

BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 41

To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese

14 March 2021



Dear friends

Mothering Sunday

Greetings on this day when we give thanks for mothers, for the motherly qualities of God our Father and of the Lord Jesus, and when we remember our true mother: Jerusalem from above, the bride, the church. We rejoice in God's parental love, and in our new birth into the church's nurturing care.

Marriage Registration

The long-awaited new system of registering marriages, postponed from 2019, is being implemented this summer – a strange time to do it, if you ask me, but nobody has asked me. We will give more details as they come out, but here's a brief introduction.

Training for clergy is being rolled out by the General Register Office, rather than through the C of E, and this will be through a password protected online portal. This is not yet available, although it is planned to be ready in the next week or so. We aren't in control of the process ourselves I'm afraid, but we will do our best to ensure that all licensed and PTO clergy are notified.

Churches will need a new marriage record book. Church House Publishing are producing these, although they are not yet available.

(I very much regret this next bit, though I can see it makes sense.) The priest who takes the marriage will need to send the completed marriage document (online, I believe, and much more quickly than the present quarterly returns) to the appropriate Register Office to enable them to generate the Marriage Certificate. (In the original proposals, it was the couple themselves who were to send the marriage document in, but this has now changed to the celebrant.)

It is likely that there will be some sort of certificate which clergy can give to the couple, but this will just be a memento, and have no legal standing.

If the training offered seems inadequate or unclear, Anna Spriggs, our Diocesan Registrar, has kindly agreed to supplement it. Watch this space!

Divided we fall

I didn't watch THE INTERVIEW last week, being firmly of the belief that screens should be off by 9pm, but I've read numerous reports. Whatever the rights and wrongs on both sides of a family spat which has gone viral, it is clear that this is dividing people at a deep level. Are you on Meghan's side or the Palace's? Please note that I'm not asking that question, which is inherently divisive and destabilising. Similarly, horrified as we all are by the murder of Sarah Everard, I'm not asking whether there should be a 6pm curfew for men. Or whether we should or should not treat the covid restrictions as flexible. Or whether Brexit was wrong. Or whether Scotland should be independent. Or whether representative democracy has had its day. As a nation, we are deeply divided, and in real danger of becoming more so. As church, we should foster unity not division.

Traditionally, various institutions and cultural norms have held us together in a fairly high degree of peaceful harmony. The monarchy, the rule of law, a free press, marriage, the union, the supremacy of parliament, freedom of assembly and of worship, the House of Lords as a check on the tyranny of the majority, respect for other people and for different opinions, and so on. There are those who would undermine all of these. Social media highlight and seem to encourage intemperate and intolerant instant reaction and comment. Culture clashes are quickly magnified and blown way out of proportion.

Even in churches, debates on when and how to go back to worship in the buildings can become heated. Let us at least set an example at our local level, with consultation, then clear decisions taken by the incumbent and PCC, and the church uniting around those decisions. A challenge I know, but we could even be small lights or beacons on how to argue well and decide well, remaining united in a world which seems to prefer division.

Trusteeship

Many of us as clergy are trustees of local or national charities in addition to our legal roles as PCC members. I have been asked if there is any training for this, not least as there could be apparent conflicts of interest. I recommend two places to look: the [Parish Resources](#) website, and [Governance and trustees training](#) run by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). We will see if the NCVO is willing to run some bespoke training for us in the diocese: if so, it will be announced in our training bulletin.

Jean Wardle

Jack Wardle was Rector of Barton Seagrave from 1979 until he retired in 1996, and was well known to many in the diocese. He had PTO until his death in 2006. Sadly, his widow Jean died on 6 March. Our prayers and sympathy are with their family.

With love in Christ

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