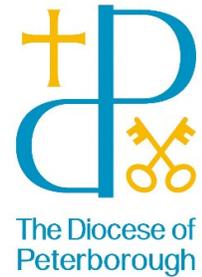


All Saints Day
1 November 2016



From Bishop Donald To the Clergy and LLMs No 18

Dear friends

This is the latest of my occasional letters to the clergy of our diocese. I copy these for information to some other people: deanery lay chairs, diocesan lay staff, and the clergy of Yaxley Deanery (the area of Ely Diocese which includes the southern third of the City of Peterborough - I share with the Bishop of Ely in offering pastoral care to these parishes).

I copied our Licensed Lay Ministers into my last letter, and have decided that from now on these letters will normally be addressed to the Clergy and LLMs. This is not because I am in any doubt about the significance of ordination or the distinctive role of the clergy, and it certainly does not indicate any lack of resolve to continue increasing clergy numbers; but I do think it increasingly important to affirm licensed lay ministry, to strengthen the relationship between LLMs and their bishop, and to focus my attention on LLMs and their ministry as well as on the ordained clergy. It is of course likely that parts of these letters will be more relevant to some people than to others, but I think it helpful for what I am saying to be heard by all who hold my licence. We work together as colleagues in the diocese as well as in our benefices, parishes, and other ministry contexts, and we all need to ensure the best possible communication between us.

There is quite a lot here. Please do share this letter, or parts of it, with others as you think right. And please feel free to contact me about anything in it. We serve together.

My Sabbatical

I had a good time away, but am glad to be back – and am grateful to the many people who wished me well, and to those who have welcomed me back so warmly. My time was interrupted and somewhat curtailed with a crisis at the Cathedral (more on that below), but I have been thoroughly refreshed and invigorated for the next spell of ministry. I haven't yet completed my write-up, but will do that over this autumn, and will make it available for any who want to read it. I am enormously grateful to Bishop John, Bishop John Flack, my Chaplain Tim Alban Jones, and my PA Alex Tolley for carrying an extra load over the summer, and doing it so well.

This was my first sabbatical, forty years into stipendiary ordained ministry. I do commend sabbaticals to others: and you don't have to wait so long! Details are on the diocesan website, or you can contact Sheila Addison: sheilaadd@aol.com

Cathedral

Most of you will have seen or heard something of the Cathedral's woes this summer. A very severe cash flow crisis led to my launching an official Bishop's Visitation – one of the few actual powers that a bishop has. This consists of a detailed investigation by experts in their field, who have authority to look into everything. We need to know exactly what went wrong, why and how. We need to learn lessons for our own Cathedral, and I suspect for others too.

My Visitors will report back to me quite soon, and I can then issue directions on any changes I think necessary or right, which the Chapter must implement. As far as I am concerned, a Visitation is close to a nuclear option, and one that I tried to avoid for as long as possible, but the situation was simply going from bad to worse.

Charles Taylor has resigned as Dean. Charles has done a great deal of good at the Cathedral, and built very strong links with the City Council, the business community, the cultural life of the city, and the other faiths. He has been an active and invaluable member of my senior staff, has shared in the visiting and reviewing of clergy, and has opened up the Cathedral to the Diocese in significant ways. He and Catherine continue to be very much in my prayers, and I hope yours, as they look to what he might do next. Richard Cattle has retired from his role as Dean's Assistant. There will have to be a number of redundancies, hopefully voluntary but if necessary some compulsory, to bring spending back in line with income. There will have to be a restructuring of the management and leadership, and I am sure other changes too. And there are very major debts to be paid off, which will inevitably mean selling significant amounts of property. All will become clearer in due time.

In the meantime, I am very grateful to Jonathan Baker for agreeing to serve again as Acting Dean: he has my full confidence. I am also grateful to the Church Commissioners who are helping with significant advice and funding, not least ensuring that the staff continue to be paid. And I take my hat off to the clergy, staff, and volunteers of the Cathedral, who are continuing to do excellent and important work under very difficult conditions. Some of them have even volunteered to reduce their hours in the hope of saving other people's jobs. Do encourage them as you have opportunity.

The search for a new Dean will begin before too long, but not until I have completed my Visitation and given my directions. A Cathedral Dean is a Crown Appointment, so there will be public and private consultations, the opportunity for people to suggest names, and a careful process. I will be involved in that, but it is not my appointment in the way that a suffragan bishop or an archdeacon would be. Please pray that we find the right person.

Korea

I visited Seoul Diocese for a week at the end of September, and combined this with 24-hour visits to the two much smaller dioceses, Daejeon and Busan, which together with Seoul cover the whole of South Korea. These short visits were at the Bishops' requests: easily done with the fast train from Seoul in the north-west, via Daejeon in the middle of the country, to Busan in the south-east. In practice our link will now be with the Anglican Province of Korea rather than just with the Diocese of Seoul, but as Seoul Diocese has about two-thirds of the population and two-thirds of the clergy in the country, our emphasis will remain there.

Peterborough and Seoul have been learning much from each other at the diocesan level, but I am determined to share that benefit with parishes. On this last visit I took three incumbents: Lee Francis-Dehqani from Oakham, Ian Holdsworth from Far Cotton, and Greg Roberts from All Saints Peterborough. Those three parishes cover a very wide spectrum on the socio-economic scale. I chose them for that reason, and because each of them has offered and shown hospitality to our guests from Korea in recent years. (I also invited a woman priest whose parish met the same criteria, but sadly she was unable to come.) Our three clergy were each able to spend time with the incumbent of a roughly comparable Seoul parish, to worship and preach there on a Sunday, and to start thinking about how a parish-to-parish link might work in their situation. I hope that before too long we can publicise how those links are beginning to develop. I would be keen to take a few more incumbents in future years: please get in touch if you might be interested or would like to hear more.

Bungoma

Bishop John and others visited Bungoma at the beginning of October, celebrating the centenary of the Anglican Mission which eventually became the diocese, and marking the end of our diocesan link. Friendships and individual contacts will of course continue. Any further donations to be sent to Bungoma via our diocesan office should be sent in to arrive before the Christmas break.

A New Link Diocese

A small group has been looking into the possibility of a new link partnership in the developing world, both through the Anglican Communion Office, and via direct links with suggested places. Our criteria have not been too limiting, but so far the right diocese hasn't come onto our radar. We are going to wait a while before looking again.

Clergy Ministry Reviews

From the New Year we are bringing in a simpler system of clergy reviews. These are compulsory for all clergy serving under Common Tenure, and have great benefits, but those of us responsible for maintaining the system are conscious that we could do it better. It may take a little time to bed the new system in, but in essence it will mean that each priest in parish ministry (except curates who have their own training programme) will have just one "review" meeting a year. One year will be my pastoral visit to your home, which I am continuing to do and to enjoy on a three-yearly cycle. Another year will involve a visit from one of my senior team (suffragan bishop, dean, archdeacon, bishop's chaplain). The third year will involve a visit from one of the Training Team based at Bouverie Court, and will focus particularly on training needs and opportunities, helping us to identify and meet your needs in a more personalised way.

This means that, for the time being at least, we are stopping the "peer review" or "consultant assisted review" element of the programme. I am hugely grateful to all those, clergy and lay, who have acted as reviewers in recent years. We will of course seek to use their gifts in other ways.

Conflict Conversations

Conflict is inevitable, in ministry as in life. We are all called to enable the church to grow. Sometimes this can lead to anxiety and conflict in our churches and relationships. How we handle ourselves in the midst of this is a significant aspect of our leadership. Conflict is never comfortable, though sadly some people seem to enjoy it rather too much. And some run from it, even though the tendency to avoid conflict can seriously weaken ministry and leadership.

A small group working within the Training Team is now offering "Conflict Conversations" to help us in this area. You might want someone to chat with, informally and confidentially, about a particular conflict you are facing (or avoiding, or dreading). You might feel the need for a facilitated conversation – someone being there in the conflict situation to help you deal with it better. You might even have reached the position where some sort of mediation is necessary.

The aim of this service, which is offered free to clergy, LLMs and churchwardens, is to:

- help you understand what is happening in the conflict and in the wider church system, and your own response to it;
- help you to avoid the escalation of a conflict situation;
- enable healing as early as possible in yourself and the relationship;
- help you and your church grow through this experience.

I commend this initiative to you, and hope it is well used. It could make a very significant difference to our ministry. Details are on the diocesan website:

www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/church-resources-adult-education-and-training/conflict-conversations

Or just enter “conflict” in the search box on the home page.

Bishops’ Office Staff

We welcome Suzanne Carter to her new role as Bishop John’s PA, and Franz Guerge as our Admin Assistant. I believe very much in team working, so Alex, Suzanne, Franz and Tim my Chaplain, share an open-plan office and can to some extent cover for each other – though of course confidential matters are kept confidential, and they have access to a private meeting room whenever they need to see anybody one-to-one.

Communion by Extension at Christmas

I say this regularly, but we have a number of clergy newly in post since I last said it, so here goes ...

I hereby give blanket permission until further notice for any parish in the Diocese to have Communion by Extension on Christmas Day (and Easter Day). The service should be: according to the liturgy and rubrics authorized under Common Worship (see link below), led by a Reader or Deacon holding my licence, and using elements consecrated earlier that day or on the Eve of the Festival. I hope this means that every parish can have Communion on Christmas Day without giving the clergy an impossible workload.

If you haven’t got the relevant liturgy and notes, you can find them here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/extension.aspx>

Communion by Extension on other occasions should be the exception rather than the norm, as clearly intended when this provision was introduced. Each proposed service has to be agreed by me, and I will be looking to see that it is an exception rather than part of a regular pattern, and that the request has been agreed by the relevant PCC.

Bishop’s Charity 2017

My charity next year, to which confirmation collections and other donations will go, is shared between two locally based Christian charities working with ex-offenders. Caring for people released from prison, helping them to find housing, work, and appropriate networks of support, is vital and very much at the heart of our Christian values. **C2C Charitable Trust** (formerly Crime to Christ) is based in Northampton, and **Hope Into Action** is Peterborough-based. Both do important and worthwhile work, and I am very glad to support them. We will produce a flier about this which could be incorporated into confirmation service leaflets.

2017 Roadshows

Some of you will remember the Roadshows I and others led in 2014. These were an attempt to communicate something of our missional and church growth priorities, including the cost implications, to a wide audience. The turnout was good, there was much appreciation, and the follow-up YouTube clips have been widely viewed.

I have decided to repeat the exercise next year, with another series of Roadshows aimed at PCC members, but open to anyone. Again the theme will be our diocesan vision, with the focus very much on where we are now and where we can go, and the intention of getting as many people on board as possible. I am hoping to make use of bigger and more comfortable venues: last time we were slightly constrained as more people came than we had planned for. Each Roadshow will be on a Saturday morning, with good coffee and pastries as part of the attraction.

Provisional dates are 28 January, 4 February, 29 April and 6 May (the nearest my diary will allow to a block of four!) Each will notionally be for three deaneries, but all venues and dates will be publicised, so people can come to any one. As soon as we have the details we will send them to you, to Churchwardens, and to PCC Secretaries. Please encourage PCC members in particular to come to one.

Bible Day – 18 March 2017

Publicity is already going out for the Bible Day, where I will be looking at the importance of the Old Testament for our life in the church and the world today. We will also have a number of practical workshops. I am excited by that, and grateful to those who are doing the organising. As usual, this is for anyone who uses the Bible with others in any way: preachers, teachers, homegroup leaders, youth and children's leaders ... Please make it known, and consider bringing a group from your church.

Archbishop's Call to Prayer – Ascension to Pentecost 2017

Most clergy will have heard about this initiative directly. This from me is simply by way of reminder and commendation.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York invited parishes to join a wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost this year. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in this, in churches of different traditions around the world. For 2017 the Presidents of Churches Together in England are joining with the Archbishops to make the call to churches of all denominations in England. Archbishop Justin is extending this to the whole Anglican Communion, and the World Methodist Council to Methodist Churches worldwide.

The aim is to join with other Christians and Churches in prayer, each of us praying specifically for individual people to come to know Jesus Christ for themselves. There are and will be plenty of resources on the 'Thy Kingdom Come' website: www.thykingdom.co.uk

Licensed Lay Ministers Day – 23 September 2017

Every autumn we have a service at the Cathedral to license new LLMs. Every five years (next due in 2018) this becomes a much bigger event, re-licensing all LLMs who want to commit for another five years. I am thinking of making a much bigger event in the years in between those five-yearly services: something along the lines of an annual Celebration of

Licensed Lay Ministry, with a whole day of events, teaching, workshops, and fellowship, which would include the licensing of those newly trained. We have the cathedral booked for 23 September next year, and I'd love to hear from LLMs, or from clergy who have LLMs in their ministry teams, as to whether you think this might be a good idea (or not), and any ideas you have to help it go well.

Ministers Conference – 13-16 November 2017

You should have your 2017 diary by now. Please put our Conference dates in and keep them there. Stipendiary clergy are expected to attend, while self-supporting ministers and licensed lay ministers are warmly invited. The publicity is doing the rounds. I am excited by the plans so far, and look forward to seeing you there.

Pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine – Spring 2018

I am hoping to lead another Diocesan Pilgrimage to the lands of the Bible, and have provisionally booked the dates 23 April to 2 May 2018. The intention would be to take a party of 80-90 people, so we can conveniently travel around in two coaches. I am very grateful to the Revd Paula York, who had agreed to take on the admin role, and will co-lead the pilgrimage with me. We will look for two others to assist us. They could be clergy or LLMs, and each would have pastoral care of one of the coaches. This pattern worked very well for our 2013 visit. Brochures should be out soon, but I wanted to let you know in advance. I am excited about this, and hope you will feel able to publicise it, maybe even to join me.

There could be complications over pricing, and in the extreme these might even lead to cancellation, though I hope and pray that doesn't happen. Our initial quotation is just under £1,800 per person (in twin rooms, more with a single room supplement), but much of the cost is in US dollars, and a falling pound could affect the price quite significantly. We will keep a careful eye on this, ensuring that any who need to drop out if prices rise too much can do so at no cost.

Looking Outwards

It may seem that much of the content of this long letter is about our internal affairs as a Diocese, and little about the situation in our communities, our country, and our world. I am well aware of that, but believe that we need to be leading a Church that is healthy and strong, precisely so we are better equipped to reach a very needy world with the good news and the love of Christ. Thank you for sharing with me in that great enterprise.

I look forward to seeing most of the clergy at our study day next week.

With all good wishes.

Donald