

## WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD the Second Session of the Eighteenth Synod

**St Peter's Baptist Church, Worcester  
on Saturday 5 March 2022**

**Opening prayers** were led by the Revd Francis Moloney, during which we prayed for all in Ukraine.



David Nichol raised a **question under standing orders**:

*In the face of the current climate emergency and the Church of England's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 what plans does the Diocese have to install charging points for electric vehicles in parsonage properties?*

Diocesan Secretary, John Preston responded by saying that charging points were currently being installed on request, with 3 or 4 completed so far. He explained that the parsonages team might look at block installation at some point, but are waiting to see how the technology develops before moving to that point.

**Announcements and statements** – John Preston proclaimed the 'Act of Synod' regarding Vacancy in See Committees as required.



Bishop John gave his **Presidential Address** which focussed on the situation in Ukraine and the religious dimension of the conflict. In the East, Christianity is thriving and Putin is at the heart of this post-Soviet revival with the invasion of Ukraine in part a spiritual quest. Putin has typically used faith to knock the West – he sees it as rejecting anything moral, ethical and Christian. Such is the centrality of Ukraine and Kyiv in particular to the Orthodox Church that they've been prepared to go to war. As we pray for the situation, we need to understand and remember this religious dimension. [Read the full address](#)

Synod elected a number of new people to the **Vacancy in See Committee** (which will only meet following the retirement/ resignation of the diocesan bishop). Those elected:

- Paul Latham (Dudley Archdeaconry). Paul is leading the Community Link project in Cradeley, and has a background as a director of health and safety in the construction and engineering sectors.)
- John Dentith (Worcester Archdeaconry). John is former Church Building Officer and a member of the Worcester Deanery Synod.
- Clare Stockford (Worcester Archdeaconry). Clare is Lay Chair of Kidderminster and Stourport Deanery, and worships at Chaddesley Corbett.
- Professor David Sims (Worcester Archdeaconry). David is a reader at Malvern Link, and is Emeritus Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Cass Business School.

### **Living in love and Faith**

Jonathan Kimber updated synod in his role as diocesan Advocate for LLF. [See his presentation here](#). He recapped the purpose and spirit of LLF, informed members about engagement thus far (with around 350 people completing the course to date and 80 attending a 'digging deeper' event) and explained the forthcoming process of discernment and decision-making (with proposals coming to the meeting of General Synod in February 2023).





There was an opportunity to discuss on tables the hopes that had been set out by the national team and feelings as to how the process had gone locally. Feedback included the worry that the LLF process didn't get the participation it needed or deserved as it happened at the wrong time and it will be important to extend this going forward.

### **Diocesan Transformation and Change – healthy and sustainable churches**

The Archdeacon of Dudley and Diocesan Leader of Transformation and Change, Nikki Groarke, gave an update on the change journey, together with some context and background for those newly elected, saying that now more than ever we need our churches to thrive that we might share hope in a despairing world, to be healthy and sustainable in their unique contexts.



Synod watched a short film giving an overall update on the programme ([watch it here](#)) and then Nikki explained more about the offer of Mission Accompaniers (MA), who will help parishes to engage with what it means for them to be healthy and sustainable. Nikki interviewed Adam Hadley in Kingswinford who is hoping to have a MA in his parish and Chris Sheehan from Evesham who will be one of the Mission Accompaniers. The discussion explained that the role of a MA will vary depending on the



individual context and situation of each parish. Some will focus on mission, others will look at how the church might become more sustainable. Synod also watched a short video with Simon Barrington and Ceri Harris who are working with Nikki on a consultancy basis to help get the scheme up and running. [Watch this here.](#)

Synod members had the opportunity to discuss progress to date and were asked for input on whether there are additional elements needed to resource parishes and enable local churches to thrive. Issues raised included helping churches with finance, pointing to the Everyday Faith resources, ensuring we reflect the suffering in many of our churches and making sure we don't overburden clergy and laity.

### **As the nation and the church hopefully emerge from the pandemic, Synod discussed “Where next for Church and Society?”**

The item was opened with input from Professor John Bryson, Enterprise and Economic Geography at the University of Birmingham who worships in the Diocese. Professor Bryson suggested the pandemic has done three things:

- It's been a discontinuity – a significant alteration of direction.
- It's been an inflection point – something which changes the future.
- It's accelerated a whole series of existing trends that already existed. For example:
  - The shift towards a high street of experiences – churches should be thinking about what it means to become an experiential church (which doesn't necessarily mean charismatic).
  - The shift towards multi-locational work or working from home – where that's possible. People no longer need to live in cities, and this provides opportunities for parishes in smaller towns which might be growing. Church buildings could become 'co-working spaces' – bringing those working from home together to give them some kind of community.



- The shift in climate change – we need to be forgetting about cars and ensuring everything we do is within 20 mins of where we live.

Professor Bryson suggested that it is important to know your parish. Change is not about money, but is about small actions that are micro-incremental changes that make a difference. There is power in collective small changes. Are some of the Church of England's rules holding back change? It's all about people and place. Listen to those in your parish and think about what you're doing. How does the church touch the people in their parish and what are the pathways to touch?



The synod also watched a film with reflections from members of the Children and Youth (Candy) in the Diocese. [Watch this here](#)

Synod had the opportunity to discuss some of the issues raised on their tables and feed back any comments.

The meeting was closed with a Eucharist led by Bishop John.

**Date of next meeting:** Monday 27 June, 7pm.