

## **BISHOP'S LETTER    No 23    26 July 2018**



### **From Bishop Donald    To the Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers**

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

#### ***Dear friends***

Very warm greetings (over 30 degrees as I write this, in stark contrast to the below-zero temperature when I wrote in March). Most of what I want to say looks forward to the autumn, but I take the opportunity to wish you a good summer break, or if you have already been away, a relatively quiet and peaceful August.

A number of clergy have recently taken up incumbencies in the diocese, or are going to over the coming months. Also, we have new lay ministers being licensed in September. A very warm welcome to all of them. I mention two new clergy, and two new lay staff, in more detail below, but this does not in any way detract from my greetings to all who join us.

#### **New Precentor – 16 September**

At Evensong on 16 September we will be welcoming our new Canon Precentor to the Cathedral. **Rowan Williams** comes to us from being Chaplain to the University of York, and Minor Canon assisting the Precentor at York Minster. She has Master's and Doctor's degrees in different aspects of liturgy. I and the Cathedral community very much look forward to her joining us, and I am glad to say that she will also have a presence in the Diocese beyond the Cathedral walls. I am appointing her as Bishop's Adviser in Liturgy and Worship, not to advise me on those areas (that is my chaplain's job), but to advise parishes on my behalf. That is an important role, though it has been in abeyance for the last few years. For her first few months, Rowan will need to spend almost all her work time getting to know the Cathedral, and its huge programme of worship events, but quite soon I expect some of her skills and wisdom to have an influence further afield. Clergy or lay ministers who are planning changes in worship patterns, or who need to see new life in your liturgical offerings, do feel free to contact her once she is in post. From her installation her email address will be [precentor@peterborough-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:precentor@peterborough-cathedral.org.uk)

#### **New Honorary Assistant Bishop – 22 September**

As they retire, bishops are expected to leave the diocese where they served, and may be licensed as Honorary Assistant Bishop in their retirement diocese. This means they can perform episcopal duties (confirmations, licensings, etc) on the diocesan bishop's behalf. For some years, we enjoyed John Flack's ministry in this way until he and Julia moved back to their beloved West Yorkshire.

I am delighted to say that Bishop Ed Condry has moved into the diocese on his retirement as Bishop of Ramsbury (suffragan in Salisbury Diocese). Ed and his wife both have roots in

Northamptonshire, and his curacy was at Weston Favell in the early 1980s. I shall be licensing Bishop Ed as Honorary Assistant Bishop at Diocesan Synod on 22 September, after which he will be able to exercise episcopal ministry among us. We need to keep a check that he is not being asked to do too much (this is a retirement ministry), so contact with him or requests for his ministry will be through my office.

### **Celebration of Lay Ministry – 29 September**

This is becoming an annual event, not just for licensing new lay ministers, though that will happen during the Eucharist, but as a whole day of worship, encouragement, training and fellowship for all lay ministers who hold my licence. I very much want to affirm and encourage lay ministry as it develops and grows, and this day will be a big part of that, in the same way that our autumn clergy day is for the ordained.

Lay ministers: once we have received your paperwork for the five-yearly renewal of your licence, you will receive an invitation to the day with full details.

### **Developments in Lay Ministry**

A few dioceses still have Readers (formerly known as Lay Readers) as their only form of licensed lay ministry. Some years ago, we added Lay Pastoral Ministers and Licensed Evangelists to the mix, both doing a two-year course whereas Readers train for three years. We are now adding further possibilities. People can train as Lay Chaplains, and other options are under consideration, such as Lay Administrators. Our training is also becoming more flexible: for example, a Lay Pastoral Minister will be able to do the training in funeral ministry which has previously been restricted to Readers. All our two-year courses will include some study of the Bible, of basic pastoral care, and of sharing the faith, and there will be other options depending on what sort of ministry the student is likely to exercise. We are also requiring, as we do for clergy, some continuing study and learning.

This plethora of new licensed ministries, while I believe wholly good, can look confusing in terms of the many options and titles. I think it is right to simplify this as much as possible, so at the diocesan level we will just use two titles: Readers and Lay Ministers. The new licences for Lay Pastoral Ministers, Licensed Evangelists, and so on, will simply say Lay Minister. Of course, we will have a record of which training options people have taken up, and we will maintain a team of Wardens to oversee the various ministries people can exercise, but we are trying to encourage maximum flexibility. In future, the Reader course will be a single year of extra training on top of the two-year Lay Minister course: this will make it much easier for Lay Ministers to “step up” to Reader ministry without having to start training all over again. Within parishes, it is up to the Incumbent and PCC to decide what titles may be appropriate for individuals, and these will often reflect their role more precisely, so someone who holds my licence as Lay Minister may well be described in their parish as, for example, “Lay Pastor” or “Parish Evangelist.” That is entirely appropriate: as much simplicity as we can achieve at the diocesan level, and as much clarity as possible within the parish.

To add to the confusion (or, I hope, to the clarity) we are continuing to offer one-year courses, such as for lay worship leaders, children’s ministers, homegroup leaders, and now also lay pioneers. These have been a great blessing to many parishes. Those who complete the course receive a certificate signed by me, but their ministry is authorised within the parish rather than licensed by the bishop. These are valuable ministries, and I am happy to see more people trained for and exercising them, but the care, oversight (and discipline if necessary) is entirely the responsibility of the parish clergy, whereas a licence from the bishop necessarily brings people under diocesan authority.

## **Clergy Day – 15 November**

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. I am grateful to Pete White and our Children & Youth Team who are putting the programme together. Further information will be sent out nearer the time, but please make sure the date is in your diary.

## **Bishops' Office**

Bishop John and I are very well served by the staff in the office in Peterborough. We have had some staff changes recently, so it might help if I introduce the current team. Jackie Newman has retired after a year as my temporary PA. I am very grateful to her for excellent work and support. **Alex Tolley** is back as my PA following her maternity leave, but now working part-time in the office, with some hours working at home. She will deal with emails every day, but be present in the office roughly alternate days. It is good to have her back. **Tim Alban Jones** continues as my Chaplain, though he is also Acting Precentor at the Cathedral until Rowan Williams joins us in September. It will be good to have him fully back in post! **Suzanne Carter** continues her good work as Bishop John's PA. To cope with Alex going part-time, we have made another change. Franz Guerge, our admin assistant, has moved on, and we have welcomed **Rachel Lomas** as office secretary. She is in every day, and already doing a great job.

If you phone the office or call in, you might encounter any of Alex, Tim, Suzanne or Rachel. They share an open-plan office, though there is a private meeting room available if any of them needs it. Any of them can take messages for any of the others, and in many cases whoever answers the phone can deal with your query. John and I are so glad to have such a good team working with us.

As a reminder, the office phone number is 01733 562492.

## **Christmas Communion**

Many of you know this, but for the sake of our newer clergy, and as you get into your autumn programmes and start planning for Christmas: I hereby give permission for any parish in the diocese to offer Communion by Extension on Christmas Day (and Easter Day), provided the service is led by a Deacon or a Reader, and that the authorised form of service is used.

On other occasions, clergy should request permission for Communion by Extension from me on a case-by-case basis, indicating PCC agreement, that the minister will be a Deacon or a Reader, and that the authorised form of service will be used.

## **Confirmations**

Again, this may be mainly for new incumbents, but it might be a useful reminder for others. Bishop John and I (and now also Bishop Ed) are very happy to confirm at the main service in parish churches on Sundays, however small the numbers are. We are of course also willing to take deanery, benefice, or combined confirmation services if that works for you. As Assistant Bishop in Ely Diocese I am also happy to confirm on the same basis in the parishes of the Yaxley Deanery. Every Easter Eve I also confirm in the Cathedral at the 8pm

Vigil Service, and clergy from the Diocese or from Yaxley Deanery are welcome to bring candidates. For any requests for a bishop's visit, for confirmations, celebrations, or just a "normal" Sunday, please contact my office. Sunday mornings tend to book up six to twelve months ahead, though afternoons and evenings are often more flexible.

### **Grants from the National Church**

In the depths of time, the Church Commissioners subsidised clergy stipends in almost all dioceses. For the last dozen or so years that has only applied to dioceses in the poorer areas of the country (and we don't count as that, whatever you may think) – this is the core reason that we have had to see substantial parish share rises in recent years: as far as stipends and most other areas of expenditure are concerned, we have to pay our way. In recent years there have been block grants to dioceses for their Mission Fund. This has enabled parishes to apply to us for funding for a particular time-limited or pump-priming project: hiring a youth worker, or setting up a social action project, for example. Now this national Mission Fund has been wound up, and replaced with a new national initiative, the Strategic Development Fund, from which dioceses can bid for significant grants which are likely to have a diocesan-wide benefit in terms of growth.

I am delighted to report that we have been awarded two such grants this year, and I congratulate those involved. One is to help us resource our stewardship work better. The grant will pay for an assistant stewardship officer for three years, effectively doubling our capacity to help parishes with stewardship campaigns. **Pete Squires** joined us in this new role in the spring. He is based at Bouverie Court, working with **Paul Adams**.

A larger grant has been secured by **Pete White** and the Children & Youth Team. This will fund an expansion of the work we now do with youth interns, so that we can train church youth workers as apprentices up to degree level. While they are training, they will be placed in parishes and deaneries. Once qualified, we hope and intend that they be employed in the diocese. This is an exciting and imaginative project, which I think will have real tangible benefit for our parishes and communities.

### **Great Vocations Conversation**

I commend to you this campaign sponsored by the Church of England's Ministry Division. The core idea is to invite clergy and lay ministers to have a vocation conversation with one person each month. If you sign up to do this, you will be sent helpful resources for these conversations. We have already had four referrals to explore ministry as a result of people being encouraged in this way to visit the vocations page on the C of E website. Further details of the scheme are at [www.churchofengland.org/greatvocationsconversation](http://www.churchofengland.org/greatvocationsconversation)

### **Festival Churches**

You may have seen national publicity last year about Festival Churches, and we already have a few functioning in that way. The idea is that churches which serve a very small parish population, sometimes even under one hundred people, and can't get more than a handful to their normal Sunday service, move to "Festival Church" status, whereby they only have occasional services on special occasions: maybe Harvest or Remembrance or to coincide with a village summer fair, and maybe for village weddings or funerals. They will be part of a wider benefice, so the requirement for weekly services and regular communions can be observed in other parishes in the benefice. This can work very well, and I commend it in the case of very small communities which cannot sustain a regular Sunday service.

One complication is the calling of banns. If all the PCCs in a benefice agree, I can sign an order to allow banns or marriages which would normally happen in one particular parish to take place in any parish of that benefice.

If you are interested in the Festival Church idea, please talk to your Archdeacon. Contact my office if you want to pursue the idea of an order for marriages and banns to take place in any church in your benefice.

### **Lone Working**

I am asked to draw your attention to our lone working policy; there are two relevant documents to read:

<https://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/downloads/safeguarding/toolkit-sw-1.docx>

<https://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/downloads/safeguarding/toolkit-sw-2.pdf>

### **Parish Share**

Diocesan Synod in September will be setting the parish share for next year. This year so far has seen an increase in receipts over last year, but not at the average 3.5% rise that we needed to pay our bills. I am hugely grateful to all who are paying monthly and in full, though if we don't see our collection rate going back from the current 90% to the near 95% rate we were seeing until two years ago, we are going to be faced with tough decisions. Please do all you can to teach committed and sacrificial giving (as part of our discipleship, our response to God's love in Christ). And do feel free to contact your Archdeacon or the Stewardship Team if you need help in this.

With much gratitude for our fellowship together in ministry,  
and with every blessing for the summer and autumn.

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