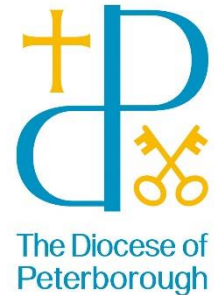


**BISHOP'S LETTER    No 39    5 September 2021**

**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

Welcome back to a new season of ministry. I hope you've had some refreshment and renewal over the summer. I do understand that many of us are still tired, and have had more than enough of all the rules, restrictions, and changes that we've seen over the last year and a half. I don't think we are out of the woods yet. We are now entering the new world of living with covid, adapting some of our practices permanently, and always ready for short-term restrictions (some imposed by government, others self-imposed) as we see further spikes and waves of what is still a deadly and evolving disease.

Some of what follows is covid-related, or covid-modified. Other items may mark a return to more familiar life and ministry issues.

**Archdeacon of Oakham**

A reminder that Gordon Steele's farewell will be at Cathedral Evensong at 3.30pm on Sunday 31 October. We don't know what restrictions might apply, but we are hoping for a good turnout, a presentation, and refreshments afterwards. If you would like to come, please let [Rachel Lomas](#) know, with numbers if you are planning to bring others.

We will be interviewing for a new Archdeacon of Oakham on 13 September. Please pray for the interview panel and the candidates. I hope we will have someone ready to start work in late January or early February.

During the vacancy, Archdeacon Richard will assume the legal duties of the Archdeacon of Oakham (matters such as faculties, finance, clergy housing and clergy discipline), while the jobs that don't legally need an archdeacon will be shared out between other members of the Bishop's Management Group and the Rural Deans.

**LLF Taster**

A reminder that we have a diocesan taster session for those interesting in using the ***Living in Love and Faith*** materials for group study in parish or other contexts. This is a zoom session, from 9.30am to 1.00pm, on Thursday 16 September. Advance booking is necessary. For further information, or to book, please contact [Alex Tolley](#).

## **DBS Changes**

This is going to affect all our clergy and lay ministers, and many others too, so please bear with me. The Disclosure and Barring Service is now requiring that DBS renewals should take place every three years instead of every five. We can and will phase that change in over a year or so, but it will mean extra work for a lot of us (and additional expense to the diocese).

Lay Ministers (including Readers) are the easiest. We currently link the DBS renewal with the five-yearly re-licensing, next due in the autumn of 2023. We are going to bring that re-licensing forward to 2022 (15 October if you have next year's diary to hand), and will be doing new DBS checks on all lay ministers in the run-up to that. From then on, DBS checks and relicensing will take place every three years in late September or early October.

Licensed clergy (parish, chaplaincy, diocesan staff) are fairly straightforward. We will phase this in, and you will simply hear from my office when a new DBS disclosure is required. Please take action as soon as you do hear.

Clergy with Permission to Officiate (PTO) are a bit more complicated, as these permissions have to be time-limited, but start and end throughout the year. Once again, you will hear from us, but you will find your five-year PTO over time being replaced by a three-year one, and the DBS check moving in line with that. A reminder that, under new rules, applying for PTO is considerably more complicated than it used to be. If your retirement ministry is mainly in one church or benefice it would be much more straightforward to transfer from PTO to being an assistant priest. That needs your incumbent's and PCC's agreement, but it is something I encourage where possible.

## **Sunday Sermons, Tuesday Psalms**

There is still take-up, so I am continuing to offer a video-recorded sermon on the gospel reading for each Sunday, and a meditation on a Psalm each Tuesday. You are free to make whatever use of these you wish. There are links to these on the [diocesan website](#) and on [YouTube channel](#), and advance copies of the sermons are available from [Rachel Lomas](#) in my office. I have now recorded up to the end of October.

## **Clergy Days**

We are still planning for our Ministers' Conference in November next year. In the years in between conferences we aim to have a clergy day for gathering, teaching, worship and fellowship. We couldn't do that last year, and I am not sure we can sensibly get us all together this autumn. However, as promised earlier this year, we are going to offer an online alternative. We will have two clergy afternoons, one for each archdeaconry:

Oakham Archdeaconry: 2.00-4.00pm, Tuesday 9 November;

Northampton Archdeaconry: 2.00-4.00pm, Thursday 11 November.

Please, clergy, make a note of the relevant date. We will give further details and zoom links nearer the time.

## Anna Chaplaincy

A few of our Readers have recently been commissioned as “Anna Chaplains”, and I thought you might like to know more about this ministry, offering spiritual care to people in later life, which is supported by the Bible Reading Fellowship. They have a dedicated website with fuller information: [Anna Chaplaincy](#). Here is the short version:

Anna Chaplaincy operates across the country. It is focused on visiting older people wherever they may be living, whether in residential and nursing homes, sheltered housing, retirement complexes, or private homes. It is an ecumenical, community-based, chaplaincy approach to promoting the spiritual welfare of all older people.

Anna Chaplains also help and support relatives and carers to understand better the spiritual issues that people face in the latter stages of their lives. They support staff working with older people by offering spiritual support to them as they deal with the, sometimes stressful, circumstances that they encounter when working with the people in their care.

Anna Chaplains are commissioned by their local church or group of ‘Churches Together’ and the chaplaincy is intended to complement and run alongside ministry already being done by churches. An Anna Chaplain may be an ordained minister or licensed lay minister, a volunteer or an employee. Initial training is provided and there are numerous opportunities to meet other Anna Chaplains on a regular basis for prayer, discussion and mutual support. There are now over 160 Anna Chaplains throughout the UK.

Anna Chaplain, as a title, was chosen for its echoes of Anna, the widow and faithful older person who, together with Simeon, recognised the baby Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfilment of God’s promises. The Anna name reinforces the fact that much of the work is with those who have suffered loss and bereavement. It is hope-filled ministry, highlighting the tradition of older people having prophetic voices, and which recognises that many older people have wisdom to impart to younger generations and life lessons to share. The name Anna means ‘gift’ or ‘grace’.

With thanks for our shared ministry,  
and very best wishes for the autumn.

+ Donald