

Woodstock Deanery Synod Annual Report 2021

Like 2020, 2021 was a very strange year. Zoom services and virtual meetings became commonplace across the Deanery. During the year, some services and gatherings were in church buildings but, generally speaking, life in the parishes has changed.

The synod met three times during the year, twice on zoom and once at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock. All of the meetings began with an act of worship that helped us to focus on God and his work in our Deanery. At our first meeting the main topic was the parish share for 2022, more of that later. At our June meeting, Ollie Shaw, the youth worker at St Leonard's, Eynsham, spoke to the synod about 'reaching out to young people after coronavirus'. Members found this an interesting and encouraging presentation. In November, Jeremy Auld gave a presentation on 'Living in love and faith' in the hope that people would be encouraged to look at the materials, maybe join a study group and respond to the bishops' request to engage in the discernment process about the way forward. We also looked at the list of ten things that the diocese could do to make it easier for parishes to concentrate their efforts on spreading the news of God's love, rather than things like form filling. All Deanery synod members were asked to consult with their parishes and the list sent to Bishop Gavin early in 2022 was a collation of these responses.

In relation to the parish share an amendment was agreed to the way in which the parish share is allocated between the benefices in the Deanery from 2022 onwards in order to change the effect that the high community profile score system has particularly on the rural parishes in the Deanery. It is anticipated that the allocation method may need amending again from 2023 as a revised diocesan scheme may be in place by then. During the year Deanery Mission grants were approved to Woodstock, the Barton benefice and the Wootton benefice.

There have been some comings and goings in our Deanery. Bishop Gavin, the new Bishop of Dorchester moved into the Deanery at the beginning of the year. Steve Stewart was instituted as rector of the Hanborough and Freeland churches in January and Ralph Williamson was instituted as rector of Stonesfield and Combe in May.

In June, Anthony Watkinson stepped down as Deanery synod secretary, and we would like to record our thanks to him for all his hard work. Maria Coonick was co-opted onto the synod as our new secretary at that point. 2021 was also the year that marked a change in our diocesan synod representatives. Reverend Jeremy Auld (Woodstock & Bladon) and Reverend Marcus Green (Steeple Aston, North Aston & Tackley) kindly agreed to represent the clergy, Marcus carrying on from the previous synod and Jeremy filling the gap left by David Tyler. Ollie Shaw (Eynsham) and Mike Holmes (Woodstock) agreed to represent the laity. Our thanks to Steve Young (Hanborough) and Susan Small (Steeple Barton) who preceded them.

March 2022