

Deanery Synod Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 11th February 2026

Present

Fr John Carruthers - Area Dean - St Pauls Church
Akin Akinwunmi - Lay Chair - St Paul's Church
Bett Lewelyn - Treasurer - St Christopher
Fr Charlie Lamont - Dean of Revitalisation - Missions Department
Mthr Desrine Swarby - St Michaels Camberwell
Mother Ellen - St Christopher's Church
Matilda T Young - St John's church
Mthr Marieke Sybrandi - St George the Martyr

Apologies

Fiona Andrewes - St George the Martyr
Stuart Labran - St Marys Kennington
Robert Wright - St Agnes Kennington
Robert Llewelyn - St Agnes Kennington
Keith Potter - St Agnes Kennington
Andrew Morton - St Peters Walworth
Alex Garzigliia - St Christopher's Church

Opening Prayer

> "Loving God, as we still our hearts and focus our minds, grant us wisdom in all our discussions, grace not disagreements, and joy in the shared work of your Kingdom. Bless our parishes, and all whom we serve. Guide us."

Session with Charlie – Leading Your Church Into Growth (Summary)

Charlie thanked everyone and explained the purpose of the session: to sow seeds, listen to the room, and reflect together.

He noted that the deanery might consider running two smaller LyCiG sessions a year rather than one larger one.

What does growth look like?

Participants reflected:

- Growth can happen through informal discussions and small groups.
- Post-Covid, many people's lives have changed—Sunday work patterns, shifting priorities, and people drifting from church.
- Some Christians have become disconnected; others outside the church need help understanding even basic church language.

Charlie emphasised:

- Church growth is fundamentally about change management.
- Change happens to us; transition is what we choose to do with it.
- Covid forced change—now churches must decide how to transition.

Reaching Outward

A participant noted that Bible studies often serve only those already in church. They asked how to reach those outside.

Charlie reframed the question:

- Growth is not about getting people into a building.
- It is about helping people encounter Jesus.
- Evangelisation can be understood as “sharing the gospel” or “inviting people into the family.”

Participants discussed belonging, welcome, and the importance of helping newcomers understand church life.

Baptism and Belonging

There was a theological reflection on baptism:

- Theologically, baptism joins a person to the Body of Christ.
- Practically, families often come for reasons unrelated to faith (schools, weddings, tradition).
- The church must hold both realities with grace.

Who grows the church?

Charlie reminded the group:

> “It is the Lord Jesus who brings people into his Body by the Spirit. We set the table; he brings the guests.”

He encouraged churches to remove unnecessary barriers—“our stuff”—so people can see Jesus more clearly.

Heart Team and Head Team

Charlie introduced a simple model:

- Heart Team – the core group who hold the values, relationships, and purpose.
- Head Team – PCC and leadership structures that handle buildings, finance, and governance.

Growth requires:

1. Purpose (Why?)
2. Relationships (Who?)
3. Vision (What?)
4. Mission (How?)
5. Results (Actions & Outcomes)

He stressed that many churches jump straight to actions without first building the heart.

Change, Transition, and Culture

Charlie shared examples:

- Churches often have “thick walls”—a club mentality.
- Vision must emerge from the people actually in the room.
- Transparency is essential.
- Growth begins with those who care: “Churches are built on the people who are already there.”

He encouraged small steps, repeated over time, rather than rushing to produce a Mission Action Plan.

Prayer and Reflection

Charlie invited everyone to offer a single word of reflection. Words included:

- “Relationships”
- “Purpose”

He prayed for the deanery and its churches.

Questions and Reflections

Participants shared:

- Relief that growth doesn’t require “doing more,” but building a church within the church.
- Vision takes time—“Christianity is a long game.”
- Vision must start with who is present, not with slogans on noticeboards.
- Transparency and relational depth are essential.

Other Matters

Youth Trip Update

There was an update on a planned youth trip. Funding from last year's donations will help support it. Leaders are being recruited, and the hope is to build a strong network of young people across the deanery.

Synod Elections

A reminder was given that elections for deanery and diocesan synod are coming up. Lay reps and clergy reps are needed. One attendee shared their experience of joining diocesan synod—initially daunting, but important.

Topics recently discussed at synod included:

- LLF / LGBTQ+ matters
- Safeguarding
- DBS processes and costs
- Data breaches with previous providers

Parish Updates

Parishes shared good news:

- Strong attendance at Christmas services.
- Carol services with many new faces.
- Family carol events that were joyful even if newcomers didn't return immediately.
- Midnight Mass attendance varied across parishes.
- Creative children's services using props, countdowns, and interactive elements.
- A new monthly luncheon club attracting people who rarely attend church.
- Some parishes saw increased Christmas Day attendance.

Meeting finished with Compline and Prayer

Next Deanery Synod Meeting: Wednesday 24th June 2026