

# STOKESLEY DEANERY In the Diocese of York

## Minutes of the Deanery Synod held at St. Augustine's Church Hall, Kirkby in Cleveland, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

**Attendees: Clergy:** Revds. Tessa Stephens (Area Dean) Darren Moore (Asst. Area Dean) Kate Brown, Liz Brown, Emma Cain, Sarah Cliff, Anne Heading. **Lay:** John Dickinson (Lay Dean), Liz Taylorson (Secretary) Bob Ardley (Treasurer), Ken Taylor (DFA) Carol McGee, Olwen Hopkins, Sally Hamlin, Linda Wells, Sarah Weyell, David Heading, Astrid Wood, Christine Young, Jenny James, David Hand, Avril Rhodes, John Rhodes, David Local, Roy Parsonage. **Visitors:** Sam Durant and Debs Smith from BiGKIDS, and David Young.

### 1) Welcome and Prayers (Revd. Tessa Stephens, Area Dean)

Tessa was pleased to have returned to Synod following her sabbatical. Revd. Sarah Cliff was welcomed to her first Synod, and a short tribute was paid to the late David Yates, our representative on Diocesan Synod, who died on 15<sup>th</sup> August. We welcomed Sam and Debs from the BiGKIDS Charity.

### 2) Apologies for absence

**Clergy:** Revds Vanessa Kirby, Brenda Forrester, Laura Wild, Elaine Curry, Ben Gunter and Jon Dean. **Lay:** Linda King (who has resigned from Synod), Margaret Lawrance, Judy Hall, Julia Ardley, Linda Smith and Malcolm Granville.

### 3) Minutes of last meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025)

St. Barbara the Queen Bee is reported to be doing well!

Agreed: Minutes unanimously accepted, proposed by Ken Taylor, seconded by Roy Parsonage.

### 4) Deanery Financial Adviser Update (Ken Taylors, DFA)

- Thanks to all parishes who have now submitted their report and accounts for 2024 – there is only 1 parish still outstanding.
- Thank you for the prompt responses from parishes who have submitted their Free Will Offer (FWO) for 2026. Out of 20 parishes 9 have increased their offers, 8 are unchanged and 3 very small parishes have reduced their offers. Overall, the increase is 2.1%. Many parishes are suffering from ageing and reducing congregations and finding it very difficult to recruit new members or encourage increased giving from existing members.
- Some parishes have adopted CORNERSTONE – a free C of E software package which aims to help parishes understand their financial situation better and encourage churches to create an improved giving culture. A very useful feature is the large grants database which is helpful in providing funding for building maintenance and improvement projects. For more information contact Phil McBride of the Generous Giving Team.

- If you have maintenance work to carry out on a listed church, aim to complete it by the end of March 2026 when the Listed Place of Worship Scheme (to enable VAT to be reclaimed) may come to an end.

## 5) Finance (Bob Ardley, Treasurer)

The Current Account balance on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025 was £2808.10 and on 8<sup>th</sup> October was £2995.80

- **Income:** Deanery Levy payments of £50.00 per DS Rep have been received from all Parishes except two. Bob has sent a chase up e-mail to one treasurer and received a “decline to pay” e-mail from the other treasurer (they have been unable to elect a Rep for the current year).
- **Expenditure:** Deanery Book Grant cheques for LLMs and ALMs have all been cashed. The Secretary has claimed reimbursement of £62.40 for the website hosting and domain name subscriptions; this cheque is still to be cashed. Bob expects to reimburse the Area Dean for hospitality costs for the Deanery Lunch at the Bishop’s Visit on 22nd Sept 2025. Nunthorpe PCC has been reimbursed for the Deanery Secretary’s pay for 2025.

## 6) Safeguarding

### 1. Presenting a motion to Diocesan Synod – Roy Parsonage.

Our motion from the June Synod which expressed concern about safeguarding nationally and the lack of support for parishes, was taken to Diocesan Synod on 5<sup>th</sup> July by Roy where it received support from the Arch Bishop and was carried. This is the start of a process, and it is hoped that Diocesan Synod will take this forward nationally. The Diocese understood and supported the concerns expressed and noted that they know parishes are doing their best to make safeguarding effective at their own level. A new member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team is to be recruited to provide faster and better responses to safeguarding concerns, and improving procedures will be an ongoing process. It should be noted that this is the first time in a long while that proposals made by a Deanery have been taken forward to this level. The Diocese is also seeking to improve communications at all levels. The Arch Bishop has committed to making Safeguarding an important part of his own leadership.

Thanks were unanimously expressed to Roy and Carol for their tenacity and diligence, and Roy thanked the Synod for their support.

### 2. Informal Meeting at Wydale for Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) – Bob Ardley

This meeting, held in the summer, was a useful networking event for PSOs run by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. 33 PSOs were present – Bob being the only one from Stokesley Deanery. It was a chance for the Diocesan team to thank PSOs as well as providing information and support. The team was very appreciative of the safeguarding work being done at the Parish level.

## 7) Working with Children and Young People - Sam Durant and Debs Smith from BiGKIDS.

The team initially came together from St. Barnabas' Church and the charity was founded in 2017, working with children from 7-14 (and some toddlers) their mission being to 'join the dots' of work with schools, churches, community and 'walking' (discipleship). In **schools**, the team work with faith and non-faith schools, working in the curriculum and at lunch and after-school projects. With some schools they have worked on grass-roots projects driven by the kids themselves such as providing 90 'hug in a mug' gifts for a local hospice. In **churches**, they are fighting the statistic that 98% of Middlesbrough children are no longer connected with a church. BiGKIDS want to help change that by working with churches - thriving youth work adds value to a church, and the group want to use their enthusiasm to bring more families into churches. In the **community** the group wants to see not just churches, but the whole area thrive. In Middlesbrough 52% of children live in poverty (compared to a national average of 22%). One particularly successful project is Barney's Baby Bank which provides nappies, clothes, shoes, prams, cots, highchairs and other essentials to families with very little. On 'Wish List Wednesday' they ask for items that are most in need – you can find this at <https://www.facebook.com/barneysbabybank> The final dot is described as '**walking**', another term for discipleship – the journey that the BiGKIDS staff themselves are on , learning as they move forward to tell God's story through modern means.

This led neatly into a practical demonstration of how to teach faith through Lego – and gave Synod participants the chance to build some wonderful creations (including a jet plane, a windmill and a concept car) for themselves.

BiGKIDS also mentioned that they ask for the 'three Ps' when people ask what they can do to help:

- Prayer
- People
- Pennies.

If you would like to help with any of the three Ps, or find out more about how they could work with your church, you will find BiGKIDS online at <https://bigkids.org.uk/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/bigkidsboro>

#### 8) **What's on around the Deanery.**

- Christian Aid posters – at Yarm, 15<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> October, a national travelling exhibition marking 80 years of Christian Aid through posters, with a narrative explaining the context of each one.
- Looking forward to Christmas, Brookfield are planning a Nativity Festival from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November.
- Full details of Deanery events in October and November are listed in the 'What's On' leaflet which will also appear on the website and Facebook.

#### 9) **AOB:**

None.

#### 10) **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> 2026, venue TBC.

## **11) Closing Prayers**

The meeting concluded with the Grace.

Liz Taylorson, 15.10.2025