

**Minutes of a Meeting
of
Blackburn Diocesan Synod**

held on Tuesday 12 March 2024 at Fulwood St Cuthberts

Present

2 Members of the House of Bishops (100%)
28 Members of the House of Clergy (44%)
26 Members of the House of Laity (47%)
7 Visitors

Apologies

16 Members of the House of Clergy (25%)
14 Members of the House of Laity (25%)

1. Opening Worship

The meeting was chaired by **Bishop Philip** and commenced with worship led by **Munawar and Lubna Din (Munawar is Vice-Chair of the House of Clergy)**.

2. Presidential Address

Bishop Philip welcomed Synod members to the meeting. His presidential address is attached.

There will be two public announcements regarding the new Bishop of Burnley on Friday 22 March. The first will be at 10am at Burnley Faith Centre and the second at Blackburn Cathedral at 11.30am.

3. Diocesan Synod Elections

Bishop Jill and **Stephen Whittaker (Diocesan Secretary)** explained that the Diocesan Synod elections are due to take place over the coming months closely followed by the Board and Committee elections in autumn.

For the Synod elections, nomination forms are due to be sent out on 1 May and need to be returned by 23 May, with voting papers being sent out on 30 May for return by 20 June.

A "[Synod Handbook](#)" has been drafted to equip people to understand what Synod is about. This can be found on the Synod page of the Diocesan website.

The need to have a body that represents our diversity as a Diocese was highlighted and Synod was asked to encourage people within our parishes to stand for nomination and to share the Synod Handbook with them.

4. Vision 2026 – Listening to Synod

A series of interviews followed on the four strands of the Vision.

Making Disciples - Bishop Philip interviewed **Damian Platt (Vicar, Thornton-le-Fylde Christ Church)** who was involved in creating the new Fruitful app. Damian spoke about the role of technology in proclaiming the Gospel. The aim of the app is to help people grow more deeply in their faith. So far there have been over 2000 downloads and several hundred people launch the app each day. It will be kept fresh with new podcasts, live streaming and other resources.

Being Witnesses - Bishop Jill interviewed **Charlie Hill (Vicar at Burnley West All Saints with St John the Baptist)** who spoke of the parish renewal programme and how a small group within his parish prayed specifically for growth at the time of coming out of covid lockdown and then found that they saw genuine growth. He encouraged anyone wanting to see growth to pray specifically for it.

Growing Leaders - Bishop Jill interviewed **Anne Beverley (Director of Ministry)**. Some of her priorities as our new Director of Ministry will include making a number of appointments to key roles, expanding our pipeline of leaders and looking at diversity when calling people into both lay and ordained ministry.

Children and Young People - Bishop Philip explained about the Youth Forum that is being formed which Synod will be able to consult if it wants to hear the voice of young people. He introduced **Emily Harding** and **Sam Foster** from Over Wyresdale Christ Church who spoke about their involvement in their parish youth group, being junior wardens at their church, young people's concerns about the environment and the importance of creating space for young people in the church.

During the session, Synod were asked for their views on a number of questions. The questions and the responses are attached in the Appendix to the minutes and will be shared with the central Vision teams.

Following a request from Synod, engaging young people in the sacrament has also been added as a priority in response to the question around children's ministry in churches.

5. SMMI Update

Carolyn Barton (Director of Vision Delivery) provided an update on the application for Strategic Mission and Ministry funding. Her slides are attached in the Appendix to the minutes.

The SMMI Board have looked at our application and are highly enthusiastic and supportive of our ambition. As this is such a large application, they have asked for further information in some areas for consideration at their next meeting in June. Synod will be updated on their final decision in due course.

Questions and comments were invited.

Martin Keighley (HoC, Poulton Deanery) asked if the additional work would receive scrutiny before submission.

Carolyn Barton reassured Synod that there is nothing controversial involved. Most of the answers are already available as the initial application needed to be condensed. We will now have the opportunity to include the detail that was left out initially.

Munawar Din (Vice-Chair of the House of Clergy) asked about the timeframe around the investment going into central Burnley.

Carolyn Barton explained that this would be approximately 18 months from June as there is a need to work out the detail around this part of the bid.

Joseph Brookfield (HoL Preston Deanery) asked if the Diocese would be monitored on progress once the funding has been received.

Carolyn Barton explained that some monitoring indicators had been built into the application but that the focus would be concentrated on developing ministry rather than on counting numbers.

6. Centenary Plans

Bishop Philip explained the plans for the Diocese's centenary year. An outline of the plans is set out in paper DS 2074.

The date of the Whit Walk was confirmed as being Saturday 23 May instead of Sunday 24 May.

Peter Howell Jones (Blackburn Cathedral Dean) explained the plans for the Cathedral. The Centenary will be used as a springboard of renewal with 100 different projects starting later in 2024 through to 2027. These will include enquirers and discipleship courses, a festival of faith, exhibitions, engagement in the public square and a strategic charter that will be worked on with the local authorities. Further details will be released in June.

All were encouraged feed in their ideas. There were no questions from the floor.

7. Diocesan Advisory Committee Annual Report and Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee Annual Report

Archdeacon Mark Ireland presented the DAC Annual Report. He thanked the Advisers for giving their time to, and Andrew Holliday for Chairing, the DAC Committee. The DAC is looking for more women and people from diverse backgrounds to join them. Interested parties should contact Jen Read at Clayton House.

There were no questions from the floor and the report was formally **received** by Synod.

Archdeacon Mark Ireland presented the DMPC Annual report.

There were no questions from the floor and the report was formally **received** by Synod.

8. Proclamation of Canons

None.

9. Questions

Four questions had been received. These questions and the answers provided are attached to the minutes.

The following supplementary questions were received:

Alan Roadley (HoL Burnley Deanery) pointed out that the age of entry to Lay Ministry in other denominations varies from 58 – 70 years and asked if it was understood why some people might feel that the age limit in Blackburn Diocese is unfair.

Bishop Philip said he understood, however the investment put in needs to be balanced against the benefits. He suggested this could be discussed further with Anne Beverley, Director of Ministry.

David O'Brien (HoC, Blackpool Deanery) expressed concern for the stress experienced by people with blemished DBS records going through the assessment process. He asked if there would be any funds available as part of the SMMI grant as extra capacity for safeguarding and whether the safeguarding team is currently big enough to cope with growth within our churches.

Bishop Philip highlighted the importance of not lowering safeguarding standards but said he understood how the DBS process can be difficult for some people to go through. He acknowledged the challenges with safeguarding in urban parishes and how this needs to be balanced with the capacity within the Safeguarding Team.

David O'Brien asked if there was any sympathy to forming a working group to look into whether all pathways have been explored in relation to safeguarding in urban areas.

Bishop Philip explained that the points in his answers had come from parishes.

David O'Brien said he would be interested in convening a group to explore class and equality, which Bishop Philip endorsed.

Tim Cox (Vice-Chair of the House of Laity) asked if there are any plans to evaluate diversity on Diocesan Synod as currently there is no data on this.

Stephen Whittaker (Diocesan Secretary) said he would look into how this might be done.

Leah Vasey-Saunders (HoC Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) pointed out that we cannot measure success without a baseline in terms of diversity: for example, she highlighted that when people are asking for more working class leaders in the room, we may not be aware of those already present!

Bishop Philip suggested adding this to David O'Brien's agenda.

10. Motions

There were no motions received.

The meeting closed with a prayer and hymn.

Signed: 

Dated: 12.3.24