

A few words from the Vicar

I was gobsmacked to receive Bishop David's invitation to become the next Area Dean for Radcliffe & Prestwich! It was entirely unexpected, not least because I was about to qualify for a concessionary bus pass! At least the Church of England isn't ageist!

Anyway, my initial shock has now given way to excitement, and I am really looking forward to getting to grips with this new role.

Officially, my stint as Area Dean begins with my licensing on 4th August, but I have already hit the ground running with meetings and dealing with correspondence. By the way, everyone is more than welcome to come along to my licensing in Church on Sunday 4th August at 6.30pm.

So, what does an Area Dean do? Well, that's a good question, to which I am still trying to find a definitive answer.

Most obviously, jointly with our own Chris Haworth who, as it happens, is Deanery Lay Chair, I will chair Deanery Synod meetings. But that's only a small part of the role.

I will have some responsibility for: the pastoral care of clergy, arranging clergy meetings, and helping those parishes that are between vicars. I will also have shared responsibility for carrying out parish inspections on behalf of our Archdeacon, which brings with it a sense of déjà vu given my previous career as an Internal Audit Manager.

And, I am sure, there will be lots of meetings.

You might be thinking, "*so what, the Deanery isn't important!*" Well, that has never been true even though some joke about the definition of a deanery synod meeting being a bunch of people waiting to go home! (*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea máxima culpa.*)

The reality is, deaneries are becoming more relevant to parish life, and are set to become much more so. For starters, through deaneries, there is growing collaboration in mission. Indeed, in common with other deaneries in Manchester, we already have a deanery Mission Action Plan, which our own PCC endorses.

Over recent years, our deanery synod has been evolving into a place where parishes can learn about good practice and learn from one another. For example, Debra and I have briefed synod about the success of Mid-Week Praise and, most recently, we had a presentation from St Margaret's about becoming 'Eco Churches.'

Personally, I find both the formal and informal sharing of good practice through the deanery to be immensely helpful for my ministry.

Almost as soon as I received Bishop David's letter of invitation, I discovered that I might be the last Area Dean for Radcliffe & Prestwich. Consideration is being given to a 10-year strategy for the Diocese. Subject to consultation, Church Commissioners and Diocesan Synod approval, there is a possibility that the number of deaneries may be reduced from 20 to 7. The target date for implementing this is 1st January 2021. If that happens, we will become part of a geographically larger deanery and Area Dean will become a full-time role.

The purpose of the reorganisation is to deliver the radical changes needed to reverse decline and to grow the church of the future. Personally, I am excited by this, and am excited to be serving as Area Dean during this period of change.

By the way, my bus pass photo looks nothing like me!

Every Blessing

Dave