

Guildford Diocese and Leatherhead Deanery

The dominant event of 2020 for the Diocese of Guildford was the pandemic and its consequences. Restrictions on meeting in person required churches and schools to close. The Diocese responded with weekly briefings to give individual parishes support. Senior members of the clergy made themselves available for consultation. The Diocesan Board of Education helped schools with online resources. Worship and learning at a distance replaced gathering together face to face.

Bishop Andrew and Bishop Jo recorded weekly sermons for churches to use. Many ideas and activities were available for churches and schools to help them to maintain their life and worship. The Diocese made preparations for a fall in income and closed Church House Guildford. Those that had worked there began to work from home. They were in the same situation, and shared the same experience, as many others in the diocese.

The pandemic also had the effect of impeding the introduction of the diocesan plan, with its sharper focus on mission. The Diocese had already appointed mission enablers. Their role is to help parishes to identify their needs more clearly than in the past and so enable the diocese to be more responsive in meeting their needs. The hope is that the implementation and development of the programme will feature more prominently in 2021.

During the pandemic the Deanery of Leatherhead managed to meet but only online. The Mission and Pastoral Committee, also the executive committee of the synod, has been following guidance from the Diocese and making major changes. The Diocese expects each deanery to have a Deanery Leadership Team. The team that is now coming into shape is broader and more representative in structure. Another major change has been the departure, due to a change of circumstances, of the secretary, Andy Black, at the end of 2020. Having thanked Andy for his great contribution, the team went on to welcome, as its new secretary, Amy Douthett.

The Deanery Leadership Team has also adopted its first development plan. Some of the projects are already under way but the plan also includes additional projects for 2021. Members of the synod have received a copy of the plan. Our members, for the next three years, include Mike, Charleen and Moni, as clergy, with David Taylor, Dave Greenwood and Claire Costard as our new lay representatives.

Two of the additional projects for 2021 form the agenda for the next two meetings of the synod. As meetings are open, you are warmly welcome to attend. The first meeting is on the evening of March 10, when Bishop Jo will speak on the subject of 'Living in Love and Faith', a matter that the General Synod has asked us all to discuss. The other meeting is on the evening of June 9, when David Welch, the mission enabler for our deanery and our church, will speak about his role and explain the 'Parish Needs' part of the diocesan plan.