

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the Synod held on the evening of Wednesday 9th October at St. Michael & All Angels, Mitcheldean

Attending:

Clergy: J Hyde (Area Dean), J Longuet-Higgins (Assistant Area Dean), S Cooke, H de Gruyther, D Gill, J Knight, S Mason, S Taylor

Laity: S Padfield (Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), R Parker, L Ashenden, D Connell, M Connell, F Down, M Fear, N Garbutt, T Greenhalgh, C Hill, N Hogg, C Jones, J Keene, C May, M Mitchell, H Murphy, R Newbery, A Smith

Apologies:

Clergy: M Boot, M Dunning, J Monaghan, D Newman, R Spear

Laity: D Wright (Parish Share Officer/Treasurer), R Blandford, J Churchill-Wood, J Deane, D Elson, C Gardner, C Langham, G Limbrick, M Richardson, R Williams

After the initial welcomes and apologies, the Reverend David Gill led our opening prayers; following which Lisa-Jayne Lewis – the **Stewardship and Giving Advisor** for the Diocese – was introduced to talk about her role and related opportunities for our churches to improve their income streams.

Lisa started by going over her previous experience, largely consisting of fundraising via events and legacies with various Christian organisations. She has now been with the Diocese for ten months, based in Mission rather than Finance, her primary responsibility being as a facilitator and adviser (helping congregations, rather than doing things for them). She has met with all the Area Deans and understands that deaneries have both differences and commonalities.

To date most interest has been shown in the area of **Grant Support**, with various workshops already held and more scheduled. Lisa noted that there are numerous grant-offering organisations, some specifically focused on churches, and many of us are not taking full advantage. Applications need to be targeted at the right institutions (which is not always an easy task, given their number), to have the right level of detail, and to properly justify why funds are being sought. Most feedback on these workshops has been strongly positive. There has also been a **"Friends of"** meeting, with more planned; a **Fundraising** seminar; **will-writing and legacy** initiatives; and a **"Preaching Generosity"** course. Support has also been offered regarding digital giving. Future plans are fluid (and obviously resources are constrained) but may include a Treasurers' workshop; fundraising strategies; and looking at better use of church buildings as community spaces. If demand levels are there, she is more than happy to do things "locally" at a Deanery/Benefice level, rather than Diocese-wide.

One area where Lisa-Jayne thinks the Diocese can do better – based on what she has seen and done elsewhere – is as regards legacies; perhaps surprisingly, churches are not good at having conversations about death. She is persevering on this front, and notes that the national church is also looking at legacy support.

Various matters were then raised from the floor – including that some of our Synod members have relevant experience with helping on Gift Aid recoveries (Chris Hill of St John's Churchdown offering Lisa his support), with other charities (including the RNLI), and with legacies, all of which can hopefully be shared where appropriate. Concerns were also noted that fundraising is sometimes

complicated by the false perception that “the Church is rich”, and by our own lack of local resources. Lisa-Jayne can be contacted via email on llewis@glosdioc.org.uk or by the Church House switchboard; while future courses can be found via “The Messenger” or on the Diocese website www.gloucester.anglican.org

Following thanks to Lisa-Jayne, we then moved onto other business.

The **minutes of our last meeting** were approved without amendment. There were two matters arising – firstly to record that we have elected six clergy and five lay members for the forthcoming Diocesan Synod triennium (and to thank those who have put themselves forward); and secondly to confirm that the implementation of the new Parish Share Model has now been put back to 2026.

As regards the **Deanery Strategic Plan**, matters are progressing. Some initiatives are already underway. Meanwhile all deaneries will be meeting twice in the next few months with Bishop Robert and relevant others (for us, including Archdeacon Hilary) to help move things forward. Bishop Robert is determined that all our discussions should be both mission-focused and resource-aware: i.e. that what we plan to do is both missional and affordable.

In the absence of the Parish Share Officer/Treasurer, the Secretary noted that our Deanery is slightly behind on paying the 2024 Parish Share, but so far we are not aware of any Benefice not being able to meet its 2024 commitment. As regards **2025 Parish Share**, one Benefice is yet to make its submission, but hopefully will be in a position to do so soon. Offers to date are by and large in line with or ahead of inflation over 2024, but have not reached the Diocese request. In due course the Deanery leadership team will be discussing the situation with Church House.

The **2023 Synod accounts were approved** after noting one small typo; available funds are just over £3,000.

As regards **Diocesan Developments**, the recent Synod focused on three key areas – the work of the Diocesan Board of Education (those with a particular interest can obtain details from the Secretary); further conversations on Living in Love and Faith pending the February 2025 General Synod (the relevant Autumn 2024 Update is being sent out to all Deanery Synod members); and the Diocese Budget for 2025 (which shows a £2.5 million deficit, due to the continuing gap between Parish Share and the cost of Mission and Ministry).

There was no other business of note, and the meeting finished at 8.55pm with thanks to St Michael & All Angels for hosting followed by the Grace. The dates for 2025 Deanery Synods will be finalised and communicated in the next few weeks.

Steve Riddick, 12 October 2024