

Report on the Proceedings of the Wallingford Deanery Synod 2016.

The Wallingford Deanery Synod met in March, May, September and November 2016.

March Meeting:

The Synod conducted a short 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats' exercise and identified the following opportunities:

- We are beginning to realise that change is necessary and that we must work together to achieve our Mission;
- We could reap benefits by engaging more fully with families and children. There are opportunities at this time where the Church might step in to provide some of the Childrens' Services that are being withdrawn by the county council;
- We need to show the Gospel to the people out there who know nothing about it;
- We can achieve a wider congregation from baptisms, weddings and funerals;
- We have a growing population in the Deanery and the Church can become a focus for these new communities;

The Diocesan Director of Mission, who was at the meeting, commented that many people will describe themselves as spiritual and are asking serious questions about life and purpose, but our language does not seem to connect with them.

May Meeting:

At the May meeting, Professor Helen King gave a presentation on the Shared Conversations process. The key question was: Given the significant changes in our culture in relation to human sexuality, how should the Church respond? The Church of England is a broad Church; how broad can it be? Are people's sexual orientations created, or is this as a result of the Fall? The results of these Regional Conversations over the past year were taken forward to the General Synod.

The Revd Hugh Boorman gave a presentation on the future of the Ladygrove Conventional District. The Synod unanimously passed the following motion: *While recognising that there are factors which are yet to be considered, Deanery Synod, in principle, supports the Ladygrove Church's request to become a separate parish and would like to encourage the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee to complete their consideration of the church's status as a conventional district as a matter of urgency*

The geographical boundaries of the proposed development were larger than the area covered by the Ladygrove portion of the All Saints Parish. Conversations with surrounding parishes have taken place to set the boundaries of the proposed new Ladygrove Parish.

September Meeting:

The September Synod focussed on the future Ministry within the Great Western Park and Valley Park developments which will bring to us a new population of circa 25,000 people. The Archdeacon has made an application to the Diocesan New Communities fund for a stipendiary post in Great Western Park as from 2017. This grant will pay for the post over the next few years; after which responsibility for funding the post will gradually be transferred to the Deanery and thence to the New Community. The Synod unanimously passed the following motion: *The Deanery fully supports the Revd Mark Bodeker's work in Great Western Park and would like it to continue.* A further motion was passed at the November Synod endorsing the application for the post in Great Western park.

November Meeting:

Archdeacon Judy French joined us for the November meeting and spoke about the Dorchester Archdeaconry's approach to Mission Planning. Bishop Colin suggests we think about mission first; to ask, 'What's your mission? Why are you here? What is God calling you to do/ to be? What therefore do you

need to make that happen? What resources do you need?' Our plan needs to be sustainable in the longer term and realistic in terms of current resources.

Finances and Parish Share:

The Deanery was able to meet the full amount for 2016 as previously agreed by PCCs, due to a very generous one-off extra payment of £2000 from Ladygrove. We achieved the full 3% rebate from the Diocese which will again be used in 2017 as the Deanery contribution to the parish share. All PCC Treasurers have received a letter from Bishop Colin and Archdeacon Judy thanking their PCCs for their successful efforts in 2016.

The share requests for 2017 were agreed. The budget of amounts agreed by PCCs shows that, as of now, we plan to contribute about £2800 less than the amount allocated to us by the Diocese. We will seek extra contributions or arrange a loan in 2017 from a parish to cover this; the full payment being necessary to achieve the 3% rebate from the Diocese at the end of this year to go towards the 2018 share.

Matters for consideration in 2017.

The Deanery Mission Action Plan needs to be updated. The existing plan is based on priorities which have changed. We have to take forward the comment of the Diocesan Director of Mission that our structure must serve us rather than hinder us. Where are the relationships that we want to forge? What is the potential for partnerships? We may need to develop relationships across boundaries.

Our Archdeacon's insight is that we are addressing the challenges of new communities and huge areas of new housing. We will also face the challenge of multi-parish rural benefices, a great contrast to the towns. The plan needs to put all this on the table and to ask what is God calling us to do to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our people.

We need to work out what can be done within the Deanery; this will then enable us to focus the new Deanery Mission Plan on the deployment of our resources of ordained ministers, laity, buildings and funding.

George Curtis,
Wallingford Deanery Synod Secretary