

Woodstock Deanery synod annual report 2024-2025

Area Dean: Revd Dr Andrew Bunch

Lay Chair: Stephanie Lacey

Secretary: Maria Coonick

Treasurer: Mike Sinfield

Deanery synod meetings

We have had three meetings since the last APCM. All of these meetings were preceded by a short act of worship, which helped us to focus on God's love and the work of the church in the deanery.

In July we met at Christ Church, Long Hanborough. On this occasion Revd Duncan Fraser and Revd Jane Wright spoke about the work in their respective parishes: Eynsham and Cassington, and the Barton Benefice. Melanie McGregor talked about a recently formed working group, which is looking into planning Pilgrim Paths around the deanery. She mentioned some of the paths that had already been devised.

In November we went to St Leonard's Church, Eynsham. Hannah Mann, the Diocesan Environment Officer, spoke about 'Creation care in our churches – the why, the what, and the how'. Revd Dr Andrew Atherston, our representative on the General Synod, reported back to us on the recent discussions, which included healthy working practices for clergy, safeguarding, transparency and trust, human identity, marriage, and issues related to 'living in love and faith'. Revd Oliver Petter presented the third in our series of updates from around the benefices and described what had been happening in the Yarnton benefice.

In March we met at St Mary's Church, Woodstock. Phil Evans spoke to us about 'Engaging with the world through Christian Aid'. This was followed by Revd Harriet Orridge talking about work in the Steeple Aston, North Aston and Tackley benefice. Melanie McGregor provided an update on the Pilgrim Paths initiative.

The synod also unanimously passed this proposal to be sent forward to the Diocesan Synod.

'The Woodstock Deanery Synod would like to propose that in multi-parish benefices (three or more), where there is only one stipendiary priest, that the diocese funds additional administrative support so that the priest is freed to fulfil their missional objectives in relation to serving and caring for the people of God.'

Other meetings and services

There have been several deanery events at St Mary's in Woodstock. In the Autumn, Revd Steve Stewart from Hanborough spoke about his PHD thesis on 'the law of Moses in John's prologue: the Law as central to a Jewish fourth gospel.' He has now been awarded his doctorate.

Some of us also attended the Lamps performance in October entitled 'Salt and Light.'

There was a deanery Epiphany Carol Service in January.

In March three of our deanery benefices met together at St Mary's Church, Wootton for a confirmation service taken by Bishop Gavin.

Comings and goings

Two clergy appointments were made in the summer, with the priests taking up their posts in the Autumn. Revd Esther Lay is now the house for duty priest in the Wootton, Glympton and Kiddington benefice. Revd Sarah Bourne was installed as rector of the Woodstock and Bladon benefice. This means that we have no clergy vacancies at present.

Other things to mention

Several archdeaconry triennial inspections have been carried out during this period by Andrew and Steph, with Revd Jane Haslam, our Associate Archdeacon, joining them on the first day. Since then a new diocesan check list has been devised, which we will use in the future.

Two of our deanery laity have been elected to the diocesan synod. Maria Coonick (Duns Tew) joins Mike Holmes (Woodstock). Revd Harriet Orridge is our only clergy representative on the synod, although we are entitled to two.

Recently the deanery clergy have undertaken an audit of the work with children and young people across the deanery. This will form a basis for future work as well as providing an opportunity to share good practice.

Stephanie Lacey March 2025