

Notes of the Tower Hamlets Deanery Synod – 10 July 2014

7.30pm at Raines Upper School

Attended by 13 clergy and 24 laity

The meeting was chaired by Andy Rider.

Welcome

Brian Ralph opened the meeting and spoke about his role as Chaplain at Raines School. Pastoral services are provided to the young people and also the teaching and support staff. Chapel Mass is held twice a week and there is a strong Christian Union presence, with many trips organised to China, Sweden and the West Bank.

Brian led us in prayer.

Introduction

Andy Rider thanked Brian and welcomed all the new members of Synod. The Sub-Deans (Brian Ralph, Rod Green and Jane Hodges) identified themselves and it was explained that these sit on the Deanery Standing Committee. The lay members of that Committee were also identified (David Longbottom, Ruth McCurry, Elizabeth Marshall and Hayley Clark). Andy welcomed Alexandra Lillie, the new Curate at St Paul's Shadwell, and also advised those present of the role of Tracy Miller as the Deanery's representative on the London Diocesan Board for Schools. Five minutes of 'buzzing' followed whereby attendees introduced themselves to those around them.

Andy went on to explain the purpose of Synod, namely to create a fellowship in the locality and to work together to identify strategic opportunities in Tower Hamlets for mission and ministry. Another function is to elect governors to church schools. Members were asked to bear in mind that it can be difficult to find people suitable for the role and, should they know anyone with appropriate skills, to direct them to the LDBS or Tracy Miller.

The matter of electing a new Lay Chair to Deanery Synod was then discussed. David Longbottom, the current Lay Chair, had now reached the end of his three year term of office and it was time to elect a new Lay Chair. The Standing Committee had made a recommendation that David be re-elected for the short term, just until new members had had time to settle in and until the current strategic work was completed in September. Andy recommended this to those present with a view to holding fuller and more informed elections later this year.

Members discussed the ramifications of the above recommendation as there was concern from laity that they need to own the process regarding lay elections. Members split into the two houses (Clergy and Laity) to discuss further.

House of Laity Discussion

Some members of the House of Laity felt uneasy about not having a full election for Lay Chair, whether that be because they were new to Synod or whether they be concerned about procedure. Ruth McCurry emphasised that this had been recommended as a short term solution and that David Longbottom had

been planning to stand down. However, given that the strategic work was still ongoing and to give new members the opportunity to get to know fellow Synod members, it was felt to be a sensible way forward. Hayley noted that the role does require commitment and that succession planning would be wise. Elizabeth advised that the Standing Committee is not elected, but is appointed by the Dean. No lay members present expressed a wish to stand. Philip Rice noted that a fair point had been made about process, but that a compromise needed to be found. **The re-election of David Longbottom as Lay Chair was proposed by Barbara Perrot and seconded by Stephen Beer.**

House of Clergy Discussion

The Clergy gathered in the Raines Chapel and heard a little more from Brian about his work there and the life of the school. Members discussed and affirmed the fact that we have three sub-deans chosen to represent different clusters and traditions, who with the Area Dean give thought to the life of the chapter and with the laity comprise the Deanery Standing Committee.

Andy welcomed members back together and was informed that David Longbottom had been re-elected. **ACTION: Andy to provide a link to the Church of England representation rules regarding Deanery Synod specifically for new members. The next meeting will have opportunity to reflect on our own local life together.**

Credit Champions: Presentation by David Barclay - Contextual Theology Centre

David spoke briefly about the Contextual Theology Centre, a charity based at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, and its work in helping churches engage with the community. David explained his role there in heading up work on credit unions and their role in providing more ethical access to money than via the banking system. A focus of this work is the Church Credit Champions Network (CCCN), which was launched earlier this year. The purpose of the Network is to increase access to responsible credit and savings by bringing together local churches and community finance providers like credit unions.

David spoke about the need of lots of people for short term credit. 61% of the population have no savings and 74% would not be able to find £200-300 cash should the need arise. The tightening of lending controls by banks and credit card companies has led to the rise of many short term lenders often charging more than 5000% pa interest.

The community finance sector is very small in the UK compared to other countries. The London Community Credit Union is an example of a local organisation. Credit unions work by using the deposits of savers to make loans at a typical rate of around 2% per month. The Contextual Theology Centre has been working to promote the use of such credit unions amongst churches, as it is an ethical model which may help address many of the Bible teachings about money and economics and alleviate need. Although many churches are already active in this area by providing debt and money management advice, it was felt that a more strategic approach was needed to boost sources of affordable credit and hence the launch of CCCN.

The aim is to increase the number of churches engaged in financial issues and to train 'credit champions' in churches to research and support responsible credit unions. David asked members to be open to finding out more about this work and concluded with the following:

- 1) **Connect** – contact David for more information.
- 2) **Listen** – hold a Money Talk in your church to listen to the Bible and to people’s experiences of borrowing and saving.
- 3) **Learn** – attend one of our Credit Champions training sessions.

A Q&A session followed with many questions asked. **ACTION: Andy to circulate the link to the Church Credit Champions Network (CCCN).**

Strategic Conversation

Andy distributed a presentation outlining the Deanery strategic work that had been done and setting out the conclusions of that work to date, namely the three strategic aims identified of **collaboration, innovation** and **learning**, and the associated operational aims (see presentation). These three areas will form the basis of the September Synod meeting but Andy welcomed input in the meantime. Members were asked to consider the following:

1. Where else could we collaborate?
2. What else could the Deanery innovate in order to reach out?
3. What learning would equip us best for church life and mission?

Five minutes was spent in small groups discussing the above. Andy asked that any ideas/thoughts be emailed to either himself (arider@ccspitalfields.org) or Dawn (dawnbiggsby@yahoo.com) for consideration at the September Synod.

Conclusion

Members were advised that the dates of the next four Synod meetings, as well as notes of previous meetings, are on the website - www.thcofe.org.

David Longbottom closed the meeting with prayer.

The next Synod – Tuesday 23 September 2014 at

The Royal Foundation of St Katharine

Deanery Strategic Conversation V - ‘Three Strategic Aims - Setting out together’