

October 2020

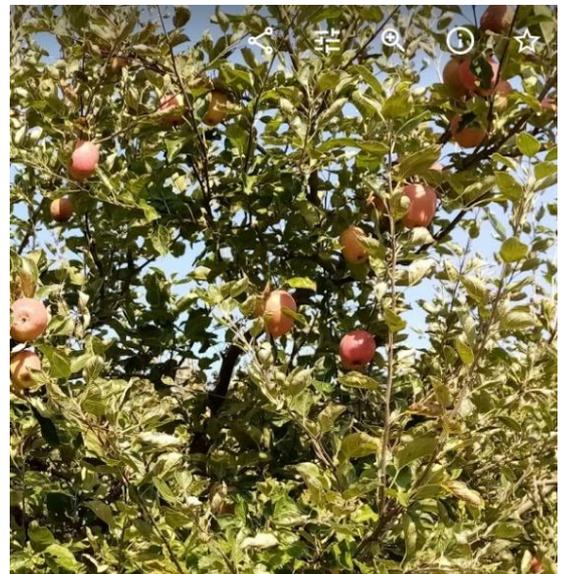
Lay Ministry Matters

GREETINGS TO YOU ALL,

This comes to you all from my dining room table once again, via Tricia's house, as most Diocesan Office staff are back to working from home. The office hasn't closed completely this time, but only a very few staff members are working there.

Tricia and I both ended our furlough in September – both of us had done some time completely furloughed and some partly, so I am very conscious that I have a lot of catching up to do. I have been touched by your understanding about that – but as I said in my previous letter please don't feel you can't contact me or nudge me about something you expected to have heard about by now.

Most churches are open again, though worshipping in a very different way – Harvest Festivals this year have not been like this time last year, and we look ahead to Remembrance Season and Advent aware that there will be much which we can't do. But among all the challenges there are positive signs of God at work. This week I had a phone call from an LLM whose ministry includes conducting funerals, and she said that although the limits of numbers mean many people who might previously have attended a funeral simply can't now, the resulting pared down service can feel much more intimate and personal for the family.



Official guidance continues to change, and I am impressed at how rapidly Jenny and Katerina in our Diocesan Communications team keep us informed. The weekly Digest continues to be a useful document in alerting us to what we need to know, as well as sharing ideas and resources. I know that some Lay Ministers are still shielding and facing a long winter ahead without much social contact. Please keep on praying for one another.

Lay Ministry Conference

Our annual Lay Ministry Conference has been booked since the start of the year at Christ Church Orpington on November 7th. When I met with Bishop James in early September we decided there might still be a possibility of some combination of real person meeting an online event, but since then the Rule of 6 has been enforced, and as I write there is much speculation of the rules for England being tightened again, so we have no option but to transfer this to an online event. I am very sorry that excludes a small minority of Lay Ministers who are not online, but for those of us who are, if you have “attended” any of the diocesan webinars this year, you will know that there are some advantages – no Saturday morning drives across the diocese with concerns about finding a parking place - but the fact that such a good number of you have gathered other years proves that the opportunities for meeting up with others is something most of us value, and this year we will miss that.



I'll send out more details in due course but for now **please keep the date free.**

In the last newsletter I wrote that there are lots of good news stories, where we have learnt new skills, discovered new opportunities, and seen the kingdom of God grow while the church buildings were locked.

You might have seen a couple of videos on our Facebook page:

Lisa Glasscote – commissioned Evangelist at St Philip's Tunbridge Wells spoke about being appointed to a new paid role in the church just before lockdown. As well as having to learn how to film teaching for children she hadn't had time to get to know, God nudged Lisa to create a community larder, which has been a brilliant way of the church serving the local community in lockdown.



Rose Robinson - Reader at Pip 'n' Jims in Walderslade has been creating online bible stories for their café and tots group – in the picture she is telling the story of the Walls of Jericho – with the help of Teddy!

Susan Trowbridge – Reader with PTO has told me about the weekday services she has been leading after the Farmers Market in Hildenborough, which has been slowly re-opening in a new way.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR PART OF THE DIOCESE WHICH MIGHT INSPIRE OTHERS ELSEWHERE?

St Benedict's Centre



Many of us have appreciated days at St Benedict's Centre over the last few years, either on courses or as personal quiet days.

The good news is that St Benedict's Centre is now open again for day guests. The cost is £10 because they cannot offer refreshments at the moment. There has been a full risk assessment, and people who have been to the centre have felt very safe and commended the risk assessment.

The opportunity for a quiet day is frequently an outcome of LMDRs (reviews), but for all of us this year has had additional stresses so if you would benefit from this please book, and if the cost is a problem please contact me.

To book, email

bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

Last month the Formation & Ministry Team had the first team meeting of 2020, and this is what a socially distanced a team day with face coverings looks like. I was on holiday, but my colleagues who were present were really pleased to have the chance to catch up with one another despite the distancing.



The Bishop's certificate and LLM modules are running this term through blending face to face teaching and zoom at the same time. This is working well.

There will be LLM modules beginning in January which will have limited space for existing Lay Ministers to join as CMD, and these are:

Anna Chaplaincy – people can join the module to become an Anna friend or an Anna chaplain

General introduction to chaplaincy – students have a placement in an area of chaplaincy they are interested in

Christianity in a world context – exploring Christianity sits within different cultural contexts

Community engagement – looking at how the local church engages in mission through social action

Reimagining Church – exploring new ways in which the church exercises ministry and mission responding to the social and cultural changes around us

If anyone is interested in joining one of these modules, contact

jane.winter@rochester.anglican.org who will give you more information including the dates/venue. Please be aware that some of these modules have been very popular in

previous years, and there are limited spaces which will be offered on a first come first served basis.

IICSA Report.

By the time you read this, you will all have seen the statement from Bishop James and Archdeacon Julie, and you will be very aware of the contents of the reports and the shameful failings of the church which we serve. You may have had people in the congregation or the community asking you about the report. Can I urge you to read it please – at very least the summary and recommendations, and to read the dedicated page on the Diocesan Website - <https://www.rochester.anglican.org/communications/news/time-to-quotlearn-to-repent-and-to-actquotsays-bishop-as-report-into-church-child-sexual-abuse-is-published.php>

Although the report included failings by lay Church officers and by Lay Ministers, the main thrust of the reporting has been the abuse by clergy, and this means that we, as Lay Ministers, might be more likely to be those to whom a victim or survivor might disclose abuse. Are you aware of the new Safe Spaces initiative by Victims Support? Details of this are on the webpage above – please do read this in case you find yourself in a conversation where you can direct someone to this. It is entirely possible that within our number as the lay ministers in the diocese, there are people who have been abused. Please don't suffer in silence – call the numbers given.

Those of you who were the first cohort to do C3 Safeguarding training may have heard from Tricia that you need to do the new Leadership module. There has been a backlog of people needing to do this, as all training stopped in lockdown. There have been Zoom presentations of the Leadership module, and this is how it will be presented for the foreseeable future. We are well aware that when you did C3 you were told that you would only be required to do a top up module after 3 years, but the National Safeguarding Team has revamped all the modules, and we now have to ask you to do Basic and Foundation modules before the Leadership ones. These are national church changes, and all Dioceses must comply with them. I know that online training is extra stressful for some of you, but following the report this week of all weeks makes it clear that we all need to be as equipped as possible to make our churches safe communities for vulnerable people.

Care home ministry

Anna Chaplains and others among you who are on the BRF mailing list may have seen this – there is a new coalition of organisations, including Anna Chaplaincy, and their website has a useful list of suggestions for how to support Care Homes in parishes.



<https://www.carehomefriends.org.uk/supporting-care-homes-during-coronavirus.html>

Dr Colin Brown

Colin will be remembered by cohorts of Readers who trained in the 1990s and 2000s. Colin called me this week to tell me his is leaving the diocese and moving to a little village in Surrey. We wish him well as he settles into a new church and community. He plans to send me his new address, so if you would like to send him a card please contact me.

Once again – thank you all for all you are doing, and if you are still shielding or isolating, please remember that you are called first and foremost to be a disciple not a minister, and you are still able to pray for those who are currently working out how to serve the church in a very different context.

With my prayers and best wishes for you all,

Kevin

