

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

**AT TANKERSLEY HUB, PILLEY LANE, TANKERSLEY, BARNSELY, S75 3AP**

**SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2025 AT 9.00 AM**

**1. INTRODUCTION AND NOTICES**

Bishop Pete welcomed members to the meeting and thanked the team at the Hub for their hospitality. He extended a warm welcome to Bishop Leah Vasey-Saunders and the Venerable David Gerrard, Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham, who were attending their first meeting.

Yvette Cooper (RE Teacher) and children from Tankersley School led opening worship.

The Reverend Canon Matthew Rhodes was confirmed as Chair for the meeting.

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 Christ Church Pitsmoor on Saturday 19 July 2025 had been circulated as Paper 3.1 and were accepted and signed.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. **A WINDOW ON TANKERSLEY DEANERY** – Yvette Cooper (RE Teacher) and children from Tankersley School's new worship band provided a window on the Deanery by sharing about the work in RE at the school and singing the school song that had been written for the school's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

**5. BISHOP'S COUNCIL REPORT**

A Report on the proceedings of the Bishop's Council since the last Synod meeting was circulated as Paper 5.1. Miss Julia Newton presented the report, and noted that the Bishop's Council Away Day on 8 November had been a good time of reflection together.

The Reverend Malcolm Liles (Attercliffe Deanery) asked about the cancelled open day and how many follow ups have taken place. The Archdeacon of Doncaster indicated that he has had conversations with the three people who had booked the open day, but there are other conversations also taking place.

The Reverend David Middleton (Attercliffe Deanery) asked about whether there had been thought on the number of ordinands and situation nationally, and what the reason is for that. Bishop Pete responded that he has spoken about the matter a number of times and the situation nationally has not improved. However, work is being done to discover the reasons for the shortfall and the drastic need to revitalise the pipeline of ordinands, although projections for ordination of deacons in 2026 in this diocese are good. The factors contributing seem to be clergy wellbeing and wellbeing of serving clergy, the value of the stipend, impact of repeated safeguarding failures and their impact on confidence in the Church of England, together with uncertainty regarding Prayers of Love and Faith.

*MEETING AS THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE – Canon Ian Walker, Chair of the DBF took the Chair.*

**6. FINANCE REPORT AND 2026 BUDGET**

Canon Ian Walker indicated that the budget presented is again a deficit budget, but that the current year is expected to end slightly better than originally budgeted for. Work has been done on considering longer term arrangements and the effects of continuing deficit budgets on reserves, and these conversations are being held within the background of the overall diocesan strategy.

Tony Gardiner, Director of Finance, provided an update on Diocesan finances and the 2026 Budget. He indicated that the budget has been prepared in light of the triennium funding review for 2025-2028. He highlighted the following:

- i. Assumption has been made that Common Fund will grow from £3.5m to £3.6m (which is around the same level as receipts in 2020).
- ii. Increasing levels of stipend, paying incumbents at National Stipend Benchmark (an increase of around 11%) and Curates at National Minimum Stipend.
- iii. Property costs have been held flat at £2.2m
- iv. Grant funded income will be equal to expenditure.
- v. Current Common Fund receipts are on track for £3.5m budget for 2025.
- vi. The Common Fund increase still does not reflect a sustainable level.
- vii. There are currently 110 stipended roles; at the end of this year 66 of those will be DBF-funded roles. The current vacancy rate in the Diocese is around 14%, which is approximately half the national rate. The budget has been put together with the expectation that half the roles will be filled in the year.
- viii. In 2025 a deficit of £1.99m was budgeted, expected end of year forecast is a deficit of £0.9m, which takes into account the £1m SMMIB transition funding.

- ix. Income rises from £7.6m to £7.7m which includes Low Income Community (LinC) funding, which has risen to £2.2m, and transitional funding from the National Church of £600k.
- x. From an expenditure point of view costs have increased from £8.4 to £8.5m. A Ministry Training Fund replaces grants made in the past. Housing costs have remained flat and central support costs have increased due to having two full time Archdeacons and increase in salaries as part of Job Evaluation Review.
- xi. For 2027 to 2028 assumptions include 5% Common Fund growth.
- xii. National Funding has been confirmed for the triennium 2026-2028.
- xiii. In terms of reserves, there are nearly £60m worth of reserves, but £47m of that is tied up in property, £12m is in unrestricted funds (£3m of which is in property), so careful management is needed. However, the same position is replicated across Dioceses nationally. The Finance and Property Committee (FaPC) was asked to look at what 'Plan B' would look like, while noting that further triennium funding is expected in the 2029-31 triennium. The Strategic Ministry and Mission Investment Board (SMMIB) response also included a further £1m transitional funding, but this has not been confirmed yet so have not been taken into account. Costs therefore have to be managed carefully, as well as Common Fund methodology considered, together with LinC allocation.

## **Questions**

- 1. The Reverend Beth Keith (Hallam Deanery): in terms of contribution from parishes, what is the figure that would cover stipend, housing and central costs. Mr Gardiner confirmed that it is £80k and this would be expected to increase year-on-year.
- 2. Mrs Keith also asked what progress has been made when looking at Common Fund contributions across mission areas rather than at parish level. Mr Gardiner confirmed this will be looked at as part of Common Fund methodology conversations.
- 3. Ben Christmas (Ecclesall Deanery) asked about taking some of the deficit from restricted funds and asked what these funds would be. Mr Gardiner replied that funds have certain usages that are allowed within the restrictions, for example for property repairs. The matters are looked at with the auditors each year to ensure the general fund is not depleted too quickly.
- 4. The Reverend David Dean-Revill (Ecclesfield Deanery) asked about investment with CCLA, where the investments are held and how much is invested, particularly in weapons and pharmaceuticals. Mr Gardiner indicated that funds are invested across a number of different funds, following National Church of England guidelines on ethical investment. There are also deposit and property funds. There is about £10m invested and another £10m on behalf of parishes as custodian trustees. CCLA decide where the investments are made and they have a target of providing a return of 5% above inflation. Information from CCLA is also

provided regularly to FaPC. Canon Walker indicated that he would look into whether there is investment in weapons/pharmaceuticals.

5. The Reverend Malcolm Liles (Attercliffe Deanery) asked how many parsonages are vacant, and also noted that as a nation there is a cost of living crisis and people in parishes might struggle to increase Common Fund. Canon Walker responded that vacant houses are usually only kept vacant while awaiting appointment processes and the matter is closely monitored to ensure income is maximised.
6. David Clark (Hallam Deanery), asked about the impact of national changes in rental processes and also if there is an assessment of what standards the properties that are rented out are in. Canon Walker replied that the Property Manager keeps the national changes under review and advice is taken about the potential impact on diocesan properties. In terms of standards of the properties, they are in a much better shape than in the past, the DBF does what it can within the budget available.
7. Brian Wrigley (Ecclesall Deanery) asked about budgeting for deficits and whether plans are being made regarding the continuing erosion of unrestricted funds and what happens in four years' time if the National Church does not provide extra funds. Canon Walker responded that there are longer term plans and aspirations that the National Church will provide funding, however, as Chair of the DBF he had asked for work to be done on a 'Plan B' in case this is not what happens. However, he noted that Synod were only being asked to approve the budget for 2026, not for the next three years. Mrs Bell also noted the long-term strategic planning which runs alongside the SMMIB funding and actively involves managing risk, including what interventions can be made, over ten-year planning and beyond to look at how the deficit budgets can be turned around.
8. The Reverend Tom A Brown (Doncaster Deanery), asked how national conversations are progressing and how other dioceses are managing. Canon Walker responded that he is not as aware as Bishop Pete about how national conversations are going, but he is aware of the difficult conversations that are held in parishes and reflected nationally. Bishop Pete added that the Triennium Funding Working Group (TFWG) for 2026-2028 prioritised the value of the stipend, his expectation of the next TFWG is that they will prioritise the number of stipends. He emphasised that the deficits in Dioceses need a national solution.
9. The Reverend David Middleton (Attercliffe Deanery) noted his encouragement in the projected increase in the number of clergy appointed. He noted the cap of 75-80 clergy a few years ago, but asked if that has now been overruled and what the plan is moving forward? Canon Walker noted that the 75-80 were DBF-funded posts and these were not all currently filled. The additional posts are funded by national funds.
10. Michaela Suckling (General Synod rep), asked regarding rental options given the protection of housing for clergy. She asked if tenants are aware

of this. Canon Walker confirmed that legal advice is taken to ensure properties can be vacated if needed for clergy.

Canon Walker concluded the report by presenting the motion:

“THAT Synod, sitting as the DBF, approves the Budget of the Diocesan Board of Finance for the twelve months ending 31 December 2026 as proposed by the Finance Committee and authorises the DBF to work to a deficit Budget of net (outgoing) resources, after transfers, of £1.24m.”

The motion was carried with 2 votes against and no abstentions.

*MEETING AS THE DIOCESAN SYNOD – Canon Rhodes re-took the Chair*

7. **DIGNITY IN MISSION AND AT WORK** – The Reverend Canon Amanda Barraclough commended the new policy which had been circulated as Paper 7.1, with summary booklet as Paper 7.2. She thanked HR Manager, Leo Colson, for partnering with her to write the policy and also noted that she used her sabbatical last year to look in more detail at the matter.
  - i. Canon Barraclough noted research showed that the prevalence of bullying in churches is higher than in secular workplaces. 39% of clergy experienced no bullying (compared to 53% secular), 50% of clergy experienced bullying (38% secular) and 10% of clergy experienced daily or weekly bullying compared to 8% in secular workplaces.
  - ii. Early recognition and intervention was vital to improve internal literacy about what bullying looks like.
  - iii. As Dean of Women’s Ministry she reported that she had seen seven women in seven years leaving posts as a result of bullying, but she did not see it as a gender issue, although she noted women might be more likely to report bullying than men.
  - iv. The policy was part of a way to support clergy and laity in recognising bullying behaviour. Canon Barraclough noted that conflict is normal and should be expected to arise, but it can be managed in healthy ways.
  - v. What can be done?
    - a. If low level, one to one pastoral conversation
    - b. Ongoing concern, Associate Archdeacon
    - c. Anti-Harassment Advisers – a team of people, professionally trained in conflict mediation, to help deal with conflict situations. Three have been identified and are going through a safer recruitment process and will be commissioned in the Diocese when they have attended the training.
  - vi. Canon Barraclough concluded by commending the policy but noted that there was additional work to be done on an appendix on dealing with vexatious complaints. She emphasised that it needed to be part of a wider culture change.

## **Questions**

1. The Reverend Christopher Hobbs (Snaith and Hatfield Deanery) asked where the process in General Synod was on the Clergy Discipline Measure. Bishop Pete confirmed General Synod had passed the Clergy Conduct Measure in July, but the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament have ruled it inexpedient and therefore it will need to return to Synod and may delay the process by around a year.
2. Dr Jane Patterson (General Synod rep) asked if quotes can include sources of the quotes in the appendices. This was taken away as an action.
3. Pip Salmon asked about where clergy are perpetrators of bullying? He also asked if there was an indication about where the bullying was coming from. Canon Barraclough indicated it could be from colleagues, hierarchy or lay people in congregations. The relationship between curates and Training Incumbent particularly needed to be considered and work was being done to ensure this is considered.
4. Michael MacDonald (Wath Deanery) made three observations: there will be an increase in reports when the policy is produced; once formal processes are reached it can be difficult to rebuild relationships; as a church community a culture should be created where differences of opinion are likely and welcomed.

In conclusion, Synod received the new policy.

## **8. DEANERY SYNOD ELECTIONS 2026**

The proposed numbers to be elected to Deanery Synods for the 2026-2028 three-year term, based on parish Electoral Roll numbers as at the 2025 APCM, were set out in Paper 8.1. In addition, a paper had been circulated which showed the split of numbers by Deanery.

An amendment was proposed by the Reverend Charles Burton (Wath Deanery) and this was circulated ahead of the meeting, together with a paper showing the impact of this amendment on Deanery Synod numbers.

Vicky Vidler (Ecclesall Deanery) raised a point of order to move to next business. Dr Butcher reported that if it moves to next business that motion would take precedence and would mean existing arrangements would stand (legal advice had been sought and confirmed this).

Mrs Vidler indicated the amended motion would have a big effect on deanery composition and particularly in 2026, so it was a significant decision to make with not a lot of time given to consider implications.

Ben Christmas (Ecclesall Deanery) asked if it was worth debating the procedural motion when the main motion would be debated. It was confirmed that this followed the requirements of the Standing Orders.

John Marsden (Ecclesfield Deanery) asked if it was better to support the procedural motion or vote on the amendment and reject it. Dr Butcher confirmed that this is a procedural motion, either would achieve the same end.

Michaela Suckling (General Synod rep) proposed not moving to next business as she would be interested in hearing the debate.

There was a vote on moving to next business which was overturned, with 14 in favour and the remainder against.

The Reverend Charles Burton was invited to introduce his amendment. He indicated that the proposal sought fairer representation of all electoral roll membership and ensured a more equitable system, seeking to reflect more closely each person in a parish. He felt that the current historic system gave undue weight to smaller churches. He thanked Graham Handley from Church House for producing the figures which had been circulated.

Dr Jackie Butcher urged Synod to resist the amendment. She noted that this matter has never been debated before, but that it may be time for a more thorough reconsideration and this would not be possible within a ten minute debate. She was concerned about the phrase 'equitable representation' and what this meant. She noted that the impact could be that voices from smaller churches may not be heard when they should be heard just as clearly as those from larger churches. She suggested a careful review of Deanery Synod membership should be done by Bishop's Council rather than making a quick decision at this meeting.

The Reverend Ben Tanner (Ecclesall Deanery) noted that his issue was the inherent unfairness in the numbers, using the illustration that under the current system the 27<sup>th</sup> person on an electoral roll would have a much greater say than the 200<sup>th</sup>.

The Reverend Beth Keith (Hallam Deanery) indicated that she is the incumbent of both a large and a small church. She noted that it is easier to get people to stand from a bigger church than a smaller church, but she has also found that people from the larger church are less likely to attend and engage with the meetings, whereas those from the smaller church enjoy being part of the diocese and having their voice heard. As part of her role she felt that she has a duty of care to ensure those who are less likely to speak should be given a voice.

The Reverend Chris Tufnell (Ecclesfield Deanery) indicated that he supports the amendment and made a comparison with local MPs and the numbers of constituents they represent.

The Reverend Pip Salmon (Ecclesfield Deanery) asked for clarification that lay members of Deanery Synod will form the electorate for General Synod elections in 2026. This was confirmed to be the case.

Following the debate, the proposed amendment was voted on:

In favour: 28  
Against: 38  
Abstentions: 6

The amendment therefore was not carried and the substantive item as set out in Paper 8.1 was voted on:

In favour: 34  
Against: 9  
Abstentions: 17

The motion was therefore carried.

9. **SAFEGUARDING REPORT** – the safeguarding report and overview of the 2026 INEQE audit had been circulated as Papers 9.1 and 9.2. The Reverend Canon Harry Steele noted that the Safeguarding Survivor service had taken place at Rotherham Minster and was well attended and received. He urged members to prioritise hearing the voice of survivors.

Michaela Suckling asked of the cases referred to in the report, how many were referred to or discussed with statutory agencies. Canon Steele responded that he would seek a response from the safeguarding team.  
*Added following the meeting: Out of 53 cases, five have been referred to statutory services*

Canon LJ Buxton noted that her remit widened three years ago to include line management of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. She was therefore leading on the INEQE Audit so provided the following overview:

1. The INEQE audit is part of the Church of England's commitment to improve safeguarding in the Church, following recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audit and Past Cases Review (PCR2) which led to INEQE being appointed in 2022 to carry out independent audits of Dioceses. They are part of the Safeguarding Support and Resource Hub and assure that the approach is collaborative.



2. The audit is being carried out because safeguarding matters, it is not about compliance but is about culture and care.
3. The process is running across all dioceses for five years from 2023 to 2028.
4. Audits are carried out in the diocese and cathedral at the same time.
5. Sheffield's audit will take place from 11-17 May 2026, but preparation and provision of information will begin around February.
6. The audit will measure against the five national safeguarding standards:
  1. Culture, Leadership and Capacity
  2. Prevention
  3. Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk
  4. Victims and Survivors
  5. Learning, Supervision and Support
7. Evidence is gathered and uploaded to a portal.
8. The auditors will want to see evidence against the five safeguarding standards and will seek feedback from across the diocese, carrying out interviews across the diocese with different groups.
9. A communication plan has been developed.
10. INEQE will produce a report around June which will include a number of recommendations for the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) and the Cathedral Chapter.
11. This is not just an audit of the Safeguarding team, but the whole diocese and requires openness and honesty.
12. In conclusion Canon Buxton encouraged members to engage with the process. She also noted that all reports are published on the Church of England website: [Church of England - Ineqe Safeguarding Group](#)

Susi Liles (Attercliffe Deanery) noted that there is no reference to the C4 process for those living in a women's refuge. Canon Steele indicated that the process can waive the requirement to contact previous spouses if there is a safeguarding concern.

10. **LIGHTS FOR CHRIST** – Hannah Sandoval, Lights for Christ (or Discipleship) Enabler. She wanted to know what the barriers were to people deepening their faith and she asked members to discuss what opportunities there were for people in their parishes to do this. Barriers noted:
  - i. Use of words like 'worthy' and 'unworthy' creating a divisive impression of the church.
  - ii. Drawing people into church, being unwelcoming and uninterested in them as individuals.
  - iii. Lay leadership capacity, not enough volunteers
  - iv. Change of language – not "come to church or you will die" to "come to church and you will live"

- v. Meeting people where they are: People being expected to attend Sundays, no growth numerically but there is opportunity for discipleship, for example those who attend/volunteer at foodbanks.
- vi. Knowing how to deal with new people/planning ahead and being intentional.

Mrs Sandoval noted that she would like resources to meet needs so will take the feedback on board.

Lights for Christ works best when it is a slow drip and lifelong journey, rather than a one off. She encouraged churches and people in them to see Lights for Christ as an approach to every day life.

The Reverend James Gould, Curate from Thrybergh and Bramley spoke about a series they had run at the churches to promote the themes of 'Walk the Light', 'Receive the Light' and 'Reflect the Light'. They returned to the matter a few months later to create a focused vision for the churches, through the lens of Lights for Christ.

The Reverend Beth Langner, Priest in Charge of Maltby and Laughton spoke about her approach to discipleship and what discipleship means. A prayer course was run across eight sessions, which sparked different conversations around prayer. This was used as a springboard for a sermon series and from then a Personal Rule of Life Workshop was held, giving people resources for their journey. She noted that it was about the difference that can be made to individuals to support their needs.

Mrs Sandoval indicated that her role is to support churches to identify their needs in terms of discipleship and tailor resources for them. She encouraged members to be in touch if they would like to.

11. **SYNOD QUESTIONS** – The questions that had been received were circulated with the notice paper, together with written responses. Members were reminded that questions can be asked of Synod officers if relevant to their duties but should not ask for opinion. It was also noted that questions on administrative matters can be asked between meetings.

The questions and responses are set out in Appendix 1. Supplementaries were invited for each question and those received are also set out in the Appendix.

12. **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS** – Bishop Pete addressed Synod, a copy of his full address is included in Appendix 2.
13. **CENTENARY PROJECT** – Sarah Beardsmore, Centenary Project Manager, provided a report on ten years of the project. She highlighted the following:

- i. The Diocese made a bold decision in 2014 to invest in children and young people at a time when youth workers felt isolated, lacked support and when churches did not have the funds to employ workers.
- ii. The Centenary Project equips local churches to effectively engage, nurture and disciple children, young people and families.
- iii. Workers are centrally employed by the Diocese.
- iv. The full evaluation report was circulated as Paper 13.1, highlights included:
  - a. The project has exceeded all of its targets, including 20% of attenders for 2024/5 now in discipleship groups
  - b. Centenary Project Workers (CPWs) help the whole church to engage in mission and ministry
  - c. The project has enriched the diocese, so children and young people's ministry is now embedded in diocesan structures.
  - d. There are support structures and leadership pipelines in place.
  - e. Funding remains the biggest challenge, particularly as the majority of CPWs are placed in deprived parishes.
  - f. Recruitment also remains a significant challenge.
  - g. Ongoing support ensures ministry can thrive.
  - h. Growth takes time, but paid workers can have a direct and indirect impact on a church.
- v. Laura Passo, Centenary Project Worker at Heeley Parish Church spoke about the difference the worker has made in the parish, both as a parent and subsequently as the paid worker herself. Opportunities include after-school clubs, holiday clubs, toddler groups and Messy Church. Her own children have grown significantly in their faith. She is a point of contact for people in the area. Support she is offered through the project has been invaluable to her. The monthly network means they can have training, share concerns, things that are working well or less well; she also has a mentorship arrangement through the project. She encouraged members to consider having a CPW in their parish.
- vi. As part of the strategy, a target has been set to more than double the number of children and young people engaged through the project. As part of this there are plans for:
  - a. Up to 35 new CP poses
  - b. Support for volunteer-led ministry
  - c. Growing the Young Leaders' Community
  - d. Support churches to establish school-based congregations
  - e. Equip leaders through the Aurora programme, with more information now available online.
- vii. A link will be circulated to the 20 minute online prayer meeting that takes place each week on a Tuesday lunchtime.

14. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

15. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – The meetings in 2026 will be held on 7 March, 18 July and 21 November
16. **CLOSING PRAYERS** – The meeting concluded with prayers led by Sarah Beardsmore on behalf of the Centenary Project.

**Appendix 1**

**Questions to Diocesan Synod – 22 November 2025**

	From	Question	Response
1.	The Reverend Christopher Hobbs, Snaith and Hatfield Deanery	The Employment Rights Bill proposes outlawing employers using NDAs to silence victims of workplace harassment and abuse. Archbishop Welby stated the church should stop using NDAs. Have there been any Non Disclosure Agreements put in place in the last five years by the DBF, the office of the Bishop of Sheffield, Sheffield Cathedral, or DSAT? If there have, how many, and have such agreements ceased to be used?	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete, Katie Bell and the Dean:</i></p> <p>The office of the Bishop of Sheffield, DBF and Cathedral have put no NDAs in place in the last 5 years.. Synod are not the employer or governing body for DSAT, however the Diocesan Director of Education has liaised with the trust and reports the following:</p> <p>DSAT has not and does not use NDAs. It should be noted that, when employment settlement agreements are agreed, as part of capability procedures, these can include a commitment not to disclose the existence or nature of the agreement, outside the circle of 'need to know' contacts working with the colleague - e.g. union reps, supporting family. The purpose of this commitment is in part to protect the employee from having the fact that they have left under an agreed settlement disclosed to future potential employers and to protect the trust from negative publicity in public forums or through social media.</p>
2.	Mr Pete Sandford, Ecclesall Deanery	<p>To Bishop Pete:</p> <p>A) Have you read the letter from Open Church addressed to members of the House of Bishops asking that they commit to offer leadership and direction that honours the</p>	<p>Yes, and I was grateful for the kind and constructive tone of the letter.</p>

		<p>inclusive majority of the Church of England and truly values LGBTQ+ people?</p> <p>B) Will you invite Diocesan Synod and the wider Diocese to prayerfully consider the open letter and, whatever their opinion upon it, to commit to pray for the House of Bishops as they navigate these decisions, and for the healing and renewal of the whole Church?</p>	<p>Yes, and I am grateful for every commitment to pray for me and other members of the House of Bishops.</p>
3.	Mr Pete Sandford, Ecclesall Deanery	<p>To Bishop Leah: Where active Licensed Ministers (both Lay and Ordained) have funded access to national and regional provisions including counselling, training, retreats, and financial support in difficulty, Authorised Lay Ministers (including Focal Ministers) do not always have the same access to all these supports leading to scenarios where a Lay Reader may find themselves more comprehensively supported than their Focal Minister colleague. Please could this inequality be investigated and steps be taken to ensure that parity of esteem is matched by parity of support, especially as both Reader and Focal Minister are also likely to be self supporting (unpaid) volunteers or have some hours of</p>	<p>The Diocese, or more accurately the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), are trustees of the West Riding Charitable Society Trust which provides grants to alleviate hardship amongst clergy, their dependents or licensed lay ministers. There are no hardship funds available to those in other forms of lay ministry in the diocese at present.</p> <p>The Diocese of Sheffield holds strongly to the conviction that all people, whether lay or ordained, ministers or not, are entitled to parity of esteem. We seek to ensure that the whole people of God are enabled to flourish in mission and ministry. Regrettably, it is impossible to provide parity of support to the whole people of God whilst operating within limited budgets. Living within this reality it is of vital importance that we do not allow ourselves to believe that those who for whatever reason do not receive particular forms of support are therefore to be viewed with less esteem.</p> <p>Within the Diocese of Sheffield £5000 is budgeted annually for Ongoing Ministerial Development (OMD) grants to all lay ministers including focal ministers. This fund can be applied to by licensed, authorised and commissioned lay ministers and provides for up to 20 awards each year of £250. These can be spent on retreats and courses. No distinction is made between Readers and other lay ministers in regard to this diocesan funding. It is</p>

		employment in the church where they also minister?	true that Readers also have access to national grants (whose terms and conditions we have no control over) as well as to the Diocesan Pamela Richardson Fund (which is a restricted fund set up for this purpose and under charity commission rules cannot be used for other purposes). For this reason, we ask Readers to explore those other avenues before applying for an OMD grant, to maximise the use of these funds for other lay ministers. To make the diocesan support that is available more accessible, Beth Burras has produced a Focal Ministry Handbook, which outlines sources of pastoral support and grants for ministerial development and this has recently been shared with Focal Ministers. This handbook stands alongside parallel handbooks which are also provided to licensed ministers, lay and ordained.
	<b>SUPPLEMENTARY</b>	Could all efforts be made to ensure authorised ministers have access to the same provision?	+Leah indicated that she would respond directly by email
4	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	<p>To the Archdeacons and Bishop's Chaplain:</p> <p>Is it known how many parishes, congregations and network churches in the diocese are using liturgies for worship which are neither authorised nor commended, neither BCP nor Common Worship; I understand that the practice of writing one's own eucharistic prayers or affirmation of faith etc. happens in some places outside this diocese, does it happen here?</p>	This is not information we hold centrally and would not have access to unless a parish team tells us directly. We do not currently plan to request this information from parishes, but we will remain vigilant for it as we visit churches throughout the Diocese.
5.	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	<p>To the Diocesan Secretary:</p> <p>In the papers for this meeting there are a number acronyms used without further explanation which can</p>	Thank you for your question. We try to encourage this as best practice, but thank you for the reminder which we will include in future when requesting papers from staff or contributors to Diocesan Synod.

		tend to make them impenetrable to the attendees. Can we have a policy of their expansion on first use in a paper, followed by acronym on succeeding occasions?	
6	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	To the Diocesan Secretary:  Deanery Synod elections are on the agenda paper. Will the Diocesan Secretary ensure that nominations are sought and elections held, if necessary, by deanery synod secretaries for representation of clergy with PTO on Deanery Synods in number in accord with the Church Representation Rules? Presumably the Bishop's Chaplain will have Deanery lists of Clergy with PTO to assist in this objective?	I can confirm that this will be included in the communications which will be sent to Deanery Synod Secretaries regarding the Deanery Synod elections.
7.	Mr Brian Wrigley, Ecclesall Deanery	To the Diocesan Secretary  With the Deanery Synod elections due next year has any further consideration been given to finding a way to ensure that the members of the Deanery Synod have a secure way of contacting each other.	Due to GDPR we cannot assume that people 'opt-in' to communications, so it needs to be arranged locally by Deanery Synod Secretaries and permission sought from each member for specific mailings to be sent (for example setting up a group email contact or WhatsApp Group). However, it may be that the preference is to send to the Deanery Synod Secretary for them to disseminate, rather than sharing contact details with everyone. Permissions are also recorded on our central database and we are able to forward any communications on your behalf.
	<b>SUPPLEMENTARY</b>	In light of the answer, how can he find out in advance what is	Canon Buxton responded that each person's permission would still be required to share contact details and there is no guarantee everyone would

		<p>happening in deaneries if people cannot email him?</p>	<p>agree. The database defaults to 'Private' and that has to be actively changed by the individual. A contact audit will be carried out in the next couple of months so members were encouraged to set their privacy settings accordingly.</p> <p>Canon Steele also reminded members to ensure that their details and those within their parishes are updated and correct.</p>
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**Presidential Address to the Diocesan Synod  
Saturday 22 November 2025**

Dear friends, when I was last a parish priest, we did a sermon series one year on the 'one another' sayings of the New Testament. There are about a hundred of these, but don't worry: we didn't stretch out the series for two whole years, not least because some exhortations are often repeated. Our Lord's command, for example, that we should 'love one another', comes 6 times altogether in the Gospel and Epistles of John and about as often in the writings of St Paul. But you may also recall: 'be devoted to one another', 'honour one another above yourselves', 'serve one another', 'bear with one another', 'be subject to one another', 'do not judge one another', 'do not lie to one another', 'comfort one another', 'encourage one another', 'live in harmony with one another', 'welcome one another', 'wait for one another', 'be kind and compassionate to one another'. And there are more.

In the summer of 2018, when I had been the Bishop of Sheffield for not quite one year, I delivered a lecture at All Saints' Church, Ecclesall entitled, 'Mutual Flourishing in a place of disagreement'. It had originally been conceived as a Lent Lecture to be delivered in February, but that occasion was snowed off and the lecture was rescheduled for June of that year. In the lecture, I spoke about my longing that our Diocese should be known as a Diocese which is generous with Jesus, in the sense both of a Diocese that gives Jesus himself generously away; and of a Diocese that models its life on the generosity of Jesus. Seven years on and a bit more, that is still my longing. It seems to me that generosity as the only proper response of Christian people to all that God has done for us in Christ: gratitude is always the right reaction to the grace God has demonstrated in the Gospel, and generosity is just the proper outworking of our gratitude.

Dear friends, you could describe this as a Presidential Address about mutual flourishing. But I hope you could also describe it as a Presidential Address about the Gospel, about Jesus, and about the way we live out our common life in response to all that God has done for us in him.

I want to focus this address here, primarily because this time next week, around 50 of us will, God willing, be drawing towards the end of a residential at The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick. This event will be the fruition of the commitment I made to this Synod in March this year, when I set out a proposal to arrange what I called 'a professionally facilitated 48-hour long residential for a larger group of clergy and lay leaders than served on the former Mutual Flourishing group, to go away together to build the relationships of trust and respect which mutual flourishing really requires, ensuring good representation across deaneries, but appropriate to each deanery.'

This morning I want to tell you what is planned, and to ask for your prayers, but also to name some of the risks and hazards which this proposal presents, which

are also presented to the common life and revitalisation of our Diocese more generally.

Very wonderfully, as I said a moment ago, about 50 of us have committed to this event. Bishop Leah and I honestly could not have asked for more 'buy in', if I can put it like that. Almost exactly half are men and half are women. 35 are clergy, but 15 are lay. I believe every deanery is represented at least twice. The whole spectrum of the Diocese is represented theologically: the majority affirm the ordination of women as priests and bishops, but there are also plenty in attendance who in conscience are not able to do so, from both traditionalist catholic and complementarian evangelical perspectives. The readiness of all these participants to engage in the residential has quite frankly surpassed our expectations and we are hugely grateful to each one. Their commitment seems to us to imply a desire to belong to this Diocese and to see this whole Diocese flourish and we are much encouraged by that. I have managed to secure two world class facilitators (and I mean world class) in Bill Marsh and Sandra Cobbin, as well as two chaplains to support us pastorally, one male and one female, one more liberal and one more conservative. I have worked hard with the facilitators on the shape of the programme and I am genuinely hopeful that this investment of time and relationship (and yes, money) will be good for this Diocese in the months and years to come.

But we are aware that bad outcomes are possible as well as good ones, and we want to acknowledge the risk that each participant is taking by committing to the uncertainty. With the facilitators, I have tried very hard to ensure that we create a safe enough space. But it is not possible to eliminate every risk of hurt or harm and we want to acknowledge that.

I have also tried to be clear with participants about the aim of the 48 hours. It is to get past the current entrenched and defensive battle-lines, by creating an environment safe enough for individuals, lay and ordained, from across the theological spectrum, to encounter one another as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God. We will not be offering participants a platform to rehearse the theological arguments which justify their positions: we will not be attempting to convince one another that we are right and they are wrong. Rather we will be seeking to create an environment in which each participant has an opportunity to be seen and heard and valued by the group and in which each is invited to reflect on what it is about their convictions which is most precious and meaningful to them; and what it feels like for them to be part of the Diocese of Sheffield at present. The aim is to enable deeper and broader relationships of trust and affection across difference.

As many of you know, the Diocese of Sheffield apparently has the highest proportion of parishes in any Diocese outside London, which have petitioned for extended episcopal oversight. But we also are also blessed with a higher proportion of female incumbents than most Dioceses, as well as a substantial cohort of male incumbents who support the ordination of women as priests and

bishops. I realise that as a man, and as a bishop, my perspective on these matters is coloured twice over. But I do take pride in the fact that the proportion of female incumbents is right now as high as it has ever been in the life of this Diocese. I regard this theological diversity as an asset, one of the many rich and good things about the Diocese of Sheffield.

Nevertheless it is also true that this combination of circumstances presents us with challenges most Dioceses do not have. Bishop Leah and I find ourselves often having to work around these ever-present dynamics and tensions: they impact on pastoral re-organisation, clergy deployment, church planting and grafting, lay ministry training and so on. We are aware they impact on wellbeing too, and on all sides.

I also want to recognise that some of you present this morning believe the Five Guiding Principles to be logically incoherent and unworkable. We know that some of you long to see the abolition of the 2014 settlement and that you wish you had the support of your bishops in doing so. We realise that ultimately we may be a disappointment to you because we cannot advocate for this in the way you might wish – but we do earnestly want you to know that we really do want you to flourish in this Diocese too.

I want to refer briefly to a letter published in the Church Times on 14 of this month, by Martine Osborne, the Chair of WATCH (Women and the Church) in which she states that it is time ‘to start working on bringing the 2014 arrangements to a generous end’. That seems to me to be an entirely legitimate point of view and some of you will share it. However, in the previous sentence, she states her belief that the present arrangement ‘creates a fertile environment for sexism and abuse’. This is a judgement I find it much harder to accept. I want to recognise here that many women in this diocese as elsewhere have all too often experienced misogyny and on occasion, yes, abuse. Bishop Leah and I have both heard this from many women and we are so sorry this has been your experience. We have also both heard the painful experiences of those who cannot accept the ministry of women as priests and bishops, who have also been subject to prejudice and have had values and behaviours attributed to them that they do not recognise. None of this should be tolerated in this diocese, and Bishop Leah and I are deeply committed to creating a culture of dignity and respect on all sides.

However, without suggesting that the 2014 settlement is anyone’s ideal, I want to say that in my view that settlement is not the cause of all of these very real and painful experiences and does by necessity create a fertile environment for them. Prejudice and exclusion, contempt and disrespect existed before the 2014 settlement and would not disappear if we were to abolish it. Whatever difficulties any of us may have with the specifics of that settlement, the principle of a church committed to mutual flourishing despite painful division is not something we can afford to abandon.

So let me remind you again, friends, that Jesus called his followers to love not just their neighbours but their enemies. We who are baptised into Christ are not enemies, though I accept it may feel close to it sometimes. We remain fellow believers and if our Saviour calls us to love even our enemies, how much more are we called to love those who (for all that they oppose us theologically) are our brothers and sisters in him. We are surely bound to love them, to be devoted to them, to honour them above ourselves, to serve them, to bear with them, to be subject to them, to encourage them, to live in harmony with them, to welcome them, and to be kind and compassionate to them?

That is what Bishop Leah and I hope the residential will promote: a fresh impetus towards a culture in our Diocese of mutual kindness and compassion, mutual service and devotion, harmony and mutual honour. If you feel able to do so, please can we urge you during this week to pray for that outcome. Thank you.