

Hertford and Ware Deanery Synod

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.*

Annual Report of Activity in 2024

(for publication at APCMs in 2025)

Deanery Synod met three times during 2024.

March – The Deanery of the Future

Synod looked at some of the realities of the life of our deanery and began to consider possible futures. It was noted that only two of the benefices contribute (through their Parish Share) the full cost of placing a priest in post, and these effectively subsidise the rest of the parishes (whose full share request falls short of the total cost of ministry). It was observed that some parishes are paying their share by dipping into reserves and that many were being funded by donations from generous ageing congregations. If current trends were to continue, it would not be long before the diocese would need to consider further amalgamations. The challenge for the deanery was how to be ready with suitable answers to any such proposals. The following questions were discussed in groups:

What would your reaction be to the suggestion that your parish be united with [a parish adjacent to yours] when the next minister resigns (yours or theirs)? What would be gained? What would be lost? What don't you know that you think you need to know?

The increase in the governance burden on churches and the simultaneous volunteer-crisis were also discussed. Much important ministry is carried out by lay people, but it is getting harder to fill the posts of warden, treasurer, secretary and PSO. Members were asked:

What do you think could be done about filling this need? What is your own parish situation with regard to filling vacancies for posts like churchwarden and treasurer?

Synod will return to these matters later.

July – Social Function and Elections to Diocesan Synod

All five vacancies in the House of Clergy were filled without election. Our representatives are Ysmena Pentelow, John Hookway, Alan Stewart, Sarah Forrest and Mark Dunstan.

Five of the six vacancies in the house of laity were filled without election. Our representatives are Liz Horner (St Mary the Virgin, Ware), Tim Crowther (St Mary the Virgin, Ware), Janet Bird (All Saints, Hertford), Colin Bird (All Saints, Hertford) and Bob Barker (Christ Church, Ware).

This Synod was followed by a relaxed and enjoyable BBQ, giving members an opportunity to deepen friendships and share ideas, issues and best practices.

November: Generous Giving

The Diocesan Giving Officer, Kate Ford, has been in post for about two years. Her role is sponsored by funds from the National Church. She is helping parishes to grow generous giving by advising on giving mechanisms and communications and through running giving campaigns. She gave a thorough and encouraging presentation.

Questions and comments from the floor related to a wide range of topics including: legacies; the benefits, costs and use of card readers; the positives of using the National Parish Giving Scheme and Gift Aid. After the plenary, Synod members were given the opportunity to look at template documentation resources and two card readers.

The vacancy in the House of Laity for Diocesan Synod was filled by Shirley Taylor from Hertford, St Andrew's (unopposed).

All the meetings also included other reports from Diocesan Synod.

Deanery Collaboration

The Deanery Synod is currently engaged in six important streams of work:

- Environment
- Growing Younger and More Diverse
- New Development
- Parish Share and Finances
- Reaching New People / Fresh Expressions
- Social Action

By sharing wisdom, experience and best practice, the teams responsible for each of these streams aim to encourage and support parishes across the deanery as they face challenges in these areas. The core teams are all looking for more members. You do not need to be a member of Synod to be on the teams. All that is needed is an interest in the relevant field and a heart to see the good news of Jesus transforming communities through the work carried out by the parishes of the deanery in that field. Could you help?

The deanery website now includes a functional "social network" which means that members can contribute to discussions about these matters online as and when they think of things (rather than needing to commit to meetings). Anyone interested can register with the website at www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk/register and join one of the groups. N.B. usernames can be seen by everyone, so we recommend applicants do not use their email address as their username.

The social network also has a dedicated group for Church Wardens to communicate with one another (i.e. for asking for advice about aspects of the role and specific circumstances they encounter, e.g. recommendations about contractors or "what to do if..." scenarios). There is also a general "Deanery Chat" group which is for people to keep up to date with deanery news, advise others about events in their parishes or ask questions.

It is hoped that many people will register with the site to keep informed and to be engaged in the deanery's mission over the coming year.

Marion Little, Deanery Secretary
February 2025