

Report from the Diocese of Dunedin Synod 2024



Synod convened from Friday 13 to Saturday 14 September and included some significant moments.

Opening Service - Session 1 of Synod

This took place on Friday 13 September at St Michael's in Andersons Bay. Thanks to Rev'ds Michael and Mary-Jo Holdaway and the Otago Peninsula Parish who hosted this service. The Venerable Clark (Vicar General) presided and delivered the Charge to Synod (attached below) and Synod Chaplain the Ven. Liz Cheyne with Synod reps from Holy Cross Trinity closed the first session in prayer.

In her charge, Jan referred to the deaths of both Pihopa Richard Wallace and the Māori King, Bishop Steven Benford's time in our diocese, the discernment process being led by Bishop Ross Bay as we look to elect our new bishop, community ministry and the ministry within our diocesan family.

After the service, Synod was officially opened and four motions, relating to procedures in Synod were passed. Then the first reading of the Bills to be presented at Synod were put.

- Bill No 1 'A Statute to provide for the offices of Diocesan Bishop and Assistant Bishop in the Diocese' was withdrawn.
- Bill No 2 'The Selwyn College Te Maru Pūmanawa Statute 2023' was laid on the table to be considered by a future Synod.
- Bill No 3 'The Clergy Pension and Benevolent Fund Statute 2024' and Bill No 4 'To provide for the appointment of Trustees, Investment and management of funds held by the Dunedin Diocesan Trust Board' were accepted to be an Order for the Day for Saturday 14 September.
- Bill No 5 'A Statute to provide for a Shared Episcopacy in the Diocese of Dunedin' was withdrawn.

However, a motion 'Shared Episcopacy' was agreed to be discussed as Motion 16.

After the election of Scrutineers, the evening closed with prayers by the Synod Chaplain – The Ven Liz Cheyne.

Saturday 14 September - Session 2 of Synod.

The second session began with a moving tribute from the Ven Te Ata Roy to [Pihopa Richard Wallace](#) who died on 6 January 2024. Pihopa Richard was remembered as someone who was innovative and quite radical when it came to looking at how to address the decline of participation in Anglican settings, with the challenge for the church to go where the people are, and not wait for them to come to the church. Te Ata and her group gave a waiata to conclude with ([see below](#) for a brief glimpse of this) and Synod responded with singing "Te Aroha".

Diocesan Council and Diocesan Nominators Elections

The following were elected to be on Diocesan Council (the Synod Standing Committee) and to be Diocesan Nominators (who, along with the Bishop, assist local nominators in a search for new clergy) from 2024-2026:

Diocesan Council

Lay: Nikki Gordon-Smith, Keith Gover, Steve Mitchell, Theodore Rose, Dr Gillian Townsley

Clergy: The Ven Liz Cheyne, The Very Rev'd Dr Tony Curtis, The Rev'd Natalie Milliken, The Ven Damon Plimmer, The Rev'd Canon Michael Wallace

Diocesan Nominators

Lay: Anne Gover, Theodore Rose.

Clergy: The Rev'd Brett Roberts, The Ven Barbara Walker

Motions at Synod

The procedural motions were passed unamended. Other motions gained a strong sense of support from those present and others had some minor changes, with one motion not being passed. (To see all the motions, the budget that was passed etc, see <https://www.calledsouth.org.nz/synod-info/> and look at [Order of Proceedings](#)).

A further eleven motions were put and passed unamended with some gaining a strong sense of support from those present – the motions relating to Anglican Overseas Mission (this was put by Dot Muir, strongly encouraging us all to achieve an aim of \$63,000 again next year) and the request to Government for special visas for family members of the NZ Palestinian community affected by the war in Gaza to ensure safe passage out of this war zone for them. This motion read:

That this Synod calls on the government via appropriate ministers and members of the opposition to urgently establish a special visa for family members of the New Zealand Palestinian community affected by the war in Gaza. And to make every diplomatic effort to ensure the safe passage for these family members out of this war zone.

There was a motion regarding the **Dissolution of the Parish of Bluff** because there are currently no Anglicans as part of the Bluff-Greenhill's Cooperating Parish, and a new church initiative has begun from the existing congregation.

The **Diocesan (Office) Budget** was so well presented that there was little discussion on it, and thanks were expressed to Fiona Gray, the Diocesan Accountant

Motion No 9 'Length of Trustee Terms' saw much discussion, but it was finally agreed that trustees representing the diocese on various boards should only hold office for three consecutive terms [9 years] unless there are exceptional circumstances as to why they should be appointed for a longer term.

Four motions approved changes made at General Synod and which only needed support from each Diocese.

- Statute 776 [to amend Part B of the Constitution/Te Pouhere to clarify where 'the Doctrine and Sacraments of Christ as the Lord has commanded in Holy Scripture' are explained]

- Statute 777 [to amend ‘Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child’ by removing the words ‘for a child born handicapped’]
- Statute 778 [to amend ‘The Liturgies of the Word’ to replace ‘the Queen’ by the words ‘the Sovereign’ and replace the specific prayer with a general prayer for the Sovereign], and
- Statute 779 [to amend Title G Canon V to add four more bible translations authorised for use in churches]

Motion 6: Shared Episcopacy

A final motion towards the end of the day about ‘Shared Episcopacy’ saw a great deal of debate and after three amendments the following motion was voted on:

1. Subject to the approval of the new Diocesan Bishop to establish a Diocesan Working Group, convened by the Bishop of Dunedin, to consider further all matters regarding shared episcopacy.
2. To authorize the Diocesan Working Group to make an application to the Judicial Committee of General Synod (pursuant to Title C Canon IV) to determine the question as to the canonical legality of the appointment of two people sharing the role of one bishop.
3. To authorize the Diocesan Working Group to make a request to General Synod Standing Committee that a Commission meet to consider the doctrinal question (pursuant to Title B Canon XVII) as to whether theologically the role of Diocesan Bishop can be legitimately occupied by more than one person at a time.
4. That once a response has been received from the Judicial Committee and the Commission on Doctrine and Theological Questions, that the responses will be placed on the agenda of the next Diocesan Synod for consideration.

Because it was unclear whether the motion was won or lost after voting by voice and show of hands count, a Division was called for and the motion was lost with 29 voting in favour and 39 voting against.

Following a vote of thanks to all concerned and Evening Prayer, Synod closed at 5.25pm.

A note about how Synod works... and Bills

Synod is run on the Westminster style of procedure. There are Bills, Motions, Statutes, Schedules, Canons and Standing Resolutions, each with its own set of rules of how they are to be conducted. Bills are discussed in Committee, when the Bishop [or in this case the Vicar General] stepped down and The Ven Damon Plimmer became the Chair of Committee. After discussion and any changes, he reported back to the Vicar General, The Ven Jan Clark the result of the discussion.

There were only two bills. The first one regarding ‘**The Clergy Pension and Benevolent Fund Statute [2024]**’ amended Statute 15 Clause 3 by adding the words ‘up to’ three ordained ministers and ‘up to’ four lay persons to be on the Dunedin Committee.

The second bill amended Clause 5 of **'The Diocese of Dunedin Trust Board Statute 2022'** by adding the following clause –

(e) That all appointed members (Trustees) of the Dunedin Diocesan Trust Board have an unqualified indemnity from liability for any transactions carried out by the Dunedin Diocesan Trust Board where they act in good faith according to the charitable purpose of any funds or property held in Trust.

Synod in Conference

There were several matters dealt with "in conference", meaning that there were discussions and presentations, but no motions or decisions resulting from them.

These ranged from a presentation on **Anglican Missions** (slides attached below) from Diocesan Missions Enabler Dot Muir and Jen Lun, Operations Manager at Anglican Missions spoke.

Jen started with the Anglican Missions in 2024 as Operations Manager. As a recent graduate from Te Herenga Waka with a bachelor's degree in International Relations and Cultural Anthropology, Jen has a heart for social justice – both in New Zealand and globally. Part of her role also includes OMTP (Overseas Mission Tikanga Pākehā), helping to raise the profile of overseas Mission. Jen spoke about how Anglican Missions covers all three tikanga and focuses on:

- Disaster risk resilience
- Water and sanitation – safe water not clean water
- Agriculture

She also encouraged us to get their weekly blog **'Pray the News'**.

There was also a challenging presentation from Rev'd Ester Clark Prebble and Julianne Clark Morris on the Climate Resilience Conference in Suva, Fiji - Moana Water of Life Part 2 Talanoa. This followed on from Part 1 held in conjunction with the Diocese of Lincoln UK. Julianne's presentation also shared information from the Faith and Belief Study, with both emphasising that Climate resilience meets and helps church resilience, with safe and resilient churches being communities who know us, uphold us and help protect us in our times of crisis. There was a reminder that the Season of Creation is now taking place 1 Sept – 4 October (**[see a separate article with a link to these presentations](#)**).

We also heard from Stephen Grant (Chair of the Dunedin Diocesan Trust Board – DDTB) about **insurance matters**. He reported that faith communities will be asked to confirm that they will take the same insurance cover as they did in 2024, but if they want to change this, they will have the opportunity to do this via a form that will ask things such as:

The strategic importance of the building on a scale of 1-5

- Seismic status (if known)
- Why they may be requesting a change in cover
- The frequency that the building is being use
- What the continuity-contingency plan if the building is "lost" in a major event
- The ability of the faith community to pay expected premiums.

Correspondence is due to go out to faith communities around this in the next few weeks.

Speaking to Reports

Reports were presented from about 30 Diocesan Committees, Boards, Organisations and Educators. We had a few people speak to reports (see link above), as well as some time at Synod for people to discuss these at their tables and make comments/ask questions.

And Finally...

It was wonderful at Synod to meet and hear briefly from MaryAnne Kuiti, Manager of Te Whare Manaaki South Centre in Invercargill, who spoke about what they do (see <https://www.calledsouth.org.nz/south-centre/>) and to be able to pray for her and the team there.

There were great opportunities for people to connect with old and new friends at Synod, whether it be at a table discussing important issues, or over lunch, evening pizzas or morning breakfast on Sunday.

Special thanks to The Ven Liz Cheyne and others for leading worship throughout Synod and for the clergy and people of Otago Peninsula Parish for their hospitality.

To sign up to the Diocesan News:
<https://hail.to/diocese-of-dunedin>



**Ko Te Tonga
kei te Karaka
The South Calling**

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Welshman, Bendigo, Otago
W Cooper