

Diocesan Synod: Open Synod Forum Saturday 12th March 2016

144 members and guests gathered at Northumberland Church of England Academy for an Open Synod Forum on Saturday 12th March. The Revd Catherine MacPherson led the worship which was followed by a Presidential Address.

Presidential Address by the Bishop of Newcastle

The Bishop of Newcastle delivered a Presidential Address which reflected on her initial six months in office. The Address included reference to her engagement with faith leaders and church and community life; the progress made with reviving the Suffragan See of Berwick; the need to challenge our perceptions of ourselves in order to rise to the challenges presented by the programme of Renewal and Reform. The Bishop encouraged engagement with the process while remaining true to our core values and to put the life of the diocese as a whole, not just the life of the church, at the heart of what we do.

The Bishop then engaged in conversation and responded to questions from the floor. The sound recording is available at: <https://soundcloud.com/diocese-of-newcastle>

The meeting was then handed over to the **Disability Task Group**.

Welcome to my World

The Chair of the Disability Task Group introduced Roy McCloughry who about how we may help those with disabilities belong in church and how we may view disability as a focus for our mission. Roy's talk is available at: <https://soundcloud.com/diocese-of-newcastle>

Delegates then took part in two of the eight workshops which allowed people to share some of the joys, challenges, opportunities and frustrations of living with disabilities as part of God's church and the world.

The workshops were:

- Sight Loss, presented by Ben Pullen.
- Hearing Loss, presented by Lynn Farquharson.
- Mobility Impairments, presented by Julia Barham.
- Unseen Disabilities, presented by Marion Penfold.
- Dementia, presented by Sandra Hastings.
- Learning Difficulties, presented by John Telfer.
- Mental Health Issues, presented by Neil Cockling.
- A tour of The Centre, located within the Josephine Butler Campus which caters for the needs of children and young people aged 4 – 19 years who have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Following the workshops a short plenary session enabled people to share their learning and to reflect on what they would take back to their parishes and communities.

During the morning £190 was raised towards a visit to Botswana for the young people of the Academy who had helped with hospitality for the meeting.

The meeting closed at 13:00 with worship and a blessing by the Bishop.