

Notes from Deanery Plan Review Day 15th November 2025, at Paul Church Hall

Opening and Framing the Day

The day began with attendees being led in the Eucharist and with prayers and blessing by AD Clive.

Adam then welcomed everyone and set out some ground rules in regard to mutual respect for each other as the day progresses.

Attendees were asked to state how they were feeling about the day. Words included hopeful, excitement, apathy, optimism, renewed hope, bored, intrigued, apprehensive, curious, puzzlement and desperate!

Adam explained that just one year ago he came to look around the benefice in vacancy. Three words were often stated when in conversation with people, these being “On the Way!” His earliest response from people when he newly arrived was that ‘on the way’ was not how many people generally felt, in fact comments heard from nearly everyone about On the Way were mixed leaning toward not positive. Adam acknowledged there has been a process and although it sounded like the process was the right thing, there was a mismatch and people were not engaged. He believes people bring about change and if people are not engaged, change is very difficult to achieve, however important things are, however right and true, even God directed change requires people’s willingness to bring about those changes, and we ourselves, need to be willing to change.

The points he wishes to acknowledge –

1. Original plan cut number of clergy to five priests – between 27 parishes. Presently have just one benefice with five or more parishes. Now, the first phase is completed, and has resulted in 8 members of clergy between all parishes. If shared, on average the clergy within this deanery should have no more than three parishes! Acknowledges too that we have three parishes where the strategic plan hasn’t worked. The reasons for this vary but include ‘fit’ and other unique reasons. The new deanery team is committed to sorting this out, with help from the Diocese but in interim we need to make sure these three parishes have clergy support.

Two benefices remain in ‘vacancy’ and Adam confirmed we will recruit two stipendiary clergy for these benefices. We will support each other in this. When our neighbours are in need, we support them.

Adam has lived in various places and unique to most places is that there is a passion surrounding the local parish church, people are ‘passionate’ about their local church, even when they don’t attend regularly. We mustn’t forget there are areas within the

CoE, within other dioceses and deaneries, even local to us, that are not in a similar privileged position as us. We are in a very strong position! He recognises that for some people, trust has been broken but he is asking that we all look to redevelop trust.

Regarding the plan, Adam's recognition is that almost no-one understands the present plan. Everyone accepts that children and young people need to be the focus of our churches, but not at the exclusion of older people. It is widely recognised that the best people who communicate with young people and children generally tend to be the older generation! We all know that young people will often talk and share with older people rather than people of a similar age to their parents. (This not to say that young people don't make good youth workers!)

Adam wished to acknowledge the amazing work and service undertaken by our self-supporting ministers (SSMs) and those with permission to officiate (PTO's). We need to understand how to better support our PTO's and SSM's etc. We have other members of clergy who we still wish to honour, we recognise that clergy never say 'no' but another thing we have to do is to honour those called to lay ministry, this means everyone here and others within our churches.

He has noticed that people have low confidence when placed in a church environment. Ministry must not be exclusive, we need to build confidence for people to undertake lay ministry, including young people and those not presently involved in church. Jesus met with people and asked them to 'go out' and feed the hungry, go and tell people about him etc. We have a host of volunteer roles but what do we actually need? What will they need?

Resetting Relationships

Adam asked attendees to share in pairs, asking "what has been 'good' for you in the past five years?". Don't be negative here!

- People acknowledged that benefices have joined together more often with churches within benefices coming together as a community to create worship.

Adam then asked attendees for suggestions in regard to what they would like to see happening from hereon...

- People expressed the following - for there to be more listening; friendship; inclusion; welcome; respect; openness, honesty and caring for each other; positive examples, integrity; acceptance, listening to understand – we need to do something different – to understand. St Paul said, when we see God face to face, then we will know. God is in each of us. Empowering and affirming of each other; laughing together; please let us not take each other too seriously; adventurous, selflessness and unselfish. To be enabled. We need to leave 'umbridge (Harry Potter reference) at home!'

Adam confirmed that we will need to hold each other to account, to be brave and a true friend, sometimes this means having the courage to speak the truth, even when we fear the consequence of speaking that truth! Equally, we need to have forgiveness.

He asked, what is the 'umbridge' that we have brought with us over the last five years and moving forward, what are the principles that we will need to move forward?

Attendees suggested the following...

Fair allocation of resources; being willing to try something new. Adam explained at this juncture that Edison designed a thousand models of the lightbulb before he got one that worked! We need to try things and be ready to learn from our mistakes! We don't repeat mistakes we need to learn collectively. Attendees recognised that there needs to be better communication as communication is often poor.

Attendees continued....

Love – working together, whatever has gone before we must work together in love and forgiveness so that we can rebuild, "they will know that we are Christians by our love", especially when it's hard. Communication is two way – we should listen to receive not listen to respond.

Adam – you, the people are going to discuss and write the detail of the revised plan, together with the diocese who will help to shape it for us. We will need to ensure that those who are in vacancy feel support from now on! There are examples in other parts of the country whereby the COE has proceeded to implement the 'On the Way' process regardless of what people say locally. This not the case for Penwith, spent yesterday with Simon Cade and Sophie (?), who are lifting us from underneath and not pushing from behind. There is positive things to come with money to be made available to support local parishes. He reminded attendees that original plan had stipulated five stipendiary clergy, Penwith now has eight and it's up to us to make this work!

There was a question from an attendee who asked – "Are we asking today about the future? What are we actually doing today?" Adam – you are going to set three priorities for the future. We are going to have headline priorities – what are the most important things that collectively you think we need to concentrate on for the next five years. This afternoon we will look at the three priorities and ask what does success look like? Today we are reassessing our culture, asking where do we want to go? If growth of the church is what we are after, that is what we are spending our money on and we can work collectively with clergy to ensure this happens.

Attendees commented that stipendiary priests are so important for visiting and outreach work. Adam – this is correct, but priests are not necessarily the right person to knock on the door initially. Personal politics needs to be understood of course and so that type of outreach needs to be done in partnership. Think about all the church

groups we know, these were all run by local people, getting hold of the priest was not always easy! There is acknowledgement that where there is no priest, the numbers continue to decline but we need to do this collaboratively. So what does the stipendiary member of clergy need in order to make things better? An attendee reminded everyone that Christ started out with just himself and called the twelve disciples – fishermen and tax collectors. He didn't go out knocking on doors! Christ is WITH EACH OF US! Adam agrees – yes Christ is within each of us, Christ is knocking on the doors. God says he knew what he was doing when he chose each of us individually. He would choose each of us again and again and again. Stopping for break now, but over coffee and tea, please talk to each other.

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Identifying Shared Priorities

Following the coffee break attendees split into groups upstairs and down and were asked...

- i) what they considered to be the biggest challenges within their parish, benefice and deanery.
- ii) What they see as 'urgent' and needs dealing with quickly?
- III) What are the 'opportunities' that are waiting for us?

What should our collective focus be? (Sarah only present for the feedback from downstairs groups)...

Sarah Lee's table - Hayle Youth Project, consider 0-50 classed as younger people; look at skills sets; staffing – we need people who are well equipped re: youth, readers, lay leaders etc. Need flexibility.

Caroline Amos' table – think about a deanery prayer to be used across the whole deanery); to increase inclusivity – think about accessibility, services that are held at flexible times in order to appeal to families, to aid people who are on the fringes – generally people who do not wish to attend a 'Sunday' service. To meet people where they are, to go out to people. WWJD - what would Jesus do? Think about skills and resources.

Eliza Sewell's table – for there to be support for ministry – more sharing and caring – to have meetings like today. To enable the ministry team and the PCC to speak up. Improve communication from Diocese down to parishes.

Kay Short's table – becoming intergenerational; educational opportunities for all; caring for our congregations and potential congregations – pastoral care – providing the meat but what comes next? Training courses, being willing to signpost people

within the deanery to other parishes that are holding relevant training?
Discipleship and deepening spirituality, deepening relationships with God.

Tracey Worrall's table – We need churches to be places for 'everybody' to dispel the mysticism of the church? The church has had such a bad press we have a lot of work to do; we need to show people that it is a good and safe place to be. For important people within the diocese to be available, receive regular visits from the diocese (Adam reminded all, how accessible +David has been in just a very short time!), we need to be aware of how much the Diocese give to us, money from the diocesan reserve – this cannot continue – so we need to look at how we raise funds locally. Truro Diocese have made £22m from the sales of property they don't need. We are the second lowest paying MMF deanery within the country which is why we are getting some help! There was acknowledgement that the public believe all churches have lots of money and we need to raise public awareness that our churches are not necessarily 'wealthy'.

Father Jeff's table – Fostering a spiritual connection with our environment both for residents and for visitors – we live in a beautiful place. Building relationships with other organisations within our community. Think about how we attract younger generations into our churches.

Adam then looked to group the suggestions from attendees. He reminded people that some of these 'wishes' cannot be met and so collectively we need to help each other in meeting where we want to go. Maybe via skill sharing, learning from one another – including deepening spirituality.

Can we make use of church buildings in a creative way? Can our church places be better used for the good of the community? Most of the suggestions made can happily be grouped under the terms 'outreach and evangelism', both of which mean to tell people what is going on in our churches and to develop faith within and among us all. There was concern from some however, that the term 'evangelism' is often looked upon very negatively by the public. This is acknowledged, we will look at outreach in a more open way. There is a genuine desire for us to be more caring and pastoral.

Attendees agreed that youth shouldn't mean just young people and children – we need churches that are multigenerational, and we will need help to meet this. It's about showing love, peace and sanctuary for many within our society, like NightChurch is doing in Penzance.

All acknowledged that the hardest thing to do, for many people who are not used to attending church, is to walk through the doors!

Break for lunch

Building the Action Plan

Adam pointed out three headlines that he and Chris feel cover all that have been discussed.

- i) Intergenerational growth
- ii) Patterns for ministry – support and outreach, intergenerational ministry.
- iii) Sharing Resources – sharing with each other and using the resources that we have.

Note - Prayer, accessibility, the environment and safety (safeguarding) run through everything that we do.

Chris led the downstairs afternoon session asked attendees to work out and focus on the three **priorities**. To consider - how do we wish to make the three priorities happen?

Attendees continued to work in groups. Using sticky notes they then attached their suggestions to a sheet with the relevant heading.

Sheets were then collected together for the Deanery Leadership Team to draw up the revised plan going forward.

Attendees then stopped for afternoon break.

Next Steps and Commitment

Following on from the afternoon break the final session brought all attendees back together for final thoughts...

Adam - We need to be willing to change in order to see growth, feels that he sees this when visiting people and churches. We need to be better communicators to ensure this happens.

Plan will need to be flexible, for example one parish may wish to employ someone to work with children while another wishes to train people who will then undertake the work themselves. Attendees asked for training to be easier and more widely available, needs to be local and bite-sized so that it is manageable for people locally.

A further request is for advice/training in regard to applying for grants.

Adam advised that the next deanery synod is to be held on 28th January 2026. There may be a new team for DIT. The DIT needs to include expertise within the specific areas we wish to deliver. Synod needs to be reinvigorated and more fun. Adam is to chair the new DIT and Chris to chair the Synod meetings, he will make sure we deliver on the success criteria, we will report back every quarter on how things are going. We will

recognise when things haven't worked and acknowledge this. The DIT is appointed by the AD and while he will do so on the deanery team's advice, the decision is finally his alone.

Communication wise – we will create a deanery website, it will include what's going on – it will be clustered in regard to relevant information. We will include our financial picture. At the deanery synod in January, the finances will be agreed. There will be financial transparency that will be sent out via email.

Closing Reflections

Adam asked how people now felt...

Responses - exciting, more hopeful, feels that there is now more openness. A good start to a new beginning.

The review day finished with a time of prayer and thanksgiving led by our lay chair of deanery synod – John.