

**RICHMOND AND BARNES DEANERY SYNOD**  
***praying together, learning together, working together***

Monday 7th October 2019 – 7.30 pm

At ST MARY MAGDALENE, RICHMOND

MINUTES

1 Lay Chair, Marian Mollett, opened the meeting by welcoming new clergy:

- *James Hutchings, St Mary Barnes*
- *Sarah Atkins, St Richard's Ham*
- *Martin Calderbank, St Michael & All Angels Barnes*

"It has been the first time we have been in this church for many years due to the extensive refurbishment project and it is wonderful to be back in this bright and light building."

2 Rev Wilma Roest led the welcome to St Mary Magdalene from the Richmond Team Ministry. She opened with a prayer and then we joined in the hymn "*Thanks Be to God for His Saints of Each Past Generation*" (Timothy Dudley-Smith) which was sung at the rededication service in July.

Rev Roest remarked how 800 years ago, people also gathered on this site to sing and that for all that time, St Mary Magdalene has been a place where people came together. Their presence is felt today. An 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book has been compiled from church records and will be used each day of the anniversary year to remember:

- someone baptised in St Mary's on that date.
- a couple married in St Mary's on that date.
- someone whose Funeral or Memorial Service was held in St Mary's on that date.

This place is first and foremost about people – past, present and future. The investment of time, money and effort in the refurbishment has been all about getting the church ready for future generations. The alterations have been complex, but the church has been open the whole time. It would have been easier and maybe quicker to close the church and relocate during the refurbishment but that would have meant the clergy and congregation would have missed the journey of the transformation.

Rev Roest went on to describe the upheavals in that the congregation were moved from one part of the church to another and various spaces were opened and closed. This gave the congregation a chance to really get to know each other, to be flexible and to not worry when things weren't perfect. People put up with worshipping in a building site

because they knew the church was being prepared for future generations. The renovations were not quick and will not be finished for some time, but it is all part of the journey together and people just got on with it. One significant change is the addition of moveable pews creating a flexible space.

The church is open daily from 8am-3pm (and has remained so during the renovations). It provides a place of peace and of safety for the people of Richmond and visitors. It is a place for shoppers to rest awhile and a place to shelter from the rain. Rev Roest cited an example of a worker in Richmond who is there each day at 8am to pray before work. This is a reminder that the church does not just belong to the clergy or the congregation but to the wider community and has done so for 800 years.

Charles Stiller then spoke about the events that were being planned or had happened in the anniversary year and how these fitted in with the mission of St Mary's. Full details of all that is happening can be found at <http://stmarys800.com/>. The "*Singalong Concert*" featuring the Royal Artillery Regimental Band, in September celebrated past members of the church including Lord Attenborough and James Thomson, the author of Rule Britannia. There is also evidence that the Prince of Wales worshipped here 300 years ago. A commemorative coin has been minted and a book has been written of the history of the vicars of the church.

St Mary's want to shout out to the community in Richmond that this is a place for them and a place not just for services but for events that bring the community in. There are story boards around the church and Christ School will be performing "Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" in the church. St Mary's have been reaching out to local businesses and asking if they would like to be involved in the anniversary events and the businesses have been only too happy to help. The "*Hymms and Pimms*" event in July involved the adjacent Angel and Crown pub. Local businesses donated refreshments for the "*Afternoon Tea and Teddy Bears' Picnic*" in August.

There will be a Deanery Choral Evensong in November, although no choirs have responded yet. **ACTION – Paula Brackenridge to re-contact Parish Administrators, Clergy, Directors of Music with details.**

Next year, there will be a thanksgiving service commemorating the 80th Anniversary of Dunkirk. Many people from Richmond and people from St Mary's were involved in the Dunkirk rescue and their stories will be heard down on the riverbank next May.

St Mary's are using this year of celebration to ask: "how do we reconnect with our local community?" It is about people and reminding people that there are holy and peaceful places in this busy world.

Rev Roest ended by saying the words of the Peace that had been spoken by Bishop Christopher at the rededication service. We all shared the Peace.

- 3 Rev Peter Hart reminded us that one of the focuses of deanery work was to encourage churches in mission. Rev Simon Coupland and Liz Kearns spoke about mission at St Richard's, Ham. Rev Coupland is the Priest in Charge and soon to be vicar of St Richard's.

St Richard's Ham is the newest church in the deanery and is tucked away so many people may not know where it is (as evidenced by the recent Christian Aid sponsored walk). It has a flexible space suitable for all types of gatherings and an excellent kitchen. It was founded in 1964 by an enthusiastic local population who had previously been worshipping in a hut. However, the congregation dwindled over the years and there was poor leadership which has led to a small and mostly elderly congregation and an inward-looking church. A small congregation means a small choir and difficulty finding people to fill official positions such as PCC members.

Due to a bequest, the church does boast the comfiest seats in the deanery!

There is also a church school next to the church (St Richards C of E). The church and school are situated right on the edge of the deanery and are in one of the least affluent areas of Richmond. Roughly a third of the pupils at the school get the Pupil Premium (a sum of money given to schools each year by the Government to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children). There are also many different languages and nationalities at the school which also brings challenges. The school is under strong leadership but the relationship between church and school has declined in the past few years resulting in the school not using the church.

Rev Simon Coupland has turned everything around the last 15 months. There was a small church planting - Rev Coupland brought seven congregation members with him who have played an active part in the life of the church. The relationship with the school has been restored. Rev Coupland goes into the school once a week and the children are now using the church. This has inspired St Richard's to reach out to the local community (they have found feeding works well!).

Earlier in the year, the congregation were given a questionnaire with two questions:

*"Over the last year I have seen....."*

*"In the next year I would like to see....."*

The results demonstrated the positive and healing relationships that have happened within the church.

St Richard's is considering running an Alpha course but first is it doing "Church Alpha" aimed at Christians. Even though the congregation believe in and know God it is still useful to look at some of the Alpha topics such as *who was Jesus?* and *what is it all about?* The first session was run after a Sunday service. Of the 40 members of the congregation 27 stayed for Alpha. It gives Christians the chance to ask questions and also to say let's launch this for the community.

The traditional and liturgical service does not appeal to most local people. There is a homegroup that meets every Thursday and St Richard's are considering rolling out a modern less formal midweek service (in addition to the existing midweek service that is aimed at the elderly).

St Richard's MAP is asking the question of how to reach out to especially to families. It was a particular disappointment that there were no children at the Christmas Day Family Eucharist. Two partners have been approached:

**Riverbank Trust** (<http://riverbanktrust.org/>) want to partner churches and schools to help single parent families who are in need of support.

**Insight Bible Trust** (<http://insightbiblechurch.org/>) who set up Bible clubs in local schools.

They are also considering becoming an Eco Church (<https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/>). This challenge will be taken on by Rev Sarah Atkins.

In this way St Richard's is looking both inwardly and outwardly at how they can grow.

- 4 "Sleeping with the Archdeacon" – Rev James Hutchings described who his experience sleeping rough in Chelsea as part of the Glass Door Annual Sleep Out on Friday 4th October.

Rev Hutchings was joined among others by our Archdeacon John Kiddle and Lucy Abraham from [Glass Door](#). (Lucy Abraham was originally scheduled to come to this synod but had caught a bad cold from the Sleep Out.) Rev Hutchings said that he somewhat felt like a fraud sleeping rough as he knew he had security, was protected and it was only one mild night he would be out. In that way you only get a snapshot of what it is like to be out on the streets, night after night. However, as a fundraising tool it is very effective with £50,000 already achieved. He had many conversations that night with Glass Door caseworkers that night who all had good things to say about the Church of England from the outreach work they had seen.

Lucy Abraham sent a letter to the Times on Thursday 3rd October (see end for full letter) in which she said the it was misleading to cite drug and alcohol addiction as the major cause of death among the homeless but that that “ *We should be looking at the lack of affordable housing and the cuts to social services that cause people to become homeless in the first place.*” We need to tackle the root cause of homelessness which sums up the work of Glass Door.

## 5 Glass Door Update – Rev Peter Hart

This coming winter, four out of the seven nights in the Richmond circuit are being provided by Richmond and Barnes Deanery (St Michael and All Angels, Barnes is participating in the Hammersmith circuit), two more nights are other churches in Richmond and the other night (Sunday) is in Teddington. Volunteer coordinators had already had training in Safeguarding and Food Safety for this winter and they will pass on this training to volunteers. One of the issues from last year was that training was needed to equip volunteers to deal with mental health issues and it is not clear whether this has happened. St Mattias, Richmond who will host the Saturday night will direct guests to the Sunday Vineyard lunches. We will have good numbers of volunteers but there may be gaps so more volunteers are needed to ensure good coverage in Richmond from Monday – Saturday (Teddington have enough volunteers).

## 6 Knife Crime: A response from Richmond & Barnes Deanery Update

Background: Following the discussion on knife crime at Diocesan Synod, Marian Mollett was moved by the story of a Parish who had to give up their Knife Bin due to lack of funds. We as a deanery would like to fund a Knife Bin via [Word 4 Weapons](#) to be placed somewhere in the Diocese where it would be most needed. £10,000 is needed to fund a bin for five years as follows:

- £4,000 manufacture, delivery, 1st year maintenance
- £1,535 subsequent annual maintenance

It works out as £5.70 for each person on the electoral rolls of Richmond & Barnes, around £750 per church or less than £2.50 per church each week for five years.

Marian Mollett reported that there had been a good response to the appeal so far. 11 PCCs have replied:

- One church feels it is not the right time.
- Six gifts from PCC funds.
- Four will appeal directly to their congregation. This could be a stand-up appeal at the end of the service or a leaflet drop.

7 How can we use our deanery structure to tackle unjust structures?

The members of the synod were invited to discuss in groups what projects they might be doing that would benefit from deanery support or what might we do as a deanery. Marian Mollett stated that the deanery finances were in good shape and so money from the deanery may be made available to support projects.

A lively discussion ensued but prompted only one response:

Mortlake Team Ministry felt that they already support many charities – their own, through the Parish Support Fund and with Glass Door, Foodbank etc – that they felt another layer of giving was not practical and placed too many different demands on parishioners.

Nevertheless, there are gaps we could fill:

- Supporting rough sleepers in the seven months of the year when Glass Door is closed? There are around 140 rough sleepers in Richmond which falls to 32 when Glass Door is open and then rises back up to 140.
- Supporting the work of the Riverbank Trust which can't expand too much due to funding?
- Supporting Christ's School? We are good at supporting our primary schools but what about our secondary schools?

8 Richmond Interfaith Week 9th - 17th November  
Monday 11th November, from 7:30pm at St Mary's, Barnes- Devotional Event for all Faiths with readings.

Wednesday 13th November, 2:30pm at Whitton Community Social Club Ltd, Percy Rd, Twickenham. TW2 6DW - Afternoon tea with Multicultural Richmond.

Sunday 17th November, 3pm St Mary Magdalene, Richmond - Interfaith Forum – exploring 800 years of all faiths.

9 A Deanery Choral Evensong on the festival of Christ the King (Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November) at St Mary Magdalene.

10 Marian Mollett thanked all churches for their response to the Parish Support Fund – this year we have raised our giving by over 2% across the deanery to £1,323,000.

11 Closing Prayer



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Sir, Much has been made of the significance of drugs in causing the deaths of rough sleepers. Yet to focus on drugs as a key driver of homeless deaths is both misleading and distracting. Although drug and alcohol addictions can of course lead to tragic outcomes, addiction is not the root cause of these deaths. We should be looking at the lack of affordable housing and the cuts to social services that cause people to become homeless in the first place. Nor are addiction issues as prevalent within the wider homeless population as the headlines suggest. Of the 1,200 rough sleepers supported by Glass Door caseworkers last year, only 18 per cent had identified drug or alcohol needs; mental and physical health needs (38 per cent) played a far greater part.

Moreover, addictions and mental health needs are often a consequence, rather than a cause, of homelessness. Where we should focus our attention is on how we tackle the root causes of homelessness; we need to remember that behind these statistics are human beings who need our compassion and support, not our quick labels.

**Lucy Abraham**  
Glass Door homeless charity

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