

**SALISBURY DIOCESAN SYNOD
MINUTES OF THE 93rd SESSION OF THE SYNOD HELD AT
ST PAUL'S CHURCH, FISHERTON ANGER ON WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2007**

1. Prayers

Prayers were led by the Bishop.

The Bishop welcomed the Revd Paul Richardson as the newly elected Chairman of the House of Clergy and Daniel Lual, visiting the diocese from the Sudan. He advised Synod of his intention to make a Declaration by Deed in due course to rename Sarum Readers "Licensed Lay Ministers". This was in order to better reflect their wide role in lay ministry.

2. Notices, Co-options and Apologies

The Diocesan Secretary reported that enough parishes in the diocese (at least half) had now committed to using Fair Trade products to enable the diocese to apply, through the Fairtrade Foundation, to be registered as a Fair Trade Diocese.

Apologies were received from 24 clergy, 19 laity and 1 bishop.

3 Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Learning for Discipleship

Synod members had each been issued with four leaflets setting out different strands of training, plus a program of courses arranged for September 2007 to March 2008. The Director of Ministry explained that "Learning for Discipleship" is an initiative set up in response to popular demand. It comprises five core courses plus many additional ones. Anyone is welcome to join the courses, which will run at local learning centres around the diocese. Courses are priced just to cover costs. Participants can study just for pleasure or, in a program run in partnership with Oxford Brookes University, up to foundation degree level. Courses are presented as modules which can earn academic credits where the choice is made to submit work for assessment. There will be three starting points each year.

The Director of Ministry confirmed that the above information is on the diocesan web site. The Learning for Discipleship and Ministry Team is now looking for tutors, mentors and learners to participate in all of the above.

5. Diocesan Scheme for the Inspection of Churches

The Archdeacon of Dorset reported that the diocesan Scheme had become significantly out of date. Architects and surveyors had been consulted in preparation of a revised Scheme. Since this revision, the changes to diocesan structures required an additional amendment at points 9 and 10 to read "DBF Executive" in place of "DBF". With this additional amendment, the Archdeacon moved on behalf of Bishop's Council and Synod approved that:

"This Synod approves the Salisbury Diocesan Scheme for the Inspection of Churches 2008."

6. Diocesan Board of Finance Annual General Meeting

6.1 Annual Report and Accounts 2006

The Chairman DBF presented the annual Report and Accounts 2006. It had been an exceptional year resulting in a budget surplus of £484,000. The main reasons for this were:

- an under-spend on stipends
- fewer removals, resettlements and retirements than usual or expected
- the anticipated changes to Council Tax bands did not occur
- staff costs were less than budgeted due to the timing of movements
- an increase in glebe houses income following a rent review
- an increase in assigned and non-assigned fees
- a one-off redistribution from the Archbishops' Council
- higher investment income than expected
- higher surveyor fees income than anticipated
- the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group grant was larger than anticipated
- the Church Commissioners increased their grant towards area bishops' secretaries
- Share shortfall reduced to £141,000
- transfers between funds

In addition and mainly due to unrealised investment gains, the diocese will have £500,000 of Free Reserve (the money over and above that required by the Reserves Policy) available for supporting mission plans in the diocese.

The Chairman DBF clarified that at paragraph 38b, regarding pensions, the figures quoted were those provided by the Pensions Board. The Chairman DBF then moved on behalf of the DBF Executive:

“That the Diocesan Board of Finance approves the Directors’ and Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2006.”

This was approved by the Board of Finance.

The Chairman DBF reported the good news that 2007 Share payment is currently running at 1% above the 2006 payment so, if the improvement is sustained, the diocese is likely to raise 98% of Share asked for this year.

6.2 Appointment of Auditors

The Chairman DBF moved, on behalf of the DBF Executive:

“That the Diocesan Board of Finance approves the re-appointment of Mazars LLP as the auditors for the Diocesan Board of Finance.”

This was approved by the Board of Finance.

6.3 Diocesan Budget for Share Assessment 2008

For the purposes of this item, members acted as both the Board of Finance and Synod.

The Chairman DBF reported that for the third year running the Share increase had been kept at or below the level of the retail price index. The proposed Share increase 2008 was just 0.99% which was the lowest annual increase in over 20 years. It should, however, be remembered that this may not be the increase at an individual parish level due to local variables.

When considering the budget the Board of Finance and Synod were asked to bear in mind the following:

- The Church Commissioners are currently at the top of UK financial performance indicators.
- A potential distribution from the Church Commissioners to compensate for a pension contribution increase had not been included because it had not been agreed yet. If the current pension proposals are not approved by General Synod in July then the contributions required from dioceses are likely to

increase again. The potential distribution (above) will help compensate for this.

- A possible increase in Property Department staffing, with a corresponding increase in income from their work, had been built into the budget.
- Diocesan administration represented just 4.1% of the total which was extremely low.

In response to a question, the Chairman DBF explained that the 40% pension contribution figure was based on the national minimum stipend which is less than the current diocesan stipend. In addition, the total stipend figure included additional factors such as national insurance which did not form part of the pension calculation.

The Chairman DBF moved on behalf of the DBF Executive:

“That the Diocesan Board of Finance/Synod approves the annual Budget for Share Assessment 2008”.

This was approved by the Board of Finance and the Synod.

7. Funding for Mission

The Chairman DBF introduced the subject. If the £484,000 surplus were to be returned to parishes in proportion to the level of Share paid in 2006, then 70% would receive less than £1,000 with the median figure being £559. It could be a major mission opportunity if parishes were to work together with this money in support of deanery plans, with each deanery standing to gain between £14,000 and £57,000. Nevertheless, he felt it to be an issue of trust that the money should be returned with no strings attached beyond the recommendation from Bishop’s Council and the DBF Executive that parishes be encouraged to consult within deaneries about the possibility of using the money for mission. The recommendation was:

“That Synod approves that the 2006 budget surplus be offered to parishes in direct proportion to the level of 2006 Share paid”.

The options for achieving this included:

- approve the recommendation for immediate action
- delay the decision until the next Synod meeting in order to consider the matter further and discuss it with parishes
- approve the recommendation but delay the distribution until deaneries had had an opportunity to discuss the matter with parishes

When debating the issue, Synod was asked to consider what would best motivate parishes and show the greatest trust.

Canon Nigel LLoyd (Poole Deanery) supported the principal and the formula but wished Synod to be clear about what it hoped the money would be spent on whilst encouraging discussions to take place at deanery level. He therefore proposed that the Motion be amended to add, “...but not before the parishes have had the opportunity to debate at their Deanery Synods whether they wish collectively to allocate their share of the surplus towards the aims and objectives of their particular Deanery’s Plan.”

In debating the amendment, the following comments were made:

- the amendment may cause unacceptable delay
- not all deaneries need a debate since Dorchester, for example, does not require any money for its deanery plan
- a lack of resources in some parishes may cause them to be indifferent to deanery plans
- one should not assume that parishes do not have their own mission plans requiring money
- it’s a matter of trust, so Synod should follow the original recommendation

- having decided to apportion Share to parishes rather than deaneries, it will seem strange to insist on a requirement that parishes now consult deaneries in a Share matter
- the money will help some individual parishes enormously.

Mr Roger Holehouse (Dorchester Deanery) proposed an amendment to the amendment in order to avoid delays and increase the sense of trust. The amended amendment to read, "...but encourages parishes to debate at their Deanery Synods whether they wish collectively to allocate their share of the surplus towards the aims and objectives of their particular Deanery's Plan."

The Lay Chairman of the Synod accepted the amendment to the amendment for debate. Several members did not support either amendment both of which they felt denoted a lack of trust in parishes. Several supported the second amendment which they felt provided for mission opportunities in deaneries. The amendment to the amendment was put to the vote and the proposal was carried with 48 votes in favour and 40 against. Synod then voted on the Motion that:

"The Synod approves that the 2006 budget surplus be offered to parishes in direct proportion to the level of 2006 Share paid, but encourages parishes to debate at their Deanery Synods whether they wish collectively to allocate their share of the surplus towards the aims and objectives of their particular Deanery's Plan."

The vote was carried with one member against.

8. Questions

Mr Paul Boyd-Lee (General Synod Member) asked:

Has the Diocesan Office received Guidelines from the Archbishops' Council Legal Office on the 2006 Equality Act, with regard to its implications for parishes, and could Synod be told how and when this information is to be made known for the use of all parishes and other bodies under the jurisdiction of the Diocese?

The Diocesan Secretary responded:

The Diocesan Office received these detailed guidelines in May 2006. It is a long document and we are working on providing a summary of the issues that will be sent out in Despatch to PCC Secretaries and clergy along with the Summary Annual Report and Accounts for 2006 later this month. The information will also be published on the web-site and highlighted in the weekly e-bulletin and in Sarum Link.

Many in our parishes will already be familiar with the principles in the guidelines as a result of the passage of the legislation through Parliament. Our churches will obviously need to comply with the legislation to ensure that they do not break the law. However, it is also important to recognize that, as Christians, many will already be leading the way in countering discrimination and valuing every member of their local communities.

We are conscious that the legislative requirements placed on parishes can often be seen as a burden and do try to lighten the impact while working within the law. PCCs that have already been dealing with the requirement to place "no smoking" signs in churches will have had a little breathing space before we pass on these guidelines from the Archbishops' Council Legal Office.

13 Date of Next Meeting

10 am on Saturday 3 November 2007 at Amesbury Baptist Church.

A news item on the Funding for Mission item may be found on the diocesan web site at <http://www.salisbury.anglican.org>