

Deanery Synod Report for year to 13 May 2026

We only had two Synod since the last APCM as the November meeting was cancelled because of other meetings during the month.

July 2025

Pastoral Plan - Steering Group, some priests, some lay people and Stephen Baggs who is the Assistant Archdeacon, met. Stephen shared his experience of Bromyard deanery pastoral reorganisation. After discussion, it was decided to ask if other clergy wished to be involved

Because the clergy team now contains two very new members, it was decided that they need time to get to know one another before further meaningful discussion to take the Pastoral Plan forward could take place.

Lifelink

Sheila welcomed Emily, the new Lifelink Chaplain, to our Deanery and asked Rev. Caroline to update the Deanery on developments. Caroline reminded us of the long-term vision - to link the primary schools and John Kyrle High School to the local churches. Progress had been made in that most youngsters in school in our Deanery would have received a copy of 'It's Your Move', a Scripture Union production, to help them prepare for their move to secondary education. Emily will be the Christian link at John Kyrle High School.

Emily told us a bit about her background. Emily lives in the Forest of Dean and grew up in Cinderford. She completed a degree in Theological Studies despite being dyslexic and took up a post as a Youth and Children's Pastor in Dorset. From there she joined in a YWAM mission to Australia and The Solomon Islands with a particular slant on sharing God with young people through the Arts, returning in May where Emily heard about the Chaplain position, applied and got the job.

Emily's appointment met with excitement and positivity from members of staff at John Kyrle and Emily sees her role as being a Christian presence in a Secondary School environment. Emily will help to build up links between school, the community and church. As it would soon be the school holidays, Emily will be able to spend time getting to know the Deanery and the things that are going on for young people.

Caroline mentioned how the post would be financed for 5 years by money released from reserves held by Walford Church, 50% of money from the Diocese and money promised by parishes, individuals and Parish Councils.

The positivity towards the Christian faith shown by leaders at John Kyrle is very encouraging.

Emily's email address is emily@rossparishes.uk.

The "Spiritual Question Times" with Bishop Richard and Dean Sarah would be in the evening; times and venues to be confirmed. One was on Tuesday, 21st October – with Angie Kateley at The New Harp Inn, Hoarwithy (It was a very successful evening and Bishop Richard and Dean Sarah were very pleased both with the venue and contributions by those present).

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Hereford Diocese - Hereford deanery is piloting a new funerals project which means there would be one person handling all the calls for funerals centrally. Clergy in the Deanery are not in favour but as there were few clergy at the Gathering, discussion will need to be held at the next Gathering. Rev Sheila has formulated a resolution which can be changed. Rev. Caroline mentioned that she had had good experience with the one run in Gloucestershire.

Order of St Ethelbert - Parishes are encouraged to put forward the details of people to be considered for the Order. Applications to be with the diocese asap. (Robin Symonds was nominated and received the order).

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer thanked the group for Parish shares paid up to date and slightly over what was promised.

Paul, also, reminded us that the diocese wiped out a debt of £250,000 owed by the Deanery to the Diocese in 2012.

Paul reminded us of our Bishop's request to the National Church to repay some of the money taken from rural dioceses in the past which would help our financial reserves. Please pray.

Sheila commended the Diocesan Financial Roadshow with Stephen Herbert which would be visiting our Deanery on Monday 10th November.

Parish Offers 2025 Actual against Original Offers

The Treasurer reported:- I am pleased to report that out of the 12 Deaneries within Hereford Diocese we are in the top 4 to have met (and slightly exceeded) the mid-year target.

The total half year results for our Ross & Archenfield Deanery being:-

2025 Parish Offer	Actual Half Year	Due by year-end
352,907	177,569	175,338

However, these totals mask a variation within the PCC,s and Benefices individual results with 3 showing arrears at the half year (all under £1,000) counter balanced by one with an excess of £2,500 giving a net Excess of £1,115

2025 parish ministry costs

These were stated by the Diocese as being £67k per stipendiary clergy post or £61k with expected vacancy savings.

Using our 2025 Parish Offer Total of £352,907:-

At £67k this would cover 5.3 full time posts

At £61k this would cover 5.7 full time posts

Parish Offers 2026

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A letter from the Diocese of Hereford on the 26th March '25, written in the spirit of hope which was sensed at work in our diocese, encouraging each church to Budget first for the Parish Offer, modelling on the "first fruits" principle. Parish Offer Forms were requested to be submitted by the 30th June As of Monday, the 7th July, only 23 have been received with some 15 outstanding. The total of offers received to date amount to £251,690 which is £2,260 above the offers of the same churches in 2025.

Conclusion

There is some good news, but also recognition that there is much prayerful collaborative work to be done. The Diocese has made it clear that it does not have the resources to continue funding stipendiary posts, and we can only have what we can afford, and we badly need clergy to work with us to deliver ministry and mission within our deanery. Therefore, this is a real opportunity for us to prayerfully, collaborative work together to this end.

Paul reminded us of our Bishop's request to the National Church to repay some of the money taken from rural dioceses in the past which would help our financial reserves. Please pray.

Good News

Good news relevant to us

The Bible Society Course has been successfully run by Rev. Mark Johnson, followed by the 10 week Romans course. They are possibly looking at 3 psalms over the summer and a new course for September has yet to be decided.

Pencoyd surrounding wall has been repaired by an excellent workman with money from Historic Churches.

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March 26

The House for Duty Post in the Walford Parish that had been advertised for some time but had attracted no applicants. There was a congregation of 60 at Walford Church recently for a St. Davids Day service, there is a steady regular congregation with standing room only for special services. There is a team which regularly takes Open The Book stories in to Walford Primary School. There are many such posts being advertised at the moment and there is a discussion going on with regard to offering some remuneration.

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Pastoral Plan

It was thought by the Steering Group that met last year that it would be good for the pastoral plan to be taken forward by a group which involved all the Deanery Ministers. Hence, the Deanery Leadership Team and the ministers will meet bi-monthly in the form of a MPC (Mission and Pastoral Committee) in order to take the Pastoral Plan forward.

Funeral Project

After discussion by the ministers of the Deanery, it was decided that the Funeral Project would not work in our Deanery.

Revd. David introduced himself as a temporary Rural Dean after the retirement of Revd Sheila. He was the Rural Dean at Bromyard some years ago. Revd David explained that a younger person will be needed who will be more computer friendly.

Revd. David explained that the Deanery needs a Lay Co Chair in ensure the laity is fully represented on the MPC and encouraged someone to come forward. There will be APCM's in the next couple of months to elect Deanery Synod reps so maybe finding a Lay Co Chair could be a high priority at the next meeting. Churches are allowed reps according to the numbers on their electoral roll:- 1 to 15 -1 rep; 16 to 50 - 2 reps; 51 to 100 - 3 reps; 100 to 200 - 4 reps. There is a leaflet on the Diocesan website explaining the responsibilities of the Deanery Synod.

Safeguarding - DBS checks can now be taken forward at a Benefice level through the thirtyeightone group and the new Diocesan Lead is Lisa Anderson.

Herefordshire Diocese Year of Celebration is this year. The Bishop is planning to attend all Churchwarden Services and that two confirmation services will be held by the Bishop this year at central venues.

Treasurers Report A full report was shared with delegates. Many thanks to all those churches who have given more than they promised. Understanding was expressed to those who were unable to pay their parish share as it is understood that essentials need to be paid for. However, the money promised through the Parish Offer is needed in order to cover the costs of our priests.

LifeLink - Revd. Caroline offered Emily Goy's (Lifelink Chaplain) apologies as she was attending a training session that evening. Revd Caroline is recorded as a member of staff in a non-church secondary school and is allowed to share the Christian viewpoint. Emily has been at the forefront at times like Remembrance Sunday and Christmas. Young people are coming to her with questions and some members of the Sixth Form are talking about starting a Christian Union. Emily is always looking for new opportunities to foster school/church/home relationships.

Emily is looking forward to meeting year pupils in primary schools who will be moving on to secondary schools in September and is offering to take a Transition Assembly linked to the 'It's Your Move' books.

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Emily is also starting to work with other secondary schools which youngsters from our area attend:- Newent, Dean Magna, Monmouth Comp.

Re the money promised by parishes towards the Lifelink Chaplain , there would be letters coming soon to Treasurers and Clergy. Revd Caroline asked for prayer for Emily and the young people.

Prayer 'Beads'/Origami - Helen Mealins now living in Marstow spoke about a participatory art project which encourages reflection and the expression of empathy with people in our world affected by armed conflict, displacement and migration. At the end of 2024 there were 123 million refugees in our world. The United Kingdom hosts 1% of displaced people. A Project Concept Note was shared and is attached to the minutes. The goals of the project are to increase empathy for those affected by war; to strengthen community connections as we work on a creative shared project together and to encourage a sense of hope and empowerment through prayer and reflection. The finished prayer beads will be displayed in the summer.

Helen Mealins encouraged churches to complete an Expression of Interest Form as they consider how their community might take part whether as a Craft group, in a Community event, at a meeting in a pub etc.