

RICHMOND AND BARNES DEANERY SYNOD

Tuesday 3rd November 2020 – 7.30 pm

Via ZOOM

MINUTES

- 1 Opening Prayers led by Rev Canon Dr Ann Nickson from St Mary the Virgin, Mortlake (the intended venue for this Synod before the recent increased Coronavirus restrictions).
- 2 Introduction and welcome by Marian Mollett. She welcomed Rev Alex Barrow as the new Area Dean. She took Rev Barrow's commissioning by Zoom as an example of how the new normal of worshipping can sometimes be better than the old ways. She welcomed new Lay Members to the Deanery Synod but noted that there might not be a completely new body of members until the meeting next Summer and at that meeting a new Lay Chair will be elected. She thanked all the clergy, church wardens and parish teams for bearing the responsibilities for opening our churches in the restricted ways necessary and the congregations for adapting to the new circumstances.
- 3 Discussion on what we have learnt from the past four months of our churches being open and how we can overcome the challenges we face. The discussion broadly followed the three themes:
 - Who is still missing from your Church?
 - How have we had to rethink what we do?
 - How are we preparing for Advent and Easter?

Who is still missing from your Church?

- Most of the congregation have returned apart from those who are still shielding who mostly engage with a Zoom service rather than a Live-Streamed service. Some clergy have been able to hold services at old peoples' homes. Parishioners are still keeping in touch with those still missing from church.
- Younger families are still missing due perhaps to worries about social distancing and whether school-age children will be transmitting the disease to other members of the congregation. Some churches have had separate family services to encourage families back, some are managing to run their children's groups during the service. Some churches are still running remote children's worship. One church showed pictures children's craft activities from their home worship

on screen during a Sunday service - a creative way of including the children in the service when they weren't there.

- One parishioner went back to church but didn't like the social distancing and not being able to sing. She also said she enjoyed recorded services and found it quite encouraging to worship God at home with family members together.
- Choirs have been able to sing hymns and anthems in church but people are missing the music. One parishioner feels a divide between the performance of the singers and everybody else. Congregational singing via Zoom does not work very well either. One suggestion is to play a recording and have muted people sing along.
- What about the people who have returned to church but are maybe still feeling lonely as the new way of the socially distanced church may feel quite isolating (a quick rush in through the door, seated alone, the Peace being shared from a distance and no chance for socialising after the service). St John the Divine has a weekly Zoom meeting where parishioners can have a chat and finish with Compline. Other churches have been setting up Zoom chats and if the group is too big you can use breakout rooms to chat.

How have we had to rethink what we do?

- There is so much you can do with the new creative medium that's not mimicking the old service. Photographs or poems can be peoples act of worship.
- Online services are the way forward and good for outreach too. Online services are reaching people who do not necessarily live in the local area. Parishioners who are perhaps away for a weekend are still able to join their church for Sunday worship. It gives people who do not know what goes on in a church (and could be a bit apprehensive about coming to church) an opportunity to see what goes on inside. People are "meeting up" with family who live faraway by joining the same online services. Although churches have no way of contacting people who are watching online services they are making it easy to be contacted by those people. People can make comments during live-streamed services (especially during the Peace) and churches can engage with those comments.
- St Luke's and St Philip and All Saints, Kew now has Morning Worship once a month instead of a Eucharist which is a wonderful service. (This was borne out of necessity as Covid restrictions prevent a celebrant conducting a service in two different venues.) The Sunday service does not always have to be a Eucharist.
- Going forward we should be thinking of maintaining a hybrid between those in church and those connecting in different ways even after the pandemic is over. When engaging with a service online, how do we find ways not to become and audience but to maintain a notion of being part of a congregation? How do we maintain a sense of fellowship when our congregations are in different places?

How do we reform and reshape as church within our congregations? How do we avoid a sense of something that's been splintered or fragmented? Even if we are not together in the same way, how do you find that cohesive sense of Church?

- A further reflection was that sharing the Eucharist requires a physical presence. An online service can never be a substitute for this.

How are we reaching people during November?

- Our churches will be open for private prayer and in some churches, the clergy are going to be present during some of that time. We are calling people we do know but will have to wait for those we don't know to come to us.
- It's very important and comforting that our churches will be open, and some people may prefer to attend their church for private prayer on a Sunday morning rather than attend a live-streamed/Zoom service.
- Some people may prefer to return to the live-streamed services which may feel more normal than the experience of being in church recently. It's very beneficial to hear the word of God and see clergy via an online service rather than no service at all.
- Local neighbourhood organisations (eg [FiSH](#) and [KNA](#)) are doing an amazing job of keeping in touch with elderly and vulnerable people. They have a befriending service and also delivery groceries and prescriptions to those who need it. They need more volunteers.

How are we preparing for Advent and Easter?

- One Church is going to encourage parishioners to put nativity scenes/tableaus in their windows to create a "trail" around the local area.
- Socially distanced carol singing in the churchyard is being considered. Also getting the choir to visit local streets to sing carols and have residents, who are warned in advance, sing from their doorstep. Need to check the Covid regulations to find out if this is permissible.
- Zoom carol services would be difficult to do but some churches are pre-recording music to put in an online service. If we are still in lockdown during Advent, professionally paid choirs are allowed to record music in church.
- Sadly, even if congregations are back in church by Christmas, they still won't be able to sing which is disappointing. Recorded carol services might be better as people can sing at home. However non church goers will probably watch a carol service on television rather than one from their local church.
- We traditionally welcome members of the local community who normally come to church at Christmas time and usually have packed churches. How do we do this when we have reduced capacity? Will a booking system make us seem more closed than open?

- Some churches are considering multiple, duplicate services.
- One parishioner said she found booking clear and inclusive and you know you will get in if you've booked. Eventbrite provide booking systems. Some of the information given via a booking system is required for Track and Trace, although churches not using a booking system gather this information in other ways.
- A sidesperson said she had concerns about large groups of people arriving at church for midnight mass at the last minute and having to turn people away. It may give the impression of the church not being welcoming, especially if it is non regular church goers who are turned away. The experience of going home and watching a live-stream is not the same as being in the church on Christmas Eve. Booking systems are advertised to all via church websites and a safe capacity at church must be maintained. These are difficult times, and these limitations have to be borne.
- We need to tell our parishes (not just our congregations) how we are planning for Christmas services and if we are ticketing or not. People will understand if they are told clearly and well in advance. Try to get this message out by the end of November. Church may be more significant to many people whose Christmas plans have been changed.

4 [Glass Door](#) are running a meal only service from the [Vineyard](#) for 30 people. The meals will hopefully be provided each night by the church which would have normally run a night shelter on that night of the week. Gathering to cook a meal in a church kitchen for this purpose is permissible under the current regulations. The night shelters are not operating this year so people will eat but will then have to leave to sleep rough – an appalling situation. Glass Door are running a small night shelter in central London but are not publicising the location. On 26th November, Lucy Graham, Glass Door CEO will be speaking to us about the work of Glass Door this winter. Please publicise to your congregations (details below).

5 There has been a good response to the Parish Support Fund from the churches in Richmond and Barnes Deanery. Those parishes who have yet to make their pledges are urged to do all they can, despite the dreadful financial circumstances, to maintain their giving to Southwark.

6 Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

7 Congratulations to Rev Martin Calderbank and Rev Sarah Atkins (curates of St Michael and All Angels, Barnes and St Richard's, Ham respectively) who were ordained priests on 17th October. We wish them well and pray for them in their

new priestly ministry.

Congratulations to Rev Canon Wilma Roest who has been installed as a non-residentiary canon at Southwark Cathedral.

Rev Chris Griffiths has been appointed as the new team vicar to Christ Church, East Sheen and will hopefully begin his ministry with us at end of February 2021.

Rev Griffiths is currently Rector of The Benefice of Horringer, Bury St Edmonds.

8 Rev Alex Barrow closed with a prayer and the Grace.

Open Meeting via Zoom with Lucy Abraham from Glass Door on Thursday, 26th November at 6:30pm. She will be talking about the current situation for rough sleepers locally, Glass Door's intended response in line with the Covid related restrictions and the support that churches and individuals can give to Glass Door. The session will last for an hour with an opportunity for questions.

The next meetings of the Deanery Synod will be on

Monday 1st February 2021 - St Peters, Petersham

Wednesday 9th June 2021 - Holy Trinity, Richmond

Monday 4th October 2021 - St Matthias, Richmond

We hope that we will be able to meet in person next year.