Report from  May Malvern Deanery Synod

Attended by Peter Buchanan and Angela Davison

The Synod was held at Norton Church, which is not technically in Malvern Deanery but is part of the group of churches looked after by Mark Badger, Vicar of Kempsey (which is in our Deanery) An old building in a pleasant churchyard with a light modern hall attached to the church. Rev Alison Maddocks, Dean of Smaller Churches, gave an interesting presentation. Her role is unique in the UK, aiming to make churches with smaller congregations healthy and sustainable.

        45% of churches in Worcester Diocese are looked after by 15% of Diocese church members. It is not Diocese strategy to close churches, as this does not remove the financial burden. A closed church may have to be fenced off, which would tell a terrible story about the state of the Church. The Church Buildings Management Partnership is taking on routine maintenance of some churches, including bulk-buying insurance.

         There is already a method of establishing Joint PCCs, which can lessen duplication and bring people together, with the potential to develop combined events. The same can be done with administration.

          Churches Held in Local leadership (CHILL)  - clergy have been given more & more churches, without a change in how to offer ministry. A potential way is to identify lay, more local people to be attached to each church. In some cases, church attendance is so small that it perhaps has to operate more like a House Group with appropriate support and supervision. There are moves to partner smaller churches with those with greater attendance and therefore more skills to offer.

A new Bishop's Certificate in Parochial Leadership will soon be offered, recognising the skills needed in looking after our buildings and other church management tasks. Other subjects discussed included the possibility of officially linking parishes. One problem that can prevent this is that each church has the right to put 2 churchwardens on a panel to appoint a new vicar, regardless of the size of the congregations. It was said that one reason that people from country villages attend Malvern Priory is that they are exhausted with the responsibilities they've had to repeatedly take on in their local church. Another subject commented on was the restrictions placed on Communion by Extension.

An interesting meeting. Do look out for announcements of events being put on by the Deanery Synod, as there is a drive to help the churches of Malvern and area work closer together.

Angela Davison