

Minutes of the meeting of Christianity Deanery Synod

Tuesday, 9th February, 2016 at 7.30 p.m. at the Mary Harris Chapel at Exeter University,
chaired by David Smith

Thank you to Rev Chantal Mason for hosting us with a warm welcome and refreshments

1. Act of worship led by Chantal Mason

2. Welcome: to Helen Lach and Mike Melville-Shreeve from ENC

3. Presentation by John Arkell, Diocesan Mission Enabler.

- a. John and his wife, Kate, moved to Exeter in 2010, joining Trinity Church as the Associate Minister, and since 2014, he is employed by the Diocese to develop parish work in newly built estates
- b. There are now about 1000 new homes of a future 3000 homes in the Newcourt and Seabrook estates, situated between Sandy Park, Rydon Lane and Topsham Road
- c. A new C of E primary school, called Trinity, is due to open this September although there have been building delays
- d. John introduced 11 key principles that he uses as focus for prayer
 - i. *Fellowship, prayer and shared commitment with other Christians:* over the last 4 years, a group of local Christians (Christians in Newcourt) who live on the estate meet monthly and pray for residents
 - ii. *Engagement with the whole community:* a residents' association has been formed; Carols on the Green are held annually; a playpark has opened; a community centre has been built and is being used – and all of these have really bound Christians living in this area together
 - iii. *Face to face contact with fellow residents:* John and Kate started a community choir and started this by knocking on every door on the Digby and Clyst Heath estates when they first moved to Exeter
 - iv. *Model parish focus:* Only 40% of the members of Trinity live in the parish with homegroups being spread city-wide. So, to build the community feel, a Newcourt homegroup was started with a real focus on prayer for the new estates
 - v. *PCC engagement with the process:* This has been harder than John imagined but is working. Two PCC away-mornings have focused on parish development; congregation-planting has been the focus of the most recent vicar address at the APCM
 - vi. *Drip, drip communication:* The Trinity Quarterly – magazine goes out to all homes in the parish
 - vii. *Tangible, generous-hearted Christian service that meets real needs:* Newcourt Babies and Toddlers started in John and Kate's home before

the community centre was built. Now 37 families attend and while there is no real evangelism thrust, it's consistent and relevant community contact

- viii. *Wide sowing of the good news*: this is close to John's heart and he longs to do more of this. A couple of years ago, John found online a 4-minute film that shared the gospel succinctly and approachably – 'Falling Plates'. He had many copies of the dvd made and teams personally delivered them to people's home if people opened their doors. Around 400 were given out and one man made contact with John in response and was really challenged by the dvd. He is now in John's Newcourt homegroup
 - ix. *Well-shaped activities with different objectives*: social events, some with a talk at the end; a Thanksgiving dinner; a couples evening to chat about marriage MOT, men's breakfast
 - x. *Understanding our part*: this is key to effective service: we have followed a series called *Fruitfulness of the Frontline* – seeing God move in the different places that we spend our time; knowing how best to use our A-H-A – attitudes, habits and activities – to serve God better in sharing our faith
 - xi. *An accessible time and place for corporate worship*: our evening services now meet weekly in the new community centre while morning services and our once-a-month youth service continue at Clyst Heath Primary School
- e. Challenges:
- i. inward vs. outward focused discipleship
 - ii. Resident or non-resident church members
 - iii. Busy-ness
 - iv. Community challenges

Q: would this model work in other parishes? **A:** Yes. The toddler group is sponsored by Trinity but staffed fully by Newcourt residents so there is a really healthy emotional and spiritual investment by people. And creative thinking about devising activities that take place outside of the church building

Q: what is the demographic of the estate? **A:** It's wide. There are a lot of retired or empty-nesters who have down-sized to garden-free homes; lots of fractured households; many singles; lots of families; lots of young professionals. The location is quite strategic – near the motorway, accessible to town, close to the rugby,

Q: how much of the estate is social housing? **A:** 35% in the Rydens; 20-25% in Greenacres

4. Presentation on Ordinands, Readers and Theological Education by David

Nixon, Dean of Studies for South West Ministry Training Course

- a. **Intro:** enjoys his work. Did a curacy at St Peter's in Plymouth with Sam Philpott, and learned a huge amount; went to University of Exeter, chaplain at St Luke's site for 9 years, finishing a PhD in Theology and homelessness and very involved in the department there. He then went to Devonport, spending

10 years in parish work. He moved to SWMTC and has been Dean of Studies for about 2 and a half years. He would seriously consider younger people present to think about embarking on further theological education.

- b. **Theological education:** an overview nationally and locally. Currently it's going in two contrary directions simultaneously. We may have heard of the report that came before General Synod: Resourcing Ministerial Education – it's being revised comprehensively and will become part of the national picture of the C of E. This includes the fact that much more of the financial responsibility for theological training is to be taken by the Diocese, particularly if they are over 50. However, this age limit may yet go up as there are a lot of older ordinands. There is more emphasis on lay education. There is a push to have a 50% increase in ordinands, particularly younger ones. However, even if this push is successful, this will not cover the current number of clergy who will leave service through retirement in the coming few years. A commercial decision was made recently - Common Awards – where all educational theology is underwritten by Durham University – and it is very prescriptive and very much more tightly governed. This is a real pressure for those who are involved. Locally, in Exeter and Truro Dioceses, the Diocesan bishops are trying to decide exactly what they want in education so we are awaiting the outcomes of this consultation. There is also the question of what we are educating for? Do we actually know and how clearly do we know the shape of church in the future so there is a melting pot element in the mix? There may be significant changes ahead in theological education
- c. **Vocations:** there is a new Lay Formation year starting which is a pre-Reader course, which deals with the Bible and some doctrine and study skills. The study skills issue is particularly key to many who have not studied for about 20 years. David wanted to encourage us to think about ordination and to prompt people to ask this question of their parishioners. Can we do a bit more? We will not continue to have readers and ordinands in the future unless people are encouraged to look into it and start the process.

Q: Bishop Michael was v strong on encouraging lay people to take an active role in church and there was a 2-year course a few years ago that set people up for service, many of whom may not be using their training – are we really just asking lay people to fill in the gaps? **A:** Good question: we do really want lay people to be involved in service and to have serious responsibility in the diocese. This is seen a lot in France. Re accreditation: when Durham Uni took on the mantle, some people lost out on opportunities. However, this new course is for all manner of vocations.

Q: Two people in a parish have had their applications for ministry refused on what the questioner perceived to be prejudicial grounds – sexuality and mental health. Is there going to be any change in the way that applications are vetted? **A:** In theological education, there are a lot of very complex administrative issues to learn for ministry and people need to be able to cope with a lot of pressure. A selection process is appropriate to ensure that the most suitable candidates are ordained. However, this question does have a few specifics attached and it is not possible to extrapolate a general answer.

5. Business items

a. Discussion of the proposed reserves policy (c.10 minutes)

- i. After last meeting, in Oct, there were some questions about the reserves that are held by Christianity DS. Much of this money was accrued during the 1980s with high interest. The accumulated amount need not be so high (e.g. postal costs now negligible). There have only been a couple of comments given to David about possible uses of the money. Mathematically, remuneration to parishes who have given over the years, is not able to be worked out.

Q: this money needs to be used wisely and for godly purposes – can we express caution about the use of loans? **A:** Yes, these would only be very small and short-term loans and we feel that encouraging the use of loans is not appropriate for gospel service. The questioner added that they would second this proposal

Q: what will happen in 2020, when we have used up the reserves?

A: The Deanery has small overheads and we feel that it would not be imprudent to run the money down to £1-2,000, which will still earn a little interest. It is felt that Deanery costs will be sustainable thereafter

Q: how have other Deaneries managed? **A:** Other Deaneries do not usually have reserves so we are exceptional. In addition, some deaneries charge each church a couple of pounds per member of DS to keep a small amount

Q: are accounts available to see exactly how the money has been accrued? **A:** Historically, the treasurer received CF money and paid it centrally, which is how we made money by holding a few thousand pounds for a few days each year. This system stopped in 2012.

Q: is £1,000 enough for reserves? Is this a decision to be made by the Standing Committee? No, the Standing Committee has brought a proposal

The Reserves Policy was approved by the Synod

b. Secretary's Report –

- i. Update of email addresses and curacy details – thank you to those who have updated Harriet and do please let her know of any new curates or changes in details
- ii. There is a newsletter from Thika link to be emailed out with minutes
- iii. Date for May/June meeting to be arranged having been advised that the Bishop will be visiting the Deanery in Mar 2017
- iv. The **Christianity Deanery Secretary role will become available** this summer as Harriet is getting married in August and will be moving away to Buckinghamshire. Please speak to her, Robin or David if you are interested and do please ask people in your churches too

c. Treasurer's Report (given by the Lay Chair); By Dec, this Deanery had paid 96% of CF and any parishes who were short planned to pay this in Jan/Feb

d. Lay Chair's Report – nothing further to report

e. Area Dean's Report - nothing further to report

6. A.O.B.

- a. Juliet Meadowcroft: Alphington Church is setting up a new 4.30pm church service which incorporates Messy Church so please pray for growth here.
- b. In addition, Juliet wanted to thank John Arkell for his talk as there is another big development of homes between Alphington and Exminster.
- c. Juliet is also chairman of the Bach Society. Regularly, they sing the Bach Cantata at the Cathedral during a special evensong. However, they are unable to use the Cathedral after February, so are looking for a church that would like to invite the Bach Choir and an Orchestra to sing at their evensong. Please would you let Juliet know? Leaflets were available for each Parish
- d. St Michael's Mount Dinham – a talk is being given on '*Christianity and Mental Health*: Wed 24th Feb at 7.30 – further info at:
<http://www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk/event/st-michaels-lecture-christianity-and-mental-illness/>

7. Closing prayer

Diary Dates 2016

Deanery Synod: starting at 7.30 pm with refreshments from 7pm

- Wed 25th May – at one of the Heavitree Parish Churches t.b.c.

Pastoral & Standing Committee: all at 25 Matford Ave - 7.45 pm

- Monday 25th April
- Monday 27th June

Apologies should be sent to the Deanery Secretary:

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