

A SUMMARY OF THE WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD
the Sixth Session of the Nineteenth Synod
and a general meeting of the
WORCESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED

Held at St Michael and All Angels Church, Norton, Stourbridge on Monday 6 July 2026

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

There was one **question under Standing Order 71** from Hugh Richards asking about the measures our diocese has in place to enable, value and support retired clergy in their continuing ministry. This was answered by Bishop Hugh. The full question and Bishop Hugh's response can be [read here](#).

A formal announcement was made regarding **Amending Canon 44** which facilitates Ministers' exercise of ministry as Armed Forces Chaplains. This measure had received Royal Assent earlier in the year.



Bishop Hugh's address focused on the one word he's heard more than any other when he's been out and about in the Diocese: 'Busy'. Bishop Hugh said: "Invariably people say – you must be so busy, or I'm sure you're too busy. Or 'if only we weren't so busy', 'we're a very busy church'."

He said that there was no golden age when people didn't have more to do than they had time to do it. Having too much to do is not new. This is also not a challenge for the church alone to deal with - the experience of being too busy is universal. However, we need to take people's busy-ness seriously.

Bishop Hugh suggested three causes for this 'busy-ness'

1. Busy-ness is seen as a marker of value.
2. We are overwhelmed by information and by choice.
3. The real cause of busy-ness is not in our diaries but in our hearts.

He then offered four simple suggestions as to things we could do:

1. Remember that God is God and we are not. Hope comes from God. Real, purposeful activity comes from that hope. Disciplines of prayer and worship and self-giving are part of that. There is a saviour, thank God it's not you!
2. Words that we use matter. Things that we show we value through those words mean even more. Refuse to use the word busy and find different ones.
3. Remember the sabbath and keep it holy – this has somehow become the optional commandment for when we have time. We should remember that God is responsible for the world, not us.
4. Do a few things and do them really well. There will always be more possible activities that you could do, but which you will not have time to do. Discern carefully, listening to God, make the necessary choices and then commit. 'No' can be a good and Godly word.

Bishop Hugh concluded "I hope this will be the beginning of a conversation. Above all my hope is that in the midst of everything that we have to do, that we remember that we are Kingdom People called to live the way of Jesus in this beautiful and broken world and we have been given all that we need to be who we are. 'Do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself.'"



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

WORCESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The Chair of the Board of Finance, Wadham Downing, presented the **2025 Annual Report and Accounts** thanking the diocesan team for producing the accounts at the year end. He said:

“In 2025 we made an overall slight deficit of £0.1m and in the current climate that’s a real success story. However, we are still using our reserves to achieve this position and this balance is fragile. Ideally, we want to use our reserves for long

term growth, not to cover gaps. Parish contributions grew slightly in 2025 (£3,971k up 2.2% from £3,883k in 2024). This is positive but doesn’t keep pace with inflation. None of our six deaneries paid their parish share in full. In aggregate, contributions from parishes only pay for 64 of our 72 stipendiary clergy, which is not sustainable.

The diocesan assets less our liabilities give us a £89.3m net asset position. While this is a strong position, most of these are held in long term funds. We should be focussing these on supporting growth.

We are confident that we would remain solvent in a crisis. At the end of 2025 we were operating in line with our cash reserves policy, holding slightly more than 5.1 months’ expenditure.

In summary, we achieved a generally breakeven position in challenging conditions. Assets are strong but are not easily accessible and although our reserves are healthy, we’re relying on them more than we’d like.”

[See Wadham’s slides](#)

There was an opportunity for Synod to ask questions, which included the financial challenge of rural ministry, statutory fees and the Total Return policy.

On behalf of the Bishop’s Council and Standing Committee in their capacity as the Directors of the DBF, the Chair of the DBF moved:

Resolution No 1: “That the Annual Report and Accounts for 2025 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 unanimously.

WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD

Jennie Johnson, Director of the **West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative**, updated Synod regarding progress in the initiative and its future direction.

She explained that the work of racial justice across six dioceses is a brave project which is shaped by our values:

- Collaboration - recognising that transformation happens together with our relational partners in the six Dioceses and beyond.
- Diversity - honouring the voices and experiences God brings into the community, especially those who have experienced racialised harm.



- Integrity - acting with honesty and mutual respect as we tell the truth about racial injustice and act faithfully to end it.
- Shared Purpose - remembering that the work of racial justice participates in God's larger mission to the world through partnership with Holy Spirit

Jennie explained that all of us are invited to participate in Racial Justice and we can take part wherever it is that we live, learn, or play. She said: "When we value diversity, we see the many different ways in which God connects us together. We need to take the time to listen to those who were either historically or currently marginalised. We recognise that not everyone agrees with us all of the time, but if we believe that God created all of us then we should treat each other with respect."

The work of the West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative is focussed on the Church of England's 'From Lament to Action' report. This includes work in education, making sure our young people are central and offering the opportunity to influence and work with the citizens of the future across the six dioceses. The group is also working on governance structures which don't always reflect the communities we serve, to ensure that different voices are heard. WMRJI has done some data collection and will be feeding that back soon.



Jennie also highlighted the microgrants that are available to move racial justice work forward within parishes. WMRJI would love to support parishes with projects – do get in touch with them with any ideas. ([Find some suggestions here](#)) She also encouraged synod members to sign up to the newsletter ([Do this here](#)).

Jennie concluded by saying "Please pray for us. God calls us to invite all people to be with him, yet it is highly contested in every single sphere."

Synod had the opportunity to ask questions including asking for examples of microgrants and advice for school governors.

Steve Hollinghurst, Diocesan lead for the **New Worshipping Communities Priority** within the Transformation Programme, presented an update for Synod on progress, learnings to date, and emerging thinking regarding next stage of the priority.



Steve spoke about the reason we are working to have a 'mixed-ecology' in the Church of England, explaining that the majority of people who say they're Christian in the census talk about how they've been brought up, not what they believe and that there has been a huge shift from people saying they are Christian towards people saying they have no faith. Steve explained some of the statistics behind belief (or not) in God in our society, saying that new worshipping communities

(NWCs) are about how we connect with those who have no church background whatsoever. They often come from a place of experimentation. They are not about calling people to where you are, but creating something new together.

The Diocese has a target of 100 NWCs by 2030 and are well on the way to reaching it – we currently have about 68. However, we don't necessarily know about all of our NWCs, nor are the team told when they are no longer running.

Steve talked through what the key priorities are in this area including offering support from the national church through Greenhouse as an umbrella for training those starting out in NWC leadership and creating learning communities for staff teams. Steve is also developing approaches to NWCs in areas of new housing and working to address the particular context of rural mission.

[See Steve's slides](#)



Chris Ottershaw, Parish Resources Officer, presented a report on **the use of Lowest Income Communities (LInC) Funding**. He explained that each year, the National Church grants our diocese a sum of money to support and develop ministry in communities with the most deprived populations, and it is now a condition of the grant that dioceses should report on the use of LInC funding to their Diocesan Synods. Chris explained that we had received a total grant of £848,513 in 2025, which was used to support the most deprived area in paying their Ministry Share as well as supporting projects in these areas. These projects include the Cradley Heath Community Link, a Children and Families' worker in our most deprived area in Worcester and the iSingPop project's work with LInC communities.

Synod was asked to discuss the issue of using LinC funding to support the hidden deprivation found in rural areas and how we can encourage LInC-eligible churches to utilise the component of LInC set aside for missional projects, which has been underspent in previous years.

At the recommendation of Bishop's Council, as the Standing Committee of Diocesan Synod, members approved an **amendment to Standing Orders** to enable the proper functioning of the process for General Synod elections during 2026 which devolved certain powers down to the Area Dean or another appointed person if there is no Deanery Synod Secretary.

Bishop Hugh highlighted the **150th Anniversary of the Mothers' Union** and a celebration in the Cathedral which is happening on Tuesday 24th November at 2 pm, to which all are welcome.

Bishop Hugh asked members to spend some time in silence before closing the meeting with prayer.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 2 November 2026 at 7pm, at St Helen's Church in Worcester.

