

# Bruton & Cary Deanery



## Minutes of the Meeting of Bruton and Cary Deanery Synod held via Zoom on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 at 7.30 pm

### Present:

Revd Kevin Rogers	Area Dean
Dr Rob Sage	Lay Dean
Jay Greene	Deputy Lay Dean
Mrs Rosemary Rymer	Treasurer
Mr Jeremy Pratt	Secretary
Other Members of House of Clergy	6
Other Members of House of Laity	26
Jill Perrett	Deanery Accompanier
Wendy Hester	Schools Chaplain
Other PTO Clergy	2
Other Readers	3
Other Guests	12

**Apologies for absence** were received from: Revd Tristram Rae Smith (Assistant Area Dean), Revd Anna Creedon, Leni van Klaveren, Revd Helen Drever, Jane Martin, Nick Armstrong, Susan Hartnell-Beavis, Sue Kellagher and Kate Benson.

**Introductions.** Some of the members who were new to Deanery Synod introduced themselves:

Revd Elisabeth Isted had been at Castle Cary & Ansford for 5 weeks.  
Helen Hamlet was Deanery Synod Representative for Charlton Musgrove.  
Roger Cowley was Deanery Synod Representative for Goathill.  
Martyn Brown was Churchwarden for Charlton Musgrove.  
Nigel Blower was Churchwarden for Hornblotton.  
Heather Beadles was PCC Secretary for Compton Pauncefoot.  
Joanna Durham-Matthews was Deanery Synod Representative for Wincanton.

1. **Opening Worship** included the hymn 'I heard the voice of Jesus say', a reading from Luke 10:38-42 and a responsive version of Psalm 121.

2. **School Chaplaincy Update** – Wendy Hester

Wendy was working in the 3 secondary schools in the Deanery: Sexey's School, Bruton; King Arthur's School, Wincanton and Ansford School. She had been chaplain for 18 months which hadn't included much time outside the pandemic. Despite the pandemic there had been real blessings. With her medical background she had been able to join Covid testing teams in the schools. Some after school clubs were running again, but at times Wendy had had to work from home. She hadn't expected to be sitting with a student whose father had died with Covid.

Anxiety levels were high. Wendy asked Synod members to pray for God's love to flow through these school communities.

3. **What our Churches may look like post Pandemic**

Two documents had been sent out with the agenda:

Discerning Ministries – a vision for local ministry

Discerning Ministries – a guide for exploration

these documents were pilot and draft – a work in progress which were being refined

Revd Jane Chamberlain, Diocesan Head of Mission for Ministry, gave a presentation, which included a video from Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York which is available at:

[Vision & Strategy | Archbishop Stephen Cottrell - YouTube.](#)

A copy of Jane's slides are circulated with these minutes.

During Jane's presentation, Synod split into Breakout Rooms to consider two questions:

Question 1: What resonates with you and what challenges you about the idea that God calls everyone?

Answers included:

"What resonates with you?"

No matter where we are in our lives, and over many years, we can be called to different roles and exciting opportunities. Group members gave personal examples.

A feeling of "this is where I am meant to be".

If you are alert, you will see calling everywhere, even in small events and "coincidences".

"What challenges you?"

Calling is a privilege and responsibility but can also be relentless – constantly being an "ambassador for the Lord".

Can be difficult to express one's faith in different contexts.

Fear of failure.

Can be heard differently at different times or seasons in your life.

Being open to having new roles, doing new things, taking new qualifications – having the courage to think you can do it.

Knowing when is the right time to lay something down and accept the challenge of moving on.

Those with experience may have filled various roles within the parish and the deanery.

Our calling changes, but people get trapped in a role.

Like the whole idea of movement in the Christian Pilgrimage.

Where does a vacancy leave the Churchwardens? Perhaps open to where God is taking us.

God uses our gifts.

One person felt that the notion of God calling everyone was nonsense and that the most important thing is to look after churchgoers properly.

Another felt that the Holy Spirit reaches everyone, that there is a call from God in everybody.

Discernment is not easy – it takes time, support and wisdom from others.

There are many different ways of doing God's work.

There was a difference of opinion on what we mean by Church – some thought the building, others thought the institution, others thought the people.

Everyone agreed that too much time was spent in looking after the building when the focus should be on people and faith.

Churchgoers are facilitators that can encourage people to respond to God. Often people with skills are waiting to be asked.

Traditionally it has been a struggle to be a lay person – the Church needs to give more freedom from structure.

Church on Sunday feels disconnected from everyday life Monday to Saturday. It needs to be more relevant to people.

There are many opportunities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Cary Cares was a local initiative that included church and non-church community.

We need to find ways to harness and build on the good will and community spirit during the lockdown.

Sharing personal experience resonates with people. The rector's sermons are more effective when he shares his own life stories.

We should create opportunities to listen to people, and not preach.

The group were excited by the idea that God calls everyone and noted that our calling can change depending on the situation we find ourselves in.

We felt that God's calling was not limited to major roles such as a Reader or a chaplain, but often came in the form of responding to people's needs – and the lockdown had provided plenty of opportunities to respond to this calling.

It was felt that we needed to have a broad vision to see the different ways in which people are called and the range of giftings that they have.

Examples of such "smaller" callings included providing transport to hospital; helping someone with the practical details of a bereavement; making space in our working day to allow people to talk; organising innovative ways of maintaining social contact such as outdoor coffee mornings.

On reflection it was clear that all the members of the group had a calling to the pastoral care of others around them in one form or another – although that wasn't explicitly stated.

The group struggled to find anything challenging in the idea that God calls everyone; although it did note that our callings can contain their own challenges – such as when someone we are helping dies.

A good idea that each church has its own person to go to.

What about the skills? Training?

Not altogether happy about taking the focal minister leadership role, but would prefer to be led by an incumbent.

Agreed with the vision from Stephen Cottrell, going back to basics. Feeling the church may have lost its way in terms of Mission for Evangelism. Need to take stock and ensure Mission for Evangelism is effective, and not simply throw money at it.

Would like the option of having a Vicar and Reader going forward. And to select these people ourselves.

Running services is very important to us.

What about the option of developing Bible Study leaders to compliment the services?

What resonates:

This is always what the church has taught.

Everyone using the unique gifts that God has given us.

Each individual is uniquely called to do what only they can do.

Faith is whole life.

Disciples were a good example of being gifted by God for what was needed when they needed it.

We will find purpose in serving our neighbours.

This is exciting!

Important to encourage a belief in everyone having a calling.

Everyone contributing by playing a part (including commitment to praying).

Simpler, humbler and bolder spoke to us.

What challenges:

Not many doers currently.

Getting more people involved gracefully.

Making sure of the motivations of the heart – why we are doing what we are doing.

The idea of 'every member ministry' was generally accepted by the group.

One participant was part of a benefice which hadn't had a stipendiary minister since the late 1990's.

The parishes were happy to help out but felt they needed a central figure to do the 'vicar stuff' – i.e. to give overall guidance, be an outside figure looking in and help to be the moral compass.

Another participant commented that churches need organising and that they can't be church on their own. A central figure is needed although it doesn't matter who.

Another participant was part of a church in a hamlet. Although there was a Priest in the benefice the group worked together to run the church.

Another participant commented that the people who come to church are mainly elderly and that young people don't come.

The final point was a question – we've spoken about the church building, but what about spirituality?

The people are the church. How can we be shaped by Jesus' priorities?

## Question 2: Where is focal ministry already happening? And how is this working?

Answers included:

During a recent vacancy, many people worked together – roof repairs, communication with church members.

The pandemic has brought many new opportunities for church members to take on new roles and actually increased the number of worship opportunities in some places.

The "go-to" people of a parish are already focal ministers.

The future of the Church should include far more collaboration and learning from each other.

Worries about losing the key role of the priest as teacher and leader. The priest is the leader but could/should someone else "chair the board"?

The legalities of being an incumbent are onerous and the responsibilities rest on the vicar's shoulders.

Who will bring the sacraments to the parishes?

Oversight ministry: which clergy would want to take this on as it will have so much admin in it?

Examples were given of focal ministry in action (a person started as a Lay Worship Assistant and then trained as a Reader and could be seen as the focal minister in her village which works well but has its limitations – would her more inclusive café church style be better in a different setting?

Other models of shared ministry include expanding the role of the wardens to support the focal minister. The downside of having a local lay person is the issue of trust and confidentiality: could you have a deep conversation with someone who was up to then an everyday acquaintance? How would you feel when you saw them later? The vicar is preferred because they come as an outsider.

Sometimes parishes know what they want but do they know what they need?

What happens when the focal minister moves on? Will the diocese help us to find another person?

Various people are seen in their communities as the focal person.

There were concerns about having a focal minister for a single parish rather than the benefice.

It's already happening with the Reader and Retired Priests.

With a vacancy there is a chance for development.

This is new language – we need to get it across to the people that they are already doing it.

A lot of Churchwardens are focal ministers.

There could be a problem with the title in the same way that a lot of pastoral people don't want to be Lay Pastoral Assistants.

It's a joy watching a ministry team work as a team.

A wide acceptance that Focal Ministry is already happening.

Once place had 3 readers who are recognised as focal ministers, others had retired clergy fulfilling the role. It was thought possible that lay involvement could be a stretch but that people could be willing with support.

One spoke of a very good team ministry across 6 parishes which was a stretch for the rector as every church wanted a service every Sunday. Another of an excellent Reader alongside a recognition that we are all ageing. One reported that she is about to join a team ministry as a lay person.

There is a need to connect church to people's everyday lives.

One positive aspect of the changes through the pandemic is a willingness for lay people to be involved in being the church.

We cannot rely on one individual to be a focal minister. In our village a lady arranged all the church activities, but as she got older there was no replacement.

Young women are working or bringing up children and do not have time to dedicate to focal ministry. Therefore, the functions of a focal minister need to be shared by a team of local people. Each person does what they can, when they can.

Community leaders are not appointed, they evolve over time.

Communities will come together for a cause – COVID-19, for example.

The existing model of Sunday worship is not appealing to prospective Christians – we need to take the church to people, instead of trying to bring people into a cold, stone building on a Sunday.

The burden of legal responsibility on the clergy is too great. In one village the burden was a shared licence and the lay persons were on a rota.

Examples were given of the chaplain being a focal minister within the school communities and of churchwardens providing a regular morning prayer service in a small church in a large benefice where there weren't the clergy and Reader resources to provide a service every Sunday.

Other examples were bringing people together for Coffee Mornings that provided social contact and providing the practical support for a Café church service led by the Vicar.

We need to accept that we are never going to go back to where we were. It does need some working around. We need to be realistic and aware of the options facing us.

We have to make the most of what we have.

Need to find relevant person(s). But it is quite a responsible role. Quite an ask.

I don't think people can step up in the way that the church might want. It is a lot to ask of individuals.

People want traditional services and sermons of good quality. And lay people by and large are not up to doing that.

Possibility of a big screen up in the church and thus have one of the inspiring preachers on the screen. Amazing people. Spread the word.

This is happening in small communities and in pastoral ministry already.

Easier to envisage in small discrete communities than in towns.

Vacancies can be a time when people step up more.

The 'go to' person is often already established – well known by a lot of people with the time, energy and passion to do this.

One participant pointed out the danger in using a bespoke model. The facilitator acknowledged this but explained that the context would be taken into account when looking at focal ministry.

It was commented that it was a chance for everyone to take their own particular strengths.

Focal ministry – specific ministry where skills added to passion could result in growing.

It was highlighted that the wrong people may well assume a role but that the right people may be overlooked because they may not seem to be the most obvious choice. This highlights the importance of the discernment process.

One participant said that churches can do things for themselves but there are dangers within this.

It was agreed that the role of the Oversight Minister will be particularly important for both discernment

and overseeing the parishes and their focal ministers.

Focal ministry provides an opportunity, it is exciting but certainly will also present challenges.

The discussion highlighted the importance of going back to basics. What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be church – i.e. the church is the people not the building. There are many faithful people who have served their local church for many years. They will need a lot of guidance and encouragement as they walk the journey to reimagine the church of the future.

#### **4. Deanery Business**

- a) Previous Minutes. The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 were approved (proposed by Revd Sarah Godfrey, seconded by Jane Jeanes).
- b) Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group. The Deanery Standing Committee had been renamed as the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group to bring it in line with the rest of the Diocese.
- c) Area Dean's Notices.  
Revd Elisabeth Isted was welcomed to the benefice of Castle Cary & Ansford.

Revd Marion Clutterbuck had retired from the benefice of Six Pilgrims at Easter due to ill health.

This was the last Synod for Revd Sarah Godfrey who was moving from the benefice of Milborne Port with Goathill and Charlton Horethorne with Stowell to the Golden Cap benefice in Salisbury Diocese.

The Archdeacon's Visitation would be on Thursday 10th June via Zoom.

5. **Closing Prayers**. The meeting closed with the grace.

**Next Deanery Synod Meeting** – Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 7.30 pm