

## The Bishop of Peterborough writes

### Clergy and laity together

**One of the keys to the health and growth of the Church is the relationship between clergy and laity. In particular I am thinking of lay leaders (churchwardens, PCC members, etc), and of lay ministers (Readers, evangelists, pastoral ministers, musicians, youth workers etc).**

A strength of the Church of England is that the laity have a significant voice. They are involved in the appointment of the parish priest, and of the bishop. They have the right to bring proposals to synods, and to veto changes which bishops or clergy want to introduce. In the parish the churchwardens share the leadership with the vicar or rector. Traditionally the chair of the diocesan finances is a lay person, as also the chair of the church's national finances. Much of our worship leading, teaching, evangelism and pastoral care is done by lay people, as is most of our engagement with social issues and with civic authorities.

A layman recently said to me at diocesan synod (after paying me a compliment): "perhaps you will ordain me now!" That was meant in jest but it highlighted a sad truth, that many people still see the clergy as promoted laity, and ordination as a step closer to heaven. Not so! We are all on that journey together. We have different callings, roles and

responsibilities, but let's not forget that laypeople can be saints, and the ordained can be sinners.



Sadly sometimes clergy-lay relationships in a parish can be a cause for concern. The recent proliferation of lay ministries is wholly welcome as far as I am concerned, but it can raise issues. Clergy even in relatively small parishes have to learn to be team leaders or conductors rather than solo performers. Trained lay ministers may have acquired knowledge or skills which the clergy do not have, or do not have time to exercise: this can lead to tensions. Occasionally, sadly, a parish will send someone for diocesan training, and will make a fuss of them when they are licensed by the bishop, but then the parish priest will not really know how to use them – or even just not want to use them – in ministry.

Church life and ministry are about being together, working together, serving together. Let's do all we can to welcome more lay people into ministry (both within and beyond the church). Let's learn together to work as teams.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald".

Rt Revd Donald Allister

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