



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

I think it is still the new year until the end of January, so I wish you all a very happy, peaceful and fruitful new year.

The Leprosy Mission

I am keeping the Leprosy Mission as my Bishop's Charity for one more year. Confirmation collections, and other gifts I am given during this year, will once again go to this excellent work which has its England and Wales headquarters in Peterborough. Thank you for your generosity over 2019: £4,500 of your donations has gone to the Leprosy Mission via the diocese, and I know some has also gone directly from parishes.

World Leprosy Day is officially the last Sunday of January, but the Mission encourages parishes to mark the day on any convenient Sunday in the first four months of the year. If you would like a speaker or resources, please look at the Leprosy Mission website, where you can request a speaker and download resources: leprosymission.org.uk

I am travelling to Bangladesh tomorrow for eight days as vice-president of the Leprosy Mission, visiting mission hospitals and a research centre, and celebrating World Leprosy Day with the Bangladeshi Church. Bangladesh alone has 4,000 new cases of leprosy diagnosed each year. Please pray!

Bishops' Office Staff

Alex Tolley goes off on maternity leave at the start of February. We wish her well, and look forward to her return. For the next year-and-a-bit, she will be replaced by **Joanne Gibson**, who starts work today, initially overlapping with Alex and learning the job from her. Joanne has been a Lay Minister in Braunston, near Daventry. She and her husband André have moved temporarily to Peterborough for this job: André will continue to run their IT business.

We have also recruited a Conference Administrator for our three-yearly Ministers' Conference in November. **Nicola Young**, who is PCC secretary at Ketton, will start soon in that role, initially just a few hours a week, but moving up to full time for a few weeks before the conference and during it. You can expect to hear from her before too long!

Rachel Lomas will return from her maternity leave as Office Secretary on 1 March. **Ben Kirk** leaves us at the end of February: we thank him for covering for Rachel over the last year, and wish him well.

A warm welcome to Joanne and Nicola, and welcome back to Rachel. The updated office contact details are at the foot of this message.

Clergy MDR Scheme

We get regular questions about how our Ministry Development Review works, so here is as simple an explanation as I can come up with.

Most parish clergy serve under Common Tenure, which has very clear rules in a number of areas (compared with the older Freehold system which simply has guidelines). Under Common Tenure, the Bishop has to provide an MDR scheme for the diocese, ensuring that all eligible clergy have a review of their ministry at least every two years by or on behalf of the Bishop. In the years since this has been in place, we have tweaked our scheme a couple of times, and what we now do is this:

We run a three-yearly programme of MDR. Each year, about a third of our incumbents and associate/assistant priests have a review with a member of the senior staff (Suffragan Bishop, Archdeacon, Dean, or Bishop's Chaplain), a third meet a member of the diocesan team tasked with providing the ongoing training which forms part of MDR, and a third have a pastoral visit from me to their home. My visit is not part of MDR: it is something I choose to do, and is strictly pastoral, normally with no written record; but for convenience it forms part of the three-year cycle. Glitches do happen in any rota, not least when people move or are on sabbatical or off sick, and occasionally people have been asked to take part in two of these meetings in one year and none in the next, but we do our best to keep to the cycle. All the MDR meetings, both with senior staff, and on the training theme, are recorded on a written report, signed by the priest and the reviewer. I read all of these, and they go into your file. If training or other needs are identified, we seek to meet them, and the clergy are invited to highlight any issues they want especially drawn to my attention.

Parish Share

Returns from 2019 show an increase over 2018 of a little under 2%. Many thanks for the hard work and prayer which has gone into achieving this. This is a bigger rise than last year, and a cause for some thankfulness. However, it does not quite meet the 2% pay rise we awarded last year, and it falls some way short of the 3.5% we needed.

While there is not an immediate crisis, it is clear that we are spending more as a diocese than we are receiving, and we have to correct this within the next two to three years. Those of us responsible are looking at a number of options, none of which will be easy. Please pray, and get your parishes to pray, about this. And please continue to teach joyful sacrificial giving as a key part of our discipleship.

Gluten-free Communion Bread

It is right that we offer gluten-free communion bread for those with coeliac disease or gluten sensitivity, but we have to be careful how we do this. Some people have mild sensitivity, but for others it may be a major problem. Therefore, the gluten-free bread must not be on the same plate or in the same container as normal bread, it must not be touched by hands which have touched normal bread, it must not be exposed to the small particles of bread which are there when bread (even sealed wafer bread) is broken. I suggest that gluten free bread should always be on a separate plate or patten, and remain covered until it is needed, and that the person distributing the bread should offer the plate to the communicant for them to take the bread for themselves.

In some parishes, people with high gluten sensitivity are offered a supply of gluten-free wafers to keep at home. They then bring a piece, wrapped in foil or cling film, to be consecrated on a separate plate at the service, and taken, unwrapped, and consumed by the communicant. I commend this method where it reassures people for whom gluten is a major problem.

If you have not done so, I suggest reviewing the way your parish makes gluten-free communion bread available for those who want or need it.

Operation London Bridge

This is the name for the plans which are always kept in readiness, and revised from time to time, in case of the death of a senior member of the Royal Family. We hope and pray that it will be a long time before they are needed. The plans are put together by Buckingham Palace, the Government, the Metropolitan Police, and Lambeth Palace. They contain a fair amount of detail for a ten-day period of national mourning, with the involvement of government, local authorities, the news media, bishops, cathedrals and a few major civic churches. It would not be appropriate to publish the plans widely until they are needed. However, from time to time bishops and others are asked what parishes might be expected to do if such a death occurs. There are two answers which I can give for the time being.

First, clergy will be notified, probably by the relevant bishop's chaplain, within a couple of hours of the plans being triggered, and told what they need to do and how they are their parishes fit into the wider plan. Second, diocesan liturgical advisers have been given material which parishes can request, to help with advance planning of appropriate times of public prayer. This is on the understanding that the existence of these plans, or their contents, is not advertised and made public. Preparation may well be helpful, but public dissemination of plans for an event which has not yet happened is most definitely not. Incumbents in this diocese who would like some help with advance liturgical planning should contact Rowan Williams: canon.precentor@peterborough-cathedral.org.uk

Forthcoming dates

The rest of this letter is a list of dates and events. Please read them carefully, deciding which are of particular importance to you and/or your people, and praying for as many of them as you are able.

Parish Nursing – 16 February

I am delighted that the parish nursing movement is growing steadily around the country. We have a small number of parish nurses in the diocese, but I would like to see more. On Sunday 16 February at 3.30pm the Cathedral will host a service to celebrate and pray for this ministry, and I will formally license our parish nurses. All are welcome. It would be helpful if you could let my office know if you plan to attend this service. Please email Joanne Gibson joanne.gibson@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Easter Eve Confirmation – 11 April

As usual, I shall be confirming at the first Eucharist of Easter in the Cathedral. The Easter Vigil starts at 8pm on Easter Eve, and runs straight into the Confirmation and Communion. We finish by 10pm. Any parish or school may bring candidates, who with their clergy will be asked to attend a brief rehearsal at 7pm. Please let Tim Alban Jones know numbers and names by a fortnight before, Saturday 28 March.

Celebration of Vocations – 3 May

This year marks ten years since we began our concerted effort to increase vocations to ordained ministry. There has been much encouragement in that time, with very significant numbers of vocations (ordained and lay), people entering training, and those being ordained or licensed. It seems right to celebrate this, so for our Vocations Sunday, 3 May, we are

inviting back to the Cathedral all who have been part of this journey in recent years. The service will be at 6.30pm, and is open to all.

Visit to South Korea – 20 May

I shall be visiting our friends in South Korea for ten days in the spring, mainly in Seoul Diocese, but also briefly the smaller dioceses of Daejeon and Busan. For a week I'll be accompanied by four of our parish clergy who have expressed interest in building parish links: this is a growing feature of our diocesan link. I will stay on for a further day, as I've been invited to take part in the Seoul Cathedral Ordinations which always happen on 27 May, marking the formation of the Anglican Church in Korea.

Lambeth Conference – 22 July

Every ten or so years, the Archbishop of Canterbury invites all the bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion to join him for a major conference – called the Lambeth Conference, but nowadays held at the University of Kent, outside Canterbury. The conference takes place from 22 July to 3 August this year; Bishop John and I will both attend. For a few days beforehand, English dioceses are asked to host some of the overseas bishops, to give them a taste of England and of our church life. We will have a group of ten bishops from round the world, including the three Korean bishops, staying in the diocese for the long weekend before the conference, so don't be too surprised if you hear of one visiting or preaching at a church near you on Sunday 19 July.

Celebration of Lay Ministry – 26 September

This is our annual day for all Lay Ministers, with hospitality at the Palace, training activities at the Cathedral in the morning, and the licensing of new lay ministers at a Celebration Eucharist in the afternoon. Further details will follow for lay ministers, but please note the date now – and please, lay ministers, remember that this day is intended as part of the ongoing learning which is a requirement of being relicensed. As near as can be for people exercising a voluntary ministry, this day is a three-line whip for all lay ministers. I will look forward to seeing you there.

Ministers' Conference – 9 November

That leads us on to the three-line whip for stipendiary clergy, our three-yearly four-day Ministers' Conference. Self-supporting clergy and all lay ministers are also warmly invited, and we hope many will come. Further details will follow before too long from Nicola Young, our Conference Administrator, but for now please note the dates, and that we will once again be at Yarnfield Park in Staffordshire. There will be no formal conference fee, but as I indicated a while ago, we will invite and welcome donations towards the cost, either from parishes or individuals, given the state of diocesan finances.

The overall theme will be Old and New, and I believe we have a good line-up of speakers. We will be asking if any who are coming are interested in leading a workshop or seminar during the conference, so do be ready to offer that if you would like to when the details are publicised. The last three conferences have been excellent times of worship, teaching, fellowship and relaxation, and I am very much looking forward to this one.

I am conscious that the conference includes Armistice Day, and that in recent years a number of towns and villages have held civic memorial services on that day as well as the nearest Sunday. I am sorry for the clash of dates – we booked the centre over three years ago – and will do my best to avoid that clash in the future. For this year, I encourage incumbents who are asked to lead Remembrance events on 11 November to find suitable retired colleagues to cover that duty for you.

The Conference will replace our annual clergy day this autumn, but I gladly take this opportunity to thank Charlie Nobbs and his Mission Team for organising such a good day for the clergy back in November. We have studied all the feedback forms in detail, and have taken on board good suggestions for the future, but the strong message in feedback was what a good day this was.

Holy Land Pilgrimage – 12 April 2021

This is a long way ahead, but I am frequently being asked when my next Holy Land pilgrimage will be. The trip last October was fully booked, and I think a great success. Final details are still being confirmed, but I am as certain as I can be that we will go again on 12 April 2021, a ten-day trip including travel, and be able to take 50 pilgrims. If you are interested, details should be available well before Easter.

Aren't we busy with so much on? However, the main thing remains our daily and weekly walk with the Lord, and with our people and our wider communities. Let's continue to pray for and support each other in that. Ministry is always a privilege, but for me it is also a delight to continue to serve such a group of clergy and lay ministers as your bishop.

With greetings, and thanks for our fellowship and shared ministry.

+ Donald

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