

Welcome & Opening Prayer: Margaret Sheather, the Lay Chair, warmly welcomed everyone signing in to our Deanery Synod meeting this evening, and particularly to +Rachel joining us to share her reflections during these challenging times for everyone. Margaret outlined the pattern of the meeting, as circulated with the accompanying reports, and invited Sue, the Area Dean to begin with Prayer.
(31+ members were signed in to the meeting)

Bishop Rachel – Reflections

+R began by saying how lovely it was to actually see people live on screen and how helpful it was having names to accompany each picture!

“Firstly, ‘thank you’ for the way you are living in these very strange times – everyone is juggling life in their own homes, with all aspects of our lives focused in the one space, from ‘the same chair’ and it’s not easy.

I want to highlight a number of reflections to share with you:

- **The Diocesan Weekly Bulletin** - It is Ascension Day tomorrow when we remember the day when the risen Christ returned to the heavenly realms and his disciples waited for the Holy Spirit to come upon them – the disciples were called to shape a new future through the work of the Holy Spirit within them – so it reminds me of ‘the new normal’ – how we too are standing in a strange present, seeking to shape a new future, living in each present moment as we deal with the constant unexpected happenings around us. What does that mean to us as Christians? We are living with so many questions that we cannot answer at the moment. In recognizing that things will never be the same again, ‘how will we remember so that we might sustain that which has been life-giving and dare to change where we need to live differently?’

(Please see +R’s full message on this week’s Bulletin. If you would like to sign up to receive the regular report via email, contact Katherine Clamp:

kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk)

- **Ascension Day in 2016** was a Diocesan Day of Prayer in the Cathedral, when everyone came together to begin to pray where God was leading us, starting conversations across the Diocese to discern our vision for the coming years, and our Life Vision was born. Revisiting the Life Vision booklet is giving us a taste of what we are living now, as we find ourselves having to adapt and change, focusing on new and imaginative ways of worshipping and connecting to more people during this time of lockdown, covering all or the areas of Leadership, Imagination, Faith and Engagement. Lots of prophetic words but we are learning a lot from this time about what it can really mean to be church and how we can live out our faith as confident disciples of Jesus Christ at this time.

As we look at the next season it is a good time to reflect:

- What have we missed from the past that we want to hold on to?
- What are we using in the present that we want to sustain that has been life-giving?
- As we move forward and dare to change, what would we have the courage to get rid of?

Life will never be the same again when we return to ‘normal’. Will we remember what it was like to engage more deeply with our communities? Will we remember the good and bad? Keep a diary - what do you want to hold on to and why it worked, and also how you might do things differently and why.

Lockdown was an easy message, but coming out will be much more difficult. I have three main mantras: Simplicity, Clarity and Solidarity.

Guidance and comments coming out from the church will be as clear, concise and as transparent as possible. There are two key meetings coming up, tomorrow and on the 9th June when the Bishop’s staff will be looking at how we will start to move to begin opening up our churches, including what public worship will look like. We are all living this together, everything is new and challenging – be kind to yourself. We are all different and certain things will be more difficult for some more than others – we all have different skills and gifts as we navigate our way going forward, together.

Margaret thanked +R for her very thoughtful reflections.

Questions to +R were invited from members:

- *(David Groom, Selsley)*

Concern over the fact that decisions are all being taken centrally from

London. Can +R discuss within the Council of Bishops a more local decision making response, taking into account local circumstances? - In our area, we have a relatively low level of the Virus.

Everyone is living within Government Guidelines and there are local discussions within that. In particular, individual clergy or lay leaders can go into church to stream services and that can be a local decision. You will need to make decision at local level as we move forward, operating within changing Government guidelines as we start to move out of lockdown. All guidance given is based on medical advice – this a new Virus and we are learning how to live with it in appropriate and safe ways. There will be a phased progression as we move forward and clear instructions will be given.

(Debbie Bird, Bussage & Eastcombe)

- **What have you missed from the past?**

Face to face meetings with people – we are very lucky to have Zoom, but it is not the same!

The interaction of being able to give people a hug.

Moving to different spaces as we go about our daily lives – e.g. when speaking in The Lords, I would have the advantage of 2 hours of calm on the train!

I would definitely like to hold on to the greater range of people we are interacting with, particularly charities. Feed the 5000 has been stressful but fantastic, and also making the best of this opportunity to review and reflect as we work out together how to be church going forward from here.

(Revd Helen Cain, Bisley Benefice)

- People are embracing the opportunity for on-line worship, particularly through Facebook – they don’t have to be invited, they can just log-in to watch. People

who have never been into a church are connecting with this style of worship. Keen to continue with this in some shape or form – ‘the walls have fallen down’ with this worshipping in an open space.

Yes, it is very liberating for people to just look in, but be aware of the number of ‘hits’ – there is some really good worship going on, but also some that is very poor, and some of it is still ‘exclusive’. How are we going to have robust conversations with those who do not normally come to church to find out what they really think, to have some honest opinions – we must ‘dare to ask’.

Barry Voyce is having fantastic conversations reaching out to young people through the Illuminate initiative through the local schools. They want to say ‘thank-you’ for providing this opportunity and style of worship to help them stay connected during these challenging times.

(Revd Kate Stacey – The Stroud Team)

- How can we gather all the reflections and positives that we have learned from this experience, to come out the other side and share best practice?

The Bishop’s staff team are looking at how we achieve this – what does it mean for us to be church; what do we need to build God’s kingdom in our changing society and what do we need in our Deaneries to do that? The information will be a valuable tool as we move forward with our Deanery Strategic Plans in the next level of our Life vision.

(Peter Hankins, Amberley)

- What is the position with Clergy going in to Hospices and Care Homes?

We are very much following the Guidelines within Care Homes. If someone is at the point of death, they may be allowed in, observing the strict rules on PPE, but this is not always the case. This is also true in Hospital Chaplaincies with end of life care. We need to find alternative ways of ‘providing care’ – we do not want to withdraw our pastoral care so may need to be creative, whilst still following the Government guidelines laid down. Care must be the starting point.

(Andrew Pemberton, Woodchester)

- Church Access – We are in the middle of major building works – when might we be able to have the builders back to continue the work?

Work is ongoing on this particular point – Guidelines are going on to the Diocesan website imminently, by the end of this week for contractors.

Parishes will be able to take a pragmatic, common sense approach in their own setting, whilst working within the guidelines set out.

Margaret thanked +R for answering our questions and helping us to move forward with these challenges.

There followed a short film by the young people involved in the Illuminate project. Barry Voyce and the team are doing fantastic work - daily posts are made through Facebook, Instagram etc. to keep our young people connected.

+Rachel confirmed that young people have said to her that they are really missing their church communities and miss being with their ‘real life Golden Oldies’ – please pray

for Illuminate and our young people – it has been particularly tough for them missing their friends, their sports and particularly their exams.

David Groom - There has been very positive feedback about the project and this whole new dimension that has been created connecting with the next generation. Our challenge is to maintain our older congregations, whilst engaging and reaching out to young people. We must be open to ‘thinking outside the box’ in how this might be achieved.

Revd Kate Stacey confirmed that funding for the Illuminate project runs out in August this year. There are funds out there, particularly if a project can be seen to support young people - new funding is being sought with a number of providers as a matter of urgency.

Reports – No questions or queries were received following circulation of the Reports for the meeting.

Margaret confirmed that the Inter-Deanery Meeting to distribute the particular element of the DSF monies is set for the 1st June. This year we are invited to comment on a proposed distribution by Deanery, rather than by bidding for particular allocation. We will keep you informed as soon as we know any more.

A big ‘thank you’ to everyone for taking the time to be part of this meeting.

The meeting closed with prayers led by +Rachel and The Grace.

Standing & Pastoral Committee 10am-12 noon in the Choir Vestry St Laurence Church	Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm	Speaker/Topic
September 15th	<u>Wednesday October 7th</u> Cainscross Church Hall	Revd Canon Dr Sandra Millar Welcome initiative ‘Stranger to Friend’