

1 March 2018

## **BISHOP'S LETTER No 22**

**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***

I write eight years to the day after our move to Peterborough. There was ice on the ground in the Cathedral Precincts then too, in fact rather more than we see today. These have been happy and good years, in the main, and I look forward to several more.

It was so good to see many of you at our conference in November. I am still reaping the benefit of the fellowship and the teaching. I hope to see you for our next ministers' conference, again at Yarnfield Park, 9-12 November 2020.

Our diocesan YouTube channel includes video recordings of the conference talks, as well as short summaries of my roadshows from last year. Do make these known, and make use of them. <https://www.youtube.com/user/peterboroughdiocese>

### **Welcomes**

A warm welcome to: our new Dean, **Chris Dalliston**; our new Director of Education, **Peter Cantley**; our new Canon Missioner, **Sarah Brown**; our new Curate Training Officer, **Carys Walsh**; our new Assistant Diocesan Secretary, **Sue Ratcliffe**: all of whom started in January - and to all who have joined us in ordained and lay ministry roles over recent months.

### **Parish Share**

A big thank you to the many parishes which met the share request in full last year. The outcome was certainly better than in 2016, though we are not yet paying our way. Good leadership and teaching in this area, especially by the clergy, are essential. I want to make two further points.

First, It really isn't on for parishes to hold back share for payment later in the year (or in the early weeks of the subsequent year). In order to pay our clergy on the last working day of each month, the diocese has to send that money to the Church Commissioners payroll team in the middle of the month. I am not asking parishes to pay by mid-month, but surely it is not unreasonable to expect regular monthly payments. I understand that in some cases it is PCC treasurers who hold money back and pay late; in other cases different people are responsible. I ask those of you who chair PCCs to make it absolutely clear that payments should be made monthly.

Second, the payment of parish share should be the first call on parish funds, not a matter to be considered when you know how much is left after "more pressing" expenditure. I understand the temptation to think that we will give what we can towards the share when we have paid for the repairs or the refurbishment, but if paying for ministry is not a parish's first priority, then the priorities are wrong.

### **Cathedral Confirmation – 31 March**

As always, I shall be confirming in the Cathedral at the Easter Vigil. The service begins at 8pm. Parishes are welcome to bring candidates (though Bishop John and I continue to be very happy to confirm in parish churches on Sundays). Please let my chaplain know if you want to be involved, and how many candidates you will bring, by Friday 16

March. [tim.albanjones@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:tim.albanjones@peterborough-diocese.org.uk)

### **Easter Communion – 1 April**

A reminder for any who need it: I give permission for any parish in the diocese to offer Communion by Extension on Easter Day (and Christmas Day), provided the service is led by a Deacon or a Reader.

### **Looking Ahead – 29 September and 15 November**

Our annual **Celebration of Lay Ministry** will take place in the Cathedral on 29 September. This will include the five-yearly renewal of licences (for those whose safeguarding requirements are up to date – see below), as well as worship, encouragement, training and fellowship for all licensed lay ministers. Further details will follow.

Our **Clergy Day** this year will be on 15 November, again at the Cathedral. All stipendiary clergy are expected to attend. Self-supporting ministers, and chaplains, are warmly invited. This is also to be a day of worship, encouragement, training and fellowship, which we hold in the years when there is no residential ministers' conference. Again, further information will be sent out nearer the time.

### **The Leprosy Mission**

You may have seen that I have accepted an invitation to serve as a Vice President of The Leprosy Mission. This Christian charity seeks to demonstrate Christ's love and compassion towards leprosy sufferers, helping them to find healing, dignity and life in all its fullness. It is committed to seeing a significant reduction in the number of new cases diagnosed of this tragic disease, and lives fully transformed.

The thing that is striking about leprosy is that its sufferers are so stigmatised. I can't think of any other illness a person can get that, in some countries, constitutes legal grounds for divorce or for expulsion from one's community. Despite being thought of as a biblical disease, leprosy is far from being consigned to the past. A new case is diagnosed every two minutes, and there are millions of people suffering the stigmas of severe deformity, banishment, and isolation.

I am hoping to make a difference personally by speaking out, and by challenging our government to use some of its huge overseas development budget for leprosy research and support. Leprosy is on the World Health Organisation's list of "Neglected Tropical Diseases". Our government rightly funds work with some of these, but excludes leprosy. I have spoken on this in the House of Lords, and will continue to campaign in various ways.

I would like to draw your attention to the forthcoming World Leprosy Sunday 2018 campaign which offers a way for churches and The Leprosy Mission to work together. The campaign focusses on the story of one family living in Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world. Habsou, now aged 57 and the mother of Mariama, was diagnosed with leprosy as a young child. Since then her life has been one of shame and rejection by her parents and the uneducated community in which she lived. As a teenager she received treatment but by that time leprosy had attacked her body and she was forced to beg and marry a leprosy affected

man who unfortunately died whilst she was pregnant. Her daughter Mariama, now aged 23, was considered tainted and dirty although she has never had leprosy and was also forced to marry a leprosy affected man. She could not complete her education and her greatest desire is that her daughter Saoude, now aged eight, will break free from the chains of leprosy. An education and a job for Saoude could save her from the same fate that her mother and grandmother have had and with the money she would earn, Saoude would be able to look after her mother and grandmother.

I know that we all have our own commitments to support different aspects of gospel and kingdom work in the world, but I ask you to consider encouraging your church to pray for the success of the World Leprosy Sunday 2018 appeal, and perhaps booking a speaker to attend one of your church services or mid-week groups? To make things easy, you can designate any Sunday of your choice for this focus. There are plenty of resources available: call The Leprosy Mission Supporter Care Team on 01733 370505, email [post@TLMEW.org.uk](mailto:post@TLMEW.org.uk) or visit the website [www.leprosymission.org.uk](http://www.leprosymission.org.uk)

I have designated The Leprosy Mission as my Bishop's Charity for this year. Confirmation collections, and any donations I receive during the year, will go to this good cause. If you are planning a confirmation you will receive information in a format which can be included in service booklets or on notice sheets.

### **Safeguarding**

I draw your attention to our Safer Church policy and procedures, and the other materials available on our website at [www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding). Safeguarding must be a regular item on every PCC and APCM agenda.

Clergy and lay ministers need to keep their training and their DBS certificate up-to-date; if the DBS lapses, or if training to the national C3 level is not completed as required, I have no option but to suspend someone from ministry until those conditions are met.

### **Licensed Evangelists**

Melvyn Pereira is stepping down as Warden of Licensed Evangelists after seven years in this role. I thank him warmly. I am looking for a new Warden (a priest or licensed lay minister): someone with a heart for lay ministry and evangelism, someone who will enjoy getting our evangelists together occasionally and encourage them, someone who will share in the overall leadership and strategy for lay ministry in the diocese. Please let me know if you might be interested.

With much gratitude for our fellowship together in ministry, and with every blessing for Lent and Easter.

**Donald**

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

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