

Yellow Paper B

BISHOP'S COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE

Chairman: The Bishop of Carlisle

Secretary: Mr Derek Hurton

Report of the meeting held at Church House, Penrith on Thursday 2nd May 2019

Present:- The Bishop of Carlisle (in the Chair), the Bishop of Penrith, the Dean, the Archdeacon of Carlisle, the Archdeacon of West Cumberland, the Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness, the Revd R P Ham, the Revd J Maycock, the Revd A B Norman, the Revd S Thompson, the Revd A Towner, Dr C Angus, Mr A R H Cook, Mrs V Hallard, Mr C Howarth, Mr D Hurton, Mr J A E Johnson, Mr M Wilson.

In attendance: - Canon C Butland, Mr R Jaques, Mr D Roberts.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Other than those on the agenda. There were no specific matters arising, but attention was drawn to the Bishops' Stewardship Roadshows and the Cumbria Ministry Development Day on Thursday, 10th October. It was also noted that there remained two lay vacancies on the Vacancy in See Committee in spite of attempts to fill them.

Retirement of the Diocesan Registrar and the Appointment of a new Registrar

The Bishop reported that Mrs Jane Lowdon was retiring. Her current deputy, Mrs Laura Peace was generally regarded as a potential successor, with a hand over of responsibilities in the period running up to August 2020. If the Council was happy to explore this way forward then a formal interview would be arranged with Mrs Peace.

The Council were happy with the suggestion of interviewing Mrs Peace as a sole candidate. The interview panel would include the Diocesan Bishop, an Archdeacon, the Chancellor and Mr Hurton.

Diocesan Chancellor

The Bishop announced that the Chancellor, Geoffrey Tattersall, was continuing in office until the age of 75 and that Mr James Fryer-Spedding had been appointed as his Deputy.

Feedback from March Synod

Members reported positive comments following the meeting, which had been more participative. Comments particularly welcomed the small group discussions and the opportunity for members to give feedback on the subject of the Distinctive Diaconate.

Diocesan Budget 2020+

Mr Hurton introduced the item by explaining that members were being asked to approve the budget for submission to the Diocesan Finance Committee who would then approve its submission to the Diocesan Board of Finance/Diocesan Synod meeting in June.

Mr Hurton reminded members that this would be the final year of the budget set for 2015-2020. Given what had happened over the past four years and the proposed outturn for the current year, the forecast outturn for the six year period was within 0.6% of a balanced budget. When the Council had looked at the budget for 2019 and 2020 last year the picture for 2020 had been slightly worse than he was now presenting. He therefore felt that the proposal was largely uncontroversial.

In terms of the key elements of the budget for 2020, it anticipated broadly static Parish Offer receipts, following a 2.7% reduction in Offers made for 2019; continued progress towards achieving our 2020 clergy numbers targets; continuing to fill outstanding vacancies through 2019; a conservative increase in fee income for ordinands in training; and continuing to maximise our investment and rental income, including from renting houses as soon as possible after they became vacant. The budget continued to be based on a policy of investing the capital receipts from the sale of assets including redundant parsonages.

Mr Hurton's emphasised that the 2020 budget figures showed Parish Offer receipts being 3.1% less in cash-terms than those for 2018. Two years' worth of ministry cost inflation was around 5% so this represented an 8% fall in real terms. The budget did not assume any income from the Archbishops' Council Strategic Development Funding (SDF), but if our current application was successful it would represent additional money and enable us to fund additional work.

Looking beyond 2020 if the budget figures were simply rolled forward we would soon have an annual deficit of over £100,000 a year. As we were planning for clergy numbers to stabilise from 2020 onwards, if other factors did not change then Parish Offer would have to go up by 2-2.5% each year. The assumption that we could achieve this was highly risky and additional work would need to be done to test out this assumption in the run up to setting the 2021-2025 budget.

Mr Jaques and Mr Johnson reminded the Council of the work that was being undertaken in 2019 to improve understanding of the Diocesan financial situation and to encourage Parishes to be generous in the Offers they made. Mr Johnson commented specifically on the opportunity cost of holding houses vacant.

In the discussion it was confirmed that there was capacity in the training budget to send ordinands to residential training but that this was expected to be on an exceptional basis. The clergy numbers used in setting the budget were produced on a very granular basis including drawing on an analysis of age profiles and likely retirement dates. Heading towards 2020 we knew there were several places where, by then, we would not have reached the long-term mission community clergy numbers.

Dr Angus moved that the Council approved the budget for presentation to the Finance Committee and then to the Diocesan Synod. This was approved.

God for All

(a) Bishop Emma's Reflections. Bishop Emma reported her early reflections on the Diocese after five weeks in her role. The vision of God for All had been the reason why she had been so interested in the role of Bishop of Penrith and she had been delighted to find that as she met people in the Diocese there was a genuine desire to see every man, woman and child in the county come to know Jesus. The vision was interpreted in different ways in different contexts, and this was to be welcomed, but there was a genuinely missional thread running through life in the Diocese that we should not take for granted.

Bishop Emma had been impressed by the obvious desire on the part of local churches and Christians to work together, particularly focusing on establishing mission communities. The desire for Christians in an area to work together might seem like the most obvious thing in the world, but while it was not commonplace across the country, it was actually a reality in Cumbria. She had also been excited to see the way that the growth of lay ministry and lay leadership was being encouraged alongside ordained leadership. There was also an obvious appetite for innovation and to try something new and different. She had already seen a varied, mixed economy including village churches, fresh expressions, urban churches and messy churches, all being supported ecumenically.

At the same time, she felt that there were one or two issues on which we could work. These included some confusion about what was the focus of God for All. Although the Bishop's Council might be able to describe what it was, there was a gap in perception between what was said centrally and what was felt on the ground. It was easy to feel that God for All was about coping with continued reductions in clergy numbers rather than about everyone in Cumbria knowing more of God. She also had a concern that many of the brilliant, hard-working people she had met were tired. We needed to understand the pressure points that they faced and respond to them.

Bishop Emma reminded the Council that we were approaching 2020 and would need to start to refresh the God for All Vision and Strategy to take us beyond the end of that year.

(b) Bishops' Walk. The Bishop reported back on the walk that he and Bishop Emma had undertaken in Cumbria in the run up to Easter. He said that the ecumenical leaders had joined in the walk and that the ecumenical nature of so many of the events during the walk had been terrific. Walking with people had stimulated many fascinating faith conversations.

In total the walk had touched eighty benefices across the county. The Bishop felt that it had served a very valuable pastoral purpose, visiting churches and church people as well as allowing for evangelistic opportunities and events. There had been a huge variety of events along the way including, for instance, a chance for himself, Bishop Emma and the Revd Sarah Moore to talk about the books that had influenced them and had an impact on their lives and spiritual development; a visit to the Grace Church in Barrow for a pie and peas meal; and a discussion in Penrith about the future development of the town. Feedback had suggested that the walk had been an encouragement to those involved in our mission communities, fostering co-operation and ecumenical development. He had been particularly encouraged by the examples of people working together in mission.

In the discussion Council members remarked on the great boost that church members received from seeing their Bishops walking and talking among them. Church members appreciated that Bishops were very busy people and they therefore had particularly valued the fact that Bishop had taken time to be involved with day to day life in parishes and mission communities.

(c) The Big Discussion. Mr Roberts said that the feedback from the Big Discussion event provided a useful bank of information upon which we could now build, helping us to measure progress in implementing God for All and its impact. One of the main aims of the event had been to test the water and he believed that the event and the response to it had achieved that aim. The reaction, both pre and post event, was mixed which perhaps reflected where some people were in terms of God for All as a whole. When the invitations were sent out there had been no three-line whip and this approach had enabled us to establish what appetite there was for the event and for God for All. It was interesting that some of the feedback indicated that people were not as engaged as we would have liked them to be. In fact there had been feedback to the effect that God for All was really not being implemented in a few areas.

Mr Roberts said that the feedback had been very positive about the elements of the event that had drawn on voices on the ground and enabled people to hear from peers who had made God for All happen. In this respect the input from Revd Godfrey Butland, Mission Community Leader in the Grasmoor Mission Community and Joyce Keetley, Mission Community Administrator in the Heart of Eden had been very helpful. Some of the audience at the event reported that they had felt talked at rather than being able to ask questions.

The varied state of play on God for All across the county made communicating messages even harder because we had to nuance them for particular areas and audiences. What we communicated for those who were only now beginning to explore mission communities, perhaps after some initial opposition, and what we communicated to those who were operating fully as mission communities should be quite different.

The Bishop thanked Mr Roberts for all the work that had gone into the big discussion and what had come out of it. He emphasised the importance of communication. Although some people suggested that God for All was a top down strategy, we had spent at least two years in discussion and consultation before we had begun to pursue it. However, once we had settled on it, it had become the centre of everything we were doing in terms of ministry and mission. It was important to recognise what a big culture shift God for All was. We were not only sharing the good news of the Gospel but our faith with other people. We had to recognise that this culture change would not happen overnight.

(d) Strategy beyond 2020. The Bishop introduced this item by reflecting that we were now coming to the end of the 2015-20 God for All vision and strategy period and needed to answer the question as to what would happen after the end of 2020. Thinking had now begun about how we could refresh the vision.

Everyone he had spoken to was clear that we did not want to lose God for All. It was however appropriate to consider how we could give it a new impetus and a new focus, with new communications and ways for us to engage with people around the county.

Bishop Emma said it was important that we held together the tension between building on what we had and being open to God saying something new and different. We needed to listen to what people were saying on the ground. The refresh of the vision was a really important piece of work and the process would be surrounded in prayer. She felt that it was relatively easy to come up with a great vision but unless it was God's vision we might as well give up. The process of refreshing the vision would start on Pentecost Sunday 2019 with "100 days of prayer", centred on God and what He wanted to say to us. This would be followed by "100 days of listening" which would take us to Christmas Day.

In the discussion it was noted that in terms of process the refresh should be as streamlined as possible. We did not expect it to herald a whole new initiative but instead to be a stage on a journey. At some point it would be good to take stock of where we had started from in 2015 and compare that with where we were now. This should include sharing stories with a focus on people, so that we could be encouraged and inspired by what had happened. This would help people to understand what God for All really meant and see how they could contribute. It would also provide reassurance that we were taking steps in a journey and that everything did not need to change suddenly.

It would be very important that the outcomes were not pre-judged and that we showed this to be the case. Looking back at the consultation about the Ministry Strategy, the issues that had been raised and our responses to them had been made available on the website so that people could see what comments had been made and what our responses had been.

Steering Committee Report

The Council received the report of the meeting held on 9th April 2019.

Mission and Pastoral Committee matters

The Committee, acting as the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, received the draft minutes of the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees.

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| Archdeaconry of Westmorland and Furness | 21st February 2019 |
| Archdeaconry of West Cumberland | 19th March 2019 |
| Archdeaconry of Carlisle | 28th March 2019 |

There was a query about ongoing suspension of presentation where mission communities were in their current development stage. Suspension was being lifted in some places but there was a risk that our approach was inconsistent across the Diocese as whole.

In response the Bishop noted that he could not and did not take blanket decisions to impose or to lift suspension of presentation. Each individual decision was taken on its merits and with regard to the local situation. He was keen that once a mission community shape was set, if a suspension came up for renewal, it would be lifted. Situations varied considerably from place to place and the Archdeacons were fully engaged with the issue.

Change of Date

The Committee noted that the date of the February 2020 meeting had been changed from Tuesday 25th February to Monday 24th.

