

A Paper for Discussion from the Deanery M&P Committee.

WINCHESTER DEANERY SYNOD MEETING: 1 MARCH 2012

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1. Background: Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 It is worth reminding ourselves that under the Synodical Government Measure 1969 Deanery Synods are potentially forums of great opportunity and significance – and that among their key functions is *“to bring together the views of the parishes of the deanery on common problems, to discuss and formulate common policies on those problems, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes, and generally to promote in the deanery the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical”*; a very wide ranging remit!

1.2 More recently our own Deanery (as legally required by the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007) has set up the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC). Among other responsibilities it has the particular remit of developing, and then overseeing the maintenance and updating, of the Pastoral Plan for the Deanery. This Plan will be concerned with the allocation of resources within the Deanery (stipendiary clergy, self supporting ministers, readers etc) and will also set out the Deanery’s policies with regard to the possible reorganization and grouping of parishes as vacancies arise. But, more than these questions (important though they are), the Mission and Pastoral Committee believes that it is fundamental that the Pastoral Plan should also articulate a wider vision, some over arching framework, of the key aims and aspirations for the mission of the Deanery, and our parishes individually and collectively, to guide and inform this more detailed work of resources allocation and collaboration.

1.3 In developing the Pastoral Plan it is essential that there should be close collaboration and dialogue between the Mission and Pastoral Committee and the parishes within the Deanery, so that what emerges has a collective ownership and is firmly rooted in the realities of parish life.

1.4 To that end, parishes were asked in 2011 to appoint two Parish Representatives to work collectively with the Committee to help shape the Pastoral Plan, and to act as channels of communication with PCCs. It was suggested that the Parish Representatives should comprise the incumbent and a lay person (probably, but not necessarily, a churchwarden). Provision was made to enable a benefice to appoint a single lay Representative to represent all the parishes in a benefice if this was judged most appropriate. Whoever were appointed as Representatives, it was made clear that the key requirement was that the Representatives should understand their parish situation and aspirations and be truly able to represent their parish.

2. Meeting with Parish Representatives: September 2011

2.1 The initial meeting between members of the Mission and Pastoral Committee and Parish Representatives was held on 7 September 2011. Not all parishes were represented at this meeting. After a general briefing about the profile of the Deanery, the meeting split into three groups to consider issues around resources, ministry and mission. A wider range of detailed views and ideas emerged which will be helpful in informing the Committee’s work.

3. Taking the Process Forward

3.1 The initial meeting with Parish Representatives was valuable in initiating the dialogue, bringing all present up to speed with where we are as a Deanery, and identifying specific areas for investigation. **Nevertheless, the Committee feels it is necessary to hold this work within a prior question and to seek first the mind of Synod members on what might be the core values and understandings that we would wish to hold in common as a Deanery. What is the “big picture” within which the details of the Pastoral Plan can be developed?**

3.2 In terms of stipendiary clergy numbers, the working assumption which the Diocese has given to the Deanery is that the current total of 11.5 posts will be maintained for the next five years (subject to the key proviso that the Share required from parishes to fund the Diocesan Budget is forthcoming). This should not necessarily imply *status quo*, and as a Deanery we need to be alert to fresh priorities and new opportunities for taking forward the mission of the Church – for example, the innovative approach taken with the recent vacancy at St Barnabas, Winchester, where instead of making a full time like for like stipendiary replacement the post has been rethought with a reduced parochial component to enable the appointee to be also a wider resource to parishes in the Deanery as Adviser in Adult Discipleship. There may well be other opportunities for such “out of the box” thinking.

3.3 The Committee also suggests to Synod that there is a need for us to be honest with each other about the realities of our current common life within the Deanery. There are a number of challenges in constructing a coherent vision for our Deanery and we will not make progress unless we acknowledge them. Among these realities are:

- The relationship of Christ Church with the remainder of the Deanery – this is not intended as any sort of criticism, but simply to note the differences in understandings of church life and the differences in viewpoints between a very large gathered church like Christ Church (drawing its members from most if not all parishes within the Deanery and from much further afield) and the far more parochially rooted structure of the rest of the Deanery; as well as the substantial disparities in size, financial strength and confidence which flow from this. There is a need for a two way sharing of understandings here.
- The Deanery is not homogeneous and the relationship of the rural parishes in the north and south of the Deanery to those in the City and its suburbs is weak.
- The relationship between the Cathedral as “Mother Church of the Diocese” (with its large gathered congregation) and the remainder of the Deanery presents particular opportunities for collaboration both ecumenically and with parishes in the Deanery.
- Within the City Centre the parishes have ecumenical relationships of more significance than those with the other Anglican parishes in the Deanery and this affects the dynamics of collaboration (note too the relationship between Mission Winchester and Churches Together in Winchester which further complicates the ecumenical picture).
- The clergy’s engagement with Deanery affairs is key to the involvement of parishes; but the level of this engagement varies, and in some instances is slight.

Are these fair comments and, if so, what can we do to change the situation or construct a fresh narrative?

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3.4 Among the questions posed to Parish Representatives at the September meeting were:

- What resources might your parish wish to share?
- What attracts people in your area to Jesus and to your church?
- What might ministry in the future look like?

3.5 The views of Synod members are particularly invited on what they perceive as the underlying values and aspirations behind such questions. What values should we as a Deanery seek to hold in common? It is from these that practical collaboration will flow, and which the Pastoral Plan will then seek to enable.

3.6 In terms of timescale, as the next stage in this process, the Mission and Pastoral Committee will be meeting Parish Representatives again on the evening of 18 April; and it is anticipated that the draft Pastoral Plan will be brought to the Deanery Synod for discussion and approval at its meeting on 17 October, prior to submission to the Diocesan Northern Area Pastoral Committee on 29 November.

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For the DMPC
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