

Bristol Diocesan Synod Minutes

Date: 22 March 2025
Time: 9.30am to 1.00pm (coffee from 9.00am)
Venue: [STEAM \(Museum of The Great Western Railway\), Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon SN2 2EY](#) and via Zoom.

The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the Diocese of Bristol website at: [Diocesan Synod - Diocese of Bristol](#)

0.	Worship
The Revd Adam Beaumont, Associate Archdeacon, led worship.	
1.	Welcome
<p>The Revd Trudie Wigley, Chair of the House of Clergy, opened the meeting by thanking everyone who attended despite the travel disruptions. She also thanked the DSS team for their efforts in bringing Diocesan Synod together and for making it hybrid so that more participants could attend.</p> <p>As Diocesan Synod often covers sensitive subjects, Trudie Wigley asked members to take into account the range of experience, including lived experience, which everyone brings and that informs their views and beliefs.</p> <p>Whilst there was no intention to unduly limit the expression of anyone's views, Diocesan Synod members were asked to be mindful that not everyone would come from the same perspective, and to keep this in mind when contributing to the synod debate and during conversations with others, including diocesan support staff. Respecting differences helped to uphold the values of generosity of spirit, as well as our legal obligations.</p> <p>The Chair explained that if Diocesan Synod covered any subjects that members, visitors, or DSS staff found upsetting or triggering, they could speak with The Revd Dr. Anthea Colledge for support in the room, or with The Revd Dr. Simon Taylor or Mrs. Geralyn Meehan for support via direct message on Zoom.</p> <p>If anyone required medical attention, Georgina Ross was the trained First Aider.</p> <p>Minutes of the last Meeting</p> <p>The following amendments were requested:</p>	

Existing minute	Changed minute	Requested by
Item 10 states: “Licensed Lay ministers (LLM) – funding for one LLM in each of fourteen priority communities”	Will be amended to: “Funded Lay Ministry Posts - funding for one in each of fourteen priority communities”	The Revd Dr Andy Murray
Item 10 states: “St Agnes in St Paul’s; St Anne’s, Eastville”	Will be amended to: “St Agnes in St Paul’s and St Anne’s, Eastville” so it appears on the list as one context.	The Revd Dr Andy Murray
Item 10 did not include Shine Pinehurst BMO in the list of the fourteen priority communities	Will be amended to include Shine Pinehurst BMO	The Revd Dr Andy Murray

As no other changes were requested, the minutes were deemed approved

Matters Arising

Actions from previous meetings

Actions from previous meeting	Minute ref	Outcome
The Revd Dr Simon Taylor to report to The Revd Toby Boutle any plans to mark the anniversary of the Council of Nicea.	11	ST has been in touch with TB to let him know that the DBF have no specific plans to do this.

The Chair explained that whilst there are not Diocesan wide plans to mark the anniversary, churches might mark the occasion in their own contexts.

Apologies

It was reported that the following apologies had been received, 0 from the House of Bishops, 9 from the of Clergy and 8 from the House of Laity.

It was noted that whilst Mr Bruce Finnamore, Chair of the House of Laity, had given his apologies, he had passed on his prayers and thoughts for the meeting.

Structure of meeting

It was explained that Diocesan Synod had four main parts:

1. **Routine Business:** This includes reports from recent meetings of Bishop's Council, Board of Directors, DMPC, and General Synod.
2. **Living in Love and Faith (LLF):** At this March 2025 Diocesan Synod meeting, Bishop Viv will report on the current state of play following the February 2025 meeting of General Synod. Time will be given for facilitated conversations and feedback afterwards
3. **Updates:** This section focuses on updates on the Diocese of Bristol's target of meeting Carbon Net Zero by 2030, and an update on the Diocese of Bristol Academy Trust (DBAT). It also includes an opportunity for questions.
4. **Good News Stories and Youth Voice:** the closing section of Diocesan Synod will highlight good news stories from the parishes as well as Echo. Echo is designed to allow the young people of our Diocese space to express their faith, ideas and hopes for the church and the wider world and in turn, see their influence ripple through their Church communities.

If anyone wished to speak or ask a question, Diocesan Synod was asked to raise their hand, wait for a microphone, stand (if they are comfortable to do so), say their name and deanery. If anyone has questions and would prefer not to ask them themselves, they might email governance.support@bristoldiocese.org which would be monitored throughout the session.

2. The appointment of members of Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

Diocesan Synod noted those elected to Diocesan Synod and appointment to the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd of:

Mr Chris Bradley (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery)
Mr Phil Townend (Chippenham Deanery)
The Revd Marc Terry (Chippenham Deanery)

3. Bishop's Address

Bishop Viv addressed Diocesan Synod. A fully copy of the address can be found in Appendix 1.

4.	General Synod 4.1 General Synod 4.2 Questions
	<p>4.1 Report</p> <p>Mrs. Christiana Olomolaiye (General Synod Representative) gave a report summarising the work of General Synod at its most recent sessions (10 – 14 February 2025).</p> <p>Minutes of General Synod - February 2025</p> <p>The February 2025 General Synod was held amid safeguarding concerns, which included the resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby and the Bishop of Liverpool. Calls for the resignation of Archbishop Stephen Cotterell were raised, but the Synod proceeded as scheduled.</p> <p>Presidential Address</p> <p>Archbishop Cotterell delivered a reflective address on justice and repentance. The worship session included the Eucharist and ecumenical addresses from Archbishop Urmas Viilma (Estonia) and Archbishop Anne Germond (Canada).</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>The Makin Report highlighted safeguarding failures within the Church. Two proposed models for improvement were debated. Model 3 (maintaining current officers with independent scrutiny) and Model 4 (creating a single independent body). A compromise, Model 3.5, was adopted, and an apology to victims was issued again.</p> <p>Racial Justice</p> <p>Lord Boateng presented the final report on racial justice, urging Synod to take action, including the establishment of a £20 million racial justice board. The motion received strong support and passed successfully.</p> <p>Crown Nominations Committee</p> <p>The importance of confidentiality and Holy Spirit guidance in the appointments process was affirmed, and the secret ballot system for nominations was retained.</p> <p>Diocesan Bishop Appointments</p> <p>Proposals to change the standing orders for diocesan bishop appointments were defeated after strong opposition from Synod members.</p> <p>Financial Update</p> <p>A £200 million fund will be allocated to struggling dioceses, tapering over nine years, with additional annual funding and one-off grants available for necessary structural changes.</p> <p>Working-Class Ministry</p> <p>A motion to support working-class individuals entering ministry passed unanimously. A National Strategy will be developed to further this initiative.</p> <p>Sports and Wellbeing Ministry</p> <p>A presentation on sports ministry highlighted its potential to make the Church younger and more diverse, with greater engagement across communities.</p>

Clergy Conduct Measure

Amendments to the Clergy Conduct Measure, including regulations on the Royal Peculiars, and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, were passed.

Recording Confirmations

A motion to record data on confirmations, emphasizing the candidates' commitment to Christ, was passed.

Growing Younger and More Diverse

A motion to include young adults (18-35) in General Synod was passed by a large majority, reflecting the Synod's commitment to making the Church more inclusive.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

Progress on the LLF process was presented, with some concerns raised about the speed and logistics of implementation.

National Church Governance Measure

Amendments to the National Church Governance Measure, focused on transparency and prioritizing the poorest parishes, were passed.

Mission and Pastoral Measure

Concerns were raised about church closures and consultations on church buildings, signalling the need for further discussion.

Miscellaneous Items

- The **Safeguarding Regulations (Clergy Risk Assessment)** following the IICSA review were moved.
- **Legal officers' fees** were increased by 10%.
- The **motion on fund redistribution in Hereford Diocese** was adjourned for late consideration.

5.

Bishop's Council & Board of Directors report (10 December 2024 and 24 February 2025)

Mrs Alison Rowe, Bishop's Council member, presented the report.

Meeting Overview

- Marked the end of the old triennium; The Rt Revd Viv Faull thanked members for their contributions.
- The new Bishop's Council received training in preparation for their future tasks.

Governance

- Vacancy in See Committee (ViSC): Mr. Richard Bacon elected Chair; Richard Leaman appointed Secretary; Anjali Kanagaratnam and Abby Scott co-opted.

- Diocesan Board of Patronage: Alison Rowe and Eliana Pretorian elected.
- Council reviewed and approved the constitution for a new charitable entity (CIO), with plans for a shadow board.

Transforming Church Together (TC.T) Update

- Progress on TC.T was reviewed, with focus on targeted interventions for 4 parishes (Patchway, St Agnes Bristol, Kingswood/Hanham, and Westbury Park).
- Successes to date included increased attendance (adults and young people), baptisms, and positive outcomes in various projects (eco-church, clergy coaching, etc.).
- Work is underway on a letter to the SMMIB to release funding for the next phase of TC.T.

Ministerial Wellbeing

- Ministerial surveys indicated that clergy feel "weary but hopeful," with workload and finances as key concerns.
- LLMs reported feeling supported but noted challenges like volunteer decreases and service coverage during vacancies.

Staff Wellbeing

- The Diocesan Support Services (DSS) conducted an Employee Engagement Survey with a 73% positive feedback rating.
- Plans for a standing employee voice group are underway.

Education Update

- The 'DBAT Lessons Learned' report was shared, and it was reported that our schools in new trusts are thriving.
- In December 2024 St Michael's School (Stoke Gifford) experienced a fire but swiftly implemented alternative arrangements to ensure the students were well cared for and continued to receive their education without disruption.

Safeguarding

- An independent audit highlighted strong safeguarding practices, with action plans being developed.
- Discussion at General Synod on the safeguarding (options 3 and 4), and whilst there was significant support for option 4, a halfway house (option 3.5, and examine the implications of option 4) was passed.

Financial Update

- Budget concerns due to increased National Insurance costs; we must all make a big effort to encourage increased parish contributions.

- Haysmacintyre auditing the 2024 accounts.
- IT migration and VOIP telephony positively received.

Bishop's Council Induction and Residential

- Induction and residential meetings provided training and discussions on key issues like Racial Justice and youth engagement.
- Contact database established for Diocesan Synod members' skills and experience.

Mission and Pastoral Committee

- Reviewed several matters and recommended suspensions.
- The Diocese continues to be attractive for clergy appointments.

Questions:

Prof Julian Rivers (Bristol West Deanery) requested more details on the new charitable entity.

Richard Leaman explained that the entity would separate the finances of the DBF (Diocesan Board of Finance) and the new entity, enabling it to apply more readily for external funding. Currently, the DBF struggles to attract funding due to its significant reserves.

Ms Auriol Britton (Bristol South Deanery) raised concerns about Westbury Park receiving TC.T funding, noting that it isn't an area of deprivation. Also, the Echo Youth Report highlighted that young people tend to feel safest within their comfort zones. However, she suggested that they should be encouraged to step outside these comfort zones in-order to grow and experience new opportunities.

Richard Leaman responded that the Archidiaconal decision to focus on specific parishes wasn't based on deprivation, but rather on a combination of factors, including readiness, leadership, context, and the potential for support and growth through the TC.T workstreams. While TC.T has previously been offered generally across 12 workstreams to the whole diocese, focusing on specific areas could lead to more impactful results by providing targeted support and advice. The Archdeacons nominated the four parishes (including Westbury Park) based on these factors, not solely on deprivation.

Mrs Alison Rowe (Bishop's Council member) moved:
a) that the Bishop's Council report be received.

The report was received.

	<p>6.1 Update</p> <p>6.2 Table Discussion</p> <p>6.3 Questions and answers</p>
	<p>6.1 Update</p> <p>The Rt Revd Viv Faull provided an update on the ongoing discussions within the Church regarding the ordination and licensing of individuals in same-sex marriages. She highlighted that the question of whether it should be permissible for lay people in same-sex marriages to be called to ordination, and whether clergy who enter into same-sex marriages should be allowed to retain their Bishop's License was being discussed.</p> <p>Bishop Viv acknowledged the diverse opinions within the Church at all levels on these matters and suggested that this should be an area of discussion in the coming months. She highlighted the need for reassurance for parishes that may disagree with the stance of their Diocesan Bishop.</p> <p>She further noted that Bishops would be willing to provide episcopal ministry across boundaries, with sufficient diversity in views among the bishops to accommodate varying perspectives. She also raised the question of how episcopal ministry might be delegated, referencing existing precedents, such as parishes that disagree with the ministry of women receiving ministerial care from the Bishop of Oswestry.</p> <p>In sharing her personal view, Bishop Viv expressed that when a parish seeks care and guidance from another bishop, she feels as though she is being asked to "cast off her child." She acknowledged that her perspective on this issue is influenced by her role as a female bishop, noting that others may have different experiences or views on the matter.</p> <p>6.2 Table Discussions</p> <p>Diocesan Synod discussed in tables the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What discussions of decisions around Prayers of Love and Faith have your PCC and your Deanery Synod arranged? What was the impact? • What information would enable further good discussion at PCC or Deanery Synod meetings? <p>Trudie thanked Synod members for their contributions to the discussions, acknowledging the challenges involved. She noted that today's Synod was originally planned to cover a full agenda with materials from the National Church. However,</p>

due to delays, these resources will be brought to a future Synod for formal discussion.

6.3 Questions and Answers

Mrs. Julia Childerhouse (Chippenham Deanery) raised a concern that the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) initiative had not been discussed at the PCC or Deanery Synod. She pointed out that her church was currently in vacancy and expressed the need for clarity in the parish profile regarding the values and direction of her church. She highlighted that there was no authority within her church to lead these discussions or handle the potential pastoral fallout. As a result, she noted the difficulty in moving forward with a further round of advertising, as both the parish and potential candidates lacked clarity about what to expect.

The Rt Revd Viv Faull noted that resources had been circulated approximately four years ago to assist with discussions surrounding the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) initiative. However, she noted that these resources now needed to be revised and re-circulated in order to better support parishes in their ongoing conversations.

ACTION: Diocesan resources on LLF to be updated and circulated to parishes to aid with discussions.

Mrs Eleanor Vousden (Bristol South Deanery) noted that the Pastoral Principles study process had been very valuable, particularly in terms of helping people think about difficult issues and facilitating important conversations. She highlighted how this process has encouraged dialogue and reflection within parishes, aiding in the overall understanding and approach to the topic.

Mrs. Kate Davison (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) shared her experience of consulting a group of five churches on the LLF. Four churches expressed support, while one agreed to participate on the condition that it would not impact Sunday services.

She also raised the question of whether the PCC is aware of the incumbent's views, noting that this awareness could significantly impact the discussions within the parish.

Charley Maidment (Bristol West), attending via Zoom, through Mr. Cyril Babeev (Public Relations Manager), suggested the need for clear guidance from either the national church or the diocese regarding what topics need to be discussed, what decisions need to be made, and the timeline for these discussions and decisions.

Richard Leaman informed the Synod that the National Church will be asking the diocese 5 or 6 questions within the next two to three months. A special Synod will be held to discuss these questions.

The National Church is producing two or three documents and will seek feedback on two key areas:

1. The principles being discussed in these documents.
2. The workability of these principles.

Once the proposals are completed, they will be circulated to PCCs to facilitate structured discussions, with the goal of collecting feedback rather than making decisions at this stage.

Mr John Spens (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire) highlighted that many PCCs have not yet engaged in discussions regarding LLF. He shared his experience at St. Michael's (Stoke Gifford), where almost every other PCC meeting has dedicated 20-45 minutes for discussions on the topic in small, safe group settings. This approach has helped the parish work through how the church will address the matter. At St. Michael's, there is a 50/50 split between affirming and non-affirming views within the PCC. To facilitate further discussion, the PCC set up a working party to formulate a statement for adoption. Mr Spens expressed that there is much more that could be done and suggested that The Revd Si Jones (simon@stmichaelsbristol.org) would be happy to share his approach with any clergy interested in learning more.

The Revd David Brae (South Gloucestershire and Kingswood Deanery) queried why the decision about LLF in an individual church was PCC decision and not based on the convictions of the priest. Are bishops concerned that there might be difference in opinions.

The Very Revd Dr. Mandy Ford, a member of the National Church's LLF programme board, confirmed that, ultimately, the responsibility for the church lies with the incumbent. While the decision rests with the incumbent, it would be unwise for a priest not to consult their PCC in this process.

The Rt Revd Viv Faull noted that considerable work had been done by Bishop Lee, the previous Bishop of Swindon, on LLF with advisors and facilitators. She emphasized the need to revisit the general LLF discussion as well as the national church questions.

Action: This will be picked up at Bishop's Council and Bishop's Staff meetings, with a more substantive discussion expected at Synod in September.

The discussion was concluded with a prayer led by Nathalie Marshall.

COFFEE

7. Net Zero

7.1 Net Zero Update Report

7.1 Net Zero Update report

Mrs Lindsey McCullam, Director of Estates and Governance, presented Net Zero report.

Carbon Emissions: It was noted that the Diocese had reduced its carbon emissions significantly in 2021, but emissions increased in 2023. This was attributed to the inclusion of more accurate data, as well as a rise in church attendance. There is now greater awareness of what is being measured.

Grants and Funding:

- **31 churches** have accessed a £10,000 grant, which is seen as a quick win to assist churches in their environmental journey. Successful examples include lighting and heating projects, such as under-pew heaters.
- The £5.2M **Demonstrator Churches project**, part of the Church of England's Net Zero Programme, aims to assist 114 churches in 2024 and 2025 with funding for initiatives such as solar panels, heat pumps, insulation, secondary glazing, LED lighting, and infrared heating systems. While the selected projects for Bristol churches are underway, some require additional funding to fully cover the proposed works.
- The **Church Buildings Team** will expand in June, offering wrap-around support for PCCs to care for church buildings and engage with local communities. Collaboration with the **Fundraising and CNZ teams** is ongoing.

Environmental Initiatives:

- **35 churches** are now eligible for the **Net Zero Award** from Bristol Diocese.
- **51 photovoltaic (PV) systems** have been installed on parsonages, with **30 more** planned by the end of 2025.
- **8 air-source heat pumps (ASHPs)** have been installed at parsonages, with **11 more** expected by the end of 2025.
- Full energy upgrades have been completed for **22 parsonages**, with **11 more** expected by the end of 2025.

Schools:

- Five **VA schools** will install PV systems in 2025 as part of a larger decarbonisation effort supported by the **public sector decarbonisation scheme**.

Biodiversity: Information was presented via a PowerPoint, but the video could not be played due to technical difficulties. The video was circulated in the meeting papers, so Diocesan Synod members may watch it outside of the meeting.

Supporting Parishes:

- Recognizing the many responsibilities of PCCs, there is a commitment to support parishes through the **Church Buildings Team** and to hire a **Procurement Officer** to ensure value for money.
- The Diocese will provide additional support through the creation of an **Environment Officer** role at the parish level, consultancy for heating systems, and **Church Buildings Days**.

Leadership:

Kit Connell explained that many dioceses are looking to Bristol for leadership due to its progress with solar energy installations and other environmental initiatives.

Diocesan Synod was asked to consider the following questions and send its comments to governance.support@bristoldiocese.org.

Synod Questions:

1. "We believe the wider community is crucial to supporting our mission. Who should we talk to in your community or Church network?"
2. "Aside from the identified funding shortfall, what are three barriers preventing your parish or deanery from achieving net zero? How can parishes and deaneries collaborate to share best practices and overcome these barriers?"

The Revd Sarah Hancox committed the environment section to prayer.

8.	<p>Diocese of Bristol Academy Trust (DBAT) lessons learnt, actions taken and implications for wider governance</p> <p>8.1 Report</p> <p>8.2 Questions & Answers</p>
	<p>8.1 Report</p> <p>The Rt Rev Neil Warwick, Chair of the Bristol Diocese Board of Education, and Canon Liz Townend reported on the dissolution of the Diocesan Board of Academies Trust (DBAT)</p> <p>Successful Transition of DBAT Schools: The transition of DBAT schools to other trusts was successful and has reinforced long-term benefits for children, young</p>

people, schools, and communities. While challenging, the process has led to positive outcomes, growth, and stability.

Transfers:

2 Swindon schools to The Park Academies Trust completed on 1 September 2024.

10 Wiltshire and Swindon primaries to Blue Kite Academy Trust completed on 1 January 2025.

3 Bristol schools to Lighthouse Schools Partnership completed on 1 January 2025.

The receiving Trusts were carefully chosen for their ethos and capacity; track record of school improvement; and robust central capacity, business and operations.

School Visits and Leadership Engagement: The Chair visited several transferred schools, met with trust CEOs, and experienced firsthand the dedication and commitment to the shared vision. A Trust CEO gathering is planned for 31st March to promote collaboration and mutual support among leaders.

School Progress: The Deanery CE Academy and Kingfisher CE Academy Primary are making positive progress under their new trusts and leadership, including a productive meeting with Year 10/11 pupils at Kingfisher CE Academy.

Acknowledgment of Staff Efforts: The professionalism of the Director of Education, Canon Liz Townend, and the Education Team was recognized for their expertise, commitment, and creativity. The commitment of headteachers, teachers, and school teams was also acknowledged, with many stories of lives transformed.

Lessons Learned: All recommendations from the independent lessons learned report, commissioned after the decision to transfer DBAT schools, are being addressed. Governance lessons have been taken seriously, with trustees and/or members engaged in board meetings of all trusts hosting DBAT schools.

Ongoing Communication and Support: The DBE continues to receive regular updates from trusts and maintains strong connections. The Education Team is working closely with trusts, school clusters, and individual schools to ensure the flourishing of schools, with Christian distinctiveness at the core.

The Diocese of Bristol School Partnership Programme (DBSP) has been co-constructed with the Trusts and will launch in September 2025. It's four strands are Church School Flourishing Leader; Church School Governance Leader; Religion and Worldview Leader; and Collective Worship and Spirituality Leader.

Future Governance Focus: The Chair will liaise with Bishop's Council and Richard Leamen to discuss any governance learning from education that may have wider application within the Diocese.

Reflections on DBAT's Ending: Despite the difficulties surrounding DBAT's closure, positive outcomes have emerged, and the Chair expressed gratitude for the continued dedication of all involved.

8.2 Questions and Answers

The Revd Trudie Wigley announced that, due to overrunning, the time allocated for questions regarding DBAT would be incorporated into the following agenda item, "9. Question 9," in an effort to keep the meeting on schedule.

9. Question Time

The Revd Trudie Wigley explained that copies of the formal written questions that had been submitted had been included in the meeting papers that were circulated, and a hard copy was on each table.

Diocesan Synod member: The Revd Joel Sales (Swindon Deanery)

Question: If we were only able to focus on and achieve three of the twelve streams of transforming church, which would be your top three priorities?

Person who answered the question: Mr Richard Leaman (CEO/Diocesan Secretary)

Answer: TC.T is an integrated plan which aims to support the transformation of parishes and church communities through the transformation of lives by Christ, and all parts contribute to the whole. In the final analysis, the plan aims to help us all follow Jesus, serve others and transform communities.

There are many interdependencies between the various streams, for example, clergy wellbeing has a significant impact on parish activities and pathways to faith; and our work with Children Young People and Families will help to build the future, bring more people to faith, and support our financial sustainability.

We will continue to support all the workstrands – all of which are important in their own way - and pray that the Holy Spirit guides us and supports us in our endeavours.

Supplementary question: The Revd Joel Sales confirmed that he did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

Diocesan Synod members: The Revd David Jones (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery); The Revd James Cannan (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery); The Revd Dr Adrian Howkins (Bristol City Deanery); Dr Brendan Biggs (Bristol West Deanery); and Mr John Spens (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery)

Question (Note: Since several similar questions were received, they have been consolidated):

How many churches in the diocese are placing limitations on how their parish share contributions can be used, by withholding parish share, donating through the Ephesian Fund or similar third party, or through a special arrangement with the diocese, such that their contributions cannot be used to support all churches and clergy in the diocese? How much money is affected by these arrangements? What would be the impact on the Diocese if a significant number of churches were to join the Alliance and pay into the Ephesians Fund?

Person who answered the question: Mr Richard Leaman (CEO/Diocesan Secretary)

Answer: There is one church plant with three worshipping communities - with accountabilities under a BMO - which has very recently stated its intention to pay share via the Ephesian Fund . The Bishop is seeking clarification from her Visitor on the details, and will report her findings to Diocesan Synod via Bishop's Council.

The financial impact is difficult to quantify because all contexts differ in terms of their unrestricted income, how much it costs the Diocese to support them (clergy, housing, safeguarding etc), and how much they currently contribute financially to the Diocese's work.

It remains vital however that we continue to collaborate together as a Diocese – to Transform Church.Together - and see unrestricted generosity as an essential value, and a cornerstone of our faith.

Supplementary questions:

The Revd David Jones (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery): What tools might the Bishop be able to use to ensure churches understood the importance of funding the wider ministry within the diocese and wider church, for example, could Bishop Viv remove her blessing placed upon her Mission orders?

The Rt Revd Viv Faull explained that she had met with Bishop's Visitor for the BMO in question and had explored options about how the church might be encouraged to be part of Transforming Church. *Together.*

The Revd James Cannan (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery); As contributions to the Ephesian Fund would by nature limit funds to parish share, is the BMO in question a net contributor to parish share?

Richard Leaman the BMO costs ~£80,000 per year (including clergy, housing, DSS support, etc). Over the years, the BMO has contributed £103,000.00 in 2022, £61,000.00 in 2023 and £15,000.00 in 2024. [**Post meeting note – the BMO**]

concerned has questioned the numbers given, and where discrepancies are evidenced, an amendment to these minutes will be issued]

The Rt Revd Viv Faull highlighted that every church community is encouraged to give generously to parish share in accordance with the size and wealth of the parish or area it ministers to. It is not simply about local costs of ministry.

Diocesan Synod member: The Revd Janet Lee (Bristol West Deanery) on behalf of Bristol West Deanery

Question: Christian Funerals: We are aware of the big fall in numbers of Christian funerals across our deanery (and wider diocese) both in churches and in crematoria, are there any current plans for a one-stop shop or central diocese wide initiative as, for example, in Gloucester and Liverpool Dioceses? We understand there were plans pre-Covid, what is the current situation in this diocese?

Person who answered: The Revd Canon Dr Simon Taylor (Director of Mission and Ministry)

Answer: There are no current plans for such a diocese-wide initiative. If a deanery or mission area were to want to set up such an initiative, the Diocesan Support Services would want to actively support it.

Supplementary question: As the Revd Janet Lee was unable to attend Diocesan Synod she delegated her supplementary question to The Revd Dr Andy Murray.

Was the diocese using National Research and seeking advice from other diocese who are reversing the decline of Christian funerals?

The Revd Dr. Simon Taylor wasn't certain there had been any national research on funeral ministry, apart from the Statistics for Mission data, which indicates a decline in the number of Christian funerals. He emphasized the vital role that local parishes and clergy play, particularly due to their established relationships with funeral directors.

Dr. Taylor suggested that the Diocese could support a collaborative group that aims to approach funeral ministry in a strategic and creative way. However, he noted that initiating such efforts from the DSS would not be the ideal starting point. Instead, a more grassroots approach, led by local clergy and parishes, would be more effective in exploring and developing this area of ministry.

Diocesan Synod member: Charley Maidment (Bristol West Deanery) on behalf of Bristol West Deanery

Question: Creation Care and TC.T Partnerships: Given the Fifth Mark of mission regarding Creation Care and the focus on TC.T Partnerships, would the Diocese

consider pursuing a diocesan-wide partnership with both an e-bike and e-car lease and car-club rental scheme?

This is a particular problem in Bristol with the clean air zone and hills. However, clergy who struggle to fund two cars, would benefit from a scheme that allows them to upgrade older gas-guzzling cars or those who are charged for entering the Bristol clean air zone. Similarly, because of the terms of employment, clergy can't benefit from the cycle to work scheme, and so an e-bike scheme or lease would allow those who wish to benefit from assistance to fund this whilst also benefitting from the wellbeing (physically and mentally) and hopefully counter short carbon-rich car journeys around the parish. This would not only be missionally positive, and a 'good news' story for the diocese, it could be rolled out potentially to benefit others with carparks in churches used as 'hosts' for the potential car/bike club scheme.

Person who answered the question: Mrs Lindsey McCullam (Director of Estates and Property)

Answer: This is absolutely the ambition, and very relevant to DSS members too. Such Schemes can present challenges from a tax position, and we will need to carefully review the impact, if any, on stipendiary clergy. The matter has previously been discussed with the DSS Finance Team, unfortunately, following several staffing and resource challenges last year, the review was postponed enabling some higher priority matters to be attended to. The DSS Finance Team remain committed to following through on this proposal and, following further recruitment, have dedicated some time to review the viability of such schemes this summer, after the annual audit.

Supplementary question: Charley Maidment confirmed that she did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

Diocesan Synod member: The Revd Charles Sutton (Bristol West Deanery) on behalf of Bristol West Deanery

Question: Diocese of Bristol Re-Branding: Recently, it appears, there has been a 're-branding' of the Diocese and the strap line '*Transforming. Together*' has been placed beneath the words Diocese of Bristol and the 'three crowns image'. Please could we be given an introduction to the thinking behind this change and information as to how, if at all, it impacts upon the Diocesan strategic intention '*Transforming Church. Together*'. Also, as this seems to be a secular strap line, can we be reassured that this was approved and reviewed by senior diocesan clergy, Bishops and Archdeacons (as a minimum), and by diocesan trustees or Bishop's Council?

Person who answered the question: Mr Richard Leaman

Answer: The recent refresh of the brand – which is not a full re-branding – was undertaken by an independent agency aiming to help us better reach the 94% of the

Diocese who are not Christians, to promote better the amazing work of our parishes, and to support the launch of the new Charitable Entity. The agency was particularly well attuned to our strategy, and very sensitive to our values and theology. The thinking behind the refresh has been briefed to Bishop's Staff and Bishop's Council, and was approved by both Bishops. As the questioner will recognise, graphic design is a highly specialised activity and not something which can be undertaken by committee.

The headline Transforming. Together is overarching, and has a number of sub-brands, depending on the intended audience and message content. Transforming Church. Together remains a very valid option, particularly for our internal communications with parishes, and when the TC.T strategy is the subject of the communication. If, however, we are communicating externally about CNZ, or social impact work, for example, we are able (and should) use Transforming Environment. Together, or Transforming Communities. Together. We have been using this thinking for over a year now, particularly in the Mission and Ministry area, and it will become vital as we begin to implement the Charitable Entity. The strategy has not changed, nor has its name; this is about refreshing how we communicate who and what we are to external audiences.

A great deal of discernment and thought went into the changes, and we have sent Synod a link to a 25-minute video which explains the rationale behind them, and this is available on request to anyone else who would like to know more.

Supplementary question:

The Revd Charles Sutton (Bristol West Deanery) To be assured that there is a communication plan to understand the purpose of the re-brand, as in their opinion, the brand video was not satisfactory.

Richard Leaman confirmed that in technical terms it is not a re-brand which would have required consultation groups etc. This is simply about the graphics and the images we use, to say better what we want to say. Refresh of the graphic design is all it is, and this does not lend itself to design by committee. It has been reviewed by Bishop's Staff, Bishop's Council and agreed by our two bishops.

RL stated that he was pleased with the refresh, but there was a misstep in how it was communicated. We would be very happy to work with Bristol West on how we might communicate it going forwards

Diocesan Synod member: Mr John Spens (Kingswood & South Gloucestershire Deanery)

Question: Does the Diocese have a written policy on joint ministry by couples who are both ordained? If so, when was the policy written and how has it been communicated to couples who may be considering ordination or who are already ordinands at Trinity or another training institution?

How has it been communicated to couples who may be considering ordination or who are already ordinands at Trinity or another training institution?

The Diocese has stated that the reason for having such a policy is because of “issues of power, accountability and safeguarding that can be complicated and/or compromised by a married couple serving in the same church”. Would you like to expand on this, particularly as to how you think it might impact on safeguarding?”

Does the Diocese need to have such a firm policy on this when God calls a wide variety of people to serve full-time and may call a married couple to minister in the same church (e.g. Priscilla and Aquila in Acts 18. 2, 18, 19 and 26). Is it not feasible that God may call an ordained married couple to serve together in the same church? If so, shouldn’t the Diocese try to enable such a call?

Person who answered question: The Revd Canon Dr Simon Taylor (Director of Mission and Ministry)

Answer: The Diocese of Bristol does have a Clergy Partnered with Clergy Protocol. It was first written in 2023 and is currently being revised in the light of the Makin Report. The original Protocol was poorly communicated, and once the revisions have been finalised efforts will be made to properly communicate the revised Protocol to those it may impact. This will include a proper briefing of the Principal of Trinity College.

The Protocol is written to value and support clergy partners through the complexities that arise for them and for the Diocese, so that they might flourish in ministry. In particular, conflicts of interest and safeguarding concerns must be addressed. The Protocol does not preclude partnered clergy serving in the same church but aims to support all involved to navigate the challenges of such service with realism, care and safety.

Supplementary question:

Mr John Spens (Kingswood and South Gloucestershire deanery) commented that the final sentence of the formal answer seems to contradict what the PCC was told.

The Revd Dr Simon Taylor clarified that the protocol does not preclude it but not every single couple can do that. What would need to be in place to allow couples to minister in the same church, community or benefice might not be able to happen in every context.

10.	Transforming Church. Together (TC.T) 10.1 TC.T Update
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10.2 Using Sharesy at Holy Trinity, Horfield

10.1 TC.T Update

Mr Rob Mountain, Director of Transformation, highlighted that the most recent TC.T update report had been circulated in the meeting papers, and he would be happy to take questions via email or in-person after Diocesan Synod.

10.2 Using Sharesy at Holy Trinity, Horfield

Ms. Caroline Plaice, Churchwarden of Holy Trinity Horfield, presented on her church's experience using Sharesy, an online booking platform for meeting and event venues. Sharesy offers both transactional and transformational benefits, particularly in fostering community engagement.

Usage:

- 11 churches (7 in Bristol and 4 in Swindon) are currently using Sharesy, which represents 8% of the total number of churches.
- An additional 6 churches have signed terms to join.
- A further 3 are considering using the platform.
- Sharesy is encouraged for broader engagement.

Features of Sharesy:

- The platform reduces the administrative burden of managing church bookings and maximizes the use of church spaces, similar to Airbnb.
- Sharesy's analytics tools can help churches advertise their spaces effectively.

Support and Growth:

- Tara Nelson has been seconded to assist parishes in navigating the Sharesy process.
- Following the impact of COVID-19, there has been a loss in bookings, but Sharesy has helped address this challenge.
- The platform has led to increased bookings, both recurring and one-off.

Challenges and Solutions:

- Previously, Holy Trinity (Horfield) had a cumbersome booking process, lacked data, and faced challenges securing bookings.
- Sharesy has significantly improved booking efficiency.

Tips for Success:

- **Preparation:** Take time to review current processes and ensure terms and conditions are up to date.

- **Engagement:** Inform regular bookers about the change, sending out notifications multiple times and including the booking link in all communications.
- **Review:** Evaluate past bookings to understand trends.
- **Outcome:** The church has seen bookings from individuals who were previously unaware of Holy Trinity, broadening the community reach.

11. Blessings and close

Due to technical difficulties with hosting a hybrid meeting and showing videos, The Rt Revd Viv Faull closed the meeting with a blessing and encouraged those online to watch the Echo video (link circulated in the meeting papers) outside of the meeting. Those who had attended the meeting in-person were shown the Echo Video.

10. 10.3 Echo: Youth Voice

The Revd Adam Beaumont, Associate Archdeacon, introduced the video. The Echo programme, a listening initiative, has engaged teachers and youth leaders (trusted leaders) to gain insights into the experiences and needs of young people. The programme has highlighted a significant desire among young people for safe spaces where they feel accepted, listened to, and like they belong.

Key Insights from Echo:

- **Participants:** 108 young people are represented in Echo.
- **Safe Spaces:** Young people identified their need to feel safe in their environments. When asked to design their own safe space, 25% included an animal, with the explanation that animals love unconditionally and do not judge.
- **Churches as Safe Spaces:** The majority of young people reported feeling safe or very safe in churches, reinforcing the church's role as a safe space for young people.

Three Key Questions:

- What practical steps can the church take to ensure that young people feel safe in church?
- How can the church extend this sense of safety so that more young people feel safe and included?
- How can we ensure that we continually listen to young people and meet their needs, rather than making assumptions, in order to respond effectively to them?

Young People's Plea: A young person expressed the desire to be involved in conversations that impact their lives and future, emphasizing the importance of youth engagement in decision-making.

Appendix 1 – The Ret Revd Viv Faull, Bishop of Bristol, address to Diocesan Synod
I begin with a story from some years ago (retiring bishops inevitably take the long view)
On the first Sunday in Lent in 1983 I preached one of my early faltering sermons as a Deaconess, beginning with a question (St Matthew and St James Mossley Hill was and is a large church with an expectation of interactivity, though heckling wasn't encouraged despite the training many of the congregation had on the Kop)). So, to the question. Do you notice anything different about the church today? Expecting that someone might just notice that coloured hangings had changed from green to purple, or there were no flowers.

Straight back came the reply from one of the new arrivals in the childrens' group; you've put the cushions on the floor.

I wonder how you 'dress' the church for the seasons of the church year? I wonder how you enable those who gather for worship week by week (and many in our churches still do) to learn the story of our salvation not just by hearing the words of that story but living the drama through sight and sound and smell and sometimes also touch and taste. I wonder, for an example, how you observe Palm Sunday. Processions? Donkeys? Many of you will have a Palm Sunday donkey story.... Last year +Neil tells me of one Benefice, bereft of a donkey, dressed a horse up to look like a donkey.... for all sorts of reasons the impact, I suggest, wasn't quite the same.

That sense of the stories of our faith, and our formation in faith as we live in out over time through weekly and annual rhythms is fundamental to Anglican being, and every so often the Liturgical Commission looks at how we observe those times and seasons. This

week the House of Bishops (which does talk about things other than money sex and power) discussed a particular proposed addition, the addition of a festival of God the creator, which fits rather well with our own Transforming Church. Together strategy as we work to reduce our carbon impact and work towards Aroscha Eco church gold.

The proposal was put in the form of an invitation in 1989 from the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch to the entire world that every year that there should be a day of prayer and supplication in thanksgiving for God's gift of creation and in petition for its protection and salvation.

This year, as Fr Toby reminded us last time we met in Synod in Swindon, marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, and remembering the first clause of the creed which emerged from that Council we believe in one God, father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. That word 'all' does some heavy lifting. That all means each one of us, those we love and those we find it difficult to love and the missions we have never met, those close to us and those on the unseen sedges. It means the whole of creation, animate and inanimate. We are all of God's making and all gathered together in this utterly inclusive train of thought.

The proposal for a new festival has been received warmly by Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist churches worldwide, by several catholic bishops' conferences and by provinces of the Anglican communion.

Simultaneously in England there has been a renewal of observance of occasions still observed in farming communities, Plough Sunday, Rogationtide, Lammas and Harvest, alongside the publication of the Encyclical Laudato Si by Pope Fransis which has become influential and inspirational way beyond the Roman Catholic church. A further invitation came from the Ecumenical Patriarch in March 2024 to explore the deeper embrace of creation care in the words and drama of the liturgy. This has already had an

impact in this diocese as parishes observe not just a day but a season of creation from September into October as, in our part of God's earth, we experience an ending of summer and the preparation for newness to come. There is now a formal proposal, to come to our General Synod, and so discussed by your representatives, that, as a focus within that season, a festival of God the creator should be observed on the first Sunday after 1 September. I hope it will be well supported,

Alongside that addition to the church calendar the Liturgical Commission is bringing a second proposal to the General Synod to commemorate the 21 martyrs of Libya ten years after their deaths, the earliest moment at which they could be included in our calendar.

This is their story. On 15 February 2015, 21 Christian men were martyred by militants of the so-called Islamic State (IS) on a beach near Sirte, Libya. This bloody event, documented and broadcast by the perpetrators, has since been recognised as a profound witness to Christian faith. The men were migrant labourers from impoverished Coptic Christian village communities in Egypt who had travelled to Libya seeking work to support their families. They were explicitly targeted for their Christian identity. Their execution, the martyrs dressed in orange jump suits and kneeling in front of their executioners, was intended as a message of terror, to warn and cow Christians in north and east Africa. Yet it became an extraordinary testimony of obedience to Christ unto death. To the end the men refused to renounce Christ despite the threat of death and affirmed their faith with the words 'O my Lord Jesus' as they met their end.

With them was a west African, a Ghanaian who was working alongside the Coptic Christians as a labourer, had recently because of their witness, been baptised. His captors offered him release if he would deny that Jesus Christ was his Lord and Saviour. He refused to be parted from his Egyptian companions, and was decapitated alongside them. He had taken the baptismal name Matthew. His own country refused to repatriate his body, so he is buried and honoured alongside Arab Christians.

So as we remember the 21 Coptic Martyrs this Lent, we pray too for all those caught up in the many many conflicts across our world perhaps particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

Almighty God,
The strength of the weak,
Who have called to eternal glory the twenty one martyrs of Libya
While they fixed their eyes on Jesus Christ,
And confessed his Holy Name in the power of the Spirit,
Grant that the blood which they shed
May be the seed of the church
And the source of its unity
So that the world may believe
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.