

Wallingford Deanery Synod: Summary 2025

(prepared by Ali Adams, Deanery Synod Secretary)

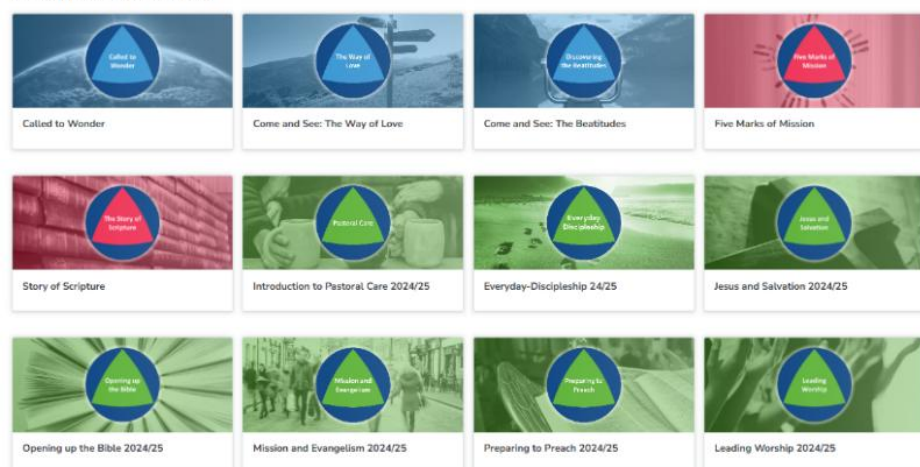
The Deanery includes parishes in Blewbury, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Chilton, Cholsey, Crowmarsh Gifford, Didcot, Great Western Park, Hagbourne, Harwell, Moulsoford, the Moretons, the Astons, Upton, Wallingford.. The Deanery Synod provides PCCs with an important link between parishes and the wider structures of the church. Meetings are jointly chaired by the Area Dean (Revd Dr Andy Lord) and Lay Chair (Vaughn Lawfull).

- Three Deanery Synod meetings and four Standing Committees were held in 2025. All of the Synods continued to consider how we perceive 'church' in the modern world.

The first Deanery Synod meeting in February was based around a theme of growing our faith and parish development through learning. Andrew Hayes, Oxford Diocese Ministry Enabler (Digital Learning) spoke about the diocesan Learning Hub www.oxford.anglican.org/everyday-faith/learning-hub, giving a history of its development and an online tour of its features.

The core principle is to keep learners 'together' so that the same accessible and interactive courses are used by individuals ('bitesize' – featured in blue on the website), study groups within church environments ('going deeper' – featured in red on the website) and those studying wanting more in-depth study of theology ('study groups' – featured in green on the website). Depending on the course level, features include a mix of videos, audio conversations, readings, case studies, forums, tutorials and study days. Many are not aimed at being academic but at increasing the participants' knowledge and spirituality in supportive and appropriate ways.

Available courses



At this meeting: the Deanery's Children, young people and families Plan was adopted by the Deanery.

The second Synod in June featured a conversation between Professor Helen King and the Area Dean, about Exploring Ministry. Helen is a General Synod Rep, works in Classics, is an Authorised Lay Preacher in the Benefice, and had just retired after working with the Street Pastors for 11 years. She and Andy (who was brought up a Catholic, and whose faith came alive at university, subsequently working as a church youth leader, then in the Church Mission Society, and finally becoming Ordained) discussed the meaning of 'Ministry' and agreed that it is what we all do in every part of life. Those at the meeting subsequently spent time discussing how far this is true in their own lives and parishes, and what could be done by recognising this concept.

At this meeting: a Deanery environmental network was established; and guidance for stipendiary ministry across Greater Didcot was noted for use in vacancies.

The third Synod in October was led by Maranda St John Nicolle, the Diocesan Project Officer for PWM (Partnership for World Mission), talking about how necessary it is to work together with people from around the world. A video of Bishop Henry Scriven was played, commenting on this happening in Ephesians 2 when Jews and Gentiles needed to come together to form churches. Similarly we all need each other.

Other videos from the Diocese's link partners in dioceses around the world were also played, including from a very recent partner the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Within a few days of our Synod, Hurricane Melissa hit Jamaica, causing enormous devastation and very much underlining the importance of our prayers for each other.

Various activities using world maps were undertaken to illustrate this point, with Synod members placing post-it notes where places/organisations were on their hearts, where they had personal connections, and where they had church links around the world. Maranda prayed for all these connections.



During the year:

- Inspections took place in several parishes and more are scheduled for 2026
- The 2025 diocesan bid for national funding for Children & Young People's work was unexpectedly not successful, but many varied activities connected to the Deanery's own plan were celebrated during the year
- The Deanery Greenhouse met to pray for the different creative expressions of church that have been established around the Deanery