

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the Synod held on the evening of Tuesday 10th March at St Andrew's, Churchdown

Attending:

Clergy: J Hyde (Area Dean), J Longuet-Higgins (Assistant Area Dean), S Cooke, R Greenhalgh, D Newman, S Taylor

Laity: S Padfield (Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), D Connell, M Connell, V Funnell, N Garbutt, R Garbutt, T Greenhalgh, C Hill, N Hogg, D Hopkins, L Hopkins, K Martyn, C May, M Mitchell, S Phelps, J Philpott, A Smith, K Spence, R Williams

Apologies:

Clergy: L Bloom (Assistant Area Dean), P Brunt, H de Gruyther, M Dunning, S Mason, J Monaghan, R Spear

Laity: D Wright (Parish Share Officer/Treasurer), R Blandford, J Churchill-Wood, P Cotton, J Deane, F Down, D Elson, C Gardner, J Hogg, C Langham, G Limbrick, M McGhee, R Parker, M Richardson, J Robertson

After the initial welcomes and apologies, Reverend Steve Taylor led our opening prayer.

Following this, Jacqui Hyde talked about a recent Thriving Churches Day focussed on children and young people, and how we might try to define **differences between generations**.

With apologies for what are by necessity sweeping generalisations:

- (a) **Baby boomers** – people born post-war up to the early/mid-sixties are typically optimistic and believe things are getting (or will get) better
- (b) **Generation X** – from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s – having faced perhaps more uncertain economic times plus fears of possible nuclear war are more cynical and self-reliant
- (c) **Millennials** – the next generation – think that life hasn't worked out as well as they'd been led to believe, with high house prices and more difficult career progression
- (d) **Generations Z and Alpha**, born 2010 onwards – hence now approaching or entering adulthood – faced Covid in some of their most formative years, see a stagnant economy and increasing strains in civil society, are often heavily dependent on mobile technology/social media, and are therefore more anxious and "brittle".

Of course generations are neither distinct nor homogenous, but nonetheless – with most regular churchgoers being over the age of 50 – we must be aware of differences and not assume that younger people necessarily think like us. Meanwhile many younger people are now asking questions about the meaning of life; there is talk of a "quiet Church revival"; Bible sales are up 19% in 2025 (and up 87% in the preceding five years); and there is a need for support, kindness and authenticity.

We then went into break-out groups to consider various questions related to the above and how they might impact our local churches and congregations, notes from these being summarised in the attached appendix.

After reconvening, Sue Padfield directed the meeting to our standard Synod business.

The **minutes of our meeting on 15th October 2025** were agreed without amendment, and there were no matters arising.

Jacqui gave a brief update on the **Deanery Strategic Pathway**, noting that a Youth Connector for Newent has been fully funded for the next three years, and hopefully progress in negotiations with the new Head Teacher can now be made. Meanwhile St Andrew's Churchdown has at last made some (limited) inroads into the local Academy. And Deanery Operations Leaders are now in place in three other deaneries, us being in the next group for recruitment, and interviews scheduled for 21 May; this might make a real difference.

It was noted that 99.7% of the committed **2025 Deanery Parish Share** has been paid, which is to be commended. However, our 2026 commitment is £22k below the Diocese ask (and 1% below our 2025 commitment), if those Benefices who are falling short could please try to go further. Meanwhile three Benefices are yet to pay their annual £20 Deanery subscriptions.

It was noted that the recent **Diocesan Synod** had mainly looked at Safeguarding and Net Zero; the Secretary will circulate the draft minutes. Given recent Church history, safeguarding is of course of the utmost importance.

We are now trying to manage the **Deanery website** ourselves; if anyone observes problems with this (or wishes to volunteer to help!), please speak to the Secretary.

Finally John Longuet-Higgins spoke briefly about the role of **Pastoral Visitors** and upcoming training courses, with the Secretary to circulate further information; and Chris May reminded everyone about the beautiful **daffodil walks** (and teas) over the next 2 weeks or so in Kempley and Dymock.

With no other business, the meeting concluded just before 9pm; we meet again on Tuesday 30th June in Bromsberrow.

Steve Riddick, 16 March 2026