

Diocesan Synod Presidential Address

Saturday July 13th 2024

This is the final Presidential Address after three years of this Synod. Elections have taken place. The next time Synod meets there will be many new people in our midst and many of you will have come to the view that you have done your shift on Diocesan Synod. So I want to start with an enormous thank you to you for all that you have contributed to the Diocese of Blackburn over the past three years.

As we look to the next triennium we do so faced with remarkable and God-given opportunities. Over the course of this Synod, we have seen giving through Parish Share and attendance, especially amongst children, bounce back from Covid. We have witnessed tremendous and growing vitality and energy in most of our parishes which are led by a group of clergy who are wonderfully committed to Christ and to their people and in whom I take immense pride. We have the best church schools in the country. We have new initiatives that are bearing rich fruit, especially our new local congregations, M:Power and the Parish Renewal Programme.

Vision 2026 has given us a missional coherence that all traditions have been able to unite behind. The clarity of the Vision and the detailed work we have done in implementation has now resulted in £25.5m investment from the national church in our Diocese. That is a breath-taking achievement, by far the biggest grant per head of population the national church has ever awarded. It will enable unprecedented levels of investment in ministry to the young, in urban ministry and in the wellbeing of our clergy. With youth ministry already expanding across our Diocese and with our strong partnerships with our schools, we can now pray expectantly for a major movement to Christ amongst the young people of our county.

Great opportunities. But there are also choppy waters ahead. At General Synod earlier this week a motion was passed that sets a direction of travel for the House of Bishops with regard to the Living in Love and Faith process. This means that firm proposals will now be worked up and brought back to Synod that will allow parishes to use standalone services. It begins some work on the development of doctrine that would explore the possibility of clergy entering into same sex marriages. And then, in order to maintain the greatest possible degree of unity, it provides for new structures of delegated episcopal oversight so that clergy and parishes can petition for pastoral and sacramental care from a Bishop who holds their view on this issue.

Many of you here will warmly welcome these developments but also remain very frustrated at the slow pace of progress. Others of you are deeply concerned about the Biblical basis of the proposals and so about your very future in the Church of England.

As the Archbishop of York admitted, the proposals represent a classic Anglican attempt to square a circle. But the cost of change is high, in my view too high which is one reason why I was not able to support the proposals. We now face the prospect of opening up dangerous and irreversible divisions within the Church and of losing the ancient principle of geographical episcopacy.

This is a Diocese full of people who are passionate about what they believe and about what it means to follow Jesus and how that faith is lived out in pastoral ministry. It is that very passion which means that we will need the greatest possible wisdom and courage if we are to navigate together the choppy waters ahead.

It would be an unmitigated catastrophe were the Diocese of Blackburn to lose its hard won missional coherence because of these disagreements. It would be a disaster if our divisions were to undermine our proclamation. And it would be a disaster not for us but for those who are yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Three things will see us through. First, a firm focus on Jesus. It is when we keep our eyes fixed on him and seek him in prayer and in the scripture that we discover anew what it means to be the Church.

Second, real attention to relationships. This Diocese stands out because of the depth and the quality of relationships we build, particularly those we build across divisions. If we can continue to love each other, then we can continue to focus that love on God's world.

Third, by looking out to those who are lost. So often in the church's past it is times of division that have been the times of evangelistic renewal. Don't be afraid of the future. Don't let yourselves be dragged down by doom scenarios. Rather focus on the mission, on proclamation, on service.

So as this synod draws to its close, we have both opportunities and threats. But when has being a Christian ever been easy? Where in the Scriptures did Jesus offer us a soft ride? When has a church made up of sinners ever been perfect? Look to Jesus. Love each other. Reach out to the lost. And we will see what every generation of faithful Christians has seen, which is that God is faithful and he will never let us go.

+Philip Blackburn
July 13th 2024

Diocesan Synod on 13 July 2024

Questions Received

From	To	Question	Response
Susan Procter (Pendle Deanery House of Laity)	Bishop Jill/ Mark Ireland	How does the diocese guide the interview panel in appointing the best candidate as the new incumbent?	The Archdeacon explains the interview process to a PCC at its Vacancy or Pre-Section 11 meeting. This takes place before the Section 11 meeting at which the PCC approves the parish profile and elects two representatives to the interview panel. Members of interview panels are asked to approach their work prayerfully and to undertake training to avoid unconscious bias. The chair of the panel will usually remind a panel that there are two good outcomes to any interview process, either to make a right appointment or to avoid making a wrong appointment. For any appointment to be made the Patron, the Bishop (or occasionally the Archdeacon) and the parish representatives must all be in favour.
Susan Procter (Pendle Deanery House of Laity)	Bishop Jill/ Mark Ireland	If differences occur between the incumbent and parishioners how can the diocese help?	Jesus provides a helpful framework for handling differences between members of the church in Matthew 18.15-17. The key principle here is to try to resolve things personally and privately in the first instance. If the vicar and the parishioner(s) are not able to work things out on their own, then the churchwardens are the best people to speak to. According to Canon E1 churchwardens 'shall be foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the incumbent'. If the churchwardens are unable to bring a resolution then they may seek the help of the Area Dean. Only if these three steps have been exhausted to no avail would the diocese become directly involved, usually through the Archdeacon or their representative.

STRATEGIC MISSION AND MINISTRY INVESTMENT UPDATE

**Carolyn Barton, Director of Vision Delivery and
Deputy Diocesan Secretary**

Aim 1: A Church that Reflects the Communities it Serves

- **A Younger Church** (30 FTE Children's, Families and Youth Workers)
- **A Socio-economically diverse church** (18 Lay Pioneers & Continuation of M:Power Training Programme)
- **A Culturally Diverse Church that is Present in all Communities** (Canon for P&E in North Blackburn & Inter-Cultural Ministry Enabler in north Burnley)

Aim 2: A Parish System Revitalised for Mission

- An expanded Parish Renewal Programme
- Administrators for Key Renewal Parishes
- Planning for investment into Accrington and Burnley – *outcomes to form part of a further application in 2026*

Aim 3: A Transformed Leadership Pipeline

- Radical overhaul of CME / Sabbatical / Retreat pattern
- Feasibility Study re Young Leadership Academy (13-18 year olds) – *outcomes to form part of a further app in early 2026.*
- Curates (5 funded by national church / 5 funded by DBF plus 2 SSM = 12 per year)

What is the latest?

- Full amount approved with:
 - Phases 2 and 3 to be released following independent evaluation of Phase 1
- SMMI Board will welcome an application in 2026 for investment into Young Leadership Academy, Accrington and Burnley.

Next Steps

- Recruitment of new posts
- Finalisation of Application process for parish-based posts and recruitment of new Panel.
- Putting in place all of the governance, management and financial structures to enable the programme to run smoothly.

30 x 'Ignite Team' and 18 x part-time M:Power Lay Pioneers

Panel Meet	Ignite Posts	M:Power Posts
Mar 2025	5	3
Sept 2025	5	6
Mar 2026	5	3
Sept 2026	5	3
Mar 2027	5	3
Sept 2027	5	

30 x 'Ignite Team' & 18 x PT M:Power Lay Pioneers

- Will have dedicated support from a full-time central 'Ignite Project Manager' & 'Urban Ministry Enabler'
- Will be able to access mentoring and training (up to degree level for Ignite posts)
- As well as regular networking meetings with others working in similar roles, once a year there will be an annual celebratory project event sponsored by senior clergy
- Posts will be recruited & employed by the parish – *supported by new HR Advisor.*
- Funding will taper over time with the local contribution expected as follows:
Yr 1 = 0%; Yr 2 = 10%; Yr 3 = 30%; Yr 4 = 50%; Yr 5 = 75%; Yr 6 = 100%; Yr 7 = 100% - *supported by new Funding Support Officer.*

Questions on SMMI?





DISCERNING THE NEXT DIOCESAN VISION

**Carolyn Barton, Director of Vision Delivery and
Deputy Diocesan Secretary**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Vision 2026: To see 'Healthy Churches Transforming Communities' through:

- Making Disciples of Jesus Christ
- Being Witnesses to Jesus Christ
- Growing Leaders for Jesus Christ
- Inspiring Children and Young People

...undergirded by prayer.

Looking Back, Looking Out and Looking Ahead

- Discernment of the next Diocesan Vision



Step 1: Listening - to God and to Lancashire

- *Sept – Dec 24*: Consultation with all parishes / launch consultation with CofE schools
- *Jan – June 25*:
 - Deanery Synods
 - Headteachers & Incumbents conference
 - Youth Forum

....as well as a wide range of voices from across the County.

Step 2: July to Sept 2025 - Pooling Ideas and Discerning

Step 3: Oct to Apr 2026 - Reflecting Back & Working out the Detail (How will we get there?)

Step 4: May to July 2026 - Reflecting back the new Draft Vision Implementation Plan

Step 5: August to October 2026 - Finalising the new Vision Implementation Plan

Launch of New Diocesan Vision:

November 2026



HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES



BUDGET 2025

**David Barlow, Chair of the Diocesan Board of
Finance**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

‘Healthy Churches Transforming Communities’

- We desire to make the Good News about Jesus Christ more widely known, because we believe:
 - He is the One who brings ‘life in all its fullness’
 - Healthy church communities have a positive and transformative impact on our society.
- We will work together to achieve this by making disciples of Jesus Christ; being witnesses to Jesus Christ, growing leaders and inspiring young people for Jesus Christ

Budget Points for 2025

- **Increase in overall parish share request 6% for 2025.**
- **Stipend and salary increase circa 3%, following an increase of circa 8% in 2024.**
- **92.8% of overall share requested had been collected in 2023 which has been the highest collection rate yet, with over 81% of parishes contributing over 90% of final share requests.**

Budget Points for 2025

- **Continue to support Vision 2026 by maintaining clergy stipendiary numbers at 154FTE**
- **Overall Parish Share increase 2019 – 2025 of 15% 5% less than increase in CPI.**
- **73% of Parish Share goes directly to stipendiary ministry and clergy housing.**
- **Central Costs 6.6%**
- **Potential Significant use of reserves of up to £1.5m in 2025**



THANK YOU

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Motion

This Synod approves,

- 1. An amendment to the Parish Share calculation to increase the number of years in the rolling average from 3 to 5**
- 2. An amendment in the parish share calculation cost of ministry housing to include:**
 - a. The per parsonage budget of £7,000**
 - b. The per property cost of the property team £700 and**
 - c. The relocation and removal grants for incumbent £940**

Motion

This Synod accepts,

- 1. The increase to parish share of 7% and the reduction of the support fund by 1%. A net increase of 6%**
- 2. The 2025 parish share budget with expenditure of £13.8 million**



VOCATIONS

Anne Beverley, Director of Ministry

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

National – Recommendation for Training

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Stipendiary	370	399	403	417	321	263	229	tbc
SSM	177	188	151	165	155	114	113	tbc
Total	547	587	554	582	476	377	342	tbc
% us 600 benchmark	91%	97%	92%	97%	79%	62%	57%	tbc



Blackburn - Deacons to be Ordained

Year	Stipendiary	Self-Supporting	Imported
2024	10	5	6
2025	1	3	9 required
2026	2	2	8 required
2027	1	3*	9 required



Priorities

Team restructure and recruitment
Growing younger and more diverse
Calling unlikely leaders



You Can Help
Pray
Network and Promote

