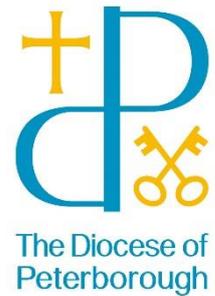


BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 33

To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese

3 January 2021



Dear friends

God's richest blessings for this Year of Our Lord 2021. I hope you have had a good break, even if an unusual one.

Back to the Future?

All the indications are that this month and next will be the worst of the whole coronavirus epidemic in this country. We need to be ready. A few of our parish churches had to cancel services at short notice over Christmas, and a few more have done so since then, because of outbreaks among the choir or the congregation.

Even the Tier 4 restrictions do not require churches to close, unlike the full lockdown last spring, so for now (pending Tier 5 or another lockdown) you have to make sensible decisions based on the rules, the national picture, and your local context.

An incumbent and PCC can make an emergency decision to close down for one Sunday, but anything more than that needs permission from the Diocesan Bishop. I trust you to know your context, and to make wise decisions. I hope you know that I will support you. If you think it is wise, or necessary, to close down for public worship again, please let me know and keep me in the picture. If you can stay open, confidently and safely, that is marvellous; but if you can't, don't be afraid of making tough decisions – you are not on your own.

New Year Thinking Caps On

In a new year, we do need to be looking ahead, not just coping with the present situation. You may remember that I concluded a letter to clergy and lay ministers in late November with a series of questions for us all to be thinking about. (In case you don't print those letters out, tie them with red ribbon, and keep them safe, you can find what I wrote [here](#) - Bishop's Letter No 34, 23 Nov 2020).

I still intend to return to those questions in due time, but, at this stage in the extended coronavirus saga, I have just a few starter questions for us all. Please, for a few minutes at least, look up, look forward, and ask yourself:

- How does my parish/ my chaplaincy/ my mission/ my pastoral care/ my teaching/ my ministry need to be different once covid is all over?
- What should or can I be doing now to be ready for those changes?

By all means get back to me with your provisional answers. Or just work on them for yourself for now. I'll be asking these questions too.

Bishops' Office

I have two pieces of very good news (certainly as far as I am concerned, and I am confident also for the diocese as a whole).

First, **Alex Tolley** is returning after her maternity leave, but to a new role. She wants to come back part-time, which wouldn't work as my PA, but will be ideal for a new position as my Projects Manager. She will run a number of events and activities: our ministers' conference in the autumn, the diocesan involvement with the Lambeth Conference, our discussions and input to the *Living in Love and Faith* project, our Korea link, a major database renewal and our GDPR responsibilities, and managing the Bishops' Office, among other things. She is starting now, one day a week, and this will go up to about two and a half days from Easter. Welcome back, Alex!

Second, **Joanne Gibson** has agreed to stay on as my full-time Personal Assistant, having served brilliantly for the best part of a year as maternity cover in that role. Welcome to the permanent team, Joanne!

Someone will ask how all this is to be paid for. In short, it won't cost the diocese or the parishes a penny. Bishops get an allowance for staff and other expenses from the Church Commissioners, and we have flexibility as to how we use it. I have regularly underspent, and will continue to do so, partly because most of my office staff (in fact, all of them except my PA) are part-time, but also because travel and hospitality were greatly reduced last year, and that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. I think the new office arrangement and team will be a real boon. Obviously, for the time being, most will be working from home most of the time.

Dennis Allsopp

Christine Allsopp was Archdeacon of Northampton from 2005 to 2013. In "retirement" she is Associate Priest at Lambourn in Berkshire. Her husband, Dennis, died on 23 December after a long illness. Our prayers and deepest sympathy to Christine.

With love in Christ

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