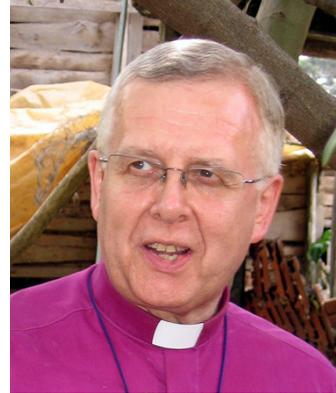


# The Bishop of Peterborough writes

## Ember Days

**A**re you into Ember Days? They always fall in threes: the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of the same week. There is one Ember week in March, one in June, one in September, and one this month.

The derivation of the word “Ember” varies according to who you ask, but its meaning (either from Anglo-Saxon or from Latin) is “quarterly”, four times a year. Hundreds of years ago these weeks were set aside by the Church, for gentle fasting and prayer. Gentle fasting means nothing between meals, and meat no more than once a day, so it isn’t too arduous! But the idea was to have one week in each of the year’s four seasons for slightly more focused prayer.



The Roman Catholic Church introduced the rule, which we have never had, that ordinations could only take place on an Ember day – though the Ember Day prayer focus in RC Churches these days is often something more general like world peace.

In the Church of England, although we don’t restrict ordinations to Ember Days, the Ember Days became prayer for those in ordained ministry, and particularly for more people to hear God’s call to consider ordination. Now that is something very specific which I like the sound of.

We have seen more people answering that call in recent years, including more young adults which is wonderful. But those people are almost all men, and they are almost all looking for full-time paid ministry. I’ve no objection to that, but wouldn’t it be good to see more women offering, and more for voluntary (“self-supporting”) ministry as well? (The answer to that question is a definite Yes!)

So perhaps you will commit with me to pray on this month’s Ember Days, 9,11 and 12 December, for God to call more young women and more self-supporting ministers into ordained ministry in this Diocese. Please do!

*Each time I write a letter for December magazines someone says “Why didn’t you focus on Christmas?” The answer is that Christmas only occupies the last week of December: there’s plenty else going on as well which shouldn’t be forgotten. But just to complete the picture, and for after you have prayer your Ember prayers, do have a very joyful and peaceful celebration of our Lord’s birth.*

With very best wishes

+Donald

+ Donald

**Diocese of Peterborough - Magazine Resource – December 2015**  
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