



DIOCESE OF  
**Bath & Wells**

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## Bishop Ruth's Deacon's Ordination Charge Michaelmas 2022 **Reach in... and Reveal**



The feast of Michaelmas, September 29<sup>th</sup>, St Michael and All Angels, marks the date of my ordinations, my call to ministry, first as deacon 26 years ago, then priest 25 years ago, then Bishop 7 years ago. It's a feast that reminds us of the ministry of angels, as messengers and truth-tellers of the glory of God. Angels point to a hope beyond this world, found in the person of Christ. We are called to be heralds, tellers of the story of God's love for the world. And surely now more than ever the world needs us to be bringers of such hope!

Many in our communities are feeling the anxiety of an uncertain future. There's a dis-ease in our society, inequality is increasing, anger is rising, mental wellbeing is being affected, and we are seeing signs of civil unrest as a result. This is a moment for those of us with hope in Christ to share that hope with those around us. To be an angel!

You will have given much thought to the words of the ordinal about what a deacon is called to do. I know that you will have been struck by the challenge to "***reach into the forgotten corners of the world that the love of God may be made visible***". I have encouraged you to reflect on what are the forgotten or hidden corners in your own experience, and to step into those places. Challenging you to step out of your comfort zones and see what you might discover. (Don't forget I shall ask you to share the story next year!)

There are many who feel forgotten, neglected, overlooked just now. Things have happened in our world recently which we had not expected or predicted and for which we were not prepared. We can point to a virus, to conflicts and natural disasters, to political leaders, as being responsible for this but that would be to see ourselves as separate from the world in which we live too. We share in some of the responsibility, both for where we are and for what can be done about it now.

The work of a deacon is all about **reaching into** those forgotten corners, **reaching out** to the overlooked. However, this isn't about giving you more things to do. Please don't think that. This isn't your work but God's.

What we hear in the ordinal is that it is in **reaching into** those forgotten corners that the love of God can be made visible. I am not sure that it is we who carry that love there, I think rather it means that God's love is **revealed**, it becomes apparent to all who are there.

Because the work of mission is God's, not ours. We are merely the heralds, the proclaimers, the agents. He is the one who **reached into** our world with his love, coming as one of us to a world that had forgotten. We partner with him and are called to shine as beacons of that love, as angels.

My Charge to you is not intended to add to the list of things that you and your incumbent have already created in your ministry agreement. Rather I want you to focus on these words:

***“Deacons are to be faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God’s presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us.”***

This is an attitude, a charism, a way of being. Prayer is at the heart of all we do. As we enter into a conversation with God, with its silences as well as its words, so we discover more of his heart and see through his eyes. And that is when the kingdom is **revealed!** Our task is to **reach in** and to play our part in **revealing** the kingdom. That means **reaching into** the heart of God by taking the time to both listen to him and the world in which he has placed us. That means taking time, making space, and not filling it with our own words, thoughts and ideas but having an awareness for the prompts of the Spirit.

This year our “Dwelling’ passage across our diocese has been from Philippians 4. I share a few words from that passage which I think helps us discover the charism, the way of being, that helps us to discover the heart of God, that is prayer.

*‘Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.’*

May God reveal his love for you, which is as deep for you as for anyone else and will enable you to live out that love as angels!

With thankfulness for you.

+ Ruth

