

1. **Welcome & Introduction** – The Lay Chair, Canon Margaret Sheather, warmly welcomed everyone to our Deanery Synod meeting, particularly our speakers, Benjamin Preece-Smith, Diocesan Secretary, accompanied by Archdeacon Hilary and Lara Bloom from the Parish Share Working Group. We are also pleased to welcome visiting Parish Treasurers and Churchwardens joining us for the evening. *(Please see the attached list)*  
29 members attended the meeting, as per the Register and apologies were received from: Revd Caroline Bland, Revd John Hunnisett, Revd Gill Martin, Revd Liz Palin, Revd Kim Trinder, Sharon Samaroo, John Dawson, Ann Greaves, Jennie South, Alison Wood, Clare Jayes, Henry Parker.
2. **Opening Prayer** – led by Revd James Turk
3. **Minutes** - Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February at Lakefield School, Frampton, were accepted as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.
4. **Presentation & Consultation – New Parish Share Model**  
Speaker: Ben Preece-Smith, Diocesan Secretary, accompanied by Archdeacon Hilary Dawson and Revd Lara Bloom from the Parish Share Consultation Group. Benjamin confirmed that this was his 6 of 9 Deanery Synod meetings sharing the principles of the new Parish Share Model. At the end of this work, Questionnaires will go out to all PCCs, with a summary of the collated results going to the Resources Committee to debate at their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Their recommendation then goes to Bishop's Council on 20<sup>th</sup> June, with a final proposal going for debate and approval at the Diocesan Synod meeting in July. It is hoped that figures for discussion at Deanery level will be out by the end of August. The Parish Share Working Group have been working around three approved principles:
  1. Parish Share should pay for Parish Ministry *(pay for what the church delivers)*
  2. The 'Centre' should not be a burden on parishes *(Cover its intended costs)*
  3. We are grounded in parish ministry – every parish should be sustainable.  
How we share the gospel around all our churches – can we do it better?

Parish Share has not paid for the cost of ministry for 20 years.

**Looking at assets, we are actually one of the wealthiest dioceses, with historic assets that have allowed us to weather some of the recent pressures. It was confirmed that Diocesan centre posts and offices are funded from investments. The balance sheet is in good health and has risen by twice the rate of inflation for over 20 years.**

As a Diocese, we are facing an ingrained deficit which equates to around £14k per benefice shortfall, but with high inflation this figure is probably nearer 20k How sustainable is our parish ministry? *(loss of stipendiary clergy and realistically asking priests to take on achievable jobs)*. Acceptance that there is a lack of trust and confidence in the current allocation model and any new system would need to be fairer and more transparent and easily understood. How can we sustain our ministry, not just financially but what we can deliver locally, specific to our particular church, and be in a position to take

opportunities that arise? Be honest about what we can and can't do and fund things properly.

- **70%** of Benefices are currently struggling, and acknowledged by the Centre as of serious cause for concern.
- The complexity of a Benefice structure – what is a fair level for one compared to another? Comparing numbers and changing demographics and levels of ministry required is very difficult – 'one size does not fit all' and how can we fairly share our resources?

There are four key principles that should be included in the new model:

1. The cost of ministry – re-establish a simple narrative
2. Bandings around that cost – (*Around £80k for a full-time stipendiary priest*) to make the task manageable. Establish a highest and lowest level within each banding.
3. Check bandings with challenging conversations and honest dialogue, including due diligence at Deanery level – more responsibility and shared ownership at local level
4. Quinquennial Mission Reviews programme built into the new Model to ensure ongoing and joined up dialogue between parishes, Deaneries and the Centre to spot problems and access support when needed.

Confirming the next steps:

- Following presentations to Deanery Synods, Questionnaires will be going out to all PCCs in the next few weeks seeking more detailed responses based on questions that have arisen during the consultation.
- The collated results will be sent to the Resources Committee to debate at their next meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June.
- Their considered recommendation will then go to Bishop's Council on 20<sup>th</sup> June, with a final proposal going for debate and approval at the Diocesan Synod meeting in July.
- Confirmed PS costs for 2025 will come out towards the end of August
- September/October – Benefices will meet and decide on their appropriate bandings.
- October/November - Deaneries will host consultations and share final position if required
- Early December, Benefices to confirm their final PS figures ready for Direct Debits and Standing Orders to go.

The Diocese do not have a 'No' button - the decision-making process is in the hands of Parishes, Benefices and ultimately Deaneries.

Benjamin confirmed that Power Point slides to accompany his presentation would be circulated as soon as possible ready for your parish discussions.

There followed a time for questions, including:

- **Sharing the costs fairly around a Benefice**  
*Honest conversations will be difficult but necessary – identifying clergy time is important so that discussions are done well and respectfully. There are statistics available to equip you when making these decisions.*
- **Multi-parish Benefices** – Should we be more Benefice driven around services and income? *Possibly more formal arrangements around Benefice Councils.*
- **Some parishes have money in the bank but won't pay** – how can we address this issue?

*Help and support from the Archdeacons in the discussions, ultimately the money belongs to the church.*

- **Pay Roll Service** – why was the service withdrawn?  
*Ultimately, not staffed well to meet the demand – we were looking at hiring staff or closing the facility down and costs at the time made the decision. Brief discussion on overall costs, including utility company used at the Centre, decided by the Cathedral, cost of training, stipendiary housing, and how the Diocese allocates down to Deaneries, which is not an easy process. Experian Dats mentioned – C of E Schools play a large part in the life and income of some churches, how is this factored in?*
- **Allocation Model** – should there be a process to challenge the decisions made?  
*The Area Dean and Lay Chair confirm the final allocations, following mutual conversations to reach agreeable decisions with each Benefice. (Taking into account staff; House for Duty, Stipendiary Clergy, Self-supporting Ministers etc. Social Enterprise mentioned, that can also bring much needed funds into the church. Looking at alternative uses for church buildings – Stewardship Workshops are in the pipeline, do look out for more details on the Diocesan Website.*
- **Review process for any new Model**  
*Suggested after 5 years, when bandings can also be reviewed, bearing in mind potential demographic changes expected over time.*
- **The Church Commissioners have lots of cash** – how can we tap into that?  
*Your Diocese agrees with you! 14 Dioceses are joining together to request at General Synod that the Church Commissioners hand back 2.6 billion to Diocesan Stipend Funds.*

The Lay Chair closed by thanking our speaker and everyone for coming and contributing to the discussions.

## **5. The Deanery Strategic Plan**

Following a very good, lively DLT meeting in April, we are drawing together the key points that have come out of the presentations to parishes. Kat Stacey also joined us in her new role as Collaborative Ministry Lead for Life Long Learning.

## **6. Parish & Benefice Update**

- **Minchinhampton** – Canon Howard Gilbert confirmed that they have appointed a new .5 priest to cover Amberley, Avening and Cherrington – Revd Natalie Jennings will be licensed on 16<sup>th</sup> July – very exciting times ahead!
- **Stroudwater Team** – David Groom, Selsley  
Historically, when the team was set up, it was always going to have 3 stipendiary clergy to cover the 15 parishes. Following the decision of the DPMG not to replace Steve Harrison, 2 priests are now covering these 15 parishes. Alongside this, there were over 200 occasional offices: Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms and burial of ashes within the team in the last year, placing a huge demand on our clergy.  
*Lay Chair - We are very aware of the pressure on clergy, but our influence is limited in asking the DPMG to review its decision.*

## 7. Reports

**8.1 Report from General Synod – *As circulated***

**8.2 Report from Diocesan Synod – *As circulated***

**8.3 Stroud Deanery Financial Update – *As circulated***

**Parish Share 2024** – Mike Lambert confirmed that we have as yet not received any Parish Share figures for this year from the Diocese.

**Deanery Administration Function** – Thanks to all those parishes who have made their contribution to the Deanery Administration function for 2024. Do please check with your Treasurer that your parish has made its contribution.

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

<b>Standing/Pastoral Com. 9.30am-12 noon all at The Porch Room Minchinhampton</b>	<b>Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm <i>Coffee served from 7pm</i></b>	<b>Suggested Speaker/Topic</b>
<b>September</b> Tuesday 10th	<b>October</b> <b>Tuesday 15th</b> <b>Holy Trinity Church,</b> <b>Minchinhampton</b>	<b>The Very Revd</b> <b>Andrew Zihni</b> <b>Dean of Gloucester</b> <b>Cathedral</b>

## 8. Chair's Announcements

- **Diocesan Synod Elections**

Diocesan Synod elections take place this year. Invitations for nominations to eligible members of the House of Clergy & Laity will be circulated on 20th May 2024. Currently only 3 of possible 6 lay places are filled. Do please consider standing if you would like to represent our Deanery. New appointments take up office from the 1st August for 3 years, ending 31<sup>st</sup> July 2027.

Do please think if this is something that you would like to do and to speak to the Area Dean or Lay Chair for more information.

- **Archbishop of Canterbury visit to Gloucester Diocese**

Revd Peter Francis confirmed that will be an opportunity to take part in a Quiet Day run by one of the Archbishops Evangelists on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May at Woodchester, equipping everyone to tell their stories. 10am to 3pm. Sally will circulate further details shortly.

- **Question from France Lynch PCC to Diocesan Synod**

It was noted that there had been no opportunity for the usual follow-up question, following the written response from the Bishop of Chester on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops Council to the question.  
*It was noted, not a very helpful answer!*

- **Lay vacancies on the Deanery Standing & Pastoral Committee**

We have 2 lay vacancies - 3 meetings per year, plus a role on the Deanery Leadership Team. We would be very pleased to hear from you if you are interested.

## 9. Closing Prayer – Thanks to everyone for their attendance and participation this evening. There being no other business, the meeting closed with prayer led by the Area Dean.