



Woodbridge Deanery Synod

<https://www.woodbridgedeanery.org/>

Minutes of the meeting of Woodbridge Deanery Synod held at 7.30pm on Thursday 8th February 2024 at St Mary's House (main hall) Woodbridge IP12 4LP

26 people attended: 5 Clergy, 21 Lay Representatives. There were 11 apologies.

1. Rev Giles Tulk, Rural Dean, welcomed everyone and thanked St Mary's for providing refreshments. Giles also welcomed Archdeacon Rich to the meeting.

2. Rev Nigel Prior led the opening prayers.

3. Deanery Vision, Issues, Engagement. – followed by questions/discussion.

Archdeacon Rich opened by mentioning impending changes following the news that Giles would be leaving for a new appointment in the Diocese of Hereford after Easter. This, with the recent departure of Katrina Dykes created a challenge of attracting 2 new priests where there are currently 11 existing vacancies across the Arch deanery. This sadly reflected a national picture due to a paucity of applicants and highlighted the need for creative parish profiles and positive experiences for potential applicants as part of the selection process. The personnel changes have also slowed the consultation process for the future organisation of the Benefice.

Archdeacon Rich thought that there were opportunities to improve the sharing of good practice between parishes and learn from each other's experience and take some occasional risks, but a highlight of his job was witnessing the dedication and commitment of individuals in the pursuit of keeping their parish churches going enabling them to evolve and grow in the future.

Key planned activities this year included:

- Celebrating the role of the Churchwarden – a meeting is scheduled at Sizewell Hall
- Growing Younger Conference – planned for the autumn to tell the story of children's projects to support learning
- Generous Giving Conference

Questions

a. *What is the strategy for tiny churches? Should they be encouraged to survive or close?*

Archdeacon Rich indicated that Bishop Martin had stated that no churches should close and that any strategy could include the merging of PCCs within a wider Benefice, the transition to a Festival Church and the sharing of Treasurer Accounts with another PCC.

b. *Should the future organisation of the Benefice be agreed before the appointment of a new Team Rector and the role of the Rural Dean?*

Archdeacon Rich suggested that the current organisation was a recognised and legally constituted team which couldn't be unpicked in the timescales and any appointment would include pre-vacancy meetings with Churchwardens across the Benefice. The Rural Dean was in the gift of the Bishop who would write to and consult with licensed clergy.

c. *Is encouraging risk taking often crushed by the structure of the Church?*

Archdeacon Rich conceded that legally bound changes are more difficult to achieve and the large size of the Wilford Benefice would mean changes take longer due to numbers of personnel, geography etc.

d. *Bishop Mission Order – can this be expanded?*

Archdeacon Rich suggested contacting Sally Gaze at the Lightwave community for further details. The meeting identified a range of activities in their parishes such as pop up shops, Children's' days, village choirs, joint Services, lightshows etc. where attendance was aimed at the wider community.

e. *Is there a case for expanding Livestreaming of Services?*

Archdeacon Rich noted that post-Covid, livestreaming is still operating in some locations for midweek and children's' Services.

Archdeacon Rich concluded by saying that coming year would bring much change, and that that the last 12 months had been the most challenging of times in his role as Archdeacon and thanked the meeting for their help and support in fulfilling his role. He also thanked Giles for all his hard work and leadership in the Benefice over the last few years and wished him well in his new role. The meeting unanimously agreed.

Giles and the meeting attendees thanked Archdeacon Rich for his time and for coming to the meeting.

4. Apologies - received from Gill Reidy, Rosie Evans, Philippa Hamlyn, Gail Minter, Rev Paul Hambling, Clive Willetts, Karen Upson, Stephen Stammers, Poppy Bird, Jane Pilchford, Rev Mandy Reynolds

5. Minutes of the meeting held 19th October 2023 – These were agreed and signed.

6. Matters arising from the minutes – None

7. Financial Update – Mary Hare said Clive Willetts could not be at the meeting but read a short report from him. The key points were that the Deanery had performed well with 92.5% of the Share received. Sterling efforts had been made by all Parishes with only one needing assistance. Clive wished to thank all Treasurers and PCC members for their efforts.

8. Eco Church – Rita James updated the meeting on the Eco Church Survey with 11 out of 36 churches in the Woodbridge Deanery having registered (31%) and 3 achieving Silver status and 2 Bronze status and the remaining 6 registered but not having submitted the survey. Giles suggested that the meeting should aim to increase the target to 50% registered by 2025. Rita said all resources are available online below and Rita can be contacted at ritajamesstmarys@gmail.com and can assist with placing event information on the website.

Links to the Woodbridge Deanery website are included here: <https://www.woodbridgedeanery.org/>

The environment and net zero carbon webpage - <https://www.woodbridgedeanery.org/environment-nzc>

The Eco Church information page - <https://www.woodbridgedeanery.org/ecochurch-information>

Events within the Deanery that may be of interest - <https://www.woodbridgedeanery.org/deanery-events>

9. Suggestions for future guest speakers – Rev Charles Trefusis suggested future speaker slots should support plans to develop and grow the Deanery, linking Mission and pastoral activities and agreed to meet with Mary to plan how this could be achieved.

10 Bishop Lent Appeal 2024 – Full details of the 2024 Lent appeal can be found at: [Bishops' Lent Appeal - Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich \(cofesuffolk.org\)](https://www.cofesuffolk.org/bishops-lent-appeal)

11 Parish News - The refurbished Church room at St Andrew's Melton is now completed following donations. Usage has consequentially increased and is a useful resource across the wider parishes. The meeting agreed that the room and facilities were greatly improved.

12 Future Deanery Synod 2024 dates – Thursday 6th June, Thursday 10th October.

13. AOB

- Giles reported to the meeting that Mary Hare had received an invitation from Buckingham Palace to attend the Royal Maundy Service at Worcester Cathedral and receive Maundy Money in recognition of the work she has done in the community and Church across the years. Mary thanked Giles for his work and support over the last few years.
- Mary reported she had received a thankyou card from Linda Cooper.

14. Giles closed the meeting with a prayer at 8.55pm