

Bishop's Address by Rt Revd Vivienne Faulk

In her address to Diocesan Synod, Bishop Viv drew on St Luke's narratives of journeys, in particular the road to Emmaus and Philip's meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. She asked who was learning from whom in the meeting and what truth was discovered by them both as a result.

She said: *"The story comes in a sequence of encounters in which the brand-new church finds that the message of Jesus is not only for the Jewish people.*

"Luke tells us a story about a journey, a journey which has at its core the search for truth, discussing the scriptures and what they mean, talking about who Jesus was. Are Philip and the eunuch learning from each other here? And does Philip learn that the way of Jesus is even more inclusive than he'd thought?"

"For the Ethiopian, the search is for an interpreter, and for a faith community: hence the demand for baptism, the rite the church adopted for initiation because it included more than circumcised men. The Ethiopian now belonged. For Philip, I surmise the search, in his journeys beyond the first Christian communities, was for a map to describe for him the wideness of God's mercy."

Downloads and Links

- [Bristol DBF: Annual Report 2018 - summary](#)
- [Bristol DBF: Annual Report & Financial Statements](#)
- [Bishop's Council and Board of Directors report May 2019](#)
- [Updated Financial Plan to 2020 \(cover note\)](#)
- [Updated Financial Plan to 2020](#)
- [Safeguarding Annual Report 2018](#)
- [House for Duty policy review](#)
- [Amending Canon 38 explanation](#)
- [Written questions](#)
- [Bishop Viv's Synod Address](#)
- [Pastoral Principle Cards](#)

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DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT

8 June 2019

Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together

With a Synod that is increasingly engaging enthusiastically and passionately with difficult topics of mission and ministry, members considered how the Church could relate well together.

The main topic of discussion was the Pastoral Principles, a set of six prompts which invite church communities to consider and discuss their life together as a diverse community. The resources focus on LGBTI+ issues but apply to wider issues of diversity.

It was introduced by Ed Shaw, a Licensed Lay Minister who leads Emmanuel City Centre, who is a member of the Pastoral Advisory Group which was tasked by the Archbishop of Canterbury to advise churches on pastoral guidance.

Ed began by asking members to think about topics churches find difficult to discuss. A list of ideas were put forward including money, Brexit and sexuality.

Ed said: *"The English response [to these difficult conversations] is*

silence. It leaves people asking the questions feeling they are out of order and not welcome in the church. By having a conspiracy of silence, it allows us to avoid conflict and lead a quiet life.

"But what if people want help with a particular area which has been considered a 'no-go' area? What does church experience feel like for them?"

He then introduced the Pastoral Principles, which have been designed to help churches examine afresh life together.

Ed said: *"The Pastoral Principles are to challenge all of us. It helps us to recognise those evils that are present in our hearts and our lives and our church communities. Which of these evils do we see in our own hearts? We should think about this before we think about anybody else."*

A session was then facilitated with members asked to consider how we all might speak into the silences around the lived experiences of LGBTI+ people.

Members reflected on the need to find space in churches for non-confrontational debates; they also commented on the need to be welcoming to all, regardless of their views and experiences.

Bishop Viv concluded this part of the meeting by reflecting on how to extend these kinds of discussions well across the Diocese.

Safeguarding Annual Report

The Diocese of Bristol has now published the Safeguarding Annual Report for 2018.

This report provides information about the progress which has been made through 2018 and current safeguarding arrangements in the Diocese of Bristol.

Mal Munday, Interim Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group, emphasised the need to ensure that safeguarding remained a top priority for everybody in the church and not just those in leadership.

He told members: *“If we are a church that wants to welcome the poor and the broken, we must make sure that we have our house in order.”*

“We need to do something. We need a massive culture shift. We

need to keep an eye on the people who are vulnerable in our churches. The challenge does not stop at the dog collar, but at the wider membership of the church. If we do not get this right, then this will be an organisational killer. No change is not an option.”

Referring to Hebrews 12, Mal said that safeguarding was a race that was already being run and he praised the Safeguarding Team for the rigor they brought to the issue in the Diocese.

But he warned about the creation of culture where the team was demonised for wanting to ensure that every step was taken to ensure the Church was a safe place for all.

Mal said: *“We need to move away from a culture of ‘them and us’, where church members complain about being ‘made’ to take part in training or having a DBS check done. We are all busy, but we have to move to a place where we understand the vital need for the DBS checks or the training. Because we need to get to a place where abuse stops happening.”*

“As Christians, we believe God is mighty and can do anything. God has given us free will, which can be used for good, bad or neutral. We have to choose to be the step change that we need.”

Updated Financial Plan

Andrew Lucas, chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance, presented [the annual report](#) and gave an update on the Financial Plan. He made it clear that, without the progression of property sales and parishes meeting their Parish Share commitments, the Diocese would face a deficit of £700,000. This would lead to a reduction rather than increase in paid parish ministry and support.

“Parish Share still does not fund the cost of current parish ministry,” he said. *“It therefore does not fund our investment into future ministry - our curates and ordinands – or vital support from the diocesan office.”*

“Synod last year had faith that we would find the extra amount in Parish Share. 60% of our churches did increase their share last year. Giving has gone up overall in the last few years, but it is not reflected in all Parish Share commitments.”

“If we were benchmarked against other dioceses, we should be able to support a Parish Share of over £6million rather than £5.4million.”

“The question for PCCs is should they think of Parish Share as the first line in their budgets?”

Members were asked to consider what key message they could take back to their parishes.

House for Duty policy

Ven Michael Johnson, acting Archdeacon of Bristol, gave feedback from the discussions around House of Duty.

A review of the current policy by the Bishop’s Staff and Finance Committee concluded it should be maintained in line with the current Strategic Plan and owing to the lack of housing for such a ministry.

However, the Bishop’s Staff also proposed a more holistic review is done as part of the strategic planning for 2021 to 2025 in the light of other ministry policies.

The option for further review and consideration was welcomed by those who spoke in the discussion.

Question Time

Written questions regarding parish share and the Setting God’s People Free programme were submitted. Additional questions were asked about the strategy, funding and provision of ministry on estates, including newer developments.

Oliver Home, Diocesan Secretary, said there had been national church grants for both areas and current SDF grants were applied to these contexts. He anticipated the strategic planning process and further SDF bids would ensure appropriate deployment to all contexts.

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