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- 1. Welcome** - Margaret Sheather, the Lay Chair, warmly welcomed everyone signing in to our Deanery Synod meeting this evening, and particularly to our Speaker Revd Canon Dr Sandra Millar, and also to any newly elected Deanery Synod members attending for the first time. Brief outline of Zoom etiquette, including mute if you are not speaking.

(Members signed in: Revd Sue Murray, Margaret Sheather, Debbie Bird, Mike Lambert, Sharon Sameroo, Julien Elloway, Caroline Hensley, Richard Venning, Bernard Twiddy, Christine Pearce, Penny Lidstone, Revd John Spiers, Revd Steve Jarvis, Cliff Smith, Kim Trinder, Revd Steve Harrison, Val Regal, Lydia Savage, Revd Liz Palin, Andrew Pemberton, Janet Ryan, Revd Howard Gilbert, Revd John Hunnisett, Revd Dave Bishop, Simon Barker, David Groom, Revd Caroline Bland, Ann Greaves, Revd Kate Stacey)

- 2. Opening Prayer** – led by Revd Sue Murray, Area Dean
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting** held on Wednesday 20th May, were accepted as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising, not already covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

- 4. Speaker – Revd Canon Dr Sandra Millar** – Stranger to Friend initiative
Sandra introduced a screen share to talk us through a series of detailed slides. The Church that makes Friends – from Stranger to Friend. The project was launched 1 year ago and is still evolving - with 4 main principles: To See, Smile, say Hello and to Invite on your faith journey. The huge importance of that first contact – a warm smile and welcoming engaging chat, and that ongoing contact that is the bridge from mission to discipleship. That positive first experience can have long-lasting affects.

Why - Numbers – the number of people we come into contact with:

Life Events – 15m

Life Events conversations – 1.1m

Christmas – 5m

Events (*seeing the Moon in the Cathedral*) 50k+ along with community occasions (Remembrance Sunday, All Souls, schools etc)

Digital reach – massive!

Who - Faith – Whenever they happen, (digital or physical)

Wherever they happen, new to faith or new to the place

Whatever they are for: events or worship

Difficulty of getting churches to think about themselves and how they see themselves –

Hallmarks of a friendly church:

Good at handing out at the door

Good at smiling

Good at talking to each other over coffee

Inclusive and exclusive – ‘it’s where we find our friends’ – can we make new friends as well?

Making Friends

What does it feel like to be a stranger, what does it feel like to have a friend? We are the stranger in that situation as well, before we make that contact – it's a transitional process:

- Fear and anxiety
- Anticipation and excitement
- Reassurance and confidence
- Trust and delight

Approaching church for the first time can be scary and the warmth of the welcome leads on to the next stage in the process.

Expanded thinking

- Hospitable hearts – exploring friendship through scripture (Zacchaeus and Sara)
- Our own stories – playing snap/going into a new experience.
- In their shoes – look at the welcoming experience any time you walk into church
- Physical and digital – Zoom services that you are invited into (insider group)
- Live streams – anyone can access – the downside is that you may not make any contact with them.

Generous Outlook - Seeing and noticing, Kindness and delight, Warmth and Welcome

Action and reflection – think about welcome, balance warmth and process – how does this affect your thinking about welcome?

Conversation (small talk) – offering up bits of ourselves to find common ground

- Finding common ground
- Name and contact details (informed consent)
- Places and connection
- Church experiences

Think about active invitation: Where will you see each other again? Who will follow-through?

- Church
- Practical help – everyone welcome
- On-line
- Mid-week services
- For coffee/facetime
- Any interesting in volunteering if they have spare time?

How do people move from stranger to friend? How can we start conversation with those that we meet? Where do people find out what the next step might be in their church and who should they speak to?

Three things to remember:

- Confidence, with the Gospel
- Connection, make bridges
- Contact – don't give up!

The meeting then moved into small break-out groups for further thoughts and discussions

Thanks to Sandra for a very stimulating presentation.

There followed a time for questions, including:

Is it going to be rolled out in the Diocese?

It is going to be a national initiative for Deaneries that want to participate, hopefully next year. The exact form is yet to be decided, possibly a short study course – ‘what does it mean to be a church that makes friends’.

Will it include a section for worshippers to give feedback?

This will be a very important part of the process, ‘how did we do really’, thinking about how people can give that hard feedback, and it will form part of the ‘tools’ that we offer parishes.

We are ‘God’s hospitality industry’ and people will only come back if they are made to feel welcome and valued - the hotel hospitality scenario is a very good way to look at it.

Serving and meeting the needs of others – what good practice can we celebrate and share with others?

Sandra was greeted with a rousing unmuted round of applause!

If you have any further thoughts or suggestions, do please contact Sandra direct:

Tel: 07976 823986 Email: sandra.millar@churchofengland.org she would love to hear from you.

5. **Deanery Strategic Plan** – In view of the current circumstances with Covid, the AD confirmed that the 10 year Strategic Plan has now been postponed. The Standing Committee will continue to develop the working document, which will be brought back to the next Deanery Synod in February 2021, when it will be the main focus of our discussions.
6. **Parish & Benefice update**
 - **Bisley** – Revd Helen Caine, who has been helping out for the last year has now returned to her own parish. The HfD vacancies will now be looked at under the Deanery Strategic Plan.
 - **The Stroud Team** – the Team Vicar vacancy continues to be under review
 - **Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough** – Sarah Haslam, who was ordained on 19th September, has now taken up her post as stipendiary Curate to the Benefice.
7. **Reports**
 - 7.1 **Diocesan Synod Meeting 1st July 2020** – Written report as circulated by the Lay Chair. General Synod Elections have been postponed until next year.
 - 7.2 **Parish Share 2020** – Revd Liz Palin reported that the latest figures circulated at the end of September show that 69% of our pledges as a Deanery for this year have been met, which is very encouraging in view of the challenges of the Covid pandemic. A big thank you to Treasurers and everyone for their continued hard work and support.

Parish Share 2021 – Incumbents and Treasurers received the figures from the Diocese at the end of August, who have confirmed that it will be a ‘stand-still’ budget for 2021, with PS requests remaining the same as last year. With a slightly increased figure of approx. £5k from DSF monies, the total figure requested is therefore slightly less than last year.

Allocation of the DSF monies is calculated on 2 main elements:
 Half, is allocated to each Deanery based on population adjusted for Experian income indexing to provide a clear ‘bias to the poor’ and half allocated at an annual inter-deanery meeting, held virtually this summer on 1st June. Allocation of the DSF monies following this inter-deanery meeting are discussed and decided within the Chapter Clergy, and in view of the particular difficulties for everyone this year, it has been agreed that the monies will be split between all the parishes, pro rata, based on a % of their individual Parish Share.

Parishes are asked to let us know their pledges for 2021 by the end of November, please, so that we can pass these back to the Diocese as quickly as possible.

The Lay Chair thanked everyone for keeping our rate of contributions at such a good level, let’s hope we can keep it going as the year progresses.

Questions were invited.

7.3 Deanery Office Funding – Written report as circulated by Mike Lambert, the Deanery Treasurer. Mike reported that most of the parishes had now paid their contributions to the office for 2020, with one or two exceptions.

8. Meeting Dates for 2021 confirmed as:

Standing/Pastoral Com.10am-12 noon	Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm	Speaker/Topic
February 2nd	February - Wednesday 24th	10 Year Strategic Plan
April 27th	May - Wednesday 12th	
September 21st	October – Wednesday 6th	

9. Chair’s Announcements

- **Deanery Synod Elections 2020** – *The deadline for APCM meetings has been extended to 31st October. Existing lay members of Deanery Synod as at 20th March 2020 will now remain in office until 30th November 2020. Newly elected members will take up their offices from 1st December 2020.*
- **Diocesan Synod** – *Lay vacancies (Currently only 4 of possible 8 places filled – 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.*
- **General Synod** - *By-election to fill the outstanding vacancy in membership of the House of Laity. Further details from the Diocesan Secretary, Ben Preece-Smith, in due course.*
- **Next meeting of Area Deans** – *22nd October 2020*
- Lay Chair confirmed that the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, (IICSA), published its overarching investigation report yesterday (170 pages) and official comments will be coming out from the Diocese in the next few days - +Rachel will also be speaking on Radio Gloucestershire. It is certainly not comfortable reading – none of the issues reported are new ones. The church nationally, as well as in the Diocese and also down to individual parish level are all working closely to ensure that the issues are addressed, but there is still work

to be done to ensure that we are the safe church we want it to be for everyone. How can we ensure that we are offering a warm but safe welcome in the best possible way, whatever the needs or expectations might be? *(In 2013 the cost of safeguarding was £37,500 – the National Team now cost around £3m).* The report will be our tool to help answer any questions that may arise. *The Archbishops acknowledge that there is still real anger felt towards the whole church institution by the survivors of historic abuse.*

(+Rachel's response is attached, taken from the Diocesan website – which includes a direct link to the full report.

- **APCM meetings** – David Groom from Selsley questioned the wisdom of trying to hold PCC meetings at this time because of the difficulties of communications within the church due to the Covid pandemic. Many in the older congregations are not IT savvy and are therefore not able to attend virtual meetings, highlighting the importance of the postal system to ensure inclusivity. It was accepted that individual parishes will have their own particular difficulties. Others agreed, mixed media does not really work, with problems of access and connectivity etc having the opposite effect of making the virtual environment actually exclusive to those with the technology. Suggested that David speak with Archdeacon Hilary to check on the position, it may be to comply with existing charity law. Please ask Archdeacon Hilary to let us know – she is very good at replying to emails!

The Lay Chair drew the meeting to a close with a big 'thank you' to everyone for taking the time to be part of this meeting.

The meeting closed with prayers led by Revd Sue Murray, Area Dean