

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 22nd October 2019 at Holy Innocents, Highnam

Present:

Clergy: Revds: J Longuet-Higgins, D Gill, L Bloom, H Sammon, S Skepper, S Taylor, S Godsell.

Laity: S Padfield (Chair), S Riddick, Canon R Parker, K Carpenter, H Dunsford, H Cotton, P Cotton, N Hogg, L Vogwell, E Ashenden, M Richardson, G Goodman, R Ensor, M McGhee, D Sanderson, M Mitchell, E Lovell, R Blandford, A Holland, D Wright, C Langham, A Clive, F Down.

Apologies:

Clergy: Revds: S Mason (Area Dean), J Hyde (*on sabbatical*), J Perkin, S Cooke, P Donald, P Phillips

Laity: M Barnes, C Hickson, D Elson, G Davies, D Starr, A Herbert, A Nicol, C May, B Fellowes, S Fellowes, C Hickson, J Churchill-Wood, A Cowdrey, P Ingram (*absent because his wife has just returned from Oxford hospital after four months, four operations and many prayers*).

Sue Padfield began by welcoming everyone and giving apologies for the Area Dean, who had been taken unwell earlier in the evening. She thanked Highnam for hosting the meeting; after which the Reverend Helen Sammon led our opening worship.

Highnam Church: Helen then gave a brief talk on Holy Innocents Church, which is one of the more striking churches in our Deanery – particularly due to its wall and ceiling frescoes, which are more reminiscent of Italy than Gloucestershire. The church was built in Victorian times by Thomas Gambier Parry (also father of the composer Hubert Parry), and has been subject to extensive renovations in recent times. More than 3000 visitors come to the church every year; guided tours are sometimes available in the summer; and informative fact sheets are always on hand. Anybody wanting further information is recommended to visit the church website.

Moving to more formal business, **the Minutes** of the meeting held on 26th June 2019 were approved without amendment. There were no matters arising not already being covered under subsequent agenda headings, other than for the Reverend John Longuet-Higgins reporting that the Eco Breakfast in Staunton had gone very well.

New Children And Family Worker Post: it was noted that Owen Westall started in this role (which serves the Benefices of Highnam and Leadon Vale) only the day before the meeting, and we hope he might be able to talk to us sometime in the New Year. The post is part-financed by the LIFE initiative, and is already funded for three years. There are many initiatives and ideas for him to run with, especially as regards primary/secondary school interfaces, and we of course wish him all the best as he settles in.

LIFE Vision Updates: Sue Padfield spoke about "Greenway Flourish", Flourish being a national initiative now followed in our area by Greenway Benefice. It is mainly focused on encouraging discipleship from Monday to Saturday, and is supported by residential courses for clergy and some video conferencing. The key underlying themes are Theology behind Leadership, Teamwork, Culture Change and Integration of the Gathered and the Scattered. We will watch how this develops both locally and nationally in the coming months.

John Longuet-Higgins talked about West of Severn Partners in Mission, which includes numerous outreach activities, different types of services, and trying to work with schools on how Religious Education is taught. He also reminded us all about PSALMS and its various sports initiatives.

It was noted that financing for the Newent Community School Chaplaincy Team is still not wholly finalised, but a lot of work has been done and further progress is hoped for soon. Volunteers from the local ecumenical community will be establishing contacts after the forthcoming holiday and prayer spaces will be set up via Jonathan Kean.

Gordon Goodman informed everyone that St Andrew's Churchdown is now embarking on a Courtyard building project to provide more space for the various (and developing) children's groups based at the church; £150k is required, and fundraising activities have commenced. He also talked about how St Andrew's (and its sister church St Bartholomew's, at the top of Chosen Hill) have grown and developed over the years as evidence of how a church can change with the right people in place and God's guiding hand; before encouraging everyone to spread the word about the Women's Day at St Andrew's on Saturday 9th November – this year led by Christy Wimber, who is an inspirational speaker (see new.standrewschurchdown.org.uk for more details).

Finally Roger Parker spoke of how Leadon Vale is developing a good ministry team in response to a long-term vacancy and the danger of churches having to reduce services or even close.

Parish Share: Roger then made a presentation on Parish Share, covering the history of church finances, "Queen Anne's bounty", and how Church of England resources have been affected by minister pensions – such that all parishes now need to be largely self-financing, with very little support available from Diocese or national levels.

He pointed out that in our Diocese, parishes do not subsidise the centre – but rather the other way round. At the most recent Diocesan Synod (a summary of which had previously been circulated to Deanery Synod members), it was noted that parish share does not meet the cost of parish ministry by in excess of £1 million per annum, and this is not sustainable long-term.

Nowadays Parish Share (often still wrongly referred to as Quota) is calculated according to various categories – minister stipends, grants, on-costs, housing, vacancy savings, training, curate costs and adjustments, plus certain central/national items – and making allowance for the number of priests and usual Sunday attendance. In our Deanery we allocate Parish Share to Benefices, who then split between their parishes as they see fit; but we try to ensure no increases are more than inflation plus 4%, to hopefully keep things manageable. It is recognised that some parishes will struggle to pay the full amount required, and we therefore have a degree of relief available through mutual support and the Diocesan Stipend Fund. But it was hoped that mutual support could be reduced significantly over time, and this is not currently happening. At the end of the day we must find some way of paying all of our minister costs, or difficult decisions will need to be made.

Roger is to put the Parish Share Calculator on the Deanery website, for those who are interested in looking at more detail.

Reports:

- a. Diocesan Synod – the Secretary referred everyone to the summary from the July meeting, previously circulated. Most of that meeting was focused on finances, and how we can spend more of our resources on mission and outreach rather than "internal" matters.
- b. House of Clergy – Helen Sammon spoke briefly about the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing, and also mentioned a "Setting People Free" initiative which we will hear more about in future.
- c. Treasurer – the finances are generally in good shape. A volunteer responded to Sue Padfield's request for someone new to take on this role, and hopefully this can be sorted out soon.
- d. Training – there is a course on "Unlocking The Bible" being held on the morning of Saturday 16th November at Hartpury Old Chapel, led by Dan Button. The cost is minimal, and Dan is a very engaging speaker. Those wishing to attend should please contact Helen Sammon on

vicar@highnamchurch.org or through their minister. Details of workshops on environmental concerns (with a focus on the EcoChurch awards) have already been circulated by the Secretary. And other training courses will hopefully be arranged in the New Year.

Under **Other Business**, it was noted that 2020 Synod meetings are provisionally set for Thursday 20th February, Wednesday 24th June and Tuesday 27th October, with venues to be decided.

The meeting closed with thanks to all attendees, and the Grace.