

Minutes of the Edinburgh Diocesan Synod held on 26 October 2023

at St Paul's & St George's Church, York Place, Edinburgh

The meeting was in-person as well as being live-streamed

Synod commenced with Eucharist at 5.30pm

Clergy (73 Members)	Lay (60 Members)
• Attended – 38 (52%)	• Attended – 34 (57%)
• Apologies – 12	• Apologies – 5
Total – 72 (54%)	

STANDING ITEMS

New to the diocese

- The Rev David Bagnall, Associate Rector, Edinburgh St John's Princes Street.
- The Rev Ryan Bennett, Associate Rector, Christ Church Morningside, Edinburgh
- Vicki Clark, Alternate Lay representative, St Mary's Dalkeith
- Sue Crozier, Lay Representative, St Cuthbert's Hawick
- Brother Joseph Emanuel, Priest-in-Charge, Edinburgh St David's
- Diana Gilligan, Alternate Lay Representative, Edinburgh St Martin's.
- Stephen Haigh, Lay Representative, St Mary's Dalmahoy
- The Rev Jo Henderson, Associate Priest, Edinburgh St James's Leith
- The Rev Michael Johns-Perring, Rector, Edinburgh St Fillan's
- Alan Kirkpatrick, Lay Representative, Edinburgh Holy Cross
- The Rev Dr Lesley Penny, Curate-in-Charge, St Peter's Galashiels and St John's Selkirk.
- The Rev Fiona Reynolds, Diocesan Advisor for Christian life.

Synod then held a moment of silence for those who had died since the last meeting:

- The Rev Canon Bill Brockie
- The Right Rev Bishop Keith Riglin
- The Rev Neville Suttle
- Mrs Tilly Suttle

Bishops Address

With sorrow, Bishop John acknowledged the death of Keith Riglin, Bishop of Argyll & The Isles. He asked Synod to pray for Bishop Keith's wife and family.

Bishop John reported that alternate provision was being put in place for the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney and that he would shortly be handing over his own duties there to Bishop Dorsey McConnell. He would then return to being simply Bishop of Edinburgh. He noted the extra work it had involved for himself, as well as for the Diocesan Office staff, the Dean and Godfrey Robson, and he wanted to record his thanks to them all. Synod applauded.

He then reflected on the wonderful people and faithful congregations in Aberdeen Diocese as well as the conflicts. He drew attention to the words of the psalm which looked forward to a time when "*love and faithfulness will meet and righteousness and peace will kiss each other*". He also reflected on the conflict in the Middle East and he had written to local Rabbis and Synagogues expressing his sorrow and assuring them of his love. Like so many people of faith, Christians took as a golden rule that we should treat others as we wished to be treated. He was all too aware that words were easy, and what mattered was action. He thanked God for the dear, brave people, in Israel and Gaza and beyond, whose selfless actions daily affirmed the dignity of each person and who, amidst the agony and terror, the dust and rubble sought to rebuild shattered lives.

He acknowledged the many signs of hope in the continuing life of our diocese, with some ordinations to new ministries and some inducted into new roles. Over the years, grants from the St Hilda's Fund had meant that we had been able to encourage a number of charges to fulfil their plans for new life and growth. Money alone was no solution. Around the diocese he saw what might be called 'successes', with

congregations that were thriving, where faith was deepening, enthusiasm stirring, or numbers growing, and there were a significant number of these.

We no longer needed to look backwards or to measure our success against what we imagined the church was in the past, but we could look forward, open to new possibilities, trusting that God, far from giving up on us, far from letting us slide into inevitable decline, actually had plans for us, plans to give us hope and a future.

The full version of the Bishop's address was available on the diocesan website.

ADMINISTRATION

Synod Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2023 were confirmed subject to two minor textual corrections.

Environmental Group Report

The report was given by the Rev Valerie Cameron (St Mary's Dalkeith and member of the Provincial Environmental Group)

One of the United Nations' stated objectives for the world was to achieve carbon net zero. The Province's plan to achieve this within our own estate had been subject to extensive consultation and refinement. A toolkit had been prepared to assist Charges. Specialist staff are being recruited by the Province to work with all dioceses. It was noted that, in Edinburgh Diocese, progress was being made. Smaller charges needed support. Improving insulation of Rectories was a priority and an easily achievable goal. A diocesan plan was needed.

Questions and comments.

The Rev Nicholas Bowry (Penicuik & West Linton). He welcomed the provincial funding for upgrading rectories and asked whether the diocese was providing any matching funding?

The Rev David Paton-Williams (Edinburgh St Columba's). He echoed the previous question and asked whether this could include retrospective grant funding where work was already going ahead for such priority items as double glazing?

The Rev Valerie Cameron responded that detailed consideration was still under way by the Province. The Provincial Buildings Committee was fully engaged, and it was intended to make central funding available. But detailed decisions were still awaited. Bethany Nelson (Convenor, Diocesan Environmental Group) added that the Heat Hack organisation was looking at community buildings more generally and what could be to reduce their energy consumption. She recommended that churches signed up to the initiative and engaged with their workshops.

Godfrey Robson added that the Diocesan Standing Committee was taking the matter very seriously, as a token of which the Diocesan Environmental Group, which Bethany Nelson chaired, was reporting directly to it. The Finance & Management Committee had considered funding within the 2024 budget but, at this stage, no specific funding had been set aside pending clarification of Provincial funding plans, but on the assessment that any expenditure in 2024 could probably be contained within that year's budget.

FINANCE & MANAGEMENT

Diocesan Accounts 2022

Ian Lawson, Diocesan Treasurer, noted the challenges ahead, but began his presentation by looking at the record in recent years. In 2022 there had been an operating surplus of £39k, due to reduced expenditure in the Covid lockdown and better than budgeted investment income from UTPs. The reduced expenditure arose principally from reduced mission and ministry expenditure and staff vacancies not immediately refilled.

The capital value of the UTP investments had in the meantime fallen, resulting in an unrealised capital loss of £1.28m leaving net assets of £6.1m. But this had to be judged against considerable earlier gains.

It had been possible to restore current reserves, in line with established policy but not hitherto achieved since 2020, to allow for 13 weeks of operational continuity in the event of income loss.

2023 Financial Report

In the year to date for 2023 income had been slightly ahead of budget. At the end of the 3rd quarter expenditure was 68% of budget. This margin could well be reduced by year end, as a result of us now having a full staff complement, and also some lumpy expenditure expected in Q4. But a small surplus was still likely.

2024 Budget

Expenditure was planned to increase by 9%, partly through increases in Provincial Quota, the effect of inflation and some significant expenditure on the Bishop's residence in the move towards carbon net zero. The Finance & Management Committee had given long consideration to various areas of proposed increases in expenditure but had conclude that there was little or no room for any significant savings, and so recommended the budget as presented, on the basis that the overall quota increase was restricted to 3%.

Questions and comments

Robin Quinn (Lay Representative, Christ Church Morningside). There had been mention of a Rectory 'green fund', but how much would that add to diocesan quota?

The Rev Diana Hall (Dunbar). She welcomed the news of funding for rectories, but reflected that it would need significant funds to meet the magnitude of the task.

The Rev David Paton Williams (Edinburgh St Columba's). If church halls were also to have energy performance certificates would funding be available for those in the same way as for rectories?

Ian Lawson responded to say that, in his presentation comments, his reference to a possible 8% increase in quota had been intended as illustrative only, and what would be needed if all the work was to be done in a single year.

Ian Lawson also responded that the provincial funding would be the major source of money for this, but it was hoped that some diocesan funding could be provided alongside such grants.

The Rev Valerie Cameron replied that the provincial funding was only for rectories at present.

The motion that Synod accepted the 2022 Diocesan Accounts was proposed by Ian Lawson and seconded by Godfrey Robson. The motion was carried UNANIMOUSLY

The motion that Synod approved the 2024 Diocesan Budget, and the required 3% increase in Diocesan quota, was proposed by Ian Lawson and seconded by Godfrey Robson. The motion was carried UNANIMOUSLY

The Bishop offered a vote of thanks to Ian Lawson for the clarity of his presentation and for his hard work on behalf the diocese.

The Dean Chaired from this point

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

The Rev Canon Dr Sophia Marriage (Convenor, Mission & Ministry Committee) updated Synod on this initiative. There had been a new momentum after Covid, with new thinking and growth. The Finance & Management Committee had created funding of £750k over 5 years and the progress on projects had been swift. There were 3 main priorities for the funding:

- To support congregations currently facing difficulties but where there was long-term growth potential.
- To develop a presence in new residential areas of high population growth, where we currently had no presence
- To support charges in areas of social need.

She then invited presentations from those who had received funding and support for mission and growth projects from the St Hilda's Fund.

The Rev Aaron Moffatt Jackman (Priest in Charge, Musselburgh,) reported that they had renovated the public and visible side of their church building, which also enabled outdoor events to be held. A men's shed group had built some large planters which had become a very visible and welcoming presence in the town, raising the Church's profile and enabling the community to engage directly with the congregation of St Peter's.

The Rev Jane MacLaren (Rector, Edinburgh St Philip's & St James'). She had taken on the role of Rector in 2020 on a short-term basis, initially. There had been no Treasurer and no person to oversee the care of the building. The Charge owned three other buildings, and the management responsibility for these was strangling the life out of the congregation. She approached the diocese and asked for help. She had been hugely encouraged by the unexpected response. A member of another congregation had taken on the role of their Treasurer, a member of the Diocesan Buildings Committee had convened a new buildings group and the diocese took on responsibility for managing major repair and improvement work on the Rectory. It had put money into, and practically managed, the renovation of the house, preparing it for letting, which provided a new income stream for the church. now a thriving congregation, now with fresh challenges but well equipped to meet them. Across the diocese, she believed we had an abundance of people qualified and equipped to manage rescues lie this, if we could regard ourselves as a single Diocesan family prepared to offer the kind of support that St James had been given.

Sophia Marriage felt that we were in a better place now, after Covid, to use larger sums of money, and more wisely. There were many signs of growth possibilities and we needed to fan those flames, with new building and expansion being seen in so many residential areas around the diocese. Any investment needed to be properly supported. Five initial projects had been identified which matched the 3 principles. She then invited a representative of one of the project recipients to update Synod on its progress.

Shirley Green (Lay Representative, Edinburgh St David's, Pilton) recollected, in the 1970s, the first Franciscans arriving at St David's. She thanked the diocese for its faith in Pilton which, with Granton and Muirhouse, had faced many challenges, and the question of closure had always been present. The renewed presence of the Franciscan brothers, through this project initiative, had already just in its first month been making a visible impact in the community. It was the first time in 40 years that there had been a priest from St David's living in the area. The diocese as a whole had made this possible, and she sincerely thanked everyone for the support and for giving them confidence in their future.

The Dean then invited representatives of two of the seven Area Councils to speak. The Councils had been invited to discuss the principles of Investing in The Future and how further projects might be identified for potential funding.

The Rev Peter Harris (Mid & East Lothian Area Council). He reported that the Area Council had welcomed the opportunity to discuss what was happening locally. It was noted that each charge within the Council area was unique. Three observations were presented to Synod.

1. An Area Council Mission Enabler might be appointed to be alongside each charge.
2. There should be proactive assistance provided for charges where new housing was being built.
3. There should be a review of linked charges across the diocese to consider the new opportunities they might present. In some cases, and with Diocesan support (personnel as much as funding), they might form the kernel for early new initiatives.

The Rev David Paton Williams (Edinburgh East Area Council). The Council had reflected on the significant new housing growth. It questioned how they could flourish, as no new community buildings were being planned within the developments. Consideration should be given to engaging with local councils to allocate such spaces and buildings. In addition, consideration might be given to setting up House Churches for meeting and prayer. Was there scope for greater collaboration across charges and Area Councils? Was there wisdom to be gained from looking at similar experiences in other areas of the UK?

The Dean reported that the Area Council minutes from the other five Councils would all be considered at the Standing Committee meeting in November, so that all the thoughts, questions and resource suggestions could be captured together.

The Bishop Chaired from this point

The Bishop confirmed the acts of Synod

The next meeting of Diocesan Synod would be held on Saturday 24 February 2024