

## Report on the Meetings of the Mowbray Deanery Synod 2019/2020

Before each meeting minutes from Deanery, Diocesan and General Synod, as well as finance reports are circulated by e-mail. At the beginning of each meeting there is the opportunity to visit the church in the parish hosting the meeting and refreshments are available with time to meet and talk to members from other churches and to catch up on what is happening elsewhere in the Deanery.

This year Deanery Synod has spent the majority of the meetings in group discussions. The topics have been:

- **Come and See Mission**

At the May meeting we put forward ideas for the Come and See Mission in our Deanery; what kind of events could be planned, what events might build relationships in the community, what follow-up could we offer to those who wish to explore faith?

In September we heard about the sub-group, headed by Rev Mary Rolls, Rev David Johnson and Rev Dianne Gamble, that had been formed to co-ordinate ideas for events and to offer training and sermons for the Mission.

Updates were given at the November '19 and January '20 meetings.

- **Deanery Plan Consultation**

At three of our meetings Mr David Smethurst gave presentations and organised discussion groups to highlight the need to develop a Deanery Plan and outline objectives for the plan.

The objectives are:

1. transforming the world: expressing love and caring for others, supporting the less fortunate, and challenging injustice and caring for our world
2. spreading the word of God widely, developing and nurturing Christian faith
3. enabling services of worship.

David has divided the objectives into 10 issues and discussions have taken place regarding each one. The 'issues' are: 1. Pastoral work, 2. Transformation: active engagement projects, 3. Transformation: environment, 4. Transformation: challenging injustice, 5. Approach to giving, 6. Promoting linkages, 7. Nurturing faith, 8. Mission activities, 9. Pattern and type of formal services, 10. Resources: matching to needs and resources. This work is on-going.

- **Setting God's People Free.**

Setting God's People Free is an initiative across the Church of England to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday. See <https://www.churchofengland.org/SGPF>

We also had a presentation from the 20s to 40s team on the progress and plans of this outreach - this project is now known as Multiply.

There is a Mowbray Deanery website.

There was an important meeting of the Deanery Synod (held by means of Zoom) on Monday 12 October. The subject of this meeting was 'Deanery Reorganisation'. All PCC members were invited to attend. The following is the text of the presentation that was made (PCCs are asked to comment and feedback on this) :

**DEANERY SYNOD Monday 12th October 2020 DEVELOPING THE DEANERY PLAN ...**  
**Possible changes to the structure & ways of working in the Deanery**

**RECAP ... emerging Deanery Plan OBJECTIVES:** 1. transforming the world: • expressing love and caring for others • supporting the less fortunate, and challenging injustice • caring for our world 2. spreading the word of God widely, developing and nurturing Christian faith 3. enabling services of worship

**RECAP ... emerging Deanery Plan KEY ISSUES**

**A. TRANSFORMING THE WORLD** 1. Pastoral work 2. Transformation: active engagement in caring 3. Transformation: environment 4. Transformation: challenging injustice 5.

Approach to giving 6. Links: promoting links

**B. SPREADING THE WORD** 7. Nurturing faith 8. Mission activities: making them more effective

**C. ENABLING SERVICES OF WORSHIP** 9. Pattern & type of services: making them more effective and sustainable 10. Resources: making best use, and matching resources to needs & priorities

**Making best use of resources: the need for organisational change?**

- specific issue: how should clergy/lay resources be organised in relation to parishes/geography?
- impending cliff edge of Diocesan finances - how many years away?
- brought closer by Covid implications of reduced revenues;
- we have a number of clergy vacancies - this is both a burden, and an opportunity for change;
- probably the hardest issue in the Plan? Has potentially greatest impact, with possibility of radical change.

**Responding to the challenge**

- how do we begin to tackle these issues?
- starting point: can we continue to operate as we have?
- best to develop our own local views - to feed into the likely externally driven debate?
- . is the status quo sustainable?
- . what other alternatives might be possible?

## STATUS QUO

- 7 benefices

- ★ incumbent
- ★ house for duty



### Advantages & disadvantages of status quo

#### PRO

- continuity - and thereby popular?
- familiarity - of approach, and individuals leading worship and looking after parish;
- more local recognition & identity - more local worship run locally;
- prospect of local tenure for incumbents - traditional security;
- little change required to implement (apart from filling 3 posts).

#### CON

- not affordable now, let alone future;
- involves and perpetuates use and focus on many buildings;
- inflexible - importing external support less easy;
- not resilient - loss of incumbent is major problem to overcome;
- individual clergy very exposed, and less easily supported;
- imbalance of resources between urban and rural parishes;
- urban/rural benefices becoming less cohesive & attractive to clergy;
- dependent on limited number (reducing) of key people.

### So what should we do?

- the Deanery Leadership Team (DLT) suggests that the status quo is not sustainable;
- if we accept that the status quo is not likely to be tenable - if not immediately, then very soon - then what else can we do?

. working together across the Deanery, and making the best use of our existing (limited) resources, will be essential

### **The alternative?**

- DLT suggests that there are two key elements in developing an alternative:
  1. the potential to group resources more effectively by operating in **teams**;
  2. the need to reflect and respond to our distinctive **urban and rural character**.

#### **1a. What might a Team structure mean?**

- clergy (stipendiary or not, parish or specialist) and lay people combine together within a team, covering a wide geographical area - wider than existing benefices;
- a team leader (senior clergy person) is likely to be necessary to co-ordinate and direct;
- the team can combine and use its many talents & capabilities to meet needs wherever and whatever they might be, and drive our wider mission.

#### **1b. Advantages & disadvantages of teams**

##### **PRO**

- most easily adjusts to resource availability (up and down);
- maximises use of skills & talents;
- easier sharing of resources/skills and matching with needs;
- resilient: team members can cover for and support each other.

##### **CON**

- most radical - and thus may be unpopular (at least at first);
- doesn't immediately recognise differences between urban and rural needs & opportunities (but see later ...);
- infrequency of support in individual locations - and perhaps lack of consistency;
- lack of local tenure; • most effort to implement - requiring perhaps interim solutions, and perhaps voluntary agreements /relinquishment of current clergy positions?
- most probably the need for a team leader - a new structure.

#### **1c. How many teams - and covering where?**

- achieving the advantages of teams requires consolidation - fewer is likely to be better than more;
- probably three teams (or more) would stretch resources too far: 2 teams is likely to be the optimum;
- geographically a north/south split is likely to be the most effective - including Northallerton in the north and Thirsk/ Sowerby in the south.

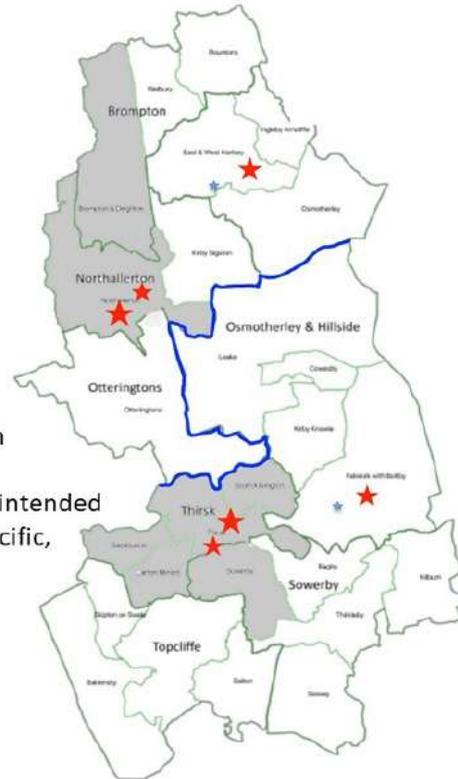
#### **2a. The urban & rural character of our area**

- whilst the Deanery has no cities or big towns, there is a wide range of settlements: market towns, villages with different levels of facilities, down to the smallest hamlet;
- our styles of worship and approaches differ throughout, particularly between the towns, with larger congregations (and more resources)- and the rural areas;
- how can we best support all these differing needs and aspirations?

#### **2b. Meeting the differing urban & rural needs**

- we could develop a dedicated rural team - but the scope to do so (meaning 3 or more teams) is likely to be limited;
- more realistically, a better approach might be to ensure that within each team, there is dedicated support, and identified contacts, with responsibilities for either the towns or the wider rural areas.

**a possible solution:**  
**TWO TEAMS**  
**- each containing an urban & a rural focus**



A notional north/south divide is shown, as an example and to promote discussion

The location of incumbents (stars) is not intended to be geographically (or numerically) specific, but to illustrate the principle of team working, but with team members having differing urban/rural emphases

**Conclusions & discussion points**

- do you agree with the analysis?
- can we survive with the status quo - could we make it work better?
- do you agree with the potential of team working? How would you see teams operating?
- can we best address our urban and rural differences by reflecting them in the ways teams would operate?

**Next steps**

- please continue to consider these issues, and in particular, share & discuss this PowerPoint and its ideas with your PCCs;
- the need to address our limited resources, and our ways of organising ourselves, cannot be ducked - everybody needs to be involved in deciding our best approach;
- be prepared to bring back your local/PCC views to the next Synod, in December.