

Peterborough Diocesan Synod

Autumn Session

Christ the King, Kettering
Saturday 10 October 2026

1. Opening prayer

Bishop Debbie opened Synod in prayer, reflecting on the words from Joshua, 'Sanctify yourselves.' She invited members to consider whether all that they do draws them closer to God and encouraged this perspective to shape Synod's discussions and decisions.

2. Conversation with Bishop Alex

Bishop Debbie introduced Bishop Alex and led a conversation about his background, ministry and family, giving members an opportunity to get to know him better.

Bishop Alex said that a favourite Bible verse is Isaiah 43, 'I have called you by name and made you my own'. He spoke about his portfolio responsibilities of vocations, education and pastoral leadership, explaining that he wants clergy and ministers to feel valued and supported

3. Introduction from the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance

Alice Cooper introduced herself as the new Chair of the Peterborough Diocesan Board of Finance and outlined her role within the new aligned governance arrangements. She explained that the arrangements are intended to align the Diocese's finances and operations more closely with its vision and mission.

4. Annual Report and Accounts 2025

Alice Cooper introduced the Annual Report and Accounts, supported by the presentation circulated for the meeting. She explained that the DBF is responsible for stewarding our resources to fund mission and ministry. Expenditure of £11.86M included £7.9M of direct clergy costs, £2.35M supporting parish ministry and £0.55M in grants and donations. Income was £10.07M including £6.1M of Parish Share, £2.1M from Investments and £1.14M in donations. Alice explained that the DBF is committed to tackling the structural deficit by developing a sustainable ten year financial strategy.

Members were given time to consider the accounts before questions were invited.

- Members expressed thanks for the clarity and communication of the accounts.
- A request was made for clear parish-facing information explaining the full cost of clergy ministry, including housing.
- The importance of stabilising the financial position while developing a longer-term plan to move away from the structural deficit was emphasised.
- The longer-term approach will include encouraging generosity in parishes and ensuring that diocesan assets, including glebe land, work effectively within the Diocese's ethical framework.

- It was confirmed that discussions are taking place with other dioceses and the national Church.

5. 2027 budget

Russ Beese introduced some background to the budget being proposed; outlining the work undertaken with staff teams to develop and scrutinise departmental budgets and emphasising the importance of openness and transparency about the challenges facing the Diocese.

Russ emphasised the need to align affordability with mission-shaped priorities and diocesan aspirations, while remaining transparent and disciplined in the use of assets. The ten-year financial plan aims to strengthen sustainability, support parishes and improve Common Fund collection rates.

Alice Cooper then introduced the financial position and proposed budget for 2027. The key figures are income of £11.1M and expenditure of £13M resulting in a deficit of £1.9M, broadly stable with the current position against cost inflation.

- The budget had been developed using zero-based budgeting.
- A review of the building portfolio and other assets was under way within an ethical framework.
- The Common Fund was being introduced, with continued engagement and resources planned for parishes.
- Open channels of communication would remain important throughout the work.

Alice Cooper introduced the proposed budget accepting that this year is a holding year to allow some space for the vision and strategy to be decided and the finances to be aligned with those missional priorities. One of the factors causing the structural deficit to persist is that the amount of Parish Share received (£6M/annum) is the same as in 2016 and since then compound cost inflation is 41%. The budget assumes that the collection rate remains at 78% of Parish Share and the impact of a percentage point move in the collection rate is about £85,000.

She emphasised the need to be faithful and optimistic while remaining honest about the challenges and exercising faithful stewardship.

Questions and discussion included:

- whether the Diocese could be more ambitious and secure further improvement during 2027;
- the need to strengthen communication and engagement with parishes and share more clearly how diocesan resources support mission and ministry;
- the importance of strengthening deanery input into future budget conversations; and
- the impact of new housing developments on mission and future planning.

DECISION: Synod voted in favour of accepting the 2027 budget.

6. Children, young people and families

Chad Chadwick and Corinne Stefanowicz, representing the Children, Young People and Families team, presented on the importance of investing in younger generations and keeping this work central to the life and mission of the Diocese. They spoke passionately about the impact of this vital ministry on their own faith and careers as well as what they have witnessed in parishes they have served.

7. Anna Chaplaincy

Liz Kelly, Diocesan Lead for Anna Chaplaincy, introduced the ministry of Anna Chaplaincy in the Diocese and explained how parishes could become involved in this vital ministry supporting and walking alongside older people in our communities. Synod heard that the number of Anna Chaplains was growing and that the role could be voluntary or paid and lay or ordained.

8. General Synod report and elections

Chris Banks introduced the Dean of Peterborough, Chris Dalliston, who gave a report from the most recent session of General Synod, reflecting that the last session was his final one as a representative for the Diocese. Chris Dalliston noted:

- The transparency of Synod is needed. Its main purpose is to pass legislation which does impact on parishes
- The new Festival of Creation and remembering the 21 martyrs of Libya were passed
- Safeguarding is moving towards independence and the Redress scheme is being launched.
- The discussion of neurodiversity and inclusion in the Church
- The impact of division in the nation and how the Church can make a difference.
- The contention surrounding Christians in the Holy Land and the amendment to affirm those in LGBTQIA relationships.

Notice was given that voting for the next General Synod elections was drawing to a close.

9. Vacancy in See and the next Diocesan Synod triennium

Russ Beese referred to the Vacancy in See motion passed at the previous session of Synod which has now been implemented and affirmed.

He also announced the timetable and arrangements for the next Diocesan Synod triennium, which will commence on 1 August 2027.

10. Diocesan Board of Education governance

Bishop Alex gave an update on the governance of the Diocesan Board of Education, reflecting on his recent appointment as Chair and the review of its legal and governance functions. The DBE has taken advice and has two options which are either:

- To remain an unincorporated body and become a sub committee of the DBF
- To become an incorporated body and its own legal entity separate from the Diocese.

A consultant has been appointed to help aid this process of reflection. The DBE will consult the DBF as part of its stakeholder engagement during this process.

Bishop Alex also noted that Andrew Read is currently acting up in an interim basis as the Director of Education to maintain leadership following the departure of the former Director of Education.

Bishop Alex invited questions to be sent by email.

11. Time for Questions

No questions were raised under standing order 70.

12. Governance review

Following lunch, Chris Banks gave an update on the diocesan governance review on behalf of the working group, which also includes Alice Cooper and Beverley Hollins.

The proposed structure would bring the Bishop's Council, Diocesan Board of Finance, Mission and Pastoral Committee and Parsonages Board into a single aligned body after the new Diocesan Synod is elected next summer.

The review aims to provide greater clarity and transparency, including the purpose of each sub-committee and the responsibilities of members and trustees.

Chris explained that the proposals followed Andy Brookes' governance review, which recommended changes to the Diocese's structure and culture.

Members discussed how to encourage more people to offer themselves for roles on the new Diocesan Council and its sub-committees, how to make the bodies more representative and how to involve more younger people.

Discussion included:

- the benefits and potential consequences of bringing decision-making bodies together, noting the continued importance of sub-committees;
- how accountability and transparency would be *strengthened*, and how people could contribute and be heard;
- the impact of clergy vacancies on Synod membership;
- the need for clear role descriptions and accessible information on the diocesan website;
- the relationship between all the different levels of governance and
- the fact that we are here to do God's work and a key purpose of the governance bodies is to enable mission and ministry in the Diocese.

12. Parsonages Board Scheme and Houses Committee terms of reference

Russ Beese moved a motion to agree the Parsonages Board Scheme and the Houses Committee terms of reference. This was passed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of Diocesan Synod will take place on 20 March at Christ the King, Kettering.