

To all Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers

Date: Epiphany 2020  
Our Ref: MS/ec-bp8901

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We send you our warm greetings in this season of Epiphany and at the start of a new year. We hope that you've managed to enjoy some sort of break after Christmas and that, as you plan for the year ahead, you are full of hope and expectancy. In this regard, we would commend to you Archbishop Michael Ramsey's 'five helps for the New Year':

1. **Thank God. Often and always.** *'Thankfulness is a soil in which pride does not easily grow.'*
2. **Take care about confession of your sins.** *'As time passes the habit of being critical about people and things grow more than each of us realize.'*
3. **Be ready to accept humiliations.** *'They can hurt terribly but they can help to keep you humble.'*
4. **Don't worry about status.** *'There is only one status that Our Lord bids us be concerned with, and that is our proximity to Him.'*
5. **Use your sense of humour.** *'Laugh at things, laugh at the absurdities of life, laugh at yourself.'*

A few more practical matters:

#### **Diocesan Narrative – asking for feedback.**

Since 2006, the Diocese of Leicester has been working with a vision, purpose and strategy called 'Shaped by God'. When I (Martyn) arrived in the diocese in 2016, I refined this slightly to focus on 'Three Key Questions':

1. How are you growing, and enabling others to grow in the depth of their discipleship?
2. How are you enabling growth in the numbers of disciples of Jesus?
3. How are you serving your community, and enabling others to love and serve those around them?

In addition, in 2019 we suggested that for this next season in the life of the diocese, we would further refine these questions to focus on 'everyday faith' i.e. the impact of our Christian faith on every area of our lives. So, we've been exploring, Q1 'everyday prayer', Q2 'everyday witness' and Q3 'everyday action'.

We have been encouraged to hear of a good number of churches using these three questions as they reflect on their own mission and ministry. At the same time, we are also aware that some have been confused by the number of different new initiatives in the

diocese – fresh expressions of church, Resourcing Churches, Intercultural Worshipping Communities, the Rural Commission and the Community of the Tree of Life. A lot has happened in recent years and we have much to celebrate! But this is also a good time to reflect on these initiatives and how they sit alongside the three key questions.

In the coming weeks, Bishop Martyn's new Research Assistant, Josh Crick de Boom (part of the Bishop's Lodge staff team) will be working with Liz Rawlings, Discipleship and Vocations Enabler, to hold various conversations across the diocese. Rather than filling everyone's email inbox, they will be selecting a range of parishes to ask them to complete a questionnaire or take part in a reflective telephone conversation (all confidential – no names will go in the report seen by the Bishop's Leadership Team and Bishop's Council). We do want to listen to all views, so if you would like to be involved, or have particular thoughts you would like to feedback, please contact Josh: [josh.crickdeboom@leccofe.org](mailto:josh.crickdeboom@leccofe.org) In addition, Liz and Josh will be visiting deaneries to learn more about your approaches to answering the Three Key Questions and hear what 'everyday faith' looks like in your context. Please be frank and honest in your comments.

We know that this sort of feedback exercise is necessarily quite superficial. However, it is all part of a continued process of listening for all diocesan staff, and all those on the Bishop's Leadership Team. We hope that this exercise will provide a useful snapshot of where we are as a diocese and help inform our decision making about immediate next steps. In addition, Bishop Guli is also hoping to conduct a 'deep listening' exercise, probably starting in the autumn of this year and she will be in touch with you about this later in the year.

### **Everyday Faith – new resources**

As you explore Everyday Faith, you may have seen that the national church released some new resources on 12<sup>th</sup> January, which can be used at any time of the year. In particular there is a book of reflections which we want to commend to you. We have 500 copies available from Bishop's Lodge on a first-come-first-served basis (20 per church) – please contact Ellie: [ellie.cox@leccofe.org](mailto:ellie.cox@leccofe.org) who can post copies to you (free of charge). Further copies can be bought from the [Church House Publishing website](#). There is also an Everyday Faith app available to download. In addition, we highly recommend that your PCC / Ministry Team reads and discusses the free resource [\*Everyday Faith for churches: Seven shifts to inspire Sunday to Saturday faith\*](#).

### **Retreat Days at Launde Abbey**

Over the past year we have been offering free retreat days at Launde Abbey to all licenced clergy. A good number have been to one of these days and we have been very encouraged by your comments afterwards (there is no formal content to the day other than opening prayers and closing Eucharist – the rest of the day is free time for you to use as you find helpful). We would really like to encourage clergy to plan ahead and get at least one of these dates (overleaf) booked in your diary this year (or more than one – you are free to come to as many as you would like!). Please book directly with Launde Abbey [bookings@launde.org.uk](mailto:bookings@launde.org.uk)

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### Dates for 2020:

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December

### **Living Well Together Implementation Group**

We have just put together a new working group in the diocese to help us think about how we apply the [Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together](#) resources, together with the Living in Love and Faith resources which are due to be published later this year. The group is deliberately diverse and will take responsibility for leading discussions at Diocesan Synod as well as resourcing parishes and deaneries. Further updates will follow.

### **The 'Five Guiding Principles' in the Diocese of Leicester**

We are also in the process of agreeing a statement on the implementation of the House of Bishops' 'Five Guiding Principles', designed to enable women in ministry and those who cannot receive the ministry of women priests or bishops to maintain the highest possible degree of communion. We know that last year's ordination services caused considerable pain in the diocese and we want to apologise for the lack of communication and discussion around these. We are seeking to learn lessons for the future, and we are very grateful to Canon Karen Rooms for taking on the role of Women's Ministry Enabler. Karen is available to deaneries or parishes that want to discuss this further.

### **Brexit**

You may have hoped for a letter which didn't mention Brexit! But we want to encourage you to go on working for reconciliation and good community relations (all with an eye to who are most vulnerable in our society). The church continues to play a very important role in bringing people together across divides and this is needed more than ever at this time. Among the many creative ideas which we have seen across the diocese are community meals, visits to other community groups and creative approaches to intercessions e.g. 'light three candles' – one for ourselves, one for a friend in need, and one for someone with whom we disagree.

### **Safeguarding - Past Cases Review 2**

Finally, a note on safeguarding. Many of you will have seen the recent BBC 2 programme about the shocking abuse carried out by Peter Ball and the failure of the Church of England to respond appropriately. A statement was issued after the broadcast by the Church of England's lead safeguarding bishop ([click here to read in full](#)), who said: "*There is much that is being written and said about accountability and the culture of deference in the Church and it is clear that change has been too slow. We are committed to making these changes and ensuring that the Church is a safe and welcoming place for everyone.*"

You may also know that in 2008 every diocese in the Church of England was asked to commission an independent review of all their clergy and church officer files and take action

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on safeguarding concerns. Unfortunately, these reviews were not all done as thoroughly as they should have been and so the House of Bishops has asked every diocese across the country to undertake a further review. This time the scope of the review is to be extended to ensure that any risk from church officers to children, young people *and* vulnerable adults has been acted on appropriately. Every parish will be contacted to check that all known safeguarding concerns about clergy and church officers have been reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding team. There will also be an open invitation to anyone who wants to make representations about their experience as a victim or survivor, or to come forward with information or make a disclosure regarding church-related abuse. The Diocesan Safeguarding team will be in touch with you in February with further details about this, but we want to make a personal appeal to you to cooperate fully with the review and in particular to help support those who have been victims of abuse. This safeguarding work is core to our mission and ministry.

Finally, can we also take this opportunity to once again thank you for your partnership in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and your service in God's kingdom and church.

In Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow  
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani  
Bishop of Loughborough