

Lay Representative Report

As part of my responsibility as Diocesan Lay Representative, I represent St Mungo's at the twice-yearly Diocesan Synod meetings. In the Scottish Episcopal Church, Synod consists of a mixture of clergy and laity and functions as an ecclesiastical governing or advisory council. The meetings open with an act of worship [Eucharist] followed by a pastoral address from the Bishop. At the Synod meeting on 25 February 2023, the Bishop addressed Synod on being a people of hope. He differentiated between Christian hope and mere optimism and he exhorted us to offer a hope, born of humility and trust in God, to the people and situations to whom God had called us to minister.

Synod then received reports and updates from the various standing committees: Diocesan Standing Committee, Finance & Management Committee and Mission & Ministry Committee. There was a presentation of the Cathedral Accounts, safeguarding report, together with presentations from the Diocesan Treasurer and a report from the Dean. Various committee appointments were approved, with votes taken on revisions to the Canon [pertaining to the election of Bishops] and changes to the liturgy. The Environmental Committee reported back and an update on the Investing in the Future projects shared.

At the October meeting, Bishop John addressed a number of internal issues within the College of Bishops in the Scottish Episcopal Church; the death of the Bishop of Argyll and the appointment of a new bishop in Aberdeen and Orkney, relieving Bishop John of his temporary responsibilities there and enabling him to focus fully on the leadership of the Edinburgh Diocese. He updated Synod on several new initiatives and appointments across the Diocese. He acknowledged the impact of the war with Israel and Gaza and has written to other faith leaders in the city, assuring them of our prayers and expressing sorrow. The business covered was mostly financial, with a presentation from the Diocesan Treasurer, Ian Lawson. There was an update on the Diocesan financial position, Synod noted the accounts for 2022 and approved the proposed budget for 2024.

At each meeting I am always struck by the dedication and commitment I witness from various clergy across the Diocese. Many are facing significant challenges in their respective charges and many are seeking creative and innovative ways to meet these challenges. A number of charges are grappling with the mounting costs of maintaining large church buildings and rectories, some are struggling to find appropriate people with the requisite skills and expertise in church and charity governance and many are working hard to meet the needs of the new communities that are springing up as a result of the significant new housing developments that are happening across the region.

The next meeting is in February 2024.

Francis Cumming
Lay Representative