

Deanery Pastoral Forum Minutes

27th February 2025
Sacred Heart, Bilton

- 1) **Welcome & opening prayer** - Peter Rand and Fr David Hartley welcomed everybody and the meeting opened with a prayer. PR also announced Fr David is to be appointed a Canon.
- 2) **Attendance** - 6 clergy and 18 lay members attended the meeting - Stephen Bamber (Whitnash), Sue Barton (Rugby B&H), Bernard Baxter (H on the H), Susan Berti (Kenilworth), John Brine (K/S/B), David Brooks (K/S/B), John Clayton (Baddesley Clinton), Diane Davies (Rugby B&H), Peter & Theresa Finkel (Stratford upon Avon), Martin Foley (Lillington), Fr Paul Haines (Monks Kirby), Fr David Hartley (Whitnash), Simon Hill (Kenilworth), Vicki Hobbs (Rugby), Pat Holliday (Baddesley Clinton) Fr Oliver Holt (Stratford upon Avon), Louisa Hosegood (Monks Kirby), Fr Gerry Murray (Rugby B&H), Fr Teddy O'Brien (Wappenbury), Deacon Lionel Pelloquin (Rugby B&H), Richard Potter (Rugby), Peter Rand (Kenilworth), Fr Samy Arul (Southam). Louise Sandford (Wootton Wawen)

Apologies - these were received from Les Cleeve, Loretta Curtis, Fr Craig Davies, Fr Stephen Day, Richard Deane, Frank Eustace, Peter Gay, Ed Hester, Trevor Hodgkinson, Fr Kevin Hooper, David McLoughlin, Brian Malone, Nicola Mollard, Fr Damian Nwankwo, Kevin Quinn, Fr Frank Smith and Clare St John.

In addition, there were six clergy and 12 lay members who did not attend.

- 3) **Minutes of the last meeting** - the minutes were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting.

4) Cluster Meetings - Verbal Reports

Bicester, Hethe, Banbury, Chipping Norton, Charlbury

They reported that they hadn't held a meeting held since the last DPF. PR read a report on their behalf which reported that a "way forward" group was working in Charlbury and Chipping Norton parishes, Banbury had opened a consultation process to discuss the changes they would need to consider with the loss of their assistant priest in the summer. Bicester and Hethe had formed a social committee and are now planning to run their parish council in a more synodal way.

Leamington, Lillington, Kenilworth, Whitnash, Warwick, Hampton on the Hill, Baddesley Clinton:

The cluster reported on their meeting held last week. The focus was on comms and the identity of the cluster which has a very transient Mass going population. They are looking at the sharing of newsletters and bringing them together into a cluster newsletter. They have also been looking at the database of info they have/need to have. They have also begun to consider how lay led ministry might develop as the future unfolds. Fr David said he was encouraged by their conversation around how we fully express our faith. The idea of a "second tier" of prayer and worship was supported, there should be more than eucharistic services.

It was also reported that consideration was being given to how the digital magazine from the Leamington parishes could be expanded in future.

The issue of future priest numbers was discussed and more data projections on priest numbers would help. PR commented that it exists and can be shared again, broadly speaking in 10 years we will be at 50% of the current numbers.

The point was made that there is a need to repeat messages over and over - both the situation and decisions, as it acknowledged that people only really listen when it bites.

If we are expecting lay people to do more, then lay formation needs to happen now. More authenticating roles e.g. lectors could help. What is the diocesan view on this? The role of deacons will be increasingly significant too.

Rugby, Bilton, Hillmorton, Southam, Wappenbury, Monks Kirby

The cluster reported they met on 13th Feb and Monks Kirby joined them. They are moving forward collaboratively and grappling with how to make it work and how to support parishes in need. They reported on the work they had done to rate where parishes are doing well or not. The resultant RAG ratings help to focus conversations and show where resources can be used and also where excellence can be shared to help others. They have considered how the four themes the Archbishop has given us could be used to structure future agendas.

PR commented on the RAG rating and the amount of info it provides, something that other clusters may wish to adapt/adopt. RAG rating will help sharing of best practice and help focus on top priorities and best use of resources.

It was confirmed by show of hands that people are happy for email addresses across the DPF to be shared to facilitate sharing and learning.

Stratford, Wooton Wawen, Kineton, Shipston & Brailes

The cluster met last week and reported a very positive meeting where they had considered the sustainability of the cluster/mission given its geography. They had begun to consider how it would work and identified some of the fundamental questions. It was recognised that a lot of preparation is required, for example on property and finances and how they would work across the cluster.

Fr D Tams had produced a short paper identifying future issues and questions that he feels need to be answered, including how priest training will need to be developed to prepare people for the new way of working. This will be shared.

The cluster had agreed that all parish newsletters will list Mass times across the cluster and that parish events were already being opened up to all.

The meeting discussed the need to model how future structures will work. We shouldn't wait too long; it would be useful to decide on a model and test it. It was agreed that a timeframe would also be helpful so that people can understand the broad sweep and phases of change that we will face. The point was raised that perhaps a diocesan commission or similar could help to consider and pull together some of the big issues. Fr D commented that there is a lot under discussion as to how the new structure will work, and shared how in Brighton they had converted deaneries into parishes to address some of the issues we are facing.

There were some comments about the need for a clearer enunciation of what vision we are working towards and also a call for more frequent and consistent leadership direction to help set the overall framework for our work.

5) Deanery Pastoral Forum - terms of reference

PR thanked the meeting for their responses to the Terms of Reference. They were accepted and will be forwarded to the VG along with clergy comments.

There followed a brief discussion around the terminology of cluster versus mission.

6) Coming Events

Pilgrimage to Littlemore 22nd March - PR reported that 10/18 parishes had mentioned it in their newsletters.

Diocesan pilgrimage to Harvington in September - it was suggested that as a deanery we should support this event.

7) Communications

PR shared some thoughts on the relationship between Diocese, Deanery, Cluster and Parish. He explained that Deanery now has a different role. The deanery is the link to the diocese for clergy and laity, our deanery is large, and output of the clusters/missions has shown where the energy is - this will help the dean feedback to diocese. But getting the message over to parishioners has to be at cluster level - a lot of work is required to improve comms.

Comments were made with reference to a feedback loop - how do clusters/deanery hear what is happening elsewhere? It was proposed that we have an opportunity once a year for the diocese to feedback - perhaps our area bishop could undertake this?

It was also suggested that a pastoral letter or other communication should be used on a regular basis to share information on the progress we are making across the diocese. This links to the earlier points raised about leadership and vision in item no.4 above.

There was some discussion around the proposed diocesan fundraising campaign, clergy had been asked for volunteers. The idea is to have a fund-raising focus for 4 weeks following a similar process held by Southwark and Westminster. It was agreed that more info is required and that any process needs to recognise all the other initiatives that are being undertaken.

The deanery website will be an issue for discussion at a future meeting, a link to it should be added to parish newsletters.

8) Next meeting

Thurs. 19 June. 7pm. St Francis Kenilworth

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm with a prayer.