

Diocesan Synod Feedback – Thursday 22nd June 2023

- 1) Initial reaction
- 2) One comment – what pleased, surprised, encouraged, stands out?
- 3) One question for the Bishop’s council.

1) Initial Reaction	<p>Good</p> <p>Tie-up Diocese and Parish aims</p> <p>It was a good report</p> <p>Encouraging – brings breadth together</p> <p>Good to read narrative, not just accounts</p> <p>Encouraging – addressing what had gone wrong / ignored in past, now seeing dealt with even if uncomfortable</p> <p>‘Getting back on to the front foot’ - not defensive!</p> <p>Helpful, refreshed and well presented</p> <p>Difficult to see / read things on the screen in marquee</p> <p>Style sometimes at expense of access</p> <p>Long – how am I going to understand, and in the end didn’t</p> <p>Need more visualization with the steps</p> <p>Would like to know more about investment strategy to beat inflation (£8.3m in cash)</p>
2) Comment	<p>Encourage</p> <p>Encouraging – balance at end</p> <p>Consultations with Parish</p> <p>Making it more accessible – yes please!</p> <p>Don’t shortcut synodical structures in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do we want to understand this and what’s the best way of reaching them? - Existing Synod members to take to Deanery <p>DBF to look to make use of Diocesan Stipends Fund (£23m in fund) which we don’t seem to have used – why?</p> <p>Maintain momentum – here to serve the mission</p>

	<p>Build trust</p> <p>Separating cash & investments & clergy housing</p> <p>Categorizing costs in more meaningful categories</p> <p>Transparency & a desire to change</p> <p>Small surplus (because of clergy vacancies)</p> <p>Encouraged re transparency & willingness to engage with Synod – better Governance</p>
3) Bishop’s Council	<p>Want a simple 3-fold report for congregation; liked the steps as on the screen</p> <p>One page summary, especially re cash flow / Parish contributions.</p> <p>Does reduction of staffing costs equal staff shortage?</p> <p>Improved transparency for those who understand!</p> <p>When are we getting a vicar?</p> <p>Summary guide for Parishes.</p> <p>Single page of questions – why can’t we have a vicar?</p> <p>Interested in running costs.</p> <p>How do we package and parish parishioners?</p> <p>Value</p> <p>Access</p> <p>Having longer to read than more than a week / or a guide to help</p>

Note from the Diocesan Secretary:

One of the comments at the meeting (section 2) questioned why the WDBF had not used the Diocesan Stipends Fund, currently valued at £23m. I did not have an opportunity at the meeting to respond to this point so feel it would be helpful to do so now. It is useful to start by noting the purpose and history of the Diocesan Stipends Fund (as set out in Section 19 of the annual report & accounts - page 52)

The diocesan stipends capital fund has been created from the diocesan stipends fund capital account assets held on behalf of the diocese by the Church Commissioners under the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976 to provide income for clergy stipends. It represents the accumulated sale proceeds of glebe property, sale proceeds of benefice houses and surplus benefice endowments following pastoral reorganisation. Capital funds may be used for the purchase, improvement and maintenance of glebe property and benefice houses. The funds may be invested in the CBF Church of England Property, Investment or Fixed Interest Securities Funds, or simply held on deposit.

Over the last 4 decades the fund has been used to purchase multiple ministerial houses which we now primarily use for curates and associate minister posts. The vast majority of the fund is therefore held as 'tangible fixed assets' which do not generate income. In fact they represent an annual cost due to the need to maintain and invest in the properties. The increases in value of the fund over the years is primarily driven by the increasing value of the properties themselves.

From time to time we sell such houses if they are no longer required for ministerial purposes. We have recently done this, selling a few houses last year. Whilst this capital (around £2m) could now be used for annual operating costs such as clergy stipends, we can only spend the money once. At the moment the intention is to keep the sale proceeds invested thereby generating ongoing income to offset clergy costs and keeping the Common Mission Fund as low as possible. This can and will be kept under review as circumstances, opportunities and needs change.