

## Hertford and Ware Deanery Synod

**Our vision:** to see flourishing, Christ-centred communities inspiring people of all ages and backgrounds to discover God, grow in their relationship with Him and respond to His transforming love through serving others. [www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk](http://www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk)

### Synod Meal and Meeting 10 July 2019

The event took place in the Chapel Barn at High Leigh, with some 25 members in attendance. The ambience of the Barn is delightful, as many will know, and the food was well prepared and served by members of staff. Seated around four large tables, there was the unusual opportunity to speak together in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

After the meal the Rural Dean presented an olive tree to the Revd David Sheppard who was priested recently. A second tree will be given to the Revd Wendy Sellers, also priested at Petertide.

The forthcoming retirement of the Revd Anne Donaldson was announced for September, with an acknowledgement of over 35 years of ministry.

The Revd Sally Dryden was announced, joining Holy Trinity, Little Amwell on 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

Katy Little was correctly elected as a member of the Synod and of Diocesan Synod, being proposed by Tim Crowther and seconded by Mike West.

The next Deanery Synod meeting, without a meal, will take place on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October, 7.45pm. We would welcome an invitation from one of our parishes, please.

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Information was shared using “Everybody Welcome”, available on the internet from Church House Publishing. The programme offers a complete course to transform your church by improving your approach to newcomers. As they say – how many people “try out” your church each year? What would happen if 10%, 25% or even 50% of your visitors became regular members of your congregation? See <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/everybody-welcome>

Engaging with this, we have had a Mystery Worshipper attending a number of churches in the Deanery in recent months, completing a four-page questionnaire from Everybody Welcome, and the Deanery Secretary read out selected – balanced – results. The information concerned Exterior and Entrance of the church, Initial Welcome, Worship Space, After the Service.

One church scored well, with numerous top points, including accessibility, a visible, up-to-date notice board, easily understood, a great sermon from a gentle, approachable Vicar, good lighting and heating, toilets and sound system, excellent refreshments: but other than the Vicar, only one person spoke to our mystery worshipper: there was no welcome and it was fortunate that the worshipper already knew how Anglicans worship as it was not very clear.

A second church was also easy to find, but a poor Notice Board. The welcome page received 0 points on ten counts: the MW arrived ten minutes before the service but no welcome, unclear how to find a hymn book etc. It was warm and light in the church but the sound system did not work well and the sermon was virtually inaudible. After the Service scored 0 Poor for nine out of ten categories, and in terms of anyone speaking after the service – “Not a soul”.

We moved to ideas from *New Patterns for Worship*, also from Church House Publishing, looking at the space, preparations and introductions in four fictional churches, each dealing with their worship in different ways. These were read out, and the text is included below. On three tables, members then considered what they might find helpful or otherwise, and hearing the Mystery Worshipper information and the examples from NPW what in our own church can we cherish, challenge or change? See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-worship>

## New Patterns for Worship: Stories from four churches

### Section 1 : Space and Colour



**St Ann's** is a modern building with worshippers seated on movable chairs in a semi-circle around the shallow open dais. The amplification system is excellent and none of the furniture in the building is fixed. A creative group in the church makes banners and throw-away paper visuals which focus on the season or the teaching theme – and the children's groups often contribute their own decorations. Using free-standing screens for some of these means that they need not always be in the same place and can be moved according to the needs of the worship. It also avoids sticky messes on the walls, though occasionally the wall is used, as when they went for a year or so with the words 'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again' in well-designed paper letters on the wall behind the holy table.



**St Bartholomew's** found some years ago that they could increase the sense of space in their tiny church by removing the back row of the choir, moving the front stalls back, and putting carpet right across the chancel and sanctuary. At the same time, they moved the altar forward far enough for the president to get behind it.

More recently, they have looked at the need for somewhere for a very small group to worship on Sunday evenings or for less formal midweek occasions. The result of this has been the transformation of a small side chapel. The floor has been levelled, an efficient independent heating system installed and the old wooden chairs replaced by stacking cushioned stools, whose upholstery matches the carpet and the new pastel wash on the walls. And the small Jacobean table, restored and no longer boxed in with hangings, is a fitting focus for the seven or eight who gather round. Other 'focus' items include an icon of the Trinity and a single candle. Worshipping in this situation, with a more personal relationship between the members of the congregation and the president, inevitably has an effect on what happens in the larger group on Sundays. It has also been suitable for trying some of the less formal structures in *New Patterns for Worship*.



**St Dodo's** is a bit like an old-fashioned museum, with generations of furnishings and clutter which no one is allowed to touch. The sanctuary houses banners from long-departed church organizations, a large three-dimensional marble monument on one wall, a threadbare strip of carpet with brass fasteners, and a holy table which is not a table but a boxed-in wooden framework to hold ancient frontals (and behind which the flower vases, spare candles and watering can are kept). The modern light oak reading desks (given in memory of a benefactor twenty years ago and therefore immovable

– one reason why the table cannot be moved forward) contrast with the dark pine empty choir stalls. And there are some items taken from the now-demolished church in the next parish when it was amalgamated with St Dodo's – an enormous carved oak lectern, which is out of all proportion to the rest of the furnishings, and a large marble font. This was so heavy that a special concrete base had to be built for it at the back of the church (where it is never used). They even found space to cram in a few more pews at the same time, and all without thinking of seeking advice or getting a faculty.



**St Christopher's** have only been back in church for a month. They worshipped in the school hall while the church was being re-ordered and decorated, and found this a surprisingly valuable experience. They took a deliberate decision not to cart bits of furniture out of the church into the hall to make the place 'more like church' – they had seen the odd effect of this in another local church which used a community centre, with plastic chairs and metal tables, a heavy gothic lectern and sanctuary chairs to match.

Instead, they decided to use the school furniture as it was, with a white cloth on the table and all the links with church centred on the people and the colourful vestments of the ministers. Without hassocks, they stood for the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer – and quite a bit more in the worship – and decided to carry on doing this when they returned to church. Doing without the organ was a good experience, too, and opened up the possibility of using other instruments regularly. A flute, guitar and piano now practise each week for some of the items in each service, and taped music provides the background to receiving communion more often than the organ.

In the re-ordered St Christopher's, the choir stalls have been moved to the west end of the church, behind the congregation. The chancel, cleared of furniture, is made more spacious with a platform built forward of the chancel arch and a carpet unifying the floor area. Gone are the heavy oak clergy desks and ornate bishop's chair; they are replaced by simple seats for the president and his assistants, arranged to face the people. The lectern too is of a simple design. The altar has been brought forward, under the arch, with plenty of space for movement round it. There is also space at the side of the church for a modern one-piece font which is big enough for an adult to stand in and have water poured over her or him and incorporates a bowl at waist height for pouring.

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## Section 2 Gathering and Greeting (A)



While the large and lively mixed-age congregation arrive for worship, the **St Ann's** music group plays a selection of thematic hymns and choruses in order to focus people's attention on worship and set the initial mood of the service.

The congregation join in the singing; the song numbers have been printed on the service sheet. The music stops three or four minutes before the ministers enter and take their places. The congregation become quiet, attentive and prayerful – a sense of expectancy is in the air. The minister rises to call the people to worship with the greeting:

God is spirit.

**Let us worship him in spirit and truth.**

Then, after the opening hymn of praise, the congregation sit for an imaginative presentation of the notices, done by two people in a 'sharing the news' style. This is regarded as part of the worship, both giving a sense of belonging and bringing all the church's activities into the presence of God. The notices end with a reminder of today's learning themes (for adults, children and young people), some silence and the opening collect.



At **St Bartholomew's** the organist quietly plays a simple voluntary based on a seasonal hymn melody on the small village organ while the congregation arrive for worship. The minister has hurried from another village and makes her way to the vestry in order to robe and have a few moments of prayer before the service begins. The churchwarden has taken care to ensure that everything is prepared for worship before the minister arrives and she announces the opening hymn. As the congregation sing, the minister makes her way to his place from the back of the church. At the end of the hymn, she greets the congregation with a seasonal greeting and invites them to join with him in some moments of silence before saying a prayer of preparation for worship.



It is Pentecost at **St Dodo's** and the clergy and choir are hurrying to prepare for worship as the congregation arrive. The organist starts to play a difficult voluntary with some unexpected stops and starts five minutes before the service is advertised to begin. Four minutes after the service should have begun the minister appears at the front of the church, nods at the organist to stop playing, welcomes everyone and realizes that the amplification system is not working. High-pitched feedback jolts everyone awake as the amplification comes to life. No one can hear the announcement of the number of the opening processional hymn. Choir and clergy process slowly in a ragged crocodile to their seats. The minister turns and greets the people again – this time with a liturgical greeting. He then tells everyone to be seated and announces the notices for the week at some length, before inviting the congregation to join him in a prayer of preparation for worship.



At **St Christopher's** good quality music is relayed gently through the amplification system as the multi-cultural, mixed-age congregation take their seats. The choir is already seated five minutes before the service is advertised to begin. When the music ceases, the churchwarden gives out some notices, announces the opening song of praise and invites people to keep a time of silence before the organ plays the first line. As the lights are turned full on, a well-ordered procession of crucifer, acolytes and two ministers enters the church, the deacon holding aloft the Book of the Gospels. As soon as the song is finished, the president welcomes the people with a responsive greeting, announces the theme of the service and invites the people to make their confession.

You may wish to know that CHP mention that there is a Belgian Saint named Dodo, chosen because we do not have such a church in Britain, and therefore not in our Deanery. However, the name is thought to be something of a warning sign.