

# Hertford and Ware Deanery

**Minutes of the DEANERY SYNOD held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7:45pm in Saint Mary's Church Hall, Ware.**

1. **Welcome:** The Rural Dean welcomed Synod Members.
2. **Opening Prayers** were led by Revd Mark Dunstan, the Rural Dean.
3. **Attendance:**  
Clergy: Mark Dunstan, Marcus Hart, John Hookway, Theresa Musiwacho, Ysmena Pentelow, Jake Pass (and our guest, Rachel Wakefield – General Synod)  
  
Laity: Jane Abbott, Dorothy Abel Smith, Ian Bailey, Marilyn Britton, Tony Gilby, Lynne Griffiths, Julie Markey, Peter Melrose, Sara McCrea, Hannah Orton, Lyn Paddon, Mike West, Amanda Rosier, Sue Rogers, Ian Screech and Liz Finch (St Mary's Environment team)

**Apologies for Absence** had been received from  
Clergy: Sarah Forrest, Jenny Gray, Jo Loveridge

Laity: Tim Alexander, Phyllis Ballam, Colin Bird, Janet Bird, Robin Bishop, Tim Crowther, Roti Ogunlewe, Beresford Thompson

4. **Report from General Synod**  
Revd Rachel Wakefield began her report by sharing the feeling and atmosphere to give a sense of the importance of this Synod. Synod thanked her for her report which is included in full in the appendices to these minutes.
5. **To receive reports of Environmental Action from each parish:**  
The Rural Dean had circulated a paper to the Synod explaining the implications for the work of parishes following the Diocesan Synod's adoption of an Environment Policy. In this deanery, we believe by working together and sharing good practices we can achieve more than working alone. Contributions had been invited from parishes which would be collated, circulated and made available as a shared resource.

Representatives spoke briefly about the actions being taken in their own parishes. The reports are included in the appendices to the minutes and will be made available on the deanery website.

The meeting then broke for refreshments and the opportunity for representatives to share and discuss with one another how PCCs were dealing with this issue.

6. **To approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting:**  
These had been circulated and were agreed as an accurate record.

[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)

**7. Matters Arising**

All matters arising were covered by the agenda.

**8. To receive a report from the Diocesan Synod:**

The next Synod would be providing space for reflection following the recent General Synod on diverse gender issues, age, learning and education. It was suggested that Revd Dan Drew might be approached to come to share his experiences and plans for the Growing Younger initiative. All the synod papers are on diocesan website. The Rural Dean reminded the meeting that we have vacancies on the Diocesan Synod.

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

Colin Bird had submitted a comment to be conveyed to the meeting to say a big thank you to the parishes in our deanery for achieving a 97.6% payment rate for Parish Share in 2022. This compares to the average across the diocese of 92.5%. He noted that if every deanery had achieved what we did in 2022, we would have had an extra £700,000 for ministry across the diocese! Only two parishes in our deanery did not manage to pay 100%, and one of these has an improving financial position which will mean a better performance in 2023. He assured us that the DBF appreciates how much more difficult this will be in 2023, given the headwinds facing us, especially with inflation, but invited all parishes to do all they can to keep the contributions going, as this is the only way the parish ministry can continue at the existing level.

Revd Ysmena Pentelow reported that the scaffolding was now coming down following the re-decorating of the nave at St Mary's, Ware.

Hertford St Andrews have a vacancy for a funded youth and children's worker.

The parishes of High Cross and Thundridge wish to thank the retired clergy for all their support during their vacancy.

**10. To note the date of the next meetings:**

Synod Meetings are:

- Thursday 13th July 2023 (was 6th but clashes with General Synod)
- Tuesday 21st November (was 14th but clashes with General Synod)
- Monday 18th March 2024
- Thursday 11th July 2024
- Tuesday 26th November 2024

Standing Committee Meetings are:

- Tuesday 9th May 2023
- Thursday 21st September 2023
- Monday 22nd January 2024
- Thursday 16th May 2024
- Tuesday 1st October 2024

**11. The meeting closed with the Grace at 9:15pm**

## Appendix 1: General Synod Report

The formal proceedings began with the Presidential Address where the Archbishop of Canterbury urged us to remember to speak “Christian”. That we should be seeking unity and not to be making names for ourselves here but to listen to, and to love one another. We are called to gather, not scatter. “Where people find it difficult to believe what Christians say about God’s great love for them because they have been excluded, or made to conceal their identity, or made to feel in some way less — they have not been spoken to in “Christian”.

We live in a time of danger and crisis, the greatest since the terrors of the Second World War. We are called as Christians to be gathered in the Spirit and to show in the life of the Church of England a passionate love for every person, a profound commitment to the proclamation of Christ.

That is the good news we carry. Whoever we meet, they are loved by God freely and completely. We may say it, we must live it, and how we do that is one of the great tests of these times of societal, national, and international division; for we live today in a time of war physical, and war cultural. We too easily import culture wars and lapse into their language. It is the sea we swim in. We do not need to drink it.

The Church is not called to avoid or to endorse wokery, but to be awake to the Holy Spirit, to show that no division is greater than the unity of our identity in Christ.”

The introduction to the Business Report which sets out this session of Synod was responded to by a maiden speech where the speaker reminded people that, as someone being discussed this week – as an LGBTQIA+ person – the synod chamber is the place where she is most vulnerable, and to remind us we are talking about people and not things. This was a speech which received huge applause across the chamber. There were questions asking for clarification around liturgy, CDMs and safeguarding, as well as a reminder that **this is not a one subject Synod.**

Monday afternoon’s legislative business involved stipends, safeguarding and pensions. Canon 42 regarding new arrangements for safeguarding structures in dioceses was approved with Archbishop Stephen Cottrell commending it as a really important piece of work. Essentially it implements a recommendation from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that the role of the diocesan safeguarding adviser be changed to officer, and that they would have responsibility in the diocese, independent of the bishop for the professional leadership on management and matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

The Stipend Measure allows wealthier dioceses to have more freedom to be generous with their historic wealth to other dioceses, enabling a more equitable sharing of this wealth.

The Pensions Measure extends the period during which the Church Commissioners may use capital to meet their obligations under the pre-1998 clergy pension scheme.

The Miscellaneous Provisions was a somewhat mixed bag of things, and if you are keen to find out more, I would read the section on the Church Times website which sets out the provisions and the responses to them.

The loyal address on the occasion of King Charles' accession to the throne was given on Tuesday morning. Given the rest of the business of Synod it was not opened to the floor, and the Archbishop did admit to having nightmares about what might go wrong at the Coronation.

Wednesday morning saw a debate on the Cost-of-Living Crisis with Synod unanimously carrying a motion calling for the government to recognise that the resilience of this nation is limited. Synod also approved the Draft Parochial Fees amendment, providing that for the rest of this year, fees for weddings and funerals set in 2019 will increase by no more than 5% rounded to the nearest pound, rather than 9.9% in line with the Consumer Price Index. There was acknowledgement of the impact this may have on parishes, but a strong sense that the pastoral role the church plays, particularly at the point of bereavement, is declining as people avoid fees by opting for direct cremations, and having debated the cost-of-living crisis earlier the order was approved.

Thursday afternoon saw business amended due to LLF. However there was a big focus on safeguarding and our failure to get things right. The outgoing safeguarding lead, the Bishop of Rochester, Jonathan Gibbs, said, "We are meant to be a sacred space, safe for all. When things go wrong, there is a deep sense of betrayal. It is a matter of deep regret that this is taking far longer than I anticipated."

The Church's national director of safeguarding, **Alex Kubeyinje apologised for the misinterpretation of his report which highlighted the bullying of church house staff by survivors, saying he had not meant to reverse the perceptions of victim and offender. He had wanted to highlight the issue, explaining that we have the best intentions, but we do not always understand how long things will take. He was commended for his honesty and transparency by the ABC who said,** "We need to bear in mind that junior and clerical staff in particular on the National Safeguarding Team need our protection. [There] is no reason for death threats or to be screamed at. Alex has difficult [things] to deal with.

This is a very strange institution." We voted to take note of the reports, but as parishes you may find this a helpful perspective on safeguarding on a day-to-day level - **James Cary** (Bath & Wells) spoke about safeguarding training, and the Church's vision of "doubling the number of children and young people in our churches. It is vital that children can enjoy our churches in safety. Do the training: do it with joy. You may be instrumental in preventing the abuse of a child."

We then debated the Insurance Premium Tax. The motion was brought by Lincoln Diocesan Synod who are concerned that with rising prices to insure buildings, many parishes have to decide between insuring properties and paying parish share. This motion seeks to exempt churches and charities from liability for the Insurance Premium Tax. It was a very interesting debate with real tangible stories shared, and the motion was very clearly carried.

A discussion of a new system of electronic registers was postponed...but what do you think? [There was a brief discussion on this item where arguments for and against were given voice. It is expected that this will return to synod in the future.]

Monday afternoon saw the presentation by the Bishop of London of where the Living in Love and Faith project had reached and how our group work would run. She said disagreements existed throughout the church at all levels, but that the conflict tarnished the reputation of the CofE distracting from our mission, and “casting a shadow over our witness to Christ”. She said that the bishops had picked up different stories from those often heard and there was a growing empathy and respect emerging on all sides, and an acknowledgment that including as many voices as possible in the process has led the bishops to understanding that “our eyes have been opened to the harm that we have done, especially to LGBTQIA+ people”. She urged us to find a way to walk together, acknowledging that the prayers both go too far for some and not far enough for others, and that there is still much work to be done in setting out the pastoral guidelines which will accompany the prayers and replace Issues in Human Sexuality. There was also a clear reminder that within all of this, the church needs to expand its thinking on friendship and singleness.

On Tuesday afternoon we were put into groups to discuss the recommendations from the House of Bishops. Groups were selected at random and contained people from all three houses and were facilitated by external people. These sessions were agreed to be confidential safe spaces, ensuring people felt able to speak freely.

The debate itself ran to around 9 hours and such were the number of amendments proposed – 27 – that it could not be concluded on Wednesday but ran to Thursday lunchtime. I don't intend to share details of the debate, or the amendments as I'm sure if you are interested you may have already read them and there really is not time to cover it all.

Opinions were varied, it was tense and difficult, but incredibly respectful with Ben Bradshaw MP sharing that he wished the Commons could behave more like General Synod. It should be funny, but it isn't.

When we eventually came to vote it was done in silence and any images you have seen of a standing ovation was for our extraordinary chairman, Geoffrey Tattershall KC. Once the votes had been taken, we left the chamber in relative silence. As you probably know, all three houses voted in favour of the prayers of blessing.

Some who've served on Synod for many years reliably tell me that this was by far the most exhausting and draining session they have attended. I share this with you, not out of a need for sympathy but to help you understand that no matter what you feel about the decisions we made, it was hard, tense, demanding and to be honest, for many, somewhat costly. There is much concern about the welfare of all attending.

## **Appendix 2: Reports of Environmental Action from the parishes**

A paper from the Rural Dean had been circulated to the Synod explaining the implications for the work of parishes following the Diocesan Synod Environment Policy. In this deanery, we believe by working together and sharing good practices we can achieve more. The paper invited contributions from parishes which would be collated, circulated and made available as a shared resource.

### **Bramfield**

Dorothy Abel Smith reported that their very small parish churchyard was surrounded by agricultural land which allowed an environment of trees, shrubs and wildflowers to flourish, and rare Hawfinches were present. Inside the church, bulbs were gradually being replaced by LED lights and although the heating was ancient it was efficient thanks to an excellent electrician who maintained and monitored the system.

### **St Mary, Ware**

Liz Finch reported as follows:

- In early 2022 we registered for the A Rocha Eco Audit. Of the 5 sections on worship, buildings, land use, community and global engagement and lifestyle the only one we couldn't complete to at least Bronze award standard was Land Use/Environment.
- Actions included initial contact with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust for advice on wildlife areas in churchyards. Online resources were useful for this (St Albans dioceses Living Churchyards; Shropshire-based Caring for God's Acre; Love your Burial ground/CCN) Churches Count on Nature – 11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This was completed by various church members for varying amounts of time at different times over the weekend. We counted 72 different flowering plants and 15-30 different types of trees, birds and insects. We aim to do it again this year. Registration has just opened.
- A workgroup installed a bike rack by the Linkway door – officially “opened” by the Mayor of Ware in the summer as the Town Council had helped with funding this.
- We spoke to Ware Swift Group in July about installing swift boxes in the tower before next year's swift arrivals in mid-April. This has recently been spec'd out by Gavin Vicary (who builds the boxes). The Tower Captain/Fabric Committee chair is going to do the practical plan with Gavin and a volunteer carpenter and Gavin is registered to take the application through the Diocese.
- Other plans: reinstatement of a small wildflower area – perhaps near the bike rack – to replace the unpopular one trialled some years ago and/or a herb garden.

### **St Andrew, Little Berkhamsted**

Ian Bailey reported on a two-year project to make their churchyard more environmentally friendly. They had received diocesan advice and suggestions about creating a habitat to encourage insects and wildflowers. They had also installed bird boxes.

### **All Saints, Hertford**

Two Environment Saturdays were held where participants had looked at Climate Change, Net Zero Emissions and Green Watch campaign. They had received a grant for their Energy Footprint and Audit which they had completed for 2019 and 2021. They try to recycle as much as possible and ran a Christmas Tree Exhibition with local schools using recycled material.

### **St Mary, Essendon**

St Mary's had signed up to the "Eco Churches" scheme four years ago, developing wildflowers and grasses. They had installed hedgehog nesting boxes. They had also set up a water collecting scheme and were gradually changing to LED lights and replacing the heating system. They needed extra funding and were applying for grants and faculties and planning permissions.

### **St John the Evangelist, High Cross**

Tony Gilby reported that they had only recently started to develop their environment strategy. They were looking at replacing their old boiler but the difficulties of trying to lay gas supplies and digging up the church yard had left them re-thinking the options. They had also installed bug hotels.

### **St Mary, Thundridge**

Rare Meadow Saxifrage is growing in the churchyard, and a wildlife and wildflower survey is currently being arranged with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

### **St Dunstan, Hunsdon**

Amanda Rosier reported that as their parish church was away from the village and had a very poor heating system, during the winter (with the bishop's permission) they had moved to worshipping in the school hall in the village which was warmer and also accessible for pedestrians. They are also considering changing electricity supply to ensure it comes from renewable sources. A recent alteration means the heating can be controlled remotely (on/off) saving fuel emissions driving to the church to reset the timer.

### **Christ Church, Ware**

Revd John Hookway reported that following their refurbishment when all eco and green issues were taken into consideration, they had received the A Rocha Silver Award. They were now encouraging their congregation to look at their own environment and lifestyle and consider options for improving the environment.

### **St Andrew, Hertford**

Julie Markey reported that they were looking to become an Eco Church and are looking to turn their commitment into action by setting up a working committee with two members of the PCC taking the lead. They are working to renew and improve insulation in their Victorian church and investigating solar panels. They will also be looking at an audit of wildlife in the church grounds and know they have jackdaws nesting.

### **St Michael and All Angels, Waterford**

Hannah Orton said they have replaced lights with LED bulbs and are working in the churchyard to make it more wildlife friendly. They are currently exploring what the next initiatives should be.

### **Holy Trinity, Wareside**

Having previously rented sheep to graze the churchyard (until a dog killed one of the sheep), the PCC has now agreed to allow large sections of the older churchyard to be left wild for the benefit of pollinators and other wildlife. A recent citizen science project exploring how much carbon is captured by churchyards was undertaken in conjunction with the Church of England and the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. Core soil samples were taken and submitted along with data relating to tree cover. The PCC is currently awaiting results, which may help identify the best way to look after the churchyard.

### **St John the Baptist, Widford**

The PCC is having to consider replacing its oil-fired boiler very soon.

### **Great Amwell with St Margarets and Stanstead Abbots**

Lynne Griffiths & Lyn Paddon reported the following:

- A new environmental policy was to be ratified by the PCCs the following week for the three churches in the Benefice.
- An insect hotel and a couple of bird boxes for St Mary's churchyard have been purchased.
- St Mary's is registered with the living churchyard scheme at the diocese and uses the diocesan portal to input carbon footprint results and other data.
- Appropriate cups are used for tea/coffee and as much waste as possible is recycled.
- Heating is only on when there is a real need: i.e. services, food bank hub drop in, and warm space.
- There has always been a natural wildlife area in the churchyard.
- A new boiler was installed in 2017 and there is also a new complete lighting system using LEDs.
- The church is registered with A Rocha and working towards the bronze award – very close to achieving.