

Bruton & Cary Deanery



**Minutes of the Meeting of Bruton and Cary Deanery Synod
held at North Barrow Village Hall on Tuesday 21st March 2023 at 7.30 pm**

Present:

Revd Kevin Rogers	Area Dean
Dr Rob Sage	Lay Dean
Mr Jeremy Pratt	Deputy Lay Dean and Secretary
Mrs Rosemary Rymer	Treasurer
Other Members of House of Clergy	7
Other Members of House of Laity	28
Revd Jill Perrett	Deanery Accompanier
Wendy Hester	Schools Chaplain
Other PTO Clergy	5
Other Readers	2
Other Guests	18

Apologies for absence were received from: Revd Tristram Rae Smith (Assistant Area Dean), Roger Cowley, Julie Ebsworth, Tim Chater, Camilla Graham, Russell Hamblin-Boone, John Deverell, Revd Rosy Ashley, Sue Deyes, Marjorie Payne, Sophia Tayler, Helen Corney and Ginnie Deverell.

- Opening Worship** was led by synod members from Milborne Port with Goathill and Charlton Horethorne with Stowell. It was from Evening Prayer on the day when the Church remembers Thomas Cranmer and included a reading from Exodus 3:7-12.
- Previous Minutes.** The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10th November 2022 were approved (proposed: Jane Jeanes, seconded: Peter Leavold).
- Presentation of Options for Pastoral Reorganisation.** Rev Kevin Rogers advised that the aim of this meeting was to discuss the recommended options which were sent out prior to the meeting and for members to gain an understanding so they can discuss these options with their church community. Any alternative plans/options and comments will be required by the DMPG prior to the next meeting at the end of May to enable these to be looked at prior to the DMPG sending a final recommendation to the Deanery Synod at the July meeting for approval.

Rob Sage provided the background to the re-organisation, which was due to financial issues within the Diocese. An expected deficit for 2022 was predicted as £1.2 million, however the actual figure was £2.2 million. The Diocese does not have many unrestricted reserves and is down to about 6 weeks' expenditure. The response was a 5-year plan, which we are 1 year into, to save money. The main expense had been identified as the stipendiary clergy and therefore the plan included a reduction from 178 to 150 clergy in the Diocese - which means reducing the clergy posts within the Deanery from 8½ to 7. Last Autumn the DMPG looked at objective criteria to assess what options were viable. Using adapted criteria based on how the Diocese allocated clergy to Deaneries, this was agreed as: 46% Congregation, 36% Population, 15% No. of Churches and 3% Church Schools. From this a fraction of the 7 clergy people we have was allocated to each parish and the DMPG then sought to create benefices which are as close as possible to 1 clergy person each. Possible benefices were identified by coloured coded maps. The DMPG looked at all possible ways to re-organise the Deanery. There were 8 main options with 3 to 4 sub-options for each one totalling 21 possible options. Following a consultation with the Clergy Chapter, the DMPG reduced the options to 4 main options with 1 variation on each option and these were sent out to Synod reps and PCC Secretaries. Rob Sage advised he would briefly go through the options with questions on completion.

Option 1 – The aim was to get as close as possible to 7 equal Benefices all with a score on the criteria as close to 1 as possible. To do this we added Six Pilgrims to Castle Cary. The Camelot Parishes were split apart with North and South Cadbury joining the Cam Vale Benefice; Compton Pouncefoot and Blackford joining Milborne Port; Maperton, Holton, and North Cheriton joining Henstridge and Templecombe, and Bratton St. Maur and Yarlinton going to Bruton. The ½ time post also had to be split with Charlton Musgrove going to Bruton; and Stoke Trister and Cucklington to Wincanton.

The benefits to this option are the 7 Benefices are almost all the same size and we don't need to use any House for Duty (HfD) posts. The only issue with this option is that Bruton would become a large Benefice with 7 parishes and 9 churches. An option could be to keep Charlton Musgrove with Stoke Trister and Cucklington, adding it to the Wincanton Benefice. That would mean Wincanton becoming a large Benefice, scoring 1.2 on the criteria. However there would be a good case for keeping a HfD post at Cucklington to support the incumbent at Wincanton.

Rob Sage noted that there were 3 HfD posts in the Deanery – Six Pilgrims which is currently vacant; and Batcombe which is currently vacant and which we were hoping to use as a spirituality post for the Deanery although this is now unlikely to go ahead. The Camelot parishes had a HfD post, which was now being used to fund the school chaplain. The Diocese has set aside 18 houses for HfD and ½ time posts and our Deanery has a good chance to get 1 HfD post or possibly 2 if a strong case can be made. It is unlikely the Deanery would get 3.

Option 2 – This was not considered to be a viable option. The DMPG looked at the possibility of retaining the ½ time post at Charlton Musgrove, Cucklington and Stoke Trister however the issues were:

If you have one ½ time post, you must have another to make up the 7 which means you need an extra house. Creating another ½ time post somewhere leaves extra parishes to be absorbed by another benefice, which would probably need another HfD post. In addition, Charlton Musgrove, Cucklington and Stoke Trister are not that large a benefice (scoring just over 0.3 under the criteria) and would therefore need to add extra parishes added to them to create a ½ time post. Finally, if you keep these parishes as a benefice, you don't have any to add to Wincanton and Penselwood leaving a benefice which would struggle to support a full-time post financially.

Option 3 – This started out with a suggestion from North Cadbury. They would like their own Benefice of North Cadbury, Yarlinton, and South Cadbury to become a HfD post. Several issues arose with this suggestion, one being that a HfD priest is usually someone looking to retire and letting go of the full requirements of an incumbent, such as dealing with complex pastoral or legal issues. It would also be difficult to explain to the Six Pilgrims why their HfD post was being taken away and given to North Cadbury. It would also leave Cam Vale as small benefice. These issues would be addressed if Cam Vale were combined with North Cadbury, Yarlinton and South Cadbury. You would then have an incumbent looking after the Benefice and a HfD post assisting. There are good reasons to have the incumbent at North Cadbury which has a large wedding venue and a Church School with a HfD post in the current Cam Vale benefice.

Option 4 – A further suggestion from North Cadbury was that if they couldn't have their own benefice, they would like to join Castle Cary. There are a few issues with this; particularly what to do with Cam Vale - as it is a small benefice (scoring 0.67 under the criteria) and there are not many options for adding other parishes to it. You could combine Cam Vale with Six Pilgrims but that would make a 12 parish benefice. However, the DMPG feel that Option 4 should be considered. As with the other options being consider the variation is to add Charlton Musgrove to Wincanton instead of Bruton.

Options 5 & 6 – The rest of the Camelot parishes apart from North Cadbury would like to stay together. Camelot on its own is a viable Benefice as it is one of the few Benefices in our Deanery which pay enough Parish Share to cover the cost of a clergy person. However it's position in the middle of the Deanery makes it difficult to organise pastoral re-organisation around Camelot. The DMPG looked at various options:

Option 5 – Joining Castle Cary and Bruton together – this requires a HfD post at Six Pilgrims, and another in Castle Cary and Bruton as it is a large benefice. Charlton Musgrove, Stoke Trister and Cucklington would then have to join Wincanton which creates a large benefice needing a HfD post. This this option would require three HfD posts which we are probably not going to get. The other issue is that there will be large benefices in the north and small benefices in the south.

Option 6 – looked at the possibility of creating **two** benefices out of three in the south of the Deanery – Cam Vale, Milborne Port and Henstridge, but this presented similar problems. Charlton Hawthorne can be added to Cam Vale but there is no direct route between the benefices making it difficult to travel to and this takes it away from Milborne Port which it has connections with. Adding Milborne Port to Henstridge creates a very large benefice and leaves Bruton in the north as a small benefice. As a result, this was not felt to be a viable option. It was possible to add parishes to one side of the Camelot Parishes and take them away from the other side to balance the benefices either side a bit - but the DMPG did not think this was enough to make this a viable option.

Option 7 – Having a concern for rural parishes, Revd Tristram Rae Smith had an idea whereby all rural parishes were placed together in a Team Ministry. This would be approximately 30 parishes with three clergy working together in a Team Ministry. The advantages would be working together and being able to specialise in different areas focusing on their skills and calling. However, this could present problems in setting up and if it didn't work it would be very difficult to unpick everything and therefore was not considered as a viable option.

Option 8 – An alternative to Team Ministry is Group Ministry. Each clergy person has their own Benefice and is licensed to work in other Benefices within a group. You could put 2, 3 or 4 Benefices together which allows clergy to work across Benefices and specialise to a certain extent, sharing the workload and possibly resources, for example utilising Readers of one Benefice with another Benefice who has no Readers. Several other Deaneries planning pastoral re-organisation are considering the possibility of Group Ministry and it may be something we may wish to consider as an option.

Having run through all options for our Deanery the next step is to take this information back to your parishes to consider at PCC/APCMs and come back with any thoughts or other options prior to the next DMPG meeting which is being held on 30th May 2023. This will then enable the DMPG to prepare one option for the next Deanery Synod meeting in July 2023 to hopefully be agreed upon.

Questions and Answers.

Q – Have read all the options and it feels as though we have accepted that we are managing decline. The Church has £10.2 billion – why can't we go back to Central Church and ask for more money?

A – Rev Kevin Rogers advised that Matthew Pinnock is the Diocesan Head of Finance and to forward any financial questions to him directly.

Rev Kevin Rogers advised we should not work from a deficit model – what don't we have, but what do we have. We have very gifted people in our parishes, both Lay and Ordained, and therefore need to explore this further.

Q – Speaking from a small parish, there is no doubt that we struggle to keep growing the church and the ramifications of losing our dedicated Rector is fundamental to our ability to grow our church in our small parish. What would the re-organisation mean to our ability to have a clergyman for our Sunday Services. We only meet for a Communion Service once a month and therefore could that continue, or would we be forced in with a larger urban parish and also would it dictate the type of service the incumbent could provide?

A – Jill Perrett (Deanery Accompanier) explained her role to encourage looking at other ways of doing ministry. We need to look at re-imagining from an asset base of what we have. Rev Kevin Rogers advised that every parish is unique and has its own profile and hopes and these will be worked out with the clergy person/people who will eventually be working in and around these parishes. This is a piece of work which needs to be done further down the line.

Q – What evidence do we have that by reducing the number of clergy will increase income?

A – Rev Kevin Rogers advised that understanding that a clergy person brings people into the church and therefore increases income is not a direct correlation and the church is not seeing that. We are living in changing times of a post Christian modern society however trying to continue as a Victorian church and the Victorian buildings are holding us, but there is more. Eg, church with Business people who understand finances and marketing. These are gifts which we are looking for to raise income and encourage people into the church. People in the community are leaders in their fields with contacts and connections to bring people to church and allow the clergy to do clergy work.

Rob Sage added that it is not just a question of clergy bringing in an income – clergy cost money (£53,000 a year per clergy person).

Q – Why does the church spend vast amounts of money on maintaining old buildings the old way instead of using new products for repairs?

A – Rev Kevin Rogers advised the Rep to raise this question with the Diocesan Church Buildings Advisor directly.

Q – There seems to be no fundamental changes from the Victorian model to 2023. We are still dealing with small parishes who cannot pay and leaking buildings. Cannot see how this current model will stop the hemorrhaging of money. There appears to be a disconnect between us and the wealthy National Church.

A – Revd Kevin Rogers advised that church buildings are not assets that can be disposed of, and they cannot be just sold or maintained in new ways as most are listed. Agreed that this question should be promoted at Diocese level – “Are we making good use of our Business Acumen?”

Q – Expectations upon each priest seems enormous and unfair. With the re-organisation has the Diocese got any Lay Ministry training to support us?

A – Jill Perrett advised that there are pathways of support given to Readers, Lay Worship Assistants and Lay Pastoral Assistants, however we need to grow more and would encourage ideas of different ways of equipping people.

Q – Taking just 7 ministers and trying to spread them out is so diluted. Rural parishes do not want someone they don't know to take a funeral service, they want someone who knew the person.

A – Rev Kevin Rogers advised we need to look at what are the things which are part of the clergy role and what is not, eg Business Managers to work alongside the clergy.

Q – Concerned how we just seem to be dividing up the parishes into sections without looking at natural groups who will share. The re-organisation will break up bonds.

A – Rev Kevin Rogers advised that these structures we are talking about are purely legal and not necessarily cross minister. We must look at how we work together forming those communities and must be nurtured irrespective of structure. We are relying on communities to say that they work well together and are going to continue.

Q – Why get rid of HfD posts as they are cost effective?

A – Rob Sage advised that the problem is the capital investment required to have a HfD post. The Diocese is making ends meet by selling houses as it is the only way it can cover its costs. It may seem cost effective to have a HfD post but to tie all that money up in a house is not viable now. If you can show how, you will be severely hampered without a HfD post, we can fight for it.

Q – Why not with this re-organisation ask the churches to discuss amongst themselves so that the options are coming upwards rather than being imposed from above?

A – Please put suggestions/options to us by 30th May 2023.

4. **Refreshments.** Thank you to Jane Jeanes and to those from Charlton Musgrove who served refreshments.

5. **Finance.**
Parish Share.

Rosemary Rymer advised that in 2021 the Deanery overall had paid 95% of its Parish Share.

In 2022 the Deanery overall had only paid 89% of its Parish Share. 31 parishes had paid in full, but 9 parishes had paid nothing.

2022 Annual Report.

a) Deanery Synod. There had been a deficit of receipts over payments of £180.12 in 2022. The main expenditure had been the hire of the hall for meetings.

b) Deanery Ministry Fund. There was a balance of £1831.73. This was available in the form of grants to lay people for training.

The Annual Report was adopted (proposed: Eric Deyes, seconded: Linda Mumford).

6. **2023 Deanery Subscription.** Due to the balance the Deanery held still being greater than that outlined in the reserves policy, Rosemary Rymer recommended that no Deanery Subscription be charged in 2023. This was readily accepted by Synod.

7. **2023 Elections to Deanery Synod.** Jeremy Pratt outlined the process for the elections of lay representatives to Deanery Synod for 2023-2026, which would take place at the 2023 APCMs. On 22nd December 2022 the Diocese had sent PCC Secretaries details of how many representatives each parish could elect, and a form which should be sent to Jeremy by 7th June 2023. Anyone on the Church Electoral Roll of the parish could stand for Deanery Synod. Those elected would serve on Deanery Synod from 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2026. Lay Deanery Synod members are automatically *ex officio* members of their PCC for the 3 years. In view of the importance of the July 2023 Deanery Synod, it was hoped that all 42 parishes would return the form to Jeremy, even if it was a blank form to say that no representative(s) had been elected. If any parish was unsure of how many representatives they could elect, or needed another copy of the form, they could contact Jeremy.
8. **Area Dean's Notices.** Upcoming events are listed at the bottom of these minutes.
9. **Closing Prayers.** Revd Kevin Rogers closed the meeting in prayer and with the grace.

Deanery Ascension Day Service – Thursday 18th May 2023, 7.00 pm at Wincanton Parish Church

**Visitation – Wednesday 7th June 2023 at Castle Cary Parish Church
Signing in from 5.45 pm; Service at 7.00 pm**

Next Deanery Synod Meeting – Wednesday 5th July 2023 at 7.30 pm