

Minutes of the meeting of Christianity Deanery Synod

at **St Michael's and All Angels, Heavitree on Church Street, EX2 5EP** on **Wednesday, 25th May, 2016** at **7.30 p.m.** chaired by the Area Dean

Thank you to Heavitree parish for hosting us with a warm welcome and refreshments

1. **Opening prayer, welcome and short act of worship** remembering the feast of St Bede the Venerable by Robin Eastoe. Particular welcome to the new members of Synod.
2. **Presentation by Gill Luckings**, Communications Manager of St Petrock's, on their work with the homeless in the city.
 - a. Gill introduced the work that St Petrock's do and explained how many come to be homeless. Exeter has had a high homelessness population since the 1990s, a recent audit showing that 49 people sleep rough in Exeter, which is the highest number in an urban area in Devon and Cornwall.
 - b. Hidden homelessness is also a problem – sofa surfing for example - and this affects a lot of women who are so much more vulnerable on the streets
 - c. How do people become homeless? Poverty, job loss, changes to benefits, high housing costs, relationship breakdown plus other underlying risk factors that make people more vulnerable: leaving school without qualifications, mental health issues, addiction needs and an offending history are some contributory factors. However, in the experience of St Petrock's, anyone could become homeless
 - d. St Petrock's aims to minimise the time anyone has to sleep rough by helping people off the streets and into decent, affordable accommodation. They aim to provide individualised help for people, enabling them to become independent again
 - e. It started as a small community soup kitchen project 20 years ago
 - f. They were given 2/3 of St Petrock's church in the early 1990s by the Central Parish of Exeter, which is a fantastic resource and since opening as a charity in 1994, have supported over 10,000 people and helped over 8,200 into accommodation
 - g. There is a growing local need and statistics show that there was a 40% increase in visits to their centre between 2013 and 2015. One significant factor is Exeter City Council locking car parks at night, raising the number of people genuinely sleeping on the streets
 - h. Who do they help? Rough sleepers; people who have a roof over their head but no settled home of their own; people who have been resettled but who, without support, could be at risk of returning to the streets, as there is a familiarity for them in this

- i. 84% of their clients are single adults who have no statutory right to housing
- j. 31% were homeless for the first time
- k. 57% has mental health concerns
- l. 60% had a criminal justice history
- m. 47% had a history of substance misuse
- n. 11% were women
- o. There is a growing number of women seeking help at St Petrock's – the local female hostel closed 3 years ago
- p. Based in Cathedral Green, St Petrock's is pretty much the first point of contact for people finding themselves homeless in our city centre
- q. The heart of their service is unique and they see 50-60 people a day. They provide health and basic survival services on weekdays, including a barber and chiropody. Appointments can be reserved for individual assessment and referrals
- r. It takes time for people to build up trust in sharing their stories so relationships are built up between team and clients over a number of weeks
- s. They now have a private rent and support team, even able to offer people a choice in the sort of area where they might want to live, which is often the first time people have had a choice. This involves close links with landlords, and it can be difficult to find people who are willing to use their properties – but over the last 5 years, they have helped to house over 100 people, many of whom have stayed in one place for over 6 months – which is a long time - as there is often a lot of fear and wariness of offered accommodation. One factor contributing to this is the dislike of communal facilities offered in hostels so people are often sceptical about other offers
- t. St Petrock's have worked in the prison and with Probation services, often helping heroin users to stay within the law once they have been released. Their team there has supported 1,124 offenders prior to release and 87% of these were accommodate through St Petrock's on their release
- u. There is significant proof that working with other agencies has helped to keep many housed
- v. In 2015/16, they supported 1,710 homeless and vulnerably-housed people through their services and 1,012 people were supported into accommodation
- w. St Petrock's annual income is £500,000 with no government subsidy
- x. They are an independent charity and this status is really important to them. They are able to engage professionals in specific situations without waiting

Q. it sounds like your prison work is no longer continuing. Yes, the prison contract has now ended. Probation now no longer really exists and the agency that is working in the prison was concerned that their work was being duplicated, even though it is now proving that this is not the case.

Q. are there particular items that are of use to give? Information on what is most helpful can be found on the website - www.stpetrocks.org.uk – and all through the year, basics like sleeping bags are invaluable

Q. is it harder to find accommodation for those with dogs? Yes it's harder,

but it's not impossible. And to dispel a myth, people with dogs do not get extra benefit money

Q. do you work in conjunction with other agencies? Yes: YMCA, although their client base is usually younger; Gabriel House is a frequent partner; there are regular reviews with other agencies; no-one can work in isolation

Q. you mentioned that 50% of people who come to you have mental health issues – is there help available? Yes, there is now. We now have counsellors working with us a couple of days a week

Q. is the refugee crisis having any impact on homelessness in the city? Thankfully, not thus far.

- 3. Presentation by Gill Ford and Mike Todd**, from the Children's Society, on their work with vulnerable young people in the SW.
- a. Mike is in a newly-founded job, which is aiming to work with more parishes.
 - b. 'The Church of England Central Home for Waifs and Strays' was set up in S London in 1881 by Edward Rudolf, who established smaller homes for children feeling they were significantly better than vast institutions
 - c. The Children's Society would like to give a big thank-you for people's loyalty and commitment over the years.
 - d. 130 years on from being founded, they are known for Christingle services and collecting boxes, both of which generate a lot of revenue. However, they want to become more integrated with parishes and raise awareness of particular issues that are not able to be talked about in a meeting full of young children – like Child Sexual Exploitation
 - e. The government's definition of child poverty has been changed in the last few weeks but it is important not to forget that the ability to buy simple food for the family table is a very basic requisite
 - f. The Children's Society no longer run children's homes or do fostering yet there is a lot of unawareness about this. However, they are trying to develop a holistic plan for the work done in churches
 - g. Their vision is a country where children are free from disadvantage
 - h. £116,000 was given by Exeter Diocese last year to the Children's Society
 - i. 'House boxes' were given to people many years ago – and people have been very loyal to collecting for the Children's Society throughout their lives
 - j. The Christingle Service will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2018 and over the years, they have developed a lot of great resources to help our country's neediest children
 - k. Another aim of the Children's Society is to be a national charity delivering local services to local communities while speaking on behalf of the people who most need a voice, by people campaigning in parliament. The *Free School Meals* campaign was fought and won by them
 - l. They work with runaways too. Statistically, one child runs away every 5 minutes in the UK. This adds up to c.100,000 children a year who run away, many of whom end up sleeping rough and/or in the criminal justice system. As a result, the Children's Society have written the *Runaways Charter*, which

was written with input from children who have run away. They have created a wealth of guides about how to look after children, many written by children themselves, particularly those in care

- m. They run many thousands of projects nationally
- n. They have a shop in Fore Street, Exeter, to raise money
- o. Their biggest local project is *Checkpoint*, which is a drop-in centre for young people in Torquay, providing invaluable health, counselling and support. Their main focus is on 10-18 year olds, notably, Young Carers, those with mental health, drug and alcohol misuse, young runaways, refugees and those at risk from or victims of CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). Young people may fit into more than one of these categories. *Checkpoint* is not overtly branded with the Children's Society logo in any way as they want their services to be accessed by all without negative associations being given by others
- p. There are 7 trained workers at Checkpoint, all of whom are able to come and speak to your church about the work they are doing locally and nationally. Feel free to speak to contact Gill
- q. They are also setting up a Devon-based project for Children at risk of Sexual Exploitation, which has no government support, but will be employing 4 support workers. They will cover issues that emphasise keeping children safe
- r. The Children's Society *Seriously Awkward* campaign is their latest high-profile project, aiming to make changes in the law so that 16 & 17 year olds are better-protected from abuse. Currently, this age-group falls between childhood and adulthood, and there are gaps in their legal protection
- s. There are free Youth Resources available on their website, all of which are faith-based and easy to download

Q. a lot of statutory children's centres have been closed in recent years due to lack of funding. Do you know of any resources that parishes can tap into to help with parenting and other topical issues? The Children's Society are mainly working with 10-18 year olds and they aim to fill the gaps that no other agencies are filling. Children's Society resources are helpful in encouraging people to protect children in practical and lifestyle ways and there are lots of these on their website – and these have been successfully used with a PCC to encourage people to think about this generation and the pressure that they are under and what we can do to help. Particular resources work with parents in a mission and outreach way, encouraging engagement without necessarily them having to come into church

Robin closed this part of the meeting in prayer, praying for the most vulnerable in our society who come into contact with St Petrock's and the Children's Society

4. Business items

- a. Secretary's Report:
 - i. Thank you for all updates on changed members of the Synod for 2016-17. Please do pass any further details onto Harriet
 - ii. The Secretary post is still available so you haven't missed out yet. It has been quite a fun and informative job and it is almost exclusively all done by email. Please do enquire of Harriet if you would like to know more information about what it entails
- b. Treasurer's Report: nothing to report
- c. Lay Chair's Report:
 - i. David Smith mentioned that 110 years ago, his own grandfather was a runaway.
 - ii. Farewell and thank you to Harriet Faith, Paul Morrell and Peter March
 - iii. The Deanery Walk will be on Saturday September 10th. David will be aiming to walk around as many churches in the Deanery as possible with as many people as possible and pray in as many as possible. It starts at 8am and it will be easy to join at the Cathedral at 10
 - iv. There is the 15th National Deaneries' Conference later this year – *More for Less: Deaneries in Renewal and Reform*. Held on 7-9th October 2016 in Swanwick, Derbyshire, it will be covering reform in the church and how the Deaneries are influential in this. There are some illustrious episcopal key speakers and more information can be found on the National Deaneries Network website
- d. Area Dean's Report, incorporating a Diocesan Synod report
 - i. The Diocese has bought a copy of a booklet about the Queen and her faith to be given out to every clergyperson
 - ii. Robin is looking for a clergy volunteer to attend a meeting on 14th June. Please speak to him about this
 - iii. Bishops in Mission – the diocese is inviting a bishop to visit each Deanery for a few days. In Feb 2017, Bishop Sarah will be coming to Christianity Deanery and wants to see Mission in action in parishes. We will be putting a programme together and if you have a mission activity that is going on in your parish, please contact Robin Eastoe so that we might include this in the Bishop's visit
 - iv. Diocesan Synod: one of the main messages is that they are supporting lots of mission work but it has been felt that it would be great to have bottom-up mission projects being funded. Please contact the Diocese if you have a project that you think might benefit from some funding Prayer, serving the people of Devon with joy and making new disciples. This is the new strategy of the Bishop

5. A.O.B.

- a. A few introductory words on 'New Ecumenism' by Ash Leighton Plom, the Archdeaconry Ecumenical Officer
 - i. 8 hours of his working week is spent as East Devon Ecumenical Officer. He is on *Churches Together Executive Committee* and he has been made aware of such need this evening and feels burdened to do something in the city. The Lund principle: anything we can do together, we should do together. There is a lot we could do in Exeter, just in relation to these two presentations we have heard and he hopes that churches will be inspired to work together helping the neediest in our community
- b. Nick Horton: question on home communion, seeking clarification on behalf of the Cathedral. People come to the Cathedral who live in different parishes. If these people are elderly and infirm and want to receive communion from a clergyperson from the Cathedral, would this tread on toes of the parish in which these people live, including if they live in a care home? Individuals in their own home – fine. If they are in a care home, it might be worth checking with the parish priest what is already going on in that care home – but it is part of our service to offer communion to people, wherever they live. There probably isn't that big a financial issue if they are on the list of the electoral roll.

6. Closing prayer: David Smith closed in prayer

Diary Dates 2016

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

- Monday 17th October at St Stephen's, High Street, Exeter EX4 3LW

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

- Monday 27th June
- Monday 26th September

Apologies should currently be sent to the Lay Chair:

David Smith, 25 Matford Avenue, EX2 4PL

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