

Deanery Synod Report for APCM 2015

- 1) Synod was informed that, sadly, long-standing member Jim Cheeseman died on May 2nd after a period of illness. He gave faithful service in many capacities and will be much missed.
- 2) Lay members of Synod elected the new Lay Chair of Synod, new lay members of the Standing and Pastoral Committee and a new Secretary and a new Treasurer for the Synod
Brigadier Dobbie was proposed and elected unanimously as Lay Chair of Synod.
Existing Lay members Paul Lewis and John Colyer QC were proposed and unanimously re-elected as Lay members of the Committee
Terence Boxall volunteered to be a Lay Member of the Committee and was elected unanimously.
Michael Conacher was unanimously approved as the new Secretary of the Deanery Synod.
Ron Drury was unanimously approved as the new Treasurer of the Deanery Synod

The lay chair informed Synod that Mr Michael Conacher had come forward to be synod secretary and Mr Ron Drury synod treasurer. These were approved and it was agreed that the new secretary, treasurer, and the Rural Dean, Revd Mark Griffin, be additional signatories on the bank account.

- 3) Over the course of the year, we were informed of the work of the Diocesan Synod and General Synod including, of course, developments regarding Women Bishops, our own Bishop of Rochester, Rt Revd James Longstaff being chair of the Committee that ultimately were responsible for turning theory into practice.

- 4) Bishop James also came to Synod to outline draft plans for funding the work of the Diocese and Ministry in general; and our Parishes contributions towards it. (Note: this was later discussed at PCC and St Mary's Treasurer and Stewardship Committee have matters in hand).

- 5) Dr. Martin Hodson, Operations Manager of the John Ray Initiative which connects Environment, Science and Christianity and visiting Researcher in Environmental Biology, Oxford Brookes University gave us a talk on:

"Climate Change: is it an issue for the Church?"

The simple answer is "yes".

Whoever or whatever is to blame for such changes in our environment we all have a very real and urgent tole to play in making things better for ourselves, for others and for future generations. Individually, corporately, in any and every community to which be long and the church - St Mary's, Diocesan, National and globally - need to be modelling this as a priority.

- 6) The Very Reverend Dr Brian Castle engaged in a week long programme of visits to Sevenoaks Deanery.

He said that although he lives in Sevenoaks and knows the town well he had found the week of his "visitation" to Sevenoaks Deanery to be very inspiring and that people in all the churches were working very hard for Jesus.

He had met many young Christians in the schools on his programme. He was particularly impressed with the new Trinity School which has 220 pupils, including about 20 sub divisions of the Christian faith. They are using an office block in Riverhead at the moment but hope soon to move into their new school on the Wildernesse site. He complimented the Rural Dean and his team for arranging such an interesting and inspiring series of visits and was impressed by the lunches which had been provided. He was looking forward to meeting the 21 candidates being presented for confirmation this coming Sunday at St Mary's Kippington.

He said he appreciated that people in the South East are very busy but thought that a life style incorporating attendance at a church gives a good balance. Church can provide a refuge from the pressures of work and other outside commitments but some are put off from coming to church because of the fear of being asked to do too much too soon. There are not enough people willing

to contribute but once involved the burden can be shared and others helped who are struggling. Churches must be welcoming to outsiders and he considered that the standard prayers in the services are excellent but private prayers are even more important and deeper and extremely effective.

He has been surprised to learn that 40 families in an affluent town like Sevenoaks use the food bank at St. James' church. He pondered on why are the poor – poor and suggested that an injustice exists in society and inequalities need to be removed.

A general discussion with the Bishop followed, points made included:

- We have aging congregations and the urgent need for more young people to become involved was raised. Youth workers are needed but are hard to find and costly for churches. Suggestions were made that churches can combine to share and fund a Youth Worker.

- Various other ways for encouraging youth were mentioned by members.

A Brighton church asks children to come for breakfast between 9.30 and 10.30 then attend morning service. Gravesend churches fund a caravan twice a week so the young can drop in for a chat then attend a service in church. Chevening have a youth Service. Many churches invite the young people to part of the adult service before they go to junior church. Trinity School encourages outside contacts with young people

- Young people from RC and Anglican and other denominations should come together.

- Bishop Brian said that the ecumenical centre in Rome wants to make contact. Also the church at Taize in Burgundy attracts up to 5000 mostly young people of all nationalities to services.

- We must not forget the elderly in society. The forecast is that there will soon be over half a million over 90 years of age in the UK. The clergy are also ageing with 40% due to retire in the next 10 years and insufficient younger people are taking up a vocation. The Bishop was asked if there is a "plan B" He answered that the church needs to use more non ordained leaders, working in combined parishes with supervision from the fewer number of ordained clergy. - Extended communion could be used.

- The Bishop said Rural Dean Revd Mark Griffin is Diocesan & Deanery Adviser for fostering vocations. There is a Licensed Lay Ministry course available in the Diocese and an information on vocations day on October 3rd in Orpington. St Nicholas Church has an apprentice scheme.

- The Diocese is holding a conference in May 2015 on challenging poverty in our Diocese and there will be a DVD available on the subject for use in 2015 Lent Courses. Poverty is an international problem, especially in Africa.

- The Bishop pointed out that some Christians such as Monks and Nuns choose poverty and prayer. He brought the discussion back to the subject of prayer which he said alters us, makes us open to change and is very powerful in effect.

- The discussion concluded with the question:

"...when asked what are the reasons for believing how should we reply?"

The Bishop replied that there is general world movement towards de-secularising society with more believing the faith. Faith includes life in all its fullness for living, death and resurrection. God's revelation works through culture and through Jesus Christ.

MAB April 2015