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**1. Welcome & Introduction** – Revd Sue Murray, Area Dean warmly welcomed everyone signing in to our Deanery Synod meeting this evening.

*(Members attending: Revd Helen Hill, Revd John Hunnisett, Revd Sue Murray, Canon Margaret Sheather, Bernard Twiddy, Revd Steve Jarvis, Linda Jarvis, Sharon Sameroo, Ann Greaves, Jenny Carden, Diane Keyes, Val Regel, David Groom, Caroline Hensley, Andrew Pemberton, Cliff Smith, Richard Venning, Revd Steve Harrison, Revd John Spiers, Julian Elloway, Revd Sarah Haslam, Canon Howard Gilbert, Cristopher Hill, Jackie Natt, Revd Kate Stacey, Kim Trinder, Revd Dave Bishop, Revd Simon Howell, Frances Watson, Revd Caroline Bland, Alec Jeakins, Lydia Savage, Peter Frances, Alison Wood, Hazel Stacey, Penny Lidstone, Peter Hankins, & Mike Lambert.*

**2. Opening Prayer** – led by Revd Canon Howard Gilbert

Commissioning of Mrs Linda Jarvis as the new Sub Warden of Readers for our Deanery. Thank you to Linda for accepting the invitation – the formal words were followed by Synod praying together for Linda.

**3. Minutes**

**3.1 Minutes of the previous meeting** held on Wednesday 24th February 2021, were accepted as a true and accurate record.

**3.2 Matters arising** - there were no matters arising not already covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

**4. Speaker – Canon Margaret Sheather – Living in Love and Faith**

*(Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage)*

Margaret confirmed that she is the Diocesan Advocate for Gloucester for the Living in Love and Faith project, developed by the Church of England. Margaret shared a screen slideshow outlining the key elements of the programme, inviting us to explore the topics more deeply, looking together at how the Christian understanding of God relates to questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage using the accompanying variety of resources including the book, films, podcasts and a short course.

**A multidisciplinary approach** – The Bible, theological writings and thinking, and many others, are all reflected in the resources on offer, enriching our understanding of the issues and how we might find a way forward.

**Real Life stories** – the issues affect ordinary people profoundly – there is a short film, including shared stories and experiences of how everyone is influenced by their understanding of the Christian faith.

**Different perspectives** – Embracing all of the different spectrums of understanding to find a clear way forward

**What's on offer:** The Living in Love and Faith book – you can start on any section, which includes links to podcasts (listening learning), laid out in a way easy to follow, and a short course – very accessible for groups to work through together to share ideas and thinking. So two approaches: on-line using all of the materials as a video presentation or through the Booklet based on printed material.

*We do have a supply of booklets that can be made available to support the course.*

*(All the information is available on the Living in Love and Faith website, through the Church of England learning hub – podcasts are also available through all the main PC providers)*

**The Book** – An introduction and invitation by the Archbishops appealing to the whole Church to engage in this process of learning together to work out a way forward for the Church on the topics that have proved so controversial.

**Reflecting** on what we have received

**Looking forward** and paying attention to what is going on around us

**Making connections** – How we perceive ourselves in the kingdom of God

**Seeking answers** – how do we hear God?

**Conversing** – what can we learn from each other?

**The Course** – designed for learning together in groups, all set out so that you can follow through a conversation in each session. All materials are included, all on a video version – there is guidance for leaders at the back of the leaflet.

Based on 5 sessions:

1. Learning together – what it means to learn together as followers of Jesus Christ
2. Identity – How our identity in Christ relates to sex and gender
3. Relationships – What kind of relationships God calls us to
4. Sex – Where our bodies and sex fits in to all of this
5. Life together – How diversity and difference affects our life together as a church

Underpinned by 6 Pastoral Principles (*Acknowledge Prejudice, Speaking into silence, Address ignorance, Cast out fear, Admitting hypocrisy, Pay attention to power*), Teaching, Bible Study, Prayer and Reflection and Story films of personal experiences. Braver and safer - Creating spaces where people feel safe and brave enough to take part and learn together, addressing these challenging topics safely in a caring and understanding setting – What is God saying to the church today?

There is training available locally for anyone who wants to lead the course.

Next Steps – The Bishops have set up a Next Steps Group to make sure what comes out of the process is listened to and actioned so that our learning and experiences contribute to the decisions that need to be made within the Church as a whole.

A short film was then shared listening to some real life stories, followed by 10 minutes for Break-out Group discussions

Some feedback received:

#### *Break out room 2*

- *Looks like a good way to come at a large and complex issue*
- *Even if it is not a 'live' issue now, you can't be sure that it won't be an issue soon*
- *Deanery groups rather than parish views will mean a better range of perspectives*
- *Really good that we are seeking what God is doing*
- *Small groups suggested – 5-7 people would make for good discussion*
- *Online conversations might help people feel safe? Cut down on travelling*
- *Hannah Steele, Living his story – links in*

#### *Break-out room 3*

- *This programme should help to address many of the problems within the church in an open and transparent manner – Life is changing and we as a church need to embrace all sorts of situations – let's do something positive for the bigger picture*

- *The church has been behind in so many things – time to be pro-active rather than reactive*
- *The church is not good at talking about things – We need to listen to each other – this needs to be done correctly so that people feel safe to express a view*
- *The young do not see these things as an issue*

*Questions following the break-out groups including:*

- Are Podcasts different from the book?  
*Yes, the same material but presented in a slightly different way*
- Relationship of this process and safeguarding – This could be the cultural change we are looking for. Some of the historic sexual abuse took place because of the church's refusal to be open about peoples sexuality

Margaret continued...

During 2021 – We will be encourage participation as widely as possible; to listen attentively, discern from those discussions and explore the possibilities – many voices, one church – move into the future and plan the way forward. Feedback can be made in two ways:

1. On-line survey, which anyone can do and which is completely confidential
2. There is also a creative element to this – creative writing, or reporting, a piece of music – anything you want to contribute.

Comments can also be made direct to the Next Steps Group

*Brief introduction to this process to explore the genesis of it:*

*Sexuality still divides the church – which led in 2015 to the 'Shared Conversation' initiative being set up, of which Margaret was a delegate, which started to see how the issues might be addressed with 'good disagreement' – out of the process a paper came to General Synod in 2017 – they declined to take note of the House of Bishops Report. Members of Bishops Council had to take stock again and the further thought given led to the formation of this much larger project, to put together a set of resources, which is what we have here today.*

*Margaret will include this introduction at the beginning of future presentations.*

Pressure on trying to fit the course in this year because of the Covid pandemic. It does not have to be this year, the resources are there to be used – possibly a Lent course for next year? The course is made up of five 1.5 hour sessions. The Diocese will be running a couple of courses that people can sign up to or we can do something within our Deanery. You could pick certain parts to stimulate conversations – People would generally prefer to do it with people they are familiar with, but others may prefer a random group

Any other comments to Sally please and do take this discussion back to your PCC's to continue the conversations.

*The Area Dean thanked Margaret for her hard work and continued commitment to this very important work.*

## **5. Deanery Strategic Plan update – Interim Report as circulated**

- Query over the wording of Section 3 number 3 'being more deliberate in the deployment of Readers and Retired Clergy'  
*This is mainly aimed at ensuring Readers are not forgotten, breaking boundaries for their possible deployment within the Deanery.*
- Is the plan to re-group churches within the Deanery?  
*That might come but not at the moment*

*In 10 years' time it might be more beneficial having groups of parishes working together but nothing is set in stone. Minchinhampton will be receiving 2 parishes, Cherington and Avening.*

We will be looking at our Report more fully at our Deanery Synod Meeting on 6th October – hopefully face to face in Cainscross Church Hall

## 6. Parish & Benefice update

- **Bisley** – House for Duty Vacancy and  
**The Stroud Team** – Team Vicar Vacancy  
**Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough** – Associate Priest vacancy  
*All three posts are on hold at the moment and will be reviewed again in-line with our Deanery Strategic Plan*
- **Minchinhampton** – A new Curate will be ordained at the end of June, Mrs Coral Francis, wife of Peter, and they are very much looking forward to welcoming her on the 4th July.
- **Revd Steve Jarvis** will be retiring on the 4th July.  
Looking forward to a six month break, but will then apply for PTO in the Deanery. Thanks to Steve for all his support for our Deanery and particularly his work with Caroline for the last 3 years in Nailsworth.

## 7. Reports

### 7.1 General Synod 23rd-24th April 2021 – Report as circulated by the Lay Chair

Delegates are up for election again soon – Deanery Synod representatives are the electorate for General Synod. Margaret intends to stand again – they are hoping to meet in person again in July in London (*300 people on Zoom has not been easy!*)

### 7.2 Diocesan Synod Meeting – Next meeting not until 14th July 2021

### 7.3 Parish Share – Report as circulated by Mike Lambert, the Deanery Treasurer

Mike hopes that the late newsflash report for Month 4 Parish Share figures to the end of April was self-explanatory. Our thanks to parishes who are continuing to pay their PS under difficult circumstances and we hope that this will continue for the rest of the year. The Parish Giving Scheme – If your parish has not already joined up to the scheme, this might be a good time to re-consider its merits.

### 7.4 Deanery Office Funding – Our thanks to all those parishes who have paid their share for this year. Please check with your Treasurer that your parish has paid. If you are unsure of your exact Parish Share figure please let Mike know-

Email: [mikeandtonilambert@gmail.com](mailto:mikeandtonilambert@gmail.com)

## 8. Future Meeting Dates for 2021 confirmed as:

<b>Standing/Pastoral Com.10am-12 noon</b>	<b>Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm</b>	<b>Speaker/Topic</b>
<b>September 21st</b>	<b>October – Wednesday 6th Cainscross Church Hall</b>	<b>Deanery Strategic Plan proposal</b>

## 9. Chair's Announcements

- **Diocesan Synod** – Diocesan Synod Elections take place again this year  
– More information will be coming out from Sally shortly  
*(Commitment: 3 meetings per year, 2 usually on Saturday mornings from 9am to 1pm, including lunch, and one evening in the summer during June/July).*  
If you are interested in finding out more, please speak to Margaret or Sue.
- **Next meeting of Area Deans – Thursday 13th May** – Feedback in due course

- **Area Dean Sabbatical** – Sue will be on study leave from 1st June to the 28th August. Revd Canon Howard Gilbert will be acting Area Dean during Sue's absence. Any problems, speak to Howard!  
Margaret thanked Sue for all her hard work and enthusiasm keeping the Deanery energy going so well during the last year – wishing you a restful and refreshing break.

**10. AOB** – Chapter please get back to Sally about meeting face to face for our meeting next week, by Zoom or face to face.

**11. Closing Prayer** - The meeting closed with prayer led by the Area Dean