

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Christ Church
Stamford

AGENDA

Christ Church Agenda for Meeting of Parishioners

Sunday 24th April 2022

Prayer and Introduction - Rev'd Anthony

Hymn

Bible Reading - 1 Peter 2: 4-10

Elections of Churchwardens for 2022/23

Hymn

Bible Reading - John 15: 9-17

Exhortation - Rev'd Anthony

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Minutes from 2021 - including matters arising

Elections -Deanery Synod representative

New PCC Members

Reports - Churchwarden's Report

Children, Youth and Young Families

Electoral Roll

Ministry and Mission Associate

Anchored

Vicar's Report

Finances - including appointing Independent Examiner

Any Other Business

Hymn

Blessing

MINUTES

of the 24th Annual Parochial Church Meeting of Christ Church
Sunday 2nd May 2021

Vestry Meeting

1. Welcome and Prayer: Rev. Anthony Laotan welcomed the parishioners and opened with a prayer

2. Election of Church Wardens: Nigel Garwood (proposed by Dawn Field and seconded by Paul Darley) and Dawn Field (proposed by Lisa Garwood and seconded by Laura Mitchell) were elected as church wardens.

APCM

1. **Apologies:** None

2. **Ministry report:** given by Anthony as part of the service

3. **Minutes from the APCM November 2020:** Minutes unanimously agreed and signed as a true record.

4. **Deanery Synod Representative:** Laura Mitchell elected to Deanery Synod, proposed by Rachael Carter and seconded by Joanne Atkinson.

5. **PCC Members:** New members elected are

Rachael Carter : Proposed by Laura Mitchell, Seconded by Ruth Lock

Jacqui Wells : Proposed by Lisa Garwood, Seconded by Rachael McIntyre

Tina Bland: Proposed by Lisa Garwood, Seconded by Ruth Lock

Barbara Morley : Proposed by Lel Nicholls, Seconded by Jason Nicholls

6. **Church Fabric Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes. Jason highlighted key areas such as the work done on risk assessments on return to worship post lockdown. The cooker will need replacement. The organ was found to be beyond repair and removed. A/V equipment has been upgraded thanks to a generous legacy.

7. **Children and Youth Ministry Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes. Lel specifically thanked the volunteers for their hard work.

8. **Anchored Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes. Anchored is the new name for our outreach, encompassing StartaFresh, Day Centre and new initiatives.

9. **Electoral Roll:** April 2020 membership is 59, a decrease of one from the previous year. Three members have left and two joined.

10. **Safeguarding Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes Anthony encouraged us to look out for one another as we emerge from lockdown. We are looking for a new Safeguarding Officer.

11. **Ministry Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes. Anthony mentioned that we would move forward with the pop-up café to connect with our community and with Catalyst communities also.

12. **Financial Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes. Lisa verbally summarised key points from the written report. The church finances have been independently examined and an independent report produced which was adopted by the PCC on 20.04.2021. The report will be uploaded onto the Church and Charity Commission website.

13. **Deanery/Diocesan Report:** A written report is available on file with the minutes. The Christ Church parish profile is about to go live and it is hoped the interviews will take place in June.

14. AOB:

14.1 Barbara commented that we should continue to ensure that Christ Church is A Place to Belong. Anthony agreed by the grace of God we would.

Closed with prayers and worship.

FABRIC

Throughout 2021 all required checks on Fire protection services and gas appliances have been carried out. It was highlighted that the cooker in the kitchen is coming to the end of its serviceable life. Investigations are ongoing into replacing it.

Towards the end of 2021 we realised that the brick wall at the side of the slope leading up to the Church building was separating apart. A structural Engineer came out and checked the situation and confirmed that there was some structural damage being caused by tree roots on the neighbouring property. We have contacted Land Registry and the Diocese for advice as to how the problem can be solved.

During the year we have had a couple of sessions to clear clutter and tidy up, once in the shed and once in the building. Thanks to all who volunteered to help.

The church made a donation to Bluecoat School in exchange for their roadside noticeboard. Planning permission was sought and approved for it to be placed at the front of the church. This has now been put up and we would like to thank Colin Field and Neels Herman for the hard work getting this in place.

The Church audit was carried out and the inventory (Terrier) has been updated accordingly.

Nigel Garwood & Dawn Field
Church Wardens

ELECTORAL ROLL

The Electoral roll currently stands at 55 members as at 24th April 2022.

Movement:

- 4 members left (3 deceased / 1 left CC)
- 1 new member

Electoral roll 2021 58 members

Gail Burnham
Electoral Roll Officer

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Tots' 'n' Lil'Cherubs:

During lock down in 2021 I was able to establish a well-being group for new mums and their babies, which met the required the restrictions at the time. Called 'Lil'Cherubs', the group ran once a week from January – June 2021 and proved successful. As restrictions lifted the group decided to amalgamate with Tots 'n' Toast which was starting back up. To date this is still the case, now all the Lil' cherub babies are now toddlers so are fully exploring the main hall, I continue to set up a separate Lil' Cherubs area in church which has given the whole group much more space. We deliberately carried on offering sessions throughout the Summer of 2021 to try and console those that had missed out on contact time. We reverted to term time only in September 2021. Current attendance figures are usually in the late teens with a maximum of 23 young babies/toddlers attending in any one session. Our curriculum has covered Creation, Miracles and Parables and we move on to 'Men of the Bible' this coming term. This provision is popular to our community families and is of great importance to my role.

The Den:

This remained online last year, and Aileen and I delivered 53 weekly sessions until we could re-open face to face on 8th June '21. Once again, to console those who had missed out on face to face, we managed to stay open throughout the Summer, albeit to a very small number of young people (min of 3, max of 7). We have been running consistently (term time only) since September '21 and quickly established a core group of approx. 12 young people who attend most frequently. The maximum we have had attend is 18 in one session. We currently have 21 registered and a solid team of 5 fabulous volunteers who support the smooth running of the group. Encouraging fellowship, we have recently introduced prayer cards and each week one member chooses a prayer and reads it to all before we start our meal together. This provision is a most valued integral part of my ministry.

Sunday Zone:

Last year we maintained delivery of craft packs to our church families until we were able to re-establish in September 2021. Our teachings were lectionary based, in line with Anthony's sermons at the time. From January 2022 we have returned to our own curriculum and have covered Creation and Miracles, now moving on to Parables. We no longer have a secondary school aged group, (Blaze), as our youth (& volunteers) have moved on both physically and spiritually. Our current attendance numbers range from 5 – 9 children each session, supported by a rostered team of 4 wonderful volunteers without whom I could not function! Their hard work and time is so greatly appreciated!

Paws for Prayer:

Sadly, this has not restarted after lockdown, mostly due to my lack of time but also due to maintaining a sensible social distance with others. Bear and I are keen to carry on when the time is right.

Rooted Summer Club:

After a successful funding bid from the LADs club, we were able to deliver a Summer club that ran once a week throughout the Summer of 2021. Some of the Den young people volunteered to help and we delivered 5 sessions teaching the Fruits of the Spirit to a group of 13 youngsters.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Light Party:

Thankfully we were still able to deliver an alternative to Halloween last October 2021, by kind funding from the LADs Club. We had 26 young people from the church family, and from various primary schools, join us for a fun evening of games and activities centred on Jesus being the Light. We received some positive feedback and once again, this was to the thanks of the generous volunteers who supported it!

Christingle Service:

Sadly, this had to be cancelled due to Covid illness.

School Ministry:

With the same funding from the LADs Club, I am able to attend Bluecoat Primary for a morning and Stamford Welland Academy in the afternoon every Tuesday to offer school ministry and support. This funding runs from September 2021 through to the end of July 2022. I have been able to give some mentoring and resilience support and promote reading skills, as well as developing relationships with individuals both students and staff. I see approximately 20 young people (one to one) throughout the day.

Choc 'n' Chat:

Acutely aware of our youth who were struggling with the lock down, I was able to run a Youth Alpha for 10 weeks from March – July 2021. With a dedicated small team of volunteers, we were able to draw alongside individuals and help them better understand the big questions in life and explore their stance of faith. We had 7 young people attend the course, most of whom came from The Den, and it was a real privilege to be a part of their spiritual journey.

Looking forward:

From May we will have a new Blaze group once a month, run by Carly who attends our church. With support, she will be leading our older primary aged children in Jesus centred teachings, and this is an exciting development for our church youngsters.

Responding to a specific request, I will be running Alpha for a small group of Tots parents, starting Wednesday 27th April for 8 weeks. This will be the second Alpha we have run and will hopefully pave the way for further courses.

Despite not having many youths attend our services, I maintain meetings with our Choc 'n' Chat group during school holidays, with the aim of running a mini youth Bible study (face to face) via a phone app. The details of when and where are currently being developed.

Your continued prayers are needed in giving thanks to God for all our current volunteers and funding and to seek more as none of the above is possible without either the willing and giving hearts of those around us.

Lel Nicholls
Children & Youth Minister.



MINISTRY AND MISSION ASSOCIATE

In March 2021 I was commissioned into the role of Ministry and Mission Associate for Christchurch. The missional side of this role has involved initiating and overseeing a number of different projects over the year including the Pop-Up Café, the Gardening Group and development of the Community Garden, helping to develop the International Culture Feast and Friday Thing and co-ordinating some one-off outreach events such as the Scavenger Hunt and the Ladies Pamper Evening.

This is alongside to contributing to other ministries of the church, particularly with supporting the leading and teaching at the monthly all-age services and contributing to the children's and youth work in other outreach opportunities such as Tots and Toast, Youth Alpha, the Easter Experience and the Rooted holiday Club.

Pop-Up Café

The Pop-up Café started on Tuesday afternoons after Easter when lockdown lifted and ran until the end of September when the weather turned too cold for sitting outside! The aim was to create a space where people from the local community could connect with each other and the church, give us an opportunity to read the local mood and see what might 'pop-up' from there. While it did go well and achieve what we hoped it would in many ways, we discovered that mainly the people who connected were people already on the fringe on church and members of the international community who came from a personal invitation. While there were some local people who came spontaneously there were perhaps not quite as many as we had hoped. However, it did give us great visibility to the school community opposite and we were able to create lots of initial links that we have been able to build on since, for me particularly as my daughter Hope started school there in the autumn. When it was too cold to meet outside, part of the café community moved to a Thursday afternoon and we created the 'Community Chatter' group where people could continue to gather.

Gardening Group and the Community Garden

During the pop-up café we came to further realise the fantastic potential of our little garden space outside church at the back of the car park. Over the coming months I developed a proposal for developing that space into a Community Garden, which I presented to the PCC in June and was approved in November. We are now all lined up ready to go with this as soon as we receive the final go-ahead from the diocese. In order to help manage the current garden and develop the opportunities the Community Garden will present, I started a Gardening group in October on Tuesday afternoons and although attendance has been fairly small, we have made great progress tidying up the garden. We had a break over the coldest months in winter but restarted in February and are looking forward to being able to crack on with the next stage of the plan soon, God willing!

International Culture Feast and The Friday Thing

Following the attendance of a number of international people, mainly ladies, at the Pop-Up Café, and a rather divine opportunity to host an 'International Feast' in December at the church, we have developed a more regular (currently fortnightly) Friday morning drop-in group specifically aimed at internationals. The aim of this is to provide a place of welcome, fun, fellowship and potentially the development of faith over time. So far, we have had three mornings which have been well attended, had a great atmosphere and contained significant conversations and opportunities for encounter with God! The International Feast has also become a quarterly event and the second one in February was again really well attended (by nearly 20 different nationalities) and was great fun!

MINISTRY AND MISSION ASSOCIATE

Outreach events

As well as contributing to the community outreach events that we already run as a church, such as the Christmas Fayre and anniversary events, we hosted a Scavenger hunt for families in October and a Ladies Pamper evening in March. Both were well attended by members of the church as well as people from the local community which was fantastic. We had encouraging feedback that they were really enjoyed and both events brought a couple of people in or back to church the following days. The Ladies Pamper evening particularly gave us a wonderful opportunity to really bless the ladies who came, not just with the physical pampering treats but also what we called the 'Blessing chair' where people could receive prayer or words of encouragement, strengthening or even revelation.

Future ideas and opportunities

It is encouraging writing this report to see how far we have come in just a year, and I look forward to seeing how things further develop or adapt with the coming seasons. We are eagerly awaiting the permission to go ahead with our Community Garden, but in the meantime have created fantastic links with the local school opposite in an opportunity to support them with the reviving of their wildlife garden and potentially developing a space into a community allotment garden.

Depending on the progress of the garden in the next few weeks/months, we may be able to open the pop-up café again this summer in the carpark or the garden. We are particularly looking forward to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in early June and are trusting that by then we may be ready to officially 'open' the community garden and then use it for the party!

Following the recent conflict in the Ukraine and the arrival of some Ukrainians in Stamford, the Friday Thing is well placed to receive people looking for support and friendship, so we are waiting to see how this will develop over the coming months. We are due to review the plans at May half term, so we decide then how to take this further from there. May God help us to help those who come.

The other area of stirring over the year as we connected with and observed our community is the way that we have young people gathering at our doors and the increasing problems with casual drug use in our local community. We have been and continue to pray into this opportunity and concern and are trusting that the Lord will guide our steps in reaching out where the need is greatest.

In Christ, and for His glory,

Laura Mitchell

Ministry and Mission Associate



ANCHORED

Anchored is the title given to our new programme created towards the end of 2020. It incorporates existing programmes that have run at Christ Church for many years, the Day Centre and StartaFresh. Anchored will seek to offer activities and support to the wider community of Christ Church parish. We hope that the activities on offer and those yet to be developed will build resilience, improve wellbeing, reduce loneliness, foster community integration and enable spiritual transformation within our Parish in particular and Stamford in general. Anchored is headed up by Geraldine who has done a fantastic job in developing the programme and responding to need.

StartaFresh continued on Zoom until March, this enabled us to maintain regular contact with our members. We returned to face to face meetings in March and adjusted our sessions so that the group met on a Monday and Friday afternoon. We were able to start an Art Therapy session once a month with the wonderfully talented John and Rachel Nicholls. They are able to draw upon their artistic talents and life experiences to deliver sessions that are both fun and supportive to the well-being of the group. We are blessed to have a wonderful team of volunteers who give up their time and facilitate sessions including CAP Kick start courses, Healthy Lifestyle activities, games quizzes and much more. Rutland Adult Learning have remained instrumental in our Friday sessions and Sue has delivered a couple of excellent courses encouraging literacy and numeracy skills and encouraging the members to research and deliver some content themselves. The Pelican Trust also come periodically to do some sessions with the group. Group numbers have remained steady since restarting, most members have returned to at least some of the activities and we have seen a couple of new people join.

At the Day Centre we continued the weekly soup run to our members until June 2021. They were delighted to be able to meet in person for the first time in July 2021 when we ran a Summer Party including Fish and Chips and ice cream. It was great to see so many of the members back and enjoying the company, which is the most important aspect of the group to them. We resumed sessions in September and currently meet fortnightly in term time. This reduced frequency was in part to be cautious around Covid but also to allow for reduced volunteer numbers, particularly around transport. As we sold our minibus at the start of the year we now hire a bus from Rutland Community Transport. We were delighted that all members have returned and we have added new ones to the group at the beginning of 2022. We couldn't have operated the group without the volunteers, in the kitchen, serving and on transport and we extend our heartfelt thanks to them. We would love to build up a team of volunteer car drivers which would enable us to offer more flexible transport to the group and perhaps allow us to increase frequency in the future.

We continued to make up food hampers for Bluecoat School and Stamford Welland, we work in partnership with the schools. They identify the families most in need and deliver the hampers to them. This year we have distributed over 200 hampers.

In September when the Pop Up Cafe stopped we began Community Chatter on a Thursday afternoon. This offered a safe social space for drinks, chat and crafting. Initially well attended with many knitters and crafters numbers have dropped slightly this year but are stable and the group is much appreciated by all who attend. We will review Community Chatter as we head into the warmer months and consider opportunities in the new garden space.

As you know Geraldine has had to take some time off due to ill health from the beginning of 2022. We thank her for her contribution last year and continue to pray for her full recovery and swift return. We have been able to continue Day Centre and the hampers with the support of Rhea Rayside on a temporary contract. Other activities have continued with the support of the staff team and the volunteers.

Lisa Garwood

SAFEGUARDING

At last years' APCM our safeguarding officer, James Mitchell stood down from the role and was thanked for all his hard work during his term of office. The position remained vacant, covered by Anthony and the wardens, until September when Carol MacBeath stepped into the role. We also appointed Jacqui Wells as an Assistant Safeguarding Officer. The DBS checks and safeguarding training of our volunteer teams are up to date and regularly monitored by the church office.

Since I became Safeguarding Officer. I have had one disclosure of concern which was followed up by Diocese. One concern with information shared from St George's Church. There have been discussions around our ongoing engagement with the youths that gather round the building at different and advice was sought from the Diocese. We are also looking at the ongoing development of the Pastoral Care Unit of the Church. Ideas for the above mentioned areas are highly welcome and if any one would like to join The Pastoral Team, please see Carol or Dawn.

Carol Macbeath
Safeguarding Officer

VICAR'S REPORT



As at this time last year, 2021, COVID restrictions had been slightly revised, allowing us to have a few more people gathering in the church building. Holy Week was eventful as the yearly Walk of Witness organized by Churches Together in Stamford went virtual, allowing for creativity and adaptability. As the newest clergy on the block, I had the great privilege of preaching last year which for obvious reasons was pre-recorded. A virtual trail of the churches also took place on the day, Good Friday. We had an in-house reflection service later that afternoon. The Saturday after was the Easter Experience for the children primarily accompanied by parents or other members of their families. It was a morning filled with games, craft, songs and most importantly, the Easter story over four different time slots. Easter Sunday service was full and well attended as much we could accommodate. We also resumed communion at this service. The APCM last year afforded us time to reflect on the previous year, celebrate what was good and improve on what was yet to be. It was also a time to formally recognise, before the congregation, the new additions to the PCC namely Tina Bland, Jacqui Wells, Rachael McCarter and Barbara Morley. Dawn Fields also returned to the PCC as Church Warden after Jay Nicholls stepped down. Later in the year, Carol McBeath was appointed as the Parish Safeguarding Officer with Jacqui Wells coming alongside as Deputy. James Mitchell had also stepped down from this role after faithfully serving his tenure.

Summer in 2021 was a time for us to step out of the building (into the car park / garden) to engage with the wider community on the Estate. Pop up café led by Laura Mitchell and her team of volunteers set up the car park café style with lots of hot beverage and sumptuous cakes for those who came and when the weather was great. Thankfully we did have many of those days and people did come to the café with a few helping out with the garden as well. As part of our community engagement, we had three monthly car boot sales over the summer months which fared fairly well. One of the highlights last summer was the 60th anniversary celebration of the founding of Christ Church. We had a lovely service which was well attended and many who hadn't been to the church since COVID came as well. We had food afterwards and the cake was remarkable. We probably could have made much out of it but grateful we did do something albeit simple. Another highlight was the Church BBQ we had following the first service, since I and my family arrived in Stamford, without COVID restrictions. It was a fun atmosphere and great to meet with lots of church folks that attended prior to lockdown.

Our outreach initiatives carried on even through the colder months. Even though, the Pop-up café stopped due to season change, we adapted our outreach to match the short days and long dark nights. The Light Party, organised by Lel and the team, had perhaps its biggest number of children, 30, even pre-COVID. It was an opportunity for the children to see and hear about Jesus as the Light of the world and that there was a better alternative to Halloween. Later that November, we braved the cold to have our monthly evening Immerse service as 'songs around the firepit', where we worshipped outside around our makeshift firepit followed by toasted marshmallows and hot chocolate. December kicked off with the Christmas Fair which, considering all that had transpired the year and even last year, was a huge success. All hands were on deck as the entire church space was transformed to a winter wonderland. It was super busy from start to finish, and the Lord blessed all the efforts of everyone involved with the handsome funds that were raised. The following Saturday, the 11th, witnessed another crowd in the building, this time, the International Community from within Stamford, Peterborough, and environs. It was an incredible atmosphere with a rich array of food and culture. We were richly blessed to have hosted it. We ploughed through the winter blues thereafter with omicron but still managed to pull off the carols in the carpark. Again, it was well attended even when the weather went awry. Folks came into the building to finish singing their Christmas carols.

VICAR'S REPORT



The entire year, we focused on the CATALYST values in our services exploring and establishing eight primary values we subscribe to in order for us to live our vision and fulfil our mission. We also reviewed our services to reflect various ways we can worship God collectively. The first Sunday is our monthly Communion service, the second is the Family / All-age, the third is the Encounter service and the fourth is the Connect service which is quite interactive and engaging for people of faith or no faith. If there's a fifth Sunday, it would be another Encounter service. As a PCC, we started exploring, in line with both the National and Diocesan vision of Resourcing Sustainable Church, what type of Church we've been called to be especially for these times we live in. We had a Vision Day in October, which I led, where we established that we were a Community Church type with huge potential for a Local Mission Church type. We agreed to a five-year transitional trajectory to be where we strongly felt God was taking us. We felt we needed another Vision Day to conclude on finer details with which to implement the vision. We agreed to meeting on 15th January 2022.

It has been an eventful year, nonetheless, and I am really thankful to God for his mercies towards us as a church. It's been a blessing for I and my family to be part of this tribe and to journey together in faith, hope and love. Also thankful for the Staff Team for sticking together and pulling through tough times. It's amazing how we have grown together relationally, professionally, and spiritually. The PCC and the Ministry Team I am immensely grateful to for their right hand of fellowship and unfeigned support. God has indeed blessed us with health, strength, and provision even adding to our number last year with new people like Carly, Neels and their kids, Albert and Maria and Sandra.

As 2022 continues to unfold, I am excited and hopeful of greater testimonies and successes for the next APCM

Revd Anthony Laotan

FINANCES

Our annual accounts have been independently examined, by Michelle Feasey, and formally adopted by the PCC as a true record of our finances. The full annual accounts are available in a separate document. The nature of the way the accounts are set up, with particular regard to funds, can make it difficult to understand a true picture of what is going on. We have a number of funds so this report concentrates on the General Fund, Children & Youth and Anchored. The General Fund is where all the main church income and expenditure goes, each programme has a separate restricted and designated fund and there are a number of small church related funds such as hardship, fabric and mission.

This year's accounts have to be viewed in the context of recovering from a global pandemic where we have slowly returned to something resembling "normality". The total income for Christ Church was £58,082 a small increase of 1%. Expenditure also increased about 0.5% With attendance remaining low for much of the year, following Covid, this was to be expected and our figures were in line with our budget forecast.

Our regular giving and open plate giving showed a very small increase. There are encouraging signs as we neared the year-end that this will go in an upwards direction as more people join us or return post-Covid. At the end of 2020 we closed our transport scheme and sold the minibus. This was sold at a loss and the only fixed asset on the balance sheet now is the wheelchair car. The PCC agreed to the disbursement of the sale proceeds. We were able to pay an additional £5,860 to our parish share, transfer £4,800 to our Children and Youth Minister fund, £3,000 to Fabric fund and left the remaining £6340 in General Fund.

Last year we were able to pay £10,000 to our Parish Share. This is now called the Covenant Pledge and we are working on a five year plan through the Resourcing Sustainable Church initiative. We have committed to paying £10,000 again this year, £11,500 in 2023, £12,500 in 2024 and £15,000 in 2025. These figures will be kept under regular review and are a pledge rather than anything legally binding.

Our biggest challenge remains to increase our income to support the payment of our Parish share and our other commitments. Please do look at the finance board in church which will be regularly updated and communicated. We are running at a deficit budget this year of £8,284. This is higher than we had anticipated due to rising energy costs. We are praying for and focussing on increasing our income this year to significantly reduce this deficit and have seen good progress so far.

We are grateful for the continued support of a number of organisations who have granted funding so that we can continue with the work of our Children and Youth Minister and Anchored. This year we received funding from Stamford Lads Club, Burghley Family Trust, Reiss Trust, The Ark Trust, Cummins, Stamford Kiwani's, Stamford XT and Stamford Rotary. The funds for these roles are a priority as we look with some urgency to secure funding to allow us to continue this vital work.

How can you help? Do consider reviewing whether you are able to increase your giving prayerfully and practically. We are thankful for the generosity of all who give of their time, talent and treasure to the work of Christ Church. We do not take it for granted.

Lisa Garwood
Treasurer

DEANERY & DIOCESAN SYNOD

The main focus for the Deanery and the Diocese was Time to Change Together. This strategy to transform the pattern of ministry in the Diocese was approved by Diocesan Synod in June.

Parishes are being asked to work together in Local Mission Partnerships, each served by a team of ordained and lay people. The present Stamford Deanery, comprising the parishes in Stamford and the Uffington Group of villages, is likely to become one such. In addition Deanery Partnerships are being formed, based on local authority areas: the South Kesteven Partnership, for instance, brings together the present deaneries of Stamford, Grantham, Beltisloe and Lovedon. A Steering Group of representatives from these four is working on the detail of local changes over the next few months.

Parishes have chosen which of four categories they fit into and will be asked for financial contributions accordingly (CC PCC opted for Type 2: Local Mission Church). These contributions will no longer be set by the Diocese, but rather negotiated based on a covenant, reflecting the level of paid ministry provided to the parish but also encouraging generosity. The overall aim of the changes is for parishes to grow in numbers, discipleship and giving.

Diocesan Synod also deliberated on safeguarding, education, engaging with racial issues and social justice, environmental issues, streamlining the parish support office and reducing central costs.

We were consulted about the search for a new Bishop of Lincoln, to replace Bishop Christopher who stood down in December. Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely, is Acting Bishop of Lincoln in the interim.

The Deanery re-elected Nigel Garwood to Diocesan Synod. In separate elections, Martyn and Carl Fender from St George's were returned to General Synod.

Nigel Garwood

(with thanks to Phillip Dale for content)