

QUESTION TIME

1. *The Revd Paul Darlington (Oswestry) has asked:*

Can the Bishop confirm that parish share/common fund payments from parishes are voluntary contributions, and that those parishes who have or might pause payments in the light of the House of Bishops Prayers of Love and Faith being commended will continue to receive the same treatment as other parishes when seeking a new incumbent following a future vacancy?

Bishop Michael has replied:

It is indeed the case that common fund or parish share payments from parishes are voluntary contributions made to the Diocesan Board of Finance. It is also the case that these payments provide the vast bulk of diocesan finances, enabling the provision of ministry in parishes across the diocese. At present, when a vacancy occurs in a benefice, a number of different factors are taken into account when assessing what provision for pastoral ministry will be made going into the future. One such factor, not surprisingly, is the record of common fund or parish share contributions which the parishes of the benefice have made and are making to the Diocesan Board of Finance in support of ministry. I would anticipate that this will continue to be a significant factor to be weighed in discerning the provision of appropriate ministry in the future, particularly given the current pressures on diocesan finances. That said, our DBF staff are currently and actively exploring the possibility of parallel payment routes which could make it easier for some parishes to continue to contribute to the cost of ministry.

2. *The Revd Paul Darlington (Oswestry) has asked:*

In the event of Prayers of Love and Faith being introduced, will those who in good conscience are compelled to resist them still be considered as suitable training incumbents, and will those being offered curacies in this diocese in 2024 onwards be guaranteed the ability to be trained by an incumbent whose convictions on the use of Prayers in Love and Faith coincide with their own?

Bishop Michael has replied:

The proposed Prayers of Love and Faith make clear that they are offered to ministers as a possible resource to be used at their discretion, and that there is no requirement on any minister to make use of them. I and my brother and sister bishops in this diocese have made clear that we will respect and uphold conscientious decisions made in this area by our clergy and lay ministers, and we will continue to seek the flourishing of their ministries. One clear implication of that is that we will not marginalise those in our episcopal care who conscientiously choose not to avail themselves of Prayers of Love & Faith – for example, by considering their decision a reason not to consider them as suitable training incumbents, or by ruling out on those grounds the possibility of curacies being offered to those who do not intend to use the Prayers.

3. *The Revd Neil Robbie (West Bromwich) has asked:*

In the event of Prayers of Love and Faith being approved by General Synod and commended by the House of Bishops, and given that all 3 houses of the General Synod voted to 'endorse the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage', what teaching materials will the Diocesan Board of Education commend to Church of England Schools to explain, commend and promote the Church of England's doctrine of marriage?

The Diocesan Director of Education has replied:

The LDBE promotes key documents from the Church OF England including, 'Valuing All God's Children,' the 'RSE Principles Charter and associated resources, and 'Goodness and Mercy' which is a RSE resource for primary and secondary schools written by the Diocese of Bristol and endorsed by Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely and Lead Bishop for Education.

4. *The Revd Neil Robbie (West Bromwich) has asked:*

Does the diocese expect the Church of England's current proposals around the Prayers of Love and Faith to impact our relationships with our Anglican Communion link dioceses in South Africa, Canada and Ireland and what impact has there been on any attempts to renew our partnership with the Dioceses of Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore and West Malaysia?

Bishop Michael has replied:

I am glad to be able to give some reassurance in relation to the likely impact of the current proposals on our international partnerships. I do not foresee that there will be any particular impact on our links with dioceses in South Africa, Canada or Ireland, as follows:

My understanding from recent correspondence with the Bishop of Matlosane is that the Anglican Church of Southern Africa is currently considering proposals for blessings of people in same sex relationships, while maintaining the understanding of Christian marriage as between one man and one woman.

Human sexuality has been an issue widely discussed in the Anglican Church of Canada, to which our linked Diocese of Qu'Appelle belongs. At the ACC General Synod in 2019, a proposal to allow same-sex marriages in Anglican churches across Canada was narrowly defeated, and it was resolved that different dioceses would form their own decisions on questions of marriages and blessings.

In the Church of Ireland, of which the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne & Ross is a part, there is wide a range of views on human sexuality, as in the Church of England. The Irish bishops in 2018 issued a statement which included these words: 'It would seem that there is no consensus ... to change the Canons of the Church of Ireland on the matter of marriage. Thus the Church of Ireland marriage service remains unchanged and marriage may be solemnised only between a man and a woman. No liturgy or authorised service is provided therefore for any other situation. As the archbishops and bishops have already made clear to the clergy of the Church of Ireland, it is not possible to proscribe the saying of prayers in personal and pastoral situations ... any such prayer must remain consonant with the spirit and teaching of the Church of Ireland'.

Following the General Synod, the bishops of the Church of South-East Asia issued a Pastoral Letter expressing deep disappointment at Synod's decision, and stating that the blessing of same-sex unions has no biblical ground. The Pastoral Letter concluded with these words: 'Despite our grave reservations regarding the Church of England's decision, we believe that the unity of the Anglican communion should not be lightly abandoned. Hence, we will remain in communion with the Church of England while praying fervently for her and speaking boldly for God's truth'. Although we currently have no formal companionship with any diocese in CSEA, our links of friendship and prayer with the Dioceses of West Malaysia and Kuching in particular remain strong; I do not anticipate that these will be strongly impacted by the General Synod decision.

5. *Dr Ros Clarke (General Synod) has asked:*

Given that the General Synod vote to approve the bishops' plans to commend prayers of blessing for people in same sex relationships was passed by the narrowest of margins (just 11 votes in the house of laity), what steps will the bishops in our diocese be taking to ensure that there is continued unity in the face of this deep division?

Bishop Michael has replied:

On the final (amended) motion to approve the bishops' response to Living in Love and Faith, voting across General Synod was 250 in favour, 181 against, and 10 abstentions. While voting was particularly close in the House of Laity, overall margins could have been narrower.

That said, it is clear that there is considerable disagreement in our diocese, as in other parts of the Church of England, and I and my episcopal colleagues are clear that we wish to ensure the highest degree of unity possible, while at the same time acknowledging the reality and strength of disagreement. To that end, we have all been meeting with individuals and groups who have been dismayed or disappointed by the result, engaging in postal and electronic correspondence with a wide range of individuals, and underlining our commitment to uphold the conscientious decisions that ministers will find themselves having to make. While debates and conversations continue to unfold at both diocesan and national levels, we believe that it is essential that we continue to treat one another with respect, kindness and patience, and to have a particular concern for those who are individually most affected by the issues under discussion.

6. *Mr Chris Gill (General Synod) has asked:*

Given that all the Bishops in the Diocese wrote to "warmly commend the Church of England College of Bishops' response, and accompanying resources" with regard to LLF, what arrangements are being put in place for Episcopal oversight of those clergy in the Diocese who cannot agree with the subsequent amended motion approved by General Synod?

Bishop Michael has replied:

The provision of episcopal care for people unable to accept the position approved by General Synod needs to be considered on several levels. In the first place, in the letter in which we warmly commended the College of Bishops' response and resources, we also emphasised our respect for the conscientious decisions which ministers would make in

their pastoral ministry, and following the General Synod vote we reaffirmed our commitment to *finding the best ways to support them in their ministry*.

Meanwhile, conversations on episcopal oversight and possible 'visible differentiation' are happening at various levels. The direction in which those are currently heading is by no means clear, but we stand ready both to participate in the conversation and to seek ways of being part of a solution which would provide appropriate oversight while maintaining a maximal degree of unity.

With that in mind, I intend to take a measured pace in the process of discerning a new Bishop of Wolverhampton, so as to enable me and the diocese to take stock of any emerging arrangements for differentiation. I might also mention that I have commissioned the Bishop of Ebbsfleet as an assistant bishop in the diocese; he will have a particular role in providing extended episcopal oversight for clergy and parishes with a Complementarian Evangelical theology, but I hope that his episcopal ministry might also (depending on capacity) be more widely available.

7. The Revd Iain Baker (Newcastle) has asked:

In the event of Prayers of Love and Faith being approved by General Synod and commended by the House of Bishops, what forms of support will be provided by this diocese to :

- Those who use the Prayers but, not appreciating the fact that the House of Bishops commendation has no legal effect, subsequently find themselves facing complaints brought under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 alleging that their use of the Prayer is not permitted under Canon B5 and constitutes the commission of an offence
- Those who chose not to use the Prayers and as a consequence find themselves exposed to actions for discrimination under the Equality Act 2010?

Bishop Michael has replied:

With my brother and sister bishops, should the Prayers of Love & Faith be commended in final form by the House of Bishops, I will be committed to providing whatever support is necessary for clergy and lay ministers as they encounter pastoral situations. The Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 has been used on only a handful of occasions in the last sixty years, and I think it is highly unlikely that any complaint could be successfully brought under it against a minister who made use of resources which would have been commended by the House of Bishops, certified by the Church of England's Legal Office as legal, and used by the minister in accordance with the Pastoral Guidance which would accompany them. If such a complaint were to proceed, we would do all we could to support the minister in question.

In their draft form, the Prayers of Love & Faith make clear that their use is entirely at the discretion of the minister, who is under no obligation whatsoever to use any part of them. I and my brother and sister bishops in this diocese have made clear that we will respect and uphold conscientious decisions made in this area by our clergy and lay ministers, and we will uphold them in their ministry.

8. The Revd Iain Baker (Newcastle) has asked:

What impact assessment does the Diocesan Board of Finance plan to undertake before July 2023 when General Synod might commend the Prayers of Love and Faith? Will the Board include in its deliberations possible risk to :

- The number of clergy holding licenses
- The number of people offering for ordained ministry
- Average Sunday attendance
- Electoral roll numbers
- Deanery plans for mission
- Parish share contributions

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

The potential loss of parish share caused by a major external event has been part of our risk register for many years. Such loss is classified as high risk and needs increasing. In honesty it is not possible at present to assess the impact of the adoption of Prayers in Love and Faith on either our missional profile or financial position. Much depends on the content of the pastoral guidance and the subsequent reaction to them. Given this, we do not plan to undertake any formal assessment right away as it would be hugely speculative. However, we must and will continue informal assessments of the risks outlined in the question to discern what can be done to mitigate potential risks.

9. Mrs Josephine Locke (Newcastle) has asked:

Does Bishop Michael plan to exercise personal restraint concerning use of the Prayers of Love and Faith, in the manner of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in order to be able to serve as a focus of unity in the diocese?

Bishop Michael has replied:

The position of the Archbishop of Canterbury, with his Communion-wide responsibilities, is unique in the Church of England, and raises particular issues in an acute form which are not faced in the same way by other bishops. If the Prayers of Love & Faith are commended, in their final form, by the House of Bishops, I will want to commend them for use in the Diocese of Lichfield, taking into account the Pastoral Guidance which should accompany them. Given the nature of a diocesan bishop's ministry, I think it unlikely that I would be asked myself to offer use of the Prayers to a couple; were I in such a position, I would form a judgement based on the pastoral circumstances of the case.

10. The Revd Kate Watson (Wolverhampton) has asked:

Has the Diocese added to our risk register an assessment of the possible impact/fall out of the introduction of Prayers of Love and Faith?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

Not specifically but the potential loss of parish share caused by a major external event has been part of our risk register for many years. Such loss is currently classified as a 5 in terms of impact and a three in terms of probability. This latter score does need to be

increased. We will informally monitor the potential impact of the introduction of Prayers of Love and Faith seeking to mitigate those risks when they become evident.

11. Mr Geoff Nankivell (Oswestry) has asked:

The 'Living in Love and Faith' process has revealed a lack of Biblical Scholarship to support the proposed changes to the Church's 2000 years of teaching that marriage is solely between one man and one woman. Regrettably, the Bishops voted against the traditional view laid down by Scripture (Gen.2:24; Mk. 10:6-9; Eph. 5:23; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 7:3) even though they have the spiritual oversight to 'shepherd' the flock (Jn. 10:2-4) and have taken ordination vows to uphold the veracity of Scripture and the Church of England tenets concerning marriage. This leaves those who hold the traditional view of marriage in a difficult position.

We all understand the challenges today's increasingly secular society pose to our Christian faith, and it is true that we are to love as Christ would love, but the arguments proffered for a change have de-contextualised God's teaching on love and have utilized emotional anecdotal 'evidence' so that what is now proposed would see a blessing given to that which God disapproves (Rom.2:24-27).

In the light of this could the Synod give an answer to the following:

- a) Is the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Bible on marriage being solely a male/female relationship and all other sexual interactions being sinful still relevant in today's society or is Scripture out of date?
- b) Can the Synod provide the Biblical teaching and references in order to prove that the change intended is Scriptural?
- c) In the event of 'Living in Love and Faith' being passed in July by the General Synod and there being no accommodation for those who believe in the traditional view, which group would be asked to leave – those who believe the Bible's view or those who don't?

Bishop Michael has replied:

It is not in fact the case that the bishops voted against a traditional view of marriage. Rather, in common with the other two houses of General Synod, they voted in support of the making available of the Prayers of Love & Faith. The Prayers were themselves carefully worded so as not to indicate any departure from the Church of England's teaching on Holy Matrimony, which affirms (Canon B30) that 'marriage is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong, for better for worse, till death them do part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for the mutual society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity'.

This point was made explicit in the acceptance of Amendment 67 to the motion, which stated that Synod 'endorse the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage, and their intention that the final version of the *Prayers of Love & Faith* should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England'. As this was indeed the basis on which the Prayers of Love & Faith had been compiled, I was myself happy to vote for Amendment 67, as well as for the main motion as amended.

12. Mr Christopher Corbet (Wem and Whitchurch) has asked:

To the Diocesan Bishop in his capacity as having undertaken a duty as a Bishop to teach the doctrine of Christ as the Church of England has received it, to refute error and to hand on entire the faith that is entrusted to him:

Could you please state (i) whether you have as Bishop of Lichfield taught publicly and (ii) in what ways you have as Bishop of Lichfield handed on entire or failed to hand on entire the faith entrusted to you:

- on the subject of sexual activity between members of the same sex and in particular on the subject whether such activity is sinful or not sinful? If you have so taught and if you have passed on the faith entrusted to you, what in summary did you teach or hand on and to whom?
- on the subject of abortion, and in particular whether, in the absence of relevant medical or similar competing factors, abortion is sinful or not sinful? If you have so taught and/or if you have passed on the faith entrusted to you relating to this issue, what in summary did you teach or hand on and to whom?

Bishop Michael has replied:

This question references the promises made by bishops at their ordination and consecration, and as such its wording needs to be read in the light of the Declaration of Assent, which all ministers subscribe at the start of every new ministry. The Declaration speaks of the Church of England as professing 'the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation'; it goes on to speak of the witness to Christian truth which is born by the historic formularies of the Church of England.

It is worth noting that none of the historic formularies refer either to same-sex relationships or to abortion, and it is a matter of fact that there is a significant variety of views among church members on these questions, perhaps particularly on the former. For myself, I understand the teaching office of a bishop in such a situation as involving both the interpretation of scripture in the light of tradition and reason, and also the safeguarding of a space for debate between the differing views which are to be found within the Church as a result of such interpretation. In relation to same-sex relationships, both of these dimensions were prominent in the Living in Love & Faith process, which I and my episcopal colleagues strongly encouraged in this diocese. To date, there has been no corresponding process within the Church of England focused on the question of abortion.

13. Mr John Wardle (Shrewsbury and Wrekin) has asked:

It is pleasing to see the agenda for this Synod includes a motion to be discussed that "endorses the call for church schools and churches to work collaboratively in partnership to bring the gospel to families". I was minded to ask this question ahead of seeing Synod papers, and I am now more disheartened to become aware that despite the many statements issued by the Church of England since 2001, there are many schools, some members of the St Chad's Academy Trust who do not have an ordained minister as a member of its local governance body. In addition, membership of laity as 'governors' is also lower than ideal. Lack of clergy representation on governing bodies sends a signal that involvement is not important.

I am aware that some members of clergy feel they need to avoid a conflict of interest with their pastoral work, but is it not possible, in such circumstances, to act as a governor elsewhere and a clergy member from outside the benefice to join the local school's governing body (akin to a swap). Involvement of the school's supervisory body alongside others from the community is as key as leading collective worship in schools. What steps (a) do and (b) can the leadership of the Diocese and the Archdeaconries take to ensure there is clergy representation on the governance bodies of Church and Community schools throughout the Diocese?

The Diocesan Director of Education has replied:

The DBE current policy enables appointments to governing bodies from the incumbent, the PCC, the DBE and site trustees. Whilst we acknowledge that for some clergy, the demands of governance can be challenging whilst serving our parishes. However, the DBE welcomes and encourages clergy to fulfil their role as a member of a governing body of either a Church or Community School. The DBE, in partnership with the mission team also offers a range of training and support services for clergy and other members of a governing body. For example, 'where do schools fit in the Church's mission?' We also have our Foundation governor SIAMS training amongst many other support services bespoke to each school's need.

We encourage a creative approach when there may be a conflict of interest for clergy serving in a school within their parish. The LDBE are currently refreshing the process to appoint foundation governors to ensure effective communication from nomination to appointment between the LDBE and the nominated person.

The LDBE has a robust framework which sets out the expectations for multi-academy trusts to ensure the distinctive Christian vision and ethos is monitored, evaluated and developed by governance at all levels within each trust.

The LDBE welcomes more regular discussions with Archdeacons to identify and respond to situations where local clergy representation on a local governing body cannot be achieved.

14. Mr John Wardle (Shrewsbury and Wrekin) has asked:

At Synod in November, the Director of Finance stated the budget had been approved by Bishop's Council in its capacity as Directors of the Diocesan Board of Finance. The Chair of the Board of Finance stated that "the Income value in the budget had already been approved by Bishops Council and he was only seeking approval of the value of expenditure from Synod."

The Diocesan Secretariat pages of the Diocese website state "Members of Bishops Council [...] are responsible for management of finance subject to the direction of the Synod" The same page also states a role of Diocesan Synod is "to consider proposals for the annual budget for the diocese and to approve or disapprove them".

Given the above, on what basis did Bishops Council approve all or part of the budget before it came to Synod?

The Director of Finance has replied:

As per Diocesan Synod Standing Orders, "The Bishop's Council, as Directors/Trustees of the DBF, is responsible for finance but is accountable to Synod as "shareholders". Synod must receive the annual accounts, approve the annual budget and appoint auditors at the AGM of the DBF."

As per the Trustees Annual Report, one of the functions delegated by Diocesan Synod to Bishop's Council is "Preparation of annual estimates of expenditure through the Budget", in their capacity as Directors and Trustees of the Board of Finance.

It should be noted that despite the wording used, if Synod was not to support the budget, Bishop Michael, as Person of Significant Control, has the authority to withdraw the item. Therefore, Synod retains the power to approve or disapprove the Budget item.

15. *The Revd Tim Vasby-Burnie (Shrewsbury and Wrekin) has asked:*

Which consultants, if any, have been used in senior appointments in the diocese over the last three years, and how much has been paid to such consultants in that period?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

This Diocese has not used head-hunters when making senior appointments. The cost of this approach is substantial, and we have not felt able to justify it. I think the last time one was used was on my appointment 14 years ago!

We have sometimes asked colleagues from other Dioceses to advise the Bishop and participate in interviews but only travel expenses have been paid.

16. *The Revd Tim Vasby-Burnie (Shrewsbury and Wrekin) has asked:*

Does the Diocese undertake any benchmarking against other Dioceses? If so, which dioceses are used as comparators and what aspects of the work of the Diocese are benchmarked?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

The Diocesan Secretaries network undertakes a voluntary bench marking exercise every two years. The last one was in April 2022 and 30 Dioceses participated. All DBF roles were benchmarked covering the following areas, Leadership and Governance, Finance and IT, Education, Property and Church buildings, Safeguarding, HR, Communications and Ministry and Discipleship. I have a detailed breakdown of the results. Clergy stipends are monitored annually using the national minimum stipends information provided by the national church.

17. *Dr Ros Clarke (General Synod) has asked:*

At our last Diocesan Synod meeting, we approved a deficit budget and were asked for suggestions on how the diocese might balance its finances going forward. Has the diocese considered that a significant amount of money might be saved by putting a stop to new initiatives, new visions and strategies, new roles and instead simply getting on with the work of the gospel as it has been understood for 2000 years?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

The question of balancing our finances remains a great concern. You have not highlighted any particular initiatives, strategies or roles so I cannot comment very specifically. The Diocese continues to put emphasis on its key priorities, Discipleship, Vocations and Evangelism and as you will hear at Synod on Saturday how the Growing Faith initiative might add value to those by emphasising schools as mission bases. I believe all three priorities are entirely consistent with the proclamation of the gospel. Our desire is to build people up in their faith so that they are confident to share it with others. I am genuinely unclear how much money you think can be saved. We are constantly reviewing our Diocesan staffing and indeed cutting it in order to try and bring down the overall cost of ministry figure. This is not easy in the face of increasing expectations coming from the national church in areas such as Safeguarding, Church Buildings, Data management, Net Carbon Zero and Racial Justice.

18. *The Revd Brian Leathers (Uttoxeter) has asked:*

I am aware of several Clergy in our Diocese who are housing refugees. I was grateful for the extremely useful information provided centrally to enable wise decisions as we approached the task in the first place. How many adults and children are currently accommodated as refugees in Diocesan housing (Vicarage and others)?

The Director of Communications has replied:

Twelve months after the invasion of Ukraine, this remains a fairly fluid situation with refugees – including some in the past week – still arriving at clergy homes in our diocese. Some have moved on after arriving in the early phase of the war but are still in touch with – or supported by – their former clergy hosts. Archdeacons have been asked to monitor the situation in their local areas and it appears that there are currently 18 Ukrainian refugees staying with clergy across the diocese. These include at least six dependents (children or teenagers) who have travelled with their parents.

19. *The Revd Brian Leathers (Uttoxeter) has asked:*

What support structures are currently in place for Clergy spouses and families in the Diocese? Has consideration been given to the appointment of Bishop's visitors for spouses and families?

Bishop Matthew has replied:

Support for clergy spouses, partners and families is kept under constant review by the Senior Staff Team. We currently offer access to the Diocesan Counselling Service, Listening Ear, for those spouses and partners and other immediate family members who need confidential support of this kind. In addition, Lisa Knight, our Diocesan Clergy Spouse and Partner Officer offers free, independent and confidential support for spouses and partners of clergy and ordinands in training bringing a breadth of experience and wisdom gained through having experienced training and ordained life both as a clergy spouse and as an ordained priest.

Bishop's Visitors are available where a clergy spouse may need practical help and emergency financial provision because the couple are separating.

20. Mrs Amanda Robbie (General Synod) has asked:

Please can the Diocese provide the following data: total number of under 16s in attendance in the Diocese in the years 2020 and 2021, and average per church in those years. And also the total number of churches in those years in the Diocese that reported child (aged under 16) attendance of the following: 0, 0-5, 6-10, 11-24, 26-50, 51+.

The Mission Team Leader has replied:

In 2020, submissions from churches for the annual Statistics for Mission recorded 697 under 16s in church. In 2021 the figure was 1947.

These figures are taken from the 'October Count'. They do not include school services.

There are 545 churches in the diocese, so the average figure is as follows:

2020: 1.3 under 16s per church

2021: 3.6 under 16s per church

Number of under 16s	No of churches (2020)	No of churches (2021)
0 under 16s	353	221
1-5 under 16s	153	215
6-10 under 16s	21	48
11-25 under 16s	18	49
26-50 under 16s	0	9
51 or more under 16s	0	1

21. Mrs Amanda Robbie (General Synod) has asked:

Please can the Diocese publish for Synod members, and on the Diocesan website, lists of all those who are currently members of the following Diocesan committees, listed on the Synods and Committees page of the Diocesan website, together with details of how to contact committee members: Bishops' Council, Synod Standing Committee, Agenda Planning Committee, Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, DAC, Vacancy in See Committee, FAM, BRG, DIG, TLG, PASC, PACS, RAC, SSP, St Chad's Retreat Centres, DBE.

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

We appreciate the need for members of certain bodies to be contactable. We would however need permission from all individuals to publish their details. We will begin work on this in due course and consider the best way to make any details available.

22. Mr Chris Gill (General Synod) has asked:

Congratulations to Bishop Michael on his appointment to sit as one of the Lords Spiritual in the House of Lords. With the additional demands on +Michael's time for sitting in the Lords, and all the other associated work, what arrangements have been put in place for leading the Diocese on those occasions when +Michael will be away from the Diocese?

Bishop Michael has replied:

Thank you for the kind words. I would much value the prayers of all members of Synod as I take up this new, interesting and somewhat daunting responsibility.

I am yet to settle on a regular pattern of attendance at, and involvement with, the House of Lords, but I do not anticipate that it will often involve me in more than a day or two at a time of absence in the diocese. Currently a number of national roles for the Church of England already take me out of the diocese, and I have generally found it possible to keep in close touch despite these commitments; I am also using this year to finish my lead role in one or two ecumenical and inter faith engagements, which I have found rewarding but time-consuming. I am very grateful to all my colleagues for the support and cover which they provide for me, and I believe that in particular our area scheme of delegation enables a good continuity of episcopal leadership in the occasional absence of the diocesan bishop.

23. The Revd Matt Beer (General Synod) has asked:

Since 2003 how many new Anglican churches have been planted in the Lichfield diocese and what is our diocesan church planting strategy for the 2020's?"

The Mission Team Leader has replied:

Since 2003 we have records of 18 activities that might be described as church plants. This figure does not include the wide range of Messy Churches, Forest Churches, Youth Churches etc that exist within parish oversight.

It does include church 'revitalisations' (under which part of one congregation has been 'planted' into another congregation). It also includes some worshipping communities or initiatives (including those holding a Bishop's Mission Order) that might not use the language of 'church planting' to refer to themselves.

Of these 18:

7 remain active and under the oversight of the Bishop of Lichfield;

2 are no longer under the oversight of the Bishop of Lichfield;

9 have closed.

On the question of strategy, planting arises from local potential and opportunity and is not driven by a fixed diocesan strategy.