

St Andrew's PCC – Annual General Meeting 17 April 2018

Report on Droitwich Deanery Synod meetings 2017-8

Droitwich Deanery Synod has met three times in the past twelve months. Traditionally, the sessions consist of an open forum discussion led by invited speakers, followed by a short business meeting.

The **June** meeting of the Droitwich Deanery Synod was held at Elmbridge, where the topic for discussion was the “Calling Young Disciples” initiative – a major new mission project in the Diocese of Worcester’s Kingdom People vision. The Revd Ruth Walker, director of the project, was the main speaker alongside Helen Laird, one of the mission enablers.

The aim of the project is to place around 10 mission enablers in churches across the Diocese over the next 4 years. Their task will be to review the church’s work with children and young people and seek out new and sustainable opportunities to engage with these young people. Each placement will last about a year. Churches will be chosen using clear criteria and an assurance that their work in this field has the potential to grow with this additional support.

At the **October** meeting the speaker was the Revd Alison Maddocks, Diocesan Stewardship Officer. She made it clear that her rôle is to help and advise parishes, not to do the work for them. Although Stewardship is about a lot more than just giving money to the church, it was money on which she concentrated – “the difficult thing to talk about”.

There are two audiences for giving financial support - regular churchgoers and well-wishers from outside of the church. Regular churchgoers should be giving regularly through standing orders or similar, and should be responsible for day-to-day housekeeping. Well-wishers may be encouraged to donate to major capital ventures and one-offs.

The target level of giving for each churchgoer is, and always has been, 10% of net income after taxes. 5% should go to the church and 5% to other “good” causes.

The Diocesan share – always a bone of contention within parishes – is not designed to be a tax on congregations for which they receive “services” from the Diocese (like a form of Council Tax). It is a sum of money freely given to the Diocese for it to be spent on projects and support in those areas of the Diocese which need it most. The argument that a particular parish is paying ever more and receiving ever less (eg only a small fraction of a priest’s time when it once had a full-time vicar) is irrelevant. It’s all about helping others.

The guest speaker at the meeting held in **January** was the Revd Margie Schutte, who is the chaplain at Her Majesty’s Prison, Hewell. She spoke about the prison system nationally, and her rôle at Hewell. Margie works with 6 full time people on her team, plus 10 sessional helpers, and they “cover” all the major faiths. She works not only with the prisoners, but also the governor and staff who are under huge and relentless pressures.

Particular challenges that Margie faces, and indeed the prison system in general, include the rapid turnover of staff and the loss of experienced staff members. There are big problems with drugs (often brought in by drones) and the possession of mobile phones. The high proportion of young and inexperienced staff does not help.

There are many opportunities for volunteers to work with the chaplaincy team. The prisoners are grateful for people to talk to, and who treat them as human beings.

RT
7 April 2018