

Tough Choices for the Winchester Diocese

On September 23rd this year our Bishops circulated a letter letting us know that the Winchester Diocesan Board of Finance (WDBF) had been forced by a growing deficit in the Diocesan budget, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, to approve a package of measures, designed to secure the future of the Diocese.

The WDBF agreed that £2million of savings were required by the middle of 2021 if future budgets were to be balanced. The savings were to be achieved by a combination of central savings in the Diocesan office and through decreasing the number of stipendiary clergy posts.

On November 26th the outline plan for achieving these savings was presented to the Diocesan Synod. Putting together this plan had involved making a number of difficult decisions, including:

- Asking some clergy nearing retirement to take early retirement.
- Loosing some posts from the Diocesan Office.
- Amalgamating some parishes to form larger benefices.
- Reducing the number of stipendiary clergy. Reductions to be achieved by holding open vacant posts but likely to require some dispossessions.
- Adopting a priority approach to filling posts in parishes that are in interregnum

It is hoped that the majority of these changes will be made by the middle of 2021. Some key dates have already been decided including:

- Discussions with clergy likely to be most seriously impacted by these changes to take place in December this year or in January in 2021 with priority being given to any facing dispossession
- Discussions with benefices in interregnum to take place following the clergy discussions.

Bishop Tim recognises that these changes bring a time of uncertainty and worry for many people but every attempt will be made to deal with the situation sensitively and to ensure that those affected will be given as much support as possible including all available financial support. He also thanked retired clergy for the support they had offered to clergy and parishes over the last months, whether or not they have been able to attend face-to-face worship during this time, and hoped that they would continue to keep safe in this Covid era.

Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing

Many clergy have experienced tough times recently, including retired clergy, so it is good to welcome the General Synod's approval of the "Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing" that sets out the intention "that the work of supporting clergy in their ministry will become an integral part of the life of the Church and part of the DNA of every aspect of our mission and ministry." To read more about this and take part in "The Big Conversation" about the issues and what to do about them go to: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/covenant>

2020 Snapshots from a Strange Year

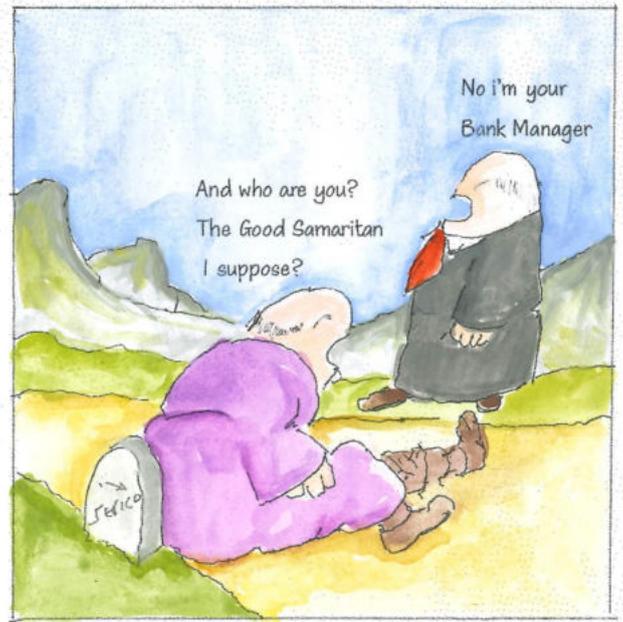


Like many new years, 2020 brought with it the hope of new and better starts, but who could have imagined how it would pan out. Who would have guessed how quickly it would all end in tears, when Covid came along and turned our personal, work and social lives upside down.

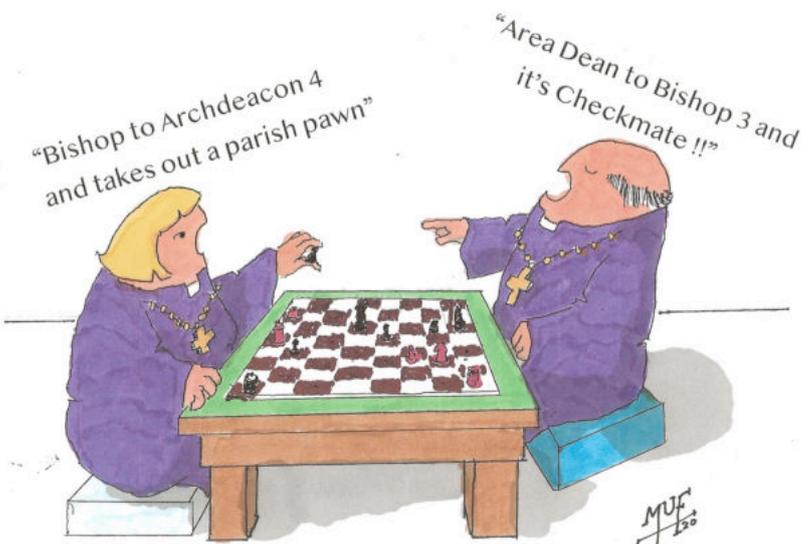
The church, like many organisations, was not immune to such upsets with lockdowns and closed churches quickly leading to ever growing discombobulation and increasing financial deficits.

Our Bishops faced the challenge of leading the Diocese through the rough waters created by Covid not least of which was the need to make £2m of savings by the middle of 2021 if future budgets were to be balanced.

There were no easy answers to problems like this, no good samaritan to come along and rescue us.



A Diocesan recovery plan was needed and the Bishops, the WDBF, the Diocesan Synod and many others set about seeking what could be done. Many suggested approaches to tackling the problem were considered before a final plan emerged.



Senior staff work on The Diocesan Recovery Plan

Turn your sound off!



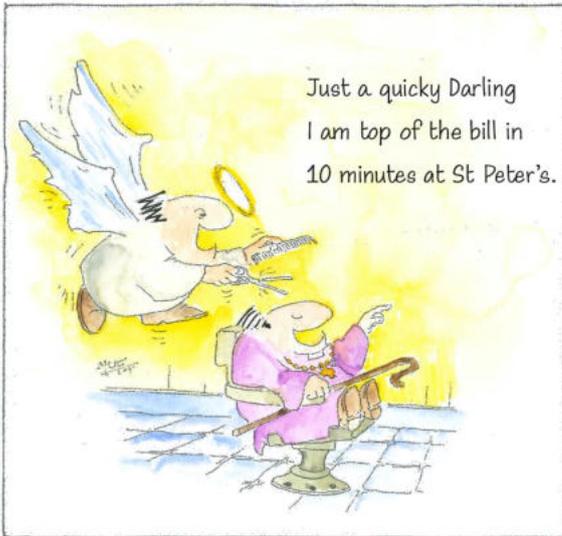
Zoom was at first a novelty that helped lockdown and self distancing people meet others virtually, but of course this is not the same as meeting face to face. Staring at a screen for long periods is very tiring and a new disease called “Zoom Fatigue” was quickly identified.

Then there were lockdowns. Child care and home schooling were new jobs retired clergy, who were also grandparents, found themselves doing alongside the children’s parents, sometimes wondering what they had done to deserve this privilege.



Clergy, along with retired clergy who had PTO, discovered the joys of taking part in live streamed services, where suddenly what you looked like in a TV close up, was something you had to think about in addition to how best to lead such a service.

Just a quicky Darling
I am top of the bill in
10 minutes at St Peter’s.



God’s Double Whammy

Comfort and Joy - a phrase which the Church of England hopes is lodged somewhere deep in our cultural memory! I find it hard to say without the ‘comfort-and-joy’ triplet from the carol beating about my brain.

This Christmas it may take quite a lot to lift us from a sense of loss, threat and gloom. We have to remind ourselves that Christmas was intentionally set amidst the darkest days of winter, and that our carols lay the snow on thick to remind us of the chill of the world, in contrast to the rich glow of Nativity.

To shake up my own imagination from fear and familiarity, I think of the Comfort and Joy as two blows from the dark, delivered by the divine adversary – a modern version of Jacob’s struggle at the ford at Jabbok. The first blow, to the ribs, is Comfort. It bashes into a stomach flabby from sitting around on Zoom. It expels my lethargy and strategies for self-comfort and self-protection. It summons me to brace myself for something strengthening coming, nothing sweetly sentimental.

The second blow, straight to the jaw, is Joy. Suddenly I am tottering, I see my feet were not well planted. I was looking in the wrong direction and my reactions were too slow to anticipate the genuinely new and graceful. The heavens are in a whirl, I see stars and there is ringing in my ears. Comfort and Joy - God coming in Jesus to bring us the body-blows of salvation.

Roly Riem Vice-Dean and Canon Chancellor Winchester Cathedral

BEANOLD? *saved by Desperate Dan?*

I wonder how many of our readers used to read the Beano as a child? At 6d a copy I often used to get my hands on one but recently I decided, over 60 years later, to give it a second go even if it was now £2.75 a copy. "Why?" might you ask was I that rash? Well, . . . I heard on the BBC morning news that the publishers had included a supplement for grownups in their latest edition called "BEANOLD" and as the editor of "Oldhabits" I sensed the hand of a kindred spirit.

A search for more information led me to an article by Mark Brown the arts correspondent for "The Guardian". Mark had interviewed Mike Stirling from Beano who had told him that the Beano people had just wanted to cheer everyone up as they had noticed that their young readers were feeling a bit sorry for the adults in their lives. The supplement pokes gentle fun at some adults in the news during 2020 included references to Boris Johnston, Dominic Cummings, Captain Tom Moore, Marcus Rashford and Greta Thunberg.

At the end of the story, the Beano people tell us, that we will be glad to know that Christmas will be saved this year with the help of "Desperate Dan". On the other hand you might rather think that both we, and any of the Desperate Dan's amongst us, have been saved by Christmas. The first edition was a sell out but if you want to cheer yourself up you can still get a copy directly from the publisher.

Safeguarding . . . Hidden by initials and box ticking?

It is frustrating that so many things in church life are referred to by initials. Two recent examples are LLF and IICSA. I sometimes think remembering what they stand for would be a good basis for a question on the BBC television quiz "Pointless". I understand why it is convenient to use initials but feel it can prevent us remembering that they may be hiding some very important issues the church needs to address.

Can you see the wood for the trees?

So what does IICSA stand for and yes - I did need to look up the answer - "Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse". Some of the findings of this report are truly worrying, not least that children are still open to this sort of abuse. Although much progress has clearly been made in the last two decades with the introduction of new laws and safeguarding procedures, it can be argued that we are still not "seeing the wood for the trees." Safeguarding training focusing on the law, procedures and case studies may have stopped us hearing the voices of the abused and letting those voices critiquing our own attitude to safeguarding so that we stop seeing safeguarding as a "box ticking" exercise but rather as an opportunity to give children the protection that Jesus demands of us.

Moving on from "Box Ticking"

Safeguarding training is evolving. One person reflecting on this new approach commented:

"Over the last 23 years I have been involved many times with child protection and safeguarding training, often dry and procedural. Of course, we need to know the procedure to follow in the case of disclosure or concern. But this training is so refreshing and absolutely spot on. We do need a change in the culture of the church, safeguarding needs to be an open discussion in the church and part of the everyday culture of the local and wider church.

Being able to theologically reflect on my approach to safeguarding, discussing together and not just reading case studies but also hearing victims voices, reflecting together and turning safeguarding into a conversation is exactly what is needed. Safeguarding is not an admin task that needs to be ticked off, it is a living, real part of church life that needs to be embraced for the sake of God's people and those who do not yet know him."

Safeguarding Training in the Diocese

To find out more about safe guarding training in the Diocese go to www.winchester.anglican.org and click on safeguarding. If you are required to renew your safeguarding training you will be contacted. For general inquiries ring Siona on 01962 737347 (Monday to Thursday 8.00am to 3.00pm - answer phone on Fridays)

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*A Peaceful Christmas
and a Hopeful New Year
to all our readers*