

STROUD DEANERY STRATEGIC PATHWAY DEANERY LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

Thursday 9th October, 9.30am in the Upstairs Room above St Laurence Church Hall

Meeting Notes

- **Present:** Revd Sue Murray, Martin Freeman, Revd Canon Howard Gilbert (AD), Revd Liz Palin (ADT) Revd James Turk (ADT), Mike Lambert (Deanery Treasurer & PS Liaison), Revd Sarah Haslam, Barrie Voyce (Senior Youth Connector), Col. Tony Singer, John Amos, Revd Peter Francis, Nigel Warren, John Wyatt, Sally Withers.

Apologies: Revd Carline Bland, Jan Dryden, Andrew Pemberton, Sharon Samaroo

Welcome & Opening Prayer – Particular welcome to new members, Nigel Warren and John Wyatt. Members were invited to introduce themselves around the table. HG confirmed that although he has been licensed as AD, he will be joined by LP & JH and they will be working collaboratively as an Area Dean Team. Archdeacon Hilary will launch the idea at the forthcoming Deanery Synod.

- **Deanery Strategic Pathway Document** – updated paper circulated prior to the meeting, including Three Horizons change management, celebrating things that are going well, and focusing on what green shoots we want to invest in for the future. Deanery Strategic Pathway Consultation paper also presented, to go down to PCC for their feedback.

Thoughts from members, including:

- Suggested additions: prayer space, including digital, not currently in the document.
- Deanery Operations Lead role – Cirencester are appointing now. Job specs are adapted to suite specific needs, in particular engaging with the next generation through digital coms/social media.
- Music – There are less and less skilled musicians around. Worship may have to adapt to keep abreast with changes.
- Deanery function to provide and deliver a pathway for parishes to follow together. How do parishes interact with this? Where does overall responsibility fit/who is responsible for making it happen?
- Have we done a buildings audit – no, not so far
- Stroudwater conducted a 'Health Check' a few years ago, using a traffic light system, which gave a clearer picture of exactly where each church was buildings wise, which particularly highlighted what is working and what is not. LP is happy to share the model.
- We need to sustain what we already have and neglect it at our peril. (*Often, older congregations are those who regularly give and sustain our churches, both physically and financially*). Discern what is thriving and what is dying and have the courage to let some things end.
- DOL funding – we need a strategy to make sure we use the money well. This could be a really transformational role. A three-year timescale is a relatively short – what happens then?
- The Diocesan funding is a 7 year, once in a generation, 'window of opportunity' to invest in the long-term future of the church. Investing more locally in projects that will make a material difference/produce real measurable results.

The AD will redraft the document again, taking into consideration the shared thoughts. Will be discussed again at Deanery Synod, for feedback and review again at the next DS meeting in February. The accompanying Consultation Document will be a tool to enable parishes to engage with the process. Getting the 'buy-in' from parishes is the only way to move forward, as they are a legal entity in their own right. (*More helpful, positive, language; bold, caring, courageous - investing in a shared vision for the long-term future of the church/something very positive that they can get involved with/driving the mission of the church and putting it on the map.*)

Do people have Mission budgets? Consider setting aside some money to help augment small changes.

3. Deanery Vision for Children, Youth & Families – BV confirmed our document is very much a work in progress, trying to bring in some of the learning naturally. Lots of investment going on in the Diocese and in January they will be sharing some of the outcomes. How can we use some of our current opportunities and what is it we want to do to engage more with young people? What might we need to shift or change to achieve this? Brief look at boundary structures (consider mapping schools/supermarkets) and the possible housing opportunities at Painswick and Bisley and how this might work practically. Recognise that: Under 5s are more localised; Primary age children are much more mobile, with Secondary provision requiring a Deanery-wide strategy. It is important that young people see the same faces/branding where they live and where they go to school. Sportily now work to a lesser extent in our Deanery; The Door, Christian faith ministry charity, is already working in our secondary schools. Should we consider investing in Illuminate that is working well in the Stroud area?

We accept that a lot of our work is ‘seed sewing’ and harvesting outcomes may be well into the future. Helping families engage and be supported and working in schools is a very positive starting point.

17–25 year-olds; we need to be offering something for them. Likewise, post education age – we need a more Deanery led strategy, mindful of the geographical restraints that we have. The Diocese are working on a 7-year strategy, to be completed by March 2026, with the aim to future-proof/invest in the disciples of tomorrow. ‘Telling the story’ – what does it mean to be a disciple/be a ‘generous giver’?

There will be a further Thriving Church Day in January focusing on Shaping Mission for the next Generation- ADs should have been invited (SW to circulate information), and are encouraged to invite people to attend. Specific Youth Ministry training is available – please speak to BV to find out more.

What would a Deanery partnership with Illuminate look like? BV will work with The Door, shaping the way that Illuminate might develop and how that could integrate with our DSP. Where would accountability and responsibilities lie – to be clarified. BV will report back in the New Year.

Deanery Operations Lead post – There is funding allocated to this Deanery for a key lay post, funded over 3 years. We need to be wise and take time to decide how we would effectively use this opportunity. General view that this is not quite the right time for us at the moment – prioritise the DSP first which will give us a clearer vision going forward. We may decide we want to do something completely different with the money – we would need to come up with a well thought out business model that would need to be approved by the Bishops. *(BV confirmed that there is a budget coming out specifically for Children and Families, so don't focus on that!) We would need to come up with a strategy before we apply on how it would be funded beyond that point – 3 years is a very limited window.*

To consider:

- What might the ‘Smart’ objective be for us?

SMART principles to help formulate a strategic plan:

Specific: Clearly define what you want to achieve;

Measurable: Ensure that progress can be tracked;

Achievable: Set realistic goals that can be accomplished;

Relevant: Align objectives with broader research goals.

Time-bound: Set a deadline for achieving the objectives.

- Have a 5/7 year vision – how are we going to get there, and what type of person do we need to make that shift? By going through the process of the DSP we will be in a better position to answer that question. This could be a transformational role, with the right person, who will make decisions as part of a wider Deanery team.
- Set up a communications strategy – the importance of digital communications/Instagram/Tic Tok to engage with young people.
- Consider renaming the post to ‘Deanery Transformational Lead’ to better reflect our needs.

- **The Vicarage in the Stroud Team** – JT confirmed that this will remain in hand
- **The vacant post in the Stroudwater Team** – LP confirmed that a Pioneer Minister post is being sought, although this could potentially be funded from a different pot of money. (*The current vacant Stipendiary post is not currently being covered by paid PS*)

4. Actions

- **HG will re-write the DSP document following our discussions, to be circulated again, along with the Consultation paper, before coming back for further discussion at the next Deanery Synod on 21st February 2026.**
- **BV will do some further work with The Door around children and young people and report back in the Spring.**
- **LP has agreed to work on some prayer resources**

Discussion on restructuring

The Deanery Standing & Pastoral Committee and the Deanery Leadership Team are almost an identical group of people - consider amalgamating these groups.

(The DLT was set up more as a consultation/vision/creative group, with each Benefice being represented by one Lay and one Clergy person, the Lay Chair, the Deanery Treasurer and Barrie Voyce the Senior Youth Co-Ordinator, as we work on the new Deanery Strategic Pathway, and is always part of the Standing & Pastoral Committee agenda).

Suggestion that the new Deanery Leadership Team, including both amalgamated groups, will focus on future strategic planning and our evolving Deanery Strategic Pathway document as it continues to develop, including managing the consultation process of the revised DSP document. They will meet as and when needed.

Deanery Leadership - HG confirmed that the new Area Dean Team (HG, LP & JT) have set up a **Core Deanery Leadership Team**, consisting of the AD and his two assistants, SW the Deanery Administrator, the Deanery Lay Chair and possibly the Deanery Treasurer. They will be responsible for planning and managing the business of Deanery Synod.

Following further discussions, it was agreed that we should merge the groups as suggested, to be known as the Deanery Leadership Team, and that we would try this for 12 months.

Brief discussion on timings of Deanery Synod meetings – we are going to return to 4 meetings per year to help maintain momentum and continuity.

Deanery Synod Elections take place again in Spring 2026.

There being no other business, the meeting closed with the Grace.

Next meeting date to be confirmed.