

Deanery Synod Report for 2019 for the 2020 APCM

Deanery Synods take place to provide encouragement to the parishes, to share useful experience and occasionally to receive reports to discuss and to feed motions up the line to Diocesan synod after due debate.

There has been the equivalent of three synods in the year but no reports or debates or motions sent up the line.

For sharing we have heard from Warbleton, BSG, and Dallington, Netherfield, Herstmonceux and Wartling.

For encouragement we heard in May (it was the Diocesan Year of Vocation) from Jayne Prestwood the Diocesan Adviser for Lay Vocations and Ministry. Speaking on the Church of England's Setting God's People Free initiative Jane stressed that vocation was a calling to serve which we all possess in some shape or form and not something only the clergy possess.

Setting God's people free seeks to broaden the definition of calling to address the "theological deficit of the 6 days" we are not in church.

Jane outlined some of the training opportunities already available to lay people to enable them to take a fuller part in parish life. She stressed the increasing importance of those roles particularly in rural parishes as clergy retire and are not replaced.

The Diocese of Chichester is a pilot diocese for the SGPF initiative, and the diocesan core group has been working to roll out SGPF across the diocese. Every parish has been sent resources to assist with exploring how SGPF could work at a local level, and the Diocese has appointed nearly 50 lay champions and 10 pilot parishes to work on furthering this agenda.

Anne Procter from Horam was invited to speak on how she had felt called into bereavement counselling, then becoming the Deanery Healing Adviser and then an "enthusiastic" Street Pastor.

The Treasurer (Brian Gibson who announced his pending retirement) reported that the Deanery had received Bishop Richard's thanks for meeting in aggregate its parish giving target for 2018.

The June synod was replaced by an Episcopal Visitation at which Bishop Richard led an open consultation event on Diocesan Strategy to which Churchwardens, Readers and PCC members particularly were invited. He began by acknowledging the initiatives already in place.

Amongst these were Setting God's people free; the identification, training and licensing of a number of new and different lay ministries, specialist training for church officers and school governors; training for clergy in collaborative ministry; church planting; a requirement for benefice plans for Christian growth and to become self-financing; parish audits of community engagement; and for each parish one new project to bless their local community, sharing with local ecumenical partners where practical.

After a statistical analysis of the diocese he proposed four areas we needed to focus on achieving "more" and posed questions for discussion associated with each area. In each case he asked a specific question and then what diocesan support had already been received and what further support would be appreciated. The four "more" areas were:

MORE OPEN – A sign of being one

A vision for congregations with age and other profiles reflecting the communities they serve. We want to see the church as a family of all ages, loving, serving contributing and receiving together at a level appropriate for their age and maturity.

Key question: What groups in your community are under-represented in your congregation? (*If there are any what are you planning to do?*)

MORE CONVERTED TO JESUS CHRIST – A sign of becoming holy

A vision for a church which communicates the Gospel effectively, so that men, women and children come to a living, personal faith in Jesus Christ and join their local church family on the journey to know, love and follow Jesus. We want to be a church where people are valued and nurtured, finding support through the difficulties of life. We envisage a wide-open front door to a community where people feel at home and want to stay. We want to see our life flow out of prayer and worship, rather than see these things simply as one amongst other activities that we do.

Key question: In what ways have you been seeking to share the Gospel in your community?
(What are you planning to do?)

MORE GENEROUS -

A vision of a diocese where there are “no needy among them” but where wealthier parishes contribute joyfully to sustain ministry in deprived areas. We envisage a diocese with a balance budget and financial sustainable parishes/benefices by 2025.

Key question: What has your parish done *(or is planning to do)* to work towards this part of the vision?

MORE ENGAGED - A sign of being Apostolic

A vision for a church where people have a sense of vocation to love which expresses itself in service and a church family that nurtures and encourages that vocation. We long to see a church whose reputation in the community is one of bringing blessing and transformation: a church which works with all those of good will to contribute to the common good.

Key question: What has your church done in the last 5 years to work towards this area of the vision? *(What are you planning to do?)*

(Italics are mine VEB)

In November Bishop Richard was invited to return to a Dallington Synod prior to his departure to be installed as Diocesan Bishop of Hereford to leave with us his reflections for the future here in Sussex.

He told us that we are all on a journey to reflect what it is to be a disciple of Christ. He set out six reflections for us:

- 1 There is a cultural journey to be undertaken from volunteering to discipleship.
2. The word diocese describes us collectively not a tax collecting body.
3. Generous giving is more than just charitable giving.
4. The organisational approach has to be more spiritual than tactical. It is God's church not ours.
5. The Church is a community not a building. It's a question of growing followers of Jesus not filling seats.
6. We must learn to ask the right questions: how can we, for instance, be witnesses of Christ and follow Jesus keeping the distinctiveness of the Gospel when distraction from that path is so easy.

In summary, to gain Christ you must leave all else, God First, Christ First.

Vivian Bown October 5th 2020

