

**Minute of a meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod  
held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May at the Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School,  
Silverton Lane, Rothbury, NE65 7RJ from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.**

President: The Rt Revd Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle.

Two members of the House of Bishops, twenty-nine members of the House of Clergy, thirty-one members of the House of Laity and twelve officers, staff and visitors attended the meeting.

**1. Welcome and opening worship**

Canon Carol Wolstenholme, Chair of the House of Laity, welcomed members to the second formal meeting of the triennium and led the Synod in prayer.

**2. Declaration of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of previous meeting**

**3.1 Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018** (Paper DS19 02 supported this item)

The Synod agreed the minute of a meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

**3.2 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Notices**

There were no notices.

**5. Questions**

There were no questions.

**6. Presidential Address**

The Bishop gave a Presidential Address and used a poem of the Annunciation by Denise Levertov to highlight the Kairos moment the Diocese of Newcastle was facing and the need to look at the anxiety that caused a diversion from reaching a new landscape that could be glimpsed, but could not be reached. The Bishop explained that we had arrived at a point where, as a Diocese, we needed to face up to our situation and address money, an issue that caused so much anxiety. The recognised that the lack of money blighted lives and prevented people and congregations from moving forward.

The Address highlighted that although the Diocese had a theoretical stipendiary clergy cohort of 101 full-time equivalent posts deployed across the diocese the deployment was unaffordable which left a significant number of posts in vacancy. Customarily the budget had been achieved by carrying the vacancies but these were growing and becoming longer. In turn this was impacting the ability to release missional opportunities in our parishes. Realistically the income we could expect to raise from Parish Share and income from other sources, including from the National Church, meant the Diocese could afford approximately 80 full-time equivalent stipendiary posts. Work was in hand to develop an intentional deployment strategy based around the realistic number of posts that could be afforded.

The Synod was invited to use the Address to reflect on how the Diocese could move beyond the block which was caused by an overwhelming anxiety about money.

*(The Address was made available after the Synod under paper DS19 09 available from [www.newcastle.anglican.org/synod](http://www.newcastle.anglican.org/synod))*

## 7. Education

The Synod welcomed the Diocesan Director of Education, Paul Rickeard, and invited him to give a presentation about the Church of England's impact and involvement in the education of 13,000 children across the Diocese.

The Director explained the significance of the Church's mission in education. The Synod heard that relationship with the Department for Education had changed and the Department now saw the Church as a partner rather than a stakeholder with over one million children in Church of England schools across the country. In the North East 25% of children attended a Church of England or Roman Catholic School.

The Synod heard about the major changes in education and the challenges for all schools to help children achieve their full potential. This included the equipping of clergy to serve our Church and Community Schools across the three local authorities within the Diocese of Newcastle.

The Director gave an insight into the day-to-day work of the Joint Education Team which often saw it engaged with leaders to ensure standards and achievements were met and that the distinctive education offering, which was deeply Christian, was thriving.

The Chair thanked the Director for his presentation and invited members to engage with questions.

**The Revd Tony Curtis** (Tynemouth Deanery) asked how he might access support for Community Schools. In response the Director signposted members to the website of the Joint Education Team, which worked across the two Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle, for details of the Religious Education Advisors who would be happy to offer support to all schools. **Prof Gary Holmes** (Morpeth Deanery) asked, in light of changing governing structures, what would be the role of the Church in moving into these new structures. In response the Director explained that some of the key issues would be to: identify people who would commit time to work with schools; offer training to enable those people to operate in the changing landscape; the appointment of key individuals to run our schools; and to look at how we bring Schools to work together in a more strategic way.

**Mrs Mary Hughes** (Morpeth Deanery) asked how a child would recognise that they were in a Christian School. In response, the Director explained that first and foremost each child should overwhelmingly know that they are loved and understand that they are a child of God in a learning environment which has been built on a distinctive values-based vision. Schools across the Diocese were a place of learning but also a place where children could feel wanted within a distinctly Christian environment built around trust, forgiveness, tolerance and hope. **Mrs Jennifer Brown** (Newcastle East Deanery) asked how we ensured that our children felt their Christian education was helping them and how we protected their mental health in the transition from one school to another. In response the Director explained that it was part of the strategic vision of the Board of Education that schools worked collaboratively with neighbouring schools from an early stage in the transition process. The Director explained that the Board had employed a colleague who was trained to support the health and wellbeing of our children and to care for their mental health. The Director added that the Board was also working with the NHS and the North of Tyne Mayoral candidates to raise the profile of mental health issues.

The Synod thanked the Director for his presentation and the work of the Joint Education Team.

**8. Financial Accounts 2018** (Paper numbers DS19 03 and DS 19 03A supported this item)

**Annual Accounts and Financial Statements 2018**

Canon Simon Harper, Chair of the Board of Finance reminded Synod that it was now meeting as the members of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Canon Harper presented the Financial Accounts for 2018 and explained that the underlying position for 2018 was a £123,000 deficit. Parish Share contributions were 3.2% less than the amount received in 2017 and parishes had managed to contribute 89.9% of the amount requested of them.

In describing the challenges arising from the 2018 outturn Canon Harper highlighted the pressures on cash flow given the largest expenditure item for the Board of Finance was the monthly payment of clergy stipends and staff salaries. He encouraged parishes to make a regular pattern of contribution a priority to help to offset the challenges of maintaining sufficient operational cash to support the day-to-day activities. Canon Harper explained that if we were not able to achieve a more stable cash flow the Diocese may reach a point where it would need to sell assets to fund the shortfall in cash reserves. He explained that this option had been strongly resisted in past years on the basis that once an asset was sold to help cash flow the asset was lost and that it was acceptable to consider selling an asset to fund a positive action, it was not acceptable to sell assets to fill a funding gap.

The Chair thanked Canon Harper for his presentation and invited questions of clarification.

**Dr John Appleby** (General Synod Member) suggested that, in future, the income illustrated in the pie charts in the budget summary document might benefit from the addition of a separate classification for financial adjustments, to provide further clarity.

There being no further questions of clarification the Chair opened the item for debate.

**The Revd Canon Dr Rob Kelsey** (Norham Deanery) explained that Norham Deanery had introduced a system of allocating Parish Share which encouraged openness and communication between parishes. This had been a positive experience. Canon Kelsey suggested that the Review of Parish Share should not only be about fairness but also about the method of allocation. **Mr Nigel Collingwood** (Hexham Deanery) advised that the Norham model of allocation of Parish Share had been adopted in Hexham Deanery and this had helped the parishes across the deanery to achieve a 100% contribution. Mr Collingwood asked how the joint approach of the Norham model of allocation could be rolled out to other Deaneries. **The Revd Dr Benjamin Carter** (Hexham Deanery) asked parishes to consider whether they would share their accounts openly and honestly with their neighbour and encouraged members to promote an openness and honesty around financial reporting. **The Revd Canon Adrian Hughes** (Tynemouth Deanery) asked if work was being undertaken in the Diocese to identify the context in which Parish Share was being paid, such as statistical data on congregations. He asked if other dioceses in the Northern Province were experiencing the same issues as Newcastle as a result of the changes to National Church funding, and if so, what strategies were being adopted in response to this. Canon Hughes asked if the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners were aware of the impact of reduced funding at diocesan level.

In response, Canon Harper advised that the Norham model had been successful because it had improved communication and openness between treasurers and had taken the accountability and responsibility for the payment of Parish Share from parishes to a wider deanery level. He encouraged anyone who needed support with their accounts to contact the Finance Manager, Philip Ambrose.

The Secretary explained that work was in hand to analyse statistics and data trends to help to inform the initial phases of the work with deployment planning. The Secretary advised that from

a national perspective it was important to note that the General Synod had supported the changes in National Funding arrangements and reminded members that the Diocese of Newcastle had six elected representatives on the General Synod in addition to the two bishops. The Secretary explained that dioceses, across both Provinces, which were experiencing a reduction in National Church funding were having to face their financial realities and were working to reorganise and reshape what they were doing. The Secretary highlighted that it was not only the financial position from changes to National Church funding which were causing financial concerns but the fact that declining congregations and the subsequent loss of income were having a greater impact. The Secretary explained that at the latest Peer Review, held in December 2018, the point had been made that the Diocese of Newcastle was struggling to move forward given the impact of the changes to National Church funding.

Canon Harper proposed that the Synod, sitting as the Board of Finance, receive the Financial Statement for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

The Synod, sitting as members of the Diocesan Board of Finance, by a show of hands agreed to receive the financial statements for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

*The Revd Catherine Pickford, Chair of the House of Clergy, took the Chair.*

## **9. Resourcing the Future**

The Bishop introduced this item and invited members to hold in mind their hopes for the future and how to overcome the fear about money that was preventing the Diocese from moving forward. The Bishop invited Synod to put forward practical ideas which would assist the budget planning process, including any proposals on effective deployment and how we move forward with the challenges we face with money. The Bishop invited the Synod to set the discussion in the context of a vision for the next ten years and reminded Synod that God was not calling us to balance our books but that God was calling us into a new landscape.

The Chair thanked the Bishop for introducing the item. Discussions at tables followed and the Chair then invited feedback from the table discussions.

**The Revd Claire Robson** (Diocesan Director of Ordinands) commended the work of the Joint Education Team and suggested that we emulate the work of the Team in responding to the changes we faced in order to transition to a new landscape. **Ms Constance Masolino-Okai** (Newcastle Central Deanery) suggested that we could conserve some finance by not giving communion every week, and by utilising laity to work alongside ordained priests. **Mrs Emma Doran** (Tynemouth Deanery) suggested the opportunities be taken to encourage greater collaborative work between the laity and the clergy and that we needed to plant new visions and new churches by going out to where people were and to stop expecting people to come to us. **The Revd Tony Curtis** (Tynemouth Deanery) suggested that if we were to have 80 stipendiary posts then we needed to look at the communities that they are going to serve and how we may have a proper missional, incarnational presence in those places as the communities may have to look quite different to the way they look at present. **The Revd Dr Benjamin Carter** (Hexham Deanery) suggested that we need to consider a broad range of ministry and how the ministry of both lay and ordained is deployed. **The Ven Mark Wroe** (Archdeacon of Northumberland) suggested that we need clarity about money and asked whether we were looking clearly enough at income and expenditure within our parishes and whether we were looking at the real facts. The Archdeacon also encouraged a need to be courageous about change and asked if the anxiety about money was masking a fear around change. **Dr John Appleby** (General Synod Member) explained that his table had talked about leadership and teamwork in the parish and had recognised that interim ministry had value and that effective team work between clergy and laity would require training for laity. **The Ven Dr Peter Robinson** (Archdeacon of Lindisfarne) suggested that the partnership between laity and clergy would require a step change by the laity into leadership positions and a step change

by clergy in allowing space for others to share in leadership. **The Revd Dr Helen Savage** (Corbridge Deanery) affirmed the use of church buildings as assets, particularly in the rural areas. **Mrs Jennie Jones** (Newcastle West Deanery) suggested there were many positive actions going on in parishes and invited recognition for the work, skill and money that parishes were putting into working with their buildings.

The Chair thanked all for their contributions.

## **10. General Synod Items**

### **10.1 Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 38**

Amending Canon No. 38 was enacted at the General Synod February Group of Sessions. The Amending Canon was promulgated.

### **10.2 General Synod Report**

Dr John Appleby (General Synod Member) updated Synod about the General Synod February 2019 group of sessions. Items had included presentations from the Archbishop of Canterbury; debates on homelessness; estates ministry which had included a speech by Canon Izzy MacDonald-Booth about her work in Byker; discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; the environment; sexuality; gambling; and the state of the nation.

### **10.3 The Environment**

Dr Tony Thick (Morpeth Deanery) gave a presentation about environmental concerns which included the environment debate and motion included at the February meeting of the General Synod. In his presentation, Dr Thick explained the work that was now needed for the Diocese of Newcastle to become an Eco Diocese and that over the coming months information would be shared across parishes and deaneries to help to inform people about the need to engage in environmental matters and to help prepare the Diocesan Synod for a wider debate about the environment at its next sitting in September. Dr Thick's presentation included a video of the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calling for action on climate change.

The Chair thanked Dr Thick for his presentation which had introduced the Synod to further work on crucial and critical environmental matters.

## **11. Annual Reports 2018** (Paper DS19 04 supported this item)

The Secretary presented the Annual Reports of Boards, Committees, Supporting Ministers and Task Groups which provided a snapshot of some of the work carried out in the Diocese in 2018. He explained that the Peer Reviewers had recommended that we cease the production of the reports and as a result work was in hand to produce an alternative, more impact driven report, in the future. The Secretary invited questions from the Synod.

**Bishop John Packer** (Tynemouth Deanery) expressed his hope that the reports wouldn't be abandoned unless we have something to replace them in the future. He went on to express a concern about Task Groups, a number of whom were struggling. He suggested that there needed to be some way to look at the contributions the Task Groups made to the life of the Diocese and how we could develop work in this area.

The Chair moved that the Annual Reports for Boards, Committees, supporting Ministers and Task Groups be received.

By a show of hands Synod received the Annual Reports.

## **12. Closing Prayer and Dismissal**

The Bishop led the Synod in prayer and closed the meeting with a blessing.