

Deanery Synod 2021

Fr Neil attends Deanery Synods as the Vicar of St Michael & All Angels'. At our APCM in October 2020 Elizabeth was voted as our Parish Representative on the Deanery Synod and is now a voting member. At the APCM in April 2021 Jessica O'Sullivan was voted as our 2nd Deanery Synod representative. Eleanor Relle is on the Diocesan Synod because she is on the Diocesan Synod.

Early in 2021 Elizabeth Bryson, as our M&M (Ministry and Mission) representative, was involved and contributed to Zoom Meetings to prepare:

Maidstone Deanery/Group Ministry

Shaping Our Life For A Flourishing Future

Second Submission February 2021



The Deanery Incumbents, including Fr Neil, attended some of the planning Zoom Meetings. The Introduction to this document said: *'The Deanery has so far engaged with this consultation process by the collating of initial thoughts from each parish that were developed into our submission to the Diocese at the beginning of February. A working group, consisting of the M&M committee, additional incumbents and church wardens of parishes in vacancy was formed to develop our thinking. This has involved meetings with Archdeacon Andrew and Bishop Rose and discussion at Deanery Synod, feeding into this second submission. Many suggestions have been made and it seems appropriate that anything of a substantial nature requires further discussion over a much longer period of time.'*

Our Parish is described thus: *'ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS' is a high anglo-catholic church on the west side of town and its long-standing tradition is appreciated by many. Under new leadership the church is seeing the fruit of respecting, and developing, that tradition; it has been experiencing growth since 2017. This provides the deanery with a clear contribution to Christian witness. The ministry team is looking at a variety of new initiatives for engaging with both the unchurched and with its growing congregation, as well as maintaining its work with the schools in the parish.'*

The Deanery Synod met by Zoom on Tuesday 23rd February 2021. The Minutes include:

'Rev Chris & Diane attended an Area Dean & Lay Chair meeting yesterday where the Diocese shared the thinking behind this report. Discussion took place including how each parish has been involved in the report, the Deanery needs to identify areas that can be looked at in the future. Liz Mullins stated that this has been imposed onto the Diocese by the National Church and they have employed an Independent Financial Advisor. There was concern that the Diocese has been stating this is about mission, when there is clearly a financial deficit. Diane shared power point slides – the Diocese was working towards "Making our vision a reality". The budget deficit projection for 2022 is £1,000,000 (one million pounds) with normal level of Parish Share payments received. Suggestions have been presented including reducing number of stipendiary curates or re-look at the way curates are trained. Questions that have been sent to the parishes include resources, number of church buildings, leadership and are central services for the Diocese still appropriate.'

Comments at Deanery Synod included – is the Diocesan structure top-heavy? Feeling let down that the Diocese were not honest about financial situation from the start; how can funding be clawed back to local parishes; can clergy work in parishes rather than in Diocesan House; Ministers are very important in the parish; need to increase number of people coming to church & what are our outreach plans?

M&M met on 1st June. M&M recommended that Rev Chris approach Neville to discuss the facilitation of the LLF Course in Maidstone, rather than by each parish and that this suggestion was agreed by Synod in July. Diane will be standing down as Lay Chair at the July Synod. Rev Chris announced that he will also be standing down as Area Dean. I said that The Diocesan Report has already been discussed at St Michael & All Angels' PCC, with general disappointment expressed, that this seemed to be a "plan for decline" rather than for growth. Particular concern expressed about reduction in clergy numbers and the implications for sacramental ministry.

The Deanery Synod met by Zoom on 7th July.

On 4th October the Deanery Synod members and three others from the PCC went to a meeting on 4th October at St Martin's to hear about the Diocesan Budget 2022. We were shocked and disappointed to discover that after being told that all Parish Shares would be decreased by 10% we were the only Parish to have an increase. This was followed by questions, emails, etc but no change was made to the amount required.....

There was no Deanery Synod later in the year.

Elizabeth Bryson
Deanery Synod rep