

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the Synod held on the evening of Thursday 10th November at St-Mary-the Virgin, Hartpury – such meeting having been opened to all, given Bishop Rachel's attendance.

Attending:

Clergy: The Right Reverend Rachel Treweek (Bishop of Gloucester), J Hyde (Area Dean), J Longuet-Higgins (Assistant Area Dean), L Bloom, S Cooke, H de Gruyther, J Knight, J Monaghan, R Spear
Laity: S Padfield (Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), R Parker, M Richardson, L Ashenden, H Cotton, P Cotton, A Cowdrey, M Cowdrey, F Down, H Dunsford, A Ellis, R Ensor, G Goodman, E Harbottle, N Hogg, C Jones, C Langham, G Limbrick, P Manson, C May, M McGhee, J Newbery, R Newbery, R Otter, C Phelps, S Phelps, P Singh, A Smith, J Smith, J Starr, C Steadman, C Stewart, C Tatchell

Apologies:

Clergy: S Mason, M Smith

Laity: D Wright (Parish Share Officer and Treasurer), R Cottell, G Davies, A Herbert, C Hill, C Hitchins, E Lovell, H Murphy, L Ward

After opening worship led by Canon Roger Parker, **Bishop Rachel** advised all present that she was trying to spend one day in each Deanery across the Diocese, to gain a better understanding of the issues and opportunities which face us all – and as part of this had spent **today in Severn Vale**. She confirmed it had been a varied and very enjoyable day, including visits to Mitcheldean, Newent, the Westbury area, Churcham, Shurdington, Churchdown and finally Hartpury. And she thanked everyone involved for their time and hospitality.

Following this she reminded us all that we – and not Church House – are the Diocese; noted that she has now been in Gloucester for over seven years; and spoke about where we stand today. Her main thrust was on our Vision – including on how the initial LIFE Vision came about; how much the world has changed since then, including with the pandemic and associated lockdowns; and how we have now refined our commitments into **LIFE Together**, which can be accessed by those not already familiar with it via the Diocese website home page.

Our focus is of course not solely on Sunday – **we are the church, and need to be so seven days a week**. Our key aim is not getting more people into the church building on a Sunday morning – although this is obviously a good thing – but about doing Christ's work. The questions we need to ask ourselves are where people in our communities spend their time; how we connect with them; and what kinds of worship then emerge. Which naturally leads into our Deanery Strategic Plans, helping us to understand what shape we need to be. These plans are not about cutbacks or closing churches; and although the Diocese's finances are stretched, there is investment money available if the right opportunities can be identified.

The Reverend Canon Jacqui Hyde now gave a brief update on our own **Strategic Planning Process**. She began by noting that the four key areas (building stronger relationships with young people and their families; reaching those who know very little about Christianity or the church; Deanery organisation and communication; and the future of our church buildings) remain unchanged. Detailed work is continuing under each heading; further discussions have been held with Archdeacon Hilary; and a meeting is being arranged for the New Year with various people from College Green, so we can benefit from their expertise and experience. Further draft documents will be issued for comment in due course.

Following a brief period for reflection on issues facing the church, **Bishop Rachel then took questions** from the floor. Subjects covered included the Living in Love and Faith initiative (covering identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage), how such issues were very important to younger people, and whether it might be possible to reach any kind of agreement given the very disparate views held; how we can work better with older people, whether in care homes or elsewhere; possible training opportunities for those who might wish to take their service to another level; interfaith relationships – what we could and could not do with people of other beliefs; COP27 and whether the church could achieve its environmental targets given the age and historical importance of many of our buildings; and various other topics. After lively debate, Bishop Rachel thanked everyone for their interest and recommended contacting the relevant people at Church House where appropriate (the Diocese website being a very useful first port-of-call), or speaking to the local minister.

Standard Synod business was then dealt with as appropriate:

- (i) the previous meeting's minutes were approved
- (ii) there were no particular matters arising
- (iii) it was noted that most Benefices are broadly up-to-date with parish share payments, although the Parish Share Officer is still waiting for 2023 commitments from some, and
- (iv) a brief summary of the most recent Diocesan Synod will be sent out within the next week

Finally, provisional dates for 2023 Deanery Synods have been set as Tuesday 14th March; Wednesday 19th July; and Thursday 16th November.

The meeting closed at 9pm with a blessing from Bishop Rachel and thanks to all.

Steve Riddick, 14 November 2022