

**To all Licenced Clergy, Clergy with PTO and Licensed Lay Ministers**

Date: Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024

Our Ref: MJS/bp4042

Candlemas 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Candlemas, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, is an important moment to remember that our Lord entered this world in a state of vulnerability and powerlessness – a tiny baby, wholly dependent on others for care and support. Simeon and Anna held him in their arms and prophesied over him – this baby would be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles”.

At times, the Church shares this sense of vulnerability and powerlessness, and we are learning more about this as our society becomes ever more secular. Yet we also share the calling to “shine like stars in the world” (Philippians 2:15) and we do this by “holding fast to the word of life” (Phil 2:16). So, this is our prayer for you in the coming weeks.

**Lent Appeal 2024 – Baca**

This year’s Bishops’ Lent Appeal is in support of Baca, a charity founded in Loughborough which provides accommodation and therapeutic care for young people seeking refuge in the UK, without families. I (+Martyn) had the chance to visit Baca in September and meet a number of the staff as well as the young people in their care. I found it a truly inspirational occasion and was particularly impressed by the wrap-around support and specialist education they offer, which includes art therapies, sports activities, and life skills training which helps those in their care adjust to life in the UK and become familiar with its laws and culture.

Baca serves an incredibly vulnerable group of people. Many of the young people who arrive in the UK alone have endured unimaginable horrors, and when they arrive in the UK, they continue to face adversity. Often housed in unsuitable accommodation, like hotels, with basic needs unmet and no wider support, they are at extreme risk of being trafficked. As a result, nearly a third are reported missing. But the young people in Baca’s care are kept safe, and supported to heal, so they can lead a happy and fruitful life here in the UK.

We know that finances are challenging for many people, making it difficult to fundraise within your communities. But, if members of your community do feel able to give, then here is how their money can help:

- £5 could equip new arrivals at Baca College with education starter packs
- £13 could provide an hour of learning for all child refugees studying at Baca College
- £50 could cover the setup costs for a new arrival’s room

You can find out more about Baca's work at [www.bacacharity.org.uk](http://www.bacacharity.org.uk); and donations can be made online [here](#).

We are also hosting a webinar on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March at 7.45pm with Jimmy Zachariah, CEO of Baca, and two leaders from within the diocese, Kat Gibson and Revd Claire Goode, who have, in different ways, supported refugees and asylum-seekers. It should be an inspiring discussion, and one which sheds light on the various ways we can all play our part, whether with our time, prayer, creativity, or financially. You can register to attend the webinar [here](#).

### **Bishops' Study Days**

The next Study Day will take place on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May and we will be exploring our diocesan priority of Intercultural Communities. In view of this, we have decided to use a different venue: the Peepul Centre, Orchardson Avenue, Leicester, LE4 6DP. Situated just off Belgrave Road, the day will include time to walk around the area and reflect on what it means for our churches to be genuinely intercultural. The Study Day will be led by Dr Harvey Kwiyani, a lecturer in African Christianity, and Founder and Director of Missio Africanus, an intercultural mission training initiative. He has authored several books, including *Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church*, and so we are very much looking forward to learning from Dr Kwiyani as we continue on our journey to becoming a more racially just and intercultural diocese.

The study day is open to clergy and lay ministers, so book your place please visit [here](#).

Our Autumn Study Day is planned for Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November, and we hope that we will be joined by school headteachers as we explore the theme of intergenerational communities. Letters are going out now to invite church school heads, but we would appreciate it if you could follow up these letters with a conversation and personal invitation (including extending the invitation to community school heads with whom you work). We are also keen to ensure that children, youth and family workers attend the day. At the moment, we are still researching a venue for what will be much larger gathering than our normal study days. Please hold the date and pass on the invitation – more details are to follow.

### **Intercultural Mission Conference**

In March, we are planning to host a national conference on Intercultural Mission in partnership with ANIC, the Anglican Network for Intercultural Churches. This will take place in St Martins House and the Cathedral between Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> to Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – for more information about the conference please visit [here](#). We hope that the conference will include a book launch (and free copies for conference participants!) for the new book co-authored by the two of us, Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, Jessie Tang and Florence Gildea: *An Intercultural Church for a Multicultural World: Reflections on Intercultural Gift Exchange*.

## **Bishop of Leicester's Chaplaincy Lectures 2024**

We are pleased to announce that the inaugural series of 'Chaplaincy Lectures', a joint initiative between us and the universities in Leicester and Loughborough, will be taking place in the coming months. The goal of the lectures is to explore an important issue of the day or ethical question from a Christian perspective, to both equip clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese and to be of interest to staff and students at the universities.

Our first lecture, in partnership with De Montfort University, will be given by Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London, on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm at St Andrew's, Jarrom Street in Leicester. Drawing on her experience as Chief Nursing Officer for England, the title of Bishop Sarah's lecture will be *Towards a Common Vision of Health*. You can find out more about the event and register to attend [here](#).

The second lecture, in partnership with the University of Leicester, will take place in May, and the third will be delivered by Lord Boateng in the Autumn term at the University of Loughborough. Details about each of the lectures will be shared in Diomail, so please do look out for them.

## **General Election**

We are now in what will very likely be an election year, and we would encourage you to engage with this democratic process in the fullest way possible. Participating in elections is an important way in which we can show love for our neighbour and seek the welfare of our communities (Jeremiah 29:7). And whenever political debates become hostile and dehumanising, we as Christians can serve as salt and light by being voices of compassion, mercy and peace.

As leaders within your worshipping communities, you may wish to hold hustings with candidates in your area, encourage members to register to vote and remind them about the new photo ID requirements, and, above all, to pray - for generosity and gentleness in debates, and wisdom in policymaking. We aim to provide resources to support you in doing this as and when an election is announced.

We would also encourage you to engage with children and young people in your community about the election, what changes they would wish to see to their communities and the wider world, and how civic and political engagement can be an expression of one's Christian faith. We know that the decisions of politicians and policy-makers have a significant impact on children and young people both now and in the future, and therefore so do the votes we cast. So, creating a space for their voices to be heard is one way in which we help our communities become more intergenerational.

## Diocesan Strategy

Finally, a note on the development of our diocesan ten-year strategy. Members of Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council, DBF Trustees, and school representatives met on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January to continue the process of discerning how God is leading us. Core to our discussions were the questions of how we continue our focus on the 'three key questions' of discipleship, while also addressing our very significant financial deficit. The development of Minster Communities is a key part of our strategy, but it is not the only part – we also considered questions of our central support services, church buildings, and operations (admin) support in parishes.

Further work is now being done on each area by small groups of staff, and there will be another gathering of our governance bodies in June to finalise the details of the strategy. We will then be in a position to approach the national church for grant funds to enable the delivery of this strategy. If you would like to know any more about this process, please contact Barry Hill on [barry.hill@leicestercofe.org](mailto:barry.hill@leicestercofe.org).

This comes, as always, with our sincere thanks for your service. We never cease to be grateful that God has called us to work alongside so many inspiring colleagues to serve the communities of Leicester and Leicestershire. We hope that you will hold fast to the word of life.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow  
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Saju Muthalaly  
Bishop of Loughborough

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