**APCM 2024 - Report from the Deanery Synods 2023**

The Parish of All Saints has four allotted places on Deanery Synod (based on Electoral role numbers). There are two vacancies. The Deanery Synod consists of all licenced clergy to a parish/benefice within the Deanery and elected lay members from each parish. Decisions are made and the Synod acts as an intermediary between parish and Diocese. Deaneries can bring proposals and motions to Diocesan Synod for debate. There are presentations and debates and it is an opportunity to exchange views and share experiences with those from other churches. At each Synod the Rural Dean gives an update of what is happening across the Deanery, the Treasurer a verbal or written report about finances and depending on timing, a verbal or written report on Diocesan Synod and General Synod.

The following is just a brief summary of the main issues/presentations in 2023. Synod minutes giving full details are sent to Deanery representatives, clergy and PCC Secretaries for circulation usually within two weeks of the Synod and are available for anyone who wishes to see them.

There were four Deanery Synods in 2023: -

Synod 1 - March 2023 – St John, the Evangelist, Preston

Synod 2 - June 2023 – St Wulfran’s, Ovingdean

Synod 3 - September 2023 -St Batholomew’s

Synod 4 - November 2023 -St Cuthman’s

A new Rural Dean was appointed at the beginning of the year – the Rev Dr Anthony Moore (St Margarets, Rottingdean). Fr Anthony stood down in the autumn due to ill health. Rev Helen Garratt (Assistant Rural Dean) has been made a canon of the cathedral.

The Standing Committee was given more balance and Fr Ben Eadon (St Bartholomew’s was appointed) as was Rev Emma Ham Riche (St John the Evangelist) who filled the role of Assistant Deanery Secretary. Elections were due for Deanery Officers but existing officers all stood unopposed. The Deanery Secretary said that it she had been Deanery secretary since 2011 and that it was with great sadness that she was to give notice that she was to stand down after the September 2024 Synod. A replacement was sought.

New lay Deanery Representatives were elected from each parish, the term of office to run from 1 July 2023 and expire on 30 June 2026. Currently there were 19 vacancies across the Deanery and parishes were encouraged to try and fill any vacancies they had.

In 2023 Synod looked at the Deanery Mission Action Plans (MAPs) and concentrated on one particular area at each Synod with an opportunity at each Synod to discuss and progress what had been heard.

**Synod 1**

Synod members were asked to get together in small groups to consider the various parts of the MAPs. Each group was asked to feedback on paper so that these thoughts could be attached to the Deanery minutes. The questions were: -

10.1 To establish support for leaders of church activities such as Messy Church, youth work, carer/parent and child groups.

10.2 To use the heritage assets to develop a trail/pilgrimage around the historic churches

10.3 To develop the work within all of the schools in the Deanery.

10.4 To create a shared experience of Eco church as a way to support each other moving towards the National Churches

10.5 To strengthen the Deanery Treasurers group to give support to new Parish Treasurers

**Synod 2**

Presentations were given on ECO church by Rev Richard Tuset (St Wulfran’s) and Mr Martin Pett (Voluntary Eco Church adviser, Trinity, Lewes)

Eco church was explained as was the process of applying for an Eco award. Run by A Rocha UK this equips a church to care for God's creation through their worship, buildings, land, community engagement, and individual lifestyles. Eco Church supports, directs and recognises a process of change. The application consists of five sections with different questions namely: - Worship & Teaching (10), Buildings (33),. Land (15), Engagement (27) and Lifestyle (15)

Nearly 200 countries have signed up to the 2015 Paris Agreement with a commitment to reduce emissions and to work towards a low-carbon economy. The Church of England in support of this and its commitment to its own 5th Mark of Mission has recognised the climate emergency. In February 2020 the Church of England General Synod passed a resolution recognising that ‘the global climate emergency is a crisis for God’s creation and a fundamental injustice’. It called upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in carbon emissions, for which the church is able to take responsibility, and urgently to examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030. Archbishop Justin Welby said,

“That climate change is the greatest challenge that we and future generations face. It’s our sacred duty to protect the natural world we’ve so generously been given, as well as our neighbours around the world who will be first and worst affected. Without swift decisive action the consequences of climate change will be devastating”

St Wulfran’s shared their strategy for obtaining the bronze award.

Mr Martin Pett talked about caring for creation at Trinity, Lewes using the phrase Creation Care, as a faith-based way of describing all things Eco, Green or Environmental in a Christian setting, and as a way of showing a commitment to our biblical mandate as stewards of God’s earth.  Greed and selfishness lead to creation being damaged and shows a lack of respect for God’s work and apathy can prevent us from doing anything about it. Churches need to find ways of promoting this spiritual and cultural transformation. Areas covered included the rain garden planet, welcome/interpretation boards, Trinity for Men (TFM) beehives and Eco Sunday school. There was an opportunity for Synod members to then discuss what they had hear

**Synod 3**

This Synod covered Heritage and Pilgrimage with a presentation by Rev Peter Blee, Rector of the benefice or Arlington, Berwick, Selmeston with Alciston and Wilmington. Rev Blee talked about the Cuckmere Pilgrim path – a 12-mile circular walk of seven Sussex churches comprising Selmeston, Arlington, Alciston, Berwick, Wilmington, Alfriston and Lullington. In his illustrated talk he pointed out his various buildings, memorials and decorations associated with the Bloomsbury artists. Further information is available at [www.cuckmerepilgrimpath.org.u](http://www.cuckmerepilgrimpath.org.uk) where there are full details about the types of landscape (marsh and reeds or sandy ridge etc) and terrain (high ground or seasonal stream etc) together with details of each church. The beauty of the pilgrim’s path is that it can be undertaken in one go or can be split between various sections of the trail It can be undertaken in a group or by just one person. A range of hand carved pilgrim staffs were shown.

Pilgrimage is a unique form of sacrifice and church and pilgrimage offer places for a unique kind of offering. The children from Alfriston primary school made a number of clay shells (shells are a sign of pilgrimage) and these, together with the pilgrimage passport card can be taken on the pilgrimage and the card send to someone - the walk can become an offering to that person. A local potter has also made a number of clay pots which can be found in each of the churches. This enables messages to be left by pilgrims for other pilgrims to read.

Walking has taken on a specific significance; people were doing this all over the country. Exodus reminded us of the beginning of a journey - and intimate and physical journey. Synod were shown an example of a lady who had brought her shell token on a pilgrimage from Southampton to Canterbury and, at Canterbury had passed on her shell to an American man who was walking from Canterbury to Rome. Heritage can be sacramental (God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Israel).

Michael Miller a lay member of Synod and Diocesan Synod and the assistant warden for lay Ministry for the Archdeaconry of Lewes and Brighton talked about lay vocation, discipleship and ministry in the Diocese of Chichester. His role was to support Lay ministers, Readers and those Authorised Lay Ministers and to encourage more people to come forward. An explanation of Lay Vocation was given. The hierarchy of vocations with Bishops, vicars, missionaries and Holy people at the top with a large group of people at the bottom of the tree meant those further up the tree were prayed for more frequently. The question was how could we repurpose those further down?

Research had found that 59% of those of working age said that the most challenging context in which to be a disciple of Christ was the workplace. 62% of those in full time paid employment experience little help from the life and ministries of the church to deal with the issues they faced at work. 47% said they did not have a story to tell about how God has worked in their lives (82% of those surveyed had been Christians for over 10 years). 59% of Anglicans surveyed said that their church does not equip people well for life in today’s world. All this means, 98% of people who are not in ordained ministry are neither adequately envisioned, nor appropriately trained, nor consistently prayed for, nor enthusiastically encouraged for mission nor ministry in the 90% of their waking lives that they do not spend in church related activities; ​so, we need to change the culture of the church.​

Lay Ministry comprises three areas, Readers, Living Faith and Authorised Lay Ministry.

For Readers there is to be a new discernment process, with a reshaping of selection. This Ministry is involved with preaching, teaching and pastoral care in a parish; this role is flexible and each Reader finds their own role within parish life. Reader’s training covers two years of evening, day and online courses – it is not one size fits all! The new process will be a more gradual with input from the parish priest and the PCC. Readers have an ongoing ministry and have five yearly ministerial development reviews. These reviews will allow Readers an opportunity to stop and think where they are going. Readers can now have their license up to age 75 years of age with some winding down aged 75-80 and at age 80 they may now be given the title Reader Emeritus.

Authorised Lay Ministry differs from Readers, they are nominated by the incumbent and the PCC and receive practical skills-based training over a one-year programme.

Living Faith is a programme that has been going for 4 years and promises an 18-week course which is usually face to face but was on line during Covid. The first term covers faith, kingdom and action; the second discipleship, vocation and ministry and the third mission and gospel. For those training for Authorised Lay Ministry the core modules are called know, love and follow. A chosen elective is made from chaplaincy, care for creation/ eco church, mission enabler, pastoral ministry, preaching, small group leader, rural mission and ministry and worship/ liturgy.

Whether a parish requires more staff, more skills, more ideas, or there is no money or time the solution may be volunteers, retired people, part timers, older people and, if unskilled, training can be given.

The authorised Lay Ministry (ALM)training programme provides flexible skills-based training for lay people. ALM ministry takes many different forms depending upon the parish base but in general ALMs lead, establish or work within a team of people working in an area of ministry and they also work to encourage and develop the gifts of others. There are no specific educational requirements, there must be a wish to know, love and follow Jesus, they must undertake the Living Faith course or a Core Module first and have the support of their incumbent.

**Synod 4**

The main speaker was Lizzi Demetriou, Schools & Youth Team Manager, Off the Fence Trust (OTF) as the Deanery moved on to look at developing work within all schools in the Deanery

Lizzi began her presentation with a video to give a taster of the work of the Schools & Youth Team (<https://youtu.be/5KmqKsskank>). A ‘straw poll’ of members present showed that many of the churches in the Deanery were already engaging with schools in their Parishes. Examples were given of the ways that OTF connect with schools, and ways Churches can connect also. The team run 14 Lunch Clubs each week, as well as a Youth Café run in a church and to which local schools are invited. It was suggested that churches might consider opening their doors, perhaps once a month, serving hot chocolate, offering games or discussing ‘big questions’. Prayer spaces are popular with schools, as it’s good ‘evidence’ for OFSTED inspections. She recommended the Prayer Space in Schools website: <https://prayerspacesinschools.com>

‘Hot Off the Press’ is offered to Year 5 & 6 just before Easter, in which pupils become investigative journalists, exploring the death of Jesus. Pastoral support is offered through the ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ programme, covering anxiety, bereavement, anger, relationships, risky behaviour. Free downloadable resources: <https://www.offthefence.org.uk/sy-wheres-your-head-at> ‘Head Over’ is a transition programme for small groups between Year 6 and Year 7.

Other examples were given for engaging in work with schools:

* Start with prayer (‘Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain’ Psalm 127:1)
* Consider your aim: why are you doing this? What do you want to do?
* Ask the school: How can we serve you? What can we do for you?
* Use existing connections in your congregation: parents, grandparents, staff.
* Think small, but sustainable.
* Partner with organisations such as Brighton & Hove City Mission (<https://www.bhcm.org.uk>) or Festive (<https://www.festive.org.uk>).

The Diocese has produced a new Growing Partnerships document for non-church schools, and this was distributed.

Synod were told about the possible closure of St Bartholomew’s CE Primary School. There was to be a period of consultation about the proposed closure of the school. The school serves some of the most deprived children in Brighton. 50% of the children are of Global Majority Heritage, 50% are from deprived families and 10% of the children have Education & Health Care Plans. The proposed closure was described as being an injustice to these families, as well as the anxieties it is now causing.

The following motion was passed and subsequently a letter sent to the Council.

***We, the members of Brighton Deanery Synod, call upon the Education Department of Brighton and Hove City Council to halt the closure of St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, Ann Street, Brighton. The school plays a vital role in supporting low-income families with 55% of children on free school meals as well as 32% pupils with Special Educational Needs. With many of pupils living within close proximity of the school the additional costs of accessing the new schools for low-income families will cause further hardship.***

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is involved in the Consultation, but ultimately the decision will be for the Council.

**Deanery Finances**

In total the pledges by all 22 parishes amounted to £1.654 million (the total for 2022 was £1.6 million). A small deficit was carried over to 2023; the word deficit was Church House language.

As a Deanery we were down on our pledge amount but the Treasurer said that he suspected that as a Deanery we were not alone and the question had to be asked how the gap could be bridged and Church House would be asking that very question. Thanks were expressed to al the Treasurers for staying on top of PMC contributions.

The treasurer said that he would be asking parishes for £50 contribution to the Deanery bank – the last request was made over 3 years ag and it was hoped that the current balance would see the Deanery through another 3 years.

As the year progressed the Treasurer said, he was aware of some parishes who were finding it particularly difficult to keep up with their contributions.

The Treasurer had recently attended an online meeting of Deanery Treasurers as Church House took them through the 2023 budget numbers and gave a heads up for 2024. 2023 is expected to end with a deficit for the diocese of £800,000. This is largely due to parish share receipts coming in less than expected. Parish fee income is down by £60,000. Property Income receipts are £130,000 less than expected and clergy housing costs are much higher than expected. All of this, not surprisingly means that there is huge pressure on the budget. The Treasurer said that this came as no surprise since everyone is in the same boat.

As far as 2024 is concerned, the Treasurer said that he would shortly be sending out the 2024 budget booklet and the PMC cost calculations to parishes. These will reveal an increase in by just under 3.50% for 2024. Treasurers, Church Wardens and Clergy had been invited to the annual Deanery Treasurers meeting, which is shared with Hove Deanery. One year it is held in Brighton and the next year in Hove. It was to be held at Bishop Hannington Church on October 16th . Representatives of Church House, and Archdeacon Martin would be present to discuss in detail the budget and to answer questions.

Later in the year the Treasurer confirmed that, following an update from Diocesan Synod, the deficit in the Diocesan budget was due to a reduction in Parish pledges.

**Diocesan/General synod Report**

Reports on Diocesan and General Synod were given verbally and in writing and at General Synod covered the use of electronic registers book of services so that registers of services can now be held electronically, presentations on the restructuring of the National Institutions of the Church of England and also the resourcing of ministerial formation. Time was given to a presentation and discussion about the cost-of-living crisis and a motion was passed calling for the government to be generous in its support.

Final approval was given to the Diocesan Stipends Funds Measure, which will enable wealthier diocese to use some of its stipend fund to support those dioceses that do not have the historical wealth and investments.

Eight hours was spent debating the proposals brought forward by the House of Bishops in response to Living in Love and Faith (LLF). The response was accepted with an amendment that neither the prayers of blessing nor the pastoral guidance should do anything to alter the churches doctrinal teaching on Holy Matrimony. In addition to the debate, there was discussion in smaller working groups. Each group had a Bishop who was there to listen and report to the College of Bishops about what people thought of the prayers and what they thought should be in the pastoral guidance. The Bishop of London took quite a battering in the questions session on the Tuesday morning, which was questions on the LLF response whilst many of the questions were given written answers, she was very good at dealing with the supplementary questions. The next steps group made a statement at the end of the debate following the results to say that the College of Bishops will work on the pastoral guidance and refining the prayers so that they will be ready of Synod in July.

The LLF debate was difficult, and it was acknowledged that it was hard for everyone. The motion was amended to reflect this, beginning ‘There is deep hurt across the Church . . . ‘. The Church is divided, and it is challenging to know what to do. The Prayers of Love and Faith were approved. The standalone services now need to be voted on in all 42 Diocesan Synods, before coming back to General Synod, where there must be an 2/3 majority in each House. They can then be commended by the Archbishops as experimental for a period of time. The House of Bishops is meeting to discuss the way forward.

The Archbishop of Canterbury had given a powerful address about the situation in Gaza, encouraging prayer for Gaza and for peace.

Other areas covered were the Safeguarding Redress Scheme for survivors of abuse and other church failures. General Synod was dealing with the process and systems at the same time as the legislation, as an acknowledgement of past mistakes. Parishes would not be liable for any redress, but if there are any concerns, it was advisable not to change insurers for the time being because a new insurer will not cover historical claims.

At Diocesan Synod. News from the Diocesan Board of Education was positive. 127 schools had taken part in the Annual Leavers’ services, with upwards of 3000 children.

Grants had been received as part of the Church of England Carbon Net Zero strategic plan, and Synod agreed to use these to fund three Diocesan posts.

The Diocesan investment policy was discussed, with particular reference to disinvestment from companies involved in fossil fuel. However, a 2/3 majority voted to continue with these investments, in the hope that by being ‘inside the circle’ there is an opportunity to influence these companies.

The Diocesan Auditors were reappointed, and it was agreed that Diocesan Synod membership would remain at 270.

The Diocesan budget is showing a £1 million deficit, and there needs to be £200k of cuts from central/Church House costs, and £800k of cuts from ministry costs.

Finally, there was an update about Racial Justice, as well as news that Canon C30 has been amended so that the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser is now the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Full reports and minutes from General Synod and Diocesan Synod are available on the respective websites.

**Carole Copelin**

**Deanery Representative and Deanery Secretary**