

BISHOP'S COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE

Chairman: The Bishop of Carlisle
Secretary: Mr Derek Hurton

Report of the meeting held at Rydal Hall on Wednesday 28th February

Present: - The Bishop of Carlisle (in the Chair), the Archdeacon of West Cumberland, the Associate Archdeacon of West Cumberland, Revd A B Norman, Revd A Towner, Dr C Angus, Mr A R H Cook, Mr C Howarth, Mr D Hurton, Mr J A E Johnson, Mr N Barrett & Mr M Lawson.

In attendance: - Mrs C Bell and Mr D Roberts.

Devotions were led by the Venerable Richard Pratt

Apologies for absence: the Bishop of Penrith, Mrs R Milburn, the Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness, Revd S Thompson, Revd J Maycock, Revd R P Ham, Canon C Butland.

The Council approved the minutes of the meetings of Bishop's Council held on 7th November 2022 & Friday 20th January 2023

Matters Arising: - Bishop James introduced the follow up to the Archdeaconries Review, bringing the Council up to speed with developments since the discussion at their residential meeting in January. Subsequent to that meeting Derek Hurton and Bishop Rob had met with the Rod McPhee from the national team to discuss the potential for funding from the Church Commissioners/Archbishop's Council. In the course of conversations about God for All and the need to resource work to develop and embed mission communities it had become apparent that funding applications could cover a broader range of measures than previously understood, including, potentially, Archidiaconal capacity. If the Diocese felt that maintaining the current number of archdeacons for a period of time was integral to the package of measures needed then we should include it in any application for support.

The Archdeaconries Review Group's considered view was that this development should not change the ultimate direction of travel, but could affect how the diocese got to the end point. If we could secure funding for an additional interim archdeacon role this would provide capacity to support Mission Community Development while also smoothing the transition to two Archdeaconries. In considering this option it was important that the Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod clearly understood that the diocese would be moving to four senior clergy roles, that this would not increase the diocesan budget and that within five years there would be two archdeaconries. Within that time-period retirements and appointments could be managed to ensure that we arrive at the intended end point. In practical terms this meant that when appointing an archdeacon to fill the Archdeaconry of Carlisle there would be a clear requirement to accept subsequent changes to the role as the permanent arrangements were

put in place.

The goal would be to secure grant funding for four to five years. In the event that Church Commissioners' funding was not awarded, further work would be needed to plan for and manage a transition to two archdeaconries on a much shorter timescale.

In light of this development The Archdeaconries Review Group recommended that the Bishop's Council approve the following proposal to go to the Diocesan Synod on 11th March:

- that a scheme be developed to create two archdeaconries within five years
- that a bid to the Church Commissioners be made to implement God for All, including both hands-on, local support for mission communities and a third Archdeacon post
- that a plan be drawn up with a timeline marking the key stages and supporting the following appointments:
 - i) specialist development officers to work with the archdeacons in supporting MCs
 - ii) a new Archdeacon of Carlisle whose role would subsequently change to cover one of two future archdeaconries

Bishop's Council approved the revised proposal to go to the Diocesan Synod on 11th March.

Steering Committee Report: The Council received the report of the meeting held on 4th January 2023.

Annual Report on Safeguarding: Richard Pratt introduced the Annual Report on Safeguarding, drawing attention to the appointment of a new Safeguarding Administrator, Elizabeth Franklin, and highlighting that Jill Webb, the Independent Safeguarding Trainer, continued to provide service on a self-employed basis in order to meet the priority of providing, and the demand for, safeguarding training.

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. One of these cases involved a complaint of misconduct and was subject to the Clergy Disciplinary Measure. In four of the 19 new cases Safeguarding Agreements had been implemented for parishioners who wished to worship in our churches but were perceived to pose a significant risk of harm.

In line with the national Safeguarding Learning & Development Framework 2021 the training of Clergy, Church Officers, volunteers and elected members had been a priority in 2022 and significant progress had been made with the development and delivery of a range of courses including:

- **Leadership Safeguarding Pathway** – a course for all those who hold a Bishop's licence, Parish Safeguarding Officers, and Church Wardens. The diocese was encouraging all churchwardens to complete this level of training.

- **Permission to Officiate (PTO) specific Leadership Pathway** - there had been 46 successful completions in 2022 so that numbers now requiring this pathway were low and thus courses were now offered virtually.
- **Parish Safeguarding Officer Induction Course (PSO)** – Uptake for the course since implementing it in 2022 continued to be good. It was aimed at both PSOs who are new to the role and also those who had been in post for a longer time. Delivery was hybrid in that both face-to-face and virtual courses were available.
- **New ‘Train the Trainer’ training** – to deliver Basic & Foundation Safeguarding Course Face-to-face: In response to identified need, a bespoke one-day ‘Train the Trainer’ course had been developed in the diocese to cover the material contained within the two modules, assist participants to develop their skills and confidence in delivering at a local level, and to provide them with the materials to facilitate this.

Further to discussions between the Diocese of Carlisle and the National Safeguarding Team, we had a place on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) pilot pathfinder project. This would help us inform the ways in which the Church designed and implemented its responses to IICSA’s recommendations.

The PCR2 process had been launched in 2019, involving independent reviews of the files of all 42 Anglican dioceses to ensure that all known cases of concerns about the behaviour of clergy and church officers towards children and vulnerable adults had been dealt with appropriately. Jo Van Lachterop and Dave Roberts had put a huge amount of work into the process.

The priorities and development that had been identified for 2023 were to update the Diocesan Safeguarding Development Plan, implement Parish Safeguarding Dashboards, implement the new national Case Management System, develop a Victim Survivor Strategy, undertake further Training Needs Analyses, improve the recognition and development of Parish Safeguarding Officers and raising awareness of domestic abuse.

During the discussion a member asked if any safeguarding agreements applied to clergy as well as laity. Richard Pratt was to ask the Safeguarding Adviser for clarification. There was also a question of how ‘spiritual abuse’ was defined, in response to which Richard Pratt provided some examples.

LLF Update: Bishop James reported that General Synod had met in London in February. The main item of business covered had been the next steps on the Living in Love and Faith report.

General Synod had voted in favour of a motion offering blessings to same sex couples but without changing the existing doctrine that marriage can only be between a man and a woman. The motion had also included an acknowledgement of a failure to welcome LGBTQI+ people and repentance for the harm they have experienced and continue to experience in the church.

The House of Bishops had voted 36 for and 4 against with 2 abstentions, the House of Clergy 111 in favor and 85 against with 3 abstentions, and the House of Laity 103 votes for, 92 against and 5

abstentions. The outcome had caused disappointment on both sides of the debate as there were strongly held convictions that the measures either went too far or not far enough.

There was a plan for General Synod in July to consider further details of the next steps including specific wording but Bishop James felt that in reality it was unlikely that this would happen on the timescales envisaged.

God for All – Buildings Strategy: Richard Pratt introduced the strategy and implementation paper. The central plank of the strategy was for Mission Communities to draw up 'Local Buildings Plans'. The principal voices in this process were to be from the local church because knowledge and ownership were strongest at the local level, although there was also a place for support, input and challenge from the Archdeacons as Strategy Development Officers and from County-level Church Leaders. The plans would describe how the different buildings, including churches and halls, in a Mission Community are to be used.

Although 'heritage' and 'mission' or the 'living church' were sometimes seen as being in opposition, in nearly every case, careful thinking could actually keep them aligned.

The fundamental unit of mission for the church in the coming years would be the mission community: this did not mean doing away with the parish system but rather an appropriate redrawing of parish boundaries in the face of societal change. No one person, no one church, was "the Church" and instead Christians and congregations must be mutually accountable. At a time when resources were scarce, and getting more so, we must focus on value for money, good stewardship, and effectiveness in the application of what resources we had. This needed to be at Mission Community level not just at individual church level, with our buildings regarded as assets of Mission Communities as a whole.

Resources had been produced to help Mission Communities and Mission Community Leaders to tackle the writing of Local Buildings Plans. The process of writing these would be incremental, with first drafts being very simple, but changing and improving as things were tried, lessons learned and ideas developed.

There were a number of risks associated with this strategy. It was highly dependent on Mission Communities working well with enough courageous leadership to tackle very difficult and sensitive questions about church buildings. If we were honest with ourselves we would acknowledge that many of our Mission Communities were not currently operating at this level. Some Mission Communities had high numbers of heritage buildings but only small populations to sustain them. Some of the options available, while attractive on the face of things, hid issues. For example, hibernating a building did not of itself solve the potential lack of finances to maintain it, and, if it meant that there was no active congregation, might reduce the capacity and energy available. However, not implementing this strategy would lead to buildings which were important for mission and heritage being lost.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- the building strategy should be linked to the Ministry Strategy, asking where our energy is focused, including the fact that 490k of the county's 500k population are not regularly in church
- we need to try to think on a long-term basis – ie what buildings will we need in 2040
- in respect of rewriting parish boundaries, 500 years ago there was a much smaller number of parishes with the rapid expansion happening in the Victorian times, so when PCC's argue that they are saving their parish, they are actually saving a Victorian parish.
- some local communities have lost trust in the church and are disconnected. If those connections could be rebuilt the local community could make a significant contribution to caring for and funding the building
- in an earlier version of the building strategy Mission Communities were encouraged to list the buildings on their parish plans
- there are lots of examples of good practice around the county and the DAC Secretary tries to connect parishes who are considering development with others who have relevant experience
- on a practical point, it would be useful to have a table of contents at the beginning of the strategy document

Chris Angus introduced proposed changes to the Mission and Pastoral Measure that relate to church closures. Closures were currently covered by the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011, but a new Mission and Pastoral Measure was in preparation and due to come to General Synod in July 2023 for initial consideration. There had been extensive consultation, both before and after publication of GS2222. A General Synod Reference Group had been involved in the process over the last 8 months, liaising with the Third Estates Commissioner and the Mission, Pastoral & Church Property Committee.

There had been a significant backlash to GS2222 as it had been read to imply that the Church Commissioners were gearing up to close more churches, that dioceses were closing churches against the wishes of the parishes, and that dioceses were selling off closed churches to pay for more diocesan staff and reduce the need for parish clergy. This had been one of the main triggers for the Save our Parish movement.

The reality however was that a steady stream of churches have been closing in recent years and the Church Commissioners were not planning to close more churches. The Commissioners were however needing to consider how they managed an increasing workload if the trend of closures accelerated as a result of increasing local financial pressures and the shortage of church officers. Carlisle Diocese, as a matter of policy, did not instigate church closures. Here the initiative came from the parish, and we relied on Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees to consider proposed closures, rather than this consideration happening at an overarching Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee. The benefit of this was that it allowed more thought to be given to proposed closures and greater local knowledge when making recommendations. Here in Carlisle closed churches were generally a cost to the diocese and we had not historically derived significant income from disposing of them.

The key points in respect to the proposed pastoral church buildings scheme were:

- moving away from a binary choice of open or closed and introducing the concept of a fallow church whereby a Parish declares a church to be fallow for a temporary period of up to 5 years. In these cases, the PCC would need to send a notice to the Mission and Pastoral Committee for approval with the building staying in the care of the PCC, with a Diocesan Trust or temporarily vested in the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT). During the 5-year fallow period there would be a consultation with the local community on options for the building. At the 5 year point a decision would need to be made as to whether it would continue to be used for worship or to start a scheme for disposal.
- a possible 'cease to use' notice under the terms of which a church would not need to be open, there would be no worship, and this would be permanent.
- increased options for repurposing church buildings, with or without closure.
- vesting in CCT noting that the CCT are keen that in general, the churches vested in them should not be viewed as 'closed churches'

The repurposing of church buildings should be part of any strategy. There were various types of option being investigated, with examples found in our Diocese. For instance, there were currently attempts to repurpose two closed churches for community use in Penrith Deanery. In each case perhaps £500,000 needed to be raised to fit them out for their intended use and there was a significant call on human resources both to raise funds and manage the projects. There was clearly a risk that financial and capacity constraints would limit the widespread repurposing of churches for community use.

Chris Angus updated Bishop's Council on a buildings-related Deanery Synod motion that Kendal Deanery wished to bring to Diocesan Synod. The current wording of the motion was as follows:

This Deanery Synod invites the Diocesan Synod to consider the following two-part resolution:

1. This Diocesan Synod requests the Bishop's Leadership Team (a) to promote and support open discussion about the future of valued, historic church buildings that may no longer be sustainable by their congregations and (b) to ensure the development of a strategic approach to supporting parishes facing this situation.
2. This Diocesan Synod asks the General Synod to ensure that, nationally, there is a clear process through which the level of external financial support for essential maintenance and conservation of Grade 1 listed parish churches reflects the circumstances of the congregation and its community, as well as the heritage value of the building.

Chris had referred both the second part of the Kendal motion and reflections on our experience of repurposing churches to Wendy Matthews, the head of the Mission, Pastoral & Church Property Committee (MPCPC) for consideration. That Committee was key in terms of the CoFE's liaison with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. We were awaiting a response from them before bringing the motion to Diocesan Synod.

Report on Other Workstreams: Bishops Council received updates on the Reaching Deeper Programme, progress towards the Carbon Neutral target & the Implementation of the Ministry Offer process.

Mission and Pastoral Committee Matters: The following draft minutes of the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees were received by the Council:

Archdeaconry of Westmorland and Furness

10th November 2022

Archdeaconry of West Cumberland

29th November 2022

Archdeaconry of Carlisle

1st December 2022