

RICHMOND AND BARNES DEANERY SYNOD

Monday 27th January 2019 – 7.45 pm

At ST JOHN THE DIVINE, RICHMOND

MINUTES

- 1 Welcome to St John the Divine by Rev Neil Summers. Rev Summers apologised for us having to meet in the Narthex due to a very cold Church (caused by recent gas/water problems affecting most of Richmond). He gave a brief history of the Church and pointed out many features including the beautiful stone Stations of the Cross, carved between 1955 and 1970 by the sculptor [Freda Skinner](#).
- 2 Rev Peter Hart thanked Rev Summers for his welcome. The meeting had been preceded by drinks as it is the last scheduled formal meeting within the current three-year cycle of the Synod. The term of the current lay members ends on 31 May 2020. Lay members for the next three-year cycle will be elected by parishes/teams at their next APCMs, to serve from 1 June 2020. Rev Hart thanked the lay members for the vast amount of work that they had done. They had gone through difficult times with the sudden death of Rev Trevor Patterson (vicar of Holy Trinity and Christchurch, Richmond and Area Dean) in October 2017. Rev Hart described Rev Paterson as a special man and a true man of God. The Deanery had persevered through this sadness and we have much to be thankful for including the recent installation of Rev Simon Coupland as vicar of St Richard's Ham and it is good to see what the people of St Richard's had achieved in the previous 18 months. We are also thankful for the work done across the Deanery in Glasdoor, Food Bank and Street Pastors. With this in mind, Rev Hart led prayers of thanksgiving.
- 3 Iso Neville, Social Media Officer for the Church of England Digital Team: talk and discussion on Digital Discipleship – the use of social media for mission. The Digital Team was created in October 2016 to develop the Church of England's approach to the web, social media and wider technological innovation. Click [here](#) to read about their impact in 2019.

Iso said she was pleased to be here and had had many interesting conversations before the meeting started.

She started with a general introduction to social media. It being a whole community and audience where we can meet people and have conversations.

The different platforms have different audiences:

Instagram: used mainly by younger crowd.

Twitter: users are older than Instagram users and have a global audience.

Facebook: seems to be used by everyone but on a more local level.

It is sufficient to have only one social media platform if you are doing that well. Similarly if you are posting on more than one social media platform don't be tempted to replicate your posts on your other platforms as your audiences may overlap and be tempted to stop following you on one platform.

The key thing is to think about your audience – **who is your existing audience and who would you like to reach?** Think about your existing Church community – they all know what your church is doing. Maybe not what it's doing from week to week but they are familiar with you and feel comfortable with your Church. Now think about your wider community who may not necessarily know what is going on inside your Church. For example a couple marrying in Church where one partner is familiar with Church but the other partner is not – how do you make both of them feel welcome.

A Facebook page (which 13 out of the 15 Churches in the Deanery have) is like a mini website. You can build a Facebook Group but that may only include your congregation. Facebook Groups are a great tool for local conversation. Look for local community groups. You can post from your Church into a community group about your Church events. But it's not just events. You can establish your Church as a community page (as in the olden days when Churches were at the heart of the community) by building a reputation as a source of information. Eg *"Mortlake Rd at Chalkers Corner has now reopened after a bad accident. We pray for those involved and the emergency services at work"* Think about what value you can add to the community. **What do you want to be known for?** For example, one Church has set themselves up as an ECO church and is known for green initiatives.

Do we use questions on social media? It's an obvious way to get people to respond and engage but think about people who are not familiar with Church. Videos produced nationally (Eg the Church of England's "What is Good Friday?" - www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARE8oORvpTw) have a reach nationally but the real power comes from the local community. Follow the Church of England ([@churchofengland](https://twitter.com/churchofengland)) and retweet and repost but add your own reflection or ask a question. This encourages people to engage with your post and the more engagements you get the more people Facebook will show your post to. Similarly, share the digital campaigns such as Follow the Star and Live Lent via social media but add your own layer to them.

Use Live Video on Facebook. When you do a live video broadcast on Facebook, everyone who follows you will be notified, and your video will stay on Facebook to be watched later as well. You can live stream the Sunday sermon or Bible studies. For example, one Church had about 15-20 people in Church listening to a sermon one Sunday but at the same time 60 people were watching it online! There are many reasons why people can't come to Church on a Sunday morning but may be able to take 5-10 minutes to listen to the sermon.

How can you get your posts noticed? Use a big picture (avoid using stock photographs) – that stops people scrolling past your post. Make sure you include a location tag in your post so people can find you. Post a question or a bible passage. Use #(hashtags) on Twitter and Facebook. Remember Twitter may attract a more global audience so using #BibleStudy on Twitter may not be suitable but on Facebook it helps you interact with other Churches doing the same thing. #London may be lost but #RichmondChurches may get you noticed. Do not underestimate **Paid Advertising** it can help you reach more people and you can target it by location or interest. For example, if you are holding a "Messy Church" event you may want to advertise it to local parents.

Mind your language! The average reading age of the UK is 9 so think about your language, tone and content length. Avoid *Christianese* eg words like "Eucharist", "Mission" etc. Although such words can promote debate. Instead of talking about the "Kingdom of God" ask "What does the Kingdom of God mean to you?" Asking "What's your favourite hymn?" gets everyone talking whether Church goes, Christians or not. Remember not everyone knows your Church so remove all barriers.

Iso was particularly encouraged by the depth of questions at the end of the talk:
At a recent Deanery Synod meeting on communications, the Diocesan Communications Secretary said the vicar shouldn't be responsible for social media. Are there best practice guidelines for who should be responsible for social media output from a Church?
It depends on the Church. Some Churches have an enthusiastic member of the congregation. It maybe that you want to ask in the notices if there is anyone who can help with social media. You give the task to a youth group – that has worked in some Churches. Always try to have at least two people responsible for each platform so it doesn't get locked down if they leave. You can schedule Facebook posts in advance to cut down on the workload. Do as much as you can well and don't worry about what you are not doing. Only post when you have something to post.

Is less more?

Definitely. If you overwhelm your audience, they might stop following you. Figure out what your audience wants and how often you think you should post.

Apart from “Likes”, how can we measure engagement on Facebook?

Use Facebook Insights to get more statistics on post and page engagement.

Can we measure what is happening to these people in terms of faith engagement?

Difficult to measure and hard to track unless they come through the doors of your Church. People may have found you locally but are engaging with the national campaigns. It is hoped that in the future, there may be a way of including social media statistics as a part of “attendance” at Church.

Churches like it when their posts are shared.

The Church of England Digital Labs is a hub of resources, news and events to support digital evangelism and digital discipleship in the Church of England. There is a weekly blog, a monthly newsletter, roadshows and annual events. Find out more from www.churchofengland.org/digital-labs.

The Church of England Digital Charter is a voluntary pledge that they’re encouraging individual Christians as well as churches to sign to help make social media and the web more widely positive places for conversations to happen. Find out more from www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-digital-charter.

Sign up to the Church of England Resources on www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/sign-our-resources.

Rev Peter Hart thanked Iso and said she has highlighted a very useful resource for Churches.

- 4 Update on Knife Crime Appeal (to raise £9,500 to fund the £4,000 initial cost of a bin and maintenance for 5 years). Marian Mollett said that at the last meeting there had been a very promising initial response and she was pleased to report now that she is confident our target will be reached. Parishes have responded in different ways – some have promised money from the PCC (some with a one-off donation and some spreading over a number of years), some are holding their own appeal.

The next stage is exploring where the bin should be placed and Marian will report back to the Deanery Synod once we are clearer on the location, following discussion with Word4Weapons and the Diocese’s social justice team.

Word4Weapons are keen that the bins should be placed within Church premises.

We are very grateful for the response to this appeal.

Recent comments to Marian from Word4Weapons highlight the difference a knife bin makes and how crucial the location is. In a three-month period one bin had collected 40 knives and one bin had collected 300 knives. A very powerful illustration of need.

Once our bin is up and running, we will have a good story to tell which we will share nationally.

- 5 Deanery Finances. Marian Mollett told us that the Deanery bank account has £6,000 to spare and proposed the following allocation of funds:
- £1,000 to the Knife Bin Appeal
 - £1,000 for this year's Glassdoor campaign (ie Winter 2019/20)
 - £1,000 for next year's Glassdoor campaign (ie Winter 2020/21)
 - £3,000 to be left for the next Deanery Synod members to decide how it can best be used to further mission.

All were in agreement.

- 6 Rev Peter Hart urged the Lay Members to share what the deanery is doing with their PCCs, especially as new Deanery Synod members will be elected at this year's APCMs. The APCMs must be held before 31st May which gives plenty of time to elect new offices. Lay members were encouraged to stand up in Church and share what the Deanery has done and ask who would like to be a member.

Marian Mollett is also standing down as Lay Chair after six years. She was thanked for her hard work. A new Lay Chair must now be found.

- 7 Rev Peter Hart will be leaving at Easter to take up the post of Team Rector in the South East Worcester Team Ministry so we are looking for a new Area Dean. Bishop Christopher will start that process by writing to all the clergy in the Deanery. Rev Hart said it had been fabulous privilege to be Area Dean. He had learnt a massive amount and will take a lot with him to Worcester. Marian Mollett thanked Peter and presented him with a bottle of wine from the Deanery which she hoped he and Beverly would enjoy on some balmy evening in Worcester whilst remembering us in Richmond and Barnes.
- 8 Rev Hart thanked Rev Wilma Roest and Charles Stiller for the Deanery Choral Evensong held at St Mary, Magdalene in November and urged the Deanery to do it again.

- 9 The Wandsworth Visitation Service will be held at St Mary Magdalene, Richmond on Thursday 18th June.
- 10 Please remember Rev Alex Barrow and Rev Nigel Worn in your prayers who are recovering from operations.
- 11 Closing Prayer

The next meetings of the Deanery Synod will be on

Wednesday 3rd June 2020 - St Peters, Petersham

Tuesday 6th October 2020 - St Mary the Virgin, Mortlake