

1. **Welcome & Introduction** – The Lay Chair, Canon Margaret Sheather, warmly welcomed everyone to our Deanery Synod meeting, particularly our speakers, Revd Simon Howell and Jennie South, our new Deanery Eco Ambassador. Also our thanks to Jackie for providing refreshments and Darren the Verger for moving the furniture! 21 members attended the meeting, as per the Register and apologies were received from: Jayne Southwell, Freda Butler, Alison Wood, Ann Greaves, Andrew Pemberton, Tony Singer, Derek Greenaway, Lydia Savage, Pam Smith, Clare Jayes, Revd Liz Palin, Revd Caroline Bland, Alec Jeakins, Christine Pearce, Val Regal, Revd Sarah Haslam, Revd Kate Stacey, Revd Dave Bishop.
2. **Opening Prayer** – led by Revd Canon Howard Gilbert
3. **Minutes** - Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 at St Laurence Church were accepted, with some minor changes, as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

- **Our Motion to Diocesan Synod** re the process for filling Clergy vacancies – Following our last meeting, an official response was received from +Robert, Chair of the DPMG, confirming how things stand - circulated 13.6.23
Personal response to +Robert's reply from Peter Hankins, Holy Trinity Amberley – *please see attached paper.*
- **Question from France Lynch PCC to Synods**
Submitted and confirmed as item of business for Diocesan Synod 18th November.
- **Deanery Business** - David Groom, rep for Selsley, wrote a letter to Sue Murray & Margaret Sheather following the last meeting, which has since been discussed at Standing Committee. The main issue, very little opportunity for wider discussions at the last meeting, particularly on the question from France Lynch, and the ongoing difficulties trying to fill church officer posts. Margaret has since written back to David apologising for the lack of wider discussion time at the last meeting, also confirming follow-up on action points and timescale for replies. We will also allocate timings on future Agendas to help ensure that 'slots' are protected and stay on track, including prioritizing time for open discussions. David was pleased with the outcome, highlighting again the importance of shared discussion time, which can be very helpful and mutually supportive if you are experiencing the same difficulties.

Further feedback following +Roberts reply, including:

- Peter Hankins (*Amberley*) – Question following +Roberts reply – Can we suggest ideas for improvements to the current system?
(Initial 'informal approach' when someone plans to retire, say for ill health).
- Cliff Smith (*Moreton Valence*) – Timescale is still a major issue, raised back in 2018, when technical issues were given as the reason. The Bishops can act quickly when they want to – filling the post left by Steve Harrison did not follow the usual process, and was not advertised/publicised more widely.
- David Groom (*Selsley*) – There is a general shortage of clergy and often filling a vacancy the first time around seems to be very difficult.
- Revd John Hunnisett (*Bishops visitor to Retired Clergy*) – Motion to Synods from St Albans with similar issues to ours, the ongoing challenges of trying to fill vital PCC posts.

- Revd Peter Francis (*Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough*) – Retirement information does go around clergy, particularly at gatherings by the Bishops, when +Rachel will also give an idea of when they plan to leave.

Margaret confirm that the DPMG are meeting with Area Deans and Lay Chairs in November, which might be an opportunity to see what more can be done. It is not Margaret's impression that there is any deliberate delay to the process for any reason.

4. Green Shoots

- **Revd Simon Howell – The Festival of Wonder – 17th to 19th November 2023**

at St Laurence Church in Stroud. Simon gave us a brief history and showed a short film to outline this exciting new Festival that started last year. The project runs in conjunction with Giffords Circus and Ignition Gloucestershire. The theme this year is the Magnificat, and will include 'jazz Vespers'. St Laurence Church has become the Centre for Peace and the Arts in the Stroud Area, and with a strong spiritual sense within the local communities, last year's event attracted over 2000 visitors. With a wide range of festivals now on offer, welcoming all-comers, the building is creating a real sense of belonging in the centre of Stroud. If you are interested in volunteering, please visit their website to find out more: [Festival of Wonder](#)

Funding bids from the Life Development fund – Simon confirmed that they have been awarded a one-off, £5000 grant towards the Festival of Wonder. (*With grateful thanks to our Area Dean Sue Murray and the Standing Committee for her support with the application*). The Stroud Team have also been granted £10,000 for Year 1 and £5,000 for Year 2, to enable them to increase their Administrative hours by approximately 10. By doing this it will enable them to spend more time on Community Outreach, through focusing dedicated time on the church and hall bookings. This will include developing and implementing a marketing strategy, building relationships with community groups and other local venues, focusing attention on building up a commercial hire customer base, to help to subsidise the community/charity groups that they host.

- **Revd Peter Francis – Full submersion Baptism**

Baptism service recently taken outdoors, in a river near one of their churches – turned out to be a real opportunity to meet with people who would not normally come to church, resulting in 3 people coming forward to find out more.

- **Nailsworth Church** – A new stained glass window has been unveiled at St George's, highlighted recently in the local press – do pop in and have a look.

- **The Shop at Amberley Church** – This community based initiative is going really well, continuing to evolve and develop to meet the needs of local people. (*Congregations are shifting, regular church goer numbers are declining – an outreach opportunity for the church community to remain relevant and useful*).

5. Deanery Strategic Plan – The next step is for us to take our Plan out to the parishes. The Deanery Leadership Team is meeting on the 9th November to work out the logistics of who is going to do what and start arranging visit to PCCs. No further adjustments have been made to the Plan since it was last circulated. If you are interested in working on this living, evolving document please contact your Incumbent.

6. Presentation – Jennie South, Deanery Eco Ambassador

Please see the detailed brief attached. Followed by small group discussions, questions and feedback, including:

- *We are a 15 parish Team with 2 Vicars – The logistics of making this work are mind blowing. People are already over-loaded, particularly the older generation.*

- *Stonehouse have a benefice-wide group working together towards an Eco Church award.*
- *Eco Church – people do not necessarily have to be church-goers. There may be someone in your community who would like to support the church, perhaps by giving their skills and time to help with this very important issue.*
- *We have other priorities at the moment*
(It is not just an 'add-on', but should be considered as being part of any discussions or decisions we might make in the future).
- *Trying to build up some momentum in the wider community to perhaps look at possible solar panels – smaller churches working together to share ideas and talents.*
- *Minchinhampton Community hub, in conjunction with the Gloucestershire Community Energy Co-operative have invested in two solar panel scheme. Investors get a return, plus a discount on energy costs. £35k of investment has been achieved which will enable solar panels to be placed on Minchinhampton Primary School. To find out more please speak to Jennie or Howard, or visit: www.gloscommenergy.org.uk for more details on what might be available for your parish.*

7. Parish & Benefice update

- **The Beacon Benefice** – Confirmed appointment of Revd Sarah Haslam, as Stipendiary Rector of The Beacon Benefice - Institution by +Rachel and induction by Archdeacon Hilary took place on 17th September at Painswick Church.
Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough – Assoc. Priest vacancy to be reviewed under the Deanery Strategic Plan.
- **Bisley Benefice** – House for Duty vacancy – No change, to be considered under the Deanery Strategic Plan.
- **The Stroud Team** – Revd Kate Stacey continues her recovery, gradually returning to restricted hours for the time being.
- **The Stroudwater Team** – Confirmed appointment of Revd Liz Palin at Team Rector of the Stroudwater Team - **Liz will be Instituted and Inducted by The Bishop of Tewkesbury, The Right Reverend Robert Springett at 7pm on Thursday 7th December at St Mary's, Frampton-upon Severn.**
- **Minchinhampton** – Ongoing process to appoint the House for Duty post at Amberley - Canon Howard Gilbert confirmed there has been some progress, following discussions with the DPMG: Avening and Cherington are moving to become part of the Benefice; also working towards Amberley having a part time clergy post for someone to run Avening, Cherington and Amberley together, creating a .5 stipendiary clergy position, rather than just in lieu of a house. (*Escalating costs of running larger clergy houses is a significant drawback when trying to attract people*). Still lots of work to do but possibly 3 people already interested with this new arrangement. The 3 PCCs are meeting shortly to consider what might be the type of person they are looking for. What are their priorities, and what might they have to de-prioritise and let go to make this happen? Lots to consider, possibly selling the Amberley Rectory or letting it out to provide an income to support ongoing projects. Further update at the next meeting.

8. Reports

8.1 Report from General Synod – Next meeting 7th – 11th July 2023 – Minutes as circulated

- Query over calculating Parish Share and the fact that we used to have a detailed spreadsheet from the Finance Team listing the exact number of clergy in the Deanery and how the figures are calculated, which we don't seem to get any more. Hopefully this will come through shortly with the confirmed figures for next year.

8.2 Report from Diocesan Synod – Next meeting 12th July 2023 – Minutes as circulated

- Query raised on the Mission & Pastoral Measure. The Lay Chair confirmed that there was a more detailed sub-paper, which some had found controversial connected with the 'Save the Parish' movement, in that it makes it easier to close churches. Although it did instigate more local discussions on the issue of retaining smaller, more rural churches, as a precious resource when they have a value and purpose.

8.3 Stroud Deanery Financial Update – Newsletter from Mike Lambert, the Deanery Treasurer and Parish Share Officer, as circulated detailing the current position. Mike confirmed that two parishes have still to make their commitment. Any new Parish Share scheme has been delayed until 2025 and we are still awaiting confirmed figure for 2024, which are expected shortly.

9. Meeting Dates and venues for 2023 confirmed as:

Standing/Pastoral Com. 9.30am-12 noon all at The Porch Room Minchinhampton	Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm Coffee served from 7pm	Suggested Speaker/Topic
January Tuesday 16th	February Wednesday 7th Lakefield School, Frampton	Lisa Gardner Diocesan Director of Finance, Property & Giving accompanied by Archdeacon Hilary Dawson
April Tuesday 16th	May Wednesday 8th St Laurence Church, Stroud	Community Engagement <i>Speaker: tbc</i>
September Tuesday 10th	October Tuesday 15th Holy Trinity Church, Minchinhampton	The Very Revd Andrew Zihni Dean of Gloucester Cathedral

10. Chair's Announcements

- **Lay vacancy on the Deanery Standing & Pastoral Committee**
3 meeting per year, plus a role on the Deanery Leadership Team.
We would be very pleased to hear from you if you are interested.
- **Diocesan Payroll Scheme** – The Diocese are no longer able to offer this service.
3 Benefices are affected in our Deanery and are now looking at making alternative arrangements. Mike Lambert has offered help transitioning if needed.
- **Next meeting of Area Deans** – 1st February 2024.

11. AOB – None

12. 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.