

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



A thousand years of God's love in Suffolk

Minutes of the Forum meeting held in Pilgrim's Kitchen on Wednesday 25 January 2023

Present: Canon Matthew Vernon (Chair), Sarah-Jane Allison, Canon Philip Banks, Margaret Bond, Sue Cockram, David Eaton, Paul Elkin, Gray Elkin, Rev Sarah Geileskey, Dean Joe Hawes, Sue Hughes, Fiona Knapp, James Knowles, Jane Leung, Louise Martin, Mark Pendlington, Pam Pitts, Barbara Pycraft, Rev Anita Rooney, Alice Sheepshanks, Terry Stark, James Stark, Liz Steele, Louise Stewart, Margaret Steavenson, Margaret Wheeldon, Doreen Young

Observing: Chris Andrews, Alan Bond, Lorna Brook, Geoffrey House, Susan Knowles, Alan McAndrew, Gretta McAndrew, Hugh Steavenson, Chrissy Trendall, Caroline Baker, Karen Soons, Ted Simmons, Jan Simmons, Sherril Furnell, Rev Simon Hill, Taylor.

1. Welcome: Canon Matthew opened with a prayer on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul and mentioned that when a service precedes Forum all are welcome to attend the service.

2. Apologies: Carol Arnold, Cedric Catton, Gray Elkin, Dominic Holmes, Alex Knock, Sandra Lant, Robert Lant, Kathryn Mitchell, Jane Movley, Jane Olive, Tim Parsons, Liz Rowlands, Karen Smith.

3. Minutes: The Minutes of 30 November 2022 were approved with one minor amendment and duly signed.

Matters arising –

Developing Cathedral Culture – the revised questionnaire was shared with members before the meeting and with a few minor tweaks will be sent out in February to the whole cathedral community. Thanks to Fiona Knapp and Doreen Young for assistance in its production. Additional comments will be welcomed when submitting the questionnaire. It will be electronically issued and anonymized via google forms with a few paper copies available for those without a computer.

Feedback from Safeguarding Sunday 10:30am service – generally widely appreciated, both in person and via the livestream. The interview technique worked well. Posters need to be more child friendly and at a suitable height. Increased use of QR codes and links to the website would be more helpful rather than a list of phone numbers which are hard to remember. Take away cards with information could also be helpful. The next round of safeguarding audits at Cathedrals are due in the near future.

4. Cathedral Governance Changes and the role of Forum – Matthew updated that the role of Forum will be discussed at the next June meeting, including a draft Terms of Reference. It has been acknowledged that there is a wish to strengthen the makeup and role of Forum. Having a young peoples' representative attending Forum in the future will be reviewed.

5. Dean's Report – Dean Joe reported on:

Living in Love and Faith - links and papers had been shared with Forum members prior to the meeting. Living in Love and Faith is a six year process to discern the way forward on attitudes to sexuality in the Church of England. Three years ago Living in Love and Faith materials were produced for discussion, this was not to change peoples' minds but to listen to different viewpoints. This discussion period has now concluded with three meetings in the House of Bishops. There has been a groundswell of opinion towards change tending for equal marriage, but lawyers have advised in order to approve this there would need to be a two thirds majority in all three houses of General Synod. This would not be likely to happen. There are five proposals going forward to General Synod between 6-9 February. An apology to LGBTQI+ people, an Order of Service produced which is commended for God's blessing of a same sex couple while maintaining the doctrine on Holy Matrimony which is for a man and woman only. The 1991 Issues in Human Sexuality statement which has been the policy for Curates and Priests over the last 30 years, but not always applied equally across all dioceses, will be replaced by new pastoral guidelines. It is not yet known who will work on these new guidelines. Recognising the breadth of disagreement the Synod will keep working on this issue and will come back in 5 year's time. Dean Joe emphasized a Cathedral should be a place for all. Bishops Martin and Mike have said they wished there was equal marriage for all. Chapter have supported their statement and regrets past attitudes to LGBTQI+ people. There is a likelihood that the Church will split over this issue. Although no visible structural changes will be made.

Discussion ensued amongst Forum members and other attendees. Conversion therapy has been acknowledged within the Church of England as a moral evil and should be banned. A Church should be honest about their attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people and publicise these on their website. Is it or was it legal for the Church of England to inspect someone's sleeping arrangements? Inclusivity is still an issue for women not just an LGBTQI+ issue. The 5 year review seems a long time, could there not be a half-way point review? An amendment has been tabled to Synod to reduce to 2 years from 5 years. What about other denominations? The Anglican Communion and Roman Catholics are being consulted although their views may not be supportive. The Church of Wales already blesses same-sex weddings and the Scottish Episcopal Church already has equal marriage. We may not be as one but we must be allowed to walk faithfully together. A traditional view of marriage was expressed.

Future of the Deanery – a paper was shared with Forum members prior to the meeting. The seven bedroom Deanery has been subdivided into separate properties to rent out and provide a smaller deanery. Permission to remove the grand staircase was denied by West Suffolk Council. The choice of appeal against the decision would be too expensive to pursue through

the courts. The revised quote of £861,000 to make these refurbishments is prohibitive. As a Grade 1 listed building the Deanery has its limitations. Chapter needs to make a decision. Dean Joe said it's a shame that a decision is likely to be made to sell the Deanery to move forward. Permission is now being sought to convert garages and outbuildings at Abbey Precincts into an Eco friendly, net carbon zero Deanery. Some of the proceeds will be able to be used to fund the changes to the sanctuary housing flats.

Advised that Clopton Cottage could be sold separately and the West Wing and remainder of Deanery could be sold as one unit. The increase to £861k for refurbishment illustrates the journey Chapter has been over the time of this process. Will the sale of the Deanery be advertised widely so as to maximize the proceeds from the sale? Is there enough parking to assist the sale? Yes at both ends of the property. Concern raised about other properties in the vicinity eg the Magistrates building have taken a while to sell.

Confirmed that the St James School site will be sold for redevelopment with the proceeds going towards education in the Diocese. Sadness expressed at the loss of heritage. Unfortunately refurbishments are most necessary.

6. Financial update - Mark Pendlington, the chair of the Finance Committee and Senior Non Executive Member of Chapter, reported that he was privileged to be with us. The Finance committee has been working hard, giving a steering focus to Cathedral finances. Surviving from year to year and bumping along at the bottom financially is no longer viable. Selling the Deanery may well repair this situation by allowing investment and receiving income from the property. We have over 100 patrons and room for another 100 patrons. The Giving day was a huge success but this shouldn't be something we depend on year after year. Hopeful that the Cathedral funds will improve going forward.

7. Liturgy Update - Philip mentioned that we serve the county and diocese with future services for the coronation of the King. Philip thanked Naomi Sturges and James Stark and his vergers team, all musicians and wardens. Working towards an eco friendly Cathedral – we shall be experimenting with the QR code and printing less paper for services.

8. AOB: Liz Steele recommended an update on the membership of Chapter and of the Nomination committee. Also an update on the chairs project is required. The Chair of FAC proved that Pews were not designed by Gilbert Scott but came from a 'catalogue' and this information has been passed back to the FAC and the Victorian Society. After 2 Feb when they next meet we should have a decision on selling the pews. The plan is for Rough Stuff to recondition the pews into 2, 3 and 4 seaters and provide off cuts as chopping boards to be sold. The cathedral warm space has been used more since December on Thursdays.

The meeting finished with prayers at 8:20pm

Louise Martin/January 2023

Forum dates

2023: APCM Tuesday 25 April, Wednesday 21 June, Tuesday 26 September, Tuesday 21 November.

All will be held at 6:30pm in Pilgrim's Kitchen.