

Tiverton and Cullompton Deanery Synod Meeting
St Andrews Community Centre, Cullompton
Thursday, September 30th 2021 at 7pm for 7.30pm start

Present: Clergy: 5, Laity: 30
Apologies: Clergy: 4, Laity: 6

Introduction

The deanery synod meeting – the first since 12 March 2020 - was opened by the lay chair, Keith Rushforth, with a prayer. Keith outlined the plan for the evening - the main item for the agenda being a talk by Brigit Kiyaga, Mission Resources Adviser. The second item would be to aim to fill the remaining vacancies for Diocesan synod - 3 clergy, 2 laity. As the newly appointed Rural Dean, Andy Humm, had been ill and was unable to attend the meeting, it was agreed that it may be more appropriate to arrange a meeting when Andy would be able to attend and be involved in the election of the lay chair, secretary, and treasurer in 2022.

Stewardship – Brigit Kiyaga

Keith welcomed Brigit who presented the first part of the session as an interactive exercise. All those attending the meeting were invited to respond to challenges, incorporating LEGO serious play (a tool frequently used in businesses and others to help build vision and strategy). This process provoked much thoughtful and entertaining discussion and allowed the participants to express their experiences over the past year and focus on future actions.

The challenges / questions included:

Creating shapes reflecting animals, objects, emotions

The impact of lockdown

What was good about lockdown? What has the church learnt from lockdown?

Keith read the passage from Philippians 3:1-14. Brigit discussed the concept of sharing and giving and presented a film about a community from Mizoram in North East India, that in 1910 set up an initiative called “A Handful of Rice” or “buhfai tham”. It became the practice where each family, mainly from the Mizo ethnic group, put aside a handful of rice every time they cooked a meal. Later, they gathered the rice they had saved and offered it to the church. The church in turn sold the rice and generated income to support its work. Over time, the amount of rice given increased and people started to give other things, including firewood, vegetables and other produce.

As a result of this initiative, the churches in Mizoram have now become self-sufficient and require no outside funding. Although the Mizoram State is not wealthy, the community has been able to raise funds for 1,800 mission workers. The Mizo people say that as long as they have something to eat every day, they can share what they have with God.

The concepts of gratitude, generosity and giving were then discussed. There is evidence that gratitude (responding to God’s generosity with thanks) and generosity (responding to God and others with acts of kindness) encourages happiness.

Brigit discussed Henri Nouwen’s work on The Spirituality of Fundraising which has many thought-provoking comments. More can be found from this link:

https://www.perceptionfunding.org/uploads/1/6/8/9/16891606/spiritualityoffundraisingbyhenrinouwen_267.pdf

The presentation led on to different methods of giving, in our society that now rarely carries much cash in their pockets. We need to be ready with different methods.

These included:

Parish Giving Schemes

Contactless point of donation: "Love your community, love your church"

Legacies: many people don't realise that they can leave money to the church.

Grant-funding – there are many foundations that are willing to support the church financially.

Brigit's closing suggestion was not to give up – but keep at it. Many people do want to help (a PowerPoint presentation of Brigit's talk is also attached).

Vacancies for representation on the Diocesan Synod

Keith then discussed the issue of remaining vacancies for the Diocesan Synod.

Andy Humm as rural Dean will join the Diocesan Synod. Keith is the Clergy

Returning Officer. Phil Mumby and Martin Smith were elected as lay members of the Diocesan Synod. However, there remain three unfilled vacancies for clergy on the Diocesan Synod. This is an important role which allows an opportunity to hold people to account, and ask difficult questions. It was suggested that representatives on the Diocese could provide the deanery synod with a report on what is going on in Diocesan Synod prior to the next deanery synod meeting.

Any other business

- Justin Montague then talked to the Deanery Synod about a recently formed group called the Clergy Household Hub, that aims to provide a warm welcome and support for spouses, partners and families in the diocese. They are looking for additional members to help take forward the work of this group. If anyone knows any partners or spouses with a passion for helping with events, being a contact in their local area or even getting involved with some social media and podcasts, the group would love to hear from them. Please contact either Melissa Montague - bodymetrics890@gmail.com or Ben Slater - Benslater@fivewaysdevon.uk for more details.
- Simon Friend asked whether the Deanery Synod were aware of, or had participated in, the Living in Love and Faith Hub Course. There is an Exeter diocesan course in Zoom for those who do not have the opportunity to attend a local course which will run from 7.30pm – 9 pm on Tuesday evenings starting on 2 November until 30 November 2021. It is hoped that most churches across Devon will have run the 5-week Living in Love and Faith course by the end of April 2022. Keith said that this would be a main topic at the next Deanery Synod meeting in 2022.

Date of next meeting: To be arranged with Rev Andy Humm and the deanery synod standing committee as soon as possible and then circulated to the deanery synod.