

**Note of business transacted at a meeting of
the Newcastle Diocesan Synod held on
Saturday 9th November, 2024 at 10:00am
at Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School, Silverton Lane, Rothbury, NE65
7RJ.**

The President was the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Newcastle and the meeting was chaired by the Dean of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Lee Batson; The Chair of the House of Laity, Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth and the Registrar, Laura Peace.

The Register, attached, recorded 68 members; 1 visitor and 10 officers in attendance.

1. Welcome and opening worship

The Bishop of Newcastle welcomed members to the meeting and gave a particular welcome to new members who were attending Synod for the first time since the beginning of the new triennium. The Bishop also welcomed the new Interim Diocesan Secretary, Chris Elder to their first attendance of Diocesan Synod and gave a huge thanks to the Secretary for taking on the role.

The Bishop noted that as the Chair of the House of Clergy, Revd Robert Lawrance was unable to attend, the Dean of Newcastle would chair Items 2 - 8.

The Bishop then led the opening prayer for Synod.

The Dean of Newcastle took the chair

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from 22 members.

3. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were made.

4. Meeting held on Saturday 28th September, 2024

4.1. Note of business transacted on Saturday 28th September, 2024 (paper DS24 29)

The Synod noted and approved the business transacted.

4.2. Matters arising

i. Update on the Elections to Diocesan Boards, Councils and Committees (Paper DS24 30)

The Secretary informed Synod that the nomination period for people to serve on Boards, Councils and Committees was now closed. There had been no more nominations than positions available, therefore, all people nominated would be duly elected to serve on the respective Board/Council/Committee for the new triennium beginning January 1st 2025. Each newly elected member would be informed in the week to come.

5. Notices

The Secretary reported that Revd Emma Duff had now started in post as the newly appointed LGBTQI+ Lead Chaplain. The Chaplaincy would provide a safe space for people to discuss matters relating to sexuality and the church. It would also support those who identified as LGBTQI+ to help them to feel confident about being part of diocesan and church life.

6. Questions

The Secretary confirmed no questions had been received.

7. Presidential Address

The Bishop of Newcastle gave their Presidential Address to Synod. A copy of the Address is attached to this note.

8. Board of Finance Items

The Chair invited the Chair of the Board of Finance, Canon Simon Harper to speak to the following Board of Finance items.

i. **2024 Period 10 Parish Share Report** (Paper DS24 31)

ii. **Management Accounts: Period 10 to 31st October 2024** (Paper DS24 32)

The Chair of the Board of Finance informed members that the first two Board of Finance papers noted above set out a summary of Parish Share and NDBF Management accounts up until the end of October 2024 and were to be taken as read.

ii. **2025 Budget** (Paper DS24 33)

The Chair of the Board of Finance (CBF) thanked the Bishop of Newcastle for their earlier comments on the 2025 budget during their address to Synod. The CBF reported the following key details from the 2025 Budget Consultation which was used to inform the 2025 Budget proposal set out in paper DS24 33:

- 146 parishes had responded out of 183.
- Of those who had responded 138 offers were received.
- In 2024 the total offer received was £3,080,580.
- In 2025 the total offer received £3,098,726.
- For the 37 Parishes who had not responded an estimated offer of £767,857 had been made.
- The total estimated offer for 2025 was £3,880,130 which represented a 0.47% increase on 2024.
- 98 parishes had increased their offer which equated to a total sum of £197,645. St Thomas' Resource Church had offered £52k more than in 2024. Collectively this was a 10% increase on their 2024 offers.
- 21 parishes reduced their offer which equated to a total loss of £179,499. Those that had decreased, had decreased by 30% on their 2024 offers.
- 27 parishes had offered the same amount in 2025 as in 2024.

The CBF thanked everyone who has responded for engaging in the process and noted their appreciation for the time and emotional energy that it had taken up.

With regards to the 2025 Budget Proposal, the CBF noted for clarity that the paper was not proposing to reduce the number of FTE stipendiary clergy to 60. The budget remained at 71 and the paper showed the gap between what we were currently able to fund from parish share (which was 60FTE) and what we currently had (71FTE). It also showed the impact of filling all the 80 posts set out in the Deanery Plan, although due to timing issues between an incumbent leaving and a new appointment beginning, it was highly improbable that we would ever be in the position where we had no vacancies and all 80 posts were filled.

The CBF noted that the proposed budget also made the following three key assumptions in addition to the 71 FTE:

1. A 2% cost of living increase for both staff and clergy.
2. A 2% inflationary increase in costs.
3. National insurance and living wage increases had also been taken into account.

The CBF explained that with this budget we would make a deficit of £911,000 which would have to be funded from Diocesan reserves and the sale of some of the remaining properties. The CBF added that Newcastle Diocese had never been able to fund all its own clergy costs however 10 years ago a new funding regime was put in place by the national church as part of Renewal and

Reform. This changed our block grant into 2 elements, the lowest income community fund (LINC) and the Strategic Development Fund. This change was managed by transition funding over a 10-year period. The LINC funding was annual income, but funding from the National Church needed to be applied for. Last year our STF (Strategic Transformation Funding) bid was unsuccessful and the transition funding had now ended. The inevitable result of this loss was that without the STF or transition funding, as a diocese, we would be around £1m a year worse off. The CBF noted that the diocese had done well over recent years to manage costs in line with that falling income, but now additional income was needed, both at a parish and diocesan level, to fill this unfunded gap.

The CBF noted that the following actions would to be taken going forward to try to close this funding gap:

- The creation of a group who could help in thinking outside the box in order to find ways of raising additional funds both at parish and diocesan level.
- Work would be carried out with Brewin Dolphin to help maximise the return on our assets and adopt an alternative strategy of total return. This would allow us to treat an element of capital growth as income.
- A review of surplus properties would be carried out, particularly those whose ownership was not vested with the DBF in order to maximise the cash and income generating possibilities from these.
- Concerns around the funding gap and the resultant financial issues would be raised with Central Church via Diocesan Secretaries, Finance Directors and Bishops. This was particularly important considering the level of overall deficits experienced by dioceses nationwide.

The CBF invited questions or comments from Synod

The Revd Canon Ian Flintoft (Bedlington) noted with regret that there had not been a great deal of time for Synod to look at the budget proposal and asked that more time was given for future budget proposals to be considered before approving. Revd Flintoft then enquired what work had been done to look into why parishes were struggling to pay parish share and also asked for more information with regards to the group which would be set up to help increase income.

The CBF explained that the Budget Proposal had only been approved by Bishop's Council at their meeting two days prior, on 7th November, which was why there had been such a short amount of time for Synod to review it. With regards to parishes which were struggling financially, the CBF confirmed that there was a lot of work done by the Head of Finance, Tom Royle and the archdeacons to provide support and guidance for those parishes. In terms of the group to be created to help increase income, the CBF noted that this was still at an embryonic stage. As there was no defined picture of what this group would look like yet, the CBF welcomed input and suggestions from those who wished to assist in the matter.

Acting Bishop's Advisor for the Environment, The Revd Tim Mayfield (Tynemouth) noted the importance of being able to maximise income and using investments with Brewin Dolphin in order to do this but asked for confirmation that the diocese would not be investing in companies that supported fossil fuels. The CBF confirmed that Brewin Dolphin had to follow the diocese's ethical strategy when investing funds.

The Revd Canon Dr Ben Doolan (Newcastle Central) asked what was currently being done to access new funding as a diocese. The CBF reported that every possible avenue to raise funds was being looked into and noted that the Bishop of Newcastle, the Director of Mission and Ministry and the Head of Finance were all involved with this task.

The Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh (Tynemouth) was encouraged by the assurance that Diocesan Secretaries were at work to raise concerns regarding funding deficits through national networks.

Revd Cleugh noted that we needed to consider whether we also wanted this issue brought for debate at General Synod in order to draw attention to the impact the lack of funding has had on the diocese. The CBF agreed that this was something the diocese should consider and noted that it was unlikely that Central Church was looking at our diocese without worrying about this issue.

Kay Plumley (Newcastle Central) asked what the NDBF's target for reserves was. The CBF noted that the NDBF aimed to have enough funds to cover twelve months of expenditure if no Parish Share was received.

The Revd Canon Steve Wright (Hexham) asked what amount of time would be given to see if extra funding could be gained before the diocese would have to aim for 60FTE. The CBF noted that the paper showed the impact if no extra funding was received and we tried to achieve a balanced budget. With the current 71FTE we would reach a £2million deficit in three years and there would not be sufficient budget to survive into a fourth year, therefore this was the time period being looked at.

The Chair (the Dean of Newcastle) commented that the budget proposal was not an emotional decision on the number of posts which could be reduced but rather a realistic decision to be able to fund 71FTE.

The Chair moved that Synod, sitting as members of the Diocesan Board of Finance, resolve:

- a) that the budget (presented in paper DS24 33) be approved; or
- b) that the budget be referred back to the Standing Committee.

By a majority show of hands, the Synod, sitting as members of the Diocesan Board of Finance resolved to approve the budget proposed in paper DS24 33.

iv. **Recruitment for a New Diocesan Secretary**

The Chair of the Board of Finance reported that HR consultant, Judith Knight had been engaged to support the diocese in the recruitment process for a new Diocesan Secretary. Judith was highly skilled in this area and was currently helping to put together a job description for the role. It was hoped the job description would be finalised over the next few weeks and ready to advertise in December, with interviews scheduled to take place in January. The expectation was that if the post was offered to a successful candidate following interview in January a new Secretary would hopefully be in post by the second quarter of 2025.

The Chair of the Board of Finance gave a huge thanks to Chris Elder for stepping in to cover the Secretary post in the interim, as well as all the work he had already managed to do during his short time in the role.

The Chair thanked members for their input and invited Synod to pause for a break.

The Synod paused for a break.

Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth took the chair

9. **Standing Agenda Items**

9.1 **Racial Justice**

The Chair invited the Director of Mission and Ministry, the Revd Canon Dr Ric Whaite to speak to this item on behalf of the Bishop of Berwick who was currently on sabbatical.

The Director of Mission and Ministry (DMM) gave an update regarding the ongoing work to appoint a Racial Justice Officer and reported that before he went on sabbatical, the Bishop of

Berwick had begun conversations with the Racial Justice Team at Lambeth Palace as well as the Racial Justice Director for Central Church, Guy Hewitt. The DMM was scheduled to meet with Guy later in November to look into additional funding for the post and also think through what different version of the role may look like as no two dioceses were alike in the way they treated Racial Justice work. In light of this, there was still some work to be done to shape the role to be able to maximise opportunities in our own region as well as align this with our own diocesan mission of growing younger and more diverse.

9.2 Net Zero Action Plan

The Chair invited the Interim Diocesan Secretary to give an update on the Net Zero Action Plan Capacity Building Grant.

The Secretary reported that the diocese had been successful in securing the Capacity Building Grant from Central Church. The grant, along with match funding from the diocese, would be used to fund a Net Zero Team comprised of five part time posts for a period of 18 months. It was hoped that the recruitment process for this team would begin next month.

The Chair invited questions or comments

Acting Bishop's Advisor for the Environment, The Revd Tim Mayfield (Tynemouth) asked who would be managing the recruitment of the Net Zero Team. The Secretary confirmed that he would be managing the recruitment process but noted that he planned to enlist individuals to help with this work.

9.3 Safeguarding

- i. **Diocese of Newcastle Safeguarding Research from Sunderland University: Final Report - 'How can the Newcastle Diocese Safeguarding Team better support Incumbents and Parish Safeguarding Officers in the effective implementation of Church of England safeguarding policy in practice.'** (Paper DS24 34)

The Chair invited the Chair of the Board of Finance to speak to this item.

The Chair of the Board of Finance (CBF) noted that the final report from Sunderland University was to be received for information and taken as read. The CBF informed members that the research team from Sunderland University had presented the paper and findings to Bishop's Council a few days earlier. The research team had also collated a set of recommendations which would help to better inform the support the diocese provided to Incumbents and Parish Safeguarding Officers with regards to their responsibility to implement and uphold safeguarding policies and practices. The Chair confirmed that these recommendations would be looked at and actioned once the new Safeguarding Staffing Structure was in place.

Kay Plumley (Newcastle Central) asked if the recommendations would also be shared with Synod. The Secretary confirmed the recommendations would be shared at a later date after they had been worked through more closely.

The Revd Allison Harding (Newcastle West) enquired whether these recommendations would be implemented alongside recommendations from the Safeguarding Audit. The CBF noted that the Independent Safeguarding Audit was done separately from this research and had its own separate recommendations, mainly to do with safeguarding structures. The recommendations from the Sunderland University research were more to do with the practicalities of safeguarding itself.

To clarify further **the Bishop of Newcastle** explained that the Independent Safeguarding Audit informed us of critical structural changes which needed to be made and Bishop's Council were currently in the process of implementing these changes. The report which the Sunderland University Research Team had completed was to help with the more cultural and emotional aspects of safeguarding and safeguarding practice and what we, as a diocese, could do to help address issues with regards to this. The research was supplemental in terms of improving safeguarding throughout the diocese. The Independent Audit had produced immediate structural recommendations which were already in the process of being addressed.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne added that the Sunderland University research had looked at the moral injury side of safeguarding and the overwhelm and fear that people felt around safeguarding and safeguarding responsibilities. The recommendations from the research were not something which parishes would be asked to implement. The archdeacon further noted the importance of feedback from the research as it offered a greater level of understanding with regards to why people found safeguarding difficult.

The Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh (Tynemouth) raised concerns around the new restructured safeguarding team's capacity to address the recommendations from the research given there would be a backlog of work to deal with once this team was in place. *The CBF responded to this concern at item 9.3iii below.*

ii. **Children & Youth Digital Media Guidance** (Paper DS24 35)

The Chair of the Board of Finance spoke to this item and informed members that there had been a slight delay in circulating the paper. The guidance had only recently been approved by Bishop's Council, subject to some minor amendments. Once these changes had been made the guidance would be made available on the diocesan website.

iii. **Safeguarding Staffing**

The Chair of the Board of Finance informed Synod that Judith Knight was also providing support with the recruitment of new safeguarding staff. Judith was very experienced in this area, particularly with assisting in the implementation of safeguarding recommendation as she had also done this for other dioceses. There was now a proposed safeguarding staffing structure which would resource a team of staff enabling larger capacity to deal with both the back log of work and implementing further recommendations. As the next meeting of Bishop's Council was not until February 2025, the proposed structure would be circulated to council members for approval via email so as not to delay work in this area.

10. Deanery Planning

The Chair invited the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne and the Archdeacon of Northumberland to lead the following Deanery Planning items.

i. **Deployment Proposal** (Paper DS24 36)

The Archdeacon of Northumberland spoke to this paper which asked Synod to approve the proposed Diocesan Deployment Plan for Stipendiary Clergy. The archdeacon honoured the amazing work which had been carried out during the Deanery Planning Process (DPP) over the past two years and also acknowledged the uncomfortable nature of the deployment proposal. The archdeacon highlighted the many conversations had at Bishop's Staff meetings and at every level across the diocese regarding the fantastic things that were happening as a result of the DPP, but also noted that there had also had to be hard conversations regarding the realities and practicalities of the developing deanery plans. The DPP had been a great opportunity to meet and share all the good things which had come out of the process but it had also allowed us to face difficult things together with honesty and transparency. The deployment proposal set out in paper

DS24 36 had come out of the same DPP and it clarified precisely where the 80FTE stipendiary clergy posts would go.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne clarified for those members new to Synod and those not familiar with the DPP that 80 posts were the number of FTE stipendiary clergy that Synod had previously approved. The archdeacon celebrated all the hard work done by Deanery Development Groups (DDGs) throughout the process and emphasised the prayer and discernment which gone into the deployment proposal. Almost every deanery was being asked to slightly reduce their number of posts but the proposal also matched what almost all deaneries had asked for in their deanery development plans. There were only a few deaneries where this had not been possible.

The Chair invited questions or comments on the proposal from Synod.

- **The Revd Tom Birch** (Corbridge) congratulated DDGs for their work during the development process and acknowledged the real sense of how these numbers had been achieved. Revd Birch noted that the 80 posts referred to full-time posts and asked if there was yet any decision made on how many posts would be full/part-time, as there tended to be more difficulty moving curates in to part time, rather than full-time incumbencies.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne agreed that it was difficult to recruit to part time posts and confirmed that there would only a be minority of posts which were less than full-time. The archdeacon noted that it was often better to amalgamate two part-time posts into one full-time role. The archdeacon also pointed out that the 80FTE posts only referred to incumbency level posts and did not include curates, chaplains or missionaries.

- **The Revd Phyl Carruthers** (Bamburgh & Glendale) agreed with the introduction set out in the paper which explained the missional reasoning informing the deployment proposal, but had concerns regarding the final paragraph of the paper regarding the way in which the National Church considered funding for new/additional missional roles. Revd Carruthers noted that the DPP was started with hope and commitment and had been an enriching process. However, Revd Carruthers also went on to register his resultant disappointment at the deployment proposal which, if implemented, meant that Bamburgh and Glendale Deanery would not get the resource necessary to fulfil their mission. Revd Carruthers highlighted that Bamburgh & Glendale's numbers compared favourably with urban parishes and the deanery's financial situation echoed that of the diocese itself. As it appeared that Central Church was not acting to support those dioceses which were struggling, the deanery had been asked to ask diocesan representatives to challenge the church on this. In light of these issues Bamburgh & Glendale Deanery were unable to vote in favour of the deployment proposal.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne echoed Revd Carruthers' concerns regarding the problems with the National Church and reiterated that the diocese would be engaging at a national level to be heard on this specific issue. The archdeacon noted that from a financial standpoint within the diocese, the vast majority of parishes had increased their Parish Share offers for 2025 and it was the minority who reduced their offers which had wiped out this increase. The archdeacon also emphasised that the criteria for deploying clergy was a complex one taking into account a variety of issues, not just the population of a deanery/parish.

The Archdeacon of Northumberland informed Synod that the language used in the final paragraph of the paper (point (C)ii.) was that of the National Church. The archdeacon apologised for the tone of this language and appreciated that it was not easy to hear but noted that it was what had to be used at this point in the paper.

- **The Revd Canon Ian Flintoft** (Bedlington) raised concerns about the content and process of the proposal and noted that initially Bedlington Deanery had gone down from 11 to 10 posts and this wasn't shown in the paper. Revd Canon Flintoft urged that should this number be reduced down further to 8 posts then there was no way for the deanery to maximise services and this proposal would trap the deanery in a spiral of decline. In terms of process the DPP was supposed to be iterative, however this final stage had felt less so without enough time for DDGs to have proper conversations on the deployment strategy. Bedlington had already been without an Area Dean for three months and, to date, it had not been possible to find someone to take on the role. Revd Canon Flintoft confirmed that the deanery accepted the painful reality of reductions but noted with regret that Bedlington Deanery would be voting against the deployment proposal.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne thanked Revd Canon Flintoft for taking time to prepare his speech on this matter and recognised the deanery's disappointment. The archdeacon emphasised that the Deanery Planning Working Group had tried to be as fair as possible in the decisions that had been made regarding deployment.

- In relation to the Archdeacon of Northumberland's earlier comment on the language of the National Church in the last paragraph of the proposal, **The Revd Claire Maxim** (Bellingham) noted their dismay at this language but also their relief that it was that of the National Church and not the diocese. Revd Maxim commended the DPP and asked in what ways experienced ministry on the ground could engage with the National Church to persuade them of the negative impact the diocese was facing due to these financial struggles.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne ensured Revd Maxim and Synod that their voices and questions were being heard and they would be taken into conversations going forward.

- **The Revd Canon Simon White** (Morpeth) praised the deployment plan noting that it was a very creative piece of work and suggested that deaneries should also use this opportunity to be creative and look at how things may be done differently with regards to their deanery planning. Revd White noted that many charitable agencies were also struggling and it was an important time for partnership work. If deaneries focused too much on FTE posts then this struggle would only increase.
- **Carol Griffiths** (Bamburgh & Glendale) felt that the DPP had been an enriching process and celebrated that much of Bamburgh & Glendale's plan spoke to the deanery becoming more cohesive. Carol noted that the 3.5 posts allocated to Bamburgh and Glendale by the proposal had been discussed by PCCs and throughout the deanery and reported her distress at the amount of anger there was towards the National Church during these conversations, with regards to this issue. Carol highlighted that this was resulting in an extremely problematic 'us and them' attitude and worried how this divide would be overcome.

The Bishop of Newcastle thanked Synod for the openness and transparency of their comments. The Bishop highlighted that it was their responsibility to reflect reality back into this debate and urged Synod to reflect on what the National Church was. The Bishop noted that we, along with all the other dioceses, made up the National Church, we were all a part of the body of Christ. The Bishop recognised that some unfortunate financial changes had been made centrally and confirmed that as a Bishop, they did feedback into these central conversations. The Bishop commended the voices heard from Synod today and ensured they would be taken back and reflected upon. The Bishop had intended that their earlier address to Synod would help to foster a sense of hope in these challenging times, rather than fear, and although a number of fearful voices had emerged it was the Bishop's prayer that we were hopeful for the future.

The Archdeacon of Northumberland echoed the Bishop and noted it was important to plan together in hope. The archdeacon also shared the good news that the diocese had only recently received funding for a post in Byker which was one of the diocese's poorest parishes. This funding had come unexpectedly and highlighted that there was always reason to be hopeful.

By a majority show of hands, the Synod approved the Diocesan Deployment Plan for Stipendiary Clergy set out in paper DS24 36.

ii. Deanery Planning Update

The Archdeacon of Northumberland reported that there had been a wonderful DDG check-in session last month with keynote speaker Revd Mary Hawes, the National Children's Advisor for the Archbishops' Council. The next meeting was planned for early February, which the Generous Giving Team would also be attending.

iii. Casual and Parochial Fees Consultation

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne spoke to this item to give a report on the Casual and Parochial Fees Consultation which had taken place during the year. The archdeacon explained that up until a couple of years ago parishes could retain a portion of casual duty and parochial fees and this had continued to be allowed in our diocese. However, there were many people taking funeral services (readers, PTO self-supporting clergy and retired clergy) who were not receiving a fee but perhaps should and the consultation set out to collect views on expanding the group of those able to claim. The Archdeacon confirmed that the consultation had showed that the majority of people were in favour of expanding those able to claim. The proposal was agreed by Bishop's Council so now any clergy person with PTO who had been licensed at some point in their ministry as well as licensed Readers and retired Readers with PTO could claim 80% of the fee due to the NDBF. This would cost the diocese approx. £19,000 a year, which the archdeacon noted, was a small amount to pay if it encouraged more funerals to be held in churches thereby also enriching the community.

In response to a question from **The Revd Chris Grocock** (Morpeth) the archdeacon clarified that this claim could only be made for funeral services.

The Revd Dr Sarah Moon (Bedlington) noted that because of the current economic crisis, it had been noticed that more and more people had been opting for cremations. Revd Moon also enquired if there was anything coming from Central Church to say that the church was helping to support those people in grief from bereavement and not just the ceremony itself.

The Revd Canon Louise Taylor-Kenyon endorsed Dr Revd Moon's comments on bereavement support and noted that they had only recently visited a parishioner who was still suffering greatly a year later after his wife had passed.

The Chair noted that if a deanery was to formulate a motion regarding this issue they would be very happy to put this forward as an item of debate at General Synod.

iv. DMPC Annual Report (Paper DS24 37)

The Archdeacon of Northumberland informed Synod that the DMPC Annual Report had been approved by DMPC and was to be taken as read and received for information only.

There were no questions or comments from members.

11. Any other business

The Secretary confirmed there was no other business.

12. Close

The Bishop of Newcastle thanked all in attendance for their engagement as well as Church House staff, Ruth O'Hagan and Kyrinn Gill for their support in organising Synod and Dr Thomlinson's School for their hospitality. The Bishop then led the Synod in prayer and, with a blessing, drew the meeting to a close.

Presidential Address – Diocesan Synod Nov 2024

Late on Wednesday afternoon, the Independent Learning Lessons Review into John Smyth QC was published after a long delay. Smyth was a prolific abuser and the Review brings into the light the horrific abuse he perpetrated over a significant period of time. It has further highlighted persistent failures in how the Church of England has dealt with safeguarding. In all of this, we need to remember the many victims and survivors of Smyth's abuse and all who continue to be impacted by church-related abuse today. So I want to begin this Address by acknowledging victims and survivors, and offering continued lament for failings that ultimately weigh heavily on all our consciences. I repeat my commitment to the very best standards of safeguarding in this diocese and following the INEQE Audit we are in the process of implementing its recommendations. I look forward to the restructure which will unfold over the next few months and am grateful to those who are helping us progress this work without delay. We do have an interim DSA waiting in the wings and we are still waiting for their DBS to come through and hopefully this will happen soon. In the meantime I am grateful for the support of the NST regional lead and I wish to pay tribute to parish safeguarding officers in particular for the work they do on the ground in parishes.

When I started to think about my Address for today, which was earlier in the week, I decided to search for a book on my bookshelf. The title of this book is *Ten Survival Skills for a World in Flux* published in 2022, and written by former diplomat and current Principal of Hertford College, Oxford Tom Fletcher. It's a book I like to dip into now and again, and its chapter titles give you a clue of what Fletcher covers: How to take back control; how to be curious; how to find purpose; how to find your voice;

how to find, grow and mobilise your community; how to coexist; how to be kind; how to live with technology, how to be global; how to be a good ancestor.

However my point is less about the book (and by the way it is worth dipping into) rather more about where I found it. The titles of the books on either side were as follows: *Stop Reading the News* (Rolf Dobelli), *Ways of Seeing* (John Berger) and I couldn't resist noticing one more in proximity *Messy Church Goes Wild!* (ed. Lucy Moore). Part of me is tempted just to leave it there.

I think probably every Address to Synod in my still relatively recent taking up of this role has been in the light of ongoing churn, and I am beginning to think it was ever thus. The things before us today on our agenda touch on many aspects of our life together as a diocese, the nuts and bolts of mission and ministry and how we resource it. And it's very tempting I think to exist in a kind of permanent survival mode. But is this, as I once heard a retired Antipodean archbishop ask: the crisis we are in or the opportunity we are at?

In the last two weeks we have had the Autumn Budget and its related fall-out. I am not going to get into the detail of the Budget. I am speaking in the debate on it in the House of Lords on Monday. There are 82 speakers and I think it's going to be a very long night. On Wednesday this week I was at the Northern Farming Conference at Hexham auction mart.

I drove through a picket line of protesting farmers unhappy about the APR situation and generally feeling that despite this was statistically a

big budget for farming, it didn't really feel or read like a budget that was for the rural economy and certainly not in the light of the horrendous flooding that farmers have had to deal with this year. And of course it doesn't take long before we are confronted by the reality of the climate emergency. Everything is related it seems. The last speaker at the Farming Conference, in a late afternoon slot that is clearly designed to give people a slightly different take on events was a sheep farmer from the Scottish borders who came on stage doing a Donald Trump impression (you may have been wondering when the US election was going to feature in this Address), a very convincing one I must say. Trump surveyed the 260 or so people before him and remarked (I am certainly not going to attempt the accent) 'so much tweed'. There was a serious point of course: the audience wasn't expecting the speaker to be quite like that. It just goes to show how much can change in a very short space of time.

Crises can attract our human predisposition to gloom and if aren't careful we will spend all our time in number crunching and figuring out new ways to do what we have always tried to but in ways that ultimately feed the survival instinct that is natural to all of us. The flip side of this, as seen in the work of John Paul Kotter emeritus professor of leadership at the Harvard Business School is how to thrive and to do that we need to cultivate our opportunity seeking radars that engage the body, emotions and mind in a positive way.

And perhaps this is all I want to say at this point with a provocative question: is parish Share the thing that we contribute once we have sorted everything out locally, or is it the outward demonstration of committing to life in mission and ministry together and therefore the

priority in our outlook? Please note I am being deliberately provocative here.

The Church is not a business. As the US humanities professor Alan Jacobs says: *Christians manage even such dramatic swervings by remembering that the way we follow is not, primarily, the way of a pastor or theologian, teacher or bishop, administrator or prayer-warrior. The Way is, simply, that of Christ. It is followed by those who were once children of Adam and are now co-heirs, with Christ, of his Father's kingdom.*

And that Synod is what I want to leave you with: as we seek our way forward together, please let us not forget our primary calling to be disciples of Christ and to live in love and humility together for Jesus' sake.

Surname	First Name	House	Deanery	Attended (Signed)		
Abrams	Tony	Laity	Bellingham	<i>OC Abrams</i>		
Alexander	Gill	Clergy	Ex-officio	Apology		
Appleby	John	Laity	Tynemouth	Apology		
Atkinson	Jacqueline	Laity	Newcastle West	<i>J Atkinson</i>		
Baker	Paul	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>P.A. Baker</i>		
Barwick	Joel	Laity	Newcastle Central	<i>Joel Barwick</i>		
Batey	Annmarie	Laity	Newcastle West	Apology		
Batson	Lee	Clergy	Ex-officio	<i>Lee Batson</i>		
Birch	Tom	Clergy	Corbridge	<i>Tom Birch</i>		
Brims	Robin	Laity	Ex-officio	Apology		
Caro	Rae	Clergy	Tynemouth	<i>Rae Caro</i>		
Carr	Candis			<i>Candis Carr</i>		
Carruthers	Phyl	Clergy	Bamburgh and Glendale	<i>Phyl Carruthers</i>		
Cleugh	Hannah	Clergy	Tynemouth	<i>Hannah Cleugh</i>		
Collingwood	Nigel			<i>Nigel Collingwood</i>		
Craggs	Lynne	Laity	Bedlington	Apology		
Denyer	Nic	Laity	Tynemouth	Apology		
Doolan	Ben	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>Ben Doolan</i>		
Doran	Emma	Laity	Tynemouth	<i>Emma Doran</i>		
Dunsire	Ian	Laity	Bamburgh and Glendale	<i>Ian Dunsire</i>		
Elder	Chris			<i>Chris Elder</i>		
Evans	Aidan	Laity	Newcastle West	<i>Aidan W Evans</i>		
Flintoft	Ian	Clergy	Ex-officio	<i>Ian Flintoft</i>		
Fox	Louisa	Laity	Newcastle East	<i>Louisa Fox</i>		
Frier	Brenda	Laity	Bamburgh and Glendale	<i>Brenda Frier</i>		

(18) attended

(22) apologies

(2) did not attend

(19) attended (6) apology

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Surname	First Name	House	Deanery	Attended (Signed)		
Gill	Helen	Clergy	Newcastle East	did not attend		
Gill	Kyrinn			✓		
Glover	David	Clergy	Hexham	Apology		
Griffiths	Carol	Laity	Bamburgh and Glendale	Carol Griffiths		
Grocock	Chris	Clergy	Morpeth	Chris Grocock		
Hall	Malcolm	Clergy	Newcastle Central	Malcolm Hall		
Harding	Allison	Clergy	Newcastle West	✓		
Hardy	Alison	Clergy	Alnwick	A. J. Hardy		
Harper	Simon	Laity	Ex-officio	Simon Harper		
Hartley	Helen-Ann	Bishops	Ex-officio			
Heslop	Neil	Clergy	Newcastle West	Apology		
Hildred	Mandy	Laity	Norham	Mandy Hildred		
Hills	Sarah	Clergy	Norham	✓		
Hume	Brogan	Clergy	Newcastle Central	Apology		
Jackson	Heather	Laity	Morpeth	Apology		
Jee	Josh	Laity	Newcastle Central	Josh Jee		
Johnson	Diana	Clergy	Corbridge	Diana Johnson		
Johnson	Leigh			✓		
Kennedy	David	Clergy	Corbridge	David Kennedy		
Kyffin	Steven	Laity		Steven Kyffin		

⑮ attended ④ apology ① did not attend

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Surname	First Name	House	Deanery	Attended (Signed)		
Lacey	Julia	Clergy	Morpeth	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Lawrance	Robert	Clergy	Ex-officio	Apology		
Lea	David	Clergy	Bedlington	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Llewellyn	Dom	Laity	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Loughran	Debbie	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Lunn	Sarah	Clergy	Bellingham	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Mann	Remley	Laity	Alnwick	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Marshall	John	Laity	Alnwick	Apology		
Maxim	Claire	Clergy	Bellingham	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Mayfield	Tim	Clergy	Tynemouth	<i>[Signature]</i>		
McDonald-Booth	Izzy	Laity	Ex-officio	<i>[Signature]</i>		
McKenzie	David	Laity	Corbridge	<i>[Signature]</i>		
McKenzie	Gwyn	Laity	Corbridge	<i>[Signature]</i>		
McIlroy Hipwell	Mary	Laity	Alnwick	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Minchin	Chris	Clergy	Newcastle West	<i>[Signature]</i> did not attend		
Mitchell	John	Laity	Hexham	✓		
Mitchell	Mitch	Clergy	Alnwick	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Moon	Sarah	Clergy	Bedlington	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Morsman	Andy	Laity	Hexham	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Murray	Alice	Laity	Bellingham	Apology		
Naylor	Martin	Clergy	Hexham	Apology		
Newlands	Annie	Laity	Morpeth	<i>[Signature]</i>		
O'Grady	Anthony	Clergy	Morpeth	Apology		
O'Hagan	Ruth			✓		
Osborn	Charlotte	Clergy	Norham	<i>[Signature]</i>		

19 attended 5 apology 1 did not attend.

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Surname	First Name	House	Deanery	Attended (Signed)		
Peace	Laura			<i>[Signature]</i>		
Plumley	Kay	Laity	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Pope	Valerie	Laity	Morpeth	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Railton	Malcolm	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Ramshaw	Susan	Laity	Bedlington	<i>[Signature]</i>	apology	
Robinson	Janice	Laity	Morpeth	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Robson	Claire	Clergy	Ex-officio	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Royle	Tom			✓		
Russell	Tara			<i>[Signature]</i>		
Sanderson	Tim	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Shipton	Andrew	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Simpson	Rebecca	Laity		<i>[Signature]</i>		
Smith	Adam	Clergy	Newcastle Central	Apology		
Sourbut Groves	Catherine	Clergy	Ex-officio	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Stradling	Ruth	Clergy	Newcastle Central	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Smith	Rich			✓		
Styring	Roger	Laity	Ex-officio	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Swaile	Jill	Laity	Bellingham	Apology		
Taylor	Nigel	Clergy	Tynemouth	Apology		
Taylor-Kenyon	Louise	Clergy	Bamburgh and Glendale	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Tranter	Stephen			<i>[Signature]</i>		
Vilaseca-Bruch	John	Clergy	Tynemouth	<i>[Signature]</i>		
Whaite	Ric			<i>[Signature]</i>		
Wheatley	Andrew	Laity		<i>[Signature]</i>		
Windass	Roger	Laity	Ex-officio	Apology		

(20) attended (5) apology

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[illegible]

⑤ attended ② apology