

Hertford and Ware Deanery Synod

Our vision: to see flourishing, Christ-centred communities inspiring people of all ages and backgrounds to discover God, grow in their relationship with Him and respond to His transforming love through serving others.

Minutes of the Zoom Meeting 7.45pm Tuesday 16th March 2021

Chair – The Revd Canon Jo Loveridge, Rural Dean

1. Welcome and Introductions. Jo mentioned the Bishops' retreat for Holy Week, please ask for a connection if desired.
2. Prayers – The Revd Mark Dunstan, Assistant Rural Dean
3. Apologies for absence: Lynne Griffiths, The Revd Robert Thompson, The Revd Angela Lynas, Janet Bird, The Revd Alan Stewart, Richard McKay, Dorothy Toyn, The Revd Amanda Duncan, Tim Crowther, Katy Little, Ian Bailey.
4. The Minutes of the previous Synod Meeting 8 February 2021 were accepted as correct.
5. Matters arising. Nil
6. Election of the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee. (It has been suggested that this should be temporarily postponed since due to changed circumstances with the impact of Covid 19 we may prefer to have two separate committees). Mark was asked to explain, and he stated that with new housing developments and many other changes there will need to be a new MAP, needing people who have insight into the new situation. We are awaiting further Diocesan information, as there is a lot of change coming. There are also Diocesan and General Synod elections in the near future. Either way, the clerical and lay vacancies remain.
7. Jo said that she is coming to the end of her tenure as Rural Dean in May. She added that there are concerns about whether we can sustain our current number of churches and clergy due to Covid 19 etc.
8. Main Topic: Where are we now? Seeking the Way ahead. Please see the Notes below.....

9. Diocesan Synod Saturday 13 March Report: Diana Perkins Bp Alan had used Haggai 2 “Start rebuilding” (after the Exile, returning to the devastated Jerusalem and its destroyed Temple), this situation is not a unique occurrence. We should embrace the crisis and opportunities. He thanked parishes and treasurers for their ongoing commitment and donations.
Tim Lomax spoke re Clergy Well-being: it was accepted that it should extend to all church workers.
Re General Synod, and coming elections, it is not required that a nominee is on their own PCC. They do need to be a Deanery Synod member, a CV needed. The Diocese aims to be carbon free by 2030.
Presentation on the Young People report, few teenagers attend church – very hard to reverse the cycle. This is our topic at the DS next time.
10. Parish Share and Diocesan Board of Finance – Colin Bird
Parish Share over 2020 was down £1.3 million, significant though not as bad as feared. Expenditure has been reduced by £800,000. Funerals – sadly - brought an extra 100k, plus investments improved. In the end, deficit of 510k. Despite thanks that it is not as bad as expected, there is still much concern about 2021. David Sheppard asked if there are any ideas about the future of funding; Colin responded that although most money is spent on Ministry, we have no need to cut figures dramatically. The strategy for future ministry is being looked at, but there is no chance of running down the parish system.
11. Events in the Deanery. -
12. Any Other Business -
13. Closing Prayer Jo
14. Forthcoming Meeting: Wed 12 May Topic – The “Faith in Young People” report.

Representatives please remember that communication in the Deanery depends on arranging and delivering a Deanery Report/update at your Parochial Church Council meeting.

Deanery website... www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk

Main Topic: The Way Forward, led by the Rural Dean.

Jo referred to Bishop Alan's document, already circulated, then led a series of focussed Bible readings with short moment of reflection (additional document enclosed). This was followed by questions for discussion.

1. How do we regain our confidence and hope after the virus has pulled us apart and caused wide disruption to church and society?
2. What have we learnt from our experience of isolation, including our online presence, pastoral phoning, need for togetherness etc.?
3. What opportunities (other than restoring vital shared worship) look most important in your parish context?

Feedback from the discussions (five groups responded to each question):

1. Confidence. We are regaining confidence, going back into church. Help and support will be needed by those who do not feel confident to return.
Can we be sure that Christians have more confidence than anyone else? Concern was expressed for those who have not joined Zoom services.
Group felt the church hasn't lost confidence, it has brought us close together: young people have actually been more involved. But some people may be fearful of leaving their homes.
A need for celebration when we return, we have in certain respects gained a lot, especially with supporting others eg Foodbanks. Having churches open when possible gave new people a chance to enter.
2. Lessons Learned. We should continue our telephone ministry. This can give us more understanding and empathy with those usually alone. Family links have been maintained at Zoom/YouTube Family Services – even including people across the world!
Working with the local school has been very important; eg giving gifts to those who helped in the school, greatly appreciated.
Returning to past things may not be the way forward.
There are challenges re children returning to church, we need to be mindful.

3. There have been useful opportunities. We would still value instructions on how to set up technology in the church, we don't have expertise in our church at present. Livestreaming could well be valuable to continue – a number of churches certainly expect to do so.

Many churches now looking forward to re-opening and finding the way forward. When churches return, people may nevertheless need to visit relatives initially. It has been very difficult with so much bereavement.

Struck by the Timothy scripture – preach the Gospel in season and out; the latter sounds like the time and culture in which we live; wider discussion needed.

We cannot forget that the Covid crisis is not over, there may be more peaks and troughs, further vaccinations, etc. We need to learn and be prepared.

It's all about confidence! There is optimism, but we need to make it work.