

# Minutes of the Edinburgh Diocesan Synod held on 24 February 2024

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 8.30am

Clergy (72 Members)	Lay (69 Members)
• Attended – 49 (68%)	• Attended – 47 (68%)
• Apologies – 10 (12%)	• Apologies – 12 (17%)
• Total attending or submitting apologies – 59 (82%)	• Total attending or submitting apologies – 59 (86%)

---

## STANDING ITEMS

The Rev Canon Sarah Shaw, Synod Clerk, introduced members new to Diocesan Synod:

- David Munro, Alt Lay Rep, Musselburgh.
- Revd Andi Hofbauer, Priest in Charge, Hawick & Jedburgh
- Andrew Daye, General Synod Rep/Lay Rep for St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh
- Eckart Floether, St Margaret's, Edinburgh
- Jenny Floether, St Salvador's, Edinburgh
- Tim Horne, Alt Lay Rep, Christ Church, Edinburgh
- Nettie Mewha, Alt Lay Rep, Kelso
- Wilma Brown, Alt Lay Rep, Dalmahoy
- Myra Martin, Lay Rep, Mustard Seed, Edinburgh
- Revd Gavin Burnage, Priest in Charge, South Queensferry
- Stewart Smith: Lay Rep, St Michael and All Saints, Edinburgh
- Neil Stewart, Lay Rep, St Paul's and St George's, Edinburgh
- Revd John Bremner, Livingston
- Revd Matthew Rushton, Christ Church, Edinburgh
- Lesley Leishman, Lay Rep, Falkirk

Bishop John invited Synod to a moment of silence, marking the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

Bishop John then invited Synod to a moment of silence for those who had died since the last Synod:

- The Rev Sandy Ryrie
- The father of the Revd Markus Duenzkofer

Bishop John reported that Canon Janet McKinnell was standing down as the Warden of Lay Readers, and he wished to mark, with thanks, her long service in that role.

He also wished to ask Synod for its support in marking the long service of Eckart Floether by making him Lay Reader Emeritus

Finally, he asked Synod to confirm two new Lay Canons, nominated by the Cathedral Chapter. The first was John Stuart who, during 2024, would be retiring as General Secretary of the Scottish Episcopal Church after 28 years of service. The second was Godfrey Robson who had recently retired as Diocesan Secretary. Synod indicated its **SUPPORT** for all these proposals.

Bishop John spoke of his appreciation for the staff of the Diocesan Office. It had been a hard and challenging year, including additional work during his time overseeing the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney. Synod warmly acknowledged this, as they did the return of the Bishop's PA, Samantha Campbell, after a protracted period of illness

## **Bishops Address**

Bishop John reflected that the meeting was taking place in the context of a troubled world. It was often said that there were no bad people, just people who do bad things. On the other hand, the Christian faith proclaims that God loves each member of the human family, even though each of us falls short of the perfection God calls us to – that we are all caught up in a pattern of failure fed by the pride and selfishness

that we call sin. This might suggest that there are no good people, just people who do good things. Many conflicts were rooted in the past and decisions made by powerful individuals were themselves shaped by the history they had grown up within.

He went on to say that we all bore a moral responsibility for the decisions we make and, as Jesus told us, we are known by our fruits. In a troubled world, we needed to have a sense of the direction we wanted to travel in and, in Lent we were invited to explore again what it meant to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus.

The bishop spoke of the situation in Gaza being one of unalloyed horror and that whatever form of words we use, all of us want the killing to stop and the hostages returned. He thanked those who had publicly demonstrated and called for peace, and those who had voiced solidarity with the Scottish Jewish community, in the light of a rise of antisemitic abuse. This was not about taking the side of one set of victims against another, but about a yearning for justice and mercy, born from the call of Jesus to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Referring to the Synod agenda, Bishop John mentioned the Lent Appeal (to help children caught up in the conflict in Israel and Gaza), the quest for carbon net zero and the Investing in the Future initiative as examples of us putting our money where our mouth was. He pointed out that investing in the future is what we do, and we do it because we believe that it is what God did and does through Jesus Christ. God promises to be with us and to call us by name even in the deepest of dangers, and God is a God who can be trusted

*The full address was made available on the Diocesan website*

Bishop John then invited Dean, The Very Rev Frances Burberry, to present the proposal for his annual Lent Appeal. The beneficiary was to be the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, located on the Mount of Olives. It provided therapy and treatment for children from all areas of the Israel and Gaza conflict.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

---

### **Synod Minutes**

Synod unanimously **APPROVED** the minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 26 October 2023 at St Pauls & St George's Church in Edinburgh.

There were no matters arising

## Annual Reports

### Standing Committee

Due to the vacancy in the position of Diocesan Secretary, Simon Filsell, Diocesan Administrator, presented the report. He drew attention to the Diocesan Synod 2024 Annual Report which now published the details of each member of the Standing Committee and that they, individually, acted as full trustees of the Edinburgh Diocesan Synod as a charity.

***The motion that Synod approved the report of the Standing Committee was proposed by the Bishop and seconded by the Dean. The motion was CARRIED unanimously***

### Finance & Management Committee

Again, Simon Filsell presented the report. It had been a busy year for the committee, in finalising the Investing In The Future processes and handing over the delivery of the projects to the Mission & Ministry Committee.

He also highlighted some areas of work at the Diocesan Office. He thanked all of the Diocesan Office staff for taking on extra responsibilities during the year, partly whilst Bishop John had oversight of Aberdeen Diocese as an extra burden, and partly whilst his PA had been on long-term sickness leave. Nevertheless, 2023 had been the first year for some time when there were no staff vacancies, and this enabled the office to look forwards and develop. The staff were trying to find new ways of supporting vestries and congregations, particularly with the Online Support Forum now developed on the website. In addition, the office staff had relocated, for a day in October, to Melrose in order to be available to clergy and vestry members who would not normally have the opportunity to visit the Diocesan Office in Edinburgh.

Various initiatives had been taken at the office in the drive to carbon zero, including an online heating control system, so that radiators were only active in offices where staff – particularly part-time ones - were actually occupying them.

Miranda Heggie, Communications Officer, then commented on the feedback from the last Synod on communications in the diocese. There had been positive comment on The Communicant about its regularity and content. The publication had been redesigned and a new Events Calendar on the website had enabled congregations and other organisations to upload their events to a live diary system rather than being in The Communicant. There had also been positive feedback on social media, and she urged congregations to provide continued feedback on all areas of communication.

#### *Questions & Comments:*

The Rev Canon Sarah Shaw thanked everyone involved at the Diocesan Office for the improvements in communications.

***The motion that Synod approved the report of the Finance & Management Committee and its pendant committees was proposed by Bishop John and seconded by the Dean. The motion was CARRIED unanimously.***

#### Cathedral Accounts

The Very Rev John Conway, Provost of St Mary's Cathedral, presented the 2022-2023 Accounts. He commented that the last financial year had seen the final emergence from Covid. There had been many areas of increased expenditure, now with three stipendiary clergy. Cathedral income had increased, though there was much still to do. A rise in the level of tourism had helped donations, and £272k was now being received from rent and use of the buildings. Investments had been moved to an ethical portfolio. An analysis of expenditure showed that 32% of overall expenditure was for music, which was the heart of the Cathedral. He was pleased to report that there was now a waiting list for those wishing to become choristers. Further investment was still needed to secure the future, but unrestricted reserves were now building back up, following a gradual decline between 2018-2022.

Bishop John thanked the Provost and the Cathedral team for this encouraging report and commended them for the positive impact the Cathedral was making within the city.

## Safeguarding

Simon Filsell, Diocesan Administrator, presented the report having been the Diocesan Protection Officer for the first part of 2023. Other pressures on his administrative role had meant that he had become less able to devote time to this important work, and he was delighted that Joanna Appleby, an existing member of the Diocesan Office team, has been able to take over the Diocesan Protection Officer role, and was able to dedicate more time to the duties.

Joanna thanked Simon for his work as Diocesan Protection Officer over the previous 10 years and for his support as she took over.

She reported that John Wylie had been appointed as the new Provincial Safeguarding Officer, and that safeguarding training across the Province had now been reinvigorated. The initial focus on training workshops had been aimed at PVG Coordinators, but the plan was for members of the clergy to be prioritised in 2024. A new Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook, containing provincial material provided in a variety of publications, had been produced, and issued to each charge. During the year, nine new PVG Coordinators had been appointed, with all vestries following due process to obtain the Bishop's approval to the appointment before commencing work.

Joanna reported changes to the PVG scheme for 2025 which would see scheme membership being valid for only 5 years in the future. There was also legislation, making it a criminal offence to employ someone in a regulated role without a PVG check in place.

## **Elections**

Synod **ELECTED** the following:

General Synod (Clergy)

1. The Rev Ryan Bennett,
2. The Rev Dr Stephen Holmes (2nd term)
3. The Rev Canon Robert King (Borders Area Council)
4. The Rev Nicki McNelly (2nd term)

## General Synod (Lay)

1. Anne Martin (2nd term)
2. Tim Hatton (Borders Area Council)
3. Andrew Daye (Edinburgh South Area Council)

## Provincial Faith & Order Board

- The Rev Isaac Knight

## Provincial Mission Board

- The Rev Christine Downey

## Diocesan Standing Committee

- Michael Wood (Lay)

## Diocesan Mission & Ministry committee

1. The Rev Nicki McNelly
2. The Rev Elizabeth O'Ryan

## Diocesan Finance & Management Committee

- Robert O'Riordan (Convenor)

---

THE DEAN CHAIRED THE NEXT SECTION OF THE MEETING

---

## MISSION & MINISTRY

---

The Rev Canon Dr Sophia Marriage presented the Annual Report of the Diocesan Mission & Ministry Committee. She noted that, in May 2023, they welcomed Fiona Reynolds as the new Adviser for Christian Life. The appointment had enabled much work to move forward, including grants for those in Authorised Ministry, vestry training, as well as youth events. Fiona Reynolds then reported on her work, noting that there was still a difficulty in recruiting youth workers around the diocese.

Sophia Marriage, then reported on the funding which was available for mission and ministry work, including Continuing Ministerial Development grants for clergy, and the St Hilda's Mission Fund, which supported many ongoing projects around the diocese, including those with carbon zero targets at their heart.

***The Motion that Synod approved the reports of the mission and Ministry committee and its dependant committees was proposed by the Bishop and seconded by the Dean. This was PASSED unanimously***

### Investing In The Future

The Rev Canon Dr Sophia Marriage reflected that the Diocesan Finance & Management Committee had worked hard to release £750k for growth projects around the diocese. One such project already underway was in Selkirk and Galashiels. The Rev Lesley Penny, the Priest-in-Charge of the linked congregations, had been appointed in 2023 and reflected that, although they were both smaller congregations, the sense of community and support was proving the basis for many new ideas and initiatives. A 'memory care' event had been attended by 45 people, and youngsters aged 15 to 18 had attended a Messy Church event in Galashiels, with contact now being established with a number of local schools. She felt privileged to be leading the two churches, and thanked the Bishop and the Dean and all those who had supported her.



Area Councils were being encouraged to look at opportunities for projects which might be funded in the future. The Mission & Ministry Committee was not looking for fully-formed projects, but for ideas where the Bishop, the Dean and the Mission & Ministry Committee might have dialogue. These would need to align with the 3 principles of:

1. To support development of congregations in current difficulty but where we see longer term prospects for growth and development
2. To develop our presence in areas of significant housing and population growth
3. To support charges in areas of social need, which might or might not become completely self-supporting in time.

Sophia Marriage emphasised that all the projects were more about people than things.

Fiona Reynolds then spoke about lay learning and the Adventures In Faith initiative which had run in the diocese for around 10 years. Any training needs that she had become aware of had been publicised, but this needed better coordination and communication.

There were then discussions around tables led by the following questions:

- What courses, events or activities have inspired & shaped your journey of discipleship?
- What courses, events or activities might enable your continued growth in faith & abundant life?
- How best can we communicate opportunities to all members of the congregation?

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

---

Andrew Aveyard introduced himself as the new Convener of the Diocesan Environmental Group. He had taken over from Bethany Nelson, who was now one of the Provincial members of staff leading the drive towards Carbon Zero. He was looking to help on the journey to Carbon Zero, as well as improving communications. Jean Carletta then introduced herself as one of the members of the Diocesan Environmental Group. She had been responsible for setting up the Heat Hack organisation to help churches analyse their energy use and produce plans for reducing usage. She was looking to find those churches where heating systems were failing and those where heating system had recently been renewed.

The new Net Zero Team at the General Synod Office was now in place and Andrew Aveyard was hoping to work very closely with them, and connect with the congregations.

## LITURGIES

---

The Rev Rosie Addis introduced the proposed new Liturgies for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. Comments and feedback would be passed back for consideration at the 2024 General Synod.

### *Questions & comments:*

The Rev David Paton-Williams. This had been discussed at Area Council level. None of the charges were using the liturgies and there was an issue of disconnection with the material. There was no mention of world issues or environmental issues in the litanies.

The Rev Michael Johns-Perring. He was using the liturgies and they felt very positive.

Victoria Elliott. She had been running the feedback form on the Provincial website and encouraged comment via that.

The Rev Willie Shaw. He welcomed them as they have not been provided before. However, some of the language was felt to be over-literal.

The Rev Philip Blackledge. He felt that liturgy was not primarily about words but was also about silence and music. The ancient liturgies were refreshingly brief.

The Rev Peter Harris. He struggled with the statement that all churchmanship was reflected in the liturgies.

Rosie Addis thanked people for their comments and would feed these back to the Province. The Liturgies Committee would next be looking at funeral liturgies and any early thoughts would be welcomed.

## DIOCESAN SECRETARY

---

Bishop John paid tribute to Godfrey Robson for his service as Diocesan Secretary, particularly, through his health challenges. There were many people at Synod and around the diocese who have reason to be grateful for his gentle wisdom, and Bishop John was able to let him know that Synod had accepted his nomination to be a Lay Canon. A gift from the diocese was handed to him.

Godfrey Robson gave a note of sincere thanks to Synod and the diocese for the kind gift. He reflected that he had felt deeply privileged to be nominated as an Honorary Lay Canon. He had only ever sought to 'do the job' but had particularly enjoyed the visits around the diocese to see the work being done and to support it. He was incredibly humbled by the nomination. In reflecting on his time of 7 years as Diocesan Secretary, he had not felt it a burden and had made many friends across the diocese in the process. It had been during the recovery from Covid, and he had been struck, not only the diocese, but across the country of new young people expressing an interest in the church and in the Gospel, and decisions were needed about who would take on the work and the challenge they provided. He felt that, with the apostolic tradition and the liturgy of the SEC, we were well placed to attract new members and he left the question – “are we up for it?”

Synod gave long applause.

---

## THE BISHOP CHAIRED THE NEXT SECTION OF THE MEETING

---

## CANONS

---

### Canon 15 • Canon 16

Canon Dean Fostekew Introduced the proposed amendments as a member of the Canons Committee. Both were concerned with the admission of clergy to the SEC from other denominations and were between a first and second reading at General Synod. They sought to add clarity on how we worked with our ecumenical partners, stating what we could do and what we could not do.

*Questions and comments:*

The Rev John Bremner EMU Minister, Livingston. He commented on how much the proposals were welcomed as a positive step in supporting ministry in Scotland. He looked forward to greater collaboration as time went on.

The Rev Peter Harris. He asked for instructions and clarity on the references to Deacons and Deaconesses.

Bishop John responded that the title of Deaconess was an old lay order, and no new deaconesses were being made. They were to be differentiated from Deacons, which was an ordained order.

### Canon 35

Alexandra Plumtree introduced the changes as a member of the Canons Committee. She made it clear that the proposals were not contravening charges' constitutions, but it had been felt that the decisions under the Canon should also reflect the carbon zero guidance, and should be embedded where changes to church buildings were being proposed.

*Questions and comments:*

The Rev Matthew Rushton. He asked for clarity on the terminology in the Canon of 'adhere'. It seems to be guidance rather than legislation, and that such guidance should be provided direct for the Diocesan Buildings Committee, rather than being enshrined in a Canon.

### Canon 65

Alexandra Plumtree introduced the new Canon which would replace the existing one dealing with the subject of Safeguarding. Most of the Canon had not changed, but some parts sought to modernise the language, particularly as there had been new legislation and policies introduced since the Canon was first passed in the 1990s.

*Questions and comments:*

Amy-Jo Philip, Bo'ness. Why was the Resolution not a part of a Canon?

Alexandra Plumtree responded that Resolutions were easier to change in the future, so more items of detail tended to be included there instead of being enshrined within the Canon.

## AREA COUNCILS

---

The Very Rev Frances Burberry reported that Area Councils were a key part of the Synodical Structure. They provided the opportunity for Rectors, Priests-in-Charge, Lay Representatives and General Synod Members to present more local views. They were a somewhat variable presence at the moment, but had specific duties within the Diocesan Administrative Scheme and were asked to meet at least 3 times per year, with minutes to be sent to the Standing Committee, so that it could formulate the Synod agendas. The discussions around the Investing In The Future had provided ideal material for Area Councils to take on. The Dean invited discussions around tables and feedback would be taken to the next Standing Committee meeting in May.

### *Questions and comments:*

The Rev Willie Shaw. He asked for clarification of the roles of Area Councils.

Anne Martin. She asked whether a vestry could send another representative, if the appointed Lay Representative or Alternate Lay Representative was unable to attend? She also requested that Standing Committee provide suggested items for the Area Council agendas.

Shirley Green, St David's. She encouraged all Lay Representatives to put meetings dates in their diaries and do their utmost to attend.

Stephen Gillespie, South Queensferry. He asked for clarification on the reference that an Area Council was able to reallocate quota.

Phillip Sawyer, St Barnabas. He commented that Area Councils needed to turn words into actions. Better communication was also needed between Area Councils and the diocese.

The Dean responded that the reallocation quota was not a particularly formal aspect but was more about neighbours helping each other within an area Council. She acknowledged that better communication was needed between the councils and the diocese.

## FINANCE

---

Ian Lawson, Diocesan Treasurer, reported that the Diocesan Synod was very early in the year and that, although the audit had been carried out, there had been no time for any outcome to be reported.

In 2023 there had been an operating surplus of £47k. There had been a rise in investment values of £0.7m and net assets now stood at £6.85m. The General Fund saw a surplus of £15k in 2023 (£24k in 2022). The Investing In The Future and Transitional Support Grants were included in the Designated Funds section. A contingency element was now included in budgeting and £17k of the 2023 contingency of £20k has been used, mainly for the increased costs of the Clergy Conference.

In 2024 there was a budget increase of 9% on 2023, but quota had been restricted to a 3% increase. An unknown element was what diocesan matching-funding might be required for the Provincial Green Grants. This funding would probably be required sometime in 2024. The new legislation related to the Registration of Controlling Interests in Land was demanding that charges comply with the registration of three vestry members as associate owners of the properties within the charge. The registration needed to be completed by 31 March 2024 with penalties set up for non-compliance. It was strongly felt to be an unwelcome and unnecessary piece of legislation across the SEC and beyond, but it was recognised that it was now unavoidable. The Standing Committee had agreed that quota should not be used for the significant costs involved, and work had been done to source other funds to subsidise the work. It had been agreed that congregations would only be asked to contribute £250 per property and the rest would be centrally-funded.

### *Questions and comments:*

Stephen Gillespie, South Queensferry. He asked for clarification as to whether this would include the church and the Rectory as well.

Ian Lawson responded to say that it would include both properties, individually.

The Bishop thanked Ian Lawson for his clarity of presentation and for all his hard work in keeping the diocesan finances in excellent order.

## DEAN'S REPORT

---

Dean Frances took Synod through her reflections and involvements over the previous year, including:

- The Guntrip Trust, which exists to assist education and training in the field of human relations
- Preparatory Committee for the calling of a Bishop to Argyll & The Isles
- Involvement in nine appointments and installations of priests to charges around the diocese
- Vestry Training Days
- Meetings of the College of Deans
- Twelve Visitations of charges
- A visit by colleagues from Espoo Diocese
- Three Ordinations to the priesthood

Bishop John thanked the Dean for her unstinting hard work during the year, particularly whilst he was undertaking duties in another diocese as well.

## **THE BISHOP CONFIRMED THE ACTS OF SYNOD**