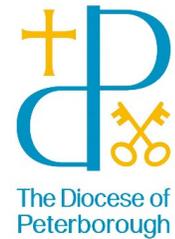


4 August 2017



BISHOP'S LETTER No 21

From Bishop Donald To the Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers

cc Bishop's Council, Diocesan and Cathedral Staff, Lay Chairs, Yaxley Deanery Clergy and Lay Chair

Dear friends

August greetings. I don't normally write at this time of year, and appreciate that you may not see this until later in the month, depending on your holiday dates. However, I want to keep you up to date, and put a few matters on record. This year is turning out to be one of many comings and goings. Valued people moving on, others changing roles, others joining us. I want to record our thanks and good wishes as a diocese to some, and our greetings and welcome to others.

Bouverie Court

Miles Baker has now ended his wonderful nine-year stint as Mission Enabler then Director of Mission. Early in my time here I encouraged him to move from a focus on deanery mission planning to parish growth action plans. That involved much more work, but Miles has been quite outstanding in that area, and in building a Mission Team, rather than simply having individuals based at Bouverie each doing their own thing. He has encouraged many people in mission, and has helped his team members grow and develop in their roles. We wish Miles and Dawn much joy at they move to Coventry Diocese.

Rona Orme has been our Children's Missioner for ten years, and has totally transformed the ministry among children in this diocese. There are so many Sunday Schools, Messy Church groups, and other activities going on, which simply weren't happening before. There are so many children's leaders who Rona has encouraged and/or trained. She is moving on at the end of August: she goes with our deep appreciation and thanks.

Guli Francis-Dehqani will be finishing as Curate Training Officer in mid-autumn, prior to her consecration as the first Bishop of Loughborough (suffragan in the Diocese of Leicester) on 30 November. She has done a great job for us, with growing numbers of curates, and much more attention being paid by the national church to the standards of curate training in the dioceses. Many thanks to her for doing such a key role so very well – and for serving as the Bishop's Adviser on Women's Ministry.

Miranda Robinson has been a first class Director of Education, steering courses for our Church Schools through the always-changing and frequently rough waters of government education policy. She has set up and run the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust, which enables us to continue to support Church Schools as they convert to Academy status. She has done a huge amount in appointing and supporting head teachers, and in helping schools raise their standards. She is stepping down from the leadership of PDET this autumn, and retiring as Director of

Education at the end of the year. She will be greatly missed, and we wish her and Terry a long and happy retirement.

We are looking to appoint a new Curate Training Officer, and a new Director of Education, in September, both probably to start work in January. These are posts which we have to fill to comply with legislation and statutory regulations. Sadly, we cannot appoint direct replacements for Miles and Rona, important though their work is. Diocesan finances continue to be tight: parish share receipts are back to the levels of two years ago (*thank you for that*), but that still doesn't cover the costs of parish clergy, let alone those who serve in the Peterborough Office or at Bouverie Court.

However, with some reconfiguration of the teams at Bouverie Court, and with more voluntary help, I believe we can continue to offer a very good package of support to our parishes – always remembering that mission, growth, children's ministry, and all these things, only happen at the parish level. The diocese does not do mission, or achieve growth, or lead people into faith and discipleship. The job of the diocese is to support parishes as they do the work. Furthermore, some of the changes we are making are very timely. It is good from time to time to reassess priorities, and the way we do things. This is an important opportunity to do that.

Bouverie Court has been labelled as our Conference, Training, and Resource Centre. We are changing that to our **Department for Mission and Ministry**. The Education Team will stay much as it is, but the other three teams will be reconfigured with new responsibilities. Instead of teams for Mission, Training and Vocations we will have: **Children and Youth**, led by Pete White; **Mission and Development**, led by Liz Holdsworth; and **Vocations and Formation**, led by Steve Benoy. Children and Youth will be recruiting a volunteer to hold the brief for children's ministry, supported by a group of folk involved in that work in their own parishes. Mission and Development will offer growth action plans, and will be responsible for clergy ministry development, but will also be offering other ways of supporting mission and ministry in parishes, and looking to develop lay ministry much more. Vocations and Formation will hold together vocations to ordained and lay ministry, and the early training of both clergy and lay ministers. I am confident that these changes will enable us to continue to do a very good job, and indeed to do some things better than before, but they will inevitably involve some disruption and re-thinking for the Bouverie staff. We have an excellent group of people working for us: do support and encourage them.

The Cathedral

Bruce Ruddock has left his role as Precentor of the Cathedral, which he had held since 2004, taking early retirement because of ill health. He and Vivien have moved to Sussex, and Bruce is currently undergoing treatment for prostate cancer. We are grateful to Bruce for long and faithful service, and wish him and Vivien well.

Jonathan Baker, who came to the Cathedral at the same time as Bruce, initially served as Canon Pastor, then became Canon Missioner, and has spent most of the last 18 months as Acting Dean. His contribution in all three roles has been outstanding. He moves back to Yorkshire this autumn, to be Vicar of Beverley Minster. We will miss him and Sue enormously.

Tim Sledge becomes Dean on 15 October, joining us from Romsey Abbey, but well known to many for his time in the diocese as Miles Baker's predecessor. In recent years he has become a

nationally known figure for his work on church growth and youth evangelism, as well as for leading and growing a major church. A trained musician before ordination, Tim brings many skills and much experience which seem just right for this major role, and I very much look forward to welcoming him and his wife Caroline.

Appointing two new residentiary canons is my responsibility, though I will involve Tim Sledge very closely in that process. They will be part of his team at the Cathedral, so it is right that he has a major say in who he has to work with. I hope that he and I can start work on those appointments before his official start date. Clergy have to give three months notice when they move on, and it would be good to have at least one new canon in place in January.

Northampton Methodist District

Many of you know that the Methodist District Office is based at Bouverie Court. We have very good relations with our Methodist friends, and want that to continue.

Peter Hancock has just finished his time as District Chair, and we wish him well. He is being replaced in that role by **Helen Cameron**, whom we warmly welcome. As I did with Peter, I am authorising Helen to lead services of Holy Communion at Bouverie Court, where I hope she will join the rota of those who lead the Wednesday lunchtime service. Under our Church's Canon Law I also hereby give permission for her to preside at Holy Communion, or to preach, at any parish in the diocese if invited by the incumbent.

Bishop John Flack

I mentioned John's move back to Wakefield in my last letter, but he officially finishes as honorary assistant bishop at the end of this month. He will be hugely missed. Many many thanks and best wishes to him and Julia.

That's it for now. Do have a good August.

Every blessing

Donald

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