

DIOCESE of TRURO
Diocesan Synod

Minutes for a meeting of Truro Diocesan Synod 28 February 2026 at **St Erme Community Centre, Trispen and on Zoom.**

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Synod | Chaired by The Revd. Douglas Wren (DW), Chair of the House of Clergy

Opening Worship led by Local Worship Leaders from St Agnes | Mrs. Charlotte Irwin, Ava, Ivy, Merryn, and Katharine

Mrs. Charlotte Irwin (CI) spoke of children and young people and how they are a part of the Church. CI introduced Ava, Ivy, Merryn and Katharine and invited them to lead worship.

DW thanked CI and the St Agnes team for blessing synod and leading worship.

DW invited The Rt Revd. David Williams, Bishop of Truro, to give his address.

Bishop's Address | The Rt Revd. David Williams, Bishop of Truro

Bishop David gave his Presidential Address, a copy of which can be found on the Diocesan website [\[HERE\]](#).

Small Groups (15mins) | The Rt Revd. David Williams, Bishop of Truro

Questions for group discussions:

- Can you share with your group a place where God has met with you.
- Where are the signs of inter-generational Church that you have noticed?
- The Church of England's parish system is not simply an inherited structure to be managed, but a theological conviction to be lived. What is this conviction?
- "A house of prayer for all who live within earshot of its bells". What might this mean for your local church?

Update on Diocesan Plan for Change & Renewal | Ms. Ruth Marriott, Director of Change and Renewal; The Revd. Adam Thomas, Penwith; and The Revd. Erica Payne, Powder

Summary:

- Deanery Plans are progressing, with most clergy posts filled, Strategic Rural Deans appointed, and annual reviews and communications improving.
- Diocesan priorities remain: Patterns of Ministry, Growing Younger, and With and for Those in Need.
- The Dockyard in Powder offers LICF-funded community support, intergenerational activities, youth work, and a weekly congregation.
- Penwith Deanery is undergoing cultural change, focusing on intergenerational growth, resource management, and ministry patterns.
- Speakers stressed the importance of local context, cultural change, and recognising God's work already present.

Ms. Ruth Marriott, Director of Change and Renewal (RM)

RM presented an interim update, noting that a full report will follow later in the year after the annual reviews of the Diocesan and Deanery Plans. Slides will be circulated after the meeting.

She outlined progress on the twelve Deanery Plans, which have continued to develop over the past five years with a focus on fruitfulness and sustainability. Clergy deployment has stabilised, with most posts filled, and all twelve Strategic Rural Deans now in post to support cultural and structural change.

RM reported evidence of cultural shifts across several deaneries as they discern how best to meet local needs. Annual reviews are now in place to assess progress and identify adjustments. Communications remain a key area for improvement, and ten deaneries now have a communications champion working with the diocesan team.

She introduced the shared outcomes framework, currently in its first year, which tracks twelve indicators of fruitfulness and sustainability. A new deanery dashboard will support this work later in the year.

RM reminded Synod of the three diocesan priorities:

- Patterns of Ministry.
- Growing the number of children and young people tenfold.
- Creating accessible communities with and for those in need.

She summarised financial sustainability, explaining how MMF, LICF and Mission Funding interact, and noted that five Transforming Mission areas are transitioning into long-term deanery models.

On Patterns of Ministry, she referred to the People Plan, developed 18 months ago, which identifies four essential ministry strands: incumbent clergy, local leaders, leaders for work with children & young people, and Strategic Rural Deans.

On Growing Younger, RM reported increasing support and training for churches, including training undertaken by a cohort clergy at Trinity College, Bristol. Three Flourish sites are piloting school-based worshipping communities, and the first deanery will begin shaping a Growing Younger plan later this year.

Finally, she highlighted the breadth of community initiatives across the diocese, including parish nurses, food and clothes banks, CAP centres and debt advice services. Many deaneries use LICF to support stipendiary or locally employed roles, with ten deaneries already operating local employment structures and another exploring options.

The Revd. Erica Payne (EP), Powder

EP explained that the Dockyard project was established three years ago using LICF funding to support communities experiencing deprivation in Truro and its surrounding areas. While most statistical deprivation lies within the city, hidden poverty is present across Cornwall. Powder Deanery chose to pool resources to create a central hub accessible by public transport.

EP shared that the project grew out of prayer and personal experience of supporting a friend who became homeless. This highlighted the instability, disruption, and trauma experienced by families in temporary accommodation. The Dockyard seeks to bring hope and resilience through intergenerational community focused on children, young people, and families.

EP outlined the Dockyard's core values:

- Radical hospitality
- Shared contribution
- Genuine friendship
- Reducing barriers to access
- Offering opportunities for faith exploration

The project now operates from a rented shop in Truro, shared with several other community organisations, which has enabled significant growth.

The Dockyard team includes two employed staff, an administrative enabler, a youth and families worker, and three new part-time posts soon to be recruited. Around twenty volunteers from different churches support the ministry.

EP described the Sunday “Meals with a Message” congregation, a weekly family café, a food larder, Bible study for members of the homeless community, and youth work in local schools. Around 95 people per month now engage with the Dockyard who were not previously connected with the Anglican Church.

EP concluded by encouraging Synod that God continues to lead, equip, and sustain mission.

The Revd. Adam Thomas (AT), Joint Strategic Rural Dean, Penwith

AT reflected on earlier perceptions of Penwith as a challenging or overlooked deanery. Many people had experienced the ‘On the Way’ process as something imposed rather than collaborative.

AT emphasised that lasting change requires cultural transformation rather than plans or resources alone. Although the existing Deanery Plan was well written, it did not reflect the lived situation. One significant decision already taken was that the deanery would move to eight priests serving twenty-six churches, a bold move compared with other contexts. Clergy were now more willing to meet and work collaboratively, which encouraged him to take on the role.

A “clear the air” deanery day was held, drawing 120 attendees. Archdeacon Clive presided at the opening Eucharist and listened as participants shared experiences and set new expectations for communication and collaboration.

AT explained that Penwith’s process follows three stages of change management: intention (desired outcomes), awareness (the current reality), and action (supporting change without becoming overly focused on the plan itself). The deanery has agreed three priorities: intergenerational growth focused on Growing Younger, resource management, and Patterns of Ministry. Work is underway to gather accurate data and visit every parish, recognising the substantial ministry already taking place.

The deanery has launched several “early wins,” including a grant scheme enabling each parish to experiment with projects aligned to the priorities. AT noted that consultancy support is being sought for patterns of ministry, buildings, and Growing Younger. AT shared a story of a parish reduced to eight worshippers, once considered for closure, which has now grown to twenty-four through prayer and new connections. He emphasised that planning must not obscure attentiveness to God’s work already present in each place.

RM thanked the speakers and affirmed that each deanery is in a different place, echoing the diocesan emphasis on responding to local context.

DW thanked all contributors.

BREAK

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Synod | Chaired by Ms. Merisa MacInnes (MM), Chair of the House of Laity

Annual Report on Safeguarding | Ms. Justine Hosking (JH), Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Panel and The Revd. Andy Earl (AE), Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

Summary:

- The Annual Safeguarding Report highlighted increased scrutiny of culture, leadership, and case outcomes across the diocese.
- Significant rise in referrals (69 in 2023 to 270 in 2025) showing greater awareness in parishes.
- Referral levels, capacity challenges, and planned recruitment for cathedral-specific support were outlined.
- Strong performance was noted in safety-plan management, parish dashboard compliance, and partnership working.
- Development needs include improved data systems, clearer processes for outlying roles, and stronger survivor input.
- Safeguarding remains a shared cultural responsibility, with 2026 focusing on leadership, risk, survivor experience, and prevention.

Ms. Justine Hosking (JH), Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Panel

JH began by outlining her role within the diocesan governance structure. Although positioned as an independent voice in safeguarding oversight, she emphasised that safeguarding responsibilities permeate all aspects of diocesan activity. She described her professional background in public law, child and adult protection, and her experience as a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

JH explained that the Scrutiny Panel operates according to national safeguarding standards, focusing on five key principles:

- Culture and leadership
- Prevention of harm
- Risk management
- Survivor voice
- Learning from case outcomes

In 2025 the panel examined safeguarding activity across the diocese and cathedral. In 2026 the focus will shift to evaluating how safeguarding work impacts the experience and safety of those attending church and related activities. JH thanked the diocesan safeguarding team for their expertise and support.

The panel's role has evolved from an advisory function to active scrutiny of culture, case management, and parish practice. This includes monitoring the application of national safeguarding standards, reviewing case outcomes, and examining cultural influences on safeguarding effectiveness. National reports, including 'Makin' and 'Scolding', prompted scrutiny into areas such as Bishops' Mission Orders and broader governance structures. JH encouraged development of clearer organisational mapping to help the panel and other governance bodies to understand the full range of diocesan ministries and responsibilities.

JH highlighted work linked to the 'Jay Review' and its implications for confidence, capacity, and well-being among clergy and church officers. The panel intends to examine culture and leadership more deeply in 2026, including engagement with the Chair of the Clergy Wellbeing Group, noting that clergy mental health has direct implications for safeguarding vigilance.

She reported that the cathedral had responded constructively to a high-profile safeguarding case by strengthening governance, establishing an independent safeguarding management group, and appointing an independent safeguarding trustee. JH noted that this case demonstrated the need for continued national review of clergy discipline processes, and she welcomed the Charity Commission's regulatory engagement on safeguarding.

JH reported substantial improvements in parish dashboard compliance, crediting strategic rural deans for their leadership. Some parishes expressed concerns about accessibility and

language used within the dashboard; a working group may be formed to support future development.

She noted that the diocesan safeguarding team is reviewing its data management systems to ensure case outcomes and learning are recorded more effectively. The team has experienced a significant rise in referrals, which JH views as a positive sign of increased awareness and willingness to raise concerns.

The Revd. Andy Earl (AE), Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

AE clarified that the referral figures do not include the large volume of routine administrative requests (DBS checks, training guidance, etc.). Referrals reflect concerns requiring assessment or advice.

He reported the following:

- Level 1 concerns (triage and advice): 153 cases in 2024; 208 in 2025.
- Medium-level concerns (allegations requiring further fact-finding): an increase consistent with national trends.
- High-level cases: 6 in 2024; 14 in 2025, representing a significant rise over five years.

AE explained that the Charity Commission had recently clarified that charities (including the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance and PCCs) have responsibilities that extend to all who engage with church life, not only children or adults at risk. Safeguarding structures are being strengthened accordingly. Investment from the Board of Trustees and improved resourcing at the cathedral will support the recruitment of an additional Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Officer dedicated to cathedral casework.

He emphasised that high activity levels within the safeguarding team should never be interpreted as reluctance to engage. He encouraged clergy and parishes to raise concerns early rather than hold onto uncertainty or anxiety.

JH added that the Scrutiny Panel views the rise in referrals positively as it reflects increased awareness. She reported that safety-plan practice for managing convicted offenders is regarded nationally as an example of good practice, with 14 active plans and 5 pending review.

She encouraged parishes to continue learning exercises, such as scenario-based workshops, to strengthen confidence in responding to safeguarding concerns. Partnership working will be a continued focus, with panel members from organisations such as First Light contributing professional insight.

The Scrutiny Panel plans a July deep dive into risk identification and risk-register practice. JH suggested providing Synod with a schedule of themed panel meetings so members may contribute to relevant discussions.

Survivor engagement remains central. The diocese holds two annual conferences, and JH noted the strong attendance at the recent survivor conference. She described emerging work on prevention, including gathering children's views through school visits and sharing insights with the education team.

JH also highlighted the need to examine safeguarding provision for "outlying roles" such as Permission to Officiate clergy and bell ringers, ensuring consistency of training and induction. She invited Synod to suggest any additional roles requiring attention.

The Scrutiny Panel will focus its next meetings on:

- April: Culture and leadership
- July: Risk and survivor experience
- October: Prevention and learning

JH reiterated that safeguarding is not an add-on but a shared cultural commitment. She reflected on data showing that 82 referrals related to requests for advice, while 96 related to concerning adult behaviour, which is a category the panel intends to explore further to ensure clarity and consistency.

MM thanked JH and AE for their clear and detailed report, expressing appreciation for the extensive safeguarding work undertaken across the diocese.

Update on Growing Younger | Mr. Isaac McNish, Head of Ministry

Summary:

- IM reported growing momentum across parishes, clergy, and volunteers engaging with Growing Younger training and shared learning.
- The “many-some-few” framework continues to guide development through broad engagement, deeper school partnerships, and long-term deanery-owned plans.
- IM emphasised prayer, careful pacing, safeguarding culture, and collaborative ministry as essential foundations.
- A pilot for the “few” will begin this year, with wider roll-out after learning from the first phase.
- The work remains rooted in five foundations: intergenerational community, children’s voice, church-home-school partnership, intentional faith formation, and collaborative ministry.

MM introduced Mr. Isaac McNish, Head of Ministry, who would be providing an update on the Growing Younger programme. She noted that this work is referenced in the Bishop’s Diocesan Council Report, with additional materials circulated earlier in the week. Before inviting him to begin, she asked IM to share why he is passionate about this work.

Mr. Isaac McNish (IM), Head of Ministry

IM greeted Synod members and reflected on why he serves in this role. He described his experience of Christian communities that can feel both fragile and beautiful yet deeply grounded in God’s presence. He expressed a desire to support these communities as they seek to radiate God’s love, explaining that the opportunity to serve them through this ministry felt like a natural response to his calling.

Turning to his update on Growing Younger, IM noted that although the time between the last Synod and this meeting has been short, important work has nevertheless taken place. Conversations have continued across the diocese, PCCs have been engaging with the language and principles of Growing Younger, and leaders involved have been developing their understanding through shared learning and reflection. IM observed that themes central to Growing Younger—intergenerational worship, shared prayer, and mission—had already been evident throughout Synod that morning.

IM outlined the programme’s structure using the established “many-some-few” framework.

The Many

IM explained that this strand focuses on training for leaders at every level and in every context. He encouraged anyone who feels a gap exists in available training or resources to contact the ministry team. He reported that at a recent Bishop’s Briefing, clergy explored what establishing or strengthening ministry with children and young people might look like in at least one of their churches. IM highlighted the importance of prayer in this process, noting that shared prayer during the briefing created a strong sense of unity and purpose. Momentum continues to build as more leaders and volunteers engage in the Growing Younger vision.

The Some

This strand focuses on deeper engagement with schools. IM affirmed the significant work

being done through the Flourish programme and referred Synod to the detailed report prepared by the Director of Education. He emphasised that worshipping communities centred on Christ are already present in schools and can be vibrant and transformative spaces. The aim is to strengthen the partnership between church, home, and school, aligning with one of the five foundations of Growing Younger.

The Few

IM explained that much of the long-term investment for Growing Younger will be directed towards this strand. The work will be guided by learning from recent years and rooted in the five foundations. Central to its development will be a strong safeguarding culture, attentive listening to one another and to God, and a careful and prayerful pace to ensure no one is left behind.

He emphasised that the work of planning must not be rushed; communication and inclusion are essential, particularly when shaping long-term ministry. A new working phrase has been adopted to express the intended approach: “*Episcopally led, deanery owned, diocesan supported.*” This aims to ensure that deaneries shape and share the work collectively, supported by diocesan resourcing.

IM confirmed that one pilot project for the “few” strand is planned to begin this year. The intention is to learn from that process and refine the approach before expanding further.

IM concluded by restating the five foundations underpinning Growing Younger:

- Intergenerational communities
- The voice of children and young people
- Partnership between church, home, and school
- Intentional faith formation
- Collaborative ministry

He invited Synod to spend time in discussion groups, asking each table to identify one key question to feed back.

FEEDBACK

Mrs. Kerstin Lewis (KL), Mothers’ Union

KL praised the excellent practice in church primary schools and highlighted them as a strong sign of hope. She encouraged Synod to focus on meeting children where they already are, especially in schools, rather than worrying about bringing them into church buildings.

Mrs. Caroline Atwood (CA), Penwith

CA expressed concern that the clapping after the children’s worship contribution risked treating them like performers. She questioned whether the children were genuinely part of the worshipping community.

Mrs. Charlotte Irwin (CI), Pydar

CI confirmed the children are active members of the worshipping community, regularly leading prayers and services. She acknowledged concerns about clapping but affirmed that in this case it was a joyful, not performative, response.

Mr. Isaac McNish (IM), Head of Ministry

IM stressed the importance of avoiding tokenism and ensuring children’s contributions are genuinely valued. He affirmed the need to engage children in their own environments where appropriate.

Mrs. Gill Shipsides (GS), Stratton

GS echoed praise for the strength of church schools and commended the work of the Director of Education and his team. She noted excellent practice across the schools she works with.

Mrs. Sarah Vinson (SV), Trigg Major

SV shared that her small church community is beginning to reflect on how to engage adults aged 40-50, who represent two generations younger than most of the current congregation.

Miss. Jane Le Page (JLP), Carnmarth North

JLP described the significant variation across parishes in her deanery, with some lacking children and schools entirely. She hoped for support to secure trained youth workers and noted the challenges posed by ageing, impractical church buildings.

Mrs. Abigail Kirby Harris (AKH), Trigg Minor & Bodmin

AKH asked how schools can ensure Christianity remains included within RE provision, noting the national requirement for RE teaching time. She sought guidance on how this could be supported effectively.

Mr. Lee Moscato (LM), Director of Education

LM clarified that church schools must dedicate a specific portion of their timetable to RE, unlike community schools. He assured Synod that the education team actively supports RE locally and nationally, including through SACRE and national curriculum development work.

END OF FEEDBACK.

IM concluded by reminding Synod that many of the issues raised point to the need to recognise and draw on the wider Christian community across deaneries. He emphasised collaboration, prayer, training, and shared gifts as core to the Growing Younger vision.

MM thanked contributors and encouraged members to continue discussions informally, stressing that all generations play a part in passing on faith. She highlighted creative family activities across the diocese and the valuable influence older members can have on younger generations before inviting Ms. Kerstin Lewis (Mothers' Union) to lead midday prayers.

LUNCH with Midday Prayers led by Ms. Kerstin Lewis, President of the Mothers' Union

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Synod: Chaired by The Rt. Revd. David Williams, Bishop of Truro

Consultation on the church buildings strategy | Mrs. Kate Cortez, Head of Operations & Governance; The Ven. Clive Hogger, Archdeacon of Cornwall; and The Revd. Laura Bushell Hawke, Chair of the Building Strategy Advisory Group

Summary:

- Bishop David introduced the consultation on supporting PCCs with church buildings, linking stewardship to the theological and missional significance of sacred space.
- KC outlined the year-long consultation and invited Synod to help shape the final diocesan buildings strategy.
- CH highlighted four national challenges and stressed the missional importance of buildings as places of encounter and community.
- LBH described the theological basis and consultation behind the strategy, noting a shift from scarcity to an investment mindset across all 305 churches.
- KC confirmed the BDC will approve the final strategy and assured Synod their input is substantive, not symbolic.

Bishop David re-convened Synod and introduced the major consultation on how the diocese can better support PCCs in the stewardship of church buildings. He linked the discussion to themes from his opening address, noting that at their best, church buildings serve as "embodied icons," opening windows from the ordinary to the holy. However, he acknowledged the strain that maintaining such buildings can place on small congregations. Bishop David highlighted Mrs. Kate Cortez (KC), Head of Operations and

Deputy Diocesan Secretary, who had led the consultation throughout 2025 and would now guide Synod through its final stage before a strategy is presented to the Bishop's Diocesan Council (BDC).

Mrs. Kate Cortez (KC), Head of Operations & Governance

KC explained that the session would involve substantial discussion and feedback. Before group work began, she invited two speakers to outline why this work matters and how it has developed. She then handed over to The Ven. Clive Hogger.

The Ven. Clive Hogger (CH), Archdeacon of Cornwall

CH reflected on his previous role in the Diocese of Sheffield, where he supported clergy and PCCs in responding to local challenges. He noted that in supporting the local church, the posture needed to be supporting people in the way they needed, rather than imposing external expectations.

CH identified four existential challenges faced nationally and within the Diocese of Truro:

- An ageing church demographic
- Declining attendance
- Dwindling financial resources
- Increasing building demands

He stressed that although some might argue the Church is “the people, not the building,” the Church of England cannot simply step away from its building responsibilities, given that 45% of all Grade I listed buildings in the UK are churches. CH argued that buildings remain significant assets, tired and costly, yet beloved and central to Cornish identity and worshipping life.

Reflecting on Growing Younger, CH asked how buildings can support ministry with children and young people: Are buildings fit for purpose? Do they have working kitchens, watertight roofs, and usable toilets? He observed that commercial organisations would close most buildings, but the Church is not Starbucks; its mission is not market-driven but grounded in proclaiming God's presence.

He drew attention to the symbolism of church bells and the requirement under Canon F8 to ring them to summon people to worship. He encouraged parishes to consider reinstating this practice where possible, as a sign of God's presence and invitation.

CH concluded that buildings, when well cared for, communicate that God is present in the community. Neglected or closed buildings risk signalling the opposite. Therefore, he strongly commended the consultation and strategy as essential stewardship of the gifts God has placed in the diocese. He then invited The Revd. Laura Bushell Hawke to speak.

The Revd. Laura Bushell Hawke (LBH), Chair of the Building Strategy Advisory Group

LBH explained that the group's work began with the conviction that God chooses to dwell in real places, and that church buildings, beautiful yet fragile, embody this truth. She noted that the diocese has 305 church buildings, most ancient, most loved, and many needing significant repair. PCCs collectively spent an estimated £3 million last year simply maintaining buildings, not counting the hidden labour that accompanies this burden. The challenge has therefore been discerned as: How do we steward these gifts faithfully, sustainably, and with hope?

LBH described the Building Strategy Advisory Group as a “diocese in miniature,” drawing together representatives from rural and town parishes, clergy with varied experience, architects, surveyors, heritage specialists, DAC members, and volunteers familiar with both successful fundraising and difficult maintenance crises. She expressed deep gratitude for KC's leadership, organisation, and ability to hold together both detail and vision.

Early in the process, some members suggested that with limited funds (£2 million) and many buildings, the best approach might be to “fix five roofs.” This, LBH explained, reflected a mindset of scarcity. Through consultation, listening to data, exploring examples from other dioceses, and hearing the lived experiences of volunteers, the group shifted toward a mindset of abundance and investment.

Drawing on The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), LBH described the work as a movement from burying what has been given to investing in ways that multiply life. The strategy aims not to preserve a few buildings but to strengthen all 305 churches by empowering local effort through:

- Small grants
- Match funding
- Maintenance pilots
- Support officers
- Shared services

LBH emphasised that this shift was spiritual as well as practical: listening deeply, facing reality honestly, and fostering hope for ministry and mission. The proposed strategy is rooted in theology, shaped by consultation, grounded in data, realistic about limitations, and hopeful about God’s ability to multiply what is faithfully offered.

She concluded that the diocesan community will grow richer in both resilience and faith as it invests in the places God has called it to inhabit.

Mrs. Kate Cortez (KC), Head of Operations & Governance

KC thanked LBH for her contribution and reiterated that the synod paper circulated earlier summarised the consultation and proposed aims. A longer strategy document will follow, but the summary provided the essential elements for Synod members to reflect on.

She highlighted that:

- the consultation attracted thoughtful, detailed responses from a wide range of contributors, including whole PCCs;
- this stage is genuinely consultative, not symbolic;
- Synod feedback will shape what is included or excluded from the final strategy.

KC emphasised her position as neither clergy nor churchwarden and therefore welcomed insights from those with lived, practical experience of managing church buildings.

She explained that Synod’s contributions will inform the full strategy, which she plans to present to the BDC for approval in April, with implementation beginning in early summer. Some elements are already in delivery, but the strategy will guide a fuller, coherent programme of support.

KC then introduced the first facilitated group discussion, asking members to reflect on two questions relating to the scope of the strategy and its alignment with deanery and diocesan plans.

Mrs. Abigail Kirby Harris (AKH), Trigg Minor & Bodmin

AKH sought clarification on decision-making, asking whether the BDC would make the final decision and questioning the point of Synod’s involvement if so.

KC confirmed that the BDC will approve the final strategy but emphasised that Synod’s input directly shapes the document she is drafting, and that the process is neither tokenistic nor superficial. She noted that the strategy draws on a wide journey of consultation, from individual churchwardens up through this Synod and into diocesan governance, and that BDC members recognise and respect the significance of this broader

discernment.

AKH queried whether the meeting was quorate.

KC confirmed that it was, including 15 participants online.

KC then invited groups to begin their discussions.

Group discussion (8mins)

- Is the overarching aim clear and is what is in scope sufficiently clear?
- Do the proposals align with our wider strategy and vision (fruitfulness and sustainability)?

FEEDBACK

Ms. Kay Short (KS)

KS strongly endorsed the draft strategy, describing it as thorough, practical, and addressing long-standing issues faced by churches. She affirmed full support.

Ms. Ruth Marriott (RM)

RM emphasised that building investment must link clearly to fruitfulness and sustainability. She cautioned against investing in buildings that are no longer viable and suggested developing an evaluation tool to assess proposals against the strategy's criteria.

KC explained that investment may focus on "middle-tier" churches that could avoid future crisis with support. She reassured Synod that all churches remain eligible but that this approach may deliver the most sustainable impact.

Canon Dr. Patrick Newberry (PN)

PN praised the strategy's practical help for parishes and highlighted the community value of church buildings, urging this to be stated more explicitly. He also asked for stronger guidance on environmentally sustainable decisions to avoid unintended negative impacts.

Mr. Nik Browning (NB)

NB agreed with earlier praise and stressed the importance of building support officers, noting PCCs typically lack specialist expertise. He said professional advice would be highly beneficial and worth investing in.

The Revd. Paul Salaman (PS)

PS commended the strategy and diocesan staff but warned that the small team could become overstretched. He proposed creating a peer-support network of parish fabric teams to share experience and reduce pressure on diocesan staff.

Mr. Robert Perry (RP)

RP supported the strategy's focus on centralised specialist advice and shared an example of a church revived after near closure. He urged Synod not to give up on buildings too quickly while recognising some may still need to be considered for closure.

KC affirmed that the goal is early intervention to prevent parishes reaching crisis point before help is offered.

The Revd. Elizabeth Burke (EB)

EB strongly supported the strategy and recommended a triage system for assessing all church buildings. She also called for expanded building support roles and a practical toolkit to guide parishes through major projects.

KC moved the meeting on to the next set of discussion questions, allowing groups more time for reflection.

Questions (8mins)

- Do proposals address the most important challenges and opportunities facing us around church buildings?
- What is missing?
- What would you do differently or not do?

Mr. Andrew Prince (AP)

AP asked how soon parishes will be able to access the new grant schemes. KC said the intention is to launch them in the summer, with possible national funding updates expected in July.

The Revd. Elizabeth Burke (EB)

EB noted that PCCs often oversee halls and other ancillary buildings, which can be financially crucial. They urged that these properties be fully included within the building strategy.

The Revd. Theresa Folland (TF)

TF highlighted the significant impact of “Friends” groups in major fundraising, sharing an £80,000 example from Stratton. She recommended that the strategy explicitly recognise and encourage such groups. KC thanked her for the reminder.

The Revd. Adam Thomas (AT)

AT stressed that ambitious improvements will require early engagement with Cornwall Council due to constraints in listed-building processes. He suggested taking council officers to see successful examples elsewhere to broaden their understanding. KC agreed and acknowledged the value of early collaboration.

The Revd. Rosheen Browning (RB)

RB observed that successful grant work often coincides with spiritual renewal in congregations. She proposed offering optional short Bible-study or prayer courses at the start of major projects to help root the work spiritually.

Mr. Chris Beckett (CB)

CB noted the difficulty of securing major funding for roof repairs, emphasising that smaller grants are easier to obtain but inadequate for large structural needs. He urged stronger diocesan support for major repairs. KC agreed and reported significant improvements in funding success since appointing a buildings support officer.

Mr. Jeremy Stuart (JS)

JS proposed producing a webinar to demystify the faculty process, which many PCCs find intimidating. He shared a positive example of new wardens whose involvement in a renovation project led to deeper faith engagement. KC affirmed that the DAC Secretary is always available to guide parishes, even if she cannot change the rules.

Mr. Martin Saunders (MS), Pydar

MS suggested revising some strategic wording to avoid implying current church practice is lacking and emphasised that any Building Strategy must acknowledge the interconnectedness of parish, priest, and building. He questioned the relevance of deaneries for this work and argued that resources should be directed at parish level. MS also proposed establishing a major diocesan endowment of around £100 million, which could generate £5 million per year for building repairs, and advised limiting the final strategy to a concise four-page document.

KC agreed that phrasing can and should be adjusted to reflect continuity rather than implying deficiencies. She reiterated that although clergy deployment is not within her remit, the proposed strategy is designed to support current and emerging ministry models. She affirmed the central role of parishes and noted that deaneries will remain

integral within the diocesan structure.

Regarding funding, she confirmed that early work has begun on exploring opportunities to leverage diocesan investment with external funders, though achieving a £100 million endowment would require substantial and long-term effort beyond the remit of this consultation.

Next Steps

KC confirmed that feedback from the session, and any further comments submitted afterwards, will contribute to the final draft. The revised strategy will be taken to the Bishop's Diocesan Council at the end of April for approval, after which it will be published. A concise summary will accompany the full strategy, with additional appendices available for those wishing to explore the supporting research. KC closed by thanking Synod members for their contributions.

Report from General Synod | Mrs. Diana Favell, General Synod

Summary:

- DF, newly elected to General Synod, reported on her first meeting, outlining its structure, procedures, and overall atmosphere.
- Early business covered terminology changes, voting rights for acting diocesan bishops, maintaining hybrid meetings, and increasing youth representation.
- Fringe sessions explored emerging themes including LLF, rural finance, reimagining care, mental health, and clergy support.
- Major debates addressed clergy conduct, LLF, sustainable flowers, new feast days, funding for low-income communities, and rural ministry challenges.
- DF reflected on worship, testimonies, international and environmental concerns, key decisions made, and the intensity of adjusting as a new member.

DF addressed Synod, explaining that she had been elected to General Synod during the final year of its five-year cycle (the quinquennium). She described the experience as similar to joining a new school mid-term: relationships already formed, routines established, and everyone but the newcomer familiar with the building and procedures. She noted that six representatives from the Diocese of Truro attended, along with The Rt Revd. David Williams, Bishop of Truro.

DF stayed near Waterloo with other delegates and reflected that the daily walk to Church House was both invigorating and welcome after long sessions. Two weeks on, she had observed that many motions were either procedural, ratifying ongoing work, or revisiting revised proposals. In contrast, fringe meetings offered space for new or emerging topics that may appear on the July agenda.

Monday

Business began at 2:30pm with the three houses (bishops, clergy, and laity) meeting separately. DF learned the voting system, which uses a device resembling an older mobile phone, into which members insert their voting card and select for, against, or abstain. Results are recorded by each house, and some matters are decided by show of hands. New members were welcomed formally. The House of Laity, DF observed, was largely older in demographic, though diverse in experience.

Early decisions included:

- approving the use of “chair” instead of “chairman”;
- granting acting diocesan bishops temporary membership and voting rights in the House of Bishops;
- maintaining hybrid meetings to support accessibility; and
- increasing the number of youth observers from three to five.

Questions followed, which DF described as unexpectedly wide-ranging, covering topics such as ecology, employment rights, and investment. Although answers were pre-published, supplementary questions were permitted.

DF left afterwards to attend a service at St Martin-in-the-Fields organised by Together for the Church of England. She found the service deeply moving, reconnecting with a church she had attended as a young adult.

Tuesday

Following worship, Archbishop Sarah Mullally gave an address on “troubled waters,” drawing on her vocational journey as nurse, priest, and bishop, and reminding Synod that “hope is a muscle” requiring exercise.

Synod then debated the clergy conduct measure, previously approved by Synod but deemed inexpedient by the Parliamentary Ecclesiastical Committee. An amendment was passed requiring tribunals to meet in public except in specific circumstances.

DF attended a lunchtime fringe meeting hosted by Together for the Church of England, noting alignment with her own parish context and her public support for clergy both using, and choosing not to use, Prayers of Love and Faith.

Later debates addressed:

- **Reimagining care**, urging government to draw on the Archbishop’s Commission’s recommendations;
- **Lowest Income Communities Funding**, with calls for more equitable distribution to parishes, prompting a review of funding formulas; and
- **Evening reception at Lambeth Palace**, which included supper and concluding worship (Compline), offering a rare and valued moment of corporate stillness.

Wednesday

Archbishop Sarah presided at communion, after which Synod debated mental health and clergy wellbeing. Contributions included:

- calls for better training and accessible counselling;
- concerns about overstretched clergy in large parishes;
- recognition that central funding for projects can inadvertently increase local pressure.

This motion passed.

At lunchtime, DF attended a session on rural church finance with Carl Hughes (Chair, Archbishops’ Council Finance Committee). Discussion highlighted the fragile ecology of rural parishes, the reliance on anecdotal evidence versus data, and acute clergy shortages in some dioceses. Participants were invited to identify the single most transformative intervention for mission and ministry in their rural contexts.

The afternoon included:

- debates on adding new Church calendar observances: the Festival of God the Creator and a commemoration of the 21 Libyan martyrs, both approved;
- moving testimonies from bishops and representatives regarding modern martyrdom and global Christian suffering.

Thursday

DF attended an early fringe meeting focused on supporting Palestinian Christians. Human rights lawyer Dalia Kumseh described the severe impacts of occupation, displacement, and violence in the West Bank, urging Synod members to take meaningful action, not only offer prayer.

Formal business began with a technical Standing Orders Committee report, followed by

debate on sustainable church flowers, which recommended environmentally responsible approaches without imposing bans. DF welcomed that this issue had arisen from parish-level initiative, demonstrating grassroots influence on General Synod.

The major afternoon session was the five-hour debate on Living in Love and Faith (LLF).

DF described:

- the dignity yet emotional weight of the contributions;
- the pain expressed by LGBTQ+ clergy and laity;
- frustration at delays experienced on all sides;
- 18 amendments debated and defeated; and
- the final vote approving the motion for ongoing work under episcopal oversight.

Voting results were read by house:

- **Bishops:** 34 in favour / 0 against
- **Clergy:** 109 in favour / 62 against
- **Laity:** 109 in favour / 70 against

DF reflected that she witnessed pain primarily on one side and drafted a speech she ultimately did not give.

The day concluded with a session on caring for creation, addressed by Chris Packham and Deborah Meaden, who encouraged rewilding opportunities on church-owned land and broader ecological responsibility. A private member's motion on this topic is expected in July.

Friday

The final day began with worship and an address from Archbishop Marinez Rosa dos Santos Bassotto of Brazil, who highlighted the environmental challenges facing the Amazon region and urged mutual support across the Anglican Communion.

Key business included:

- Parochial fees order debate, proposing a significant increase in burial fees to match local authority charges.
DF reported strong opposition from clergy and laity, citing pastoral sensitivity, rural community ties, and the potential harm of limiting access to churchyard burials.
Amendments were passed removing the proposed £1,000 increase.
- Lunch with other Truro delegates at a nearby community café, offering fellowship after an intense week.
- Debate on working-class vocations, passing a motion aimed at removing structural barriers to ordination and promoting more diverse leadership.

DF left shortly before the final vote of the session, which approved the creation of a national register of Licensed Lay Ministers.

She concluded by reflecting on the valuable companionship of travelling home with fellow delegate Andrew Yates, providing time to process an intense and formative week.

Mr. Robert Perry (RP), General Synod

RP noted that the most recent House of Laity "election" was uncontested, with only three nominees for three seats, compared with fifteen candidates previously. While this does not affect his legitimacy, he stressed that the diocese would benefit from a wider field of nominees. He encouraged members to consider standing in the upcoming elections or to encourage others who might serve well.

Ms. Kerstin Lewis (KL), Mothers' Union

KL emphasised that for deanery processes to operate democratically, the membership

lists used at deanery level must be accurate. At present, she noted, this is not the case, and genuine democratic accountability cannot be achieved until those lists are corrected.

Bishop David acknowledged the point raised and encouraged parishes to ensure that at their annual meetings they elect the correct number of representatives to deanery synod. He affirmed the need for accurate lists and noted that Synod is on a journey toward improving these processes.

Bishop David thanked DF for her engaging report from General Synod.

Bishop David noted that a question submitted under standing orders could not be taken because The Revd. Will Harwood had sent apologies; in line with established practice, both the question and written answer will be circulated with the Synod papers (**see below**).

Questions under Standing Order XB21

Question received from the Revd Will Harwood, General Synod, Powder Deanery

What is the value of funding for which the Truro DBF has placed bids from SMMIB for the next funding phase, including LiNC Funding (LICF); and how does the DBF envisage disbursing these funds within the diocese, should the bid(s) be successful?

The Revd. Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary

Truro Diocesan Board of Finance has not yet begun any formal bids for funding under the next funding phase of the Archbishops' Council Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB). Lowest Income Communities Funding (LICF) is allocated to dioceses on a formula basis, rather than bid for, and we have been advised of the following allocation:

- 2026: £1,307,255
- 2027: £1,360,591
- 2028: £1,412,790

Background Information

The Lowest Income Communities Funding guidance (which has just been revised) reads that funding should be “directed to support mission and ministry in the communities with the lowest incomes.” The national church use the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and a measure of those in receipt of Universal Credit to calculate diocesan allocations. These may be good measures of deprivation in an urban context but in sparse, rural and coastal parishes and in areas with patterns of seasonal employment, they tend to conceal pockets of profound deprivation. Hence the national guidance notes “there are good reasons why a diocese may choose to allocate funding to a parish without a particularly high IMD” - the guidance notes what it calls “other contextual factors to be used in local allocation.”

For these reasons rather than allocating LICF directly from Truro, we have taken the view that there is likely to be better understanding of local patterns of deprivation within the leadership of each deanery. Hence our approach which is to allocate almost all of the LICF received on a deanery basis using the same formula applied by the Archbishops' Council (slightly modified to even out potential unhelpful jumps over time). We then ask those who know their local communities best to consider the church's calling under God in those places, LICF can help to support that work. Deanery Plans specifically describe how to support the mission and ministry of the church in those communities. Hence the use of LICF is part of deanery planning.

We hold part of the allocation (£100,000 in the 2026 budget) to fund work that is better done at a diocesan level, like Transformation Cornwall, and to fund the Board's reporting and assurance on LICF fed back to London, which is becoming more onerous.

We intend to make a bid to SMMIB in the summer of 2027 for funding to support our Growing Younger ambition, we originally expected to make this bid in 2025 but have

delayed that work for two reasons; partly because the bidding process is very onerous and we haven't had the capacity on Episcopal College to lead that work, and secondly because we think that to make a good bid we will need to work with parish and deanery leaders to develop proposals, rather than dropping something expensive and shiny out of the sky. Doing that local work well takes time.

We anticipate that the bid next summer will be for an initial "proof of concept" pilot with agreement in principle for further projects, and that the total bid will be for around £7m.

Reports and Minutes [RECORDING 11]

Voting

The Chair proposes:

"that Synod note:

- *the minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod on 22 November 2025*
- *the report from the Bishops Diocesan Council"*

Members 'noted' the minutes and BDC report. The following comments were made:

Mr. Martin Saunders (MS), Pydar

MS stated that he would vote against noting the minutes. He argued that Diocesan Synod requires deanery synods to approve their minutes as a correct record, and therefore Synod should hold itself to the same standard. He described Synod's approach as inconsistent and, potentially, hypocritical.

Mrs. Abigail Kirby-Harris (AKH), Trigg Minor & Bodmin

AKH expressed concern that if Synod does not formally approve its minutes, decisions made at previous meetings may not be properly recognised as authoritative. She noted that while minutes can be circulated electronically, those who attended should explicitly confirm their accuracy.

The Revd. Canon Simon Cade (SC), Diocesan Secretary | Process Clarification

SC explained that Synod had previously voted, after debate, to delegate formal approval of minutes to the Standing Committee. The agreed procedure is:

- Draft minutes are circulated to Synod members.
- Members submit comments or corrections.
- The Standing Committee considers all comments and approves the final version.
- The subsequent Synod meeting notes the approved minutes.

SC noted that this change was introduced to avoid prolonged debates over minute-keeping, which in the past could occupy significant Synod time. He affirmed that both delegated approval and approval by the full assembly are legitimate governance practices.

Mr. Jeremy Stuart (JS), Pydar

JS agreed with SC's explanation, adding that Synod decisions become lawful at the moment of voting, independent of later minute approval. He reminded Synod that it had already debated and agreed the current process.

Canon Dr. Patrick Newberry (PN), East Wivelshire

PN expressed a concern about the process, noting that a correction he submitted regarding his remarks at the November Synod had not been incorporated in the printed minutes available to members. He shared this as a test case, raising questions about whether the process reliably captures member amendments.

Bishop David asked PN to confirm whether he had received and responded to the draft minutes. PN affirmed that he had. Bishop David apologised as the chair and confirmed that

the correction would be recorded from the current meeting. He welcomed members to raise any similar issues should they arise in future, noting that this reflects a mature and transparent approach.

[NOTE: Following the meeting it was found that the printed draft minutes available to members were the original initial draft version as circulated for comment, the version on the website and emailed to members as part of the pack to be “noted” did incorporate the amendments received and were the version approved by the Standing Committee.]

Bishop David invited questions or comments on the report from the Bishop’s Diocesan Council.

Mr. Martin Saunders (MS), Pydar

MS asked for assurance that the forthcoming full report on Transforming Mission would be presented to Diocesan Synod and that Synod would have the opportunity for a full discussion.

Bishop David noted the request and agreed to refer it to the Standing Committee. He highlighted that the report is intended as a significant reflective and lessons-learned document, likely to shape future diocesan decisions.

With no further questions, Bishop David brought the discussion to a close and invited Synod to stand and say the grace together.

Prayer and Blessing

Closed at 14:50

Dates of future meetings of Diocesan Synod

30 May 2026	St Petroc’s Church, Bodmin and on Zoom
28 November 2026	Chapter House, Truro Cathedral and on Zoom