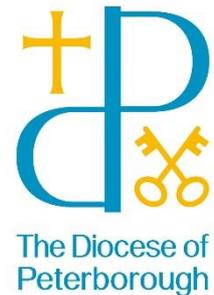


BISHOP'S LETTER No 37 2 May 2021

From Bishop Donald

To: Licensed Clergy, Licensed Lay Ministers, Clergy with PTO, Bishop's Council, Diocesan and Cathedral Staff, Diocesan Registrar, Churchwardens, Deanery and Diocesan Lay Chairs, final-year Ordinands, final-year Lay Ministry students; copied for information to Yaxley Deanery Clergy and Lay Chair



Dear friends

Warm greetings to you in this continuing Easter Season. We rejoice that our Lord is risen, alive, and loves us.

In addition to the usual recipients listed above, I am sending this edition to all our PCC Secretaries. That is an opportunity to thank them, as well as the rest of you, for all the hard work, the time and skill given voluntarily in the service of Christ's Church in this diocese.

A Third Archdeaconry?

I'm also writing to all of you as part of a consultation exercise. With this letter you will find a paper entitled ***A Third Archdeaconry***, outlining a proposal to make us more missional, and to relate better to local government. The changes wouldn't affect the deaneries of Brackley, Brixworth, Daventry, and Towcester, and would only marginally affect Greater Northampton. Wellingborough deanery would be most affected, with the loss of two benefices, and a move of the rest into a new archdeaconry, but still as Wellingborough deanery. The other deaneries would find themselves in new archdeaconries, but with no internal changes.

This paper has been to Bishop's Council, who are happy for me to consult. I would like you to think about the proposal, discuss it in PCCs and deaneries if you wish, and let me have your thoughts, preferably by email, via my PA [Joanne Gibson](#).

Bible Teaching

Quite a lot of people have watched my series of talks on Hebrews. Dozens have also taken part in one or other of the question and answer webinars. Thank you for that, which I take as encouragement. The material is still available, together with one of the webinars, via this link: [Bishop Donald's Bible teaching series](#).

In response to positive feedback, I have also produced a series of four half-hour talks on Galatians, probably the earliest New Testament book, and utterly revolutionary in its intent and effect. That series is also available for church or group or personal use, via the link above. I am also offering a zoom question and answer session on the Galatians series from 6.30 to 7.45pm on Tuesday 15 June. If you would like to join, please [click this link](#).

Holy Land Pilgrimage

I had planned to take a group in April this year to the land where Jesus lived and ministered, died and rose again. Obviously that wasn't possible, but the trip has now been rearranged for the last ten days of March next year. These are not cheap holidays, though we do work to keep prices down, and we don't fly or stay in luxury at all. However, many of those who have been with me have testified, as I do, that faith is renewed (or even discovered for the first time), and that huge blessing results – often accompanied by many more questions and perplexities, but with a new way of looking at everything.

Here are some comments from participants in our last two pilgrimages:

- *3 years ago today at this time we were on the plane to our pilgrimage, it was life changing and only God knows where it will take us ... such an awesome trip*
- *... my daughter and I have found it truly life-changing.*
- *Lots of “goosebump” moments, and a few tears, both of sadness and absolute joy.*
- *I was exhausted by the time I got home and am still trying to process it all. Not sure I ever will.*
- *We learnt so much, gained new insights; were challenged, encouraged and strengthened in our faith. The fellowship with our brother and sister pilgrims was wonderful.*
- *It was a wonderful emotional privilege to be part of such a trip. Quite different from just a holiday in a sunny historical country. I'm sure it has made a profound difference to my understanding of our Lord's story & mission & to my own faith.*
- *... fascinating trip that gave us a much broader perspective of challenges in the region as well as the life and times of Jesus ... and history between then and now.*
- *We are yet to come down from the experience and it will influence our devotions for ever!!*
- *The experience was spiritually enriching and provided much food for thought and helped me grow as a disciple*
- *It was an experience we will never forget and will certainly continue to make a difference to our own journeys in faith.*

You can find the details, and even book to join us, [here](#). I or my planning team, will happily answer any questions by email [here](#).

Mental Health Survey

Earlier this year our mental health working group visited every deanery in an attempt to raise awareness about wellbeing and mental health. Some of you may remember Wellbeing Sunday which we marked in January this year and which will become an annual event. One of our clergy has just trained to be a Mental Health First Aid trainer and would welcome expressions of interest about undertaking training in mental health matters. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact my chaplain, [Tim Alban Jones](#). He would also be pleased to hear about any wellbeing initiatives taking place in your parishes, and to offer encouragement to those who are thinking of setting up such initiatives.

Sister Rachel Overton

I am sorry to report that Sister Rachel will be leaving us in the autumn. In the ten years she has been in the diocese she has brought much blessing, not least in setting up our **Holy Listening** course, and in establishing and leading our **Fellowship of Spiritual Directors**. Spiritual direction is an important discipline for those in ministry, and it is vital that those offering this have appropriate training, supervision, and oversight. I am so grateful to Rachel, and wish her well as she prepares to move on.

I hope to announce a new Spirituality Adviser before Sister Rachel leaves. Watch this space.

Samantha Jackson

Sam has been a brilliant assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. Sadly, she is moving on to another post this month. We will be recruiting a successor as soon as we can.

John White

I am deeply sad to report the death of John White, chair of our Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC), and a good servant of the diocese. Our sympathy and prayers are with his widow Jane, who lost her husband on their Golden Wedding Anniversary, and with their church family at St Peter's Weston Favell.

With love and best wishes.

+ Donald