

Minutes of a meeting of the Carlisle Diocesan Synod held on Saturday, 14th November 2009 at Penrith Methodist Church.

M09/28 Presidential Address. The meeting began with a presidential address from Bishop James Newcome, Lord Bishop of Carlisle.

The Bishop described his talk as about: ‘Where We Have Come From and Where We Are Going’. There had been decline in church attendance since 1850, which had accelerated especially in the 1970s and 1980s – the decade of evangelism! This had been particularly hard felt in Cumbria, where we had lost in those decades 20% of adults and 60% of our young people.

In 2003 we embarked on the Healthy Churches exercise. There were seven marks of good health:

- energized by faith
- outward looking
- discerning what God wants
- facing the cost of change
- involved in the community
- making room for everyone
- doing a few things well.

The report from most Churches was that they felt especially weak about two of the seven marks – energized by faith and discerning what God wants. The Bishop said that since these were the root and branch of mission it was not surprising that we were not growing. The response to the Healthy Churches Exercise, was the Survival to Revival plan, with its six leaflets and the idea that Churches set themselves a couple of measurable objectives. In 2009, the Diocese centrally and complementarily agreed that it would focus its spare resources on ‘ministry’, on ‘youth’ and on ‘rural’. We had produced little postcards elaborating this and most people would have seen those.

The Bishop then moved to the present and future. The overall theme continued to be growth. The Diocese, centrally, aimed to serve parishes and their growth and to cut where what it was doing was not contributing to growth. Good foundations had been laid.

At the First Incumbents course attending clergy did a Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT Analysis) on their Parishes, before they developed a strategy for growth and the Bishop now offered that for the Diocese:

Strengths

- The leadership of an excellent Senior Staff – they are developing vision, with these two being two important ingredients of growth – Leadership and Vision.
- Lay Ministry and training for it
- Motivated clergy
- A family feel to the Diocese
- The appraisal scheme - which really was cutting edge at national level
- High quality Diocesan officers and remarkably few of them - very little money is spent at the centre
- A Sense of hospitality
- The environment, which is beautiful and diverse
- Rydal Hall
- 106 Church Schools with excellent heads and good relationships.

Weaknesses

- Financial – the per capita giving is amongst the lowest in the country even when allowing for average income in Cumbria.
- Lack of confidence in our aspirations
- Entrenched attitudes, particularly with regards to mission (When the Bishop mentioned mission to one group of churchgoers, the response was: “we don’t do that sort of thing round here.”)
- Isolation
- Inability to reach a critical mass in many places – we’re the third largest Diocese geographically and the third smallest in population.

Opportunities

- The green shoots - one particular parish had shown 10% growth each year for the last 3 years
- Our ecumenical relationships
- The young diocese and the new youth congregations growing out of that
- Ministry teams
- Mission Units or Zones or Clusters of Partnerships (whatever they’re called) - many self generated
- Sharing resources
- Developing strategies for mission together and with an open and energized attitude
- The role of Archdeacons as growth officers
- The marketing of the Diocese and the communications teams promotion strategy
- Goodwill in local communities
- Parish offer scheme and giving for life
- The Buildings Audit which was encouraging us to think about how best we could use our buildings for mission and to generate income and perhaps in a few cases to dispose of where none of those things could be done. The Buildings Audit of course was done in conjunction with the Churches Trust for Cumbria.
- The untouched talent
- The Growth Fund

Threats

- Finance
- Clergy stress, especially because of the changing role
- A defensive parochialism – we want just what we want, never mind the rest of the Diocese.
- Our buildings – their cost, location, condition and the facilities they offer
- The age profile of the Diocese – the Bishop is the same as the average age of the clergy and we need more, younger clergy.
- Second Homes – it’s a problem that there are so many and that affordable housing is quite difficult.

Looking to the future, it’s important to have continuity. The core vision remains growth. Growth in maturity of individuals and congregations; growth in evangelism (for example – the Lost for Words course); growth in social action; growth in numbers of individuals knowing that they’re loved by God. But alongside continuity there is also therefore change, and a new approach and ethos. A focus on discipleship - we’re going to advance ecumenically and we’re going to provide strategy. Looking at discipleship, that’s about running the race, fellowship and belonging, the discernment of gifts, generous giving, faith

sharing, serving communities, deepening spirituality, an attractive lifestyle and a vocational response. This is the big theme for the next ten years.

Ecumenism

Church leaders are meeting more often and get on very well together. Are we going to be the first Ecumenical Diocese? - where we aim at a single Christian presence in each community sharing resources, for example the diocesan newspaper, THE WAY, and social responsibility work. We shouldn't do anything separately that we could do better together, making appointments with an ecumenical view and our witness to the world ecumenically.

Strategy

Which is about how to get from where we are, to where God wants us to be?

This has already been tackled by the Bishop's Staff and Bishop's Council will pick up their work in January and then again at the Bishop's Staff in February. Further thinking will be brought to Diocesan Synod in March and to Clergy Day in April.

Bishop James' Prayer for Cumbria

What I give, I give freely
 What I aspire to, is kindness;
 What I offer, is my all;
 What I cherish, is your undivided attention;
 What I seek, is God revealed in all his splendour,
 through Jesus Christ my Lord.

M09/29 Attendance. 102 members were present and 19 apologies for absence were received.

M09/30 Membership of the Carlisle Diocesan Board of Finance. The structure of the Diocese was explained to this new Synod - that the whole of Synod is the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). Then there is a Finance Committee consisting of ex-officio and elected members, who are the Directors and Trustees of the DBF. So the whole of Synod was nominated by Bishop's Council to be a Diocesan Board of Finance and Synod agreed to be the DBF. The following motion was carried.

“To approve the nomination by the Bishop's Council of all members of the Diocesan Synod other than those who are defined as “excluded persons” to company membership of the Carlisle Diocesan Board of Finance”

M09/31 Membership. The membership of Diocesan Synod was detailed on paper A and this was noted. Donald Leighton commented on the large number of vacancies and asked that deaneries be reminded to work hard to fill the vacancies and the bishop added his encouragement for deaneries to do this.

M09/32 Minutes. The minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2009 were signed as a true and correct record.

M09/33 Work of Diocesan Committees

Derek Hurton, Diocesan Secretary, introduced Diocesan structures to this new Diocesan Synod, explaining the role and function of the different committees and how often they met. Nominations were encouraged either today or for later.

M09/34 The Way

Before lunch Richard Pratt explained to Diocesan Synod that the Diocesan newspaper ‘The WAY’ would from now on be an ecumenical production in conjunction with the Methodists, the United Reformed Church and Churches Together in Cumbria and he showed a mock-up of the front page, which would be in a different colour from the previously Anglican version.

At the commencement of the afternoon session the Bishop announced that Michael Bonner had been elected Chair of the House of Laity, the votes having been counted during lunch. Revd Peter Tiplady had been elected unopposed as the Chair of the House of Clergy.

M09/35 Clergy Terms of Service – Common Tenure

This item was introduced by George Howe, who talked about the magnitude of God’s vocation, which was about a ministry as a task shared by all the baptised. Common Tenure, then, was not introducing a new pattern of ministry, but was providing a better framework for shaping vocation and using it. It arose in the context of recent changes in national legislation relating to employment and the protection of employees. The Church was attempting to respond to those national changes in a distinctive and Christian way. So Common Tenure is therefore a new way of holding Ecclesiastical office and is a key part of the introduction of new Terms of Service.

Firstly, Common Tenure preserves the idea of clergy being office holders rather than employees. It provides security for all, not just those clergy who have freehold as incumbents and it allows for a shared accountability. One of the requirements of Common Tenure will be a description for each office holder of the various aspects of their work. This is called a Statement of Particulars, and it will include things like the stipend, the housing, amount of time off, it will describe reasonable expectations on all sides, agree on-going goals for ministry, and set good practice in the appointment process.

Secondly, all clergy will have the opportunity for regular review and our diocese is ahead of the game here with its review and appraisal systems, which are themselves being reviewed at the moment.

The third requirement will be for clergy to engage in continuing ministerial education and again we’re already very well placed in this Diocese.

The fourth requirement is capability and grievance procedures, for when things go wrong, and these procedures needed to be prayerful and fair and supportive and to be mostly about reconciliation and recovery.

Common Tenure will be coming into practice either late in 2010 or more probably early in 2011, so we were doing the preparation now and clergy had already had a letter from Bishop Graham. We were going to share with Blackburn in appointing Human Resources (HR) provision, and there’s more information on the website www.commontenure.org

A question from John Lee of Brampton: What would be the impact on appointments between now and 2011 - would we be seeing lots of continued suspensions? To which the answer was, yes, possibly.

A question from Graham Brassington of Calder Deanery: How did this relate to pension schemes? The answer was that it did relate to them in as much as they would form part of the Clergy Terms of Service and reflected in their Statement of Particulars, but that the nature and cost of the clergy pensions scheme was a different topic.

M09/36 Fresh Expressions presented by Norman Iveson (Director of Communications and Resources for Fresh Expressions, who introduced himself as a Cumbrian - born and brought up in Whitehaven, did a curacy in Lichfield, and then became a BBC religious producer) and Beth Keith.

Synod was shown a video which included

- a message from Archbishop Rowan Williams
- various clips of people and their experience of Fresh Expressions Churches
- a student in Southampton who appreciated the warmth and the food
- a young woman from Benfleet
- a young father from Portsmouth who found Messy Church was fun
- a woman whose father was ill and who was taken by a friend to a Fresh Expression in rural Norfolk
- a foreign student who felt welcomed
- a black woman from Birmingham who found sanctuary
- and older man who went because his wife was a committed Christian

Norman added some information about new types of church and new types of ministers - for example pioneer ministries coming out of Anglican and Methodist and URC churches

Norman explained about the characteristics of Fresh Expressions

- a strong mission focus - church for those who are not yet members
- a willingness to re-imagine church - what might church look like if you are not yet a member
- a commitment to both new and existing forms of church - a mixed economy

He talked about why this matters:

- the world is changing - eg Sundays are now days for shopping, and work
- relationships are changing - people belong to various networks, including virtual social networks
- culture is changing - Church is no longer at the centre but has to compete with others for attention
- there is less knowledge of faith - so what would the Church look like for raw beginners? - the answer is more profound than just an Alpha Course
- there is a spiritual hunger - in the "Soul of Britain" survey in 2000, two thirds claimed some spiritual experience - there is more interest in spirituality and less in (organised) church

Anecdotally he pointed out that whilst making the video (in Preston) they had surveyed 45 people of whom one was a practising Christian, three were nominal Christians, and 5 had never heard of the Church of England.

Because of, and in these gaps, it was time to re-think.

Beth continued the presentation by talking about three methods of mission:

- traditionally, we asked people to come along (the attractational method) - this was working less well
- more recently, we had gone out and then asked people to come to us - (the engaged method)
- Fresh Expressions was about going out to people and then staying there (an emerging method)

A booklet and newspaper had been given out to Synod members, which offered a definition of Fresh Expressions: a form of Church for a changing culture, for those not yet members. It was marked by listening, and service, it was truly incarnational, it was shaped by the gospel and had the enduring marks of Church - but was also shaped by its cultural context. In fact a definition was hard - after all definitions are about marking boundaries, but Fresh Expressions is emerging and changing: there is not a specific model, rather a set of principles.

Beth's grandparents came from the Lake District and she was very aware of the realities and possibilities here - and spoke positively about a number of initiatives - Survival to Revival, Youth Congregations, Vision Days, Pioneer ministries, our rural emphasis.

Norman and Beth asked Synod members to break into groups of two or three and to discuss; then Synod members came together again and offered feedback.

Chris Hart (Solway) expressed some concern - would this initiative mean that we were trying to be all things to all men, and did we potentially open ourselves to ridicule? Norman's response was that this was not top down but was about listening, learning and sharing.

David Simon (Windermere) asked about resources - should we put them into things which couldn't sustain themselves (many of the Fresh Expressions had not yet been able to do this)? Norman's answer was that this was a very important issue for the future: there was discussion about sustainability at national levels.

Graham Brassington (Calder) talked about the example of Shackles Off - a youth group in Seascale, which had started in response to the problem of there being little to do in the village for young people except drink. Norman responded that this was a very good example - where the leaders had looked carefully at where groups of people naturally meet.

Alan Bing (Furness) mentioned the Café Church in Ulverston. Peter Tiplady mentioned Wednesday morning coffee in Wetheral - where a group from Church simply push tables together in a local café and sit and talk, engaging other visitors in a non-threatening way as they come into the shop.

Robert Coke (Windermere) mentioned a Family Drop in Centre run after School: Norman's comment was that the brave thing would be to allow this group to be itself Church, rather than trying to draw the people in it into traditional church. However in such case, there would be pressure from congregations, "when are they going to come to church?" We would need to teach ecclesiology - what is church?

Norman also offered one reflection - a common theme was often food - interesting given that the heart of church was Communion.

Norman drew the discussion together by talking about why Fresh Expressions matters:

- it is part of God's call to mission - which needs to be fluid and flexible
- it is a response to the decline of Christendom (which is gone or passing fast - in 1979 11.7% went to church, by 2005 it was 6.3% and if current trends continued by 2014 it would be down to 4.7%) - although other surveys show that 25% of the English population go to church about three times a year
- Fresh Expressions wanted to target the 60% who say they will never go to church as it is at the moment (Back to Church Sunday targets the 6% who are open to coming to church as it is)

He then talked about how to move forwards. He mentioned Vision Days (Of which one had been held at Ambleside in 2007); these enable the ideas and thinking behind Fresh Expressions to be explained to congregations; see:
www.freshexpressions.org.uk
www.sharetheguide.org.uk

Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEAST) are another way forwards

- linked to pioneer ministries
- encouraged by the national Fresh Expressions team
- best done ecumenically
- have champions who are enthusiastic, though not necessarily directly involved
- initiated by regional leaders (eg Bishops)

SANCTUS - fresh expressions within the sacramental tradition

Mission Shaped congregations and the Mission Shaped Ministry course (there is one run for Carlisle and Blackburn Dioceses).

Bishop's Mission Orders enable Fresh Expressions to fit into existing structures - giving them the same legal status as Parish Churches

Pioneer Ministries: see the CD "On the Edge"

Norman ended by reminding Synod that at the commissioning of the Fresh Expressions team at Lambeth four year ago the Archbishop had taken as his text St Luke 5:4 where Jesus commanded the disciples to put out in to deep water for their catch.

Jon Greenwood then explained the background and reality of setting up and running a new diocesan initiative called Op Shops. These are a chain of charity shops in Carlisle, run by the church, which create a different shop window for the church. Two had been opened so far making three in all with one in prospect and these were being run on a proper commercial basis with the intention that they did not prove to be a financial burden on the diocese. On the contrary they would fund ministry in the communities in which they operated. The Op Shops are about being Church in a different way.

- a. The Op Shops did work with outside agencies, for example they could be Credit Union collection points, work with Barnardo's and so on, running Surestart and other children's work in Carlisle. The Op shops are the beginning of Mission.
- b. They need books, bric-a-brac, household goods, furniture, clothes, electrical items. They do sort out problems of compliance with health and safety – PAT testing etc. They need volunteers to do everything from ironing to making coffee to serving in the shop and they need prayer.

M09/37 Bishop's Council Report. The President moved the following motion which was carried.

"That the report of the Bishop's Council meeting held on 22nd September 2009 be received."

M09/38 General Synod Report. The newest Synod member, Canon Nigel Davies presented a report on the work of General Synod to the Diocesan Synod. He thanked Ferial for the pink sheet of paper, which was the written report. He would attempt to give something of the feel of the General Synod to the Diocesan Synod. He mentioned the papers, the bustle, the business, the bureaucracy, the officers sitting at the tables etc. But he also talked about the

humanity of all the players, where everybody mixed up at the bar and at lunchtime and dinnertime. He talked about the fringe sessions and the coming and going. He mentioned the worship. He mentioned those using laptops through the sessions and he told us that next time, he gets a golden ticket for his maiden speech in London.

M09/39 Election of Trustees for St Monica & St Mary Charity. Tim Harmer as the Rural Dean of Kendal, Susan Holmes, Shirley Payne were elected

M09/40 Amending Canon No. 28. The Bishop proclaimed Amending Canon No 28 which amends Canon B 44 'Of local ecumenical projects'.

M09/41 Questions

(a) Could these presentations go on the website? To which the answer was yes, they would be put up on the Diocesan Synod section of the website.

(b) There was a question about the Bishop's home. Bishop James explained that he was in Kendal for the foreseeable future. There was a group working on Rose's future and discussions were continuing. The Commissioners were looking for a possible Bishop's home.

The meeting closed with Prayers and the Grace at 3.45pm.