



# People & Places



## Newsletter Summer 2022

### A word from Archdeacon Jenny Tomlinson



Being part of the development of People & Places has been a very stimulating part of my ministry in the last three years. From the decisions in deaneries about joining together, to the appointment of a wonderful group of Area Deans, to the discussions about Oversight Areas, we've seen God at work leading and guiding us into the future. And that future is different to what any of us could have imagined three years ago, when no one had really heard of a coronavirus. I'm very thankful for the way in which the vision of People & Places has been held, especially by the Area Deans, as we've adapted to changing circumstances of all kinds. If we're serious about listening to God and to each other, we may well find that sometimes decisions need to be reviewed, ideas altered and plans amended. What doesn't change, though, is our common commitment to God's mission in our communities; our shared concern for those around us; and our understanding that we are the Body of Christ, called and equipped to play our part in God's Church in this generation.

### Aston & Sutton Coldfield Area Dean: Rev'd Ann Richardson



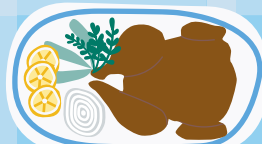
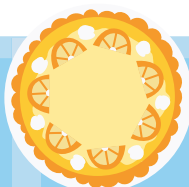
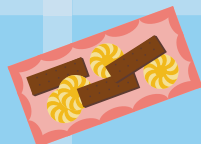
It has been three years since Aston & Sutton Coldfield became a Deanery. Over that time, a lot has happened – a lot of it unexpected! We have been working away since the beginning of 2020, with our eyes on where God is leading us into the future. The biggest

and most noticeable impact that People & Places has had so far has been on the deepening relationships between people and parishes, with initiatives to work and journey together forming in new ways in a number of places. During the Covid pandemic this togetherness was key to the way in which we were able to support and encourage one another in such challenging times.

The biggest challenge, for me as Area Dean, has been trying to foster a culture of togetherness and collaboration during a time when we were being told to stay at home, when churches were closed or limited in what we could do, and when the national climate was so full of fear. As we have begun to regain our confidence through 2022, we are looking to see many more signs of new relationships blossoming and bearing creative fruit, particularly as Oversight Areas begin to be formed.

In May, we were finally able to hold a Deanery Ascension Day service, delayed by two years but marvellous to be together. One of the many highlights last year was the inaugural Deanery Eco Festival at St Chad's Sutton Coldfield – I'm really looking forward to this year's festival on September 24th in Aston. So many people have been involved in all that we have done in the first three years of deanery life, but for me, our Deanery Support Officer, Deborah has been a particular blessing, keeping us moving forward.

Aston & Sutton Coldfield is a brilliantly varied deanery – how could you not want to come here for a fabulous walk around Sutton Park or a trip to the twin Cathedrals of Aston Parish Church and Villa Park, which stare at each other across the Witton Road? Or, in spring, to wander through the bluebells in the parish of Curdworth, Middleton and Wishaw... And the churches of the Deanery will give you a warm welcome and great hospitality. I have been the recipient of much good food and drink in the last two and a half years – most memorably the cake I was handed after a service at St James' Aston that came with the wise words "you might want to drive home before you eat this..." For all that God has done among us in the last three years, we give thanks. For all that is to come as we head into our fourth year as a Deanery together, we say "yes".



## Coleshill & Polesworth Area Dean: Revd Cannon Louise Shaw



I would say that one benefit of People & Places has been in helping parishes in the deanery to feel more connected to each other. When I have visited PCCs to talk about possible Oversight Areas there is obvious relief that natural relationships between parishes is a focus and that people have some

agency in considering possible oversight areas. There are parishes in Oversight Areas have been working formally or informally for years so the Oversight Areas are not a surprise. There are many parishes are looking forward to more intentionally supporting and learning from each other and their communities.

My biggest initial challenge was beginning my role in a pandemic. Getting to know people in the deanery was initially quite restricted; meeting people - vicar or wardens or the lay church planter in a garden or a walk. I wasn't sure how I was going to form a Deanery Project Team without meeting people! However God is good and relationships were formed. I also had a number of vacancies that came up quite close together and I wondered how we would manage in the deanery. However that became quite a highlight for me.

One highlight since coming into post has been working alongside parishes in vacancy. It can be a daunting prospect so I try to cover a Sunday service and attend the PCC as soon as possible. Those whom I meet as wardens, as PCC members and when I am covering services have been caring and very inspiring about how they can care for their church and those in the community; and doing that in a pandemic has needed such creativity, sacrifice and energy reserves. People have forged relationships and others have had a go at doing new things and clergy in the deanery have been fantastic with their support.

A blessing of people has been the Thursday at 3 prayers. It began on Zoom in lockdown as a way for members of clergy or churchwardens in a vacancy to pop on if they wanted to check in, pray and know that I and others would be online when times were uncertain. The time and day were chosen simply to be memorable, it is about 30mins and we still continue it although life is more regular now. Those who come vary in church roles and who turns up but all appreciate the time to share news, or to ask for some help with something and pray together. It is always uplifting.

When asked 'which parish bakes the best cakes?' I answered, 'have you gone mad?' Many a good relationship could be destroyed by my showing favouritism. HOWEVER if anyone would like to know my favourite cakes mines a carrot cake or a lemon drizzle, thank you.

## Handsworth & Central Area Dean: Revd Canon Douglas Machiridza



I have honestly been surprised and humbled by the warm reception that the P&P framework has generally received by churches in the deanery. It would be premature to talk of impact and or success at this stage but there is a clear and apparent acceptance that this is the way to

go re: how ministry should be organised and shaped in our deanery. Some of the tangible impact and responses have been the sharing of ministry resources within the deanery. The lay readers in the deanery are leading the way in sharing missional and other resources within the deanery. We also have seen an increase in clergy willing to support and cover services for one another. We are not at the stage of talking about common identity yet, but there is a willingness to invest in that process of exploring what our common identity could be. We are unique in the sense that as a predominantly Anglo-Catholic deanery we have managed to put together a bid towards funding the services of an Anglo-Catholic Missioner working across 5 parishes, animating mission and

ministry within the deanery and beyond. I would not want to single out anyone in particular, however quite a number of clergy colleagues have been invaluable and a blessing in their support of my ministry as Area Dean and I am so grateful.

Expectations for the year 2022 are many but these three could be the key and essential ones:

- A full role out of the P&P framework and its validation by most deanery.
- A conclusion and agreement of the Oversight Areas suggested by Project Team, Deanery Synod and PCC(s).
- To see more collaboration between parishes and churches within the deanery.

The biggest challenge so far has been the decrease in number of incumbents or clergy with primary responsibility in the deanery and what impact that will have on the P&P roll out. The other challenge has been the delay and uncertainty of the role out and the potential negative impact this could bring. I would be hard pressed to direct guests to any particular parish in the deanery as many parishes are doing fantastic and outstanding missional work in their contexts. St John's parish, Holy Trinity Birchfield, Gas Street Church and St Luke's Kingstanding could be potential places to visit.



## Kings Norton, Moseley & Shirley Area Dean: Revd Phelim O'Hare



Coming to a deanery as large and diverse as KNMS was slightly intimidating at the beginning but I have been pleasantly surprised at how quickly I've managed to get to know the area (I'm only occasionally using satnav). I've also had lots of opportunity to cycle around the deanery and realise that it is very doable and enjoyable.

What has been most pleasing, and a real blessing, has been the enduring camaraderie and fellowship that exists amongst colleagues of the old former deaneries - a desire to journey with each other and support each other in time of need. As the deanery grows into a new identity (and new Area Dean)

I've found the same Christian hospitality and warm inclusion to be shown to me and to the project of forming oversight areas and ministry.

I'm hoping these next 12 months sees the beginning of real fruitful friendships emerge between collaborating parishes and from this an insight mission and into how our sharing in mission and church life can increase how local people encounter God and the message of Jesus that is truly life changing for them and us. My hope too is that People and Places enables increased collaboration that actually eases the burdens of some and raises new possibilities to reach out to others.

As for how many miles I've travelled - God knows, yet I've enjoyed them all so far and am looking forward to even more to come "didn't our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road" (Luke 24:32).

## Warley & Edgbaston Area Dean: Revd Mike Sermon



### How has People & Places made an impact in your Deanery?

One of the results of exploring potential oversight areas has been to trigger a certain amount of self-examination about our own parishes, which has helped us to discover some new things about ourselves that we have not previously noticed. This has

also highlighted some common areas of interest with our neighbouring parishes where future collaboration could offer some significant benefit.

### Where have you seen God moving in your Deanery?

We host several different models of mission that includes close collaboration between some parishes to revitalise and plant new congregations, and a partnership with the Church Army that has formed a new centre of mission. It is exciting to see these new chapters of long running parish stories being written and the potential that each carry for making the love of God known more widely.

### What are you expecting to see in your Deanery in 2022?

In feedback from a recent Deanery Synod meeting, we were asked to set a dateline for the establishment of oversight

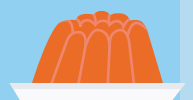
areas. In response to this our goal is for parishes to express their preferences so that our respective PCC's can consent to a new pattern of oversight areas by 30th September 2022. Beyond this there is hope that we can build and expand our ministry to schools, for example, by creating a team that draws volunteers from several different parishes.

### Since coming into post as Area Dean, what has been a highlight for you?

Serving as Area Dean is a real privilege. One of the great joys has been the opportunity to visit our parishes and to be inspired by the range of gifts and talents on show and the way in which these are being used to serve local communities. To listen to the story of God at work in all our parishes is a real joy and there are so many examples of faith being lived out and communities being blessed as a result.

### If a guest was to visit your Deanery, where would you suggest they visit and why?

There are many wonderful sites to visit, but my suggestion would be to walk or take a boat along the Birmingham Main Line Canal from central Birmingham to Oldbury. It's a different view and a journey through the history and culture of much of our deanery that tells its own eloquent story.



## Yardley & Solihull Area Dean: Revd Nick Parker



**How many miles have you covered?**  
3,500 by car but I have also cycled and walked many miles. I've not enjoyed the seemingly endless roadworks along the Coventry Road and around HS2 but have cherished cycling along the Grand Union Canal and having walking meetings when possible, often accompanied by Mabel, our sprocker spaniel.

**What have you learnt about your Deanery?**  
That there's gross injustice and inequality affecting health, security, opportunity and wellbeing – that this disfigures all of our lives and dishonours God. But that there's also beauty and wonder in every corner when we choose to look for it – most of all in the hearts of the wonderful people giving their all to express God's love and healing in so many creative ways – thereby offering hope that a different Kingdom is possible.

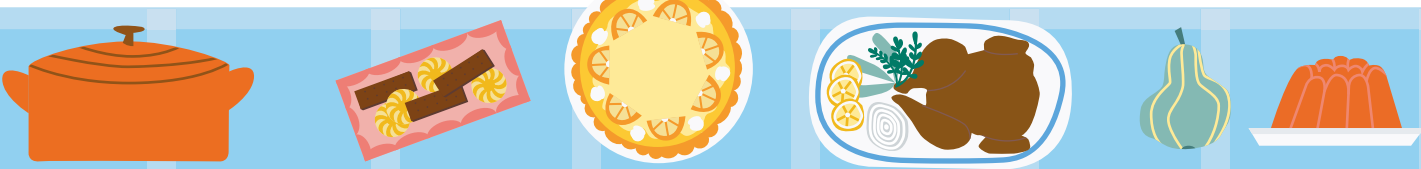
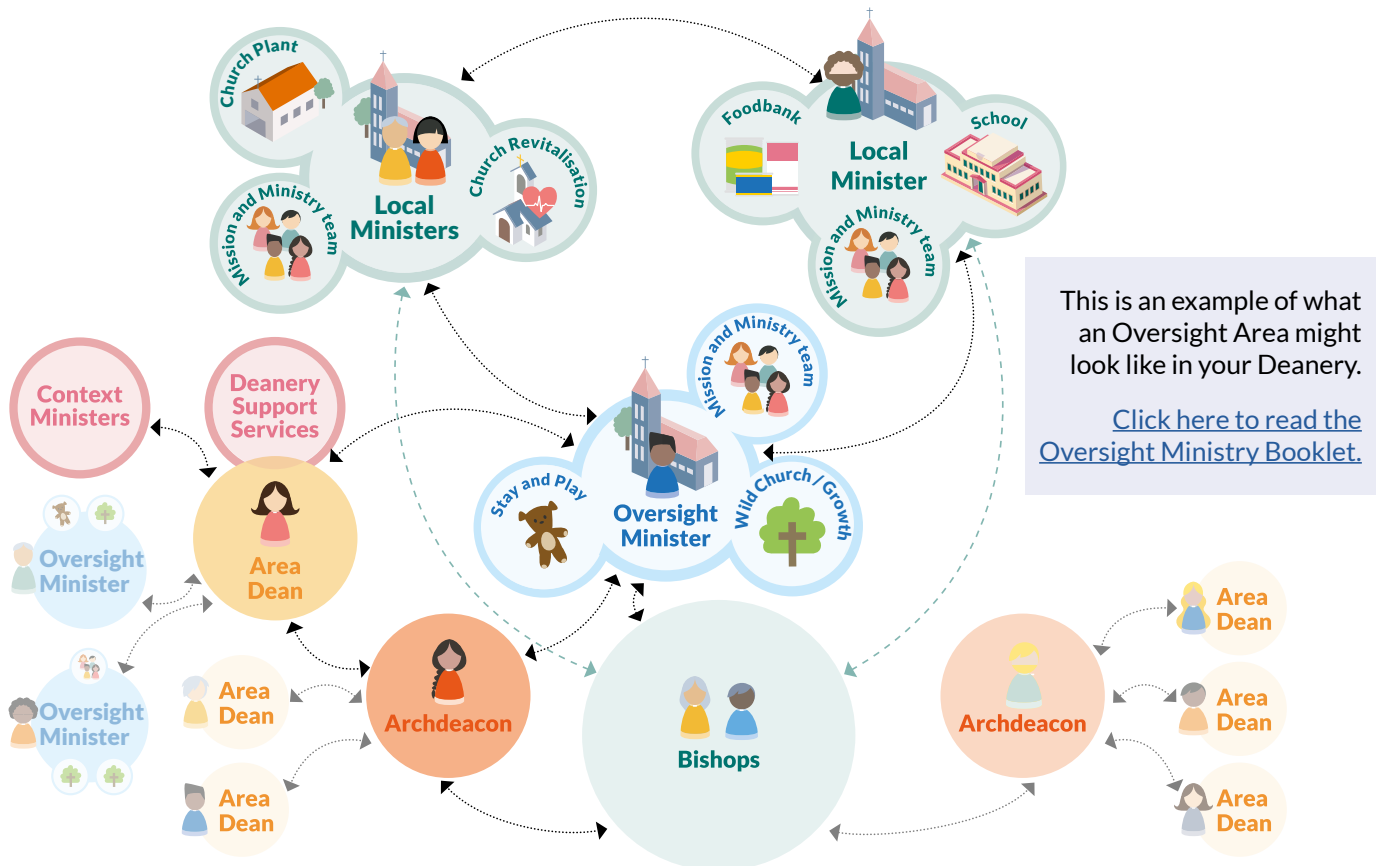
**What has been your biggest challenge yet?**  
Adjusting to a new ministry with a great deal of autonomy whilst seeking to discern God's priorities. I have missed being

rooted in a parish community but am beginning to enjoy a different rhythm and am finding a wider sense of belonging in large part thanks to the wonderful welcome offered in each place.

**Since coming into post as Area Dean, what has been a highlight for you?**  
The Deanery Walk of Witness for Racial Justice when I was delighted by participation and engagement across all our parishes with a strong sense that God's Spirit is at work changing us. There is a clear determination that this journey towards justice and mutual flourishing across all our churches must continue.

**Where have you seen God moving in your Deanery?**  
Incarnationally through God's people, often unheralded but always transformational. And through a growing openness to new ways of working, accompanied by a strong desire for building relationships across parish boundaries, along with sharing resources and learning. Of course, for the People & Places to be effective it requires a culture change to accompany the restructuring and I am encouraged that this is happening as more of us embrace the opportunity to work in missional partnership with each other and together with God. As Oversight Areas come into being this will gather pace and I pray the fruit of such collaboration and friendship will become yet more evident.

## Oversight as a Community of Communities Interrelationship within an Oversight Area





### A few words from Gary Killeen...

*“After 3½ years at Church of England Birmingham, I’ve decided to return to the private sector to take up the role of Technical Project Manager. It’s been a pleasure to serve here in my working life and I’ve met so many amazing people along the way, too many to mention.*

*I will continue to pray for Church of England Birmingham and will watch with interest as the People & Places framework embeds itself across our region, providing a firm foundation for future growth.”*

Gary has been the Programme Manager for People & Places and in his time we have seen:

- The formation of six new Deaneries, with new Area Deans
- The establishment of the Pathways platform including the specific coaching and mentoring projects
- Parish services around Bookkeeping, Building Surveying and HR starting
- The foundation for the creation of Oversight Areas

Gary has also introduced many new things to Church of England Birmingham and will always be remembered as the go to expert for Mapinfo and SmartSheets. It has been a pleasure working with Gary and we know he will be missed by many. We thank God for his input and consistency and pray blessings over him as he moves onto new adventures.

## The Future

Church of England Birmingham has been going through a process of understanding how we deliver our Transforming Church vision and how we best manage the funded projects we have to do this. One of the results of this review is the clear need for us to bring all projects into one framework and we are therefore forming a project management office (PMO) to support all projects to maximise the impact they can make. The PMO will also make sure all projects have a chance to report into the wider governance structures of CofEB. The national church, through capacity funding, have agreed to fund the costs of the PMO for the next few years. The projects that make up People & Places will become part of this. Steve Cook and Bev Heritage are the two members of current staff moving into the PMO and the hope is that they will be joined by new colleagues in the near future.

Further information about funded projects and the PMO will be available in the autumn.

## People & Places prayer

*Gracious and merciful God, as we pray for the future of the Church of England Birmingham, we thank you that the whole earth, its people and places, are equally precious to you.*

*By your Spirit, equip us to meet the challenges of these times with generosity and courage; hold our fears and uncertainties in your love, and grant us the needful gifts of grace to share your love and reflect your light throughout our communities*

*In the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen*

