

PARISH OF SANDERSTEAD

CROYDON SOUTH DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2015-16

This was the second year of the 2014-17 triennium for Croydon South Deanery Synod. It met four times between April 2015 and February 2016.

The first meeting in 2015-16 was on 30th April 2015 at St Mark's, Woodcote. Among necessary administrative business, members were briefed on the arrangements for the election of new Diocesan and General Synods, for which Deanery Synod members form the electorate.

The main business was a session entitled "Are People Growing Closer to God" led by Canon Trevor Mapstone, Vicar of Emmanuel, South Croydon, and Area Dean of Croydon Central. Canon Mapstone led us through an exercise entitled "Discerning the Angel of the Church" from the book "Growing Healthy Churches" by Robert Warren. It is based on the messages to the Angels of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor in Revelation chapters 2 & 3, particularly that to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus (Rev.2 1-7). The representatives of each church were asked to consider a number of questions. These included which colour would best represent the life of their church, and what Jesus would write to its Angel. We were then asked to feed back on these two questions. It was a very interesting and revealing exercise.

The second meeting was on 6th July 2015 at Christchurch, Purley. The main business of what was essentially a social meeting was the election, by Houses, of Diocesan Synod Representatives: Revd Fiona Weaver and Fr Grant Cohen to the House of Clergy; Mr Nick Whitley and Mrs Rosemary Kempself to the House of Laity. Synod was also briefed on the proposal to streamline the senior management structure of the diocese, by combining no less than four committees (Bishop's Council, Diocesan Board of Finance, Mission & Pastoral Committee and Parsonage Board) into one Council of Trustees, supported by a Policy & Finance Committee. The results of the elections to the Council have recently been announced.

Subsequent to the meeting, Fr Grant Cohen volunteered to act as Secretary of Deanery Synod, filling a serious gap in the structure.

At St Mary's, Sanderstead on 5th November 2015, following the usual business session, Synod divided into three groups to consider three key issues about the contribution of the Deanery to growing the Kingdom of God in Croydon South. Outputs were:

- Communications: material for a job description for a Deanery Communications Officer.
- Training: topics on which training on a Deanery-wide basis would be helpful/feasible: preparation of intercessions; identifying gifts within congregations; lay leadership of worship; and pastoral visiting, plus some further possibilities.
- Sharing of Resources: suggestion for the creation of a directory of available resources; moving on to suggestions for the process in which Synod could identify key aspects of the way forward with the new Area Dean.

The last meeting in 2015-16 was at St Andrew's Coulsdon on 2nd February 2016. The main item was a presentation by Revd Louise Ellis, Diocesan Discipleship and Vocations Missioner on the subject of Discipleship and Vocation. The key points were:

- The difference between Discipleship and Vocation. The presentation would be essentially in two halves, with each presenting the key words and phrases associated with the two ideas. Both categories were about the outward working of our faith.

- Discipleship was more than just belief. It covered our life in all its fullness. It was about following a life-long, on-going process of forming and learning. Discipleship was not without its costs.
- Vocation was about our specific calling - of each of us, by name. It was our specific and unique purpose or work and how our discipleship worked out in the best possible way.
- Ways of discerning and encouraging discipleship and vocations in our church communities included:
 - Preaching
 - Teaching (development of a course was nearing completion)
 - Exploration in wider forums (material on Vocations Fairs had been circulated and was available in hard copy; there was an NSM Conference 4-5/3/16)
 - Looking afresh at people
 - Seeking ideas and help from the diocesan team
 - Prayer.
- The discernment processes for formal ministries, lay or ordained, were then described, as well as less formal alternatives, such as the Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship.

It was also announced at the February meeting that Revd Paul Robert's, St John's, Old Coulsdon, had been elected to serve as Area Dean, succeeding Revd Christine Spurway who had given many years faithful service. Paul will be licensed in his church on 19th April 2016, and this will be followed by the next meeting of Synod.

We are also having to bid farewell to Mr Nick Whitley who is standing down, also after many years faithful service. At the time of writing a successor has yet to come forward.

Chris Babbs

15/2/16