

## APCM Deanery Synod Report 2022 (2020-2023 Triennium)

The first meeting of the year was held at Great St Mary's Sawbridgeworth, on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The new Diocesan Secretary, David White, was the main speaker. He was doing a tour of the Deanery Synods in the Diocese. The Diocesan Secretary is the senior lay officer, and he is responsible for the governance framework and answering any queries that come from parishes. His role involves both strategic planning and resource management for the Diocese and operational functions within parishes. He noted that during the pandemic, the recovered Parish Share had dropped from 94% to 91%, creating a budgetary loss that had to be made up from accessible reserves. These reserves were not large, and even though it was hoped that the financial situation would improve, some cuts would be needed. These included reducing the annual number of new curates from 14 to 10, and reviewing the future of stipendiary posts in some poor paying parishes.

The second meeting was held at St James High Wych on 18<sup>th</sup> May. This was the first meeting chaired by the new Area Dean, the Revd Gaz Tracey of St James the Great Thorley. He stated the need for our individual churches in the Deanery to work together whilst still having individual mission agendas. We discussed how our churches were currently doing. A lot of effort had been exerted to achieve a new normal post covid, which made it difficult to consider expanding our mission into the new estates. Many churches left with ageing congregations are less able to take up the extra load. Pressures on family life and commitments affect the attendance numbers. Need to find new ways of engaging with people such as different times of services or taking church out to the people. Other ideas include making the church a focus of civic celebrations, and bringing local schools into church. Families should be nurtured as a whole within the church, not separating the children into Sunday School type activities. Church management (e.g. PCC) should not be stifled by tradition.

Future Deanery synod meetings would focus more on discussing local needs rather than having outside speakers as main focal point.

The September meeting was cancelled as it fell during the period of official mourning for the Queen.

Our current lay representatives are Margaret Fox, Peter Rixson and Michelle Durnell.

Peter Rixson