

## **Report of the Sharnbrook Deanery Synod -- January -December 2019**

At February meeting Revd Sarah talked about Compassion and said it starts by accepting ourselves, as we are, flawed human beings. We should live fully in the present, not trying to change ourselves nor the situation, God's love and mercy is never-ending. We should learn to forgive ourselves, with all our failed humanity and wounded past. Once we have love and sympathetic feeling for ourselves, we can then start to look on others with compassion.

Under Listening to Young People's Project, Monica Bergh has been appointed part time adviser and the immediate aim is to make a space for young people to meet together (called "Our Voice"), to start conversations, for us to listen to the young people, let them feel accepted, give them an opportunity to do things together and allow them to discover that they need Jesus.

From the "Learning and Growing Together" workshop it was reported that all generations are involved in this festival, not only the immediate family of new-born Jesus, but also the aged Simeon and Anna. In our churches we are called to celebrate across the generations. It is important that adults within the church carefully consider their attitude to children and value them for who they are, belonging to the family, part of the mission, part of the church here and now.

At the June meeting Keith Williams discussed the Parish Share Factor (PSF) and attendees were advised that costs across the diocese are going up, income going down. As our churches have an ageing population it will be difficult to maintain the same level of expenditure and clergy numbers across the diocese in future years, unless more money is forthcoming. Each parish is only asked to pay 60% of the annual cost of each clergy post and the 40% remainder is raised across the deanery as part of the Mission Support Contribution (MSC) to which each parish is also asked to contribute.

September meeting again focused on Parish Share and the Archdeacon Dave addressed the meeting beginning with a thanks to all for the hard work in the parishes. He has been blown away by the commitment, dedication and creativity he has seen. Income of the Diocese is £15.5 million of which 85% of this is raised by the parish share and the balance from glebe lands, central church funds and other sources. 89% is spent on parish clergy (so therefore it is subsidised overall for the Diocese).

Revd. Tim Wilson explained the BIG conversation. It is part of the Living God's Love strategy supporting the 2025 vision. During 2020 a group of 80-100 people will be going out to PCC's to encourage and explore the BIG conversation i.e. 47% of congregations are over 65 years, the biggest gap is from young adults and middle aged. 'Growing Younger' is the message and they will discuss with PCC's how they are already encouraged as well as how they can continue to encourage

In November Keith Williams commented that the way the Parish Share figures are presented was unclear and possibly misleading and needed improvement. He also concluded that this Deanery's requested total was fair when compared with other deaneries, and therefore should be accepted.

Revd Paul Davies (Bedfordshire Church Growth Officer) said from the Renewal Quiz completed at the last Synod, as a Deanery the overall score indicated 'we help the Vicar to be the church' which he felt was encouraging that congregations recognise the responsibilities borne by the vicar and want to offer support so the church can flourish and grow. The goal is where people recognise church as being the whole people of God". The Church has elderly members who have high quality input to offer, although may be less in terms of time and energy and also, they have much wisdom and experience to use and pass on. We need to move from 'going to church' to 'being the church' and from being 'worshippers' to being 'disciples' and from 'following the light' to 'being the light'.

Jacqui Wright and Cliff Turner spoke about their initiative 'Church as a refuge' which is raising awareness of abuse, especially when perpetrated by church leaders, and offering support to survivors.

Dates for Sharnbrook Deanery Synod Meetings 2020 – 17 Feb, 15 June, 21 Sept, 16 Nov.  
Derek Hayhoe Synod Representative 18/01/20