

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the Synod held on the evening of Wednesday 19th July 2023 at Holy Innocents, Highnam

Attending:

Clergy: J Hyde (Area Dean), L Bloom, H de Gruyther, D Gill, J Knight, S Mason

Laity: S Padfield (elected Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), D Wright (Treasurer/Parish Share Officer), L Ashenden, D Connell, M Connell, H Cotton, P Cotton, F Down, V Funnell, N Garbutt, C Hitchins, C Jones, J Keene, M Mitchell, H Murphy, Canon R Parker, M Richardson, J Robertson, P Singh, C Steadman

Apologies:

Clergy: S Cooke, M Dunning, J Longuet-Higgins, K Mephram, J Monaghan

Laity: J Churchill-Wood, J Deane, T Greenhalgh, E Harbottle, C Hill, A Holland, N Hogg, C Langham, G Limbrick, C May, J Smith, R Williams

The Reverend Canon Jacqui Hyde started the meeting by reminding everyone that today was the start of the new three-year Deanery Synod Cycle (or “triennium”), then welcomed new members. Following which she made a brief presentation on the **purpose and operation of Deanery Synods** – with particular focus on the need for us to work and celebrate together, while simultaneously acting as a conduit for passing information both up to and down from the Diocese. She also noted the similar functions of both Diocesan and General Synods, and that all three actually comprise separate sections (“houses”) for clergy and laity.

It was now necessary for us to elect a **Lay Chair** for the next three years; and given this is strictly a laity matter, Steve Riddick (Secretary) briefly took the chair. He noted that so far only one person has put themselves forward, being Sue Padfield, the previous holder of the office, and asked if anyone else present wished to be considered. In the absence of any other candidates, Sue was duly elected. Before handing over, Steve pointed out that Sue has already fulfilled this role for many years, and everyone thanked her for all her work. Meanwhile Sue has indicated that this will probably be the last time she will serve in this position, so Steve asked if all members could prayerfully consider if they – or anyone they know amongst their congregations – might be prepared to take on the responsibility in due course, if possible with a short period of “shadowing.”

Before moving on, Jacqui noted the re-appointment of both Steve as Secretary and Derek Wright as Treasurer and Parish Share Officer; after which the Reverend Heather de Gruyther led a brief period of worship, with the assistance of Christine Steadman.

The **minutes of the previous meeting** (held on 14th March 2023) were then approved. As regards matters arising, Canon Roger Parker asked about feedback from parishes on the youth-related questionnaires Jacqui had sent out. Jacqui confirmed she had received a number of replies (although not as many as she might have hoped), and these – together with issues discussed at the previous meeting – were being incorporated into the Deanery Strategic Plan (*see also below*). There were no other matters arising of note.

Jacqui next gave the meeting an **overview of the Deanery**, noting the similarities of and differences between our various Benefices; referring to a map she had previously circulated; and concluding with a short quiz.

The meeting then turned to the status of the **Deanery Strategic Plan** (or "DSP"). Jacqui noted that the DSP process is focussed on four key areas – young people and their families; reaching out (with particular attention on new housing and rural needs); organisation and communication; and our buildings. Recently we have been spending more time on issues related to young people, and have identified needs in areas such as mental health, sports-related activities and outreach. It was noted that there are five secondary schools in our Deanery, and we need to work harder on developing relationships at each. Meanwhile a workshop aimed at those interested in working with young people is scheduled for 9am to 3.30pm on **Saturday 7th October** at **St Mary's Newent** (see <https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/connecting-with-young-people-october-2023> for details). Jacqui asked that every Benefice should please try to send at least one representative. Finally an up-to-date version of the DSP will soon be available online (hopefully via the OneDrive based in the office at St John's Churchdown and Innsworth) for anyone who wishes to look at it.

Steve now spoke about **Deanery Organisation and Communication**. He noted that discussions with the Diocese suggest that many of our ideas on improving the website (both as to functionality and content) may not be worthwhile given the number of likely users; nevertheless, we continue to believe we can make certain improvements to the site at limited cost. We also think there may be many opportunities to use social media better, especially in linking people across similar churches or Benefices who might have useful experiences to share – for example churchwardens, treasurers, or people with safeguarding responsibilities. The meeting then moved into break-out groups to consider these and related topics; responses were collected and will be shared (and incorporated into the DSP) in due course.

Derek Wright then presented the **Synod accounts for 2022**, noting that certain amounts remain outstanding but in general terms we have adequate resources for our needs. As regards **Parish Share**, information from the Diocese is behind schedule, but he is hopeful they will catch up soon and that most parishes are broadly up-to-date with payments.

Steve then gave a brief overview of the most recent **Diocesan Synod** (held the previous week), noting the key topics were a report from the Diocesan Board of Education; "Love Matters", a recent report from the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households; the Diocese annual accounts for 2022; and the recently-held General Synod. Anyone requiring further details on any of these topics should please let him know.

There was no other business of consequence, and the meeting closed at 9pm with thanks to Highnam for hosting followed by the Grace. Our next Synod will be on **Thursday 16th November 2023**, at a venue to be announced nearer the time.

Steve Riddick, 23 July 2023