

## **September 2023 - Report to Diocesan Synod from the Bishops Diocesan Council**

This is a report from the Diocesan Secretary to members of Diocesan Synod relating to the work of the Bishops Diocesan Council (BDC). For timing reasons, as is usual with the September report, this report has not been formally approved by the BDC.

This report is in three parts, the first relates to the role of the BDC and wider diocese in the vacancy in see process, the second part is about the work of the Bishops Diocesan Council since the May Synod, and the third part of the report gives a brief summary of some of the upcoming work of Diocesan Synod.

Members should feel free to forward this to parish or deanery colleagues.

### **Part One - the Vacancy in See**

#### **1.1 Leadership of the diocese during the vacancy**

Almost all of what Bishop Philip has done can be done by Bishop Hugh. Hugh will have all the responsibilities and powers of the diocesan bishop when it comes to diocesan synod and the Diocesan Board of Finance, he will be able to license clergy and exercise the powers of the diocesan bishop under the Pastoral Measure and other church legislation. Hugh will chair the Bishop's Diocesan Council and become "President" of Diocesan Synod under our Articles of Association.

But why "almost" all of the duties? There are one or two odd things that revert back to the Archbishop of Canterbury during a vacancy (we are unlikely to stumble across them and in practise the archbishop will probably just delegate these things to Hugh) but the main areas that Hugh will not pick up are Philip's national responsibilities, for instance as chair of the national Redress Board or his work on freedom of religion. Hugh is continuing his work as Bishop to the Forces but will have more support in that role nationally to release him for work down here.

There will be some changes to Hugh's local workload so that he can do more of the work that Philip was doing, so expect some changes to the groups or panels that he has been leading. The work of Lis Escop will continue, and the office will remain working as it has been. If you are meeting Hugh do take care to note where it will be, it might be at Lis Escop but could well be elsewhere to make best use of his diary time.

The best summary is to assume that things continue. The work of synod and BDC continues, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal wasn't Philip's plan, it is the diocesan plan, so that continues, deanery plans are plans made by the deaneries and will continue to be implemented, our proposals for the budget and assets will come to synod in November as planned.

#### **1.2 How we find the next Bishop of Truro**

By early October we will publish detail on the work of the "Vacancy in See Committee" which is a diocesan committee established to do some of the work of finding a new diocesan bishop. There is a readable, useful, and completely unofficial summary of the process [here](#).

The Committee has two main functions; one is to create and publish a statement that describes the diocese and what we are looking for in a new bishop, sometimes called the "Statement of Needs." The second function is to elect members to the "Crown Nominations Commission" (CNC) which is the group that will actually look

at shortlists and make the final nomination. The CNC includes our elected members as well as members appointed by General Synod, and the archbishops.

BDC has a couple of things to do before all that can start. We need to appoint four additional members to the Vacancy in See Committee to ensure that the Committee properly reflects the diocese, and we need to appoint a chair from among the members. Most of the Vacancy in See members are already in place, including those elected directly from Diocesan Synod, but there have been some resignations and changes that we need to take into account.

## **Part Two - Report on the work of the Bishops Diocesan Council**

### **2.1 Fruitfulness and Sustainability**

The work of the BDC has continued to focus on supporting parish ministry and helping parishes and deaneries to implement their plans. BDC in May approved a consultation on proposals for the 2024 budget and the use of assets that will, if approved by Diocesan Synod in November, represent a historic shift of assets from the DBF balance sheet to support parish ministry. We strongly encourage members to feedback if they have not yet done so, we want whatever proposals do come to synod to reflect as broad a cross section of views as possible.

BDC continues to monitor the work of implementing the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal through reports from the Board for Change and Renewal.

BDC considers that the main risks to these plans fall in four areas: money, people, culture and leadership.

- MMF contributions overall are now much closer to the agreed call (which is itself based on plans made in the deanery, rather than calculations made at Church House) but we are alert to the ongoing fragility of parish finances and that in some places the post-Covid recovery has been weak. BDC and the Finance, Assets and Risk Committee continue to monitor this and have made proposals which are now under consultation.
- Church House has been focussing on supporting the very large number of clergy appointments this year, we have been able to make some great appointments noting that there is strong competition across the church for fewer clergy. Alongside the recruitment of clergy we know that many churches rely on a dwindling number of sometimes elderly volunteers for key leadership and day-to-day roles, BDC has asked for more work on how we work together particularly to support smaller churches and to make sure that what we have the right expectations of local leaders.
- “Culture” may be part of what the church means by our call to faithfulness. Remaining focussed on Jesus and his call to us as disciples is as important for BDC as it is in the local church, making sure that our policies and practices remain faithful even when much else in the world is changing.  
A new area of work relates to our faithful response to Jesus’ call to put children at the heart of our work, we expect to do significantly more work on this during the late 2023 and early 2024 reporting on proposals next summer.
- Deanery plans propose significant change in the life of the church, leadership in a time of change is demanding and the church relies on volunteers for most of its work. We also know that our clergy were already busy and often hard-pressed even before we embarked on new programmes of change. BDC has recognised that we need to increase our resourcing of leadership at every level and are considering ways of doing so including changing the arrangements for Rural Deans

## **2.2 The Ministry of the Church**

BDC have approved plans to support the new patterns of ministry that are described in deanery plans; in particular training and support for more Oversight Ministers and Local Leaders to serve the local church.

None of the deanery plans proposes closing parish churches, obviously indicating that we should plan for ministry that continues to be served by around 300 church buildings. BDC have asked for more work on how the partnership between parish, deanery, and diocese can best serve this expectation without putting undue and unsustainable pressure on any element in that partnership.

## **2.3 Financial challenges and opportunities**

Our position at the bottom of the diocesan league table for MMF/Common Fund contributions looks to be reversed, we are only part way through the year but levels of MMF contribution match commitments made in deanery plans in most places. We are enormously grateful for the hard work and generosity that is behind this. This is the context for our bold proposals regarding the use of assets over the next ten years.

## **2.4 Safeguarding**

BDC continues to hold safeguarding as an absolute priority, it reflects the Commandment to love God and to love one another and in the life of any Christian organisation it is hard to imagine a priority higher than this.

## **2.5 Education**

BDC welcomed the appointment of Mr Lee Moscato as our interim Diocesan Director of Education, members will have an opportunity to meet Lee at our September Synod. Lee comes to us from King Charles School in Falmouth where he serves as headteacher.

## **2.6 Compliance**

A post on the “Save the Parish Cornwall” twitter account in May 2023 made unfounded, false and potentially actionable allegations. The tweet was deleted within a few hours. Save the Parish Cornwall were directed to the diocesan complaints procedures and other opportunities for reporting serious allegations, but no complaint, evidence or corroboration was provided.

The nature of the allegations meant that in line with legal advice a “Serious Incident Report” was made to the Charity Commission on behalf of the Diocesan Board of Finance. The allegations in the tweet were referred to the diocesan and national safeguarding teams which concurred that no further action should be taken.

A Serious Incident Report on behalf of a charity must be declared to the auditor and the Annual Report will make reference to this.

There are currently a small number of vacancies on the BDC which we will be working to fill during the second half of 2023 and will communicate with you further about this.

### **Part Three - The work of Diocesan Synod**

#### **3.1 September and November Synod agendas**

Members will note that the focus of the September Synod will be children and young people, then in November we will turn our attention to two main areas of business; our work to care for our God-given environment, to cherish creation, cut carbon, and speak up, and alongside this to debate the 2024 budget and our proposals for the use of assets over the next ten years.

#### **3.2 Future areas of focus**

For the past few years we have worked to a cycle of meeting themes that have picked up the five priorities and two commitments in The Saints Way. As we enter a new phase for the diocese under the leadership of Bishop Hugh we would like to know if there are areas of the work of the church that you would like to see at Diocesan Synod?

As an example, we have recently received a proposal from one deanery synod that we should debate the role of churchwardens and whether a parish should have the option of sharing some of the duties of churchwarden rather than nominating specific individuals to hold those important roles.

Please contact me, on [simon.cade@truro.anglican.org](mailto:simon.cade@truro.anglican.org), if you have any suggestions for topics.