

Minutes

Meeting on: 6 February 2016
Time: 9.30-1.00pm
Location: St Nicolas Church, Cheltenham (GL50 4PA).

Item	Action
1. Opening Prayers	
Synod opened with prayers	
2. Welcomes and apologies	
The Secretary reported 16 apologies had been received.	
3. Notices and Questions	
None	
4. Minutes of the previous meeting	
The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2016 were approved.	
5. Matters arising from the minutes	
The Chair reported that Helena Arnold, Director of Education, is to retire and move to Cornwall on 7 March 2016. She will continue with a more focused part time role with DGAT. A farewell Evensong to give thanks to Helena over the past 7 years will be held in the Cathedral on 24 February.	
6. Safeguarding Annual Report	
<p>Bishop Rachel introduced the item. She explained that Safeguarding underpins who we are and what we do as a diocese.</p> <p>Margaret Styles introduced herself as the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board. She explained how this was an opportunity to ask questions about the work of the board and safeguarding across the diocese. She welcomed thoughts on how to improve and develop the Board's work. The Plan for 2016 is comprehensive but hopefully comprehensible; she would appreciate comment if Synod felt it was going in the right (or wrong) direction. Synod was asked how many members of the Board were present (4 hands were raised) all senior members evidencing how seriously this matter is to be taken. Mrs Style's work elsewhere suggests very good practice within this diocese but historic safeguarding shortcomings in the Church continue to attract attention in the media. Safeguarding nationally has required significant additional infrastructure and that will need to grow further; risks and harm done need to be investigated and addressed to protect all. The Diocese of Gloucester will be at the forefront of the national agenda in the coming year with both the Goddard Inquiry and SCIE review. SCIE is a very significant audit of what we do as a diocese right through from parishes to the Safeguarding</p>	

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<p>Board to understand the effectiveness of our work in protecting people. This will involve the Safeguarding Board, professional officers and those involved in implementing policy. It was important to engage fully with this process.</p> <p>Mrs Styles felt that in discussions with others the Diocese of Gloucester’s safeguarding work compared favourably, which meant people here were safer.</p> <p>She urged parishes not to treat safeguarding as bureaucratic or an irrelevance but to know it is there to serve and protect. She promised a fuller report after the SCIE audit but for now welcomed questions and comments.</p> <p>Mrs Judith Knight spoke of her work in distilling the myriad policies and resources on safeguarding into a digestible and achievable form for parishes. Only policies which are understood can be effective. She also noted the importance of knowing their Safeguarding lead. In a show of hands all but one knew their local contact. She also championed good record keeping and communications to ensure clarity of understanding and make a robust system imbedded in culture. She reported that there was new guidance and a new teaching and development programme coming from the national team which would start on a rolling programme in the diocese towards the end of the year. Goddard, SCIE, Safer recruitment are all hugely important but they need to be manageable – please call the diocesan office for comprehensive advice and support if necessary.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked Mrs Styles, Mrs Knight and her team for their incredible work in translating complex guidance and always being accessible. She challenged Synod to ensure it rippled out the culture of safeguarding across the whole diocese. Questions were invited.</p> <p>Professor Jenny Tann (Stroud) was worried about the subjective description of “vulnerable adults”. It was necessary to avoid stereo-types.</p> <p>Revd Mike Smith (Stroud) asked for a single sentence response to those who say they don’t need a safeguarding officer.</p> <p>Revd John Swanton (Cirencester) asked for printer friendly documentation sympathetic to parish volunteers.</p> <p>Mrs Anna Venables (Tewkesbury and Winchcombe) asked that safeguards were in place for elderly members engaging with giving/stewardship initiatives.</p> <p>Mrs Knight responded:</p> <p>To Professor Tann; whilst there is a wide a complex issue on vulnerability the key to the legal definition has clear national guidance linking the description to social care categorisation and those at risk of harm.</p> <p>To Revd Smith: A safeguarding officer is a necessity (regardless of the presence of children) to which the Archdeacon of Cheltenham confirmed meant the PCC’s insurance was invalid and the incumbent would be subject to a disciplinary action if not addressed.</p> <p>To Revd Swanton – happy to ensure this is considered, will review next week for suitability for local printers.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel concluded the item by thanking Mrs Styles and Mrs Knight again. Synod gave an appreciative applause.</p>	
<p>7. Financial Update</p>	
<p>Mrs Julie Ridgway updated Synod on the initial financial outturn for GDBF in 2015. She noted Parish Share receipts improved in the last quarter and ended up at £6.12m, £80k below budget. She expressed her thanks to all those who helped raise Parish Share and helped in its collection. She noted parish fees were down, in part due to later returns, she asked members for their help in reminded parishes that these are legally due and it is helpful for cash flow if they are remitted promptly. She also noted clergy costs were higher than forecast which together with low income from fees and parish share led to an</p>	

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<p>expected deficit in the region of £400k. Administration costs were broadly on target, including significant legal and professional costs which were now being managed down.</p> <p>Mr Rank gave thanks to Mrs Ridgway and her team for their excellent work. He asked members to pray for the team and all who work in our parishes to fund the Church's mission. He noted the Statutory Accounts would be presented at the next meeting.</p> <p>+Rachel commented how often finances were raised with her during her deanery tours, and how important it was to know that finances were a means to enabling God's work.</p>	
<p>8. Reappointment of the Bishop of Tewkesbury</p>	
<p>+Rachel explained that she had known of +Martyn's departure for some time and apologised if she had thereby seemed not to be involving him fully in new work. She expressed immense gratitude for the effort and grace he had put in to leading the diocese, she wished to acknowledge all that he had lived and carried through a very difficult time in the life of the diocese. She was sad that he was leaving but glad that he has heard a call from God to a new ministry. She hoped members would mark his ending with her at a farewell service in the Cathedral at 4:30 on 12 March. It will be a very good send off.</p> <p>She explained that it was now time for Synod to consider if the diocese needed a replacement Bishop of Tewkesbury, Suffragan Bishop's were not permanent offices. If Synod decided it wished there to be a new Bishop of Tewkesbury she would write to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Diocesan Commission to request a replacement. It was not guaranteed.</p> <p>She noted that it was only three years since the last request to replace the Bishop of Tewkesbury and the reasoning for that appointment was the basis of the current request. She asked members for questions or clarifications.</p> <p>Mr Graham Collins (Stroud) commented that as a Reader the role of the Bishop of Tewkesbury having oversight of Readers was very important. The past two office holders had been good validation of a sometimes forgotten ministry. He asked that this role was part of the new appointment.</p> <p>Revd Nick Davies (Cheltenham) asked that the appointment helped balance the Bishop's Staff Team as a whole, which was important for the confidence of parishes in diocesan leadership.</p> <p>Mr Robert Cook (Severn Vale) warmly welcomed Bishop Rachel's historic appointment but asked if gender balance could be considered in the process.</p> <p>Canon Margaret Sheather (Stroud) noted that as more goes on in the diocese more is demanded of its leadership capacity so that parishes may be resourced and supported to fulfil their work. There is no such thing as "back-office" in the Church.</p> <p>Mr Bob Sims (Tewkesbury and Winchcombe) hoped the roles with Readers and Churches Together in Gloucestershire will be given prominence.</p> <p>Canon Richard Mitchell (Severn Vale) asked that due consideration is given to where the new appointment is asked to live.</p> <p>With a sense of <i>de ja vu</i> the Dean formally proposed that Synod approved the request for a new appointment to the See of Tewkesbury. He expressed the hope that he would not need to make such a proposal again for some time.</p> <p>Item approved <i>nem con</i>.</p>	
<p>9. Bishop's Council update</p>	
<p>DS16/3 was shared with members.</p> <p>Mr Bruce Coles (N Cotswolds) asked if the reference to Willersey could be explained more fully. Mr Rank responded that there was a fund established to help resource "in house" planning applications. He noted there was a legal</p>	

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<p>obligation to obtain best value from glebe which if successful helped balance out resources across the church. +Rachel reported that she had commissioned a review of glebe communications which would be considered by Bishop's Council on 24 February.</p>	
<p>10. Shared Conversations on Human Sexuality</p>	
<p>Bishop Rachel referred Synod to the circulated report on the Shared Conversations on Human Sexuality (DS16/02). This comes from the local group participating in a national series of conversations which Synod will be aware of. The group is officially anonymous but some members declare their own involvement for the purpose of sharing the experience. Bishop Michael commissioned the diocesan representations and Canon Robbin Clark has facilitated the group.</p> <p>The group asked for the report to be shared with Synod. Bishop Rachel was encouraged that it conveyed Christians staying together through a difficult discussion of real human struggles.</p> <p>She reported that General Synod in July will be running its own series of Shared Conversations amongst representatives. After this she will look to roll out a similar process across the diocese, trying to ensure it does not become entangled or confused with the Vision process and its series of different conversations. This would require resources for the local Shared Conversations Group.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel asked for questions or clarifications.</p> <p>Revd Jonathan Perkins (Severn Vale) noted the reported focuses on feelings/experience and believed that without a scriptural grounding to tie these conversations to our faith they risked becoming emanations of the <i>Daily Mail</i> not Scripture. Bishop Rachel recognised the concern and wished to assure Revd Perkins that scripture and prayer had been integral to the process but she recognised this was not necessarily clear from the report. She agreed that truth in our daily lives must be rooted in a theological interpretation of our experience.</p> <p>Canon Richard Mitchell (Severn Vale) noted an age and clerical bias to the group. He felt it would have been good to have seen more diversity. The Archdeacon of Gloucester asked if the group was true to the original brief for the process. Canon Clark responded that there was a difficulty in the timescales required to get the spread originally sought and therefore the availability or volunteers was a deciding factor in the ultimate makeup of the group.</p> <p>Revd Dana Delap (North Cotswolds) believed the Church needed to listen to its communities on this conversation.</p>	
<p>11. Understanding our Communities</p>	
<p>The Archdeacon of Cheltenham introduced the item asking members to gather in deanery groups to undertake an exercise in exploring their understanding of their communities. After this members would be asked to feedback their discussions and reflect on how this might affect the future diocesan vision.</p> <p>He was recently involved in an appointment process where the PCC knew what they wanted and believed they should reuse the profile they drafted 15 years ago for the last appointment. When asked if there may have been some changes in that time the PCC seemed confused but humoured the Archdeacon and locked themselves away for a short time to draft another profile. It had a front page of the building, but no people. Inside was a picture of an empty church interior and an empty high street. It seemed good bait for a lazy priest. The text described a community of elderly middle class childless households. Somehow it omitted the town's secondary school and Church of England primary school.</p> <p>It can be a challenge for our congregations to work out what their community</p>	

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<p>is actually like, rather than who they know. The Diocesan Office has however found a useful tool which helps understand what our communities are really like, who we are called to serve, using Experian profiling data. This is a powerful check to us in understanding who we are ministering to and who we are missing in our communities.</p> <p>In deanery groups Synod was given a series of questions about their deaneries to answer including an Experian profile. They were then asked to compare “their answers” to “the answers” once they have completed the exercise and then feedback in plenary what most surprised their group.</p> <p>The surprises fed back by deanery were:</p> <p>Gloucester City was surprised by the number of children in Church of England schools.</p> <p>Stroud was also surprised there were so many children in Church schools and also that they overestimated the number of worshippers in the deanery.</p> <p>Forest was surprised by the number of churches and readers in the deanery.</p> <p>Cheltenham was less deprived than they had thought.</p> <p>Wotton was less rural than they had thought.</p> <p>Tewkesbury and Winchcombe were surprised by their social mix and that they were a “least deprived” area.</p> <p>Severn Vale had also overestimated the number of rural people in their deanery and underestimated the ex-industrial working class.</p> <p>Cirencester were pleased they could fairly describe their communities.</p> <p>North Cotswolds thought they had more school children than was reported.</p> <p>Canon Andrew Braddock then took the conversation on by reflecting on how we use a better understanding of our communities to effect our mission and ministry. He reported a recent event “On Your Doorstep” at which Sam Wells had challenged parishes to engage more with their communities. In this there were two dangers; being overwhelmed by the opportunities vs capacity and seeing the community as having problems to be solved. It is important to work <i>with</i> communities identifying strengths, needs and relationships and how they and the church support one another. He introduced Richard and Hannah from the Barnwood Trust who would have a stand in the lobby at lunchtime.</p> <p>Richard explained the Barnwood Trust has a 10 year community building programme called “You’re Welcome” developing social relationships which include the most vulnerable. This programme seeks to understand and share how we form relationships with one another. One example was a group of men with early on-set dementia from Tewkesbury who were brought together to talk not about illness but about their interests and passions. Out of this they developed a walking football team with around 15-20 members. This social relationship has a deep affect on happiness and wellness without anyone “doing” anything for them. We need to ask if we know our neighbours. If not we need to ask how we can get to know them and build relationships to unite communities. Churches can and should be part of this and he would love to speak with members over lunch to help set up local clubs/groups/schemes.</p> <p>The Archdeacon of Cheltenham thanked Richard for affirming this is not a discussion about statistic but about people. He then shared a series of comparisons between deaneries through an interactive demonstration.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel reminded Synod that all the baptised are “in ministry”. We must be aware of everyone we live and work with, as we must know the water in which we swim. There will be blind spots and opportunities to serve hopes and needs, helping and valuing. We are created to live in relationship with one another and with God. Ministry is not about giving help but about learning and receiving together; living our lives for Jesus Christ as the People of God. She</p>	

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<p>asked people not the “fight the data”, we must not collect and connect only with information that makes us comfortable and affirms what we want. We know we would like more people to worship in our churches but we also need to capture better how we go out and relate in all the other ways in which the Church engages in relationships. Some were surprised at how many children were in Church schools – schools which we affirmed were core to our mission at the last Synod. We need more things to be going on, not “initiatives” but joining in with what is already happening. Parents helping out in Church schools may find that to be their path to Jesus Christ. Developing the Next Steps in Journeying Together is not about starting again but acknowledging that we have come so far and need to build on that journey. We as a diocese need to gather around 2/3/4 things for the next five years. We need data and information to reach out effectively. Thousands are busy not in church, not sharing with us, us not sharing with them. We must speak with them and that means understanding how to have conversations with them. Conversations with Christians and non-Christians, daring to hear what they say and not deafened by excuses. God may be speaking to us through his world. We must pray for this. Bishop Rachel was calling the diocese to pray in Lent followed by an exciting day of prayer in the Cathedral on Ascension Day. This event would last from 11am until 8:30pm and enable pilgrims to experience different prayer styles listening to God together. After a period of prayer there would be a time of conversation where groups would gather around three key questions building on the Statement of Needs prepared by the Vacancy in See Committee. There would therefore be a time of discernment through prayer, conversation and assembling data which would inform and shape our conversations. Bishop Rachel had identified a persistent voice to hold this discernment through vision setting and into plan implementation from next year. Discovering who we are together should not be exhausting but exciting. Out of this we need also to agree what not to do, what to let go. At the core is an understanding that this is what “it” is “all about”; becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and sharing our faith.</p> <p>The Archdeacon thanked Bishop Rachel and hoped others shared his excitement for the coming months; understanding that any Vision would be rooted in prayer he asked each deanery to provide a prayer based on the exercise just completed for inclusion in the closing worship.</p>	
<p>12. Date of next Meeting</p>	
<p>The date of the next Synod was announced as 29 June 2016.</p>	

The meeting ended with worship