

Hertford and Ware Deanery

Minutes of the DEANERY SYNOD held on Monday 7th July 2022 at 7:45pm in St Andrew's Church, Stanstead Abbots

1. **Welcome:** The Assistant Rural Dean welcomed Synod Members, Lorraine Newman, Senior Waterways Chaplain and two new curates, Marcus Hart at Christchurch, Ware and Jake Pass at St Mary's Ware.

2. **Opening Prayers** were led by Revd Sarah Forrest.

3. **Attendance:**

Clergy: Ysmena Pentelow (Chair), Sarah Forrest, Theresa Musiwacho, Robert Thompson, Jake Pass, Marcus Hart.

Laity: Jane Abbott, Tim Alexander, Phyllis Ballam, Colin Bird, Janet Bird, Marilyn Britten, Tim Crowther, Janet Dance, Tony Gilly, Rosemary James, Julie Markey, Lyn Paddon, Diana Perkins, Sally Rees, Susan Rogers, Ian Screech, Shirley Taylor, Mike West.

Apologies for Absence had been received from

Clergy: John Hookway, Mark Dunstan, Amanda Duncan, Jo Loveridge, Angela Lynas,

Laity: Dorothy Abel-Smith, Ian Bailey, Lesley Atterwill, Robin Bishop, Lynne Griffiths, Sara McCrae, Roti Ogunlewe, Beresford Thompson, Rachel Quinlan

4. **The Waterways Chaplain**, Lorraine Newman gave a presentation on how and why Waterways Chaplains were set up and how she became involved. She also explained how waterways activity has rapidly expanded and more people are living on waterways out of economic necessity.

As a narrowboat owner, she got involved in the Boaters Christian Fellowship and when she was commissioned in 2012 there were just 15 Waterways Chaplains, there are now over 100. The role is to be a visible presence along the waterways and to work in partnership with the waterways authorities, boaters and outside agencies.

Lorraine explained how she supported those in need living on the waterways with finding medical treatment and mental health support and linking them to food banks and other support.

In answer to a question about age limits for Waterways Chaplains, Lorraine confirmed that there was no age limit and she challenged anyone who regularly walked the tow paths to consider if this might be a calling and to chat to her about the training and support.

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

The Chairman then invited Sarah Forrest and Lyn Paddon from the Deanery Standing Committee who were leading the Deanery MAP Social Action Group to talk about the Social Action activity in their benefice. Lyn is a church warden and, with Sarah, during the Pandemic joined up with the Hertford Food Bank to get support for those in need. In December 2020 they managed to get a grant and, through links with the school, identified those in need and managed to deliver food bank parcels from both Ware and Hertford. This activity provided much urgently needed help.

EHDC purchased the Old Rectory for the homeless. They decided to provide “welcome packs”. After a Facebook appeal they were overwhelmed with towels, bedding, kitchen equipment. They also had food waste packages delivered on Saturdays, which became a massive logistical exercise.

Post Covid, they started up a “Drop In” session on a Wednesday morning as a place for people to seek help, have access to CAB advice, use the internet and phone. This started slowly but is beginning to grow.

They also now have three more helpers with the food bank and Sarah encouraged members to ask what God is calling you and your parish to do. The Deanery Social Action group was to support parish initiatives and sharing experiences, information and resources and to encourage anyone who is interested to get in touch with Sarah. The meeting was reminded that people did not need to be Deanery Synod members.

5. To approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting:

After the correction of the November Synod, which is now 22nd November, they were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting on 21st March 2022.

6. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

7. To receive a report from the Diocesan Synod:

Tim Crowther reported on the following:

Environment carbon net zero

The Diocese of St Albans has registered with A Rocha to achieve the Bronze Eco Diocese award by the end of 2022 and to progress to Silver and Gold award levels. As part of this commitment, we will work to achieve the Church of England target of Net Zero carbon emissions.

The policy document was updated May 2022. Actions include:

- Changing to Green Energy
- Eco Church Registration and Eco Diocese award
- Contribution to, and use of the Energy Footprint Tool
- Biodiversity – Parish and Community engagement
- Sharing resources and experience across the Diocese

Wellbeing

Revds Will Gibb & Tim Lomax reported back:

- Clergy wellbeing is important, but our commitment is to the wellbeing of all our ministers (lay and ordained)
- That opportunities for theological reflection be provided through the Continuing Ministry Development Programme
- That training for conflict management and change-management be enhanced
- That the Diocesan Dispute Advisory Service be promoted
- That healthy expectations for ministry be addressed in IME 2, parish profiles, role descriptions, licensing services and Church Warden training
- That the “How Clergy Thrive” and “Flourishing Ministry” booklets be distributed
- That the Diocesan Wellbeing Group be formally established

The Clergy Wellbeing Survey highlighted two main findings to address:

1. Supporting the taking of days off/retreats/time for reading, prayer and reflection
2. Finding volunteers

Discussion:

1. What do you see as the main challenges to the wellbeing of our ministers (lay and ordained)?
2. What more can be done to support the wellbeing of our ministers?

Priorities for new housing developments

Example developments were reported on, one being at Gilston on the north side of the A414 the other side from Harlow, and another, Blakemore Manor (Hertford). There was a third one at Houghton Regis, which is north of Dunstable.

It was noted that the register of developments that were being monitored are those that are larger than 3,000 dwellings. So smaller ones may have to be looked at more locally.

The diocese and parishes are working to understand what the planners are providing, or not, and how the church both influences what is being built where appropriate and likewise offers resources where available. What is our response? What are our priorities and how do we reach out?

Annual Reports

These were paper presentations:

1. The Bishop’s Council
2. The Diocesan Advisory Committee
3. The Diocesan Board of Education
4. The Board of Mission and Ministry
5. The Verulam House Fund Trust
6. The Board of Patronage

Safeguarding

Annual Report: Renaming of courses, e.g. Leadership training was previously known as C2.

The second past cases review was completed in Oct 21 and sent for independent review.

The use of the parish dashboard has increased over the past year, with over 70% of parishes now subscribing. However, some parishes still require encouragement to use the dashboard and we are considering how this support can be provided – perhaps through mentoring from those already using it successfully.

Existing policies and guidance will be incorporated in a new Code of Practice to be issued by the House of Bishops later this year.

Strategy 2020 – 2022

Objective 1: Policy and Practice Guidance.

Ensure that the National Safeguarding Policy Statement, House of Bishops Policies and Practice Guidance are formally adopted and implemented within the Diocese.

Objective 2: Training

Provide safeguarding learning and development at all levels of the organisation adhering to the National Learning and Development Practice Guidance.

Objective 3: Safe Recruitment

Adhere to the principles of safer recruitment when engaging the services of people to work or volunteer within the church.

Objective 4: Casework and working with those who pose risk within our churches.

Maintain an effective and efficient mechanism to manage safeguarding casework and responding to serious situations to include working with offenders and people who pose a risk.

Objective 5: Engaging with Survivors

Develop and maintain a means by which the Diocese effectively engages with survivors of abuse. Enable survivors to have a voice and a way of shaping and influencing things. There is also a need to provide access for survivors to listening, healing and specialist pastoral support.

Objective 6: Quality Assurance and Audit

Maintain an effective mechanism to ensure that required safeguarding activities are delivered to the highest standard throughout the whole Diocese at every level of the church.

Objective 7: Governance and Leadership

Maintain working within structures and with people that provide good governance and leadership. We must ensure Bishop's Staff have oversight of relevant safeguarding concerns and that there is an appropriate level of engagement with independent and statutory bodies.

Objective 8: Communications and Supporting Access to Safeguarding information and incidents

To ensure that everyone has access to up-to-date accurate information regarding safeguarding within the Church including details about who to contact if there is a safeguarding concern.

Finance – accounts 2021 & budget 2023

The Diocesan Synod was very grateful to Colin Bird, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and his colleagues for the huge amount of work involved. The details of this will be covered in Colin's report under the next item on the agenda.

8. To receive a report from the Diocesan Board of Finance:

Colin Bird presented the following report: The two years of the pandemic have resulted in financial deficits totalling £913,000 driven by a reduction in Parish Share collections, but helped, in 2021 by a better investment performance than expected when the budget was set (in the second half of 2020, in the teeth of the pandemic).

The Board of Finance is grappling with a series of challenging issues in order to bring the finances back to a surplus position by 2025. For this year, the financial forecast as presented to Diocesan Synod is for a further deficit of £744,000 and for next year, a further £449,000, so we have been staring down the barrel of losses totalling over 2 million pounds before we can get towards a full recovery. Even this is recognised as fragile given the headwinds facing the church and its members namely inflation, a declining membership and significant costs on parishes and the diocese especially relating to the new environmental policy and the commitment to Net Zero by 2030. You won't be surprised therefore to learn that the DBF is taking an extended look at possible budget scenarios for 2023 and will now not recommend a budget until September for consideration at Diocesan Synod in October.

The major cost which impacts the parish share is clergy stipends. The National Church each year carries out a consultation and this is ongoing at present. In the light of current inflationary expectations, I think we can assume that we will see a recommendation for a greater increase than the one percent this year. We have traditionally followed the national recommendation on stipends and the outcome will have a serious and material impact on fixing the Parish Share for 2023.

The other concern is the ability of the parishes to meet the request for their share. Last year the Parish Share collection rate was 91.7% (which was about £1m less than requested). Over two thirds of the parishes in the Diocese paid in full but they are bearing the load created by those who cannot manage to pay in full. In our Deanery the collection rate overall improved to an impressive 97% with only 4 parishes being unable to meet the request in full.

For 2023 we are hoping for a modest increase in overall Parish Share collections - in other words expecting a slow recovery but who really knows?

At the same time, of course, we are struggling with the potential costs of retrofitting parsonage houses and church buildings in line with the net Zero environmental policy. We are working on ensuring that our reserves are earmarked for current priorities, including net Zero. It is for the DBF to identify what funds can be made available to the Bishops Council, to allocate to the various priorities and again the work on this will run through to September.

It is obviously the case that we cannot provide all the money required to retrofit churches and parsonages even if that were technically possible, but it should be possible to create some specific funds that can help parishes and the Diocese to prime the pump and at least apply for the significant funding announced by the National Church.

We give massive thanks to the Parishes for their ongoing support whilst recognizing that they too are facing the same challenges in maintaining the income to fund the parochial system.

9. **To receive the Deanery response to the Triennial Share Factor Review: This report** from the Rural Dean had previously been circulated and most synod members had read it. The Assistant Rural Dean explained that each Deanery is given a figure to raise, the share factor is the mechanism this is raised from all the parishes/benefices, not the amount which will be discussed and agreed separately. Acceptance of the review was agreed on a show of hands with two abstentions only.
10. **To receive an update on the Deanery Mission Action Plan and the Project Teams:**

Social Action – Sarah and Lyn had already reported

Environment – The Rural Dean, Mark Dunstan is leading on this

New Developments – Mike West reminded the Synod that we are called to welcome. With lots of new developments, both large and small, in the towns as well as the villages there is much to do. We can achieve so much more if we share experiences and best practices and ideas, so please send any feedback, information, examples to Ysmena.

Fresh Expressions (FX) / Reaching New People

Diana Perkins reminded Synod of our Deanery strap line and a couple of verses from Matthew's Gospel. Fresh Expressions encompasses many different ways of doing "church" that are outside the box of what people think when they hear the word "church". It is also something that spans denominations and there are some great examples of interdenominational partnerships through Fresh Expressions.

Diana went on to explain that early FX involved men meeting in pubs and children and families being invited to Messy Church had been tried at Christ Church in the past along with other free running services and then have been dropped. There was also the issue of people being put off by lack of welcome.

This group wanted to hear about what was going on across the Deanery so we can help each other and share experiences.

In closing Diana asked for members of Synod or parishes to join a small working group to get this part of MAP started.

Parish Shares and Finance – Janet Bird explained that this was not just about wanting money. Giving and sharing is also an important part of this MAP topic. She urged Synod to encourage and support each other and invited people to come along and contribute email/sign up.

11. To hear good news stories or specific challenges from around the Deanery:

Every other month All Saints, Hertford are holding a Saturday talk discussion and lunch about the environment. Janet would talk to Mark about adding these events to the Deanery website. She also mentioned that although their peregrine falcons had left the swifts had returned.

Essendon had a very successful Jubilee weekend with open church and gardens.

Waterford has events at end of July.

12. To note the date of the next meetings:

- Tuesday 22nd November 2022
- Monday 23rd March 2023
- Tuesday 14th November 2023.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking Lorraine for her inspiring and informative presentation and staying on to meet members and Sarah for leading prayers.

The meeting closed with The Grace at 9.48pm