

## **BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 27**

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

**9 November 2020**



Dear friends

### **Lockdown Blues**

Each of us, in different ways, has found this year a struggle, and the November lockdown intensifies that (and we haven't got to December yet!). Yesterday we had 858 covid deaths reported nationally, right back up to the horrifying numbers seen around Easter. Not many of those were in our area, but there is absolutely no room for complacency. The rate of increase may have slowed, but the numbers of cases, hospitalisations, and deaths, are all still increasing, here as elsewhere. Covid isn't going away.

Also not going away are the mental health effects of lockdown. Sad to say, but completely predictable (and predicted), more of our people, including more of us as clergy, are really struggling with the situation. We are social beings, and being isolated from normal contacts does us harm (even though it also saves lives during a pandemic). Church is about gathering together, and private prayer (important though it is) is no substitute for that. So there is real suffering, real damage done to many people, apart from the physical effects of covid as a disease.

Add to that "long covid", the continuation of the effects of the bug, which affects many of those who seem to have recovered from the initial infection. This can include an absolute sense of exhaustion which is hard to distinguish from a deep depression or breakdown. Maybe it is the same thing. We simply don't know enough yet.

These mental health issues can manifest in many ways, including physical ways, and we need to address them. This starts with each of us addressing our own wellbeing. God loves you, so love yourself. Take time, take exercise, eat healthily. If you are struggling, don't struggle alone. Talk about it (you can walk or exercise with one other person, and both phones and the new-fangled zoom-o-phones are still working). Talk to a friend, a fellow-priest, even a rural dean, bishop's chaplain, archdeacon or bishop. We are all in this together, and no-one is going to think the worse of you if you show weakness or are conscious of being a cracked pot or a frail vessel: you would be in very good company. And if you need help, ask for it, sooner rather than later. We are here for each other.

## **Living in Love and Faith**

This long-awaited new book, and suite of accompanying materials, is finally published today. Bishops, theologians, and others have been working for several years on a resource to help the whole church think through the whole area of sexuality. We are all encouraged to read, think, pray, discuss. Doubtless more on this in the coming weeks and months, but for now, get reading!

## **Diocesan Finance Team**

Mike Stobbs is retiring soon as our Diocesan Accountant, and moving away to Yorkshire. Mike has been a good servant of the diocese, and it will be sad to see him go. In his place, David Mason will be joining us as Chief Finance Officer (a better title for the person who leads the Finance Team). We look forward to welcoming him.

## **Friends of the Holy Land**

You may know this charity, which I regularly support alongside my Holy Land pilgrimages. It supports the poorest members of the Christian community in the West Bank and Gaza. Their plight is worse than ever this year with the covid-related drying up of pilgrimage income. You can see more, including their Christmas appeal, [here](#).

## **Bible Days / Lent Course**

For obvious reasons, I have decided not to hold our Northampton and Peterborough Bible Days next spring. Instead, I am producing a video teaching series on the Letter to the Hebrews, the much-ignored New Testament guide to following Jesus in a world where religious tradition could so easily lead us to miss the point. (Was that a bit blunt? The course is, naturally, optional.)

My intention is to produce seven half-hour video talks on Hebrews. These could be used by churches or individuals as an online Bible Day (with appropriate breaks for coffee, pastries, or whatever else keeps you alert), or they could be used as the basis for an online study course, with one talk and study each week in Lent.

More details to follow, but feel free to plan how you might want to use this material. The first Bible Day was planned for 6 February; Ash Wednesday is 17 February: all seven talks will be available by the start of February for you to use as you wish.

With love in Christ

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