

Ivybridge Deanery Review Report

January 2018

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Introduction

The vision of the Diocese of Exeter is to be people who together are growing in prayer, making new disciples, and serving the people of Devon with joy. These aims are implicit in the following document and form the basis of its recommendations.

On 17th May 2017, the Bishop of Exeter set out in a letter (Appendix A) addressed to licensed clergy, churchwardens, the Deanery Lay Chair and the Secretary of the Deanery Synod, his concerns in respect of the Ivybridge Deanery. The letter was copied to potentially interested parties in adjacent parishes and deaneries.

The letter described several issues, some of which had been in evidence for many years, concerning poor relationships between parishes, declining church attendance, current and future questions about posts, and the overall structure of the deanery.

Bishop Robert posed a series of questions designed to invite strategic thought and ideas in respect of the structure of the deanery, its mission and ministry, staffing, finances, ecumenical opportunities and the role of church schools.

Because of these concerns, Bishop Robert invited the Archdeacon of Totnes, the Venerable Douglas Dettmer; the Revd Prebendary Nick Shutt, Team Rector of West Dartmoor; and retired Chief Constable Gillian Parker QPM, churchwarden of Holne and Huccaby to conduct a review of Ivybridge Deanery.

The review team were asked to “look at church life in the Deanery, clergy provision and possibilities of pastoral reorganisation with a view to advising the Bishop on the best ways to enable the flourishing of mission and ministry within the Deanery, working together with the Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee and with local clergy and PCCs.”

The team began its work in June 2017 and having completed the information gathering phase at the end of November, submitted its report to the Bishop in January 2018.

Ivybridge Deanery

The deanery presently comprises ten parishes organised in five units of oversight (two of which include more than one legal benefice), with the following staffing:

Cornwood and Sparkwell (1): Post currently vacant

Ivybridge & Harford (1): The Revd Chris Osborne

Newton Ferrers & Revelstoke and Holbeton (1): The Revd Anne Legge, Rural Dean

Yealmpton & Brixton (1): The Revd Owen Murphy

Wembury (0.66): The Revd Martin Kirkbride

There are two licensed Readers: Patricia Stringer in the benefice of Ivybridge & Harford and Norma Baker, licensed in October to Brixton & Yealmpton

On paper, there are three mission communities—(i) Yealm & Erme: Newton Ferrers & Revelstoke and Holbeton; (ii) Yealmside: Yealmpton & Brixton and Wembury; and (iii) South Dartmoor: Ivybridge & Harford and Sparkwell and Cornwood.

The deanery is located within the South Hams District Council area and borders Plymouth to the west. The A38 effectively cuts the Deanery in two, with Ivybridge and Harford, Sparkwell and Cornwood being to the north of the A38, the remaining parishes lying south of it.

The deanery has an approximate population of 18,000 with Ivybridge being the largest centre of population with approximately 12,000 people.

Natural boundaries are created by the rivers Erme and Yealm, with many of the road links between parishes being B class or single track, making travelling around the area challenging.

The new town of Sherford is a development between Elburton and Brixton. It is planned to house up to 12,000 people with 3 primary schools and a secondary school. A curate is in place and the diocese is bidding for a church school in the development.

Methodology

The review team undertook to carry out personal interviews with as many people or groups as practicable. A list of those interviewed and the meetings attended are recorded in Appendix B. With one exception, all the interviews of deanery personnel (priests, readers, churchwardens, Deanery Synod Lay Chair), were carried out by at least two of the team members. Two team members attended the Deanery Pastoral Committee and one Team member attended the Deanery Synod. Personal interviews were also conducted with priests and churchwardens outside the deanery.

The interviews explored the current deanery/mission community structures and how they related to the day to day activities of the people living in the parishes to gain a sense of where people felt they belonged. The life and activities of each church and the involvement in mission communities were discussed, as were hopes and aspirations for the future.

The team also visited the churches and attended some services in the deanery which enabled conversations with members of the congregation to take place.

An invitation to submit written observations was placed in all the relevant parish and community publications. Many people took the opportunity to write to the team.

The consultation period concluded at the end of November 2017.

Findings

The review team were delighted with the positive responses that were received in respect of requests to carry out interviews and are grateful that individuals were willing to give of their time. It was clear that a great deal of thought and preparation had taken place prior to each interview and that there was a feeling that the review was very much welcomed throughout the deanery.

As a result, a great deal of information was gathered and to meet Bishop Robert's desire to "think strategically about the future," the findings are set out in relation to the current deanery structure.

Deanery

Without exception, people who commented on the size of the deanery stated that it was too small. In recent times the size of the deanery has reduced with the parishes of Shaugh Prior, Ermington and Ugborough moving to different deaneries.

There was also a broad consensus that as far as the laity are concerned, "The deanery means nothing to people. It does not impinge on people. There is no understanding of the deanery and it does not impact locally." Another interviewee described the deanery as having no sense of unity, no common vision, no strategic thinking with each parish being "in their own little box".

The review team found no evidence to contradict this view. It should be noted that at the time the review commenced, the Rural Dean was suspended, and the Acting Rural Dean had not been in post long enough to make an impact.

Deanery Synod & Deanery Pastoral Committee

Deanery Synod is generally poorly attended, being described as "grim and sad" with some churchwardens not even sure if their representatives attended the meetings and other elected representatives and clergy choosing not to attend.

The Deanery Pastoral Committee comprises the Rural Dean, the Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod, the Deanery Treasurer and a representative of clergy with Permission to Officiate. Currently it is regarded as "an agenda setting meeting for Deanery Synod." Two members of the review team attended a meeting and were able to provide support by providing the chair with a copy of the Deanery Synod Rules.

With a few notable exceptions, church life in the deanery is at a low ebb. All the evidence points to dissatisfaction with the current deanery structure. Ivybridge Deanery means little to most people at parish or mission community level and it has not been an effective means of organising church life so as to enable and support the flourishing of the mission and ministry of the church.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that Ivybridge Deanery be dissolved.

Mission Communities

Although there are three mission communities in name within the deanery, it appears that only the Yealm and Erme Mission Community was functioning as envisaged. Even here, it was said that it had taken ten years to achieve a working model and a Mission Action Plan. There is much support for retaining this mission community.

In other areas, there was “no appetite to work together,” with individual parishes fearing closure if they worked too closely together. The geography and road system were also cited as reasons for not working together as well as particular historic differences. There were no effectively functioning Mission Action Plans in place for South Dartmoor or Yealmside Mission Communities.

Whilst there were some examples of the laity wanting to develop relationships—for example, an offer to set up a Messy Church in Wembury by the churchwarden from Brixton, not yet taken up—the apparent unwillingness of the clergy to communicate or co-operate with one another has prevented or hampered the development of functioning mission communities across the deanery.

All the churches draw worshippers from outside their own parishes and in most cases, have declining congregations.

Parishes

Attached at Appendix C is information about population, participant numbers in 2017 and the Common Fund requests for 2018.

Wembury

The Revd Martin Kirkbride has been Priest-in-Charge for three years and there is one churchwarden. There are problems with the building which have led to reserves being used to pay into the Common Fund, to which the parish’s contribution stood at 100% at the end of December. Participants in proportion to the population are 3.9%.

There is a community school which has some contact with the church. Clear community links for shopping and public services are with Plymstock. At the same time, most Wembury parishioners identify strongly as members of a rural rather than suburban community.

The parish church, located in an exceptionally scenic seaside location, is the venue for a distinctive wedding ministry among couples from a wide area who seek to marry there, although this ministry has declined in the last few years from a peak of 80 weddings to around 35-40 per annum. It is clear that this ministry is taken very seriously by the church community, who offer a great deal of support to couples wishing to be married in St Werburgh’s and are ready to offer their experience in this area to the wider diocese. Some feel this special ministry has made it difficult to maintain normal parochial life because so much resource is needed to service weddings and provide appropriate marriage preparation. The PCC is strongly of the view that the demands of the present wedding ministry, with the considerable addition fee income generated for the Diocesan Board of Finance as a result of it, justify a stipendiary staffing level greater than the current 0.66 full time equivalent. It has been possible to sustain the current workload only with support from neighbouring clergy, including the Team Rector of Plymstock (also Assistant Rural Dean of Plymouth City).

We believe that greater support is needed for the significant contribution toward the mission of the Church of England in Devon represented by Wembury's wedding ministry. At the same time, we recognise that in the current climate, with reducing stipendiary clergy numbers and Common Fund income across the diocese, it is not realistic to consider increasing the current allocation of clergy for this parish alone.

Our recommendation seeks to ensure that while remaining distinctively a rural village church in character, St Werburgh's will be enabled to give and receive the mutual support in mission and ministry which would be possible in a mission community with critical mass, and where the demands of priestly ministry are shared by a team of ministers rather than borne by one individual.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Wembury parish join the Plymstock & Hooe Team Ministry benefice, remaining a distinct parish within the benefice, with at least the present 0.66 stipendiary allocation for Wembury being added to the Team Ministry and if possible, an increased allocation depending on the number of stipendiary posts available for the enlarged area. The Team Rector, as well as exercising general oversight of the benefice, would be minister with overall responsibility for Wembury parish, chairing the PCC and in practice sharing most day-to-day ministry in Wembury with a Team Vicar resident in Wembury Vicarage, who would collaborate with the Team Rector and colleague Team Vicar in ministry across the whole of the enlarged team including Wembury.

Brixton

The Revd Owen Murphy has been Priest-in-Charge of Brixton and Yealmpton for four years. There is one churchwarden and a high turnover of officers on the PCC, with four changes of Secretary in as many years for a variety of reasons. Locum clergy are used regularly because of the timing of services relative to Yealmpton. The percentage of participants in the population is 2.2%.

The building is in good repair with a recently installed kitchen and toilet. There is no longer a parish choir or full-time organist, but a new benefice choir (the Silverstream Singers) has been formed. As of late January, the PCC had paid £5,000 toward its Common Fund assessment of £11,835.

There is a Church of England school in the parish with 110 pupils, which received an Outstanding Ofsted report at its last inspection in 2014. There are good links between the school and the church. New houses are being built and younger people are moving in. In general, the population works and shops in Plymouth.

There is a successful Messy Church with 35-45 people attending. Harvest Festivals and church fetes are well supported. Nevertheless, the number of participants in the regular worshipping life of St Mary's has fallen steeply from 49 in 2011 to 30 in 2017 and this is clearly a concern for the church.

The new development at Sherford is being built partly within the parish boundary of Brixton and will fall clearly within the urban area of Plymouth. This will fundamentally alter the character of the eastern part of Brixton parish over the next few years. We believe the mission of the Church of England in Sherford will be best served if the new community is enabled to build its own identity as a parish, with a church serving the new development as a whole, rather than perpetuating historic parish boundaries which will soon be obsolete.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the area of Brixton parish falling within the new development of Sherford be transferred to a new parish of Sherford. The remaining part of Brixton parish including the village centre and the parish church should continue to be linked with Yealmpton, but in a new benefice and mission community.

Yealmpton

The Priest-in-Charge, the Revd Owen Murphy, resides at Yealmpton Vicarage. He is supported by one recently appointed churchwarden at St. Bartholomew's. The percentage of participants from the population is 2.5%.

The building needs some repair, but a recent legacy will assist with the finances. As of January 2018, the PCC had paid its Common Fund contribution in full. The number of participants in the regular worshipping life of St Bartholomew's fell from a recent high of 60 in 2013 to 30 in 2016, though the number rose again to 46 in the following year.

There is a primary school in Yealmpton with limited links with St. Bartholomew's and a well-attended Messy Church. Evidence of decline in numbers, demoralisation and internal conflict was presented by some longstanding lay members of the church community, a perspective not shared by the ministry team and some other laity. The divergence of perspective seemed itself a significant aspect of the overall picture.

Until relatively recent times the southern part of the parish of Yealmpton fell within the parish of Newton Ferrers.

The evidence shows that the existing Yealmside Mission Community with Brixton and Wembury is not working and that setting aside the proposed reduction in the size of Brixton parish, change is needed to ensure the flourishing of the mission and ministry of the church. At the same time, the combined Common Fund contribution for the two parishes of the present Yealmpton and Brixton benefice, a total of £29,678, is a little over half the cost of providing a fully stipendiary priest on the most generous diocesan measure. Realistically, over the short to medium term the present stipendiary clergy allocation for the combined area of the present Yealmside and Yealm & Erme Mission Communities is unlikely to be sustainable, both financially and in terms of the number of clergy available to the diocese. In any case we consider an effective, functioning mission community to be essential for the future life, health and growth of the parishes concerned, and this is the principal rationale for our Recommendation 4.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that Yealmpton parish and the reduced Brixton parish together with Newton Ferrers and Revelstoke form a new benefice and mission community, with a fully stipendiary incumbent resident in Newton Ferrers and an associate priest based in Yealmpton, serving on at least a house-for-duty basis. Options for the future organisation of Holbeton and Ermington parishes should include this mission community; see Recommendation 5 below.

Newton Ferrers

The Revd Anne Legge has served in Newton Ferrers, Revelstoke and Holbeton for a total of seven years, from 2010-13 as curate in training and then curate in charge, and since 2013 as Priest-in-Charge. She was recently appointed Rural Dean and is supported by two churchwardens at Holy Cross.

At Newton Ferrers there are 82 participants in the regular worshipping life of the church, 6.4% of the parish population. The Common Fund contribution is being met in full. Some reordering has taken place.

There are three pastoral teams and five lay worship leaders working across the three parishes, along with a context-based ordinand at St Mellitus College South West (an experienced youth worker) who has been placed there for his training.

A variety of worship types take place and church attendance is increasing. There is a church primary school, judged Outstanding at both its most recent OFSTED (2011) and SIAMS (Anglican & Methodist Schools) inspections.

From the evidence we have gathered, the Yealm and Erme Mission Community of Newton Ferrers, Revelstoke and Holbeton is the only mission community in Ivybridge Deanery to be functioning effectively at the present time. This is the fruit of planning and development over several years, and we recognise and commend the significant energy and spiritual liveliness we found there across a range of age groups, worship styles and people types. Newton Ferrers and Revelstoke cohere well as a unit; Holbeton is a somewhat more detached outlier though its relations with the other parishes are friendly. The work of mission and ministry is well led and widely shared. We believe there is good practice in this mission community that is ready to be shared with the neighbouring parishes of Yealmpton and Brixton, which will benefit in the short term from its reservoir of vibrancy and expertise and in the longer term from being part of a larger mission community with critical mass, a coherent shape, and better opportunities for collaboration among ordained ministers and gifted lay people. We consider this line of development to offer the best chance of enabling the work of the church to flourish across the four parishes and more likely to sustain a level of ordained ministry that will support this, even with a stipendiary allocation of fewer than two full-time equivalents as at present, which will not realistically be sustainable in future. For our conclusions, see Recommendation 4 above.

Revelstoke/Noss Mayo

There are two churchwardens and a supportive community who contribute to repairs and the upkeep of the church. Participants in the population are 5.9%. Common Fund is being paid in full. For our conclusions, see Recommendation 4 above.

Holbeton (and Ermington)

Holbeton retains the feel of an estate parish, its character shaped to a large extent by the Flete Estate, which in turn is highly supportive of the parish church as of the community at large.

The historical and geographical traction for Holbeton is mainly eastward, toward Ermington and Modbury. People tend to shop at Lee Mill or in Modbury. There is a community primary school from which most children go on to Ivybridge or Kingsbridge.

There are two churchwardens. The roof at All Saints needs replacing, repairs are needed to the bells and the building needs redecorating. There is a wish to improve facilities and a struggle to keep the churchyard in order. Participants as a percentage of the population are 3.3%.

The parish remains legally a separate benefice distinct from Newton Ferrers and Revelstoke, with which it shares a Priest-in-Charge (see below). There is a church maintenance trust. The Common Fund contribution is being met in full.

In the 1980s, proposals to unite the benefice of Holbeton with the then single-parish benefice of Ermington were considered but did not proceed, partly as a result of outstanding questions about the provision of a parsonage house for a new benefice and the disposal of the benefice house at Holbeton. In the 1990s, a draft scheme to unite the benefice of Holbeton with Newton Ferrers reached an advanced stage but was abandoned. Issues around the status of Church Hill House, and in particular whether the donors of the land on which it is built have retained a legal interest in its value to be applied toward the maintenance of the parish church, remain open.

For a number of practical reasons, the future disposition of what is still legally the benefice house continues to exercise a gravitational pull on questions which should be decided on the basis of what will best serve the future mission of the church locally. We consider that these questions need to be resolved sooner rather than later.

Our consultations raised issues around the future pastoral organisation of Ermington & Ugborough, situated across the archdeaconry boundary in Totnes Deanery and so strictly speaking outside the scope of this review. Because those parishes moved from Ivybridge to Totnes Deanery in recent memory, we were asked to include them in the consultative process and we consider that the Ivybridge review offers a timely opportunity to address identified opportunities and needs there. The two parishes are joined in a united benefice and share a priest-in-charge with the adjacent Three Rivers benefice in Totnes Deanery, based in Diptford.

We recognise the wisdom in the 1980s proposal to link the parishes of Holbeton and Ermington; the geographical factors behind that proposal continue to be relevant today. Further reflection and consultation are needed as to whether on balance the church's mission and ministry both in Holbeton and the adjacent parishes will be best served by its future grouping eastward or westward. Coincidentally or not, the parish of Ermington is in a similar position of uncertainty around where its future mission community link should lie, whether east or west and with or without Holbeton.

Given that the questions around the two parishes remain so fluid, partly because of their location on ecclesiastical boundaries, their equidistance from neighbours, and the practical and organisational issues mentioned above, our Recommendation 5 suggests three options for the future organisation of Holbeton and Ermington. So far as the second and third of these are concerned, we note that the Modbury benefice in Woodleigh Deanery has been vacant until very recently, its new incumbent having started work in January 2018, and that neither he nor the church communities of the Modbury benefice have been part of the consultative process around the Ivybridge Review. Therefore any consideration of a Modbury option for Holbeton and/or Ermington would need to begin with careful consultation of the incumbent and lay officers of the Modbury Mission Community; any resulting development probably would involve a longer transitional period than the westward option, given that the early days of a new incumbency are not an opportune time to consider significant change to the shape of a benefice. That said, we consider it right to include these options in view of the obvious geographical and community links, and also because a modest enlargement of the Modbury benefice may be regarded as strengthening that mission community for the future by making a fully stipendiary clergy post more sustainable in the longer term beyond the present incumbency. The same consideration would apply to the mission community around Newton Ferrers and Yealmpton were the link for either or both parishes to be westward.

Recommendation 5

We recommend a process of consultation on both sides of the present deanery boundary to discern which of the following three options would best enable the church's mission and ministry in the parishes concerned. Option A: Holbeton and Ermington as distinct parishes form part of a mission community with Newton Ferrers, Revelstoke, Yealmpton and Brixton (see Recommendation 4). Option B: Holbeton and Ermington join the Modbury Mission Community in Woodleigh deanery. Option C: Holbeton forms part of a mission community with Newton Ferrers and Yealmpton et al., and Ermington joins the Modbury Mission Community.

As a consequential amendment to current organisation in Totnes deanery, we recommend that the benefice of Ermington and Ugborough be dissolved, Ermington pursuing one of the options indicated above, and Ugborough formally joining the Three Rivers Mission Community benefice in Totnes Deanery of which it is already effectively a part.

Sparkwell

Until July 2017 the incumbent of Sparkwell and Priest-in-Charge of Cornwood (still legally separate single-parish benefices) was the Revd Freddie Denman, who resigned following a period of suspension. The post is presently vacant. There are two churchwardens at All Saints; the percentage of participants in the population is 3.9%.

The parish of Sparkwell enjoys the benefit of two very substantial Trusts. The committee of managing trustees for the larger fund comprises the incumbent, churchwardens and a PCC member and its object is 'such charitable church purpose or purposes in the parish as the Committee shall think fit.' The smaller Trust, of which the incumbent and churchwardens together with the Archdeacon of Plymouth are managing trustees, generates funds which augment the income of the incumbent of Sparkwell (so long as it remains a separate benefice) and may be (and have been) applied toward maintenance of the church, the church school, and the parsonage house in Sparkwell.

Common Fund contributions are being met in full. There is a new parish hall, funded by the larger Trust, which it is hoped will draw people in.

Sparkwell was originally part of Plympton and the community look towards Plympton for schools, doctors and shopping. Some children also attend schools in Ivybridge. This parish is another which sits on the cusp of seeing itself as rural whilst being heavily influenced by its proximity to Plymouth.

The church school has been replaced in the last ten years by a (non-church) Free School with sixty pupils. The 19th-century Vicarage is overly large; the Diocesan Parsonages Board has been considering its replacement for some time.

Sparkwell is part of the South Dartmoor Mission Community, which on the evidence we have seen is not yet functioning effectively as a unit of mission and ministry, although a start has been made.

The currently linked benefices of Sparkwell and Cornwood are too small to justify replacement of the full-time stipendiary priest until recently serving both. There is scope for the Sparkwell Trusts to offer Sponsorship Funding to support a part-time priest serving Sparkwell; we understand that discussions are currently underway about the provision of such funding and appointment of an assistant curate pro tem. Common Tenure legislation provides that such a post must not be the incumbency of a benefice; an arrangement of this nature on a permanent basis would require Sparkwell to become part of a larger benefice with an incumbent exercising oversight and an associate minister resident in Sparkwell assisting in day to day ministry.

We have already signposted the need for the trustees of the two substantial charitable parish Trusts to work with the Diocesan Accounts Team to ensure that all their legal and financial responsibilities and duties are placed on a firm footing.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that Sparkwell join Cornwood, Ivybridge and Harford in a new benefice and a relaunched mission community.

We further recommend that with the agreement of the managing trustees a Post Subject to Sponsorship Funding, supported by the Sparkwell Trusts, be established to enable appointment of a house-for-duty associate minister resident in Sparkwell, to work with the incumbent of the new benefice particularly in the pastoral care of Sparkwell and Cornwood. We recommend that the present Sparkwell Vicarage be replaced with a more suitable house in the parish as soon as practicable.

We also recommend that the Trustees of the Parish Trusts continue to work closely with the Diocesan Accounts Team.

Cornwood

There are two churchwardens and the percentage of participants per population is 3.8%. All services are Eucharistic and there are no lay-led services. Common Fund contributions are being paid in full and links with the community are good, with a strong record of community fund-raising.

More recently there has been to some extent a developing relationship with Sparkwell. There is a church school in Cornwood.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that Cornwood join Ivybridge, Sparkwell and Harford in a new benefice and mission community.

Harford

St. Petroc's at Harford is a small rural church with 13 participants, the highest percentage in the population (6.5%) in the deanery. There are two churchwardens and the church is in good repair thanks to a supportive population and successful fundraising events. Common Fund contributions are paid in full. A well-attended 'Philosophybites' group has operated for several years, and St Petroc's has just started an already popular monthly parish breakfast in a newly developed pew-free space in the church.

This parish values its relationship with Ivybridge parish even though it is, by contrast to Ivybridge, very rural. The evidence suggests that it should continue to be served from Ivybridge and form part of a new mission community with Cornwood, Sparkwell and Ivybridge.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that Harford join Ivybridge, Sparkwell and Cornwood in a new benefice and mission community.

Ivybridge

The Revd Christopher Osborne has been in post since 2001 and is supported by a Reader, Patricia Stringer, and two churchwardens.

The church has links with the Scouts and Cubs, and there are lay-led study groups including Wednesday Night Church, which is well supported by churchgoers and usually attracts two or three participants from the wider parish. The Christmas Tree Festival in December 2017 was well supported. Access for those with disabilities is a priority and the church has been commended for its dementia-friendliness.

Of all the parishes in the deanery, at 0.3% Ivybridge has the lowest percentage of participants compared to the population. The Common Fund contribution for 2017 of £15,872 has been paid in full. The church has been without a choir for some time and an electronic music system has been in use; an organist has recently been recruited.

Ivybridge is a fast growing town, being conveniently located for Plymouth and Exeter. There are four primary schools and a highly popular community college in the town. (None is a church school, though one of the primary schools has historic church links and the incumbent leads collective worship there fortnightly.) There are two nursing homes and three residential units for elderly people.

St John's is located away from the centre of the town with no convenient parking. In recent times there has been a wide-ranging parish consultation about the building, which is too large for the present number of regular worshippers and increasingly deteriorating, but no agreement about its future was reached. Most services during previous winters have been held in the church hall to save the cost of heating the church. We appreciate the challenges to church life and mission that this presents. The hall, maintained by volunteers, is heavily used; activities there include Artistic Story Time, a popular weekly creative group for toddlers and parents/carers led by the Reader and a volunteer.

A thriving evangelical Methodist church is prominently located in the centre of Ivybridge and has attracted some former members of St. John's. There are Roman Catholic and conservative Baptist churches and the Salvation Army has a presence.

We warmly acknowledge the efforts being made at St John's to serve and involve people of all ages within the community, including Artistic Story Time; the priority given to access for people with disabilities and to dementia-friendliness; and its strong emphasis on silence and prayer. The deliberately liberal and inclusive preaching and undergirding theology are an important aspect of the church's present identity. We commend the faithfulness and commitment of the church community in maintaining a life of worship and service at St John's.

At the same time, we recognise the very considerable opportunities for church growth and outreach in a town with a large and fast-growing population spanning a wide age range including numerous younger families, which are not currently being met through the Church of England's presence there.

The evidence we have gathered through face to face conversation, correspondence, and personal observation paints a complex picture of a parish at a low ebb with steeply declining numbers over several years (out of a parish population of 12,000, reducing from 56 participants in 2011 to 36 in 2017); a deteriorating church building located away from the centre of the town; financial pressures; and a perceptible sense of despondency with regard to the future prospects of St John's as the parish church of Ivybridge.

Given the size and growing population of the town, the evidence suggests that there is considerably greater scope for a strong and growing Church of England presence in this parish than is presently being realised.

Where a church community is reducing in numerical strength rather than maintaining itself or growing, there are almost inevitable financial consequences in contribution to the Common Fund and therefore to the payment of clergy stipends. At present, the total contribution of Ivybridge and Harford (met in full) is £24,978 which represents less than half the cost of providing a stipendiary priest at incumbent level on the most generous diocesan measure, in a benefice with a total population of over 12,000 living on average in the relatively more privileged socioeconomic bands.

The effect of continued decline in total participants over time and the consequently reducing total Common Fund assessment for the two parishes is that the present organisation of Ivybridge and Harford as a benefice is no longer financially sustainable. Pastoral reorganisation will enable greater sustainability and provide the opportunity for the parish priest to work collaboratively with a part-stipendiary ordained colleague in the benefice, as well as supporting the development of a more coherent, mutually supportive and potentially effective South Dartmoor mission community.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that Ivybridge join Harford, Sparkwell and Cornwood in a new benefice and mission community, staffed by a full-time stipendiary incumbent based in Ivybridge and a house-for-duty associate priest locally sponsored and resident in Sparkwell.

Clergy provision and the possibilities of pastoral reorganisation

Clergy provision has to be seen in the light of diocesan policies regarding the reduction of stipendiary clergy across the whole of the diocese. The review team has looked strategically at the provision of clergy, not by reference to the current office holders, but by considering the need for pastoral reorganisation to ensure that structures enable the flourishing of the mission and ministry of the church in this part of Devon. Future deployment of clergy must ensure that they work collaboratively in teams. By doing so, they will receive mutual support and gifts and strength of each will add value to the team as a whole. Future deployment of clergy is a function of future pastoral organisation.

The impact our recommendations will have on neighbouring parishes, deaneries, and archdeaonries

If an effective restructuring is to be put in place, decisions affecting the wider context need to be considered. The solutions we propose impact neighbouring parishes, deaneries and archdeaonries.

What we propose will need to be seen in the light of wider changes that will be required in Plymouth and Totnes Archdeaonries.

Deanery impact

In gathering evidence from ministers from parishes outside Ivybridge Deanery we have noted a view that the existing Plymouth City Deanery is not working as originally imagined. Views were expressed that it was too large and has not brought about a recognisable Plymouth identity. We formed the view that creating a new deanery is preferable to placing the parishes formerly in the Ivybridge Deanery within Totnes Archdeaonry, where they would render adjacent deaneries too large.

As part of our methodology we have sought to establish how community is made in the parishes. Aligning a reordered deanery structure with parliamentary constituency boundaries has some merit in building on an already established common identity. The constituency of South West Devon takes in Plympton, Plymstock and Ivybridge; a new deanery with a similar shape would likewise straddle both the City of Plymouth and the South Hams, allowing the diversity of rural and suburban contexts within a geographical area marked by increasing economic and political interdependence to function as a strength for the church's mission and ministry.

We recognise that such a suggestion would be the correct way forward only insofar as it would better enable mission and ministry in the urban core of Plymouth as well as in the city's eastern suburbs and in the area of the present Ivybridge Deanery. Needless to say, such a judgement could not be made without a careful review of present arrangements in Plymouth City Deanery.

Nevertheless, our consultations have led us to think that a more compact and coherent Plymouth Deanery including the city centre, Devonport and the northern residential estates, might well be able to support the church's work in urban Plymouth more effectively than the present arrangements seem so far to have done in practice, and that this option is therefore worth exploring in its own right from a Plymouth point of view.

In any case, there are few if any realistic alternatives to the proposed course of action if our Recommendation 1 (dissolution of Ivybridge Deanery) is to be adopted, though we would welcome a wider range of options from which to choose.

Recommendation 10

We recommend a process of consultation on both sides of the present deanery boundary around the option of removing the parishes on the eastern side of Plymouth City Deanery, together with the parishes of the present Ivybridge Deanery (possibly excepting Holbeton) into a new deanery.

We recommend that consideration be given to a name for such a deanery which would express the common identity already shared by these communities through, for example, their location within the Parliamentary constituency of South West Devon.

Diocesan and Archdeaconry impact

In the course of the review we have become aware that there are potential wider questions about how, and how well, our central diocesan structures and personnel support the work of local PCCs, churchwardens and clergy. Although these wider issues go beyond our brief, we make the following recommendation:

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Bishop and his senior staff reflect further on how the parishes and mission communities in this part of the diocese might best be supported pastorally, organisationally and missionally in future.

Next Steps

Should our recommendations be accepted, the next step will be for the Bishop of Exeter together with the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee, which in practice delegates its functions in this area of work to the Plymouth Archidiaconal Mission & Pastoral Committee (AMPC), to formulate draft proposals for pastoral reorganisation.

Key to each stage of the process is consultation, both informal and formal. This is a guaranteed part of the statutory process and is by definition open-ended. The Bishop and AMPC need to start the process by making proposals on which to consult, but those proposals need to be open to reshaping or replacement by others on the basis of ongoing consultation.

At the same time, it is worth placing on record the statutory duties upon the Bishop, the Mission & Pastoral Committee, and all involved in any process under the Mission & Pastoral Measure:

from the Mission & Pastoral Measure 2011

It shall be the duty of any person or body carrying out functions under this Measure to have due regard to the furtherance of the mission of the Church of England...

In carrying out any of its functions the mission and pastoral committee shall... have regard to:

worship, mission and community as central to the life and work of the Church of England...

the financial implications for the diocese and the Church of England as a whole...

the need to allocate appropriate spheres of work and to ensure that appropriate conditions of service are enjoyed by those employed or holding office in the diocese and, where relevant, that reasonable remuneration is provided for all those engaged in the cure of souls...

the traditions, needs and characteristics of particular parishes; and

any other aspects of the policies of the diocesan synod to which the synod has requested the committee to have regard in discharging its responsibilities.

In other words, the outcome of pastoral reorganisation represents a balance between the considerations listed above, which include financial considerations and as the overriding aim, 'the furtherance of the mission of the Church of England.'

The recommendations in this report as they relate to pastoral organisation are made principally on the basis that (i) the present organisation of the parishes of Ivybridge Deanery is failing to support the churches in 'the furtherance of the mission of the Church of England'; (ii) the 'financial implications for the diocese' should the present arrangements continue into the future would be unacceptable and unsustainable; (iii) 'worship, mission and community' will be strengthened by more coherent but still moderately sized mission communities with greater critical mass and clearer lines of accountability within benefices; and that (iv) 'appropriate spheres of work and... appropriate conditions of service' will be provided most satisfactorily where clergy are working collaboratively in a benefice with at least one other licensed minister (fully or partly stipendiary) rather than mostly on their own, where posts at incumbent level are structured so as to engage the professional and vocational gifts of clergy to the fullest possible extent, and where there are opportunities for clergy called both to ministries of oversight and to assisting roles to serve and thrive in their respective vocations.

It is important to be clear about the position of office-holders including clergy and lay workers who are fully and/or partly stipendiary, whose livelihoods and family homes depend upon the work they do. Such clergy are among those most closely consulted on any pastoral reorganisation which may be proposed, though they do not have a veto on it. Specifically, draft proposals for pastoral reorganisation of benefices in which one or more office-holders are already in post may provide for the future in one of two ways.

(i) Draft proposals may provide for an existing office-holder to be named in an eventual scheme of pastoral reorganisation as the first holder of a particular office. For example, an existing incumbent or priest-in-charge might be named as the first incumbent of a new benefice which includes his or her existing parish or parishes, or some of them. He or she then would automatically become the incumbent of the new benefice once the scheme came into effect.

Or, (ii) draft proposals might refrain from naming anyone as first holder of a particular office in an eventual new benefice. In that case, it would be open to an existing office-holder in a previous benefice which had been dissolved by the scheme to be considered for appointment to a newly created post in the new benefice, for example by applying for the post if advertised. Equally, he or she might choose not to apply or be considered for the new post. In any case, any fully or partly stipendiary office-holder who is dispossessed of his or her post by a scheme of pastoral reorganisation is entitled to statutory compensation payable by the Diocesan Board of Finance according to a formula set out in the legislation in force at the relevant time.

Where benefices are united, a pastoral scheme will provide for the patronage of the resulting new benefice to be shared by the patrons of the former benefices. We recognise the strength of the contribution made by patrons in presenting clergy to benefices and to encouraging them in a variety of ways in their subsequent work.

Under the national Common Tenure legislation, a 'Locally Supported Post' is held by a licensed minister whose post is wholly or partly funded by the Parochial Church Council out of its own resources. Before an appointment is made, the PCC enters into a binding agreement with the Diocesan Board of Finance to meet the whole cost of the post as well as paying its Common Fund contributions in full. A 'Post Subject to Sponsorship Funding' is exactly that; in this case the funding comes from an external body such as a charitable trust, an institution or a private benefactor. Clergy in such posts can be appointed for a time-limited period, typically three years with an option of renewal; they cannot be the incumbent of the benefice and are typically licensed as associate ministers. These new provisions are being used increasingly, as they offer greater local flexibility in enabling parishes to recruit clergy where it would otherwise be unaffordable for the diocese as a whole to provide additional stipendiary or house-for-duty priests out of the Common Fund.

Timing

The Plymouth Archidiaconal Mission & Pastoral Committee at its next meeting in late March will wish to take note of this report and its recommendations, after which the church communities and other interested parties in Ivybridge Deanery will need time to digest and discuss informally the contents of the report before further steps are taken. It is important that people in and around the deanery should have sufficient opportunity to engage with the report, ask questions and clarify points before any definite courses of action are contemplated or formal consultations undertaken. The autumn meeting of the Archidiaconal Mission & Pastoral Committee is the earliest stage at which that committee is likely to be in a position to discuss formal proposals.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Plymouth Archidiaconal Mission & Pastoral Committee receive this report at its March meeting and that a period of informal reflection, discussion and prayer should precede any formal preliminary work on pastoral reorganisation which may arise from its recommendations.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

We recommend that Ivybridge Deanery be dissolved.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Wembury parish join the Plymstock & Hooe Team Ministry benefice, remaining a distinct parish within the benefice, with at least the present 0.66 stipendiary allocation for Wembury being added to the Team Ministry and if possible an increased allocation depending on the number of stipendiary posts available for the enlarged area. The Team Rector, as well as exercising general oversight of the benefice, would be minister with overall responsibility for Wembury parish, chairing the PCC and in practice sharing most day-to-day ministry in Wembury with a Team Vicar resident in Wembury Vicarage, who would collaborate with the Team Rector and colleague Team Vicar in ministry across the whole of the enlarged team including Wembury.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the area of Brixton parish falling within the new development of Sherford be transferred to a new parish of Sherford. The remaining part of Brixton parish including the village centre and the parish church should continue to be linked with Yealmpton, but in a new benefice and mission community.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that Yealmpton parish and the reduced Brixton parish together with Newton Ferrers and Revelstoke form a new benefice and mission community, with a fully stipendiary incumbent resident in Newton Ferrers and an associate priest based in Yealmpton, serving on at least a house-for-duty basis. Options for the future organisation of Holbeton and Ermington parishes should include this mission community; see Recommendation 5 below.

Recommendation 5

We recommend a process of consultation on both sides of the present deanery boundary to discern which of the following three options would best enable the church's mission and ministry in the parishes concerned. **Option A:** Holbeton and Ermington as distinct parishes form part of a mission community with Newton Ferrers, Revelstoke, Yealmpton and Brixton (see Recommendation 4). **Option B:** Holbeton and Ermington join the Modbury Mission Community in Woodleigh deanery. **Option C:** Holbeton forms part of a mission community with Newton Ferrers and Yealmpton et al., and Ermington joins the Modbury Mission Community.

As a consequential amendment to current organisation in Totnes deanery, we recommend that the benefice of Ermington and Ugborough be dissolved, Ermington pursuing one of the options indicated above, and Ugborough formally joining the Three Rivers Mission Community benefice in Totnes Deanery of which it is already effectively a part.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that Sparkwell join Cornwood, Ivybridge and Harford in a new benefice and mission community.

We further recommend that with the agreement of the managing trustees, a Post Subject to Sponsorship Funding and funded by the Sparkwell Trusts be established to enable appointment of a house for duty associate minister resident in Sparkwell, to work with the incumbent of the new benefice with particular reference to the pastoral care of Sparkwell and Cornwood. We recommend that the present Sparkwell Vicarage be replaced with a more suitable house in the parish as soon as practicable.

We also recommend that the Trustees of the Parish Trusts continue to work closely with the Diocesan Accounts Team.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that Cornwood join Ivybridge, Sparkwell and Harford in a new benefice and Mission Community.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that Harford join Ivybridge, Sparkwell and Cornwood in a new benefice and mission community.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that Ivybridge join Harford, Sparkwell and Cornwood in a new benefice and mission community, staffed by a full-time stipendiary incumbent based in Ivybridge and a house-for-duty associate priest locally sponsored and resident in Sparkwell.

Recommendation 10

We recommend a process of consultation on both sides of the present deanery boundary around the option of removing the parishes on the eastern side of Plymouth City Deanery, together with the parishes of the present Ivybridge Deanery (possibly excepting Holbeton) into a new deanery.

We recommend that consideration be given to a name for such a deanery which would express the common identity already shared by these communities through, for example, their location within the Parliamentary constituency of South West Devon.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Bishop and his senior staff reflect further on how the parishes and mission communities in this part of the diocese might best be supported pastorally, organisationally and missionally in future.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Plymouth Archidiaconal Mission & Pastoral Committee receive this report at its March meeting and that a period of informal reflection, discussion and prayer should precede any formal preliminary work on pastoral reorganisation which may arise from its recommendations.

Appendix A – Letter from The Bishop of Exeter.

IVYBRIDGE DEANERY REVIEW

17 May 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Mission and Ministry in Ivybridge Deanery

How do you see mission and ministry in your area changing over the next 5-10 years? The primary unit for mission and pastoral care is the parish, but we need one another if we are to be effective. This is what lies behind our vision for establishing viable and creative mission communities. What we do together is more than what we do apart.

The deanery is important because it fosters a broader vision of an area and provides a forum for discerning priorities in the light of the changing context of ministry. This is why I have asked Douglas Dettmer, Archdeacon of Totnes, Prebendary Nick Shutt, Team Rector of West Dartmoor, and retired Chief Constable Gillian Parker, churchwarden of Holne and Huccaby, to lead a process of reflection and review across your deanery. As you will see from the attached paper, the Church is facing considerable challenges in your area and rather than tackle problems piecemeal, we need a coordinated approach.

A number of issues need to be thought through as well as tacking the big question of how the deanery can be better structured to release the mission energies of the people of God. Who are your natural partners in mission and ministry? What should our priorities be in mission? How should we staff our mission communities? How can the real costs of ministry be sustained in an equitable way? What part do our church schools play in the mission and ministry of the area? Are there ecumenical opportunities we should explore?

There are no simple answers to the questions I am raising and Bishop Nick and I do not have a master-plan. We need your wisdom to think strategically about the future. I believe that as Christians we need to be God-centred and world-engaging. With God's help we can go forward together.

With my thanks for our partnership in the Gospel

Sent to each of the clergy and churchwardens, lay chair and secretary to the Deanery Synod,

cc. Clergy and cw of South Brent and Rattery , Ermington and Ugborough and Shaugh Prior. Rural dean and lay chair of Totnes and Plymouth City Deaneries

PROPOSED REVIEW OF IVYBRIDGE DEANERY

Background

In the light of recent statistical data, it has become clear that there are a number of issues in Ivybridge Deanery on which the Bishop of Exeter would value advice:

- The provision of only a 0.66 post at Wembury has attracted representations from a church which pays £58,000 in Common Fund and substantial wedding fees to the Diocese.
- The Priest-in-Charge of Sparkwell and Cornwood is currently suspended. (The intention is for the Diocese in due course to allow a self-supporting minister for two parishes who will be funded locally).
- Anglican church attendance in the parish of Ivybridge (population: 12,000) is, at 31, the lowest by some margin in any comparable Devon town.
- Attendance at Brixton and Yealmpton has halved over the last five years, with no church officers in Yealmpton.
- The Deanery is relatively small, and has recently 'lost' Shaugh Prior, Ugborough and Ermington to other deaneries. South Brent is nearby, and there are timely questions to ask about how the parishes in and around the Deanery may best be organised for mission and ministry in the next five to ten years
- Issues over the parsonage house at Holbeton are delaying pastoral reorganisation in the Yealm and Erme Mission Community.

The Reviewers

The Archdeacon of Totnes, the Revd. Prebendary Nick Shutt and Mrs Gillian Parker have kindly agreed to conduct this review.

The review will look at church life in the Deanery, clergy provision and possibilities of pastoral reorganisation with a view to advising the Bishop on the best ways to enable the flourishing of mission and ministry in the Deanery, working together with the Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee and with local clergy and PCCs.

Appendix B – Interviews and Meetings

Mrs Jayne Richardson – Deanery Lay Chair

Rt Revd Nick McKinnel, Bishop of Plymouth

Revd Anne Legge – Rural Dean

Revd Martin Kirkbride

Ven Ian Chandler, Archdeacon of Plymouth

Mrs Christine Kendrick (Sparkwell)

Mrs Margaret Kingwell (Sparkwell)

Mr Richard Morgan (Newton Ferrers)

Mrs Judith Draper (Newton Ferrers)

Mrs Anne Kay (Brixton)

Revd Chris Osborne

Revd Owen Murphy

Mr Anthony Mildmay-White (Holbeton)

Mr Graham Price (Holbeton)

Ivybridge Deanery Pastoral Committee (Revd Anne Legge, Revd John Perry, Mrs Chris Lock, Mrs Jayne Richardson)

Mrs Carol Steel (Wembury)

Mrs Sheena Barons (Ivybridge)

Mr Graham Smaridge (Ivybridge)

Mrs Alison Stone (Yealmpton)

Mr Keith Baldry (Yealmpton)

Mr Richard Yonge (Yealmpton)

Mr David Stafford (Totnes Deanery)

Mr Graham Searle (Yealmpton)

Mrs Rosemary Howell (Harford)

Mr John Messham (Harford)

Mrs Jane Barnett (Revelstoke)

Mr Christopher Bradley (Revelstoke)

Mrs Helen Hart (Ugborough)

Mr Jeremy Wells (Ugborough)
Mrs Lesley Thurley (Ermington)
Mrs Sarah Foulis (Ermington)
Revd Preb. Robert Harris
Revd Preb. David Gill
Revd Preb. Julian Ould
Mr Gary Streeter MP

Number of Correspondents by email, letter or telephone

Ivybridge & Harford – 12
Yealmpton & Brixton – 16
Newton Ferrers, Revelstoke & Holbeton – 2
Wembury - 3

Appendix C – 2018 Common Fund Assessment & Participants

Common Fund Requests for Ivybridge Deanery 2018

Parish	2018 Common Fund Request
Brixton	£12,115
Cornwood	£18,180
Harford	£4,420
Holbeton	£8,847
Ivybridge	£16,131
Newton Ferrers	£42,236
Revelstoke	£15,059
Sparkwell	£16,750
Wembury	£59,422
Yealmpton	£17,563

Participants, Population & Index of Multiple Deprivation Figures

Parish	Participant Nos.	Population	IMD Band
Brixton	30	1,356	B
Cornwood	39	1,029	B
Harford	13	200	B
Holbeton	20	600	B
Ivybridge	36	12,042	A
Newton Ferrers	82	1,281	A
Revelstoke	31	525	A
Sparkwell	44	1,106	C
Wembury	105	2,690	A
Yealmpton	46	1,846	A

In context, 30% of all parishes in the diocese are Band A; 40% Band B; 20% Band C and 10% Band D or lower.

Participants as a percentage of the Parish Population

Parish	Participants	Population	Percentage of population as participants
Brixton	30	1,356	2.2
Cornwood	39	1,029	3.8
Harford	13	200	6.5
Holbeton	20	600	3.3
Ivybridge	36	12,042	0.3
Newton Ferrers	82	1,281	6.4
Revelstoke	31	525	5.9
Sparkwell	44	1,106	3.9
Wembury	105	2,690	3.9
Yealmpton	46	1,846	2.5

Appendix D – Common Fund Payments 2017

Parish	Payments made as at 23/01/18	Total Common Fund	Amount outstanding	Percentage paid
Cornwood	£17,174.00	£17,174.00	£0	100%
Holbeton	£8,483.00	£8,483.00	£0	100%
Harford	£4,887.00	£4,887.00	£0	100%
Ivybridge	£15,872.00	£15,872.00	£0	100%
Newton Ferrers	£36,223.00	£39,521.00	£0	100%
Revelstoke	£14,838.00	£14,838.00	£0	100%
Sparkwell	£13,762.00	£13,762.00	£0	100%
Wembury	£58,048.00	£58,048.00	£0	100%
Brixton	£5,000	£11,835.00	£6,835.00	42%
Yealmpton	£18,251.00	£18,251.00	£0	100%