APCM 2024 - Report on Stroud Area Deanery Synod for May 2023 to April 2024.

The Deanery Synod followed its normal pattern of three Wednesday evening meetings in the year (May, October, February). This year Jenny Bernard has joined me as a second deanery synod rep for St Mary’s. The Stroud Area Dean is **Revd Sue Murray**, of Bisley benefice; **Margaret Sheather** is Lay Chair of the Synod meetings. There is some regular business at each meeting in communicating updates on Diocesan and national synods, and “green shoots” - snippets of encouraging news- within the deanery, but the main interest is usually provided by a guest speaker.

Deanery Synod met on 10th May last year with **Rev Canon Dana Delap** visiting, and representing the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). She led a workshop session on creative use of church buildings and advocated early consultation with the DAC about ideas we might have for extending or changing the use of our buildings. There was also discussion of a motion formally tabled to be reviewed at Diocesan Synod, to reduce the period of “vacancy” after an incumbent leaves his/her parish. Several parishes in the deanery had recently experienced particularly long vacancies.

The Synod then met on 3rd October (n.b. I did not attend this meeting). There was discussion of the response received from Bishop Robert about filling clergy vacancies, and about difficulty that smaller parishes have in filling “officer” posts (wardens, secretary, treasurer). **Rev Simon Howell** gave an account of the Festival of Wonder now happening annually at St Laurence Church in Stroud, how it is funded, and what it aims to achieve in outreach. **Jennie South**, recently appointed Eco-ambassador for the deanery, gave a presentation about her role and what she is hoping that individual churches will do to support sustainable living. There followed some discussion and feedback, about the challenges the topic gives us.

The most recent meeting was on February 7th this year at which **Lisa Gardner**, Diocesan Director of Finance presented her role, her organisation, the activities she is responsible for, and the financial challenges the church faces at Diocese level. There is a group working to devise a new method of calculating the Parish Share that each Parish is asked to pay, which is mainly for funding of stipendiary clergy. This new method has not yet been published (as of now in April) but I can’t help feeling that our challenge remains that, in the medium-to-long term there has to be more money raised or there will be fewer stipendiary clergy.

If anyone is interested in being Deanery Synod representative, do have a word with Peter.

Andrew Pemberton, lay representative from St Mary Woodchester

3rd April 2024