

Odiham Deanery Synod Report for 2015

The Deanery Synod met four times during 2015.

The main focus for the meetings was pMAP, which has been designed to put the dMAP into practice, the common mission fund (the vexed question of Parish Share).

Presentations given included:

A simple approach to Mission Action Planning given by Ken Shorey for St. John's HW.

Archdeacon Paul Moore gave a presentation around the vision and proposals of "Living the mission of Jesus: our common calling in Christ", which have the support of the Bishop's Council, and will be formally considered by the Diocesan Synod in November 2015.

Peter Dyson commented on the pMAP process, and the extraordinary diversity of the Deanery, ranging from a parish of 13,000, to a parish of just 59. He sees it as a hugely exciting initiative which could bring new life into all the parishes, helping them, under God, find their way to go.

Mark Tanner gave the highlights of dMAP and how it fits the Diocesan Strategic Priorities.

Colin Cohen gave a comment on the financial/resource issues in the Deanery. He said that the focus so far has been concentrated on each parish's own area, and now there is a need to consider the wider deanery.

- The Diocese has accepted the comments about the targets looking too big, but it is felt they have not been as robust as they could have been.
- The Diocese has said that the parishes cannot change their affluence band rating without good reason.
- The returns for 2014 are within £2,000 of the agreed amount.
- 2015 - at the end of the first quarter the returns are completely on target.
- The Deanery is pulling together; three parishes came forward to help others that were unable to meet their targets.
- 2016 - the parishes were asked to give information regarding the Affluence band and the Worshipping Community figures by the w/c 27th April. By and large (one exception), the numbers are encouraging, with the Worshipping Community numbers up 5%.
- Regarding the Affluence band, five parishes want to come down by one grade, which is not unreasonable. One parish is still in dialogue.
- In the w/c 7th June, the Diocese will take all the information and will give back the figures for 2016. The Affluence band will not necessarily change, but if a parish does not have the money, then they should go to the Diocese and they will try and help them to reach the target that has been set for them. It is recognised that most parishes may not have the money, and they should tell Colin Harbridge as he wants to talk to those parishes.
- No parish share will go up more than 10%. Some may see a reduction, but this may take three years to effect.
- The key to this working out is if the other Deaneries also meet the requirements. If they do not, then the average amount for the Worshipping Community will go up, and will hit Odiham. This is an early warning of what may happen if the process is not followed fully next year.
- The Diocese does listen, but it is difficult to find a compromise.

The parish share pays for the pensions of past priests, pays for present priests, will fund future priests, and it is absolutely right to pay it.

Archdeacon Paul

Archdeacon Paul Moore expressed his pleasure in visiting Odiham Deanery Synod for the first time. He said that he had held his post for a year, and had already had changes in his role as the Archdeacon for Mission and Development. He then spoke about his background, and his coming to faith and ministry, and explained that his role in the Diocese is to take the lead in enabling and supporting the Diocese in its vision for living the Mission of Jesus.

Colin Harbidge gave a very clear and understandable presentation on the parish share, which he divided into three sections:

1. Understanding the Diocesan budget.
2. The Common Mission fund
3. Generosity and Giving.

Resourcing our Mission

Ministry and Mission *grows our* Worshipping Communities *more income fed into* Local Parish income *feeds into* our Common Mission Fund *funds* Ministry and Mission.

An increase in any of these areas will have a positive impact on the rest. Similarly, a decrease in any area will negatively impact the next stage, which may ultimately lead to cuts in opportunities for growth, a drop in the number of stipendiary ministers, and a decline in worshipping communities. This in turn affects the sort of diocese we have/want, whether growing or declining.

Colin gave a summary of the diocesan accounts. Income stands at £12.6m, of which 80% comes from the parish share. Expenditure at £12.6m equates to 78% going directly back to local ministry and mission, 9% to the national church, and 13% representing mission support costs – management and legal costs etc. Few of these costs are optional or discretionary, all are necessary expenses.

Many people still believe the Church of England is very wealthy, but this is no longer true. Colin illustrated this by showing a breakdown of costs from 1963 to 2006. He said there is a triple responsibility:

1. To fund the Living church
2. To secure our future.
3. To grow our present.

Colin has been asked if the costs of Winchester are too high, and he has done a comparison with the other Dioceses. Of the 40 Dioceses, Winchester scores thus:

2nd most reliant on giving

6th most affluent.

12th highest personal giving levels (to PCCs), in cash terms.

27th most generous.

35th Parish share as a percentage of total parish income.

38th Amount of Parish share per member.

The central costs are under control, but although Winchester is one of the most affluent dioceses, the giving levels are not there, leaving potential for growth.

The Common Mission Fund

This is the first year of the current model, and Colin admitted that it is impossible to find a system that suits everyone. The models considered were:

- Cost based model – in which each parish is asked to pay their own costs. It is a good, simple and easy model, but reduces the parish share to cash flow. Depending on maintaining the level of giving, the need to fund what the parish needs, including clergy wages, could mean the parish can't afford clergy.
- Potential model – this is the one adopted by Winchester diocese and it recognises the spread and variety of affluence across the diocese. It represents a consistent challenge to reach potential giving.
- Free-will giving – this sees the parish share as a gift, with everyone giving what they feel they can afford. A number of dioceses have adopted this model, but all have seen a massive decrease in income.
- The previous model was not delivering, showing a shortfall each year leading to cuts.
- The theology of giving is that it should be seen a gift, not payment. This led to the potential model being adopted by the Bishop's Council.

- There is a need to assess the potential of each parish by looking at the Worshipping Community – who is in your church? In order to decide the relative affluence bands of each parish, two outside agencies were used to source the information. Their findings were cross-referenced, and found to give similar results.
- The affluence bands are important because there are some areas of great deprivation.
- The experience from 2015 has led to the decision to challenge requests to reduce the affluence rating. When setting the process for 2016, a more robust approach has been taken to requests to change.

Colin thanked the Deanery for being so willing to bear with him and work towards achieving the parish share. He has been very saddened by unnecessarily unpleasant personal criticism, and by apparent criticisms by parishes of each other. He pointed out that the grass is not greener on the other side, and the neighbouring parish is very unlikely to be better off.

Generosity of Giving.

The perception of the parish share is not to do everything, but to spotlight specific issues. We need to address what generosity looks like in a parish and Christian view. Colin illustrated the fact that the model should be the same across the diocese, by using the example of two opposing parishes, one high income, one low income.

He also gave the following figures to show the situation at the moment.

	Average annual giving	Average weekly giving
Deanery Giving	£572	£11
Diocesan average	£622	£11.97

He said sacrificial giving was so welcome; people should give generously according to their means. The figures at present stand at:

	2015 requirement	Target requirement for 2018
Deanery	£721.706	£800.796

Bishop David said it was a great delight to work with Colin, and that he lives and breathes his Christian life. He introduced his talk by saying there were six steps in Christian Giving.

- Survival** – I give a bit when I am asked because the church ought to be there in case I need it.
- Supermarket** – I am happy to pay towards the cost of the bits of the church that I want and enjoy.
- Support**- The work of the church is important to me, so I support it.
- Subscription** – I see myself as a member and wish to contribute to my fair share of the costs.
- Submission** – my understanding of being a disciple is that I should put God first in my life.
- Sacrifice** – My calling is to be Christ-like, and so I give both joyfully and sacrificially, following Jesus Christ.

Bishop David gave the background to his early ministry, and why, as a suffragan bishop he feels he needs to go out to the parishes, and in particular with Colin. He said that generosity in giving is something he needs to be daily convinced on. Poverty in spirit is what grips the wealthiest countries of the world, creating a culture of mitigating risk which includes financial security. The Christian call is to share it all.

He then explained his background, and gave a quote from his father “You can’t out-give the Lord.”

He told an anecdote from his time in Africa which illustrated the fact that generosity sometimes goes against rationale, but can change worlds.

He told another from his first parish, where the generosity of one person rebuilt the hall, leading directly to a growth in the worshipping community.

He told a third from his time in Winchester where huge growth started with unrestricted gifts from three individuals of £300,000.

Bishop David also cited several occasions recently where Muslims asked him for prayer.