

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

AT ALL SAINTS WOODLANDS

SATURDAY 8 MARCH 2025 AT 9.00 AM

1. **INTRODUCTION AND NOTICES**

Bishop Pete welcomed members to the meeting.

Bishop Pete shared the news that the Diocese's bid to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board had been successful, with a total of £35.8m awarded in two phases:

- Phase 1 award of £17.5M, 2025-28, he noted that all of this is currently allocated.
- In principle a further £18.3M, 2029-31, this is subject to funding goalposts not changing. It is anticipated that they will change, although unlikely to be in a way that is detrimental to the Diocese of Sheffield.

Bishop Pete expressed thanks on behalf of Synod to the Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham, Alex Shilkoff, LJ Buxton and other DBF staff, as well as Synod members for their engagement.

Bishop Pete emphasised that the funding does not reduce dependence on Common Fund, but relies on the Diocese becoming financially independent. He also asked for continued prayer for people to be called to ordination and to the Diocese of Sheffield.

Bishop Pete indicated that the agenda for this meeting had been framed to allow a good portion of time to safeguarding matters and there would therefore not be an opening act of worship as usual, but an Act of Lament later in the agenda. The item on safeguarding failures would also allow open discussion and expression of views.

The agenda moved straight into the meeting, chaired by Canon Matthew Rhodes.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were shown on the Notice Paper or could be notified to Elizabeth Lunt.
3. **THE MINUTES** of the Synod's meeting held at St Paul's Norton Lees on Saturday 30 November 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. **GENERAL SYNOD REPORT**

Dr Cathy Rhodes began by providing an overview of business from the February Group of Sessions, which she described as difficult at times in the context of the Scolding report, Makin Review, the Archbishop of Canterbury's resignation and Bishop of Liverpool's stepping down, division on LLF and pressure on the Archbishop of York around his Presidential Address, which Dr Rhodes noted was preceded by a litany of penitence and saying the Magnificat.

Dr Rhodes summarised the key points, including:

- The final report of the Archbishops' Commission on Racial Justice was given as the three-year term had ended, and the work was commended. A motion for further work and funding was passed. Dr Rhodes commended the report *Behind the Stained Glass*.
- The Diocesan Finance Review proposed increases in Low Income Communities (LinC) funding, stipend increases, removal of apportionment, and reorganisation and simplification of ordination training funding, overall the work is to remove duplication and complexity.
- A motion encouraging vocations from working class people was carried and Dr Rhodes encouraged members to watch the speech by Fr Alex Frost.
- Sports and wellbeing ministry was agreed as a way of reaching out to young people, local communities and chance to share the Gospel.
- Adding Confirmation data in Missions Stats, so this becomes mandatory.
- Include younger voices – group of young adults providing GS reps
- LLF presentation on PLF: work ongoing including on guidance around clergy in same-sex relationships, and theology. Perspective on level of disagreement were noted.
- CNC (Crown Nominations Commission) standing orders amendments debated following recent failures to appoint: interpreters agreed, secret ballot retained.
- ViSC (Vacancy in See Committee) regulations: changes on representation of women/rules on reps were agreed
- Church Governance Measure final drafting
- A petition on the removal of *Issues in Human Sexuality* was put forward.
- Mission and Pastoral Regulations: fallow churches, collaboration, concerns around closure/consultation, with some good feedback on aspects of this from Save the Parish.

Canon Rick Stordy then reported on the aspects of the General Synod which had focussed on safeguarding in the context of the IICSA Review, Wilkinson Report, Jay Report, David Tudor and Makin Review and resignations of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Liverpool. He noted that there was

a large degree of anxiety, but the debates were positive with some careful and powerful speeches.

Learning from the Makin Review: Why did it take so long? John Smyth was likely to be the most prolific abuser linked to the Church of England. Over 40 years, the abuse was actively covered up by some members of clergy. A time of reflection and lament for the recent and past failures included a commitment to repentance.

Vote on future of safeguarding, between Option 4 (two totally independent bodies, one for scrutiny, one for delivery) and Option 3 (totally independent scrutiny, delivery in-house & local in each diocese). After a long debate, an amended Option 3.5 was put forward, which included independent national scrutiny, with operational delivery within dioceses in the short term, and longer term exploration of an independent body for delivery. The final vote saw this as the most popular.

Additional discussions included on risk assessments for clergy, conducted by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer; new codes of practice were approved relating to handling of allegations; the Clergy Conduct Measure, a 'triage' for complaints about conduct, recognising the variation in seriousness of complaints, grievance, misconduct and serious misconduct.

Canon Stordy noted the positive experience of diocesan safeguarding processes and also emphasised his belief that the church is learning from past mistakes and himself had experienced superb advice very recently from our Diocesan Safeguarding Team and Archdeacon, which had not only been a great support but had kept a vulnerable person safe as a result.

5. **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS** – Bishop Pete addressed Synod, a copy of his full address is included in Appendix 1.
6. **RECENT SAFEGUARDING FAILURES** – Bishop Pete indicated that this item was an opportunity for members to articulate how they feel, but also to identify concerns that remain unanswered.

There was a time of discussion around tables, after which there was opportunity for open comment/questions:

The Reverend Keith Johnson (Attercliffe Deanery) stated that any model is irrelevant if disclosures are not passed on. He asked if further disciplinary measures are going to be taken against Bishops who have not acted or disclosed on safeguarding matters. The Archdeacon indicated that legislation is going through parliament that will make reporting mandatory and this will affect the Church.

Mrs Susi Liles (Attercliffe Deanery) spoke as a mother of a survivor, and noted that there seems to be a focus on the reputation of the Church. She stated that if what we do is focused on best safeguarding practice, the reputation of the church would follow. Bishop Pete agreed, and noted that historically it was a reaction to protect the reputation of the church, but hoped that quicker, more transparent, dealing with issues would seek to address this.

The Reverend Malcolm Liles (Attercliffe Deanery), stated that there will always be difficulty if the safeguarding teams in the diocese are employed by the DBF as they could be subject to pressure. He asked whether it would take a long time to get to model 4. He also noted that the House of Bishops always passes a resolution to not allow members of the public in, so there is a problem about accountability and transparency. In addition he noted that General Synod reps were sent a lot of documents which they wouldn't have had time to read. The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham responded that a key recommendation from the IICSA report was to shift from Diocesan Safeguarding 'Adviser' to Diocesan Safeguarding 'Officer' with the authority to implement and act according to their professional judgement, irrespective of the Bishop's views. This is still being worked out and insufficient time has been given to see if this has been effective. IICSA also recommended that diocesan teams be accountable to the National Safeguarding Team (NST), and the motion passed at General Synod included making the NST fully independent. Therefore, even if diocesan teams remain employed by their DBF, they will be accountable to a fully independent NST. LJ Buxton added that there is now a regional supervision model in place and the job descriptions are being transferred to DSO. It was hoped that the IICSA 1&8 recommendations would be completed by April 2025.

Bishop Pete encouraged members to look at audits published by INEQE, which includes the principle that the best outcome would be for effective safeguarding to be done by the church rather than to the church.

In terms of the House of Bishops, Bishop Pete noted that Standing Order 14 is never now approved unanimously,

The Reverend Beth Keith (Hallam Deanery), thanked Bishop Pete for talking about the HR problems in the Church. She noted the structures of the Church of England as not being fit for purpose if each parish is its 'own kingdom'. She stated that a recurring theme is that the only option for those who raise allegations or whistle blow is to go to a different church. It is vital that allegations are passed on and she asked if structures are not fit for purpose, how do we minister safely? Bishop Pete shared reservations that current systems inhibit registering of complaints and allegations, but was also confident that when they are made they are appropriately dealt with.

Gillis Robbie (Hallam Deanery) wanted to address the safety of clergy and their families, from his personal experience as the son of a clergyperson who

was subject to vexatious complaints. With the new Clergy Conduct Measure (CCM) he asked for the diocese to particularly look to care for clergy and their families. He also noted that Lichfield Diocese has a vexatious complaints policy and asked Sheffield to look into this. The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham responded that there had clearly been a failure of process, in that appropriate support should have been offered to Mr Robbie's family (although not by the Bishop who has to retain impartiality in case a CDM complaint progresses). He reported that the Steering/Revision Committee responsible for the drafting of the CCM has included family members of clergy that have been subject to difficult CDM processes. The CCM legislation, which is now going through parliament, does include provision for excluding complainants that have been adjudged to have made vexatious complaints against a clergyperson from bringing further complaints against that clergyperson.

Bishop Pete thanked members for their engagement in the matter. He encouraged members who wished to speak to him, LJ Buxton or the Archdeacon during coffee to do so.

7. **LAMENT IN WORSHIP** – the Dean of Sheffield led an Act of Lament in Worship providing an opportunity for reflection
8. **DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING REPORT** – The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham presented the Diocesan Safeguarding Report, which had been circulated as Paper 8.1. He highlighted the following:
 - a) It has become a requirement for parishes to use the safeguarding dashboard, following positive responses from trial parishes. He emphasised that the safeguarding team is available to support.
 - b) The Survivor support and engagement group, which includes survivors of abuse, is continuing its work of shaping survivor care. They are planning to have a survivor-focused service in November around Safeguarding Sunday.
 - c) In the light of the Makin Review, an additional risk has been added to the Risk Register relating to the impact that high-profile national safeguarding failures might have on the diocesan safeguarding journey.

Questions

Michaela Suckling (General Synod rep), asked if HR issues going to safeguarding is a problem in Sheffield. She also asked for clarification that Spiritual Abuse has been retained as a category in Sheffield, despite Professor Jay's views that it should be removed due to there being no clear definitions. Finally, she asked for clarification about changes to the Domestic Abuse training.

The Archdeacon responded that the safeguarding team initially supports parishes, even if it's decided that an allegation doesn't meet the threshold for a safeguarding response and needs to be referred to another team. He confirmed that Spiritual Abuse had been retained as a category, and that the Domestic Abuse training was being developed nationally and recommended that it is taken more widely.

The Reverend Malcolm Liles (Attercliffe Deanery) – asked about those who exercise PTO ministry more than 5 times per year and the guidance that they will now be diverted to the full safeguarding leadership course; he asked when this would take effect and asked what provision there is for transition. The Reverend Harry Steele responded that the full leadership training will be implemented at the point that renewal is due. The PTO leadership pathway is for those who use their PTO less regularly. He also added that the Leadership Training has now been added to the online portal and that it does apply to those without a specific parish.

Mr Liles also asked about the INEQE audit and his understanding that there is no 'drilling down' into the papers. The Archdeacon noted that the audit is extensive and papers are already being put together for the diocesan audit in 2026. The experience of dioceses that have been reviewed is that the process is vigorous.

The Reverend David Dean-Revell (Ecclesfield Deanery) asked how clergy can avoid spiritual abuse if there is no definition. The Archdeacon replied that while there is no definition in statute, there are clear guidelines in safeguarding practice guidance and in the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy. He explained that there is a distinction between teaching and the coercive control abuse of power. David Middleton also asked for clarification of the Archdeacon's response. The Archdeacon provided the following links after the meeting:

Guidance around 'spiritual abuse' can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safeguarding-children-young-people-and-vulnerable-adults/42> together with sections from the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy 12.2 and 12.3: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/guidelines-professional-conduct-clergy/guidelines>

Gillis Robbie (Hallam Deanery) asked if there is any provision for protection of clergy against spiritual abuse by laity. The Archdeacon responded that the safeguarding team would respond to allegations against laity holding office, as our safeguarding processes are principally about managing risk. He emphasised that if there is criminal activity it should be reported to the police.

9. **RACIAL JUSTICE UPDATE** – the Reverend Anesia Cook, Racial Justice Officer provided a report on the work of Racial Justice, beginning with Amos 5:24 ('But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream'). She introduced Rachel Edmonds, Racial Justice Admin and Research Officer. Mrs Cook noted the work of Racial Justice (the equal treatment of everyone, regardless of ethnicity and race) as being part of the diocesan vision, noting in particular that it is not new, having begun with calls to the church to tackle division going back to the 1920 Lambeth Conference. In 2020 a group was commissioned to look at racial justice in the Church of England, with the publishing of *From Lament to Action* in 2021. This report set up five priority areas (Participation, Education, Training and Mentoring, Young People and Structures and Governance) and 47 recommendations. In 2023 the vision for Racial Justice was endorsed by Diocesan Synod with the project "Turning the Map Diverse in the Diocese of Sheffield" having three phases:
- a. Listening and Learning: visiting clergy, parishes, Deanery Synods, a gathering which will include a safe space for talking about stories.
 - b. Training and Enabling – Development of a toolkit for churches; Unconscious Bias training is being reviewed and churches will be encouraged to use Racial Justice Sunday liturgy
 - c. Celebration, Confidence and Cultivation

What can we do?

- Educate ourselves and others – be open to discuss and acknowledge race
- Inclusive liturgy and worship
- Participation and belonging – encourage to be part of services
- Talk about racism and impact on wellbeing
- Consider language
- Recognise privilege
- Explore and acknowledge our own prejudice
- Become active anti-racist
- Respond to racism within our churches
- Support those affected by racism
- Report racism
- Affirm and support UKME/GMH leaders and members.

A glossary of terms was circulated ahead of the meeting.

Questions

Pete Sandford (Ecclesall Deanery) - Commended the glossary, but noted the definition of discrimination was limited and could be expanded to include any protected characteristics.

Dr Cathy Rhodes (General Synod rep) thanked Mrs Cook and Mrs Edmonds, including for the helpful definition of terms. The organisation 'Inclusive Church' names race as one of several characteristics it includes alongside others, so could be helpful for some churches for resources etc. The presentation had referred to the Equality Act and she noted that the Church of England has some exemptions.

10. **BISHOP'S COUNCIL REPORT** – A Report on the proceedings of the Bishop's Council since the last Synod meeting was circulated as Paper 10.1. The Reverend Harry Steele and Canon Peter Rainford presented the report. Canon Rainford noted that reporting back was a way to feed back as Standing Committee of Diocesan Synod. New members of Bishop's Council, as well as re-elected members were introduced. Mr Steele noted that the last meeting spent a good proportion of time reflecting on safeguarding, giving space and time for sharing, while acknowledging the work of local parish churches in the midst of a difficult national picture.

As well as being the Standing Committee, Bishop's Council also acts as the Board of Trustees and prepares ground for reporting to Synod. Canon Rainford reiterated thanks for those who prepared the SMMIB bid. It was confirmed that Governance remains and standing item on the agenda and at the last meeting included plans for the Diocesan Secretary's maternity leave. The Risk Register is also reviewed at each meeting with a 'deep dive' each year.

There were no questions arising out of the report.

11. **A WINDOW ON ADWICK-LE-STREET DEANERY** – the Reverend David Berry provided some information about the Community Hub at St Peter's Bentley. Mr Berry reported that in 2019 there was a flood in Bentley and out of conversations following that and the Covid pandemic, some funding was applied for and received. This was to support those who had been flooded, but as this support grew a larger building was leased which would host the Debt Advice Service, a Uniform Bank and a café has just started. Mr Berry noted that the cafe has cost a lot of money and is struggling to serve the community, so he highlighted this as an area for prayer.
12. **FINANCE UPDATE** – Mr Tony Gardiner was invited to provide an update on diocesan finances. He noted that he would be attending an inter-diocesan finance forum in the coming week which would provide more detail on the triennium funding.

Mr Gardiner reported that the current general fund deficit for 2024 is around £1.1-1.2m and that the audit and preparation of accounts is now underway.

Mrs Amy Hole asked about the RME budget which has to be returned and why it wasn't spent at the time. Mr Gardiner responded that the spending

was on the basis of a formula and the training that was undertaken, it had been spent prudently and not anticipated that it would be clawed back. He noted that across the Church of England around £5m would be returned. The DBF have scrutinised the figures and are content with the calculation, but noted that a reduction in the repayment had been negotiated.

13. **UPDATE ON MUTUAL FLOURISHING** – Bishop Pete reported that after the approval of Ordination of Women as Bishops was approved in 2014, there was commissioning of *New Norms New Beginning*, but processed relating to that were affected by Bishop Steven Croft's departure and the appointment of Bishop Philip North. Bishop Pete reported that there were some listening sessions arranged in 2018 and in 2019 a group was commissioned to promote Mutual Flourishing. He paid tribute to the members of that group, but noted that when meeting with each person individually there was a consensus that the group's best work was becoming transactional and organisational and all agreed that the ambition of the group should be more aspirational. As a result, Bishop Pete researched the diocesan situation and noted the variation between deaneries regarding the numbers of parishes within Deaneries with Extended Episcopal Oversight and numbers with female incumbents. This led him to the belief that future plans should be more deanery-focussed and he indicated that he was looking to the autumn to renew efforts towards mutual flourishing. He proposed to arrange a professionally facilitated residential to build relationships of trust and ensure good and appropriate representation from across the deaneries. There will then be a roadshow across deaneries, with testimony from local participants in the residential.

Questions

The Reverend Grant Naylor (Ecclesall Deanery) noted the importance of acknowledging the positive working relationships in the Diocese, and noted the need for careful use of language, particularly in a couple of comments that had been made at Diocesan Synod. He stated that 5% of posts are not open to women, but 95% of posts are not open to Catholic or Complementarian Evangelical, although Bishop Pete clarified that the 5% was parishes that are legally not open to women, while the 95% could potentially appoint Catholic/Complementarian Evangelical priests. The Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham noted that applications are open to anyone who wants to apply and appointments have been made across traditions.

Dr Cathy Rhodes (General Synod rep) raised a point of order in responding to the comment about use of language. She indicated that she had been making a factual point regarding the Church of England and the Equality Act and apologised for any hurt felt from her comments as that was not her intention.

The Reverend David Middleton (Attercliffe Deanery) echoed Fr Grant's words and noted that he had felt hostility at the last Synod meeting. His perception was that people do not feel free to express what they are feeling and was concerned that Synod was no longer a safe space where members can speak their views. Bishop Pete emphasised that no one wants an atmosphere where people feel unsafe.

The Reverend Pete Jackson (Wath Deanery) asked if mutual flourishing will ever have proper representation from a Complementarian Evangelical Bishop in the College or House of Bishops, noting in particular that there had been provision for female representation before the Ordination of women as bishops was agreed. Bishop Pete responded that Bishops Rob Munro and Bishop Stephen Race are in the College of Bishops, but acknowledged they are not diocesan or suffragan Bishops.

Michaela Suckling (General Synod rep) asked how the members of the residential will be chosen. Bishop Pete responded that he will be looking for a willing and diverse coalition.

Amanda Barraclough noted the importance of a listening exercise and the need to be heard and she applauded the efforts to have deep and real conversations.

The Reverend Ed Morrison (Wath Deanery) asked when the Senior Staff would include representation from Catholic or Complementarian Evangelical traditions. Bishop Pete responded that this was not something that was known as it would depend on when appointments are made.

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 2. Supplementaries were invited for each question and those received are set out in the Appendix.
15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – The date of the next meeting is Saturday 19 July at Christ Church Pitsmoor.
17. **CLOSING PRAYERS** – The meeting concluded with prayers led by the Reverend Robert Heaton.

Presidential Address to the Diocesan Synod Saturday 8 March 2025

Friends, let me begin by reading the familiar words of Psalm 121.

¹*I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?*

²*My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

³*He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.*

⁴*He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

⁵*The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.*

⁶*The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.*

⁷*The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.*

⁸*The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.*

I offered an exposition of that Psalm at our first Parish Safeguarding Officers' day in 2023, making the point that forms of that little word 'keep', which come six times in the last six verses, could equally be translated 'guard' or 'safeguard'. Let me read those last six verses again:

³*He will not let your foot be moved;*

he who safeguards you will not slumber.

⁴*He who safeguards Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

⁵*The LORD is your safeguarder; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.*

⁶*The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.*

⁷*The LORD will safeguard you from all evil; he will safeguard your life.*

⁸*The LORD will safeguard your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.*

Friends, safeguarding doesn't just matter to God. Safeguarding is characteristic of God and I hope it will seem entirely obvious and appropriate to you that I want to make safeguarding the principle focus of this Presidential Address.

When this Synod last met, it was very soon after the publication of the Makin Report into the abominable abuses of John Smyth and the subsequent resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Indeed, if you were there, you will probably recall that Archdeacon Malcolm and I sought to address those events head on at the outset of the meeting – after which we kept a minute of silent prayer together for a safer church.

But since then we have all been shaken by at least three subsequent developments, one before Christmas and two afterwards – the first two of which led to calls for the resignation of the Archbishop of York. I want to note, however, that none of these terrible events reflect the work of safeguarding at parish level, and do not reflect on the quality of work by PSOs and volunteers in local congregations. It's really important to say that.

First, in December, BBC File on 4 published its investigation into the case of David Tudor, a priest in the Diocese of Chelmsford deprived of office in October last year after a complaint made against him under the Clergy Discipline Measure relating to historic sexual offences against girls under the age of 18. You will recall, and may well share, the widespread sense of consternation that he was allowed to continue in post for so long after concerns about his behaviour first emerged. In some quarters, that sense of consternation led to the first

calls for the resignation of the Archbishop of York who had been the Bishop of Chelmsford for a decade until 2020.

Then in January came the Channel Four documentary, disclosing complaints of sexual assault and sexual harassment against the Bishop of Liverpool, John Perambulath. The documentary led swiftly to his resignation and to the revelation that one of the complainants was his colleague, the Bishop of Warrington, Bev Mason. Again, there was widespread consternation that these complaints had not been addressed and resolved by proper process and as a matter of urgency. You may remember that by the time the Bishop of Liverpool resigned, the Bishop of Warrington had not been able to exercise her ministry in the Diocese of Liverpool for over 500 days. 500 days! Again there were calls for the resignation of the Archbishop of York, and these intensified after Channel Four broadcast some concerns about the meetings of the CNC, the Crown Nominations Commission, which had resulted in Perambulath's appointment.

Finally, last month, there was the debate at General Synod, at which we debated two potential models of independence in safeguarding for the Church of England, called models 3 and models 4 because the two least ambitious models (1 and 2) had already been rejected. Model 3 envisages the creation of an independent scrutiny body to review the management of casework in the Church of England and the outsourcing to a second independent body of the work currently done by the National Safeguarding Team, while Diocesan Safeguarding Officers and Teams would remain employees of the relevant Diocesan Board of Finance, supervised through the regional model arising from the IICSA recommendations. Model 4 envisages that DSOs and their teams would also be outsourced to the independent body, together with the National Safeguarding Team. Broadly speaking, model 3 was preferred by the safeguarding professionals within the Church of England, including our own Safeguarding Team; and by INEQE, the body which is currently undertaking an audit of safeguarding in Dioceses. Model 4 was strongly preferred by Professor Jay, who published a review of Church Safeguarding review last year and who previously chaired the IICSA enquiry. Model 4 was also preferred by most victims and survivors.

The decision of the Synod was reported with dismay on national TV and radio, in print and on social media. 'Church of England rejects independent safeguarding' was the blunt headline. 'Church of England lets down survivors once again'. 'Church of England rejects option 4'. The optics were undeniably horrid, and frankly I would be surprised if, on Wednesday 12 February, you were not feeling thoroughly discouraged by the whole sorry mess.

The cumulative impact of these events has been deeply demoralising and at various points over the past four months I myself have felt despondent and even ashamed about the institution I serve. The first thing I want to say this morning is that if this recent crisis has tested your loyalty to the Church of England and has made you question your place in it, I understand that. That's not an over-reaction. We have repeatedly let down those who have looked to us for refuge; we have failed very publicly for at least a decade to prioritise the needs of survivors; and in the process, we have brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ into disrepute. We, and when I say 'we' I do especially mean we bishops, should hang our heads in shame.

Having said that, I do want to try to provide some context. In what follows I am not attempting to excuse or justify anyone or anything; but I think it might be helpful to clarify

a few things. I want to make two points, one about the decision of the General Synod and one about the other three terrible revelations.

First of all, then, General Synod. I do understand the backlash following the vote last month. I realise that the decision we took was a further deep disappointment to most survivors, at a time when they had already had their fill of disappointment. But as a matter of fact, I do also believe the decision taken at Synod offers the best path to a safer church, so let me try to say why.

Those who reported 'Church rejects model 4' could in fact equally have reported 'Church rejects model 3' – but no-one did report it like that. Given the binary choice between model three and model 4, what Synod voted in favour of was actually for 3.5 or 3.7: we voted for model 3 as a stepping stone towards a more thoroughly explored model 4.

You see, model 4 has its risks. No other institution has ever outsourced its safeguarding. There is no precedent to learn from. No university, or NHS trust, no large charity or local authority has tried it. And the Charity Commission, on hearing of the possibility, reminded us that if the Church of England did adopt model 4, it would still retain the Governance responsibility for safeguarding, even if we outsource the operation. The Bishops would still retain responsibility for safeguarding. And that raises questions: what would we do if we became dissatisfied with the work of the independent body? What if their values and goals began to diverge from those of the Christian Church? How would an independent body itself be held to account? And just what would it involve if we were to transfer 42 Cathedral safeguarding teams and 42 Diocesan teams into one independent employer, given that the terms and conditions of safeguarding teams are not standard. At present, a DSO in Sheffield might not be paid the same as a DSO in Leeds, any more than the Diocesan Secretary or Director of Finance. What would TUPE look like from 84 charities to one employer, 85 charities if you include the National Safeguarding Team? Diocesan Safeguarding teams were also concerned that an independent employer might not encourage or even permit safeguarding professionals to spend a significant proportion of their time supporting parishes and individuals to engender a more healthy safeguarding culture, and that their work might end up being restricted to case management alone. The rejection of model 4 has been reported as if the Bishops were determined to retain control of safeguarding. We are not. Most of us would like nothing more than to relinquish not only control but responsibility. And there's the rub. We can't relinquish responsibility. We should not relinquish responsibility. So we are trying to ensure we find the model which enables us to exercise that continued responsibility well.

It was for these sorts of reasons that safeguarding teams also favoured model 3 not model 4. But on the other hand, model 3 has shortcomings. At present there is a real unevenness of resource, performance and culture across the 42 Dioceses and 42 Cathedrals. Not every Diocese has the same size of safeguarding team, relative to the number of parishes. Not every Diocese offers the same training in the same way. Not every Cathedral relates to its DSO in the same way. And surely we desperately need consistency and best practice across the board. Model 4 would certainly make that achievable.

So what we voted for was to get the independent scrutiny body underway and to begin the process of transferring the NST to independent employment, but not to stop there, as if model 3 is job done. We also voted to explore further model 4, and possibly multiple versions of model 4, so that we can be satisfied that the benefits will outweigh the costs. We did not reject model 4, we just determined, I believe wisely, that model 4 is not

yet sufficiently formed for us to adopt it with confidence. That's the General Synod and my first point.

Secondly, as far as the three scandals are concerned, and I do think they are, in their different ways, scandals, I hope to God that they will prove to be a watershed in the life of our church. Although the Smyth story is atrocious, the cover up in the 1980s utterly reprehensible, the lack of follow-through by Archbishop Justin and others since 2017 lamentable, although that is all true, it seems to me that the lessons to be learned are relatively clear and the recommendations of the Makin Review relatively easily applied. I may be fooling myself, but I believe that to be true.

But the other two cases are trickier. A few weeks ago, a prominent lay person in this Diocese challenged me: 'How long is it going to take for the House of Bishops to sort out safeguarding? How difficult can it be?' And part of what the Tudor case in particular has shown us, and maybe also recent events in Liverpool, is that it can be very difficult indeed, for this reason. The structures, systems and processes which make up the Church of England were mostly laid down organically centuries ago and they are proving unfit for a present-day culture which values scrutiny, transparency and accountability. I'll say that again because it's important: the structures, systems and processes which make up the Church of England were mostly laid down organically centuries ago and they are proving unfit for a present-day culture which values scrutiny, transparency and accountability.

The most obvious illustration of this – and this may even come as a surprise to some of you lay people here – is that clergy are not employees; they are office holders. As such, they are not subject to employment law. Although a legal process of pastoral reorganisation can lead to the dispossession of a priest, parish clergy cannot be made redundant in the ordinary way. They cannot be sacked or be made subject to a performance management process. Clergy are not subject to ordinary HR.

There was another debate at General Synod, hardly reported at all in the media, which ended in the adoption of a new Clergy Conduct Measure, which will in effect replace the Clergy Discipline Measure with something much more refined, much less of a blunt instrument. That is a huge step forward, and our own Archdeacon Malcolm was part of the group which has been working on it. It's a huge step forward, but it is still not ordinary HR.

A significant part of the problem in the Tudor case, and I suspect also in the Liverpool case, is that ordinary HR did not apply. In other words, the Church of England has an HR crisis as well as a safeguarding crisis. And it may be that part of the solution to our present ills is to bring office holder status to an end and for the clergy to become employees, subject to ordinary HR. Had that been the case, I do believe the Tudor case and the Liverpool case could have been, would have been, brought to a just conclusion much more quickly. Again, I may be fooling myself, but I believe that to be true.

I must stop. Friends, in this address I am not trying to excuse anyone or anything. I am not trying to minimise offences or failings. I can assure you that have felt the woes of the past four months keenly. And I am committed, deeply committed, to navigating the way to a genuinely safe, and survivor focused Church of England. But I am wanting to say that there is no magic switch we can flip which will get us there overnight. Independence in safeguarding will be a big part of the solution, but it will not be the whole solution. Nothing less than a wholesale reform of our structures, systems and processes (perhaps especially in HR) will get us to where we need to be. May God help us get there.

Questions to Diocesan Synod – 8 March 2025

From	Question	Response
1. The Reverend Christopher Hobbs, Snaith and Hatfield Deanery	What is the usual time to wait for a response from the Chancellor, after the submission of the Public Notice period of a Faculty Application, if there have been no objections?	<p><i>Response from the Diocesan Registry:</i></p> <p>There is currently no set timescale for a faculty petition to work its way through the Consistory Court process as it is dependent on a number of factors. These include; level of complexity of works and amount of documentation and consultations to review; whether further correspondence is required with the DAC, consultees or petitioners for clarity on any subject; timescales are also dependent on the number of petitions lodged with the Diocesan Registry and being worked through at any one time which may impact wait times for Registry and/or Chancellor review. The Diocesan Registry encourages petitioners to keep communication open with both the Registry and DAC, and to ask for updates and alert the Registry to any urgency associated with an individual petition.</p>
SUPPLEMENTARY	The DAC Secretary advised one churchwarden on an uncontested and uncontroversial matter, and following the public notice period, that 2-3 months can be expected for the Chancellor's determination to reach an applicant. In 2 dioceses where I have been an incumbent 2-3 weeks was normal. What assessment has been made of speeding up the process in the diocese of Sheffield?	<p><i>Response from Simon Chesters-Thompson</i></p> <p>Work is being done on the strategic analysis of a couple of key cases to give a better insight into the possible sticking points of the Faculty Process.</p>
2. The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	A recent well-being survey conducted on behalf of Church House Westminster revealed that 1 in 5 stipendiary	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete:</i></p> <p>We have sought to invest heavily in clergy wellbeing in this Diocese in recent years. A wellbeing group has published a suite of resources called 'Flourishing in</p>

		clergy were clinically depressed whilst 1 in 3 were suffering from some form of depression; what steps are being taken to mitigate this at a national or diocesan level?	Ministry'. It is currently being reprinted. We have encouraged clergy and lay staff to take annual wellbeing days in addition to their full allocation of rest days and annual leave, and for clergy to consider a double rest day in any month in which no annual leave is due. We have introduced and offered pastoral supervision. And this year's Bishops Annual Lecture has a wellbeing theme. The evidence is that these initiatives is having come effect. The Bishop's Advisor in Pastoral Care, Mrs Patricia Hunt, reports that whereas in 2018 the Diocese of Sheffield was making the most use, in the region, of the Churches Ministerial Counselling Scheme, we are now making the least use.
	SUPPLEMENTARY	Could something about the commitment to wellbeing go on the diocesan website as an encouragement to applicants. One thing that isn't covered is about financial worry.	<i>The Archdeacon of Doncaster responded that the Flourishing in Ministry booklet is on the website and is currently being reviewed so a new version will be uploaded once complete. The financial aspects are not part of the wellbeing group's remit.</i>
3.	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	Why are vacant parochial/oversight posts not advertised on the opening page of the Diocesan website even though they may be vacancies of long-standing? I am aware of other diocesan websites providing this information should clergy looking to move happen upon them.	<p><i>Response from LJ Buxton, Acting Diocesan Secretary (Comms Director):</i></p> <p>I think it easier to respond to this in two points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ongoing advertising of long-standing vacancies</i> Parish clergy vacancies are currently advertised in agreement with the timeframe set by the PCC, Patron, Archdeacon and Associate Archdeacon. The vacancy will often go in the Church Times (if approved by the PCC) and will run on the Diocesan website, usually for a period of four weeks, or until the closing date. Following that it is removed until a decision is made on the next steps (either appoint or re-advertise). At this point it might be that a new timeline needs to be agreed, or revisions made to the paperwork before it is re-advertised. <i>Advertising vacancies on the home page of the website</i> The Vacancies section on our website is accessible via a direct link from the home page. This section of the website does not struggle for visitors. Since we started

		<p>gathering website analytics in 2015, it has consistently been in the top five pages visited monthly. In fact, in 2024 it was the second most visited page on the website with a monthly average number of visitors of 515. You may be interested to see some of the total website visitor stats to a few of our more recent adverts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anston, Firbeck with Letwell and Woodsetts – 166• Bradfield – 1,018• Worsborough – 423 <p>Listing individual vacancies directly on the homepage could increase visibility further for those not actively seek out the vacancies page. However, we also need to balance this with ensuring that vacancies are presented with the appropriate level of detail, including role descriptions, parish profiles, and the necessary support for those discerning a call to ministry in Sheffield. Also, the homepage is the main entry point for all website visitors so we have to carefully consider the content and features presented. Nothing is done by accident, and all backed by metrics and industry good practices.</p> <p>While more visitors will of course be welcome, what we really need to figure out is what is the ‘conversion’ ie what makes a visitor decide to apply?</p> <p>Recruitment of clergy has been, and remains, a critical ‘project’ for us and we will continue to review the approach we take. Clergy and lay sharing our adverts in their own networks is also a really valuable advertising tool and we are very appreciative for those that do this. We may also consider a general statement on the vacancies pages welcoming and encouraging those looking for roles to contact us for further discussion if there are no current adverts for roles of interest to them.</p>
SUPPLEMENTARY	Could a statement go on the website as per last paragraph?	Yes!

4.	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	Can we know of the numbers of clergy with PTO in the diocese for each of the last five years?	<p><i>Response from Harry Steele, Bishop's Chaplain:</i></p> <p>2025 - 114 with PTO 2024 - 118 with PTO 2023 - 113 with PTO 2022 - 110 with PTO 2021 – the data for this year is less easily accessible as it is on a database we no longer use.</p>
5.	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	In July Peter Wright will be retiring as Retired Clergy Officer after 23 years in this post, will there be an occasion of official recognition of this period of voluntary service to the diocese? When will his successor be known to enable a smooth transition?	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete:</i></p> <p>Peter will be thanked fulsomely at the annual meeting of retired clergy on 17 July. A potential successor has been identified and a smooth succession is therefore very possible.</p>
6.	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	Which parishes are receiving funding in 2025 from the share of Lowest Income Communities Support received by Sheffield diocese and what are the respective amounts receivable by each of those parishes? Do those amounts add up to 100% of the funding received by the diocese?	<p><i>Response from the Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary</i></p> <p>100% of this money is allocated towards the costs of providing ministry in the most deprived parishes in our Diocese. The allocation is calculated taking account of the cost of providing ministry in the parish, and using the national deprivation ranking of parishes, and with reference to Common Fund payments.</p> <p>It is allocated starting with the most deprived parish and then the next until the grant has all been allocated. In 2023 it was allocated to the 51 most deprived parishes which are all amongst the 20% most deprived parishes in the country.</p>
7.	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	Is there a plan for an educational programme around LLF for deaneries and Diocesan Synod to enable an informed response to the General Synod consultation on LLF which may take place later this year?	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete</i></p> <p>The period for an educational programme in relation to LLF is really behind us. Parishes and deaneries were repeatedly encouraged to run the LLF short course in 2019-2021 and several Diocesan-wide and expertly facilitated courses were offered. A team of outstanding LLF advocates sacrificially agreed to support the process. In addition, a Diocesan-wide</p>

			<p>study day was arranged in May 2021, attended by over 150 participants. That phase was intended to inform the process up to the Synod debate of February 2023. We are now in an implementation phase. That said, as soon as guidance is issued by the LLF Programme Board about the engagement now being asked of Dioceses, appropriate arrangements will be made to enable as full and effective an engagement in our Diocese as possible.</p>
	SUPPLEMENTARY	<p>Comment: Understanding the different views of the Diocese, there is a need to engage people again before we are asked to vote for anything related to LLF.</p>	
8.	Dr Cathy Rhodes General Synod Rep	<p>How many churches in the diocese are placing limitations on how their common fund contributions can be used, by withholding common fund contributions, donating through the Ephesian Fund or similar third party, or through a special arrangement with the diocese, such that their contributions cannot be used to support all churches and clergy in the diocese? How much money is affected by these arrangements?</p>	<p><i>Response from Tony Gardiner, Finance Director</i></p> <p>Six parishes currently give to the Ephesians Fund and two to the Diocesan Restricted Fund, with three expressions of interest about the Diocesan Restricted Fund.</p> <p>Between them all 11 parishes are pledging £312,000 (£165,000) Ephesians and (£147,000) Diocesan Fund. Ministry costs across those 11 parishes totals £790,000 so the contributions fall short of the full cost by £488,000</p>
9.	Vicky Vidler Ecclesall Deanery	<p>1) How many parishes have elected to make their Common Fund contributions into the newly created Common Fund Restricted Account?</p> <p>2) What proportion of Common Fund receipts</p>	<p><i>Response from Tony Gardiner, Finance Director</i></p> <p>1) See above</p> <p>2) In 2024 Common Fund receipts totalled £3.4m, £312k is 9.2% of this.</p>

		do these contributions make up?	
10.	The Reverend Canon Amanda Barraclough Adwick-le Street Deanery	<p>1) How many parishes in the Diocese have subscribed to the Ephesians Fund?</p> <p>2) Is this information in the public domain? In the interests of transparency, should it be?</p>	<p><i>Response to part 1 from Tony Gardiner, Finance Director and part 2 from Bishop Pete</i></p> <p>1) See above</p> <p>2) The information should be in the public domain in my opinion and indeed I believe I am right in saying that eventually it will be: my understanding is that when our DBF accounts for 2025 are published, they will have to identify this restricted fund, indicating who contributed to it and how much.</p>
	SUPPLEMENTARY	Thank you for response and welcomes transparency the accounts will provide, but what responsibility does the diocese and parishes have to disclose the information?	<i>The advice note with the Diocesan Restricted Fund includes the expectation that PCCs would be consulted and would encourage parishes to put on the website if possible.</i>
11.	The Reverend Beth Keith Hallam Deanery	<p>1. The number of concerns raised by female clergy regarding harassment, inappropriate touching, or assault by male clergy.</p> <p>2. The number of these concerns that have been formally lodged as complaints.</p> <p>3. The number of complaints that have led to any form of action.</p> <p>4. The number of female clergy who have made allegations and were subsequently encouraged to take time off, move to a different deanery, or leave the Diocese.</p>	<p><i>Response from Harry Steele, Bishop's Chaplain:</i></p> <p>We have had a number of people in different offices (the Dean of Women's Ministry, bishop's office, archdeacons' offices and Church House) working on these questions since they were received on 28 February. The data we have been able to collate in the time available is almost certainly only partial. We are therefore intending to provide a comprehensive response in time for the next meeting of the Synod.</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. The number of concerns or complaints that have resulted in disciplinary action.6. The number of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) that have been agreed upon in such cases.7. Whether any clergy who have had allegations made against them have received financial settlements as part of their departure from the Diocese.8. Whether any clergy who have made allegations have received financial settlements.	
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