

Church Administrator: Sally Banks

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Meeting Notes from Deanery Synod, 25th February 2016.

Introduction

The meeting was hosted at Holy Trinity Church, Aldershot. This is George Newton's church, and he led our worship. Isaiah 61 v1-4. We prayed through these verses, and then prayed for our parishes and our deanery, for leading and restoration.

George spoke about some of the exciting things going on at Holy Trinity, and also the challenges they are facing. Holy Trinity is a small church, but there's a lot going on. Community action and outreach is a priority - when the weather gets really cold, the church provides a Night Shelter for the homeless, and ministry on the street has meant that over 1000 people were prayed with last year. Testimonies at Sunday services provide great encouragement, as people speak about their engagement with others wherever they live and work during the week.

They've run the puzzling questions course, followed by an Alpha course (very much like we've done at St Paul's), and there is a growing and thriving 'Women's Hour' group, for retired women, who come and bring their friends.

There are big financial challenges, not least of which is the new roof (£200k) which is needed.

Welcome and Introduction to James Lee

Bethany Lee stood down as Lay Chair last summer before the birth of their third son. James, her husband is our new Lay Chair, and he spoke about his day job at the Bible Society, working with the 'Christians in Parliament' Group. A prayer breakfast is held each Summer, attended by the Archbishop Justin Welby, and in 2014, both David Cameron and Ed Milliband attended – the first time ever that the PM and Leader of the Opposition had both been there.

Wellesley (Aldershot Urban Expansion)

Two new candidates will be coming for interview 8/9 Mar – please pray that the right person will be appointed to lead the new church in Wellesley. Around 18 people are needed to form a 'seed team' to go and work there – servant hearted people required, and some key people from Holy Trinity will be going.

Mission Strategy Group – There is still a vacancy on this team so please see George if you are interested. Now Bishop Andrew's action plan is in place, it will be possible to determine the focus and priorities for the group.

Virtual Networks – I haven't received any emails on this, but it does sound as if the Wardens facebook group for sharing expertise has now been set up, so we could join in with this (if I can find out how), and there is also one for clergy. Future groups for children's work, mission and outreach, and PCC secretaries are also planned.

All Saints in Fleet, gutted by fire in the Summer, has now been cleared, and work has started to put a 'top hat' over the building so that reconstruction can start, but now awaiting permission to move some graves. Fundraising continues. Please continue to pray for the rebuilding of this church – see the website for more information. <http://ariseallsaints.uk/>

General and Diocesan Synod Update – James Lee

James has been elected to General Synod, so was able to share with us his experience of attending the first session in November, opened by the Queen, and the following session in February. Issues discussed have been: (Nov) Renewal and reform programme with positive encouragements; targets to increase new ordinands, encourage lay leadership and greater flexibility. The Migrant crisis was debated, with calls on the government to do more, and discussion of how the church seeks to respond. (Feb) Archbishop's task group on evangelism reported: Significance of student mission and summer camps for young people, clarity of the gospel and the transforming power of Jesus, recognition of the importance of mission to families, not just children in isolation. The July meeting will debate human sexuality.

Waterways Chaplaincy – Mark Chester

Mark Chester is Senior Chaplain to the Waterways. He used to be vicar at St Paul's Camberley. He has a great heart for the un-churched. The Waterways Chaplaincy is ecumenical and part of a wider movement which is growing, aiming to go out to where people are. 'Workplace matters' is the umbrella organization for all sorts of chaplaincy, and embodies over 50 years of experience.

The vision for the Waterways Chaplaincy is to be a catalyst in the waterways community, to bring about short and long term transformation, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Mark's work consists of going out, walking the canal path, and looking for people who need help and care. There are many people here – anglers, walkers, business people taking a break, gongoozlers (who idly watches people working hard at locks), and many more.

The Chaplains seek to help people in practical ways and improve their wellbeing, build empowering relationships, and respond to questions about the meaning of life. People to seek still waters to reflect on the big questions of life, and to get away from the stress and burdens of their lives. So it's an ideal place to meet with and minister to people, to be with them in the good times and the bad.

The mission of the Canals and Rivers Trust, who are the main operators of our UK waterways since 2012, is "transforming places and enriching lives", very similar to the chaplains!

Aldershot is on the Basingstoke canal, running from the Wey River all the way to Basingstoke. It's been open to the public since 1991, and had 56,000 visitors in 2015. In the early days, the Salvation Army had a key involvement in the canals. Many who lived there were outside of society, with high levels of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty, primarily due to having no address. Many today end up living on the canals following family breakdown, where a man is longer able to afford a place to live.

There are currently 30 Waterways Chaplains in the UK. The target is to have 200 by 2020, which will mean we will have 1 chaplain responsible for 8 miles of canal. They will be able to reach the de-churched (drifted away) and the un-churched (never been). There are fewer de-churched people today, and the number of un-churched is growing, so we need to reach them in "the 3rd place", ie.

1. Home
2. Work
3. Where people want to be (eg. The Basingstoke Canal!)

You don't have to be ordained to be a Chaplain. You commit to walking a mile or more of the towpath every week. There is a monthly meeting which supports chaplains in their work, and annual training.

You can support this work as a church – through engagement with a chaplain, inviting them to come in and talk about their work, leading to prayer support, and getting others involved. Or as an area, establishing a group of chaplains who are self sustaining.

Please pray for the ministry and for Mark.

I picked up some leaflets, so I'll put these with the hard copy of these notes in the PCC/Deanery Synod file at the back of church.

Further meeting dates in 2016

15th June

13th October

Locations to be arranged.

Sally Banks

7th March 2015