

# SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the Synod held on the evening of Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May at St. Lawrence, Sandhurst

## Attending:

Clergy: H Dawson (Archdeacon of Gloucester), J Hyde (Area Dean), J Longuet-Higgins (Assistant Area Dean), C Dunnett, D Gill, R Greenhalgh, H de Gruyther, J Knight, S Mason, J Monaghan, R Spear, S Taylor

Laity: S Padfield (Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), D Wright (Treasurer/Parish Share Officer), L Ashenden, G Baker, R Barnes, J Chapman, J Clutterbuck, D Connell, M Connell, P Cooke, H Cotton, P Cotton, K Creese, G Davies, F Down, M Fear, N Garbutt, T Greenhalgh, M Howell, H James, N Johnson, C Jones, J Keene, N Kinlay, C Langham, G Limbrick, C May, M McGhee, M Mitchell, R Newbery, B Nulty, M Perry, R Perry, S Phelps, R Phillips, M Poulter, P Singh, A Smith, J Stait, K Starr, C Steadman, D Williams

## Apologies:

Clergy: L Bloom, M Boot, S Cooke, M Dunning, K Mephram

Laity: J Deane, D Elson, V Funnell, E Harbottle, C Hill, N Hogg, H Murphy, R Parker, M Richardson, J Robertson, J Smith

After the initial welcomes – including to one new member, from St Andrew’s, Churchdown – the Reverend Joe Knight led our opening prayers. Following which (after noting apologies from Lisa Gardner, the Diocesan Director of Finance, Property and Giving) Karen Czapiewski – the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance – was introduced to present on the main business of the meeting, being the **proposed new Parish Share Model**.

Karen started by reminding everyone of the Diocese’s long-held ambition for Parish Share to fund Parish Ministry, in order to ensure our long-term financial stability is not put at risk. However, not only is this target not being met, but in recent years the gap has increased rather than decreased (and currently runs at well over £1million per annum). Meanwhile a recent Diocese calculation indicates that the cost of ministry and mission per stipendiary minister is approximately £80,000, while Parish Share per minister runs at about £66,000 – a difference of £14,000 per minister, which is at present being met out of Diocesan Reserves.

There are of course challenges in eliminating (or at least reducing) this gap – including that many Benefices are already under financial pressure; communities across the Diocese often face very different and sometimes challenging situations; and demographics (particularly in rural areas) make it difficult to easily match needs with resources. All of which means it has proved impossible to come up with an acceptable detailed formula for allocating Parish Share.

Current Diocese thinking is therefore to make the cost of ministry very clear; to establish a set of bandings around this (perhaps in the region of 80% to 120%); and for all Benefices to then look very seriously at their finances to assess – with kindness and consideration – what they can afford to pay, mindful of the fact that on average we must be aiming for 100% cost recovery. It is intended that Deaneries will lead discussions on this, and there will be regular reviews. Next steps include a related Questionnaire now being distributed amongst parishes; all responses being collated; and based on this a final “in principle” proposal being made to the Diocesan Synod being held on 10<sup>th</sup> July.

We then broke into small groups to discuss the proposal, following which various questions were raised for both Karen and Archdeacon Hilary. These largely focused on four areas – the calculation of the cost of ministry and mission, given current levels of stipend and that some parishes employ well-qualified people far more cheaply; the use of national Church Commissioner funds; the difficulty of paying even the existing levels of Parish Share, allowing for the size and age profile of congregations; and the extensive cost of maintaining church buildings. We were assured that these and other concerns were understood at the Diocese; that as far as possible we should include them in our Questionnaire responses; and that they will be discussed further at the next Diocesan Synod.

Following thanks to Karen and Hilary, we then moved onto other business.

The **minutes of our last meeting** were approved without amendment, and no matters arising were noted.

We next discussed the **forthcoming Diocesan Synod elections**. Our Deanery is entitled to elect 7 clergy and 7 lay members; and although Deanery Synod is the electorate, candidates do not need to be Synod members to stand (although of course they should be regular churchgoers). Meanwhile in recent times we have not had enough people putting themselves forward to fill all our places, despite it not being an onerous responsibility. Everyone was therefore encouraged to consider whether they were prepared to be nominated, and/or whether they might encourage other worthwhile candidates. Nomination forms were available from the Secretary, and will also be emailed to all members. The deadline for nominations to be received (either by Sue Padfield or the Secretary) is **Friday 21st June**, and both the Proposer and Secunder should be members of Deanery Synod (note that the Secretary can help with this if appropriate). Any required elections will then be completed by Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July.

The Treasurer/Parish Share Officer had nothing to report.

As regards Diocesan developments, the Area Dean spoke about the long-term implications of adequate Parish Share not being collected, and noted that Lisa-Jayne Lewis, the Diocesan Stewardship and Giving Advisor, might help with fundraising (including possibly with "Friends" organisations); she hopes that Lisa-Jayne might come along to our next Synod, but parishes do not need to wait till then to contact her.

There was no other business of note, and the meeting finished at 8.55pm with thanks to St Lawrence's for hosting followed by the Grace. Our next Synod is scheduled for Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October at a venue to be confirmed nearer the time.

*Steve Riddick, 19 May 2024*