**Summary of a meeting of Lichfield Diocesan Synod**

**15th March 2025 at Telford Minster**

* Opening Worship was led by the Revd Preb Pat Hawkins.
* The President welcomed all and thanked the Minster team for their warm welcome.
* He explained that there was no discussion on **Living in Love and Faith** at the meeting due to changes in the national timetable, and a discussion would take place later in the year.
* He then congratulated three **recently elected General Synod members**, the Revds Abbie Walsh, Christopher Landau and Neil Robbie, following a by election to fill vacancies created by the departures of the Revds Matt Beer and Zoe Heming, and the resignation of the Revd Damian Feeney. The new members were greeted with applause.
* The new **Mothers’ Union President**, Deb Tudor, was welcomed and formally co-opted as a member of Synod by a vote.
* The **minutes** of the meeting held on 30th November 2024 were approved. No matters arising had been notified.
* The **President then gave his address**, looking ahead to the items on the agenda, including a motion on Non-Disclosure Agreements, the report of General Synod including Safeguarding debate. He paid tribute to the work of our Parish Safeguarding Officers, who were at the front line of delivering our aspiration for Safeguarding to be shared pattern of our life together at every level. He also then expressed gratitude to our Diocesan Safeguarding Team and was very pleased to add that we had recently been able to increase resourcing of this team. He emphasised the need to celebrate progress in this area at a local level, whilst acknowledging that there was still much to do. There was also an item dealing with some amendments to the Diocesan Strategy, and he spoke about his upcoming pilgrimage around the dioceses at the beginning of April to help launch the strategic framework, most of which would be on foot, with some sections on public transport. Every evening, he would be leading a Bible Study using a different text from the New Testament to encourage us to think about one of our ten strategic goals. Each of these could be found in the 8th Century St Chad’s Gospels housed in our Cathedral, from which he would be carrying illustrations as a reminder of the story of how the diocese began. He went to speak about the marking this year of 1700 years since the gathering at Nicaea. The Nicene Creed, which was first formulated there still summarised the heart of the Christian faith. He commended to members the saying or singing of the Creed on Sundays and the practice of thinking about what was being said or sung about. The gift entrusted to us was a treasure of infinite value, yet so often taken for granted, and he was aiming to write soon to those in the diocese with information about the resources available in this 1700th year to help individuals and churches engage with the riches of the apostolic faith as set out in the He concluded with the following:

*As we commit ourselves afresh to following Christ in the Footsteps of St Chad, let us do so with clarity, with determination and with gratitude for the Faith which we have received and which we pass on to future generations. Let us walk in the light of Christ.*

* The Chair of the DBF spoke about **Mrs Sam Rushton, who would be joining the Board as Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary in April**. He spoke about Sam’s background in retail banking and most recently as part of the leadership team in the Diocese of York. He then moved the following motion:

*This Synod notes the appointment of Mrs Sam Rushton to the post of Diocesan Secretary and CEO.*

This was unanimously carried.

* The Revd Tim Carter, gave background information, speaking to previously circulated papers and took questions before moving the following motion regarding **Non-Disclosure Agreements** on behalf of Telford Deanery:

*this Synod requests General Synod:*

1. *Condemn and discourage the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) and reiterate that the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements is inappropriate in any HR and Safeguarding situation and*
2. *Request Archbishop’s Council and the National Safeguarding Team to bring forward proposals for national guidelines on the use of NDAs and establish mechanisms for the reporting of NDAs and*
3. *Require any Church of England institution, organisation or body to report on and register the existence and use of NDAs relating to HR and Safeguarding matters and*
4. *Request Archbishop’s Council and the National Safeguarding Team to develop appropriate guidance and mechanisms to enable existing NDAs relating to HR and Safeguarding matters to be monitored and where possible to be retracted and replaced with appropriate support.*

Following a vote this was carried with one abstention, noting that further work would be needed at a national level before any debate by General Synod.

* Mrs Amanda Robbie spoke to her report of the **February sessions of General Synod** where the major items had been Safeguarding and adjustments to the appointment of Diocesan Bishops. The death of Geoffery Tattersall in January was noted with sadness and appreciation of his significant contribution to General Synod, particularly in chairing recent debates on Living in Love and Faith. Amanda then moved the following motion:

*The report of the General Synod sessions in February 2025 be received*

This was carried unanimously.

* The Strategy Programme Director introduced the next item which involved the **Diocesan Strategy Document** “Seeking the Kingdom”. This document set out the route towards our destination which was the vision set out in the strategic framework, which in turn was the result of Shaping for Mission. It was about directing and channelling our efforts over the coming years, working together as we journeyed towards our destination. It also contained an action plan setting out what would be done centrally to support our parishes, schools, fresh expressions, chaplaincies and the cathedral as we sought the kingdom together. It was important to note that the document was not static and would be updated as needed to help us continue on the best route to out destination, adapting to missional opportunities and challenges. The destination however would remain, to be a diocese that was purposeful about evangelism, engaged creatively with local communities, was becoming more diverse, and was growing younger.

The Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent introduced and then moved the following motions:

*This synod approves the following amendments to the strategic framework:*

*1. To ensure that our terminology aligns with that used by the National Church, propose a change in the narrative under Goal 1 from:*

*The current worshipping congregation represents 0.9% of the population of the Diocese. Our goal is to double this. It is possible to achieve this goal if we work at increasing our individual confidence in living the gospel story.*

*to:*

*Our All-Age Average Weekly Attendance represents 0.9% of the population of the Diocese and our Worshipping Community represents 1.6% of the population of the Diocese. Our goal is to double our Worshipping Community. It is possible to achieve this goal if we work at increasing our individual confidence in living the gospel story.*

*2. To add a tenth goal:*

*To have made substantial progress towards NZC with a clear and achievable plan of how any shortall will be resolved in the following few years.*

*The diocese is working with the Net Zero route map set out by the Church of England. Through the setting of milestones and resources provided centrally we will: help our congregations to understand the imperative of caring for God’s creation; consider the carbon emissions of both buildings and travel; and with the innovative use of glebe land for offsetting, aim to achieve Net Zero by 2030.*

Following questions, the Revd Richard Grigson (Stafford) withdrew an amendment to the motion that he had submitted previously.

The Revd Neil Robbie (General Synod) then introduced an amendment, and following discussion and voting, the amended motion (as below) was voted upon and clearly carried:

*This synod approves the following amendments to the strategic framework:*

*1. To ensure that our terminology aligns with that used by the National Church, propose a change in the narrative under Goal 1 from:*

*The current worshipping congregation represents 0.9% of the population of the Diocese. Our goal is to double this. It is possible to achieve this goal if we work at increasing our individual confidence in living the gospel story.*

*to:*

*Our All-Age Average Weekly Attendance represents 0.9% of the population of the Diocese and our Worshipping Community represents 1.6% of the population of the Diocese. Our goal is to double our Worshipping Community. It is possible to achieve this goal if we work at increasing our individual confidence in living the gospel story.*

*2. To add a tenth goal:*

*To have made substantial progress towards NZC with a clear and achievable plan of how any shortall will be resolved in the following few years.*

*The diocese is working with the Net Zero route map set out by the Church of England. Through the setting of milestones and resources provided centrally we will: help our congregations to understand the imperative of caring for God’s creation; consider the carbon emissions of both buildings and travel; and with the innovative use of glebe land for offsetting, aim to achieve Net Zero by 2030.*

*and, recognising that this synod in March 2024 endorsed the principles and priorities set out in the strategy direction paper DS24/03/06 and to receive regular updates and reviews at future meetings request that:*

*(i) synod receives a detailed programme for the implementation of the strategic framework (2025-2030) to include*

*(a) staffing structure and any contractual commitments.*

*(b) a detailed budget, including costs, funding sources and ongoing financial commitments with their implication on the diocesan budget beyond the end of the programme.*

* The **Question Time** paper was discussed, which contained twenty-four written questions and answers. Several supplementary questions were answered.
* The Revd Paul Kingman (Stone) raised an item from the Bishop’s Council Report which concerned the **project in Stoke being funded by SMMIB**, asking if updates on this could be a standing item on Synod’s agenda. The Archdeacon of Stoke answered that there could certainly be regular updates but was reluctant to commit to an item at every Synod meeting. She encouraged members though to feel free to ask any questions by email at any point, and thanked members for their ongoing interest and prayers.
* Bishop Michael closed the meeting in prayer, thanking all for their attendance and participation.

All papers are available [on the website here](https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/synod/) or by contacting [jo.durber@lichfield.anglican.org](mailto:jo.durber@lichfield.anglican.org) or 01543 306067