

## Wallingford Deanery Synod Summary 2021

The Deanery Synod provides PCCs with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the Diocese of Oxford and the Church of England. The Deanery Synod is jointly chaired by an Area Dean and a Lay Chair. The Revd David Rice is the Area Dean and Mr Gordon Gill is Lay Chair. The Wallingford Deanery includes St Peter's Didcot, All Saints' and Ladygrove Didcot, Great Western Park, Harwell, Chilton, Cholsey, Moulsoford, Hagbourne, Blewbury, Upton, South & North Moreton, Aston Tirrold & Aston Upthorpe, Wallingford, Crowmarsh Gifford and Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

Meetings of the Deanery Synod in 2021 were once again impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, only two Deanery Synod meetings were held and four meetings of the Deanery Synod standing committee. In addition, a 24 hour deanery conference was held to progress the Mission Action Plan (MAP).

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The first Deanery Synod meeting in March 2021 focused on 'unlocking' children, youth and family ministry'. The guest speaker was Yvonne Morris, who has worked for many years as the Diocesan Children and Family Ministry Advisor. She spoke about the report "Disciples Together" which was published in 2020 by Oxford Diocese.

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The purpose of the conference, which was held in October 2020, was to bring together a number of clergy and lay people across the deanery to work out how to move the MAP forward. The MAP, which had been approved at the end of 2019 by the Dorchester Mission and Pastoral committee, has four 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**
- 4. Development of the Ministry in the Greater Didcot Garden Town area, both financially & structurally,**

There were a number of key speakers at the conference, including Bishop Gavin and Associate Archdeacon David Tyler as well as Yvonne Morris and Revd Charles Chadwick, Parish Development Adviser. In addition to further exploring the MAP, we spent some time thinking about the future of the Deanery and its sustainability. Some key points emerged from the conference, these being: relationship building, networking (cross-fertilisation of ideas, sharing experiences, working together), welcoming, hospitality, follow-through and the fact that parish boundaries are not important to people, especially the young.

There was a great deal of talk and support for online church, not just to deliver services to those at home but also for meetings, house groups, Bible and alpha courses, prayer meetings etc. However it was felt there was a general problem getting children and teenagers back. And it was felt that children's ministry had been hard-hit since the start of the Covid situation.

The conference was generally seen as refreshing and stimulating and the chance for clergy and lay reps from all over the deanery to meet and reflect on the shared nature of mission was very valuable. It highlighted the benefit of exchanging ideas and identified how collaboration and networking within the Deanery structure would support and facilitate this.

One initiative emerging from the MAP was the creation of a program of Pilgrim Path walks across the deanery, to link parishes and benefices. This initiative had been started in 2020 but the walks were unable to go ahead as planned due to COVID-19. Fortunately, we were able to hold two of these walks in 2021,

one being between Wallingford and Cholsey, attended by Bishop Gavin, and the other being at Blewbury. It is anticipated that a full program of walks will be launched in 2022.

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The Deanery Synod meeting in November 2021 focused on developing the next steps of the MAP. Each of the four focus areas now has a 'champion' who will help to drive it forward. These are:

- 1) **Development of Ministry to Children, Young People and Families;** *Revd Kevin Beer, Vicar of Crowmarsh Gifford and Brightwell cum Sotwell*
- 2) **Development of Appropriate Patterns of Worship;** *Revd David Rice, Rector of Wallingford & Wallingford Area Dean*
- 3) **Developing our Outreach to New and Settled Communities;** *Revd Mark Bodeker, Vicar at GWP*
- 4) **Development of Ministry in the Greater Didcot Garden Town area, both financially and structurally;** *Revd Dr Andy Lord, Vicar of All Saints' Didcot and also Bishop's Adviser on Mission to the Designated Didcot Garden Town,*

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Finally, the Parish Share for 2022 was negotiated; this highlighted that some parishes are struggling financially. For some parishes this is an ongoing problem, for others it is a direct result of the pandemic. A working party has been set up to look at Parish Share.