

**Minutes of the Joint Deanery Synod Meeting of
Halifax and Calder Valley and Brighouse and Elland Deaneries
Held on Wednesday 13th October at Halifax Minster**

1. Opening Prayer

After a short introduction to the meeting, from Jane Evans, the Lay Chair of the Halifax and Calder Valley Deanery Synod, the opening prayer was led by Revd Canon Kathia Shoesmith, the Area Dean of Brighouse and Elland Deanery and of Halifax and Calder Valley Deanery.

2. Apologies

38 members attended from the Halifax and Calder Valley Deanery, with apologies from the following members: Revd Canon Angela Dick (Sowerby Bridge), Ros Gowers (All Saints), Joan Aspin (Warley), John White (Warley), Joyce Galloway (Minster), Revd Sue Heptinstall (Bradshaw & Holmfield), Revd Jeanette Roberts (Sowerby/Cottonstone/Norland), Mark Johnston (Walsden), Revd Cathy Reardon (Mytholmroyd /Cragg Vale).

3. Living in Love and Faith (LLF) - An Introduction to the LLF teaching and learning material and taster of the LLF course, led by Marilyn Banister

Jane Evans told the meeting of the aim of the LLF course, which is to help us all think more deeply about living in love and faith, in the context of faith and understanding of human identity, changing patterns of relationship in families, changing attitudes to sexuality and what it means to us as Christians. Jane explained that some pilot courses had been run in different parts of our Diocese and as part of the Diocesan response to the request to help pursue discussions of living in love and faith, a team of advocates or "champions" was established, under the leadership of Bishop Helen-Ann, Bishop of Ripon. Jane welcomed one of those Diocesan Champions, Ms Marilyn Banister. Marilyn is also the Lay Chair of South Craven and Wharfedale Deanery and a member of the Bradford Cathedral Council. As LLF champion was here with us to give us an introduction to LLF and to give a flavour of the course which is to be launched on the 23rd of October, in the Halifax and Calder Valley Deanery.

Marilyn arrived at the position of being a champion of the LLF course through being approached to run a pilot course in the South Craven and Wharfedale Deanery. Marilyn led this course, along with Derek Twine, Lay Chair of Bradford Cathedral Council and found it a great experience and encouraged members, at the meeting, to sign up to the course and make the most of the opportunity, with the promise that whatever people thought about these issues, they would learn something. This is a hugely challenging issue for the Church and has been for a number of years and as Marilyn explained, the LLF course is part of the attempt to come to some sort of resolution.

Marilyn split her presentation into four categories. Why? What? How? When? Why was there a need for LLF? What resources are available? How will people engage? When will this happen? With the use of slides and video, she began with "Why" and the LLF course being about the Christian understanding of being human, about learning together and acknowledging complexity, understanding different perspectives better and engaging the whole Church, which leads into discernment in decision making. The intention of the people who set up the course, is for diverse groups to contribute and that we hear from those groups.

Regarding "What", the resources available include the website, <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith/about-living-love-and-faith>, podcasts, essays from LLF team members, the "Story Films" etc. and the Living in Love and Faith book. Marilyn gave a brief synopsis of the book, which ends with an appeal from the Bishops, for the readers to tell their opinions and what they think.

The LLF course and "How" it will be organised was the next part of the talk. It will take place over five sessions.

Session one. Learning together. What does it mean to learn together as followers of Jesus Christ?

Session two. Identity. How does our identity in Christ relate to sex and gender?

Session three. Relationship. What kind of relationship does God call us to?

Session four. Sex. Where do our bodies and sex fit into all of this?

Session five. Life together. How do diversity and difference affect our life together as a church?

As a follow on from the course, a "Next Step Group" has been formed; it is led by the Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullally DBE and its tasks are to encourage participation in learning together, in and across churches everywhere, to listen attentively to one and other and for Bishops, who are themselves committed to learning from the LLF resources, to listen to what is emerging from churches engagement. The Next Step Group is not representative which is why advocates have been appointed, to encourage participation and listening and there is also a reference group, of grass roots people who are active in their local church communities and is designed to be diverse in age, ethnicity and sexuality and act as a sounding board for the Next Steps Group.

Marilyn then told the meeting that we are now entering the period when courses are run, between now and April 2022. Then the Bishops will get together, together with the General Synod in a discernment and decision making process.

6. Discussion in small groups

The meeting was invited, by Marilyn, to split into groups of three, one of the group to act as a speaker, talking about, perhaps something of their life story or maybe something appertaining to the LLF course, anything they felt comfortable in speaking about. One of the group would listen and one would observe, with members taking it in turn to be speaker, listener and observer.

After this exercise, the feedback included the thoughts that it was good to be listened to and that there was a skill and a requirement to focus when listening and reflecting back on what had been said.

As a further taster of the LLF course and an example of what could be found in the resources, Marilyn played a video, which involved a couple telling their story and giving their thoughts and hopes for the future. A further video was played, where the speaker gave her personnel reflections.

Finally, in winding up her presentation, Marilyn asked people, if they do the course, to listen, learn and reflect and to give their feedback, as the only way that Bishops and the General Synod can move forward is by having engagement with and hearing the views of as many people as possible.

Jane Evans thanked Marilyn, very much indeed, for coming such a long way, thanked her for preparing the presentation and persevering with the temperamental technology. Mentioning the small group listening exercise, Jane pointed out that this is part of the first session of the five week course and that it affirms and emphasises it being all about "listening to each other, learning from each other and doing our best to walk in each other's footsteps". The two videos shown in Marilyn's presentation are part of the abundant resources on the LLF website and Jane recommended that members visit this site, look at some of the videos, which she described as very moving, very honest, very frank and very loving. Previous to the meeting, a fear had been voiced to Jane, which was that the course would be confrontational and that therefore, this person was afraid to sign up. Jane stressed that this was not the way it is structured or its intent. The Halifax and Calder Valley course will be facilitated by Revd Jenny Clarke, of Bradshaw and Holmfield and the Revd Daniel Miles, of Mytholmroyd. Two good facilitators who are going to lead us through the process and be there with pastoral support if needed.

5. Deanery Notices

Living in Love and Faith Course:

HX & Calder Valley Deanery: The 5-weeks course will be run in the Deanery on Saturday mornings from 23rd October at Holy Trinity & St Jude's Church, Halifax. Meet at 9am for coffee and bacon sandwiches. The course itself will start at 9.30am and finish promptly at 11am.

Appointments:

Revd Jennifer Middleton has been appointed as Interim Priest in Charge of All Saints Halifax. Licensing on 28th October 2021.

Revd Nigel Stimpson has been appointed as Priest in Charge of St Paul's King Cross and St Anne's Southowram. Licensing on 23rd November 2021.

Vacancies:

Christ Church Mt Pellon & St Augustine's, Halifax

Deanery Facebook Page: Jane has set up a Facebook page for the H&CV Deanery. It's a place for churches to advertise to the rest of us when they have events etc. People who use Facebook should search for Halifax & Calder Valley Deanery and follow us - then post when they have something to advertise. [Halifax & Calder Valley Deanery | Facebook](#)

From 1st November, the Ven Peter Townley, Archdeacon of Pontefract, will be the Acting Archdeacon of Halifax for the duration of the vacancy.

Kathia thanked everyone for taking part in the General Synod elections, whether by attending hustings and/or voting. The votes will be counted tomorrow and the result announced soon after.

It is Baby Loss Awareness Week and there will be a service at Halifax Minster on the 15th of October at 7.30pm this under the banner of the Global Wave of Light, an international event which aims to raise awareness of this subject.

6. Close with Compline

Barbara Smith, Deanery Lay Chair of Brighouse and Elland Deanery closed the meeting with Compline

Date of next Joint Deanery Synods meeting – Wednesday 23rd February 2022 at 7.30pm on Zoom