

## **BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 17**

### **To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese**

**22 June 2020**



Dear friends

Our love, prayers, and deepest sympathy to Diane Whittaker, Rector of the South Cleley Benefice in Towcester Deanery (moving soon to be Rector of the Astwell Benefice in Brackley Deanery). Diane's husband Jon died in his sleep over the weekend.

#### **Diocesan Cycle of Prayer**

Some folk have missed the printed cycle of prayer during lockdown. It is still being produced, but, for the time being at least, online only. You can find it [here](#).

#### **Opening Churches**

If you are sorted and confident about the re-opening question, by all means skip this section! There is still a lot of confusion. This doesn't surprise me, as the advice we receive from the Government changes quite frequently. Two questions keep recurring: Is supervision necessary? and Can't rural churches be treated leniently?

Supervised opening was specified when the government first announced this relaxation, and I specified it a fortnight ago. Since then, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (churches come under Communities in government-think) has dropped that word, but issued detailed guidance: that churches must ensure that social distancing is maintained, that they maintain a record of how many people come in, that there should be a one-way system, with hand sanitising at entry and exit points, the removal of soft furnishings, and so on. They say that rural churches might be able to do this with signposting and no supervision, but that this must be a local decision. I think it is easier to comply with one or preferably two stewards or welcomers present, but that this is not compulsory.

There is less risk in rural areas, but a number of rural people have been seriously ill with covid-19, tragically some have died, and some are still in hospital. Rural areas are not places of zero risk, and Northamptonshire has suffered significantly. We are responsible for the well-being of those who come into our churches. Of course we want people to come in, but we must not take unnecessary risks.

For clarity, I repeat what I said last week: the decision is for the Incumbent, in consultation with the PCC, in the light of guidance from the national church and from the diocesan bishop. And I repeat what I said a few weeks ago: that the lifting of lockdown will be messy, and will involve a postcode lottery; I don't like that, but I can't change it. And I repeat what I will keep saying: that I will support you, whatever decision you make.

To look ahead: my guess is that it will be no more straightforward when we are allowed to re-start public worship. Watch this space! And thank you for your forbearance.

## Daily Hope

There have been numerous initiatives to help in lockdown. You may not have seen **Daily Hope**, which comes from the Church of England, and which I gladly commend.

This is a free phone line for those who might struggle to access services and prayers online. Many of you are doing great work in new ways, but we will all know of some people who for one reason or another cannot get online. **Daily Hope** is particularly aimed at older people: did you know that less than a quarter of those aged 75 or more regularly go online?

People who specialise in ministry to older people have worked with IT and communications staff, liturgists and musicians to produce this phone service. It includes well known hymns, stories behind hymns, the option of joining Morning or Evening Prayer, and even the latest public health advice.

You might like to try it out before making it more widely known among your older folk. **0800 804 8044** is the Freephone number, and you can read more [here](#).

## What day is it?

Early in lockdown many of us, without our familiar routines, were losing track of the days. In last week's bulletin I lost track of the weeks, and put the forthcoming ordination retreat a week earlier than it really is. Do please pray for our eight priest-candidates and our eleven deacon-candidates, as they go on retreat by zoom from this Thursday, 25 June, to next Sunday, 28 June.

With love in Christ

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