



Deanery Vine

News from the Deanery Synod Meeting
Thursday 19th June 2025
St John's Hall, Bromsgrove

What a truly magnificent evening we shared on Thursday, June 19th, 2025, at St. John's Hall in Bromsgrove! As the sun blazed outside on the hottest day of the year, our spirits soared even higher within, ignited by a profound exploration of worship music. It was a joy to journey through the diverse landscape of musical praise with our incredible guides—Joshua Williams, Paul Sherwin, Steve Cowperthwaite, Paul Taylor, and Roger Powell—who, through their passion and insight, revealed the rich tapestry of sounds

That lift our hearts to God. This wasn't just a meeting; it was a vibrant celebration, a powerful reminder of the endless creativity and devotion that flows within our Deanery, and a truly inspiring Synod meeting, that evening we celebrated the powerful truth that no matter our tradition, **worship is truly powerful!** We gathered not just to discuss, but to ignite a deeper understanding of worship—a sacred journey where every note, every prayer, and every intentional act draws us closer to the divine.

A Symphony of the Senses: Music as a Divine Language

The session began with **Kashmir** articulating the profound role of music in worship. More than just sound, music is a powerful language that speaks directly to the **heart and soul**, engaging every sense and allowing us to express the full spectrum of human emotion—from the overflowing joy of gratitude to the solace found in sorrow. We were reminded that this ancient art form, deeply rooted in tradition and echoed through history by figures like King David's sons, possesses an incredible ability to **unite communities**, weaving us together in a shared experience of faith.

Invoking the Spirit: A Call to Intentional Connection

As the session commenced, **Paul Lawlor** led us in a powerful opening of worship, invoking blessings in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This was more than a prelude; it was an invitation to open our hearts. A heartfelt prayer followed, welcoming the **Holy Spirit** and expressing a deep yearning to reconnect with God. We were stirred to consider the profound importance of being **intentional** in our role as

ambassadors for Christ, recognising that the Holy Spirit is the true catalyst for change in hearts. A palpable sense of urgency permeated the room as we acknowledged a spiritual wave moving across our local areas, signifying that the **harvest is indeed ready**. We were urged to embrace our weaknesses, knowing that in God's strength, we find our greatest power.

Echoes of Eternity: Songs of Praise and Profound Reflection



The air vibrated with the collective voices of worship as we sang timeless anthems like 'Forever,' 'How Great Thou Art,' and 'How Great Is Our God.' These songs served as powerful reminders of God's **everlasting nature**, His unwavering strength, and the boundless comfort He offers to those in need. Beyond the melodies, deep reflections were shared on the transformative power of worship itself. We were challenged to be intentional in our positioning as leaders within the church, embracing a **servant-hearted approach** and recognising the immense impact of our ministry work. The profound truth that we are **valued by God**, and that the Holy Spirit dwells within each believer, resonated deeply, igniting a renewed sense of purpose.

Igniting the Next Generation: Joshua's Inspiring Journey

The session reached a powerful crescendo with **Joshua, the Worship Director at Saint Stephen's**, sharing his personal testimony. His journey, from his upbringing in the Church of England to his vibrant path in worship leadership, was a testament to God's guiding hand. Joshua passionately emphasised the vital importance of **being an example, equipping others, and**

actively encouraging future generations in worship. He spoke of how prophetic words and dedicated mentors illuminated his path, reminding us of the profound impact each of us can have on another's spiritual journey. His insights on the necessity of **meeting people where they are** and cultivating intentionality in worship leadership left us deeply inspired.

Crafting Sacred Spaces: A Dialogue on Worship's Evolving Heart



The discussion then broadened, with participants encouraged to share their experiences and insights on worship styles within their own churches. The consistent themes of **being an example, equipping, and encouraging** remained at the forefront. We acknowledged the beautiful **diversity of worship**

styles across denominations, reiterating the crucial need to meet people where they are on their spiritual journey. The vital importance of **practical implementation** in worship was highlighted, ensuring that cherished traditions continue to thrive while also fostering innovation. A clear call to action emerged: to consider how we can actively **pioneer another generation in worship**, ensuring the flame of faith burns brightly for years to come.

The conversation deepened as we explored the **skill and excellence** required in worship music, recognising the call to do our absolute best with the resources God provides. We were reminded by **Steve Cowperthwaite** of the paramount importance of **authenticity in worship**, cautioning against the danger of merely imagining a different reality. The profound impact of **impactful moments and dedicated mentors** in nurturing worship leaders was emphasised, highlighting the ripple effect of genuine guidance. Theological discussions touched upon the power of repetition in worship songs and the rich significance of traditional music, recognising that both have their place in drawing us closer to God.

Beyond the Melody: The Theology and Purpose of Sacred Sound

The discussion ventured into the rich **theology behind church music**, reminding us that worship is far more than just singing songs; it's about understanding the deeper meaning and spiritual truth embedded within them. **Paul Lawlor** passionately articulated the importance of **joining people together through music**, while also prompting a thoughtful re-examination of the theology inherent in our traditional songs. **Paul Taylor** eloquently championed the profound depth of Charles Wesley's hymns,



challenging modern worship songs to fully acknowledge the **fullness of the Trinity**. The simplicity of worship was celebrated, with a reminder of the power of the human voice over even the grandest instruments.

Cultivating Connection: Creating Engaging Worship Environments

Paul Lawlor urged us to create spaces where people can truly **engage with God**, emphasising that repetitive practices alone may not fill our churches. The conversation gracefully shifted to **ecclesiology**, prompting a vital questioning of what it truly means to be a church and how we can effectively speak into the world. While **Ray Khan** voiced frustration with a perceived overemphasis on style, reiterating that the sole purpose of worship is to **give worth to God**, it was countered that style is indeed significant, as different musical expressions resonate with people in unique and powerful ways.

A Generosity of Spirit: Overcoming the Consumer Mentality

A crucial point was raised when **Gail Rogers** brought attention to the prevalent **consumer attitude in worship**, where personal preferences can sometimes overshadow the collective experience of worship. The challenge of meeting diverse expectations was openly discussed, leading to a powerful call for a **generosity of spirit** within our congregations. **Paul Lawlor** noted the cultural expectation that a single worship service should fulfil all spiritual needs, underscoring the unrealistic nature of such a demand.

Nurturing Talent: Empowering the Next Generation of Musicians

Inspiring efforts to **involve young people in church music** were shared by **Paul Sherwin**, with a focus on actively developing their musical skills and passion. Personal journeys of striving to bring musicians together, not just to worship, but to share struggles and build community were recounted. The importance of **networking among musicians** to foster mutual support and shared growth was powerfully emphasised.

Harmonising Challenges: The Peripatetic Choir Vision

Roger Powell unveiled an exciting vision for a **peripatetic choir**, designed to bridge the gap left by choirs that have become defunct post-COVID. While acknowledging the challenges in securing consistent participation from signed-up members, the choir's aim to perform at various services resonated deeply as many churches do not have active choirs. The ongoing efforts to overcome scheduling conflicts, as members are often committed to other churches, highlighted the dedication required to bring such an initiative to fruition.

The News

Looking Forward with Hope: Upcoming Blessings and Opportunities



Looking Forward with Hope: Upcoming Blessings and OpportunitiesThe session concluded with exciting future announcements that gave everyone something to look forward to. The upcoming licensing of **Reverend Dr Alan Conant as the new Team Rector in Bromsgrove on September 7th** was met with enthusiasm, signifying a new chapter for the Bromsgrove community. We were informed that recruitment for crucial roles for the Redditch Mission Area will commence soon, with opportunities spanning across various churches and the wider area. Finally, the promising news of efforts to release **national church funds for vital work in the Bromsgrove team**, with a focus on contextual developments, underscored a future brimming with possibility and growth.

This gathering was a powerful reminder that worship is a dynamic, living force within our communities. Leaving us with the question how will you answer the call to inspire, equip, and empower the next generation of worship leaders?

Remember – this is your Deanery Synod so if there is a subject you would like us to look at, please email us on info@cofe-redditch.org.uk

Attendees: Peter McLaren, Brian Palmer, Carolyn Reading, Chris McLaren, Chris Thom, Keith Thom, Rev Ray Khan, Nan Adie, Janet Hewer, Rev Ann Cogle, Helen Ayling, Rev Garth Nathaniel, Norman Hewer, Rhoda Lingard, Kashmir Garton, Rev Sarah Jayne Hewitt, Neil Hewitt, Roger Powell, Barry Humphrey, Rose Humphrey, Jill Allbut, Hilda Roxbrough, Paul Taylor, Rev Gail Rogers, Rev Manda Arthur, Rachel Jennings, Rose Akeroyd, Philip Smiglariski, Irene Hamilton, Glenn Reading, Len Mowatt, Rev Paul Lawlor, Joshua Williams, Paul Sherwin, Steve Cowperthwaite, Elaine Whitfield.

Apologies: Fraser Oates, Evelyn Reston

Next Deanery Synod will be on Wednesday 8th October 2025, 7pm for 7.30pm at St John's Hall, Bromsgrove B61 7JW.

Meet Your Deanery Leadership Team:

Rev Canon Paul Lawlor - Area Dean/Chair

Canon Kashmir Garton – Lay Chair

Rose Humphrey – Deanery Secretary (Governance & Data)

Elaine Whitfield – Deanery Admin (Meetings & Communication)

Rev Dr Martin Allen

Deanery Treasurer - Vacant

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