

Minutes of Bishop's Waltham Deanery Synod
2nd February 2022 held via Zoom

Area Dean - Revd Canon David Isaac

Lay Chair - Norman Chapman

Present were 23 Lay members and 6 Clergy. (details noted in attendance book).

Apologies were received from Jill Phipps, Sabrina Gwynn, Rachel Houlberg, Petrina Hillier, Rosie Greenlees.

1. The **Minutes** of the Meeting held on 11th November 2021, having been previously circulated, were agreed.
2. **Diocesan News**
Bishop Jonathan, whose appointment as the 10th Bishop of Portsmouth has now been legally confirmed, will be installed at the cathedral on March 12th. Arrangements will be made for two representatives from each parish to attend. The Bishop intends to spend a day in the deanery later in March – date to be confirmed. *(Now confirmed as March 22nd.)*
3. **Membership**
Elizabeth Quinn (Hambledon) has tendered her resignation as a member of the deanery synod, in the expectation of her ordination as deacon this summer, after which she will be serving her title in the parish of Waterlooville, in our neighbouring deanery. Liz was warmly thanked by the synod for her contribution to the life of the deanery and especially for building and sustaining the links with our partner diocese of Waiwso in Ghana.
4. **Lent Lectures**
The lecture series, sponsored by St John the Baptist, Shedfield, will be on Monday evenings, beginning on March 7th for five weeks, and will take the form of webinars on Zoom. The programme of speakers will be available shortly, focussed around the themes contained in the 'Living in Love and Faith' report. The first speaker will be the Revd Juliet Montague, who will speak about the difficulties of being one of the first women to be ordained and of the impact on her life and ministry.
5. **Partnership with Waiwso Diocese**
Our link diocese in Ghana now has a new bishop, succeeding Bishop Abraham, who has retired. Bishop Ampomah was hoping to have the opportunity to visit us in the deanery this coming summer, as part of the Lambeth Conference preparatory programme. However, the Conference plans have now changed and all the bishops will stay in or around Canterbury before and after the event.

We still need to schedule on the agenda of the deanery synod discussion about how we take forward our partnership with the churches in Waiwso Diocese, in terms of mutual encouragement, living as disciples in different geographic and social contexts and sharing resources. Following the announcement some months ago of the Ghanaian bishops' intention to support the Ghanaian government's bill to criminalise LGBTQ+ lifestyle orientations, the synod agreed to put on hold its discussion of this issue. Contributions to the debate from synod members indicated that more information is still needed before there can be a fully informed discussion. However, the willingness by the Ghanaian bishops to engage in dialogue about the issue is probably an encouraging basis for us to continue to explore our relationship with Waiwso Diocese.

(Post-meeting note. The Ghanaian House of Bishops has now issued a statement saying that it considers sections of the draft Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill were 'severe and must be reviewed'. The statement further continues 'We agreed that, though human dignity is always dominant, LGBTQI+ activities are frowned upon by the Ghanaian ethnicity....Nevertheless, Ghanaian citizens must not use the bill as an avenue to assault persons with homosexual orientation but show love to them...Acts of harassment, intimidation, and hostilities against LGBTQI+ people should be condemned.')

6. Ascension Day Deanery Service

Plans are being considered for a deanery gathering for worship on the evening of Ascension Day, 26th May. Further details will be notified soon.

7. Financial Report

Paul Emmerson, chair of the Finance Committee, reported to Synod members that parishes across the deanery had completed in full the payment of parish share for 2021 and are to be thanked for their continuing commitment to achieving this result, which is a remarkable and laudable outcome considering all the uncertainties.

Paul commented also on the adjustment of parish share figures for 2022, reflecting an earlier miscalculation by the diocese of the basis of assessment. The impact, overall, for parishes in the deanery is a requirement for an increase in parish share. Potential increases, based on the revised basis of assessment, have been limited by the Bishop's Council to 5% for 2022. Paul will be in contact with every parish treasurer for further detailed discussion.

It is still unclear how the incorrect assessments were initially made and Paul is continuing to seek further clarification from Victoria James, the Diocesan Secretary, both about the data used as the basis for calculation and the factors involved in arriving at the proportionate assessments. For the re-assurance of parish treasurers and PCCs, Paul was asked to obtain from the diocese the detailed figures that have been used in recent years to make the assessment, so that there can be some confidence in their reliability.

It was indicated that at least one parish is planning to challenge congregations to lift giving to the level that would have been needed to meet the full revised increase in parish share, in readiness for that being the future position.

Adrian Jordan (Bishop's Council member) suggested that he and Paul have a further conversation before the next meeting of the Bishop's Council. He also reminded the synod that the diocese is in the process of reviewing the whole basis of parish share calculation. There are no indications yet of what may emerge from that review in terms of a new framework for assessment.

A copy of Paul's report and a financial summary of deanery funds are distributed with these minutes.

8. Diocesan Development – A Way Forward

Norman Chapman, Deanery Lay Chair, introduced the paper (*copy attached*), which has emerged out of extensive discussions in PCCs, the Mission & Pastoral Committee and the Deanery Synod. The paper sets out the broad principles for working together in the deanery

and signposts the direction of travel. Implementing the hopes expressed in prior discussions and reflected in the paper will require a willingness to engage in continuing conversations in several contexts across the deanery.

To help with understanding further the implications and potential contained in the paper James Hunt clarified that a significant feature of working together will be the way in which parishes can help each other develop and utilise their own potential resources. Some further elaboration of how parishes can help each other is outlined in a helpful note circulated to members at the synod meeting (*and included with these minutes as an attachment*).

Jonathan Montgomery welcomed the paper as being a concise and helpful summary of the aspirations contained in previous discussions, suggesting that the 'audit of potential to develop relationships' should focus on how we might use resources for mission and discipleship development. Doing that effectively requires us to have some conversation about the nature of mission and discipleship development needs in our several contexts.

The area dean invited Ruth Howlett-Shipley to comment on the 'audit' element in the proposals, commenting as he did so that the word 'audit' may be not entirely capture the true nature of what is intended. Ruth, who has kindly agreed to coordinate the audit, reported on her activity so far, via the published websites of our parishes, to try and identify where there may be significant gaps in our mission and discipleship provision, or where there are opportunities for those engaged in similar activity to encourage and enable each other. Ruth further reflected that a questionnaire approach would need to be supported by direct conversation, to relate factual information to actual local issues and needs.

Janet Clarke reported that she, as deanery sub-warden of lay ministers, had recently compiled, from a survey of responses from lay ministry colleagues, an overall perspective of ways in which they are involved in ministry in their parishes.

John Symes wondered if social media platforms might be useful tools in establishing links between relevant groups of individuals wanting to engage in working together. Adrian Jordan reported that churchwardens across the deanery (and further afield in the diocese) have already established a social media link which is proving hugely successful.

In response to a question from Elizabeth Townsend about who would be available to construct and operate these links the area dean commented that, for all of the elements of what is proposed there will always need to be an awareness of what can realistically and feasibly be achieved, without diminishing our hopes and vision of what could be possible.

The area dean proposed that the deanery synod confirm that it now wished to agree the broad principles contained in the paper, with appropriate reflections around all the issues identified at this meeting, and so **to request and encourage parishes, benefices, church officers and ministry teams** to engage together in this direction of travel and to put in place, over time, the means required to do this.

The synod agreed unanimously.

The lay chair expressed his thanks to the synod for its willingness to accept the proposal and his thanks to all those who had contributed to its formation. The area dean confirmed that

the content of the proposal had been signalled to the acting archdeacon and diocesan secretary, who had expressed their support for it.

Next Meeting: to be arranged

Attachments:

Report from Chair of Finance Committee

Treasurer's Report

A Way Forward – slightly adapted to reflect discussion

Further explanatory notes