



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

held on Saturday 18 July 2026 at St Bartholomew's Blackburn

Present

3 Members of the House of Bishops (100%)
22 Members of the House of Clergy (34.5%)
33 Members of the House of Laity (50%)

Apologies

12 Members of the House of Clergy (19%)
16 Members of the House of Laity (24%)

1. Eucharist

The meeting was chaired by **Fleur Green (Vice Chair of the House of Clergy)** and opened with the Eucharist.

2. Welcome and Presidential Address

Bishop Philip addressed the Synod, setting out his top 10 highlights from Vision 2026. His full presidential address is attached. He also highlighted the growing crisis in Liwolo, explaining that this year's Harvest Appeal will be raising funds for the Diocese of Liwolo.

3. Draft Vision Implementation Plan

Carolyn Barton (Director of Vision Delivery) presented the Vision 2026 Review Paper and the Joyful Followers of Jesus Delivery Roadmap. Her slides are attached.

(a) Review of Vision 2026

Carolyn Barton explained that the report summarised widespread consultation from across the diocese and from the National Vision and Strategy Consultant. It included the main achievements under Vision 2026, items that hadn't progressed as planned, learning points, key data points and the key themes used to guide the planning of the new vision.

There were no questions from the floor.

Synod members were then given a brief opportunity to share in groups their one highlight from Vision 2026.

Bishop Philip moved:

“That this Synod takes note of the Review of Vision 2026.”

The motion was **unanimously carried**.

(b) “Joyful Followers of Jesus” Delivery Roadmap

Carolyn Barton explained that, following Synod’s approval of the headlines for the new Vision in October 2025, there had been widespread consultation across the diocese and the Delivery Roadmap was now presented to Synod for approval. If approved, the new diocesan vision would be launched on Saturday 14th November at St Michaels CofE High School in Chorley.

The structure of the Roadmap can be found in her slides.

Following consultation, consideration had been given to adding the word ‘prayer’ to the wording of the Vision and there is now a significant section on prayer in the Roadmap. A more accessible, lighter version of the Roadmap will be made available and videos are being developed over the summer to ensure as many people as possible understand and engage with the new vision. New branding will also be available in due course.

Synod were then given a brief opportunity to discuss the new vision among themselves before questions were invited.

David Gascoigne (Poulton-le-Fylde House of Laity) expressed concern that Section 2 of the Roadmap did not sufficiently make clear that our joy is grounded in the Gospel. He emphasised that God sent his Son to die for us and rescue us from our sin, and that our joy is therefore rooted in something already accomplished. He noted that, while Section 2 was not contrary to this, those unfamiliar with the Gospel would not receive that explanation from the section as currently drafted.

Bishop Joe agreed that whilst we rejoice in the Gospel, the Roadmap was intended to show how the Diocese might gather around the Vision. Whilst the document does say this, it also needs to address wider aspects. He described the section as a theological reflection on what it means to be a joyful follower of Jesus rooted in what the Bible tells us.

Jonny Lee (Blackpool Deanery House of Clergy) asked for clarification on what Synod was being asked to approve, noting that parts of the Roadmap were still under development. He also felt that parents and carers were not sufficiently reflected in the section on Inspiring Young People and they should also be recognised as primary disciples in the Loving our Neighbour section.

Hannah Boyd (Leyland Deanery House of Clergy) felt that the Loving our Neighbour section should include more on the International Church and about recognising our place as Christians around the world.

Carolyn Barton explained that Synod was being asked to approve the wording of the Roadmap except for the areas still being developed which will be honed and consulted on further with Chaplains, the Cathedral and Whalley Abbey.

The section on Link Dioceses will be fleshed out, giving the document more of an international flavour and the point made regarding the international church will be considered further.

Carolyn emphasised the importance of parents and carers, noting that if this wasn’t adequately reflected in the document that it will be looked at further.

She added that supporting promotional material is being developed to help to explain the meaning of being a Joyful Follower of Jesus which should address the point raised in relation to the Gospel.

Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery House of Clergy) stated she was encouraged by the section on church buildings but was conscious of the disparity in resourcing this work and she emphasised the importance of prayer for this.

Richard Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery House of Laity) felt that some important points in the Knowing Jesus section had not been presented cohesively. He emphasised the importance of knowing Jesus through reading Scripture and engaging in daily reflection on the Gospel. He also felt that there was insufficient reference to the First Commandment and to God the Father.

Carolyn Barton advised that there is an ongoing piece of work to help elevate levels of prayer and disseminate prayer requests under the new vision which includes church buildings. She added that she will seek the views of the Senior Church Buildings Officer in response to the point raised regarding church buildings.

Jane Atkinson (Archdeacon of Blackburn) confirmed she had heard the points raised regarding the Knowing Jesus section and added that the paper will be refined with more detail as we move forward.

Sam Dickinson (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery House of Clergy) noted there was no reference to advocating for unborn babies and those who cannot speak for themselves. He emphasised this was a significant omission from the paragraph on Page 23 concerning challenging injustice.

Peter Roberts (Kirkham Deanery House of Laity) agreed with the comments regarding the Knowing Jesus section and asked if deanery synods could take a more active role in this area as well as a greater involvement with the Prayer Enablers work.

Bishop Philip explained the paragraph on challenging injustice had been deliberately drafted without a list of detailed issues although racial justice and climate change had been included as national priorities. Parishes will be encouraged to determine their own priorities in this area.

Carolyn Barton said she would welcome deanery feedback regarding the Knowing Jesus section. A series of videos will be developed over the summer on the individual strands for use by parishes and deaneries. Carolyn would be happy to visit deaneries as often as needed.

She explained that the Prayer Enablers initiative is an exciting element of the new vision, which is intended to be highly flexible, reflecting our diverse traditions and is intended to encourage a grassroots culture of prayer.

Bishop Philip moved:

“This Synod approves the Vision Delivery Roadmap for the new diocesan vision: Joyful Followers of Jesus”.

The motion was **carried** with two abstentions.

4. Safeguarding Annual Report

Cath Smith (Diocesan Safeguarding Officer) summarised the main points within the Safeguarding Annual Report, highlighting that safeguarding arrangements remain strong.

The report emphasised increasing safeguarding demand and case complexity, ongoing work to strengthen cathedral safeguarding, the importance of hearing the voices of victims and survivors, and significant national safeguarding developments. Synod were asked to note the national shift to “duty to comply”, the importance of prevention through safer recruitment and the importance of listening to the insights of victims and survivors.

Questions were invited.

Jacqueline Stamper (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery House of Laity) expressed gratitude to the Safeguarding Team and asked about the reasons for the increasing demand on the team.

Cath Smith explained that parishes have engaged well. Concerns that are causing volume are mainly low-level advice, guidance and support which focus on prevention rather than a large increase in high level cases. However, the response to cases is now more complex and involved.

Rosemary Lyon (Leyland Deanery House of Laity) thanked Cath for the in-person training course explaining they have made a big difference.

Sam Dickinson (Blackburn with Darwen Deanery House of Clergy) asked what is the best ‘at a glance’ resource which explains parishes’ legal duties bearing in mind the national shift to ‘duty to comply’.

Cath Smith recommended the overview e-manual document on the Church of England website as well as the safeguarding newsletter as this will signpost parishes to what will be useful.

Ruth Haldane (Whalley Deanery House of Laity) expressed concern regarding the time spent due to parishes not complying with safer recruitment and asked what action is being taken.

Cath Smith replied that constant messaging has been the main way to get the message across. She highlighted the importance of prevention and raising awareness.

Matthew Lockwood (Blackpool Deanery House of Clergy) spoke about issues in his parish including responding to and helping people, dealing with local authorities and managing concerns raised with them.

Cath Smith confirmed she would like to be able to assist parishes with these issues especially when they have little capacity and she will give this some thought. She highlighted that transparency from parishes regarding how they respond to concerns is helpful.

Synod noted the contents of the report.

5. Youth Forum Update

Craig Abbott (Head of Children, Youth and Chaplaincy) presented the proposed Youth Charter. The Charter had been shaped in consultation with the Youth Forum, following the ideas that came out of March Synod regarding how we could make churches more youth friendly.

The Youth Forum observed how some of the responsibility for enabling churches to be more youth friendly lies with individuals in churches, some of it with the church and some of it with the deanery/diocese.

Questions were invited.

Gregor Stewart (Garstang Deanery House of Clergy) said that the Youth Forum had had a significant impact on the faith of one young person from his church who was a member of the Forum. He added that Forum members felt listened to by the Diocese.

Peter Lillicrap (Chair of the House of Clergy) asked about the size of the forum and the process for a young person to join it.

Craig Abbott advised that around 35 young people were on the Forum, with attendance varying between 15 and 20 at each meeting. Where possible, no more than two young people attend from any one parish. Anyone interested in joining should speak to Craig or a member of his team.

Bishop Jill added that she would like to encourage children's voices being heard within churches too.

Craig Abbott agreed it would be refreshing to hear children's voices within our churches and confirmed the importance of this.

Bishop Philip said that every person in every church has a responsibility for nurturing young people.

Craig Abbott echoed the importance of ordinary members of the congregation taking an active interest in young people's lives.

Bishop Philip moved that:

"This Synod fully endorses the Youth Charter and pledges to welcome, nurture and retain young people and calls on every parish to join in adopting the charter and publicly commit to youth ministry."

The motion was **carried unanimously**.

Standing orders were suspended.

6. Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance followed. The minutes were recorded separately.

7. 2027 Diocesan Budget

Standing orders were reinstated.

At this point in the meeting, it was confirmed that the meeting was not quorate and that the Diocesan Budget would need to come back for full approval at the October Synod.

David Barlow (Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance) presented the 2027 Budget. His slides are attached to the minutes.

The 2027 Budget had been prepared in the context of the Diocese's new vision, "Joyful Followers of Jesus", and is intended to support mission, growth and local ministry.

He highlighted investment through the Diocesan Investment Programme, including support for youth and young people's ministry, lay pioneers and evangelists, curates, and the development of new leadership capacity.

Stipend costs are projected to increase by £273,000, mainly due to a 3% inflationary uplift and additional curates funded through investment programmes. The projected level of vacancies has been increased from 14 to 20 to reflect current clergy recruitment challenges, although it is hoped this will reduce in future years.

Housing costs are expected to increase by £199,000, reflecting planned maintenance to ensure clergy housing remains safe, decent and fit for purpose.

Parish share receipts are budgeted to increase by approximately £200,000, representing a 2.4% increase following modest increases in the previous two years.

Free reserves are expected to reduce from £8.8 million to approximately £8 million in 2027.

Looking ahead, a further £3.5 million to £4.5 million is expected to be required over the next four to five years in order to keep parish share requests at modest levels.

David Barlow emphasised that the budget was ultimately about helping parishes to flourish and supporting people and mission, rather than being focused solely on money.

Parishes were invited to give thanks for God's provision and for the generosity which already sustains ministry across the Diocese. Generous giving was presented as a joyful response to God's grace, rooted in worship, trust and gratitude. Parishes were also encouraged to pray for growth in faith and discipleship, recognising the connection between spiritual and financial health.

Where Parish Share presents a challenge, parishes are encouraged to contact the Diocesan Team to arrange a support meeting.

There were no questions from the floor.

David Barlow thanked Ruth McGaughey and the Finance Team for preparing the budget, the Leadership Team and Board colleagues for their support, and Bishop Philip for inviting him to continue as Chair after his appointment by Bishop Julian.

He also thanked Synod members for their courtesy and support during his time in the role.

Bishop Philip paid tribute to David's exceptional chairing of the Board of Finance and his transformative contribution over recent years.

Bishop Philip proposed a vote of thanks to David, which was **carried unanimously**.

Synod were invited to sing "A Vote of Thanks to the Outgoing Chair" composed by Bishop Jill and Archdeacon Jane to the music of 'Summer Loving'.

8. Proclamation of Canons

Stephen Whittaker proclaimed Amending Canon No 44 concerning the ministry of Armed Forces Chaplains.

9. Questions

One question had been received. The question and the answer provided are attached.

No supplementary questions were asked.

10. Motions

None.

The meeting closed with a blessing.

Signed:

Dated: