

OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

Saturday 14 November 2015

Archdeaconry (Area) reports

Berkshire Archdeaconry Report to Bishop's Council

There is a lot to thank God for in the life of the Church of England in Berkshire. Various things are either being planned for, or have just started or are coming up.

- **Climate Event:** On 5th December, a whole day event at Reading Minster to highlight climate issues as the Paris Summit gets underway. The day is likely to include a family-friendly daytime climate pilgrimage through Reading; a photo exhibition in the Minster, with prayer stations; a big outdoor human display; social media activity ; an afternoon talk, a la Café Theologique, with an 'expert' sitting on a stool in the Minster, to speak for 40 minutes followed by questions; a Climate Mass, to which we'd invite parishes from across Reading –space, prayer stations, images, sounds etc and late night use of the Sanctuary space that 'clubbers' usually drop-in to, provide a prayer space appealing to all the senses.
- **Churchwarden training:** Following on from the very successful morning in March, a second session will be held on 7th November at Greyfriars.
- **Fundraisers' Forum:** Following on from the churchwardens' training, an afternoon for those involved in large scale fundraising to meet, share ideas and experiences, find out where the money is and get some training in apply for grants.
- **The New Communities Forum** morning organised by Peter Morgan on 30th September will be followed by an afternoon session for those parishes which have large new builds coming. Questions of community development, ministry deployment, what does church look like where there is no church, and how to shape new posts most strategically will be discussed. Feedback will go to the Berkshire AMPC in November.
- **Appointments:** We have made a series of excellent appointments, including two which take advantage of the changes in the Clergy Terms of Service Reg. 29 rules allowing the appointment of interim ministers (at Holy Trinity Reading and Holy Trinity Bracknell) for 3 years. We now have our first clergy couple sharing a post at St Peter's, Earley. We have the first woman priest in the parish of St John, Newbury, which is now in a joint benefice with St George, Wash Common. We were delighted to welcome a priest from Egypt as incumbent of the benefice of Old Windsor, and an Australian to St Nicholas, Newbury as assistant minister.

- All but a handful of the suspensions have been lifted over the past 18 months.
- A deanery morning in Bradfield in September showcased some wonderful and innovative outreach being done by many churches. For example, *Singing for Fun*, a Fresh Expression at St Mary's Purley where more than 70 older people meet weekly to sing, dance, talk, pray and break down isolation and loneliness.
- Negotiations are underway for the acquisition of a Berkshire Area Office at Theale Lakes Business Park.
- We are in the process of setting up our first BMO in Windsor.

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

Olivia Graham
October 2015

Buckingham Area Report for Bishop's Council

The Revd Valerie Plumb was welcomed and licensed on 22nd September as the Area Dean for Rural Mission and Development. Valerie, who comes with much rural experience from the Bath and Wells diocese, will live in Ludgershall and work with the deaneries of Mursley, Claydon, Buckingham and the rural parts of Aylesbury, to encourage simplification, the sharing of good practice, clergy well-being and church growth amongst the rural churches. She will be part of our Area Team.

Many churches are responding practically and pastorally to the needs of the refugee crisis, including Christian involvement in Citizen MK, and initiatives in Chesham, Slough and High Wycombe.

Work continues to take place in our new communities. The diocese have recently purchased a house in Newton Leys, a new area of housing (2000+ homes) between Bletchley (MK deanery) and Newton Longville (Mursley deanery), and it is hoped that a pioneer minister will be appointed there in the New Year and be part of the Bletchley team.

The 2015 Mission Fund grants were allocated over the summer to a variety of projects including the development of a café on Berryfields, Aylesbury as part of outreach to that new community, a rural children's work project and the production of a radio advertisement for Father's day which was broadcast across MK. Other significant developments in the archdeaconry include a new partnership between the National Trust and the local church at Stowe, which is resulting in an increase in visitor numbers to the church, and, following the installation of a water supply (enabled by a small archdeacon's grant and mission grant), the development of outreach and hospitality to visitors.

The plans for HS2 are concerning a number of our communities and churches. A recent visit by a cross party committee visited various sites, and discussions continue, including noise mitigation at Wendover Church.

We are delighted that Caroline Windley, Area DDO and Vocation Development Officer for Bucks, has been appointed Diocesan Director of Ordinands, and are pleased that her reshaped Team Leader role will enable her to continue with her vital work in the area (fully funded by the diocese rather than a 0.5 archdeaconry post). Also that Andrew Gear, Parish Development Advisor, has been appointed Director of Mission. Andrew's important work with parishes over the years has been much valued in the area. The Area Team therefore will need to be reshaped in the coming months to reflect ongoing needs, especially addressing how discipleship, stewardship and training all fit with a new PDA and Val's work in the rural communities.

Karen Gorham
October 2015

Dorchester Area Report for Bishop's Council

Over the last year, the formation of the Archdeaconry Mission Action Plan has been a good way for the expanded Area to get to know one another and to identify common priorities. New housing developments are providing opportunities (especially in Bicester and Didcot) for relocating some ministry provision and planning to meet the needs of an increased population. Another emerging challenge is that of simplification and resourcing, especially in rural areas, and the recent Rural Conference has helped to encourage parishes to begin thinking that things can be done differently. We await too with interest the work that Catherine Dormer has been doing on numerical growth of congregations in some of our market towns.

In line with other archdeaconries, we held a very successful and well received Church Wardens Morning in February, with workshops on Being a new Warden, PCC duties and responsibilities, Mission Action Planning, Working with the DAC, and Working Well Together. Those attending valued engaging directly with diocesan staff.

In the last few months, we've had two clergy deaths in service, and a number of pastoral and sickness issues. We lost John Burrell, much loved Vicar of Benson, very suddenly in May, and Edward Coombs, much loved Vicar of Banbury St Paul's, in September after an illness of five months. We are delighted though to have been able to appoint two Clergy Widow(er) Visitors, Hope Price and Beryl Clements, who will cover the 11 deaneries between them. We are also delighted that Mike Williams and David Knight are continuing their roles as Retired Clergy Officers. In both of these areas, it made sense to join with Oxford Archdeaconry to ensure we cover this work together and share our resources.

The Area Office at Arran House will be moving to Bannister House in due course, to enable more effective and closer working with diocesan staff. Work on putting files onto Filestream is vast and ongoing, and some voluntary help on this is proving useful.

St Birinus' Fellowship, a way of recognising the outstanding contribution to their churches and communities of (mostly) lay people (there are a few clergy who make it into the ranks), is growing. The reasons for their inclusion are many and varied, and the sheer numbers being recommended by parish clergy gives us huge optimism for the health and wellbeing of our churches and the mission of God in our Area.

Finally, it has been a busy period for appointments and we have been encouraged by the quality of those who have been applying. There have also been some frustrations (eg low numbers of applicants) but, overall, the picture is encouraging.

The Ven Judy French
October 2015

Oxford Archdeaconry Report for Bishop's Council

- We have operated for the last 12 months with no Area Bishop and an Archdeacon who is also the Parish Development Advisor. As we look to another year of vacancy pressure points are particularly around vacancies and appointments, as well as MDR's and general meetings with clergy and parish personnel.
- Bishop Colin is a great support as Acting Bishop of Oxford and Martyn Percy is kindly taking some MDRs. The Area Deans, Tim Stead and Will Donaldson are also invaluable as colleagues.
- Key appointments have been made at St Clements (Rachel Gibson being Oxford's first female incumbent in an evangelical parish), Cowley St John (Phil Ritchie), Kidlington Team Vicar (Martin Davies), Wolvercote (Charles Draper) and Cowley Team (Geoff Bayliss). St Giles and St Margaret Associate Priest is being filled and other key posts will become vacant next year meaning that over a third of our stipendiary clergy posts will have changed in 18 months.

- A Pastoral Scheme has brought together the parishes of St Thomas the Martyr and St Barnabas in central Oxford as a single parish. The consultation process was long and complex, with a hearing before the Church Commissioners in London. St Barnabas was originally a daughter church of St Thomas. This Anglo-Catholic parish is also committed to exploring partnership working with St Ebbe's, a city centre Evangelical church.
- St Mary's Headington (Barton) is one of the most prominent churches on the edge of Oxford, where the A40 meets the ring road. It is Oxford's fastest growing area with 2000+ people set to move in over the next two years. Being one of the ten most deprived parishes in the diocese its clergy have sometimes felt isolated and can become demoralised. When it became vacant the PCC of this Open Catholic parish were invited to consider a partnership with the city centre open evangelical parish of St Aldates. The Vicar of St Mary's will also be on the leadership team at St Aldates to the mutual benefit of both parishes. After much exploration and discussion this exciting new post is now proceeding to advert in October.
- These developments emerge from our desire to unlock the mission potential of all the churches in Oxford, where a small number of largely evangelical churches are bursting with people, and others have considerable mission opportunities but may lack the resources to pursue them.
- We are continuing to explore chaplaincy provision at Oxford Brookes University, which now equals Oxford University in numbers of students. The latter has around 20 chaplains, whereas Brookes has none. A Chaplain could also be part of our strategy to increase vocations from the Archdeaconry, along with recently appointed Vocations Advisers for the city and universities.
- Refugees: Oxford has declared itself a City of Sanctuary and is expecting to receive some of the new group of Syrian refugees soon. The city is used to receiving asylum seekers and has a number of experienced agencies working in this field e.g. Asylum Welcome, Childrens Society, Refugee Action. We already have over a hundred unaccompanied child and teenage refugees/migrants being cared for in Oxford. However the housing shortage is beyond acute and there is talk of them being housed outside the city where access to services may be more problematic. Co-operation across between city and county could be vital and the church is well placed to enable this should need arise.

Martin Gorick
October 2015