

Wallingford Deanery Synod Summary 2019

The Deanery Synod provides an important link between the parishes and the wider structures of the church. Revd David Rice is the Area Dean and Gordon Gill the Lay Chair for the Wallingford Deanery, which includes Didcot (St Peter's, All Saints' and Ladygrove), Great Western Park, Harwell, Chilton, Cholsey, Moulsoford, Hagbourne, Blewbury, Upton, South & North Moreton, Aston Tirrold & Aston Upthorpe, Wallingford, Crowmarsh Gifford & Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

Three Deanery Synod meetings were held during 2019, each of which was focused on further developing our Mission Action Plan (MAP), which in turn will support the mission of the churches in the deanery. The creation of the MAP is a lengthy process and has been very much a 'bottom-up' approach, listening to the parishes, via their PCCs and synod members, whilst taking account of the Common Vision from Bishop Stephen: **to become a more Christlike Church with the values Contemplative, Compassionate and Courageous at the heart of all we are and all we do.** The output of the MAP will therefore help the Deanery to focus on the issues considered important at PCC level in order to reflect these up to the Diocese, providing vital input into Bishop Steven's Common Vision.

Our MAP contains three key focus areas:

1. **Development of ministry to children, young people & families**
2. **Developing our outreach to new & settled communities,**
3. **Development of appropriate patterns of worship**

with a fourth area added, identified due to the vast growth anticipated in the Didcot area:

4. **Development of the Ministry in the Greater Didcot Garden Town area, both financially & structurally,**

Revd Sally Welsh, Area Dean of Chipping Norton deanery, spoke at the July synod meeting on Pilgrim Paths. Within her deanery, a network of Paths has been created to connect the churches within a benefice and within the deanery via a series of circular footpaths. We discussed, with enthusiasm, the possibility of introducing this idea within the Wallingford Deanery. An inaugural walk was held in November 2019 between Wallingford and Cholsey, which included 'gate-crashing' a bring-and-share lunch at St Mary's, Cholsey, where the pilgrims were warmly welcomed and well fed! A programme of walks across the Wallingford deanery will be created for 2020 and all are encouraged to join. These walks will be of different lengths and some will be 'buggy-friendly'. If you are unable to join the walk, welcomers at the end with refreshments would be great!

Apart from the obvious health benefits, Pilgrim Paths are a way of enabling the deanery to work together and of engaging all spiritual seekers, who may not be finding what they are searching for in a church on a Sunday morning. We are gifted with some wonderful countryside, ancient woodlands and space to reflect and recharge, and some beautiful churches to visit en route.

The speakers at our October meeting were Revd Charlie Kerr, Chaplaincy Adviser, and Angela Curran-Smith, Church-School Relationship Adviser. They spoke about the pressures on school children today, including academic results, inspections, technology, social media, loneliness etc. Unfortunately, these result too often in forms of mental and physical illness in the children. The aim of school chaplains is to work with the schools to support the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the students, helping them to flourish.

All Saints' Didcot welcomed their new vicar, Revd Dr Andy Lord, in September. Andy is also the **Bishop's Adviser on Mission to the Designated Didcot Garden Town**. Didcot's population is expected to grow to 62,000, compared to 30,000 in 2016. Andy's remit is to look at the wider issues of the new Didcot Garden Town and to produce a report within 12-18 months for both Bishop Colin and the Deanery on the opportunities it presents for mission and ministry. As the area covered by the new Didcot Garden Town impacts other deaneries, this will involve consulting with colleagues in these deaneries, as well as the various county, district and parish councils and ministers of other denomination churches.

Finally, the Parish Share for 2020 was successfully negotiated. All our commitments will be met in 2020, however the Treasurer, George Curtis, highlighted that 2021 is likely to be troublesome with short-falls in some areas. The parish share is a crucial part of our mission; it is used for paying the stipends of our clergy, the housing and training for clergy and curates, investing in the "Church of the future" (e.g. fostering vocations, selecting and training for ministry) and supporting/resourcing local churches for such things as safeguarding etc.