

Sonning Deanery Synod Report for the 2019 Annual Parochial Church Meeting of Finchampstead and California Parish for the year to 31 December 2018

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. It runs in 3 year terms, the present being to 31 May 2020. The Synod is chaired by the Area Dean, (our own Rev Canon Julie until October 2018) and also by a Lay Chair, elected triennially by the House of Laity (at present John Smith of All Saints'). A Deanery Standing Committee arranges the agendas for the Synod, invites speakers and prepares papers for consideration by Synod.

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, Martin Hughes, James Lawbuary, Richard Owen, Richard Peat, Sharon White and myself, although Richard Peat resigned in Dec 2018 as he was moving away. 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 circulates details of upcoming events and training courses and looks after the Deanery website. I pass her communications on to PCC members and 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 based on their inspectable buildings 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 is eligible to receive a rebate. These amounts can fund projects in the Deanery and also makes sabbatical grants to clergy to match PCC contributions. These rebates have reduced over recent years as more parishes have been unable/unwilling to meet their Parish Share. Synod receives and approves the accounts and agrees how funds should be spent.

In 2018 the Deanery Synod met four times, on 21 March 2018 at St Eligius', on 19 June 2018 at St Andrews, Sonning, on 24 Sept 2018 at St Bartholomew's Church, Arborfield; the November meeting was cancelled in favour of a Deanery Planning Day at St James' Finchampstead on 1 Dec 2018. The meetings generally begin with visiting speakers on a range of topics or an agenda item of joint interest;

- in March, an open meeting, Ian Macdonald (Diocesan Youth Adviser) spoke on Lay Discipleship and the report 'Setting God's People Free', which was aimed at liberating non-ordained people for fruitful ministry. There was a Financial report, including information on parish share and approval of the Annual Accounts 17; Also, information about compliance with the impending General Data Protection Regulation for both Synod and Parishes.
- in June, after a shared Eucharist service and financial update, groups discussed how the Deanery could help parishes be more contemplative, compassionate and courageous. The resulting ideas were taken to be considered by the Standing Committee in advancing the Deanery Plan.
- in September, an open meeting, there was a presentation by Jonathan Farnhill - Diocesan Generous Giving Adviser and author of *The Porcupine Principle (and other fundraising secrets)*.
- in December, the open Deanery Planning Day with help from Rhodri Bowen (Parish Development Advisor for the Archdeaconry) concentrated on the five identified points of focus. Tina Molyneux (Vocations Enabler for the Archdeaconry) introduced Personal Discipleship Plans; Rev Tonia Elliott spoke about the challenges and joys of working in a new community. Small groups worked on plans for the areas of focus (New Communities, Lay Discipleship, Local Training and Building Relationships and Networks in the Deanery.) Three parishes in the Deanery offered a reflection on where they are seeing God at work at the moment - a source of encouragement and inspiration. The whole focus of the day was on the Deanery as a source of support and encouragement for parishes and congregations.

Each meeting includes Area Dean's and other notices; notifications of changes of clergy in the Deanery; information about events and courses of general interest and also chance to share problems and successes. Members also receive reports on the Diocesan Synod which I share with the PCC.

Carolyn Fox. April 2019