



July 2024

Lay Ministry Mailing

And Karen's final farewell

Dear Lay Ministers,

It has seemed like a long season of farewells since Jane pointed out that October's Lay Ministry Conference would be my last as Warden. Bishop Jonathan thanked me on behalf of Lay Ministers in the cathedral on licencing day in May, and gave me the card signed by so many of you, along with your very generous gift which I shall use when we are settled into our new home, thank you all again for that.



Last week saw my official farewell from the Diocesan Office in the context of the lunch in the marquee for Diocesan and Cathedral offices staff. By the time you read this I will have said goodbye to the Mission and Ministry Development team colleagues with whom I have worked most closely, and retirement will have begun!

Some of you reading this will remember retirement, and others might be looking forward to it, but either way it's an opportunity to reflect on what work has meant.

It is exactly 10 years this month since I began working as the diocese's first employed Warden of Lay Ministry and a great deal has changed in that time. None of us would have expected what the big challenges in society have meant - COVID and the subsequent lockdowns affected the church in many ways. There have been other social changes, and the widening gap between rich and poor has led to the huge increase in food banks which are a feature of many parishes in one way or another, along with the new roles many churches are playing in building community and offering space and company – as part of the good news we have to share.

Nationally lay ministry has changed a great deal. Ten years ago anyone looking up vocation on the Church of England website would have been directed to information about ordination. Now vocation includes Lay Ministry nationally, as it has done for a long time in this diocese. I zoomed into my last national Lay Ministries Network gathering last month and Bishop Sophie, (now joint chair of the Lay Ministries Advisory Group(LMAG), along with Dr Paula Gooder – LAY (Reader) Canon Chancellor at St Paul's Cathedral) was present in the meeting.

I was taking notes, so this might not be her exact words but +Sophie said something along the lines of:

The Church is a lay movement with a few clergy - How do we share that message?

Lay ministry needs Representation rather than tokenism, on both the LMAG, & Ministry Council nationally. Why should a Bishop be a lead for LMAG?

Paula chairs because she's lay - my role is championing.

Ministry begins with baptism, not ordination.

She went on to say It's been an absolute delight to meet people building relationships with lay people - seeing people released into calling is fabulous.

Since I began working in the diocesan office our filing is now all electronic, but there were still papers on my desk and in the drawers which needed sorting and clearing before the new warden begins. One pre-dates my time as Warden and doesn't in fact have a date on it – it's an undated pre-cursor to a working agreement for a Reader, but the first line on it is as true now as it was then if where it says **Readers**, you now read **Lay Ministers**:
Readers and clergy are particularly committed to each other in Christian love. They pray regularly for each other and have a close concern for one another's spiritual development and ministry.

I am reminded of Archdeacon Paul Wright's final charge to Lay Ministers in Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry:
PRAY FOR EACH OTHER. PRAY FOR EACH OTHER. PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

The best collaborative ministry is relational, something I have said that to new incumbents each time I have met them at New Posts Conferences.

Seeking the best for each other doesn't mean denying the truth, and I know that for some of you, relationships in your ministry team are not all you would hope for. Not all clergy value and affirm their Lay Ministers, and you may feel you can only do so much to keep the relationship going. If this is you - a conversation with one of the Deputy Wardens in your Archdeaconry might be helpful, and their contact details are further down in this letter.

News round up!

You should have seen the reporting of the licensing of this year's new LLMs in diocesan news:



From left to right:

Jane Winter,
Antonieta Ogundimu from Strood,
St Francis.
Pippa Hillen from Bidborough St
Lawrence and Southborough St
Peter.
Martin Clay – admitted, and will be
licensed this Summer at St
Thomas's Southborough.
Bishop Jonathan
Robert Dammers from Pembury.
Jaki Musker from Kent Downs and
Malling Team.
Louise Shrubsole from St Mary & St
John Chatham.
Please pray for them as they begin
their licensed ministries.

This is the smallest cohort ever licensed as LLMs - but there is a good reason for that. This cohort of LLMs began their vocation journey during Covid Lockdowns! Some Dioceses took a year or two years out of selecting and training Lay Ministers but THANKYOU to our vocations team who kept going online and these Lay Ministers are the outcome of their work.

Next year **19** students are beginning the Bishop's certificate – please keep them and their tutors in your prayers too.

New Anna Chaplains

Robert, LLM from Pembury, pictured above, was also commissioned as an Anna Chaplain by Bishop Jonathan last month, along with other new Anna Chaplains – lay and ordained, including Ruth Mason, Reader from Kemsing. These new Anna Chaplains were from a range of different parishes – rural and urban, and share a passion for ministry to older people and those living with dementia.



Ellenor Hospice Unsung Hero Award

Much of the best Lay Ministry happens almost unnoticed, so it is lovely when that it's noted and appreciated.

Lesley Gould is a Reader at St Mary's Gravesend, but over the years she has spent far more time in chaplaincy at the nearby Ellenor Hospice. Lesley wasn't going to tell us all, so thank you to the Lay Minister who told me (you know who you are!) - and this is what Lesley has written:

"I was honoured to be awarded the 'Unsung hero' award for my Chaplaincy work at the Ellenor hospice, I have been the chaplain for many years, and I am there for staff, volunteers & the patients, I am often called in to pray for a dying patient and their family, which is such a privilege, I accepted the award on behalf of Chaplaincy work across the Diocese"



Looking ahead - 2024 Lay Ministry Conference.

A number of you were disappointed to miss last year's conference which was in half term week, so in order to avoid that week, the 2024 conference will be on Saturday 9th November at Christ Church Orpington, and this is planned to be an opportunity for Bishop Jonathan to introduce both the new Director of Mission & Ministry Development and the new Warden of Lay Ministry. **Please save the date!**



As I write, there are a couple more weeks for applications for the post of Warden of Lay Ministry. Please pray, and if you know someone you think might fit the role - speak with them! It's going to be some weeks, even perhaps some months, before the new Warden begins. Please be patient with them – they have a lot to get their head around – the job has grown in 10 years and they won't have the advantage I had of 7 years as a volunteer Warden.

In the interim – for queries email tricia.cliffe@rochester.anglican.org (bearing in mind Tricia too only works Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). Tricia will respond where she can and will refer you to others in the M&MD team, or one of the Deputy Wardens.

Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry

Philippa Linton - lintonphilippa@hotmail.com & Mark Newman - marknewman1955@gmail.com

Rochester Archdeaconry

Val Butler - val.a.butler@googlemail.com & Mandy Holloway - mandy@stmarygreenhithe.com

Tonbridge Archdeaconry

Hilary Sutton - hilary.sutton1@btopenworld.com & Paul Oakley - poakley8th@gmail.com

It only remains for me to thank you all again. It has been an immense privilege to get to know so many of you, to see God at work in calling and equipping you for ministry.

May God bless you all as you are a blessing to others,

