

**Minute of a meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod
held on Saturday 20th October at Newcastle Cathedral, Newcastle, NE1 1PF,
from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.**

President: The Rt Revd Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle

Two members of the House of Bishops, thirty-six members of the House of Clergy, thirty-eight members of the House of Laity and fourteen officers, staff and visitors attended the meeting.

The Synod began with a Eucharist in the Choir followed by a meeting in the Refectory.

1. Welcome from the President

The Bishop of Newcastle welcomed new and returning members to the first meeting of the new Triennium.

2. Apologies

The Secretary reported 18 apologies had been noted.

3. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Election of Clergy and Lay Chairs

The President explained that Under Standing Order 5 the House of Laity and the House of Clergy were each required to elect a Chair. One nomination had been received for the House of Clergy and one nomination for the House of Laity.

The Revd Catherine Pickford was elected as Chair of the House of Clergy (Proposed by: the Revd Canon John Sinclair; Seconded by the Revd Canon Adrian Hughes). **Canon Carol Wolstenholme** was elected as Chair of the House of Laity (Proposed by: Lynne Craggs; Seconded by Aidan Evans).

The Bishop thanked the outgoing Chair of the House of Clergy, Canon John Sinclair, for his valued work with the Diocesan Synod. The Synod thanked Canon Sinclair with a round of applause.

Canon Carol Wolstenholme, Chair of the House of Laity, took the Chair.

5. Minutes of previous meetings

5.1 Meeting held on 28th April 2018 (Paper DS18 13 supported this item)

The Synod agreed the minute of a meeting held on 28th April 2018.

5.2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Notices

There were no notices.

7. Questions

The Secretary reported that two questions had been received.

- (i) **Mr David Ratcliff** (Hexham Deanery) had asked: *What are the plans to introduce support, through an officer re-appointment, to parishes to help maximise the generosity of parish givers, and when will this happen?*

In response, the Vice-Chair of the Board of Finance and Chair of the Developing Stewardship Group (Mrs Liz Kerry) explained that the final report of the Developing Stewardship Group, which would be considered by the Bishop's Council in November, included a recommendation for the appointment of resource to support generous giving.

Going forward there was provision within the budget to support generous giving and interim support arrangements had been introduced in September to help to bridge the gap to allow consideration and decisions about any future appointment. The interim arrangement was helping to promote the Parish Giving Scheme and a series of workshops was already underway.

- (ii) **Mr Matthew King** (Newcastle East Deanery) had asked: *Regarding the diocesan vision and the five strands, at the launch we were told regular progress reports would be provided. Could an A4 leaflet be produced to be shared with parishes?*

In responding to Mr King the Secretary agreed to work with colleagues to produce an information leaflet for circulation.

The Revd Catherine Pickford, Chair of the House of Clergy, took the Chair

8. Safeguarding (Paper DS18 22 supported this item)

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA), Ruth Rogan, explained that in her time in Office the Diocese of Newcastle had recognised the significance of safeguarding through the appointment of additional resources within the Safeguarding Team. This had increased the Safeguarding function from a single officer resource to a team of four (part-time posts). The DSA invited the Team comprising of the Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Andrew Grant), the Training and Policy Adviser (Linda Hunter) and the Safeguarding Administrator (Ruth O'Hagan) to introduce themselves to the Synod.

The DSA highlighted the roles and responsibilities of Diocesan Synod in relation to safeguarding and invited the Synod to adopt the National Safeguarding Policy and to note the practice guidance which informed safeguarding practice within the diocese.

The Chair invited questions from the Synod:

Dr Lesley Twomey (Corbridge Deanery) asked if training could be delivered at the weekends to accommodate those who worked during the week. In response the DSA explained that over the last three years training had been delivered at different locations across the diocese and which had included training at evenings and weekends to reach as wide an audience as possible. **The Revd Christopher Grocock** (Morpeth Deanery) commended the facility to deliver training in parishes and asked for clarification about C1 online training. The DSA explained that she had invited feedback from the cohort who had participated with the online training and added that anyone who experienced problems accessing the online training should contact the Safeguarding Administrator for assistance. In addition the DSA advised feedback had identified that face-to-face training with opportunities for group discussion was found to be preferable to online training. **The Revd Lesley Chapman** (Corbridge Deanery) asked if there was any national or diocesan policy relating to Anglo Catholic clergy offering confessional. The DSA explained that a training module was in development which was expected to be ready for delivery in 2019. Two members of clergy had been identified to deliver this training within the Diocese. **Prof Gary Holmes** (Morpeth Deanery) suggested that the approach to Safeguarding Training had been relatively passive and that a voluntary approach was inadequate. The DSA explained that the Bishop had provided all Licensed Clergy, Readers and those holding Permission to Officiate (PTO) with a clear timeline within which to complete their training and that this approach had been successful. In addition clarification was sought about Church of England national practice and procedure differing from that of the diocesan policy and which would take precedence? The DSA explained that all dioceses were encouraged to adopt the National Safeguarding Policy in order that individual diocesan procedures would become more consistent across parishes and the Church of England as a whole. The Safeguarding Team was working with the Communications Team to develop the safeguarding pages on the diocesan website in keeping with the national guidance.

The Chair thanked the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for her presentation and invited members to adopt the policies recommended in the paper. By a show of hands, the members of Diocesan Synod:

- i) adopted the National Safeguarding Policy which underpinned all safeguarding work within the Diocese and would drive improvement in practice in parishes and deaneries in the diocese as a whole: and
- ii) adopted the Policy and Practice Guidance for responding well to domestic abuse; and
- iii) noted the Practice Guidance that was available and would inform safeguarding practice within the Diocese.

9. Proposed Budget 2019 (Paper DS18 14 supported this item)

The Chair of the Board of Finance, Canon Simon Harper, introduced the proposed budget for 2019. For the benefit of new members Canon Harper explained that members of Synod had a dual role: as members of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod and members of the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance. Canon Harper highlighted that the proposed budget would:

- Provide sufficient funding for 85.0FTE of the 101.8FTE permanent substantive stipendiary posts and which would mean that 16.8FTE posts would be vacant at any one time during 2019.
- Provide sufficient funding for 18.0FTE stipendiary curates.
- Fund the financial contribution to the National Church activities set by the General Synod.
- Fund 3.0FTE new fixed term missioner posts and 1.0FTE interim ministry post
- Resource a diocesan contribution to the work of the Diocesan Education Board of £100k
- Wholly fund 21.22FTE posts and part fund 5.5FTE posts based at Church House or with partner organisations.
- Resource a £100k investment into the Strategic Mission Fund to help resource ongoing and future strategic mission projects across the diocese.
- Require a Parish Share request in 2019 of £4,807,066 to achieve a balanced budget. The budget would require all deaneries to meet their Parish Share request in full.

Canon Harper explained that the budget proposal resulted in a 3.0% reduction to the Parish Share request made in 2018 and emphasised that this was predicated on each deanery contributing fully to the amount that was requested. To achieve this Canon Harper stressed that an environment of mutual support between parishes would be required.

The Chair invited questions of clarification:

The Bishop of Newcastle explained that the vacancy rate to achieve the proposed budget would need to be 17% and sought clarification about the current vacancy rate. The Secretary responded and confirmed that the vacancy rate for 2018 had been higher than this figure and at some points had been 25%. **Mr Mick Greves** (Corbridge Deanery) asked why Corbridge Deanery had been selected to support other deaneries in the diocese. Canon Harper explained that in the context of mutual support within the Share Allocation for 2019 Corbridge Deanery would be asked to support other deaneries and explained that Corbridge Deanery had been a recipient of mutual support from the other deaneries in the allocation in 2017 and 2018. **The Revd Dr Benjamin Carter** (Hexham Deanery) sought clarification on the way the figures were presented. The Secretary explained that the 3.3% reduction was a result of reduced expenditure carried forward from the contingency budget agreed in April 2018. However, the Secretary added that although the proposed budget would see a reduction in the amount of Parish Share that was requested in 2019 the forecast for 2018 contributions towards the Parish Share was expected to achieve a 93% contribution. As a result, many parishes would be expected to increase their cash contribution to Parish Share in 2019 to meet the proposed budget expenditure which was based on a full contribution to Parish Share.

The Chair invited members to debate the budget.

The Revd Tom Birch (Corbridge Deanery) suggested that the problem was not what we spent our money on but that our parish incomes were too small and in that context we should encourage our communicant members to strengthen their discipleship and move to be a church run by laity with the support of ordained ministry to see a growing church with growing income. Mr Birch commended the proposed budget. **Dr John Appleby** (Tynemouth Deanery) suggested that we needed to engage ourselves and our parishes in how we grow church and raise our income to achieve the vision in which our Bishop was leading us. **The Ven Dr Peter Robinson** (Archdeacon of Lindisfarne) spoke in his role as Chair of the Diocesan Education Board and highlighted that the budget proposed a £50K reduction in the grant to the Diocesan Education Board in 2019. This would result in less Religious Education support in Church Schools, a reduced capacity to engage consultants in school improvement and restrict the Board's ability to achieve its objectives. **The Revd Lesley Chapman** (Corbridge Deanery) advised that as a Deanery, Corbridge was working collectively to pay Parish Share but that some targeted support with parishes across the Diocese who are unable or unwilling to pay Parish Share would be helpful. **Mr John Ayerst** (Norham Deanery) advised that meeting the Parish Share request is dependant on 100% allocation to parishes. Norham Deanery was grateful for a reduction in the 2019 budget but this would still leave some parishes unable to pay and this would not be sustainable in the longer term. **Mrs Emma Doran** (Tynemouth Deanery) spoke from the experience of her own church which had thoroughly looked at expenditure and explained that it would be helpful for all churches to budget and be realistic with their expenditure. **Mr Mick Greves** (Corbridge Deanery) suggested that on the basis of mutual support across the Diocese, the members from congregations in Corbridge Deanery would each need pay an extra £1.60 per head per week and this would be difficult for an individual on a fixed income. He explained that in regard to the suggestion that Parish Share was being reduced his experience was that the Share request for the parish of Shotley St John had increased by 13% in 2017 and by over 8% in 2018.

The Chair invited Canon Harper to respond to the debate:

Canon Harper reported that he had found the debate to be very positive and that it had been made clear that Parish Share was not only about items such as paying stipends and maintaining buildings, it was about mission and supporting a wider vision. He explained that we needed to have more effective communication about what Parish Share resourced to engender a more positive response towards contributions. Canon Harper suggested that as a new Synod this presented a new and positive opportunity to explain to everyone why we are here and what we want to do with our financial resources.

Canon Harper invited the Synod, sitting as the diocesan Board of Finance to resolve:

- a) that the budget be approved; or
- b) that the budget be referred back to the Standing Committee

By a show of hands, the members of the Diocesan Board of Finance approved the budget and the proposal was carried.

Canon Carol Wolstenholme, Chair of the House of Laity, resumed the Chair.

10. Appointment of Honorary Assistant Bishop

In accordance with the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 (s13) the Bishop asked the Diocesan Synod to approve the appointment of the Rt Revd Mark Bryant as an Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Newcastle.

By a show of hands the Synod agreed to the appointment.

11. Deanery Synod Motion

The Revd Phil Hughes (Area Dean, Bedlington) and Mrs Lynne Craggs (Deanery Lay Chair, Bedlington) introduced a motion which had been passed by the Bedlington Deanery Synod.

This Synod recognises that the Diocesan Board of Finance (the Board) is required to submit annually to the Diocesan Synod a budget showing the estimated expenditure of the Board for the following year together with proposals for raising the money required to meet the estimated expenditure. The raising of such monies include sums known as parish share which every parish in the Diocese is asked to contribute not as a debt which is demanded, but as a voluntary offering which is expected. The Board is required to apportion the amount to be received by way of parish share to the Deaneries using the method as the Diocesan Synod shall have approved. This Synod, recognising the method for apportioning the sums to Deaneries was last revised by the Diocesan Synod in 1994, requests the Diocesan Synod to carry out a review with Deanery Synods, of the method for apportioning parish share.

The Chair invited questions of clarification:

Mrs Emma Doran (Tynemouth Deanery) asked, for the benefit of new members who may not know, what was the current system to determine Parish Share? The Secretary responded that the current system was a weighted system based on three factors: parish income 70%; clergy points 15%; and attendance 15%. **The Revd Dr Benjamin Carter** (Hexham Deanery) sought confirmation that the policy was to allocate Parish Share to Deaneries who then allocate to Parishes. The Secretary confirmed that current Standing Orders set out the current process which was to allocate to each deanery. The Synod had the power to agree changes to the Standing Orders. **Prof Gary Holmes** (Morpeth Deanery) asked the proposers if they anticipated any benefits, or any new distinctive or compelling elements to a system which would not arouse anxiety in the deaneries. The Secretary explained that the motion was to carry out a review and if the Synod were to request a review, a Review Group would need to consult and present proposals arising from the Review to a future Synod for debate.

The Chair opened the item for debate by Synod

The Revd Simon White (Morpeth Deanery) suggested that in the allocation of Parish Share we should be generous, engaged and open. **Dr John Appleby** (Tynemouth Deanery) welcomed a review as an opportunity to share an understanding of how Parish Share is calculated and suggested that it would also be valuable to share information and best practise in the different ways the deaneries respond to Parish Share. **The Ven Dr Peter Robinson** (Archdeacon of Lindisfarne) welcomed the opportunity to review how we deal with Parish Share in the diocese as part of a wider restructure of diocesan finances. He advised that finance must follow vision and that we should reconnect the mission of God with Parish Share so we do not take energy away from other things we do in the mission of God. **The Revd Dr Helen Savage** (Corbridge Deanery) and **The Rt Revd John Packer** (Tynemouth Deanery) both reiterated that a review of Parish Share and any changes which may be introduced should be related to mission. **Mrs Liz Kerry** (Alnwick Deanery) reported from her experience as Chair of the Developing Stewardship Group and explained that work with deaneries and parishes over the last three years had shown that the current formula for Parish Share, with a heavy emphasis on income was a disincentive to generous giving.

The Chair invited Mrs Craggs and Fr Hughes to respond to the debate.

In her response Mrs Craggs explained that she had found joy in the debate especially linking mission with Parish Share. Fr Hughes moved the motion from the Bedlington Deanery Synod.

By a show of hands the Diocesan Synod approved a review of Parish Share. The motion was therefore carried.

The Chair invited the Secretary to explain the process which would then follow. In response the Secretary reported that the Bishop's Council would establish a Review Group, appoint a Chair and terms of reference and the work of the Review Group would be brought back to Synod for consideration.

12. Closing Prayer

The Chair led the closing prayers and the Bishop of Newcastle closed the meeting with a blessing.