

Bruton & Cary Deanery



Minutes of the Meeting of Bruton and Cary Deanery Synod held via Zoom on Tuesday 29th March 2022 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Revd Kevin Rogers	Area Dean
Dr Rob Sage	Lay Dean
Mr Jeremy Pratt	Deputy Lay Dean and Secretary
Mrs Rosemary Rymer	Treasurer
Other Members of House of Clergy	2
Other Members of House of Laity	20
Revd Jill Perrett	Deanery Accompanier
Wendy Hester	Schools Chaplain
Other PTO Clergy	0
Other Readers	1
Other Guests	4

Apologies for absence were received from: Joanna Durham-Matthews, Revd Katharine Hawksley, Peter Leavold, Jane Martin, Harold Clarke, Philip Skelhorn, Revd Frank Wright, Susan Hartnell-Beavis, Alan Hoskins, Preb Rose Hoskins, Buff Powell, Canon Brian McConnell, Alice Cleaveland, Revd Alison Way, Jen Richards, Preb Mike Vockins, Lynda Payne, Camilla Graham, Leni van Klaveren and Marion Chapman.

- 1. Welcome and Introductions.** Revd Kevin Rogers welcomed everyone and introduced the meeting, before handing over to Rob Sage to chair the meeting.
- 2. Opening Worship** was led by Sandi Kiddle from Templecombe and included the message that the Lord brings life to the barren places, the hymn 'Great Are You Lord' and readings from Isaiah 43:1-7, 18-20 and Isaiah 54:1-7.

3. Enabling Ministries

Julia Hill, Diocesan Head of Deanery and Parish Support, explained that "Enabling Ministries" is a project which she and others will be taking forward at diocesan level over the next few years. She works closely with Jill Perrett, our Deanery Accompanier. She mentioned that "Enabling Ministries" is not a new concept; rather, it is about the calling of all God's people, about sharing ministry, about being a presence. It is really our DNA, being very much about determining the right "shape" for our ministry, adapted according to our gifts. This is not something to be imposed. Moses represents a good example; his father-in-law told him to stop trying to do it all on his own.

So two culture shifts are required: firstly, people living out their faith daily; and, secondly, ordained and lay people working together in mutual support to each other.

She then posed the question: how can we have shared ministry, using gifts that exist in and beyond the church? Determining the answers is what this project is about. Words and ideas are not enough. Given – amongst other requirements – the need to survive in the future with fewer clergy than hitherto, there is a certain urgency to move things forward. It would be facile to pretend otherwise.

Julia made the point that the impetus for this project is not COVID or lack of money; it is what God is calling us to do, to be a presence in every community – and this is not new. He is present in the world. He calls us; we are reminded that the church doesn't exist for itself but is there to serve the world, and that God calls us to new places; we are not promised the status quo. That should be a source of life and joy and not give rise to a feeling of pressure and overwork.

All that said, we are not promised an easy ride; indeed the road ahead may be difficult.

Julia introduced an online poll. We were asked whether we believe that God is present in the world. There were four choices: yes, no, sometimes, yes but not here. It was reassuring that 100% of those present voted for “yes”.

Up to now we have been using the term “Focal Minister”. That is still broadly the direction of travel. But it is not our headline any more. We want to do something more organic, from the ground upwards – based on any community, whether village, town or school – or some other team. Building on good practice that already exists. Creating a shared ministry that plays to our various gifts. It might or might not be the vicar who leads. The model will be “oversight ministry”.

But how do we do that? Given the challenge of reducing clergy numbers, the temptation will be to fill the gaps, to replace what we have now with something not dissimilar. Julia mentioned that she and the team are there to help us move forward. Some resources exist to that end.

So Julia posed a question to us: “What makes a Christian community, what gifts are there, what does our community look like, how well does our church represent the different threads in our community?” Put another way, what does the “thread” look like for each of us and our communities, where is the “God thread”, where is it not reaching, how might we together provide this Christian presence, the “God thread” that weaves throughout all the community.

Synod split into Breakout Rooms to consider three questions:

Question 1: What encourages you?

Answers included:

Living here – there is a strong sense of spirituality in this region.

That we have the opportunity to discuss these questions.

We were in Vacancy for 9 months. We now have had a Vicar for a year, but when we were in Vacancy, we repaired our roof, and had Church warden led services.

Another Church warden said that he and his colleague, led church services, using the book of common prayer, during almost two years of Vacancy.

The feeling was that even without a member of the clergy, or Readers, the church could still have services, and carry out repairs.

The fact that everyone at Synod felt that God was present in Bruton & Cary Deanery was encouraging - although it was felt that might mean different things for different people.

To be able to look at how ministry will be resourced differently, as worried about the strain on one vicar running a huge number of parishes.

In one benefice there is an attempt to reach out to people and what emerged from a coffee morning has now evolved into organising ‘markers’ for the year. This whole experience of finding her gifts and stepping out in faith has surprised her.

It's all about life – making the most of it.

We were all encouraged by the thought that God calls everyone and gives us gifts which we can use. We had noted the number of people who did things they had not thought they were capable of.

We all had quite a few clubs in our communities.

Links between Churches and Schools were prominent.

Question 2: Do you have any questions?

Answers included:

Will the support be adequate?

What are we going to do about sermons?

What is the Church doing via the Diocese, to help us lead services at lay level?

We can't wait three years for this to happen.

Was it possible to work with other groups in the community in supporting refugees from Ukraine? This was felt to be an opportunity to make connections with other groups in the community – just as the pandemic had presented opportunities to work with others who shared in some of our Christian values – such as caring for those in need and showing kindness to those who were struggling – even if they didn't always see those values as being Christian.

Was Enabling Ministries restricted to activities that went on in the church or was it much broader – using the gifts of God’s people to connect with our communities?

We’re told that things have got to change but there’s no clarity. It’s more disconcerting for the clergy because it’s their livelihood.

What about ‘them at Wells’? Have they lost touch?

We talked about the new housing developments going on over Somerset and how do we as a church reach / welcome in these new people and how do we show them the love of God?

Question 3: Do you have any suggestions?

Answers included:

Church wardens would like training courses led by the Diocese, to enable them to take services when necessary.

Take time to do an analysis/audit of the groups in your community and see where you already have connections and identify the gaps where there are no connections. It was noted that we often have good connections with groups that older people belong to, but less connection with groups that younger people are part of.

Beware of labels, as people may find these off-putting. Example - when reaching out to communities some use the term evangelist which may not be helpful.

We continued to talk about the new housing estates and we wondered if welcome packs could be left in estate agents or local Facebook pages for the area could be looked at and utilised.

General comments included:

Communion by extension by Lay Readers – used to be permitted, now less readily permitted – which is a shame.

LWA – people have got used to lay leadership of worship, but people do like to go to communion.

People don’t value the amount of time LWAs put in to preparation.

Lay led bible study group already up and running.

Enabling Ministries is already happening?

Enabling ministries sounds wonderful on paper but is challenging in practice, as in rural parishes there are several elderly with no energy or will to explore new giftings.

It was noted that people are using their gifts but don’t want any change from what they are already doing.

The very elderly are just wanting to go to worship in church and have no energy or motivation for anything else.

One participant noted that the chaplain who was the subject of the video to which we had been given the link was much younger than the majority of our congregations.

With congregations consisting largely of retired people, and with the benefices in prolonged vacancy, it was more difficult to find encouragement, and the necessary jobs were being shared among a small number of people, all of whom were tired.

The concept of shared ministry was a good one, but in practice it was hard to connect with younger people.

We applauded the work Wendy was doing in the school context.

With time running out, we mentioned projects like re-wilding churchyards, which were a good point of connection with the community and a younger age-group.

We’ve all been go-to people. We need different people doing different things.

Some of this doesn’t feel very helpful – it looks like a fire-fighting exercise.

Without a minister it’s about keeping things going – more people taking on responsibilities.

What next?

There are decisions to be made and there will be a reduction in clergy numbers that will touch each deanery; that will be clearer in the next two months. It is not about letting people go; rather, it is about reconfiguration and we all need to play our part.

- Have conversations locally and the feed your thinking into deanery level. That is where the decisions will be made in the next one to five years from now.

- Support is available from support services: including from Caroline Bruce and Rob Walrond (Deanery and Parish Development advisers for Wells Archdeaconry).
- Look at “Enabling Ministries” on the Bath and Wells website.
- Incumbents, Churchwardens and Deanery Synod Representatives were encouraged to sign up to a workshop that will help educate on how to use resources, as follows:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=pmobfwCRBE20OeGHO2pcCyV1z0Y9WONEnoGTcOdUSYVUOTBSQjM5SE5EMEFOS0paUDdLUzBOQ0c5Mi4u>
- Also, have a look at the video that Julia showed: <https://vimeo.com/679150668>

4. **Previous Minutes.** The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4th November 2021 were approved (proposed by Jane Jeanes, seconded by Charles Oulton).

5. **2021 Annual Reports.**

- a) Deanery Synod. Rosemary Rymer presented the report and accounts. There had been minimal expenditure and minimal income. There were no questions. The report and accounts were accepted (proposed by Nick Armstrong, seconded by Eric Deyes).
- b) Deanery Ministry Fund. This supports Readers and others who are undergoing training. There had been no requests for grants in 2021. At the end of the year there was £1,900 available in the fund. There had been 1 request for a grant so far in 2022 to help with training for a new reader. Income might come from the offering at the Deanery Ascension Day service. The accounts were accepted (proposed by Jane Jeanes, seconded by Linda Mumford).

6. **2022 Deanery Subscription.**

It was agreed that no Deanery Subscription be charged to parishes in 2022 (proposed by Revd Kevin Rogers, seconded by Deirdre Loftus).

Rosemary Rymer said that she would only be continuing for 1 more year as Deanery Treasurer. Revd Kevin Rogers extended sincere and deep thanks to Rosemary for her excellent work, on behalf of the deanery.

7. **Area Dean's Notices.**

- a) Vacancies.
- i) Cam Vale. Revd Katharine Hawksley had resigned from the end of March 2022.
 - ii) Milborne Port with Goathill and Charlton Horethorne with Stowell. The advertisement to recruit had gone live.
 - iii) Six Pilgrims. House for Duty posts were still on hold so there was a wait to find the Diocesan plan.
- b) Curacy. Revd Anna Creedon, curate at the Camelot parishes, had moved to Cornwall and was continuing her curacy there.
- c) Schools Chaplain. Wendy Hester was still very well received by the schools. Synod were encouraged to pray for Wendy and for young people around the Deanery.
8. **Closing Prayers.** The meeting closed with a time of prayer and the grace.

Next Deanery Synod Meeting – Wednesday 8th June 2022, 7.30 pm at North Barrow Village Hall