

## **Minute of a meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and hosting using Zoom Video Conferencing**

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

There were 64 members present, 12 guests and 4 officers.

### **1. Welcome and opening worship**

The Revd Canon Brian Hurst welcomed members and guests to the meeting and began with a prayer giving thanks for Mother Julian of Norwich.

### **2. Declaration of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes of previous meeting**

#### **3.1 Transcript of a meeting held 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020** (Paper DS21 03B)

The Synod noted the transcript of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

#### **3.2 Matters arising**

The Secretary confirmed the Diocese of Newcastle had registered as an eco diocese and that 15% of churches in the diocese had registered with eco church, an increase of 14 churches since the November Synod and 2.5% of churches had achieved an eco church award. Church House had also registered and was working towards a silver award.

### **4. Promulgation of Amending Canons No 40 and 41** (Paper DS21 04)

Amending Canons No 40 and 41 were promulgated by the Chair.

### **5. DAC Quinquennial Inspection Scheme 2021** (Paper DS21 05)

The Chair invited Canon Roger Styring, Chair of the DAC, to speak to the Quinquennial Inspection Scheme 2021.

Canon Styring explained the background to the Scheme and confirmed the Scheme followed the template provided by the Church Buildings Council (CBC). Canon Styring explained the PCC remained responsible for the proper care of church buildings; was responsible for the appointment of an inspector; had a duty to apply for a faculty for permission for any work that was commissioned and that all buildings that are listed are to be inspected every five years. Traditionally, an inspector was an architect but a PCC was now able to appoint a suitable professional to be an inspector.

The Chair invited questions of clarification. **The Revd Allison Harding** (Newcastle West) asked if an example could be given of a suitable inspector who was not an architect. In response Canon Styring gave an example as someone with professional qualifications and professional indemnity, such as a Chartered Surveyor.

There being no further questions the Chair moved that the Synod approve the Diocesan Scheme for the Inspection of Churches.

The Synod approved the Scheme.

### **6. Instrument of Delegation: Honorary Assistant Bishop** (Paper DS21 06)

The Chair invited the Bishop to speak to the paper.

Bishop Christine explained it was a real joy to seek the Synod's noting and approval for the granting of an Instrument of Delegation for Archbishop Sentamu to become an honorary assistant bishop in the Diocese of Newcastle. Bishop Christine read out the draft Instrument of Delegation.

The Synod approved the granting of the Instrument of Delegation to the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dr John Tucker Mugabi Sentamu.

Bishop Christine thanked the Synod for giving its approval and gave thanks for all the honorary assistant bishops serving in the Diocese of Newcastle.

On behalf of the Synod, Bishop Christine congratulated Archbishop Sentamu on having been conferred the dignity of a Barony of the United Kingdom for life with the name, style and title of Baron Sentamu of Lindisfarne in the County of Northumberland and of Masooli in the Republic of Uganda. The Bishop asked that the Synod's congratulations be conveyed in writing to the Archbishop.

*Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth took the Chair*

## **7. Growing Church Bringing Hope: Next Steps (Paper DS21 07)**

the Synod received a presentation from Bishop Mark and Chris Elder (the Strategy and Transformation Manager) which included:

- an update on deanery engagement
- progress with the self-evaluation questionnaire
- the funding application timeline
- an opportunity to reflect on myths

### *Deanery Engagement*

Chris Elder reflected on the engagement with deaneries and highlighted the key themes which had emerged. All deaneries had recognised the Kairos moment but the engagement had identified deaneries were at different places with their own challenges and opportunities within their local contexts. The engagement had identified support for greater collaboration and the potential for developing the role of the laity as well as embracing digital inclusion.

The presentation paused for questions. No questions were asked.

### *Self-Evaluation Questionnaire*

Chris Elder provided an overview of the emerging questionnaire for parishes which had five sections: (i) Leadership and Governance; (ii) Mission and Pastoral Care; (iii) Development of Lay Ministry; (iv) Buildings fit for purpose; and (v) Generous Giving.

The presentation paused for questions

**Carol Griffiths** (Bamburgh & Glendale) asked about the timeframe for the questionnaire and also reflected on her experience with authorised lay ministry development where the initiative was launched but sufficient resources had not been made available for it to succeed. Would the new initiatives be sufficiently resourced? In response Chris Elder explained the timeframe for the issuing of the questionnaire was yet to be confirmed and was dependent on having resource in place to support parishes with the exercise. Bishop Mark responded to the question about authorised lay ministry and explained resources were now in place following the appointment of the Canon Director for Mission & Ministry and the recent appointment of a Lay Ministry Development Officer. **The Revd Canon Christine Brown** (Newcastle West) asked if the questionnaire would be piloted and in response Bishop Mark confirmed a pilot was intended. **The Revd Allison Harding** (Newcastle West) asked who was going to complete the questionnaire, would it be the PCC? In response Bishop Mark explained it would be different in each place, for example in some parishes it would be the PCC and in others it could be the Standing Committee but the hope was that it would be done in collaboration. In response to **the Revd Capt Paul Allinson** (Newcastle West) asking how to understand the term 'encounter faith' Bishop Mark explained this would be interpreted locally. **The Revd Catherine Macpherson** (Bedlington) asked how would the questionnaire help parishes evaluate and prioritise rather than list what was or was not happening.

Bishop Mark explained it was hoped that a parish would have an awareness about what was and was not being achieved and there was space within the questionnaire for parishes to work out where particular support and help with priorities was needed. **The Revd Jane Nattrass** (Newcastle Central) asked if the questionnaire could become a tool to help parishes work through the various areas. **Aidan Evans** (Newcastle West) had not seen a question about how the local church interacted with the poor, distressed and marginalised and in response Bishop Mark assured Mr Evans this would be addressed before the questionnaire was sent to parishes. **Emma Doran** (Tynemouth) observed that the questionnaire would be an opportunity for parishes to engage in the process and they should be encouraged to participate fully.

#### *Timeline*

Chris Elder resumed the presentation and updated the Synod about the timeline for the two stages involved with the application for funding to the National Church. The Core Group was working to submit the Stage One application in June 2021.

#### *Myths*

In light of press coverage about changes in other dioceses which was causing local concern and anxiety Bishop Mark addressed some myths about the transformation programme. Points addressed included:

- Reductions to clergy numbers and the actual deployment over recent years. The actual stipendiary cohort, excluding curates, has been circa 82FTE in recent years and the Next Steps work is focused on approximately 80FTE stipendiary clergy being a financially sustainable number;
- responding to COVID was included within the work but the pandemic had not initiated the need to carry out the work;
- the emerging shape was to address our shared responsibility to help support mission across the diocese together as a household of faith and not a master plan from the national church; and
- the work was not about church closure but would include looking at how buildings are best used for mission.

In response to a question of clarification from **John Ayerst** (Norham) Bishop Mark explained FTE was full-time equivalent. **Prof Gary Holmes** (Morpeth) asked at what point would Synod have the opportunity to comment on the people plan within the transformation bid to ensure frontline deployment and in response, Chris Elder explained the Stage Two submission would include a finer detailed plan. **The Revd Canon Christine Brown** (Newcastle West) commented on the two-stage process and explained the need to keep the conversation alive within parishes while journeying through the process.

The Chair thanked Bishop Mark and Chris Elder for the update and presentation supporting the Next Steps work.

*The Synod paused for a break before reconvening for item 8, Living in Love and Faith.*

*The Revd Canon Brian Hurst resumed the Chair*

## **8. Introduction to Living in Love and Faith**

The Chair invited Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth to provide the Synod with an introduction to Living in Love and Faith, a project the Church of England had worked on for three years. All dioceses had been asked to appoint advocates to help and support churches and to encourage churches to engage with the material. The Bishop had invited Canon McDonald-Booth to be the advocate for Living in Love and Faith for the Diocese of Newcastle.

Canon McDonald-Booth began the introduction with a video produced by the Church of England which explained the project was a way of enabling the church to think together about identity,

relationships, marriage and sexuality, things that define the way lives will be led. The project was a library of resources including a book, a series of podcasts, real life video stories and a course.

Canon McDonald-Booth followed the video with a period of prayer before giving a short presentation which covered the following points: (i) why the Church had introduced the project; (ii) the available resources; (iii) how to engage with the project; and (iv) the timeline.

The Synod noted the project timeframe would enable participation and learning in 2021 followed by discernment in 2022. To help diocesan engagement an Open Synod Forum was arranged to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> June and this would be facilitated by Dr Eeva John, the Church of England's Enabling Officer for Living in Love and Faith.

The Chair opened the item for questions. Comments and questions included: the need to provide a safe space for discussion at local levels, particularly within group work; if the courses could be run at a deanery, rather than parish level; the difference between Inclusive Church and Living in Love and Faith; the speed at which parishes could begin to engage with the material; and the need for people to genuinely listen to one another without prejudice.

In response, Canon McDonald-Booth reassured the Synod the materials had been carefully designed and courses were well assembled to ensure safe spaces for discussion; in some places it may be appropriate to hold a deanery course while in others it may be more appropriate at a local level; parishes could begin to engage as soon as they felt ready; and the Living in Love and Faith project was designed to allow many differing voices to come through.

The Chair thanked Canon McDonald-Booth for her introduction to Living in Love and Faith and encourage members to attend the Open Synod Forum on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

*Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth took the Chair and reminded the Synod that for item 9 they were sitting as members of the Board of Finance.*

## **9. Financial Items**

**9A Annual Report and Financial Statements 2020** (Paper DS21 08A)

**9B Summary of Financial Statements 2020** (Paper DS21 08B)

The Chair invited the Bishop and Canon Simon Harper, Chair of the Board of Finance, to present to the Synod.

Bishop Christine began by thanking all individual members and PCCs who had worked so hard to make parish share payments in an extraordinary time. The collaboration of parishes and diocesan support working together to journey through the pandemic had demonstrated a real generosity. Moving forward in our life together as a diocese will require us to engage in our financial situation with realism, with generosity and above all with gratitude for all that we have. The Bishop hoped that with our Next Steps work we will gather like a family around a table to have an adult conversation together so that as a family we are sharing this together and seeking to be realistic about what we can achieve with the resources we have.

Canon Harper took the Synod through a slide presentation about the Statutory Accounts and explained the Accounts reported a surplus of £362k on unrestricted and designated funds. However, the underlying position for 2020 was a loss of £121k.

The difference between the two figures was due to accounting rules which meant a reduction in the clergy pension liability (£330k); a balance of lowest income communities funding (£53k); and a donation from the Newcastle Diocesan Society (£100k) required these items to be reported as part of the surplus for the year.

Canon Harper reflected on the generosity of parishes during an unprecedented time. The underlying loss of £121k was much less than anticipated at the height of the pandemic. In addition, the National Church had provided additional funding of £498k to help with the financial impact from the pandemic. The generosity of parishes together with the budget savings in 2020 had meant this additional funding had not been required for 2020 but the National Church had recognised the challenges the diocese would face in 2021 and had agreed for the sum to be used to help support the 2021 budget.

Canon Harper thanked parishes for the contributions and support of parish share in what was an extraordinary year.

There being no questions Canon Harper moved that the Financial Statements for the year ending 31st December 2020 be received.

The Synod agreed to receive the Financial Statements.

*The Revd Canon Brian Hurst resumed the Chair*

## **10. Elections 2021**

### **10A General Synod Elections** (Paper DS21 09)

The Secretary provided an overview of the timetable for the General Synod Elections and explained the process would be electronic and would be supported by Civica Election Services.

The nomination period would begin at the end of July and close at the start of September.

Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth encouraged people to think about standing for General Synod themselves, or to encourage others to do so, and shared her experience as a member of General Synod. Bishop Christine added her reflections of working with the current cohort of General Synod members who had represented the Diocese well during debates and as members of various national boards and committees.

### **10B Diocesan Synod Elections** (Paper DS21 10)

The Secretary provided an overview of the timetable for the Diocesan Synod Elections and that the nomination process would begin on 1 June.

## **11. Closing Prayer and Dismissal**

There being no other business the Chair invited the Bishop to draw the meeting to a close.

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