



Bristol Diocesan Synod Minutes

Date: Saturday, 15 June 2024
Time: 9.30am to 1.00pm
Venue: St Michael’s Church Centre, The Green, Stoke Gifford BS34 8PD
 The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the Diocese of Bristol website at: [Diocesan Synod - Diocese of Bristol \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-diocese-of-bristol)

	Worship
	The Revd Sally Robertson led worship which included singing and reflection.
	Richard Bacon (Chair of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (BDBF)) Chaired the BDBF Annual General Meeting (AGM)
1.	The Directors’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023
	Richard Bacon introduced Stephen Sheridan (Director of Finance) who presented the Financial statements. Stephen talked BDBF members through a presentation and the accounts. He confirmed the Annual Report and Financial Statements that had been circulated to BDBF members was version 3 and there was now a version 4 which included minor amendments, such as the correction of typos. Audit & Risk Committee has reviewed version 4 and is content with it, as it does not include any material changes. The accounts are now finalised, subject to a valuation of our Glebe Land which is expected shortly. ACTION: Version 4 of the Directors’ Annual Report and Financial Statements to be circulated to BDBF members. Richard Bacon invited questions from BDBF members. Questions David Cain (Swindon) – Confirmed, as Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee, that the Committee was content with version 4. He also wanted the BDBF to record its thanks to Stephen Sheridan for his considerable work on the audit and for his determination in driving change where it was needed. Richard Bacon agreed with David Cain and wanted to record the BDBF’s thanks to David Tunley (previous Chair of Audit & Risk Committee) As there were no further questions, Richard Bacon (Chair of the BDBF) moved 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 31st December 2023.

The motion was passed unanimously.

2. Appointment of Auditors for the year ending 31 December 2024

Richard Bacon explained that the agenda sent out to BDBF members included a resolution to reappoint Mazars LLP as the Auditors for the year ending 31 December 2024. BDBF will not be asked to vote on this motion because Mazars LLP has resigned as they have been the auditors for over 30 years, which exceeds the recommended statutory length. The BDBF has been aware of the need to appoint new Auditors; however, in the past few years there has been considerable change (Transforming Church. Together, etc). Consequently, the employment of Auditors with a deep understanding of the BDBF finances has been beneficial.

Richard Bacon explained that the Directors of BDBF have the power under s485(3) of the Companies Act 2006 to appoint an auditor where there was a casual vacancy in the office of auditor. Consequently, the directors will retender and have new auditors in place before the end of the year.

Richard Bacon invited questions.

Questions

Laura Thomas (Kingswood & South Gloucestershire)– Queried what were the timescales for appointment and reporting back to BDBF members.

Stephen Sheridan confirmed that the Directors should be able to move to appointment within next few months and will report back at Diocesan Synod’s next meeting (9 October 2024).

ACTION: Directors to report back about which Auditors have been appointed by Diocesan Synod’s next meeting (9 October 2024).

The Revd Trudie Wigley thanked Richard Bacon, Stephen Sheridan and the Finance team for their work and invited David Clarke to pray for the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance.

**3. Welcome
Minutes of last meeting, apologies**

Welcome

Trudie welcomed Synod members, then thanked the Diocesan Support Services staff team for all the work they had put into making Synod happen and Sally Robertson for opening Synod with worship. Trudie shared that this was the last synod for this triennium and that we had travelled a long way together in that time.

Apologies

Trudie noted 15 apologies from the House of Clergy and 10 apologies from House of Laity.

Minutes

Trudie acknowledged that no requests for amendments for corrections had been submitted so the Diocesan Synod received the minutes from the meeting on 16 March 2024 as accepted.

Trudie also highlighted the progress made on the actions from the previous meeting. All papers promised to Diocesan Synod members and individuals had been sent, the question regarding whether the Diocesan of Bristol should declare a Children and Young People crisis was to be addressed later in the meeting, and conversations regarding a Diocesan Synod debate on how the money dedicated to addressing the legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade by the Church Commissioners should be used were progressing.

Structure and provision of meeting

Trudie reminded Synod about processes and provisions in place to assist with the efficient running of the meeting. This included, if a member wished to ask a question they should raise their hand and, when called on, to state their name and deanery. There was also an opportunity to ask questions via the Synod email address.

Trudie acknowledged that Synod might cover some subjects that Synod members, visitors or Diocesan Support Services Staff might find triggering. Due to this, Simon Taylor (Director of Mission & Ministry Support) was available should anyone wish to speak with them. Trudie asked Simon to stand so that all were aware of who he was.

Trudie explained the structure of the meeting. The meeting was largely formed of three parts.

- The **first** part will cover an **Annual General Meeting**: This involved the annual director's report, financial statements and the appointment of the auditors.
- The **second** part will cover **Routine Business**: This included reports from recent meetings of Bishop's Council, Board of Directors, DMPC, and Transforming Church. Together (TC.T). Additionally, there would be an update on Bristol Diocese's Safeguarding Annual Report and Audit.
- The **final** part would focus on **Children and Young People in Churches**: An external speaker, Mr Joel Preston, CEO of Mullers and Chair of South West Youth Ministries (SWYM), would present on the challenges and opportunities in Youth Ministry, as well as question time.

4.	The appointment of members of Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Limited
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No new members of Diocesan Synod had been appointed since the meeting on 16 March 2024.

Trudie welcomed people who were attending Diocesan Synod for the first time, this included Diocesan Support Services Staff and speakers.

5. Bishop's address

Bishop Viv gave her presidential address; a copy of the address can be obtained on the Diocesan website: <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/news/bishop-vivs-diocesan-synod-presidential-address-15-june-2024.php>

Bishop Viv started her address by posing a question to Diocesan Synod, “what was important about 1953?” It was the last time there was a recorded increase in church attendance until 2023. Bishop Viv explained that across the Church of England there has been a growth in attendance of 5% for all ages and a growth of 6% for children. Whilst a national figure this was also the growth rate for the Diocese of Bristol.

Whilst the reasons behind the growth were not certain, Bishop Viv went onto highlight examples of where there was growth in numbers, from a whole range of traditions and contexts, and recipes for drawing children into the life of the church.

- St Mary Magdalene Hullavington
- St Paul Chippenham
- Easton Christian Family Centre
- Christ Church Downend
- St Peter Bishopsworth
- Emmanuel's three worshipping communities
- St Augustine Whitchurch
- St Nicholas Bristol
- St Mary Henbury
- St Luke Swindon
- St Saviour Swindon

6. Bishop's Council & Board of Directors report (14 May 2024)

The Revd Beverley Charles summarised the Bishop’s Council & Board of Directors report. Beverley particularly focused on the section on the recent Diocesan Synod elections for the 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027 triennium as the number of those who decided to stand were lower than expected. Beverley encouraged current Diocesan Synod members to think about who they might know and talk to about filling a casual vacancy.

Trudie invited questions.

Questions

The Revd Canon Paul Langham (exofficio) – Requested the numerical data on the 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027 Diocesan Synod membership, broken down into houses and deaneries so that the current Diocesan Synod member might understand where the casual vacancies were.

ACTION – the numerical data on the 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027 Diocesan Synod membership to be circulated with the Diocesan Synod minutes.

Julia Childerhouse (Chippenham)– highlighted the excellent Comms campaign for Diocesan Synod elections but explained that the Laity were stretched, and Synod was big committee. Therefore, she queried whether there was a way of communicating the work of Diocesan Synod and the importance of being a member. Bruce Finnamore asked Diocesan Synod members to take note of any concerns or obstacles that potential Diocesan Members raise as a reason for not standing. Bruce explained that Diocesan support services wanted to listen actively and make adjustments to Diocesan Synod and how it runs to enable more people to become members.

ACTION - Richard Leaman also confirmed that the Comms team would also investigate the possibility of developing more hard copy materials and face-to-face meetings to promote Diocesan Synod.

Dr Jill Huby (Swindon) – Mentioned that she would be willing to attend Diocesan Synod for the new triennium but wouldn’t be able to cope with the other meetings (PCC and Deanery Synod). The Revd Trudie Wigley encouraged Diocesan Synod members to talk with their incumbents to develop a method of reporting Diocesan Synod matters to various committees without having to attend.

The Revd Phil Goodey (Swindon) - explained that with the benefice of Highworth with Sevenhampton and Inglesham and Hannington they had only been able to find one person willing to volunteer for Deanery Synod so they are representing five parishes. To enable this it was agreed that they didn’t have to attend all five PCCs. The Revd Trudie Wigley thanked Phil for creative thinking and for sharing it with Diocesan Synod.

The Revd Beverley Charles (Bishop’s Council Member) moved that the Bishop’s Council & Board of Directors report (14 May 2024) be received.

Motion passed unanimously.

7.	Amending Canon No 43
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The Revd Trudie Wigley explained that Amending Canon No 43, passed by the General Synod at the July 2023 group of sessions, would make the following changes:

- Following the demise of the Crown it changes “Queen” to “King” in Canon A 1 and A 6 (the government of the Church of England), Canon A 7 (the Royal Supremacy), Canon B 19 (the Bidding Prayer), Canon C 13 (the Oath of Allegiance) and Canon C 17 (archbishops).
- Removed an anomaly that arose from amendments made by Amending Canon No. 39 which removed a backstop that would prevent a church from ceasing to be used for public worship altogether when a decision is taken on where services should take place.
- Raised the minimum age at which a person may lawfully marry from 16 to 18 and came into force on 27th February 2023.
- that only a person who has been admitted as a reader or lay worker for at least six years and is licensed to serve as such is eligible for appointment as a lay residentiary canon.
- Allowing someone other than the area dean to be appointed as deputy to archdeacon for triennial inspections.
- That the qualifications for appointment as a deputy diocesan or provincial registrar were the same as those for appointment as registrar, including the requirement to be a communicant.

Trudie then gave this formal notice: “I give notice that, at its February 2024 group of sessions, the General Synod resolved that Amending Canon No. 43 be made, promulgated and executed. Amending Canon No. 43 makes miscellaneous amendments to the Canons of the Church of England. It complements the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2024.”

8.	Safeguarding Annual review and Audit recommendations
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Trudie welcomed David Niven, Chair of Diocesan Independent Safeguarding Committee (DSSG), and Adam Bond, Safeguarding Officer to report on the Safeguarding Annual Review and Audit Recommendations.

David spoke about how impressed he was by Adam and his team. He also highlighted that as Chair it was his role to challenge, and there was a one area that he would like to address and that is the external visibility of the Diocese of Bristol’s responsibility for safeguarding. He would consequently like to enhance our connections with the Local Authority, Police and Educational institutions.

Adam spoke about the recent Safeguarding Audit which was new system which comes under INEQE (portmanteau of the words ‘Innovative’ and ‘Unique’).

Previously, the Diocese and Cathedral were audited separately by SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence); however, a decision was taken nationally to combine the audits, and all must be audited within the next 4-5 years. As the diocese was last audited in 2017, Bristol volunteered to be one of the first Diocese to be audited under the new system.

The audit process started in November 2023 and included:

- 150+ questions
- 377 survey responses
- Focus groups and 1:1 interviews with 457 individuals

Due to one of the auditing team being unwell, there has been a significant delay, and the audit report has not yet been published. Consequently, Adam was unable to talk through the audit recommendations. However, he informed Diocesan Synod that the Diocese was aware of potentially 41 recommendations, and the Cathedral had 25 (this was reduced from 26 as the auditors agreed to remove 1).

Some of the recommendations were minor, others are more significant. Adam presented a preview of the results.

- Overall INEQE found the leadership of Bishop Viv and Dean Mandy to be formidable
- The Safeguarding team was the Diocese's greatest asset and was highly experienced and dedicated.
- The approach to governance and oversight was becoming stronger across both.
- Good relationships with statutory partners; however, both were seeking to broaden and strengthen these.
- Challenges remained in how survivors had been supported in the past. But the audit was confident that there was no evidence of any cover up or disregard of this.

What next

- The report will be sometime after the general election (4 July 2024).
- A Safeguarding action plan will be developed based on recommendations and overseen by DSSG and progressed reported to Bishop's Council
- INEQE will also publish annual thematic reports collating recurring themes and issues across the church.

Adam asked that once the report has been published, he would be eager to hear from anyone who has any ideas or thoughts on how we might implement the recommendations. Adam can be contacted via adam.bond@bristoldiocese.org.

Trudie invited questions.

Questions

Ian Henderson (North Wiltshire) – much of the work the Diocesan Safeguarding Team was doing was dependant on people volunteering and filling safeguarding positions in parishes. How was the recruitment of these volunteers in parishes going?

Adam Bond– Of over 200 churches, only 7 don't have a Safeguarding Officers. The team is also exploring a project of having Safeguarding Officers mentors for each deanery to help less experienced people in these roles.

Prof Julian Rivers (Bristol West) queried whether internet safety, mental health issues, human vulnerability was all part of safeguarding or whether there are limits to safeguarding scope?

David Niven – explained that it was hard to say how far it extended. However, it was clear who were vulnerable and who needed care. Alerting volunteers to useful information they can disseminate this to the people they are coming in touch with who might need it.

Prof Julian Rivers – Understood the relationship between safeguarding and crime.

So, queried the dangers of trying to address a range of issues that did not relate to criminality.

David Niven – explained that the church has an imperative to care for the community.

Trudie Wigley - Thanked David for his explanation and shared that it can feel overwhelming for people at parish level.

Catherine Price (North Wiltshire) – The Archbishop of Canterbury said in an interview that safeguarding was one of the issues that kept him up at night. Catherine understood that Adam could not share details, but asked if there were issues that keep him up at night.

Adam – confirmed that there were on some nights; however, he did not want parish officers to have sleepless nights. The Safeguarding Team exist to listen, advise, and deal with any concerns. Most sleepless nights relate to when the person who is vulnerable would not talk with the police, which limits the actions that can be taken.

Laura Thomas (Kingswood & South Gloucestershire) – wanted to commend the Parish Dashboard and support of the Safeguarding Team. Laura queried whether the additional training that has been coming out might be incorporated into the existing sessions so that there are not more and more training sessions.
ACTION – Safeguarding to see if additional safeguarding training might be incorporated into existing training.

The Revd Beverley Charles (Kingswood & South Gloucestershire) – highlighted that she had volunteers with special educational needs that were not able to access the online training.

Adam – explained that this has been flagged with National Church, but he had not yet had a response. He would like to put together bespoke training but does not have the resource at Diocesan level so would like to see it done a National level.

The Canon Alice Kemp (Chippenham) – voiced a follow up thought on training for volunteers with specialist education needs. She suggested that to influence this nationally one of the Diocese of Bristol’s General Synod representatives might pose a question at General Synod.

ACTION – Adam Bond and Alice Kemp to develop a question for General Synod on how Safeguarding Training might be made accessible for those with special educational needs.

Kat Campion-Spall committed safeguarding to God.

Mr Bruce Finnamore (Chair of the House of Laity) in the Chair

9.	Transforming Church.Together
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Bishop Neil and Rob Mountain (Director of Transformation) presented the Transforming Church. Together (TC.T) update.

Bishop Neil highlighted that the best part of his role was the opportunity to be somewhere different every Sunday and see grass root activities developing and emerging.

Rob explained at the last Diocesan Synod meeting that TC.T was in the preparatory

stage, whereas now it was in the engagement and implementation stage.

Overall progress was amber. There were no major issues but there was a need to look at the following:

- Parish Share
- Parish fundraising support
- Capacity in parishes and Diocesan Support Services to ensure there is capacity to support multi-ground up activities.

Engagement to date

- Incumbent TC.T engagement days meetings held in January and February
- LLM Conference held in February
- Chapter meeting hosted by archdeacons held in April – July

Upcoming engagement

- Church Team Day (renamed from Parish Officers Training Day in response to feedback) to be held in July and September.
- Roadshows to be held in later 2025 and early 2025

In order to engage, there was potential for diocesan wide prayer initiative.

Bishop Neil asked Diocesan Synod to consider:

What would be the most creative and inspiring ways to engage people in a prayer movement for the mission of TC.T?

Feedback

The Revd Richard Cresswell (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) on behalf of Table 2 – highlighted that prayer meetings are not a majority sport so suggested that prayers for intercessions might be developed and sent out.

The Revd Canon Paul Langham (Bristol West) on behalf of table 6 – queried how much TC.T was yet to come, might parishes apply TC.T to something they were already passionate about? Could TC.T prayers be included in intercessions and seasonal prayer.

The Revd Sally Roberston (Swindon) on behalf of table 5 - Suggested making it a local focus for the prayers. A cycle of prayers exists for the Diocese and suggested that a column might be added for TC.T.

The Revd Phil Goody (Swindon) on behalf of table 9 – Just as TC.T was sharing good news stories, he asked if stories of prayers being answered might be shared.

Simon Pugh-Jones (Bristol West) on behalf of table 7 – suggested that if the diocese wanted to be transformational it needed to be brave, and its prayers needed

to reach the people it was trying to support. He suggested that everyone should be encouraged to offer prayer to someone. He noted the previous Diocesan Bishop, Bishop Mike saying, “ask someone if they would like you to pray with them, the worst thing they can say is no”.

Julian Rivers (Bristol West) on behalf of table 5– suggested providing more encouragement, highlighting what God had done in the diocese and what should be prayed for next. He suggested a short video for parishes with prayer prompts. Praying for TC.T is praying for God’s kingdom.

Julia Childerhouse (Chippenham) on behalf of table 4 – suggested that there was a disconnect. If TC.T presented as just TC.T people are less likely to engage; however, if it was presented more thematic people are more likely to connect. It might also help parishes connect with the wider work of the diocese.

The Revd Kat Campion-Spall (City) on behalf of table 8 –Diocesan Support Services social media might encourage prayer that could be filtered down. With videos of the bishops modelling the prayer. Kat suggested that the bishops might commit to a daily prayer video for a month that might be used during services for churches able to show videos.

Rob thanked Diocesan Synod for its suggestions.

Rob presented good news stories from across the diocese, featuring:

- Chippenham Mission Area progressing really well
- 4 Pilots for Growing Faith Chaplains
- 2 further areas to explore growing worshipping communities in schools
- Priority Communities Network (PCN) starting, this includes:
 - i) PCN data packs delivered to support PCC discernment
 - ii) Implementation of 4 operation hubs
 - iii) Recruitment of a priority Communities Trainer
 - iv) Recruitment of 4 Lay ministry posts
- The launch of the Athelstan Pilgrim way, a new 100-mile walking and cycling route, linking 36 historic churches in North Wiltshire Deanery.
- Citizens UK (Bristol Partnership) kicked off with the diocese as a founding partner.
- Serving local schools network has started.
- Racial Justice Strategy was being finalised
- Discussion with 3 groups of parishes around possible mission area establishment.
- First cohort of clergy coaching starting quarter 4
- LLM coaching being developed for 2025

- Property team have supported plans for out of hub at St Andrews Hartcliffe.
- Cathedral Manifesto for Hope (March 2024), the meeting was in response to the recent increase in violence towards young people.
- Bristol South Deanery confirmation services saw 35 candidates confirmed.
- Positive Swindon Deanery Chapter retreat and networking day with Bishop Neil
- “We’re in this together” conference at St Paul’s, Chippenham.

Questions

The Revd Melanie Otto (City)– highlighted that the delay in finalising the Racial Justice strategy was a shame. She queried who was on the group developing the strategy and how the group was being chosen.

Richard Leaman confirmed that The Revd Dr Cathy Okoronkwo had been working hard and it would be discussed at the Bishop’s Staff residential (w/c 17 June 2024). The next steps were to find the right people under the right leadership to take this forward.

The Revd Melanie Otto (City) – commented that whilst it was good that the Cathedral hosted the evening of Hope it appeared to be in response to the murder of two white children, whereas a similar response had not been evoked when children of colour had been murdered. Melanie had raised this with Dean Mandy who had indicated that she had not been aware that other children had been murdered and that it was “awful” a similar response had not been forthcoming.

The Revd Rich Cresswell (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) – was delighted to hear about the training opportunities but queried how people unable to attend on Saturdays might access the information.

The Revd Adam Beaumont confirmed that there would be Zoom sessions in the evening that would cover similar matters.

Roy Hussey (City) - suggested that Racial Justice Strategy needed to include the voices of those who have been impacted by slavery.

John Sunderland committed TC.T to God.

10.	Children and Youth Crisis and Opportunities
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The Revd Adam Beaumont asked Diocesan Synod members to picture the last under 18-year-old who they last had a meaningful conversation with. He asked that this picture was held in their mind’s eye whilst they listened to the next section.

Adam explained that as part of TC.T there was a need to change culture so that under 18s, the future of the Church of England, were a part of everything that was done, including Diocesan Synod.

At Diocesan Synod in March it was asked whether the Diocese of Bristol should declare a children and young people crisis. In response, this is why Joel Preston (CEO of Mullers and Director South West Youth Ministry (SYMN)) was invited to address Diocesan Synod and help answer this question.

Joel presented data from the YFC 2020 survey that showed the following responses from under 19s within the Diocese of Bristol:

- 51% (61,215) believed in a higher power
- 36% (88,149) would be interested in finding out more about God
- 31% (75,906) pray
- 23% (56,138) would say they were a follower of Jesus

Whilst there was evidence that children and young people are interested in Christianity, Joel showed that

- -63% are now training in youth/children’s ministry
- 95% don’t regularly attend church events
- 50% of Church of England churches have 2 or less under 16s per week
- 16% of churches believe they are equipped to make a difference for the young people of Bristol.

It was important to engagement with young people as 76% of practising Christians came to faith under the age of 19.

Overall, the weekly attendance of young people was decreasing.

Weekly attendance	2009	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bristol Diocese	3,500	2,000	400	1,000	1,500
Average per Bristol church (212)	16.5	9.4	1.9	5.7	7.1

Reasons for decline

- A shift in parenting – if parents are not attending the children are unlikely to attend
- A shift in the perception of community
- Barriers from a church service (Hefferman 2009)
 - a) Time of day
 - b) Lack of involvement
 - c) Disconnect from real life
 - d) Lack of enthusiasm/ sincerity of church leaders.
 - e) Lack of specialists (youth ministers)

What to do next

There was hope 88,149 young people in the Diocese of Bristol would be interested in learning about God.

Bruce thanked Joel for his presentation and invited questions.

Questions

The Revd Paul Canon Langham (City)– asked if the slides might be circulated.

ACTION –slides on children and youth people to be circulated with minutes.

Julia Childerhouse (Chippenham) – before getting to the point of declaring a crisis, Julia queried whether someone would be put in place to drive all the needed work with children and young people. This was the future of the Church, what was happening at a senior level?

The Revd Adam Beaumont confirmed that the required structure was largely in place; however, it might need communicating better.

John Spens (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) – queried whether there was a connection between the decline of children and young people and the decline in people aged 20 – 40 attending church.

Joel Preston assumed there would be a correlation as most children attend church with their parents. So, if the parents were not attending, neither were the children.

Richard Leaman explained that the idea behind Growing Faith Chaplains was to connect children, schools, churches and their family.

Chris Dursley (Bristol South)– highlighted that some churches do not have church schools, so the natural connection was not there.

Bruce concluded that the information presented by Joel and colleagues, together with the questions asked, provided a useful guide for moving forward. Rather than declaring a crisis, it seemed more appropriate to view this as a significant opportunity to engage actively and intentionally with children and young people particularly in view of the assumption that over 88,000 young people in the Diocese said they wanted to hear and understand more about Jesus

The Revd Sally Wheeler committed children and young people to prayer.

11. Question Time	
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Bruce explained that two formal written questions had been received from The Revd Rich Cresswell (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) and David Briggs (North Wiltshire). The questions and answers had been circulated to Diocesan Synod. David Briggs was unable to attend Diocesan Synod but had indicated via email he was content with the answer he had received.

The Revd Rich Cresswell (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) - asked a supplementary question in which he stated that he was grateful for The Revd Dr Simon Taylor's answer for his formal written question. However, Rich said that the position in the Diocese of Bristol was that the drop in ordinands was lower than the national average and he wanted to understand why that was, and what the Diocese intended to do about it, particularly in the light of the Bishop Chesters review which highlighted the potential impact of LLF.

The Revd Dr Simon Taylor suggested that it did not surprise him that many ordinands had been in touch with the Bishop of Chester. He confirmed that the Diocese of Bristol was in the process of appointing a new DDO and that Rich's comments were of use because this matter was something that would require attention and resource. That said, curacy was not currently a concern as the Diocesan of Bristol was filling its curacy places. The Diocese of Bristol would continue to actively support curates no matter their view, so that they might become more fully who they are and who God wants them to be. It is doing this within the framework set by the National Church.

Bruce thanked Diocesan Synod members, Diocesan Support Services staff and Trudie for all their work and support over the last triennium. Bruce highlighted that this Synod had achieved much over the past three years. This included the development of a strategy for, and significant funding of, Transforming Church. Together; the declaration of a Climate Emergency which had influenced national church policy; leadership through the global Covid pandemic with clear signs of recovery, strong financial management, and relative stability; the continuation of healthy, constructive relationships across the Diocese where different views were encouraged and respected.

Whilst there was much to do, this provided a sound basis upon which the next Synod could build and continue the work to grow the Kingdom of God in the Diocese of Bristol.

12.	Blessing and Close
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Bishop Viv thanked Stoke Gifford for hosting and then closed Diocesan Synod with prayer.