

# **Diocesan Synod Summary – 19 March 2026**

## *Faith in Public and Local Life*

Diocesan Synod met on 19 March for an evening of substantial discussion about faith lived out in public life, responsible stewardship of resources, and the Church's presence in communities facing the greatest challenges. As always, the Synod began with worship which on this occasion focused on the Beatitudes; it was led by clergy serving some of the most deprived parishes in Leicester.

### **Presidential Address**

In his presidential address, Bishop Martyn invited Synod to reflect on what it means to live out Christian faith beyond church walls, in the public square and in the realities of everyday life. Drawing on his recent experience in the House of Lords, he spoke candidly about debates on abortion, assisted dying, immigration, policing and rising living costs, noting the depth of feeling and strongly held but opposing views that characterise these conversations.

Rather than focusing on policy details, the Bishop encouraged Synod to consider how Christians engage with such issues: with honesty, care and love, rooted in faith. In essence this is what we call "everyday faith" – the call to live as Christians in all places and circumstances. He linked this explicitly to the Synod agenda, suggesting that decisions about assets, funding, land and investment are not merely technical or administrative, but are deeply connected to how the Diocese expresses its faith in action, particularly among those most affected by social and economic pressures.

### **Barclays Bank Motion**

Using a procedure introduced under the 2024 Standing Orders, Joel Plant brought a motion concerning the Diocese's banking arrangements with Barclays. Introducing the motion, Joel Plant invited Synod to consider whether continuing to bank with Barclays was consistent with Christian commitments to responsibility, care for creation and concern for future generations. The motion was explicitly framed as advisory, recognising that ultimate responsibility for banking decisions rests with the Diocesan Board of Finance.

An amendment was proposed, acknowledging the concerns raised while emphasising the practical challenges of changing banks and the importance of ongoing engagement and influence. The discussion that followed reflected a diversity of theological, ethical and financial perspectives. Some speakers argued strongly that continuing to bank with Barclays amounted to complicity in harmful practices, particularly in relation to fossil fuels, and that taking a clear stand was a matter of Christian witness even if it involved inconvenience or risk. Others cautioned against potentially simplistic solutions, pointing to the complexity of the banking system, the Diocese's responsibility to ensure financial stability, and the potential consequences of frequent changes in banking arrangements.

There was also debate about whether active engagement and shareholder influence could realistically bring about change, or whether more decisive action was now required given the length of time concerns had already been raised nationally. Following the debate, Synod voted first on the amendment, which was defeated, and then on the original motion calling for reconsideration of diocesan banking arrangements, which was carried by a substantial majority.

### **Stewardship, Assets and Glebe**

Synod was then introduced to the work of the Assets and Liabilities Committee, chaired by Alan Fletcher. Synod members heard an overview of the Diocese's glebe estate, much of which consists of farmland scattered across the county. The presentation outlined how the estate generates income, the variety of tenancy arrangements involved, and the strategic approach to land sales – including promoting land on the edges of settlements, waiting for vacant possession where appropriate to maximise value, and reinvesting proceeds to achieve better long-term returns. It was emphasised that decisions about sales are taken case by case, balancing income generation with responsible stewardship.

The wider investment picture was also sketched out, including the Diocese's use of professional investment managers and the importance placed on ethical considerations. Members were reminded that the overarching aim is to secure sustainable income to support clergy and mission, while maintaining capital value over time. A brief update was also given on the Diocese's housing policy, highlighting its role as an operational rather than purely investment asset and its close connection to pastoral and archidiaconal oversight.

### **LInC Funding: Ministry in Areas of Deprivation**

The next item looked at LInC (Lowest Income Communities) funding provided by the national church to support ministry in areas of deprivation. Introducing the session, Claire Bampton explained the Diocese's focus on ensuring that resources are directed equitably towards the most deprived communities, particularly in the context of developing Minster Communities and reviewing how ministry is sustained in challenging contexts.

Synod then heard directly from Clare King, Vijay Kumar and Rob Hinsley, three clergy working in LInC-funded areas. They shared stories of patient, relational ministry rooted in presence and trust, including examples of food hubs offering both practical support and community connection, informal spaces for conversation and prayer, outreach that fosters belonging before belief, and small but deeply significant steps of faith such as adult baptisms.

Speakers from the floor challenged assumptions that deprived communities are resistant to faith or unable to contribute. On the contrary, they described communities that are generous despite having little, open to relationships, and eager to participate when treated with dignity and respect. There was reflection on the cost of such ministry – emotionally, spiritually and financially – and the importance of

sustained support rather than short-term outputs or quick results. Discussion also explored how LInC funding is allocated, how it relates to wider ministry planning within Minster Communities, and the need for clarity, transparency and good communication with parishes. There was also interest in whether the name “LInC” adequately captures the vision behind the funding, and how stories of hope and transformation might be shared more widely across the Diocese.

### **Final Business**

The evening concluded with written and supplementary questions touching on a range of topics including clergy deployment, safeguarding, and progress towards net zero carbon targets. A motion providing for representation of four Bishop’s Mission Orders on their respective deanery synods was passed and an amending canon approved by General Synod was formally promulgated.

The meeting closed with prayer led by Bishop Saju.