

# Hertford and Ware Deanery

## Minutes of the DEANERY SYNOD held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022 at 7:45pm in Christ Church Ware.

1. **Welcome:** The Rural Dean welcomed Synod Members, David White the new Diocesan Secretary and Revd Rachel Wakefield General Synod Representative. He also gave notice of the deaths of Revd Hugh Wilcox, former vicar of St Mary's Ware, and Mike Sutcliffe, Church Warden at Ponsborne and Deanery Synod Representative.
2. **Opening Prayers** were led by the Rural Dean.
3. **Attendance:**
  - a. Clergy: Mark Dunstan (Chair), Ysmena Pentelow (minutes), Sarah Forrest, John Hookway, Jo Loveridge, Theresa Musiwacho
  - b. Laity: Tim Alexander, Ian Bailey, Phyllis Ballam, Colin Bird, Janet Bird, David Briggs, Tim Crowther, Lyn Paddon, Diana Perkins, Sue Rogers, Amanda Rosier, Ian Screech, Shirley Taylor, Mike West.
4. **Apologies for Absence** had been received from
  - a. Clergy: Amanda Duncan, Jenny Gray, Angela Lynas, Robert Thompson.
  - b. Laity: Dorothy Abel-Smith, Jane Abbott, Lesley Atterwill, Robin Bishop, David Goodman, Lynne Griffiths, Helen Harris, Julie Markey, Sara McCrea, Joan Thomas, Dorothy Toyn and Marion Little (Secretary)
5. **The New Diocesan Secretary** Mr David White gave an insight into his own life of faith and experience of worshipping life in the Church of England which has included a long experience in Christian youth work.

He outlined his vision for the diocesan office – which exists for the purpose of serving the life of the diocese in its parishes, schools and chaplaincies and described the role as strategic and operational:

- **Strategic:** example of working with diocesan leadership team and others to think about how we bring people and money back into the churches after the closures of covid.
- **Operational:** he gave examples of his work, including a question about details of the Church Representation Rules; a question about the HCC Archive and what that can include; questions about churchyards, safeguarding training, finance, etc.

Business and Mission: This recognises the institution of the church as a business – what he calls a 'faith business'. David said this means ensuring the church in this diocese is financially supported and effective, but what makes the job exciting and worthwhile is the mission of the diocese and the responsibility to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

David noted some of the challenges he has noticed deaneries are facing and also the way parishes in deaneries are working together to support one another. He then asked to hear a bit about the deanery and any questions.

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

*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.*

Mrs Marion Little, Deanery Secretary, [secretary@hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk](mailto:secretary@hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk)

There was some input from Synod members about the deanery. Diana Perkins gave a bit of background about Christ Church, Ware, and her roles. Janet Bird from All Saints, Hertford and an experienced Reader spoke about supporting ministry in village churches and noted the positive experience of visiting deanery churches and feeling welcomed. She commented on the importance of that for all our churches all the time.

Mark Dunstan, Rural Dean briefly described the area and churches in the Deanery.

Two questions were asked by Synod members.

Question 1:

What is the diocesan situation financially – what are the challenges and hopes?

Response:

The Diocese was travelling in a broadly positive financial direction until the end of 2019. The two years of the pandemic have hit the diocese hard with the result that we have taken out almost £1M over the two years of the pandemic and are anticipating a further £700-750K this year as the drop in parish share recovery (from about 95% to 91%) continues.

The question the diocesan teams are asking is ‘What do the next 5 years look like?’ and the first go at modelling a response to that gave significant financial loss. Therefore, an action plan has been developed: “Rising to the challenge: Mission, Ministry and Money” which includes:

- Cost cuts and improved income generation at the diocesan office
- Reducing the number of Title Post stipendiary curates
- Looking carefully at deployment and exploring other ministry models where and if appropriate
- Bringing back up the parish share recovery to 95% and above.

David commented on the reserves and noted the way in which most of what we hold in reserves is ring fenced: there is £186m on balance sheet, but most of this is held in endowment funds, property (i.e. parsonages), or the DBE. Beyond this, the usable reserves are only £5.6m – so £1m is a substantial percentage of this; we cannot take such a sum for many years.

The action plan is a mission focussed plan and one which requires the whole diocese to work together. Referencing the Bishop of St Albans, David said: “We don’t have a financial problem in the diocese; our problem is all about numbers. If we are getting our mission and discipleship right, then the finances will follow.”

Question 2:

There is a challenge in attracting new people where the church is seen as unattractive and the numbers who might approach the churches are dwindling...

Response:

David pointed out the small grant fund that is available at the moment to kickstart things after covid. He gave some examples of how that might work well, and also noted some of the challenges and limitations on welcome. He noted the importance of bringing the outreach and the welcome together – otherwise people might be “tempted in” but then find what they meet unattractive.

## 6. **General Synod Report: Rachel Wakefield**

Rachel is a new General Synod member and is Assistant Curate at St Francis Welwyn Garden City. Her former experience is in media and communications. 60% of General Synod are new for this session.

Report on the February Session:

- Before Synod in February, it was necessary to pass a new motion to allow the Synod to meet in hybrid form – previously had been either in person or online.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury's address focussed on coming out of covid and whether or not we have lost the ability to take responsibility for one another, even in disagreement.
- The Business Committee discussed how to do hybrid well to ensure those online can properly take part.
- Racial Justice Report: Rachel suggested Synod members should watch Lord Boateng's speech in which he described racism as a "wound to the body of Christ" and noted the long delays in any action on racial justice. There are 47 actions in the report, 35 of which have been begun but it was noted that there are financial and other resource issues.

GS called for action in the dioceses and local churches.

- Safeguarding: Paper presented from the National Safeguarding Team. The key message is that safeguarding is everyone's job – not just those trained in safeguarding.
- Faculties: discussion as part of the commitment to net carbon zero.
- Slavery and Human Trafficking: tabled on the day that there was a motion presented in the House of Lords. There are/will be resources for parishes and individuals to respond well.
- Bishop of Hereford gave a report on clergy remuneration which was noted.
- A report on 'Setting God's People Free' which was noted
- Training: Synod members were given some training in some of the new material: the 'Difference Course' and the 'Pastoral Principles Course.'
- A motion from the Lichfield Diocese regarding how the churches pray for the persecuted church was unanimously carried.
- Crown nominations: there have been proposals about how the crown nominations process might be developed.
- Houses separated to agree the recommendation that each house co-opts 5 BAME members. Voting in the Province of Canterbury took place there and then and the motion was carried; the Province of York delayed voting as Synod had overrun and those with longer journeys needed to catch their trains home.

Following Rachel's presentation, a comment was made about clergy remuneration and the real terms decrease in income and pension.

Rachel reported that there was follow up discussion in General Synod Committees and at our Diocesan Synod.

## 7. **Minutes of the last meeting:**

These were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.

## 8. **Matters Arising:**

- The Rural Dean reported there had been two requests for grants (both granted).
- We do still need a deanery co-ordinator of the 'Bike 'n Hike.'
- We have appointed a Deanery Secretary, Marion Little (St Mary's Ware).

9. **Update on Deanery Vision/MAP:**

MD noted that in many places deaneries function with a Standing Committee (SC) and a Pastoral Committee (PC). Circumstances here meant that we combined those two committees a few years ago. There were some positive outcomes, but overall, this has meant that some of the areas that PC would normally cover have not had the attention they need. The areas the PC should cover are:

- Parish Share
- Social Action
- Environmental Concerns
- New developments (particularly housing, but also industrial)
- Fresh Expressions
- Ecumenical Partnerships
- Parish relationships / MAP

The SC has discussed whether we should reinstate the PC or work differently. The conclusion, and proposal to Synod, was that the PC should not be reinstated, but teams/small groups should be formed to work on particular issues. The SC would have a member on each group or team. It would be expected that synod members take an active role but that others with the right skillset, experience and interests would be invited to join the groups for a time or a task.

The Rural Dean asked synod to agree:

- Not to reinstate a Pastoral Committee
- Agree the group work approach

Synod was in favour.

Revd John Hookway offered thanks to the Standing Committee for giving this way forward as a good example of working together.

10. **Diocesan Synod Report.** Janet Bird gave a report on the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022

- The new Chair of the House of Clergy was announced: Revd Will Gibbs, vicar of Redbourn.
- The Bishop of St Albans' presidential address is available on the diocesan website (as are the agenda and papers). In this session the address included a bible study and reflection on sections of Hebrews 11 and 12.
- Presentations followed by:
  - The Racial Justice Action Group – which raised some really key and difficult questions. The action plan presented was endorsed wholeheartedly by synod.
  - Living in Love and Faith – there was an update on local courses and an encouragement to take part and contribute to the feedback. Discussions took place over coffee with written feedback given (to be followed up by the LLF team).
  - Diocesan Environment Policy – this was presented but needs to come back to synod to be discussed and adopted.
  - “Rising to the Challenge: Mission, Ministry and Money” and a discussion of finance and growth. Discussion followed with written feedback sent back to the diocesan team.

**11. Report from the Diocesan Board of Finance:** Colin Bird

Colin's presentation dovetailed with David White's comments on finance and the 'Rising to the Challenge' action plan. Colin noted the relative strength of the diocese of St Albans and shared some of the ways other dioceses are facing the challenge. He outlined the list of things that will mean all costs go up, mostly outside our control. A full written report was tabled and is attached to these minutes.

The key focus for 2022 is improving, significantly, the Parish Share collection rate.

Colin finished with the thought that it is not possible to cut for development. There needs to be a plan for growth, not decline.

**12. Deanery Annual Accounts:** Colin Bird

In 2021 the Deanery received 30p in bank interest! This represents our entire income for the year; we did not claim the diocesan grant.

Rural Dean's expenses were £230.99

The only expenditure for the year was on the website - £63.

The balance is £3199.30

**13. Good News and Challenges from around the deanery:**

The good news that was reported is that, in an effort initiated by Stapleford Church, working together, the five parishes of the Beane valley benefice have sent a big donation out to Ukraine and were able to bring back some of those seeking refuge.

**14. Dates of the next meetings**

- Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July – Social Action, Waterways Chaplaincy
- Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November
- Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

David White closed in prayer