

# May 2020

## Lay Ministry Matters

### GREETINGS TO YOU ALL,

Yes – this is the third Lay Ministry Mailing in as many months, but I don't know when the next one will be. You will probably have already read that a number of the Diocesan Office staff are or will be furloughed, and most of us in Formation and Ministry will be off for a time. I am being furloughed from the weekend for a minimum of 3 weeks and potentially up to the end of June.



I am aware that for me there is a risk of blurring boundaries – I remain a Reader licensed to the South Gillingham Team and have many friends among the Lay Ministers across the diocese, and neither of those things change, but I will not be able to do the work I normally do, so if you email me in that time you will get my Out of Office message suggesting you email one of the Deputy Wardens in the Archdeaconry (their contact details are in this letter further on), or Canon Chris Dench on [chris.dench@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:chris.dench@rochester.anglican.org)

Being furloughed puts me in a similar place to all of you who exercise your parish ministries with the Bishop's Permission and are currently self-isolating or shielding. I know that for some of you not being able to take funerals for people from your congregations who you have known a long time has been painful, and I am reminded of the powerful words of the Methodist Covenant Prayer which I have said a number of times over the years, especially the line:

*let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,*



All of us in ministry can benefit from time out, stepping back and pausing, and focussing on the one who calls us rather than the work he called us to - but stopping is something most of us find hard to do. When I get the responses from Lay Ministry Development Reviews, the most frequent outcome listed is the need for a quiet day or retreat. I'm hoping to use these weeks subduing the earth in our garden, and reading books I have not previously found time to read – and of course furlough doesn't stop me praying for Lay Ministry.

This week is when our 2020 cohort of Lay Ministers were due to be licensed in the Cathedral, and that date has been in their diaries for a long time. It seems slightly surreal that the last time they were together as a group was the weekend we were at Worth Abbey for their pre-licensing retreat and 1:1 interviews with Bishop James – and we sat around on sofas and ate meals together at long tables! This cohort of Lay Ministers are going to be licensed virtually on Saturday, via Zoom. If you want to know how that will work, the plan is that the event will be recorded and then posted afterwards on the diocesan Facebook page and Twitter account. Please pray for these twelve LLMs, who are unable to share the joy of their licensing with each other or their families friends and parishes in the way previous cohorts have.

Melanie Bailey to serve in the parish of Christ Church Orpington.  
Amy Brown to serve in the parish of Holy Trinity Twydall,  
Ruth Burnham to serve in the parish of Borough Green  
Judy Carr to serve in the parish of Frindsbury with Upnor and Chattenden  
Tony Fitzpatrick to serve in the parish of St James Tunbridge Wells  
Heather Hawthorne to serve in the parish of Christ Church & St Paul Anerly  
Jeffery Hawthorne to serve in the parish of Christ Church & St Paul Anerly  
David Jefferys to serve in the parish of St Mary's Shortlands  
Tara Kunert to serve in the parish of Christ Church Beckenham  
Roger Laing to serve in the parish of St Paulinus Crayford  
Jaqui Olid to serve in the parish of Shorne  
Hayley Usmar to serve in the parish of St Justus Rochester

We still very much hope that they will be able to have a post licensing public celebration in the Cathedral, but none of us knows more than the latest government and CofE briefings about when that might be.

Have you read the research which suggests that a quarter of the population are tuning into online worship? And that some of them have never been to church in real life?

### **Young people lead resurgence of faith, and Vicar of Dibley tops a poll as the best screen priest to lead nation through the crisis**

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



▲ Dawn French as the Rev Geraldine Granger in BBC TV's *The Vicar of Dibley*. Photograph: BBC

A quarter of adults in the UK have watched or listened to a religious service since the coronavirus lockdown began, and one in 20 have started praying during the crisis, according to a new survey.

I read an article recently, referring to the ministry of “Digital Deacon” in a church. If yours is a church who does lots online the chances are you have some digital deacons supporting you. (The team in which I am a reader has been able to record weekly service and post them to You Tube entirely due to the excellent skills of someone who has not yet left school!)

Who might God be calling to equip the church of the future?

Vocations work in the diocese has not stopped, and whilst last Saturday's venue for It's Your Calling had to be cancelled, It's Your Calling has now moved online. If you know someone who needs a nudge to ponder where God might be calling them, please refer them to <https://www.rochester.anglican.org/ministry/vocations/its-your-calling/> where our vocations team are continuing to meet (virtually) with people.

The change of rules last weekend to allow nominated clergy or lay ministers back into church buildings to live stream worship so long as only members of their household accompany them, might mean that some of you are nominated minister. Lindsay, Bishop James' Chaplain, has asked me to alert you all to the fact that in this period of no public worship, there can be no permission given for Communion by Extension, since the service is by definition public worship.

Most permissions to take Communion by Extension are given for one off occasions, but some parishes, for example in vacancies, get ongoing permission for a period of time. Please be aware that **ANY** permissions to conduct public worship with Holy Communion by extension do not hold in the current circumstances when all public worship is prohibited. If you need further guidance on that I suggest you contact Bishops court or your Archdeacon.

Like Vocations, safeguarding doesn't stop – and Archdeacon Julie, who chairs the Diocesan Safeguarding Executive Committee has asked me to draw the safeguarding note – also attached – to your attention.

In my last letter I commended the Transforming Ministry website to you - <https://transformingministry.co.uk/> as a source of gathered resources which we could all find useful – and these are being added to.

If you want to do some serious study during the lockdown, the Westminster Theological Centre [wtctheology.org.uk/wtcresource/](http://wtctheology.org.uk/wtcresource/) are offering all their online courses for free until at least the end of June.

The online guided retreat has been so popular that the Spirituality Network in Rochester Diocese will continue to offer the opportunity until the 24 May.

This is ideal for those who feel drawn, at this time of lock-down, to spending more time in prayer . You are simply encouraged to put aside time each day for your own prayer.

If you would like to find out more, or to book a place, please contact Susanne Carlsson [susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk)

There are one or two more documents attached to this mailing:

“Reflections and survival tips in the current situation” from the Sheldon Hub. It was written for clergy but almost all the advice applies equally to lay ministers too. Be gentle with yourself – take care of yourself.

And for those of you in Rochester Archdeaconry “Mental Health Support in North Kent and Medway”.

Finally - These are the contact details for the Archdeaconry Deputy Wardens. Some of you will have met yours and know them well – others will not have met them yet - but I commend them to you all – as my colleagues and friends, and each of them is an experienced lay minister so please don't feel hesitant to contact them if you need someone to listen, or to chat with and pray for you.

**BROMLEY & BEXLEY ARCHDEACONRY:**

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With my prayers and best wishes for you all,

