

CARLISLE DIOCESAN SYNOD

Minutes of a meeting of the Carlisle Diocesan Synod held on Saturday, 11th March 2023 at Newbiggin Village Hall Penrith.

Prayers and Biblical Reflection were led by the Carlisle Diocesan Mothers' Union President, Deb Lee.

1. Mothers Union/Christian Aid. Deb Lee introduced the Mothers' Union & Christian Aid item and updated Synod on the Bishop's Harvest Appeal. Unusually, the Appeal was currently in the fourth year of a three-year programme, the extra year being a response to lower donations during the covid pandemic. The appeal was currently supporting two projects, one delivered through the Mothers Union in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the second being a Christian Aid project in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The title of the Mothers Union programme was 'Sustainable economic and social empowerment for disadvantaged women in the DRC through literacy, numeracy and agricultural learning circles'. Women in the DRC do not go to school, so learning to read, write and understand numbers was crucial. After providing basic education the project fed into an agricultural learning circle which addressed farming practices that respond to climate change and business skills training, particularly relating to governance and making cooperatives work for their members.

The Carlisle Diocesan Mothers Union had a link to Boga Diocese in the DRC, hence choosing the DRC for support. Ideally the project would have taken place in Boga Diocese but there was significant conflict there, making it impractical to deliver support. On measures of income per head the DRC was one of the poorest countries in the world. Most women and many adult men and boys were illiterate and the Mothers Union in the DRC had identified illiteracy as the main barrier preventing people getting out of poverty. Three examples were given of people who had been part of the project: a young woman who had started her own clothing business and was now able to pay for her nephews and nieces to go to school; a young man who now ran his own business, employing other people and undergoing and paying for relatives to go to school; and a community leader.

Feedback from the project indicated that it was having a real and positive impact. Giving women the skills and confidence to take part in decision-making committees was very significant. The women who emerged from the literary circles were real role models in the community, not simply in terms of commerce and agriculture, but in respect of subjects such as gender-based violence. 1217 of the women involved in the literacy groups had said that when they had joined they were not allowed to make any household decisions, but that once they had been through groups, 70% of them were included in those decisions.

Deb then turned to the Christian Aid project in the occupied Palestinian territories. This project was set in a very challenging context. Since 2000, 10,300 Palestinians and 1,300 Israelis had been killed, including 2,352 children. Already this year 12 children had been killed. As part of their philosophy Christian Aid stood in solidarity with those in most need. The aim of this project was to contribute towards achieving a lasting and just peace.

Christian Aid were also very good at appreciating that local people were expert in what would make a difference in a particular place. The work supported through this project included funding the management of the local YMCA and its work including creating safe spaces for families and children to meet together, transforming a wasteland into a sports field and bringing communities together. The YMCA had also been working to empower women and provide training in local resilience and human rights, peer support and activities to help them cope with the daily stress of living in a dangerous environment.

Deb Lee offered to go to go out to individual parishes to speak to about the work of Mothers Union and Christian Aid if there were requests to do so.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th October 2022: the minutes were approved.

Matters Arising: there were no matters arising that were not already on the agenda.

3. Bishop's Council Report: Synod received the report of the Bishop's Council meeting held on 7th September 2022.

4. Annual Report on Safeguarding: Richard Pratt introduced the Annual Report on Safeguarding. There had been some significant internal changes to responsibilities with the departure of the Safeguarding Lead Archdeacon Lee Townend and the appointment of the Bishop of Penrith, Rt Revd Rob Saner-Haigh, who was now the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding.

In 2022, the DSA had opened and worked on 32 new safeguarding consultations, opened 19 new cases and currently had 24 active cases which were all being progressed and reviewed. In relation to the subject of these cases, the annual report referred to 'church officers'. A question had been raised at Bishop's Council as to who was covered by the term 'church officers', the answer being that under the House of Bishops Guidance 2017 it included anyone appointed or elected by or on behalf of the church, whether ordained or lay, pay or unpaid.

Training had been a priority in 2022 as the covid pandemic had created a backlog, with many Clergy, Church Officers, volunteers, and elected members undertaking various courses. Significant progress had been made in the past 12 months with the development and delivery of the range of courses now available. There was also new 'Train the Trainer' training which enabled people to deliver Basic & Foundation Safeguarding Courses face-to-face, the idea being that this would make it easier for people on PCCs who didn't have access to a computer or were not confident in using one to engage together and complete the training as a group.

Further to discussions between the Diocese of Carlisle and the National Safeguarding Team, we had been accepted onto the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) Pathfinder Project, contributing to the implementation of IICSA Recommendations 1 & 8 and offering a rural perspective.

The priorities and development that had been identified for 2023 were: Strategic Safeguarding Development Plans; Implementation of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboards; Case Management System; Development of a Victim Survivor Strategy; Training Needs Analysis; Support, Recognition

and Development of Parish Safeguarding Officers; and the implementation of recommendation 26 of the national PCR2, raising awareness of domestic abuse.

Work was also underway to raise awareness of spiritual abuse with examples being provided to show the difference between healthy spiritual practice and unhealthy or abusive practice.

During the discussion the following points/questions were made:

- Basic and Foundation and Local Leadership Safeguarding Courses were high quality and well delivered
- The report raised some concerns about capacity. The appointment of dedicated administrative support should make a material difference in that respect.
- There appeared to be a gap in terms of materials to help navigate issues of gender and sexuality and around the risks of spiritual abuse if those issues were not handled properly.
- There was a need to ensure the levels of training and oversight were proportionate to the risks involved in particular roles in the local church. A matrix showing the training required for particular roles was provided but there needed to be some flexibility. The Basic and Foundation Courses were an hour long and delivered online so were not a major burden.
- The Train the Trainer approach was helpful in achieving the goal of safeguarding being seen as a collective responsibility. It meant that people could be trained together in a companionable way and spread the load across the entire church population. If people trained as a group it was also easier to address particular learning needs and avoid any sense of someone feeling that they were being tested on their own in an anxiety-inducing way.

5. Equality Diversity & Inclusion strategy: Ali Ng, Head of HR and Governance, introduced this item. The paper set out a proposed vision, strategy, policy and action plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the Diocese. It included the protected characteristics that are covered by the Equality Act 2010, ie age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In addition it brought social class into scope. After examining some of the statistics comparing EDI issues between Cumbria and Cornwall Synod discussed the subject, raising the following comments and questions:

- church schools provided a wonderful opportunity to educate children holistically to embody principles of equality and we should encourage school staff to do this.
- the National Governance Association website offered good EDI training including a link to Harvard University's free access website which included materials to help individuals assess their own unconscious biases.
- EDI started with vision, strategy and policy and needed to link to an organisation's overall vision. It was not entirely clear how the proposed Diocesan framework connected to God for All or whether, for a faith community, there should be limits to EDI. It might be necessary to nuance our statements, for example in the light of our beliefs about the issues explored in Living in Love and Faith.
- The presentation could have been stronger in terms of linking the objectives in the action plan to the desired outcomes, particularly in terms of resourcing and cost.
- When looking at EDI it was important not to group everybody with a particular characteristic together. The reality was that people should be seen very much as individuals.

Ali Ng explained that the next steps would be to update the document in the light of Synod's comments and then to bring it back to the June Synod for formal approval.

6. Social Care: Bishop James introduced this item. He was involved in the House of Lords Select Committee on the future of Social Care and was also the Co-Chair of the Archbishop's Commission on Reimagining Care. The Commission had been asked to reimagine Britain as a country in which all human beings flourish and which put high quality care and public and mental health at the heart of its objectives. The Archbishop of Canterbury's book titled Re-imagining Britain: Foundations for Hope, had been the source of the Commission's statement of purpose, with a call for the development of a radical and inspiring vision, drawing on Christian theology and tradition.

The aim of the Commission was to stimulate a national debate about the nature and purpose of care and to offer practical recommendations to national and local government policymakers, the care sector and society as a whole. In addition, it had been asked to address wider issues that affect the status and well-being of people in later life and adults with disabilities or disabling conditions, that is the barriers that prevented all of us from enjoying full citizenship and contributing to and participating as fully as possible in our communities and wider society. Finally, it had been tasked with proposing areas for further action by the Church of England, learning from other denominations and faith communities, on ways to support people who draw on care so that they could live well in the community.

The Commission had identified three theological principles that undergirded all of their recommendations. The first was that we were all created in the image of God and what makes us precious was that we were children of God rather than what we produced. The second was Jesus' command to love our neighbour as ourself and the third was interdependence, picking up on Saint Paul's image of the body, with everyone having something to contribute.

The Committee had undertaken a listening and engagement exercise including looking back over 28 previous reports on this subject that had been produced in recent years, none of which had been implemented. They had conducted many interviews with, and received submissions from hundreds of organisations who were involved in social care in one way or another, and had undertaken a number of visits including to care homes. From this exercise three key recommendations had emerged: to rethink attitudes to age and disability, to re-balance rights and responsibilities, and to re-design the care system.

The core values at the heart of the report were that: social care should be universal; the burden of paying for it should be shouldered universally; it should be fair and equitable, kind and loving; embody trust; it should be inclusive, especially for those with disabilities; and it should be mutual and compassionate, with empathy rather than sympathy.

The Commission had asked for a National Care Covenant setting out mutual rights and responsibilities. So far the government had not been hugely enthusiastic about either the Commission's report or the Select Committee report, but there was to be a debate in the House of Lords at the end of March.

On the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury Bishop James had visited Australia to research Anglicare, an Anglican social enterprise delivering a range of services and support including social

care. Anglicare had 4 values of love, hope, care and humility and existed in all 27 Anglican dioceses in Australia. It had 27,000 employees plus innumerable volunteers. Not only did Anglicare look after older people in care homes or their own homes, it also provided residential support for young people, tackled issues of domestic violence, family counselling and therapy, and acted on homelessness. Anglicare was funded 1/3 by the national government who regarded them as one of their top providers. It had taken 150 years for Anglicare to develop to this point, and it specifically didn't proselytise, which was why the government was willing to fund it. A model similar to Anglicare could not be introduced to England overnight given the expense and complexity of what it delivered, but there were aspects of it from which we could learn. The vision it embodied for social care as part of the church's mission was also something from which we could learn.

During the discussion the following question was raised.

- The Methodist Church had a significant investment in social care and housing through Methodist Homes for the Aged (MHA). Was there potential for a conversation at national or local level to draw on their expertise to develop a model?
- Bishop James confirmed that in the report he had written on Anglicare he had suggested such a conversation in the light of MHA's involvement in the Commission's consultation.

The following motion was passed:

"This Synod takes note of the Archbishop's Commission's report on 'Re-imagining Social Care'."

7. General Synod Report - including Living in Love and Faith (LLF): Bishop James introduced this item, referring to the paper which summarised discussions at the February General Synod group of sessions.

A novel highlight had been the Archbishop of Canterbury's first Loyal Address for King Charles. Other items discussed had included the cost-of-living crisis, with a motion committing each of us to do what we could to help those who are struggling, and a Miscellaneous Provisions measure which sounded dull and innocuous but was full of useful, practical changes. Safeguarding featured twice on the agenda. Synod passed a number of pieces of legislation concerning Diocesan Stipends Funds, Church of England Pensions, Diocesan Boards of Education, and Parochial Fees, as well as calling on the government to exempt charities, including churches, from liability for Insurance Premium Tax.

Over and above these items the Synod had been dominated by Living Love and Faith (LLF). The debate was the culmination of several years of discussion across the church. This discussion had begun with 'mutual conversations', before becoming LLF. Synod had considered a proposal from the College of Bishops who were as divided in their views as the rest of the church. The proposal was that our doctrine of marriage as the Church of England should remain unchanged, ie the sanctity of marriage between a woman and a man for life. Beyond that however there should be radical inclusion of people in same sex relationships. This would include offering prayers of thanksgiving and blessing. These would be commended rather than authorised and it would be for clergy to choose to use them or not as they wished and felt comfortable.

Feelings, understandably, had run high on this issue. The Bishops had acknowledged that, for some, the proposals did not go far enough whereas for others they went too far, especially because of the

perception that the prayers that had been produced so far approved same-sex marriage and active sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Legal advice had been that the prayers implied the blessing of individuals rather than their union, and that this did not contradict the traditional doctrine of the Church of England. That advice had also suggested that holy matrimony, as understood by the church, was different from civil marriage as performed in a registry office. However, that was not how much of the Anglican Communion, especially in the global south, saw it. The outcome of the General Synod debate and the proposal from the College of Bishops had seen a very negative reaction from those quarters.

It had been indicative of the number of issues involved in this question that the debate had involved no fewer than 28 amendments. Although some amendments had carried more sympathy than others, in the end only one amendment had been carried, clarifying “that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England”. The motion, as amended, had been carried in all three houses of Synod.

Bishop James regarded what had happened as a first step, rather than as an arrival point with further refinement to be made in the coming months. Although that further refinement could, in principle, be conducted entirely by the House of Bishops, it was expected that General Synod would have further involvement in July in debating and deciding upon the next steps.

Bishop James invited other Diocesan members of General Synod to add to what he had said. Revd Jane Maycock encouraged members of Diocesan Synod to continue to engage with the LLF material. She said that General Synod members had been reminded that undergirding the LLF project and materials was a set of 6 pastoral principles which were about living well together, including how we conducted debate and how we lived in disagreement with one another. She felt that if we could engage together on the pastoral principles, that would lay a strong foundation for further discussion of the issues within LLF.

8. God for All: Revd Andy Smith, Growing Younger Enabler, introduced this item. As part of the Vision Refresh consultation in 2020 a significant amount of feedback had highlighted the necessity of prioritising our work with young adults, youth and children. During the envisioning process of 2021 that same theme had been repeated. There appeared to be widespread agreement that seeking to see the church flourish amongst young people was part of our calling and an urgent priority for the church in Cumbria. In addition, the Church of England had, as one of its priorities for the 2020s, to become a church that was younger and more diverse.

Cumbria was home for a significant number of young people. It was sometimes described as an aged county but the statistics told a different story. 40% of the county was under 40 years old, 52% of the county was under 50 years old, 18% was over 70 years old. These percentages were not currently reflected in our congregations.

This priority was critical for three reasons. First, the hope that was offered in Jesus was for all ages, whereas the age profile of our churches was heavily skewed towards older people. Second, young people brought a different perspective to the church in Cumbria, without which we were less than we could be. This was not only about the existence of a future church, but about the life and

vitality of the church of today. Finally, due to the cultural changes in wider society it seemed especially challenging for the church to engage with young people. Doing so meaningfully would demand a disproportionate investment.

The Growing Younger priority was not about ignoring work that goes on with older people across Cumbria. Nor was it wanting to discourage new and innovative ways to reach every generation. However, it was about recognizing that there was a great gap in the church's engagement with youth, with young adults and with children right across Cumbria, and then doing what we could to bridge the gap.

The strategy identified practical things that we could do to see fresh engagement with young people. The key learning from the National Church was that there was no silver bullet, but rather that lots of different approaches were needed. The five areas of work included in the Growing Younger Strategy were to:

- Start new worshipping communities that culturally were able to welcome young people, with mission, evangelism, worship, scripture, outreach, community building, all at their centre.
- Continue, and increase where possible, investment in Network Youth Church (NYC) as a tool for church engagement with youth. NYC was successfully addressing a need and the current statistics showed that network youth church had 679 core members, 1302 fringe members and 28 young leaders. It was a new model of church working really well, particularly in engaging with teenagers who have had no contact with church in the past.
- Support and invest where things were already working, using all the tools we had available to resource the contexts that were working well with young adults, youth and children. This would include: expansion of the Growth Fund for Growing Younger work; investment in interns; creativity in using these contexts to train the next generation of leaders; and continue to listen to the evolving needs in these contexts and taking seriously what would be needed to continue to make progress.
- Invest in church leaders who were adept at leading among younger people. This included their selection, training and future deployment. In addition, creative and purposeful recruitment of such leaders to the county was required.
- Use all means possible to encourage the culture in the church in Cumbria to develop so that it increasingly focused on the needs of young people and allowed them to feel at home within the church. This would also mean exploring how to involve young adults effectively within our structures such as Diocesan Synod and mission community and local church governance structures.

Synod discussed various aspects of the Growing Younger strategy and how it related to their contexts in small groups.

9. Environment Motion: Richard Waller, the Diocesan Environment Officer introduced this item. He explained the scientific background and evidence. Humanity was now in an environment where global temperatures had risen to 1.1 to 1.2 degrees centigrade higher than the preindustrial average, ie a rise that happened over the last 150 years. The rate of climate change could only be explained by reference to the human drivers, in particular the emission of greenhouse gases.

The impacts of climate change were becoming increasingly difficult to ignore and there was now evidence that across almost all the inhabited planet there was increase in the frequency and intensity of extremes of heat waves. In the UK, there was the longest, continuous instrumental record of climate, which went back to the 17th century and showed that the 10 hottest years since then had all occurred since 2000.

2022 had been the hottest year on record and the first year with an UK average temperature above 10 degrees centigrade. Over the winter of 2022/23 January records had been broken in no fewer than eight European countries and Alpine ski resorts were completely bereft of snowfall. These climatic events were almost impossible to explain without recourse to the anthropogenic (human) impact on the climate. Climate change significantly increased the probability of extreme precipitation events and storms, with Northern Europe particularly susceptible. The prospect of events like Storm Desmond becoming more frequent was very real. Glaciers had been retreating on an annual basis for some years but were now completely disappearing.

There was a straightforward linear relationship between the amount of carbon that we emitted and the amount of warming. The key measure was of cumulative emissions over time. The focus in the media and the COP events on 1.5 degrees centigrade of warming was because it had become increasingly apparent that a series of climate tipping points could be reached beyond that level of warming. Climate tipping points were major changes within the earth's systems which, once triggered, were irreversible. They included the potential collapse of the remaining ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica or the die-back of the Amazon rainforest.

In order to remain within the 1.5 degree limit it would be necessary to keep cumulative emissions within an overall global 'carbon budget'. With global greenhouse gas emissions currently at 50 billion tonnes of CO_{2e} per year, our remaining carbon budget would be surpassed in only eight years.

COP summits took place every year and were where the nations of the world agreed so-called 'nationally determined contributions'. The United Kingdom had been the first country to enshrine in law, as a part of the Climate Change Act, the need to decarbonise all aspects of our nation and reduce carbon emissions accordingly. The most recent UK carbon budget that had been published showed a 78% reduction in our territorial emissions.

Tackling climate change was strongly embedded in the church's 5 Marks of Mission, particularly through the fifth mark which related to caring for creation, but also through the third mark around responding to human need and, given that climate change was having most impact on those countries that had historically not benefitted from high levels of emissions, in respect of the fourth mark which related to responding to transforming unjust structures of society.

In 2020 General Synod had set an ambitious net zero target of 2030 for the Church of England. There were two ways that we could address this situation: first and foremost by reducing emissions, through increased use of renewable energy, energy efficiency measures and low carbon travel, but also by enhancing the ability of the natural environment to sequester or remove carbon from the atmosphere, through tree planting, enhancing peatlands and increasing soil carbon.

Anna Newlove, Pastoral and Net Zero Officer, updated members on what the diocese had been doing to achieve Net Zero by 2023. Drawing on the data provided by the Energy Footprint Tool, the official estimate showed that in 2021, Carlisle Diocese had a net carbon footprint of 8,400 tonnes of CO₂e, broken down approximately 50% from our schools, 30% from churches, church halls and other linked buildings, and 20% from clergy housing, business travel and other buildings such as Church House. The CofE's national Routemap to Net Zero had set a target of offsetting no more than 10% of emissions, implying that we had to make a 90% reduction. Against our baseline that would mean a reduction of about 7500 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.

The national Routemap to Net Zero gave guidance on the different in-scope areas of the Net Zero by 2030 target and the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon and Environmental Working Group was working on decarbonization plans that put the route map into our context. Initially we were focusing on quick wins that worked across a number of building types. For 2023 that meant making the switch to LED lighting where appropriate. Since the start of the year 388 lightbulbs had been changed across churches and vicarages. For vicarages that equated to a saving of about 830 kilogrammes of carbon dioxide annually with a substantial financial benefit for the occupiers.

The Diocese was promoting the Eco Church Scheme as the principal way for churches to identify areas for action. The scheme covered the whole range of environmental work and operated at three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold. There had been a number of workshops across the county promoting and explaining how the scheme worked and uptake was increasing rapidly. The diocese itself had registered as an Eco Diocese and would initially be working towards the Bronze Eco Diocese Award.

The ensuing discussion endorsed the overall goal and various specific aspects of the approach being taken. There was some discussion of the relationship between the goal, the tenets of our Christian faith and the county Vision and Strategy, particularly in terms of the specific theme of 'Treading Gently'. The potential costs of adaptation, which some felt could be prohibitive, were also discussed.

The following resolution was passed with 3 abstentions:

"This Synod Endorses the Church of England's national goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030; welcomes the steps undertaken in the Diocese towards this goal to date; and requests that Bishops Council presents a comprehensive decarbonisation plan to Synod by the end of 2023 and oversees its on ongoing implementation, reporting to Diocesan Synod annually"

10. Private Members Motion: Richard Waller & Stephen Wright, Penrith Deanery, introduced this item. They identified that in terms of responding to climate change there was a strong connection between mitigation and adaptation. Even under the most ambitious decarbonisation scenarios substantial warming was locked into the system through the carbon already emitted, with all the impact that would inevitably have. As an example, incidences of extreme heat in the UK were already five times more likely than historically, with that incidence rising to 8.5 times more likely in a scenario where the global average temperature rise was 1.5 degrees centigrade. The impacts of climate change would therefore be felt even under the most optimistic scenarios.

Stephen drew Synod's attention to a paper which explained the work of the Deep Adaptation Foundation and unpacked what that term meant in practice, including how it related to faith communities and our idea of an omnipotent and God. The paper identified ways in which the church could respond practically, prayerfully and spiritually to the pressures that communities and individuals would face as the effects of climate change were felt more intensely in the coming years.

After a debate that included discussion of our trust in a sovereign God Synod carried the following motion which was carried with 36 in favour, 3 against and 16 abstentions:

"This Synod

Noting the likelihood of worsening climate change in the coming decades, and the emotional and spiritual effects upon members of the church and our communities, resolves to explore ways that the Diocese and its constituent churches can engage with these challenges and develop support skills and networks among our parishes and those involved in pastoral care."

Following the vote Bishop James said that we would give thought to the outworking of the motion in the Diocese.

11. Archdeaonries Review: Bishop James gave an update on the Archdeaonries Review process and introduced the final report of the Archdeaonries Review Group (ARG).

He outlined the direction of travel since 2020's Covid Financial Planning Task Group. In the Autumn of 2022 the Review Group's thinking had coalesced around the idea that we should move to two Archdeaonries and two Archdeacons. As that move happened, we would hope to secure funding from the Church Commissioners for four additional staff roles to provide practical help to develop and embed Mission Communities further across the county. Since Christmas things had moved on, with discussions with the Church Commissioners suggesting that it might be possible to secure time-limited funding for a third Archdeacon post as one of the four posts. Following that development the Review Group had revised their recommendation, such that the recommendation was now to move to two Archdeaonries and two Archdeacons by 2027, but in the meantime, subject to a successful bid for Church Commissioners' funding, to continue with three archdeacons, supported by three additional staff working on the lines described above. Bishop's Council had considered and supported this recommendation. The advantage of this approach was that it would allow for a transition to two Archdeaonries to be managed carefully.

Bishop James said that Synod would not be asked formally to vote on the issue but would be asked to express its opinion through a straw poll. Decisions about staffing were taken by Diocesan Synod through the setting of the Diocesan Budget, rather than on a post by post basis. The proposal before Synod would be cost neutral and the posts involved would be time-limited. In response to a question he explained that ultimately formal decisions about the number of Archdeacons were taken episcopally rather than synodically. However, given that Synod had a legitimate interest in the matter, its views were being sought today.

Some members voiced concerns over the process that had been followed both in the previous months and at today's meeting. The item was at the end of the agenda with little time for a full

debate. Synod had not been given an opportunity previously to debate the Review Group's report as it had not been available in October. Although a wide invitation had been issued for interested people and parties to comment on the draft report, Synod had not seen the comments that had been provided and had therefore not been able to respond to those comments. There was an implication that Synod had previously approved a reduction in the number of Archdeaconries when this was not actually the case. This made some members feel as if today's discussion was a foregone conclusion.

Bishop James explained that both the Review Group and Bishop's Council had been provided with all the comments received and that the final recommendations were based on their careful consideration. He indicated that any formal proposal to reduce the number of Archdeaconries would be made under the terms of the Mission and Pastoral Measure and that Diocesan Synod would be added to the list of consultees on such a proposal. That would involve a further discussion at Diocesan Synod.

Further comments included that the Review Group's recommended way forward made a lot of sense as it drew on an analysis of the available options, benchmarked the number of Archdeacons in different dioceses and gave consideration to a structure that could be effective in enabling Mission Communities to grow and thrive. Looking back to 2020, the Task Group that made recommendations to cope with the financial impact of Covid-19 had involved members of both Bishops Council and the Board of Finance. It had put forward a package of savings which had been accepted as a whole and had resulted in a number of staff redundancies. The package had included a clear direction of travel towards reducing the number of senior clerical roles but had not been clear as to the timescale or exact means of achieving that. The unexpected departure of the previous Bishop of Penrith had complicated the situation. Currently mission communities were at the heart of the Diocesan vision and strategy and there was no doubt that they needed substantial support to become established. Archidiaconal support was ideally an important part of that. The current recommendation would hopefully enable that to happen without going back on our agreed budget.

Synod Members indicated by a clear majority on a show of hands that they were in favour of putting a bid in to the Church Commissioners to secure funding for four interim posts, including one Archdeacon.