

LICHFIELD DIOCESAN SYNOD – 28th June 2023

QUESTION TIME

1. *Mr Ian Peake (Shrewsbury) has asked:*

A recent church discussion on the subject of Living in Love and Faith highlighted that there was much confusion on the subject. Some people thought General Synod had approved same sex marriages. Others thought that Synod was discussing it and the meeting was called to feedback our views, whilst the vast majority wanted to know when the congregation would vote on what our church's position should be on the subject.

Could the Diocese send out to churches a letter summarising what the current situation is? Including amongst other things:

- What has and hasn't been agreed.
- Provisional timetables for when churches can start blessing same sex partnerships.
- Who ultimately makes the final decision regarding whether or not a church offers such blessings.

Whilst I have no doubt that clergy will be sensitive to the views of their congregation, the reality is that whatever they decide someone will not be happy and there is a good chance they may receive some very nasty and personal hate mail. What procedures are in place to help support the clergy during what could be a difficult couple of years?

Bishop Michael has replied:

While the bishops' draft proposals in response to Living in Love and Faith were supported by a majority vote in General Synod in February this year, work continues in the three different strands I have mentioned in my answer to Question 10. Many of the answers to the specific questions asked here will be dependent on the outcome of those discussions, and it is anticipated that the work will return in a substantive form to General Synod in November this year. In the meantime, I attempted to provide a summary of my own understanding of what had been agreed, and my position in relation to that, in my Presidential Address to Diocesan Synod in March; this is available on our diocesan website.

2. *Mr Ian Peake (Shrewsbury) has asked:*

Given that church buildings are at the heart of many communities, are there any rules or regulations regarding churches having defibrillators and is there any funding available?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

As far as I am aware, there are no rules or regulations which would require or compel a church to install a defibrillator.

Conversely, ecclesiastical permission does govern their installation at churches.

[Lists A and B](#) of the Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2022, which came into effect on 1st July 2022, allow for:

- **List A – no diocesan consultation or written permission required**
The introduction of a defibrillator in a church, church hall or similar building, which *is not* a listed building, or in the churchyard of the same
- **List B – written permission via OFS required from Archdeacon**
The introduction of a defibrillator in a church, church hall or similar building, which *is* a listed building, or in the churchyard of the same

To put this into context, the Church Heritage Record (CHR) indicates that we have **over 250 unlisted churches** in Lichfield Diocese, so where a defibrillator could be installed (under List A) without recourse to the diocese.

As to funding, the [British Heart Foundation](#) website includes information on part-funding defibrillators, as follows:

Defibrillators in communities

Public access defibrillators are needed by parish councils, residents' groups, social clubs, churches and many other community groups. We offer part funding for defibrillators, provided that your community group and proposed defibrillator location meets our criteria... Applicants, if successful, will need to contribute £600 towards the cost of the community package.

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

How many emails and letters do our bishops receive each week, and what is their strategy for responding to correspondence from clergy and from laity?

Bishop Michael has replied:

I am responding in this case on behalf of myself alone. In the week beginning Sunday 18th June, I received 278 ministry-related e-mails (after deletion of unsolicited circulars etc), and 22 letters; in the previous week, 332 e-mails and 25 letters. I seek to respond as quickly as possible to electronic and surface correspondence, though this may involve sending an acknowledgement pending a substantive response. My priority responses are to clergy and laity from within the diocese, alongside correspondence generated by national church roles.

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

What process has been followed for the review and retender of the services of the diocesan registrar?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

This question was asked at the November Synod, and I gave the following answer.

The appointment of a Registrar is in the gift of the Bishop as the registrar is his legal officer. (S)he is also the registrar of the Diocesan Synod and advises on governance and constitutional matters relating to the LDBF and the Diocese. Given the latter, the

committee to recommend a full review is the Risk and Audit committee. This recommendation would go to Bishop's Council as would any recommendations for change including the financial implications of the decision.

There are no plans for a review in place at this present time, but I will undertake to raise this matter at the next meeting of the Risk and Audit committee in December.

I was not able to be present to raise this issue at the last meeting of Risk and Audit but have already asked the secretary of that meeting to ensure it goes on the Agenda for discussion at the next meeting due in August this year.

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

Does the diocese have a retirement officer? Who has responsibility for the care of retired clergy and clergy widows and widowers in the Diocese?

Bishop Michael has replied:

We are in the process of establishing an area-based system of care and contact for retired clergy (both those with and those without PtO), headed up by Bishop Alistair McGowan (Shrewsbury), Preb. Paul Brown and Revd Sue Mayo (Wolverhampton), and Revd Graham Bott (Stafford). A questionnaire is currently being drafted to seek from retired clergy their views on the best ways of keeping in touch with them and supporting them. In addition, the Archdeacon of Lichfield co-ordinates a network of support for clergy widows and widowers.

6. *The Revd Graham Adamson (Stafford) has asked:*

As a neurodivergent priest, I recognise and rejoice in the unique contribution and gifts clergy and laity like myself can offer. What is being done within the diocese to nurture and encourage the vocations of neurodivergent and disabled Christians, given that we are all made in the image of God, and that The Body needs all its members to thrive?

The Diocesan Enabling Church Adviser has replied:

Enabling All, part of the new Strengthening Communities team in the Diocese (formerly TCT) continues to build on our work over the last 5 years to equip, enable and empower individuals, churches and groups in championing the gifts that disabled and neurodivergent Christians have to offer, as part of the God-given vocations in the church. It is wonderful to begin to see that neurodiversity and disability has been the feature focus of the Church Times over the last month ([Autism: adventures beyond the neurotypical \(churchtimes.co.uk\)](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/07-08/features/autism-adventures-beyond-the-neurotypical)) with a growing desire everywhere to learn from and about the ways that all our church communities flourish when shaped and empowered by such gifts.

A Neurodiversity focused service of worship and celebration in Wolverhampton will be taking place on Sept 30th. Look out for more details to come.

Through my national work, Lichfield Diocese is part of a number of ambitious new workstreams to create the cultural changes we all need in our parishes. This year, there is an exciting new, centrally funded training program called Enabling Leaders, to

provide focused leadership development training for lay and ordained people with the potential for strategic and/or senior roles.

Here in Lichfield, we are delighted that more and more churches are signing up to be part of the Enabling All Awards scheme, which helps churches to recognise and make simple changes to remove barriers which release the gifts which are already there. Parishes receive free training and targeted support within a mutually supportive network, brimming with ideas and practical tools to share with one another.

As well as a new Newsletter for inspiration, resources, local and national events, training and conferences you can be part of, my colleague Su Parker (who began earlier this year) and I continue to respond to requests for specific advice and support for individuals and parishes.

We are working on setting up a Disability Advisory Group for the Lichfield Diocese to be a resource for Diocesan structures as well as parishes. We'd love to hear from anyone with lived experience of disability and/or neurodivergence to explore being part of this important strand of work to help embed accessibility into the fabric of all our shared ministry in our Diocese.

To sign up for the newsletter so you don't miss anything, find out more about the Enabling All Awards, to work with us or to share your own expertise more widely or to access advice or any of the free training we offer please email us:

enabling.all@lichfield.anglican.org

7. *The Revd Graham Adamson (Stafford) has asked:*

Could the Diocesan Secretary clarify the status of Transforming Communities Together and the Ministries of Social Justice and the important rich and fruitful ministries that the TCT team were responsible for?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

At a Board meeting in early 2023, the TCT Board voted unanimously to cease as an autonomous charity at the end of 2023 and agreed that its activities should immediately revert to being part of the DBF. This decision was a pragmatic one that reflected changes in government policy and the removal of major projects that in the past ostensibly required an independent charity.

Since this decision was made, we have rebranded the work "Strengthening Communities" and have recruited a new substantive position to replace the old Chief Officer. The team currently report to me and are a vital part of our wider missional outreach.

The integration process has gone well, and I am pleased to append a short booklet that describes their core activities. It is our intention to have a specific item on the work of this team at the next Synod. We are in the process of resigning full membership of the national TCT network but will become an associate member. We have been supported in this by CUF.

8. *The Revd Zoe Heming (General Synod) has asked:*

In the light of the investigation around Mike Pilavachi and Soul Survivor, especially considering the number of Soul Survivor conferences which took place within the Diocesan geographical area, what is been done to safeguard the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing of young LGBTQ+ Christians in the church?

The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer has replied:

Church rules and diocese requirements necessitate that any group operating services with young people or children have in place a safeguarding policy and risk management plan that provides a strategy to ensure the safety of those under their supervision. This requires that all such groups consider the holistic wellbeing of those attending and that plans are in place to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded from harm. In addition to safeguarding from physical, sexual and mental harm, safeguarding requirements include spiritual abuse, discrimination, misuse of power, coercion, and control. Anyone experiencing abuse or suspecting abuse should contact the Diocese Safeguarding Team. Anyone with queries about safeguarding procedures, policies or processes at Parish level can similarly contact the Diocese safeguarding team for advice and support.

The definition of safeguarding recognises that discrimination by organisations within provision and planning can be abusive. Organisations working with children and young people should look to make reasonable readjustment in services provided to enable inclusion. This includes consideration and active adjustment to meet the needs of all those requiring support in order that participants can function and benefit optimally from a service. To this end there is a Chaplain for the LGBTQ+ community within the diocese. This person is Matt Edwards. Further information is available [here](#) to assist. Enquiries can also be made to Matt using the email address lgbtchaplain@lichfield.anglican.org.

In relation to Soul survivor, there are currently enquires being led by the National Safeguarding team in relation to events held outside of this diocese. It is acknowledged that some of the risk factors that led to issues elsewhere may similarly apply to other events, including those held in this Diocese. Should anyone have any information that they feel may be of interest, this should be reported to Ian Bowles or Tony Clarke (case workers) at the National Safeguarding team. Contact can be made using the following email address; safeguarding@churchofengland.org. Alternatively you may contact Neil Spiring, Peter Hurd or Kim Hodgkins at the Lichfield team on telephone number 01543 306030 option 2.

9. *The Revd Mark Wilson (West Bromwich) has asked:*

How should the diocese and patrons of parishes communicate about churches that are in vacancy, how do vicars who are patrons get to know that they are patrons? For me I found out just by chance and apart from me emailing about the church I am patron over, I haven't had correspondence from the diocese about the church where I am patron.

The Diocesan Pastoral Officer has replied:

The role of Patron is largely limited to discharging functions during pastoral reorganisation, suspension/restriction and a vacancy. The diocese wouldn't normally contact you outside of these areas. There is nothing in the current vacancy process which identifies telling newly appointed Incumbents who they are patron of by virtue of their office (if applicable). However, this information is available on the diocesan database and we will liaise with the Area Bishops and Archdeacons as to the best place to add this into the vacancy process, and thereby communicate this information to newly appointed Incumbents at an early stage.

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

What provisions are in place to ensure that curates will not be offered or compelled to accept a title post against their conscience with respect to the Prayers of Love and Faith?

Bishop Michael has replied:

The House of Bishops is continuing to discuss a number of matters relating to the Prayers of Love and Faith – the text of the prayers themselves, the pastoral guidance which will accompany them, and patterns of pastoral reassurance for those who choose or do not choose to use them. It is the clear intention of the bishops that the conscientiously held views of all clergy and ordinands should be respected, and that will apply to the placement of those seeking title posts in particular.

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

Given that the Prayers of Love and Faith are to be used according to the conscience of the minister, not by decision of the PCC, should parishes be permitted to include stipulations on this in a parish profile? What if different parishes in a benefice have different views?

Bishop Michael has replied:

As mentioned in my response to the previous question, work is ongoing in relation to various aspects of the Prayers of Love and Faith, and one strand in that includes deliberation of the canonical basis according to which, and therefore the authority on which, decisions about the use of the Prayers will be made. This may involve statements being made or questions being asked during appointment processes; it is my view that transparency in these matters is much to be desired.

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

Even though Prayers of Love and Faith are still being worked on, and given Synod's approval to the intent of the House of Bishops that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England, it is unfortunate that nationally there has already been division seen at a local level with PCCs split over whether Parish Profiles should stipulate if potential incumbents will or will not perform Prayers of Love and Faith. What strategy will this Diocese adopt in advertising for clergy and how will PCCs be supported where there is division?

Bishop Michael has replied:

I refer to my answer to Question 11.

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

Thank you so much for updating the Diocesan website to include papers from meetings of this Synod. However, these papers are still quite hard to find as there is no separate page for Synods. When was the Diocesan website last updated as a whole and does the Diocese have a website strategy that the Synod could see?

The Diocesan Secretary has replied:

The diocesan website was last fully updated when we switched to a new website in January 2020. We were an early adopter of the DC2 platform (The Dioceses & Cathedrals Digital Community)- the third of 23 dioceses to switch to it. This stood us in good stead, and provided a much-needed upgrade, ahead of Covid-19 during which the website became an even more important form of internal communication with parishes etc. The Dioceses & Cathedrals Digital Community (DC2) is an unincorporated association allowing dioceses and cathedrals to work together to create, evolve and develop a common web platform, by sharing knowledge and resources, commissioning development work as benefits most members at a significantly lower cost than before. It has also resulted in good working relationships with the developers and colleagues at Church House Westminster, enabling cross fertilisation and promotion in projects that benefit parishes in the diocese such as early roll-out and access to The Church Organiser, free (to parishes) software providing room booking and ticketing facilities in addition the existing Life Events Diary software for easing parish mission and admin.

The website is updated on an almost daily basis and reviewed as operational needs require. This is done by nominated colleagues in each department who 'own' their pages, liaising with the Comms team for guidance and assistance. The Comms team directly oversees the website homepage and other 'corporate' diocesan pages such as the Bishops & Archdeacons pages.

There is not a stand-alone website strategy at this stage - it's more about coordinating ongoing improvements and updates as needed, and making sure that the website reflects diocesan priorities and strategy as they develop. For example, the 'Find Advice' tab has evolved to bring together topics that are shared between teams- firstly the covid pages, then Buildings for Mission, Environment and so on. And the inclusion of Synod papers and summaries (unapproved minutes) on the Synods and Committees web page (<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/synod-committee-info>) was implemented within a week as a direct result of feedback from synod. The Comms team is always happy to hear feedback and suggestions from people across the diocese about how the website can be enhanced to meet local needs.

A copy of the recently updated Comms Strategy is appended.

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

What work is it anticipated that Bishop Jonathan Clark will be able to undertake in the Diocese whilst working in Lichfield during Bishop Michael's sabbatical? Has a working agreement been drawn up for this post?

Bishop Michael has replied:

Bishop Jonathan, as an Assistant Bishop in the diocese, has kindly agreed to provide pastoral oversight of clergy and parishes in the Wolverhampton Episcopal Area during my sabbatical. He will be working closely with the Archdeacons of Lichfield and Walsall, and I am in conversation with him about the shape that his work is likely to take.

15. Mrs Josephine Locke (Newcastle) has asked:

How many current clergy vacancies are there (both full and part-time) within the Diocese and what percentage does this represent of established clergy posts?

The Bishop's Chaplain has replied:

60 posts are vacant, which equates to 41.30 FTE and a vacancy rate of 19% across the Diocese.

16. Mrs Josephine Locke (Newcastle) has asked:

Can the Diocese confirm that clergy seeking a curacy will neither be offered nor required to accept a title post if this would offend conscience in relation to Prayers of Love and Faith?

Bishop Michael has replied:

I refer to my answer to Question 10.

17. The Revd Paul Kingman (Stone) has asked:

In the letter from the Bishop of Lichfield to clergy and lay ministers (5th June 2023) you mentioned ongoing work at the national level: "on the best way of providing pastoral reassurance for clergy and parishes who have concerns about the House of Bishop's proposals following the LLF process". This implies that only a small minority are affected, while the voting in General Synod was almost a 50:50 split on the proposed LLF prayers. Has there been any assessment of how many clergy and parishes in the Diocese or across the CofE have been affected?

Bishop Michael has replied:

The voting on the main (amended) motion by houses of General Synod was overwhelmingly in favour among the bishops (36 : 4 : 2), in favour by a substantial majority among the clergy (111 : 85 : 3), and closest among the laity (103 : 92 : 5). I am not aware of any national survey of those affected, but clearly in some sense discussions on such a significant issue will affect every parish and all clergy.

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

The Diocesan Budget for 2023 shows the cost of Diocesan support and office staff costs at 1,041,307 or 6.7% of the total budget (£2500+ per parish). Can synod be provided with an outline of the diocesan support and staffing costs for 2023, according to departments, the number of employees in each department and how the percentage of diocesan budget spent on support and office costs has changed over time (perhaps over 10-15 years)? Can this be made available in advance of the 2024 budget information?

The Director of Finance has replied:

The budget figure quoted online with the National Church preferred layout for financial reporting and benchmarking, represents the central office costs that covers a number of areas that would have traditionally been separated into different areas, such as Statutory and Legal, Property and Support to Parishes that would over safeguarding and communications amongst others.

The figure which represents Salaries, Ers National Insurance and Employers Pension contribution is made up as follows:

Department	FTE	Cost	% Costs against Budget
Finance (Core)	4.30	220,916	1.38%
Parish Resources and Support	3.60	146,568	0.91%
Safeguarding	2.90	135,319	0.84%
Communications	2.00	109,128	0.68%
DAC	1.90	76,621	0.48%
Property	4.00	172,733	1.08%
Secretariat/HR/Governance	2.70	180,023	1.12%
Total		1,041,037	6.49%

The above table is based on how staff are allocated, however naturally there are times when staff assist in other areas, but we do not do time sheets and specific cross charge each department for time.

Parish Resources and Support, includes the Centralized Gift Aid Scheme that recovers over £1.5M for parishes through Gift Aid, and also the bookkeeping and Independent Examination services offered to parishes and accounting licences, as well as Project and Grant Application advice and support amongst many other things.

The total costs for the Central Support should include the non-staff costs of £528,476, giving a total of £1,569,783 or 9.78%. The non staff costs will include Statutory and legal costs. The budget breakdown by category is as follows:

Diocesan Office	£535,798
Communications	£162,808
Property	£216,196
Parish Resources & Support	£166,206
Stat and Legal	£488,775
Total	£1,569,783

Stat & Legal

DAC	£92,268
DMPC	£31,333
Safeguarding	£142,755
Registrar/Chancellor	£155,327
Faculties	£35,000
Committees	£32,092

In respect of say 10 to 15 years ago we certainly can do some comparative work for the 2024 budget but below is an extract from the 2013 Budget document. Some of the names and areas of course have changed but gives a good indication, in particular regarding Diocesan office.

Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance Administration	Budget 2012	Budget 2013
Diocesan Office/St Mary's House	543,862	503,628
Services to Parishes	280,884	169,224
Statutory and Legal	216,717	210,487
Budget Requirement	1,041,463	883,339

Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance Services to Parishes	Budget 2012	Budget 2013
Child Protection (exc CRB)	31,821	31,285
External Communications	72,690	15,000
Internal Communications	65,755	62,084
Gift Aid/Christian Giving	57,856	10,000
Diocesan Trust	52,762	50,855
Budget Requirement	280,884	169,224

Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance Statutory & Legal Costs	Budget 2012	Budget 2013
General Synod Representation	14,960	15,183
Diocesan Synod	5,741	5,523
Committee Expenses	7,016	7,122
Pastoral Committee	6,222	6,315
Diocesan Registrar's Retainer	61,821	63,000
Diocesan Registrar's non-retained work	13,363	7,182
Clergy Discipline Measure	22,000	22,330
Chancellor	9,000	9,135
Faculty Fees	18,000	18,270
Parochial Registrars & Records Measure	1,000	1,000
Patronage Boards	2,665	2,665
CRB Expenses	17,238	18,415
Diocesan Advisory Committee	37,691	34,347
Budget Requirement	216,717	210,487

19. The Revd Neil Robbie (West Bromwich has asked:

How much does the diocese receive from the Strategic Development Fund and how is this being spent?

The Director of Finance has replied:

The Strategic Development Bid that is currently operational is linked to Telford Minster at Meeting Point house. The Diocese was awarded £1,690M and the funds are claimed against specific costs. To date at the end of 2022, we had claimed £0.937M - £0.500M claimed towards the capital works. There is a further claim for around £100k to be submitted recently and conversations over the remaining balance considering the increase in heating costs.