



My dear Sisters and Brothers

I do hope that your Easter was joyful and that you were able to rest afterwards. I was blessed in Holy Week this year by joining churches in Deepcut, Good Shepherd in Farnborough, Dorking, Hersham, Weybridge, St Martha-on-the-Hill and the Cathedral. I also enjoyed a much needed break in Easter week!

A. Bishop Andrew

I'm deeply grateful to you all for the love and support that you showed Bishop Andrew and Beverly during the last few weeks of Andrew's life. I know that the whole family much appreciated the many cards and messages that were a source of great comfort to them as Andrew 'cheerfully persisted towards a good death'. His example to us of what that looks like will always remain with me. Andrew's funeral on 23 March was an exceptionally powerful occasion (most of the elements of the service having been requested by him). Whilst there was a palpable sense of deep grief for both the family and diocese, there was also a strong reminder that 'we do not grieve as those without hope' as our belief in the resurrection was proclaimed and celebrated with great joy.

If you missed Andrew's funeral, it is still viewable online [here](#), and there is still opportunity to make a donation in his memory towards the mission and ministry of Guildford Cathedral [here](#). It was a gift to join the Tillingbourne Benefice and Churches Together in Guildford as we proclaimed the risen Christ around Andrew's grave at St Martha-on-the-Hill Church in the Dawn Service on Easter Sunday. Please do continue to remember Beverly, Hannah, Sam, Joe, Lydia, Alison and the whole family in your prayers.



B. Looking Ahead

I articulated at the [Diocesan Synod](#) on 14 March and the [Chrism Eucharist](#) on 2 April that a vacancy in see is not the time for discerning a new vision or strategy - but neither it it a time for treading water. The New Testament reading at Morning Prayer on the day after Andrew's funeral was from Hebrews 12. It pierced my sadness and I found myself inserting two words: *'Since we are surrounded by [Andrew and] such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith'*. The work of the Kingdom must continue. In that spirit, I have laid out three foci for the next two years.

1. Prayer



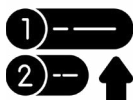
Whatever the reality behind the Quiet Revival narrative, I am witnessing remarkable things happening throughout the diocese. I wish to call us all to a more intense life of prayer and to launch this as soon as possible by holding a Prayer and Praise gathering in every deanery at which I can meet and pray with clergy and congregations. I am grateful to the Revd David Senior who has agreed to work with Area Deans to organise this.

2. Pastoral Care



Whilst we do not grieve as a people without hope, nonetheless grief is disorientating and painful. I pledge myself to care for you, as clergy, and all our leaders to the very best of my ability and to nurture a culture of care within the diocese. I have now asked Archdeacon Catharine to take the lead on clergy wellbeing (having held this brief for many years myself) and will work with her and Archdeacon Martin to support you in every way we can.

3. Priorities



One of the gifts that Bishop Andrew leaves is the fruit of a 48 hour Bishop's Staff residential in January. At that meeting, we identified our priority of priorities as a Bishop's Leadership Team. They are: (i) discipleship and the revitalisation of churches; (ii) children and young people. These are endorsed by the vast number of our church development plans. I will be ensuring these two areas are proritised in my work over the years ahead.

As I assume the responsibility of acting diocesan bishop over the period ahead, I've needed to look at the roles of both diocesan and suffragan bishop and write a new job description for myself. This basically consists of the elements of diocesan bishop I will need to embrace (including national representation and diocesan governance), together with the foci on p.2 that I have identified to be important in this season. I intend to remain sponsoring bishop (partly as I have built relationships with many of our current ordinands at various stages of discernment). I will, however, need to lay down some other elements of the Bishop of Dorking portfolio to make this manageable. In this respect, I'm enormously grateful to our Bishop's Leadership Team; Honorary Assistant Bishops (+Christopher Herbert, +Peter Hancock and +Richard Cheetham); and other colleagues for taking on additional responsibilities during this time. The following have agreed to help me in various tasks:

- The Revd Dr Moni Babatunde will chair the Racial Diversity Advisory Group
- Bishop Richard Cheetham will act as the Episcopal Warden of Readers
- The Revd Mat Ineson will oversee the children's portfolio
- The Revd Jens Mankel will oversee the environment portfolio
- Archdeacons will together chair the Mission and Pastoral Committee
- Archdeacon Martin will chair the group looking at safeguarding admin.
- Archdeacon Catharine will be the lead for the clergy wellbeing portfolio
- Our Honorary Assistant Bishops will share in leading confirmations.

Engagements In the past few months, I've been through both bishops diaries and carefully decided what I need to do, what might be done by others, and what might need to be cancelled. I hope that in most cases we've contacted clergy to confirm, re-arrange or cancel. If you sense that a booking might have fallen through the net, please do check in with us.

Confirmations Please continue to book confirmations through Andrea or Niki in the office (please do not contact bishops directly). We will strive to accommodate requests, but please understand we may need to ask you to join other local confirmations.

D. Vacancy in See

At the end of this month, the Vacancy in See Committee (ViSC) will begin the lengthy process towards the nomination of a new diocesan bishop. The ViSC is made up of 21 people - members are listed on the [diocesan website](#). Its main tasks are to prepare a statement of needs, and to elect members from the diocese to the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC). The CNC eventually shortlists and interviews candidates. The length of the process is affected by the number of other vacant sees in the Church of England at any one time. Due to the fact that there are so many vacant sees at present, and that the Guildford vacancy was unexpected, we anticipate that the Guildford CNC will not complete its work until the late summer of 2027. That means it is unlikely that we will welcome the next Bishop of Guildford into the diocese until early 2028. I will keep you updated on the process as it progresses.

E. Triennial Conference 12 - 14 May

I'm much looking forward to seeing those attending the Triennial in Swanwick next month. In view of our commitment to the environment and increased fuel costs, it would be great if we could do as much car sharing as possible!

F. Thank You

On a personal note, these last few months has been deeply challenging for me. I am so grateful for all your love, support and prayers. I consider it a great privilege to serve in CofEGuildford and give thanks to God for each of you. Please know that I will do my very best, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to lead, love, pray and support this diocese as best as I can in this time ahead.

*With love in Christ and prayers.
+Paul.*

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