

## **Report on the Proceedings of the Southend Deanery Synod year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024**

---

Southend Deanery comprises some fifteen parishes. Long and thin it stretches about fifteen miles along the side of the Thames from Hadleigh borders to Thorpe Bay and is in the Bradwell Episcopal area. The Deanery Synod functions to pull all the churches together and to keep abreast of what is going on within them. Synod meets in Spring, summer and Autumn. The members are elected by each parish PCC every three years and serve on their own PCC ex officio. Apart from Diocesan and Synod business, meetings may have visiting speakers by invitation.

In Spring 2024 the final figure for Diocesan wide Parish Share payment was given. 91% was paid – a shortfall of 9%. This will be carried forward and be difficult to make up.

The Lay Chair issued an invitation to provide parish entries for the Deanery Prayer Letter. This tends to be sent out twice a year and is part of a Church of England Prayer initiative.

A report on General Synod highlighted the attention being paid to Safeguarding and 'Living in Love and Faith', which is geared towards inclusion. At General Synod there was a call for a guidance code of conduct for PCCs. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 Chelmsford Diocese agreed to begin formulating such a guide. This was in response to a laity led request for rules of behaviour for PCC members (complying with majority decisions etc), and for some form of accountability for PCCs.

Bishop Guli visited Southend Deanery Clergy Chapter in February 2024.

In Summer 2024 the required parish inspections – registers, PCC minutes, Finance, parish Silver, Safeguarding etc – were nearly complete, in good time for the Archdeacon's visitation in July. At this all the records of the visit to each parish are submitted, and new Churchwardens are sworn in. Also in July, Southend Deanery held a joint Deanery service of praise and thanksgiving.

Autumn 2024 General Synod report asked for prayer, needed because there are disagreements round 'Living in Love and Faith'. There is a lack of trust within the laity and work must be done about how General Synod deals with deeply held and differing views.

The Area Dean shared news of re-vitalisation for youth at St John's and hoped-for training opportunities (first Aid) at St Andrews. Our Bradwell Area Bishop, Adam, held the first 'surgery' for people to book a time to speak with him whilst he is in Southend.

**In 2024 there were three invited speakers. In February Vanessa Hemmings**, chair of Harp, told us there is a huge volume of homeless people in Southend, rising from about 5 pre Covid 19 to 101 (verified figure) now bedded down each night. The old Gainsborough Carpet site was opened up for a while and could take 40 off the streets for the cold weather. It was not ideal (camp beds, rats and mice, portaloos etc). Harp is working to locate smaller hostels, bedsits, etc at affordable (!) prices of about £500/£600 per week. Grants fund about 10% of the costs and local fundraising the rest. The Council is not in favour of night shelters – people are reluctant to move on from them as they fear losing any element of control over their own lives. It's important to give people dignity. The Bradbury Centre opens mornings providing showers, laundry etc. Everyday there is somewhere to go for food, clothing etc. Pants and socks are always needed as they cannot be re-cycled. Duvets, hats and gloves are also useful donations.

Addiction is no longer a bar to admittance to Harp facilities. 'One Love' was also spoken about – a local charity based in Carnarvon Road, and alcohol and drugs are not allowed on this site. People are given a package and turned away. Anyone can come. Money comes from local businesses and personal donations. Over other sites as well 'One Love' provides hairdressing services, foodbanks, cooking lessons etc. In school holidays there's a book club for children and often families need feeding. Food and money come from

supermarkets, specially Morrisons. There 100 to 200 volunteers, all DBS checked. Vanessa said help for the homeless in Southend amounts to £250,000 from Southend people in a year.

**In Summer 2024 Michaela Southworth, Diocesan CEO**, addressed us on the role and function of the Diocese. It was extremely detailed, and an overview is given here of necessity. Since the mid 1990's statistics show a 40% decline in church attendance. Obviously if numbers decrease then so does income, but the decrease has been disproportionate. In other words, parish giving has not, on average, kept up with inflation or church expenditure, and the Church is losing an average £6 million a year in Chelmsford Diocese alone. The Church of England receives no State funding, so the only recourse is to reduce expenditure. The most effective way to do this is to reduce paid clergy numbers. It is accepted that reducing clergy reduces Mission, but if the Church goes bankrupt there will be no clergy.

**In Autumn 2024 Carrie Prior, Director of the Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education (CDBE)**, gave a broad over-view of the support to C of E schools in the Diocese. There are 139 of these including five secondary schools. School governors are supported with training and advice. In Southend the only C of E school is St Mary's Prittlewell. The work of CDBE includes land and buildings - maintenance and improvements, net carbon projects and teacher training. RE is a priority subject for C of E schools, together with other usual, and more searching, topics. Church schools are subject to OFSTED inspections, but also to the C of E's own inspections. The CDBE helps schools prepare for inspections, and provides resources and teacher training for all schools, secular ones included. In this Diocese the last new C of E school was built ten years ago.

*Linda Barnard  
on behalf of our Deanery Synod Reps for 2024  
Revd. David Willis, Martin Everett, and John Gray*