

Diocesan Synod met via Zoom as the tail end of Storm Arwen howled and froze outside.

Prior to the Synod's formal opening, a meeting of the House of Laity re-elected Dr Nick Land unopposed for a further term as its Chair; Synod proceedings began with the formal introduction of Nick and of new House of Clergy Chair the Revd Richard Walker.

In his Presidential Address, Archbishop Stephen set the scene for the major business of the morning, in which Archdeacon Sam Rushton would begin to map out a route towards the transformation emerging from the Deanery and Parish Consultations earlier this year:

"What we're sharing is not yet a highly crafted, totally thought-through plan. We are sharing where we've got to with the story so far. But we need your help. We are going to shape this together. As a Leadership Team, we think we have the broad outline of the plot so far – we know how the story starts and a pretty good idea of where it needs to end. We've begun to see who the key characters are and how they need to grow within the story.

"Now, with you, we need to work out the chapter headings and the pace of the narrative. Then we can begin to inhabit this evolving and changing story together, which is our story, and Christ's story in this place. Some of that we will do today. Some we will do in the New Year."

He spoke of five themes becoming clear from the process so far:

- 1. We cannot carry on as we are.**
- 2. We need a compelling vision.**
- 3. We need to be a more generous Church.**
- 4. The Church is for the world.**
- 5. We need to see in the Diocese of York a huge growth in vocations to ministry in the church, both lay and ordained.**

Read his address in full at bit.ly/abyaddress211127

WELCOME TO DIOCESAN SYNOD

Diocesan Secretary Canon Peter Warry introduced the working of Diocesan Synod for the benefit of those members newly-elected to serve for the next three years. He commended the full Standing Orders that can be downloaded from 'What is Diocesan Synod' at www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/diocesansynod, and ended by reminding members to 'own' the synod's decisions, reporting them to others as "we decided" rather than "they decided".

NEXT BISHOP OF HULL

Synod discussed and overwhelmingly endorsed Archbishop Stephen's resolution that a new Bishop of Hull should be appointed following Bishop Alison White's retirement in February 2022. The resolution is required by the national church before an appoint-

ment can be made. A brief debate affirmed Bishop Alison's ministry and the importance of the post to the East Riding Archdeaconry as well as the City of Hull, and acknowledged that the stipend and working costs of a bishop are not met by the Diocese.

LIVING CHRIST'S STORY

Archdeacon of York Sam Rushton, who on the 15th November began a six-month secondment to the post of Interim Diocesan Director for Strategic Transformation, introduced an hour's presentation and discussion on the developing proposals for the future resourcing and staffing of the Diocese that are emerging from the consultations with deaneries and parishes during 2021.

Updates on the Generous Giving programme, and from Director of Mission & Ministry Ian McIntosh embracing the Mustard Seed and Multiply projects as well as the development of a new team embracing ministerial discernment and formation (to include York School of Ministry), had been included in the pre-Synod papers.

Referring to the Archbishop's Presidential Address, (qv) Sam and Archdeacon of the East Riding Andy Broom updated the Synod on the likely process of developing the consultation responses into a programme of transformation beginning with Deanery planning early in 2022 and feeding into a new diocesan plan and budget during the year.

Synod was invited to consider what it means to Live Christ's Story, and where we are starting from as a diocese, and whether the basis for our plans should be maintenance of a status quo showing inexorable decline, or for planned growth in church membership and income; our attitudes to inform the next steps and appetite for change.

Breakout groups were invited to consider the scale and nature of change they were prepared to embrace and to contribute their thoughts via Zoom's 'chat' facility for consideration following the meeting.

FINANCE

Introducing the proposed Diocesan Budget for 2022, Finance Director Kathryn Rose noted that the likely financial results for 2021 were broadly within the budget, including anticipated levels of Free Will Offer received for the Common Fund from parishes, despite the difficulties and uncertainties thrown up by the COVID pandemic.

With 2021 not yet complete, investment performance appeared to have been strong, and news had recently been received of a substantial grant from the national church to help the process of post-COVID recovery.

However, looking ahead, if the Diocese does not transform its finances in the near future, it is projected that the level of financial reserves will fall below the recommended safe level (four months' expenditure) in 2024-25; this projection is partly a reflection of the failure of Free Will Offerings to the Common Fund to keep pace

with inflation from the system's adoption in 2014 to the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, and underscores the necessity for the Diocese to review its activities to live within its means.

Synod gave 98% support to the motion, "This Synod approves the Budget for 2022... and authorises the Diocesan Board of Finance to expend a sum of £14,745,000 with the facility to draw up to £250,000 of contingency in addition from reserves."

THE ENVIRONMENT

After lunch, Green Ambassador for the Diocese of York the Revd Jan Nobel updated Synod on progress by the Diocesan Environment Steering Group (DESC) since the last Synod in July gave its backing to the development of a Diocesan Environmental Policy, and called on DESC to "provide practical guidance to churches on how to measure and reduce [carbon] emissions."

He cited the Gaia exhibition at Hull Minster, the week-long residency in York of the Young Christian Climate Network Relay team during their journey to the Glasgow COP26 conference, the 9th October Diocesan Environment Conference 'Saying Yes To Life' (recordings of keynote addresses available via www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/environment), the resources made available for Climate Sunday, and the concerts given as part of the Doxecology COP26 tour by Resound Worship.

Other recent news included the selection of Archbishop Holgate's C of E Academy as a Pilot School for a 'Net Zero Carbon Action Plan', publication of 'Celebrating Creation' - a Worship and Action Pack for all churches, and participation in the consultation for the Church of England's 'Route Map to Net Zero' following the vote by General Synod to achieve 'Net Zero' carbon emissions by 2030.

Priorities for the coming months include promoting the Church of England's 'Energy Footprint Tool' (currently an optional add-on to the annual Statistics for Mission exercise asked of parishes), promoting the 'Eco Church' scheme run by A Rocha, creating a network of Deanery Green Champions across the Diocese, and of course drafting a Diocesan Environmental Policy.

Breakout groups discussed the questions, "When we—as missionary disciples living Christ's story—think about the climate crisis and our diocese/church, what status quo needs disrupting, and what inconvenience will we need to accept?"

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH (LLF)

The Revd Richard Walker, one of the two Diocesan Advocates for LLF, the Church of England's programme to explore what it means to follow Christ in love and faith given the questions about human identity and the variety of patterns of relationship emerging in our society, updated Synod on the growing levels of engagement with the process across the Diocese, and the roll-out of resources including a series of short videos made by himself and fellow Advocate Helen Lawrence modelling constructive conversations on potentially challenging topics. www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/llf

FROM LAMENT TO ACTION

Canon Linda Ali and Director of Mission and Ministry Ian McIntosh updated Synod with progress made since the July meeting's endorsement of the Church of England's report 'From Lament to Action' in establishing a working group with representation from across the Diocese, and establishing its terms of reference. The report emerged from the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce report and calls for urgent changes to the culture of the Church of England through 47 recommended actions; these shape the agenda for the new Diocesan working group.

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH WORK

Diocesan Director of Education Andrew Smith and Diocesan Children's and Youth Work Adviser Carolyn Edwards reported on recent development in children's and youth work. The 'Children of Light' Festival, much of which had been conducted online due to COVID, had taken a huge amount of work but had proved extremely popular, with a great response to the art competition and continuing enthusiasm for the travelling exhibition of entries. A new web resource for church children and youth workers has been launched at yorkdiocese-children-youth-resources.online.

GENERAL SYNOD REPORT

Dr Neill Burgess, one of the newly-elected Lay Members of General Synod representing the Diocese of York, reported on the November Sessions of the Church of England's representative body.

Remarking on the huge scale and scope of General Synod's Question Time (132 Questions had been put down and a written answer published to each one), he noted five main topics:

1. **Vision and Strategy update from the Archbishop of York**, who reminded Synod of the vision and mission to be Jesus Christ centred and Jesus Christ shaped, and simpler, humbler, and bolder.
2. **A motion was carried on Reducing the Wealth Gap and Tackling Inequality**. This was originally proposed by Inner Bradford Deanery and made its way to General Synod following support from the Leeds Diocesan Synod.
3. **There was good news about cost savings from the Archbishops' Council**: thanks to certain central savings and increased support from the Church Commissioners, the cost to Dioceses of supporting the centre has again fallen, and is now 5.4% below the 2019 level.
4. **General Synod agreed to make it easier for wealthy Dioceses to give financial support to poorer Dioceses if they wish to do so**. There are various technical reasons why this is difficult to do, so Synod has asked for legislation to be brought forward to simplify such generosity.
5. **Simplifying the central structures of the CofE was discussed**; the "central" Church of England is NOT a single organisation, but currently it is made up of 7 separate bodies and an amazing 122 sub-committees!

Neill's full report may be downloaded from bit.ly/gensynnov21.

NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed: evening of Monday 17 January 2022