

Higham Deanery Synod – report to 2025 Annual Parochial Church Meetings

1. Higham Deanery Synod met three times in 2024:

i) Tuesday 5th March at St Mary the Virgin, Finedon

Chad Chadwick from the Gen2 team spoke about **Wild and Eco Church**, including of the importance of both in a world where concern for the environment is of high importance, especially among the youth. Nicki Hobbs had helpfully agreed to be Rural Dean, in addition to her existing role of Rural Dean for Kettering – on a one year arrangement. Andrew Presland gave a spoken report on the February General Synod, including the latest debate on with a large majority vote to move to ‘next business’, recognising that the current proposals were not going to be agreed. Following Lizzie Moyston (Deanery Youth Mission Enabler)’s move to church in Hampshire, those present agreed for parishes to with their donors to prepare them to receive the unused donations back for youth work within each parish or benefice.

ii) Tuesday 18th June at St Mary the Virgin, Higham Ferrers

David Crisp (St Mary’s, Rushden) spoke about his personal experience of **autism** and the difficulties he has faced because of it. He there are 700,000 autistic people in UK, abs suggested ways in which churches could include this , such as providing direct instructions (e.g. around etiquette for communion) and friendly, welcoming leaders. Mother Louise Bishop (St Mary’s, Higham Ferrers) noted that her personal experience of autism within the church had been more positive. She has found the church community to be very supportive for her son who has autism. She highlighted that getting people to understand the differences in people with autism is key.

Andrew Presland gave a brief update on **Rushden Street Pastors**. Progress on recruiting volunteers was slow but moving forward.

Revd Morna Simpson had been appointed as the new vicar of Finedon, alongside her Diocesan role and starting on 4th September.

iii) Thursday 24th October at St Peter, Irthlingborough

Nicki Hobbs spoke about **Bishop Debbie’s visit** earlier in the day, noting the many ways in which people across the Deanery are serving their communities.

Dudley Hughes was elected as **Deanery Lay** Chair.

A **finance update** showed that, three quarters of the way through the year, parishes collectively had paid 47% of parish share, compared to 50% this time last year.

Andrew Presland reported on the new **Diocesan Synod**, which had met at Northampton. which met in Northampton recently. Bishop Debbie noted the need for a governance review to see whether the current structure is best. A deficit budget was approved for the second year running, though it was acknowledged that change is needed as the current situation is not sustainable. The importance of getting more people into church - rather than just more money – was highlighted.

Discussion took place in small groups on **which issues people would like the Deanery Synod to address** to make them excited to come to meetings. The views expressed will be considered further during Synod meetings during 2025 to inform the planning of Synod meetings including inviting guest speakers.

Other news from 2024 and early 2025:

- We are on **Facebook** at 'Higham Deanery (Diocese of Peterborough)'. Please feel free to join, if not already a member, and to submit details of church events.
- Thank you to all parishes in the Deanery for their contributions to the **Diocesan parish share**.
- Thanks to **Amanda Newman** for looking after the finances given for Lizzie Moyston, former Deanery Youth Mission Enabler, as some donations continued to come in.
- We held a **Deanery Prayer event** on Saturday 11th May at Hargrave, as part of Archdeacon Alison's walk around the Diocese for Thy Kingdom Come.
- Our annual **Beer & Hymns evening** at Newton Bromswold took place on Tuesday 11th July.
- **Morna Simpson** was licensed as Vicar of Finedon in September.
- **Bishop Debbie** visited Higham Deanery on Thursday 24th October, calling at several church-run community projects and then meeting people from around the Deanery for tea & cakes at Chelveston.
- **Revd Neil Bullen** was licensed as incumbent of the Four Spires Benefice (Raunds, Ringstead, Stanwick and Hargrave) on Thursday 30th January.
- **Wednesday 19th March, Deanery Synod** at St Peter's, Rushden, with Victoria Kellett, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer speaking.

Looking ahead:

- **The Higham and Kettering Deaneries** are now working together on an informal basis largely to ease the workload with Nicki Hobbs being Rural Dean in both deaneries. On this basis, future joint meetings include:
 - **Wednesday 25th June, Deanery Synod** at All Saints', Kettering – with an environmental focus;
 - **Tuesday 7th October, Deanery Synod** in Higham Deanery (venue to be arranged) – with a Prison Week/chaplaincy) focus
- **Vacancies on the Higham Deanery Synod – and the Synod Standing Committee** - still exist for: i) Secretary, ii) Treasurer and iii) Representative on the Diocesan Board of Finance, although the second two of these roles could be carried out by the same person. Please contact Nicki Hobbs (Rural Dean) at revnicki@familyhobbs.org.uk or Dudley Hughes (Lay Chair) at dudleychughes@gmail.com if interested.

Andrew Presland (Deanery Standing Committee), March 2025