

**A meeting of the Newcastle Diocesan Synod was held on
Saturday 28th November 2015 at the Northumberland Church of England Academy,
Ashington from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**

The meeting of the Synod began with worship led by the Revd Frances Wilson, the Revd Catherine MacPherson and the Revd Rachel Wood.

In the Chair, the Revd Canon John Sinclair, Chair of the House of Clergy.

1. The Revd Canon John Sinclair welcomed members to the meeting, especially those attending for the first time. Sixteen apologies were recorded.
2. The notes of a meeting held on 6th October (paper DS15 21) were accepted as a true record of the meeting.
3. There were two notices about resources for members to take back to their parishes: (i) copies of the Evangelism Way Ahead booklet; and (ii) copies of the Spirit in Stone Visitor and Pilgrim Welcome toolkit.
4. There were no questions.
5. **General Synod Report:** An overview of the business carried out at the November session of the General Synod was given by the Revd Canon John Sinclair supported by Canon Carol Wolstenholme and supplemented by Dr John Appleby and the Revd Catherine Pickford.
6. **Responding to Reform & Renewal:** Simon Roberson and the Archdeacon of Northumberland presented a report on behalf of the Strategic Development Group (paper DS15 22) about the diocesan response to Reform and Renewal. The report brought together the comments offered during the consultations that had taken place across the Diocese. The report focussed on the three aspects of: “doing church better”; “poorer communities”; and “doing church differently”. The Synod worked in groups to look at each of the three areas and a wide ranging discussion took place which affirmed the three aspects of work. The Archdeacon of Northumberland proposed:

‘that the work proposed by the Strategic Development Group be endorsed.’

The Synod carried the proposal.

An act of worship was followed by a break for refreshments during which the North East Pipes and Drums gave an impromptu performance (the band was rehearsing at the Academy).

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

7. **Budget 2016:** Canon Simon Harper, Chair of the Board of Finance, presented the budget for 2016 (paper DS15 23) for formal approval. In discussion members acknowledged the 100% Parish Share target would present a financial challenge to some parishes, but if achieved it would help the Diocese to flourish by creating funds within the Strategic Mission Fund. Going forward members believed that there was a need to identify what the Diocese could do to enhance its vision in terms of mission and growth.

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Canon Harper proposed:

‘that the Synod, sitting as the Diocesan Board of Finance, resolve that the budget be approved.’

The Synod carried the resolution with two abstentions.

8. **Inspired North East:** David Lovie delivered a presentation outlining the work of the Spirit in Stone Project. With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project had created a Visitor and Pilgrim Welcome Toolkit for Churches. Copies of the toolkit were made available for members to take back to their parishes.

The Dean proposed:

‘that this Synod welcomes the part that the Spirit in Stone project has played in developing visitor and pilgrim welcome to our church buildings and commends Church Buildings for Everyone to the parishes of the Diocese.’

The Synod carried the proposal.

9. **Suffragan See of Berwick:** The Assistant Bishop of Newcastle delivered a presentation to Synod (paper DS15 24) which explained the justification behind the proposal to revive the Suffragan See of Berwick. The revival of the See, dormant since 1572, would reflect the border and coastal heritage and would help to strengthen the profile of Northumberland as well as strengthening the episcopal oversight of the diocese.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne proposed:

‘that this Synod support the proposal to fill the suffragan see of Berwick.’

The Synod carried the proposal.

10. **Additional item:** The Revd Canon John Sinclair paid tribute to Bishop Frank’s prayer centred ministry and explained to the Synod that this was the final Synod under Bishop Frank’s leadership as Acting Bishop of Newcastle. The Synod responded with gratitude and loud applause.
11. **Presidential Reflections:** Bishop Frank reflected on the discussions of the morning and concluded with the word ‘vigilance’. He explained that the diocese needed to be more vigilant especially as the programme for renewal and reform would require members to be vigilant and not complacent.
12. Canon Wolstenholme thanked members for their contributions to the discussions that had taken place and announced that the Synod had donated £391.70 towards the Northumberland Academy’s visit to Botswana in 2016. The Synod closed with worship.

The meeting closed at 13:00