



# Bristol West Deanery Synod Annual Report 2023

## Introduction

Three Deanery Synods took place, all were held in person, unlike the two previous years when many meetings had to be conducted by Zoom.

In 2023 and the key themes were:

- **Missional Communities and Missional Engagement TC.T**
- **Understanding the TC.T Value - Generosity**
- **DLT Elections and understanding the TC.T Value - Creativity**

## March Deanery Synod: Missional Communities and Missional Engagement TC.T

**Deanery Synod on 14 March 2023** focused upon this being a Triennial Year and exploring the missional opportunities with Bristol West. The Meeting was held in person at St Mary's Leigh Woods.

### Triennial Year

Synod was reminded by the Area Dean that this is a Triennial year. Consequently, Deanery Representative will need to be elected at APCMs for a three-year term of office and in accordance with the number stipulated for parishes and united benefices.

The Deanery Synod Annual Report will be ready for circulation prior to the commencement of APCMs.

### **The Main Theme: Missional Communities and Missional Engagement TC.T**

The Area Dean welcomed Rob Mountain, Director of Transformation, and members of the Diocesan Transformation Team. Rob introduced the session with some slides demonstrating the reason why this Diocese is participating in the National Emerging Church programme and how this begins to translate at a local level.

Following the TCT overview, Synod broke into discussion groups to identify the active opportunities that might start to shape the projects across the Deanery that could form a

focus for TCT Missional Community activities. Recognising that some of these projects could and should cross boundaries of geography, parish, deanery, denominations, inter-faith and other organizations.

Discussion output is included with these minutes (see attachment) and have been gathered under the emergent headings:

- **Activities and Events**
- **Worship and Teaching**
- **Crossing Boundaries**
- **Culture Shift**
- **Resourcing**

### **The Uganda Link**

Rev Janet Hill and Sarah Thomas updated Synod on the Deanery trip to our link Dioceses in N Uganda which took place at the end of October 2022.

## **May Deanery Synod: The ‘Transforming Church. Together’ Value ‘Generosity’**

**Deanery Synod on 17 May 2023** focused upon our understanding of the TC.T value – ‘Generosity’ - and how this is exhibited in our words and actions. The Meeting was held in person at Christ Church Clifton.

### **The Main Theme: Generosity, one of the four values within Transforming Church. Together**

The Area Dean reminded us of the four values of the diocese, Openness, Creativity, Generosity and Bravery. We reflected in pairs and groups on the diocesan definition,

*‘We value generosity and receive and give sincerely. We give our time and resources to share what we know of Jesus’ love. We want our communities to feel supported and cared for in the way Jesus would do, to experience God’s love through our action and an opportunity to journey into faith if they choose.’*

Then in different groups we discussed what generosity looked like, we shared ideas and wrote on post it notes. There was feedback from every group, including a range of suggestions, from publicising food baskets in churches to showing generosity in our listening towards others stories.

## **The Uganda Link**

Rev Janet Lee showed slides from the trip last October and in particular of Lira Palwo clinic, the remote health clinic in Kitgum Diocese which is this year's deanery project.

## **October Deanery Synod: The 'Transforming Church. Together' Value 'Creativity**

**Deanery Synod on 5 October 2023** focused upon DLT Elections and the TC.T value of Creativity. The Meeting was held in person at Holy Trinity, Westbury on Trym.

**The Main Theme: Creativity, one of the four values within Transforming Church. Together**

### **Elections to the DLT**

It was noted that there was a lack of clarity as to the purpose and functions of the DLT, action on Area Dean to circulate role descriptions for clergy and lay reps ahead of next Deanery Synod.

### **Creativity**

Caroline Jowett-Ive, Diocesan Director of People and Bishop's Staff link to Bristol West, reported on the Transforming Church Together, TCT, 5-year programme to bring transformation with £6.8million grant. The money would help fund new roles, both full and part time, permanent and temporary, clergy and lay. Two particular new roles to note concerning clergy in our deanery, were Rev Andy Murray, now made Dean of priority communities and Rev Anjali Kanagaratnam, Racial Justice coordinator.

Caroline then introduced the evening's key topic 'Creativity':

*'We value creativity and we co-operate with the work of the Spirit. We are faithful, rooted in faith and responsive to the Spirit. Our communities feel inspired, this is bold and joyful faith, work and worship that engages us all. We want our communities to experience a variety of projects and worship styles, celebrating tradition and innovation in connection to God.'*

Looking at the definition of creativity, the synod then discussed in small groups how creativity was and could be expressed in their parishes. The results are attached to this report.

## **The Uganda Link**

The Revd. Janet Lee mentioned the bank issues currently being addressed and which will be shortly resolved. She also talked about the Bristol-Uganda partnership, which is now 54 years old, and that it will be an item for discussion at Bishop's Council in December.



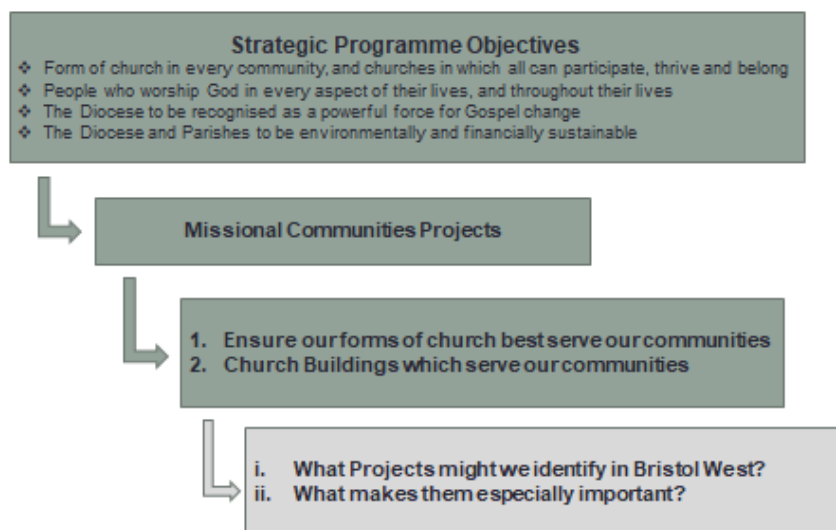
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## **Bristol West Deanery Synod Annual Report 2023**

### **Synod Output following Key Theme Discussions**

- **Missional Communities and Missional Engagement TC.T**
- **Understanding the TC.T Value - Generosity**
- **Understanding the TC.T Value - Creativity**

# Missional Communities and Missional Engagement TC.T Deanery Synod 14 March 2023



## Discussion Groups – on Missional Communities Projects

Following the TCT overview, Synod broke into discussion groups to identify the active opportunities that might start to shape the projects across the Deanery that could form a focus for TCT Community activities. Recognising that some of these projects could and should cross boundaries of geography, parish, deanery, denominations, inter-faith and other organizations.

Discussion output has been grouped for ease of reading.

## Activities and Events

**Missional Ministries** – these were seen as contextually dependent opportunities to align resource to respond to specific needs where there was energy.

- Ministry to the mature (older age groups) and those living with dementia
- Young people and young family's ministries
- Outreach through the arts (exhibitions and concerts)
- Local business networks, business breakfasts and meeting venues
- Education Centres – educational hubs on racial justice or deprivation or industrial change
- Foodbanks and Community Support (Bristol NW Foodbank and 'Loaves and Fishes')

**Regular Programmed Events** – Activities offered by local churches (in partnership) that focus on specific groups within the local community.

- Lunch Clubs and Café – such as: Friends on Friday (Dementia Café), Community Café, Listening Café, Table Talk, Drop-In Centres, Community Lunch
- Open Church Buildings for - AA, Art Group, Bereavement support, well-being (Kintsugi course), Ukrainian Hub, English Conversation, After School homework or pick-up points
- Special Events, such as ‘Open Mike Night’, Barn Dance, Beer and Prayer
- Community Venue for meetings, concerts, talks

There was some discussion as to the extent to which these events should stand alone or be connected to a more open sharing of faith, or should the relationship be built first and then faith is shared.

Additionally, there were questions as to how the church can make contact with ‘users’ and ‘visitors’ in those churches with open-door policies.

### **Worship and Teaching**

Many focused upon worship and teaching as key activities for local church contexts. There was recognition of what some churches do well and the opportunity to share or spread this across boundaries.

- Growth in children’s work, messy church
- Opportunities for family worship
- Mission to the more mature generations
- Worship – evening services and the offer of other times in the week (not just Sunday)
- Community located – not necessarily in ‘church’ buildings

Also, opportunities to have local teaching and lectures to gather people from across different boundaries. Such as ‘*Christians in Science*’ or the Churches Together Lent Course, ‘*Faith and Art Today*’, based upon the Methodist art collection.

### **Crossing Boundaries**

Though challenging to think more broadly than ‘parish’, the discussions did recognise the importance of stepping across the usual boundaries. In particular current activities include:

- School work and support in education and training (for example - Spear Bristol)
- Combination of response to people’s needs (foodbank, café, lunch clubs)
- Training and equipping leaders - for ministry to families, children and the older age groups; or in specific contexts - work and community
- Work across ecumenical boundaries (Churches Together) and inter-faith
- Collaboration with other social and community organizations

## **Culture Shift**

How do we enable ourselves to think differently? How do we cross the various boundaries emphasise our collective tendency to 'boundaried thinking' – geography, denomination, parish, community, ethnic, and so forth? How do we enable churches to look outwards – from drains and chairs to community?

Various activities emerged:

- Keep churches open all day ensure they are part of the community
- Engaging in a community audit will focus the missional lens and also demonstrate active listening to our people and communities
- Post-Covid has reduced numbers of volunteers, giving and worshippers – but also provided opportunity for active engagement within the community
- Must look out from church – mission is community focussed, meet people where they live/work/connect
- Enthuse and encourage each other with clear, defined projects (and easy wins to raise expectations)
- Provide 'specialists' to work with churches and groups of churches to identify opportunities for parishes, church communities and groups and plan for action
- Make use of the vacancy period to help parishes think differently – provide facilitation during this period (South Severnside and Henbury)
- Support parishes in the creation of strategic approach (Mission Action Plan)
- Keep 'an eye out' for and join in with what's 'bubbling up'

## **Resourcing**

Recognition that many of the Missional Community Projects can be identified and driven locally – however, many parishes do not have the resources. Also, many stipendiary clergy are more than fully occupied in maintain things as they are now – the idea of adding to this is hard to contemplate. Ministry teams (lay and ordained) often have issues of capacity, many parishes do not have volunteers to fulfil existing roles, let alone new projects.

Ideas to address these issues might include:

- Provision of Resource Hubs in local patches – this might be a whole range of offerings, including (for example) lay/ordained ministers or administration services
- Deanery located bookkeepers, Safeguarding Officers, H&S, etc; some parishes have to pay a treasurer (is cash available for support staff?)
- Deanery specialists to work on opportunities to build resource for outreach to address the big missional ministries
- How do we address the questions like 'what to do with a medieval church with no toilets?'
- Recognise the suites of skills within parishes and Deanery and communities and make these more widely available



# The 'Transforming Church. Together' Value 'Generosity'

## Deanery Synod 17 May 2023

The four values of the diocese: *Openness, Creativity, Generosity and Bravery.*

We reflected in pairs and groups on the diocesan definition: **Generosity**

*'We value generosity and receive and give sincerely. We give our time and resources to share what we know of Jesus' love. We want our communities to feel supported and cared for in the way Jesus would do, to experience God's love through our action and an opportunity to journey into faith if they choose.'*

In different table groups we discussed what generosity looked like, we shared ideas and wrote on post-it notes. There was feedback from every group, including a range of suggestions, from publicising food baskets in churches to showing generosity in our listening to the stories of others.

Table group output has been categorised below:

### **Provision – Showing Generosity now**

- Keep the food baskets topped up
- Maintain local food banks
- Offer warm spaces
- Provide choir and concerts for the community
- Provide a community hub – for personal use and small businesses
- Food banks and home banks, warm spaces, work with homeless. Offer prayer
- Welcome all – fully inclusive
- Be generous in our support to those who provide support
- Provide Dementia Friendly church
- Working with gardens and growing things
- listening opportunities in cafes and prayer on the street
- Publicise our food banks and homebanks
- Not only young people – also older people
- Develop mental health first aiders
- Boost school and youth work

### **Understanding – listening and learning**

- Serving practical needs in the community
- Listen to people's practical needs and desires
- Training for discerning the needs of the community would help
- Engage in serious outreach:
  - messy vintage church
  - messy church
  - School prayer space

## Youthwork

### Musical opportunities

Research the needs of the community (ask)

Identify deprivation and determine ways to respond

Recognise issues of cost of living, food, fuel, housing

Find out what people need rather than what we think they might need

Need to find ways to approach our local communities to find out how we can help to build relationships. Hopefully to bring people to the church family

Ask people questions to learn about their needs – we could benefit in training to know how to do this most effectively

## **Social Centre – Church as community**

Offer church as a social centre

Ukrainian response – hubs

Refugee response – hubs

## **Outreach – Recognizing the missional significance**

Be generous in spirit and find time to listen to one another

Support with missional ministries across the parish boundaries

Engage in the current cultural conversations in a distinctly Jesus shaped way (creation, Identity, economics, Poverty)

Build people's confidence in sharing their stories about the transformation Jesus brings to lives

## **Working Across Boundaries and Parish Hubs**

Give practical support to neighbour parishes

Share resource – people and physical

Are there ways in which better-off areas in the Deanery could support poor areas?

For example a Deanery hardship fund. Individuals could contribute and those in need could apply. Church to administer process

Are there parishes with needs that could be met by people from other parishes? For example provide homework clubs, career guidance

Share resources across churches – especially in the mission area

Sharing hubs around the Deanery – admin and finance and safeguarding

Share human resources (skills, ideas, money)

Share resources across churches – especially in the mission area

Sharing hubs around the Deanery – admin and finance and safeguarding

Share tips and practical ways of doing things – look for good practice

## **Equipping and enabling**

Develop community action skills – some are more experienced than others

Provide training for community engagement and development.

Share resources and skills

Provide training

for equipping befrienders

listeners and story tellers

listening

## **Change Culture – changing our Thinking**

Relationship we have in Diocese and Deanery and church seen to be generous – in times of struggle be seen to be supportive

Be more 'snake' – church not a butterfly but snake, shedding skin, adapting and moving around the community

Work ecumenically – share with partners in social prescribing and warm spaces

Actively discuss at PCC

Avoid parochialism

Do with and not to

Aspirational values require the development of a new culture. How do we recognise and reward behaviour which fits with 'generosity'

Look after interests of others, show interest, offer support, provide friendship

Risk of burden by becoming over generous

# The 'Transforming Church. Together' Value 'Creativity

## Deanery Synod 5 October 2023

The four values of the diocese: *Openness, Creativity, Generosity and Bravery.*

We reflected in groups on the diocesan definition: **Creativity**

*'We value **creativity** and we co-operate with the work of the Spirit. We are faithful, rooted in faith and responsive to the Spirit. Our communities feel inspired, this is bold and joyful faith, work and worship that engages us all. We want our communities to experience a variety of projects and worship styles, celebrating tradition and innovation in connection to God.'*

### How do we understand this value?

### If we were to see it in the Deanery, what would it look like?

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#### Alternative Ideas

Tell the stories of contested heritage  
Booklet on each value with theological reflections  
Deanery wide creative calendar  
Provide welcome packs for housing estates and people who have moved in

#### Significance of Music and the Arts

Music – school, children.  
Music as encouragement  
Music for relationships and to give context  
Dance groups  
book group  
Pop Up events  
Open doors and arts trails – join in with these events  
Open doors for environment day  
Artisans Market  
Carol singing in pubs  
Christmas tree display  
Film evenings – especially films that teach  
Taylor Swift music played by string quartet  
Wine tasting evening

### **Schools, Children and Youth Groups**

Access to youth workers  
Charing in the community – cafes  
Access to youth workers help and inspire  
Link across secondary schools and

### **Worship Style**

Have variety of worship styles in each parish and benefice  
Regular services like harvest and remembrance in different styles  
Open air carol service in the streets (Almondsbury)  
Do services and events on key national days  
Blue Christmas events – grows from grief services  
Advent easter trail  
Advent calendar display in windows of parish  
Offer wider variety of activities for community – messy church, Christmas market easter trail  
Saturday afternoon events for families with food, creativity, prayer and music  
Church@4 instead of Messy Church <https://www.avonriverteam.org.uk/church4.htm>

### **Cross Boundary**

Mission area – Henleaze, Westbury Park Westbury on Trym – growth chaplain  
Encourage churches to work together across the boundaries  
Take church outside to get over the barrier of the building  
Share knowledge and information across churches and parishes

### **Church Building**

Church is a focal building in the community – encourage people into the building in creative ways

### **Research**

Ask people if they'd like to be prayed with/for – have activities to engage with them  
Ask people in the community what they would like and what they believe

### **Café Church and Events**

Weekly café  
Café create – music, story telling, - relaxed and inclusive  
Listening café with still point  
Listening Café where people can chat and talk about problems  
Café with bible and prayer slot