

“The power of praying together”

Summary of Diocesan Synod

Saturday, 17 October 2026



The 150th meeting of the Derby Diocesan Synod gathered at Cliff College, near Baslow, to consider the business of the day, worship together and catch up with friends and colleagues. The opening worship was led by Daniel Cooke, Area Dean of North East Deanery, who encouraged everyone to turn to the person next to them, and discover what we could pray for which would be a help to them. This warm and collaborative session set the tone for the meeting, with a sense that whatever the challenges ahead, we are all in it together, working alongside one another to serve God and our parishes.

Presidential Address

Bishop Jackie's presidential address focused on the power of prayer and generous faith, noting that we would be soon discussing the Derby Diocesan Board of Finance (DDBF) budget, which gave the opportunity to consider how the Common Fund enables the provision not just of ministry, but also of essential central services to support each parish in their work. She referred to how quickly the world shifts around us, touching on both the upsides and limitations of artificial intelligence, and recommending the Pope's encyclical, *Magnificat Humanitas*, which sets out that the dignity and value of the human being cannot be replaced by algorithms.

Feedback on how Synod meets and functions

The next session, led by Diocesan Secretary Will Hagger, fed back to Synod on the response to recent feedback about how Synod meets and functions. These improvements include genuine debate, greater opportunities for discussion, valuing the relationships within Synod, and ensuring we move forward together in the spirit of positivity. The need for clear and relevant content at meetings was acknowledged.

Above all it was noted that expectations are changing – increasingly members expect these things and now want to know what difference their contribution makes.

A question about Low Income Community (LinC) funding followed, and Will updated that LinC funding, which supports our more deprived communities, was around £1.4m, which didn't cover all the things we would wish to do.



Budget

Mark Titterton, Chair, introduced the next item by noting that members of Synod are also members of the DDBF, and in approaching budget discussions, we need to accept that relying on a drawdown from reserves to meet the deficit gap is not a sustainable model for the future. Synod then watched a video from Bishop Jackie, Sam Frith, Director of Strategy and Engagement, Matt Barnes, Director of Mission, and Archdeacon Emma Sykes about how we can face into this financial challenge honestly, not simply as a cost-cutting exercise, but discerning together how mission, ministry and church life need to change so that they can flourish sustainably.

The way forward will require us to learn the lessons of the past, with local discernment and transformation recognising that a church cannot be everything to everyone. With PCCs, Synod and diocesan leaders sharing responsibility for shaping the future together, we remain rooted in hope and the continuing mission of sharing the good news of God's Kingdom.

Questions were raised about whether the Parish Support Team and Bishop's Leadership Team could help with facilitation of local meetings to discern missional focus and discuss future options and difficult budget decisions. Sam responded that current thinking was that the missional conversations would be led by clergy in their own contexts, but that some of the follow-up meetings about implications for the shape of ministry and budgets would be facilitated.

However, he expressed that diocesan leaders are keen to be helpful and to listen to feedback, and will pull together training materials and consider options for facilitation. Synod members were invited to make further suggestions, and the potential role of Deanery Leadership Teams emerged as a theme from the initial feedback. A suggestion from the floor that PCCs pulled together groups on this was well received.

Synod considered two questions following from this topic, around what PCCs might need, and what good local engagement would look like. Suggestions included clear and accessible information, and two way communications, especially regarding what other churches are doing which is successful. There was also a clear request that engagement would benefit from clear financial information and more details about the work of the parish support engagement group.

Martyn Marples, Director of Finance and Operations, then presented the 2027 Budget and its underpinning data, showing that the forecast deficit in 2026 would be followed by another deficit year in 2027. He reiterated that this was not a sustainable position. The intention set by Bishop's Council is that DDBF will be operating a balanced budget by 2031, drawing nearer to that each year in the interim.

Questions were asked about the increased cost of safeguarding, and Will responded that as well as funding preparation work for the INEQE audit in 2027, additional team resources were required to respond to an increased volume of safeguarding activity being reported – the team's work in response makes the church a safer place.

Martyn also explained that practical help would be available to churches, such as ensuring Gift Aid was being claimed, and there was a request for information to be shared with communities about what the church locally is asked to contribute.

Ian Blaney, the Registrar, moved to ask Synod to approve the budget of £11,661,035 and this was passed, with five abstentions.

Education

Sarah Anderson, Director of Education, gave a presentation about the education function and how the Diocesan Board of Education supports church schools. Sarah, who is newly appointed, made a commitment to visit every school in the Diocese in her first year and has already made inroads into this target. Her wish to see the flourishing of our schools, teachers and pupils was clear to see.

Final comments and considerations

In moving towards the final sessions of the meeting, Bishop Jackie updated that permission has been given to recruit to the See of Repton, and that the timetable had been set out. During this time of discernment, Bishop Jackie is having conversations with those who may be being called, and an advisory group is supporting this work. The aim is to interview in December with a view to an announcement in March.

Martyn proposed a change to Deanery representation at Synod to continue to enable a laity majority, which would comprise 54 lay seats, 51 clergy, three ex-officio, and the ability of the Bishop to co-opt a further ten representatives to contribute specific skills. This motion was passed.

Will updated Synod on recent funding requests. The first, of £102k for a minor repairs and improvements grant fund to be administered by the Church Buildings Officer, has been approved. We wait to hear on the outcome of a £112k request for a Locally Commissioned Lay leadership programme, and expect to hear in November.

Finally, the names of the six successful candidates to sit on General Synod were shared, and both successful and unsuccessful candidates thanked for their generosity in putting themselves forward.