

9. Hove Deanery

At some of the second visits conducted as part of the Deanery review process, we noticed a more positive attitude towards the idea of working as clusters of parishes. There was also recognition of the need, even a desire, to work collaboratively. However, there was also a marked reluctance on the part of some to accept that certain church buildings will have to be closed. Hopes were expressed that simply doing without a parish priest might provide a financially acceptable alternative, and, therefore, avoid what could be seen as a sign of retreat. Unfortunately, and regrettably, this solution does not sufficiently address the ongoing resource problem with which we have to contend.

While appreciating these views, 24 churches currently attracting a membership of 2,318 would seem to be too many. This is particularly so given that two churches – Bishop Hannington Memorial Church and St Michael (Southwick) – have a total membership of 700 leaving 22 churches with only 1,618 members. It should also be noted, that these 22 churches received subsidies totalling £351,000 in the last financial year, (a higher figure than the subsidy of 2001). This represented a claim on diocesan funds of £2.93 for each member each week. If no more than three Hove parishes can fully cover their Parish Ministry Costs and if there are too few clergy to go round, it is sadly inevitable that some churches must close. It must also be mentioned that none of the figures referred to takes account of other maintenance costs. From the parishes' own accounts, we see that this sum was in excess of £750,000, or an average of £35,000 each.

With normal Sunday service attendances filling less than even a quarter of our buildings, and with no overall material improvement in prospect, a new approach is called for which may well include having fewer but more vibrant churches from which to sustain effective pastoral care. This can only happen if all accept the need for change, acknowledge that buildings are not as important as people, and face up to the particular challenges of an increasingly secular society, a reduction in the number of vocations to ministry, and an unsustainable financial burden. The Group Ministries that we are recommending will, we believe, help us to achieve this.

There was a marked desire to keep our extensively used church halls open and working, though it was not often recognised that the adjoining church may not need to survive for the use of the halls to continue to flourish and provide much needed community facilities.

Some parish boundaries may not be consistent with the groupings we have outlined below but we look forward to working on a model of more 'perforated' boundaries and the exercise of pastoral care being undertaken over a wider area by all members of the Group. When the legal framework permits it, we would be greatly assisted in this process by the boundaries for the solemnisation of marriage being coterminous with the Group boundaries rather than as at present, with the individual parish boundaries.

The eventual deployment of staffing within each Group Ministry should be determined in consultation with those who are part of that Group Ministry. However, initially it is expected that the current provision will be retained in the short-term, unless otherwise stated.

Proposed Groups and Teams

After due deliberation, we recommend that consideration be given to the formation of the following three Group Ministries within the Hove Deanery:

- Central Hove
- Shoreham and Southwick
- Portslade and Western Hove

9.1. Central Hove Group Ministry

We recommend that a Central Hove Group Ministry be brought into being incorporating the present parishes of:

All Saints (Hove)

Holy Trinity (Hove)

St Andrew (Old Church, Hove)

St Barnabas (Hove St Barnabas and St Agnes)

St John the Baptist (Hove)

St Patrick (Hove St Patrick – part thereof)

9.1.1. All Saints (Hove)

Whilst the first Report sought to provoke discussion by recommending several options, this Report needs now to present a recommendation.

As with the centre of Brighton, our flexibility for working within the constraints that face us at the present time is much influenced by the presence of this large Victorian building requiring significant amounts of capital spending beyond the funding capacity of the current church membership.

Most of those responding to the first Report understandably hoped for the retention of All Saints both for its fine architecture and as a worshipping community, a view firmly supported by English Heritage.

All Saints will doubtless continue in their efforts to seek funding for appropriate restoration. Given the nature of the architecture of this Grade 1 listed building, we recognise that severe restraints would be placed on any internal reordering;

nevertheless, we recommend that imaginative uses be actively explored in the interests of its serving the wider community. This will represent a challenge for the worshipping community and its success will depend on viable and constructive partnerships being found and on appropriate guidance being sought from such partners as English Heritage.

While acknowledging that the financial burden falls particularly heavily on the congregation of All Saints, the retention of this church building must not be at the expense of its local mission, nor by depriving support for ministry elsewhere, nor as an ongoing subsidy cost to the diocese – i.e. its assessed Parish Ministry Costs will need to be met in full. This represents a strong challenge to this church actively to work towards growth and further ministry to the community, and we recommend that progress towards these goals is reviewed in three years' time.

In view of the recommended establishment of a wider Group Ministry, we recommend that the present Team Ministry be dissolved.

9.1.2. Holy Trinity (Hove)

Despite the strenuous and prayerful efforts of the members of Holy Trinity to identify appropriate partnerships which might give new impetus to a Christian presence at this location in the deanery and make effective use of this important site, regrettably, no such partnerships have thus far emerged.

In the light of this, and after considerable heart-searching, sadly we must recommend its closure and the sale of the site. All due pastoral support should be given to the members of this church to assist them in finding a welcome in nearby churches, be that at Holy Cross or at the neighbouring United Reformed Church. Careful consideration will also need to be given to continuing chaplaincy provision to the Martlets Hospice currently provided for as a shared post with the Team Vicar of Holy Trinity.

Monies raised in this sale, we strongly urge, should, at least in significant measure, be directed to the benefit of the deaneries of Brighton and Hove.

9.1.3. St Andrew (Old Church, Hove)

With its strong links with St Andrew's School and its 'city centre' site, this church is well provided for and is ministering effectively to its community. Its inclusion and collaboration within the Central Hove Group will be of key importance to this newly created Group Ministry.

9.1.4. St John the Baptist (Hove)

All the evidence suggests that St John's has entered a new and exciting period in its history. Their submission to the committee was full of optimistic plans for the future, but we would stress that the constructive continuation of the initiatives recently started are essential to the future of this church.

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It will be essential that the strenuous efforts to reduce the currently high level of grant continue. If the plans now being worked through in the parish are sustained with the enthusiasm currently displayed, further significant and lasting reduction should be achievable.

The Review Group recognises the important contribution St John's now makes towards meeting the needs of the local community. However, we also hope that it can be increasingly resourced from within its diverse parish community of considerable potential and resources. With the recommended enlargement of its parochial area the scope for increased growth could be further enhanced.

The church's longer term future must depend on these goals being met and we, therefore, recommend that progress be formally reviewed in three years' time.

9.1.5. St Barnabas (Hove St Barnabas and St Agnes)

Significant sums of money have in recent years been invested in the maintenance of this church building and, as was recognised in the First report, it represents a distinctive Anglo-Catholic tradition within the deanery. Nevertheless, its apparent reluctance to work in partnership with other local churches of differing tradition, and its dependence on diocesan subsidy, regrettably lead us to recommend that this church be declared redundant and closed.

In recommending this, we are very conscious that there are those here who have already experienced before the pain of the closure of their place of worship and we stress, therefore, that it is vital that all due care is taken of the current worshipping community and that assistance is given to its members to help them find alternative place of worship and Christian communities into which they will be welcomed when this church building closes.

9.1.6. St Patrick (Hove St Patrick)

The Review Group was saddened to learn that some of what was written in the first Report in relation to St Patrick's was misunderstood and caused some genuine concern which is much regretted and was entirely unintended.

We continue in the belief that this church occupies an unique place in the deaneries of Brighton and Hove and has pioneered a very special ministry amongst the most disadvantaged in the City. Indeed, in a move designed to free the building so that it might be converted to better suit the social needs to which it has since so effectively been put, it was made redundant and then granted a licence in 1999 that allowed a suitably adapted area of the building to continue in use as a place of Christian worship and for the conducting of the 'occasional offices', thereby serving the needs of its worshipping community. There was never any question that St Patrick's should suffer any curtailment of this unique and important role.

There is evidence, however, to suggest that the church 'looks' more towards Brighton than it does to Hove, and therefore, given this, we recommend that the church

continues as at present licensed for public worship, but that its eastern parochial area be brought into the Brighton Deanery and be incorporated into the parish of St Michael and All Angels.

As a partner church within an expanded St Michael's parish, St Patrick's would then be able to decide, in collaboration with St Michael's, the extent to which it exercised a parochial ministry, while primarily focusing on its specialist ministry of social care.

We also recommend that the western reaches of the current parish remain in Hove Deanery and that they are incorporated into the parish of St John, Palmeira Square.

Staffing

We recommend that this Group be staffed with three stipendiary priests.

9.2. Shoreham and Southwick Group Ministry

We recommend that a Shoreham and Southwick Group Ministry be brought into being incorporating the present parishes of:

- All Souls ('Downsway', Southwick)
- Good Shepherd (Shoreham Beach Good Shepherd)
- St Giles (Kingston Buci)
- St Julian (Kingston Buci)
- St Mary de Haura (Shoreham New)
- St Michael and All Angels (Southwick)
- St Nicolas (Shoreham Old)
- St Peter ('Fishersgate', Southwick St Peter and St Mary)

After some ground-breaking meetings, a sense of the need for collaboration between these churches has emerged.

9.2.1. Good Shepherd (Shoreham Beach Good Shepherd)

This church has an excellent record of involvement with its community and, because of this and its relative isolation, we recommend that it should continue with its work in serving that community.

However, it is still dependent on a subsidy of some £17,000. Whilst this is a reducing dependency, we would hope and expect to see substantial further reductions in this figure over the next three years. The closure of St Julian (Kingston Buci) leads us to recommend that Good Shepherd (Shoreham Beach) and St Giles (Kingston Buci) should in future share one priest.

Given the present chaplaincy to Shoreham Airport, we would recommend that consideration be given to transferring Shoreham Airport (and possibly Ricardo Consulting Engineers) into the Hove Deanery to be pastorally cared for by this Group Ministry.

9.2.2. St Julian (Kingston Buci) and St Giles (Kingston Buci)

Despite its ancient foundation, the proximity of St Julian's to St Michael's Southwick leads us to recommend that St Julian's be declared redundant. We would, however, hope that Shoreham College, with whom we would wish to maintain an effective pastoral relationship, might wish to explore a partnership with a body such as the Churches Conservation Trust with a view to their being able to continue to make use of this building.

As St Nicolas and St Mary's Shoreham are already natural collaborative neighbours, the closure of St Julian's leads us to recommend linking Shoreham Beach with Kingston Buci, and sharing one priest.

As well as the usual responsibilities to schools and community groups, notably the Southlanders Association emerging in Kingston Buci, this Group Ministry will have particular responsibility towards the Port and its development, Shoreham Airport, St Nicolas and St Mary CE First and Middle School and Shoreham College.

9.2.3. St Mary de Haura (Shoreham New) and St Nicolas (Shoreham Old)

The cost of maintaining these two churches is significant. Despite their architectural importance and community contribution, the viability of indefinitely maintaining two churches in such close proximity is dubious. Notwithstanding the submission reasonably suggesting that they might be amalgamated as a 'major parish', we cannot see what tangible working benefit would be gained thereby. The real unifying force would be Group collaboration to address the needs of the area and enable God's mission to it. For St Mary and St Nicolas, we would foresee one stipendiary priest. The active collaboration between these two churches needs to be more in evidence.

9.2.4. St Michael and All Angels (Southwick), St Peter ('Fishersgate', Southwick St Peter and St Mary) and All Souls ('Downsway', Southwick)

St Michael's (Southwick) provides a focus for the Southwick area and is in a position of pastoral and financial strength enabling it to sustain both its own ministry and to contribute significantly to that of St Peter's and All Souls.

St Peter's ('Fishersgate'), which has recently been brought into a United Benefice with St Michael's, is now benefiting from the substantial pastoral support it is receiving from St Michael's. St Peter's is located in an area of significant social need and we see continuing Christian ministry here as being of crucial importance. The worshipping community from St Peter's has been willing to transfer to St Michael's and initiatives in youth work are now being undertaken by the newly appointed priest-in-charge. We recommend that one year (from the date of publication of this Report) should be

allowed to determine whether these positive and encouraging developments are sustained. Consideration might then be given to the building or the site being substantially dedicated to community use.

The congregation of **All Souls ('Downsway')** is mainly elderly and looks to St Michael's for support, but the building is in community use each day and not only pays for itself but makes a significant fund-raising contribution to St Michael's parish. The situation should be reviewed periodically, next in three year's time.

Staffing

We recommend that this Group be staffed by three (or possibly four) stipendiary priests and one first-post curate.

9.3. Portslade and Western Hove Group Ministry

Moving east towards the city centre, we found that workable boundaries became more difficult to define and, in fact, identifiable areas were contested even among people in the same parish. A degree of flexibility will be required in the working out of this Group, which comprises:

- Bishop Hannington Memorial Church (Hove Bishop Hannington Memorial Church)
- Good Shepherd ('Mile Oak', Portslade Good Shepherd)
- Holy Cross (Hove Bishop Hannington Memorial Church)
- St Andrew (Portslade St Nicolas and St Andrew)
- St Helen (Hangleton)
- St Leonard (Aldrington)
- St Nicolas (Portslade St Nicolas and St Andrew)
- St Peter (West Blatchington)
- St Philip (Hove, Aldrington)
- St Richard ('Knoll', Hangleton)

The re-ordering of this area envisaged in the first Report has produced meetings between some of the Churches with fruitful results. Representations from Portslade – both church and secular – were very clear about retaining a sense of identity which exists between Portslade Village and south Portslade along the lines of the ward boundaries.

9.3.1. The Portslade Parishes

The major problem here is that the parishes of Good Shepherd (Mile Oak) and St Nicolas with St Andrew (Portslade) will together need a subsidy of over £46,000 in

2005, a level which is clearly unsustainable and has, in fact, been increasing steadily over the last five years.

a) Good Shepherd ('Mile Oak', Portslade Good Shepherd)

Mile Oak is a still expanding residential area where we feel it important to maintain a ministerial presence. We are concerned that there is little evidence that this parish has fully explored its potential towards meeting in full its Parish Ministry Costs – its current level of subsidy (£30,000) is unsustainable – and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

b) St Nicolas and St Andrew (Portslade St Nicolas and St Andrew)

St Nicolas with its hall, and its involvement in the local Church-Aided Junior School, provides a strong village focus. Our dilemma, however, is where to recommend the eventual placement of a stipendiary priest as only one is affordable.

The establishment of St Andrew's, in its new community centre setting, poses both a great challenge and an opportunity which will need to be taken up as a responsibility of this whole Group of churches. Nonetheless, the position of St Andrew's must be kept under close review to ensure that, over the next three years, its viability as a worship centre is clearly demonstrated.

St Nicolas' church hall meets a wide range of local community needs, and should continue to do so.

Given the need to reduce the high level of subsidy, we recommend that this part of the Group be staffed by one priest together with a house-for-duty priest. However, this alone will not sufficiently reduce the unsustainable level of subsidy and we would foresee the need in due course to consider one or the other of these churches for closure.

9.3.2. St Leonard and St Philip (Aldrington)

Whilst St Philip's and St Leonard's currently pay for one stipendiary priest between them, there can be no justification for incurring ongoing maintenance costs quite disproportionate to the amount of use made of St Leonard's. Sadly we must recommend it be declared redundant, and closed.

We are advised by English Heritage that, of the two, St Leonard's would be the more flexible building to develop for other purposes, despite our misgivings in the first Report concerning the graveyard. We recognise that a great deal of work will be needed to co-ordinate the needs of the congregations and hall users of these two churches.

St Leonard's church hall meets a wide range of local community needs, and should continue to do so.

9.3.3. Bishop Hannington Memorial Church and Holy Cross (Hove Bishop Hannington Memorial Church)

The strength of Bishop Hannington Memorial Church enables it not only to sustain its own church life but also to support the church plant at Goldstone School and its ministry at Aldrington CEP School. We welcome the emerging spirit of collaboration and our hope for this church and Holy Cross, its daughter church, is that this will continue to develop for the benefit both of the Group and deanery.

9.3.4. St Helen (Hangleton) and St Richard ('Knoll', Hangleton)

Several good meetings, with much community support, especially at St Richard's, confirmed that all parties agreed that the link between St Helen's and St Richard's should be maintained.

Until recently, a major problem for these two churches has been the very large subsidy – more than £54,000 in 2004 – required for their maintenance. Against this, their Parish Contribution towards their total Parish Ministry Costs was only £7,000. With only one stipendiary priest now appointed to care for the two churches, a significant subsidy will still be required in this current year, and every effort must be made to reduce this substantially; at this level it will currently amount to more than £8 a week for every one of the two churches' 89 members, a level of subsidy which must be capable of being considerably reduced. The situation should be reviewed in three years' time.

There is much for the recently appointed Priest-in-Charge to address in a parish with markedly contrasting social characteristics, and we believe he should be helped considerably by these two churches becoming part of the much larger Group Ministry we are proposing.

However, if in three years' time there is little evidence of significant progress towards full responsibility and since its community involvement makes St Richard's the more viable, we would have to regrettably recommend the closure of St Helen's.

9.3.5. St Peter (West Blatchington)

Despite some historical questions over the parish boundaries concerning Aldrington School, we found that there was no original intention to change the boundaries and look forward to increasing collaboration between Bishop Hannington Memorial Church and St Peter's for the good of everyone associated with the school. Indeed, it is encouraging to note the higher degree of co-operation that is already emerging and we hope this may provide a stimulus for the rest of this Group.

Staffing

We recommend that this Group be staffed with six and a half stipendiary priests and one first-post curate.

