

Notes of the Deanery Synod – 12 March 2020

7.30pm at St Luke's Millwall

Attended by 9 clergy and 10 laity (concerns about Covid-19 and restricted movements were alive)

1. Welcome

Rev Ed Dix opened the meeting with Psalm 71:1-8, followed by a moment for individual prayer.

Andy Rider welcomed the Bishop of Stepney, Bishop Joanne, as well as Synod members old and new. The retirement of Hayley Clark as Lay Chair was announced and attendees thanked her for a service with a round of applause.

2. Our Deanery Strategy

Following on from Capital Vision 2020, which focussed on starting the journey to becoming more confident, compassionate and creative, work has begun on thinking about what the church should be going forward – our Capital Vision 2030. We watched a video – [Listening to London, Listening to God](#).

We gathered as a Synod last year and asked for ideas. Over 6,000 responses were received, the same number of people who attend church in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Islington.

Andy presented some slides detailing population estimates and church growth in Tower Hamlets, alongside financial implications. The following is of note in the borough:

- There has not been much movement in the average Sunday attendance since 2013.
- The population estimates show growth in population of 16% over the same period.
- The percentage of CofE churchgoers is 0.53%, some 1,700 people.
- Common Fund costs continue to rise. Although Common Fund offers are going up, the shortfall continues to grow.
- In 2020, six parishes are giving more than their costs and six are covering their costs. All other parishes in the Deanery are being subsidised or supported in some way.

Andy closed with Acts 2:42-44 - The Fellowship of the Believers

Bishop Joanne spoke about how this news can make us competitive, but that we should instead look prayerfully and ask how God would want us to respond. As culture continues to change at speed, we need to find a language that all can relate to. We need to read the signs of the times, be bold in relation to the Gospel and develop a strategy to move forward.

We were asked to visualise a triangle. At the top is the point where every Londoner has the opportunity to encounter the love of God in Christ. At the bottom of the triangle is prayer and the inspiration this can bring. The middle of the triangle is populated by four priorities:

- Confident disciples
- Compassionate communities
- Creative growth
- Connected young people

Our challenge is to formulate a draft strategy for the Stepney area, being particularly mindful of diversity. This will feed into a London wide vision to be finalised in the autumn. Alongside this work, we also need to be aware of how this strategy will be fulfilled in practical terms. We need mission enablers, which may include the following:

- Safer churches – health and safety checks and safeguarding
- Finance and buildings – making the best use of the resources we have

- Partnership working – including links to churches of other denominations
- People and diversity – developing a new generation of leaders, particularly lay and SSM

Four discussion groups were formed, each taking one of the above four principles to explore. The following key points emerged.

Confident Disciples

1,700 people currently attending church is not an insignificant number and they can be an expression throughout London. The church family is a good setting to identify and develop leaders, with the priest/pastor equipping their congregations for growth.

Compassionate Communities

The Church is already known as being compassionate to and for its communities. We could develop more active partnerships with other agencies to tackle issues such as drug abuse, crime, isolation.

Creative Growth

We need to think outside the box and be more adaptive in approach and styles. Success could be the development of a varied ‘menu’ of activities. We need to be more representative of our congregations and empower lay people to develop their talents.

Young People

Young people bring fresh insights and energy and we should embrace them as leaders now. We could aim for a dedicated youth person in every parish to fund raise and disciple young people.

Andy thanked everyone for their contributions and finished with some thoughts of Bishop Sarah. Our actions are based in love and service. We need people to understand more about what we do, that we serve not to convert. Finally, we have a whole ‘army of Christians’ – the untapped resource of churchgoers.

3. School Governors

The following school governor was approved:

Governor	School	Proposed by
Chris Hilson	Christ Church Spitalfields	Andy Rider

4. Conclusion

Philip Rice advised that Raines School is launching its fourth appeal against closure. Richard Bray advised that Christians, not only Church of England, are exploring the idea of a free school if Raines closes as there is a desire to see a Christian secondary school in the area.

The meeting closed with Matthew 9:35-38 and a prayer from the Bishop Joanne.

Next Meeting: Summer Synod

To be arranged