

## **Note of business transacted at a meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and hosting using Zoom Video Conferencing**

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

The Revd Canon Brian Hurst welcomed members and guests to the meeting and especially Bishop Metlha, Bishop of Botswana, and the Revd Prof James Amanze the Botswana Link Officer.

Fr Allan Marks led the Synod in worship.

### **2. Botswana Partnership Agreement (Paper DS21 16)**

Bishop Christine and Bishop Metlha signed a new partnership agreement between the Dioceses of Botswana and Newcastle.

Bishop Christine invited Bishop Metlha to address the Synod and the Synod listened to the encouraging news of a growing church in Botswana filled with an energy for celebrating the Gospel together with the resource challenges of supporting such growth.

A video of Bishop Metlha's address was shared after the meeting ended and is available [using this link](#).

Bishop Christine thanked Bishop Metlha for his moving address to the Synod and reaffirmed the Diocese of Newcastle's continued support in prayer, fellowship and, wherever possible, the sharing of resources.

Bishop Metlha and Prof Amanze extended their best wishes to Bishop Christine for her upcoming retirement. The Chaired prayed for Bishop Metlha and the Diocese of Botswana before the Bishop and Prof Amanze left the meeting.

### **3. Meeting held on 18 September 2021**

#### **3.1 Note of business transacted on 18 September 2021 (Paper DS21 13B)**

The Synod noted the business transacted on 18 September 2021.

#### **3.2 Matters arising**

a) Elections to the General Synod had been completed. The Synod noted the election of the Revd Canon Ian Flintoft; the Revd Robert Lawrance; the Revd Claire Robson; Lt Gen Robin Brims; Nicola Denyer; and Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth to serve as representatives of the Diocese of Newcastle.

b) The Secretary provided an update to Boards and Councils from the Diocesan Synod. A number of places remained unfilled and work would be carried out to fill the vacancies.

### **4. Instrument of Delegation (Paper DS21 15)**

The Chair invited Bishop Christine to introduce the paper.

Bishop Christine explained that the Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Revd Christopher Lowson would soon be retiring and he would be living in Berwick upon Tweed after his retirement. Bishop Christine had invited Bishop Christopher to be an honorary assistant bishop and this required the approval of the Synod.

Bishop Christine read the draft Instrument of Delegation.

The Synod approved the Instrument of Delegation.

## 5. **Newcastle Education Board Scheme for Approval** (Papers DS21 14A and DS21 14B)

The Chair invited the Revd Gill Alexander (Chair of the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board) and Canon Paul Rickeard (Diocesan Director of Education) to speak to the two papers before the Synod.

Gill Alexander provided a background to the paper and the work involved in reaching this stage. Bishop Christine had given permission for the Board to continue as an incorporated Board. The Synod noted discussions had taken place with the National Church to ensure the Scheme was compliant with the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021. If agreed, the Scheme would come into operation on 1 January 2022.

The Chair invited questions from the Synod. There being no questions, the Chair invited Gill Alexander to move the resolution.

Gill Alexander moved the resolution standing in her name and the Synod resolved:

“Having considered the draft scheme the Newcastle Diocesan Synod (the Synod) resolves it is ready to make the proposed scheme and passes a resolution that, conditional on the proposed scheme being certified by the Archbishops’ Council in accordance with s.23(1) of the DBE Measure, the scheme will be “made” on the date on the certificate on which the scheme comes into operation. The Synod requests, subject to Archbishops’ Council approval, that the date on the certificate should be 1 January 2022”

On behalf of the Synod the Chair recorded its thanks to the Joint Education Team for the work involved in producing the Scheme asked members of Synod to continue to hold the work of the Education Board in their prayers.

## 6. **Vacancy in See: update**

The Secretary gave an oral report to update Synod on the work of the Vacancy in See Committee.

The Secretary explained that Sir Philip Mawer (the Committee’s Chair) and he had met with the Archbishops’ Secretary for Appointments, Caroline Boddington on 5 November. At that meeting it became apparent that the Crown Nominations Commission would be meeting earlier than expected to consider the Vacancy in the See of Newcastle. As a result, the Newcastle Vacancy in See Committee would need to complete its work by the third week of February.

The Synod noted that the Vacancy in See Committee would be carrying out wide consultation to help the Committee to bring together the Diocesan Statement of Needs. In addition, the Archbishops’ Secretary for Appointments and the Prime Minister’s Secretary for Appointments would be carrying out consultations in January, including a public consultation.

The Crown Nominations Commission was scheduled to meet in June and July 2022.

In light of news that the process in Lincoln had been paused and the Bishop of Ely had become the Acting Bishop of Lincoln, **Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth** (Chair of the House of Laity and General Synod Member) asked if the same could happen with the Newcastle vacancy. In response the Secretary explained it was not known what would lie ahead with the process. He hoped the timetable the Commission was working to meet would give some reassurance to the Synod. Bishop Christine explained that the Archbishop of the Province was key to the process and the Synod noted the Diocese of Lincoln fell within the Province of Canterbury.

**Fr Allan Marks** (Newcastle Central) asked about the consequences of a pause. The Secretary responded to say he was uncertain about consequences as the pause was new territory and had only been announced. Bishop Christine explained that as the Diocesan Commission had already considered a pause with the upcoming vacancy in Newcastle before permission had been granted to proceed, the Synod should be reassured that the Archbishop of York had already explored the matter and had concluded the See of Newcastle should be filled.

*Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth took the Chair*

## **7. Next Steps (Paper DS21 17)**

The Chair invited Bishop Mark and Chris Elder (Transformation and Strategy Programme Manager) to introduce the Next Steps item of business. Bishop Mark set the scene for the piece of work and invited John Hamilton (Bedlington) to read from Luke 10. The Synod then broke into eight breakout rooms to consider the question: In what ways do you think the Kingdom of God has come near you?

Members returned to the main room and Bishop Mark reflected on his recent letter which was sent in light of the Strategic Investment Board's decision not to invite the Diocese to progress an application for Transformation Funding.

Before pausing for a break, Bishop Mark invited members to begin to think about questions to be asked of ourselves, questions for the Bishop's Council and questions for the National Church. After the break members would be invited into breakout rooms to share their questions.

*The Synod paused for a break.*

Members returned from the break and Bishop Mark invited the Revd Catherine Macpherson (Bedlington) to read from Luke 10. After the reading, Chris Elder invited members to return to breakout rooms to reflect on the reading and to consider the question: What do we as a Synod need to ask Bishop's Council to consider?

Members returned to the main room and a plenary followed.

Each breakout group shared the questions that they would ask of the Bishop's Council. Many of the groups had questions for the National Church but some had found the exercise difficult when they were not aware of the feedback which may have been offered from the National Church. They felt the lack of feedback prevented them from forming questions for the Council.

The questions from the breakout groups were noted and would be shared with the Bishop's Council. Members were invited to share their questions for the National Church with the Core Group and with members of the General Synod.

The Chair invited members to ask questions and **Carol Griffiths** (Bamburgh & Glendale) requested feedback for parishes regarding the Next Steps self-review. In response Bishop Mark explained the self-review had sought to understand the questions being asked on the ground and to identify missional strengths which could be shared with others. The reason for the self-review still held despite the outcome of the Strategic Investment Board and work would be completed to arrange overviews of the data to be shared in due course. **Prof Gary Holmes** (Morpeth) asked about the response rate. Chris Elder replied to confirm the response rate was 60% but the deadline had been extended by one month to allow others to submit. A good number had committed to submitting by the deadline and only two parishes had declined to participate. **The Revd Andii Bowsher** (Newcastle Central) asked about the ownership of the data given it had been completed by parishes. In response Bishop Mark explained information gathered from the self-review would help to inform Next Steps and, once ready, would be shared with parishes and deaneries.

Bishop Mark extended his thanks to all parishes for engaging with the self-review. He recognised the disappointment and confusion felt by many in respect of the recent outcome and reminded Synod to continue to celebrate what God has given us and who we are.

The Chair thanked members for their participation in the work of Next Steps and drew the item to a close.

## 8. Budget 2022 (Paper DS21 18)

The Chair invited Canon Harper (Chair of the Board of Finance) to speak to the paper.

Canon Harper began by reflecting on the challenges faced by the Diocese of Botswana and set out by Bishop Metlha during his address to the Synod, particularly the concern raised about having sufficient funds at the end of each month to settle clergy stipends.

The Synod received an update on the financial performance for 2021 and noted the projected outcome would be a small surplus rather than a budgeted deficit. The 2021 budget had been supported from sustainability funding of £498k from the National Church.

Canon Harper took the Synod through the budget proposal set out in the paper.

The Chair invited questions and **the Revd Canon Simon White** (Morpeh) asked if there was anything the Synod could do to help the Diocese of Botswana. **Carol Griffiths** (Bamburgh & Glendale) sought clarification about the number of stipendiary posts for Bamburgh & Glendale and **Dr John Appleby** (Tynemouth) asked if the budget papers could also include information about the number of vacant posts in each deanery. In response Canon Harper explained the Board would give some consideration to Simon White's request and that future budget papers would aim to address Dr Appleby's point. The Secretary confirmed there was a typographical error within the budget paper for the Bamburgh & Glendale stipendiary posts and confirmed the number as four. **Fr Allan Marks** (Newcastle Central) spoke as Chair of the Botswana Task Group and confirmed funding was being arranged to be sent to Bishop Metlha (in the order of £5k) to help the Bishop establish a Mission Relief Fund.

There being no further questions the Chair invited Canon Harper to move the motion in his name. Canon Harper moved that the Budget for 2022 be approved.

The Synod, sitting as members of the Board of Finance, approved the Budget for 2022.

## 9. Farewells

The Synod said farewell to the Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Christine Hardman who was due to retire on 30 November. On behalf of the House of Laity, Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth thanked Bishop Christine for her service and encouragement to the Diocese of Newcastle, the House of Laity and to laity across the diocese. The Revd Canon Brian Hurst spoke on behalf of the House of Clergy and thanked Bishop Christine for her gentle but firm leadership, her encouragement and generosity and for helping us to look outwards.

Canon Hurst led the Synod in prayer in which the Synod prayed for Bishop Christine and Roger; and Bishop Metlha and the Diocese of Botswana.

In response Bishop Christine thanked the Synod and shared with members how blessed she had been to serve as Bishop of Newcastle and believed the Diocese of Newcastle was in good hands for the journey which lay ahead. Although financial resources were always welcomed, the Bishop reminded Synod that the Diocese of Botswana was lacking in financial resource but was blessed with the strength and passion of the Gospel.

## 10. Closing Prayer and Dismissal

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

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