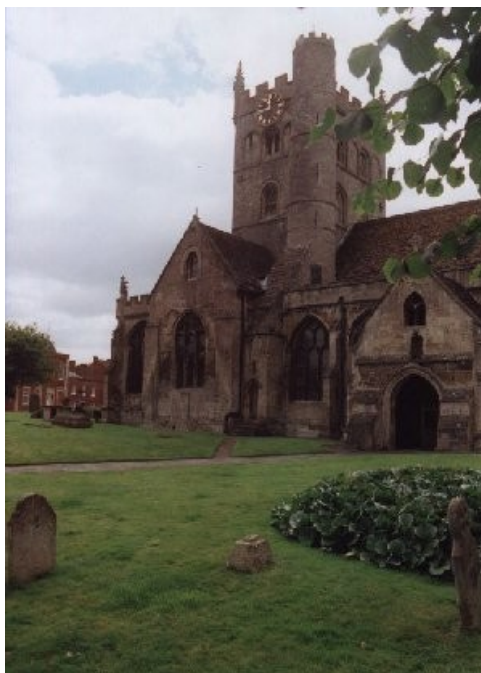


# Devizes Deanery Action Plan

Version 1.0

September 2008



Developing a Godly Deanery

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## Devizes Deanery Action Plan

### Introduction

In developing this Plan we first of all believe it is important to make clear what we believe the Deanery is actually *for*...

We believe the purpose of the Deanery is about focus, and we believe the focus and priority of The Church is (or should be!) to make known as widely as possible the good news of Jesus Christ, - to 'make disciples for Christ'. By doing this all the Baptised grow in faith and are equipped for ministry. All of our activity is ultimately with this purpose of Mission and Ministry in mind.

Until now, parishes (or Benefices) have each tried to address this outreach activity 'on their own'. Some parishes are really good at this, especially (but not always) if they are blessed with a large population. Others find it much more of a challenge, not least because their circumstances dictate other priorities.

Devizes Deanery is reasonably compact but quite diverse:

- **'The Township of Devizes'** consists of three parishes – St John & St Mary; St James Southbroom, and St Peter's. There are churches of various other denominations in the towns (Baptist, Methodist/URC, Devizes Christian Fellowship, Roman Catholic, and strict Baptist) and the majority of the town churches have contact with one another either by working together informally or through the 'Devizes Churches Together' group.
- **Churches close to Devizes** but in rural settings are: Bishop's Cannings & Etchilhampton, Urchfont & Stert, Potterne, and Rowde.
- **Deep Rural Churches** further out from Devizes are: All Cannings, Chirton, Marden, Wilsford, Bromham, Bulkington, Poulshot, Seend, Worton, Bratton, Coulston, Edington, Erlestoke, West Lavington, Market Lavington, Easterton, Great Cheverell, and Little Cheverell.

It is quite clear from the amount of new housing being built in and around Devizes that the town is set to grow rapidly – this means that some of the 'closer' parishes may soon find themselves even closer to the town than they are now. No doubt this will have an impact on the way the churches relate both to one another and to the town churches; this also has Mission/Evangelistic implications and opportunities.

We note that in rural areas often the only denomination is the Church of England. This means that these church communities function in a different way to those in the town. In rural areas, the church is often the only Christian focus for the whole village, and its ministry-style is affected accordingly. This is both a great opportunity but also a reason why Ministers (and congregations) can feel very isolated.

**We believe that the Deanery is the obvious forum to enable all the parishes within it to give support and encouragement to one another;** to offer help or advice or training when needed; to share good practice and to share resources; and not least to be a forum for communication not only among ourselves but to and from the wider Diocese and national Church.

### Stipendiary Clergy Deployment

We do have to accept that the numbers of stipendiary clergy are set to fall from the current 9 to around 7 full-time posts by 2016. However, we emphasise that this cut in stipendiary clergy numbers is NOT cost-driven, but comes about because of the falling numbers of people offering for Stipendiary Ministry. Therefore, bearing in mind this need to 'spread' the stipendiary clergy across the deanery, we put forward the idea of 'informal clusters', each with one or two stipendiary clergy.

**Our Plan addresses the following topics:**

1. **Equipping *a//* the baptized for the Christian life**  
**Our aim** is to make it possible for as many of the Baptized as possible to be effective communicators of the gospel, and to use their skills to support one another across the Deanery: we call this 'Nurturing for Discipleship – creating a Spiritual heart'.  
 (Appendix A)
2. **Stipendiary Clergy deployment**  
**Our aim is to** prepare thoughtfully and thoroughly for 2016 when we expect to have seven stipendiary clergy in the Deanery – two less than at present (Appendix B).
3. **Worship & Church life**  
**Our aim** is to deepen and enrich clergy & lay relationships with God in order to be effective witnesses and communicators for Christ, thus enabling and encouraging mission initiatives and churches to grow (Appendix C).
4. **Sharing resources** – people, knowledge, equipment, buildings  
**Our aim is to** commit to share our personnel (whether lay or ordained), our individual expertise and knowledge, both that of ministry and of other matters, which might include 'how to find funds for particular projects', or 'how to run an Alpha course', etc... This also includes communications across the Deanery. (Appendix D).
5. **Social Issues, + Ecumenical & Community relationships**  
**Our aim is to** be aware and involved in local social issues, and to play our part in the life of our local community. We also wish to strengthen our ecumenical relationships with Christians of other denominations (Appendix E).
6. **Boundaries & Buildings**  
**Our aim is to** effectively serve the communities in our Deanery, bearing in mind the population distribution in the towns and in the villages. Also to look afresh at our buildings in order to see how we can make best use of them both for worship (their primary purpose!) but also for mission and outreach activities as well as for the whole community (Appendix F).
7. **Payment of Share**  
**Our aim is** that every parish or benefice in this Deanery will pay 100% of Share in order to achieve our goals – especially those of equipping ourselves for effective mission & ministry (Appendix G).
8. **Links with the Sudan.**  
**Our aim is** to further and deepen the friendships that we made with Bishop Anthony and Bishop Ezekiel when they visited us in July 2008. (Appendix H)

In order to address these eight topics we will introduce a three-year 'Rolling Programme' (Appendix I).

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Equipping all Christians

*i.e. as many of the Baptized as possible to be effective communicators of the gospel, and to use their skills to support one another even across 'boundaries'*

A point we feel is essential to 'take on board' is that the Ordained are NOT the only ministers. All of our parish activities would come to a halt if it were not for the vast army of volunteers who give their time and talents willingly and freely. Some choose to do this in an 'official' capacity: Licensed Lay Minister, Lay Pastoral Assistant, Church Warden, Treasurer, Children's Worker etc, but others are content to work quietly in a supportive capacity.

Our Plan therefore includes encouraging people to seriously consider where their ministry lies, and to this end we will promote "Gifts and Talents" events. The need to promote both Lay and Ordained ministries is of utmost importance if we are to be a thriving, vibrant and Mission-focussed community.

It is clear from responses to questions at Deanery Synod and at Chapter that our aims for this Deanery are to enable people (clergy & laity) to be equipped to serve their church and community more effectively and with confidence. In order to achieve this we recognise the need for:

- Training, e.g. for ministries such as LPA, but also a 'stage between' LPA and LLM which takes into account the needs of particular parishes. Some 'bespoke' short courses might be the answer here.
- Present skills to be recognised and used. It may well be appropriate for some training for the clergy in how to recognise and use the skills and talents of Lay people.
- 'Support'/sharing sessions for those currently engaged in a particular ministry so that we can learn from one another, and share 'best practice'.
- Promoting and encouraging people to enrol on Diocesan-led courses such as *Learning for Discipleship*.
- Encouragement to explore vocations – perhaps through a "Vocations Day" to be held locally, but also by the clergy encouraging individuals! We could also ask current LPA, LLM, Voluntary ministers to talk about their work, what it involves etc. as part of a "Gifts and Talents" Event.
- Volunteer Youth Workers in our parishes are generous folk who give up time freely but without any specific training being offered. We are aware that Bishop's Council is currently looking at the possibility of an LLM(Y) scheme for Youth Workers who, from some date soon (possible in 2010), have to have a degree status qualification. Bearing that in mind, would it be acceptable to also have some 'accreditation' for voluntary Youth Workers, perhaps akin to LPA training?

Although many people on Deanery Synod were enthusiastic about enabling and equipping all Christians, and working together across parish boundaries, the clergy have commented that many people 'in the pews' are just not 'caught' by this vision. So we are not only trying to identify the role of the Church in the community – we also have the task of helping congregations understand that individual parishes need one another, and that the Deanery is there for mutual support and encouragement.

In this context our task includes:

- Convincing all Christians that they have a part to play, however large or small.
- Giving people the confidence to share their faith.
- Deepening our own faith in order to be equipped for life's journey as well as leading others in their journey.

- Further training for Incumbents in leadership and delegation skills.

We are also aware that publicity for *Learning for Discipleship* courses is very patchy, and not every-one is hearing about them. What is needed is a good communications system. We have recently appointed a 'Communications Officer' and she is getting to grips with her role.

Prayer. None of the above can happen unless we have a prayerful base. We would like to establish a range of facilities to which people can choose to dip into as and when necessary, e.g:

- Prayer Partnerships,
- The sharing of prayer resources,
- 'Guided Prayer' weeks,
- Deanery retreats or Quiet days,
- Meditation groups
- Worship workshops

In order to make these things happen we need 'Portfolio holders' for 'Vocations', 'Further Christian Learning', and 'Spirituality'.

## **Appendix B: Stipendiary Clergy deployment**

The report "The Diocese of Salisbury: A Vision and Strategy for 2007 – 2012, Mature Christian Disciples" sets out mission as a key priority. It also recognises that the numbers of stipendiary clergy is falling (because fewer people are offering themselves for stipendiary ministry), although the numbers of Voluntary (previously called NSM or OLM) clergy are rising. Current projections show that by 2016 the number of stipendiary ministers is likely to be around 156 for the whole Diocese - currently there are 184. Therefore there is a need to equip and nurture all the baptized, so that this Diocese will continue to have a rich variety of ministries to call on.

This means that stipendiary clergy will have to be 'placed' carefully in order to support and enable all other ministries (lay & ordained). As a Deanery we expect to have seven stipendiary Clergy by 2016 - two less than at present. Careful planning, taking into account the particular needs of this Deanery, ongoing parish projects and plans and ongoing training for *all* the baptized will ensure that the quality of ministry here is enhanced.

All of this means that we have to begin planning now in order to make sure that we have a fair and workable deployment of stipendiary clergy across the Deanery in 2016. We believe that with creative use of our Volunteer (NSM/OLM) clergy - whose numbers are rising! - plus our Licensed Lay Ministers and LPA's, we can ensure that all parts of the Deanery, however 'deeply rural' will receive good quality Ministry.

The Diocese has accepted a 'points' system for allocating Ministry Resources:

Full-time with housing	3 points
Full time without housing	2 points
Part time with housing	2 points
Part time without housing	1 point
NSM Team Vicar or priest in Charge	1 point
House for duty	1 point
Voluntary Clergy (NSM, OLM)	Priceless!

We expect to have up to 26 points in 2016 (as opposed to the 28 points we have at present). We can allocate these points as we see fit, and indeed the Deanery has already committed to giving up to 3 points to the Children & Families Pioneer post when the initial funding period finishes.

The Rural Dean and Lay Chairman have been looking at *possible* future parish/benefice clusters. These are not formal parish boundary changes, but simply consider how parishes might group together on an informal basis.

The proposals take into account the current connections between the parishes, the geographical areas, the population density and the roads connecting the parishes. Obviously this is still much to be agreed; nevertheless, the chart (below) gives this *possible* scenario for 2016:

Devizes	St John	)	2 stipendiary Clergy + 1 'House for duty' + Volunteer Clergy, LLM's & LPA's
	St Peter	)	
Southbroom	St James	)	
All Cannings		)	1 stipendiary Clergy + 1 'House for duty' + Volunteer Clergy, LLM's & LPA's
Bp's Cannings		)	
Chirton		)	
Marden		)	
Urchfont		)	
Wilsford		)	
Stert		)	
Bromham		)	2 stipendiary Clergy + possibly 1 'House for Duty' + Volunteer Clergy, LLM's & LPA's
Rowde		)	
Bulkington		)	
Poulshot		)	
Seend		)	
Potterne		)	
Worton		)	
Bratton		)	2 stipendiary Clergy + Volunteer Clergy, LLM's & LPA's
Coulston		)	
Edington		)	
Erlestoke		)	
W. Lavington		)	
Easterton		)	
Gt. Cheverell		)	
Little Cheverell		)	
M. Lavington		)	

We already have one deanery post (albeit concentrating on Devizes): The Children & Families Worker based at Southbroom, St James.

A more detailed chart which gives the current and future number of 'points' is on the last page of this Deanery Plan.

As our Plan develops, we will consider carefully the use of part-time House-for-duty or possible "½ & ½" posts. We will also consider who would most appropriately be 'priest-in-charge' in such a situation; for example would an existing Voluntary Minister be better placed to take on this role than a new HfD or "½ & ½" minister? It may be feasible to deploy an existing volunteer minister to look after a Parish/benefice (not necessarily their own?) during an interregnum. We will consider how we can share our clergy resources more widely. We will also consider what impact – on the parishes and on the individual clergy - this sharing might have.

**What is absolutely clear is that we must give our attention to fostering Vocations – for Voluntary Ordained and Licensed Lay Ministry** - as well as for Lay Pastoral Assistant and other ministries. Many of our current Voluntary clergy are beginning to think about retirement... and it takes three years to train a priest, plus the time needed for the discernment and selection process, which in itself can take 2 – 3 years.

Another aspect of clergy deployment is regarding interregna. When we come to look to appointing new clergy we need to take into account the need of the whole Deanery. Is the new Minister to be full-time in the parish, or to have a 'Deanery' remit as ½ time plus the parish as ½ time? For example, a Deanery 'Vocations Officer' or Deanery 'Further Christian Learning Officer'? However, neither of these posts *necessarily* have to be filled by clergy.

### **Appendix C: Worship and church Life.**

*The deepening and enriching of clergy and lay relationships with God in order to be effective witnesses and communicators for Christ, thus enabling and encouraging mission initiatives.*

After some research at both Deanery Synod and Clergy Chapter meetings, it has become clear that worship and church life is high on the agenda:

- Taking risks with worship, e.g. "Fresh Expressions" such as the Family Breakfast service in All Cannings School Hall, etc...
- Ensuring our Church – buildings and people – is friendly and welcoming.
- Ensuring that worship is joyful and meaningful, and that 'Church' is attractive to young people.

There is a readiness among clergy and laity to leave the 'place of safety' (i.e. the church building) and take our worship to where people naturally gather, which includes going into the schools, using the village greens, and the local pubs. Each Parish/Benefice will have its own ideas of how to do this, and we believe the majority are keen to share our ideas, our experiments and results with one another. However, we are also aware of those who find the idea of contact with other parishes quite threatening. There is a need to make clear that our individual churches are not 'separate islands' – we are all part of the One Church and do have responsibility for each other. In order to help people understand this we need to create a framework in which all can feel safe to 'move around'.

There is a keenness to take advantage of the government's idea of after-school clubs and we can see that with the right planning and leaders, a club with a clear Christian message would be an exciting possibility. There is a strong desire to identify, use and share the gifts and abilities the Holy Spirit has given us as individuals and as Church.

There is an acknowledgement of the need for 'Spiritual space' ('God's acre'), which leads to the requirement to leave our churches unlocked during the day to allow people to come and go as they need. Churches have provided means for prayers to be left, e.g. 'prayer tree', prayer net, 'post-it' notes or a book. We are alert to the need for friendship, which highlights the need for people with the ability to listen.

#### Practicalities.

- Sharing 'best practice' across the Deanery demands a good, effective communication system. Some sharing can be done at the clergy chapter, and some within Deanery Synod. We have recently set up a Deanery Communications e-newsletter; we wonder if a Deanery Website is feasible, although that requires expertise and cost to set up ... *and* someone to make sure it is up to date and has accurate information.
- Using Services such as the 'Deanery Service' and 'guest' services as 'exemplars' of a particular style of worship – i.e. the host church could put on a service which is their speciality – Taizé or Celtic, Compline or whatever.... Whenever a parish holds such an 'event-service' they could invite the other parishes along. If, over the course of a year (or two) each parish offered something that would go a long way to help us feel more together.
- Parishes are no longer 'autonomous' in the way that they were even 10 years ago. It has been hard for the clergy to accept this, but even harder to get the message across to the congregations. We are looking at ways to help people to see how working together for specific events can be a great advantage. The recent 'All Change Sunday' (held on 31<sup>st</sup> August) was well-received and many have asked for us to do this again next year. It certainly helped congregations to realise that they are part of a wider Church.

- 'Back to Church Sunday' (28<sup>th</sup> September 2008) has been welcomed and tested by several parishes in this Deanery.
- Parish/Benefice boundaries – it is clear that if we are to work together on various projects the geographical boundaries between the parishes and benefices will have to be 'semi-permeable'. This is particularly important regarding ministry to younger people who often have no concept of 'parish boundaries' and happily travel to get to an event that is important to them.

### **Appendix D: Sharing resources**

One idea put forward is to share our buildings, e.g. to have one church used for a meeting-place for teenagers groups, another used for quiet space, another used for 'training' events, etc. Do we need *every* church building we have in order to fulfil our worship requirements – is there an argument for using some of our buildings for a different purpose? Can we let go of the idea that *every* church community has to address every need and instead share out the responsibility across the Deanery? It may well be that it is more important to change attitudes rather than the boundaries!

In some rural parishes it can be difficult to find enough people to make an event 'viable', which means that it is all too easy for clergy and congregation to feel disheartened. This is why we feel it is important for parishes to work together and share resources, thus making up the 'critical mass' needed to make such events viable, especially in the more rural parishes.

#### *Examples:*

Mission initiatives might include:

- Initiation Courses such as Alpha or Emmaus
- Deanery Mission events – Fr Timothy Radcliffe's Lent talks in 2009 would fit in well here.

Children and young families outreach might include:

- Children & Families worker (Pioneer Post) based in Southbroom but known to families and churches across the Deanery as the majority of 'Secondary School-age' children attend Devizes School.
- Children and Holy Communion – so far some parishes have embraced this but others have not. We need to share our experiences with one another.

#### Occasional Offices

- Confirmation preparation
- Marriage preparation Courses

#### Current Portfolios:

Outreach to families and young people (in Devizes)  
 Healing Ministry  
 Hospital Chaplaincy  
 Voluntary Services, Church & Faith Communities  
 Liturgy  
 Lay Pastoral Assistant training  
 LPS further support & training  
 Communications across the Deanery  
 Share and Finance

Children & Families Worker  
 Revd Ann Cocking  
 Revd David Howard  
 Revd Jonathan Hiscox  
 Revd Sacha Pearce  
 Revd Dr Graham Southgate  
 Mrs Pam Dewey  
 Mrs Julia Taylor  
 Lt Col Tony Hyde  
 & Mr Michael Armstrong

#### We need portfolio holders for:

- **Vocations**
- **Further Christian Learning, and**
- **Spirituality**

Once again we emphasise that Portfolio holders do *not* need to be ordained!

## **Appendix E: Social Issues & Ecumenical & Community relationships**

We *could* put the Children & Families worker under this heading!

Churches are already involved to a greater or lesser extent in the community, through work with:

- Devizes Food Bank
- Alabaré project
- Liaison with local Parish Councils (many of our congregation members serve on these Councils)
- Helping at Erlestoke Prison crèche
- Schools and Pre-Schools including leading Assemblies, hearing children read, being on the school Governing Body, etc.
- The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP)
- Involvement with childrens' uniformed organisations, e.g. Beavers, Cubs & Scouts; Rainbows, Brownies & Guides.

St John's in Devizes is the 'civic' church and there are moves afoot to give it 'Minster' status.

There was a suggestion about Citizens Advice being available in the villages. There was also an awareness of the importance of unity between the churches/ parishes/ Benefices – a willingness to work together, which in itself would be an effective witness, thus making for better public relations.

Ecumenical relationships in and around Devizes are very positive. Devizes Churches Together group meet on a regular basis. 'The Plains' Ecumenical group (with representatives of the rural C of E churches plus the Methodist, 'Free' and Roman Catholic churches) meets roughly quarterly and organises at least one Ecumenical event a year. In several parishes churches of different denominations work together on a more regular basis.

## **Appendix F: Boundaries and Buildings**

We are not convinced at this stage of any need to legally alter the current parish boundaries, bearing in mind that we feel the way to go for the time being is for 'natural groupings' and informal alliances for specific tasks or projects. It may well be that at some time in the future we will need to look again at the legal boundaries, but we feel that the informal arrangements are much more flexible.

Responses from Deanery Synod & Chapter reveal the desire for freedom to reorder church buildings for contemporary use. Especially there is a desire to make wider use of the buildings for the good of the local communities. Suggestions included: get rid of pews, make wider use of our buildings, and make sure our churches are open during the day.

Making wider use of church buildings often requires a certain amount of re-ordering, and this can be a contentious topic. Can we use our Deanery Plan to identify the particular needs not only of parishes but the whole Deanery, so that we can work together to make the best use of each church building? It is important that whenever plans are put forward, a good, clear proposal is made that will help everyone see what we wish to do and why, and that we take into account the deployment of clergy, plus the needs of neighbouring parishes, and the Deanery.

Making best use of our church buildings does mean taking stock of *where* they are located. In rural areas it is often not practical to hold a Service in every church every Sunday. Some churches lend themselves very well to quiet, meditative services, such as Evensong, Healing Services, or All Soul's Day remembrance-style services. Others are suitable for informal worship, Youth services, etc. It could be to the advantage and growth of the whole deanery to identify 'best use' of the buildings as well as taking into account other practical considerations (e.g. parking, toilet facilities, etc).

### **Appendix G: Payment of Share**

We recognise the importance of share payment, but we also recognise that some parishes struggle to pay their share. In order to support the parishes we will continue to hold Treasurers meetings and ask Treasurers from around the Deanery to share 'best practice' and give other advice as needed. We will work with parishes that are in difficulty and help (them) to find an appropriate way forward.

### **Appendix H: Links with Sudan**

We all enjoyed the visit of Bishop Anthony Poggo of Kajo Keji, and Bishop Ezekiel Diing, Asst Bishop of Bor at the beginning of July 2008. During their visit both Bishops expressed a wish for us to forge deeper links with their respective dioceses. St James', Southbroom are already very involved in one project in Kajo Keji and are confident that this link will continue.

What we would like to see is the wider deanery forging links with other areas in Kajo Keji (and possibly in Bor as well). While this idea is very much in its infancy we nevertheless hope to make some positive moves forward in the near future.

## **Appendix I : A suggested Three-year Rolling Programme**

Clearly we cannot focus on everything at once. Therefore we have devised a three-year rolling programme, during which we will 'special focuses'. This will be alongside the work that goes on in every parish every year.

### **Year 1 – 2009**

- A 'Gifts and talents' Day (possibly leading to an annual event)
- Discuss 'Clergy Contract/expectations' with those parishes approaching interregna, plus making sure that ALL PCC's across the deanery are aware of the implications and the need to take clergy deployment into account in Parish Profiles, and Parish/Benefice Plans.
- Looking to fill the currently vacant Portfolio posts (Vocations, Further Christian Learning, and Spirituality).

In addition, 2009 will see two 'one-off events':

- Fr Timothy Radcliffe's Lent Addresses, which gives us all an opportunity to gather together, not only to be enriched in our own spiritual lives, but to get to know one another better.
- Bishop Stephen's Pilgrimage "Believing in Devises" which is a mission-focused, ecumenical event involving Devises Churches Together.

Both of these events have the potential to inspire us for further mission and spirituality.

### **Year 2 – 2010**

Having established year 1's priorities, we now build on them:

- Worship
  - a) looking at how we can share insights and 'best practice'
  - b) 'Fresh Expressions'. Celebrate what we have achieved and look to how we can do more.
  - c) Developing the Spiritual Life e.g. "Week of Guided Prayer"
- Sharing resources. Some churches already run events such as Alpha or Marriage Preparation. Can we invite people from other churches to come and see how it's done? Better still, can we link up and 'do it together'?
- Social issues and Ecumenical relationships. Exploring how we can build on and strengthen the links we already have.

### **Year 3 – 2011**

Building on year's 1 & 2:

- Deepening and expanding our insights and resources.
- Parishes further develop ways to work together on specific issues or events.

Year 4 would see us revisiting the issues we looked at in year 1, and so on.

*This page is for the 'Possible Deanery Structure' chart*

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