

DRAFT MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD HELD ON SATURDAY 23rd MAY 2014 AT 10:00AM AT THE DR THOMLINSON CHURCH OF ENGLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL, SILVERTON LANE, ROTHBURY.

Present: The Bishop of Newcastle
 The Dean of Newcastle
 The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne
 The Archdeacon of Northumberland
 The Revd Canon John Sinclair (Chair of the House of Clergy)
 Canon Carol Wolstenholme (Chair of the House of Laity)
and, 32 Members of the House of Clergy
 40 Members of the House of Laity
 Thirty four members gave apologies

In Attendance: Mr Shane Waddle (Diocesan Secretary), the Revd Ian Flintoft (Bishop's Chaplain), Mrs Jane Lowdon (Registrar), Mr Martin Sheppard (Development Officer for Communications), six Supporting Ministers and two visitors.

Canon Carol Wolstenholme, Chair of the House of Laity, was in the Chair

The Revd Canon Jim Robertson, Area Dean of Alnwick Deanery, led the Synod in worship.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed new members of the Diocesan Synod: the Rt Revd John Packer; the Revd Allison Fenton; the Revd Sarah Miller the Revd Juliet Stephenson; the Revd Jacqueline Stober; Mrs Ann Purves and the URC Observer, Pat Gurr. The Chair then paid tribute to those leaving the Synod: the Revd Dana Delap, who was preparing to move to Gloucester, and to the Bishop of Newcastle who had recently announced his retirement.

Thirty four apologies were recorded.

2. Minutes

Synod approved the Minutes from the previous Synod of 7th May 2014

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Notices

There were no notices.

5. Questions

There were no questions.

6. Presidential Address

The Bishop opened his Address by expressing his gratitude to past and present members of Synod for giving their time, energy and gifts to support the work and mission of the Diocese through the meetings of the Synod during his term of office.

The Bishop then spoke on the subject of *failings and failure* and highlighted the challenges faced by those ministering to declining congregations during times of Christian recession in the context of an environment where growth was prominent on the national agenda. The Bishop made reference to the many successes across the Diocese over recent years including growth in attendance; the increase in those called to ordination and those employed as youth workers; the work of PICA across many communities; and the financial generosity expressed through the high level of Parish Share contributions received in 2013. The Bishop encouraged the Synod to welcome growth which was not under the farmer's control but what the Lord of the harvest determines.

(A copy of the Presidential Address may be obtained from the Bishop's Office.)

7. Financial Statements 2013

Canon Simon Harper, Chair of the Board of Finance, gave a short presentation about the Financial Statements for 2013 and highlighted some key areas for Synod which could be linked into the following session when the Synod would be considering the achievements set out in the Annual Reports. Members noted that although income was strong in 2013 and had exceeded £7M the contribution to Parish Share was less than the budgeted contribution of 92% and, as a result, the Diocese had spent less on what the Synod had agreed to do in 2013.

In discussion members asked questions about the future of the Selective Allocation from the Archbishops' Council, the ability to fill vacancies quickly and what mission and ministry could have been achieved had parishes managed to contribute the full amount of Parish Share. In response members noted that discussions were ongoing with the National Church Institutions about how the National Church was proposing to use central funding in future years; the Board of Finance included a vacancy rate of 8% within the budget; and that there was a changing dynamic across the Church as deployment was moving away from a formulaic approach to a situation where dioceses were now encouraged to say more clearly what they would like to do in terms of deployment.

The Chair of the Board of Finance proposed that the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2013 be received and the Synod, by a show of hands, agreed to receive the Statements.

8. Diocesan Priorities and Annual Reports

Members divided into six groups to discuss the six Diocesan Priorities and each group was joined by representatives of the Supporting Ministers, Task Groups and Church House staff. The groups were asked to consider three questions to discern what work had been carried out to further the priority; what would be useful for the next twelve months and what could have been achieved with more resource.

During the plenary session comments were received from each group which included the following points: the importance of feeding into the work of the Vacancy in See Committee; helping to think more as a diocese and deanery rather than a parish; providing good training and support to enable ministry and mission;

to realise the potential of time as a resource as well as money; increasing communication between the diocese and the parish to help flows of information; and to be more intentional and outward with our engagement in society.

The Archdeacon of Northumberland proposed that the Annual Reports for Boards, Committees, Supporting Ministers and Task Groups be received and the Synod, by a show of hands, agreed to receive the Reports.

9. Botswana Youth Exchange

The Revd Rachel Squires and Suzy Moran, a visitor to Synod, led a presentation about the forthcoming Botswana Youth Exchange. Members noted the exchange would include a visit in June by the youth representatives from Botswana and representatives from Newcastle would head to Botswana in July to help with various tasks including decorating at a hospice and clearing a site at Old Naledi.

10. Vacancy in See

The Secretary gave a short presentation about the work of the Vacancy in See Committee which would be meeting later in the year to begin the process of finding the twelfth Bishop of Newcastle.

In discussion members asked some general questions about the process and the timetable for finding a new bishop including an update on the Synodical process for Women in the Episcopate. The Secretary promised to provide an update on the Committee's work at the next meeting in November.

11. Close

The Revd Canon John Sinclair, Chair of the House of Clergy paid tribute to the Bishop of Newcastle and the Synod responded with loud appreciation.

The Bishop concluded the meeting with a blessing at 1:00pm.