

**A meeting of the Diocesan Synod held on Saturday 28 November 2020 at 10:00am.  
Due to the coronavirus pandemic the meeting was hosted using Zoom Video Conferencing.**

President: The Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Christine Hardman  
Chair of the House of Clergy: The Revd Canon Brian Hurst  
Acting Chair of the House of Laity: Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth

### **1. Welcome and opening prayer**

Bishop Christine welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the Synod with a reflection for Canon Carol Wolstenholme, Chair of the House of Laity and General Synod Member, who had died on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

The Bishop Christine invited Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth to act as Chair of the House of Laity for the meeting.

*Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth took the Chair*

### **2. Meeting held on 26 September 2020**

By a show of hands the notes of a meeting held on 26th of September were approved.

### **3. Instrument of Delegation: Suffragan Bishop of Berwick**

Bishop Christine introduced the item and explained that Mark Wroe's consecration as a bishop would take place on 5th January 2021. In order that he is able to exercise his ministry as Bishop of Berwick, Bishop Christine would need to issue an instrument of delegation, by which she could legally delegate episcopal functions to Mark to exercise on her behalf.

Bishop Christine explained she was required to consult the Diocesan Synod before issuing the instrument of delegation, and under Section 13(8) of the Dioceses Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 she was now consulting the Synod and asking its approval in order that she could bring the draft instrument into effect.

By a show of hands the Synod gave its approval to the issuing of the Instrument of Delegation.

Bishop Christine thanked the Synod and asked those gathered to hold Mark and Caroline and their family deep in their prayers and to pray for Rachel Wood and her family as she prepared to become the acting Archdeacon of Northumberland in January.

### **4. The Environment**

Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser) introduced the environmental items with an act of worship he had prepared with Ella Vickers (Environment Working Group).

Bethany Hume (Environment Group) explained the first item was a proposal to register as an Eco Diocese. This would help to encourage churches to register for the scheme which provides structure, resources and tools to help our churches become more eco-friendly. The Synod heard that 21 churches were already registered for the eco church scheme and were doing fantastic work with their congregations to celebrate God's creation and protect the environment.

A presentation followed which also highlighted initiatives from churches within the diocese who were already registered as eco-churches.

The Chair thanked the Environment Group for the presentation and invited questions and comments.

Tim Mayfield (Tynemouth): Not a question, with just grateful thanks to those who have worked really hard on our behalf and all this together. Thank you so much. We are right behind you.

The Chair asked if we register as an eco diocese is it going to cost us a lot of money. In response, Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser) explained it won't cost us anything over and above what we will be spending any way to meet our climate change targets.

Aidan W Evans (Ncl West): I really do support us being registered as an eco diocese, but I would just like to remind everyone, possibly, they don't need to be reminded that this is the first very small footprint on a very, very long journey and registering without a commitment to change is no good whatsoever. We have to be prepared to consider all our actions in the future, including how we reorder our buildings, how we replace heating systems and the choices we make when replacing pews or installing new sound and lighting systems.

There being no further questions, the Chair moved for the Synod to register to become an Eco Diocese. A vote was taken using the Zoom polling facility. The Synod agreed to register as an Eco Diocese.

### **Aiming for Carbon Net Zero**

Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser): Introduced the second environmental decision for the meeting and explained the Environment Working Group was seeking the Synod's agreement to amend the diocesan environmental policy to reflect the call in February of this year from General Synod to reduce emissions to net zero by 2030. This would replace the current date of 2050. A presentation was given to support the change and this was followed by a discussion with Benjamin Carter (GS Member) who shared his insights on the debate at the General Synod.

Benjamin Carter (GS Member) explained the original proposal was to reach net zero by 2045 and an amendment was put forward to move this to 2030. The amendment was passed very narrowly with 144 in favour, 129 against and 10 abstentions. Benjamin reflected on the vibrancy, openness and breadth of the debate and also the grace and the openness with which that target was now being received and understood.

A presentation was given by Bethany Hume (Environment Group) which set out what was meant by carbon net zero, the availability of resources to help parishes and the work in hand to measure and report progress.

The Chair thanked the Environment Group for the presentations and invited questions and comments.

John Appleby (GS Member): I wanted to add my support to all of this and to make another couple of comments on the national picture. My first point supports Benjamin's remark about the urgency implied by the 2030 deadline. The work being done through the Mission and Public Affairs Council, of which I am a member, has been quite interesting in that after the debate it all was on examination and it looked more feasible than perhaps it did it during the debate itself. The second point thing I want to make is simply that this is about the churches and institution. I think it

behoves us all to make every effort we can in our individual lives and lifestyles to do everything towards promoting climate action and not to think it is somebody else's job.

Sarah Moon (Bedlington): I am aware, living in clergy housing, that my footprint has gone up since I moved into a clergy house. We had made all the adaptations we could in our own home to keep it as low carbon footprint as possible and I wondered if there was going to be some commitment from a diocesan level to ensure that all that we do in working towards net zero also has a prophetic edge, that if we are seen to be getting our own house in order, then we can encourage other people to do the same. It is about modelling the behaviour and the changes that we want to see in everybody. Is the property department on board with this? In response, Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser) confirmed we are talking to the property department and drawing in the DAC.

Paul Allinson (Ncl West): Can I just say yes that lots of churches would be very supportive of implementing this policy but it comes back down to funding, such as when we are looking at placing solar panels or changing heating systems. In response, Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser) agreed and explained there was a certain amount of grant funding available, I think, and I suspect as a decade goes on and Government commitments become a leader, there will be more funding available centrally as well.

Carol Griffiths (Bamburgh Glendale): I couldn't be more enthusiastic and I'm sure that we all agree but can we still legitimately vote to support this objective only 10 years away when you don't see any possibility of my many churches being able to effect any realistic change with their existing heating systems. In response, Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser) explained that was hard to answer, but if you have an old inefficient boiler the likelihood is that it would need to be replaced in the next 10 to 15 years anyway.

Tom Birch (Corbridge): This is one of the devils in the detail when we come to try and work out carbon offsetting. My question throughout this which has been partially answered is, where is the boundary, where is the circle in which we are paying attention to how much carbon is being emitted now? A reduction in carbon outside of that circle wherever we draw it, and we seem to be talking about drawing that circle around church buildings, clergy housing etc. may split our minds between the institutional church and the whole people of God. But I think, actually, this gives us an opportunity here if we are more imaginative about how we help people to record the reductions to carbon outputs as a result of changes to their behaviour. There is a great opportunity to draw more of our parishioners along and get them involved. In response, Mark Nash-Williams (Environment Adviser) explained a lot of work has been done already on defining what we mean by net zero and what is included and what is not. This can help people to think more holistically.

There being no further questions, the Chair moved for the Synod to amend the Diocesan Environmental Policy to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030, instead of the current date of 2050, to reflect the General Synod Motion. The Synod agreed the amendment to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.

The item was closed with a short video on Psalm 65 followed by a prayer.

## **5. Growing Church Bringing Hope: Next Steps**

Rob Saner-Haigh (Director Mission & Ministry) opened the item in prayer and then updated the Synod on the ongoing work on Next Steps which he invited Synod to offer feedback on the progress and to endorse direction of travel. The ongoing work had involved further consultations

which had helped come to a set of values and priorities and a potential model for how we organize our life together, our mission together and ministry together.

This was followed by a video presentation from the Archbishop of York about a mixed ecology of mission exploring the sense that we want to cherish our parish life and also find new ways of doing our mission and ministry.

Jill Swaile (Bellingham) read from Luke 10 verses 1 to 12 and Mark Wroe (Archdeacon of Northumberland) then led a reflection on the Gospel passage. This was followed by a presentation given by Rob Saner-Haigh which began with the reimagining and reordering of the diocesan values of being generous engaged and open. We want to be:

- open to God's transforming and love
- generous with God's transforming gifts
- engaged in God's transforming mission in the world

The presentation continued with a further look at the emerging three priorities which the recent consultations had helped to shape:

- bringing good news
- growing in Christ
- living faith fully

The presentation continued with an introduction to the emerging model about how the Next Steps work proposed to live out the values and priorities through being focused on how we build capacity and encouragement to then bring good news, grow in Christ and live faith fully. The emerging model included proposals to:

- ensure each local place would be looked after and developed by a focal minister (lay or ordained), as part of a team with an oversight minister;
- devolve budgets to areas to help foster accountability and local decision making about ministry needs.

*The Synod paused for a break.*

*The Chair of the House of Clergy took the Chair and invited Gwyn McKenzie (Corbridge) to lead the Synod in prayer before continuing the item on Next Steps.*

*The Synod was then invited to break into smaller discussion groups to consider three questions:*

- i. What is good about this? (What are signs of hope in this model for you and for your church community and for the work that we have to do together?)
- ii. Where do you already see this happening?
- iii. What might you have to let go of?

Mark Wroe (Archdeacon of Northumberland) welcomed people back from their breakout rooms and led the plenary session. Scribes from each group were encouraged to send their fuller reports from each group to the Secretary and these were published and circulated to Synod members after the meeting at [www.newcastle.anglican.org/synod](http://www.newcastle.anglican.org/synod)

The Chair thanked the Synod for its engagement with the Next Steps work and asked the Synod if it was content to endorse the values and priorities and the direction of travel. A vote was taken using the Zoom polling facility and the Synod endorsed the values and priorities and direction of travel.

The Chair invited Allison Harding (Ncl West) to close the item of business in prayer.

## **6. Budget 2021**

Simon Harper (DBF Chair) introduced the proposed budget for 2021 set out in paper DS20 25 and explained that document was a continuation of the Synod's discussion from September. The consultation received 168 responses and PCCs had been asked three questions (i) Could the PCC offer more than they had been allocated in 2020; (ii) could they work towards paying the same allocation given in 2020; (iii) did they think they would need to offer less. The responses had helped to shape the budget proposal by establishing a parish share that we could reasonably expect to receive based on the returns and comments from parishes. The expected parish share would leave a gap which would need to be bridged and a one-off contingency fund, set out in the paper, would be established through the sale of property to help parishes in 2021.

The Chair invited members to offer comments and questions.

Chris Grocock (Morpeth): What does that mean for the individual parishes in terms of the sort of request that is asked of them for parish share. We are in Ashington, we were really struggling massively and we are going to struggle this year, let alone next year. So I am just wondering what that contingency fund will mean for individual parishes.

In response, Simon Harper (DBF Chair) explained that the contingency fund would be used to bridge the gap between what the parish could offer in 2021 and what it had been asked to contribute in 2020.

Lesley Twomey (Corbridge) just wanted to ask about the saving on ceasing all but essential housing work and how that squares with what we've discussed this morning about the eco church and about looking at the housing to make it more ecologically friendly or zero carbon emissions. I would welcome, just a little bit more clarity on that.

In response, the Secretary explained the saving on non-essential work was to help us to get through a serious financial situation caused by the covid pandemic and was not a strategic long-term decision about property.

John Packer (Tynemouth): One of the most obvious if you like elements of this budget is the reduction in partnership working and I wondered if we could just have some reassurance or helpful comment on the lack of funding for NECAT and industrial mission.

In response the Secretary explained that the biggest budget reduction in partnership working was the removal of the grant to the Education Board for 2021. The Board had agreed to draw from its own reserves. The grant to Together Newcastle was not affected but without the resources that come in from the parishes we don't therefore have the resources to give to NECAT and other partner organisations.

Andrew Shipton (Ncl Central): How many properties are we aiming to sell this year to cover the loss? In response the Secretary confirmed the Board had identified five properties for disposal. A sixth house was also to be placed on the market, the former home for the Bishop of Berwick.

There being no further question Simon Harper (DBF Chair) moved that the Synod sitting as members of the Board of Finance approve the budget or refer the budget back to the Standing Committee.

A vote using the Zoom polling facility was taken and the budget was approved.

## **7. Covenant for the care and wellbeing of the clergy**

Izzy McDonald-Booth (GS Member and Acting Lay Chair) provided a background to the presentation and explained the General Synod had voted overwhelmingly in 2019 to support a

new way of improving the approach to the care and wellbeing of clergy across the church. The Covenant invited parishes, dioceses and the wider church as well as individual clergy to share responsibility for the welfare of ordained ministers, their families and households. The introduction to the Covenant at this meeting was the start of a conversation for something important as a church. We need to care for our clergy. We need to make sure well-being, is taken seriously. For churches this will mean different things. Sometimes it will involve conversations with a standing committee or churchwardens. Sometimes it will include PCC and deanery level conversations. People are key in this discussion and it is quite difficult for clergy to bring up their own wellbeing in their own PCC meeting and we need our lay members to take a lead in this area to encourage those conversations to happen.

John Sinclair (GS Member) provided an overview of various resources to support the Covenant, including the book *How Clergy Thrive*. The book is designed to help conversations about physical and mental wellbeing, about relationships, buildings and finances. Arrangements were in place to obtain copies for clergy, churchwardens and members of Synod.

The Chair thanked John Sinclair and Izzy McDonald-Booth for their presentation and opened the item for comments and questions.

John Ayerst (Norham): I think this is an opportunity to support not just the clergy, but the spouses and partners of the clergy.

Adrian Hughes (Tynemouth): I think I would like to relate this discussion to a previous discussion about the future ordering of our church. I think there are a lot of anxieties amongst the house of clergy and uncertainties about future roles, shape and responsibility and I don't think we should keep these two debates separate but see how one actually relates to the other.

Nigel Collingwood (Hexham): In a parish, some years ago, I was a churchwarden and the vicar there had serious health problems, and so on. It got to a stage where this particular vicar was criticized for wearing the wrong pair of shoes for church. The vicar had to wear those shoes for medical reasons and so I provided support and made sure that those parishioners, who had very sharp views on life, did not cause this vicar any harm. It is a real live issue and it is a joy to support our clergy.

Carol Barclay (Ncl Central): Can I just ask where we have to purchase this book from and how much it costs, please. In response John Sinclair (GS Member) explained it was available through Church House Publishing at a cost of £2.99 but the Secretary was arranging for copies to be purchased and circulated to members of the Synod, clergy and churchwardens.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions and this concluded the item of business.

## **8. Closing remarks**

The Chair thanked the Synod for the lively conversation and productive meeting and invited the Bishop to close the meeting with a blessing.

The Bishop brought the meeting to a close with the Advent blessing.