



Bristol Diocesan Synod Minutes

Date: 20th June 2026

Time: 9.30 – 15.00

Venue: St Michael’s Centre, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8PD

The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the Diocese of Bristol website at <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/diocesansynod/>

1.	Welcome and Apologies
Mr Bruce Fynamore (BF), Chair of the House of Laity, opened the meeting and welcomed those present.	
Apologies for Absence	
Apologies were received as follows:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House of Bishops: 0 • House of Clergy: 14 • House of Laity: 13 	
2.	Worship
The Revd Adam Beaumont (AB), Associate Archdeacon, led the worship.	
3.	Bishop’s Address
The Rt Revd Neil (+NW), Acting Bishop of Bristol, addressed the Diocesan Synod on the theme of growth, providing examples of progress across the Diocese and reflecting on a message of <i>Indestructible Hope</i> . Key highlights included:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWA increased by 43% in Priority Communities • Over 150 adult confirmations and baptisms • 75% take-up of the Clergy Coaching Programme • 9 Growing Faith Workers appointed • 2 Flourish pilots launched • Social Action Audit findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 40,773 people supported ○ Delivered by 1,636 volunteers ○ Total of 121,660 volunteer hours 	
A full copy of the address is provided in Appendix A.	
4.	Our ongoing mission and calling in the Vacancy in See
BF advised that, following the recent announcement that the Diocese will enter a prolonged Vacancy in See period, the agenda had been amended to allow time for discussion and reflection.	



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Members were invited to consider four questions in small groups, with the option to record responses either via a paper form or online. The questions were discussed in groups, and feedback was subsequently shared with the Synod.

1. What scriptural insights might help guide us in this season?

Table 6

Facilitator: Chris Bradley (CB), House of Laity, Kingswood & South Glos

CB referenced John 15:1–6:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

It was noted that courageous leadership is required in challenging times in order to make difficult decisions.

Table 5

Facilitator: Helen Clifton (HC), House of Laity, Bristol West

Discussion included strong references to scripture, including two references to the Great Commission, “go out and make disciple,” emphasising that the focus is on the work of the Holy Spirit, rather than solely on the role of the Bishop.

Members highlighted the importance of maintaining a focus on matters of faith and keeping the wider purpose of serving God in view. It was affirmed that God’s will cannot be thwarted.

2. What have you experienced during the vacancy that gives you hope and reassurance?

Table 3

Facilitator: Caroline Jowitt-Ive (CJ-I), House of Laity, Bristol West

Feedback was positive, noting that +NW is visible and supportive, with a strong presence across the Diocese.

Table 7

Facilitator: Sean Doherty (SD), House of Clergy (ex officio)

It was noted that +NW is authentic in his ministry. This comment was met with a round of applause.

3. What concerns do you have and how do we deal with these concerns so that we move forward well together?



Table 8

Facilitator: Sally Thomas (ST), House of Clergy, Bristol West.

It was noted that the responsibilities currently carried by +NW and Lucy Cleland, Bishop's Chaplain, represent a significant burden, and that there is a need for continued support. Ongoing challenges in the financial context were also highlighted.

Table 9

Facilitator: Rich Cresswell (RC), House of Clergy, Kingswood & South Glos.

Participants acknowledged that clergy are aware of the challenges facing the Diocese. Questions were raised regarding the future direction of the Diocese, with some expressing uncertainty about their own position ("Should I go or should I stay?").

Financial matters were a key area of concern, including reflections on whether the right decisions have been made and what priorities will be important for the next Bishop. A general sense of uncertainty and "being in limbo" was noted as challenging, alongside a feeling of being somewhat 'stuck' in the current circumstances.

4. What other comments or questions do you have?

Table 9

Facilitator: Auriol Britton (AB), House of Laity, Bristol South

It was expressed that there is hope the new Bishop will continue the Transforming Church. Together (TC.T) strategy, which was viewed as the most effective approach to date. Regret was also voiced regarding support for the ten-year plan, particularly in relation to reductions in administrative and clergy roles. It was noted that there would be a request for the incoming Bishop to review the ten-year plan.

Table 3

Contributor: Clive Hamilton (CH), House of Clergy, Bristol South

A question was raised regarding the implications of the extended Vacancy in See for the second-stage TC.T bid, specifically whether any allowances or flexibility would be provided by the national Church in light of this continuation.

+NW advised that he had met with National Church and confirmed that the transitional grant is substantial. It was acknowledged that the Diocese cannot wait for the appointment of the new Bishop, and the level of funding suggests that there will not be a hiatus in progress.

Table 7

Contributor: Adrian Youings (AY), House of Clergy, Swindon

A comment was made encouraging Synod to maintain perspective. While acknowledging that the Vacancy in See is a lengthy period, it was noted that



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parishes can experience even longer vacancies. There was an appeal to recognise both the broader perspective and the practical challenges currently being faced on the ground.

+NW responded by thanking members for their support, while also recognising and welcoming constructive challenge. He noted that one of the key qualities sought in the new Bishop is the ability to act as a constructive friend who is willing to ask difficult questions.

He acknowledged the points raised during the discussion, welcoming the feedback and stating, “I should not and will not oversimplify things; we will work on this together.”

+NW concluded the session with prayer.

ACTION: It was noted that the Bishop’s Staff Meeting will review the responses.

5.	Annual General Meeting of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd 5.1 Presentation 5.1.2 Questions & Answers 5.1.3 Vote on the Motion 5.2 Appointment of Auditors for the year ending 31 December 2026 5.3 The appointment of members of Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd
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Canon Richard Bacon (RB) took the Chair and introduced the Annual General Meeting (AGM), reminding members of their collective responsibility for the Diocese.

Item 5.3 was taken out of order to enable newly elected Diocesan Synod members to be appointed as Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (BDBF) members so might participate in the voting on motions during the AGM of the BDBF.

The following members were appointed to the BDBF:

- Mr Ken Petrie, House of Laity, Bristol South
- Mrs Stephanie Wren, House of Laity, Bristol West
- Dr Mary Benton, House of Laity, Bristol West
- Mr Christopher Egitton, House of Laity, City
- Mrs Sally Eaton, House of Laity, City
- The Revd Matt Southcombe, House of Clergy, Bristol West
- The Ven Adrian Youngs, House of Clergy, Swindon

A point of order was raised from the floor by Mr Stephen Grindrod (SG), House of Laity, North Wiltshire, noting that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had not been circulated within the required timeframe, resulting in insufficient time for members to review and consider them.



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BF advised that, following discussion with SG, Synod would be asked to vote on whether it was content to consider the Annual Report and Financial Statements notwithstanding their late circulation.

The proposal was carried, with one abstention.

RB continued by referring to his letter to Synod, which had been circulated with the papers on 5 June 2026. This set out the reasons for the delay in issuing the Annual Report and Financial Statements. These included the requirement for a Red Book valuation of glebe property, following a desktop valuation which indicated that the value of a particular glebe property had increased significantly. RB confirmed that the accounts are accurate and have been audited. Thanks were expressed to Stephen Sheridan (SS), Director of Finance and IT, and his team for their work on the accounts, to the auditors, HaysMac, and to those Synod members who attended the pre-Synod webinar.

He highlighted the global and national factors affecting finances, noting that both parishes and the BDBF are drawing on reserves. He emphasised that this is a shared challenge, and that all are facing this difficult period together.

5.1 Presentation of Report

SS presented the financial figures, drawing attention to the following key points:

Income

- **Parish Share:** Slightly below budget but consistent with the previous year
- **Grants:** Increased, reflecting additional funding received from the National Church to support curacy
- **Investments:** Reduced due to the global economic downturn and lower-than-expected performance by CCLA Investment Management; this is currently under review
- **Project Income (Transforming Church. Together (TC.T)):** Lower than anticipated due to delays in project delivery

Costs

- **Ministry Costs:** Lower than budgeted
- **Housing Costs:** Higher than expected, primarily due to unplanned vicarage repairs

It was noted that the underspend in ministry costs was offset by the increased expenditure on housing repairs.

Summary

- **Actual:** £5.0 million
- **Budget:** £4.8 million
- **Variance:** £200,000



Conclusion

The overall position reinforces the importance of the strategic approach adopted in the 2026 budget and reflected within the ten-year plan.

Annual Report

- The 2025 Annual Report, prepared by HaysMac, has been circulated.
- No numerical adjustments were required.
- The Glebe Red Book valuation has been updated; delays were experienced in obtaining the valuation, and there were significant differences between the initial estimate and the final valuation. A review of the current valuer is therefore being undertaken.
- The recommendation to improve evidence of journal approval has been accepted.
- Progress has been made on matters raised in the previous year, including the recovery of £0.9 million of National Church debt.

5.1.2 Questions and Answers

Julian Rivers (JR), House of Laity, Bristol West

Queried whether the table of funded and unfunded expenditure on p.11 should not also include the three further heads of expenditure listed on p. 44 under note 8 to the accounts? Since one of these missing items is 'support for parish ministry' would their inclusion not then show that the shortfall between parish share income and unfunded expenditure in 2025 was much larger than £1.6m? SS answered, yes there are external funding for the differences.

Post meeting note: JR met with SS separately and discussed the nuances. SS agreed that Finance would make the detail clearer on which funding sources fund which sections and a better explanation of services provided in both parts of the accounts and would run through them with JR online.

Stephen Grindrod (SG), House of Laity, North Wiltshire, raised a

supplementary question was raised in relation to a formal written question (see Appendix B), referring to the Gift Day 2025 advertisement inviting donations and whether these had been correctly allocated between restricted and unrestricted funds.

BF indicated that a detailed response to this question may need to be provided outside of the meeting.

SS advised that the relevant figures will be reflected in the 2026 accounts rather than the 2025 accounts.

Kat Champion-Spall (KC-s), House of Clergy, City, noted that, although reference had been made to a debate on the ten-year plan, no such debate had in fact taken place. It was suggested that, in future, financial matters should allow



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for fuller debate, rather than being limited to questions, so that the knowledge and experience of Synod members can be more fully utilised.

Beverley Charles (BC), (House of Clergy, Kingswood & South Glos) queried as to why the Diocese is liable for future maintenance of mission churches, such as Pattern Church, whereas it is not liable for parish churches.

Richard Leaman (RL), Diocesan Secretary/CEO, advised that, in the case of Pattern Church, the BDBF had purchased the building and, as the owner, is therefore responsible for its maintenance.

Auriol Britton (AB), House of Laity, Bristol South requested a definitive deficit figure for reporting purposes (e.g. in relation to St Mary Redcliffe).

SS confirmed a figure of £5 million in cash deficits.

Mrs Mary Benton (MB), House of Laity, Bristol West, raised concerns regarding the “reverse mentors” initiative referenced on page 16 of the report. She noted that the programme had concluded in January and expressed concern that strategic decisions may now be made without the benefit of that input.

RL responded that there were differing recollections as to how the programme had concluded. He advised that consultation had taken place, including with the National Church, and that it had been determined that the Diocese could not afford to continue the programme. He concluded by confirming the need for diverse voices within the programme.

Rob Mountain (RM), Director of Transformation, noted that notice had been given; however, several members expressed disagreement.

Action: RL to consider how diverse voices will continue to inform strategic discussions.

5.1.3 Vote of Motion

The Chair of the Board of Finance proposed:

that the BDBF receives and adopts the Directors’ Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Limited for the year ended 31 December 2025.

The vote was carried with 1 abstention.

5.2 Appointment of Auditors for the year ending 31 December 2026

The Chair of the Board of Finance proposed:

that the BDBF appoints HaysMac as auditors for the year ending 31 December 2026 and to authorise the Directors to fix their remuneration.

The vote was carried with 1 abstention.



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With the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting, RB returned the Chair to BF. BF advised that this would be RM’s final Synod meeting and expressed thanks for his significant contribution to Transforming Church. Together (TC.T). He also thanked Tim Godden and Ian Tomkins for their longstanding support of Synod and the Diocese.

These remarks were met with a round of applause.

4. Minutes
Minutes of 21 March 2026

Minutes

There were no amendments to the minutes.

Matters Arising

SG had submitted a formal written question regarding the “Coffee Cup” campaign, launched at the Diocesan Synod on 21 March 2026 (see Appendix B). In speaking to the question, SG commented that the campaign is a positive and low-cost initiative, and highlighted the importance of ensuring appropriate cultural awareness as it is rolled out.

Action from the Previous Meeting

There was one action arising from the previous meeting regarding data surrounding how many churches are using Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF).

Action: Trudie Wigley (TW) confirmed that the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (BDBF) will need to return to parishes to obtain more accurate data. TW encouraged any parishes currently using Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) to inform the Bishop’s Office, in order to support improved accuracy of the information held.

Response from the Bishop’s Office:

At 21 March 2026 meeting of Diocesan Synod, it had been suggested that parishes report their use of the Prayers to the Bishop. However, on review, it has been confirmed that there is no requirement for parishes to report whether or how they are using the PLF, and no expectation on dioceses to collect or collate this information.

In light of this, and in accordance with national guidance, the BDBF had not attempted to gather data on parish use of the PLF.

7. Governance Reports
7.1 Bishop’s Council Report (20 April, 11 May and 2 June 2026)
7.2 Vote on Motion

7.1 Bishop’s Council Report (20 April, 11 May & 2 June 2026) Questions and Answers

Brendan Biggs (BB), House of Laity (ex officio), noted that the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) section of the Bishop’s Council report had been



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presented in summary form and did not include details of parishes affected by the suspension of patrons' rights of presentation or by pastoral reorganisation. He asked whether there is scope to make more information publicly available regarding such matters, and how financial decisions relate to recommendations made by the DMPC.

Becky Waring (BW), Archdeacon of Bristol, confirmed that this would be considered, particularly with regard to how such decisions might be communicated more clearly to Synod.

Action: To consider how decisions relating to suspensions and reorganisations can be communicated more effectively to Diocesan Synod.

Adrian Youings (AY), (House of Clergy, Swindon) asked whether the Ephesian Fund had responded following Bishop's Council's decision.

BW confirmed that no response had yet been received.

7.2 Vote on motion

The Ven Becky Waring (member of Bishop's Council) proposed:

That the Bishop's Council reports of 20 April, 11 May and 2 June 2026 be received.

The motion was carried.

8.	Safeguarding Annual Report
	8.1 Report
	8.2 Questions and Answers

8.1 Report

Adam Bond (AB), Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, presented the Safeguarding Annual Report, highlighting the following key points:

- Safeguarding continues to be a top priority for the Diocese
- Governance arrangements are strong and will be further strengthened
- A new Chair will be appointed shortly
- Ongoing focus on prevention and supporting parishes
- Over 1,350 DBS checks were completed at a cost of £20,000
- There were 19 safety plans in place at the end of the year, with effective partnership working alongside the police and other agencies
- Continued support for victims and survivors, including a South West Dioceses safeguarding event for survivors planned for August 2026

8.2 Questions and Answers

No questions were raised.

BF thanked AB and the safeguarding team for their work, noting that the Diocese is recognised nationally as an example of good practice. These remarks were met with a round of applause.



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9.	Finance Update 9.1 Year to date Review 9.2 Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board Bid (SMMIB)
<p>9.1 Finance Update</p> <p>SS presented analysis of the Quarter 1 figures, and the following points were noted:</p> <p>Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Share: Ahead of budget, with the hope that this positive trend will continue • Investment Income: Below budget due to global economic factors • Grants: Below budget because of the phasing of National Church Transition Relief receipts <p>Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry: Below budget, as the invoice for National Church training fees had not yet been received • Housing Costs: Higher than budgeted due to additional vicarage repair costs • Diocesan Support Staff (DSS) Non-staff/Other Costs: Currently at around half of budget, again due to phasing issues; these costs are expected to be incurred in later quarters <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual: £442,000 • Budget: £415,000 • Variance: £27,000 <p>It was noted that, while the operational deficit was above budget, this was largely due to budget phasing. The issue of phasing is being reviewed as part of future budget planning.</p> <p>9.2 Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board Bid (SMMIB)</p> <p>RL confirmed to Synod that funding has been secured to continue Transforming Church. Together (TC.T) until May 2027. Work is ongoing with the National Church on the next bid, and it has been indicated that funding will be capped at £3.5 million for 2027–2028.</p> <p>It was noted that future funding will be focused on projects demonstrating clear impact, including Priority Community Networks (PCN), Children, Young People and Families (CYPF), and clergy coaching where growth can be evidenced. BW highlighted the positive position of Parish Share, which is currently ahead of budget, and expressed thanks to members and parishes for their continued support.</p> <p>RL expressed his thanks to RM for his work over the past three and a half years in the role, recognising his hard work, leadership and patience. These remarks were met with a round of applause.</p> <p>BF then handed the Chair to Trudie Wigley (TW), Chair of the House of Clergy.</p>	



The Revd Trudie Wigley, Chair of the House of Clergy, in the Chair	
10.	Question Time
<p>Formal written questions are set out in Appendix B. KC-S asked a supplementary question, enquiring whether there are plans to draw on the expertise of specialists and champions within the Diocese as part of promoting the General Synod elections. Emma Bakewell (EB), Head of Governance, confirmed that this will be ensured.</p> <p>Late Formal Written Question TW advised that a late question had been received. As it had not met the deadline, it could not be included within the formal written questions. K-CS was therefore invited to raise the question during Question Time at the meeting.</p> <p>Kat Champion-Spall (K-CS), House of Clergy, City, following the recent Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance, will the Diocese be issuing any advice about how to ensure transgender people in our congregations and communities are safe and feel welcome in our churches? Geralyn Meehan, Director of People and Safeguarding, emphasised that it is important that all worshippers know they are welcome and valued as part of the faith community, and that they are loved by God. Geralyn Meehan outlined the current legal position, noting that the EHRC Code of Practice for Services, Public Functions and Associations was laid before Parliament on 21 May 2026. Parliament has a 40-day period in which to review the Code. If it is not disapproved, the Government will set a date for it to come into force. Given that the parliamentary review period has not yet concluded, it was noted that it would be premature to issue formal diocesan guidance at this stage. Once the Code of Practice is in force, and subject to the parliamentary process proceeding as expected, PCCs will need to apply it within their local context with careful and creative discernment. KC-S requested that any advice issued by the BDBF should be pastoral in nature rather than legal.</p> <p>+NW advised that the National Church takes a pastoral approach and read from the resource document, including the opening sentence of <i>Pastoral Guidance for Use in Conjunction with the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith in the Context of Gender Transition</i>: “The Church of England welcomes and encourages the unconditional affirmation of trans people, equally with all people, and within the body of Christ, and</p>	



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rejoices in the diversity of that body into which all Christians have been baptised by one Spirit.”

11. Bible Study – Dwelling in the word

The Synod spent time dwelling in the Word. CJ-I led this session, reading prayers and the Bible passage John 1:43–51, after which members were invited to reflect and discuss in small groups.

12. Transforming Church. Together (TC.T)

- 12.1 Update on previous Synod comments on engagement and communication**
- 12.2 TC.T in practise – What It has meant to us**
- 12.3 Priority Communities Network – ‘Prepared’ film clip**
- 12.4 Launch of Equality and Diversity questionnaire**

12.1 Update on previous Synod comments on engagement and communication

BW advised that feedback from table discussions at the March 2026 Diocesan Synod identified the following priorities for improving engagement and involvement:

1. Sharing stories across the Diocese
2. Clear and consistent communication
3. Clarity regarding vision, values and lived experience

BW also reminded Synod of the four strategic outcomes:

- To have a form of church in every community, and a church in which all can participate, thrive and belong
- To have people who worship God in every aspect of their lives, and throughout their whole lives
- For the Diocese to be recognised as a powerful force for gospel change
- For the Diocese to be sustainable

It was emphasised that this reflects Transforming Church. Together (TC.T) and represents a wider programme of cultural change.

The following questions were highlighted for consideration within parishes:

- What are the “ways in” for people to encounter God through patterns of gathering and worship?
- How is the church looking outward to the community?
- How are disciples formed?
- How representative is church membership of the local community, both geographically and demographically?
- What does the church have to offer others?



12.2 TC.T in practice – What It has meant to us

BW introduced four lay members to share their experiences of Transforming Church. Together (TC.T) and its impact:

- **Chris Bradley (CB), House of Laity, Kingswood and South Glos:** Spoke about the support received through volunteering and finance, and highlighted an upcoming Treasurers’ Conference.
- **Linda Wilson (LW), House of Laity, City:** Reflected on her training and experience as a Benefice Worship Leader.
- **Rosemarie Thompson (RT), House of Laity, Swindon:** Shared her experience of the pastoral care course via a short video presentation.
- **Chris Dursley (CD), House of Laity, Bristol South:** Highlighted the support provided by Rosy Ashley, Parish Development Adviser, during a period of vacancy.

12.3 Priority Communities Network – ‘Prepared’ film clip

Members viewed a short film introducing *Prepared*, a tailored nine-month lay leadership discipleship programme open to those in priority communities. Participants from the pilot year, which has recently concluded, shared their experiences of the programme.

12.4 Launch of Equality and Diversity Questionnaire

Geralyn Meehan (GM), Director of People and Safeguarding, informed Synod of a decision made by Bishop’s Council to undertake a survey to gather data on the demographics of diocesan leadership.

TW thanked GM and requested that a paper be prepared, including background information and an indication of the type of questions to be issued to members.

Action: GM to prepare a paper for circulation to Synod members.

Post meeting note: Paper was circulated to Synod members on Tuesday 23rd June.

HC offered a prayer for TC.T

13.	Environment Strategy
	13.1 Presentation
	13.2 Questions & Answers
	13.3 Next Steps Carbon Net Zero

Items 13.1 Presentation and 13.3 Next Steps: Carbon Net Zero

Items 13.1 and 13.3 were taken together.



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Kit Connell (KC), Environment and Sustainability Manager, presented an update on work completed and projects currently underway. Joe Flatman (JF), Director of Property and Estates, outlined future priorities and planned areas of work. It was noted that the strategy will continue to be reviewed and will be brought back to Bishop's Council for further consideration, before returning to Synod for approval as part of the 2027 budget.

13.2 Questions and Answers

Melanie Griffiths (MG), House of Clergy, Bristol West, asked whether a local community consultation could be arranged to discuss hedging within her area.

KC agreed to support and assist with community engagement.

Action: **KC** to contact to **MG** to arrange support.

Suzanne Grindrod (SG), House of Clergy, North Wiltshire, highlighted the importance of using green energy suppliers and requested that information on suitable green tariffs be shared with parishes.

KC agreed to circulate relevant information. JF added that discussions are underway with an energy broker, which may provide further support in due course.

Action: **KC** to circulate relevant information on Green Tariffs.

MB raised concerns regarding the lack of guidance on building and repair materials and enquired whether advice is available on matters such as grey water usage. She also asked whether the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) is taking these issues into account.

KC confirmed that the DAC is strongly focused on environmental considerations.

- Work is underway regarding water usage, including the potential introduction of water butts for clergy housing
- Discussions are ongoing with suppliers (e.g. Herschel) regarding the embodied carbon of their products
- A pragmatic approach is being taken: PCCs are not expected to replace functioning heating systems immediately but are encouraged to consider net zero solutions at the end of their lifecycle

Simon Pugh-Jones (SP-J), Chair of the DAC, added that since 2020, all DAC submissions are required to demonstrate consideration of net zero.

Joel Sales (JS), House of Clergy, Swindon, welcomed the installation of solar panels on some vicarages and asked whether a wider rollout timeline exists.

JF confirmed that there is currently no dedicated funding stream, and therefore no defined timeframe. Funding remains a challenge and may require asset sales, with proceeds reinvested into properties, subject to Bishop's Council approval.

SP-J expressed appreciation for the progress made but emphasised that the



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strategy will only succeed through practical action. He asked what clear and urgent steps Synod members should take.

KC responded that:

- **At an individual level**, members should consider lifestyle choices and spending habits
 - **At a parish level, actions include:**
 - Improving energy efficiency (e.g. LED lighting, draught-proofing)
 - Transitioning to electric heating
 - Reviewing investments
 - Supporting community initiatives and environmental campaigns
- It was emphasised that positive encouragement is key to driving change.

TW encouraged members to reflect on one practical action they could take personally and one within their parish.

Catherine Kosidowski (CK), House of Laity, Swindon, asked whether support is available for churches wishing to host film screenings of the People’s Emergency Briefing.

KC confirmed that support is available, including assistance with registration and facilitation.

Alison Sowton (AS), House of Laity, Bristol West, expressed thanks and noted the positive impact of solar panels installed at a vicarage, particularly in generating significant free energy during recent sunny weather.

TW thanked JF, KC and the team for their work.

SP-J concluded the session with prayer.

14.	Blessing and Close
	+NW closed the meeting with prayer.

The House of Clergy and Laity meet separately for an hour after Diocesan Synod, these meetings were not formally minuted.



Appendix A

Saturday, 20 June 2026

Bishop's Address

Diocesan Synod - St Michael's Stoke Gifford

Introduction

Sisters and brothers in Christ, it is a great joy to gather as Synod. Whenever we come together like this, representing parishes, chaplaincies, schools, ministries and communities, we are reminded of something profound: we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. We are part of the work of God.

That truth has been on my mind recently. In times of change, I especially need to set my eyes on Jesus and Scripture which always draw me beyond myself to God, who I see and experience constantly at work among us. That gives us indestructible hope.

I have found myself returning to the words of St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow." 1 Cor. 3.6

Paul reminds us that the work of mission is always a shared endeavor. It's a team game. One person plants. Another waters. Someone else nurtures and tends. Others pray, encourage, teach, serve, and support. Each contribution is critical and yet ultimately, growth belongs to God.

Those words are a source of encouragement as they remind us that we are all in this together—with one another and with God and in and amongst the goodness of Transforming Church. Together.

How is this more than a platitude?

...that growth belongs to God. Three things that can '*bust the platitude*' and underpin the ministry and discipleship we all offer are:

1. The freedom of not being the Saviour

This addresses one of the great pressures in ministry and discipleship. Paul's words remind us that the church's future does not solely rest on our shoulders. We are called to faithfulness, obedience, courage, and hard work. We are not the ones who ultimately bring growth. God does.



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That truth can free us from anxiety, unhealthy comparison, and measuring our worth solely by outcomes. It allows us to serve generously, take risks, and persevere because the burden of being the saviour belongs to Jesus alone.

2. Investing in People, Trusting God for Fruit

This is where our Urban Missioners are a perfect example, they are:

“... people who live, work and serve in an urban community to build long-term relationships, providing social support whilst sharing the good news of the life transforming Gospel of Jesus. PREPARED (a training course) has been equipping people to live out their calling to urban mission, empowering them to be ‘ready to serve, ready to lead.’”

We’re also investing in administration hubs, school’s workers, young people’s leads, coaching of LLM’s and clergy...

Trusting God for growth is not about passivity. Paul planted. Apollos watered. Faithful investment matters. The experience of the Urban Missioners (and I hope all of you) demonstrates what can happen when we invest deeply in people, communities and local churches. Their work is showing that belief in the local church is justified, patient presence matters, and fruit often emerges where people have committed themselves to God’s mission over time. We do not control the harvest; we are called to cultivate the ground faithfully.

Mark who was commissioned as an Urban Missioner a couple of weeks says this to encourage you:

“Becoming an Urban Missioner is an honour - to serve God’s Kingdom in my role amongst the congregation and visitors of St Barnabas church.

To me it is very reassuring that God has guided me to this point where I can serve my community with servant-based leadership to the benefit of all. And in that journey, I will impart the power and word of God. And with that hope - unity, love and light will shine into Knowle West and beyond.”

3. High Expectation, Deep Gratitude

Confidence in God’s sovereignty inspires high expectations. Having served in this diocese since 2019, I have seen so much of God’s faithfulness.

That leads me to a high expectation of what God will continue to do among us and deep gratitude for all that is already happening across our churches and communities. Trust, expectation and gratitude become the marks of a church that knows growth belongs to God and therefore looks to the future with hope.

The mission of the Church has never depended upon one individual, one strategy, one programme, or one generation. It depends upon the faithfulness of God, who calls ordinary people into his extraordinary purposes.



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As I travel around our diocese, I see countless examples of that faithfulness. I meet lay leaders, congregants, clergy who serve with remarkable dedication.

I see churchwardens, PCC members, volunteers, chaplains, youth leaders, school teams, and congregations who faithfully give themselves, unstintingly, to the work of the Gospel week by week.

Some are planting seeds. Some are watering. Some are reaping a harvest.

I suggest it's not always immediately clear which stage of the process we are part of...and yet...God is at work in all of it.

I see the harvest at Confirmation services - a young woman was baptised and confirmed - her life had been changed. Two younger girls were taken by their vicar around the church; they stood in front of the font - *'what does this mean to you'*...

...the vicar said a beautiful and natural evocation of faith poured out of them, they spoke of knowing God and how that was good. A *'walk-up'* young man from Swindon, with no previous church or God knowledge, who felt the need to go to church. This was another life changed and he told me he'd set up a pool table drop-in because so many of his generation are asking big questions. This is harvest!

This matters deeply because the local church remains at the heart of God's mission.

From time to time, we hear predictions about the decline of the church. Yet my experience across this diocese tells a different story.

Repeatedly, I see local churches serving their communities with extraordinary generosity. Churches opening their doors to the lonely and isolated. Congregations supporting families in need. Churches engaging with schools, community groups, food banks, and local organisations. I see faithful prayer being offered day after day. Evangelism helping people come to faith. I see disciples growing in maturity.

I see hope.

David Hockney - one of the best painters of his generation - painted, in later life, Woldgate Woods in the Yorkshire Wolds and treated them as the living, dynamic subject of his art.

A critic (Will Gompertz)¹ made a disparaging comment to Hockney about these paintings. Hockney sent the critic to visit the very line of trees. At first the critic saw brown trees and brown fields.

He did what Hockney advised and kept looking. After 15 minutes or so, as the light began to change, he saw purple tinges in the bark, many shades of green, sunlight glistening in puddles...Hockney had taught him to keep looking so he could see the beauty.

¹ BBC Radio 4 PM on the day after Hockney died.



I see indestructible hope

I suggest, that longer look, is what we need to see the growth God gives. The more you look the more you see. Looking like this reminds us that belief in the local church is right and Godly.

Investment in the local church is our priority. The national church recently awarded us £900,000 in transition funding via their Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) – so that we can keep supporting and investing at parish level with Transforming Church.Together. Thank you for all you're doing locally.

Inspired by that gift, I invite us all as individuals and as churches to increase our financial giving, so that we can cover the full cost of our wonderful clergy across our Diocese. Our giving is directly linked to the ministry of people in every community.

Hope in the local church is indestructible because God works through communities of Christian people gathered in their place.

Let's be real - every challenge has not been solved; not every church is flourishing in every way. Neither have we discovered a perfect mission strategy.

I have hope because I have seen what God is doing among us and know God is more solid and precious than optimism.

Over many years in our diocese, I have seen, again and again, God's faithfulness.

Let's look at some recent and beautiful fruit...

You are called

Alongside that confidence in God, I have always had confidence in you, God's people. One of the great privileges of episcopal ministry is the opportunity to encounter the breadth and richness of the Church.

We all experienced the moment a few weeks ago when the person nominated to be our next bishop couldn't come for family reasons. That was a moment of many thoughts and emotions.

I remain. I love my calling to be your bishop and shepherd. I am managing the workload with others and will make some adjustments to stay well in body, mind and spirit as the vacancy continues.

A life in the day of a bishop!

I wonder what you think I do most of my time? People sometimes imagine that bishops spend most of their time leading.



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I certainly have responsibilities that come with this office. There are decisions to make, priorities to discern, and leadership to exercise.

The life-giving truth is that my ministry is continually enriched by the calling of God in others. Much of my ministry involves listening, learning, praying, receiving, encouraging and being encouraged.

A current example is meeting those to be ordained and/or licensed as LLM's...one-to-one meetings that allow me to see formation happening before my eyes. God calling a wide variety of people and stirring them up, surprising them in all they can do and be for God and the church.

We're in it together

Thank God that being a follower of Jesus is always done with other people. We belong to one another, need one another and learn from one another. Together we *'roll up our sleeves'* and get on with the mission of God.

That is why I want to say thank you today for your faithfulness, your service, your prayers and your generosity. And for your willingness to keep going, even when the road, like life, is difficult.

As we look ahead, I believe we are called to hold together. God remains faithful to his promises. The God we worship is calling us onwards. We should expect God to continue surprising us. We should expect new opportunities for mission. We should expect lives to be transformed. We should expect the Holy Spirit to continue moving among us, because of God's power and grace.

As we continue our work as a Synod, let us remember the words of Paul. Some plant. Some water. God gives the growth.

The future of the Diocese of Bristol is safe in God's hands. Therefore, let's be active and confident.

As Paul says to the Philippians:

*I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 1.6*

Amen.



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Appendix B

Agenda ref	10.
Report title	Questions Asked for Diocesan Synod 20 June 2026
Author	Various
Date	12 June 2026

Diocesan Synod member:	Kat Campion-Spall (House of Clergy; City Deanery)
What plans are there to make the General Synod election process accessible to a diverse range of candidates?	
Person(s) who answered question:	Emma Bakewell (Head of Governance)
<p>Answer:</p> <p>The Governance Support Team has been working closely with the Communications Team to develop a comprehensive communications plan for the upcoming General Synod elections. The aim is to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the opportunity to stand, understand the eligibility requirements, and feel confident about the process should they feel called to do so.</p> <p>Reaching a wide audience</p> <p>The plan draws on resources recently released by the National Church and uses a range of communication channels, including the <i>Three Crowns</i> newsletter, the diocesan website, email communications, and social media. By using a mix of traditional and digital methods, we hope to reach a broad and diverse audience, particularly those who may not have previously considered standing for an elected role.</p> <p>Providing clear and accessible information</p> <p>The communications will clearly set out key dates and practical information, including when nominations open, how to nominate, and how the election process works. This is intended to ensure that anyone interested in standing has the information they need to take part.</p> <p>Breaking down barriers</p> <p>The plan will also include stories, reflections and quotes from current and former General Synod members. By sharing real experiences, we hope to demystify the role of General Synod and make it feel more accessible. Hearing</p>	



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directly from those who have served may help encourage individuals who are unsure about standing to see that this could be a role for them.

Our aim is that this communications approach will help address some of the common barriers to standing, such as:

- not being aware of the opportunity
- not knowing how to get involved
- feeling that the role is not for them

Encouraging nominations

We would particularly encourage Diocesan Synod members to consider who within their networks might be a strong representative for the Diocese of Bristol and to encourage them to stand. If you identify someone, please do share our contact details with them (governance.support@bristoldiocese.org) and the website link

<https://bristol.anglican.org/aboutus/governance/generalsynod/general-synod-elections-2026/> , and we would be very happy to talk them through the process and what is involved.

Your feedback

If there is anything you feel has been overlooked or could strengthen the communications plan, please do get in touch with the Communications Team at comms@bristoldiocese.org. All suggestions will be carefully considered.

Diocesan Synod member:	Ken Petrie (House of Laity; Bristol South)
Question:	When considering the Locally Supported Ministers Policy, what safeguards will be required to ensure parishes who can afford it do not fund an LSM by reducing their Parish Share?
Person(s) who answered question:	The Revd Canon Dr Simon Taylor (Director of Mission and Ministry)
Answer:	<p>The Locally Supported Ministry Policy aims to support churches who are looking to pay for additional clergy, whilst ensuring that this is done in a way that is fair to other churches, clear about risks, and explains arrangements for licensing.</p> <p>Locally Supported Ministers (LSMs) can be in training posts or supplement existing ministry as associate ministers, but not incumbents. As part of ensuring fairness across the diocese, churches planning to appoint an LSM need to commit to the full payment of parish share at a level that contributes more than the cost of existing ministry in the benefice or mission initiative for the duration of the appointment.</p>



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An agreement between the benefice or mission initiative and the DBF outlining obligations must be signed before a licence will be offered.

A copy of the policy is available from the Governance Team (governance.support@bristoldiocese.org) on request.

Diocesan Synod member:	Stephen Grindrod (House of Laity; North Wiltshire Deanery)
<p>Question: The email (12-May-2026) for the synod gave an update on the 'Coffee Cup' that we've 'already received £45 in one-off donations and £70 in monthly donations'. What was the cost of this campaign in terms of design, printing material etc.?</p> <p>How much did the online 'LLM Advent' campaign raise and how much did it cost?</p>	
Person(s) who answered question:	Leanne Hubbard (Director of External Relations)
<p>Answer:</p> <p>Campaign Costs and Returns</p> <p>Coffee Cup Campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: £159.09 (design, printing, and materials) • Income to date: £855 (combined one-off and recurring donations) <p>The campaign has already generated a positive return on investment. With the full rollout planned for the summer, no further costs are anticipated, as all printed materials and campaign assets are already in place.</p> <p>LLM Advent Campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: £298.59 • Income raised: £755.00 <p>This campaign also delivered a positive financial return.</p> <p>Overall Context and Strategic Learning</p> <p>These campaigns form part of a broader effort to diversify income streams and increase knowledge and awareness through more creative and bold</p>	



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approaches. As initial testbeds, they were intentionally delivered at a small scale, using in-house skills and minimal expenditure.

Given this context, we are pleased that both campaigns:

- Generated a surplus over their costs
- Provided valuable insight into existing donors, potential donors, and currently unrealised supporters (please contact Leanne Hubbard if you would like further information on this)

These learnings are now being used to:

- Further develop the Coffee Cup campaign ahead of its full launch
- Shape a refined Advent campaign later this year, specifically to support CYPF work

Wider Fundraising Work

Alongside these campaigns, we are also:

- Developing a legacy giving programme, including support for parishes to grow their own legacy income
- Expanding work with trusts and foundations having developed a pipeline of a significant number of opportunities to fund the work of the Diocese in supporting Parishes and helping ministry to grow.
- Supporting parishes in collectively raising approximately £1 million over the past 12 months