

28 January 2014

To the Clergy No 12

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

Dear friends

Warm greetings. I hope you are well and enjoying life and ministry. There are a number of matters I want to share with you.

Archdeacon of Northampton

Welcome to Richard Ormston as he becomes Archdeacon of Northampton on Saturday 1 February. He and Jackie will move into the Archdeacon's house during the half term holiday next month. Cheryl Goddard continues as the Archdeacon of Northampton's Secretary, based at Westbrook, 11 The Drive, Northampton NN1 4RZ; phone 01604 714015, email secretary.northampton@peterborough-diocese.org.uk, and the Archdeacon's contact details remain as before (address and phone as for the Secretary, email archdeacon.northampton@peterborough-diocese.org.uk).

Senior Staff

We have our annual senior staff residential meeting at Launde Abbey this week (and look forward to welcoming Richard Ormston as he spends some time with us to help him prepare for his new role). As part of that meeting we will think about and pray for each of our parishes and clergy by name. We want you to know of our prayer support for you.

Here's a reminder of the way we share diocesan work out among the senior staff: partly so you can pray for us, partly so you know the best person to contact with particular issues.

- I have particular oversight and care of ordinands, curates, and clergy in parish ministry, and of the Adult Education and Training team.
- Bishop John chairs the Board of Education with its responsibility for church schools, and oversees the clergy who work in chaplaincy, those with permission to officiate, and our licensed lay ministers.
- The Archdeacons each hold the statutory responsibilities for their archdeaconry, and take the lead in appointing new parish clergy (though all appointments are discussed at my staff meeting).
- In addition Archdeacon Gordon represents me on the Diocesan Board of Finance, has spiritual oversight of financial matters including parish share across the diocese, and with me has responsibilities for that part of Ely Diocese which falls within the City of Peterborough.

- Archdeacon Richard chairs the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, oversees the Mission Team, and is responsible for mission including church growth across the diocese.
- Bishop John, the Dean, and the Archdeacons share the work of the three-yearly senior staff reviews of all licensed clergy which form part of the Clergy Ministry Development programme. I have a separate programme of pastoral visits to all parish clergy in their homes every three years.
- Andrew Roberts our Diocesan Secretary is responsible for the diocesan offices in Peterborough and at Bouverie Court. He is the employer of the diocesan staff at both, and oversees communications, finances, human resources, IT, property, and safeguarding for us.
- Julie my Chaplain deals with the details of services and liturgy for my parish visits. She also has major roles within the areas of Ministry Development Review and of pastoral care for clergy, ensuring that she or one of the senior staff take the lead on each issue that arises.
- Bishops, Archdeacons, and Julie are all ready and willing to visit parishes, organisations and projects as invited.

Care for Clergy

My thanks to Hannah Jeffery and Quentin Chandler for their involvement in what I think was a very good Clergy Day in November. The theme of clergy self-care was important, and I hope the message has gone out.

On that day I announced that we have a new Pastoral Care and Counselling Adviser. Neil Tyrer has stepped down from that role (my thanks to him for his extremely good work) and Canon Julian Bowers has taken on the responsibility. Clergy who feel they or their families might need counselling or emotional support are encouraged to contact Julian who can advise and offer professional support as necessary. This is totally confidential. I will pay for much of the counselling or other support that may be needed, and Julian will advise me of any discernable trends or common problems, but I will not be asking him for any names. Your Rural Dean has leaflets with Julian's contact details and further information about this scheme: make sure that you get one if you haven't already.

Diocesan Registrar

You may have seen that Ray Hemingray is retiring as Registrar and Bishop's Legal Secretary at the end of September, after almost 40 years in post: a remarkable record. He will remain as assistant priest of the Castor benefice. Nearer the time we will all have a chance to thank him. In the meantime, I am starting the search for a qualified solicitor who is a communicant Anglican and has or can develop a specialization in church law to take on this role.

Bible Commentaries

I want to recommend two series of Bible commentaries which I find helpful in coming to grips with the original meaning of the texts. Both series are fairly new and, for reasons I don't understand, not well known. Each approaches the Bible in a distinctive way which is something of an antidote to the deadening and unproductive critical tradition that has dominated biblical studies and commentaries for over a century.

My first recommendation is the SCM Theological Commentary series (a rebranding of what in America is called the Brazos series). The premise is that theologians, with a broad knowledge of historical and systematic theology and of biblical languages, rather than Old or New Testament specialists, should be invited to write commentaries. The results are deeply helpful, and often provocative, essays on the chapters or themes of the Bible book. Some of the volumes focus more on individual verses than others. The contributors include Reno on Genesis, Hauerwas on Matthew, and Pelikan on Acts.

The second series is The Church's Bible, published by Eerdmans in the USA and so far not published here. These books aim to let the Church Fathers (who were obviously much closer in time and culture to the Bible writers) interpret Scripture for us. The authors are patristic scholars, and each gives us decent length quotations from selected Fathers on the Bible passage. So we might be reading a couple of paragraphs of Augustine, or a page of John Chrysostom, or a thoughtful reflection from Origen, on each paragraph or section of a Bible book. The selections are all newly and freshly translated and accessible. For those who believe that Bible exegesis predates both higher criticism and the enlightenment, and that we can still learn from the saints of old, these commentaries are goldmines. New volumes of this series are still being written (maddeningly slowly as far as I am concerned), but you could try Kovacs on 1 Corinthians or Wilken on Isaiah as starters.

The SCM series are listed at around £18-£22 each, and the Church's Bible volumes are about £25 each on Amazon. I am hoping to strike a deal on these books for our diocese: watch the Ministry Mailing over the next few weeks or so.

The Pilling Report

The College of Bishops (all diocesans and suffragans) met yesterday to discuss both the Pilling Report and the Church's response to same sex marriage. We have released a statement outlining what we agreed. I commend that to you: it is on the Church of England website, and will soon be on ours. In short, discussions on the Church's attitude to homosexuality must continue, but in ways which enable people to feel safe. We agreed that the Pilling Report itself is not an adequate basis for such discussions, so the bishops will aim to bring together more biblical and other material by the summer. There is no intention and no proposal to change the Church's doctrine on the nature of marriage. What the discussions are all about is how we can stay together as a church despite our disagreements, sharing Christ with all and

caring for all.

People will legally be able to enter same sex marriage from the end of March, though the Church of England and its clergy will not be permitted to offer or officiate at these ceremonies. This raises all sorts of questions for the Church. The bishops had a preliminary discussion on this, but the House of Bishops (diocesans and those suffragans who are on general synod) will meet again for a day in mid-February with the intention of agreeing and publishing a pastoral statement on the matter.

As I have said before, it is important and right that we treat each other with love and respect as discussions are held and decisions are made in this very sensitive area.

Bishop's Bible Day – 1 March

Our Bible Day is on Saturday 1 March. 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. The publicity is out and bookings are coming in. Do commend this to the appropriate lay people, and come with them if you can.

Bishop's Roadshows – 8, 15, 29 March

The first of my roadshows for clergy, churchwardens and PCC treasurers attracted far more people than we were expecting. This was really encouraging. As a reminder, to help us with catering and venue arrangements, please let Alex Low know in advance if you are intending to come to one of the March Roadshows. I hope that everyone who did not make the Oakham meeting will be able to make it. Alex's email address is: alex.low@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Confirmations – 19 April and 22 November

I will be confirming in the Cathedral on Easter Eve, Saturday 19 April at 8pm. Any clergy from the Diocese (or from the Yaxley Deanery of Ely Diocese) may bring candidates, though you should be aware that this is within the Easter Vigil Service which is very beautiful and powerful, but longer than a normal Confirmation. Please contact Canon Bruce Ruddock at the Cathedral to give him names and numbers by Friday 28 March. Our next Cathedral Confirmation will be on Saturday 22 November at 6pm.

I remind you that Bishop John and I are happy to confirm large or small numbers (no minimum), either at special services or during the course of a normal Sunday service. My preference is for weekends (Saturday and Sunday afternoons are increasingly popular), as my House of Lords commitments make it difficult to guarantee a midweek evening. Bishop John is able to be more flexible with dates.

Easter – 20 April

We have a number of clergy new as incumbents since my last letter, so it may be worth repeating that I give permission for any parish to have Extended Communion on Easter Day (and Christmas 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 Easter easier for our clergy, and richer for our parishes and people.

Korea visit – 22-30 May

I will be leading a small team on a visit to Seoul during the last week in May, three years since I last went. I am invited to preach in Seoul Cathedral on 25 May, then again at their ordinations on 27 May, and to do some teaching on their ordination and lay ministry courses. One of the areas I will be discussing with Bishop Paul in Seoul is the development of parish links as part of our diocesan link. I can see this as being of real benefit to us and to our brothers and sisters in Seoul.

Celebration of Ministry – 7 June 2014

This year marks 20 years since the first ordinations of women as priests in the Church of England. We are holding a celebration of Ministry (please note not just women's ministry, but the ministry we all share) in the Cathedral on Saturday 7 June. Canon Julie Hutchinson will preside, I will preach, and Bishop John will act as deacon. I hope we will be joined by friends, including women priests, from our link Diocese of Seoul. Please keep an eye on the more detailed publicity as it comes out, and be ready to celebrate with us.

First World War Centenary – 3 August 2014 - 11 November 2018

Much will be made nationally and in the media of the centenary of the First World War. In particular, each of the next five Remembrance Days will be special events (and the last one is a Sunday which will add to the solemnity. All this will obviously mean much more to some than to others, but for us it must be a major mission opportunity. There is a good set of resources to help you think and plan on the Churches Together in England website. Go to www.churches-together.net and enter WW1 in the internal search engine (near the top right of the front page. Good parish events will usually focus on local interest stories as well as the national and global picture.

“I Will Build My Church” – 24-27 November 2014

Margaret Johnson and Richard Pestell are leading the planning group for our Swanwick conference, with Derek Williams again looking after the administration and my office handling the bookings. 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. Details including booking forms will be available after Easter. As last time I will expect stipendiary clergy to attend, and will warmly

invite SSMS and licensed lay ministers. I look forward to a conference as helpful and enjoyable as the last one.

With warm greetings in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Donald". The plus sign is positioned to the left of the name, and the name is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Revd Donald Allister

Bishop of Peterborough

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