

COGGES PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Deanery Synod Annual Report 2018-9

This is a summary report; more detail on areas covered can be found in individual reports to PCC, and Deanery Minutes (see <http://www.witneydeanery.org/deanery-synod/>).

Witney Deanery Synod met in June 2018 (at Mary's Cogges), October (St Mary the Virgin, Witney), and February 2019 (St Mary the Virgin, Witney). Cogges retains its five deanery representatives: Barbara Eaton, Jane Harper, Elizabeth Knowles, Kirsty Morgan, and Ben Osman. Barbara Eaton's term on Diocesan Synod finished in June 2018. David Eaton of St Mary's Cogges is Deanery Treasurer. Rev Toby Wright, Rector of Witney, remains Area Dean, but Kevin Rillie, the Lay Chair, gave notice in October of his intention to stand down by the end of the year, and in February the post was still vacant. In February, Revd Simon Kirby accepted the role of Assistant Area Dean, with responsibility for Mission, Growth, and Church Planting.

Finances, which continue to be a matter for concern, are carefully monitored. By October, the payment of parish share was at 76%, slightly behind last year—David Eaton encouraged us to try to hit last year's 100% total. It was confirmed that the increase for the coming year will be capped at 4%. In February, David was able to report that the 2018 Parish Share had in fact been paid in full.

There was a focus at the June meeting on how parishes can address giving. Jonathan Farnhill, Christian Giving Advisor, Diocese of Oxford, introduced the Parish Giving Scheme, and showed figures reflecting how costs of the Church have risen and how dioceses have responded in their giving. Witney deanery gives above the diocesan average of regular giving levels. People give if asked and continue if thanked. There is evidence that the Parish Giving Scheme, if properly launched, will increase giving, especially among younger church members (who tend to want to see the impact of what they are giving). The address included a number of practical tips on how to implement the scheme. In October, a more adventurous form of fund-raising was suggested in a presentation by Jonathan de Bernhardt Wood (né Farnhill) and Archdeacon Judy French, who were exploring the possibility of 'Church Champing' (see <https://www.champing.co.uk>) as a way for rural churches to raise money. There was some discussion of this, and cautious interest and some reservations expressed. At the February meeting, David Eaton was able to provide some supplementary information on the issue of insurance. Churches interested in exploring the possibilities should contact Ecclesiastical Insurance.

Deanery has invested funds in resources for Prayer Spaces, and in October Kirsty Morgan gave a report on this topic, encouraging those interested in arranging Prayer Spaces for a school to get in touch with her.

Schools Ministry within the deanery was helpfully illuminated in October, when our speaker was Fiona Craig, Diocesan Director of Education. She was accompanied by members of her diocesan team: Charlie Ker, the newly appointed Chaplaincy Adviser, Kirsteen Roberts, Assistant Director for free schools and academies, and Chris Price-Smith, School Link Adviser. Fiona gave an inspiring and challenging account of the current situation of our schools, and the opportunity for the Church to develop an active relationship with them, and touch the lives of many children. She spoke of the particular identity of church schools (they are schools for everyone, not 'faith schools for the faithful'), but reminded us all schools have a claim on us. She outlined some of the many ways in which the Church can work in partnership with schools, and reiterated the current pressures – 'Our schools are in trouble.' The time for us to help is now. (More details of Fiona's inspirational talk can be found at http://www.witneydeanery.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Deanery-synod-notes_16Oct18.pdf).

At the February meeting the speaker was Olly Shaw, newly appointed Pioneer Deanery Youth Minister. Based at St Leonard's Eynsham, he will for the next year be spending 15 hours a week

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(funded by the Diocese, and stemming from the Bishop's working group for children and youth work) in the Woodstock and Witney Deaneries. Olly shared with us his passion for rural youth work, and made the point that models often tend to reflect urban patterns. It isn't feasible to think of paid youth workers, and the perspective needs to be on resourcing and equipping volunteers.

He wants to:

- Listen and learn
- Offer support, including resources and ideas
- Think strategically and make connections
- Create a supportive network

He is *not* trying to:

- Come up with all the answers
- Be the person who 'does the deanery youth work' long term
- Add to people's workload

While there is no intention to develop clones of successful work at St Leonard's, he does think that 'small' youth work (as with cell groups) can be very effective. Sometimes, though, you do need critical mass, as for particular youth service, or developing a self-supporting network.

There was also news at the February meeting of a new Mission fund to be launched by the Diocese. The 'Development Fund for Mission' will be available for the next three years, and it will be open to both deaneries and parishes to apply – for small grants up to £2,500, or for larger projects. The Archdeacon of Oxford is leading on this, and it is funded from glebe monies. The scheme is not yet up and running, but further details will be forthcoming in due course. This will replace the current 'Mission Grant' to deaneries

The February 2019 meeting was the last session for this year. The meeting of the new Synod will be held on 12 June 2019 at St Mary's Cogges.

*Barbara Eaton, Jane Harper, Elizabeth Knowles, Kirsty Morgan, and Ben Osman
St Mary's Cogges Representatives to Witney Deanery Synod*