

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHEFFIELD DIOCESAN SYNOD AND BOARD OF  
FINANCE**

**AT ST PAUL'S NORTON LEES**

**SATURDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 9.00 AM**

**INTRODUCTION AND NOTICES**

Bishop Pete welcomed members to the meeting, both those who were returning and newly elected members to the new three-year term of Synod.

Tony Gardiner, Finance Director, was welcomed to his first meeting, the formal announcement of his appointment was shared in the Notice Paper.

Bishop Pete, on behalf of Synod, extended congratulations to Bishop Sophie on her appointment to the See of Coventry. He indicated there will be a formal opportunity to express gratitude in the New Year. Bishop Sophie expressed her thanks for the love and gratitude she has felt since the announcement. There remains a lack of clarity about timeline at the moment, but an update would be sent as soon as possible.

Secondly, Bishop Pete addressed the turbulence in the Church of England since the publication of the Makin report and resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Pete acknowledged with lament the failures of the Church of England to confront the abuse and to stop it and hold the perpetrator to account. He lamented those who have been abused in the intervening time and the retraumatising of survivors that the announcement has caused. He stated that the Archbishop's resignation was the right decision. The response to the Makin report was now a watershed and hoped proposals would be brought to the February session of General Synod.

The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham added that ensuring places of worship are a safe place for all is a priority and the Diocese is blessed with an excellent safeguarding team who are there to help and support. Significant progress has been made in the Diocese with support for survivors, robust core group processes, and an annual day for Parish Safeguarding Officers. He added thanks to those working in parishes to ensure good safeguarding practice. However, he also noted that the Makin report has highlighted the issues relating to potentially well-intentioned safeguarding decisions and the defence of those actions. He asked anyone who might be worried about decisions made to contact the safeguarding team. He emphasised that those who admit mistakes, rather than attempting to cover them up, should not be worried about potential consequences. The Archdeacon thanked members for their commitment to the safeguarding journey.

A minute of silence was held for prayers for a safer Church.

Opening worship was led by the Very Reverend Abi Thompson, Dean of Sheffield and Tom Daggett, Director of Music at Sheffield Cathedral.

1. **ELECTIONS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE HOUSES OF CLERGY AND LAITY**

Synod was informed that the first business of the new triennium was to elect a Chair of the House of Clergy and Chair of the House of Laity. There had been one nomination for each and both nominees, the Reverend Canon Matthew Rhodes and Dr Jackie Butcher, were therefore elected unopposed.

Dr Jackie Butcher was confirmed as Chair for the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were shown on the Notice Paper or notified to Elizabeth Lunt.

3. **THE MINUTES** of the Synod's meeting held at St Peter and St Paul Todwick on Saturday 13 July 2024 had been circulated as Paper 3.1 and were accepted and signed.

There were no matters arising other than those on the agenda.

4. **BISHOP'S COUNCIL REPORT** – A Report on the proceedings of the Bishop's Council since the last Synod meeting was circulated as Paper 4.1. The Reverend Fiona Kouble and Mr Neill Birchenall presented the report in order to raise awareness of who Bishop's Council are, as Standing Committee for Diocesan Synod and Trustees and Directors of the DBF. Mrs Kouble stated that the Council is made up of clergy and lay and hope to represent the Diocesan Synod and views of the Diocese in making strategic decisions.

There were no questions arising out of the report.

5. **CHORAL OUTREACH** – the Very Reverend Abi Thompson, Dean of Sheffield and Tom Daggett, Director of Music at Sheffield Cathedral led the item.

Mr Daggett led Synod in singing and vocal exercises, as he would lead a school class. Dean Abi spoke about her background and how she found faith through music. Singing leads people to faith in a profound way so Sheffield Cathedral have grasped this as an outreach, including going into schools in deprived parishes. Mr Daggett confirmed that music is delivered through the schools which meets curriculum requirements. He stated that in his view Hymnody should be a key part of teaching, the benefits are not just spiritual, they are all-encompassing. £2,000 per year provides weekly teaching for schools, the first half term is free and the cost to the Cathedral is over £5k, so the difference is provided for by fundraising. The ambition is

to operate this in every school across the Diocese within the next ten years, with the team growing. Details are available on the website.

Dean Abi concluded that the gift of music is a precious gift for children and it opens the opportunity to work with children and their families.

*MEETING AS THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE – Canon Walker took the Chair*

**6. FINANCE REPORT AND 2025 BUDGET**

- i. **Review of 2024 Finances** – Canon Walker began by welcoming Tony Gardiner as Finance Director. Mr Gardiner then briefly introduced himself. Thanks were noted to those who have stepped in, particularly Canon Wigglesworth and Katie Bell, Neill Birchenall and Julia Newton.

Mrs Bell noted the context in which the budget has been set, including income, expenditure, prospective income in the context of the national church, including the dioceses' review which has looked at how dioceses can be better resourced, with recommendations to be considered by the Triennium Review Group in the coming months.

The strategy refresh work has taken place over the last 18 months, and the team are currently in the final stages of preparing a bid to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board.

No additional income from LinC or SMIB has been included in the preparation of the 2025 budget.

- ii. **SDBF 2025 Budget** – Paper 6.1 had been circulated with the agenda.

Canon Wigglesworth set out the key assumptions, including a target for Common Fund income of £3.5m which remains the same as 2024. 3% increases in pay awards have been assumed for clergy and employees, this uplift has been benchmarked against other dioceses. The government's National Insurance increase has also been included in proposed figures.

Property costs of providing parsonages and curate housing have been uplifted in the budget by 5% from 2024.

Recruitment numbers are based on aspiration of recruitment through the year.

Canon Wigglesworth noted that Common Fund receipts have been reducing since 2023. In 2024 the budgeted deficit was £2.4m, although the current end of year forecast is around £1.3m deficit due

to lack of success in recruitment and also transfer from other funds. In preparation of the 2025 budget, Heads of Departments have been challenged to be tighter in their budgets so there is likely to be less room for variance in 2025.

It was noted that figures were presented as a 're-presented budget for 2024' which includes figures adjusted for total income received. The income total for 2025 is similar to 2024. In terms of expenditure, the key change is in the appointment of clergy, using learning from prior years in preparation of the budget.

A summary position of reserves was presented, but noted that most is tied up in parsonages, leaving around £10m which can be used to cover deficits.

### **Questions**

The Revd Stephen Gardner (Adwick-le-Street) acknowledged the deficit budget and the uplift in clergy stipend and asked if there was a longer term plan for clergy remuneration.

Canon Walker responded that this is recognised, a benchmarking exercise was carried out with other dioceses, and when more funds become available it is something that will be looked at. Mrs Bell added that a review of stipends is being carried out nationally which may impact decisions moving forward.

The Revd Malcolm Liles (Attercliffe Deanery) asked about the number of appointments quoted in the budget (14) and noted the lack of recruitment in the previous year. He added that the 3% uplift in stipends will just cover inflation and asked how stipendiary posts could be made more attractive. Canon Walker responded that stipends were benchmarked against similar dioceses, but noted that there was a need to be attractive.

Bishop Pete noted the erosion of the value of the stipend is being addressed nationally and will be discussed by the Triennium Funding Review Group. He also thanked those who joined the day of prayer and fasting for the recruitment of clergy and noted it was a national issue. He reported that since September two roles have been recruited to and filled, including one from outside the Diocese. He also added that if the bid to the SMIB is successful, it will provide a great opportunity to be seen to be an attractive diocese.

Brian Wrigley (Ecclesall) asked if the deficit continued at around £2m a year, how many more years could the position continue and what are the plans beyond that? Canon Walker confirmed unrestricted

funds of £10m so at a rate of £2m deficit per year, there was sufficient for around five years. Auditors will start to look at this in terms of going concern in about three years' time. However, in that period national work is being done on funding, so it is hoped that support will be received and the bid in March will be a key part of that if the diocese can show that the diocesan strategy is working. Key messages around Common Fund, which has continued to drop, are also needed.

The Revd Grant Naylor (Ecclesall) noted the move from Priest in Charge to Vicar giving more security and asked if the SMIB bid is successful if the living can be restored in more places to add security.

The Revd Eleanor Robertshaw (General Synod Rep/Snaith and Hatfield) asked for confirmation that pension contributions have reduced. She also noted that Carl Hughes has spoken about a missional crisis and asked for acknowledgement that clergy were working really hard in difficult situations.

The Revd David Dean-Revill (Ecclesfield) asked what the investments were. Canon Walker responded that one is in glebe land and this is managed with Savills, the second is through CCLA who invest according to Church of England principles including in stocks and bonds.

The Revd Amanda Barraclough (Adwick-le-Street) asked if there is evidence of uplift in Common Fund from pledges received to date. She noted that use of parish reserves to pay Common Fund is not sustainable. Mrs Bell responded that detailed modelling has been carried out on Common Fund and Common Fund from new congregations has been included, so it is not just looking at current giving units. She acknowledged the sacrificial giving of many and also the work carried out to look at risks and potential impact on giving of churches.

In conclusion, Canon Walker presented the motion:

"THAT Synod, sitting as the DBF, approves the Budget of the Diocesan Board of Finance for the twelve months ending 31 December 2025 as proposed by the Finance Committee and authorises the DBF to work to a deficit Budget of net (outgoing) resources, after transfers, of £1.990m."

The motion was carried with one vote against and four abstentions.

- iii. Mrs Bell noted that Paper 6.2 had been circulated regarding the setting up of a new restricted fund. She reported that seven PCCs are currently using the Ephesian Fund, but also that the implementation

of the new fund is not a decision that has been taken lightly. The realisation of the vision is dependent on Common Fund receipts and it has been clear in recent months that decisions taken nationally have affected the willingness of some parishes to pay to the Common Fund. This is a response to that challenge and it is hoped it will minimise the risk to Common Fund. The account would be separately disclosed in the accounts as a restricted fund.

The costs applied against it will be direct costs of ministry, including housing costs. There are a limited number of net contributors to the Common Fund and it is therefore not expected that funds received through this fund and the Ephesians Fund will fully cover ministry costs.

### **Questions**

Dr Cathy Rhodes (General Synod Rep/Hallam) indicated that she can understand where people are coming from in making this decision, however, those churches are also net receivers and therefore she encouraged those churches who would not join this fund to continue their giving in the spirit of Christian generosity.

She also asked if this can be included in messaging for transparency on the website of churches that have chosen to give in this way.

The Revd David Middleton (Attercliffe) thanked Dr Rhodes for her comments. As a parish that is struggling to grasp the way the Church of England is going, he noted the need to consider how churches give in a way that encourages members of the congregation to continue to give. He indicated that it is a question of making sure that what is given is given in good conscience without the church family being compromised in their beliefs.

The Revd Eleanor Robertshaw (General Synod rep/Snaith and Hatfield) noted that she has spent the last fifteen years working in a Church where some people do not agree that she should be ordained because she is a woman and now churches would not support her ministry because of her beliefs regarding same sex relationships. She felt strongly that prayer was needed into this situation.

The Revd David Dean-Revill (Ecclesfield) noted the decision around Living in Love and Faith had been passed at General Synod and while he could not support the plan for the new fund, he asked whether it was time to reconcile differences as a church and find a way forward.

In conclusion, it was noted that the paper was being presented for information and not decision. There was therefore no vote on the matter.

*MEETING AS THE DIOCESAN SYNOD – Dr Butcher took the Chair*

7. **LOVE MATTERS** – Bishop Sophie presented the item on the final report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households. She indicated that the presentation could be shared with PCCs and wider church families.

Bishop Sophie noted that there had been a series of commissions with a view to leading to change in communities, including families, social care and racial justice, so Love Matters sits within a suite of commissions. It was launched in April 2021 to think about what families and households need from church and government over the next decade. The work was carried out pre-election and recognised the context of the post-Covid period, guided by an in-depth exploration of Christian theology, and included engagement with communities, inter-faith, government, a deep dive in ten dioceses and review of literature of work that had already been done.

Love Matters argues for a society that puts loving relationships at the heart of everything and recognises the importance of living well together and working through difficult issues. The aim following the report was to value families and loving relationships which enable us to live in community with one another. The theme of love came up time and time again, as well as relationship support throughout their lives, while also recognising cultural shifts, such as reduction in people getting married. The report identified that churches were well-placed to support many of the situations. One of the top themes (which was picked up by the press) was honouring singleness.

A further value was to empower children and young people and listen to their voices. The parents' promise was launched in 2021. A fifth value was identified to build a kinder, fairer, more forgiving society, removing discrimination, division and deep inequality.

The report had a number of recommendations and actions which included:

- To maximise the protective effect of family;
- To ensure that loving relationships matter and are valued in everything we do;
- To give every child the best possible start in life;
- To tackle the societal issues which limit people's ability to flourish.

Bishop Sophie concluded by recommending reading the full report which is available on the Church of England website. A summary report was provided at Synod for members to take away and use in their own contexts.

8. **EDUCATION UPDATE** – A report from the Diocesan Board of Education had been circulated with the Agenda as Paper 8.1. The Reverend Huw Thomas highlighted the quality of work identified by SIAMS inspections, he noted the warm encouragement to grow good academies trusts remains in the Diocese.

Gillis Robbie (Hallam) asked about the anti-bullying work and what the work might do to ensure children from Christian homes are able to express views and do not experience bullying themselves as a result of expressing their views. Mr Thomas responded that this is something that schools will need to be aware of and will be considered by the Board.

Peter Sandford (Ecclesall) empathised with the above, but also those who struggle with their religious identity in light of personal situations and how the equality of both can be held together. Mr Thomas responded that it was down to tackling bullying in all scenarios.

9. **APPOINTMENT OF THE BISHOP OF DONCASTER** – Papers 9.1 and 9.2 setting out the Diocese's statement of need and proposed role description were circulated. Bishop Pete indicated that there is no automatic right to fill a vacant suffragan post and permission has been sought from the Dioceses' Commission to do so. The Commission will table the vacancy at their December meeting and the Bishop's Council's approval was sought to the paperwork which had to be sent by 27 November. The post is not vacant until Bishop Sophie becomes Bishop of Coventry after her confirmation of election. The vacancy (if filling it is approved) will be advertised in January with the hope that the new Bishop would be able to take up duties in September.

Dr Cathy Rhodes noted a correction regarding chair of Net Zero, which would be amended.

Bishop Pete concluded the item by presenting the following resolution:

The Diocesan Synod resolves that, following the appointment of the Right Reverend Sophie Jelley to the See of Coventry, the suffragan See of Doncaster should be filled and that the Bishop of Sheffield should so notify the Archbishop of York and the Dioceses Commission under the Provisions of Section 17 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007.

The resolution was passed unanimously.



*Post meeting addition: Synod members were notified on 13 December 2024 that the Dioceses' Commission had given agreement to the proposal to fill the See of Doncaster.*

10. **WINDOWS ON TO ECCLESALL DEANERY**

St Paul's Norton Lees Food Pantry – Tina and Stelios gave a brief presentation on the work of the Food Pantry which had started in 2022 to serve the local community and surrounding areas. The growth of the community and the support that is provided through the food pantry was noted, including support for various situations such as mental health support, and a warm welcome for all.

Dr Jackie Butcher also reported that the reordering at Dore had been a journey of hope.

11. **MOTION FROM ATTERCLIFFE DEANERY AND RESPONSE FROM BOARD OF FAITH AND JUSTICE**

A covering paper was circulated with the Agenda as Paper 11.1, together with a response from the Board of Faith and Justice as Paper 11.2. The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery Synod Secretary, presented the motion (as passed by the Deanery Synod). He indicated that it arose from concern about Palestinian Christians, who make up 20% of the population. The motion was passed by Carlisle Diocese in 2021 and has been on the agenda for General Synod since then and due to be debated in February 2025. It is about underlying decades of existential oppression by one group against another, which is deeply entrenched and even democratic processes are difficult. Mr Liles concluded with a joint statement released by the Archdeacons of Israel and of Canterbury following a recent visit to the Holy Land.

**Comments/questions**

The Revd Christopher Hobbs (Snaith and Hatfield) thanked Attercliffe and Ecclesfield Deaneries and the Board of Faith and Justice, but stated that he felt it was unnecessary as it will be debated by General Synod and the motion is not directed to Diocesan Synod. He also asked whether the General Synod needed to make motions about all the places in the world where oppression takes place and if not, why not? He also felt point two as written did not feel right. He therefore moved that Synod should proceed to the next item of business.

Dr Jackie Butcher noted that under the Standing Orders of Diocesan Synod the motion was presented to move to next business. This was therefore voted with a majority vote to continue with the motion.

Michaela Suckling (General Synod Rep) noted that she had attended a Bethlehem Ball to raise funds to set up a hospice, and that some Palestinians now have access to care but not all.

The Revd Stephen Gardner (Adwick-le-Street) indicated he would not vote against the motion, and heard the cries for support for other parts of the world. However, he also could not support the motion as he did not agree with the second point. He encouraged Synod to consider whether the motion as it stands was helpful.

The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham noted that General Synod reps listen carefully to the voice of Diocesan Synod members. He particularly noticed the criticism of point two and noted that amendments could be raised at General Synod, so if people would prefer that option to let him know.

The Archdeacon of Doncaster added that if we are to be bogged down by theological differences, this is one of many things that will not progress. He realised that motions cannot be passed for everyone, but something should be done for those we can do something for. He also recognised that things can take a long time to go through Synodical processes, but there are other ways of supporting Palestinian Christians, including Bishops in the House of Lords who can lobby the government through other means.

The Revd Grant Naylor (Ecclesall) stated that for the Palestinian people to hear our voice in support of them is very important for them and to be mindful in how it is communicated, not as an anti-Israeli message. He also noted the importance of the voice of national leadership.

Mr Liles presented the motion:

That this Synod request the General Synod to debate the following motion:

That this Synod:

- a) endorse the “Cry for Hope” expressed by Palestinian Christians and the ‘Global Kairos for Justice’ coalition (GKfJ);
- b) request that the Faith and Order Commission produce a report which analyses and refutes any theological justifications, for example, those promoted by some Christian Zionists, for the oppression of Palestinians;
- c) request the Ethical Investment Advisory Group to provide guidance to the National Investing Bodies (NIBs) and Dioceses that will enable them to screen their investments and thereby make decisions regarding engagement with, and divestment from, companies which profit from the occupation.

The motion was carried with 40 in favour, 11 against and 28 abstentions.

12. **NET ZERO PLAN UPDATE** – Papers 12.1 and 12.2 had been circulated for information.

Dr Cathy Rhodes, Diocesan Environment Officer, provided an overview of the past five years in post. She noted the highlights and progress of the work in the Diocese, including schools and churches, a net zero conference, and A Rocha Awards for Eco churches (74 – 38%, including the first Gold Award) and for Church House. She noted that the Diocese is working towards becoming a Silver Diocese and Margaret Anger, Eco Champion, is working with churches to encourage this. Investments are ethically made, not in fossil fuels and Net zero funding has been received from National Church.

David Castle, Net Zero Carbon Programme Manager, updated Synod on the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan. He highlighted some key areas, including receipt of grant funding and a Quick Wins Grant which is available for churches. Further grants have also been applied for including a Net Zero Demonstrator Project and Boiler Hardship Grant. It is likely more funds will become available from 2026.

The second focus for 2025 is to increase return rate on the Energy Footprint Tool, currently 45% and the target is 75%. Energy audits will also be rolled out to at least 60 parishes, subsidised by central funding. This has been set up jointly with neighbouring Leeds Diocese.

Mr Castle noted that energy switching to low-carbon energy tariffs will dramatically reduce emissions. 2025 is the target for switching all churches to LED lighting.

13. **SAFEGUARDING REPORT** – a written update was provided as Paper 13.1. The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham highlighted the following:

- i. A new Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Panel has been appointed, Christina Leath, who started in November and will take on sole responsibility from January.
- ii. The dashboard pilot has been unanimously positive, so they have been made compulsory for all parishes, recognising it will take time (currently just over 50% of parishes use them). The Archdeacon encouraged members to prioritise the dashboards if they haven't already signed up.

Questions:

The Revd Cliff Kay (Attercliffe Deanery) – having recently undertaken dashboard training, has been told the dashboard will capture training, but

does not do this yet. It was noted as a beneficial addition and the Archdeacon confirmed this was being looked at.

14. **SYNOD QUESTIONS** – The questions that had been received were circulated with the notice paper together with written responses. These are set out in Appendix 1. Supplementaries were invited for each question and those received are set out in the Appendix.
15. **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS** – Bishop Pete addressed Synod. A copy of his full address is included at Appendix 2.
16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**  
  
Pete Sandford raised an item about Compassionate Sheffield which would be circulated after the meeting.
17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – The dates of meetings in 2025 were confirmed as:  
  
8 March (All Saints Woodlands)  
19 July (Christ Church Pitsmoor)  
22 November (Venue TBC)
18. **CLOSING PRAYERS** – The meeting concluded with prayers led by the Revd Jon Hidden.

**Questions to Diocesan Synod – 30 November 2024**

From		Question	Response
1a.	Mr Brian Wrigley, Ecclesall Deanery	What is the total number of staff on the Diocesan payroll for the individual financial years ending in 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024?	<i>See attached table for response from Katie Bell, Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary</i>
1b.	Mr Brian Wrigley, Ecclesall Deanery	What is the cost of the total payroll for those same years ?	<i>See attached table for response from Katie Bell, Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary</i>
2.	Mr Brian Wrigley, Ecclesall Deanery	<p>After the promulgation in the London Gazette of +Sophie's appointment to Coventry, did anyone think of emailing members of Synod with the news?</p> <p><b>Supplementary:</b> did anyone think to send a one-liner to members of Synod before it was circulated to others?</p> <p><b>Response:</b> A specific Bishop's letter was issued which went to all Synod members.</p>	<p><i>Response from LJ Buxton, Deputy Diocesan Secretary (Communications)</i></p> <p>The news of +Sophie's appointment was headlined in the Bishops' Letter on 4 November which was issued at 10:08 on the morning of the announcement. It was also in the Diocesan Ebulletin on 5 November. It was on the news pages of our website and social media within minutes of the announcement by 10 Downing Street. The formal announcement by the Prime Minister, rather than anything in the London Gazette, drives local communications.</p>

			<p>All Diocesan Synod members are included on the circulation list of the Bishops' Monthly Letter. This mailing is sent on the first Monday of every month. A manual check of the list has shown approximately 12% of Synod Members did not receive the November mailing. This could be down to errors in email address spellings, changes/updates to addresses and spam filters. It is really helpful to us if you mark '@sheffield.anglican.org' addresses as 'safe'. If you do not receive this mailing currently please email <a href="mailto:communications@sheffield.anglican.org">communications@sheffield.anglican.org</a> from the email address you wish to subscribe with. Please accept my apologies for any delay we caused to you hearing the news.</p> <p>If you do not already receive the Ebulletin, which is sent weekly on a Tuesday, please do sign up on our website <a href="#">Weekly eBulletin - The Diocese of Sheffield</a></p>
3a.	Mr Brian Wrigley, Ecclesall Deanery	How can the electorate (i.e. members of the Deanery Synods ) and other members of Diocesan Synod get in touch with the ordinary members of the Diocesan Synod ?	<p><i>Response from Katie Bell, Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary</i></p>

			<p>We currently publish names of Diocesan Synod members on the website, but not contact details. However, if a member would like to contact a particular person on Diocesan Synod they can ring Church House who will check on the CMS database whether their contact details are able to be shared.</p> <p>If someone wanted to get in touch with all Diocesan Synod members then this would be possible by sending the request to the Chair of your House (Clergy or Laity) who can pass to Elizabeth Lunt for circulation.</p> <p>We have communicated with other dioceses and can confirm that the above is the most common practice followed. No dioceses publish contact details on websites.</p>
3b.	Mr Brian Wrigley, Ecclesall Deanery	<p>Subject to the answer to Q3a, have you thought either of changing the Standing Orders or providing a statement on the nomination forms for the nominee to state they have no objection to their contact details being shared?</p> <p><b>Supplementary:</b> is there a better democratic way of contacting people?</p>	<p><i>Response from Katie Bell, Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary</i></p> <p>The forms are set nationally so cannot be amended. However, an annual data audit is sent which allows people to set their contact preferences on the CMS database used by the Diocese.</p>

		<b>Response:</b> In terms of GDPR we cannot publish personal details but CMS keeps a record of who is happy for their details to be shared and this information can be given if you contact Church House.	
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Response to questions 1 and 2:

	Number of Staff Employed by DBF			Number of staff funded from General Funds			Number of staff funded from grants and parish contributions			Number of funded staff working in parishes	
Year	No of Individuals	FTE	Salary Total £k	No of Individuals	FTE	Salary Total £k	No of Individuals	FTE	Salary Total £k	No of Individuals	FTE
<b>2019</b>	74	58.8	£1,746	34	24.4	£1,242	40	34.4	£504	34	22.1
<b>2022</b>	104	89.2	£2,792	39	33.5	£1,299	65	55.6	£1,493	35	26.0
<b>2023</b>	96	80.0	£2,645	34	30.1	£1,219	62	49.9	£1,426	35	22.8
<b>2024</b>	92	76.9	£2,723	35	29.5	£1,227	57	47.4	£1,496	28	18.2
Notes											
	These figures are as of 1 July each year										
	Salary total is the sum of individual salaries and does not include additional costs of Pensions contributions and Employers National Insurance										



**Presidential Address to the Diocesan Synod  
Saturday 30 November 2024**

Sisters and brothers, some familiar words from Psalm 71:

*O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.*

My dear friends, you are surely all aware that Kim Leadbetter MP has sponsored a Private Members Bill in Parliament, to legalise assisted dying – the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, as it is properly called.

That Bill had its second reading at Westminster yesterday, and you will surely have seen and heard media coverage of the Bill during the past week and indeed coverage today of the passionate five-hour debate. The Bill was passed, by 330 votes to 275. The Bill still has a long way to go before it can become law, both in the House of Commons and then in the House of Lords. It's clear from the relatively close nature of the vote, from the impassioned nature of the debate and from the keen interest of the media that this Bill is going to remain a live issue for our nation for many months to come. It's partly for that reason, but also partly because tomorrow we enter the season of Advent, that I want to offer you some reflections about the Bill in this address today.

Traditionally in the Church of England, Advent has been a season to ponder four Last things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. But our society really doesn't like to ponder death at all. We are in fact acutely uncomfortable about death, almost in denial about death. We have very successfully pushed death to the edge of our consciousness, shoving it behind a metaphorical curtain in fact. Where once most people died at home, and lay dead in the parlour front room until the funeral, now most people die in hospitals or hospices and lie dead in funeral parlours instead. Where once children played tag around the coffin in that front room, now we think it would be better for them if they did not attend the funeral. I don't believe that over-protectiveness helps them. The result is that most people have never seen, let alone touched, the dead body of a loved one; and many have never been present as a loved one breathed their last. But many of us have done so, myself included, not only for family members but for parishioners. From time to time, we have the privilege of anointing the dead and the dying, of holding their hands as we commend them to the mercy of God their Maker and Redeemer. By contrast our society is generally uncomfortable about death, and people are generally uncomfortable talking about death. So we resort to euphemisms: we say someone has 'passed', because we fear it is too brutal, too direct to say they have died. But friends, this squeamishness is not helpful. Death

is very much part of life and our society would be more healthy if we acknowledged the reality of it more directly.

So Advent, and our inescapable mortality, is the second reason why I want to address the issue of assisted dying this afternoon – and I suspect there is a connection between the perceived need for this Bill and that widespread unwillingness or inability to confront our mortality with honesty.

I am setting out my position today, fully aware that there will be a range of views on this matter in this gathering, and in some cases, strongly held views, borne of bitter experience. My decision to focus this address on the Bill was a bit of a risk – I had no plan B if the Bill failed. But I can honestly say that I am disappointed that it passed. I would rather it failed and left me with no address to give and with egg on my Presidential face.

So you probably won't be surprised to discover that I am opposed to the present Bill. I have serious reservations about it. But if you support it, please don't imagine that means I am opposed to you or have serious reservations about you. I respect your right to come to your own conscientious conclusion about what is at stake here. I am praying for all those across our country who even now are dying or are accompanying the dying, for all whose experiences of caring for the dying have been traumatic, for chaplains in hospitals and hospices and I am praying for our representatives in Parliament, so many of them new and inexperienced, who yesterday had difficult decisions to make, and who will continue to have difficult decisions to make as the Bill returns to Parliament in the course of the coming months. I am in no doubt how heavily the burden of responsibility is lying on the shoulders of many MPs at this time: they deserve our respect and gratitude for the seriousness with which they are attending to the competing views of their constituents.

So for the next few moments, I want to set out the nature of my concerns. But let me begin by acknowledging the great strength of the Bill, or rather the laudable concern which the Bill seeks to address, and the laudable virtue which motivates it. Because there can be no doubt that the Bill seeks to reduce the suffering which some terminally ill patients experience at the end of life; and I applaud the compassion which motivates that desire. To watch a loved one die in distress, especially if that distress is prolonged, is itself a deeply distressing experience. We don't want such a death for our loved ones and we may fear it for ourselves. But I don't believe this Bill to be a good or safe solution to that real problem.

What that problem calls for is improved palliative care, available to all. I have been aghast to learn that only 37% of palliative care nationwide is currently available through the National Health Service. The rest is delivered through hospices and private health care. The Sue Ryder Charity estimates that currently, **less than 50%** of all people dying in England receive palliative care, yet **up to 90%** may have palliative care needs.

This Bill is very carefully entitled the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. It is generally referred to as the Assisted Dying Bill, but if I can say this without sounding inflammatory, I believe what it proposes is better described as Assisted Suicide. And just as I can't in conscience support a decision to commit suicide, so I cannot support this Bill. Assisted Dying, by contrast, is what we already have, in palliative care. What we need is increased investment in research, to improve the effectiveness of such care, and increased funding in provision, to make it generally accessible. Let's call on the government to focus there, and not on the provisions of time and money which this Bill, if law, would demand.

I have three significant reservations about the Bill. The first is that the proposed legislation seems to assume there are only good people in the world. As I pointed out in the Bishops' Letter at the start of this month, the legislation appears to assume human beings only ever act out of the best possible motives. It fails to take into account human frailty and greed. It therefore places at risk those who are most vulnerable to coercion: the elderly, those living in poverty, those whose disability puts them at risk, and those in abusive relationships – all of whom are likely to come under pressure, or (and this is equally important) to feel themselves under pressure, to seek an assisted death. Jews and Christians are bound by our Scriptures to prioritise the needs of the widow, the orphan and the stranger, precisely because of their vulnerability. What begins as a right to die will all too easily, for the most vulnerable, feel like a duty to die, especially while adult social care is so expensive. Many elderly people, nearing the end of life, will inevitably wonder if they could do their families more good by leaving them the money which is going, week by week, to the care home. They should be spared that dilemma. I am far from convinced the proposed Bill will protect the most vulnerable from coercion. In fact the British Geriatrics Society stated its view this week that *'effective legal safeguards cannot be created to protect older people from unwarranted harms'*.

I recognise that the Bill does seek to put in place safeguards to offer protection to the vulnerable by restricting quite narrowly access to an assisted death: a person (being of sound mind) must make an initial declaration that they wish to take advantage of the provision under this Bill; they must then be certified by two doctors to be terminally ill in the last six months of life; they must then secure a court order; and they must make a second declaration that this is their settled decision.

But my second reservation about this Bill rests on the views expressed by many medical practitioners and lawyers that these safeguards are insufficient. The safeguards seem very capable of being circumvented, especially if a determined family member is driving the process, perhaps a person in urgent financial need. If one doctor will not commit to the view you have only 6 months to live, another less scrupulous doctor might do so, especially if paid to give that judgment. The vast majority of doctors are of course people of great integrity who take their hippocratic oath, to protect life and do no harm, with the utmost seriousness.

But if there were no bad doctors, presumably none would be struck off by the GMC as close to 500 have been in the past 5 years (admittedly, that's a tiny proportion of the 390,000 strong workforce). Yet even good doctors, rushed off their feet in an over-stretched NHS may make decisions which are hasty or insufficiently rigorous. In any case is notoriously difficult to give an accurate prognosis about how long someone has left to live. And it was Hippocrates himself, the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC father of the medical profession, who wrote as part of his original oath: *'Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course.'*

And my final reservation about the Bill is the likelihood that it will not be the end of the process. In most cases, I am unimpressed by 'slippery slope' arguments, which rest on an objection that the first step is just the thin end of the wedge. But on this occasion, the argument has real force, because of the evidence in other parts of the world where such provision is already lawful: in Canada and Oregon, in Belgium and Switzerland, in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, in Australia and New Zealand. If I am reading the data correctly, and I believe I am, the number of assisted deaths has increased in every case decade by decade – in most cases by a factor of about 6 since the early 2000s, and in several cases this increase has been the result of the legalised widening of access to assisted dying. Disability campaigners are especially concerned about this and rightly so.

For these reasons, I cannot support the Bill and in so far as my diary allows, I will be opposing it in the House of Lords. Whatever your views, may I ask you to pray about the process, for a good outcome; and if you have not already done so, may I encourage you to contact your MP to register your conscientious convictions with them.

I can't resist ending with the Advent Collect. Let us pray.

*Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.*