

Bishop's Address by Rt Revd Vivienne Faul

In her address to Diocesan Synod, Bishop Viv asked whether church buildings were a blessing or a burden.

Drawing on her own experiences, she emphasised the theological importance of place in the Bible – from Eden to Jerusalem – while acknowledging the idolatry that comes when those places are put ahead of the relationship of God and God's people.

Bishop Viv praised the examples of churches finding new ways to engage with people in both urban and rural parishes.

She said: *"It is good to see wonderful current examples of community use. Across this Diocese, many of you stand ready for moments of great need, opening the doors of your churches with a generosity, grace and goodwill for all sorts of events and purposes."*

"There is a huge responsibility handed to us in our buildings, but also great joy, because they are places of symbolic power and signs of Gospel hope. May we, despite the burdens we carry, know the gift our church buildings bring."

Downloads and Links

- [Presidential Address by the Bishop of Bristol](#)
- [General Synod Report \(February 2020\)](#)
- [Church in Action: making a difference - Social engagement in the Diocese of Bristol](#)
- [Swindon Deanery Synod motion – the Real Living Wage](#)
- [Bishop's Council Report \(February 2020\)](#)
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DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT

7 March 2020

The DAC and church buildings: A mission focused resource for mission focused resources

The Diocese of Bristol has over 200 church buildings. To enhance the mission work based out of a church can mean making changes to them.

Simon Pugh-Jones, chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), challenged some of the myths about obtaining a faculty for changes as he spoke about the way that churches can use their buildings more effectively for worship and mission.

He emphasised the role the DAC had in supporting and enabling amazing schemes, prayerfully discerned to become a reality.

"Change can be very difficult, but it can also be exciting and a pathway to a brilliant new future," said Simon. *"It is the people and parishes who do the good work. Projects start in someone's head; the DAC helps nurture those ideas."*

Simon suggested 10 simple rules designed to make working with DAC easier:

- 1) Let the DAC help you through the faculty rules – don't be put off.
- 2) Talk to the DAC – they can help set you in the right direction and help you achieve.
- 3) Talk to other people before you do anything – find out about other projects elsewhere.
- 4) Understand the nature of change – look after those who find it traumatic.
- 5) Understand the decision-making process – find out about a church's history and use.
- 6) Be sustainable – care for God's creation.
- 7) Be audacious in the Lord's name – don't let obstacles stop your dreams.
- 8) Be inclusive – be open and accessible to all.
- 9) Get expert professional help – find someone who understands you and what you want to achieve.
- 10) Don't forget the God stuff – this is a place where people come to be close to God.

The Synod discussed their ideas for what changes could be made for mission and for environmental sustainability.

Church in Action: Social Engagement

Hundreds of social engagement projects are running in churches across the Diocese.

Parishes are involved with almost 650 social action projects, with some running three or more of their own activities in their communities.

Reflecting on the figures from the last 12 months, the Archdeacon of Bristol, Ven Neil Warwick, called on churches to continue and expand their social engagement initiatives.

Neil said: *“We know personally the positive difference that a belief in God can bring to our lives, and when that is coupled with action that fights injustice; looks out for people on the margins; listens to, loves and cares for people who are unwell in body, mind or spirit, that things change for the better.”*

“What we do is not dependent on church attendance; we are not helping so that we get more people coming on a Sunday morning. What we are doing is motivated by Christ and a desire to see God’s Kingdom come here on Earth.”

Around the Diocese in 2019, 83% of parishes were involved in one or more forms of social engagement.

Neil gave a series of examples of how churches have been active in their communities, including:

- supporting The Noise, which saw 900 volunteers from 57 churches in Bristol take part in 80 community projects each May.
- All Saints Clifton has set up a network for small businesses in the area, bringing them together in the church where many of them had never entered.

Neil added: *“Don’t procrastinate and think we don’t have the capacity. Let’s not stand in the sidelines or ever think we can’t make a difference. Let’s get involved in ways that will be life giving for us, our churches and our communities.”*

The Synod discussed what next steps they could take to increase the social engagement impact.

General Synod Report

Revd Canon Prof Martin Gainsborough gave feedback from the meeting in February.

The Synod discussed Living in Love and Faith, Safeguarding, youth evangelism and the Windrush legacy. Martin, who had tabled an amendment to a motion setting a net zero carbon target, to bring it forward from 2045 to 2030,

said that “we are showing leadership in this Diocese but it is up to us now to all take action.”

He encouraged people to consider standing as General Synod representatives when nominations open later this year.

Question Time

Questions were asked about planning for the impact of the Coronavirus, joint initiatives across the Church to achieve the net zero target and the tension between the pastoral duties of Archdeacons and their responsibilities for discussing Parish Share with parishes.

Oliver Home, Diocesan Secretary, said that Coronavirus guidance was being provided by the national church, a core group was meeting regularly and contingency planning ongoing and outlined the co-ordinated work and thinking being done nationally about meeting the net zero target.

Ven Christopher Bryan, Archdeacon of Malmesbury, explained the range of responsibilities the Archdeacons hold and the reason for Parish Share being one of them

Bishop Viv updated on Bishop Lee, following his cycling accident in January, who sent his greetings.

Real Living Wage

The debate on the Swindon Deanery Synod motion concerning the Real Living Wage was resumed with an amendment from the Deanery Standing Committee.

The amended motion called on all Church of England bodies, schools, academies and churches in the Diocese to commit publicly to pay the Real Living Wage.

It also called upon those bodies to consider formal accreditation as Living Wage employers.

David Tunley (Swindon), who proposed the motion, said that, by gaining accreditation, it would allow the Church in the Diocese to act as an example of good practice in the hope of encouraging other employers to take the same step.

He added: *“This is a moment when we can make a public commitment to paying the Real Living Wage.”*

“It does not bind us to anything, but it does make us accountable. This is about making a stand and showing leadership, as we did when we declared a Climate Emergency in November.”

The amended motion was passed with no votes against.

HAVE YOUR SAY:

