

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2020-21

In **June** the Area Dean summarized the feedback on the joys and Challenges of Lockdown in the pandemic.

Joys and encouragements:

Being able to use technology to carry on with services and home groups, prayer meetings etc. and some experiencing new people joining in, and some from a great distance. It is felt that it has been an 'unthreatening' way for non-church members to try out and experience services, and that many have been looking to do so in such unusual times. Also, Children's work has been able to continue quite successfully, and there has been a feeling of genuine connectivity between people. Prayer meetings have been started and are well attended.

Challenges:

Maintaining services and ministry, especially where there are people who have been unable to access the technology – for various reasons, and for church leadership building and finding the skills to make the most of the tech. Also the feeling of missing people, not being able to see them face to face regularly. The financial struggle as there is less giving if remote (apart from those who receive through on-line means), and with job losses giving may also decrease. Fund raising and the hiring out of halls etc also meaning a loss. Staffing issues for churches too as many are furloughed.

Rev. Gillaine Holland than presented on the Bishop's mission Order for Sheerwater and the need for prayer, people's skills and fundraising. For details of the success, read on.

October 2020

Rev. Jonathan Thomas, vicar of St. Peter's Church, Old Woking and Area Dean, invited Rev. Laurence Gamlen to speak on hospital chaplaincy. Laurence heads the core team locally of lay and ordained members which, pre-covid included 30 volunteers. Three groups support patients, visitors and relatives and staff.

Post covid there is a big reduction in volunteer support, due to the fact many volunteers are in the high-risk category and they are offering a different service. Supporting the hospital staff, by doing the door keeping, visiting the very sick and enabling them to have time with family via facetime and other social media, providing bereavement support and supporting staff who are struggling.

Padre Nigel Kinsella, Senior Army Chaplain also spoke about the Pirbright Training Camp and what is offered to the 5-6,000 recruits in the first 14 weeks of army life. Moral and ethical guidance and pastoral support for the many away from home for the first time and grappling with the issues of self-sacrifice and responsibility is needed. The British Army has a strong history of church and many recruits are unchurched and respond to the gospel brought by people who are able to build good relationships and offer support. Last year a group of 50 chose to be baptised.

St Michaels BMO Sheerwater – following the Deanery Synod presentation in June on the need to support the Bishop's Mission Order in Sheerwater, which Woking Borough Council are looking to regenerate, and looking for £77 – 150K to provide support for the next 5-year plan after May 2021, they set about fund raising.

Through a mixture of Anglican and Methodist Circuit support, personal and church pledges, the fundraising stands at £295,592 over the 5-year period with pledges still coming in – an amazing work of God!

Andrew Mawson, a Christian Social Entrepreneur who has substantial experience of successful community regeneration, pioneered at Bromley By Bow, championing integration between health, education, housing, business, enterprise and voluntary/faith groups for sustainable communities has been asked to look at Sheerwater.

Lay chair Geoff Pugh has offered to be a sounding board for laity in the deanery on a confidential basis and available to churchwardens who do not wish to burden their ministry further but may contribute to future deanery activity and planning.

Adrian Vincent reported from Diocesan Synod on Children and Young People

Research shows: “The biggest influence on faith formation in children and young people is their parents. After that comes connection with other adults in the faith community. And the opportunity to be active participants in worship within the whole church community.”

Our aim is in every church:

- clergy and lay ministers support households in sharing faith at home with their children.
- the congregation nurtures the faith of children and young people;
- the church builds strong relationships with local schools and households.

The Diocese are going to undertake a “Health and Viability” review of parishes. There could be different measures of whether a Parish is ‘viable’:

Financial: either the parish can’t pay its parish share now; or, there are 20 parishes who are paying their full parish share but it costs them more than 70% of their total unrestricted income, which doesn’t seem long term sustainable;

Parish size: one parish has a population of 1,500 people; another parish has a population of 23,000 people. That doesn’t seem a fair distribution of clergy;

Congregation size: one full time stipendiary priest in a single church with a very small congregation doesn’t seem long term sustainable.

February 2021

Living In Love and Faith (LLF)

Rev Mark Wallace has been asked by +Andrew to be an advocate within Guildford Diocese.

LLF is about sexuality and identity in the CofE. There has recently been a series of ‘shared conversations’ between people of different backgrounds to talk and listen to each other, not debate. This resulted in a report from the House of Bishops and General Synod failed to take note. The House of Bishops have commissioned a series of study projects and resources, including a book, a course, a set of videos and podcasts aimed to cover all permutations of sexuality. This involves the whole church with a view to listen and not impose, to explore God’s will and to live well with each other, love for each other as we have received from God.

The question is now how the churches in our deanery will be engaging. All clergy have already attended a study day in November 2020 and it has been discussed in Chapter in January. Synod Reps should engage with their church and ensure this is in front of PCC. Churches will need to ‘find a safe space’ to work through this material. The aim is to receive feedback into the Diocese at the end of the year (2021), and it should be as wide reaching and creative as possible.

The Bishop has appointed Rev Steve Cox as a chaplain for pastoral support and care for LGBTi+ as they have often not felt safe in their churches.

Engagement:

Most feel it's already on the PCC agenda. Some churches are already well on the way to engaging with the LGBT community, but others are more 'old school' but hope that they will be able to 'listen' with God's love. There are some lay representatives who are not yet aware of this being on their church Agenda. It's not felt that minds will be changed through this. Using the course material is a positive way to engage with this topic, and if its presented and facilitated well it could be responded to positively. As race and racism is already high on the Church's agenda, some felt that this is just another big issue to be facing at this time. Many felt that they would prefer a face-to-face discussion rather than on-line groups.

With regards to Deanery resources - some felt that trained facilitators, and/or facilitators from other churches would help within their churches. Some felt that a Deanery run course would be beneficial, while others thought that their church would prefer to handle it in-house, as being 'safer'. Kairos, an LGBT support group already running are planning to do the course together and may then lead the Deanery course – being considered. Support for 'train the trainers' was considered helpful.

Kate Pearmain

SEND MOTHERS UNION 2020

Due to Covid we were only able to have 2 meetings - our AGM and a visit to Bourne Valley Garden Centre. It is hoped we will be able to meet in June 2021 outside.

We have kept in touch with a newsletter - which as the year has progressed has gone out to non-members. When the restrictions are lifted we will be enrolling two new members.

We sent Christmas gifts and Easter eggs to all the children and ladies in our refuges and outreach which were greatly appreciated.

We look forward to seeing both members and non-members when we are to meet up.

Beth Shutt
Send Mothers Union Branch

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

There has been little change in the past year. Sadly we lost Ivan Saunders in April last year, and Tony tolled a bell at the Straw Chapel in his memory. I recently added Gillian Ford to the Roll. Gillian lives in Woking and joined our congregation some time in 2019. The list now comprises 74 members.

Bill Pyne
Electoral Roll Officer