

# Hertford and Ware Deanery Synod

**Our vision is** 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.

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 7.45pm via Zoom

Chair – The Revd Canon Jo Loveridge, Rural Dean

1. Welcome and Introductions. This will be the last Synod meeting led by Revd Jo Loveridge as our Rural Dean. A new Rural Dean will be appointed by Bishop Alan as from 1 June.
2. Prayers – The Revd Mark Dunstan, Assistant Rural Dean.
3. Apologies for absence: Lesley Atterwill, Revd Theresa Musiwacho, Revd Amanda Duncan, Jane Cohen, Tim Alexander, Mike Sutcliffe, Dorothy Abel Smith.  
The Revd David Sheppard is moving to Buckden (Ely Diocese), The Revd Wendy Sellers is moving to Sandridge (St Albans).  
A welcome was extended to visitors, including Tracy Plumpton, Youth Worker at St Andrews, Hertford.
4. Minutes of the previous Synod Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (sent 25<sup>th</sup> March) were approved.
5. Matters arising. None.
6. Election of the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee. This remains postponed as some parishes have yet to hold their APCMs with the election of Deanery members. Furthermore, a meeting is being arranged with the Archdeacon to talk through issues relating to the Deanery, and this also means that the next Rural Dean will be able to assemble the appropriate committee structure with the Lay Chair and Assistant Rural Dean. The chair added that we need to elect 5 lay members and 5 clergy members to the Diocesan Synod and encouraged members to consider and pray about these important tasks.
7. **Main Topic**: The “Faith in Young People” report. (This had been circulated for preparatory reading.)  
**Introduction**: The Faith in Young People report is a summary of the extensive research carried out by the Youthscape Centre for Research on behalf of the Diocese of St Albans. Every church was invited to take part in this project that sought to determine the shape and scope of our youth provision.

### **Why did we conduct this research?**

Young people are vital for our churches to flourish and grow and for many of us, it was as young people that we discovered Jesus and the amazing adventure He had for us. Living God's Love with the emerging generation is a key part of our calling and to do that, we need to know the opportunities and challenges that we face.

### **Are the findings important?**

This research will provide the foundation of a new strategy to support and enable each church in its work with young people. The report invites us to confront the current trajectory we are on, giving us a chance to change it. We all have a part to play so please read and share this report widely.

For more information or support please get in touch.

*Christian Cole, Diocesan Youth Missioner*

8. Parish Share and Diocesan Board of Finance – Colin Bird. We are still very pleased with the way churches are so resilient, the DBF is very grateful to the parishes. At the end of April, we were still within a point or two of previous years. The DBF is now moving to the 2022 budget, thinking about assumptions. The Bishop has a Senior Staff meeting about staffing next week. The situation is difficult but manageable. We are fortunate that decisions can be taken strategically, not with backs against the wall.  
The chair reminded members to speak up if their parishes were finding they need support or help.
9. Events in the Deanery – Bike 'n' Hike will take place again in September. The organisers need a person to co-ordinate efforts in our Deanery. Information is being circulated separately.
10. Any Other Business
  - a. The Deanery Accounts for 2020, forwarded yesterday, were approved.
  - b. The Deanery Secretary indicated he would like to relinquish the post (having now served for several years).
  - c. The Revd Jo Loveridge was thanked by the Revds John Hookway and Ysmena Pentelow on behalf of the Deanery.
11. Closing Prayer - The Revd Jo Loveridge, Rural Dean
12. Forthcoming Meeting: Thu 8<sup>th</sup> July was suggested. As the lockdown ends on 21<sup>st</sup> June, we should be able to meet again without the need of Zoom. Venue needed!

## FAITH IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Christian Cole, Diocesan Youth Missioner, shared the findings of the St Albans Youth Ministry Research Project which was conducted last year. This was followed by suggestions for a new strategy.

Young People are 11-18-year-olds – a significant time for development and finding faith. The year-on-year growth graph shows an ongoing decline, and this decline situation seems to be becoming normalised.

Tracy Plumpton commented that there are no surprises in the report. She noted that in St Andrews, there is a strong ministry to Young People, but since services have only just returned to church, attendance is currently low. We have an opportunity to look at what works. There are many opportunities to identify and follow up.

Colin Bird asked whether there was any chance of sharing resources across the Deanery, suggesting this may be a way of gaining “more bang for your buck.” The chair felt this to be a very important insight which should be followed up.

Members were invited to consider the following two questions:

1. Which of the research results feel most like your situation?
2. As we emerge from the pandemic, what opportunities do you see?

The report noted that on the question of whether they saw Youth Ministry as a high, medium or low priority, respondents to the survey were split broadly equally (37%, 32%, 31%). It highlighted the importance of “Partnerships and a new movement” which included whole church ministry, openness to change and the need to look beyond Sunday attendance. There was a call to renewed confidence in the power of the gospel.

The following observations were noted from the report and reflections upon it:

- Just 28% of clergy perceived their church to be very or fairly confident about engaging with young people in the community (i.e. not in church).

- It is hard to recruit volunteers (only 20% of churches have more than 5 volunteers, more than 50% have 3 or fewer, and 12% reported having no volunteers).
- There is more engagement with children than young people.
- 87% of respondents expressed some form of hope for the future, but it was noted that our church culture often doesn't readily connect with young people – one person said, "I think our young people are a small miracle, because I feel like my church is often a hostile environment to young people."

The report identified there were different levels at which action might be taken:

- Diocesan (Connect with digital equipping and events)
- Deanery (Gather small group networks in key areas), and
- Parish (Discipleship in a small group model)

It was noted that parishes with only small numbers of young people (or even only one) should not give up, but tailor their work to their context.

Tracy Plumpton observed there is an element of waiting; currently we cannot "crack on" as we re-emerge – people are visiting others they have missed, we are still wearing masks and taking special care etc. There have been incredible opportunities over the last 14 months to show patience and love. Social media has helped us keep in touch.

Christian is happy if people contact him on these matters; he would love to hear from you. You can also subscribe to the Diocesan Youth Service's weekly email by visiting <http://eepurl.com/WHFSH> (see also the information on the Diocesan website).

*Representatives, please remember that communication in the Deanery depends on you arranging and delivering a Deanery Report / Update at your Parochial Church Council meetings.*

[www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk](http://www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk)