

## Notes of the Tower Hamlets Deanery Synod – 25 March 2014

7.30pm at St Mary's Church, Bow

Attended by 10 clergy and 19 laity

Sung Evensong led by Rev Debbie Frazer. The meeting was chaired by Brian Ralph.

### Strategic Conversation III

Debbie opened the strategic discussion by introducing a slide presentation by Dan Nilsson DeHanas of the University of Kent detailing ten cross-community integration issues in Tower Hamlets (population change; hard to reach groups; school segregation; parks and public spaces; social inequality; extremism; fear/crime/ASB; social networks; funding cuts; gentrification).

Brian then recapped on the strategic work carried out by the Synod to date, namely the mapping exercise at St Peters and the contextual analysis presentation at Christ Church.

Rod Green spoke about the wider process of consultation and collaboration with the Deaneries of Hackney and Islington. Now it was time to use the information from the contextual analysis together with our own local knowledge, to build on the Diocesan vision and form the strategy for Tower Hamlets. Rod explained that the culmination of this strategic work will be the Area Clergy Conference in October, where each Deanery will outline its strategy and the Bishop will respond.

Rod advised that the Chapter had recently met to discuss strategic matters and set out the Chapter's thoughts:

- The Capital Vision 2020 framework is helpful
- The contextual analysis needs to be brought up to date
- It is recognised that in Tower Hamlets we need to be bold
- A creative and varied response is needed to new developments and population movements
- Team work and collaborative ministry is valued
- Better communication is needed
- Investment in laity is needed
- Local churches need to be empowered in interfaith matters

**Attendees split into two groups – the House of Laity and the House of Clergy – to consider two questions:**

**a) What should be our priorities in Tower Hamlets over the next few years?**

**b) How might we achieve these over the next five to seven years?**

Discussion within the groups took place for half an hour and the Synod re-grouped to present findings. The lay members had formed into two groups to facilitate discussion and so feedback was received from Philip Rice and Ruth McCurry as follows:

**Philip Rice presented the priorities identified:**

1. Outreach (identifying what works, particularly given high rate of churn);
2. Parish boundaries and how to cross them;
3. Working better together (clusters; use of community centres; flexible use of church buildings and equipment; targeting a particular group, eg evening services for 20-30 year olds or Messy Church for families).

**Ruth McCurry presented the priorities identified:**

1. Finding new ways to reach young people;
2. Maintaining contact with people who have been in church for baptisms/weddings/funerals (eg, Valentine's Day or All Souls 'reunions');
3. Understanding each other better, particularly other faiths;
4. The clergy trusting lay members to manage churches (and not micro managing);
5. Supporting each other more, including the housebound;
6. Being visible in other settings, eg at work, social clubs, etc.

**The clergy priorities were presented by Jane Hodges:**

1. Being more visible in the public domain (eg local authority/health/education), knowing when to take the lead or support what is already in place and speaking out with a prophetic voice;
2. Engagement in schools, both faith/community schools and primary/secondary;
3. Health and wellbeing;
4. Being part of a worshipping community (baptisms/weddings/funerals) and proclaiming the love of Jesus - this being the basis of growing faith;
5. Aspiring to be more diverse and better represent our communities;
6. Aspiring to be an inclusive church;
7. Visibility in the community, eg open up church buildings, clergy to wear dog collars!

Brian thanked all those present for their input and also thanked Debbie Frazer and the choir.

**The next Synod – Thursday 10 July 2014 at Raines Upper School**

**Deanery Strategic Conversation IV, including David Barclay 'Credit Champions'**