

A Heywood and Middleton Deanery Website

An opportunity for working closer together, improving communication and sharing ideas and resources and evangelising.

Background

At our last 'in-house' Deanery Synod, better communication within the members of the Deanery and between the parishes was needed, and was something which could be improved upon. The creation of a Deanery Website was suggested as one possible medium which could offer significant opportunities in that direction and would be of particular help in helping to manage and aid communication in the 'Evangelism Month Project' that was initiated on that evening.

Following the Deanery Synod, the 'Evangelism Working Party' held its first meeting with Robin Gamble. Coming out of that meeting was again the need for effective communication, but this time, in terms that were relevant for today's world so that what was offered would engage, excite and meet people's expectations and of young people, in particular. What does it say to the 'e-aware' people of the world, if a church does not evangelise its message in today's medium? Imagine the outreach that could be achieved through 'The Web'? The Manchester Diocese now has a new web site and is keen that all Deaneries and parishes get involved to 'widen the Net', if you'll excuse the double pun. At a more mundane level, it could save a lot of time, postage and telephone calls for the Deanery and our Parishes.

A Deanery Website: What will it cost?

There are two cost elements to a web account:

- o the registration fee of the domain name e.g. "heywoodandmiddletondeanery.org.uk" £1.99p/year (Paid in 2 year lumps) . It costs £8.99/annum to just have .org without the .uk. My suggestion would be that we go for the cheaper domain name suffix.)
- o the fee for the web space and e-mail accounts of £5.99/month plus a one-off start-up cost fee of £9.99.

What will we get for our money?

What we won't get are adverts which pollute many sites, especially the 'free' ones.

We would get:-

500Mb of web space	500Mb equates to about 100,000 pages of text, or 10,000 reasonable quality photos
100 POP3 e-mail accounts	A POP3 email account means you can download your mail and read it offline rather than 'hotmail' type accounts which require you to be connected whilst you read it, thus the latter is more costly to use.
FTP access to the site	FTP access means it offers a very a simple way of transferring files to and from the website via 'My Computer' on your desktop.

That should be more than enough for the Deanery. It would probably be enough to support websites and e-mail for every parish in the Deanery as well.

Who will set it up the web space and who will organise it?

If no one else would like to do it, I will volunteer to create, administer and update the website. It isn't an onerous task.

Who will supply the information?

Clearly, a website stands or falls by the information it contains. I can enter basic information about the Deanery, such as lists of Deanery Synod reps, the parishes they come from, names, their contact details, the vicar's names and contact details, where each church can be found, etc., etc.. The rest is entirely dependent upon input from everyone within the Deanery, lay and clerical, and parish members.

The sort of information could range from:-

- o calendar of events parishes are hosting with brief descriptions,
- o projects parishes may need help with,
- o General, Diocesan, and Deanery Synod minutes,
- o Lists of published documents for reference
- o Synod or Deanery administration notices
- o Legal documents
- o Archive for documents
- o Bulletin Boards: news items, hot topics, urgent assistance required etc
- o Items churches wish dispose of to 'worthy homes' or items they require.
- o A prayer diary.
- o Items of general interest
- o Progress reports from Deanery or parish ventures

How will information get published?

All I need from anyone who wishes to have some information posted on to the website is to send me the information in one form or another. The most convenient and preferred method is via an e-mail attachment, either as a text file or MS Word document or similar. If this is not possible and you only have a paper copy (need to be careful of copyright), you can send it by post and I could scan it in for you. For small snippets of information or minor changes, a phone call will suffice.

What next?

If it's agreed that a Deanery/parish web account is something we need and are willing to fund as a Deanery. Then the process can begin. It should be possible to have an initial site available within a week, time and holidays permitting.

After that it will improve directly in proportion to the information provided by you.

In this way, everyone within the Deanery will have the wherewithal to spread 'The WORD'; Evangelism in action, from each grass root. The 'net' will be cast!

Added Value for each Parish

As I alluded to earlier, individual parishes could also benefit from the existence of a Deanery website. There would be more than enough space and e-mail addresses spare within the account to be shared amongst the parishes, to allow any church within the Deanery that wishes to, to have its own website and e-mail facilities. What's more it's a no cost option, apart from each church needing to register its chosen domain name (£1.99/year).

So, if the cost was the inhibiting factor in your church not being able to cost justify a website all of its own, then that inhibiting factor would be removed once the Deanery site is up and running.

What skills are needed to create and maintain a website?

If money was not the inhibiting factor stopping your church creating its own website, then perhaps it is because you feel that you haven't the skills. Well, the skill level required you will discover is surprisingly low and easily achievable. A basic page can be created from an initial Microsoft WORD document and use of 'My Computer' to 'drag and drop' the page on to the website. A basic site is as easy as that. You can get a lot of useful information into a single document before it becomes unmanageable, when a more feature rich version is needed with navigation buttons etc. Even that step is not as complicated as it may seem. Anyway, that's a nice problem to have because it means your site has lots of information. That will encourage more people to visit the site and if it's interesting, useful and kept up to date, they will re-visit to see what's going on and the outreach is starting to work.

How does a church get started on its website?

Each church will need someone who is prepared to be the 'site editor', normally referred to as the 'webmaster'. The 'webmaster' has knowledge of the account name and password and therefore has the ability to transfer files to and from the web site. Anyone who wants to post information on the site sends the 'webmaster' the information and the webmaster puts it on the website.

If you would like your church to have a website and would need some help getting started, I would be only too pleased to assist you.

So, if you'd like to 'have a go' then I'm sure you'll find it a very rewarding exercise.

If you would like to contact me then my details are below:

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