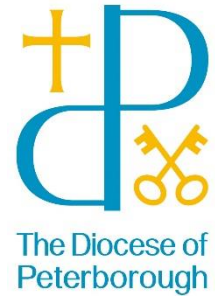


BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 47

To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese

9 May 2021



Dear friends

I'm currently enjoying another of my deanery visits. Four times a year I focus on one deanery for a few days, spending time one-to-one in their own homes with each of the parish clergy (except for the curates, who see Bishop John much more frequently). For the last fifteen months, I have conducted these visits on Zoom, but I look forward to drinking your coffee rather than my own when that is sensible and safe. However, back to the present moment. I really do enjoy these visits. Most of you know that I do not come with any agenda. This is not part of "ministry review" or "career development". I don't write anything down or add to your file. I am there purely pastorally: to listen, to pray, to get to know you better, to be there for you.

Maybe I do this because I still miss the regular systematic visiting of parish ministry, maybe it is because crowds scare me and paperwork bores me, mainly I think I do it because knowing and supporting the clergy is by a long way my top priority. Regardless of all that, the fact that I am currently in the middle of one of those deanery visits reminds me to thank you: for opening your homes and your lives to me, for sharing deep things, dreams and hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. It is a privilege to be alongside you.

I am seeing and feeling something different in my current foray into your lives. Obviously there has been a different dynamic with Zoom visits, fewer preliminaries and more focus. Obviously all our lives and ministries have changed markedly with covid and lockdown. Obviously we've all been frustrated to some degree, and learning new ways of doing things, seeing the joys and sorrows of ministry through different lenses. We take that as read. Also it is clear, and it was predictable, that the more extrovert among us would find lockdown harder and release easier, with the opposite being true for the introverts. No surprises there, though of course each one of us is different, and each one matters.

What is new, and startlingly so, is the degree of tiredness I see, real damage caused by the whole experience of the last fifteen months. It ranges from weariness to exhaustion, or from lassitude to post-traumatic stress. I am seeing torpor and tearfulness, sometimes a mixture. We are in the paradox that, even if we could go back to "normal", we can't. We are different. Some of us are damaged. All of us are tired. Many are exhausted.

So, please: don't rush back. Take time to recover. Have extra time off this summer. I'm not counting your days. Take longer breaks and a longer holiday. If necessary, seek my permission (which will be forthcoming) to close church down for a few weeks so you can have a break, or simply offer online material to your people. And, if time off doesn't heal you, talk to a bishop or an archdeacon, or a doctor or a counsellor. We want to help.

National Register and People System

You will be aware of the new “People System” and the National Register of Clergy. The People System is where your data will be held by the national church (legally speaking, by the Archbishops’ Council). This is still being built up, but it will contain the information which the church needs to know about you. You will have full access to it and know what is there. Only a very few others will be able to see that, and only if they need to know.

The National Register is the publicly accessible database which anyone can check to see that you are a bona fide minister licensed to a post or with permission to officiate. Crockfords used to serve that purpose, if people knew what it was and could find it in their local library, but for some years clergy have had the right to withhold their details from publication, which to my mind renders a directory nearly pointless; and people could stay in Crockfords even without a current licence or post. The IICSA inquiry, and safeguarding concerns, make it necessary to have a public register which simply lists those in good standing and active ministry. This will all go live on Tuesday. Very little information will be available about you, but just enough that people will know that you are an authorised minister of the Church of England.

With a system like this there will be teething problems. We have had a number of people working hard for weeks to ensure that our entries are correct. They know who they are, and I am grateful to them. We know of some glitches already with the way the central system displays the data sent from each diocese. People are working hard to iron those out. We can easily correct mistakes in our own data, but it is harder when previous posts in other dioceses are incorrectly listed.

The system will tell you to alert your diocese if you find errors. I get that, but please understand that it will be quite complex, and take some time, to deal with mistakes in historical records. Sometimes dioceses will have sent wrong information (as far as we know, ours is correct), but in other cases the software and data fields of the new system aren’t completely compatible with the many different databases which individual diocese were using. So please bear with us.

Please let us know of any significant mistakes in the current listings, such as someone being omitted or showing in the wrong job. We will put those right as soon as we can. If historic roles are showing wrongly, by all means tell us, but understand that correcting those will be less of a priority. The best contact for all this is [Alex Tolley](#) in my office.

New Marriage Rules

The *Guidebook for Clergy* from the General Register Office has been updated to take account of the changes in the marriage registration system. It is available [here](#).

With love in Christ

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