

Islington Deanery Synod
Tuesday 25th April 2023, 19.30-21.00
St Luke's West Holloway

Present:

Tamsin Merchant (Chair), St Mary's Hornsey Rise
Emily Howarth, St Mary's Hornsey Rise
Adele Ryan, St Andrew's Whitehall Park
John Tasker, St Jude's and St Paul's
John Wilson, St Jude's and St Paul's
Alexandra Lilley, St George's Tufnell Park
David Wilson, St George's Tufnell Park
Ugor Momi, St John's Upper Holloway
Poppy Pickard, St Mary's Hornsey Rise
Liz Curran, St Luke's West Holloway
Anita Mason, St Mark's N4
Stewart Mason, St Mark's N4
Trevor Golding, St Mark's N4
Anthony Dass, St Thomas Finsbury Park

James Hill, St Jude's and St Paul's
Caroline Titley, Parish of Barnsbury
Peter Sinclair, Inspire at St James
Richard Nicholson, St Mary's Clerkenwell
James Hughesdon, St Mary's Islington
Isabel Nisbet, St James', Islington
Jackie Mair, Christ Church Highbury
Jill Courtnell, St Mark's Clerkenwell
Sue Hallam, St Andrew's Whitehall Park
Steve Clarke, St Andrew's Whitehall Park
Fiona Alty, St Andrew's Whitehall Park
Timothy Muller, St Stephen's Canonbury
John Mackenzie, St Luke's West Holloway
Chloe Selby (minutes), Hope Church Islington

Apologies:

Clergy

Martin Wroe
Rayner Wakeling
Andy Crich
Gabriel Anstis
Jeremy Hobson
Clare Shepherd
Bex Daynes

Mat Seymour
Mat Tinsley
Liz Clutterbuck
Christopher Trundle

Lay

Adrian Arthur
Gemma Cook

Agenda:

Welcome
Update and Welcome from St Luke's
Youth Ministry Presentation
Estates Ministry Presentation
Discussion - Youth and Estates
Feedback
Prayer
Synod Business:
 Minutes of last meeting - 3rd November 2022
 Nomination of Jeni Kenson to be appointed as Cloudesley Trustee Churches Representative
 Nomination of Julia Abrey to be Deanery Synod Foundation Governor at St Mary Islington's School
Closing Prayer

Notes:

Welcome from Tamsin Merchant, Area Dean, and recognising those who are completing their terms on deanery synod, and encouraging people to explore finding others who can stand in their place.

Islington and Hackney show up as areas that have a low level of funding per head of population in relation to Youth, Estates and Catholic ministry and mission.

Tamsin prayed.

Welcome and Update from St Luke's West Holloway

John Mackenzie welcomed everyone to synod, especially in APCM season! John and Liz (St Luke's West Holloway) wanted to welcome everyone to synod and highlighted that the community choir will be rehearsing alongside synod, so delight in the music!

John explained that St Luke's are in the process of working towards having solar panels and an air source heat pump (following a second planning application), and are nearing having approval secured. St Luke's will continue to have a gas boiler as a back up, but hoping, with a combination of air source heat pump and solar panels, to be using 80% less carbon.

At the weekend, St Luke's were co-hosting worship with the Iona Community in Parliament Square during the Extinction Rebellion protests, whilst St Luke's also hosted prayer and worship for those who were not able to make it into Central London in the church itself.

Continue to be emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, and thinking about how the trauma of COVID continues to impact the church community. Trying to be kinder to ourselves and one another.

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Youth Ministry Presentation

Tamsin introduced two presentations, one in person and one via video. The in-person presentation is from Emily, ordinand at St Mary's Hornsey Rise, thinking about the question: how do we grow the church younger?

Emily shared her story, beginning in Cumbria as the only member of the youth group! The methodist and anglican church joined together, and so Emily was part of the Sunday School in the methodist church before being part of the youth group.

When she moved to university, Emily went to church to remind her of home, as she was homesick. She met a woman who hosted her for a pasty, a cup of tea, tinned fruit and clotted cream every Monday evening for three years, with no three point plan for converting Emily, but loving her by asking her how life was going. Over time, Emily found herself feeling alive, and began travelling to rural areas of Cornwall and teaching the bible to small groups of young people. Her faith grew by discipling other young people.

Emily described herself as one of many young people who had an ebb and flow relationship with the church, and we never know what seeds we might be sowing, even if we never see the fruit.

Discussed two foundations for the importance of working with children and young people:

Firstly, theological:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

The nuclear family was not a 'thing' in the OT - it's not just up to parents, but a community-wide, holistic role for the whole community to be involved in nurturing.

Secondly, practical:

The average Christian made their first commitment to Jesus under the age of 4. That means our toddler groups are where Jesus is most frequently meeting us.

What makes us worried about reaching children and young people?

- Young people not returning after the pandemic. Coming back to other things.
- Religion being taken out of the school curriculum.
- Less common understanding of Christianity and Christian faith.
- Fear that it will involve change.
- Lack of creativity. Youth work looks like paying someone who wears a hoodie and can play pool(!), and thinking outside that box is really tricky...

Emily invited a real live young person (Adele, who is two weeks' off from sitting GCSEs).

Adele explained that she attends St Andrew's Whitehall Park, but has been attending less since COVID pandemic. She has been attending most Sundays since birth, but has an ongoing wrestle with her own understanding and experience of God.

Emily asked what keeps Adele part of church? What does she like?

Adele explained that when she was 9 or 10, she really enjoyed being part of the youth group, and in particular her youth leader helped her to feel safe. Now, Adele enjoys being part of events, such as Christmas and Easter.

What do you think The Church (with capital letters) could be doing to reach young people?

Adele reflected that generations have changed a lot, and can feel overwhelmed by the bigness and oldness of the Bible - especially interpreting the Bible in contemporary challenges, such as sexism and homophobia.

Emily invited people to pray for young people that we already know, and to invite young people into relationship with you - asking them how they really are.

What other things are happening for young people now? How can we think creatively about what the next steps could be?

- Supporting a young person by going to watch them play music - other young people from Sunday school and youth group were also there to support - a reflection that those connections and relationships have real value because of the foundations laid when they were young children in Sunday school or in youth group.
- Relationships rather than programmes are more important.
- Children and young people adapting stories from the Bible into films or screenplays for films.
- Volunteered to cook at camp - barrier broken down, and human-human connection forming.
- Sticky Faith research - interviews with millennials about why they were staying in church - 50% children in church stay in church as they get older, and the reason why? That 50% of young people reported having at least five people in church or faith who treat them as 'normal'.
- Bigger occasions - wanting to come less on Sundays, but still wanting to come back for seasons/events - Christmas or Easter - and that can be a great thing.
- The age has shifted downwards in what children and young people are interested in - older teenagers much more interested in the bigger questions of life.
- Involving people in community, whatever age, is a beautiful thing.
- 21-35 year olds meet together once a month to eat and be together.
- Don't flog a dead horse - it's not necessarily failed - just might not be the season.

Small groups broke out to discuss their own church contexts, and to pray for the young people across the area.

Tamsin drew the groups back together after discussion and prayer, to share the encouragements from her reflections.

Video from Jeremy Hobson - estates advocate in Stepney Area. Video to be shared via email.

Tamsin facilitated space for reflection and then prayer regarding potential representatives already known who God might be calling or could call into leading on their estate.

Jeremy will be invited to further synods - conversation continues!

Synod Meeting Minutes from November 2022: all in favour for ratification.

Tamsin handed over to James Hughesdon re: election of trustee to Cloudesley. As deanery synod, there are four spots available to us to the trustee board at Cloudesley.

Special thanks to Susan at St James Prebend St, who is standing down after two terms. Synod to nominate, and James proposed Jeni Kenson to be nominated as Cloudesley Trustee. John Mackenzie seconded and motion passed by majority vote.

Deanery synod have a nomination space for St Mary's Islington School, and James proposed Julia Abrey, seconded by David Allen, and voted by majority in favour.

David explained the synod role and contribution to finding governors for schools - a complex role which needs expertise and energy - if you know anyone, or you yourself who might be interested in taking on this challenging role, please speak to your incumbent or priest-in-charge in the first instance, and then also to David.

Next meeting: Wednesday 7th June 2023.

Last but not least, Jill Courtneil is stepping down as lay chair of deanery synod. Many thanks to Jill for her faithful service (under three area deans!). This also means that there is a vacancy for lay chair, if there is interest, please speak to Jill and/or Tamsin.

Choral Evensong - 30th April at 6.30pm - St Mark's Clerkenwell.

Meeting closed with sharing the Grace.

Meeting ended at 21.06.