

Annual Report for Sevenoaks Deanery Synod 2017-2018

Sevenoaks Deanery Synod held at St. Mary Kippington on 28th June 2017.

The main topic on the Agenda was a presentation on Parish indicators:

Mr Ambler explained his role is ICT Manager for Rochester Diocese. He gives software support, manages the IT structure and is responsible for Research and Statistics.

The Parish Indicator is a Deployment database designed to assist informed decisions by Area Deans. It is not planned to be issued to parishes. Rural Deans will now become Area Deans.

There will be large demographic changes in the Diocese over the next 30 years and population will grow. It is estimated Tonbridge by 26%, Bromley by 31% and Rochester by 43%. This is equivalent to creating 26 new parishes. There will be indigenous growth and large new housing developments. For example, in the Thames Gateway 67% of parishes will grow by 1000 people and 28% will grow by 2500 people.

Clergy retirement is progressing faster than recruitment needing re-deployment of resources and more involvement by the Laity will be necessary.

The Deployment Database will give a comparative view of Parishes for Mission not money.

Factors taken into account for preparation of the database include:

Annual parish returns, National data (2011 census), Local data input from the Archdeacon, Area Dean, & Diocese, Office for National Statistics, Deprivation statistics & Diocesan research.

The Deployment Database is not

- A decision maker
- A league table generator
- A Clergy appraisalment tool.

The data base will allow local clergy deployment, identify weaknesses and identify strengths

The ideal parish will have a membership of over 6000 people. Between 3000 and 6000 people the deployment of clergy is fluid.

Small village churches with less than 3000 people in the parish will be special cases

Items inserted in the chart will be subject to weighting adjustments

Sevenoaks Deanery Synod held at St. Botolph, Chevening on 18th Oct 2017 at 8 pm.

1. Address by the new Diocesan Finance Director, the Revd .Richard Williams.

The financial plans were linked with the new Strategic framework for the Diocese, entitled "Called Together". (More information from the Diocesan website or at <http://bit.ly/2zyvPa4>) .

This concentrated on three areas

- Growing Disciples
- Enriching Communities
- Resourcing our mission and ministry

This had grown out of the consultation parishes had been invited to be part of over the past year, "Our Conversation, Our Futures".

Financial Challenges for the Diocese.

- Parish pledge system. This was being looked at afresh. New ways needed to be found to enable parishes to contribute their fair share to the Diocese.
- Need to increase awareness of wider context and build trust across the Diocese so that parishes could share resources across the Diocese.
- As a Diocese we have been spending more than we have.
- Large Church dynamics. There were specific issues that needed to be talked through concerning a number of large churches within the Diocese.

Context for Financial discussions in the future.

- It will take longer than planned to achieve break-even budget.
- New clergy deployment tool (parish indicators).
- Predicted 40% growth in population in the Diocese. This presented challenges and opportunities for new mission and ministry.
- Cash flow situation was improving, mainly due to some development land being sold.

The forecast was for £0.54m deficit next year. This assumed that a 2.5% increase in Parish Offers from parishes.

There was a need to introduce Indicative Offers, so that parishes had a clear idea of what a fair offer would look like. A new Stewardship programme would be introduced over the coming months.

Key commitments

- Diocese would break even by 2020 (assuming an increase of 2.5% p.a.)
- Clergy would reduce by 5 stipendiary posts over next five years.

Rochester churchgoers gave an average of 3.2% of net income to the church, compared to a national average of 3.5%, despite being a richer area than most. There is a wide difference in wealth in Rochester Diocese, with churches in the northern part of the Diocese often struggling to stay afloat. Many of these parishes give well over 50% of income to cover stipends, leaving little to fund other church activities and needs.

2. Home for Good.

Billy-Jo O'Leary introduced the Diocesan initiative to encourage fostering and adoption.

(<http://www.rochester.anglican.org/home-for-good-.php>)

This was a partnership between Home for Good, which had originated in the Evangelical Alliance and Care for the Family, and Diagramma.

Billy Jo shared some of her own story of being fostered, and of the considerable impact on her of the difficulties she had suffered in her early life. She knew how important stable family life was, and felt that churches were very well placed to help provide a caring community around children going through tough times, and those who fostered or adopted them.

2740 children were in need of fostering or adoption currently in Kent.

She shared resources for parishes to support the Home for Good initiative.

Churches were encouraged to keep Nov 5th (or some other convenient date) as Adoption Sunday.

Resources were available to support this.

As well as encouraging new foster carers and adopters to come forward, Home for Good aimed to support those already doing this, giving support to them and to children who had been fostered or adopted in times of need.

A church in Bromley had already investigated becoming a "home for Good" hub. Foster and adoptive families were being drawn together into networks.