

Axbridge Deanery Synod

Resourcing effective Ministry for effective Mission

Tuesday 16th October

St Andrew's, Burnham-on-Sea TA8 1AW

Setting God's People Free

Welcome

Tim Hind, Lay Dean, welcomed everyone to Deanery Synod. He asked for any volunteers who felt called to the ministry of becoming a member of Diocesan Synod to make themselves known to him at the end of Synod. (There were still 3 Lay Members to be voted on.)

[After the meeting Noreen Stott said she would like to be on Diocesan Synod and another member was thinking about it]

Worship

This was led by Emily Scott on the theme of "One body with many parts" taken from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

A short clip was played called "The Tree" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G PeeZ6viNgY>) showing how if everyone worked together then you can make a difference.

Acknowledge notes from previous gathering

The Deanery Synod members present accepted the minutes from the Axbridge Deanery Synod held on 6th June at St Peter's Draycott.

Challenging Questions One

Assistant Area Dean Richard Neill & DMPG Member Rosemary Hasler led us in a time of discussion, where the following questions were discussed. (These were then written on post in notes and attached to flip charts so that the DMPG can be guided in their discussion and way forward for the Deanery.)

1. What do you understand 'ministry' is?
2. Is there a difference between 'ministry', 'discipleship' and 'witness'?
3. Have you heard of the biblical (see 1 Peter 2) concept of 'the priesthood of all believers'? What impact should that have in the life of your church community?
4. What is the role of the 'ordained priest' within the priesthood of all believers?
5. What is the difference between 'lay' and 'ordained' ministry?

"Setting God's People Free"

The Report from the Archbishop's Council can be found at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/gs-2056-setting-gods-people-free.pdf>

The Church of England webpage for “Setting God’s People Free ... from Monday to Saturday” can be found at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/mondaytosaturday>

Tim Hind said how this initiative had been inspired by “From anecdote to evidence” (a Report from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013 <http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/FromAnecdoteToEvidence1.0.pdf>), which revealed that the church was in decline. One thing that came out of this was to ‘reimagine ministry’. This is where the importance of both lay and ordained ministry was acknowledged.

Julia Hill, the Diocesan Lay Ministries Developer, spoke to us about the initiative. She explained her background: she started working for the Diocese in April. She is a Lay person married to a Clergy person, which makes her feel like an ‘amateur Christian’ compared to her ‘professional Christian’ husband. Setting God’s people Free is about recognising that ministry is for everyone not just those who are ordained.

The Diocese has 3 main priorities, and this is one of the three: to identify, develop and release people into ministry i.e. Setting God’s People Free. There are a number of roles in the Diocese that exist to support those in lay roles including the Lay Ministries Enabler Elizabeth Harper, Lay Ministries Developer Julia Hill and Lay Ministry Co-ordinator Jonathan Philpott.

Julia Hill shared some assumptions:

- All of God’s people are called.
- God is at work.
- Lay ministries are the natural activity of a disciple.
- Specific callings require specific relevant training and accountability.
- ‘Do not be afraid’ ‘Peace be with you.’ It is important to look to the Bible to see that God says it is important to not be afraid. If God is in it it has got to be good - People lacked confidence in their faith within their Monday-Saturday lives.
- Our story is of death and resurrection; sin and forgiveness.

According to the Report from the Archbishop’s Council on “Setting God’s People Free” 98% of the church are lay people, which shows that they are equal in worth and status to ordained people and that we should celebrate the diversity that exists in lay ministry.

What lay ministries are there?

How will people know?

What training do people need?

How can we celebrate lay ministries?

Is the culture shifting?

One of the Lay Ministries that was mentioned was being a Lay Worship Assistant (LWA). The LWA course helps people discern whether this is the ministry for them. It is not assumed that everyone who does the course are called to become an LWA. A lot of people do lay ministry without the need or call to do a course.

We need to think what God is calling us to so that we can be set free.

For most people lay ministry is informal in their homes, communities and workplaces. Sometimes it is not practical or useful for courses to get involved in these. This does not reduce the worth of the ministry.

There are opportunities to grow at different levels: be that at Church, Deanery or Diocese.

The Diocese holds a '*Celebration of Ministry*' Service once a year in September, which replaces the '*Celebration of Learning*' Service so as to include ALL Lay Ministry not just those who have been doing the 2 Diocesan Courses 'Exploring Christianity' and 'Exploring Spirituality'.

Julia then opened the floor to questions and finished by saying "We are the body of Christ".

>Today which part of the body of Christ are you and how will you be that part of the body around those people who are parts of the body around you?

Tim Hind thanked Julia for coming to talk to us.

Packs of leaflets on "Setting God's People Free" were available for each member of Synod to take away. These can be purchased with customisations for our own churches/parishes from <https://www.churchprinthub.org/default.aspx?cat=440>

Challenging Questions Two

Richard Neill & Rosemary Hasler led us in another time of discussion, where the following questions were discussed.

1. What ministry is exercised in your church/parish setting and by whom?
2. What activities do you understand to be covered by 'lay ministry'?
3. To what extent do you think your congregation accepts lay ministry in worship?
4. How many of your church members exercise their main Christian ministry/discipleship/witness in the workplace or away from a church setting?
5. If you had a cornucopia of gifted and willing volunteers, what sort of minister(s) does your church community most need for the furthering of God's kingdom? (*N.B. Please focus on people rather than jobs/activities*)
6. What/Who do you think God is calling you to be?

Update on where we are with developing Lay Ministry in Axbridge Deanery and how we may communicate via the website.

Rev Jonathan Philpott, Deanery Lay Ministry Coordinator, gave an update as to where the Deanery are in relation to Lay Ministry:

- An Intercessions Training Day has been held. There is another one coming soon.
- Open the Book has been introduced in some schools.
- A Lay Pastoral Assistant network is being set up. First Meeting will be in the next month or so.

Rev Jonathan Philpott gave an update as to the progress of the Deanery Website, which is nearly finished. It is a constantly growing hub for everyone to use. The Deanery Synod page needs a bit more updating with the potential for Agendas and Minutes to be posted here along with future dates of Deanery Synods.

Also if churches have upcoming events that they want advertised then please send posters etc to either Emily [emmyscott@me.com] or Jonathan [rev.jonathanphilpott@gmail.com]

The website is available at www.axbridgedeanery.com

Please link this from your parish website and tell people that it is there.

From this synod gathering, what do we take back to PCCs?

It has given us food for thought.

“Setting God’s People Free” leaflets

Closing reflection and prayer.

Area Dean, Rev Preb Sharon Crossman, closed with a reflection and prayer on being the body of Christ.

Tim Hind ended the meeting with a request for people to consider whether they feel called to join him as Assistant Lay Dean to support him in his role as Lay Dean. Tim commented that he had only taken this role on temporarily.

Date of next gatherings

Saturday 2nd February 2019. 2pm **Wedmore Village Hall**

Forthcoming Deanery Events

For Church Wardens & Clergy “May Day May Day” Wednesday 1st May – a meal followed by discussion about how we can support each other in the role of warden across the deanery. With Caroline Bruce: Diocesan Advisor to our Deanery (More details coming soon)