

Synod met online on rain-lashed and wintry Saturday morning.

The agenda included

- Living Christ's Story – Report on Multiply
- Environment Policy
- Revised DBF Articles of Association and Synodical Standing Orders
- Financial Update including the Annual Report and Accounts
- Annual Reports from Boards and Committees
- General Synod members' report

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

"Nearly 20 years ago, I wrote a little book called Do Nothing to Change your Life. This was also about the importance of rest and contemplation.

"To publicise the book the publishers had the bright idea of getting me down to Reading at eight o'clock on a Monday morning. Armed with a box of egg timers, I handed them out to the commuters who were pouring into the station inviting them to take three minutes off – the time it takes to boil an egg – and see if it made a difference. 'Receive the gift of time,' I said to each of them.



"Most rushed past me.

"But one person, receiving the egg timer with joy, thanked me. 'This is what I need,' she said.

"It is what we all need; and not just the rest, but also the good things that flow from abiding in God; the sort of things our Diocesan Rhythm of Life encourages and promotes.

"A disclaimer: I am not very good at this. I talk a good game. I write a much referenced book about it. But I don't get it right in my life. And yet I also know, that when I do find time for rest and refreshment, for prayer and for intimacy with God, an intimacy which for me is often found in solitude and waiting, it does lead to greater creativity. From the greater knowledge of how beloved I am to God, I also learn how God wants to work and be fruitful in me."

- **Read Archbishop Stephen's full Presidential Address at [tinyurl.com/presaddress2407](https://www.tinyurl.com/presaddress2407).**

FINANCE: 2023 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Diocesan Financial Director Kathryn Rose reported that the final deficit of £1.9 million in 2023, which includes investment gains and proceeds of asset sales, was slightly less severe than the figure above £2 million anticipated in the original budget.

Free Will Offers to the Diocesan Common Fund in 2023 were still £900,000 below the level in 2019, the last year before the Covid pandemic.

While the improved position of the clergy and staff pension funds in 2023 had led to a decrease in costs, housing costs rose due to

inflation and the need to catch up with arrears of maintenance.

Useable reserves stood at £6.9 million by the year-end, which equates to about six months' costs.

Forecasts for 2024 show a likely deficit of nearly £2 million again; repeated deficits of this kind are unsustainable and hence the financial impact of Living Christ's Story proposals.

Free Will Offers for 2025 are crucial in forming the year's budget; parishes are asked prayerfully to consider the material circulated recently (and at www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/fwo) in order to respond by the 23rd September.

The Accounts for 2023 were unanimously approved.

- **Download the York Diocesan Board of Finance 2023 Report & Accounts at [tinyurl.com/ydbfaccounts2023](https://www.tinyurl.com/ydbfaccounts2023).**

GENERAL SYNOD REPORT

General Synod Members Dr Neill Burgess and the Revd Canon Liz Hassall each reflected on aspects of the July 2024 meeting at the University of York.

They reported a busy session which business had included consideration of the ongoing process of simplifying church administration, the scheduled replacement of the Clergy Discipline Measure with the new Clergy Conduct Measure, and the continuing and difficult process of carrying forward the recommendations and provisions of the Living in Love and Faith process. General Synod also considered prayer and action for the persecuted church, the financial situation of the Church of England as a whole, the future of Safeguarding provision and how to establish an appropriate level of independence for safeguarding officers in the church.

- **Download the General Synod report by Liz and Neill at [tinyurl.com/gensyn2407](https://www.tinyurl.com/gensyn2407).**

LIVING CHRIST'S STORY: STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Archbishop Stephen expressed his thanks to former Diocesan Director of Strategic Development Sam Nicol, who had left her post and had been ordained deacon in the Diocese of Blackburn at the end of June. Sam had overseen a number of successful bids for national funding to expand our capacity and progress projects which will come online in the coming months.

He acknowledged that some aspects of the Living Christ's Story (LCS) programme had not developed as hoped, and reported that Rod McPhee, known to us as a liaison point with the national grant-making bodies, was supporting the diocese this summer in reappraising the LCS process. Rod's recommendations may include advice on how best to replace the Director post, and the part to be played by the next Bishop of Selby in re-energising the process of transformation and change.

Multiply

The Revd Canon Dr Ian McIntosh, Director of Mission and Ministry, reported on the work to date of the Multiply project, which grew out of work to build new worshipping communities amongst those in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

Of about one thousand members of such new worshipping communities across the diocese, around two thirds are new disciples—the numbers are roughly equivalent to a whole new deanery. The ‘DNA’ of Multiply—the willingness to innovate and support new forms of worship and community—is becoming part of the common life of the diocese, he said.

In some places Multiply is integrated into the life of the inherited church; elsewhere it is dependent on further investment, including in people. There is some highly creative work going on with special interest groups and in ‘virtual spaces’ or online communities.

The hoped-for ‘ripple effect’ from Multiply centres to nearby parishes is not as prominent as had been hoped, and—perhaps predictably—levels of financial commitment are lagging in keeping up with the growth in attendance and membership. This is being addressed, but meanwhile Ian described Multiply as ‘Great Kingdom work’.

- **Download full Multiply report from tinyurl.com/multiply24.**

DIOCESAN ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Bishop of Selby and Chair of the Diocesan Environment Group (DEG) Dr John Thomson and Green Ambassador for the Diocese of York the Revd Jan Nobel presented the draft Environment Policy, prepared at the request of Diocesan Synod about three years ago.

The policy defines our aspirations and then fleshes them out with defined actions which Jan commended to Synod, noting that our rate of return of the Church of England’s annual Energy Footprint Tool for parishes is amongst the lowest in the country, and similarly the number of churches holding ‘Eco Church’ awards, while the Diocese of York has yet to attain its own ‘Eco Diocese’ Bronze award. The Policy was adopted by Synod with 97% in favour and 3% abstentions.

- **Download the new Diocesan Environment Policy at tinyurl.com/envpolicy24.**

ANNUAL REPORTS

Board of Education

Diocesan Director of Education Andrew Smith presented the DBE’s 2023 report. 21,500 pupils are educated daily in the 122 Church of England Schools in the Diocese of York, which in a changing scene



now include 42 Academies. All four of our secondary schools are Academies alongside 38 primaries, grouped in ten Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). The report was unanimously accepted by Synod.

- **Download the DBE report at tinyurl.com/dbereport23.**

Safeguarding

The Ven Dr Amanda Bloor, Archdeacon of Cleveland and Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Operational Group, presented the 2023 Safeguarding Summary Report to Synod.

Rob Marshall had been appointed into the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser role towards the end of 2022, and Sara Dickinson became Assistant DSA in February 2023, bringing a wealth of experience and immediately proving to be a great addition to the team. The team was brought back up to full strength, which enabled a great deal of proactive support and engagement with Parishes; huge efforts continue to grow the culture of safeguarding across the Diocese. Synod accepted the report with 99% in favour and 1% abstention.

- **Download the full Safeguarding Summary Report at tinyurl.com/safeguarding23.**

Property, Mission & Pastoral (including Closed Churches) and Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC)

These reports were accepted by Synod respectively with 99%, 99% and 100% in favour.

- **Download the full Property Sub-Committee report at tinyurl.com/propcom23.**
- **Download the full Mission & Pastoral Sub-Committee report at tinyurl.com/misspast23.**
- **Download the full DAC report at tinyurl.com/dacreport23.**

ARCHBISHOP’S CLOSING WORDS

Archbishop Stephen paid tribute to outgoing Diocesan director of Education Andrew Smith, who steps down at the end of August. “If ever there was a model of a Christian lay person in our midst showing how to use their gifts in the service of Christ, it is Andrew.”



To Bishop of Whitby Paul Ferguson and Bishop of Selby Dr John Thomson, both of whom retire this month, he said, “John once said to me that what you see depends on where you’re standing, and I love that he and Paul choose to stand in very particular places to help the church take forward its ministry to people in need.

“John, you have brought Africa, and Paul, you have brought Scandinavia to the table of our discussions. Many people owe their vocation to ministry and their faith to you both.”

NEXT MEETING:

Saturday 30 November 2024 in person.