

Minutes

Meeting on: Saturday 4 October 2025
 Time: 9.15am
 Location: All Saints' Academy, Blaisdon Way, Cheltenham, GL51 0WH

	Item	Action
1.	Refreshments	
	Members were invited to join the meeting starting with refreshments.	
2.	Sharing of Stories	
	Members shared good news stories from across our worshipping communities.	
3.	Worship	
	Members were invited to join a Eucharist.	
4.	Welcome and Apologies	
	Bishop Rachel noted 32 apologies had been received. Bishop Rachel shared that Lisa Gardner had now left the Diocese to work for a charity, bringing solar lighting to Africa.	
5.	Notices and Questions	
	None were noted.	
6.	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 July were proposed by Dana Delap, North Cotswold Deanery and seconded by Rochard Neale, Cheltenham Deanery. The minutes were approved <i>nem con</i> .	Approved: Members approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 July 2025.
7.	Matters arising	

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	No matters arising were noted.
8.	<p>Election for trustee of the GDBE/CIO</p> <p>Archdeacon Katrina introduced the item. She shared that she had been elected as Chair of The Diocesan Board of Education, and how it will be an honour to work alongside the team.</p> <p>She outlined the brief paper recommending electing Barry McMaster, Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chapter Steward at Gloucester Cathedral to be a member of the Diocesan Board of Education.</p> <p>David Roberts asked if there were any comments.</p> <p>Members were asked for a show of hands. The item was agreed <i>nem con</i>.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel presented a gift to Bishop Robert and thanked him for all that he has led, held and enabled as the outgoing Chair.</p>
9.	<p>Racial Justice</p>
	<p>Bishop Rachel introduced the item and was delighted to welcome Douglas Machiridza, Co-Director, and Seun Cole, Administration and Data Officer, of the West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative (WMRJI)</p> <p>She also gave thanks to Dean Andrew who had recently stepped down from being the Chair of the WMRJI Board.</p> <p>Douglas introduced himself. He shared the story of how the WMRJI began, who was involved, and what their hopes for the future were.</p> <p>He further described how a regional approach to Racial Justice will transform practice and culture, in a way none of us could do alone.</p>

Agreed: Synod members agreed to elect Barry McMaster as a new trustee of The Gloucester Diocesan Board of Education (CIO) (DS25/09)

Received: Members received a verbal presentation from Douglas Machiridza, Co-Director, and Seun Cole, Administration and Data Officer, of the West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative (WMRJI)

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<p>He explained the vision and strategy, and the hope to see racism eliminated from our structures and practices, and to take forward the recommendations made in Lament to Action.</p> <p>He further described how there is already much happening across the dioceses and that this should be celebrated.</p> <p>He highlighted a Residential Retreat happening later this month with all 6 dioceses invited, focussing on collaboration and learning from each other. 10 members from the Diocese of Gloucester are attending.</p> <p>Seun Cole introduced herself as the Data Administration officer.</p> <p>She explained why data matters for Racial Justice, how data equals visibility and accountability and action and how the data identifies the challenges, but also strengthens our common mission.</p> <p>She quoted: <i>"Data opens the doors to transformation. It's not just what we count- it's who counts."</i></p> <p>She invited members to complete an online survey and gave a brief snap shot of the results.</p> <p>There was a time for questions and answers.</p> <p>Sue Murray, Stroud Deanery asked how in a predominantly white community, we can talk about and promote racial justice, when so many won't have experienced racism.</p> <p>Andrew Dow, Cheltenham Deanery asked if they could give a practical example of this initiative and how it was working.</p>	

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<p>Nick Davies, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery, shared how Tewkesbury Abby are involved with contested heritage and how they share those findings and stories.</p> <p>Douglas responded to the questions and comments.</p> <p>He gave a practical example of the Cathedral becoming more inclusive and diverse.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel added how she could give lots of really awful examples of racism in our communities and how things need to change.</p> <p>She shared how one of the positive changes she has seen is in our visuals – websites, posters etc, reflecting the diversity in our communities. She also shared that she has refused to do diocesan-wide services if they do not involve people from a global majority heritage background.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel responded to the question from Sue saying that all of our communities have diversity and it's important we have the conversation.</p> <p>Philippa Moore, North Cotswold Deanery raised a question surrounding racial justice training and if that can be provided.</p> <p>Andrew Smith, Severn Vale Deanery commented on data monitoring, and how he is not aware of any request to complete data at a parish level, and asked if there is any data monitoring going on at diocesan level.</p> <p>Douglas explained how they are at the beginning of that data collection process and how it had not yet reached the parishes, but the hope is to complete that in the next few months.</p>	

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<p>With regard to training, the hope is to work on some training materials that can be shared across the dioceses.</p> <p>Patrick Olaniyi, Cheltenham Deanery commented on diocesan representation and diversity on boards and committees etc, and how we need to be intentional about inviting people to get involved.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel asked Lucy Taylor to share an update on our work with the WMRJI.</p> <p>Lucy shared how we have 52 days of support from the WMRJI team and available funding. She would like to hear all Members feedback about how they would like to use that support and resource in deaneries.</p> <p>She described the work with 'Lives of Colour', and that there are two events in the planning - one working with Heads of Schools and Governors, and then one with Clergy and Lay Leaders, to open up conversations around racism and racial justice.</p> <p>The link to the From Lament to Action report can be found here: FromLamentToAction-report.pdf</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked Douglas and Seun for being with us and encouraged people to read the report if they haven't already done so.</p>	
<p>10. Break</p>	
<p>Members were invited to break for refreshments.</p>	
<p>11. Deanery Strategic Plans</p>	
<p>Bishop Robert introduced the item. He highlighted that it should refer to Pathways rather than Plans, and how this is an ongoing process, a journey we are on to do things differently and how this is our way to invest and secure the future of the Church.</p>	<p>Received: Members received a verbal update on the Deanery Strategic Plans (Pathways) and discussed the key</p>

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<p>He explained where we are on the DSP journey and gave huge thanks for the work that has been done in each deanery.</p> <p>Bishop Robert highlighted the common themes that have emerged from across the deaneries - church buildings, admin/governance, children and young people, finance, new housing, and collaborative ministry.</p> <p>He shared that there are three deaneries that are in the process of appointing Deanery Operation Leads (DOL) in Gloucester City, Wotton and Cirencester.</p> <p>He then introduced the Director of Mission and Ministry, Sandra Millar to talk about the vision for the Team and how she is shaping the work of the Team in response to the DSPs.</p> <p>Sandra explained how her team works (see organogram in attached slides).</p> <p>She expressed how every ministry is valuable and the importance of encouraging the gifts and skills of all people.</p> <p>She described David Treharne's role who is looking at Foundational Learning and exploring how lay and ordained leaders learn and train together. She also described the importance of lifelong learning.</p> <p>She described two focus areas – reflective practice groups, where people can talk and learn from each other and Thriving Church Days where there is a focus on a particular issue.</p> <p>Bishop Robert thanked Sandra and then introduced David Evans (DE), Strategic Enabler.</p>	<p>themes that have emerged –</p> <p>Deanery Operations Leads and Collaborative Ministry</p>

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<p>David explained that he has been supporting deaneries implement the DSPs , and been involved in the appointment of Deanery Operations Leads (DOLs).</p> <p>He introduced a panel to talk about the DOLs - Benjamin Preece Smith (BPS), Diocesan Secretary, Jo Pestell (JP), Gloucester City Deanery, Graham Stacey (GS), Wotton Deanery and George Collins (GC), Cirencester Deanery.</p> <p>David asked BPS how the DOL roles connect with the Life Vision.</p> <p>BPS explained how this was an interesting and innovative approach, recognising how someone managing administration and operations will release leaders for mission and ministry.</p> <p>He explained how this role could be similar to a mini Diocesan Secretary in each Deanery</p> <p>David asked George Collins how he felt the process had gone so far.</p> <p>GC described how it has been a journey, and how when they discovered that finance support could be provided to appoint a DOL he and his fellow deanery members were very excited about the future.</p> <p>He described how trust is being built across the team, and across the deanery.</p> <p>David asked Jo Pestell how the DOL role will make a difference.</p> <p>JP described how they can already see how this role can unlock resource and the way the deanery will work together.</p> <p>David asked Graham Stacey his thoughts.</p>	

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<p>GS explained how this is not just about administration. How these operational roles will release capacity in order to move things forward and ensure join up across the deaneries and the DBF.</p> <p>David asked Bea Erskine (Forest South deanery) her thoughts.</p> <p>Bea shared how they are slightly behind the other deaneries, but how there is an awareness for how the DOL role will bring capacity to free up mission and ministry.</p> <p>Bishop Robert then opened up time for questions.</p> <p>Michael Storey, North Cotswold Deanery, shared how his deanery discussed at length the importance of admin support and the huge difference between admin and operations.</p> <p>He shared that they also have a focus on school chaplaincy and how not one size fits all and that each DSP works for each local context.</p> <p>Andrew Smith, Severn Vale Denery, shared how his parish appointed an operations manager 2.5years ago and the difference has been positive.</p> <p>David Evans picked up on the difference between admin and operations, and shared how that had been very well evidenced by the candidates applying. He shared we had 40 applicants and then 9 interviewed. He described how the HR team have been amazing at the DBF, and the interview day was a very positive day.</p> <p>Peter Francis, Stroud Deanery, asked if part of what might change is the use of technology.</p> <p>BPS commented yes. He reminded members of PGS as an example of how you can improve process.</p>	

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<p>Fiona Crocker, Wotton Deanery, highlighted how language is important and the use of the word admin means people might not be as willing to invest, compared with investing in operations.</p> <p>Robert McNeil Wilson, North Cotswold Deanery, asked how we make sure our admin/operations leads don't cease control and become overly authoritarian.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel commented on the word 'administration' and how administration is the same as <i>administry</i>, which is Latin for ministry.</p> <p>She shared how this will be trial and error and not to be down hearted by bumps in the process. We are learning together and taking courageous risks.</p> <p>BPS responded to Robert McNeil Wilson about how we live a culture of collaborative working across our diocese.</p> <p>GS echoed how crucially this capacity gives time to plan for how we do mission and ministry in the future.</p> <p>Bishop Robert reemphasised that this is about our commitment to local parish ministry.</p> <p>Carol O'Donnell asked members to show their appreciation for the panel and Sandra.</p>	
<p>12. Bishop's Council Update</p>	
<p>David Roberts introduced the item.</p> <p>This item is for information only and he asked that any questions or comments are directed to Benjamin Preece Smith.</p>	<p>Noted: Members noted a digest of the business conducted by Bishop's Council since the last Synod is circulated for information (DS25/10)</p>

Item		Action
13	<p>Bishop Rachel welcomed some new members of Diocesan Synod: Susan Rockett, Cheltenham Deanery, Daryl Burns, Cheltenham Deanery.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel also shared the outcome of the new General Synod representatives, The Revd James Turk has been elected to the House of Clergy and the lay member is to be announced.</p>	
14.	Date of next Meeting	
	The date of the next meeting will be Saturday 31 January 2026 at All Saints' Academy.	