

13 September 2013

To the Clergy No 11

copied to diocesan staff, lay chairs, and the clergy of Yaxley Deanery

Dear friends

Warm greetings to you. I hope you have had a good break over the summer, and are encouraged in your walk with God and in your ministry.

Archdeacon of Northampton

I am delighted to announce the appointment of Canon Richard Ormston as the next Archdeacon of Northampton. Richard is currently Vicar and Rural Dean of Oundle, having previously been Rector of Collingtree, Courteenhall and Milton Malsor and Rural Dean of Wootton. He is a very effective and much-loved parish priest, a rural dean of fifteen years' experience, and has served on a number of diocesan committees. With his pastoral experience and wisdom, his proven commitment to church growth, his track record of enabling churches to work together, and his wonderful sense of humour, I am sure that he will be a first class archdeacon.

We ran a very thorough process of advertising, shortlisting and interviews, with a broadly-based panel helping me decide, and over 30 candidates, most of them from outside the diocese. As a panel we were unanimous and enthusiastic in agreeing to offer Richard the post. It is good that once again an internal candidate has emerged through this sort of process. Richard will be collated at a service at St Giles Northampton on the afternoon of Saturday 1 February. More details of that will follow, but I am grateful to St Giles for agreeing to host us, and I ask you to note the date.

Archdeacon Christine retires at the end of this month. I hope to see many of you at her farewell service on 21 September. She has been a faithful, hard-working, totally reliable and efficient archdeacon. We have much reason to be grateful to her and Dennis, and we wish them a long and happy retirement as they move to their home in Lambourn, Berkshire.

For the four-month vacancy between archdeacons, Archdeacon Gordon will legally be Acting Archdeacon of Northampton, responsible for DAC and faculties, clergy housing, and (hopefully only in theory) any clergy discipline matters, while Bishop John will cover the archdeacon's responsibilities in pastoral matters and deal with any parochial appointments.

Calling all Introverts

I don't often include book reviews in these letters, but I want to commend *Quiet* by Susan Cain. This outstanding volume helps introverts understand and accept themselves, and helps extroverts to take introverts seriously. Given that a higher proportion of clergy are introverts than of the general public, this book should be of interest to all of us. I found it immensely encouraging.

Conflict Situations

I recognise that difficult working relationships and conflict situations, or potential conflicts, can be part of parish life, either involving ourselves as ministers, or between others for whom we have pastoral responsibility. To assist you in thinking about and working through this sort of situation, we have three people available to you, who have been trained in this area: Liz Holdsworth, Richard Stainer and Sheila Robertson. They can offer a completely confidential conversation, in person or by phone or email. This is not on-going pastoral support, but focused conversation relating to particular issues. They will be

sending all clergy information about this. Do use them and have confidence that you can speak freely with them without it going any further.

Clergy Day – 12 November

Our annual clergy day will be held in the Cathedral on Tuesday 12 November, with a cooked lunch provided. All licensed clergy are warmly invited and strongly encouraged to come. I shall lead the day, with help from others, on the theme of clergy self-care – how we can love and attend to ourselves in order to be the best we can for God. More details will follow, but please make sure the date is in your diary.

Confirmation – 23 November

I will be conducting a Confirmation service in the Cathedral on Saturday 23 November at 7.00pm. Any clergy from the Diocese (or from the Yaxley Deanery of Ely Diocese) may bring candidates. Please contact Canon Bruce Ruddock at the Cathedral to give him names and numbers by Friday 8 November.

Christmas

We have a number of clergy new to the Diocese since my last letter, so it may be worth repeating that I give permission for any parish to have Extended Communion on Christmas Day and Easter Day, provided that the service is led by a Deacon or a Reader, that the elements come from a service held on the Eve or the early morning of the Festival, and that the PCC has agreed. I hope this makes Christmas easier for our clergy, and richer for our parishes and people.

Bishop's Roadshows

You may be aware that Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod have approved a financial package to undergird our plans for church growth over the next five years. The aim is to increase the number of stipendiary clergy from 120 to 150 over that period. We are already on track, with significantly more in post than last year and the year before. Shortening the length of vacancies, as well as increasing the number of posts, enables this to happen. We have no shortage of able clergy applying for the posts we are advertising.

Initially much of the cost of extra clergy will come from diocesan reserves. This enables us to give a vote of confidence to parishes that they can grow, and growth is more likely if there is a priest in place. But a significant part of the cost, and over time the whole cost of clergy, will inevitably fall on the parishes. Much of this will be targeted: a parish or benefice moving from one to two stipendiaries will have to pay the difference. But the cost of shortening vacancies (with a loss of rental income on the vicarage as well as more stipend to pay) will ultimately have to be covered by parish share.

I am conscious that all this needs to be communicated well. I am planning a series of four Roadshows early next year. I will take the lead, but with significant help from diocesan officers. Clergy, churchwardens and PCC treasurers will all be invited to a Roadshow, with PCC members also welcome. Please note the date of the nearest Roadshow to you (or another if you cannot manage that date), and ensure that your wardens and treasurers know too. Each Roadshow will take place in the morning. There will of course be more publicity nearer the time.

11 January 2014 – Oakham Primary School

8 March 2014 – All Saints School, Northampton

15 March 2014 – Brackley Primary School

29 March 2014 – Bishop Stopford School, Kettering

Bishop's Bible Day – 1 March 2014

Our Bible Day next year will be on Saturday 1 March in Northampton. As in recent years this will be for all those who teach the Bible in any context: clergy, lay ministers, children's and youth leaders, homegroup leaders, RE teachers, and so on. Please pre-empt the publicity by getting it into your parish diaries now.

Celebration of Ministry – 7 June 2014

Next year marks 20 years since the first ordinations of women as priests in the Church of England. We are holding a celebration of Ministry (nb not just women's ministry, but the ministry we all share) in the Cathedral during the day on Saturday 7 June. Further details will follow, but you might like to note the date now.

Ministers' Conference – 24-27 November 2014

Our three-yearly conference for clergy and licensed lay ministers will take place again at Swanwick in Derbyshire in November next year. Please make sure the dates are in your diary now.

We are calling the conference "I will build my Church", and looking at such topics as "Can the church grow?" "The Minister's own growth", and "Growing the local church." Bible studies will be given by Dr Paul Foster who teaches New Testament at Edinburgh University and is on the staff of the Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh. Much more detail will follow, and booking details will be available next year. I look forward to a conference as helpful and enjoyable as the last one.

House of Lords

(The next eight paragraphs formed part of my Presidential Address at Diocesan Synod last week, but I want all clergy to see them, not just those on Synod).

I have been informed that I am to be admitted to the House of Lords later this year. The date is yet to be decided, but is likely to be late November or early December. There are all sorts of arguments for and against having bishops in the second chamber of Parliament. I don't want to get into those arguments today, though I see this as an element of our evolving national constitution which has far more in its favour than against it. If the Church is to be involved in society and community, preaching and living the kingdom, then surely its leaders must take every opportunity offered to them to be present, to speak, and to influence opinion and events, whenever they can. But I am aware of real concerns among church people: some saying that this role takes the bishop away from the diocese too much, others complaining that there aren't enough bishops present for certain key debates and votes. I am well aware of those views and tensions. I would like to explain how I see this role, how I intend to fulfil it, and what specific duties I will have; and to dispel a misconception.

These days the bishops in the House of Lords are seen as representing all faith communities, and indeed the wider community of their diocese. They are the only members of the house representing a geographical area, and although only 26 of us are there out of 42 dioceses, there is still good national coverage. Last week I was at a meeting with Imams and Mosque Chairmen in Peterborough: they rejoice in my appointment to the House of Lords and see me as representing them as well as Christians. I know that County and City Councillors also understand that I can be a spokesman for the people of Northants and Peterborough and Rutland regardless of their faith commitment.

There are some peers for whom this is in effect a full-time job, and others including the bishops whose other responsibilities mean that they are part-time. That is understood, and in practice there are never more than a dozen bishops present, more normally between two and six in the chamber when the House is sitting. I understand that the House normally sits from 2.30pm until up to 10.00pm, Mondays

to Thursdays during term time. Committees and other meetings happen in the mornings. Friday sessions are rare, and the holidays are quite long, although as we have seen recently Parliament can be recalled even in August.

Three weeks a year, two of them in term time and one in recess, I will be on duty. That means being there all week and ready to speak on any matters that come up, or in the recess being available for any recall. Most other weeks during term-time I will intend to be there one day a week, normally Tuesday for a variety of reasons. In practice looking at next year's diary that means about 26 days, an average of one day a fortnight. Because of good trains to London I will aim to be able to get there for an occasional evening in addition to this if the topic of debate seems to justify that or if I think that my vote needs to be counted.

I am making a few changes in the way I work here to enable this to happen. In particular I will be very reluctant to commit myself to midweek evening services during term time. In fact over the last year or two we have moved most confirmations and a number of institutions and licensing services to the weekends. Saturday and Sunday afternoons make good sense for welcoming new clergy to parishes, and confirming people in their home parish on a Sunday morning, or in the Cathedral or the deanery on a Saturday evening, is also very good. So in order to be able to keep more evenings free to be able to get to London when necessary I shall be doing rather more at weekends. I will not be giving up my usual practice of spending Wednesdays based at Bouverie Court or Thursdays in Peterborough, and I will not drop or reduce my commitment to visit all clergy in their homes every three years. Neither will I give up my day off which is almost always on a Friday: clergy please take note that your Bishop thinks days off are important. Bishop John has been in post for over two years now, and is well able to act for me in the diocese when necessary in an emergency if I am on House of Lords duty.

In recent years bishops have been encouraged to hold portfolios, areas of special interest where they will develop some expertise to speak on the Church's behalf. I am glad to say that I have been allocated my two first choices: prisons and criminal justice, and farming and rural affairs. I am not an expert on either, but I know a fair amount and care deeply about both. Each portfolio is covered by two or three bishops, to make it as easy as possible to ensure that at least one specialist is present whenever a particular subject is debated.

Just to deal with a common misconception: entering the House of Lords does not make me a Lord Bishop. Technically that term applies already, although I in common with many other bishops discourage its use and don't print it on letterheads or elsewhere. The days of addressing bishops as "My Lord" should be well behind us. For strictly formal use Bishop is enough. Less formally those who wish to use a title should observe the modern (and ancient) usage of Bishop Donald.

Obviously I am entering the House of Lords after the Syria debate, but I am happy to put on record that had I been entitled to attend, and had the House of Lords voted, I would have opposed a military strike. I deplore the use of gas, particularly against civilians, but war crimes should be prosecuted in the appropriate international courts. Military action other than in self-defence requires: international agreement, very clear and measurable objectives, and a detailed plan for what will follow. I didn't hear any of those articulated before the debate.

With warm greetings in Christ,



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