

## **BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 32**

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

**20 December 2020**



Dear friends

A Sunday bulletin, and a bumper one. These are the times we live in.

Under Tier 4 for Peterborough, and Tier 2 for the rest of the diocese, with the Christmas permissions either removed or greatly curtailed, many of us and our people will be on our own or nearly so at Christmas. Then comes the post-Christmas break. For parish clergy, the perennial problem of time off at home, that is, time off in our primary place of work, seems insoluble. Let's commit to pray for each other – perhaps particularly for those in your neighbouring parishes and in your deanery – that we will find real relaxation and refreshment after Christmas, whatever our context and situation. That is my prayer for you.

Thank you for many kind Christmas cards and messages. It is good to be cared and prayed for – and to be made aware of that. This diocese gives great joy to me.

### **Tiers (and Peals) of Christmas Joy**

I wrote recently about permissions for bellringing. Belay that. No ringing can be permitted in Tier 4, and in Tier 2 it must now be restricted to Christmas Day only, and under the conditions I described last week.



People are asking about Christmas services, particularly in Tier 4, but also with the tightened restrictions for Tier 2. The rules for public worship remain unchanged, even in Tier 4, but the context and culture have changed very markedly with the new more infectious and faster spreading variant of the virus. Decisions about opening of churches, public worship, and so on, must be for each incumbent and PCC, and you know that I will support you in these. However, I want to stress that clergy, lay ministers, and others who are in the vulnerable or extremely vulnerable categories must take sensible precautions to keep themselves and their families safe. My rule of thumb is that, if you can feel reasonably safe in what you are doing (and it is within the rules), all well and good. But I am not asking you to do what feels unsafe or might damage your physical or mental wellbeing. If there are activities, even leading public worship, which you feel you cannot do, don't do them. You will have my permission to arrange Communion

by Extension, or for appropriate lay people to lead non-eucharistic worship. Just tell your churchwardens (and your PCC if you can), let me or your archdeacon know what you decide in this regard, and we will support you.

### **Wellbeing Sunday**

I hesitate to remind you, but mid-January each year sees the highest number of people taking their own lives. For good reason, 17 January this year is being marked as “Mental Health Sunday”, though in this diocese we are preferring to call it “Wellbeing Sunday”. I am so grateful to Tim Alban Jones, who has taken the lead on these issues since Bishop John became ill. He and his team are visiting deanery chapters, and I have heard appreciative comments from a number of clergy. Do make a note to mark that day in some way. All the lectionary readings can be seen as relevant, but Tim and his team have been gathering resources to help you mark the day appropriately, and those will be sent out early in the New Year.

### **Guli Francis-Dehqani**

Guli, who was our Curate Training Officer and is now suffragan Bishop of Loughborough, has been appointed as Bishop of Chelmsford in succession to (now) Archbishop Stephen Cottrell. Warm congratulations and good wishes to her.

### **James Atwell**

James, who was a hugely popular and effective Vicar and Rural Dean of Towcester in the 1980s and early 90s, has died recently. He moved from Towcester to become Provost then Dean of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, then later to be Dean of Winchester before his retirement. His ministry and leadership seem to have been hugely appreciated wherever he served. Our sympathy and prayers to his family.

### **Pilgrimage**

With reluctance, I have decided to cancel the Diocesan Holy Land pilgrimage planned for April next year. Israel seems about to go into a third lockdown, Bethlehem and other parts of the Palestinian Territories are already closed, the tourist industry there is not going to be ready to welcome large numbers of visitors in April, and I am far from convinced that flying out from this country will be safe or sensible by then. I have booked another trip for the last ten days of March 2022, and will publicise details of that in due time.

## **Bishops' Office Tier 4 and Holiday Arrangements**

With Peterborough now in Tier 4, I have decided that my office will not be physically staffed until at least the morning of Monday 4 January – and even then re-opening will depend on the lockdown situation in the new year. However, emails to [bishop@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:bishop@peterborough-diocese.org.uk) will be monitored, and dealt with if urgent, and likewise phone calls to 01733 562492, and old-fashioned post. If you need to be in touch, please do.



I intend to spare you a bulletin next week. You can expect “normal” service to resume in the New Year. Have a good Christmas, and a very good break.

With love in Christ

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