

## More Questions...

### Will all churches have their own vicar?

Probably not in the way that they did in the past. There will be a single incumbent (who will act as the leader and focus of unity for the parish) who will manage a ministry team. It will be important, however, that clergy have defined ministerial portfolios and pastoral responsibilities.

### Is this a *fait accompli*?

Absolutely not! We are asking Deanery Leadership Teams to consider the stewardship of resources and their use in the deanery. We are also using vacancies to consider the model of mission and ministry used and whether it is the right one for the future. This arises out of this context.

### Are there any other options?

Part of the purpose of this exercise is that it's quite probable that you will come up with better ideas than us! What isn't an option is for us to return to the pre-Covid model of ministry in the town parish. This was unsustainable for one person. We do need to care for our clergy and leadership teams!

### What are the next steps?

At the right time, if and when the PCCs are agreeable, the Area Dean would be invited by Bishop Andrew to convene a team with a consultant to work with the PCCs. The team would comprise members of all PCCs and also those in the churches with gifts and knowledge that would be beneficial.

### Is there any time limit to these conversations?

We are immensely grateful to Canon John Harkin who accepted the Bishop Andrew's invitation to be an interim minister at SS Peter & Paul until the end of 2022. This was deliberate to enable time for us to consider the future of ministry in the town parish. We aim to have a plan for post December 2022.

### What if I have further questions?

If the PCCs on 27 September decide that they are comfortable to reflect further on this issue then they will return to this issue in the near future. If there are any points of clarification that you'd like to ask following this evening, please do speak to Simon Taylor or John Harkin.

## A Vision for Godalming



busbridge&hambledonchurch 

Archbishop Justin's visit to the Diocese of Guildford over this last weekend has been a great encouragement. In acknowledging the immense darkness and loss that we have endured in the last year, he was also inspirational in celebrating the myriad ways in which God has been present during this time - not least in the ways in which churches have responded to the pandemic.

One of the powerful reflections that Justin made was about a greater sense of 'us and us' that we're beginning to see both in the church and in the world. This is something that many church leaders have reflected upon in past months and we sense that God might be saying something important about our need to work together more - both as churches and communities.

In one of the most moving prayers of Jesus (John 17:21), he prays that we may be one. This does not mean uniformity (he has made us all different!) but it does mean unity 'so that the world may believe that you have sent me'. In addition to fulfilling this prayer of Jesus, we recognise the ways in which we can be so much more effective when we join forces and work together.

During the pandemic, we've experienced churches blessing each other in ways that we've never seen before: supporting each other in very practical ways, sharing ideas and resources, and partnering in mission. Under Simon's leadership as Area Dean, the Deanery of Godalming has increasingly opened its eyes to the blessings of this which have borne fruit in many ways.

The vacancy in the town parish of Godalming has provided a particular opportunity for us to think again about the mission and ministry of the Church of England to this very significant town in Surrey. What we bring this evening is a high-level vision and invite your prayerful reflection. It is not a *fait accompli* in any way: we know that it would be disastrous to try to impose solutions from 'on high'. It is rather an attempt to imagine what growing a transforming church, transforming lives might look like in the town of Godalming.

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Diocese of   
**Guildford**  
TRANSFORMING CHURCH  
TRANSFORMING LIVES

## What is the Vision?

### **The vision is the Kingdom of God...**

Godalming is an ancient and significant town in Surrey. It is a vibrant community and a highly desirable place to live. The iconic steeple of St Peter and St Paul reminds us that the church has been at the centre of this town since the Anglo-Saxon period. Over the centuries, as the town has grown, other churches have also been planted in outlying parts of the town (Busbridge, Ockford Ridge, Farncombe). Today, all the parishes still seek to be faithful to God and the people of the town in 'proclaiming afresh the Gospel of Christ' to a new generation.

Whilst we acknowledge and celebrate the many and varied ways in which the churches of all the parishes are seeking to 'proclaim afresh the Gospel of Christ', we recognise that there is much more we'd love to see – such as:

- More people coming to faith in Jesus Christ
  - Closer contact with our schools and, in particular, Godalming College
  - A greater commitment to those in varying forms of need in our town
  - An increased ministry to the civic community and the building of partnerships.
- In other words, we'd love to see God's kingdom extended in Godalming!

### **How might a united ministry to the town aid all this?**

There are lots of ways in which we believe that, by working together, we might be more effective:

- We sense the expression of our unity to the town is a powerful application of the words of Jesus in John 17. Being united as the Church of England parishes will also enable and encourage more effective ecumenical partnerships.
- Sociologically, it makes sense. A united parish must have a greater ability to speak into and collaborate with the town council.
- We also consider that a united leadership will provide greater support for clergy and leaders. We imagine them forming a community of prayer and support in the context of increasing concerns about wellbeing of leaders.
- We imagine that considerable efficiencies might be made (e.g. administrative, ministerial, pastoral etc). It's possible, for example, that baptism and marriage preparation might be done across the town as opposed to different churches
- The sharing of resources would be a massive benefit. In overseeing both parishes during the vacancy, Simon has seen the ways in which a sharing of resources across the whole could be of very considerable blessing to all.
- A 'minster' model of ministry might allow for a greater portfolio of ministry amongst the leaders (e.g. a lead on children, young people and families ministry across the town; a lead on pastoral care etc) as well as creating a spiritual powerful in the local community.

## What will all of this look like?

### **What would actually change if we supported this journey?**

We have deliberately kept our dreaming at a high level and not given much consideration to the details of what all this would look like before a conversation with PCCs about the principle of the idea. We do, however, envisage consideration of the following:

- The creation of structural unity (a united parish of Godalming)
- The recreation of a minister model of ministry (Godalming Minster?)
- Led by a Rector of Godalming with a team of leaders with specialities
- A more strategic approach to mission and ministry across the town.

### **What would not change if we supported this journey?**

There's always nervousness around conversations like this that a revolution is suggested in which everything will change. That is not what is being proposed here! It is about building on our strengths which include:

- Developing traditional worship in the parish and in particular the music.
- Providing the best possible contemporary worship
- Developing the discipleship of all and focussing on making new disciples
- Build on the ways in which each church is serving its community

## Other big questions around this idea...

### **What would be lost to our churches through this proposal?**

This is not a plan to take anything away – but rather to add – for the mutual blessing and flourishing of all. That said, the pandemic has taught us that in many aspects of church life we must change if we are to remain relevant for a changing world – and that change is not always as painful as we imagine!

### **Is this really about the diocese saving money?**

NO! The only reason for this proposal is about increasing our effectiveness in mission. That said, we have little doubt that it could result in the parishes saving money through the efficiencies of shared resources.

### **Is there any intention to close churches?**

Absolutely not. The vision is to grow not to shrink. We believe that all four churches under consideration (SS Peter & Paul, St Mark, St John the Baptist Busbridge and St Peter, Hambledon) all serve distinct communities and will be important resources for the future as they are at present.