

# Minutes of the Edinburgh Diocesan Synod held on 13 March 2021

The meeting used the Zoom online conferencing platform in order to conform with Government safety regulations during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

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**Synod commenced with Eucharist at 8.30am – a live stream from St Mary’s Cathedral, Edinburgh**

*There were 96 attendees – 71% (57 Clergy - 78%; 39 Lay - 64%)  
with apologies from 3 Clergy and 4 Lay*

## **SYNOD BUSINESS**

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The Bishop welcomed the following new Rectors:

- The Rev Nick Wills - Rector of St Peter’s Luton Place, Edinburgh
- The Rev Andrew Taylor-Cook - Rector of Peebles
- The Rev Lynn Davidson - Rector of Christ Church Morningside, Edinburgh

The Bishop welcomed John Stuart, General Secretary of the Scottish Episcopal Church, as the Provincial Representative

Bishop John then led a moment of silence for those who had died since Synod last met:

- Canon John Armson
- The Rev Hilary Naish
- Mary Haggart

## **BISHOP'S LENT APPEAL**

Bishop John reflected that the current restrictions gave the opportunity to look outwards to the needs of the poorest people on our planet. The 2021 Lent Appeal

was being directed towards the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'Together in Unity Appeal' to support virus prevention and emergency relief for vulnerable communities across the Anglican Communion. He had been reminded that, whilst many individuals had less money currently, the wealth of others had increased hugely and they might be able to be more generous.

## **BISHOP'S ADDRESS**

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Bishop John had looked back to his address in March 2020, and reflected on how much had changed as the global pandemic spread and lockdown occurred. There had been anguish and loss, which had been hard, but many had been changed through this. We should recognise that huge pastoral efforts had been made by clergy and by pastoral teams who had maintained connection with, and support for, their communities. Matters that were important last March now seemed somewhat trivial. Things that were stopped by Covid could be relaunched, perhaps in new ways. Enforced abstinence had afforded reflection.

He encouraged everyone to continue to be kind to ourselves and to others. He repeated the message from the College of Bishops that, although many congregations were eager, no one should feel under pressure to reopen church buildings for Holy Week and Easter. It should not be an opportunity to pressurize clergy, who were already under enough pressure.

He then related several quotes, including Jesus' teaching, when he asked "can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?". This was not to excuse inactivity or passivity but rather to suggest the right way of approaching our activity. What was important was believing that God is utterly trustworthy and faithful, and was always beside us on the road.

*(The full text of the address was made available on the diocesan website)*

Bishop John then asked for Synod's assent to his nomination of The Rev Andrew Bain and The Rev Canon Malcolm Round to become Honorary Canons. Synod gave its unanimous **ASSENT**. In addition, Bishop John had used his personal nomination to also appoint Prebendary Bob King as a Canon and member of the Cathedral Chapter. All three would be installed together when current restrictions allowed.

## ADMINISTRATION

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### SYNOD MINUTES

The minutes of Diocesan Synod held on Saturday, 14 March 2020 were **CONFIRMED**

### ANNUAL REPORTS

#### **Diocesan Standing Committee**

Godfrey Robson, Diocesan Secretary, presented the report. It was brief, not because of the lack of activity. The committee had met regularly to exercise oversight of and offer guidance to the other main diocesan committees. The issues of the Covid pandemic had been paramount. He offered particular thanks to The Rev Canon Malcolm Round and Neil Stewart, who had recently stepped down from the committee, having brought both wisdom and care to the work of the committee.

**The Motion that Diocesan Synod approved the annual report of the Standing Committee was proposed by Godfrey Robson and seconded by The Very Rev Frances Burberry. The motion was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Finance & Management Committee**

Godfrey Robson presented the report, along with the reports of the Diocesan Buildings Committee and the Diocesan Personnel Committee. The latter had completed a long-term project to review all the Human Resource policies. The Buildings Committee had been busy with Canon 35 applications and had overseen the re-letting of the property at St Andrew's Newcraighall and refurbishment of the Rectory of St Philip's and St James's Edinburgh. The Rectory had been taken over by the diocese during the vacancy, and the expenditure on refurbishment was being reimbursed through lettings income. The Finance & Management Committee had kept a close eye on the finances of all congregations and had discussed arrangements for support mechanisms. A 'Covid Relief Fund' was being set up, and gratitude was due to those charges which had voluntarily overpaid quota in 2020 to enable that fund to be established. Two new members of the committee had been welcomed - Mark Harris and The Rev Dr Stephen Holmes. He then thanked Ian Lawson, Diocesan Treasurer, and the Conveners of the two committees - Professor Patricia Peattie and Alex Stewart - for all their hard work during the year.

**The Motion that Diocesan Synod approved the annual report of the Finance & Management Committee was proposed by Godfrey Robson and seconded by The Very Rev Frances Burberry. The motion was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Bishop John thanked all those involved in the work of the diocesan committees.

### **Cathedral Accounts**

The Very Rev John Conway presented the Cathedral Accounts, for the financial year ending 30 June 2020, abstracts of which were available on request from the Cathedral office. He reflected that the previous year had been challenging in many ways, including financially. There had been a considerable drop in visitor income, but regular giving had been maintained, which was a cause for thanks. It had been difficult for the members of the choir, and the Cathedral had used the furlough scheme along with grant money to support the singers during the year. The organ had been refurbished as planned, at a cost of c.£500k - the first major work on the organ for 30 years. It was recognised that this would be a recurring responsibility at 30-year intervals. The overall deficit in the accounts was £73k, which was unsustainable, and all were working hard to reduce that in the current year.

Bishop John proposed a vote of thanks to the Provost, the ministry team and the Cathedral congregation for their hard work when faced with these challenges.

### **Safeguarding**

Simon Filsell, the Diocesan Protection Officer, presented the annual report. He reported on the meeting of the Diocesan Protection Officers from around the Province, in November, and also the training delivered at St John's Princes Street in January. There had been some very good feedback from the training, which dealt with what to do if an allegation of misconduct was made in a charge, which was a high-priority issue in the Provincial Audit Report. He thanked all of the PVG Coordinators for each congregation for their work in a hugely important role in keeping our vulnerable congregation members safe.

Bishop John reported that Daphne Audsley was working on a training presentation to go on the Provincial website, and he encouraged all charges to take the matter very seriously, not least because a new policy was being prepared, and all charges should be well informed about that.

Questions & comments:

Helen Vincent, Lay Representative, St Mark's Portobello & General Synod Member:

*It was good to hear that those with Provincial Audit 'Red Flags' are being contacted but will everyone else be told they have none, which would be reassuring for vestries?*

Simon Filsell responded:

*All congregations would be contacted individually, although only 4 charges in the diocese had more than 3 out of 10 'Red Flags'*

## ELECTIONS

Godfrey Robson announced the following elected members:

General Synod – Clergy

- The Very Revd Frances Burberry (second term)
- The Revd Jane MacLaren (Edinburgh Forth Area Council)
- The Revd Susan Ward (West Forth Area Council)

General Synod – Lay

- Dr Vicki Clark (Mid & East Lothian Area Council)
- Victoria Elliott (second term)
- Karen Ellis (Borders Area Council)
- Emma Forrest
- Lei Garcia
- Ian Kerry
- Helen Mitchell
- Helen Vincent
- Dr Michael Wood (Edinburgh South West Area Council)
- Helen Wright

Diocesan Standing Committee

- The Revd David Dixon
- Victoria Elliott (second term)

### Diocesan Mission & Ministry Committee

- The Revd David Paton-Williams (second term)
- The Revd Philip Blackledge (second term)

### Diocesan Finance & Management Committee

- David McLellan (second term)

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*The Bishop then handed the chair to the Dean*

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## SEC CANONS

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### Canon IV

Bishop John introduced the proposals for changes in the way bishops were appointed. These proposals arose in the light of difficulties experienced in two recent Episcopal elections, when the existing Canon IV procedures had proved unwieldy. The General Synod's Canon 4 Review Group was asking for Diocesan Synod's initial reactions to the options being considered. In the light of current discussions, it was intended to bring formal proposals for a first consideration to the General Synod in 2022. The current consideration was therefore purely consultative and aimed to garner first thoughts. No vote was required. The two options were:

#### Option One – Electoral Synod

The first would offer a significant revision of the present Canon but would retain the Electoral Synod as the key decision-making body. At the initial meeting of an Electoral Synod all members of the Preparatory Committee would be present - as well as, ideally, the whole College of Bishops. A Preparatory Committee would produce short-lists, and would provide for up to two full meetings of the Electoral Synod and an election by the College of Bishops remaining as a final resort.

#### Option Two – Electoral Council

The second option would be to replace the Electoral Synod with an Electoral Council. The Province would be represented through members elected by each diocese and through two representatives from the College of Bishops.

Membership would be split 60%-40% in favour of the Diocese and, as far as possible, be divided equally between clergy and laity.

The Review Group had looked at the appointment processes from around the Anglican Communion and had spoken to many of those involved. After the First Reading of any new emerging proposals by General Synod in 2022, the matter would come back to dioceses for further comment before any final decisions in 2023. He reflected that the election of a Bishop was ultimately a process of discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit and it was necessary to consider which process would best allow that to happen. Bishop John then invited a representative from each of the seven Area Councils to report back on their individual discussions.

In preparation for today's consideration a Provincial discussion paper had been circulated with a request for all Vestries to consider and for discussions then to take place in Area Councils. All seven ACs had met, and their spokesmen reported back

#### The Revd Willie Shaw – West Forth

The Area Council was strongly in favour of Option One. It was a public process for the appointment of a public figure. A shortlist of two candidates was preferred as it was felt that it would be difficult for a single candidate if the decision was not to appoint.

#### The Revd Peter Harris – Mid-East Lothian

The initial feeling was Option Two but further discussion led back to Option One. The need for confidentiality was acknowledged. A Bishop was standing for a public office and it was strongly felt that the diocese should have the main say in the appointment.

#### The Revd Dr Stephen Holmes - Forth

The Area Council really appreciated the opportunity to discuss the matter, and took a straw poll. The majority preferred an electoral council [*Option Two*]. There was a need also to consider the role of the bishop and this was a process requiring both professional judgement and proper discernment. There was a preference for some flexibility over the size of the shortlist whilst ensuring the quality of candidates. It was important not just to make up numbers on a shortlist, then in effect not offering real choice if all nominees

didn't meet the standard. Confidentiality was needed to protect candidates not chosen, and the council was unanimously in favour of a larger electoral council, though not the current split. There was felt to be too much provincial influence, and an 80% 20% split would be fair.

#### The Revd Canon Dean Fostekew – Edinburgh South West

It was good that their Area Council was jump-started with the request to discuss this important issue. This discussion leaned towards an electoral council [*Option Two*], though the view was not unanimous. If Option One was preferred at the end of the day, there should be more flexibility built in to the arrangements, e.g. in relation to timetabling and to the required size of the shortlist. Ownership of the process needed to be clearly with the diocese to avoid the feeling of a bishop being 'imposed'. It may be that ways could be found to grow and nurture possible candidates within dioceses.

#### Margaret Temple – Edinburgh South

Their preference was clearly for Option I. The importance of maintaining tradition, and of the need for the appointment to remain primarily that of the diocese, was emphasised. The importance of confidentiality was recognised.

#### The Revd David Paton-Williams – Edinburgh East

There was no firm conclusion, not least because no one participating in the discussion had direct experience of the current process. The majority were in favour of Option One. It was good for a bishop to feel he or she had the backing of the diocese from the start. Discernment was a matter for both head and heart. The gathering of names should be a transparent process. The issues of getting sufficient good candidates on occasions was noted, and the flat structure of the SEC meant it was difficult to identify future bishops. Was this an issue for CMD?

#### The Revd Philip Blackledge - Borders

The Borders AC preferred Option I, retaining the affirmation afforded to a new bishop through election by diocesan synod. It was noted that better communication within the diocese in early stages might allow (particularly lay church members) to identify a wider range of possible candidates.

Questions and comments:

The Revd Diana Hall, Rector of Dunbar

*In the 18 years since the ordination of women only one female Bishop had been appointed in the SEC. It was important to ensure that there were no issues bias relating to gender, colour or any other aspect of a candidate.*

The Revd Philip Blackledge, Rector of Melrose, echoed this concern.

Bishop John thanked everyone for the very helpful and insightful responses which would be reflected upon and fed back to the General Synod later in the year. He invited further comment and subsequent thoughts on the issue.

## MISSION AND MINISTRY

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The Rev Dr Sophia Marriage presented the annual report. The work of the committee had grown around the five principles of 'Growing Together' and a video was shown illustrating activities around the Diocese in response to the Covid lockdown.

She thanked all those involved in the discussions which led to the appointment of the Ministry Coordinator, and she was delighted that The Revd Jane MacLaren had been appointed to the role.

### MINISTRY COORDINATOR

The Revd Jane MacLaren reported rapid progress in meeting diocesan clergy over the past 5 months, leading already to a clear identification and prioritisation of needs. As a result, work was already advanced in providing advice and help to priests new to the diocese, particularly those coming from the very different culture and support structure of the C of E, and also in addressing difficult relationships between vestries and clergy. A discussion day on the latter was planned.

### YOUTH & CHILDREN

Claire Benton-Evans presented her report and reflected on what, during a challenging year, could be celebrated. A number of positive initiatives, including those at St Anne's

Dunbar, St Cuthbert's Colinton and St Marks Portobello had provided inspiration. The Provincial Youth Committee Representatives from this diocese had been involved in a great deal of work online, including a presentation to General Synod. They had also helped to create the Provincial Youth Nativity Service. She saluted the quiet determination of all those maintaining their youth activities during lockdown.

The Rev Dr Sophia Marriage thanked Claire and Jane for their dedicated hard work. It had been easy to reflect on what we had not done, but there was a need to also focus on the positives and to take them forward. She thanked the members of the Diocesan Mission & Ministry Committee for their support and hard work during the year.

The Very Rev Frances Burberry thanked her, and all the committee members and video contributors.

Questions and comments:

The Revd Jenny Wright, Edinburgh Christ Church

*At General Synod the previous year, a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030 had been agreed. Was there any assistance for charges within the diocese, and could the matter be discussed at the autumn Diocesan Synod?*

The Rev Dr Sophia Marriage responded that many in the diocese were aware of the importance of the issue. There was a gap on the Diocesan Mission & Ministry Committee to lead this, knowing that it was a critical issue. She invited further feedback on all the climate issues.

## FINANCE

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Ian Lawson, Diocesan Treasurer, presented his report. At the Diocesan Synod in October 2019 there had been a report of a deficit on the General Fund of £46k and it had been suggested that, in order to continue with the existing level of activity, a 10% increase in quota might be needed. It was eventually decided that a 3% increase should be applied for the 2020 quota, along with a trimming of the activities. This projected a revised deficit of £18k, but lockdown then happened. In subsequent decisions, Provincial Quota was reduced by 10% against the 2019 figure, and the

Diocese did likewise. Diocesan expenditure had already been cut. The current estimate for the 2020 outturn, boosted by investment gains, was a £34k surplus.

Ian Lawson then referred to proposals by the Finance & Management Committee to make available recovery funds for charges facing financial difficulty. The diocese had £12k available from central diocesan funds, along with the Dunderdale Fund grant money of £13k and £11k in the COVID support fund, created by the generous commitment of 16 charges in the diocese. The province was setting up a 'Recovery & Renewal Fund', details still awaited but which would complement the approach of the diocese to the support. The criteria for providing support grants for charges had been discussed, which also provided the opportunity to explore the 'new normal' post-COVID.

Questions and comments:

The Revd Canon Anne Tomlinson

*With the environmental benefit of non-travel, would Diocesan Office meetings patterns be reviewed?*

Bishop John responded that, whilst there were challenges with online meetings, it would certainly be reviewed.

The Revd Diana Hall, Rector of Dunbar

*There was a wide range of questions on climate change, and would the Standing Committee take on the discussion to form a strategy towards 2030?*

Bishop John responded that it was already in the Standing Committee's mind, and it would take note of all the comments submitted.

Bishop John thanked Ian Lawson for the presentation and for all of his hard work in overseeing the accounts for the past year.

## DEAN'S REPORT

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The Very Rev Frances Burberry presented the report of her year. Amongst a wide range of activity, she noted that her 2020 Sabbatical plans had to be radically changed.

She had attended a reconciliation conference, and then faced the challenge of restricted reopening churches in August. Ordinations had proceeded within restrictions and the online Clergy Conference in November had taken place, with the theme of "Singing in a Strange Land". General Synod had been online in December, followed in January 2021 with another in the sequence of online institutions of rectors. There was now a challenge to face the 'new normal', and she was giving thought to how, as Dean, all charges could be supported in that.

Bishop John thanked the Dean for all that she did on behalf of the diocese.

**Bishop John confirmed the Acts of Synod**