

# STOKESLEY DEANERY In the Diocese of York

## Minutes of the Deanery Synod held at St. Mary's, Nunthorpe Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 7.30 pm.

**Attendees: Clergy:** Revds. Tessa Stephens (Area Dean) Kate Brown, Liz Brown, Brenda Forrester, Ben Gunter, Anne Heading, Geoff Jaques, Vanessa Kirby, Darren Moore, Laura Wild. **Lay:** John Dickinson (Lay Dean), Liz Taylorson (Secretary) Bob Ardley (Treasurer), Carol McGee, Malcolm Granville, Frances Brown, Linda King, Sally Hamlin, Margaret Lawrance, Judy Hall, Sarah Weyell, Roy Parsonage, David Heading, Astrid Wood, Haley Durant, Christine Young, Linda Smith, Diana Baker, Julia Ardley, Jenny James, David Hand, Avril Rhodes, John Rhodes, David Local, Local, Nick Land. **Guests:** David Young, Phil McBride, Jan Grey.

### 1. Welcome and Prayers (Revd. Tessa Stephens, Area Dean)

### 2. Apologies for absence

**Clergy:** Revds. Jon Dean, Marie Edwards, Nik Stevenson. **Lay:** Ken Taylor, Linda Wells, Richard Besford, Nick Land, David Yates.

### 3. Minutes of last meeting (4<sup>th</sup> June 2024)

Unanimously accepted.

### 4. Accounts 2024 and Budget 2025 (Bob Ardley, Treasurer)

See **Appendices 1 and 2** (Accounts and summary of Budget).

The Deanery Accounts for 2024 have been (informally) Examined by Sally Hamlin, Synod Rep at St Peter's, Hilton.

Income: All Deanery Levies (covering 38 Reps) have been received.

Expenditure: All cheque payments have been cashed: three payments to Nunthorpe PCC for the Deanery Secretary's pay; 15 book-grants to LLM (Readers) and ALMs; and reimbursement of the "Wordpress" subscription for the website. The opening and closing balances were: 1st Jan 2024 - £2,469.23; and 31st Dec 2024 - £2,019.23

A draft Deanery Budget for 2025 has been circulated to Synod Members for approval at the Synod meeting. The Draft Budget shows an increased cost for the Secretary's pay (2025 - £1,005; cf 2024 - £850) as proposed by the late Brian Dinsdale, previously Nunthorpe PCC Treasurer, and agreed to by me on behalf of the DLT. These figures are net of a £500 grant from the Diocese.

I propose that for 2025:

- the Parish Deanery Levy continue the same as for 2024 at £50 per Rep allowed in the Parish, irrespective of the number of Reps elected; and
- the book-grant for LLMs and ALMs continue the same as for 2024 at £45 per LLM/ALM (You will note that there is one few ALM this year; Liz Brown at Ingleby Barwick was ordained Deacon in 2024 and will be Priested later this year.

Acceptance of Budget and Accounts: Proposed by John Dickinson, Seconded by Roy Parsonage, unanimously agreed.

**5. Update on appointment of Assistant Area Dean**

The Bishop and Archdeacon have decided to appoint Assistant Area Deans and we are the first Deanery to have an AAD appointed – Revd Darren Moore from Yarm. As Revd Tessa Stephens will be on sabbatical from 21<sup>st</sup> April – 21<sup>st</sup> July this is a timely appointment. Revd Moore will be officially commissioned on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

**6. Generous Giving in Stokesley – a presentation by Phil McBride and Jan Grey from the Diocesan Generous Giving Team.**

A short but highly detailed presentation about the hows and whys of generous giving – its spiritual and practical sides. See **Appendix 3** for their slides. In addition to this content, they demonstrated some of the contactless payment devices available and the pros and cons of each model, and gave us some interesting statistics:

- Average QR code donation for the Diocese of York is £33
- Average contactless payment is £8.19
- However there are a much higher number of contactless donations made.
- Each contactless device averages an income of £2000 – however these figures are skewed by the earnings of 4 important churches, but the average for an ‘ordinary’ church is still £1000.

There was also some discussion of the ‘Cornerstone’ project to provide resources and tools to evaluate and support parish giving, with some interesting input from Yarm, who have already used this resource.

**7. Safeguarding – sharing parish perspectives. Carol McGee (Bilsdale) and Roy Parsonage (Kirkby)**

CM wished to report on the deep concern felt by the Parochial Church Councils of the Benefice of Ingleby Greenhow, Bilsdale and Kildale with Kirkby in Cleveland about safeguarding failures in the Church of England, and had agreed to bring the concerns to Synod with the aim of agreeing a motion to submit to the Diocese.

RP opened by reading a statement prepared and agreed by the Benefice (**Appendix 4.**) RP spoke on their concerns that although their parishes take safeguarding very seriously, serious lapses at management levels leave their PCCs feeling seriously let down. Confidence in the leadership of the Church has been lost, and they feel that there is a disconnect in communication between hierarchy and parish and a feeling that there is no urgency to improve the situation. He asked if other PCCs had raised similar concerns, or also felt that these matters should be raised with the Diocese.

Revd. Anne Heading, Vicar of the Benefice, expressed her support for the raising of these concerns.

Discussion followed, and points raised from the floor included:

- A general agreement that the ‘grassroots’ of the church were trying hard, but national leadership were not supporting us. We are the foundations of the Church and “If the foundation is not looked after, the pinnacle will collapse.”

- There was felt to be a lack of communication from the Diocese about how to deal with questions from parishioners and others. We need teaching and advice on how to steer those who are losing trust in our Church.
- Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) felt thankful for support from immediate colleagues (PCCs and parish clergy.)
- Those who have been victims of abuse are shocked and dismayed at the lack of progress and are haunted by the harms done.
- The “cover up” of safeguarding issues, and the existence of Nondisclosure agreements is perceived by some as a barrier to ministry.
- It was reported that at General Synod, it was decided against independent scrutiny of C of E safeguarding (Choosing ‘Option 3.5’ rather than ‘Option 4’). This was felt by many to be an unfortunate decision.
- It is not just about learning lessons, but acting on lessons learned. Corporate businesses would not survive with this style of management. Actions need to follow words of sorrow.
- Local politicians have been critical of the C of E in the House of Commons in a debate led by Luke Myer, MP for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland.
- Archdeaconry Safeguarding Day is March 31<sup>st</sup>, at Holy Trinity, North Ormesby. Concerns could be raised there.
- It felt to be unacceptable that members of the Church find out about safeguarding concerns from the media rather than from their own leaders.
- There has been a breakdown of trust in the relationship between the Parishes and the Church leadership, particularly the senior Bishops, which needs to be addressed.
- A letter from the Church Times by Canon Philip Brent on 21<sup>st</sup> February was cited as exemplifying our concerns.
- Moving forward, we need to communicate with our wider communities to encourage confidence in our own churches.
- It is important not to see the ‘problems’ as being those of the hierarchy only and begin to think ‘it couldn’t happen here’. If we only look upwards for problems, we could miss those in our own communities.
- Gratitude that Bishop Barry and Archdeacon Amanda had highlighted the work of PSOs and thanked them (in a letter of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024)

TS then read out a statement which summarised the concerns raised by the Synod. Attached as **Appendix 5**.

**Agreed:** Following this discussion, it was decided that TS and JD in conjunction with RP and CM should work on a statement which would then be sent out to via Synod reps to their parishes to discuss with all PCCs. There will then be a Synod in June to discuss the statement, which will then be passed to Diocesan Synod in July.

#### 8. **What’s on around the Deanery.**

- **Eco news:** The ‘Green Christian’ newsletter is available from Revd. Geoff Jaques. He was pleased to highlight that our Deanery now has 4 silver churches, and representatives of those churches were about to visit a potential gold church near Whitby. And there are bees in Yarm churchyard!

- **Prayer Labyrinth:** At St. Francis, Ingleby Barwick a prayer labyrinth has been made. This is a Deanery resource and everyone is welcome to use it. The official opening will be on Thursday.
- **Fashion Show:** St. Mary's, Nunthorpe is hosting a fashion show for church funds on 11<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30 in the Church Hall.
- **Open Gardens** will take place in Hilton parish on 7<sup>th</sup> June, with several gardens to view and refreshments available.
- **65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** St. Margaret's, Brookfield is 65 this year, and celebrations will take place on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> July.
- **The Churchwardens' Admission Service** will take place at St. Margaret's, Brookfield, at 7 pm on Wednesday, July 9<sup>th</sup>.

#### 9. **AOB: Statement submitted by Ken Taylor, DFO**

- Deanery freewill offers for 2025 were 2.9% higher than last year (about the same as the Diocese overall)
- Parish Annual Report and accounts should be submitted to the Diocese by 28<sup>th</sup> June (or no later than 28 days after APCM)
- Clergy to encourage treasurers to attend Treasurers meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> April – details will be available from Ken after 14<sup>th</sup> March.
- Parishes are encouraged to maintain reserves of around 3-4 months and also check whether restricted reserves are really "restricted" – is there clear evidence of donor's intentions?

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

An additional Synod to be arranged in June, and all reps will be notified of date and location. [A date of Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 7.00 pm for 7.30 at Yarm has since been suggested, tbc.]

The following Synod will be 8<sup>th</sup> October at St. Augustine's Church Hall, Kirkby in Cleveland.

#### **10. Closing Prayers**

Liz Taylorson. 19.3.2025

