

## The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave

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# THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

1st November 2021

### ***To: all licensed and PTO clergy, lay ministers, treasurers and churchwardens in the Diocese of Lichfield***

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

With Bishop Clive, Bishop Sarah and Bishop Matthew, I send you warm greetings as together we approach the final stretch of what has been another extraordinary and challenging year. I appreciate that many of you have been experiencing tremendous strain, and some of you personal loss, over the past 20 months as you have adapted to ever-changing scenarios both in your ministry and your parishes. Thank you for your steadfast service, leadership, innovation, sacrifice, and commitment to our shared calling to follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad in these difficult times.

Since the summer, we have been welcoming people back into our church buildings for on-site services and we are beginning to form a picture of how worship in the local context – whether 'in-person' or online – will look over this next period. This may have led to feelings of concern about the shape of your congregations, community groups or chaplaincies in a post-pandemic world, alongside a renewed awareness of the opportunities and challenges for mission and outreach in your local communities. Thank you for your ongoing engagement with our diocesan *Shaping for Mission* process as we seek to remould our shared life of discipleship, vocation and evangelism together.

### **Generous Hope**

Advent is now only a few weeks away: a time of heartfelt expectation and a reminder of the incarnate God who comes to us in our lostness, bringing joy and hope in the midst of the darkness. It is also a time to remember that the Saviour of the world offers us a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light. I pray that, in the busyness ahead, you will also find time for rest and renewal.

At a time when you have given of yourselves in ministry in many new and unexpected ways, our diocesan Advent focus **Generous Hope** will highlight the difference these inspirational acts of generosity have made. Our Communications Team are collecting everyday examples of acts and experiences of generosity for a special Advent calendar on Facebook featuring short videos and other content. They would love to hear about any examples you have been part of or come across in your churches and communities – you can email them at [comms@lichfield.anglican.org](mailto:comms@lichfield.anglican.org)

We would also encourage you to consider a special Advent gift, whether individually and/or in your parishes, for the **Church in Matlosane**, our companion diocese in South Africa. Matlosane has been hard hit by COVID. For example, clergy, when they have been paid at all, have agreed to a 30%



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reduction in their stipend due to the harsh financial impact of the pandemic. Medical aid for clergy has also been downgraded and clergy have not been able to attend retreats for two years. Our brothers and sisters in Matlosane are a blessing to us, and now they need our support; I hope that we will be able to give generously to them. Bishop Steve Diseko, from Matlosane, has recorded a [special video](#). You can give on [Justgiving](#).

In January next year, we are hoping to replace the current Parish Share system with a new Common Fund; all deaneries in the diocese are being individually consulted about this autumn, and our Diocesan Synod will vote on the new proposals this month. We believe that this will be a fairer way of distributing the load and will see a reduction in the minimum required contribution of 'share' in around 65% of parishes.

I will write to you further in the new year about this, about the work we have been and are doing to reduce the central costs of the diocese, and about ways in which we can encourage generosity among the people to whom we minister. Until then, I invite you to join with me in celebrating **Generous Hope** this Advent.

### Support after Christmas

As last year, we will be offering recorded **video sermons** for churches to use on the three Sundays after Christmas Day – 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> January – based on the Common Worship lectionary readings for each date. I will also be recording an Advent sermon on the theme of generosity for you to use at any point during the Advent season should you wish. These sermons will be available in due course on our diocesan website.

Given that it immediately follows Christmas Day, I am writing to advise you that this year ***I am issuing a dispensation from the canonical requirements for worship in any benefice on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> December 2021.*** If your church decides to take advantage of this dispensation, no further legal process is required, but could you please ensure that changes to the usual pattern are clearly publicised. I am also aware that in some places it may prove difficult to find cover for services on the following Sunday. If you feel this is likely to be the case in your church, I encourage you to seek ***a specific dispensation for 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2022 from your area bishop.*** Such a request should follow consultation within the parishes, including with the PCC; again, changes should be clearly publicised,

Finally, a new **Pastoral Care & Wellbeing** page is now available on our [diocesan website](#) featuring a wide range of resources available to support those in ministry. I encourage you to explore this and make use as you feel appropriate of the material and contacts there.

With the assurance of my prayers, and my heartfelt gratitude, for you and your ministry

Your brother in Christ,

*+Michael Igrave:*

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