Note of Vision Meeting for West Dartmoor Vacancy: 7 May 2019

Bishop Nick McKinnel came to St Pauls to address the Mission Community (MC) congregation following the announcement of departures of Rev Preb Nick Shutt and Rev Gary Shirley. 79 members of the MC attended and prayers were said at the welcome. +Nick stated his aims were to begin the recruitment of a new Rector and give an explanation of the process which he hoped might be completed by Christmas. He handed out sheets which showed possible attributes of the priest needed and the due process and legal constraints for all to peruse.

Jon Marlow (Mission Community Development Team Leader) spoke on the recent Deanery Synod initiative (answers on postcard) which most of the MC had completed. The responses had delighted him in that so much was already happening within the MC. The 3 most used cards had been open door; planting pots and hands of different races showing how the MC was prepared to embrace change and plant new seeds of community to get people in through the door of the church.

The Good things to advertise

Congregation stated that we had been put on a path of moving together as a MC by Nick Shutt and we did not wish to deviate. Unity makes things happen which otherwise would not.

+Nick indicated that the parish profiles would be roughly 2 sides A4 per parish: this was queried as it might put off an applicant. The MC wished to show how it’s more joined up. Our vision of near unity might sell the job to an incumbent: we are travelling a road together.

Other areas to celebrate were identified as: our united choir; Nosh; children’s activities; bell ringing in linked teams, as well as joint services such as Palm Sunday. It was agreed that we should celebrate UNITY not UNIFORMITY—we are 6 parishes each with our own buildings and quirks but the bigger picture is we are all one congregation. We offer a variety of services types so congregations may have to travel—but not far!

Another area to advertise was our success and willingness to participate in lay-led services such as SOTW. Advertise our ecumenical contacts in Horrabridge Princetown and Yelverton. The more energetic the parish profiles the more likely we are to recruit someone who is not simply going in to retirement.

Nosh shows how relaxed the children are at coming to regular worship: we have a mixed economy with a service somewhere for everybody.

Our church leadership is mutually supported and lay leaders, lay-readers and clergy strive for unity. The congregation has sense of excitement in welcoming a new Rector and helping the Rector through his journey with us.

* Areas where we struggle were identifies as: Dwindling congregations due to age ---but that could also allow intimate worship groups
* Difficulty attracting younger people despite 2 Cof E small schools and two other primary schools within the catchment.
* Fighting perceived diocesan bureaucracy which does not recognise Mission Communities as distinct entities for data and makes admin much more labour intensive.
* Clergy manpower levels are falling.

Not always having IT literate leaders who can respond to the young (and not so young) in modern technology.

**Process**

+Nick explained the process of recruitment. We have 1.5 clergy funded by Diocese. As of 1 Sep we will have a full time vacancy and 0.5 (long term sick) which could be house for duty plus a day per week.

During the vacancy we have to look at service patterns and keep as many going as possible whilst realizing that there will have to be temporary changes.

Annie Jefferies Chair Deanery Synod gave a very upbeat assessment of other churches in the Deanery who have gone through the same process. She felt that such a vacancy gave real opportunities for churches to work together and offered a note of HOPE)

+Nick explained there would be 3 groups of people involved in selection: the Bishop of Exeter: our Patrons and up to 2 PCC appointed representatives per parish. The Bishop advised that a total of 12 would be very cumbersome for drafting a Parish Profile and contributing to interviews and advised agreeing a streamlined structure. There has to be a section 11 meeting to appoint representatives: and then once a parish profile is approved the vacancy announcement can go to church times (suggested timeline is Sep publication—worth paying a bit extra to get a “free” repeat advert).

It can also be promoted on diocesan website. He cautioned it was not easy to recruit young to rural ministry so suggested photos of people rather than buildings were included. +Nick suggested interview date of 24 Sep but later agreed that to be over ambitious (RDB to find a late Oct/early Nov date). Any current incumbent would be likely to have to give 3 months’ notice once appointed to the previous parish.

+Nick opined that normally the interviews were conducted over 2 days the first being a look at parish life: an overnight stay with local congregation (rural dean and chair Synod invited to meet) then interviews the next day. Those on interview panel cannot participate at all in first day or meet candidates before the interview.

Closing remarks

+Nick advised that this was an opportunity but that we all needed to work together. We would need to regularise communion by extension and lay readers who could do funerals, but also be mindful we do not burn out our current clergy and lay readers should the vacancy continue longer than hoped.

RDB undertook that there would be frequent updates of vacancy happenings on the website and sent to churchwardens to disseminate at services.

JM also advised he would help where he could including taking some services

The meeting closed with prayer