

Sonning Deanery Synod Report for the 2017 Annual Parochial Church Meeting of Finchampstead and California Parish for the year to 31 December 2016

The Sonning Deanery Synod is made up of the clergy (who form the House of Clergy) and elected lay representatives (who form the House of Laity) from Church of England churches in the Wokingham area and runs for a series of 3 year terms, the present being to 31 May 2017. The Synod is chaired by the Area Dean, (our own Rev Canon Julie since 1 October 2013) and also by a Lay Chair, elected triennially by the House of Laity. A Deanery Standing Committee arranges the agendas for the Synod, invites speakers and prepares papers for consideration by Synod. Sharon White, one of our reps, has been the Deanery Treasurer since September 2014.

Each parish is entitled to a number of lay representatives based on the number on its Electoral Roll and our entitlement is 7. Our current lay representatives are Nicky Alder, Paul Arscott, Martin Hughes, Dave Moore, Richard Owen, Sharon White and myself. Each 'House' elects representatives onto the Deanery Standing Committee and each 'House' must also be separately quorate for the Deanery Synod meeting to transact its full business. Deanery Synod members are involved in the elections to the Diocesan Synod.

There is a paid Deanery Co-ordinator, (at present Hazel Berry of Crowthorne) who compiles and circulates a Deanery Prayer Cycle document, focussing on the requests and needs of one parish each month, with additional submissions from other parishes; she also produces a Deanery newsletter to circulate details of upcoming events, arranges training courses and looks after the Deanery website. I pass her communications on to PCC members for them to pass on further as they feel appropriate. The Prayer Cycle and notices are usually displayed on our noticeboards.

There is also a Quinquennial Inspection Secretary who deals with these inspections – parishes pay an annual levy to Synod from which the individual church inspection costs are paid as they become due. A further levy per allocated lay place gives the Deanery some working funds for administration, grants etc and at certain points in the year, when the total parish share paid in to the Diocese, reaches particular percentages, the Deanery receives a rebate. These amounts can fund particular projects in the Deanery and also makes sabbatical grants to clergy to match PCC contributions. Synod receives and approves the accounts and agrees how funds should be spent.

In 2016 the Deanery Synod met five times, on 26 Jan 2016 at St George's, Owlsmoor, on 14 March 2016 at St James', Barkham, on 22 June 2016 at St James', Finchampstead, on 27 Sept 2016 at St John the Baptist's, Crowthorne and then on 28 Nov 2016 at St Mary's, Twyford. The meetings generally begin with visiting speakers on a range of topics or an agenda item of joint interest;

- in January, there was group discussion on how the Deanery Mission Action Plan for 2016 – 2020 was to be taken forward, following a briefing document from the Lay Chair;
- in March, Canon Andrew Anderson Gear, the new Diocesan Director of Mission, gave a presentation on 'How to Resource Ministry'.
- the June meeting as usual began with Corporate Eucharist and there was discussion on Parish Share and the levies for 2016 were agreed.
- in September, Robin Sharples, one of the Diocesan Board of Education's Schools Link advisers, gave a presentation entitled 'Re-wrapping the gift: the distinctive offering of the Church School in Brexit England'. The Accounts for 2015 were agreed.
- In November, our own Canon John Edwards and Robert Alder gave an informal presentation on Christian Giving.

The Synod's five year Deanery Mission Action Plan (MAP) 'looks at how clergy resources are allocated for best effect; encourages collaborative working between parishes and with other Christian churches in schools work, civic life, training etc'. A sub-group has been working on this through 2016.

Each meeting includes Area Dean's notices and an opportunity for other notices. Besides changes of clergy in the Deanery, this is the opportunity to share information about events and courses of general interest and also to share problems and successes. Members also receive reports on the Diocesan Synod.