

TANDRIDGE DEANERY SYNOD

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WINDMILL UNITED BENEFICE - 2024

Introduction

Deanery Synod (DS) has a long and fascinating history, and if you are unfamiliar with it and perhaps find it slightly mysterious or outdated then I encourage you to read Sara's report of Meeting-3 below, where some of its origins are revealed. Having read this, if you feel drawn to represent your parish at DS you will have an opportunity to do just that at your APCM. Each parish in the Windmill United Benefice (WUB) is permitted two representatives. Your present DS reps are Judith Absalom, Sara Gough, and David Spruce.

There were three DS meetings in the past year. As an experiment to encourage more people to attend, they were held at different locations, on different days and at different times of day. In addition to the regular DS meetings there was a Lay conference held in March which is also covered by this report.

Meeting-1: Wednesday, 14 June 2023, at 7.30 pm, in St John the Evangelist Church, Hurst Green.
Attended by Sara Gough and Judith Absalom.

The meeting began with a prayer and a special welcome to new members like Judith and me before spending time on business such as the election of officials, agreement of reports and announcing changes in personnel.

The talk was given by **Mervyn Thomas** the Founder President of CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide).

He founded this organisation 44 years ago to highlight the persecution of Christians, particularly in Eastern Europe. However, with the political changes since 1989 he has widened the remit of CSW to press for freedom from religious persecution for all, although he said 70% of religious persecution in the world is against Christians. He felt it was vital governments put human rights above trade and special interests. He encouraged people to **Pray, Protest, Provide and Proclaim**. E.g. write to MP's. Further information about the organisation can be found on www.csi-int.org.

Meeting-2: Saturday, 4 November 2023, at 10 am, in St Mary's Church, Oxted.
Attended by David Spruce,

This meeting was abnormal because it was a dedicated training session entitled, "Unconscious Bias". The guest speaker was "The Revd Canon Wendy Robins, Canon Chancellor, Director of Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Minister Education for the Diocese of Southwark", (WOW! What a title!). The key word we learnt is, 'Inclusivity' and this is about 'making the mix work', however diverse the constituents might be. Diversity is simply about the mix of people in your setting. I feel we are fortunate in Horne, and it is probably true throughout the benefice, that we do not have wide diversity in our 'mix'. Nevertheless, it was interesting to learn about the approach and discuss some issues faced by most urban congregations.

During a breakout at the meeting, I happened to meet Jennifer Hyde (Jennifer.hyde@btinternet.com). She, together with Chris Elliot, run the Reigate anti-slavery group. She asked me if it were possible for her to speak at a service in the WUB. I passed her details to the Wardens and at Horne we discussed the offer at our next PCC meeting. Our conclusion was that we would like to take up the offer but not during the Interregnum, because it did not make sense to take on something new until we have a Rector.

Meeting-3: Tuesday, 20 February 2024, at 7.30 pm, in St Mary and St Lawrence's Churches, Caterham.

Attended by Sara Gough and Judith Absalom.

The meeting began in St Mary's church hall, with an opening prayer from the Area Dean- Michelle Edmonds Business covered included.

- Acceptance of the new Treasurer Report which stated she was in the process of opening a new bank account for Deanery funds. There would be a new financial year starting from Jan 24 and the balance of funds was £5,300.
- The secretary gave notice of elections for the Diocesan Synod, stressing that any lay member can stand.
- The next meeting is on Thursday, 4 July 2024, 7.30 pm at St John's Church, Hurst Green.

Everyone then moved across the road to the beautiful old St Lawrence's church for a short service of prayer and contemplation, led by the band, "**Free Spirit**".

The meeting then returned to St Mary's and spent the remainder of the session discussing, "**How to be an effective Deanery Synod member**".

Susan Gibbin gave a short history of the role of DS noting, it was originally established by King Edward the Confessor to enable the rural deans of the kingdom to keep connected to the centre. However, by the nineteenth century the role had fallen into disuse, so DSs were re-established by the Archdeacons as a medium of encouraging lax clergy into doing a better job. They were a way for parishes to collaborate with each other and a way to include others such as schools and charities into community ventures. Today the Church sees them as a way of promoting the church and as a communication hub for the dissemination of its ideas to individual members.

Susan also wondered how many of those present had read the document about the duties of becoming a member of the Deanery Synod - only a handful had!

Those present were then divided into groups and discussed four themes.

- To begin to understand what we want to get out of our time as a Synod.
- How parishes in the Deanery can work together more proactively.
- How parishes can jointly influence what we do for our communities locally.
- What a Deanery Synod can contribute to the wider decision making of the Church of England.

Each of the 4 discussion groups was led by a member of the Deanery Leadership team.

I joined a group looking at the second question. Our facilitator felt this could be summarised by the statement, "**Which is more effective – one person doing everything or everyone doing one thing?**"

Discussions centred around how much communication there was between parishes and Southwark and whether this could be faster and more relevant. It was felt that Southwark wasn't always aware of the problems facing the more rural churches and concentrated on issues more pertinent to city communities. We wondered how we could better pool our collective interests and talents more effectively and an action plan was proposed. Suggestions included better sharing of contacts such as emails and WhatsApp groups. We ran out of time, so it was agreed that discussions would continue at the next meeting on the 4 July 2024 and an action plan could be formulated. Meeting finished with a closing prayer.

Croydon Episcopal Area Lay Conference 2024:

Saturday, 2 March 2024, from 9.30 am to 5 pm, in St Bede's school, Redhill

Attended by Sara Gough, Sue Wates, and David Spruce.



The Conference entitled, “**Magnificat! – from praise to passionate action**”, is the fourth one held and the second that I attended. It was opened and introduced by Bishop Rosemarie who thanked everyone for coming and observed that the attendance level was high. The day began with Morning Worship which included songs written and performed by a band from Croydon Evangelical church, who were very good. Then followed the main talk, given by Dr. Elaine Storkey (ES), the Christian Philosopher and broadcaster. ES spoke about the prevalence and effects of violence towards women in present times and deprecated the spending of vast sums of money on weapons of war when poverty is so rampant throughout the world. ES called Mary a prophet and said that

God was at the centre of Mary's life. ES challenged everyone to pray a lot because the church is shrinking and we desperately need a revival to help fight social injustice, and return to the traditional family values that are being destroyed by social media.

After a brief drink break we moved into the workshops for the morning. We three attendees each chose different subjects and so we each give our account of those.

I joined, ‘**Getting the message out - communicating about the Gospel and your faith**’. This was lead by Vernia Mengot, an editor of The Bridge news and communications manager. The use of Social Media was highly recommended. The App called Next Door was mentioned as a useful place to communicate local events to the right audience. Use of a WhatsApp group is encouraged. Avoid jargon, criticism, and opinion. A parish website is a good place for all kinds of communication. It should reflect church life, but must be kept up to date regularly. Use banners on the bottom of the website to promote social media channels. Avoid the use of Clip Art because it is outdated. Use the app/web site Canva, for creating posters and all kinds of publicity materials. Overall, a useful session.

For lunch everyone was given a paper bag containing a sandwich, a packet of crisps, a piece of fruit, (apple or banana) and a soft drink. Dietary needs were catered for. Tea or coffee was available all day and considering the cost of the entire day was only £12, I think this was excellent value.

Back to workshops again in the afternoon. Unfortunately, I made a bad choice and attended a meditation session which I didn't find helpful and probably fell asleep during. I wish I had gone to the workshop on Worship song that Sara attended.

Sara Gough said, “**Workshop on Contemplative Prayer - Listening to God**. We were introduced to three techniques to help individual prayer – these were breathing exercises, naming and using a phrase from scripture to focus the mind. We were encouraged to empty our minds and let God come in.

What We Sing Matters --Stuart Burke introduced new songs which could be used in a service, some of which he had written himself. A sheet was provided with these on it.”

Sue Wates said, “Sadly, my first-choice morning workshop on the subject of Modern Slavery, was cancelled due to lack of numbers, so instead I chose “**God’s Love Inspires our Praise and Actions**” and like David I didn’t find it inspiring but it was quite relaxing, although I didn’t fall asleep!

My afternoon workshop “**Being an inclusive church: Positives and challenges**” didn’t fulfil my expectations. I was expecting information about “Inclusive Church” and how our Benefice churches might align with that initiative. There was a lot of introspective content that left no time to ask questions. Again, like David I wished I’d opted for Sara’s music workshop! The morning and afternoon worship was lovely, and the keynote speaker, Dr Elaine Storkey was excellent and challenging. It was good to meet with Bishop Rosemarie in an informal setting. Overall, I say it was well worth attending.”

The day ended with an address from The Venerable Moira Astin, Archdeacon of Reigate and closing worship.

Other topics

Occasionally as DS reps we receive information to pass on to Wardens and PCC. Here is an extract from a recent example. If you think something in your parish might qualify for such a grant, then speak initially to a Church Warden. You can request a full copy of the article from any DS rep.

Buildings for Mission - MR&I Grants for churches.

Applications can be made to seek funding from the Minor Repairs & Improvements (MR&I) Grants-Fund, part of the Archbishops' Council, ‘Buildings for Mission: Support for Churches’, project. The scheme will run into 2025. These grants will fund projects that are for stand-alone small-scale works (minor repairs and improvements) to church buildings that will cost in total up to £10,000 (or £12,000, depending on VAT implications). Grants typically awarded are expected to be between £5,000 and £10,000 per parish, providing between 50% and 90% of the cost of a project.

All Church of England consecrated churches and licensed places of worship in parishes are eligible. Works solely to church halls will not normally qualify.

Eligible costs are for

- (1) Urgent minor repair-works;
- (2) Minor improvement-works* that are essential to sustain worship and mission;
- (3) Professional fees for urgent repairs or essential improvements.
- (4) VAT incurred unless this can be reclaimed elsewhere (e.g. under the Listed Places of Worship (LPW) Grant Scheme).

Routine maintenance (including cleaning, inspections and servicing) is not eligible, and neither is any work covered by insurance, nor conservation work to church furnishings.

** Improvements are defined as church-building projects (costing under £12K – or £10K if VAT can be reclaimed elsewhere) that involve altering/adapting the building or upgrading its building-services and facilities, involving one or more of the following: Accessibility; Digital connectivity; Heating (especially where contributing towards Net Zero Carbon aims); Lighting; Wiring; Kitchens; WCs; Climate-resilience/mitigation; Bats mitigation.*

Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed reading this annual report and that it gives you a feel for the family that we are all part of in our rural parishes. As you have read above the DS exists to improve communication between the grass roots and our great Cathedral and even The King. Send your feedback to ds4gg@btinternet.com.

March 2024, prepared by David Spruce, with input from Sara Gough, and Sue Wates.