



Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf *scene@synod*

23 September 2025

Cyprus and the Gulf: a statement of vision and mission

Synod members held an extraordinary meeting via Zoom on 23 September 2025, endorsing an uplifting statement of vision and mission as the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf prepares to embark on its second half century in 2026.

The meeting of Synod was called to hear from the Bishop's Task Force—set up following a Presidential Motion passed by Synod in February 2025.

Led by Bishop Sean, the task force is examining issues related to Diocesan representation, episcopal oversight and structure. Vice-chair Manisha Cornelius outlined two phases of work: the first entailed extensive reflection and discussion to draw up the vision and mission statement presented to and endorsed by Synod members, as well as a survey of parishes across Cyprus and the Gulf; phase two will conclude with a series of reports to be presented at the next meeting of Synod, in Bahrain in February 2026.

Synod also heard updates on Safeguarding, finance and the appointment of a new Diocesan Chancellor, as well as a report from Bishop Sean, news of a forthcoming Provincial Clergy and Spouses Conference and details of Synod 2026. The session opened and closed with prayer, led by Bishop Sean.

Vision

*A diocese of the Anglican Communion offering Christian belonging and
witness in the historic biblical lands of
Cyprus and the Gulf*

Mission

*To be a visible Christian presence of love, compassion and integrity in
the countries of the Diocese*

To offer discipleship, hospitality and community to Christians

To promote peace and understanding through ecumenical and interfaith dialogue

Bishop's report to Synod



Bishop Sean shared with Synod an overview of his travel, worship and work around the Diocese, undertaken with the support of the clergy and lay people of its parishes

*And no one puts new wine into old wineskins;
otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and
the skins will be destroyed.*

But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins

St Luke 5. 37, 38

It was a great joy to meet many of you in person at our February Synod, and since then there have been parish visits to the UAE, the Canterbury Group, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and several parishes in Cyprus. In a Diocese spread over ten countries such visits are valuable opportunities to build relationships, learn of the specific joys and challenges of Christian witness in each context, and to build unity. During the final quarter of this year, I plan to visit Iraq, Yemen, Oman, the UAE, Bahrain and parishes in Cyprus not yet visited this year.

A matter which is repeatedly spoken of during visits to Gulf parishes concerns the need for our Diocesan structures and policies to reflect how Gulf countries and their parishes have developed over the course of the fifty years of the Diocese's existence.

There are more parishes in the Gulf Archdeaconry than in the Archdeaconry of Cyprus; and parishes in, for example, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar serve large and growing expatriate congregations, manage a great number of guest congregations, have significant incomes, and have opportunities for further growth. By contrast, Cyprus draws vastly fewer expatriates, and those who do come to the island are often not economically active. Consequently, the scale of churches in Cyprus will be more modest on every metric.

Recognising these realities, I spoke of the "seniority" of the Gulf Archdeaconry during my Presidential Address at our February 2025 Synod meeting, and this was followed up by a Presidential Motion to create a Bishop's Task Force to examine ways of "re-balancing the Diocese in terms of representation, episcopal oversight and diocesan funding". There will be a dedicated report on the Task Force later in our Synod meeting but through its work I have been reminded of the passage of Scripture quoted above—fresh wineskins are needed for new wine.

It is clear that the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf is seeking change; and by God's grace and wisdom, my role is to shepherd that change. Such renewal must always reflect God's will, serve the common good, be in the best interests of all parishes, and enable the Diocese to be fit-for-purpose in its unique operational context, ready to meet the challenges ahead as it enters its next half century of ministry, prayer and work in the name of the Lord.

The following snapshot offers a sense of what has been happening in the Diocese since our Synod in February this year.

CONFIRMATIONS

- 67 (as of 1 September)

ORDINATIONS

- The Reverend Christine Mbona in May 2025
- The Reverend Maria Evangelou in May 2025
- The Reverend Lesley Carr in September 2025

APPOINTMENTS

- New Archdeacons (in Cyprus and in the Gulf)
- Diocesan Director of Ministry
- Diocesan Chancellor
- Diocesan Youth Coordinator (under discussion)

CLERGY LICENCES AND PtO

The standardising of criteria for the issuing of clergy licences and Permissions to Officiate is an important work in progress.

CLERGY REGISTRY AND PARISH DATA

The Diocesan office is in the process of updating data related to licensed and PtO clergy, as well as parishes (constitutions, contracts, fabric, etc)

(contd p3)

(contd from p2)

SUPPORT TO PARISHES DURING VACANCIES

During the last year there have been several vacancies. Supported by the Archdeacons and parish councils, I have been involved in a “hands-on” way to manage these vacancies and recruit new clergy.

Vacancies include:

- The Parish of St John’s, Oman
- The Parish of St Helena’s, Larnaca
- The Cathedral Parish of St Paul’s, Nicosia
- The Cathedral Parish of St Christopher’s, Bahrain

COMMUNICATIONS

Together with the clergy and lay people of the Diocese, we continue to seek and share with the wider world hope-filled stories of parish life and personal journeys through parish and Diocesan outlets.

Other output produced from the Diocesan office includes an annual report on the Ras Morbat Clinic in Yemen, scene@Synod, and editing and communications support for the Foundation and the US and UK Friends.

OFFICE REVIEW

A review of the functioning of our Diocesan office has been completed and Standing and Finance Committee are considering its recommendations.

LEGAL MATTERS AND POLICIES

A Diocesan Chancellor will soon be in place to assist the Diocese in navigating its complex Constitutional matters. The Chancellor would also be the legal advisor to the Constitutional Review Committee.

Together with Diocesan office staff, I have overseen the updating of Diocesan policies and guidelines.

MINISTRY

Together with the newly appointed Diocesan Director of Ministry, an assessment of the Ministry programme, structure and delivery is ongoing.

MOTHER’S UNION

A Diocesan Mother’s Union has been established.

ECUMENICAL, INTERFAITH and POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

An important focus of my Episcopal ministry has been to continue strengthening and broadening ecumenical and interfaith dialogue through meetings with rulers, church leaders and leaders of other faiths, in the Gulf and in Cyprus. In September, it was a great honour to be invited to an audience with the King of Bahrain, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

LINK DIOCESES

It has been important to refresh and strengthen relationships with our link dioceses of Thika and Exeter.

Bishop Mike Harrison of Exeter will pay an official visit to Cyprus in October 2025. Plans are also being made for a future visit to the Gulf.

Bishop Julius Wanyoike attended our Synod in February 2025, and I have been invited to attend the Diocese of Thika’s Synod in 2026.

FRIENDS

We are grateful for the support we receive from both the UK and the newly formed US Friends of the Diocese.

The Zoom prayer meetings of the UK Friends and the fellowship they offer are greatly appreciated.

The US Friends are working on raising awareness of our Diocese within the United States, strengthening relationships with The Episcopal Church, and exploring possibilities for creating a US link diocese with Cyprus and the Gulf.

As always, I appreciate your commitment to Christ, expressed through the life-giving presence of our parishes in the lands of this extraordinary Diocese. May you continue to be blessed and to be a blessing to those around you.

Deo gratias,

+Sean Cyprus and the Gulf

Report

Bishop's Task Force

A report from the Bishop's Task Force, set up under the terms of a Presidential Motion (see below) passed at the February 2025 meeting of Synod, was presented by the group's vice-chair, Manisha Cornelius.

The Task Force had divided its work into two phases. The first entailed drawing up a Diocesan statement of vision and mission, presented to and endorsed by Synod members. Phase one also included the design and roll-out of a survey of parishes across Cyprus and the Gulf—an important initial step in the work of the Task Force, offering a more complete picture of the Diocese, to inform decision-making on the strategic allocation of resources and identifying of priorities, and to support the equitable treatment of parishes. Phase two—already underway—will

conclude with a series of reports to be presented to Synod in February 2026.

The BTF had a wide remit, addressing complex issues at the heart of the life and work of the Diocese. Where the Presidential Motion stipulated that the BTF would “present new organisational models” at this meeting of Synod, there was work yet to do on the four specific suggestions relating to Diocesan structure, on which the group intended to report to Synod in February 2026. “Please note,” concluded Bishop Sean: “we want to continue working with as many voices as possible, to try and shape vision, mission and policy—including that of our structures—for the benefit of the Diocese, and to always do what what we feel called by God to do.”



Synod 2025 (February) President's Motion

Recognising:

1. *the increasingly pressing need to re-balance the Diocese in terms of representation, episcopal oversight and diocesan funding;*
2. *the importance of establishing an organisational structure that can deliver the Diocese's mission now;*
3. *the necessity of addressing these issues before constitutional change can be progressed;*

this Synod will establish a task force under the leadership of the Bishop to report and present new organisational models at an Extraordinary Meeting of Synod in September 2025

(contd p5)

(contd from p4)

PHASE 1

Over the past six months, the BTF has held four meetings, each lasting 2–3 hours. These sessions were conducted in online and hybrid formats, with consistent member participation and collaboration

Phase 1

✓ Vision and Mission Statement:

A priority was to craft a Diocesan vision and mission statement that reflects the collective identity and future direction of the Diocese. Every member played an active role in the drafting of this statement. In the course of regular meetings and interim email exchanges, BTF members contributed valuable insights, shared parish perspectives, and worked collaboratively to finalise a vision and mission statement that we believe will speak to Synod and the wider Diocese as we enter the next half century of Diocesan life.

✓ Parish Surveys:

BTF members worked intensively to design and fine-tune the parish survey, to capture key areas of parish life and ministry. Their work involved identifying priority themes, framing questions that would provide meaningful and comparable data, and shaping the survey in a way that could effectively and strategically guide Diocesan planning and future initiatives.

PHASE 2

Phase 2 – Final Report on Parish Survey and Diocesan Restructuring

In addition to a final report on the Parish Survey, the BTF will prepare four further reports exploring ways to better ensure equity, unity and good governance across the Diocese—to be circulated to Synod members for discussion at the February 2026 meeting of Synod:

- **Synod Representation**
Assessing changes in congregational size across Diocesan parishes, and proposing changes to ensure equity in Synod representation
- **Archdeaconry Chapter / Deanery / Forum**
Proposing changes in organizational structure at the archdeaconry and deanery levels
- **Two Archdeaconries in the Gulf**
Making the case for two archdeaconries in the Gulf
- **Deans and Cathedral Chapters**
Suggesting new structures to underpin and enhance the role of deans and cathedrals in diocesan decision-making

Bishop's Task Force members

Chair: The Right Reverend Sean Semple
Vice-chair: Manisha Cornelius
Louise Bougourd
The Venerable Paul Carr
The Venerable Mark Derry
Deborah Graham
Christiana Nwandu
The Reverend George Vidiakin
Secretary: Dr Helen Perry

Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf
House of Laity, Christ Church Jebel Ali
SFC; House of Laity, St Luke Ras Al Khaimah
Archdeacon in Cyprus; Anglican Church of Paphos
Archdeacon in the Gulf; Church of the Epiphany, Doha
SFC; House of Laity Co-chair, St Helena Larnaca
House of Laity Co-chair; Church of the Epiphany, Doha
House of Clergy Chair, Christ Church Ayia Napa
Diocesan Administration

The BTF is grateful to former member Tim Allen for his significant contributions throughout the first phase of its work

Report

Safeguarding



Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
Linda Balfe reported to Synod



Safeguarding Policy

The Safeguarding Policy has been updated, in consultation with a member of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission, to make clear the connection between abuse and power, which was not previously referenced.

Safeguarding Area - Diocesan Website

A dedicated 'Safeguarding' area has been set up on the website. Policies and guidelines, including the new guidelines on Dementia, can be found here, along with training resources and guidelines on Safer Recruitment. This area will be added to as more resources become available.

Safeguarding Training

Following Archdeacon Christopher's retirement in September 2024, Bishop Sean asked me to take on the role of Safeguarding Advisor from December 2025.

I facilitated, and Archdeacon Christopher kindly presented, 'catch-up' training sessions for clergy in January 2025. Archdeacon Christopher left his training resources with the Diocese and with parishes for future use. Training sessions for clergy due to retrain will take place on 8th and 13th October 2025.

As a small diocese, organising our own safeguarding training, it is important that we operate in line with international standards and keep abreast of new developments in this fast-moving area. It also benefits us greatly to make use of high-quality resources that are available to us.

Dioceses in the Church of England require their clergy to take the CoE online 'Basic Awareness' and 'Foundation' courses prior to taking in-person 'Leadership' level clergy training. Bishop Sean has asked that our clergy do the same. The Diocese also recommends that all church officials and volunteers

should take the Basic Awareness and Foundations level courses. These courses are available via the Church of England Safeguarding Portal and can be accessed at no cost, by anyone, anywhere simply by creating a personal

account—safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org

Further information on accessing these and other, specialist, courses is on the Diocesan website.

In addition to training and resources from the CoE Senior Leadership Safeguarding Learning Pathway, on which I am enrolled, we have access to resources and guidelines produced by the [Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission](#) and have had useful meetings with members of the Commission. This is particularly helpful to us, as the Commission works in a global context and appreciates the nature of our Diocese. Future training delivered by the Diocese will be informed by these discussions and resources.

Safeguarding Advisory Panel

Meetings of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP) were held on 13th and 15th May, with 14 PSOs taking part from 11 parishes: 7 from Cyprus (6 parishes + 2 apologies); 7 from the Gulf (5 parishes + 2 apologies).

The PSOs who attended all showed a strong level of engagement and commitment to promoting safeguarding in their parishes, sharing a wealth of experience from a wide range of backgrounds and contexts. Many thanks to all of our PSOs for the invaluable work they are doing.

Panel meetings will now take place three times a year, instead of twice, avoiding busy times in the Church year. The panel will meet again on 27th and 29th October.

(contd p7)

Find out more—and share your news

The Diocesan Communications Team invites you to find out more about [the history](#) and [news](#) of the Diocese

To send news from your parish, please contact helen.perry@cypgulf.org

follow us on Facebook at [DioceseOfCyprusAndTheGulf](#)

explore our website at cypgulf.org

visit our YouTube channel [@cyprusandthegulf](#)

Diocesan Chancellor

*Standing and Finance Committee is pleased to announce the
appointment of new Diocesan Chancellor,
Canon Andrew Khoo—reported to Synod by Bishop Sean*



CANON ANDREW KHOO

In addition to his wide-ranging work in the fields of human rights, public interest cases, public advocacy, and legal reform, Canon Andrew is a member of the Anglican Consultative Council Standing Committee; a Trustee of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Anglican Communion Fund; and a member of Malaysia's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Racial and Religious Harmony.

He has previously served as Chancellor to the Archbishop of the Province of the Anglican Church in South-East Asia, and is currently Chancellor to the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia.

"Canon Andrew's ongoing experience working in an Asian and Muslim-majority context is of particular relevance to us," said Bishop Sean.

"In his role as Chancellor, he will advise me as the Diocesan Bishop, the Synod and Standing and Finance Committee, and our Constitutional Review Committee where necessary, on various issues of ecclesiastical law that I or they will bring to his attention in relation to the Diocese and its Constitution."

When requested, Canon Andrew will also offer advice on implications for the Diocese in relation to developments within the Anglican Communion, and on the laws of the countries in which the Diocese has a presence.

"In addition," said Bishop Sean, "I would want him to review the Constitution, Canons, practices and procedures of the Diocese, with the aim of strengthening our processes and filling in any lacunae in their provisions, so that the Diocese is well prepared to meet future challenges."

"We are fortunate to have Canon Andrew's support and professional expertise to draw on, and we are grateful to him for accepting this pro bono role."

(contd from p6)

Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs)

All parishes have an identified PSO. In four parishes this is the priest. Given the huge demands on a priest's time and his or her wider pastoral role, it would be advantageous if someone else took on this role, where possible.

St Andrew **Abu Dhabi** - Rochelle Jensen
Christ Church **Ayia Napa** - Jill Warr
St George **Baghdad** - Sinan Hanna
St Christopher & Awali Church **Bahrain** -
James Adams, Jennifer John
Canterbury Group - Jennifer Cuttino
St John **Deryneia** - (Stephen Oakley),
Comfort Ellele
Epiphany **Doha** - Shammi Michael,
Jesse George, Nicola Saraja
Holy Trinity **Dubai** - Prem Mitra
St Mark **Famagusta** - Lynette Oruc
Christ Church, **Jebel Ali** - Kaine Teme

St Paul **Kuwait** - Michael Mbona
St Andrew, **Kyrenia** - Linda Balfe
St Helena **Larnaca** - Marina Peters
St Barnabas **Limassol** - Charles Dodd
St John **Muscat** - Aline Haddad,
Peter Hawksworth
St Paul's Cathedral, **Nicosia** -
Margaret Charalambides, Winifred Spyridakis
Ayia Kyriaki, St Stephen, and St Luke **Paphos** -
Chris Hoskins, Ann Bailey
St Luke **Ras Al Khaimah** - Kent Middleton
St Martin **Sharjah** - Drew Schmotzer

Synod Motions

Three motions were presented to and approved by Synod

Motion 1

Synod approves the holding of this virtual meeting of a special Diocesan Synod.

Lay and ordained Synod members, who have joined a virtual Synod session, shall be deemed present. The usual meeting rules, including the chairing and minuting of proceedings, will be observed.

Voting by 'a show of hands' (Standing Order 63) is accepted as including its electronic and/or postal equivalent (article 6c).

Motion 2

Synod receives and approves the February 2025 Synod Minutes

Motion 3

Synod receives and approves the Diocesan vision and mission statement:

Vision

A diocese of the Anglican Communion offering Christian belonging and witness in the historic biblical lands of Cyprus and the Gulf

Mission

To be a visible Christian presence of love, compassion and integrity in the countries of the Diocese

To offer discipleship, hospitality and community to Christians

To promote peace and understanding through ecumenical and interfaith dialogue

Update

Diocesan finances

Opening the session on Diocesan finances, Bishop Sean referred to the June 2022 meeting of Synod—also held online—at which members passed a motion reaffirming the principle that each parish of the Diocese should contribute to the centre 10% of gross parish income, less depreciation, less any unusual levels of expenditure or accounting items.

“This is a fundamental part of the funding of the expenditure of this diocese,” he said. “As your bishop, I am committed to establishing the Diocese on a firm financial footing, self-supporting in its work, trusting in the provision of God.”

Bishop Sean went on to explain what he meant by self-supporting: “Self-supporting means funded from within, as Anglicans—clergy, lay and Bishop—to carry out the core work of Anglican Christian presence and witness, properly governed, with the checks and balances of policy and procedure, dedicated and qualified personnel, transparent and accountable to Synod.

“Self-supporting also includes having the resources to support parishes in need, facilitated by long-established diocesan relationships with valued external donors.”

Finance Officer Evangelia Georgakaki informed Synod that the Diocese had so far received pledges of

almost 90% of total funds required to meet the budgeted target of €295k for the year, half of which had been received with the remainder expected soon.

In line with the 2025 budget, the plan for 2026 was similarly modest, allowing only for an increase in the

meetings line, to reflect anticipated expenses associated with Diocesan 50th anniversary celebrations, as well as a small increase to €35k from €30k for project funding.

Also in 2026 the Diocese will begin repayment of a €100k loan from the Foundation, payable in four annual instalments of €25k each. The 2026 plan anticipates funding needs totalling €332k.

Presenting ACCL accounts for the period January-August 2025, it was noted that two-thirds through the year, total expenses stood at around 57% and total income at just over 42%.

ACCL—the Anglican Church (Cyprus) Ltd, incorporates the Diocese as a legal entity in Cyprus. The directors of the Company are the Bishop and two Archdeacons, and members of the Company are the elected members of Standing Committee. In both cases—Standing Committee and ACCL—those individuals are answerable to Synod.

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on a firm financial footing,
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in its work, trusting in the
provision of God”*

Provincial Clergy and Spouses Conference

Members of Provincial Synod meeting in Bahrain earlier this month reached a decision to hold a Provincial Clergy and Spouses Conference in 2026—four years after the last conference, held in Jordan in 2022.

Canon Georgia Katsantonis, who attended Provincial Synod, informed members of Diocesan Synod that the proposed Conference is to be held in Paphos, Cyprus on 19-23 April 2026. All licensed stipendiary clergy of the Diocese and their spouses will be eligible to attend, with invitation letters to be circulated in due course.

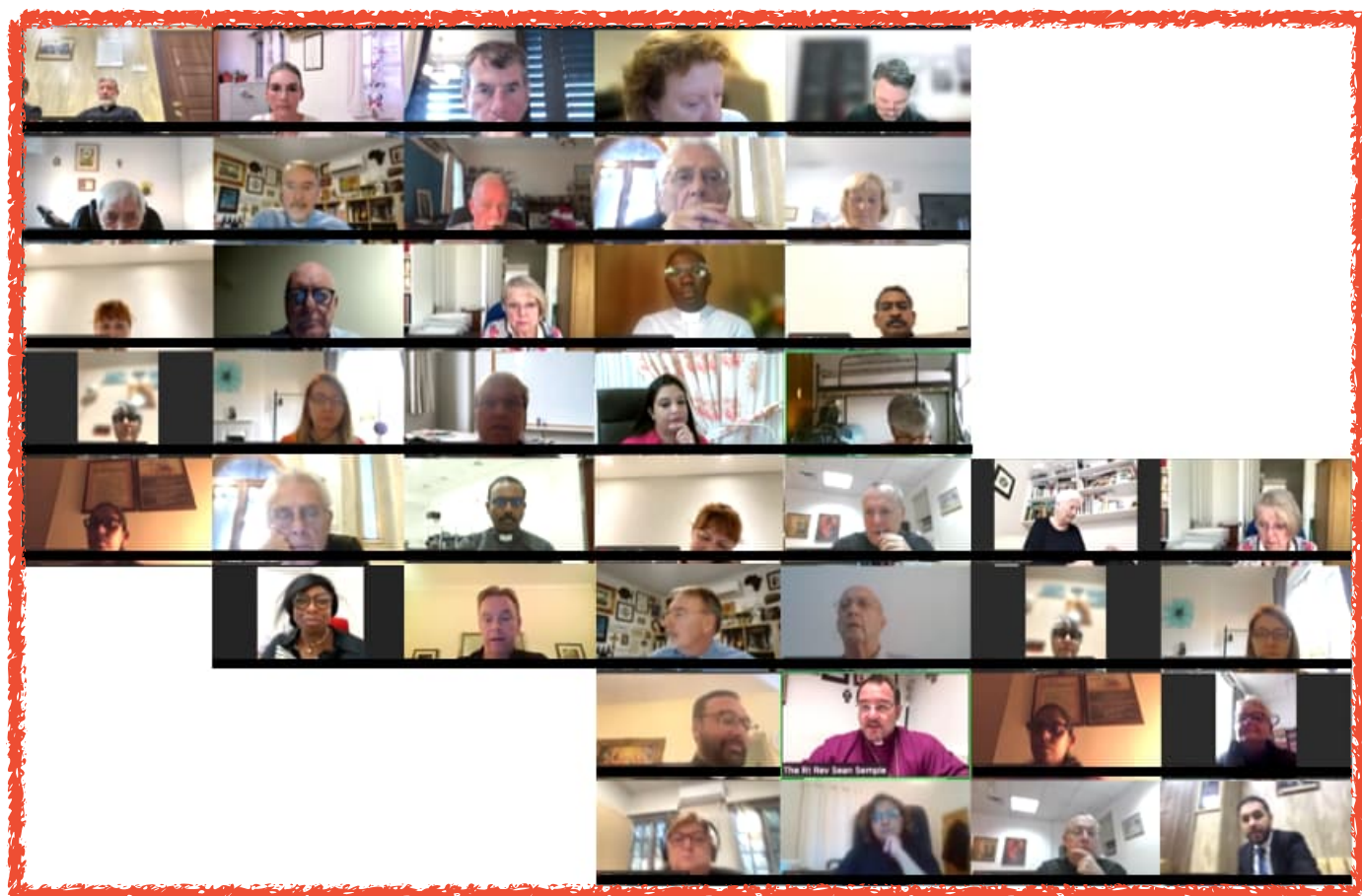
“The immediate priority is to identify a suitable hotel with the necessary facilities to accommodate conference needs,” said Canon Georgia.

A small planning committee is in the process of being formed, to begin discussions on the conference programme.

Further details, including a proposed programme, will also be drawn up.

As in previous years, all local expenses, including accommodation and transport within Cyprus, will be covered by the Province. Parishes are encouraged to consider covering the airfare for clergy and spouses.

“It is our sincere hope that as many licensed clergy as possible will be able to attend this important event in the life of the Province”—a sentiment echoed by Bishop Sean.



**BISHOP SEAN ADDRESSING THE
SEPTEMBER 2025 ZOOM MEETING OF SYNOD**

Synod 2026

Synod 2026 is to be held on 2-6 February at the Gulf Hotel in Bahrain—an occasion that will also be an opportunity to mark the 50th anniversary of the Diocese. David Axtell, a member of Provincial Synod based in Bahrain, was thanked for his extensive help in preparations for what promises to be truly special Synod and anniversary celebrations.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to encouraging interfaith dialogue and activity, and provided a wonderful setting for Bishop Sean's consecration and installation as bishop at St Christopher's Cathedral in Manama in 2024.

Synod members will be invited to mark the 50th anniversary of the Diocese with ecumenical and multi-faith activities, as well as coming together as always for worship, reflection and discussion of issues central to the strength and unity of the Diocese going forward.

The Synod theme is *A year of Jubilee*—a theme that is for 2026 as a whole, offering an opportunity for parishes to celebrate and share in the unity and diversity of our Diocese.

Conscious of the financial strain under which many parishes find themselves, the Diocesan Office, with the help of friends and supporters in Bahrain, is seeking ways to ensure that Synod costs are as low as possible—including exploring discounts with airlines and generous offers of sponsorship for at least one Synod dinner.