

ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD

14 October 2024

QUESTIONS – FIRST NOTICE PAPER (with answers)

- 1) Canon Peter Adams (Lay Chair, General Synod and Luton Deanery) to ask the Bishop of St Albans as President of the Diocesan Synod:

"Many of us in the diocese will have been holding Soul Survivor in our prayers over the past 18 months since allegations against Rev Mike Pilavachi became public, along with the processes set in place to investigate those allegations. It is now good to see Rev Jon Stevens in place as Senior Pastor, and to hear the church is doing well. How has the Diocese been supporting the church over this time? Specifically, now that the report commissioned by Soul Survivor on its culture and practice has been published, what action is the diocese taking to support the church as it responds to the many recommendations made by the report's authors."

The Bishop of St Albans will respond:

"I am grateful for Peter's question and for his prayers, along with my own and those of others in the diocese and more widely for Soul Survivor Watford, its leadership and people and all of those with historic connections to the church and the festivals. I share Peter's positivity about the good place that Soul Survivor Watford now finds itself in, both in terms of pastoral leadership and governance. I should make one very minor correction: Revd Jon Stevens appointment is as lead pastor rather than the previous title of senior pastor – a small change which is intended to signal and to be a break from the past.

Over the past 18 months the Diocese has been providing much practical support to Soul Survivor Watford particularly through the direct involvement of the Bishop's Visitor, Rev Canon Tim Lomax, as a regular presence (together with his wife Rev Kate Lomax) on Sundays and providing support, advice and pastoral care at all levels including regular attendance at staff meetings. Tim Lomax also attended meetings of the Soul Survivor Watford Trustees. There have been other aspects of support, for example around staff appointments and in coordinating responses to survivors and to the media.

The Diocese is fully committed to working with the Soul Survivor Watford leadership and trustee body as they implement the recommendations made in the Scolding Review. Most significantly the current Bishop's Mission Order for Soul Survivor Watford runs to January 2025 and will need to be replaced then regardless of whether there are changes to national arrangements for Bishops Mission Orders at a later date and in response to the wider recommendations of the review. As a senior staff team and with support from the Registrar we will be considering the recommendations of the Review in relation to the specific Bishop's

Mission Order arrangements and will incorporate these in the new Order early next year."

- 2) Canon Peter Adams (Lay Chair, General Synod and Luton Deanery) to ask the Bishop of St Albans as President of the Diocesan Synod:

"The Scolding report on Soul Survivor is in various places critical of the Diocese of St Albans, and makes a number of recommendations to the Diocese, as well as the wider Church of England, in regard to the healing of wounds of survivors of abuse addressed in the report; the process of church planting and oversight of BMOs once established; MMDRS; and ordination. How will the Diocese seek to respond to these?"

The Bishop of St Albans will respond:

"I am also grateful for this question and for Peter's acknowledgement that some of the Review recommendations are for the Diocese whilst others are for the Church of England nationally. In relation to survivors the Diocese has already been exercising best practice through the investigation that our safeguarding team were part of and has been reaching out proactively to support those from the Soul Survivor community who are now in positions of leadership within the Diocese. We have adopted an open door policy for any who have been affected by the Soul Survivor news and coverage to be supported by senior staff. In addition, the Bishop of Hertford has been proactively supporting several people in leadership roles in the Diocese who have been impacted directly or indirectly.

In relation to the structural and policy matters around church planting, oversight of BMOs, MMDRs, and ordination the Senior Staff team have already begun considering revisions to existing approaches. Bishop's Council later this month and the Diocesan Board of Finance in November will be considering the Review and its recommendations, and I have already made the public commitment that the Diocese will respond in full within three months of the Review publication date and therefore this side of Christmas."