

1. **Welcome & Introduction** – The Lay Chair, Canon Margaret Sheather, warmly welcomed everyone to our Deanery Synod, and particularly our speaker Jo Wetherall, Diocesan Growing Faith and Community Engagement Officer. Our thanks also to Ann Greaves for providing the refreshments. 25 members attended the meeting, as per the Register and apologies were received from: Revd Peter Francis, Revd Canon Howard Gilbert, Revd Helen Hill, Revd John Spiers, Revd Kate Stacey, Sharon Sameroo, Barbara Freeman, Penny Lidstone, Kathy Lee, Julian Elloway, Alison Wood, Caroline Hensley, Freda Butler, Christine Pearce & Val Regel.
2. **Opening Prayer** – led by Revd Liz Palin
3. **Minutes** - Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 5th October 2022 at Cainscross Church Hall were accepted as a true and accurate record.

#### **Matters Arising**

- **Eco Ambassador for the Deanery** – Enquiries are still ongoing with Revd Simon Howell from the Stroud Team.
  - **Our Motion to Diocesan Synod** concerning the process for filling clergy vacancies. The Lay Chair confirmed +Robert and the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Group were reviewing the process to ensure that the mechanisms in place are as efficient as possible. We are awaiting a formal reply from Archdeacon Hilary, which will be circulated when available. (*The Beacon Benefice – it was noted that as soon as Janet’s retirement was confirmed, the whole process was turned around by the Bishops & Archdeacons within 4 months*).
4. **Green Shoots** – New good news stories from around the Deanery
    - The Area Dean – Eastcombe Church building closed 14 months ago and after a few months the village instigated Sunday afternoon ‘Café church and worship’ in the Village Hall, which now meets monthly with around 30 regularly attending. It’s new and different from what we have done before, but a positive ‘flourishing’ resulting from the church closing. (From our DSP ‘abundance not scarcity’)
    - Children & Families Worker – The Nailsworth Benefice are seeking a part-time Children and Families Worker, instigated from the congregation who are supporting and funding it. 20 hours per week. Further details on their website: [www.thenailsworthbenefice.co.uk](http://www.thenailsworthbenefice.co.uk)
    - Stroud Team – lots of new positive things happening, particularly strengthening Methodist collaboration (sharing Lent activities) & Chaplain in Stroud Hospital.
    - Sheepscombe – Regular Thursday morning worship resulting from the Covid pandemic – 16 people now meet regularly each week via ‘Zoom’, much preferred to meeting in a cold church!
    - Slad Prayer Group – Iris Trask has attended a Prayer Group at Slad church for many years, along with her 2 dogs. One of her dogs recently required surgery and the Group offered to pay for the treatment – a wonderful act of kindness!
    - Severn Forum – Revd John Hunnisett highlighted these ‘high quality and highbrow’ lectures on theological subjects. Dr Rowan Williams is coming on the 14th March – available on-line by Zoom or at the Park Campus in Cheltenham. If you are interested and want to find out more, please follow the link: [The Severn Forum Lecture Programme 2023.pdf](#)

- Riverside Retreats at Framilode Church – to find out more visit: [..\DEANERY WEBSITE\Retreat s 2023 V5 mod.pdf](#)

## 5. **Deanery Strategic Plan – Area Dean**

3 years ago we met together in this building to start work on our DSP – resulting collated papers circulated with the Agenda. How do we now implement these proposals, what should our priorities be and where do we go next based on that document? A number of priorities/points were highlighted, including:

- Deanery Funeral Project – the Gloucester project is working very well. Should we invite someone from there to come along and talk to us? There is no cost involved.
- Use of Church Buildings – There will need to be support from communities to maintain churches. Difficult decisions must be made about closing churches – currently, only a PCC can request that a building be closed. Local community support will be vital in maintaining its existence. Is there going to be any Diocesan policy/guidance about possible closures?
- General maintenance and sharing information about resources
- Language barrier

There will be further opportunities to discuss the paper at the next Deanery Synod meeting. Discussions at parish level – do we have a particular message/question we want to ask?

The process will begin with Deanery Synod and when it is ready, the Deanery Leadership Team will take a presentation around to all PCCs to outline in detail our plan. We will all need to 'own' and support the Plan for it to work.

If you have any further comments on our Plan please send them to Sally

## 6. **Presentation – Jo Wetherall Growing Faith and Spirituality Officer**

Focusing on intergenerational worship, (*looking at the principles and thinking around Mark 5:21-43- do not fear, only believe, 'fearless and faithful'*).

Jo worked through a Powerpoint presentation to guide us through how we might 'do thing differently' –

- Stop, look and think about how we might engage with the wider community so that everyone is included.
- How can we meet the spiritual needs of all that come, multigenerational that is relevant to all ages?
- Growing communities – where are the other people? We need to take Jesus to the people, we need to go to them.
- What is your essential Why?

Small group discussions followed, with feedback including:

- Social Media – It's how people get their information -we need to use more/have a presence to open the route to God
- Evangelist on-line – *this is a slightly different area*
- Community – are we bonding with people on the ground? Important to have a presence in other places. Moving out as a church and meeting local people – we should but we don't – we do not always feel equipped for those discussions.
- Values – An open accessible 'culture of learning' as we move along our spiritual journey
- Do you know about your community places of need?
- Ask some God based questions to help meet the spiritual needs of your community

- Life events, Weddings, Funerals & Baptisms can be the first place to start building relationships – offering that open, welcoming presence.
- Whiteshill Church – following a visit from Archway School they now hold a Bible Study group and warm space drop-in on a Wednesday afternoon, where around 26 regularly come in after school.

Jo highlighted an 'Under five and flourishing' workshop on 18th March 2023, 9.20am to 4pm at Churchdown Community Centre, Gloucester – please follow this link to find out more: [www.gloucester.anglican.org/event/under-5's-and-flourishing](http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/event/under-5's-and-flourishing)

Our thanks to Jo for taking the time to come and speak to us today.

## 7. Parish & Benefice update

- **The Beacon Benefice** – Following the last round of interviews, no appointment was made. Sarah Haslam, Curate at Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough is now on an extended placement to the Beacon Benefice until the end of June. This will leave Peter Francis very short in the B,W & R team, particularly as his 3 Readers are busy most of the time. We will need to make sure that Peter has the support he needs, especially with funeral cover pressures.
- **Bisley Benefice** – House for Duty vacancy – No change, to be considered under the Deanery Strategic Plan
- **The Stroud Team** – To note:
  - Longstanding CW at Cainscross, Dick Venning recently passed away – *(Confirmed that information was circulated around Deanery Synod members at the time)*
  - The wife of Retired Clergy Brian Woollaston recently passed away – a service of celebration of her life will be held on 23rd February, 2pm at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Stroud – everyone welcome.
- **Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough** – Associate Priest vacancy – to be reviewed under the Deanery Strategic Plan.

## 8. Reports

**8.1 General Synod in July** – Report circulated by the Lay Chair – all papers can now be found on the Church of England website. Reports included:

Parochial Fees, proposing a 5% increase for this year *(either 5% or the rate of inflation – if we are only offering stipendiary clergy less than inflation, it would be rather odd to raise fees in line with inflation)*.

A major debate on the LLF Report consultations over the last 5 years. The aim is to try to see how it is still possible to walk 'in difference'. The Bishops want to keep us all on the same path in unity- 'create a space that we can all inhabit'. Links to all the key note speeches were on the circulated report if you would like to read more.

The motion was passed and the Bishops now have further work to do before the next meeting in July, including pastoral guidance on a safe framework to work to. If anyone would like a further opportunity to discuss what was in the report, please let Sally know and we will set up another consultation evening, in line with the course.

Questions:

- How wealthy is Gloucestershire? About a 1/3 of the way down the list, with Ely & Oxford near the top with large endorsements, and Liverpool at the bottom *(Oxford did make a donation to Liverpool)*.
- Safeguarding Officers – Are they independent of the Bishops – 'yes'

They need to have the authority/entitlement to ask questions if their advice is being ignored.

**8.2 Diocesan Synod** 4th February – Discussions covered the General Synod reports and the LFF discussions. The new Director of Finance Lisa Gardner brought everyone up to date with the key figures and the increasing deficit we are carrying as a Diocese. Full minutes will be circulate when available.

**8.3 Stroud Deanery Financial Update** – Newsletter was circulated by Mike Lambert prior to the meeting laying out in detail the current position.

**Parish Share 2023** - Most of our parishes have now confirmed their pledges for 2023, with the expected total about £580,000, 95% of the 2022 total. This is still a £200,000 shortfall from what requested. The Diocese have confirmed they will be undertaking a full review of how the Parish Share is calculated for each Parish during 2023, for a rollout in 2024.

**Deanery Administrator Function** – The receipts & payments sheet confirms we ended 2022 in line with expectations. Within the budget for 2023 we have taken into account replacing Sally computer, which is now 10 years old and is starting to show its age – Following discussions at the recent Standing Committee meeting, it was agreed that we would be asking for 1.6% of pledged Parish Share from each Parish to cover our expected outgoings to support the office for this year. This motion was then formally proposed to members and accepted, with no objections. A request letter will be going out to all Parish Treasurers shortly.

#### 9. Meeting Dates and venues for 2023 confirmed as:

Standing/Pastoral Com.10am-12 noon all at The Porch Room Minchinhampton	<b>Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm</b>	Speaker/Topic
Tuesday 25th April	<b>Wednesday 10th May St Laurence Church, Stroud.</b>	Extended/Additional uses for church buildings Adam Klups (Snr. Church Buildings Officer) & DAC Chair Revd Canon Dana De Lap
Tuesday 12th September	<b>Wednesday 4th October Minchinhampton Church</b>	Tbc

#### 10. Chair's Announcements

- **Next meeting of Area Deans** – 21st & 22nd March 2023
- **Deanery Synod Elections** – Paperwork will be coming out from the Diocesan Secretary shortly
- **Deanery Eco Ambassador** – Still no luck with this role, if you know anyone who might be interested in finding out more, do please let us know
- **Diocesan Weekly Bulletin** – Please sign up for it – lots of useful information  
*Including recently:*

**Reduced-rate VAT on energy:** Check your church has completed a charity declaration with your energy supplier. Once accepted, your church will be charged only 5% VAT and will be exempt from CCL. Churches will generally be eligible for 100% relief, but some church halls will not be able to claim 100% charitable use.

**Energy Bills Discount Scheme:** 'Non-domestic customers' includes places of worship. The taxpayer-funded discount will be applied from April 2023 to March 2024. Visit: [www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bills-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bills-discount-scheme)

*(Since the meeting, circulated to all Parish Treasurers for information)*

**11. AOB - None**

- 12. Closing Prayer** – there being no other business, the meeting closed with prayer led by the Area Dean.