

Minutes for a meeting of Truro Diocesan Synod 18 May 2024 at St Michael's, Newquay and online by "Zoom".

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Synod

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He drew attention to the new system for voting using voting cards and explained how this would work. A test vote took place.

Mr Robert Perry, Chair of the House of Laity, introduced Revd Jeff Risbridger, Dean of Self Supporting Ministry, and Revd John Eatock, Dean of Retired Clergy, who led a time of worship.

The worship focused on a reading from the Gospel of Luke and a reflection on the multiplication story.

Presidential Address

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans and Acting Bishop of Truro gave his Presidential Address, a copy of which can be found on the diocesan website [here](#)

Update from the Ministry Team

Mr Robert Perry, Chair of the House of Laity, introduced Mrs Sally Piper, Head of Ministry, who gave a presentation on patterns of ministry in the diocese.

Sally explained that the inherited model of one parish, one church, one priest had been key for many years but was no longer sustainable. This presents an opportunity & challenge and, although change is difficult, not changing would be fatal. The current deanery plans show the need to change, with proposals for larger groupings of parishes with an oversight priest who is the leader of a particular Christian community, supported in ministry by lay and ordained local/focal leaders/ministers. Local leaders, both lay and ordained, are rooted in and belong to the areas they live in; they hold the Christian community together, as well as being someone who is recognized by the wider community.

Sens Kernewek is the course to equip local lay leaders and residential AMD colleges are held for oversight ministers, with cohorts in process and future ones planned.

Sally introduced Revd Douglas Wren, the Oversight Minister for the Roseland parishes; Revd Penny Leach, an Assistant Curate, also for the Roseland area; and Revd Jeff Risbridger, who is a member of the team at Mounts Bay. Unfortunately the Oversight Minister, Revd Canon Nigel Marns was unable to be at today's meeting.

Revd Douglas Wren explained that the Roseland area covers a number of benefices and parishes. They have local/focal leaders/ministers, including Kay Robinson at Philleigh who has a strong connection with the community. A person who lives locally, who is not a regular churchgoer, said they are so pleased to have Kay as the local minister as it means 'it is our church, not the vicar's'.

Revd Penny Leach is licensed as an Assistant Curate to a benefice that is currently without a Priest in Charge and therefore technically in vacancy. However, working in collaboration with Douglas as oversight minister, and with other ministers in the area, she has been able to take on responsibilities, such as chairing the APCM, as the support has been there for her to do so.

Douglas stressed that there is not a hierarchy, that each member of the team is one of many. He also said that establishing local/focal ministers is a slow, long-term process. With both Penny and Kay there

is a strong sense of calling to their roles; they did not need to be persuaded, but felt drawn into it. This is important to the community.

Covering sacramental events is not an issue as there are clergy with PTO to help and in small parishes this does not take place so often anyway. As far as local/focal ministers are concerned, there are communities that get it and those that do not. Where a community embraces it there is a joy in pursuing it, but this is not always the case. The model of the Vicar as leader, with everyone doing as he says, is inverted for the local/focal minister model. Douglas' role is not to be 'the vicar' in these communities, but to support the local/focal ministers in those areas.

Revd Jeff Risbridger introduced himself. He is the focal priest for St Hilary, a church in the catholic tradition within the Mounts Bay (Ludgvan, Marazion, St Hilary and Perranuthnoe) benefice. The benefice has four licensed clergy as well as a number of clergy with PTO. This number is not the norm in the diocese; of the four licensed clergy, one is in training so is no cost to the deanery, and will soon be leaving; two are part-time self-supporting, so there is only one permanent stipendiary priest who is the Oversight Minister, the leader of a community of communities.

The clergy are licensed to the whole benefice but each has responsibility for leading one of the four parishes (including the Oversight Minister). On one Sunday a month, Jeff takes a service elsewhere, so that he maintains contact with the other parishes. In St Hilary he takes Sunday services, Eucharist, marriages, funerals, sick visiting; he lives in the parish and tries to be a presence there including involvement in civic duties. He acts as APCM and PCC chair and does all the work of incumbent but is not incumbent so does not carry the legal responsibility. Oversight Ministry works best when there is a good relationship with mutual trust between the Oversight minister and the local/focal ministers. It is also important to have a working agreement in place, detailing who is responsible for what.

A Local/Focal Minister offers what the traditional parish priest used to offer, but there is no longer a reliance on one person. It gives the opportunity to work as part of a team offering support and encouragement to each other.

There can be problems, particularly if the Oversight Minister is not a good leader. It is also important that self-supporting clergy are treated equally, and that the view that "only stipendiary clergy count" is left behind. However, not all problems lie with the Oversight Minister. Some Local/Focal Ministers can be difficult, doing only the tasks that they like and not what they do not like. They may have a desire to be an incumbent but for some reason are not, but try to grab on to power and hold on to it. They must be part of the team as much as the Oversight Minister. The Church works best when it works as a Team, with Oversight Minister working as a leader of community of communities, building a team of lay people to work together to advance the kingdom. Jeff observed that when he was recently on sabbatical, the team at St Hilary worked perfectly well without him, which is as it should be.

Members thanked Jeff with a round of applause.

Members then met in small groups to discuss the following questions:

What one thing have you heard this morning that encourages/excites you and why?

What one thing have you heard this morning that concerns/worries you and why?

What one question would you like to ask?

The groups gave feedback as follows:



Group 1

Discussed what has been happening at Bodmin, where oversight and focal ministry has been taking place. They asked what was happening elsewhere that they could be inspired by, the potential of what could be. They observed/queried that this style of ministry is dependent on human nature, so there may be a focal minister who is favoured in one place but not in another, with the resulting falling out and difficulties.

Group 2

How can we involve our small church ministry to meet the needs of our small communities?
How can we speed up the process of oversight and local ministry being 'the thing'?
Does the National Church have plan to roll out training of Oversight ministers?

Group 3

Observed that there had been a lot of advice given about leading churches, not so much about mission beyond the Church walls. If this pattern of ministry does not work, then what might be next and how do we actually grow the church through all of this?

Group 4

They were encouraged by Revd Jeff Risbridger's words, and see lots of potential with team working. They also recognised that there is a lot of tiredness in the areas discussed, and a lack of volunteers. How do we encourage *all* clergy and lay ministers to buy into the vision of teamwork?

Group 5

Encouraged by the idea of community of communities.
How, in that structure, do we encourage churches to work together when they may have very different aims, traditions and focuses?

Group 6

Encouraged to hear where it *is* working and grateful for Revd Jeff Risbridger's honesty. Concerned about identifying those leaders in their own area where it is not particularly obvious who they may be.
How do we minister in the gap between where we are now and where we are hoping to be, bearing in mind that it could take years to get to that point? It takes a long time for people to accept change and for people to come forward. How do we minister in that gap now and what is available to help us change those cultures?

Group 7

They were interested in the inverted triangle model.
Worried about situations where there can be an abuse of power and where people want things their way.
How long do you think it will take before this new structure is embedded, and will it then be changed again?

Group 8

Encouraged by the joy of things working well, and the positivity set against prevailing negativity. Worried about how well it would work when the person is not ordained.
Could we hear from a Local/Focal Minister who is not ordained about the local day-to-day challenges and successes, as we have just heard from priests today?

Group 9

Encouraged by this being part of culture change.
Where do we see people out on the edges and margins?
Where is there space for Oversight Ministry and Focal Ministry to be pioneering and doing new things?

Group 10

The challenge with the structure is moving into care and maintenance. There are economic reasons

for establishing this model. The Oversight Ministry diagram includes the image of a wagon representing Pioneer ministry, but not all deaneries have that as part of their plan. Unless we have someone engaged in renewal, we will not build with material impact.

Feedback from Zoom attendees:

Interested to hear about Oversight Ministry and Focal Ministry. Concerned about how un-ordained people are going to be recruited and who they will be responsible to, not just to the Oversight minister, who will be considered as their equal. They accept work in teams but are concerned that the plans are uncertain and unformed.

Encouraged about inverted triangle, a helpful image, and the sense of local ownership. Questions about sacramental provision and what this looks like from an ecumenical point of view.

Will this pattern of ministry be in place for some time? Will the goal posts be changed a bit further down the road?

Sally Piper asked Mary Cooper Brown and Charlotte Irwin, who are both Lay Local leaders/ministers, to share their experiences with members.

Mary Cooper Brown, Local Lay Leader Kerrier deanery

Mary praised the Sens Kernewek training, which she had found very helpful and encouraging. She works closely with the Rural Dean, Revd Heidi Huntley. Kerrier deanery also has a pioneer priest, Revd Susie Templeton.

She has also received feedback from someone locally that the church now feels like “our church” and not the vicar’s church.

She stressed that Local/Focal Ministers/Leaders are encouraged and trained by Sens Kernewek to think about their local community as well as the church.

Charlotte Irwin, St Agnes Church, Pydar deanery

Charlotte explained that she is not formally commissioned as a Local Leader, but is doing the role. The benefice had an oversight minister for about 8 years who has now left, so it is currently in vacancy.

This has transformed their particular church. It has empowered people to feel the church is their church, to see it is their responsibility, not just rely on someone else. The PCC makes decisions, stands by them and does not look to a minister for all the decisions. It is about reaching out into the community, not just looking after themselves. Empowering and enabling the PCC has made a huge difference.

She queried whether there are plans to have oversight ministers who are not ordained.

Revd Penny Leach commented that she completely endorses what has been said. Her role is in the community and although she can provide sacramental ministry, this does not make any difference; she is one amongst many and part of a team of collaborative ministry.

Sally thanked everyone for their feedback and said answers to the questions will be distributed with the minutes of this meeting.

Launch of “Smaller Churches” initiative

Bishop Hugh explained that the Diocese is blessed by a large number of small churches, and that the plan for Change and Renewal includes working on how we can support these.

Members then watched a video by Bishop Graham James, who is heading up this initiative, and which can be accessed on the diocesan website [here](#)

Following the video, Bishop Hugh confirmed that this conversation would continue with Bishop Graham at a future synod meeting.

He further commented that the Statistics for Mission figures collated from last year, show two things: Firstly that for the first time since the 1950s the church nationally has grown in the last year; secondly, that the Diocese of Truro has grown in this last year. These are raw figures, but this is good news.

The figures also show that three churches, each led by a local lay leader, all grew significantly in the year 2022-23.

Bishop Hugh urged everyone to continue to pray for Bishop Graham and the work he is engaging in.

Update on Vacancy in See

The Very Revd Simon Robinson, Dean of Truro, reported that, after an extensive period of consultation, the Statement of Needs for the Diocese had been finalised and that the committee has taken the unanimous decision to place it in the public domain. The committee also took the decision that the diocese would welcome a male or a female bishop and that they must ordain women as both Deacon and Priest.

At its final meeting the committee elected 6 members onto the Crown Nominations Commission who, together with the Archbishops and 6 nationally appointed members, will discern who the next Bishop of Truro will be. Those elected were: Mr Simon Taurins, Mr Mike Sturgess, Mr Roger Smith, Revd Anna Mason-Hyde, Revd Laura Bushell Hawke, Revd Andrew Yates.

Key dates for the ongoing process of discernment are:

September 2024: CNC shortlisting

October 2024: CNC interviews

January 2025: Likely date for announcement

Easter 2025: Likely time for diocesan welcome of new Bishop of Truro

Dean Simon stressed that it is important to note that the discernment of the new Bishop of Truro is not solely for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, but for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion as a whole. This is a humbling and daunting responsibility, and requires a commitment to prayer from us all.

Simon then asked the CNC representatives present at this meeting to come forward for prayer. Synod members then gathered round the CNC representatives who were present at the meeting, and prayed for and laid hands on them.

Simon concluded by saying that it had been a tremendous privilege to chair the process to this point and that he was grateful to all members of the committee and to diocesan colleagues for their hard work and commitment. He particularly thanked Kate Cortez, Revd Canon Simon Cade, Anna Corbett and Stephen Knott, the Archbishops' Appointment Secretary, and Helen Dimmock, the Crown Appointments' Secretary, for their wisdom, guidance and support.

Bishop Hugh thanked Simon and everyone who had taken on the role of CNC representative.

Report on General Synod

Revd Will Harwood, General Synod Representative, reported on the February 2024 Group of Sessions.

Safeguarding

The review of the Independent Safeguarding Board, and a paper on the Future of Church Safeguarding, were discussed. The latter proposes that the operation of safeguarding be moved from individual dioceses to an overall independent body (though retaining the same staff), and that a second group is set up to have independent oversight of safeguarding. Strong disagreements were expressed and not all were convinced of the need to take safeguarding operation away from the Dioceses. To come back for discussion at a future session.

Living in Love and Faith - Same Sex Marriage

Little progress made. A majority of bishops and around 55% of laity and clergy want radical change, 45% uphold the traditional view. Long debates took place with the headline being that we have reached a point where representatives of both sides will seek a form of structural provision that will allow both sides to remain in the Church of England with integrity. How this will be put into practice remains to be seen.

Parochial Fees

Members voted in favour of PCCs retaining some parochial fees.

Codes of Conduct for PCCs

Members agreed to look at the possibility of having a code of conduct for PCC members.

Changes in the work place

Discussion took place on the impact of changes in the workplace, including Artificial Intelligence.

Racial Justice

Progress to date was reviewed and it was agreed to encourage parishes to take this on board.

Archbishops' Commission On Families And Households

General Synod welcomed the report, although it was surprising to many that an amendment to reaffirm the value of marriage, especially when loving, as providing the most stable and permanent environment for bringing up children" was defeated.

Clergy Pensions

It was agreed to review clergy pensions and clergy remuneration.

Other areas discussed were evangelism on housing estates, the Church Commissioners' Response to links to transatlantic chattel slavery, the war in the Ukraine and challenge to international order, and the removal of the divorce impediment to ordination.

There was also a debate on Land and Nature. Revd Andrew Yates spoke in this debate, highlighting the diocesan strap line Cut Carbon, Cherish Creation, Speak Up. He was able to show case the good work of the Penlee Cluster with its two silver and two bronze Eco-church awards. He also shared examples of good practice in Truro diocese, including use of Glebe Land in the Falmouth area, which has now been let to the Falmouth Food Coop, an organisation that pursues organic, low-food mileage, sustainable veg crop growing.

Revd Andrew Yates, General Synod Member, then spoke to members. He commended the idea of biodiversity and encouraged churches to take part in the Nature Count that was due to take place on 1 June.

A question and answer session followed during which the following points were made:

Q: Revd Ben Morgan Lundie, West Wivelshire deanery, asked how diocesan synod members could pray for our General Synod Representatives.

A: Revd Will Harwood thanked Ben. Members would appreciate prayer for patience, steadfastness, wisdom as how they organise their time. Also for unity and love, particularly as some of the discussions are complex and stressful.

Q: Mike Thomas, Kerrier Deanery, mentioned that following the November Group of Sessions, there had been a reflection and concern about the behavior of some members. He asked if this had been reflected in the Code of Conduct plan.

A: Revd Will Harwood confirmed that this is in process and that this will be included in the Code of Conduct. He had personally been shocked and had added his own complaint. There was some of that in the February sessions, but less.

Mr Robert Perry, Chair of the House of Laity and General Synod Representative, commented that there had been three motions about conduct. He stressed that members have a responsibility to debate robustly but also courteously, something that can be hard to remember, particularly bearing in mind that the structure of debate is based on that of the House of Commons.

Revd Andrew Yates flagged that Robert had made an important contribution to one of the debates. A question of concern had been raised about the bell that is rung to alert people to get into the chamber to vote, and a concern that some were missing the bell. Robert had practical suggestion of getting a louder bell!

Bishop Hugh thanked both Will and Andrew, and asked everyone to pray for the next Group of Sessions due to take place in July.

Ministry & work of churchwardens

Bishop Hugh introduced Lindy Margach, Brenda Gilbert, Tim Simmonds and Andrew Sadlier. Tim and Andrew were participating via Zoom. He encouraged members to continue the conversation during lunch, after which there would be time set aside for feedback.

He asked Lindy, Brenda, Tim and Andrew to explain who they were and where they served.

Lindy Margach is PCC Secretary at Lanivet, as well as being a Deanery Synod Representative and Local Worship Leader. Lanivet is a very small church in Bodmin and Trigg Minor Deanery and is in the unusual position of not having had Churchwardens for around six years. Because it could not continue without PCC officers in place, Lanivet became a Festival Church. This has had a significant effect on the church and, as yet, there is no sign of anyone coming forward to be a churchwarden.

Brenda Gilbert is a Churchwarden at St Bartholomew, Lostwithiel. She explained that she decided to make a list of some of the things she and the other Churchwarden do on a regular basis and the list filled an A4 sheet. It surprised her to see the nitty gritty of what they actually do all the time. St Bartholomew's is a very busy church; the congregation has grown slightly since Covid and they are hoping that growth will continue. The church is involved with schools and local children.

The congregation feels that Truro is 'somewhere up there', and do not know a lot of what goes on and who does what and what all the titles of the various people are. This makes them rather sad. They would like not to feel at the bottom of a chain. Their church is getting on, they all enjoy it, but they still feel out on a limb. It is a funny feeling to have when serving and keeping things going, but to still feel not quite part of the whole.

Tim Simmonds is a Churchwarden at St Olaf's, Poughill; he feels it is a great privilege and responsibility to be a Churchwarden there.

Andrew Sadlier is a churchwarden at St Petroc's, Bodmin. This is a large and active church so Andrew is one of a fairly large team of people. There is an active PCC and a lot of volunteers. He does a lot as CW; the role can be a privilege and a curse, but is mostly a privilege.

Bishop Hugh explained that Lindy Margach has a proposal, as outlined in the paper already distributed to Synod members. He asked Lindy to explain what she is proposing.

Lindy explained that their PCC is very active is working very successfully by sharing all the duties of the Churchwardens in an unofficial way. They chose this route, after seeing the precedent set for this way of working by the PCC of a church in Suffolk, which decided in 2012 to take on the duties of Churchwarden amongst themselves

Consequently, Lanivet put forward a proposal for a change to church law for the duties of Churchwarden to be shared by the PCC together with the incumbent. They in no way want to abolish role of Churchwarden and totally endorse their value. However, according to an article in the Church Times, a quarter of churches in the diocese only have one churchwarden, and a fifth are also missing other church officers. There is a loss of volunteers as well.

The demography of people in the UK today has changed. People are having to work full-time for longer, the pension age has increased and more women are having to work as well. It is notable that the majority of churchwardens do appear to be from the older age groups. This is not a good thing for the future of the church. PCCs can attract new, thriving and thrusting members with a wide range of skills which are important to the church. This is where they are coming from with the proposal. Small churches can draw on a diversity of talent, although it may not be as much as larger churches.

Lindy said that she is slightly saddened by the questions members are going to be asked to discuss later in the meeting, concerning celebrating and supporting the work of churchwardens. She urged members to look at the essence of the proposal and consider that, where necessary and appropriate, the role can be shared by the PCC. She asked members to consider if this can be a way forward for the generations to come.

Bishop Hugh thanked Lindy. He encouraged members to engage in discussing these suggestions, bearing in mind that there will need to be consideration given to legalities.

Bishop Hugh then asked Brenda, Tim and Andrew to explain how they each became a churchwarden.

Brenda became a churchwarden because the previous churchwarden asked her if she would be interested. She has not felt this has been a calling, she was 'just dropped' into the role; she had had previous careers, and this felt like a next step. She 'fell into it' but does enjoy it and the people she works with, although it is not always easy. The PCC members are not young and there are no young people in the congregation at the moment, so it is difficult to think how the post will continue when she decides to stop.

Tim Simmonds moved to Bude in 2012 thinking to retire. He joined the PCC and shortly after he arrived the CW was taken ill so the PCC, knowing his background, asked if would be willing to take over. This was quite a shock so close to his move but he felt it was what God wanted him to do so he accepted the role. He has been learning as he goes along since then.

Andrew Sadlier does not feel that, for him, being churchwarden is a vocation. He was approached by the PCC and asked to fill the vacancy, and was encouraged by the Rural Dean. The other Churchwarden was very experienced but has since moved away. Andrew likes to get involved; he does not feel this is a calling to ministry, but a way of giving back. It is rewarding, and he is involved in developing the church in a way that it can serve the town, more than just offering communion.

Bishop Hugh commented that it was interesting that everyone had said someone else had suggested to them that they take on the role and that it was not a specific calling. He observed that this was often the case with ordination as well. He asked if anyone wished to add anything, any joys and challenges. Both Brenda and Andrew highlighted the joy and satisfaction of contributing and helping with the background work to make things run smoothly.

Tim stressed the need for prayer, particularly for new people.

Lindy concluded by saying that the role of churchwarden has drawn the PCC together, and has

encouraged teamwork and closeness. They derive enjoyment from working as a team, and bringing into church people who may not have set foot there for years, but who care about having a parish church in their community. This gives the church an opportunity to demonstrate kingdom and care in action.

Wrap up and feedback from Churchwarden session
Chaired by Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy

Members had been asked to consider the following questions:

- How can we celebrate and support the work of CWs?
- What practical suggestions that might help?
- In your place, what has worked well, or what makes the work of churchwardens harder?

Feedback from Zoom attendees:

Group 1

Important to recognise that Churchwardens are wrestling with spiritual forces in heavenly places. Wisdom is needed in finding the manpower for the various responsibilities e.g. for Health and Safety, safeguarding. It is generally recognised that getting people to stand up to organise responsibilities including PCC is potentially an issue in the parish. Churchwardens are very much responsible for welcoming.

Group 2

One problem is that there is a lack of certainty as to exactly what functions are given to Churchwardens. Despite the fact that their duties are covered by Canon Law, there is a lack of clarity and some of the duties are anachronistic. The entire PCC as charity trustees share the responsibility generally, so could alleviate the responsibilities of Churchwardens by sharing the roles that are put on to them, particularly those that are not in Canon Law anyway. There is a sense that the role of Churchwarden is much bigger than perhaps it ought to be and that Churchwardens are doing a lot more than their legal roles, so this could be shared out and the pressure mitigated.

There may be a case for developing the role of Assistant Churchwarden. In Church Representation Rules this is quite a limited function, but it could be developed as a role where someone shadows the actual Churchwarden as a way of learning the skills and becoming a Churchwarden themselves eventually.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, asked if there were any multi benefice clusters that had mentoring in place to help a churchwarden perhaps in another part of the benefice.

Revd Teresa Folland, North Kernow Benefice, Stratton Deanery responded to say that she is fortunate in that four of the five churches in her benefice have two Churchwardens, with the remaining parish having one. In the parish that has just one, that person has been paired up with another churchwarden to be her peer mentor and that is working really well.

Rosheen Browning, Camborne Cluster, Carnmarth North

Their cluster has five churches, four of which have two Churchwardens, the remaining parish having one. Rosheen brings the churchwardens together once a month for peer support, provided in a general, informal way.

Paul Holley, Trigg Minor and Bodmin

The clergy in the team have been reflecting on how much time they are able to spend with church officers, bearing in mind the number of parishes they are each responsible for. This was discussed at their Deanery Chapter meeting, with speculation that this may mean more pressure for church officers and they may not be able to access support as frequently as they would have done in the past.

Jeremy Stuart, Pydar Deanery

Flagged the challenges of finding churchwardens. Suggested perhaps focusing on having a 'mini oversight ministry' in a church, but with the Churchwarden having overall oversight, but with the encouragement and expectation of delegating those powers, so that someone else with better knowledge in an area can take on a specific duty. Many people who could take on being a churchwarden are not able to do so because they are not available to open up and lock the church, but *they could* act as oversight.

Sarah Vinson, Trigg Major Deanery

Having a job specification would help. The specification would outline what a Churchwarden is responsible for, but that they do not actually have to do it all. She believes that people interested in becoming a Churchwarden look at what others are doing in the role and do not think they have the capacity to do all those things. However, the role is in fact being misinterpreted, because the person fulfilling the role is actually doing a lot more than is actually required. A role specification would help with this.

Simon Robinson, Dean of Truro, knows someone who leads a church in London, which has a children's Churchwarden who is 14 years old, has responsibilities, sits on the PCC, and feeds back to the other children & young people in the church. This works very well, and the young person concerned is learning about governance and skills of leadership.

Mr Rob Pearce, Trigg Minor and Bodmin Deanery, said that his church at Bradoc is a small church, which works closely with the local school; they consider the school and church as one place. Their new churchwarden is also head of RE at the school and this gives an enhanced link.

Mrs Charlotte Irwin, Bishop's Nominee, recommended the nationwide Facebook page called 'Churchwardens'. This has lots of helpful advice and taps into a wealth of experience.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright thanked everyone for their contributions to today's discussion.

Instrument of Delegation

The Diocesan Registrar, Mr Jos Moule, explained that Bishop Hugh would be delegating some of his episcopal functions to Honorary Assistant Bishop, the Rt Revd Graham James. The functions will include some statutory ones that need to be delegated by a formal instrument.

The most important of these functions is to provide back-up for Bishop Hugh whilst there is no diocesan bishop, and to ensure that he can call on Bishop Graham if the need arises.

Q: Revd Paul Zaphiriou, St Austell deanery, asked if there were any significant functions that would continue to be reserved for the Acting Bishop of Truro.

A: Mr Jos Moule, Diocesan Registrar, replied to say that this is a comprehensive instrument, it is not passing everything over, it is just there for when the need arises. Bishop Hugh will perform the functions, but has the option to pass something over to Bishop Graham if needs be.

Q: Ms Mary Wooding, Penwith Deanery, asked if this was a short-term measure, and queried what would happen when a new Bishop of Truro is appointed.

A: Mr Jos Moule, Diocesan Registrar, replied to say that when Bishop Philip was in post, there was a similar delegation for Bishop Hugh. Now that Bishop Philip has left, all the responsibilities have fallen on Bishop Hugh, hence the need share those duties. In addition, it is good practice to have such an instrument in place on a permanent basis, and it will be a matter for the new bishop to appraise this once in post.

Mary Wooding also asked if Bishop Graham had been appointed by and, if so, who by?

Jos explained that Bishop Graham is an Honorary Assistant Bishop in the diocese and has been formally appointed as such. He is a former Bishop of Norwich and very experienced.

Bishop Hugh added that this is a normal procedure. Many other dioceses also have retired bishops living in their diocese and it is normal to invite them to take on responsibilities and to make sure delegated powers are in place so that they can stand in if needed.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, proposed that this Synod approve the draft Instrument of Delegation to The Right Reverend Bishop Graham James, and thanks him for his willingness to serve in this way.

Voting took place:

In the room:
In favour 31
Against 0
Abstain 0

Zoom:
In favour 8
Against 0
Abstain 0

The motion was carried.

Meeting as Diocesan Board of Finance

The Annual General Meeting of the Company

Presentation of the Strategic Report, the auditor's report, and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2023

Mr Robert Perry, Chair of the House of Laity, introduced Mrs Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets.

Sophie explained that her presentation today concerned the 2023 financial statements (annual accounts) of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance (TDBF).

The budget approved by Diocesan Synod in November 2022, which was mission and ministry led, had a deficit of £2.5m. Income in 2023 was slightly less than budget, but expenditure was also less than budgeted, resulting in an overall reduced deficit of £2.3m.

The decrease in income was in part due to receiving nearly half a million pounds less in MMF contributions than were budgeted, as well as £51k less in dividends. However, an increase in interest rates resulted in £155k more interest being received, and the diocese also received new funding from the national church to help with funding the Change and Renewal team.

Overview of expenditure and income

Actual expenditure on ministry in 2023 was 5.6% more than budgeted. The main reason for this increase was an overspend on property maintenance and major works in excess of £575k. The diocese continues to take the opportunity to carry out major works to properties when they become vacant, and during 2023 there was a further increase in the level of clergy vacancies, resulting in more properties becoming vacant. It was therefore decided to increase the budget spent during that year so as to enable an increased level of works to take place.

This overspend was balanced by savings made in other areas such as parish based mission, where

there was a saving against budget of £752k. This large saving was mainly down to the fact that, at the time the budget was prepared, most of the deanery plans did not include the detail of how the funding would be spent, resulting in an overestimation of the amount of mission and LICF funding the diocese would need to make available to deaneries.

Headlines and detail

There are four headlines in the 2023 annual report:

- Supporting strategic change
 - Initiating a trustee-led review of governance
 - Approving two key strategic documents, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal and the Assets Strategy
 - Continuing to push the priority of parishes and deaneries meeting their MMF commitment
 - To approve the creation of Dean of Area posts
 - To approve the 2024 budget with ongoing support for parishes
 - To approve the Diocesan Board of Education strategy
- Income contributed by parishes to the MMF (Mission and Ministry Fund)
 - 2023 income £2.864m (budget £3.344m)
 - Collection rate 90% in 2023, 67% in 2022
 - 2022 income £3.074m (budget £3.539m)
 - 2021 income £3.047m
 - 2019 income £3.539m
- The overall value of assets for which trustees are responsible continued to perform strongly, with the following increases
 - Property £2.152m
 - Glebe £1.918m
 - Investments £2.308m
 - We now have a strategic plan in place to start utilising the reserves in a planned way rather than using them to plug an unplanned deficit
- Increasing direct support for parish ministry.

The diocese again experienced an overall operating deficit, in 2023 that was £2,106,052, compared to £923,534 in 2022.

Following the challenging economic conditions in 2022, when the value of investments fell by £1 ³/₄ million, we saw an increase in 2023 of £4.3m. There was also a further increase to property valuations in 2023. This is good news and we now have the Assets Strategy and Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal in place, which inform key decisions around the use of these assets over time.

Income

- Income reduced by nearly £400k when compared to 2022. The main sources of income are MMF, grants from the Archbishops' Council, and investment income.

- The level of MMF contributions received in 2023 was £210k (6.8%) less than in 2022. However, the MMF call, which is allocated to parishes by the deanery, was reduced in 2023, resulting in an increased contribution rate to just of 90%, up from 67% in 2022.
- In 2023 there was a £36k increase in the amount of LICF funding received from the national church.
- The funding received from national church towards Ordinand training reduced in 2023 as we had fewer ordinands in training.
- In 2022 we received two large grants from the national church to assist parishes with energy cost increases. No similar funding was received in 2023.
- Rents from Parsonages saw a reduction of £40k, largely owing to taking the opportunity to carry out essential works on a vacant property, rather than letting it out.
- Increased income from dividends and interest, owing to the rise in interest rates in 2023.
- A net profit of £242,978 was realised in 2023 from the sale of 3 Board properties and 5 Parsonages.

Expenditure

- Expenditure increased in 2023 by around £950k when compared to 2022.
- A continued reduction in 2023 of the amount spent on stipends and NI contributions.
- An increase of £720k in the amount spent on property major works and maintenance
- No funding from the national church in 2023 for the clergy hardship fund or energy grants for PCCs, was the main contributor to the reduced spend in 2023.
- Increased expenditure following the first full year of having the Change and Renewal Team in post. This was as expected and is part of the strategic plan. Some funding has been received from national church to assist with funding this work and the remainder of the expenditure comes from DBF reserves i.e. it is not included in the MMF figures for the parishes.
- Changes in the staffing levels in a number of the Transforming Mission projects led to reduced expenditure of about £100k.
- There was an increase in expenditure on Education by about £100k.
- Central support costs increased in 2023 when compared to 2022 by £70k. Salaries have increased by £55k year on year and a dilapidation estimate has been included of £40k relating to Church House; this is funded by a designated fund and does not impact parishes. The salary increase is partly due to the 6% cost of living increase awarded in January 2023 and was also due to small changes in the staffing levels to aid with resourcing the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal.

Looking forward to 2024:

- Clergy recruitment is the top operational priority
- Continued commitment to the parishes and churches of the diocese
- Assets Strategy and Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal are the key strategic documents to ensure the assets of the TDBF are used as effectively as possible for the fruitfulness and sustainability of the wider diocese.

The 2025 budget process has now begun with FAR considering the high level assumptions. There will be a consultation again this year with the wider diocese and the budget will again be strategically led.

Sophie concluded by saying that the 2023 financial statements are reporting a surplus of £4.4m and the Balance Sheet has increased in value again. Reserves are now being used in quite a significant way as per the Assets Strategy and Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal, the key strategic documents.

The 2024 budget has been re-forecast and the budgeted deficit has increased from £3.3m to £3.6m. This is mainly due to an increase of £750k in the property maintenance budget, which is offset in part by savings on clergy stipends, and pensions of £330k as vacancy levels remain high.

To conclude, Sophie stressed that we continue to be committed to the Next Steps On the Way process.

Members thanked Sophie with a round of applause.

A question and answer time followed:

Q: David Fieldsend, Carnmarth North, queried the figure of £240,000 income from the disposal of eight properties.

A: Mrs Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets explained that the figure given in these circumstances is the profit or loss on the sale. The £240,000 is the amount made after the most recent valuation has been deducted.

Q: Annabel King, East Wivelshire Deanery, queried that MMF income was reported as being down by 6.8% but that there had been a better overall take up, which was confusing.

A: Mrs Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets explained that the call i.e. the amount we ask for reduced in 2023. The amount received is compared to the amount we asked for. The call figure went down, so income went down slightly but the denominator in the fraction has reduced so the overall take up is higher.

A: Bishop Hugh explained that one of the key aims of On The Way was to move us from an MMF income that was fairly random because historically parishes were paying what they chose to pay, with no deliberate plan or choices made. The gap between the call and what was actually paid was growing fast. This also meant that there was no confidence as to what we would need to use our reserves for i.e. what the gap would be. We therefore went to parishes and asked what they felt they could confidently pay, so that we could then have an idea of the amount we would use reserves to cover.

Q: Revd Paul Holley, Trigg Minor and Bodmin Deanery, queried the percentage figure of actual MMF call in 2023 against the actual amount, which he makes 85%. He also queried the 2024 figure of 90% contribution rate, when at the end of April we showed a 22% contribution so far.

A: Mrs Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, answered the first query. She explained that it was not clear when the budget was put together in 2022 how LICF and mission funding would be used and that changed during in 2023, so the call in effect changed too. The MMF summary has the final numbers with all the detail. She said she would be happy to have a conversation with Paul with more detail, if that would help.

A: Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, answered the second question. He explained that MMF is not received at the same rate each month e.g. less is received in January & February than in April. The figure given is based on what we predict we will receive.

Q: Mr Andrew Prince, Powder deanery, asked if there will be a renewed effort to fill the vacancies for pioneer ministers as well as a renewed effort to fill the number of clergy vacancies that currently exist.

A: Bishop Hugh thanked Andrew. He stressed that clergy numbers have not been deliberately reduced; it is harder to recruit to posts, but the aim is to have more clergy. He also explained that there has been no strategic decision to reduce the number of pioneer ministers appointed so where that is not happening is usually because we are waiting for the deanery plan. Where deaneries have said they would like to spend their funding in a particular way, it is not because we are saying they cannot spend it yet, there will be local reasons, which vary from place to place.

Sue Dickenson, Stratton Deanery, expressed on behalf of everyone thanks to Sophie for her huge support over a number of years.

Q: Rosheen Browning, Carnmarth North Deanery, also thanked Sophie. She asked if a summary of the pie charts could be provided as people often ask how much is being paid for 'the vicar', and the pie charts would give a quick visual answer for people.

A: Mrs Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, confirmed that she would do this and explained that she is preparing a version that will be sent round to Treasurers by email.

Q: Mike Thomas, Kerrier deanery asked if there is a list of Self-Supporting posts that are not being filled and had there been any research as to why no-one is coming forward?

A: The Ven Kelly Betteridge, Archdeacon of Bodmin, replied to say that there has been no specific research in this diocese, but that this has been done nationally. In this diocese, we are recruiting pretty rapidly now and it is hard to tell which posts people are attracted to, but we have had good interest in the more complex, less traditional posts e.g. Oversight posts.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, mentioned that Ordinand numbers were down nationally (340 when it used to be over 600) so there is a need to rethink.

Q: Jeremy Stuart, Pydar deanery asked if consideration could be given to sending out the financial briefing to all members of this synod so that they have it to hand for reporting to deanery and parishes.

A: Mrs Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, confirmed that this would be done.

Mary Wooding, Penwith Deanery, commented that she finds it so sad to hear talk of clergy recruitment and commitment to parishes being a top priority, and yet there is a reluctance to allow the western part of Penwith deanery to have more than four stipendiary clergy, the reason being purely linked to finance. She therefore finds it hard to trust in the process.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, thanked Mary for her comments and honesty.

Q: Roger Smith, Trigg Minor & Bodmin Deanery, asked for an update on the appointment of Deans of Area.

A: The Ven Kelly Betteridge, Archdeacon of Bodmin, said it was hoped that there would be an update for Synod fairly soon. She confirmed that appointments have not yet been made to those posts and work is ongoing as to how those posts will be configured in the future.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, closed by thanking Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets and all those engaged in this process. Members expressed their thanks with a round of applause.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, invited Mike Sturgess, Chair of Diocesan Board of Finance, to move the following motions.

Mr Mike Sturgess, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, moved that the Members of the Company receive the Reports and Annual Statements of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Seconded by Revd Paul Zaphirou, St Austell Deanery

Voting took place:

In room:

In favour 29 + 1 proxy vote

Against 0

Abstain 0

Zoom:

In favour 9

Against 0

Abstain 0

Mr Mike Sturgess, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, moved that Francis Clark LLP are appointed as the Company's auditor to hold office with effect from 1st October 2024 to the end of the next period for appointing auditors under Section 485(2) of the Companies Act 2006, at a remuneration to be determined by the directors.

Seconded by Mr David Fieldsend, Carnmarth North Deanery

Voting took place:

In room:

In favour 29 + 1 proxy vote

Against 0

Abstain 0

Zoom:

In favour 6

Against 0

Abstain 0

Mr Mike Sturgess, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, moved that Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP be appointed to serve as the solicitors of the Company.

Seconded by Revd Laura Bushell Hawke, East Wivelshire Deanery

Voting took place:

In room:

In favour 29 + 1 proxy vote

Against 0

Abstain 0

Zoom:

In favour 9

Against 0

Abstain 0

Meeting as Diocesan Synod

Questions under Standing Orders

There were no questions.

Reports and Minutes

- Minutes of the previous meeting of Diocesan Synod
- Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council

The Chair proposed

“that Synod note:

- (16) the minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod on 18th November 2023
- (18) the report from the Bishops Diocesan Council”

Seconded by Jeremy Stuart.

The majority were in favour of noting, with 1 abstention and 1 against.

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Acting Bishop of Truro and Bishop of St Germans, closed the meeting in prayer at 14.35 pm.