

1. **Welcome & Introduction** – The Area Dean, Revd Sue Murray, warmly welcomed everyone to our Deanery Synod; to those attending their last meeting and particularly to any new members elected following the APCMs. *(Officially take up office from the 1st July)* A particular welcome also to our speaker Revd Canon Dana Delap, DAC Chair. 25 members attended the meeting, as per the Register and apologies were received from: Barbara Freeman, Ann Greaves, Kathy Lee, Freda Butler, Mike Lambert, Revd Caroline Bland, Revd Canon Howard Gilbert, Revd Steve Harrison, Revd Helen Hill, Revd Kate Stacey
2. **Opening Prayer** – led by Revd James Turk
3. **Minutes** - Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 15th February 2023 at Lakefield School were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

- **Our Motion to Diocesan Synod** re the process for filling Clergy vacancies David Groom from Selsley, who was involved in the original Motion, addressed the meeting *(Please see the attached detailed brief)*.

Canon Margaret Sheather, the Lay Chair, responded: Deanery Synod approved a slightly amended Motion, which was then passed to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Group. Posts are not left vacant deliberately, but each vacancy is unique and it takes time to work through what is required and best in each individual case. The complexities of larger groups of parishes can take longer to review, whilst others can proceed very quickly. Taking the Beacon Benefice as an example, once Janet Turville actually confirmed her retirement date the whole process was turned around in just over 2 months, from Parish Profile, to advert, to interviews – unfortunately no appointment was made, similarly with the situation at Avening, no appointment was made. *(The formal process can only begin when you know the resignation date when the person is actually leaving. Until that time is not legally a vacancy).*

There is no reason why you cannot start work on the Parish Profile, in fact it is recommended that one should be in place and reviewed every year, so that it is kept up-to-date and ready to go should the need arise.

John Hankins, Amberley – We had expected an official response to our Motion, notwithstanding the difficulties of a 2 year hiatus due to the Covid epidemic. We do need to have some communication about what is actually going on in the process.

(The Diocesan website states that when a vacancy begins, a period of 6 months elapses before the advertising process begins, displayed in the Church Times etc. leading on hopefully to shortlisting and interviews)

The Area Dean confirmed that our Deanery Strategic Plan is an ongoing process over years, and as we move forward, will help enable us to keep the DPMG informed of our wishes and guide the process, in line with our vision for the Deanery.

(The House for Duty post at Bisley - no one applied so we were not able to appoint – there is a shortage of ordained clergy across the whole country).

It was agreed that Canon Margaret Sheather would request a formal response from the DMPG to our original Motion and clarification of the ongoing process.

4. Presentation – Extended/Additional uses for Church Buildings

Canon Dana Delap, DAC Chair (*Diocesan Advisory Committee*)

(Unfortunately, Adam Klups was unable to be with us due to illness)

Having spent a number of years on different Diocesan Teams, and three years as a Strategic Planning Facilitator, Dana is now Chair of the DAC (The group is made up of Clergy, the Archdeacons and specialists in a wide variety of fields).

When a church decides it wants to try something new, it begins with a conversation with the DAC.

Using Churches creatively, which might include: Schools, for local elections, Libraries/book exchanges, Plays, Concerts – churches have always been multi-functional community centers, a focal point of any community, especially in rural areas.

How might we engage more fully with the wider community, so that the church becomes part of, supports and encourages vibrant, flourishing parishes?

Members were asked 'In what way is your church used by the local community?'

responses included:

Community Shop

Monthly Lunch Club

(Woodchester have over 100 attending at Christmas, and regularly older and more isolated people in the rural villages)

Singletons/Bereavement Lunches

Drama performances

Concerts

Armchair Exercise Classes

Coffee & Cake mornings – including Music or demo by a local Artist

(Selsley – lots of visitors who do not necessarily come to church on at Sunday)

Choir practicing and Concerts

Drop-in at Paganhill for young people

Poetry & Music Night regularly at Edge

Warm Spaces

Post Office

Farmers Market

Toddler Groups

The Circus

Internet/Cyber Café

Tourism Hub

(Dana was particularly interested in The Circus and Internet/Cyber Café as new ideas!)

Any changes that you might like to make need to come from a parish and community vision. Making changes to the fabric of churches takes a long time and can be frustrating.

- When considering refurbishment or improvements, sometimes it is better to think bigger and more radically!
- Sustainability is very important – consider the national strategy of carbon net zero as this might affect how you do things

- The most common projects that come up are: Toilets, removing pews for a servery area and reliable heating - being able to offer essential services is becoming more of a 'must' to open up new opportunities.
- Potential building work – look at for who, how it might work – you may have to compromise
- Heritage Asset – How any changes might offer a wider public benefit – producing a 'Statement of Need' to prove the need to support any proposed changes.
- Begin with conversations with congregations and the wider community
- At an early stage start a conversation with the DAC – They are on your side and are very happy to offer help and guidance. They can also provide ideas for fundraising. The Diocese may be able to help with an interest free loan if you have written consent for funding to help meet any shortfall.

Do please contact them if you need any help or advice, they would love to hear from you. Checkout the Diocesan website under Support Services, DAC for a wide range of information and fact sheets.

Dana closed by asking for our prayers for all of our church buildings.

Our thanks to Dana for taking the time to come along and speak to us this evening.

5. **Green Shoots** – New good news stories from around the Deanery

- The Amberley Shop – Revd John Spiers outlined the story of the new Amberley Shop now setting up in the lobby of Amberley Church. From the initial conversations some 5 years ago when the local shop closed, to the setting up a Community Benefit Society, fundraising of £200,000 for the project, to local contractors taking on the work – all community driven. The shop is about to open along with a Coffee Shop and Servery. The whole process was supported by the DAC. A fantastic example of what can happen with commitment and enthusiasm from the wider community.

6. **Deanery Strategic Plan** – The Area Dean confirmed work on the DSP continues, with the next step, the setting up of the Deanery Leadership Team, now underway to bring the Plan together. An Incumbent and a lay representative from each Benefice are meeting on the 6th June.

7. **Parish & Benefice update**

- **The Beacon Benefice** – Revd Sarah Haslam continues on an extended placement in the Benefice, for review at the end of June.
- **The Stroudwater Team** – Revd Steve Harrison is going to be Vicar of St James, Bream in the Forest of Dean. His last Sunday will be 14th May. Revd Liz Palin will be taking on the role of Interim Team Rector during the vacancy. Archdeacon met recently with the Churchwardens to discuss what happens next.
- **Bisley Benefice** – House for Duty vacancy – No change, to be considered under the Deanery Strategic Plan
- **The Stroud Team** – Revd Kate Stacey is off sick with a physical illness
- **Brimcombe, Woodchester & Rodborough** – Associate Priest vacancy – to be reviewed under the Deanery Strategic Plan.

8. **Reports**

8.1 Report from General Synod – *Next meeting 7th – 11th July 2023*

8.2 Report from Diocesan Synod – *Next meeting 12th July 2023*

8.3 Stroud Deanery Financial Update – Newsletter from Mike Lambert, the Deanery Treasurer and Parish Share Officer, as circulated with the Agenda, details the current position.

Concern was expressed that there have been no Parish Share figures from the DBF so far this year. We are advised that they will be out very soon.

Also, no details or news on the revised Parish Share scheme, as promised last year.

The Lay Chair confirmed that we are expecting an update at the next Diocesan Synod meeting scheduled for 7th-11th July. We will update the position at our next Deanery Synod meeting on 4th October.

9. Meeting Dates and venues for 2023 confirmed as:

Standing/Pastoral Com.10am-12 noon all at The Porch Room Minchinhampton	Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm	Speaker/Topic
Tuesday 12th September	Wednesday 4th October Minchinhampton Church	Tbc <i>Any suggestions welcome</i>

10. Chair's Announcements

- **Next meeting of Area Deans** – 8th June 2023

- **Question for Synod(s)**

Are the General, Diocesan and Deanery Synods of the Church of England aware of the growing crisis caused by the inability of small parishes to attract congregations willing to provide the governance by Parochial Church Councils including the inability to recruit Church Wardens, Secretaries and Treasurers and so fulfil the Church representation Rules 2020 for governance of those parishes? What steps are being taken to address this and when will residual congregations hear of these?

Source of question- the annual meeting of St John the Baptist, France Lynch.

John Dawson, France Lynch, (1 of 5 parishes in the Bisley Benefice) spoke of the crisis in filling Church Officer posts because of falling congregation numbers, particularly Churchwardens. The group of churches are proposing to become a Benefice Parish with one PCC and as part of that process they are raising this question to 'try to get some guidance from above'.

The Lay Chair confirmed that she will raise the question at the next Diocesan Synod meeting.

David Groom – Selsley – There are many demands on Churchwardens – at their recent APCM the 2 current Churchwardens had to be "strongly persuaded" to continue but they declared it would only be for one further year. The extra demands on them during the current vacancy, in addition to all their other duties, were proving excessive.

It is an ongoing problem in many smaller parishes.

- **Diocesan Synod** – As a Deanery we are very under-represented with Lay members, with only 2 of a possible 8 placed filled. If you have an interest and want to have a voice on behalf of our Deanery this is your opportunity to put yourself forward. We can fill the casual vacancy slots at any time.

11. Lay vacancy on the Deanery Standing & Pastoral Committee

Thanks to Val Regal for all her time and commitment over the last few years as she steps down as a lay member of the Deanery Standing & Pastoral Committee. This leaves a lay member vacancy if anyone is interested, do please speak to us.

12. AOB – None

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