

**Minute of a meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod
held on Saturday 28th September 2019 at Newcastle Cathedral.**

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

Fifty seven members of the Synod attended the meeting together with six staff and observers.

1. Welcome and opening worship

The Revd Catherine Pickford, Chair of the House of Clergy, welcomed members to the third formal meeting of the triennium and led the Synod in prayer.

2. Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

3.1 Meeting held on 11th May 2019 (Paper DS19 14 supported this item)

The Synod agreed the minute of a meeting held on 11th May 2019.

3.2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Notices

The Chair gave two notices: (i) the nomination period was open to fill the vacancy on the General Synod caused by the consecration of the Revd Canon Dagmar Winter as Bishop of Huntingdon; and (ii) immediately following the meeting members would be welcome to stay for a recital in the Cathedral.

5. Question

John Ayerst (Norham Deanery) asked:

In view of the current financial position the Diocese is facing what steps can be taken to minimise the impact of loss of available funds for the Task Groups?

The Chair explained that the member for Norham Deanery had agreed that his question would be addressed in the financial business.

6. Presidential Address

The Bishop gave a Presidential Address and reflected on the gift of joy and the importance of being together, praying together and listening to one another at this point in the life of the diocese. The Bishop reflected on the life of the nation, particularly with Parliament and the need to hold debate with joy and hope.

Looking at the two agenda items for the meeting which had a focus on responsibility and care towards God's world and the environment were deeply serious matters. In challenging times there could be a host of deep feelings of grief and despair but we needed not to be afraid. The Bishop spoke of two sharply contrasting possibilities, the first was a Dementor from the books of Harry Potter which would suck out all of the joy and hope and the second was the Holy Spirit which brought joy into life. The Bishop encouraged the Synod to seek to debate the business of the agenda and to reach its decisions through joy and hope.

The Synod was presented with a video which celebrated four different pieces of work from across the diocese: God's Tent; Holiday Hunger; Byker MINE Children and Youth; the work in Embleton to help to combat social isolation.

(A sound recording of the full address is available from Church House or from www.newcastle.anglican.org/synod)

7. Environment

The Bishop's Advisor on the Environment, the Revd Mark Nash-Williams gave a presentation to the Synod which included a video from the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Synod was invited to engage with the importance of environmental issues and to agree a Diocesan Environmental Policy.

The Revd Tom Birch (Corbridge) told the Synod that he was a Climate Change and Development Economist before he became a priest and asked that the policy and the activities of the Working Group should have a greater focus on resilience and adaptation in order to help to build resilient communities. **The Revd Rachel Wood (Tynemouth)** highlighted the opportunity as a church to set targets for each PCC to work towards and suggested the Working Group could develop targets and help to provide resources to help PCCs to meet those targets. **The Ven Peter Robinson** (Archdeacon of Lindisfarne) reminded the Synod of the large portfolio of buildings across the diocese and the opportunities that were presented by initiatives, for example solar panels on church roofs. **Jill Swaile** (Bellingham) explained that small things could make a difference and shared an example from St Peter Falstone where they had installed a composting toilet. **The Revd Tim Mayfield** (Tynemouth) explained we were moving beyond individual change and needed to get behind systemic change such like the movement of Extinction Rebellion.

The President asked that the Working Group include the voice of younger people who have an energy to work on issues around climate change. **The Rt Revd Mark Tanner** (Bishop of Berwick) spoke of crisis opening up opportunities for mission. He asked the Synod to imagine a diocese where every church had solar panels on the roof and a heat pump providing warm places for the community where we could better serve the common good. **Carol Griffiths** (Bamburgh & Glendale) shared her experience of becoming overwhelmed by the number of reports that were issued, almost daily, which stressed the urgency of the situation. She asked if we should use the opportunity for systemic change to lobby Government.

In response the Bishop's Advisor on the Environment thanked the Synod for sharing the points they had made and agreed to incorporate the Synod's thoughts to shape the activities of the Working Group.

The Chair moved that the Synod adopt the policy set out in DS19 14. The Synod unanimously carried the adoption of the Diocesan Environment Policy.

8. General Synod Items

8.1 Promulgation of Amending Canon No. 39 (Paper DS19 17 supported this item)

Amending Canon No. 39 was promulgated.

8.2 General Synod Report

Dr John Appleby (General Synod Member) presented an overview of the business conducted at the July session of the General Synod.

Information about the business of the General Synod can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/about-general-synod>

The Synod paused for a break before reconvening for item 9, Financial Business.

9. Financial Business (Paper numbers DS19 16 supported this item)

Canon Simon Harper, Chair of the Board of Finance, introduced the budget discussion paper DS19 16 and used the parable of the dishonest manager and highlighted that making the most of our wealth and resource was about sharing.

Addressing the question posed by John Ayerst (Norham Deanery) the Canon Harper explained that the need to resource Task Groups had to be balanced with the other priorities and with a reduced expenditure it meant the Synod had to focus on difficult choices.

Canon Harper explained that the feedback following the budget consultation had indicated a rise of +3.82% was not felt achievable and Parish Share receipts for 2019 continued to present real challenges. As a result, the Synod was asked to consider the budget it would be minded to agree and to share this with parishes in order to seek parish support before reconvening to agree a budget for 2020. Canon Harper posed four questions for members to consider at their tables:

- What are your 'must haves' for the budget?
- Are there areas of work you feel are over resourced?
- What is your biggest concern about the budget?
- What can your parish do to help the present situation?

Members had time to discuss the questions and the Chair then invited questions of clarification ahead of the budget debate.

The Revd Sarah Moon (Bedlington Deanery) asked how people were asked to join and be a part of Task Groups and advocated that the best way of finding volunteers was to ask people. **The Revd Tim Mayfield** (Tynemouth Deanery) asked why central funding was being cut to the Diocese. **Dr John Appleby** (Tynemouth Deanery) asked about Newcastle Diocese in relation to the national picture. **The Revd Canon Andrew Shipton** (Newcastle Central) Asked how we had already achieved £341K of savings.

The Diocesan Secretary was invited to respond and explained that:

- There was a diminishing membership within the Task Groups and experience had shown that the loss of a paid leader had impacted on the work of Task Groups. He explained the Bishop's Council would be considering the work of Task Groups within the Council's future business.
- On National Funding the Secretary explained that the Archbishop of Canterbury had introduced Reform and Renewal which had then been rebranded as Renewal and Reform. This national programme had a focus on church growth and the National Church had therefore changed the way funding was allocated to enable it to focus on the priorities for Renewal and Reform. This included new funding for Lowest Income Communities which Newcastle was a recipient but this was less than the amount received through previous funding.
- In relation to other dioceses the Secretary explained that Newcastle was not the only diocese with a challenging financial future and this was not limited to dioceses in the northern province.
- In response to the budget savings already achieved the Secretary reminded the Synod that it had approved an emergency contingency budget in April 2018 which had included significant expenditure savings and these savings had been carried forward into the 2019 budget.

The Chair then opened the item for debate.

John Ayerst (Norham Deanery) talked about the three options that had been offered in July and at first he had been minded to seek an aspirational budget but now accepted that a more realistic option was a budget increase based on inflation. He reminded Synod that we are the diocese and members of Synod needed to help to communicate messages back to the people in the pews. Reflecting on his experience within Norham Deanery he commended the work of his own deanery to others in order for other deaneries to achieve a greater level of Share. **Lynne Craggs** (Bedlington) made three points: (i) Synod could all agree the percentages for increases but PCCs cannot promise to meet those increases they can only strive to pay; (ii) asked about what contingency plans would support the budget; and (iii) what other funding streams are being investigated. **Carole Griffiths** (Bamburgh and Glendale) told the Synod that there is a lot of joy in her parish following the arrival of a new priest but wanted to tell the Synod that while her parish wanted to endorse an aspirational option it could not offer any further increase to its contribution to Share. She

highlighted that the budget paper lacked any reference to fabric maintenance that had a huge expense on parishes across the diocese. **Emma Doran** (Tynemouth Deanery) spoke about the budget decision being a painful process and that it required careful management. Whatever the Synod decided to do would need to be achieved with openness and honesty and that a greater degree of collaboration was needed within deaneries. Emma highlighted the priorities for PCCs and questioned whether PCCs had considered Parish Share as a priority or an expenditure item that was left after all other priorities had been achieved. Emma advocated the setting of targets for Parish Share.

The Revd Canon Clare Maclaren (Newcastle Central) spoke of her experience of ministry across urban estates and spoke about her concern that churches continued to be vibrant. Clare highlighted that all of the options required loss and that this needed to be achieved strategically in order to achieve vibrancy in our communities. **The Revd Canon Adrian Hughes** (Tynemouth Deanery) endorsed the points made by Emma Doran and spoke of the learning that Tynemouth was working with following conversations with Norham Deanery. He advocated the use of targets and welcomed the opportunity to debate and then seek the support of a parochial response. He asked who the advocate was within the parish for financial responsibilities and asked if the stipendiary ministry was to change who was leading on the changes required to support ministerial training. **Prof Lesley Twomey** (Corbridge Deanery) asked Synod to think of the colourful ways other charities used to call on donors to support the charitable aims because people needed to know what they were paying towards. **Jill Swaile** (Bellingham Deanery) talked about the worry of church closures and the limited number of eucharistic services in deeply rural communities and the need to focus attention on how Parish Share was used locally for the benefit of local communities. **The Revd Dr Tony Curtis** (Tynemouth Deanery) spoke of the need to focus on regular giving. Fundraising could supplement mission but regular planned giving was required to sustain the parish ministry. He cited the example of Shiremoor and commended

The Revd Canon Andrew Shipton (Central Deanery) reflected on his recent sabbatical and the need to focus on realism. He pleaded for an acceptance of where we are at present could dawn a vision and a reality which could lead to new things. He advocated a focus of clergy wellbeing if the diocese moved to a lower level of stipendiary clergy. **Nigel Collingwood** (Hexham Deanery) spoke of planned giving being the primary income for parishes and asked Synod to look carefully at the increase broken down into small digressive amounts. He advocated gratitude and thanks for giving in order to value the sacrificial offering made by people. Dr John Appleby (Tynemouth Deanery) welcomed the appointment of two generous giving advisers who would be helping parishes develop generous giving. **The Ven Peter Robinson** (Archdeacon of Lindisfarne) spoke of a task for Synod to become advocates of a new model of mission and ministry. He endorsed the discussion of realism and vision and highlighted the challenge of reaching a consensus about the option that would be presented to parishes which he felt needed to include an element of aspiration.

In response to the debate Canon Harper reflected on the encouraging points raised in the debate and acknowledged the challenges of communication and collaboration. He stressed that members of Synod needed to be advocates of the budget.

The information contained in the discussion document and the views from the debate were combined to form a motion that the Chair of the Board of Finance then moved:

the Synod, sitting as members of the Board of Finance, having considered and debated the budget consultation is minded to agree a budget in 2020 which would require parishes to find an additional £90K (+2.0%) on the amount contributed in Parish Share in 2018. Therefore, the Synod requests each Parochial Church Council (or Standing Committee) be asked to indicate whether it would support the budget the Synod is minded to agree.

By a show of hands the Synod approved the motion.

10. Closing Prayer and Dismissal

The Bishop reported that during the registration on arrival members had been asked how they had arrived for today's meeting: 24 had arrived by public transport, 2 by electric car, 36 by car and 1 by bicycle.

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