

Deanery Synod 2019

Our Deanery Synod representatives from St Michael & All Angels' were David and Jessica O'Sullivan at the beginning of 2019 as they had been our reps since April 2017. They were also our representatives on the Deanery Environmental Group, organised by Rev Joyce Addison from St Martin's Church. David and Jessica were our Deanery Synod reps until later in 2019, when David was too unwell to continue to do this. Fr Neil attended Deanery Synods in 2019 as the Vicar of St Michael & All Angels' and Elizabeth Bryson attends Deanery Synod because she is our representative on the M&M (Ministry and Mission) Group in the Deanery.

The Deanery Synod met on 13th February at St Nicholas' Allington with the main focus being preparation for the **Deanery Day on Saturday 18th May**. On Saturday 18th May it was good that six of us from the Church of St Michael & All Angels attended the Deanery Day at St Paul's Church. It was excellent to feel a part of the deanery family, share our good news and hear good news mission stories from around the deanery. The day was a time of encouragement, listening, learning and sharing.

The day began with the beginning of the Eucharist Service and singing *Be thou my vision*. We had a *Dwelling in the Word* time of reflection and discussion on the Gospel Luke 10:1-12. Everyone listened and then shared the word or phrase that stood out for them. After coffee, every Church shared a good news mission story and a 'struggle'. Elizabeth shared this:

'Our good news and **encouraging mission story** from the Parish of St Michael & all Angels is **growth**. In 2018 we had a 38% increase of the numbers of people attending on a usual Sunday compared with 2016. In 2016 there was an average of 30 aged 16 and over with 2 children. In 2018 the average number was 44 with 37 aged 16 and over and 7 children. In 2019 we continue to have growth in numbers. It is great that new people come to Church, feel welcomed and stay. We have uniformed groups that use the church halls within the community; the Scouts, Guides, Brownies, Cubs and Beavers. They attend more services and are invited to take part by doing readings or sharing collages and posters that they have made. With some of them attending at Harvest we had 91 in Church in 2018. They were invited to Church Parade on Mothering Sunday, when we had 64 at Mass. The Choir is growing with more men, women and children enjoying going to choir practice and singing in the choir. We are glad that nine adults have been baptised as new believers and one of them is being prepared for Confirmation. Following our Lent Alpha Course more people are now reading the Bible and some are sharing their faith with others. So our **encouraging mission story** is growth in numbers and spiritual growth.' It is wonderful that at Mass people meet with Jesus through Word and Sacrament. People like to 'worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness' at St Michael & All Angels'.

We sang *All I once held dear* and then Elizabeth Bryson led the prayers including thanks for the encouraging mission stories and asking the Lord to help us in our struggles. She also prayed: 'We give thanks Lord that in Maidstone 'the harvest is plentiful' as there are people in our town whom you are drawing to know your love. Thank you that there are many people living here in Maidstone who are searching for meaning in their lives; some who once knew the love of God but have drifted away; and others who would be such loyal followers of Jesus if only they were introduced to Him. Let us be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit and be ready to tell others the good news about the love of Jesus. Please equip and help us all to be 'labourers in your harvest'. May we 'always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have, and to do this with gentleness and respect.' (1 Peter 3:15) Lord of the harvest. **Hear our prayer.**'

After lunch there was further discussion and input from the Revd Steve Coney, who is the Mission and Growth Adviser at Canterbury Diocese. The day ended with Holy Communion.

The Deanery Synod on Tuesday 4th June included information and explanations from Julian Hills about Diocesan finances and Parish Shares.

The Deanery Synod at St Luke's Church on 2nd December agreed the Parish Share to be paid by each Parish in 2020. There was also a presentation about Anna Chaplaincy, the Environmental Group and a demonstration about using electronic payments for collections in Church. The Deanery Synod were sad to hear about the death of David O'Sullivan and they were invited to his Funeral Requiem Mass at St Michael & All Angels' Church on Wednesday 11th December.

Jessica continues to be our Deanery Synod representative with Eleanor Relle being elected by the PCC on 4th December to be our 2nd Deanery Synod representative.

Elizabeth Bryson, Reader