

Notes of the Tower Hamlets Deanery Synod – 21 November 2013

7.30pm at St Peter's Barge, Canary Wharf

Attended by 10 clergy and 10 laity

Evening Prayer led by Rev Marcus Nodder. The meeting was chaired by Brian Ralph.

1. Since we last met

1. Two grants from the St Martin's in the Field Fund have been successfully awarded to individuals in the Deanery. There is still funding available and those present, including laity, were asked to think about anyone in their parishes who might be in need of financial assistance. Both grants awarded were for the sum of £250.
2. Three new Deanery governors have been appointed: Beki Rogers to St Saviour's Primary School; Isabelle Spencer to St Matthias School and Naomi Hiscock to St Paul with St Luke Leopold Street.
3. Raines School is currently seeking a member of clergy to become a governor. Angus Ritchie from St Peter's has shown interest but any others interested could still come forward.
4. There are now four clergy vacancies in Tower Hamlets:
 - a. St Paul's Old Ford – Philippa Boardman moved to a role at St Paul's Cathedral and James Hughesdon has done sterling work at the helm since her departure. Recruitment has been underway and on 26 November Bow clergy will be meeting the shortlisted candidates.
 - b. St Paul's Bow Common – Duncan Ross retired in October
 - c. St James the Less – Alex Logan has moved to a role as Lead Chaplain at Cumbria University
 - d. St Anne's Limehouse – Gordon Warren retired in October

Brian extended the thanks of the Deanery to all of the above.

5. Headteachers and clergy will be meeting on 16 January to get to know each other better.
6. Christ Church Spitalfields will receive two new curates next summer – one a stipendiary curate and one locally funded. Both have a lot of experience and long connections with the area.
7. Elizabeth Marshall has recently taken part in the national Deanery Chairs survey. Unfortunately Elizabeth was not present at the meeting but Hayley advised that the headlines will be published soon.
8. David Longbottom has served six years as Lay Chair of the Deanery. It will soon be time for re-elections and Synod members were asked to think about who they might like to represent them.

2. Strategic Direction

Brian spoke about the work underway to determine the strategic direction of the church over the next ten years in response to diminished church attendance and engagement. One of the ambitions of Capital Vision 2020 is to plant 100 new worshipping communities in the London Diocese. Tower Hamlets has a rich history of church planting in lots of different traditions. There were also initiatives such as New Ways and Fresh Expressions, which looked to invigorate participation.

Ric Thorpe, Ed Dix and Peter McGeary are part of the joint steering group for the Deaneries of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Islington and are exploring ideas of church planting in the Stepney area.

Ric Thorpe shared the experiences of church planting down at St Paul's Shadwell and Cris Rogers spoke about the Eden Team – a group of youth workers who have moved to All Hallows and are doing wonderful work in drawing new members to the worshipping community.



On 12 February 2014 there will be a three way Synod meeting facilitated by Alan Piggot to move the strategic conversation forward. At the recent Tower Hamlets Chapter meeting a mapping exercise was carried out to establish what communities exist now and to try and identify any gaps. It was important now to broaden that conversation out across the Deanery. The map was laid out on the floor and Synod members were invited to contribute to it by marking on important places, buildings and communities that they were aware of locally. The following thoughts arose:

- It is important to offer hospitality as well as prayer and worship.
- We should contemplate how we present ourselves as Christian people.
- People have many connections via their work, clubs, etc and these connections go across physical borders.
- Ministry goes beyond the bricks and mortar of church buildings
- St Luke's plant has no church building – they meet in a school. The church is the people.
- As well as smaller groups, we should also seek out centres of excellence, eg the arts at St John's.
- 'Maps' exist in our minds and these mental perceptions will also include invisible boundaries. There may be something to finding corridors of influence rather than simply a physical space for a new ministry or planting.

Synod members were asked to think about their own personal lists of places and connections and share them. Members were also asked to take these conversations back to their PCCs and get thinking.

3. Ordination of Women Bishops

Philip Rice shared the recent activity from General Synod regarding the ordination of women bishops. A proposal was put forward by a steering committee who worked out the parameters, including guidance for parishes which reject female ministry and the creation of an ombudsman to rule on disputes. The vote was overwhelmingly for the proposal (378 for, 9 against, 23 abstentions). The official vote takes place next year and it is envisaged that the first female bishop could be in post by 2015.

Philip also reminded members to consider applications to the Historic Places of Worship Fund as a further £1.5m tranche of funding is now available.

The next Synod – A Three Way Discussion about Strategic Direction together with the Deaneries of Hackney and Islington

Wednesday 12 February 2014 at Christ Church Spitalfields