



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

DS(23)M1

**THE DIOCESE OF ST EDMUNDSBURY AND IPSWICH
BISHOP'S COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Bishop's Council held on 18 March 2023 at the Salvation Army Hall, Stowmarket at 9.30 am.

Present:

House of Bishops	The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich The Bishop of Dunwich	
Archdeacons	The Archdeacons of Sudbury and Suffolk	
House of Clergy:	31 members of the house	15 apologies
House of Laity:	36 members of the house	20 apologies
Ex-officio	15 ex-officio members (9 Clergy, 6 Laity)	2 apologies

In Attendance:

The Diocesan Registrar, the Acting Diocesan Secretary and 11 diocesan officers and members of diocesan staff and 2 visitors.

Revd Canon Sharon Potter, Chair of House of Clergy, in the Chair

WORSHIP

Dwelling in the Word was led by Bishop Mike Harrison

WELCOME

Bishop Martin Seeley welcomed everyone and acknowledged that the following people have left Synod: The Reverend Julia Lall (Hartismere & Hoxne) has retired from Synod for health reasons; the Reverend Tiffer Robinson (Lavenham) has moved to Thingoe deanery, and Joop van der Toorn (Samford) is retiring with his wife, the Reverend Canon Stephne van der Toorn.

Gavin Bultitude (Diocesan Secretary) had taken a period of absence for personal reasons four weeks ago and would not be returning. Gary Peverley has since taken on the role of Acting Diocesan Secretary.

Bishop Martin said gratitude and huge appreciation were owed to Archdeacon Jeanette, who retires at Easter making this her last Diocesan Synod. Her gift for pastoral care and her diligence across the Archdeaconry of Suffolk and the diocese would be greatly missed.

The Reverend Canon Rich Henderson was welcomed as the incoming Archdeacon of Suffolk. Rich starts his new role in May.

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23.01 PRESEDENTIAL ADDRESS

Bishop Martin's ministry has been extended by Archbishops Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell until the summer of 2025 because the national work he has undertaken for church institutions has taken him from the diocese so much. He is thrilled and blessed to serve longer and will continue to provide continuity and stability following the pandemic.

He informed Synod about his four personal priorities for the next two years:

- 1) Working with and for young people.** He is keen to see real progress here and thanked Dean Joe Hawes and his team for the transformative work underway at the cathedral.
- 2) To support and encourage ordained and lay ministry.** A huge amount has been accomplished in the last seven years and a commitment was made not to cut stipendiary clergy posts. Under the Reverend Canon Dave Gardner, the diocese has witnessed a flowering of lay ministries, and introduced a pioneering development programme for incumbents.
- 3) To secure the finances of the diocese.** At the end of 2019, finances were balanced for the first time in memory, but the pandemic undid this. Alongside Edward Creasy, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Bishop Martin will investigate ways to increase and develop finances.
- 4) To create a sustainable future for church buildings.** A scheme was started to mitigate insurance and maintenance costs and Archdeacon David has chaired a successful Church Buildings Review group. Another initiative aided by the Church Commissioners will aim to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030.

23.02 ANNUAL REVIEW OF INSPIRING IPSWICH

Archdeacon Rhiannon King and the Reverend Charlotte Cook presented an inspirational PowerPoint of events and initiatives across the deanery of Ipswich in 2022.

They highlighted five key pieces of learning:

- 1) Generosity breeds generosity.** Spending time together in church or as a community, and sharing food and resources encourages a culture of munificence.
- 2) Loved people, love people.** Sharing what God is doing through fellowship, and encouraging others to share their experiences helps build love, faith, and hope. The acronym PRIM (Pastoral, Relational, Inspirational and Missional) is used by Inspiring Ipswich to illustrate this.
- 3) Focus Brings us Together/Clear is Kind.** A sense of clarity and vision unites and is essential to know the Lord better.
- 4) Appreciating people for who they are changes the culture.** Ipswich is blessed with amazing church planters, fresh expressions, and many different traditions.

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Recognising that we are all different and that we need one another is liberating and cheering.

5) Prayer. Prayer in all its guises is happening across the deanery every day. God can give more than we can pray for or imagine.

Archdeacon Rhiannon said everyone is welcome to attend a conference on generosity on June 10 at Ipswich, St Augustine.

23.03 DISCUSSION PIECE – COST OF LIVING

Gary introduced the discussion piece. People from all backgrounds, in and out of work, are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. The Church has a significant role to play and an obligation to face injustice, support communities, and walk humbly together. Churches and clergy are at the frontline offering short and long-term guidance alongside many other local organisations.

Gary invited three members of the clergy to share their experiences across Suffolk:

The Reverend Linda Sebbage, the Benefice of Barrow. The benefice comprises five very rural parishes west of Bury St Edmunds, with a mix of people and varying levels of deprivation. The church collaborates with other village groups such as parish councils, schools, and local businesses. Help is focused in five areas: 1) A community pantry at Risby and Barrow for food and warm clothing, with a drop-off point in the village shop. 2) Warm rooms inside the pub and village hall. 3) A popular monthly free breakfast for up to fifty people. 4) Slow cookers and microwaves and workshops on how to use them. 5) A hardship fund for emergencies via the church school. All initiatives are self-supporting. The schemes highlight the Church as a place that supports and serves the community.

The Reverend Canon Rich Henderson, the Parish of Beccles with Worlingham, North Cove and Barnby. A food bank was started seventeen years ago and now runs twice a week in one church. Up to two hundred people a week attend a breakfast club or collect food. The number has trebled in recent months. Packed lunches are provided to school children every Wednesday in the school holidays. Likewise, a school uniform bank has been very successful; a range of people wash, repair, and package the clothing. Other initiatives include an exchange of furniture and white goods, help completing benefit forms and dealing with utility companies. Many local businesses, trusts, individuals, and supermarkets want to partner with the church. The work demonstrates Evangelism in action and the love of Christ.

The Reverend Lawrence Carey, the Benefice of Ipswich St Matthew with Triangle and All Saints. Lawrence represents a collaboration of eleven churches in Ipswich called *Ipswich Top-Up Shop*. The scheme is based around food and people and is non-referral. There was a desperate need for community and pastoral care following the lockdown. The group helps with issues such as debt advice, benefits, and form filling. A hairdresser visits once a month to give free haircuts; slow cookers are provided alongside a funded four-week course on how to use them, and Hope Explored and Alpha courses are available. The

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Church is seen as authentic and serving Christ in the heart of the community, leading people to explore faith.

Gary thanked the three presenters and encouraged everyone to continue to contribute in a positive way, to be political and to partner with those wanting to help.

The Reverend Canon Andrew Dotchin, Colneys Deanery, urged Synod to ensure that clergy and lay people seek support where needed via a £3m hardship grant funded by the National Church and distributed at diocesan level.

Tony Allwood, Chair of the house of laity, in the chair

23.04 GENERAL SYNOD REPORT

Paper BC(23)P04, report from Andrew Gray and Jeanette Appleton was received and noted.

Andrew highlighted the following points:

- Living in Love and Faith (LLF). Despite the differing views on General Synod, members met in good faith and debate was conducted well overall.
- Resourcing ministerial formation. Training and resourcing have been put on a more secure footing. Wealthy dioceses may share resources with poorer ones, but this is not mandatory. Andrew hopes similar generosity would be shown across parishes.
- Draft amending Canon No. 42 was passed unanimously and calls for a safeguarding officer to be appointed to each diocese. This is a significant move.
- Cost-of-living crisis. Dioceses and parishes are beginning to hold the government to account but higher levels like the Church Commissioners are stalling. Andrew considered that the National Church could do much more in view of its assets.

23.05 UPDATE AND REFLECTIONS ON LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH FOLLOWING GENERAL SYNOD

Bishop Martin updated members on the recent General Synod debate on Living in Love and Faith. He acknowledged the diversity of the Church and the Nation and said he and Bishop Mike are committed to supporting clergy regardless of their opinion on this matter. He urged everyone to act in a spirit of collaboration not confrontation. Isolation is not an Anglican option.

Questions: The Reverend Peter Goodridge, Lavenham Deanery asked whether there should be another video (aside from Bishop Martin's and Bishop Mike's) from someone with a different viewpoint on LLF. Bishop Martin said the diocese needs to know what he and Bishop Mike think yet agreed that other voices should be heard and would consider this.

The Reverend Leslie Siu, General Synod and Loes Deanery asked how the different views and concerns regarding lifestyle can be managed by clergy in parishes. He is concerned that the

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Church is downplaying the significance of this matter.

The Reverend Canon Jonathan Alderton-Ford, Thingoe Deanery asked whether Bishop Martin agrees that as Christians we are called to love our enemies, to love those who disagree, to listen, to truly understand, to respect those who are fundamentally different and hold different views, and ultimately, to love. Bishop Martin said Jonathan had answered Leslie's question, but it is impossible to realise unanimity where there is none, as scripture is interpreted many ways. He has been struck by how, at local level LLF is of deep concern to some and less so to others. It is a matter of ensuring that differences are engaged with, and mechanisms are in place. He agreed with Jonathan that one must listen, understand, respect, and love because everyone has a story and as Christians, we are committed to being one in Christ.

Barbara Rowe, Hadleigh Deanery said she was involved with the ordination of women and the role of women in the episcopate, which was the cause of much debate. A way was found of dealing with this and she believes that it is not beyond capability to find a way to live with these differences, too. Bishop Martin said he hopes we can find a way where differences may be held together.

The Reverend Ben Edwards, Thingoe Deanery asked whether there would be a diocesan-led initiative to promote prayers for LLF. Bishop Martin said various groups have been set up to look at this and he would comment fully once a response has been made nationally.

Simon Gash, Mildenhall Deanery said a group of MPs are threatening to bring forward legislation to oblige the Church to permit same sex marriages. He noted that there is considerable bafflement outside the Church about its position and asked whether the move could gain traction, and whether matters could be taken out of the Church's hands. Bishop Martin said the group of MPs is relatively small and the issue is not high on parliament's agenda. However, those voices must be heeded, as a constitutional issue would be raised if it does gain traction.

Ian Wigston, Sudbury Deanery asked how the Church, which is inclined to be inward-looking, may become more outward-looking. Bishop Martin said many are already in outward mode; the difficulty is further up. There are, however, things that may be done through prayer including who we pray for during intercessions. Discussions may also be raised on PCC agendas, and engagement in worship and governance may be more outward-focused. Buildings and money are major areas of concern for many clergy and Bishop Martin wants to make huge progress here to release clergy for mission.

The Reverend Dan Harrison, Gipping Valley Deanery said language is very emotive and asked where clergy might look for clear definitions of marriage. Bishop Martin said he would produce a glossary highlighting definitions.

The Reverend Rob Parker-McGee, Sudbury Deanery shared reflections on his youth in a liberal market town in the Fens alongside an encounter of division in the latter stages of his discernment at Mirfield. His experience at Mirfield taught him that there are many sides to a discussion. We each hold a tiny bit of the truth and must be encouraged to work together to create the whole truth. Bishop Martin said he has become much more aware of the sense that each of us sees through a glass darkly. We must learn to love and engage with one another, ratchet down the sense of being right and listen to what God is saying through you

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to me, or you to us. We might then find a deeper truth through a variety of views touching on mystery and drawing us into the wellspring of eternal life.

Russell Hall, Ipswich Deanery asked how LLF has been received by organisations supporting the LGBTQ community. Bishop Martin said engagement has been partly informal but also formal. The LLF steering group *Next Steps* is actively engaged with many such groups. Reception is mixed; some say this is as far as we can go, while others are very frustrated and want more.

Sally Wainman, Colneys Deanery asked whether the discussions included the millions of people living together in partnerships, which society does not see as living in sin. Bishop Martin said we need to have a grown-up conversation here. He has not officiated at a wedding where he did not have reason to believe a couple was not living together; we must be realistic without immediately being seen as promoting promiscuity. Bishop Norman Banks, Forward in Faith, once said that we used to have a perfectly good use of betrothal, or a point at which intimate relationships would begin. An adult conversation needs to be on agenda.

Faith Darch, Waveney and Blyth Deanery suggested that a different word (not marriage) for long-term, same sex partnerships should be found. Bishop Martin said he would love to find words that do not emphasise difference but honour two people loving one another.

23.06 PREVENTING BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES

The Reverend Canon Dave Gardner spoke to the matter. A new advisory service and framework has been launched in support of healthy, positive relationships, and to deal with disputes that fall between safeguarding and disciplinary measures. The scheme will be run by two trained advisers and supported by a management team. It is open to all in parishes and is confidential and independent.

23.07 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 October 2023 DS(22)M3 were agreed and signed as a correct record. A show of hands was raised. None against. One abstention as not present at the previous meeting.

23.08 REPORTS FROM BISHOP'S COUNCIL

23.08.01 Minutes of a meeting held on 10 November 2022

BC(22)M5 were received and noted.

23.08.02 Minutes of a meeting held on 26 January 2023

BC(23)M1 were received and noted.

The two sets of minutes were received. Questions to be directed after by email to Gary Peverley or the archdeacons.

23.09 MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising.

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23.10 QUESTIONS

Four questions were received and sent out with the Order Paper. Full questions and answers can be found on paper ref. DS(22)P10 (and filed with the minutes).

The following supplementary questions were asked.

Harry Scott, Waveney & Blyth Deanery asked whether anyone from the diocese would be going on a plane to visit Kagera, or anywhere else given the commitments to net zero. Bishop Martin said travel via plane would be used but would be offset.

Sally Wainman, Colneys Deanery asked whether there has been much debate about the increase in parish share and the practicalities of funding between General Synod, the Bishops, and the Church Commissioners. Gary Peverley said there are regular conversations, but the dialogue must continue. The diocese must take on some responsibilities, and the National Church has already made significant contributions. There is a real desire over the coming nine years to appoint funding at a local level in support of Growing Younger and those not reached by the Church. A diocesan growth fund of £35k is also available to support issues including the cost-of-living crisis.

Sally Wainman asked a second supplementary question – whether diocesan funds would support part-time, traditional ministry aimed at increasing growth. Gary said there is a deployment plan to support different kinds of ministry like lay workers, but he could not comment on individual cases.

David Lamming, Sudbury Deanery said in relation to the Charity Commissioners supporting parishes, the Save the Parish Movement has calculated that a grant of £24m would be sufficient to eliminate all current deficits on all DBF funds across the Church of England. He asked whether this is a matter that General Synod could advance in July? Bishop Martin said the Church Commissioners are being very generous in what they are allocating but it begs the philosophical question: Do you provide money that wipes out a debt, or that promotes new growth? Amongst Bishops it is very clear that monies must go to posts for new ventures in one form or other. Bishop Martin is part of this ongoing conversation.

23.11 NOTICES

23.12.1 Deanery Synod Elections

James Hall, the Diocesan Registrar said the decision should have been taken to agree the number of representatives to be elected from each parish for the 2023 Deanery Synod elections at the Diocesan Synod in October 2022. This was omitted in error. To resolve this, Bishop's Council agreed to adopt the formula previously used on behalf of the Diocesan Synod at its meeting on the 10 November. The elections are now in-hand.

23.12.2 2024 Budget Timetable

Gary Peverley, in his capacity as Finance Director said last year's budget was presented to Synod in October. He plans to do the same this year, as it allows more time for an accurate account, and it enables parish share allocations to be presented at the same time.

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23.12.3 Disability & Inclusion Group

Archdeacon Jeanette updated on the work of the Disability & Inclusion group in 2022. Synod approved a Disability and Inclusion policy this time last year. Part of the policy was to form a group, which has since been done. In July 2022 a motion was passed unanimously by Synod to work to remove any barriers to disabled life and ministry in the Church. Every DAC was to have a representative from the group on its committee – Daphne Rose has since taken on the role here. eNews has been used to raise awareness of the group and signing was used at Synod today. The group has worked with 'I Am Me' to address issues in the training programme and has also linked with the cathedral around areas like dementia. A simple disability audit for churches is underway to improve access. The biggest achievement was creating a website and a national booklet offering tips for parishes. The next Chair of the group is in the process of being chosen.

23.12.4 Coronation

Gary Peverley, as Acting Diocesan Secretary said the Coronation, scheduled for 6 May, is a cause for celebration through hope and service. Preparations will be taking place over the coming weeks and resources and information are available on the diocesan website.

23.12.5 Suffolk Show

The Reverend Canon Dave Gardner invited Synod to paint a sheep! The show, scheduled for 31 May and 1 June, is destined to be great fun, outward looking, an opportunity for conversation and a sanctuary for all faiths or none. Gary has agreed that donations from the free café will be given to a charity.

23.12.6 Cathedral

Dean Joe said all are welcome to a Chrism eucharist, scheduled for 11 am on 6 April, at the cathedral, when lay and ordained members of the Church will renew their vows. Lunch will be provided. Replies to be sent to liturgy.admin@stedscathedral.org

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Diocesan Synod is scheduled to be held on Saturday 24 June in the Cathedral at 9.30 am

CLOSING PRAYERS

+Martin closed the meeting in prayer.

Signed:

[Chairman]

Date: _____