

**To all clergy and licenced lay ministers (incl. PTO)  
cc Churchwardens**

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020  
Our ref: MJS/rhw-bp9256

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin our Advent journey, we are all acutely aware of the darkness in our world. These last months have been a great struggle for many of us as we have been deprived of much which energises and brings us joy. Yet the Advent journey is one which encourages us to look away from ourselves and fix our eyes on *“the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross”* (Hebrews 12:2). It is by considering him, the writer goes on to say, that we do not become discouraged or lose heart. Our prayer this Advent, is that you will be able to “look away to Jesus” and so be strengthened to endure.

#### **Advent and Christmas services**

As the whole of Leicestershire enters the government Tier 3 designation, so we know that Advent and Christmas, like nearly all our other festivals in 2020, will be very different. We are of course pleased that public worship can begin again from tomorrow but, as we have done in previous letters, we want to encourage you to be realistic about what you can do this year. Please do not try to replicate the pattern of services of previous years – there is so much more to think about when we have to ensure our buildings remain Covid safe and we do not put people at risk. The Church of England nationally is encouraging more outdoor services which, with appropriate social distancing, allow for congregational singing. This is certainly worth considering, even though we recognise there will be additional practical considerations.

Please continue to check updated guidelines on both our diocesan and national church websites. And note that [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com) offers a very easy way to update details of your services and activities such that the many visitors who are likely to want to attend at some point during this season are not disappointed. Similarly, do make sure you check the [Comfort and Joy](#) resources on the national church website – for those of you continuing with online worship, there are plenty of resources on the internet which mean you do not have to create everything yourself.

#### **Sunday after Christmas**

Continuing our theme of wellbeing, we want to encourage you to consider not offering a local service on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December. Bishop Martyn is giving special dispensation from the obligation to offer public worship every Sunday and we would suggest that you direct people to online services. Bishop Guli is taking part in the national Church of England online service that day and Bishop Martyn will be leading the Cathedral online service (all prepared in advance!) – please feel free to tell people that your bishops are encouraging everyone to engage in these services. We hope that this will ensure that all clergy and lay ministers have at least a long weekend off work, and ideally take the whole week off after Christmas (where possible).

**Bishop’s Lodge, 12 Springfield Road, LE2 3BD**

0116 270 8985, [bishop.leicester@leicestercofe.org](mailto:bishop.leicester@leicestercofe.org), [www.leicester.anglican.org](http://www.leicester.anglican.org)

Following the recent Diocesan Synod when the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing was formally introduced in the Diocese, we would also like to encourage you to spend some time in deanery meetings reflecting further on the Covenant. The Wellbeing Group (chaired by Bishop Guli) will be offering a zoom session in the New Year to help think through how you might make use of the Covenant material with your PCCs and congregations. Further details will follow in due course. Meanwhile, do keep checking the [Wellbeing page](#) on the website for resources and information.

### **Shaped by God Together**

Diocesan Synod also formally endorsed the 'Shaped by God Together' process at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November. There are a number of videos on the diocesan Facebook and YouTube pages which help explain what this process is intended to achieve – in summary this is about listening to God so that together we can reshape the diocese for our new context. From January we will start conversations with as wide a range of people as possible and we will contact you early in the new year with dates and further details. Please continue to pray for this process and for those on Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod who will ultimately have to make some far-reaching decisions.

### **Letter from the Archbishops regarding Holy Communion**

Attached to this letter you will find a letter from our Archbishops, together with a guidance note on receiving Holy Communion in both kinds by 'simultaneous administration'. We know that this has been a matter of some concern, particularly as the months have gone by and many people have been deprived of receiving both the bread and wine of Holy Communion. We hope therefore that this note will be of some help and we fully endorse the Archbishops' and House of Bishops' approach. However, we understand that not everyone will feel comfortable with the approach of 'simultaneous administration' or feel able to do this safely. We want to stress therefore that the final decision remains with the Incumbent as long as the 'three essential points' of the Archbishops' letter are respected. If you have questions about this or indeed anything else within this letter, please contact your Archdeacon or the Bishop's Chaplain.

This comes, as always, with our sincere thanks for your faithful ministry at this time. May you be refreshed in your faith and strengthened to persevere in service as you fix your eyes on Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow  
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani  
Bishop of Loughborough

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