



## Adapt to achieve



With the Bishop of London who preached the sermon at my virtual Legal Church Service

### IN MY winter 2020 article I gave a little of the history and scope of the role of the High Sheriff of Greater London (HSGL).

At that time of writing I had just started to use, it turned out, the gap between lockdowns to visit almost all the nine Crown Courts in Greater London together with the Royal Courts of Justice where my wife and I had the honour of sitting with the Lord Chief Justice on a case. I also managed to visit one of the eight prisons; the rest were deemed to be (off and on) COVID 'outbreak zones' and there was a mutual reluctance towards my visiting them. I did, however, manage a fascinating half-day with the Metropolitan Police. This commenced with a short trip on one of their marine launches and included stories about how they caught modern-day smugglers of both people and drugs. The second part was a 'ride-along' in a police response car which was utterly hair-raising! The moment I sat in the car we received a call-out and crossed the whole of central London in under 10 minutes, a journey which, had I been driving and obeying the Highway Code, would have taken a minimum of an hour!

One socially distanced achievement was the creation of the first-ever virtual HSGL's Legal Church Service. Participants included the Bishop of London (who gave the sermon), the

President of the Supreme Court (who gave the address), together with three Bible readings by the Senior Presiding Judge of England and Wales, the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Prayers were said by the Recorder of London and one of the City Sheriffs who is a fellow City Alderman of mine. My aim was to bring together the senior legal/judicial figures in London, albeit in a virtual event and, in this case, with a remote congregation. This reached more than a thousand people, far more than if we'd held it physically.

The bulk of my time during the pandemic (as with so many others) has, however, been spent on video conference calls from home. These have included discussions with numerous judicial-related charity CEOs; prison governors; the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue; the Chief Magistrate; and – less obviously – the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. All of these I would have hoped to have visited and entertained in my year of office.

As my final act, and my legacy, I am now in the process of setting up the first-ever HSGL's Justice Fund. This will have as its early theme the rehabilitation of prisoners and their social inclusion. Over



With my wife at the Royal Courts of Justice to meet (and sit on a case in his courtroom with) the Lord Chief Justice

the years to come I'm sure these themes will be developed by my successors.

Overall, my year proved much more challenging and less traditional than I originally expected but, through adaptation, achieved more than might have been hoped for in the circumstances. It was both interesting and enjoyable, notwithstanding the absence of around 300 events which I would have attended!

◆ Alderman John Garbutt  
*High Sheriff of Greater London 2020-21*



On the Met Police launch for my trip on the Thames