

Deanery Synod report for St John's 2026 APCM

Updates

Revd. Katherine Price – the vicar of Wantage Parish – was installed as our new Area Dean on Sunday 11th January 2026.

The trustees of our Deanery CIO are therefore: Katherine Price as Area Dean, Hugh Rees as Lay Chair (and CW West Hendred), Sarah Shackleton as Treasurer and Paul Thompson (CW of Letcombe Bassett) as Secretary. We form the standing committee. The expectation is that members of other churches will join an extended pastoral and standing committee to discuss Deanery matters between Synods.

The Deanery Synod meetings will be expanded to three times a year to build collaboration and connection between our various parishes.

The first Synod with Katherine as Area Dean was a lively and constructive discussion and a summary is added at the end of this report.

At the Autumn 2025 Synod we agreed Parish Share for 2026. We also had an excellent presentation on the theology and practice of Eco-church initiatives by Margot and Martin Hodson. Margot is our eco representative for the Deanery.

All parishes paid their share in full by the end of December, so as a Deanery we received the 2.5% of Parish Share rebate which was passed on to parishes (with ~£400 retained to cover Deanery management expenses).

Other news:

The Ridgeway benefice is again in an interregnum and interviewing for a new vicar in the next few weeks.

Ministry to Care Homes for the Elderly. Wantage Parish and Gill Thompson (Anna Chaplain in Letcombe Regis) gave a presentation in April about the possibility of setting up a Deanery-wide team of people to minister to the six Care Homes in Wantage Parish. If you might be interested in such a ministry do discuss with Sarah Shackleton. The Wantage Curate Frances Caroe will initially lead the project.

The currently paused deanery plans are:

- Schools' chaplaincy – indeed church support for the prayer space at KA's is becoming more tenuous. However, the idea of chaplaincy type work would be welcomed by several local primary and both secondary schools. There remains ~£3,200 in a restricted account for this work.
- collaboration across the Deanery churches on mission to, and work with, children and young people. There was considerable work done – led by Johanna – to see whether the Deanery churches working together might be fruitful (and gain central church youth worker grants). Failure of the grant application has paused this process.

Sarah Shackleton – Grove Parish Deanery Rep and Deanery Treasurer

Summary of discussions at the April 2026 Deanery Synod

What is Deanery Synod for? Do we want 'more' or 'less' deanery?

Strength of being small and close

The relationships, particularly between the treasurers, are what help us to get to 100% share.

CSMV (the Convent)– could they be more involved? Could we have retreats there?

What should be done at parish level?

- The deanery plan should support what the parishes are doing
- The Deanery could help to connect individuals from different parishes who have a shared interest in a topic or project, rather than it having to be a 'deanery project' / top down
- Mission to areas of new housing could be parish rather than deanery

What could be done at deanery level?

- Sharing ideas and learning from each other. Treasurers get together for support. Could we do something similar for e.g. safeguarding officers, wardens, administrators?
- A small pot for mission funding – currently parishes need to apply for this (and they mostly don't) but could it go towards things of value to all e.g. training or shared resources for e.g. messy church etc.?
- Training – e.g. compliance topics
- Things determined by geography. E.g. secondary school, care homes (that cover the whole area)
- Communicating events from each parish that are of interest to other parishes – perhaps in a more centralised or systematic way than at present. Maybe even including e.g. bible study or home groups. More likely for people to have a 'critical mass' to do a group, or find something on a day suitable for them, if it is advertised across a wider area.
- Deanery wide events – what kind of things? A 'mummers play' passion play?
- Mission links e.g. overseas mission
- Things where we need more clout or credibility e.g. with developers – can say we are a 'deanery of the Diocese of Oxford.'

New housing

We don't want to lose the work already done by Hugh and others in staying close to plans and contributing to consultations.

Two different things: outreach to newcomers to our community (who may live in any part of town) and outreach to new communities (which may include people who have moved there from elsewhere in the deanery)

Children, schools, youth work, chaplaincy

Bringing together people working or volunteering in different schools (who may already be members of our parishes)

Nothing active to pursue right now re the chaplaincy project.

- We learned from the experience – the chaplain role as it was formulated was not realistic
- However, we still hold some money, which can only be used for this purpose.

Need to 'have oil in our lamps' i.e. to be ready to pursue opportunities when they arise.

Pray and wait.

We want to keep the relationship we have with KAs.

e.g. the reading assistants from Childrey

explore school pastors.

with more people working from home or flexibly there may be a pool of volunteers we aren't tapping at lunchtimes or at the beginning and end of working day

focus on transition from primary to secondary.

more generically about youth, not just school chaplaincy?

What do schools actually want and what do they need?

Could work ecumenically?