October, 2022 Memorandum to Synod Members:

Here is a hopefully helpful precis of the Anglican Diocese of Leeds online Synod meeting held on Saturday, October 15, 2022.

Detailed minutes of that meeting will follow in due course, as per normal.

* The liberating power of God was the overarching message at the diocese’s 23rd synod, which met online and featured robust debates on subjects including Parish Share and the use of individual Communion cups.
* The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds used his Presidential Address to concentrate thoughts on the “big vision” of the diocese, sound in the knowledge of God’s strong and encouraging presence.
* Acknowledging this as a time of exceptional political and economic turmoil, Bishop Nick said: “We are about the business of Almighty God, creator, sustainer and redeemer of the cosmos. A biblical vision of God is bigger and broader than our narrow perceptions, our limited priorities and passionate commitments. It is God’s kingdom we serve, and that kingdom is shaped by God’s character which is rooted in love, mercy and justice.”
* A full copy of Bishop Nick’s address can be read [here](https://www.leeds.anglican.org/news/synod-hears-how-liberating-power-god-gives-support-turbulent-times).
* Synod heard a report from our representatives on General Synod from the most recent meeting, which took place in July 2022 in York. Topics there included the war in Ukraine and the Church of England’s path to carbon net zero, while Team Leeds also had success on the social side, winning the General Synod Quiz.
* There was then a discussion around Parish Share, which started with an informative presentation from Diocesan Chief Financial Officer Geoff Park. Synod heard about the recommendations of our Parish Share review, which led to a useful debate about its importance and effective communications about the positive things enabled by paying share.
* Synod then passed a motion regarding lay representation on Deanery Synods, before moving into our Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance company members’ meeting, where a motion making some minor changes to our committee memberships, to make sure we have the proper expertise on our committees, was approved.
* Synod engaged in a robust and substantial debate around a motion from the Outer Bradford deanery calling on the Church of England to withdraw its opposition to the use of individual cups in Communion. Many interesting points were raised in the debate, including comments about canon law, theology and health. The successful debate showed the broad range of views in our church, and highlighted the importance of respectful and thoughtful discussion. Voting was was close, but the motion was not carried.
* Synod then passed three motions approving new deanery representation schemes for our three cathedrals, before moving into looking at the 2023 Diocesan Budget, which was approved after another presentation from Geoff Park.
* Finally, Synod ended with an update from Diocesan Secretary Jonathan Wood on our church support and deployment work, which now has the title ‘Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence’. Jonathan shared our vision for this work, rooted in the story of Barnabas, who supported early churches, investing in them and training others to do the same.
* Bishop Nick closed the meeting with a blessing.
* Diocesan Synod will meet again in March 2023.
* Bishop Nick welcomed clergy and lay members and in his Presidential Address he listed the pressing issues that face the world, and the church, in this time of political, social and humanitarian challenges.
* And he explained how both the Bible and Christian vocation require engagement with those challenges in the glare of the public square:
* “Some of the foundational texts from which our western democracies have derived their legitimacy and development – especially the particular settlement in the United Kingdom – are rooted in certain judgments and commitments.
* “Notions of human rights and the rule of law did not drop from heaven and are not self-evidently right.
* “If we claim that human beings matter and have value, or that truth and justice matter, we have to ask on what basis we make that claim.
* “For Christians it is that every human being is made in the image of God.”
* After Bishop Nick’s Address, the 2021 Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance Annual Report and Financial Statements were noted, following presentations by Irving Warnett, chair of the Financial Assets and Investments Committee and Geoff Park, diocesan Chief Finance Officer.
* Mr Warnett said that while diocesan finances were in better shape than had been anticipated, there remained the prospect of a £900k deficit for the current year.
* He thanked Synod members and parishes for monies received through Parish Share and welcomed the Church Support and Deployment initiative, which aims to support parishes and nurture growth.
* “You cannot cut your way out of a deficit, you have to grow your way out of a deficit,” Mr Warnett said.
* Geoff Park said: “2021 turned out to be a relatively positive year, despite the deficit and now the question is – where do we go from here?”
* Synod member Joyce Hill complimented the use of clear graphics in the Finance Annual Report – in particular the use of bar charts that showed the significance of Parish Share: “You don’t have to be an accountant to understand these and I’d urge that they are supplied to Synod members and transmitted to every parish.
* “You can see clearly how Parish Share is so important, just by looking at these bar charts,” she said.
* Following the departure of Bishop Jonathan Gibbs to become Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Nick performed the statutory task of asking Synod for its opinion on whether he should request that the role of Area Bishop for Huddersfield should continue. This was agreed overwhelmingly by a show of hands.
* Jonathan Gough, Archdeacon of Richmond and Craven, moved that Synod should receive the Annual Reports of Diocesan Teams, and this was duly passed following a presentation by Diocesan Secretary Jonathan Wood on the exceptional work of the Safeguarding Team.
* Synod then heard an introductory presentation from Outer Bradford Deanery on a motion to be debated at October’s meeting, regarding the use of the Common Cup.
* Diocesan Secretary Jonathan and Revd Jude Smith, Director of Church Revitalisation presented an update on the diocesan Church Support and Deployment initiative, which seeks to engage with parishes and identify tailored ways and means of providing support and resources to enable growth.
* Following group discussions, feedback stressed the need to communicate positively with clergy and laity and that best progress would be made if this was a collaborative process where individual needs and circumstances were discussed in context.
* Special thanks was given to our diocesan interns, who helped manage the practicalities of the day at St George's.