

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the Synod held on the evening of Tuesday 8th July 2025 at St Mary's, Newent

Attending:

Clergy: The Right Reverend Rachel Treweek (Bishop of Gloucester), J Hyde (Area Dean), L Bloom (Assistant Area Dean), J Longuet-Higgins (Assistant Area Dean), C Dunnett, M Dunning, R Greenhalgh, H de Gruyther, J Knight, S Taylor

Laity: S Padfield (Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), D Wright (Parish Share Officer/Treasurer), J Bates, R Blandford, L Chan, D Connell, M Connell, H Cotton, P Cotton, F Down, M Dunning, A Edginton, D Elson, V Ferguson, C Gardner, N Garbutt, R Garbutt, C Gooch, T Greenhalgh, C Gwinnett, A Hayward, T Hayward, C Hill, J Hogg, D Hopkins, L Hopkins, C Jones, J Keene, C Langham, L Mason, C May, R May, M McGhee, M Mitchell, G Moseley, S Phelps, P Phillips, J Philpott, C Poole, N Poole, Y Poole, M Richardson, N Richardson, J Sherwin, A Smith, C Tatchell, M Wilkes

Apologies:

Clergy: M Boot, S Cooke, D Gill, S Mason, J Monaghan

Laity: J Deane, V Funnell, N Hogg, G Limbrick, R Parker, P Singh

After the initial welcomes, the Reverend Mark Dunning and Josh Robertson led our opening prayers, with a particular focus on those working with children, young people and their families plus reference to a related Mission Week recently held in Newent and the surrounding areas.

Following this, Bishop Rachel spoke about **her day in the Deanery**, which had included a meeting in Churcham; visits to a day centre for people with disabilities in Newent, a memory café for people with dementia in Minsterworth, and the Fire Station in Churchdown; time at the Sportily After-School Club in Innsworth; and a Chapter meeting in Hartpury. Much of this tied-in well with the Diocese's "LIFE" Vision about how we live out our faith, how we build relationships, and how we best become "advocates for flourishing", joining in with the world's joys and struggles. She then talked about **why** we as Christians do the various things we do; whether we spend too much of our time on internal matters rather than on reaching out; and how we can best collaborate to use the various gifts of our clergy and laity, both within and outside church buildings and across generations. Despite it having been for various reasons a difficult 12 months for the Church of England, she encouraged us all to never lose sight of our greater purpose (i.e. the Kingdom of God), to be **mission-focussed** and **resource-aware**, and to always remain **humble and confident** in our faith.

Bishop Rachel then took questions from the floor.

On **Living in Love and Faith** ("LLF", the church's current thinking on recognising same-sex relationships), she explained recent developments, confirmed that existing opt-in arrangements remain, and – after pointing out that the Bible is full of conflicts – noted that she hopes for a church community which can live with differences. Issues still remain in areas such as pastoral care for ministers who hold a different view on LLF from their Bishop and how to deal with clergy in same-sex marriages. It will be February 2026 before the next proposals are considered, and it is possible that deadlock may arise.

On **Palestine**, she is not optimistic about peace (including in the West Bank as well as Gaza) but will never lose hope, especially as there are many Jews and Palestinians continuing to work together. Sadly many Palestinian Christians – especially from younger generations - are fleeing the region. Meanwhile disagreeing with the actions of the current Israeli government is not in itself anti-semitic and we should not be afraid to say so.

On the **age profile of churchgoers**, she agrees with evidence suggesting that younger people are becoming more spiritual and are attracted by the great mysteries of faith. The issues for the Church of England centre around us going where young people are; how we connect/engage with them; and how confident we are in our faith. Meanwhile on a related front there are concerns that some young men are increasingly unsure of their identities, are more likely to commit acts of sexual violence, and have high suicide rates; the criminal justice system – an area where she as the Bishop for Prisons has particular interest– confirms all this. Again, the way forward is how we connect.

As regards the **new Archbishop of Canterbury**, she agreed that on timings the process does not compare favourably with the appointment of a new Pope; this is largely because the Church of England is more democratic and collaborative. She believes the shortlist will not be all-male, and is hopeful that by late-Autumn a preferred candidate will have emerged. Meanwhile the overall governance arrangements for the Church as a whole are not set in stone, and may change in future as circumstances require.

Finally, on the **finances of the Church Commissioners**, she noted that the current surplus will now contribute to higher clergy stipends and pensions in future years. She of course understands the difficulties (and frustrations) which congregations have in maintaining church buildings, but cannot promise that the Commissioners (who have strict legal responsibilities) will be able to help in this respect, although General Synod continues to discuss the situation.

Sue Padfield then directed the meeting to **standard Synod business**. The minutes of our meeting on 6th March were agreed without amendment, and there were no matters arising. Jacqui Hyde gave a brief update on the Deanery Strategic Plan, noting that many of our initiatives are already in hand and that Deaneries will continue to learn from each other. A summary of the recent Diocesan Synod will be sent out soon, but key issues such as LLF had already been explained by Bishop Rachel. And no other business was raised.

The meeting finished at 9pm with thanks to St Mary's for hosting. Our next Synod is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday 15th October at Ashleworth.

Steve Riddick, 12 July 2025