

# Hertford and Ware Deanery Synod

*Our vision is 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.*

[www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk](http://www.hertfordandwaredeanery.org.uk)

## Annual Report 2020

The Deanery Synod exists to connect parishes to one another and to the Diocese, supporting one another and sharing in issues of Ministry and Mission.

2020 has obviously been an exceptional year in our nation, affecting our churches and all our lives. Our work of sharing and learning has continued, but much of the year has been a period of lockdown, so we have met only twice.

We were able to actually meet on 8<sup>th</sup> February, with the prelude of seeing or experiencing the Forgiveness Project at Christ Church, Ware and the stories and photographs displayed around the church spoke of radical and costly forgiveness in both the spiritual and secular realm. Many of us were deeply moved by the way that people had offered or experienced forgiveness, and the hope and healing which it brings.

Having met in Christ Church, the other main topic of the meeting was how the church had been physically transformed in the last year. The Revd John Hookway spoke about the changes, incl. heating, lighting, new floor, electrical wiring, energy efficiency, comfortable seats, living out the Christian calling. John spoke about trusting God and engaging with all who use the church, which had brought in a major proportion of the finance needed. However, challenges remain, and John spoke of remaining positive and of the enduring faithfulness of God. He challenged Synod members that we can have a narrative of hope or decline.

We met on Zoom on 12 November, with a session on *Enabling our churches to flourish in the 'New Normal'*. It was lead and facilitated by the Revd Harry Steele, Church Growth Officer for Hertfordshire and Associate Director of Leading your Church into Growth. Harry asked whether, during the pandemic, your congregation of 60 has become 35? We should seek Hope and Growth not Fear of Decline. He gave Seven Steps to consider.... which steps might be most important in our own context?

1. Create a prayerful culture of growth.  
Matthew 13.31 Mustard Seed. Pray specifically for growth.
2. Implement an effective strategy.  
Matthew 6.10 Kingdom Come.

3. Practice fruitful evangelism.  
Mark 1.17 Catching fish → people. You may feel anxious, but there's no other way than to have a go. We need to be able to tell people our story.
4. Develop engaging worship.  
Exodus 3.5 Holy Ground. What matters is doing the worship in a planned and thoughtful way, not the churchmanship, etc. Do people see a Christian community at prayer, engaged in worship? It's what we invite people to. So it isn't about what we personally prefer but what will engage new people.
5. Becoming an inviting and Welcoming church.  
Luke 14.21 Banquet. We should make sure all people are welcome. Make sure the service also gives a welcome, e.g. High Chairs and snacks for young children. Young families began to attend when this was done.
6. Create a pathway for seekers to become disciples.  
Matthew 28.19 Make Disciples. The journey of faith is like stepping stones, not a big jump from one bank of the river to another. Ask: How do you make disciples? Is it working? We could have people invited, seeking even - but they need to grow.
7. Begin a planned journey of growth.  
Acts 5.14 The Early Church. Churches that plan to grow are much more likely to grow. A plan not mentioning growth will be more difficult. Collaboration is needed within the church, keep updating. The MAP can be a standing item on the PCC; what are our goals and how are they going?

Parish Share and the Diocesan Board of Finance. Colin Bird now chairs the DBF. In this time of lockdown, many parishes are having varying issues re. fundraising, e.g. letting halls, sales etc. Some have historic reserves, some have run out, others have everyone on giving schemes which weather the storm. We are currently 10% behind across the Diocese (£1.5m). Parishes are making efforts to pay, which is excellent. Next year, we know that all of us will be financially weaker, making it very difficult to budget.

The Parish Share should not rise significantly next year due to the challenges. It is a tough situation, although we are in a better position than many other Dioceses. Jo suggested a Treasurers and Wardens meeting in January 2021, which found Treasurers feeling positive about the way ahead.

The Deanery Synod will continue to act as a conduit between the parishes and the wider church. The co-ordination of Parish Share payment, concerns about staffing of the parishes, considering strategy for Christian care in the area and participating in the wider Church of England are all part of the Deanery's work. We always encourage that relevant information is taken back to be shared more widely among our parishioners.

The Revd Douglas Loveridge  
Deanery Secretary