

**WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD**  
**A summary of the Third Session of the Nineteenth Synod**  
**and general meeting of the**  
**WORCESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED**  
**held at St Michael and All Angels Norton, Stourbridge on Monday 30 June 2025**

**Opening prayers** were led by the Revd Jon Evans, Vicar of St Michael and All Angels, Norton.

Diane Cooksey was **re-elected as Chair of the House of Clergy** following her move from Worcester to Greater Dudley Deanery.



Ben Somervell asked a **question under Standing Order 71:**

*"The Statement of Needs for our next Diocesan Bishop includes the following stipulation: "We need a bishop therefore who will be affirming of people who are LGBTQI+". What safeguards and provisions will be introduced to ensure that this divisive stipulation (of not just preferring an affirming bishop but \*needing\* one) does not hinder the mutual flourishing of those with minority views on this issue in our Diocese?"*



This was answered by Bishop Martin who reminded synod that the Diocesan Statement of Needs was drawn up by the Vacancy in See Committee. The committee has 24 members, including our General Synod members, and others elected by Diocesan Synod. It was a diverse group representing a broad range of views and they agreed the

statement unanimously. Bishop Martin also referred to the 2023 pastoral letter from the Bishops of the Church of England which said: *"We affirm, publicly and unequivocally, that LGBTQI+ people are welcome and valued: we are all children of God."* This was agreed by every bishop in the Church of England without exception.

The full paragraph in our diocesan Statement of Needs read:

*We need a Bishop who will be affirming of people who are LGBTQI+, honour and implement decisions made in General Synod, and who will wholeheartedly value, embrace, support and work with those whose convictions are different, committed to ensuring all are protected to flourish.*

The **proclamation of the Act of Synod for the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 2024** as amended February 2025 was read:

*"At the group of sessions of the General Synod held at Westminster in February 2025 the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 2024 in the form it takes following its amendment at that group of sessions was formally affirmed and proclaimed as an Act of Synod.*

*An Act of Synod is the embodiment of the will or opinion of the Church of England as expressed by the whole body of the General Synod. Copies of the Instrument proclaiming and affirming the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as an Act of Synod have been sent to members of this Synod."*



Bishop Martin gave his **Presidential Address** saying that we meet in turbulent times – climate change, violence in the US, conflicts across the world and attacks on our cyber security. We should pray for our government and wisdom in leadership and for all who work to keep us safe in this country.

As a diocese we're committed to climate and racial justice. This evening a new Racial Justice Charter will be presented following changes made after discussions at the last synod meeting. Our Annual Report and Accounts will also be presented, and Bishop Martin expressed his thanks to all those who have worked hard to pull it together and present it as straightforwardly as possible.

Bishop Martin also highlighted the request from the LLF Programme board to feedback on Living in Love and Faith proposals which have been put forward, which will enable the Board to hear from a wider group of voices than just bishops and General Synod members. There is some concern among bishops that Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM) is unsatisfactory, but the Programme Board wants to hear from diocesan synod members and that's what tonight's item about LLF is all about.

He concluded: "In all our conversations I hope that we can show the love described in 1 Corinthians 13 in the way we are with each other. Love that is patient and kind, not arrogant or rude or quick to take offense. In a world of such violence, division and polarisation, can we show courtesy and respect, and listen to each other."

[Read the full text of Bishop Martin's address.](#)

Chair of the Board of Finance, Wadham Downing gave a presentation on the **2024 Annual Report and Accounts**. [See his slides](#)

In 2024, the Diocese saw a net movement of funds of £4.7m and our net operating position was breakeven, achieved with help from our reserves and funds from the National Church. Income from ministry share compared to cost of ministry resulted in a deficit of just over £1m.



Wadham explained that this is a fragile situation – we want to use our reserves for growth, not to plug gaps.

Parish contributions fell in 2024 by £70k compared to 2023 (1.8%). To put this in context, we had the equivalent of 76 full-time stipendiary clergy in 2024, and Ministry Share paid for the equivalent of 55, with the balance being funded from reserves. None of our six deaneries met their full request in 2024. Wadham stressed that to build a sustainable future we must restore that balance.

Total assets stood at £90.8m. This remains a robust Balance Sheet, but the majority of our assets are long term investments assets and are not easily accessible.

Synod had the opportunity to ask questions.

Wadham then moved:

*Resolution No 1: “That the Annual Report and Accounts for 2024 of The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited be received.”*

*Resolution No.2: “That Crowe LLP be reappointed as Auditors to The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited”.*

These were both passed.

A draft **Racial Justice Charter** for our diocese had been brought to the March Synod for discussion. A final version, updated to reflect comments received, was presented for Synod’s approval by Bishop Martin and Kashmir Garton (co-chairs of the Diocesan Racial Justice Forum). They expressed their thanks for the way members had engaged with the process and the Forum had updated the charter following the feedback given.

The Charter was approved with 2 votes against and one abstention.

Synod took part in an informal consultation on the **Living in Love and Faith proposals** using materials put together by the LLF Programme Board. Synod was asked to discuss and provide feedback on the following:

- Draft proposals in respect of the option of holding a standalone or bespoke service in which the Prayers of Love and Faith could be used;
- A draft Code of Practice outlining how pastoral reassurance might be provided to those who feel they cannot be cared for in all respects by their diocesan bishop.



The item was led by Sam Setchell, diocesan Director of Communications. She shared with synod a short film with four people from across the Diocese outlining their viewpoints ([watch this here](#)) and feedback from a diocesan survey ([See the results](#)). Members then engaged with the questions from the LLF Programme Board using the online tool ‘Mentimeter’ which automatically collected responses which could then be shown on screen. Members discussed some of the questions in small groups, but there was no plenary discussion or overall vote as this was an informal consultation.

**Closing prayers** were led by Bishop Martin.

