

28 April 2014

**From Bishop Donald To the Clergy No 13**

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

Dear friends

Warm greetings in this Easter season. It was good to see many of you at the Cathedral on Maundy Thursday, and to be able to visit most of the clergy of the Higham, Oundle, Peterborough and Towcester Deaneries during Lent.

**Clergy Wellbeing Survey**

I remain committed to making pastoral visits to all parish clergy every three years, and am now well into my second round. Caring for the clergy is a priority for me, and I am acutely aware of the demands that are made of us all these days. However, no two people are alike, and what causes pressure for one person might not for the next. There are many anecdotes about the stresses of ministry without a comprehensive picture of what is happening.

Recently St Luke's Healthcare, the successor to St Luke's Hospital for Clergy, has been funding an initiative designed to help clergy manage the pressures of ministry better. This has been trialled in a number of dioceses. My senior staff team has invited Interhealth, the organisation involved, to undertake a survey of clergy wellbeing. Many clergy elsewhere in the country have completed this questionnaire and there is a very high rate of satisfaction expressed.

In the next couple of weeks most of you will receive a short invitation with a link to an online questionnaire. You will be asked to click the link and fill in the questionnaire, which will take 20-30 minutes. This goes direct to Interhealth for analysis and is not accessible by anyone else. You will have three weeks, 4-25 May, to do this, and you will receive a reminder during that period. This is an invitation which you are entirely free not to accept: I certainly don't want this to raise anyone's stress levels! Any response that is made is completely confidential and no identifiable personal data is made available to the diocese. The questionnaire follows a well validated method over such areas as role, demands, ministry, pressures of home and family, relationships and calling.

This is not an initiative designed to 'medicalize' the normal pressures of everyday life. It is focused on building personal resilience. In a few cases, on receipt of completed questionnaires, Interhealth may make recommendations to people who might benefit from counselling or even medical follow-up. This would be entirely confidential, and no information would be given to the diocese.

What the diocese does receive is an aggregation of the data, showing overall patterns and where some of the pressure points and causes of stress are, so that we can begin to think about how these might be addressed. Therefore I encourage you to participate so that we can receive as full a picture as possible. We are committed to following up the outcomes of the survey in the pastoral support and training we provide.

I hope you don't mind this approach. More than that, I hope that it might be useful to you personally. Once again, I emphasise that the questionnaire is voluntary and confidential, and that no identifiable personal information will be made available to the diocese or anyone else.

### **Extended Senior Staff**

With Archdeacon Christine's retirement we lost our only woman on my senior staff team. We sought the best person to replace her as Archdeacon of Northampton, regardless of gender, churchmanship, etc. I am very confident that we found that person in Richard Ormston, but his appointment means that the senior staff (two Bishops, the Dean, two Archdeacons, and the Diocesan Secretary) is an all-male body. We always have either my Chaplain Julie Hutchinson or my PA Alex Low in our meetings acting as secretary, and we are glad to hear their advice, but that is not the same as having a woman as a member of the senior team.

I have consulted fairly widely as to whether we ought to invite one or more women to join the senior staff, and have heard various arguments for and against doing that. We have decided for the time being not to make any changes, but to monitor the situation as carefully as we can. I meet with Guli Francis-Dehqani, our Adviser in Women's Ministry, about every six weeks, specifically to talk about issues affecting women clergy. And we have an extended senior staff team, which is not very well publicised, but I want to describe to you now.

The senior staff meet for most of a day about once a month, and residentially once a year. We worship together and work through a fairly standard agenda, considering parish vacancies, appointments that need to be made, the diary of diocesan events, our ordinands, clergy who are looking for a move, those who are ill or facing particular issues, any correspondence on which I need help or advice, and so on. We rarely have time to look at bigger policy or strategic issues.

Three or four times a year we gather with a wider group, normally for a day but once a year residentially, to think more strategically. We call this the extended senior staff, and its members include the six people mentioned above, plus: Bishop John Flack who oversees Deliverance Ministry as well as bringing wide experience and wisdom, Miles Baker as Mission Enabler, Steve Benoy as Director of Ordinands, Guli Francis-Dehqani as Adviser in Women's Ministry, Robert Hill as Officer for Mission in Society, Liz Holdsworth as Coordinator of Adult Education and Ministry Training, Julie Hutchinson as my Chaplain, Miranda Robinson as Director of Education, and Derek Williams as Media Adviser. My PA Alex Low also attends that meeting as Secretary.

So that wider group includes four women, with a fifth in attendance, which we all believe to be helpful and important for the overall health and strategic direction of the diocese. It is also, I believe, a real team of outstandingly able people who work well together, support each other, and share a common mind on the issues we face. I feel privileged to work with them.

### **Assistant Directors of Ordinands**

We are looking for a few clergy willing to take on an additional responsibility within the diocese by working with our Director of Ordinands, Canon Steve Benoy, as we work to increase the numbers of candidates offering for ordained ministry.

Year on year, we are seeing more people entering training for ordination, many of whom are heading for stipendiary ministry. Unlike many dioceses, we are planning for increasing numbers of stipendiary clergy in the coming years. We also want to encourage more people of all ages to consider offering for self-supporting ministry, so that in time we have as many SSMs as stipendiary clergy.

To do this takes time and care in the process of discernment, and support in training. I would like Steve Benoy to have a small team of Assistant DDOs, perhaps each giving on average half a day a week, to share in this work. Training and expenses would of course be covered. Please contact Steve on [steve.benoy@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:steve.benoy@peterborough-diocese.org.uk) if you would like to know any more or to discuss this further.

### **Roadshow videos**

Following my four Roadshows earlier this year, there were many requests for the talks to be made available more widely. We have now produced a series of three videos, each around ten minutes in length and accompanied by discussion questions. In these I present the core of the Roadshow material in a way which I hope will be helpful to PCCs, congregations, or other interested groups.

The material will be available very soon on YouTube, but with links from our diocesan website. It will be advertised in our Ministry Mailing and our Diocesan Office News (DON) which goes to Churchwardens and other lay parish officers.

Please think about how best you might use this material. I strongly suggest that each ten-minute presentation is followed by group discussion to get the most out of it. The three presentations with discussion sessions could be the basis of a special PCC meeting, or of a Saturday morning for the whole congregation. You could even use each ten minute clip instead of a Sunday morning sermon, with congregational discussion in small groups to follow. Whatever works for you and your people!

### **Celebration of Ministry, Cathedral, 7 June**

Just a reminder that we as a diocese are marking 20 years since the ordinations of the first women priests with a service celebrating the ministry we all share. Canon Julie Hutchinson will preside, I will preach, and Bishop John will act as deacon. All are most welcome, but we do need to know numbers in advance as there will be light refreshments served afterwards. Please let Alex Low ([alex.low@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:alex.low@peterborough-diocese.org.uk)) know how many people you plan to bring by 23 May.

### **Ministers' Conference, Swanwick, 24-27 November**

I am looking forward very much to our three-yearly conference in November. Bookings will open very soon, and I urge you to respond quickly. All stipendiary clergy are expected to attend, and self-supporting clergy, together with licensed lay ministers, are warmly invited and most welcome.

We have a first-class line-up of speakers, including Dr Paul Foster from Edinburgh University, Bishop Robert Atwell, and Dr Rachel Jordan. I am grateful to our planning group which is still working hard. I am confident that this conference will be at least as good as the last.

I encourage those of you in charge of parishes to arrange pastoral cover for that week. Many of our retired clergy with permission to officiate would be glad to offer cover for any funerals or other pastoral issues which may arise, but it would be wise to arrange that well in advance.

With all good wishes in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald".

**The Rt Revd Donald Allister**  
**Bishop of Peterborough**

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