

Re-organisation of Stourbridge Deanery

A Mission Statement for the deanery....

Our Deanery exists to support, sustain and develop the life and ministry of its individual churches so that God's mission through the Anglican church to the people of Stourbridge deanery can go forward in changing times. This may be achieved by maintaining all that is of value in the existing life of the churches as well as taking advantage of new opportunities of developing the ministry of the whole people of God (see note 1), training and supporting the clergy (see note 2), and working together in ways which avoid duplication and minimise bureaucracy (see note 3)

Note 1: Ministry is to be understood in the broadest terms, and training would use among others lay training programmes to be offered by the diocese. This would lead to the development of a variety of lay and ordained ministries

Note 2: Recognising that teamwork will require new ways of working, appropriate training will be required for the clergy. There would be an expectation that clergy would meet regularly for prayer and fellowship

Note 3: There is a danger that teamwork could add an additional layer to the structure with attendant meetings. However, teamwork at its best could pool resources, streamline administration and aid efficiency

A suggested plan for Stourbridge Deanery

The re-organisation of Stourbridge deanery presents us with an exciting opportunity to re-examine our mission to the people of God and to those who do not yet know him. Our vision is that by 2016, when the number of stipendiary clergy in the deanery will be no more than eight, there will be two mission teams. The exact nature of these teams has still to be determined, and may, indeed, have to evolve over the next few years, but the intention is that in due course they become Teams in a formal sense. The teams could loosely be described as the Country Team and the Town Team (*see below.*) Two clergy would eventually share responsibility for ministry to the churches of the Country Team, and within the Town Team, each clergy person would be ministering to two parishes (*see below.*) The unity of the whole deanery would be paramount, and ways of co-operating across the whole deanery explored and developed.

The two teams

The Country Team would consist of Hagley (2 churches), Clent, Belbroughton, Fairfield, Churchill, Blakedown and Broome

The Town Team would consist of Oldswinford, Wollescote, Pedmore, Lye, Wollaston, Norton, Amblecote and St Thomas

The town parishes would be paired in the following way: **Oldswinford and Wollescote;** **Pedmore and Lye;** **Wollaston and Norton;** **Amblecote and St Thomas**

Some details about the plan

Rather than be depressed by the reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy, we want to be excited by the new opportunities to serve the Lord together, so the plan envisages that cooperation between both the laity and the clergy of churches in each team would start right away. The clergy could meet regularly to pray together, perhaps sharing Morning or Evening Prayer together, and having a drink and a chat afterwards. Churchwardens and clergy could also meet informally. Rather than seeing these meetings as a further burden, it is possible to view them as a chance to develop friendships and explore possibilities of helping one another.

The plan to move towards giving each clergyperson in the Town Team responsibility for two churches would proceed when clergy retire or move. Given the age profile of the clergy it would take several years to implement this plan fully and bring the numbers of clergy down to the required figure of 8. The process of co-operation could start right away.

By (eventually) having two clergy to take care of the churches in the Country Team, and (eventually) four clergy to take care of the churches in the Town Team, the deanery would be two clergy under the 2016 allocation of eight clergy. However, it cannot be assumed that the present prediction for 2016 will remain unchanged. Having two clergy "spare" will give a measure of future-proofing that is vital- when we get to 2016 we do not want to be in the position of having to re-organise the deanery again. The second advantage to having two "spare" clergy is that this will allow us to make the most of the many mission opportunities in the deanery (as encouraged by Bishop John) and to address the pressing need to develop lay ministry and train the clergy - both vital if we are to go forward. The two clergy would work in these two areas across the whole deanery, and would, of course, be able to take services within the deanery as well.

The need to develop lay ministry, and train the clergy to work in new ways is urgent, and should start (or rather, continue and grow) right away. The vicar of Wollescote would have an additional responsibility to begin to work with lay and ordained across the deanery in this task of training, beginning immediately. This means that the pairing of Oldswinford and Wollescote would proceed as follows: if the Rector of Oldswinford moves on at any point, a successor would be appointed to Oldswinford on the understanding that s/he-would have responsibility of Wollescote when the present vicar of Wollescote moves on. If the present vicar of Wollescote moves on first, the present Rector of Oldswinford would take responsibility of Wollescote, and a clergyperson would be appointed with the role of coordinating lay and ordained training across the deanery, and living at Wollescote.

St James' church, Wollaston, has been without a minister for over three years. The Archdeacon is looking at a transitional appointment of a priest-in-charge until the deanery plan can be implemented.

It may take many years to come to a place where the vision for a mission post can be implemented. A particular feature of such an appointment might be to respond to all the opportunities in the deanery to work with educational establishments and young people.