

Deanery Synod to the Old Sodbury APCM on 4th May 2025

During the year 2024-2025, I represented the Old Sodbury PCC at 3 meetings of the Wotton-under-Edge Deanery Synod. At the first of these, the main item discussed was the Parish Share to be paid to the Diocese for 2025 and for 2026. The Area Dean, the Revd Graham Stacey, explained that the 2024 Parish Share for all parishes in the Deanery had unfortunately been miscalculated by the Diocesan Finance Department and that the resultant shortfall would have to be recovered by increasing the Parish Share for 2025. He then continued by explaining that the Parish Share for 2026 would use a new model, based on the amount that each parish could afford. The Archdeacon, the Area Dean and a member of the Diocesan Finance Department will meet with the Incumbent and representatives of each parish on 6th May 2025 for a detailed discussion about the parish's finances. The result will be setting up a number of Parish Share Bands into one of which each parish will be allocated, based on what it can afford.

The next Deanery Synod meeting, which was an open one, was dedicated to discussing the maintenance of church buildings and was led by the Lay Chair, Carole O'Donnel from Coaley. The main objective was to create a Deanery Building Maintenance Handbook in which parishes could record the location of important items in its church such as stop taps, mains power switches, heating controls etc and also a list of recommended contractors and organisations that could provide advice on items such as heating, organs, bells, clocks etc. Also included would be the names and contact details of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Advisors. The meeting concluded with some helpful advice on how volunteers can assist with church maintenance work thus minimising costs.

The third Deanery Synod meeting, chaired by the Area Dean, was devoted to three items. Firstly, we received a presentation on the training of laity for roles that include lay worship leaders, pastoral care assistants and funeral assistants. There was some discussion about this with the main conclusion being that the most difficult aspect would be the recruitment of the right people to fill these roles. The next item was concerning the Parish Share for 2026. This generated extensive discussion, including the best way to ensure that the meeting on 6th May should be run to ensure that it is effective. This discussion overran its time allocation leaving insufficient time for the third item, namely the discussion of Living in Love and Faith. This is the Church of England project to provide a selection of readings and prayers for blessing same sex couples. Each parish was provided with a form asking if it had had any discussions about this to which I replied that I was not aware of this at Old Sodbury.

Chris K Cooper

Deanery Synod Representative