



ARCHDEACONRY OF FRANCE

SYNOD MEETING

SATURDAY 27 JUNE 2026

09:00 – 11:00

Via Zoom

1 The meeting opened in **prayer**

2 Welcome and apologies

The Archdeacon opened the meeting and set out items to be covered including welcoming new and returning members; electing a new Standing Committee; and beginning to identify topics for the autumn 2026 programme of Synod workshops.

New and returning Synod representatives introduced themselves and were welcomed.

3 Minutes of French Archdeaconry Synod meeting held on 25 April 2026

The Secretary introduced the **minutes** of the April Synod meeting. Two corrections were noted: both Heather Aston and Vivian Sockett (House of Clergy) were present.

Subject to those corrections, the minutes were accepted as a true record.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Action points from April

- The narrative on the Calais project had been included in the April minutes as requested.
- Update of the Strasbourg chaplaincy's statutes (to reflect their status as an associate, rather than full, member of the Union Nationale, reflecting their different 1905-law registration basis) was still outstanding. The Archdeacon agreed to follow up directly with the Strasbourg chaplaincy and to copy the Secretary.
- Bishop-led quiet day: an attempt to run a quiet day in Brittany did not get sufficient uptake, owing to the start of the holiday season and travel distances. A further attempt will be made for an autumn date for the North-East Deanery.

4.2 Safeguarding

A question was asked about a reference in the April minutes to adopting a safeguarding approach based on English law, noting that the chaplaincy operates under French law.

The Archdeacon explained that chaplaincies in France operate under a "twin-track" legal framework: (i) French civil law requirements (via 1901/1905 association registration), and (ii) ecclesiastical law, arising from the Diocesan Constitution and Church of England Canon law. Where French law is imperative it takes precedence; otherwise chaplaincies are expected to follow the Diocesan safeguarding policy. He noted the Diocese's safeguarding audit is due in 2027, and that the safeguarding dashboard tool (discussed at the previous meeting) helps chaplaincies meet the audit requirements.

A further, more specific, concern was raised about confidentiality restrictions on checking an individual's previous record. The Archdeacon proposed taking this specific query offline with the chaplaincy concerned and the safeguarding team.

5 Developments concerning the role of the Archdeacon of France

The Archdeacon confirmed he will step down as Archdeacon of France at the end of July, after five and a half years in the role, and will return to the Diocese of Leicester (where he was previously ordained), having discerned a call to an area of ministry there.

Because he cannot hold two diocesan licenses simultaneously, the Archdeaconry will move to an interim arrangement of Acting Archdeacon for France and for Switzerland.

5.1 Acting Archdeacon

Ben Harding, Chaplain in Lyon for the past twelve years and formerly Area Dean for South-East France, will be commissioned as Acting Archdeacon for France from 1 August 2026. His commission will run until a substantive appointment is made; recruitment for the permanent role will begin in early autumn. The outgoing Archdeacon is in the process of handing over current projects.

Ben Harding spoke briefly, thanking the outgoing Archdeacon for his work and expressing enthusiasm for the role, noting he will formally start on 1 August after family leave in the UK in late July, and hopes to visit chaplaincies in person over time. He shared his official contact details

ben.harding@europe.anglican.org

5.2 Questions and discussion

The Archdeacon confirmed that the authorisation of Congregational Worship Leaders lies with the Archdeacon's office. He is hoping that a new training session will take place soon.

Akwasi Ampofo Agyapong (St Alban's, Strasbourg) mentioned the change of chaplain and the particular situation in Strasbourg; the Archdeacon confirmed the process is already under way

6 Feedback from Diocesan Synod held on 1–4 June 2026

The Archdeacon explained the synodical structure (local chaplaincy councils → archdeaconry synods → diocesan synod → general synod, and vice versa) and themes from Diocesan Synod feeding into the archdeaconry's autumn workshop programme. Last year this gave rise to five workshops, including two topics drawn directly from Diocesan Synod (safeguarding; care for creation) alongside three locally chosen topics (Alpha; Mission Action Planning; an annual update on French association-law changes).

The Archdeaconry is represented at Diocesan Synod by five lay members — David Bargioni (Dinard), Maggie Devos (Lille), John Errey (Pau), Carol Hart (Caen) and Michelle Lavaud (Biarritz) — and two clergy members, Mark Osborne (St George's, Paris) and Andy Brewerton (Cannes). Andy Brewerton and Carol Hart gave the feedback to Synod.

6.1 Conference theme: "Called to be Peacemakers"

Andy Brewerton reported that the conference theme was drawn from 2 Corinthians 5, chosen by Bishop Robert as directly relevant to the current European and wider context. The theme was explored in two strands:

- Morning Bible studies, led by Bishop Robert, working through the book of Ephesians (the opening chapters in depth, with some material from later chapters), exploring God's reconciling purpose for the world and how peace-making flows from vertical reconciliation with God into horizontal reconciliation between people.
- Interactive sessions led by Professor Julian Mitchell, Principal of St John's College, Durham, exploring conflict and peace through art, poetry and modern examples, followed by a session on the "12 Habits of Peacemakers" from the Rose Castle Foundation (including hospitality, vulnerability, hope and lament).

Delegates were encouraged to bring some of this material back into archdeaconry synods. A team is exploring whether Bishop Robert's Ephesians material could be adapted into a Diocesan Lent course

for Lent 2027 (following the precedent of the 2025 Lent course written by Donald McFadyen, Chaplain at Fontainebleau).

6.2 Diocesan Strategy presentation

Carol Hart summarised a presentation given at Diocesan Synod by Ella Sibley, the Diocesan Strategy lead, setting out the Diocese's direction for the next ten years, informed by consultation and interviews across chaplaincies. The associated slides are available on the Anglican France website.

- The Diocese identifies itself as "hospitably Anglican" — welcoming, interculturally belonging, worshipping in English but not exclusively so, united around God's word and the Eucharist, and committed to safeguarding and mutual trust — shaped by its context as a diverse and dispersed migrant church in Europe.
- Seven working groups are taking forward key areas of focus, including: healthy and thriving chaplaincies; children and youth ministry; intercultural/contextual engagement and ecumenical relations; ministry training and support for both ordained and lay ministers; new worshipping communities; care for creation; diversity and human dignity; giving and fundraising; and safeguarding.
- A final version of the strategy is expected to be presented at an extraordinary (Zoom) Diocesan Synod meeting in November 2026, following further consultation. Further information and a feedback form are available via the Europe Anglican website.

Carol noted the importance of chaplaincies genuinely "owning" the strategy rather than it remaining a top-down document.

6.3 Funding — the Strategic Mission Investment Board (SMIB)

In response to a question about what resources (money, people, or simply decisions) the strategy's priorities would require, the Archdeacon explained that the Diocese has moved from a historic "maintenance" mindset to an intentional focus on growth, supported by:

- The Diocese's own Mission Opportunities Fund (MOF), which has previously funded initiatives such as expanding David MacLeod's post in Brittany to full-time, enabling exploratory work on a new worshipping community linked to the university in Rennes.
- Participation in the Church of England's national Strategic Mission Investment Board (SMIB) programme, which is distributing very significant sums to the 42 Church of England dioceses. Unlike many dioceses receiving SMIB funding for sustainability, the Diocese in Europe does not need this money to continue operating; it has tentatively been awarded around £9,000,000 for new work — described as an unprecedented sum and opportunity in the Diocese's history).

Ben Harding, Acting Archdeacon designate, also has a dedicated day per week focused on church planting and will be rolling out related tools and resources this autumn.

6.4 Discussion

Chris Probert (La Manche) asked how French-speaking members of chaplaincies might feel about the strategy describing the Diocese as intrinsically a "migrant church", noting this was a question passed on from a French-speaking member. Andy Brewerton acknowledged this sits within an ongoing debate about identity, given the Diocese's historic origins serving British migrants/expatriates (from Versailles-era courtiers to Victorian travellers to more recent arrivals), set against a more recent trend of Francophone members worshipping in English and questions about whether worship in French should be extended.

John Bavington (Aquitaine) welcomed the strategy presentation but suggested the document was currently light on specific local demographic detail (noting, for example, the very different communities his own chaplaincy serves in Bordeaux — France's sixth-largest city — compared with rural parts of the same chaplaincy), and encouraged more emphasis on developing a specific strand of prayer to underpin the strategy process.

The Archdeacon agreed with the point on prayer, and referred to Robin Gamble's "four Ps" of church growth (prayer, presence, proclamation, persuasion); he undertook to pass the feedback to Ella Sibley and Bishop Andrew, who is leading this strand of work.

John Gay (Grenoble) raised the challenge of authorising lay people to lead services in smaller or multi-site chaplaincies, particularly relevant to chaplaincies looking to plant new congregations (citing John Bavington's and David MacLeod's contexts). The Archdeacon confirmed this maps onto the Congregational Worship Leader (CWL) programme: CWLs are discerned, trained and authorised locally, with authorisation given by Archdeacons (distinct from Diocesan Readers, who are trained and authorised at diocesan level). A previous archdeaconry-wide CWL training programme (run over six months, one session per month, led by Tina, Helen Marshall and Jacqueline Rodwell) trained 26 people. Ben Harding will look at re-running this programme in the autumn, given further local interest; Teena Twelves (Calais) offered her help, given her experience running such programmes in Canterbury Diocese.

7 Separate meetings of House of Clergy and House of Laity

Clergy and Lay members met separately to discuss what key topics from Diocesan Synod we might have as part of our autumn workshop programme and what other subjects might be covered.

The House of Laity also met to elect new: Archdeaconry Secretary; Archdeaconry Treasurer; Archdeaconry Lay Chair; one further Lay Representative for the Standing Committee.

8 Reports on meetings by houses: suggested topics for autumn workshop programme

Many of the proposed topics were common to both houses, but the House of Laity said that they had spent most of the available time on the elections rather than on discussing possible topics.

House of Clergy	House of Laity
Sharing local language resources (songs, hymns, readings, liturgy etc)	Mission and outreach
Readers' workshop	Update for Readers
Demographics and recognising diversity of worshipping communities	Demographics and focus on single people, those living alone
Mothers' Union	
Artificial Intelligence – ethical questions and practical use	
Update on Diocesan strategy	Understanding wider Diocesan strategy
<u>Local</u> growth and development aspirations	
Christmas preparations and sharing of resources and ideas	
Strategy for forthcoming events in France eg Winter Olympics and Papal visit	
Broader update on encouraging giving	
Update on ecumenical work	Ecumenical relations
	Care for buildings and relationship with Eco church
	Training of lay people

	Safeguarding and conflicts with French law
Update on 1901 and 1905 legislation	Update on 1901 and 1905 legislation

9 Structure of the Archdeaconry Standing Committee

9.1 Elections for lay members of the SC

Following the meeting of the House of Laity, the Secretary, Rosemary Ulyett, reported the result of the elections:

- **Lay Chair:** David Bean (newly elected to this role, having previously served as Archdeaconry Treasurer).
- **Secretary:** Rosemary Ulyett (re-elected; no other nominations).
- **Treasurer:** Anita Phillips
- **Fourth lay representative:** Donna Derrick.

Both David Bean and Rosemary Ulyett indicated a wish to encourage other Synod members to consider taking on these roles in future, rather than holding them indefinitely.

9.2 The Standing Committee for the coming period therefore comprises:

- Ben Harding — Acting Archdeacon for France (Chair, from 1 August 2026).
- David MacLeod — Area Dean, North-West France.
- Donald McFadyen — Area Dean, North-East France (sent apologies for this meeting; the Synod was asked to hold him and his son, Charlie, in prayer).
- Paul Willis — Area Dean, South-West France.
- Andy Brewerton — Area Dean, South-East France.
- Rosemary Ulyett — Secretary.
- Anita Phillips — Treasurer.
- David Bean — Lay Chair.
- Donna Derrick — Lay representative.

The Standing Committee will take forward the workshop topic list from both Houses and determine how best to structure the autumn programme.

10 Votes of Thanks and Closing

David Bean

The outgoing Archdeacon paid tribute to David Bean's long service as Archdeaconry Treasurer, noting he had steered the Archdeaconry through significant challenges — including Barclays withdrawing banking services, establishing proper legal status in France, moving banks twice, and setting up payroll and expense processes after the Archdeaconry took on two employees on the Diocese's behalf. A gift and card were being sent to David on behalf of the archdeaconry, alongside the thanks of the whole Synod.

The outgoing Archdeacon (Peter)

The meeting also marked the departure of the Archdeacon himself. Synod members expressed thanks for his years of service (which began during the COVID period), including his role in securing recognition with the FPdF (Fédération Protestante de France), and for his pastoral care of clergy across the archdeaconry. A card and gift were arranged on behalf of the archdeaconry, with members invited to add greetings.

The Archdeacon responded, reflecting on his call back to ministry in the Diocese of Leicester, acknowledging the pain of leaving people he has come to love and care for, but affirming his sense that

this move is what he believes God is asking of him. He thanked the Synod for the journey of the past five and a half years and pledged continued prayer for the archdeaconry.

The meeting closed in prayer.

Summary of Action Points

Owner	Action	
Secretary	Correct April minutes concerning those members present	Done
Archdeacon	Follow up with Strasbourg chaplaincy on updating their statutes to reflect associate-member status	
Archdeacon	Follow up separately and confidentially with Alastair Ross and the safeguarding team on his specific safeguarding query.	
Diocesan strategy team	Consider incorporating demographic detail and a dedicated prayer strand into the final strategy document, as per feedback from John Bavington and John Gay.	
Ben Harding	Explore re-running the Congregational Worship Leader (CWL) training programme in autumn 2026	
Synod members	Submit further suggestions for autumn workshop topics to the Archdeacon or the Secretary	
Standing Committee	Convene as soon as possible to plan the autumn workshop programme.	
All	Sign/contribute to farewell cards for David Bean and the outgoing Archdeacon.	

Rosemary Ulyett
Secretary
11 July 2026