

Newcastle East Deanery Synod
Tuesday 16th June 2020 at 7.30pm
Using Zoom

Present: Clergy: Robert Lawrance, Rae Caro, Jonathan Cooper,
Pat Craighead, Rob Fox, Helen Gill, Stephen Herbert, Phil Medley,
Avril Taylor, Katie Watson

Laity: Jennifer Brown, Sheila Dove, Wynn Findlay, Louisa Fox, Jenny Germain, Les Hodson,
Philip James, Matthew King, Trevor Lennox, Marion Pennie, Elizabeth Screen, Alan Douglas,
Jenny Trotter

1. **Opening Prayers** – Robert Lawrance opened the meeting in prayer
2. **Apologies for Absence** – Jonathan Lawson, Helen Lunn, Jacqui Gilchrist, Arthur Barnes,
Margaret Coldbeck, Eddie Long,
3. **Introductions**
As 2 people were on the phone, everyone introduced themselves. Robert Lawrance welcomed Katie Watson to the synod. Katie explained that she is the Deputy Head of Chaplaincy for the RVI and the Freeman. She had been a lay worker but due to situation created by Covid19 it was decided that she should be ordained which was done by Bishop Christine in April using zoom.
4. **Minutes of the last meeting** – these were agreed as a correct record.
5. **Matters Arising** - none
6. **Update from each parish about the last 3 months.**
 - a. *St Mary Magdalene* – Contact is being kept by ringing people up. It has been heartening to see the network strengthening. Online services are being provided on facebook using video. Around 260 people are shown as viewing the service. St Mary Magdalene's are planning to open from Sunday 21st June from 10 am to 11.30am for drop in private prayer. The Church can be accessed for private prayer at other times by appointment.
Parish buying – Pat Craighead raised the issue of the lead time on supplies such as hand sanitiser. Is there anything we could do as a Deanery for purchasing supplies?
 - b. *St Bartholomew* – Keeping in touch is being done by phone. Regular contact is being kept with those who usually have home communion. Services are being provided online.
They are currently looking at all the health and safety advice before deciding if they can open for private prayer.
 - c. *St Francis* – Sunday Morning service on facebook with different people contributing. Sunday evening – Zoom Service. Pre-recorded Morning and Evening Prayer is

provided online. Quite a lot of people joining services and are happy to join in. Robert Lawrance is currently looking at the risk assessment for private prayer and the interest there would be.

Place of Welcome was held outside with 2 sessions for 6 people using social distancing.

The beekeeping course is continuing with 3 practical sessions. Theory was completed before lockdown.

Phoning is being used to keep in contact with people.

- d. *St Gabriel* – Sunday service facebook and youtube. Letters have been sent to everyone on electoral roll. The Parish Magazine has also been delivered. Socially distanced calls on front door steps have been made. Phoning round continues. People are doing shopping for others. There have been 3 funerals one related to virus. Church will be opened every day for private prayer.
- e. *St Silas* – MINE done a lot together: Sunday services; night prayers; special services; newsletters. Phoning and emailing is being used to keep in touch. Church will be opening on Wednesday lunchtime for private prayer. There have been 3 funerals at St Silas and St Michaels, 2 of which were Covid related.
- f. *St Michael* – the Church building is difficult to open. Phoning has been used to keep in touch. The Church Centre has been a base for a Covid19 support group and MINE youth have taken packs to families in the area. Dave Johnson has made links with families and so far 200 packs have gone out.
- g. *St Martin and St Anthony* – MINE services are working across 5 parishes which means more people can be involved and adds variety. Newsletters are being produced. There is an informal network which is constantly keeping in touch. Next steps are being planned. Thanks to Rae and team for putting together Ascension Day Service.
- h. *Christ Church* – Christ Church started off doing their own services but have now joined in with the MINE services and newsletters. Contact has been by phone. There have been 2 funerals. Church has not been opened as there are jobs which are being done on the Church building involving the boiler and general maintenance. Collecting for foodbanks has continued. Prayer groups have been held in people's gardens. Whatsapp group has provided links to the MINE and Diocesan services.

Robert Lawrance thanked everyone for their contributions. It is interesting and supportive to hear what others are doing. He asked if anyone had expertise in purchasing. Supplies may be available from Charles Farris.

7. Update on current guidance for churches in the time of Coronavirus.
 - a. Church of England website is the default place for up to date guidance. Churches can now open for private prayer. Bishop Christine is clear that no one should feel obliged to open. It is a may not a must. She also said that it would be unwise for Churches to open unsupervised. Bishop Christine is very affirming of what everyone is doing.
 - b. Funerals can now take place in Church but social distancing must be observed and singing is not allowed.
 - c. Guidelines are being drawn up for celebrating Holy Communion.
 - d. Living in a time of Coronavirus has produced creative ways of being Church and coming together. We might want to consider having an online presence even when we can worship together in our buildings as it enables people who aren't able to come to Church for whatever reason to join in.
 - e. Funeral guidance suggests limiting the number of people. A point was made that it is difficult for the Vicar to both take the service and be responsible for cleaning and locking up if they don't have a verger. A reminder was made that people shouldn't be lone working. Cleaning can be reduced if the Church is going to be empty for 72 hours.
 - f. It is clear that people are thinking about same problems so let us feel encouraged to work together.

8. Transformation Agenda & reshaping the role of Area Deans

Robert Lawrance has recently received details of the transformation plan. Archdeacon of Northumberland Mark Wroe, Shane Waddle and Chris Elder will be making a detailed study of ministerial contexts and how Deaneries are currently working. It is proposed that going forward, Archdeacons will move to a more strategic role with Area Deans taking on a pastoral support role for the parishes in their deanery and responsibility for ensuring that parishes are involved in the overall deanery plan. Area Deans visitations will be more wide ranging rather than just checking the admin is correct.

Discussion: Concern was raised by the Lay Chair that it was the first he had heard about it. The Area Dean stressed he had only just received the information.

A question was asked as to whether it was achievable for the Area Dean to run his own parish and do all these new things. Stephen Herbert was asked that as he had run 2 parishes plus oversight for MINE how he had found it. He replied that it takes a certain type of person who likes do different things and that you need a good team working with you.

How will other deaneries manage especially rural ones?

Parish ministry is not the only model of Christian Ministry.

Are plans going to take account of mental health of parish priests? – There is a potential for Area Dean's involvement to be seen as threatening if a too top down or too heavy approach is taken.

This model is common in the lay world, is collegiate and is already a feature of some rural dioceses e.g. Hereford.

9. **Farewell to Canon Stephen Herbert** – Robert Lawrance thanked Stephen and wished him every blessing in his retirement. He thanked Stephen for the way he had supported him and

also the way he works with the other MINE churches. Robert Lawrance also thanked Canon Stephen on behalf of the Deanery.

Stephen said he had been in post for nearly 11 years and it had been an exciting place to work. He had seen shared ministry evolve through the years. He felt privileged to be involved. HE thanked Rob for his thanks and said he will be moving to Durham Diocese. It is hoped that Stephen will come back for a proper goodbye once we are allowed to meet together in person again.

10. Notices

- a. Future meeting dates for Deanery Synod
 - i. Wednesday September 9th 2020
 - 1. Pastoral Principles possibly
 - ii. Thursday November 12th 2020

11. A.O.B

- a. Elizabeth told us about a Scripture Union initiative led by Mark Oliver. It is called the Best Summer Ever. They will contact families who are in difficult circumstances and provide food and play items and organise street games. Helen Gill and Dave Johnson are already involved. Deanery Synod Secretary will circulate information after the meeting.
- b. St Martha's and St Mary's café are waiting to see when they can open using their outdoor space.

Meeting closed at 9pm