

**Minute of a meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod
held on Saturday 30th September at the Church of England Academy,
Ashington from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.**

President: The Rt Revd Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle

The Revd Canon John Sinclair, Chair of the House of Clergy, chaired the first part of the meeting. Canon Carol Wolstenholme, Chair of the House of Laity, chaired the second part of the meeting.

30 members of the House of Clergy, 32 members of the House of Laity and 7 members of staff attended the meeting.

1. Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Philip Ambrose, the recently appointed Finance Manager, and Mrs Alison Coulter, a visitor to the Synod from the Diocese of Winchester and a member of the Archbishops' Lay Leadership Task Group.

Robert Peers (Corbridge) led the Synod in worship.

2. Apologies

The Secretary reported that 31 apologies had been noted.

3. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations made.

4. Minutes of previous meetings

4.1 Meeting held on 20th May 2017 (Paper DS17 11 supported this item)

The Synod agreed the minutes of a meeting held on 20th May 2017.

4.2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of 20th May.

5. Notices

The Chair gave two notices.

5.1 An open consultation to look at the proposal for a Resource Church in Newcastle City Centre would be held on Wednesday 18th October at 18:30 at the Cathedral.

5.2 An Open Synod Forum would be held on Saturday 25th November at 10:00. The topic for this Open Synod would be 'discipleship' and Paula Gooder would be the keynote speaker. The venue would be the Northumberland Church of England Academy.

6. Questions

There were no questions submitted for this meeting of the Synod.

7. Presidential Address

The Bishop of Newcastle gave a Presidential Address which highlighted the early stage of the journey towards the diocesan vision of growing church bringing hope. Using the

parable of the talents to illustrate how to make the journey the Bishop reflected on the need to:

- recognise in one another the gifts that God has given us and to treasure these gifts;
- recognise the value of laity and clergy and treasure one another;
- put our sense of security into God, not our possessions and be stewards of our possessions, not owners;
- in the context of the budget, recognise that profitability is important, but above all; our vision needs to be value driven; and
- reflect on how we might use our gifts not only to be a bigger church but bring about the mission of God.

8. Setting God's People Free (Paper DS17 14 supported this item)

The Chair invited Canon Wolstenholme (Chair of the House of Laity), Canon Flintoft (Director of Discipleship and Ministry for Mission) and Mrs Alison Coulter (a member of the Archbishops' Lay Leadership Task Group and Lay Chair of Winchester Diocese) to present the business item for Setting God's People Free.

Mrs Coulter thanked the Synod for their hospitality and made a short presentation about the findings from the report of the Lay Leadership Task Group called 'Setting God's People Free'. The report highlighted the need to release and mobilise the human resources of the 98% of the Church who are not ordained, through a fresh commitment to 'whole-life discipleship'. The report had a focus on the cultural shifts that would be required to help to enact change.

After the presentation members were invited to take part in table discussions and a plenary session gathered together the table discussions. In the plenary the following points were made. **The Revd Steve Wilkinson** (Bellingham) explained that he had entered ministry later in life and had found it harder to work in distributive leadership in the church than in any other sector he had experienced. He felt the report should help to de-clericalise the church. **Dr Appleby** (Tynemouth) explained that the report had arrived at a critical time for the church and that it would help to introduce a more collaborative ministry. **The Revd Jeremy Thompson** (Hexham) reported that his table discussion had recognised that this was something they instinctively knew about but had struggled to progress and felt the report would now help them to do something. **The Revd Marion Penfold** (Bamburgh & Glendale) reported that her table had felt this was something they had been trying to do for many years and that the report was an enabling tool. **Mr Ayerst** (Norham) highlighted that one area where ordained and lay were not equal was the membership of Diocesan Synod. He reminded members that the laity could continue beyond their retirement but not those retiring from ministry. **The Revd Catherine Pickford** (Morpeth) explained that her table discussion had looked at training and development and had noted the lack of training resource for those outside of ordained or Reader ministry. They felt there was a need to identify training need. **Mr Saunders** (Tynemouth) reflected on the need to invest in digital communication in order to reach as many people as possible. **Dr Elder** (Bedlington) reported that her table had looked at changes to behaviour rather than schemes and structure. **Mr Corrigan** (Newcastle East) asked who was the shift for and added his support for an investment in digital communication because he felt there was a lack of Christian presence in the digital environment. **Mrs Malleison** (Newcastle East) explained that she had struggled

long and hard with lay discipleship and reflected on her experience where people would respond by suggesting further training or whether she had considered training for ministry rather than a perhaps a spiritual need for prayerfulness and meditation.

In drawing the plenary to a close Canon Wolstenholme thanked the Synod for the contributions and Canon Flintoft explained that the discussions and feedback had been hugely valuable for him as he was about to embark on his new role which would include this work in the early stages. The Diocese of Newcastle had been invited to be a Pilot Diocese on the programme for Setting God's People Free and the first meeting, with seven other dioceses was scheduled to take place in January 2018.

On behalf of the Synod the Chair thanked Mrs Coulter for her presentation. The Synod paused for a refreshment break and members were invited to continue their discussions during the break.

The Synod reconvened and Canon Wolstenholme took the Chair.

9. Progress with growing church bringing hope

9.1 Update on priority work streams

The Synod received updates from Strand Leaders about progress with the diocesan vision for growing church bringing hope.

IMPACT STRAND: The Bishop of Berwick reported that a consultation with young people had taken place and further consultations were scheduled to help inform this work. A guiding coalition for the impact strand was scheduled to begin work in October.

CITY CENTRE STRAND: The Bishop of Berwick explained that the City Centre Strand was not limited to the proposals for a Resource Church but encompassed the whole of the City Centre. A guiding coalition had been established which has carried out some initial consultations which have begun to discern who are the overlooked and marginalised people we need to reach.

PRAYER STRAND: Canon Flintoft reported that the first month of guided prayer was currently taking place in Riding Mill. The Revd Lesley Chapman reported that the first of the Spirituality in Daily Life courses was running and this provided space for individuals to reflect on their own spirituality and to listen to where God was working with them in their lives. Two further courses were planned for Felton and Cowgate.

LEADING YOUR CHURCH INTO GROWTH: 60 people from 21 parishes met in May for the first diocesan course which was supported by the national team. 95% of people who had attended felt more confident that their church could grow after the course. A further course was planned for 2018 with 9 parishes to date booked to take part.

RURAL STRAND: The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne reported on the planned changes in ministry to respond to the challenges of being Church in a rural setting. The headline aim was reimagine ministry in multi parish rural benefices, with streamlined structures and new teams of lay and ordained working together. A guiding coalition was meeting monthly and a network of 80-100 people were also meeting to develop ways to plan for the future. A rural

conference was expected to be arranged for 2018 to provide an opportunity to share good practise in rural working.

9.2 Application for Strategic Development Funding (SDF)

The Bishop of Berwick reported that the application for SDF in support of a Resource Church for the Diocese of Newcastle would be submitted by the end of October. The Bishop highlighted the five reasons in support of the need to establish the Resource Church:

- To plant a healthy church which would attract the missing demographic of students, young adults and young professionals.
- To provide a centre of expertise in student and young adult ministry.
- To offer resources and support to other churches within the diocese.
- To rediscover an authentic and Newcastle shaped focus on church planting in light of proposals for significant housing development throughout the Diocese.
- To assist in attracting national funding to the Diocese to support the work of the five strands of the Diocesan vision.

The Bishop invited questions from the Synod. **Mr Peers** (Corbridge) asked about what was envisaged with the Resource Church working with other churches. Responding to Mr Peers the Bishop explained that the Resource Church would begin working with Anglican churches but would be open to exploring work with other churches (denominations). **Dr Appleby** (Tynemouth) asked if we would have to support the application with our own resources. Responding to Dr Appleby the Secretary explained that the Diocese had established a Strategic Mission Fund to support future mission initiatives and this fund would help to resource Strategic Development bids. **Canon Hughes** (Tynemouth) asked which dioceses had been successful in obtaining Strategic Development Funding and was there any evidence to demonstrate how effective and efficient the National Strategy and processes were in respect of Strategic Development Funding. The Bishop of Berwick explained that at present there was limited evidence but that Winchester, St Swithin's and Birmingham Gas Street had all obtained Strategic Development Funding to support the development of Resource Churches, all of which had been successful in achieving their aims.

10. Budget 2018 (Papers DS17 12 and DS17 12B supported this item)

The Chair set the scene for the item of business and invited Canon Harper, the Chair of the Board of Finance, to introduce the proposed budget for 2018. Canon Harper reported that budget process had begun much earlier in 2017 in order to meet a request to help parishes with their financial planning. He explained that the Board of Finance had reflected on comments made during the consultation which had begun at the July Synod. He added that at the point at which the Synod agrees a budget the decision would be for the diocese and asked Synod to help with the wider communication to those at the local level. He highlighted the following key points from the paper:

- Three Deaneries had not allocated their full parish share in 2017.
- Following consultation the proposed increase to Parish Share had been reduced from 3% to 2.4%. This compared favourably to CPI which was currently at 2.9%.
- The National Church would continue to reduce funding over the remaining term of the transition period. Each year's reduction was an amount equivalent to 1% of Parish Share.
- Almost 50% of Parish Share was invested in permanent stipendiary ministry and if the payment of Parish Share was not achieved in full then vacancies would take longer to fill.

Other consequences would include a reduced ability to: maintain clergy housing; would restrict our ability to fund training posts and would limit partnership working.

- 8.5% of Parish Share would support legal, governance and safeguarding work and 9% would resource support services.

The Chair invited questions of clarification.

The Revd C Pickford (Morpeth) asked how recipients of lowest income community funding grants received their additional funding. Responding to Mrs Pickford the Secretary explained that the grant allocated to the parishes was used to support the cost of ministry in those areas and that the grant was not given over as a cash contribution to the parish. **Mrs Barclay** (Newcastle Central) sought clarification about the expected outturn for Parish Share in 2017. Responding to Mrs Barclay the Chair of the Board of Finance explained that the forecast was a 92 to 93% contribution to the full Parish Share request. **Dr Thick** (Morpeth) sought clarification on the insertion within the key points that deaneries were to allocate the Parish Share in full. Responding to Dr Thick, the Chair of the Board of Finance explained that we would be unable to achieve a 100% contribution to Parish Share if deaneries did not allocate 100% and that this request was therefore a key point to support the work funded by the proposed budget.

The Chair opened the item for debate.

Dr Thick (Morpeth) expressed his appreciation for the budget consultation process which had been helpful. Reflecting on his previous question of clarification about the key request for deaneries to allocate the Parish Share request in full he asked the Synod to recognise that rather than criticism about a deanery failing to allocate the Parish Share in full there was a real concern at deanery level about the ability of some parishes to make the full contribution. Dr Thick suggested that there was a pressing opportunity to provide practical support to help deaneries and parishes which struggle with this issue. **Mr Saunders** (Tynemouth) expressed his concern about the practicality of asking parishes in his deanery to contribute the equivalent of 80% of their income to Parish Share. **Mr Ratcliff** (Hexham) expressed his concern about the parish giving statistics in relation to national levels. He explained that changes in staffing levels to support stewardship and parish giving did not reflect the support that was required to help parishes to review their giving. **Dr Appleby** (Tynemouth) added that it was crucial to look at what we wanted to achieve and how we wanted to fund those needs. He felt that people would respond generously if they were energised by the diocesan vision. **The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne** (ex Officio) expressed his support for the budget which he believed was a step forward for the Diocese. He added that the overall increase to Parish Share was below the current inflation and felt it represented good value. The Archdeacon asked if the Finance Group would work to provide a long term projection on how the reduction in national funding over the remaining transition period would impact the future budgets. He reiterated that the new funding model could not accommodate a shortfall in Parish Share receipts.

The Chair invited Canon Harper and Mrs Kerry (Vice Chair of the Board of Finance) to respond to the debate.

Mrs Kerry responded to the first comments and recognised that for some parishes there was a real difficulty with the ability to contribute in full. However, there was also a

difference in perception that she invited the Synod to note. This related to giving levels and the fact that that Newcastle Diocese had a low level of giving in relation to the per capita levels of income. While most understood the Diocese of Newcastle to have very low income per capita the data demonstrated that the area was more aligned with a middle income region compared to the country as a whole yet we remained at the bottom of the national table on giving. In her role as Chair of the Developing Stewardship Group (DSG) Mrs Kerry explained that a package of support, including discussion packs for PCCs, and the development of tools to help parishes, such as the Parish Giving Scheme, had begun to make a difference but there was still a long path ahead. The support of parish officers, including treasurers was a key area of action for the DSG.

Canon Harper explained that the measures for inflation (CPI and RPI) demonstrated that the parish share increase was good value in that the increase neither outstripped nor matched inflation. However, the Synod needed to recognise that the reduction in national funding presented additional challenges and that a future funding gap, if all things remained the same, would be in the region of one million pounds.

There being no further questions from the Synod the Chair invited Canon Harper to make his proposal.

The Chair of the Board of Finance proposed that the Synod, sitting as the Diocesan Board of Finance, resolve that the budget be approved. By a show of hands the Synod, sitting as the Diocesan Board of Finance, resolved that the budget be approved.

11. Synodical Business

11.1 Elections to Diocesan Synod 2018 (Paper DS17 13 supported this item)

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne proposed that:

The numbers for election by deaneries of clergy and laity to the diocesan synod be calculated in accordance with paragraph 5(a) and 5(b) of Paper DS17 13 and for the Diocesan Secretary to certify to the secretary of every deanery synod, by not later than 31 December 2017, the numbers to be elected.

The Synod approved the basis on which the places are allocated for Diocesan Synod with effect from 1st August 2018.

12. Contingency business

12.1 Procedural Item

In April 2012 the Newcastle Diocesan Synod had passed a motion which requested a debate in the General Synod. The same motion had been passed by the Diocesan Synods of: Chelmsford, Oxford, St Albans, Bath & Wells, Lincoln, London, Manchester, Newcastle, and Worcester. The dioceses of Chelmsford, Oxford and St Albans had since recognised that the motion was out of date. The motion also related to the previous Archbishop of Canterbury. As such, the Diocesan Synods of Chelmsford, Oxford and St Albans had rescinded their motions. The Chair explained that Newcastle Diocesan Synod was now invited to approve a motion that recognised it was out of date. The Chair moved that:

'This Synod note and express appreciation for the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican Communion since his appointment, note that the

following motion passed by this Diocesan Synod on 28 April 2012 is now out of date, and therefore rescind the said following motion and withdraw the request for it to be debated by the General Synod.'

'This Diocesan Synod requests the General Synod to debate the following motion:

"That this Synod:

(a) rejoice in the fellowship of the world-wide Anglican Communion, which is rooted in our shared worship and held together by bonds of affection and our common appeal to Scripture, tradition and reason;

(b) thank the Archbishop of Canterbury for his tireless efforts throughout the Communion to sustain and strengthen unity in difficult times; and

(c) call on the House of Bishops:

to find ways to maintain and reinforce strong links across the world-wide Anglican Communion and to deepen the Church of England's involvement with the existing Communion ministries and networks (especially the continuing Indaba process);

to publicise and promote this work within the dioceses of the Church of England in order to broaden understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the Anglican Communion; and

to encourage a wide understanding of, and support for, the next Lambeth Conference."'

By a show of hands, the Synod approved the motion to withdraw the motion made on 28 April 2012.

13. Prayers and Close

Robert Peers (Corbridge) lead the closing prayers and the Bishop of Newcastle closed the meeting with a blessing.