

MINUTES

Meetings of the members of the Truro Diocesan Synod and The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Limited held by Zoom on 26 September 2020

Meeting as Members of the Truro Diocesan Synod

The Bishop of Truro welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that the theme 'Learning from Lockdown' would run throughout and that this would be reflected on throughout the day.

Apologies were received from 3 Clergy and 5 Laity.

Opening Prayers and Worship. The Bishop of St Germans encouraged everyone to listen for God's voice in the videos that would be shown and to see what God may be inviting us to learn from lockdown. He welcome Alice Hudd to the meeting. Alice led the opening prayers, and this was followed by a time of worship.

Learning from Lockdown video 1 - Blessings. Members used the Zoom chat function throughout the video to post their comments and thoughts which included the following:

- Lockdown provided new ways to connect and encouraged us to value the relationships we have
- Missing contact in the community
- Feelings of helplessness
- Not having control is humbling
- Stopping being busy
- Amazing how people have adapted
- Difficult endings and goodbyes
- Not being able to visit a dying parishioner in hospital
- Being apart from people as well as being with them has been a challenge
- The absence of community in the broadest sense and in the way we had known it
- Amazing how our Cornish community is and has been in supporting others

This first video session concluded with prayer by the Bishop of St Germans, followed by a scripture reading (Deuteronomy 6 vs 16) and words of intercession led by Alice Hudd.

The Presidential Address was given by the Bishop of Truro, a copy of which can be found on the Diocesan Website at: <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/policy-governance/diocesan-synod/september-2020/>

Members met in small breakout groups to consider, discuss and pray about what they had heard during the meeting so far.

Learning from Lockdown video 2 - challenges. Those interviewed in the video were asked what they considered to be the greatest blessing from lockdown. Comments and thoughts from members using the Zoom chat function included the following:

- Thanked God for technology, Zoom in particular, a company which has put help before profit
- Intimacy of on-line worship; in effect in each other's homes every day.

- Climate benefits. Need to grab the chance before it is too late as we are reverting to our old ways so quickly.
- The generosity of God in times of adversity.
- Encouraged us to really value people
- New opportunities for service and to live life differently
- Being able to attend services, bible studies etc without having to go out
- Thank God for our children. Valuing relationships and more quality time as families.
- Challenge to grow in discipleship, mission and ministry. More God, less self; and love more, judge less.

The Bishop of St Germans concluded this video session with prayer around the comments in the chat box.

Meeting as Members of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

Annual General Meeting of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

The Annual Report

Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, began by outlining the three main financial headlines from the Annual Report for 2019:

- 1 **Today's giving is not paying for today's church.** As of 31 December 2019 the overall operating deficit was £375,984. Gains on investments were £5,045,051 and the revaluation of properties increased income by a further £1,160,849, leaving an overall surplus of £5,829,916.

Neither income nor expenditure varied greatly from 2018 but, within the detail of each category, there were some larger variances. Regarding income, there were decreases in MMF and parochial fees, but increases in donations, including grant income and returns on investments. Regarding expenditure, ministry costs reduced by £691k in 2019 when compared to 2018, mainly due to a change in our pension liability by £855k (compared to £85k in 2018).

In May 2018 synod agreed that today's giving should support today's church so as to avoid using reserves. This was implemented in 2019 with a new system for calculating the way parishes contribute and this saw a fall in MMF for a second year in a row; a fall of £100,000 when compared to 2018. In 2019 this fall of income from MMF plus increased ministry costs led to a widening of the gap between today's giving and the costs of ministry.

- 2 **We are investing together in the future of the church.** The TDBF is making large investments in mission, principally through the Transforming Mission (TM) project, although there are some other projects which have also been supported.
- 3 **The value of our investments has increased.** The stock market performed well during the year, giving rise to £4.2m unrealised gain. Those gains were wiped out by 31 March 2020 due to the pandemic. However, since then, investments have bounced back significantly.

Our cash level increased overall in 2019 by £943k, but this came mainly from selling houses and glebe land, which can only be sold once.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the TDBF, continued the presentation. He summarised the key financial objectives that we have set in place in an endeavor to bring us back into a balanced budget:

- 1 **To move towards balance the cost of ministry with income from parishes (i.e. MMF).** The gap is growing and MMF collections have fallen. However, this is an oversimplification; in some deaneries the gap is minimal, in others it is much larger. Talks continue with deaneries so as to identify the key issues and consider what steps can be taken to help address them.



- 2 **To fund the ‘gap’ from investments and grant funding (mainly from the Church Commissioners) and to actively manage our properties.** Our glebe, property and investment committees are working closely together to spot opportunities.
- 3 **To use Total Return to fund mission initiatives.** Drawings on Total Return were minimal in 2019 but are forecast to increase substantially in 2020. The forecast includes further contribution from the Church Commissioners, as well contributions from the Board and parishes.

Other key decisions taken in 2019 included a commitment to a review of governance; to support the appointment of a new Bishop of St Germans; to increase diocesan safeguarding provision; and to continue support for the ‘Living Water’ project.

Looking to 2020 and beyond, the impact of Covid-19 has dominated and this will continue. The resulting fall in income for parishes as well as the Board of Finance will mean the depletion of precious reserves. However, we will continue to invest in mission in many ways across the diocese.

A question, comment and answer time followed during which the following points were raised:

- **Comment:** National figures show that the five dioceses with the biggest fall in income have areas of great poverty, and Truro Diocese has the biggest fall of all. There are huge differences of wealth in our own diocese and it is clear that some parishes have no choice - they cannot pay and have no reserves. Other parishes could pay but have chosen not too. This needs to be looked into and discussed.
- **Q:** How is TM helping ministry throughout the diocese?
A: Mike Sturgess explained that the aim of TM is for each main church hub to help other churches grow. However, the team for each hub has to be put in place before this can happen and Covid-19 has delayed the process. Liskeard now has a complete team and is looking to help other parishes.
- **Q:** What steps are being taken to consult deaneries and perhaps parishes to set MMF targets for the coming year? There is a tendency to set targets that feel unobtainable; there needs to be a balance between being realistic and pressure to pay.
A: Sophie Eddy explained that there have been conversations with 11 of the 12 deaneries. The aim of these has been to understand the challenges deaneries are facing and to make decisions about the use of “Lowest Income Communities Funding”(LICF). A great amount of work has been done concerning how central church calculates this funding and why we receive the money. We are now looking at how to use LICF this to help the communities that are most in need; more on this at November’s meeting.
- **Q:** Why does Penwith deanery, which has areas of great need, not have TM?
A: Mike Sturgess responded. TM is not the only mission drive and Total Return is available to support other mission initiatives. He would be happy to look at any initiatives they may have with a view to helping with funding.
- **Q:** How is TM helping parish ministry in the diocese?
A: Mike Sturgess responded. The aim is to work alongside parishes to help build capacity. It is important that we work with parishes that want to work with us rather than trying to impose.

The Chair of the House of Laity, Anna Corbett, asked the Archdeacon of Cornwall, the Ven Paul Bryer, for his comments. He emphasised that we are on track with putting the teams together and that the desire is for TM to help resource the whole diocese and to help other deaneries to invest in mission. He noted the interest in how TM will reach other parts of the diocese and asked Executive Officers to read the notes and comments from this meeting and suggested people contact Executive Officers if they have any further questions.



Thanks were given to Sophie Eddy, Mike Sturgess and TDBF Officers for the huge amount of work that has gone into preparing the Annual Report and Accounts.

The Chairman of The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Limited proposed:

"That the Members of the Company receive the Annual Report and Statutory Accounts of the Board for the year ended 31 December 2019."

Mr Robert Perry, member of the House of Clergy for Powder Deanery, seconded the proposal.

The majority voted in favour, with 1 abstention.

The Chairman of The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Limited proposed:

"That Haysmacintyre are re-appointed as Auditors of the Company"

The proposal was seconded.

All were in favour.

The Chairman of The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Limited proposed:

"That Veale Wasbrough Vizards are re-appointed as Solicitors of the Company"

Mrs Sue Dickenson, member of the House of Laity for Stratton Deanery, seconded the proposal.

The majority voted in favour, with 1 against and 1 abstention.

Amending the Articles of Association and Standing Orders

The Bishop's Diocesan Council, following the Governance Review held earlier in the year, recommends these amendments.

A diocesan synod member raised the point that although Article 13, and Standing Orders XB6, state that the Board should appoint the Secretary of the Company, the Bishop's Diocesan Council was not asked or consulted on the appointment of Simon Cade as Diocesan Secretary. The Bishop of Truro agreed that this should be done correctly and apologized if there had been an oversight in due process. The Diocesan Registrar, Mr Jos Moule, recommended that this be ratified at the next meeting of the BDC, and he saw no reason why proceeding with this resolution should not go ahead. Post meeting note: Simon Cade's appointment as Company Secretary to the TDBF and Secretary to Diocesan Synod, in his role as Diocesan Secretary, was ratified at a meeting of the Bishop's Diocesan Council on Monday 19 October.

The Chairman of The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Limited proposed:

"That the draft regulations presented to the Meeting be adopted as Articles of Association of the Company in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing Articles of Association.
and

"That the amendment to Standing Orders of Synod will be made under Rule 44 of the Church Representation Rules, acting as Diocesan Synod."

Mr Robert Perry, member of the House of Clergy for Powder Deanery, seconded the proposal.

The majority voted in favour, with 1 abstention.



A Diocesan Synod member drew attention to the fact that this vote concerned the Articles of Association and was therefore a Company resolution. The member asked that Synod should meet on another occasion to vote on the Standing Orders of Synod.

The members voted by a show of hands as to whether they agreed that members vote, Acting as Diocesan Synod, under Rule 44 of the Church Representation Rules, on the proposal to accept the amendments to the Standing Orders.

The majority voted in favour.

The Chair of the House of Laity proposed:

That the draft regulations presented to the Meeting be adopted as the Diocesan Synod Standing Orders in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing Diocesan Synod Standing Orders.”

The proposal was seconded.

Majority in favour, 1 abstention.

Meeting as Truro Diocesan Synod

Learning from Lockdown video 3 - opportunities. Those interviewed in the video were asked what opportunities had come out of lockdown, and the resulting conclusion was that that lockdown had led to change and re-imagination. The Bishop of St Germans concluded the session with prayer.

Report on Children, Young People and Schools in the pandemic

Presentation given by Mrs Katie Fitzsimmons, Diocesan Director of Education.

Katie Fitzsimmons described how some of our church schools have been coping with the pandemic and shared feedback from pupils and parents as to why school was so important during lockdown. Our church schools have engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at supporting pupils and their families and the level of initiative and provision has been outstanding and moving. These show the positive, encouraging and uplifting aspect of initiatives resulting from lockdown, but there have been hard things too which the schools have tackled without complaint.

Schools did not close and continued to provide lessons, food etc throughout lockdown. Staff offered personal support throughout the holidays, and with no guarantees of funding for the food and services they were providing. All this against a background of anxiety concerning the spread of infection and sadness about the mourned rites of passage for pupils - leavers' balls, end of year performances that could no longer take place, and the anxiety surrounding secondary school examinations.

These last months have shown how schools live out their visions and core values, and this has been inspiring.

From all this we learn that it is about actions, not just words. How we live our words makes such a difference to our communities and ourselves. The past few months have highlighted the vital role of relationships built over time. School staff in Devon and Cornwall have pulled together, and regular communication across all agencies has helped us help each other; the shared vision of church and school has never been stronger.

Katie asked members to use the breakout groups following this session to think about what may have surprised or shocked them from what they have just seen and heard, and to consider what they will pray for.

Revd Canon Jem Thorold, Chair of the House of Clergy, thanked Katie for her talk. He asked her to pass Synod's thanks to all the staff, pupils and boards of our schools.



He also thanked our senior staff for all they have done throughout the pandemic.

Questions under Standing Order XB18

Question from Mr Martin Saunders, Pydar Deanery:

“Choral music is an integral part of Anglican worship. Could the Diocesan Bishop please tell us what pressures the House of Bishops are putting on the Government, both inside Parliament and otherwise, to allow cathedral and church choirs and congregations to sing in church as was customary.”

The Bishop of Truro responded. He regrets the lack of singing in our churches. However, he is not a member of the House of Lords so cannot comment on that aspect of the question. However, this issue, amongst others relating to Covid 19, has been raised by the House of Bishops. A recovery group led by the Bishop of London has been established and this meets regularly with other agencies. The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, is a former nursing officer so extremely well placed to lead on this issue. The House of Bishops is urging the government to consider this, but understands that whatever is done needs to be done safely. The conclusion from a briefing held on 9 September is that more research needs to take place before singing in church can resume.

Supplementary question from Mr Saunders.

“We were not able to celebrate Easter properly. As part of the western Christian civilisation, do you, Mr President, accept and agree that we must be able to celebrate Christmas properly, with church bells, choral carol services and receiving the midnight communion in both kinds. What are you and the House of Bishops doing to achieve this?”

The Bishop of Truro emphasised that we are in an unparalleled crisis and we have made what decisions we could under the circumstances. Covid has not gone away and we do not want to contribute to its spread. Research is on-going regarding singing, but it is highly unlikely we will be unable to sing in church at Christmas. Bells will be rung and indeed are already being done so with ringers observing social distancing. Other issues, including communion, are under constant consideration by the House of Bishops and its advisers.

Martin Saunders thanked the Bishop for his detailed response to his questions.

The Bishop of St Germans led closing prayers.
The meeting closed at 12.30pm.

