

Hertford and Ware Deanery Synod Report for 2017

The Deanery is part of St Albans Diocese and consists of 23 churches with 10 stipendiary clergy and supporting clergy, other ministers and committed laity. During the year the Deanery has focused on the creation of the Deanery MAP and begun to think about Fresh Expressions, and is actively seeking to enable and encourage parishes to find new ways of being the church in their areas, reaching new people with the Gospel.

Rural Dean:	The Revd Canon Jo Loveridge (All Saints, Hertford)
Assistant RD:	The Revd Mark Dunstan (Hunsdon with Widford and Wareside)
Lay Chair:	Diana Perkins (Christ Church Ware)
Treasurer:	Janet Bird (All Saints, Hertford)
Secretary:	The Revd Doug Loveridge (All Saints, Hertford) (Samuel Stockwell until July)

NEW DEANERY WEBSITE: www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk

January Meeting

The Revd Mark Dunstan gave a Presentation on the Deanery Mission Action Plan (MAP) and encouraged the Deanery to engage with the project which the Diocese has made a priority for all Deaneries and Parishes.

The Church has a call to fulfil, and we are asked to engage with the formation of a 5 year vision and to establish priorities and goals. Attention was drawn to strategic planning to fulfil the Great Commission, our biblical heritage from Matthew 28:19-20, a task given by Christ, and that the first apostles thought strategically in spreading the good news (Colossians 1:28 vision, Romans 15:19-24, Acts 14:21-23).

Attendees fed back their reflections on changes experienced within the last five years and changes anticipated in the next five years, along with comments about the way they perceived the impact of these changes. They contributed opinion about the way our Deanery was/wasn't keeping in step with the threefold Diocesan Vision of Going Deeper into God, Transforming Community and Making New Disciples. They also gave feedback about the Goals, Priorities and Vision that made up our previous Deanery MAP, indicating their understanding of any progress made and whether the Goals, Priorities and Vision should be changed, dropped or augmented in the formation of the new MAP.

Our Vision and Plan comes from listening to God and looking at our context. Our Context as churches within a deanery and diocese is common to us all. The Deanery needs to be aiming to be a place where churches are growing numerically as new people are coming to faith, where individuals are growing in their own faith, where churches are sharing their gifts and resources to help transform the surrounding communities.

May Meeting

This was the first meeting of the newly-elected Synod, and began with the Eucharist.

The main topic was “Ideas on leading your church into growth” with three presentations about activities that had been run in churches in the deanery during Lent.

Jenny Gray spoke about “10 Things to do in Lent”, since – following from an idea based from a book by John Pritchard – Jenny has been producing in her parish magazine a series of themed articles prompting people to think about 10 things to do to grow in faith.

Janet Bird spoke about “The Easter Story”, an event aimed at schools, which takes pupils on a journey through the last few days of the Easter narrative, through the voices of those who are at the heart of the story.

Wendy Wall and Sian Campbell-Colquhoun spoke about “Easter Explored”, a multi-sensory retelling of the Easter Story and takes over the whole church building for a week. It takes people on a guided journey through the events and places of the Easter Story. People are encouraged to consider the why of the Easter story.

The Deanery MAP was further considered, and Mark Dunstan presented an update. In the historical understanding of the structure of the diocese, it sends out the parishes to work in the areas that they sit geographically. The parishes send requests to the diocese and the diocese sends back advice and support with the deanery acting as an intermediary. So the deanery acts to assist the diocese and as well as supporting the parishes.

Going forward there should be a focus within deanery of collaboration, sharing the resources that exist within the deanery, supporting all the parishes. There should also be more strategic way of working within the deanery and the meetings in particular, with material at the meetings supporting the members of the deanery as they seek to fulfil their roles. There needs to be a rethinking of the idea that the diocese exists only in the offices at St Albans, as we are all “The Diocese”.

July Meeting

Communication by parishes was considered, again with three speakers:

- Brenda Howarth reported on Bengoe's new Parish Magazine, which has been upgraded recently, including colour and a "slicker" presentation. It has been well received.
- Catriona Baker introduced Christ Church Ware's new website and its varied contents.
- The Revd Nick Sharp spoke about Social Media and how helpful they can be if used wisely.

Colin Bird reported that for 2018 there will be a 2.2% increase in overall costs, which is below inflation. The average Parish Share will rise by 2.46% for 2018.

The Diocese has bidden for strategic funding for a major Fresh Expressions project, and the Church Commissioners have awarded £1.74M over 5 years, the full cost is £3.6M, including items already budgeted. There will be no material impact on the Common Fund until Year 4 or 5. The intention is to create 1,200 lay leader posts and 8,000 new disciples via Fresh Expressions of church over the 5 years – it is a large-scale project!

A Treasurers' Meeting on 11 September discussed parish share allocations and dealt with shared concerns about parish finance, including a Pastoral Support Grant Application.

Lay Leaders of Worship training sessions took place on 23rd Sept and 4th Nov.

October

Jo Loveridge and Mark Dunstan presented the MAP to the Diocesan Pastoral Committee and, following further fine-tuning, this has now been agreed by all parties.

November Meeting

This meeting was given to Bishop Michael of Hertford to share his ideas about First Steps in making New Disciples. Parishes were encouraged to send additional people to the meeting. The Bishop gave an enthusiastic presentation about St Paul's style of evangelism, how he made it relevant to his hearers, how persistent he was – and acknowledged that he was not always successful. Those present were encouraged to discuss in groups how they came to faith and what lessons can be learnt from their own experience. Canon Tim Lomax spoke briefly about Fresh Expressions. The website is available at <https://freshexpressions.org.uk> – and is well worth exploring.