

**Note of business transacted at a meeting of
the Newcastle Diocesan Synod held on
Saturday 2nd December, 2023 at 10:00am
at the Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust, Academy Road,
Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 9FZ**

The President was the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Newcastle and the meeting was chaired by the Chair of the House of Clergy, the Revd Canon Brian Hurst and the Chair of the House of Laity, Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth. The Registrar was in attendance.

The Register recorded 44 members; 6 guests; and 13 officers in attendance.

1. Welcome and opening worship

The Bishop of Newcastle welcomed members to the meeting and extended condolences to the family of Canon Thomas Cowen BEM (Tommy), a longstanding Reader at Walker Parish Church, who had recently died.

The Bishop informed Synod that the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Carol Butler, had sustained an injury following a fall and was not able to present to the Synod as planned. As a result, the Lead Officer for the Chaplaincy to Survivors, Maggi Creese, would make the safeguarding presentation together with David Creese and the Chair would adjust the agenda running order to accommodate their arrival.

The Bishop led the opening prayer.

The Revd Canon Brian Hurst took the chair

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from 45 members.

3. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were made.

4. Meeting held on 15th July, 2023

4.1 Note of business transacted on 15th July, 2023 (paper DS23 14)

The Synod noted the business transacted and requested a correction to the spelling of the Very Revd Lee Batson.

4.2 Matters arising

Publication of the Peter Stuart McConnell Lessons Learned Review

The Secretary confirmed Lessons Learned Review in respect of Peter Stuart McConnell had been published on the diocesan website in July. The Secretary also informed the Synod that Mr McConnell had recently died.

5. Notices

There were no notices.

6. Questions

The Secretary confirmed no questions had been received.

7. Presidential Address

The Chair invited the Bishop of Newcastle to give their Presidential Address to the Synod.

Bishop Helen-Ann gave a Presidential Address and a copy of the Address is attached to this note.

8. General Synod Report (paper DS23 16)

The Chair invited Robin Brims and Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth to give a report from the November sitting of the General Synod.

Robin Brims and **Izzy McDonald-Booth** spoke to the paper, DS23 16, prepared by fellow General Synod Member, the Revd Claire Robson.

Izzy McDonald-Booth added that the upcoming elections to Diocesan Synod in 2024 would be important elections given the expectations that diocesan synods would be involved in the decisions the Church of England would be making in respect of Living in Love and Faith (LLF) and asked those present to encourage people to consider standing for election to the new Diocesan Synod.

The Chair invited questions or comments.

The Revd Canon Allan Marks (Newcastle Central) asked if there would be a vote on the prayers to be used for LLF. In response, Robin Brims explained a consultation would be required before any further decisions are made.

On behalf of the Synod the Chair thanked the General Synod members for the clarity of their report from the November sessions.

9. Budget 2024 (paper DS23 17)

The Chair of the Board of Finance, Canon Simon Harper spoke to this item and reported the following key details from the 2024 Budget Consultation:

- 117 Parish Share Units had increased their offers for 2024 but the impact from the Parish Share Units who were unable to increase their 2023 offer or who had decided to reduce their offer had resulted in a net reduction of £20k in total Share offers for 2024 against 2023.
- There was a £1.1M budget deficit in the budget proposal before the Synod which would be funded from the £1.3M balance within the contingency fund established to support parishes through the pandemic.
- When the Board of Finance had considered the budget proposal the Board was concerned at the sustainability of such a deficit and had noted that without interventions the contingency fund balance would be almost exhausted by the end of 2024. The Board had therefore recommended budget savings of £300k be found in 2024 in order to help achieve a sustainable budget by the end of 2026.

Canon Harper expressed the Board's thanks to the parishes which had agreed to increase their offers for 2024 and recognised that some parishes were continuing to face financial pressures and had found it difficult to commit to an increase at this time. The Board would continue to engage with parishes to help achieve a balanced budget proposal by 2026 year-end.

In discussion members of the Synod acknowledged the need to make savings in 2024 but stressed the need for clarity about how these savings would be achieved.

Concern was also raised about the decreasing number of paid clergy posts and impact this would have on growing the worshipping community. **Dr John Appleby** (Tynemouth) clarified that though curates were funded through the budget they were not counted as part of the 80fte incumbent status posts.

The Synod noted that many parishes were facing large increases in expenditure as the result of rising energy costs and reduced income from diminishing congregations. Members recognised the importance of mutual support to help prevent a situation where financially vulnerable parishes lost even more while better resourced parishes remained unaffected. **The Revd Canon Allan**

Marks (Newcastle Central) observed that numerical growth in poorer parishes did not always give rise to an increase in income as newcomers were often from low earning households.

Canon Harper thanked members for their comments and took note of the concerns that had been raised. He highlighted that it was important to develop a generous culture with discussions about Parish Share offers in order that offers are made on financial ability and not solely driven by the covering of ministry costs in one place.

Canon Harper moved that the Synod, sitting as members of the Diocesan Board of Finance, resolve:

- a) that the budget (presented in paper DS2317) 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 DS 23 17 and that £300,000 of savings be made in 2024.

10. Racial Justice (paper DS23 18)

The Chair invited the Bishop of Berwick to speak to this item.

The Bishop of Berwick highlighted that racial justice was an issue to be addressed by all and noted the recommendations set out in the paper would require a five-year timetable to be completed. This Bishop's Council had considered the paper at its meeting in September and explained it was now Synod's opportunity to consider the recommendations. In closing his introductory remarks the Bishop expressed his thanks to members of the Racial Justice Group and to colleagues who had helped to prepare the report now before the Synod.

There being no questions of clarification, the Chair opened the item for debate.

Members welcomed the initiatives set out in the report and recognised that a number of churches were working hard to combat issues around racial justice. **The Very Revd Lee Batson** requested that the 'essential' and 'desirable' sections of the example role description for a Racial Justice Officer be reviewed to ensure those who are more than qualified are not prevented from applying for the position because of the number of items deemed as essential criteria.

The Bishop clarified that the role description was an example drawn from another diocese as an example for the purposes of the paper. The Bishop explained that it was hoped a Racial Justice Officer might be appointed in the future, in the interim other resources would be utilised to help expediate the work should the recommendations be approved.

By a show of hands, Synod voted unanimously to approve the recommendations set out in paper DS23 18.

11. Deanery Planning (oral report)

The Chair invited the Archdeacon of Northumberland and the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne to speak to this item.

The Archdeacon of Northumberland reported that the planning process was now fully underway following receipt of the draft plans from all deaneries in July. Since receiving the draft plans both Archdeacons had met with each Deanery Development Group (DDG). In October a checkpoint meeting with all DDGs had enabled the sharing of draft plans and had provided an opportunity to share good news stories from the planning process. The Archdeacons shared a snapshot of activity from across the deaneries:

- **Alnwick Deanery** was exploring ways to develop their current governance, as well as plans to make church buildings more open in order to create sustainability for the future.
- **Bamburgh & Glendale Deanery** was also striving for more open and sustainable churches through the holding of exhibitions and developing their welcome for tourists and pilgrims.

Churches were also utilising their visitor books to greater effect to reflect on where things could be improved and introducing contactless payment devices for giving.

- **Bedlington Deanery** was working to encourage a renewed sense of community and had created a deanery newsletter to help achieve this. A main focus was to reconnect with local schools. Readers were also working together more closely to support worship across the deanery, especially in parishes that were in vacancy.
- **Morpeth Deanery** was developing a narrative of giving within discipleship to not only encourage higher levels of giving, but also to highlight the many ways in which it was possible to give.
- **Newcastle Central Deanery** was making good progress in meeting targets to achieve their next Eco Award as part of the Eco Church Scheme. The important role Churchwardens have in parish life and in the deanery has been recognised through the creation of a WhatsApp Support Group for Church Wardens.
- **Newcastle West Deanery** had compiled a list of assets and capital to better understand resources within the deanery and to help to progress deanery planning and mission going forward.
- **Norham Deanery** was focussed on developing lay ministry and had ran three successful training sessions throughout the summer on celebrating lay ministry; pastoral care; and community engagement.
- The next Checkpoint Meeting with Archdeacons and the Bishop of Berwick was to be held on February 10th, 2024 at St Aidan's Morpeth.
- A DDG Planning Celebration Event, 'A Journey Travelled' with the Bishop of Newcastle, the Dean of Newcastle and new Director of Mission and Ministry was scheduled to take place on 1st June at Newcastle Cathedral.

The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne expressed her gratitude for all of the work that had gone into developing the plans and the continued engagement from DDG's as the process evolved.

The Synod paused for lunch.

Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth took the chair

12. Growing New Worshipping Communities (paper DS23 19)

The Chair invited the Bishop of Berwick to Speak to this item.

The Bishop spoke to the paper and highlighted that it demonstrated what was already happening to grow new worshipping communities and the ways in which this could be built upon to engage new people into established communities, as well as growing new communities of worship. The Bishop proposed that with Synod's approval, he and the new Director of Mission and Ministry would visit all deaneries to begin the process of implementing the strategies set out in the paper.

The Chair invited questions/suggestions from members.

The Revd Rae Caro (Tynemouth) asked how Newcastle St Thomas (*the Diocesan Resource Church*) would be supporting the establishment of new worshipping communities. The Bishop clarified that much would depend on the outcomes of the work he and the Director would progress with the deaneries. **Jacqueline Atkinson** (Newcastle West) and **Lynne Craggs** (Bedlington) shared news of successful initiatives within their own parishes to help support their communities in times of hardship and which had flourished into new worshipping communities. **Nicola Denyer** (Tynemouth) welcomed the paper and hoped it would help those who were hesitant about new expressions of church as it provided a confident starting point for new ways to worship. **The Revd Canon Peter Dobson** (Newcastle Central) echoed his support and hoped the new strategy would encourage parishes to see Newcastle Cathedral as an available resource to further growth and mission throughout the diocese. **The Revd Canon Sarah Lunn** (Bellingham) noted the importance

of continuing to work with schools to engage both adults and children and reported that Bellingham Deanery hoped to continue to grow their work and commitment in this area.

The Bishop thanked the Synod for the support and generous feedback.

By a show of hands the Synod agreed the strategies set out in paper DS23 19.

13. Environment Report (oral report)

The Chair invited Bishop's Advisor for the Environment, the Revd Mark Nash-Williams and the Revd Tim Mayfield to speak to this item.

The Revd Mark Nash-Williams informed Synod that he was stepping down as Bishop's Advisor for the Environment and expressed his thanks to the Revd Tim Mayfield who was taking over the role as Acting Bishop's Advisor for the Environment. Mr Nash-Williams thanked the Synod for the supportive and pro-active attitude towards environmental issues during his time as Advisor to the Bishop. Mr Mayfield thanked the Mr Nash-Williams for his commitment and vision while supporting the diocese on the environment and updated Synod on the following key items:

- Net Zero consultant: Tristan Oliver had been appointed to help to draft a Net Zero Action Plan. The action plans were required by the Church of England to support the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon 2030. Tristan's work would be funded from a grant made available from the National Church. The completion of a draft plan would help to establish a Net Zero Working Group.
- During November, Jo Chamberlain, the National Environment Officer for the Church of England had delivered an online course in Carbon Literacy for Newcastle Diocese. Mr Mayfield reported that Caroline Egan, the Assistant Diocesan Environment Officer in Birmingham, was in the process of condensing the six-hour course down to 45mins and urged Synod to utilise this fantastic resource once it had been released.
- The Revd Sam Lohead had created a working spreadsheet to collate information on works that had been carried out/works planned on church buildings across the diocese. Any specialists that had been used or particular expertise would be recorded and any helpful information shared to inform works going forward. It was hoped that Parish Environment Champions would be responsible for populating the spreadsheet.
- The Diocese had been awarded funding from the National Church to employ a fixed-term Church Buildings Support Officer and recruitment to this post would begin in early 2024.

Dr John Appleby (Tynemouth), a member of the Environment Working Group (EWG), reported that discussions were ongoing between the EWG, University Chaplains and Newcastle St Thomas to create initiatives which would encourage young people in the area to give support to environmental issues. It was hoped an Environment Youth Group could be set up as part of this process.

In discussion **the Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh** (Tynemouth) highlighted the importance of ensuring greater energy efficient for clergy housing. Mr Mayfield explained that the Environment Working Group hoped to progress work in this area. The Diocesan Secretary reported that the installation of electric vehicle charging points had begun to be rolled out across the housing stock. This initiative was funded from the proceeds of a property sale. **Mr John Mitchell** (Hexham) highlighted the difficulties involved in insulating church buildings, particularly those with grade listed status and acknowledged that this was also a national issue. The Revd Nash-Williams reported that the Church of England website listed many case-studies where issues such as this had been successfully addressed and resolved in an environmentally conscious manner.

The Bishop of Newcastle paid tribute to the Revd Mark Nash-Williams for his tremendous contribution as Bishop's Advisor for the Environment and looked forward to working with the Revd Tim Mayfield.

14. Safeguarding (presentation)

The Chair invited the Bishop of Newcastle to introduce this item.

The Bishop thanked Maggi Creese, the new Lead Officer for the Chaplaincy to Survivors and David Creese, Co-Creator of the survivors' support project, *'If I Told You What Would You Do?'*, for attending Synod to present on this item.

The Bishop highlighted that as Christians, we are called to be a transformative presence in society and a beacon of the very best practice to protect children and young adults. As a diocese, Newcastle was developing a national reputation for its commitment to progressing and improving safeguarding as well as developing work in supporting survivors and helping other dioceses to improve their own practices. As Lead Officer for the Chaplaincy to Survivors, Maggi would build on this progress through the provision of pastoral and spiritual care and working with external partners on issues related to trauma and church-based abuse. The Bishop invited members to pray for Maggi and the important work she would be carrying out in her new role.

Maggi and David reported on their work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Carol Butler, to create survivor-led projects which would not only support and engage with survivors, but also offer peer support and advice to those around them. *'If I Told You What Would You Do?'* was a project that came out of this work, which, through the medium of videos, theological reflections and web-based resources, provided a voice and support for survivors. Another important facet of the project was to offer advice and assistance for Safeguarding Officers, clergy, lay people, and people in non-church professions, who encounter abuse or want to support a survivor, but do not have the knowledge or confidence to correctly navigate such situations.

Maggi extended thanks to the Communications Team; the Revd John Vilaseca-Bruch; the Revd Rae Caro and the Revd Canon Peter Dobson who had all helped with the project launch. The success of the project had also led to it being utilised nationally across other dioceses.

The Synod heard that Maggi had been working with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) as a volunteer for the past 18 months to help set up a peer support group and had been running sessions since April 2023. Maggi was currently working on a set of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive workshops which would enable attendees to feel confident in their ability to support survivors. Going forward the DSA and Maggi hoped to create a Sanctuary Course which would raise awareness around mental health issues related to church-based abuse. Further web-based resources were also being developed to promote healing throughout the church as a whole by drawing parallels between the passion of the Christ narrative and survivor experiences to then explore the concept of moral injury and the healing which can stem from this.

On behalf of the Synod the Chair congratulated Maggi, David and Carol on a brilliant piece of work and extended Synod's appreciation for the positive impact it would have on safeguarding practice, especially at parish level.

15. Elections 2024 (paper DS23 20)

The Chair invited the Diocesan Secretary to speak to this item.

The Diocesan Secretary spoke to the paper which invited Synod to agree the numbers, set out within Section 5 of the paper, to be elected to the new Diocesan Synod in 2024.

The Chair moved that the numbers for election by deaneries of clergy and laity to the diocesan synod be calculated in accordance with paragraph 3a and 3b (in paper DS23 20) and for the Diocesan Secretary to certify to the secretary of every deanery synod by not later than 31 December 2023, the numbers to be elected.

The item was passed with a unanimous vote of approval.

16. Governance (oral report)

The Secretary reported that the review of governance was continuing and initial proposals had been shared with the Bishop's Council. Further work would be shared with the Bishop's Council and a proposal would come to Synod for consideration. This would fit with the timetable of synodical elections in 2024.

17. Any other business

There was no other business.

18. Closing prayer and dismissal

The Bishop led the Synod in prayer and with a blessing drew the meeting to a close.

Bishop's Address to Diocesan Synod (2/12/23)

We meet today on the eve of Advent Sunday (though of course, certainly in Bishop's House Advent started yesterday with day 1 of our Advent Calendars opened! Yes, we have more than 1, and the cat also joins in with her very own Episcopuss calendar!). Advent is a season heavy with waiting and anticipation. You have to journey through each day before you reach December 25th. When we are used to accessing things quickly, waiting has become a harder task. Earlier this past week I was at The Sill along Hadrian's Wall for a 24-hour residential meeting. I went for a run early morning and headed to the site of the Sycamore Gap. I was last there the day after the tree was felled and wanted to return to see what the site looked and felt like now. It was a beautiful morning with a stunning sunrise. You can see the image of what I discovered there: a well-managed space, respectfully presented, with a small bunch of flowers and a cross made from twigs roped together with twine. And a sign that says: 'This tree stump is still alive. If we leave it alone it might sprout new growth...' A message of profound Advent hope in our waiting. I will return to the theme of growth later in this Address.

Since Synod last met in July, quite a lot has happened. We have a new Dean, Lee Batson; we have a new Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations, Stephen Tranter. We warmly welcome them both here today. And we recently announced the appointment of our new Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry, Ric Whaite who join us in March. Each of these appointments is a cause for rejoicing. The experiences and wisdom that they bring from different parts of the Church of England will enrich us. We will change because they are amongst us. As the Second Doctor Who, Patrick Troughton once said: 'Life depends on change, and renewal.' Advent too echoes these themes and rather than hunker down and put up the fences, the Church has opportunities to speak into a context where change and renewal is all around us. We can do this because we too have to face into a landscape of change and renewal. Since Synod last met, I have taken up my seat in the House of Lords and in the coming months I will be discerning how best to use this platform to advocate for issues that impact the diverse regions across the diocese. The reality is that I do not have a choice about this aspect of my role as Bishop of Newcastle, but as I hopefully signalled at my introduction into the Lords by inviting two students and a teacher from this school to attend along with members of Bishop's staff, and the Chief Executive of the North East Chamber of Commerce, this is an opportunity for all of us and I want to be able make the most of it.

A couple of weeks' ago I welcomed members of the Newcastle Council of Faiths to Bishop's House for conversation and shared hospitality. Sadly, no members of the Muslim communities in Newcastle were able to be with us, and we missed their presence. I was greatly moved by listening to Rabbi Aaron who looks after the Orthodox synagogue community in Gosforth share honestly and openly his feelings about the current situation in Israel and Gaza. Indeed, since Synod last met the world order continues to fracture with anxiety, and vulnerability. There are many places both near and far where fear drives existence far more than hope is able to draw humanity forward. And it's no good just thinking the world is doing its thing and I will remain in my small corner. Last Sunday morning in Allendale I was very moved by the way in which that community is caring for a Ukranian family. We don't live apart from the world and its issues, we are firmly woven into the fabric of our contexts local and global. And we aren't the first or only generation to deal

with challenges. There's an entry in a mid-seventeenth century church register (and if you know your history you will know the mid-seventeenth century was a time of enormous upheaval): the register says, "church wardens, not any, because battles, many."

On our agenda today are a number of key items for our consideration and discussion. I am delighted that David and Maggi Creese will be presenting on safeguarding. Maggi is our new Lead Officer for the Chaplaincy to Survivors, and I will be commissioning her at the end of their presentation. As a diocese we are known for our innovation and work in safeguarding, and we ought to be rightly proud of this. That is not to be at all complacent to the challenges particularly around training and the reluctance and outright refusal of some to participate. I make no apology whatsoever for holding the firmest of lines on that. I expect from all of us no less than what is expected of myself. Safeguarding is all of our responsibility. I want to take this opportunity to thank Carol for all that she and her team do, often at considerable personal cost. I know that members of Synod will want to join me in sending all prayers and best wishes to Carol as she deals with her broken shoulder.

Moving on, we will be asked to consider and agree our strategy for Growing New Worshipping Communities, which is part of our overall Deanery Development process. This has already been presented to Bishop's Council. Earlier I raised the theme of growth. Growth can be our friend and growth can send us into a tailspin of anxiety too. I was struck a few weeks back in a parish visit to Cornhill on Tweed, and a conversation with a gentleman from that community who had done some research into the church parish registers over the last 175 years. He had found that the number of Sunday attendees had remained consistently at between 12 and 15, and that I think says something quite important on a number of levels. It tells me (anyway) that growth is relative, and growth is not rapid, well not sustained growth anyway. But as our strategy describes (shaped by the dynamic of seeking, sharing, and sending) growth comes from different contexts and directions including those models that we might think aren't for us. The reality is that if we are going to grow younger and more diverse we need to listen wisely to voices and church traditions that might challenge us, *and* enable our resources to inform, equip and inspire. It isn't all one way: because our increased confidence will be echoed back and reflected in new ways of gathering and worshipping that absolutely honour our most basic Anglican ecclesiology of being a Christian presence in every community. While the Sycamore Gap tree stump might look inactive, beneath the surface there is an awful lot of energy being pushed upwards. Remember we are also being called in this season to turn outwards in mission. To discover new places and new faces that we do not see currently (I have already mentioned that in a previous Address to Synod and it bears repeating again and again).

None of this of course happens without resource. Our budget is our mission in numbers and this Synod, sitting as the members of the Diocesan Board of Finance is invited today to resolve to approve our 2024 budget, or refer it back to the Standing Committee. If you have read the paperwork and I assume you have you will see that we face a considerable problem. This is our reality, and we must face into it. It is in many ways extraordinary that a great number of ministry units have, as a result of the Budget consultation told us that they wish to increase their giving. I will be writing to these contexts next week to offer my sincere thanks for this overwhelming generosity. There is a *but* in all of this, however. A number of ministry units have indicated that they are unable to consider an increase which over time

effectively is a decrease; and there are a number of ministry units who have indicated a reduction; there is one ministry unit who is withholding Share due to uncertainty over the LLF process. The impact of all of this is that the generosity of the increased givers is wiped out by the contexts that have frozen, stopped, or reduced. Fear from the pandemic, from dwindling numbers, from poorer financial returns and from not having trust in the future has perhaps led some to live and minister by just 'getting by', the short-term rather than investing for the longer-term. Has our goal of just being able to 'get-by' damaged our rotational health? Have we lost the richness of the Church's seasons because just 'getting-by' means we haven't time to plan well for the longer-term and the seasonal differences are overlooked? I will also be writing to the ministry units who have frozen or reduced Share offer to express my concern, and I know that the Archdeacons have already been proactive in reaching out.

Funds from the Church Commissioners and other sources will always help our ability to do things, but such funds are not necessarily the answer. In a recent edition of 'Any Questions' on Radio 4, Delyth Jewell of the Welsh Senedd spoke about Sir Francis Bacon and his quote: "Money is like muck, not good except it be spread." Has our Budget consultation stirred up a generosity which sees us looking at money as if it is like muck and in seeking, sharing, and sending we are helping new crops to come? Or has our fear at being boxed-in made us resistant to seek a better future; a resistance to share our resources more widely and a resistance to send our resources for those in greater need of support?

This is hardly a new issue for the Church universal. The Apostle Paul sought particular help for the Church in Jerusalem from a number of sources, a project called 'The collection for the saints'. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9 we read that the collection was really important to Paul not just because it brought relief to poverty, but because it was fundamentally the right thing to do as part of the Body of Christ. As the New Testament scholar Richard Melick in an extended article on the collection puts it: "it speaks to a Christian's world and life view, the reality of a spiritual tie that transcends physical dimensions, and the fulfilling of OT prophetic explanations" ('The Collection for the Saints: 2 Corinthians 8-9' pp. 97-117 in the *Criswell Theological Review* 4.1 [1989]). As former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams said to *Newsnight* interviewer Emily Maitlis in March 2020 about the pandemic: 'it's really genuinely a shared challenge, and when we've got that kind of shared challenge, that puts one of the biggest moral questions to us: 'Do I understand that my well-being is completely bound up in the well-being of all my fellow human beings?' It's a big ask to get that imaginative question through but there it is.' We can apply this to many of our Big Questions currently: the environment, the cost-of-living crisis, LLF, and to ourselves as we think about our Budget. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Mark Nash-Williams who has steered the Diocesan environmental group in its important task of advocacy and education, ensuring these vital matters are talked about and acted on. Mark, thank you for all you have done in this area, and our gratitude now passes to Tim Mayfield who is picking this work up. Thank you Tim. You will be aware that I have taken on the co-chairing role of guiding LLF through its ongoing implementation, with the Bishop of Leicester. I am pleased locally to be exploring the creation of a chaplaincy in our diocese for LGBTQIA+ people. This is not about 'othering' it is responding to a genuine and it is about affirming their lives as part of the fabric of the communities we seek to serve in God's name.

Which brings me finally to the other image you can see on the screen: the Coptic icon that belonged to Br Roger of Taizè. If you visit the chapel in Bishop's House you will see it on the wall behind the altar. Jesus is shown putting his arm around the shoulder of a friend; a man called Menas. Jesus does not face Menas, as one commentators puts it: "He stands alongside him; He accompanies him, sharing in the burdens of life." Jesus holds the Scriptures, Menas holds a scroll, maybe yet to be written.

Synod it feels like we are holding an unwritten scroll in our hands. This is both terrifying yet utterly exciting. It is my hope and prayer that we may together have great courage and confidence in the story that God is calling us to write together in this season. By 'together' I don't just mean the Church, I mean all of us in renewed partnerships across our many communities as we seek to share God's message of Advent love, grace and mercy.

+Helen-Ann Newcastle

Diocesan Synod, December 2nd 2023.

Register of attendance, 2nd December 2023

DS24 02B

Surname	First Name	House	Status	Deanery	Attendance
Hartley	Helen-Ann	Bishops	Member	Ex-officio: Bishop of Newcastle	Attended
Wroe	Mark	Bishops	Member	Ex-officio: Bishop of Berwick	Attended
Alexander	Gill	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: Chair of the Board of Education	Attended
Allinson	Paul	Clergy	Member	Newcastle West	Apology
Birch	Tom	Clergy	Member	Corbridge	Attended
Batson	Lee	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: Dean of Newcastle	Attended
Bowsher	Andii	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Brown	Christine	Clergy	Member	Newcastle West	Attended
Caro	Rae	Clergy	Member	Tynemouth	Attended
Cleugh	Hannah	Clergy	Member	Tynemouth	Attended
Dixon	Steve	Clergy	Member	Tynemouth	Apology
Dobson	Peter	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Attended
Doolan	Ben	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Attended
Flintoft	Ian	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: General Synod Member	Apology
Gill	Helen	Clergy	Member	Newcastle East	Attended
Glover	David	Clergy	Member	Hexham	Attended
Grocock	Chris	Clergy	Member	Morpeth	Attended
Harding	Allison	Clergy	Member	Newcastle West	Attended

Surname	First Name	House	Status	Deanery	Attendance
Hardy	Alison	Clergy	Member	Alnwick	Attended
Hennebry	Ian	Clergy	Member	Bedlington	Apology
Heslop	Neil	Clergy	Member	Newcastle West	Apology
Hills	Mike	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Hills	Sarah	Clergy	Member	Norham	Apology
Hudson	Rachel	Clergy	Member	Norham	Apology
Hughes	Adrian	Clergy	Member	Tynemouth	Apology
Hunter	Matthew	Clergy	Member	Newcastle West	Apology
Hunter	Stephanie	Clergy	Member	Bedlington	Apology
Hurst	Brian	Clergy	Member	Bamburgh & Glendale	Attended
Kennedy	David	Clergy	Member	Corbridge	Apology
Lawrance	Robert	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: General Synod Member	Apology
Lunn	Sarah	Clergy	Member	Bellingham	Attended
Maclaren	Clare	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Macpherson	Catherine	Clergy	Member	Bedlington	Apology
Marks	Allan	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Attended
McGowan	James	Clergy	Member	Newcastle West	Apology
Moon	Sarah	Clergy	Member	Bedlington	Attended

Surname	First Name	House	Status	Deanery	Attendance
O'Grady	Anthony	Clergy	Member	Morpeth	Attended
O'Sullivan	Helen	Clergy	Member	Alnwick	Attended
Pearson	Pauline	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Robson	Claire	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: General Synod Member	Apology
Shipton	Andrew	Clergy	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Sourbut Groves	Catherine	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: Archdeacon of Lindisfarne	Attended
Taylor-Kenyon	Louise	Clergy	Member	Bamburgh & Glendale	Apology
Terry	Neal	Clergy	Member	Newcastle East	Apology
White	Simon	Clergy	Member	Morpeth	Apology
Wood	Rachel	Clergy	Member	Ex-officio: Archdeacon of Northumberland	Attended
Wright	Steve	Clergy	Member	Hexham	Attended
Abrams	Jane	Laity	Member	Bellingham	Apology
Appleby	John	Laity	Member	Tynemouth	Attended
Arckless	Robert	Laity	Member	Alnwick	Attended
Atkinson	Jacqueline	Laity	Member	Newcastle West	Attended
Ayerst	John	Laity	Member	Norham	Apology
Barclay	Carol	Laity	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Brims	Robin	Laity	Member	Ex-officio: General Synod Member	Attended

Surname	First Name	House	Status	Deanery	Attendance
Brown	Christine	Laity	Member	Bedlington	Apology
Charlton	Joyce	Laity	Member	Hexham	Apology
Craggs	Lynne	Laity	Member	Bedlington	Attended
Denyer	Nicola	Laity	Member	Ex-officio: General Synod Member	Attended
Doran	Emma	Laity	Member	Tynemouth	Attended
Evans	Aidan	Laity	Member	Newcastle West	Apology
Field	Carole	Laity	Member	Bamburgh & Glendale	Apology
Fisher	Meg	Laity	Member	Newcastle West	Attended
Fox	Louisa	Laity	Member	Newcastle East	Apology
Griffiths	Carol	Laity	Member	Bamburgh & Glendale	Apology
Hamilton	John	Laity	Member	Bedlington	Apology
Harper	Simon	Laity	Member	Ex-officio: Chair of the Board of Finance	Attended
Holmes	Gary	Laity	Member	Morpeth	Apology
Jones	Jennie	Laity	Member	Newcastle West	Attended
Kerry	Liz	Laity	Member	Bishop's Appointment: Chair of the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Cttee	Attended
King	Matthew	Laity	Member	Newcastle East	Apology
Knox	Hilary	Laity	Member	Morpeth	Apology
McDonald-Booth	Izzy	Laity	Member	Ex-officio: General Synod Member	Attended

Surname	First Name	House	Status	Deanery	Attendance
McKenzie	Gwyn	Laity	Member	Corbridge	Attended
Mitchell	John	Laity	Member	Hexham	Attended
Morsman	Andy	Laity	Member	Hexham	Apology
Murray	Alice	Laity	Member	Bellingham	Apology
O'Hagan	Ruth	Laity	Member	Newcastle Central	Attended
Pope	Valerie	Laity	Member	Morpeth	Attended
Ramshaw	Susan	Laity	Member	Bedlington	Attended
Robinson	Janice	Laity	Member	Morpeth	Apology
Styring	Roger	Laity	Member	Ex-officio: Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee	Apology
Swaile	Jill	Laity	Member	Bellingham	Attended
Tasker-Brown	Margy	Laity	Member	Bishop's Appointment: President Mother's Union	Attended
Turner	Lorna	Laity	Member	Bamburgh & Glendale	Apology
Vickers	Ella	Laity	Member	Newcastle Central	Apology
Williams	Hugh	Laity	Member	Alnwick	Attended
Wilson	Carol	Laity	Member	Hexham	Apology
Windass	Roger	Laity	Member	Bishop's Appointment: Chair of Houses & Glebe Cttee	Apology
Wood	Simon	Laity	Member	Ex-officio: Chancellor	Apology
Askew	Pete		Officer		Attended

Surname	First Name	House	Status	Deanery	Attendance
Carr	Candis		Officer		Attended
Creese	Maggi		Officer		Attended
Doran	Dan		Officer		Attended
Johnson	Leigh		Officer		Attended
Nash-Williams	Mark		Officer		Attended
Peace	Laura		Officer		Attended
Royle	Tom		Officer		Attended
Russell	Tara		Officer		Attended
Tranter	Stephen		Officer		Attended
Waddle	Shane		Officer		Attended
Ward	Alice		Officer		Attended
Whittaker	Kyrinn		Officer		Attended
Chillingsworth	Joanna		Guest		Attended
Collingwood	Nigel		Guest		Attended
Creese	David		Guest		Attended
Lea	David		Guest		Attended
Mayfield	Tim		Guest		Attended
Ward	Robert		Guest		Attended