

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

held on Saturday 13 July 2024 at St Bartholomew's Blackburn

Present

1 Member of the House of Bishops (50%)
28 Members of the House of Clergy (45%)
22 Members of the House of Laity (40%)
1 Observer

Apologies

1 Member of the House of Bishops (50%)
16 Members of the House of Clergy (26%)
10 Members of the House of Laity (18%)

1. Opening Worship

The meeting commenced with the Eucharist led by **Bishop Philip**.

2. Welcome and Presidential Address

Tim Cox (Vice-Chair of the House of Laity) chaired the meeting and welcomed Synod members. **Bishop Philip** addressed the Synod and thanked current members for their service over the last triennium. His presidential address is attached.

3. Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Update

Carolyn Barton (Director of Vision Delivery) provided an update on the recent good news that our SMMI grant funding bid for £25.5 million had been successful with £12 million being awarded in the first phase and £13.5 million agreed in principle for two further phases, subject to evaluation of the first phase. The slides are attached.

The next steps will be recruiting the new posts to support the programme, finalising the application process for parish based posts and putting into place the governance, management and financial structures for the programme.

Questions were invited.

Jonny Lee (Blackpool House of Clergy) asked how the tapering of funding will work for parish based roles.

Carolyn Barton said it is hoped the roles will be long term and that parishes will be able to sustain the posts over time.

Awena Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe House of Laity) asked if any parishes will be excluded from applying for funding.

Carolyn Barton explained that parishes in receipt of SDF funding, vacant parishes, parishes who do not engage with parish share meetings when unable to contribute share and parishes that do not engage with required safeguarding procedures will be unable to apply. Guidance notes will be made available setting out who can apply.

Awena Carter asked if parishes will be eligible if they receive a National Church grant for a particular purpose .

Carolyn Barton pointed out that only 2 or 3 parishes receive national funding at the moment.

David Whitehouse (Leyland Deanery House of Clergy) asked if any thought had been given to the supply of people that might fill the parish based roles.

Carolyn Barton explained that a pipeline of suitable candidates for the Lay Pioneer roles will come from M:Power. The pipeline for Children's Worker roles is less clear and Synod were asked to pray for this. It is hoped that a number of attractive elements built into these roles will appeal to suitable candidates.

Emma Swarbrick (Kirkham Deanery House of Clergy) asked if there will be any capacity for part-time roles.

Carolyn Barton confirmed this will be possible although due to the mentoring and training involved it will not be possible for all the roles to be part-time.

Munawar Din (Vice-Chair of the House of Clergy and Burnley Deanery House of Clergy) asked how the presence and engagement and intercultural roles in Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley deaneries will be sustained into the future.

Carolyn Barton explained that consideration needs to be given to how the Canon for Presence and Engagement will be sustained. There are no plans for the Deanery to sustain this role. The Intercultural Ministry Enabler will need to be sustained on the ground, possibly through further grants etc.

4. Review of Vision 2026 and the Future Vision for the Diocese

Carolyn Barton (Director of Vision Delivery) presented on planning the next Vision for the Diocese. Her slides are attached.

Synod were asked to consider two questions:

Who and/or which groups would you suggest should be included in the consultation for the next Vision for the Diocese? What other comments and/or wisdom would you like to feed in to steer the planning of the process to discern the next Vision?

Feedback was gathered and will be used to inform the process going forward.

5. Budget 2025

Nick Aves (Vice-Chair of the Board of Finance and Chair of the Finance Committee) presented the following motions to amend the formula used for calculating Parish Share requests:

1. **“An amendment to the Parish Share calculation to increase the number of years in the rolling average from 3 to 5.”**

And

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 1 would give parishes with new congregations time to establish them. Motion 2 would base the housing element in the parish share calculation on actual costs, removal and relocation expenses and the cost of the Property Team per parish and was felt to be a fairer formula.

Questions were invited.

As motion 2 stated the cost of ministry housing for this year, **David Barlow (Chair of the Board of Finance)** suggested an amendment to avoid returning to Synod each year to agree the cost.

Simon Cox (Blackpool Deanery House of Clergy) suggested removing the costs from a-c of motion 2 and adding a final sentence stating this year's costs are as an example.

This was seconded by **David Barlow**.

Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe House of Clergy) pointed out that if inflation continues to grow the cost of housing could grow significantly without Synod's knowledge.

Nick Aves explained the cost would still need to be included somewhere in the share calculation.

Mark Wolverson (Leyland House of Clergy) asked if there was a scheme for those who are not able to give the full amount.

Nick Aves answered that all parishes can request a parish share meeting. If the amount is not affordable then the share request can be adjusted.

Simon Cox pointed out that if the cost changes drastically it could still be brought back to Synod.

James Nash (Preston Deanery House of Clergy) felt that the removal amount seemed high and asked if clergy were relocating more often.

Nick Aves agreed it seemed high but confirmed the figure is correct.

Jonny Lee (Blackpool Deanery House of Clergy) asked if the figures in 2c included curates and associate ministers.

Ruth McGaughey (Head of Finance and Deputy Diocesan Secretary) confirmed it includes all stipendiary clergy. The costs of relocation and removals for curates, bishops and incumbents are included and apportioned per incumbent.

David Barlow explained that motion 2 is more about how the cost is calculated rather than changing the cost itself.

Stephen Whittaker (Diocesan Secretary) added that the motion was seeking to move to a fixed cost.

David Whitehouse (Leyland Deanery House of Clergy) stated that 2a and 2b are likely to be more acceptable to parishes but proposed removing 2c and moving the cost into RWA.

Mark Ireland (Archdeacon of Blackburn) was in favour of retaining 2c as this would be more transparent.

Ann Beverley (Director of Ministry) added that the cost of housing is part of the cost of ministry and that including this in RWA would penalise churches trying to grow.

Chris Boland (Preston Deanery House of Clergy) asked if the cost would be applied to House for Duty clergy.

Nick Aves confirmed that it would.

David Whitehouse moved:

“To remove item (c) from motion 2.”

The amended motion was **not carried** with the majority voting against it.

Simon Cox moved the following amended motion 2:

“An amendment in the parish share calculation cost of ministry housing to include:
a. The per parsonage budget
b. The per property cost of the property team and
c. The relocation and removal grants per allocated ministry

For example, this year the cost would be a £7,000 per parsonage budget, a £700 per property cost of the property team and a £940 relocation and removal grant per incumbent.”

The amended motion was **carried** by majority vote.

Nick Aves moved motion 1:

“An amendment to the Parish Share calculation to increase the number of years in the rolling average from 3 to 5.”

The motion was **carried** nem con.

David Barlow (Chair of the Board of Finance) presented the Parish Share Budget for 2025. His slides are attached.

A short film on how the parish share budget is used followed. He urged Synod to encourage the use of this among their congregations. The film is available on YouTube and on the diocesan website.

The Budget had been produced by the Bishop’s Budget Team and independently scrutinised by the Budget Scrutiny Committee before endorsement by the DBF Board for submission to Diocesan Synod.

David Barlow reminded Synod that the Parish Share request enables the Board and Leadership Team to carry out the Diocesan Vision, which includes maintaining stipendiary ministry levels. Share increases from 2019 to 2024 had been held at 3%. He thanked all parishes for their share contributions over the past year. An increased number of parishes are now contributing full parish share, over 50% without support and over 74% with support. 92.8% of share requested was received in 2023 which had been the best ever recorded.

The proposed net increase to share for 2025 was 6% which included a further 1% decrease in the Parish Share Support Fund. Parishes who are unable to contribute the full amount were encouraged to contact Ruth McGaughey or Julie Grimshaw at Clayton House to arrange a meeting with DBF representatives to discuss how they can help.

Synod members were encouraged to attend one of the Generosity Presentations in the Autumn, together with members of their PCC. Details can be found on the Diocesan website.

The following budget points were highlighted:

- Stipendiary clergy numbers will be maintained in 2025 at approx 154 full time equivalent posts
- The 2025 budget includes a 3% increase in clergy stipends
- Budget increases since 2021 have been 5% below the lower rate of inflation (CPI)
- 73% of the share request goes to support stipendiary clergy and their housing cost, rising to 80% when future ministry costs are included.
- Total Central Office costs account for 6.6% of total costs
- The impact of parish share receipts could result in the DBF using £1.6m of its reserves in 2025 although actual performance in the last 5 years has been better than budgeted.

As the Diocese does not have major historical assets, 85% of funding (excluding grants) comes from parishes. Bishop Philip continues to pursue the case for a fairer distribution of assets within the Church of England. There are also ongoing discussions with the National Church regarding how they can better support dioceses.

The Bishops Budget Team, the Budget Scrutiny Team, the DBF Board and the Finance Team at Clayton House were thanked for their efforts in preparing the budget.

Questions and comments were invited.

David Whitehouse (Leyland Deanery House of Clergy) asked whether the Being Witnesses work under SMMI was for the Diocese to carry out or for Parishes to carry out.

Stephen Whittaker replied that the work would be carried out by parishes. There will be a small central team to support the new roles in parishes working at local level.

David Barlow moved:

“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.”**

The motion was carried **unanimously**.

David Barlow and Nick Aves were thanked for their work.

6. Year of Prayer and Renewal

Mark Ireland (Archdeacon of Blackburn) and Joy Rushton (Being Witnesses Manager) introduced the topic.

An interview with **Tracy Swindells (Kirkham Deanery House of Clergy)** on how God is answering her parish's prayers for growth and renewal followed. Tracy spoke of their engagement with the Parish Renewal Programme, how they have prayed for growth and how God had answered their prayers.

A PCC resource pack and an Inspiring Children and Young People resource pack will be made available for the Year of Prayer and Renewal. Joy Rushton will email Synod asking for ideas on what they would like the packs to include.

7. Vocations

Anne Beverley (Director of Ministry) presented on Vocations. Her slides are attached.

The Diocese is growing its own vocations due to the shortage of people coming forward nationally for ordained ministry training.

The Growing Leaders Team is currently being restructured and developed to ensure the infrastructure is in place to deal with an influx of candidates. There will be an emphasis on encouraging a younger and more diverse candidate and to look at ways of ensuring that people who come into the process with little or no previous education can still acknowledge and fulfil their calling.

Synod were asked to talk to people about vocations and to pray for vocations in their parishes, in the Diocese and as a whole.

Questions and comments were invited.

Emma Swarbrick (Kirkham Deanery House of Clergy) asked if there will be a plan for ministry experience schemes.

Anne Beverley explained that there were no current plans but the need is met in a similar way through M:Power and ordinand training.

Ann Hearnshaw (Poulton Deanery House of Laity) asked about age limits for ordination.

Anne Beverley confirmed that there are national age limits which depend on the type of ministry, although these can be overruled by the Bishop. If someone has a calling then Ann will work for this to be fulfilled.

Cindy Rigney (Tunstall Deanery House of Clergy) asked about linking in with high schools, eg schools career fairs.

Anne Beverley confirmed that there will be two young vocations advisers who will be doing this.

Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery House of Clergy) asked about plans to support people and enable people to flourish, particularly in connection with encouraging diversity.

Anne Beverley explained that if a person has a genuine divine call then every effort will be made to help them flourish and develop the resilience needed to meet the demands of ministry.

Paul Bye (Lancaster and Morecambe House of Clergy) wanted to know if the issues around LLF were affecting people coming forward for ordination.

Anne Beverley believed this could be one of the reasons but did not think it was having a massive impact.

Richard Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery House of Laity) asked if LLM training and ordained ministry training was a barrier to people in middle life who have other demands on their time.

Anne Beverley explained that we need to ensure our leaders are theologically robust. As there are people from all ages groups within the Diocese who are completing the training, she did not think this was having a big impact. ALM training is available for people who do not feel able to complete the two-year training.

Clive Lord (Blackpool Deanery House of Clergy) asked about growing people for chaplaincy in hospitals and other institutions.

Anne Beverley spoke of the difficulties in recruiting people for roles in institutions and felt that we need to look more at curacies in chaplaincies going forward.

8. Proclamation of Canons

Stephen Whittaker proclaimed Amending Canon 43 concerning the demise of the Crown and numerous miscellaneous amendments and statutory updates.

9. Questions

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

There were no supplementary questions.

10. Motions

Paul Ronson (General Synod and Garstang Deanery House of Laity) introduced a motion on behalf of Garstang Deanery Synod. The motion had already been passed in three other Dioceses.

Anne Beverley (Director of Ministry) asked if the intention behind the motion was to distribute the funds evenly across the dioceses or if a greater proportion would go to poorer dioceses.

Paul Ronson replied that the detail behind the motion would need to be worked out.

Marc Wolverson (Leyland Deanery House of Clergy) spoke about using the income on investment rather than spending the capital itself.

Paul Ronson agreed this would be sensible; if a good level of investment growth could be achieved the income could be used to maintain clergy numbers.

Paul Ronson moved:

“that this Synod calls upon the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council to undertake everything necessary to effect a redistribution of financial resources directly to Diocesan Boards of Finance Stipendiary Funds equivalent to the transfer of assets to the Church Commissioners from Diocesan Boards of Finance since the settlement of 1997 (£2.6 billion) to support parish ministry in the ways discerned locally to be most effective in enabling growth and sustaining the Church of England’s commitment to be a Christian presence in every community.”

The motion was **carried unanimously**.

Tim Cox (Vice-Chair of the House of Laity) announced that he was stepping down and this was his last Synod.

The Synod thanked Tim, and all synod members who would be stepping down at the end of the triennium, for their service.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

+ Philip Blackburn

Signed:

Dated: 26th July 2024