

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes – 22 June 2021**

Minutes of a meeting of Diocesan Synod, held via Zoom conference facility on
Tuesday 22 June 2021 commencing at 5:30 pm.

The Bishop of Warwick took the chair

1. Welcome and Presidential Address

Prayers

The Bishop welcomed the members of the Diocesan Synod to the meeting. The Worship was provided by the Cathedral in the form of a video recording which remains available through the following link: https://youtu.be/eO_6xGYdvas

Presidential Address

On this last Synod of the Triennium, the first thing I want to say and I know Bishop Christopher would also want to say, is 'Thank you'. Thank you for your presence, physical and virtual, and for your engagement in this shared journey. I use the word 'journey' deliberately because that is close to the root meaning of the word 'Synod'. 'Syn' meaning together and 'Hod' a diminutive of 'Hodos' meaning 'the way'. So as synod members we are 'together on the way'. I want to reflect briefly on both dimensions of this phrase. We are to be together across all our differences. Last week I read these words of a Christian lawyer. 'The Church of Jesus Christ is arguably the most international, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual body on the planet. That is one of its glories and strengths.' St Paul, and indeed the multifarious communion of saints from every race and nation would surely say 'Amen' to that. St Paul, whose life was turned upside by discovering that no-one was outside of or beyond God's love and purposes, shocked those who thought the Church should comprise only 'people like us'. How profoundly shocking it was for first century Greeks and Jews to see Christian communities embracing Greek and Jew, male and female, slave and free. Homogeneity is not a mark of the Body of Christ. Diversity is.

One thing the Holy Spirit seems to be saying to us today is actually what the same Holy Spirit of God was saying to those first disciples. As we heard in Sunday's epistle, Paul writes to those members of the community who were tribal or judgmental of others in the community 'Open wide your hearts'. In the context of the Church in Corinth, it was open wide your hearts to those who are different and those with whom you disagree. He surely also had in mind his own critics, the so-called pneumatikoi, the 'super-spiritual', who denied his claim to apostleship on the grounds of his suffering and admitted weakness, the very things he later boasts are a mark of his apostleship. Shortly, I will have the privilege of ordaining deacons and priests. In both ordination services, we will be recognizing that we cannot fulfill God's purposes in our own strength, and I will be exhorting the ordinands to 'pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit that your hearts may be enlarged and minds enlightened.' This all about movement and growth, growth in love and compassion and a growing up into Christ who is the Truth. Just as the Church cannot be static as together we step out in faith and follow, neither can your life or mine. We are a pilgrim people. We are together 'on the way'. We are not yet there. There is more for each of us personally and all of us corporately to learn and to enter into. A disciple, mathetis in the New Testament, is by definition a learner, and one who continues to learn. We are, Paul writes, to go on letting ourselves be transformed by the renewal of our minds. The learning and the becoming continues. A Head Teacher in a school where I was Vicar, had on the wall a poster with the words 'Be patient. God is not finished with me yet'. Which of us could not say that of ourselves? At least, which of us with any self-knowledge could not say that?

But learning can be uncomfortable – as those first disciples experienced. We resist having our prejudices exposed to ourselves or others. America is very definitely not the UK but the murder of George Floyd and what has emerged in its wake, have woken many of us up to the reality of racism in our own country, in our own church and perhaps also – if we have the courage and humility to

recognize it - in our own lives. One of the most creative and exciting responses to this in our own Diocese has been the Amazing Grace learning journey, undertaken by about 40 people, largely clergy but also Readers and lay leaders. The motivation and ethos of all of this is nothing to do with culture wars or identity politics as understood in secular media. It is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pay tribute to those who had the vision for this and who led it, always listening to God and the Scriptures. I trust that this will all be brought to Synod in due course as prayerfully we seek to become the Church of Pentecost and the Church described in Revelation where people of every race and nation are caught up in wonder, love and praise. In similar vein, as we seek to grow in the ministry of reconciliation, both the Difference Course and Living in Love and Faith are about sensitizing us to the experiences and perspectives of others – enlarging our hearts and enlightening our minds. All of these things can help us live out more fully and fruitfully the reconciliation ministry to which each of us is called. Just as learning means leaving behind what we thought we knew, so as we step into God's future for us, we need perhaps also to let go of some of the things we used to do. The pandemic has surely changed all of us in one way or another. Some profoundly through loss and bereavement, some through mental health impact, physical health impact, spiritual health impact and all of these are of course inter-related. Many also through financial- economical impact and, of course, in so many other ways that can't easily be categorized. But for all of us here, it has surely given us pause for thought and indeed prayer. What actually matters most? What is God saying to us through this experience? Kenneth Leech, a great prophetic and pastoral theologian, wrote 'Theology begins where the pain is'. C.S. Lewis wrote something similar, our pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world. As disciples, as learners, what is God wanting to teach us through all of this? This is a really important question for all of us, in PCCs, home groups, chaplaincies, schools and beyond. We also have the opportunity to draw others outside the Church into some of this conversation which could also be fruitful in God's purposes and our commitment to transforming communities. I'm sure some of these conversations are already happening.

A second good question would be, 'what is God wanting us to let go of as we step out into new life?' To be on the way, we need to travel lightly. We can't bring everything from the past with us. St Paul could see this when he wrote, in Philippians, 'Letting go of what lies behind and reaching out for that which lies ahead, I press on.' What do we need to let go of which lies behind us? What a waste it would surely be if we did not allow the pandemic to teach us anything new and simply try to take up where we left off before the pandemic began.

In the hymn 'O love that wilt not let me go' there is the line 'I trace the rainbow through the rain.' In and through the suffering of the pandemic, we have glimpsed the Spirit of God in a number of ways. There is not time now to reflect on all of them. We have discovered the great gift of the reach of digital. This very gift has given us a new challenge. People can become so comfortable meeting virtually, that some can lack the desire to return to worship together physically. There can be no substitute for meeting together physically.

In my own discernment, I am sensing that God may be telling us to 'get out more'. I am excited by what God is doing 'outside' the church buildings. I shouldn't be surprised because almost all Jesus' teaching, ministering and healing was done not in the synagogue or Temple but out and about, being where people are. Walking, talking in villages, on farmland, on hillside, at the lakeside or even on the lake. In short, out and about in God's good creation where life is lived. This is where chaplaincy and our chaplains have much to teach us, being with people where they actually are. This is incarnational ministry. Let me pay tribute here to all our chaplains, in prisons, hospitals, hospices, schools, universities and places of work. I am convinced that there should be a chaplaincy dimension to all our ministries, what I mean by this is spending time with people who are not Christian. We are not called to be Church-centric but Christ- centric, Christ who calls us and sends us out into the world.

It may be the John Wesley in me, but I think God is calling us, literally, outdoors. Outdoor worship has drawn in those who have not hitherto come through the church doors. A number of churches have experienced this and want to develop it. A number of parishes and schools together, through Growing Faith, have seen God do wonderful things simply by meeting outside the church building, not least in

the outdoor stations of the cross in Holy Week. I know too of parishes whose outdoor worship has attracted many who may have been reluctant to go through the church doors.

Our Church schools, having faced huge struggles throughout the pandemic remain beacons of light and life and hope. Children singing and dancing at All Saints school Coventry as they celebrated 50 years on the current site really did put a spring in my step. For of such is the Kingdom.

Finally, the pandemic, I think and I hope, has given us all a greater sense of solidarity with all of humanity, locally, nationally and internationally. May we not lose this and let us act on it, encouraging our government to do so also, not least in the sphere of vaccine justice and the environment. The earth is the Lord's and all who live in it. Following the Cathedral's inspirational ministry of crossing boundaries, nationally and internationally, let us not be insular.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from :

Bishop Christopher: Kay Dyer: Graeme Pringle: Ian Francis: Claire Hughes: Glyn Samuel: Mary Allanson: Alison Evans: Steve Gold: Craig Grocock: Gareth Irvine; Jane Hill; Jonathan Hearn

3. Minutes of the last meeting (DS 21/08)

David Spiers moved a motion for the approval of the minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 20 March 2021. The minutes were approved 47 votes in favour with 2 abstentions.

The Chair of the House of Laity took the Chair and proposed a motion to suspend the standing orders to enable the Synod to meet as the Coventry Diocese Board of Finance (CDBF). This motion was carried with 54 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

4i. The Annual General Meeting of the CDBF: Minutes (DS 21/09)

The Chair of the CDBF (Simon Danks) noted that one amendment was required to the Minutes. The word "approve" to be added under the proposals "a and b". With this amendment Simon Danks moved that the minutes be accepted. The Minutes, as amended, were approved with 50 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.

4ii.

Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 (DS 21/10)

The Chair of the CDBF took members of Synod through the above report as follows:

The accounts before you have been reviewed by the audit and risk committee who met with the auditors Crowe, they were also closely scrutinised by the Diocesan Finance Group and Bishops Council before being presented to you the members of the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance.

As we all know 2020 was a difficult year for clergy, parishes and the DBF. Despite that, 90% of parish share offered and budgeted for in 2021 was received. We can see at note 4a how this compares with 2019, and that £277k or around half of the shortfall was given in parish share relief. This relief was funded by a release of our historic funds. Fees also saw a 39% drop compared to the collection that was made in 2019.

Applications for waiving of share for 2020 and 2021 continue to be made, and I would ask you to let all parishes know that this support is still available to them.

With a fall in income of half a million the DBF made savings on expenditure of £573k most of which was in relation to housing costs, training costs, with much of this going on line, healthy churches costs as most parishes stopped carrying out this activity, and Serving Christ where savings were crystallised on the Equip Hub work which was delivered under budget and not associated with the pandemic.

During the presentation of the budget, Diocesan Synod agreed in November 2020, to release further historic unapplied return, which you can see on the face of the Statement Of Financial Affairs on page

30, underneath the normal release of investments income from the endowments is £1.909m. This was in line with the strategy to

1. support parishes with share relief,
2. support the Cathedral to be sustainable,
3. and to support the growth strategy.

The release of these funds, gives a view that the DBF has done quite well in 2020, however we are benefiting from the gifts of those who gave in the past. The results show a surplus of £978k before the investment movements and sale of glebe investments.

If we look at note 18 to the accounts we can see the release of these historic funds from the endowment in the movements in the year section. It is worth noting that during the year returns from our investments, and the gain on investment movements mean that we are not actually releasing more than the £4.2m gain we had during the year, in fact the unapplied total return that is available to us to use has increased in value to £44.8m.

Later in the meeting we will spend some time thinking about our Growth Strategy including looking at some of the detail from Nuneaton Deanery. Whilst we are still working through the financial implications of the pandemic and to be honest, we are likely to be doing so for some time to come, I encourage you to think carefully how we make the most of the strategy that we are starting to roll out. For those of you who will be part of the new Diocesan Synod, together, we will need to consider the wise use of our historic unapplied total return with regard to our strategy implementation. Appropriate use of some of those funds over the next few years along with good structures to capture our learning and therefore continually improve our strategic approach could have a long lasting positive impact on the health of our Diocese and more importantly on the impact the kingdom of God makes on our community.

Questions were invited and responded to as follows:

- Sam Margrave asked: (i) in respect of the 8 ordained deacons mentioned in the report: is it intended that they will be priests or is the “distinctive deacon” being recognised within the Diocese (ii) whether working from home was to remain for some Diocesan staff and whether savings were anticipated from this in the future (iii) The “e bulletin” is sent to 1,925 people. How does this compare to the number of worshippers in the Diocese? can it be improved across other communication methods? and how is this factored into the budgeting. In response (i) it was noted the deacons usually serve a year and then pursue priest ordination. It was confirmed the Diocese was open to “distinctive deacons”. A number had been appointed and a few subsequently felt the call to the priesthood (ii) it was confirmed the pandemic had been a terrible burden on everyone however it was recognised that working from home was very helpful for certain staff in particular. Whilst ensuring that the needs of the Diocese were met, conversations with staff had delivered both a more flexible working environment and savings for the DBF, the latter being an added bonus (iii) The e bulletin recipients fall short of the number of people worshipping across the Diocese according to the Mission returns. Work was ongoing in respect of alternative media outlets with a view to reaching more people in the future. The “Serving Christ” project, in particular, was seeking to reach out across the Diocese. A supplementary response noted that the Diocese were working on a job description for a “digital mission enabler” post to support the Serving Christ team and enhance clergy and laity support of church on line.
- Jonathan Morgan (JM) asked how the approval of the financial statements was accountable to the laity. The current proposal appears to be a “rubber stamping exercise”. What are the mechanisms by which laity members can object to something in the Report and Financial Statements if they wished too? In response it was noted that the Report and Financial Statements are approved by the Bishop’s Council acting as Directors of the DBF. Bishop’s Council is a mix of clergy and laity. JM was advised that Julie Bellamy (JB) Director of Finance

would be very happy to receive any questions he may have at any time.

- Jonathan Jee (JJ) noted that he was delighted that the Historic Unapplied Total Reserve was being utilised. The questions of (i) how much is the Total Historic Unapplied Reserve (ii) how much is tied up in houses and (iii) how much in available cash were raised. SD responded; the Historic Return is £44.8m; there are rules as to how the reserve can be utilised. JB added further detail as follows: Note 12 on page 43 shows the breakdown of the Glebe Assets and the unlisted investments. Most of the Clergy houses are assets held by the DBF and would not be sold. They are not included within note 12.

The Chair of the House of Laity (Helen Simmonds HS) asked that the Director of Finance pass on the Synod's thanks for all the finance team's work in a time of considerable challenge. HS noted that so much has been achieved in a time of significant extra pressure.

The motion to receive the Report and Financial Statements was proposed by the Chair of the House of Laity. It was approved 50 in favour and 2 abstentions. The following motion to renew the appointment of Crowe LLP as auditors of the DBF was similarly proposed and approved : 51 For and 1 abstention.

The Chair of the House of Laity reinstated the Synod standing orders.

5. Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Financial Statements (DS 21/11)

The Chair of the Board of Education (Chris Edwards CE) expressed his thanks for the work done throughout the year by Linda Wainscot (the retired Diocesan Director of Education), April Gold (the new Diocesan Director of Education) and Peter Rigby (Business Manager). All have completed immeasurable work during the period of the pandemic.

The Chair of the DBE noted that the report was a good one and that financially some "wriggle room" was available to support creative thinking. The DBE had supported schools throughout the pandemic and had started to develop sources of alternative education which will come on stream in the future.

The Chair proposed that the Report and Financial Statements be noted. The motion was approved 44 in favour with 1 abstention.

The Chair of the House of Laity, Helen Simmonds, took the Chair noting that any questions concerning the previous item should be forwarded directly to Chris Edwards, the Chair of the DBE.

The Chair of the House of Clergy, Claire McArthur, took the Chair.

In order to enable open discussion for the next items, the Chair requested that the Synod suspended the Standing Orders. The motion was carried 45 in favour with 1 abstention.

6. Diocesan Mission and Growth Strategy (DS 21/12)

Archdeacon Barry Dugmore noted the paper had been circulated however further elements were in the process of being implemented including an Away Day being hosted shortly to confirm the Terms of Reference. The detailed work on the SDF was progressing well under the direction of Emma Harrington, specifically in respect of the "planting plan", leaders and PCC's. Three great young "plant leaders" have now been appointed.

The work completed by Tim Mitchell was referenced in respect of the Healthy Churches project: "return, rebuild, renewal". A lot of resources were now available on the Diocesan website to help local churches engage in re-engaging with mission post pandemic.

Planning for the Autumn Conference: Church and Lay leaders was also well advanced.

Questions were invited. Jonathan Jee noted that a new Director of Healthy Churches and new Worshipping Community had recently been appointed. The new appointee was noted to be Rev Sally Buddle, currently Vicar of St Swithens Bath.

7. Strategy Item: Nuneaton Deanery Update

The Chair of the House of Clergy noted a fundamental part of the overall Growth Strategy was the production of strategies within the Deaneries.

The Nuneaton Deanery video was played by the individual Synod participants.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-Rvuo7GxEU>

The Chair of the House of Clergy thanked Nuneaton for their video and for drawing out the many and varied ways in which the mission of the Diocese has been promoted during the pandemic.

8. Triennium review (DS 21/13 a and b)

The Diocesan Secretary (Ruth Marlow RM) presented the results of the members survey. The three principal themes were: (i) where had God worked and brought joy during colleagues' time on the Diocesan Synod (ii) where were the challenges and frustrations and (iii) what had we learnt that we hoped to share with the new Synod.

The questionnaire had been sent out to all Synod members however only 30% had responded. The Synod went into breakout groups to discuss the three themes, and in particular (i) do you agree with the responses given (ii) do you have other thoughts to those three themes. Members of Synod were asked to e mail their responses. These are provided within Appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Chair of the House of Clergy reinstated the Synod standing orders

9. Synodical ladder (DS 21/14 a and b)

The Diocesan Secretary reminded members of the background to this discussion.

A Working Group was set up as a result of a discussion within Synod. The Working Group has been looking at all elements of connectivity within the Synodical ladder. One element of the proposals set out in the paper was that the Standing Orders for the Deanery Synod be adopted by this Synod.

The first element of the proposal is that the Deanery rules, i.e., the standing orders for the Deanery Synod, be sent out to the Deaneries to be discussed and consideration be given to how these rules could be adopted in practice.

David Spiers proposed the motion that the "Diocesan Synod invited comments from Deanery Synods on the Deanery Synod Rules recommended to Bishop's Council by the Synodical Ladder Working Group". The motion was passed with 39 in favour and 8 abstentions.

10. Questions from the Diocesan Synod under Standing Order 69.

The Chair noted four questions had been received from Sam Margrave and Nicola Perryman. The questions, the responses and the subsequent supplementary questions are in the appendices to these minutes (appendix 2).

Bishop John, the Bishop of Warwick took the Chair.

11. Closing

The Bishop drew the meeting to a close, thanking the Chairs and their teams for preparing reports for the Synod and for sharing in the journey for the last three years. The Bishop shared

his excitement in the extent to which the Diocese is becoming “one” across parishes, schools, the Cathedral and chaplaincies. All strands are being enriched and blessed by each other.

Bishop John thanked, in particular, the Chair of the House of Laity, Helen Simmonds who has gracefully and professionally encouraged fresh voices into engaging in the discussions.

In closing, Bishop John reflected on St Alban, the first martyr in England. He asked that members of Synod pray for those who are persecuted for their faith and reflect St Alban in the Synod’s solidarity for the persecuted across the world. Bishop John requested that Synod pray for Bishop Christopher during his sabbatical and that Synod encourage everyone to grow in fellowship and grace.

The Chair of the House of Laity thanked Synod. HS noted that it had been a pleasure and a privilege to be the Lay Chair.

- 12. Next Meeting: Saturday 20 November 2021 at St Andrew’s Shottery – subject to any restrictions that may be in place.

.

Attendance: Bishops: 1; Clergy: 23; Laity: 30, Attendees: 6 and guests: 0

Voting: All Zoom polls were anonymous.

Signed: Date:

Coventry Diocesan Synod

Minutes 22 June 2021

Appendix 1: Triennium Review (DS 21/13 a and b): Responses from breakout groups

Breakout Group 1

- The majority of the group had not filled in the questionnaire:
- Hard to find joy. Remote
- Unwelcoming - made harder by Zoom but was like that before.
- Not sure we are contributing anything to the Diocese.
- Feel we are being "talked at".
- Not part of the decision-making process but a rubber-stamping forum therefore miss the diversity of voice, experience and tradition in our decision-making.
- Lack of due process in the diocese - things being rushed through without scrutiny.
- Enjoyed meeting people and willing to stand again.
- Nine meetings are quite a short time to get your head around a complex structures.
- Remote to what is happening on the ground. Doesn't relate to what is happening on the ground, especially in rural parishes. The rural strategy work has been acted upon.
- Synod raises ideas, but unless it ticks central boxes, nothing happens.
- Welcome the questions brought by members of the Synod, and the responses they elicit.
- Something to take forward - encourage greater boldness and engagement in questioning the information that is presented and encourage scrutiny.

Breakout Group 2

- More questions about Synod just being a rubber stamp. How can it be a place where contributions are heard and acted upon ?
- How do we get most out of Synod and own the direction of Diocese decisions?
- Can there be more opportunities at the beginning of processes and not at the end as a rubber stamp?
- Frustration at ownership and there is a desire to needs an opportunity to add value.
- How many times is my presence at Synod making a distinctive difference.
- People would like to be in earlier for decision making.
- Potential for deliberate Synod meetings where there is less business and more discovery and ownership of direction.

Coventry Diocesan Synod

Minutes 22 June 2021

Appendix 1: Triennium Review (DS 21/13 a and b): Responses from breakout groups

Breakout Group 3

Q1 - one person saw being on DS as a duty and so doesn't necessarily expect to find joy! One other hadn't responded to the survey because they didn't know how to answer the question and was very impressed with the honesty when they read the responses.

Q2 - one person observed that in a previous diocese their DS was much more about framing policy whereas here it feels as though we're only approving policy set out by others. The observation was made that only a third of people responded, does the structure mean that people are a little disengaged?

Another member found that it took 2/2.5 years to get to grips with what was going on in the meetings, it can be an intimidating process and environment, perhaps some informal opportunities to ask questions early in the life of the triennium might be useful.

We didn't get on to question 3.

Breakout Group 4

- The work of a Diocesan Synod member is not compatible with also being an Area Dean. The Area Dean role is equivalent to a middle manager, but it is forgotten that they also have a parish to run.
- However, the joys of Diocesan Synod have been the networking, hearing the stories of others, the Bishop's address, meeting people from across the diocese and building and maintaining relationships.
- Sadly, during the pandemic, the sense of these joys has been lost. ZOOM has been very difficult and not conducive to the relational aspects of DS.
- On the other hand, given the constraints one member felt that DS had done very well and achieved a lot.
- For this individual ZOOM has been more rewarding, it has enabled her to actually see everyone's face and not the backs of their heads. ZOOM has made her feel more confident and able to speak.
- A real joy has been being able to listen properly to what people have had to say, which has not always been the case in large churches where acoustics have been poor. She has heard wonderful stories.
- A real blessing has been being able to see everyone's name and put faces to names, especially the faces of Diocesan Staff.
- In the new Synod we should all have name badges with both our names and where we are from so that we can continue to know who fellow DS members are and ensure we know who the Diocesan Staff are too.
- One of the best things was the first meeting of this Synod in Holy Trinity Church Coventry and the Pilgrimage through the Cathedral square to the Guild Hall and the talk from the Lord Mayor. We should do that again.

Breakout Group 5

What has brought you joy?

- Totally agree that it is lovely to see so very many things happening across the Diocese, and so many different projects.
- When people think of Synod, they don't always think of joy. There is good worship, but it would be good to have an element of journey and retreat together, and God's joy. Fosse tried to encourage sharing of what is going on in the parishes, and also to give an insight into different spiritualities (Faith in Fosse).

- It would be good to meet together (in person) to do things other than work through the agenda: worship, workshops on various aspects, eating together. i.e., to grow the quality of our relationships with each other.

Challenges or frustrations?

- The deep frustration at not being able to develop such relationships.

Learning for the future?

- That some Zoom meetings might be useful, but not all of them!
- We would value the chance to meet together and get to know each other properly at the start of the new triennium: suggest that a day of worship, workshops and eating together might be a really good way to start the next triennium.

Breakout Group 6

Joys

- To see and hear the whole Diocese in action.
- To hear toughness as well
- Being able to meet people across the community.

Going forward

- It would be good if whoever is chairing could ensure that no one person dominates or leads us off at tangents. One particular meeting was mentioned (Shottery November 2019) where there was a protracted discussion about synod representation. This could have been chaired more effectively.
- Zoom prevents side to side mixing so perhaps there could be a mix of zoom and in person meetings going forward.

Challenges

- Perhaps groups could separate clergy and laity occasionally as laity do not feel heard.
- How do we transmit the excitement from Diocese to parish level?

Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69

Question 1 under Standing Order 69
June 2021

Sam Margrave to ask the Chair of the DBE, Chris Edwards:

It's been reported that the national Church of England has asked schools to avoid hymns that are "preachy" (Telegraph) as that "may make pupils or teachers feel uncomfortable" (The times). Can the Diocesan Board of Education confirm that there is nothing uncomfortable about the witness of Jesus Christ and you will continue to encourage the use of Hymns to be sung in schools in this Diocese as an important part of our cultural heritage, identity, and to provide active learning for pupils (instilling reflection and ethos)?

Response from Chris Edwards, Chair of the DBE to Sam Margrave:



New Guidance on Collective Worship

On the 14th May the National Society issued what was originally called a "Statement of Entitlement" for Collective Worship. The intent in the name was to place the guidance alongside the Statement of Entitlement for RE. This document was the result of a collective effort across Dioceses, over a period of 18 months, to quantify a standard for Collective Worship in CofE Schools. The press release and link to the guidance can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/church-england-sets-out-guidance-collective-worship>

Following some adverse press coverage, the document was slightly amended and re-issued as guidance with another press release:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/stories-and-features/inclusive-invitational-and-inspirational-collective-worship>

The guidance makes clear that collective worship in CofE schools should be "inclusive, invitational and inspiring". Collective worship should be the "unique heartbeat of a Church school" which is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith. Collective worship should be welcoming, inclusive and exemplify the principles of Christian hospitality, and should meet the needs of all. The majority of Coventry Diocese CofE schools do not use faith-based criteria for admission. We cannot make assumptions that all children attending the school arrive with a Christian worldview.

The word confessional was interpreted by the media in a way that was not intended by the writers of the guidance. Christians often speak about "confessing" their personal faith in God. The use of 'confessional' here was simply meant to recognise that whilst most will enjoy singing their heart out, schools should not insist that everyone must join in and should take care with what is appropriate, depending on their context. So, for example, insisting all pupils sing 'All to Jesus, I surrender' in a school where the majority of pupils are devout followers of another faith, as is the case in some Church schools, might seem unnecessarily exclusive when there are lots of other inspirational Christian songs to choose from. The wording of the guidance has been changed to make this clear.

This inclusive, invitational, and inspiring, approach to collective worship has been central to the collective worship materials produced to guide Head Teachers in Coventry Diocese CofE schools for a number of years. All governing bodies formulate a collective worship policy considering carefully how to tailor their worship to the school context and distinctive Christian vision, which is rooted in place. Inspirational collective worship should lead pupils to become courageous advocates of causes and encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions. We want pupils to leave school with an understanding of Christianity having encountered Jesus Christ through worship in a way that enhances their lives, whatever their faith standpoint.

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69**

**Question 2 under Standing Order 69
June 2021**

Sam Margrave to ask

Unfortunately, due to a mistake meaning I am in the priority group but didn't get my jab - I am confined to my house for 8 weeks until I am fully vaccinated as its suggested, I need to have full protection with my conditions. While the vaccines are a fantastic step, and I will soon be free, they are only 95% effective and in many who have had cancer or transplants or other conditions, they won't be effective at all (due to the production of antibodies), or those people will still need to shield or even are not able to have a jab. While the Holy Spirit (unlike me) isn't confined to a being physically present, Church structures or arrangements often in the past only engaged with those who can attend in person. As a traditionalist and campaigner for the Parish, I will always believe investing in the building, but to learn lessons and to look at how we can build on the success (albeit with many flaws) of using technology as a Church through ministry, mission and governance to ensure we include and don't exclude those who can't be physically present - will work be undertaken locally to think about good practice and support Parishes to continue to have a presence in their whole community, offline and online?

Response from Bishop John to Sam Margrave:

I am grateful to Sam Margrave for this important and helpful question. As has been discussed and much appreciated, in the Diocese and beyond, digital technology has enabled us to extend the 'reach' of our worship, nurture and missional activity. It also, as the question recognises, allows more people unable to be present physically, to participate in such activities digitally. Whilst there is no substitute for meeting together physically, Clergy and lay leaders, I know, are keen to continue to use the opportunities afforded by online platforms to maintain digital connectivity as and when appropriate.

A digital strategy group has been established to further explore ways of resourcing and developing on-line church, social media and parish churches in order to establish and grow a 'hybrid' pattern of in-person and online church. A 0.5 FTE digital mission post within the Diocesan Mission and Discipleship Team will enable this work to develop further. The Serving Christ SDF funded project has also enabled the equipping of a digital studio based at St Marks Swanswell in which training will be offered to churches wishing to develop individuals or teams with further digital production skills. Some workshops have been offered and the first one is due to take place on 7th July.

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69**

**Question 3 under Standing Order 69
June 2021**

Nicola Perryman to ask the Diocesan Secretary.

In the light of the commitment by General Synod for the Church of England to be net zero by 2030, could the synod be updated on the progress made on this by the diocese so far and the next steps.

Response from the Diocesan Secretary to Nicola Perryman:

In response to the General Synod motion the diocese has established a Net Zero Steering Group which comprises representatives from the various areas covered by the 2030 target including churches, clergy housing, schools, land management and diocesan and episcopal offices.

The Archdeacon Missioner (appointed by Bishop Christopher as his named environmental lead) is a member of the steering group which is chaired by the Diocesan Environment Officer. The diocesan Communications Officer is also a member of the group, as it is recognised that good communication and engagement will be key in achieving this target.

The steering group have met online several times over the last year and have produced a diocesan strategy for working towards net zero which will be taken to Bishop's Council on 7 July and also shared with relevant partners such as the DBE and Cathedral Chapter. The first full progress report will be produced for the November 2021 diocesan synod. This report will include the most detailed measurement so far of our current carbon footprint.

The diocese has partnered with Green Journey to provide access to free of charge energy audits and energy efficiency recommendations to all churches, following a successful pilot in the Rugby deanery. IPV Flexgen were engaged to undertake a stage 1 feasibility study of land and buildings across the diocese to determine the potential for future renewable energy generation schemes.

The Diocesan Environment Group continue to work with parishes, and we now have over 60 Eco Church registrations, including one Gold award. The Diocese has an Eco Diocese bronze award and is reviewing the requirements for silver. Dedicated diocesan officer time has been allocated to the net zero work and job descriptions updated to reflect this.

Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69

Question 4 under Standing Order 69
June 2021

Nicola Perryman to ask

The COVID-19 pandemic has, understandably, prevented the sharing of the common cup, resulting in the denying of the wine to almost everyone, which is contrary to Article 30 of the 39 articles. As it seems likely that most people would be reluctant to return to sharing the common cup due to infection concerns, what is the Church of England going to do about removing obstacles to the use of individual cups for communion wine, thus ensuring it remains true to its historic formularies?

In addition, could the existing justification for not permitting individual cups be explained, including the reason why this interpretation is considered of greater importance than the clear teaching of the historic formularies of the Church of England?

Response from Bishop John to Nicola Perryman:

I thank Nicola for raising these important questions in which I am in no doubt others will share.

It is a serious point that Jesus told his disciples both to eat and to drink at the Last Supper. Yet while Article 30 ('both parts of the Lord's Sacrament... ought to be ministered') captures the position that (in normal circumstances) all should receive in both kinds, there is never any suggestion that Christ is not truly given through both bread and wine equally: the risen Christ is indivisible. By each we feed on Christ 'by faith with thanksgiving'.

It is important to remember that even in ordinary circumstances many people do receive Holy Communion in one kind, in circumstances that require it, and they legitimately and appropriately consume the species which is available to them, whether bread or wine. The *Notes to the Celebration of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital* indicate that 'Communion should normally be received in both kinds separately, but where necessary may be received in one kind whether of bread or, where the communicant cannot receive solid food, wine.' Some who are ill for a time may not be able to consume solids. Others, conversely, may be unable to use a cup. Many more, on a more permanent basis, may be unable to consume gluten or alcohol. Additionally, the Guidance on Celebrating the Eucharist with Children (published with the *Additional Eucharistic Prayers*) observes that 'if a parent declines to allow their own child to receive consecrated wine, then communion should be administered in one kind only to that child.' It would be hard to argue that all of these people, properly prepared for the sacrament, do not receive Holy Communion in its fullness. This understanding is not dependent on one's understanding of what happens to the elements of bread and wine when they are consecrated, or what benefits are understood to result from consuming them. Most of us are, like these people, currently in a position where widespread health considerations mean that we should receive Holy Communion in this way.

In answer to the second part of the question:

The paper 'Holy Communion: Administration of the Sacrament', published by the Legal Advisory Commission of the General Synod, articulates why Holy Communion should be received in both kinds 'unless necessity otherwise require'. The previous question articulates that Holy Communion in its

fullness is received in one kind in circumstances where both cannot be received. It is the current position of the Legal Advisory Commission that individual communion cups are not lawful in the Church of England. The House of Bishops is also aware of another legal opinion, commissioned by a member of the House of Laity of the General Synod, which asserts their legality. There is no mechanism for individual diocesan bishops (or indeed the House of Bishops) to authorize unilaterally the use of individual cups, whether permanently or for a fixed period. In any case, the House is of the view that such matters need to be explored theologically rather than settled solely by legal means. It would be possible to introduce legislative and liturgical business to the General Synod authorizing their use, were it deemed appropriate to do so. The House will look forward to further discussion once the Holy Communion Working Group (chair: the Bishop of Lichfield) has reported, no later than the end of 2022.

Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69

Question 2 Supplementary under Standing Order 69
June 2021

Sam Margrave to ask

Will the digital strategy group and digital mission post also consult those excluded groups, to hear their views, in line with the Archbishop of York's new Vision and Strategy for the Church of England that calls us to be "more diverse"?

Response from Bishop John to Sam Margrave:

The work of all our diocesan staff strives to resource mission and ministry to all people in our diocese. In line with our vision and values, the person undertaking the digital mission role will certainly want to consult with a wide demographic of people, age, gender, and ethnicity, including those living with disabilities that give rise to the reality (or the potential) for them to feel excluded from the life and mission of the church.

**Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69**

**Question 3 Supplementary under Standing Order 69
June 2021**

Nicola Perryman to ask the Diocesan Secretary.

I am pleased to hear that further reporting on this will be in November 2021. What will be the future regularity of reporting/discussions at Synod ?

Response from the Diocesan Secretary to Nicola Perryman:

Thank you for your supplementary question. The expected regularity of reporting of progress was set out in the General Synod motion, which called on all Diocesan Synods to address progress to the Net Zero target every 3 years. Bishop's Council have approved that the Net Zero Steering Group report Coventry Diocese's progress towards this target at the same frequency starting in 2021 and every following third year. This will enable the progress being made in Coventry to be fed into the national Environment Working Group's reporting timetable of three yearly reporting to General Synod starting in 2022.

Coventry Diocesan Synod
Minutes 22 June 2021
Appendix 2: Questions under Standing Order 69

Question 4 Supplementary under Standing Order 69
June 2021

Nicola Perryman to ask

I thank the Bishop for his answers and understand that, theologically, communion in one kind is receiving Holy Communion in its fullness, though this is not the emotional experience of many people. However, while accepting that legal opinions differ, there is still no explanation for the less legally minded of the reasons for this ban on the use of individual cups. We see individual wafers in widespread use to symbolise the 'one bread', but are not permitted to use individual cups to symbolise the 'one cup'. Why is this and is it likely to change?

Response from Bishop John to Nicola Perryman:

You make a very good point in your question 'Why should individual cups be inadmissible when individual hosts are not inadmissible?' There *is* an inconsistency here which needs to be addressed and it will be by the Holy Communion Working Group, chaired by +Michael Ipgrave. Arguments could be made in two different directions from this inconsistency. One could argue, as some do, that to be consistent with the administration of many hosts it should be perfectly permissible and proper to have many individual cups. Equally, there is perhaps a prior argument that relates to consistency and alignment with the Biblical texts and the theological and liturgical weight we attach to them. The Biblical narratives affirm the *one* bread or loaf and the *one* or *common cup* (1. Cor. 10.16-18. 1 Cor. 11.23-25. Mark 14.22-25). The disciples shared in the one bread, broken and shared and the one cup shared. The one bread and one cup are important signs of the communion (*koinonia*) we share with Christ. This would argue for using one loaf or large hosts to be used in the Eucharist which many of our churches do. This, I think reflects Paul's emphasis when he writes: 'Because there is *one* bread, we who are many are *one* body because for we all partake of the *one* bread.' Arguments could be made on the same lines for the use of a common cup.

As I have said, the very important question you raise will receive significant attention in the Holy Communion Working Group and I believe it is also being brought to General Synod. The timing of any decisions will be subject to the above processes.