



## **AD CLERUM:           Advent 2018**

Dear Colleagues

It is good to be able to greet you in these days running up to Christmas before Carol Services and Christmas shopping takes us all over. In the frenetic busyness of December and in the current maelstrom surrounding Brexit, it is hard to hold on to our belief in the coming reign of God and the sovereignty of grace. Turn on the television and so many things seem to militate against it. But this is precisely what we celebrate in these days of Advent.

Much has been happening since last I wrote to you, not least with Bishop Jackie beginning her episcopal ministry among us. But there have also been other significant changes in senior personnel. This Christmas sees the retirement of Martyn Goss after 35 years as Director of Church and Society. During that time Martyn has built up a county-wide network of contacts and relationships, and coordinated projects ranging from 'Shrinking the Footprint' to championing Fairtrade. At the end of December after 8 years in post, Ian Chandler has decided to step down from being Archdeacon of Plymouth and to seek a new position. Becky Totterdell also steps down this Christmas as Diocesan Director of Ordinands. Like Martyn and Ian, Becky has given faithful service to the Diocese over many years and we wish her well as she continues her work as a Canon Residentiary at the Cathedral. We give thanks for all three of them and pray God's blessing on them.

### **#FollowTheStar and A Church Near You**

The arrival on our television screens of this year's John Lewis Christmas advert complete with Elton John playing the piano signals that the season of conspicuous consumption is upon us. Mindful of the old saying, 'If you can't beat them, join them,' the Church of England is launching its biggest Advent and Christmas campaign to date, aimed at encouraging people to attend their local church services or events. The mobile-friendly website, [AChurchNearYou.com](http://AChurchNearYou.com) (ACNY) will play a major role in this national campaign. For the first time, your church can use the #FollowTheStar branding on your own ACNY pages. This will make it far easier for people looking on the internet to find a carol service, Christingle or Christmas Day service near them. Please take 5 minutes and add your events to this site and remember to tag them with the relevant Christmas tags. Amazingly, this website receives more than 10 million views each year; so it's well worth investing in it.

More information on how to get involved in the #FollowTheStar campaign can be found here <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/comment-and-features/how-can-your-church-get-involved-followthestar-our-2018>

## **Director of Communications and Engagement**

I am delighted to announce that Chloe Axford has been appointed our new Director of Communications and Engagement. Chloe lives and worships in Ashburton, and has worked for the BBC for many years as a television journalist and senior producer. She joins the Diocesan staff in the New Year and will bring to her new role a huge amount of professional expertise as well as a passion for communicating the gospel in new and imaginative ways.

## **Mental Health and Well-Being**

Mental health, particularly amongst young people, has shot up the political agenda in recent months. According to the Department of Health, one in ten consultations with GPs is now for depression, overtaking obesity, diabetes and asthma. Only high blood pressure exceeds depression in the GPs top ten list of illnesses. Loneliness is a big factor in the rise in depression whether in young people or older members of the community. Overcome by a sense of isolation, sufferers will often look to the clergy for help or seek friendship in our churches. In such circumstances you may wish to consult the website <https://www.pinpointdevon.co.uk/> . This portal will direct you to a host of services and community groups across the county that offer support to people with mental health problems. You can search what is local to you by identifying the need and your nearest town in its search engine. It's an easy way to signpost people effectively for help or to access specialist support as the need arises. There is also a *Mental Health Access Pack*. This is a downloadable resource available for clergy and pastoral teams supporting those struggling with mental health issues: <http://www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org/>

## **Clergy Well-Being**

In the summer we said farewell to Julia Barrett who had faithfully headed up our Diocesan Counselling Service over many years. The time had come to refresh and reframe the professional support we offer clergy, readers and diocesan employees. Since then, while the new outsourced counselling arrangements were being finalised, Anthea Carter-Savigear has been heading up the confidential counselling service. I am now pleased to say that with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> January we have engaged the *Churches Ministerial Counselling Service (CMCS)*, a leading provider in Great Britain of counselling for ministers, families and employees, to offer short-term focussed counselling in both personal and work related issues. Further information regarding the new service will be circulated and published on the diocesan website on 19<sup>th</sup> December. In the coming weeks Anthea will be writing to existing counsellors and those currently using the existing service to let them know what the new arrangements will mean for them.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work that Anthea has carried out to help shape this new service, for heading up the existing service since the summer and to say how very grateful I, and my staff team, are to her. May I also commend to you the draft Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing which was debated in General Synod and was issued last month for consultation. If you haven't read the report, this is the link to it: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/proposed-covenant>

## **Mission and Evangelism in the Catholic Tradition**

Would you like to know more about how to reach out successfully to the communities you serve within a Sacramental tradition? Would you like the opportunity to explore what a Catholic approach to evangelism might look like? On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January there will be a conference for clergy and lay people entitled 'Unity and Growth: a shared vision of Catholic

Mission and Evangelism in the Diocese of Exeter'. Key note speakers include the Bishop of Ebbsfleet and myself, with workshops on Pilgrimage, Sacramental children's work, Mission Action Planning and a history of church planting in an Anglo-Catholic tradition. The day will begin with a Sung Eucharist at which the Dean of Exeter will be the preacher. The day is free and will be held at St Mary's Abbotsbury, Newton Abbot, with a hot lunch provided. Spaces are limited so please book soon at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/unity-growth-tickets-48832858394>

### **Families for Children: Adoption**

I commend to your prayers *Families for Children*. Founded in 1993 as a joint initiative by our Diocese and Plymouth Diocesan Catholic Children's Society, it is an independent specialist adoption agency working across the region with headquarters in Buckfast. The agency places children from all over the UK and finds adoptive families for them across the South West: Devon, Dorset, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly and Somerset. The children they place are vulnerable and many have complex extra needs resulting from early childhood traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect or lots of changes and moves in their lives. As a Christian foundation they believe that the best place for children to grow up is within their family of origin. Where this is not possible, they find adoptive families for children who need them. They ask us to pray that vulnerable children are able to find secure and loving homes; that more prospective adoptive parents come forward to care for these traumatised children; and that *Families for Children* receive sufficient funds to continue to give lifelong care. To find out more, please contact Ruth Marriott, the Chief Executive: [rmarriott@familiesforchildren.org.uk](mailto:rmarriott@familiesforchildren.org.uk).

### **Holsworthy Deanery needs you!**

Although we have over 400 retired clergy in the Diocese, to the knowledge of the Rural Dean of Holsworthy, no active retired priest lives in their mission community (which is co-terminous with the deanery) or within easy commuting distance of their network of wonderful village churches. The thin black line is getting thinner in Holsworthy. If you know anyone who could be available to help out (either on Sunday or during the week as pastoral need arises) or even (big ask) move to the deanery, please be in touch with the Rural Dean, Jane Lucas: [therev.rectory62@gmail.com](mailto:therev.rectory62@gmail.com)

### **Clergy Quiet Days 2019**

I will be hosting another series of quiet days for licensed clergy next year based in the Cathedral and Palace. I am heartened by the number of you who have said how helpful you find them. As well as providing you with an opportunity for prayer and recollection, in a large Diocese like ours they also provide a chance to touch base with colleagues in other archdeaconries we seldom see. Once again I invite you to set aside time in your busy schedule to join me. Please note the dates in your diary now: Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March, Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March, Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March, Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April. If you wish to book your place an online booking system is in operation which can be found using this link <http://exeter.anglican.org/bishop-roberts-quiet-days/>. You will understand what a complex process it is each year to find days that work for the Cathedral and support staff as well as my diary. It has proved impossible to include weekend days which might have been more convenient for our SSM colleagues. Likewise, I am afraid I cannot extend this invitation to the very many retired colleagues holding PtO simply because of constraints on the number of places we can offer; of course, retired colleagues are very welcome to enquire and I would be delighted to welcome you if space permits.

### **Bishops in Mission 2020**

Bishop Nick, Bishop Jackie and I are looking forward to a new round of 'Bishops in Mission' beginning Spring 2020. In a change from last time, we hope to be accompanied by a group of ordinands and to organise things on an archdeaconry basis rather than a deanery basis. The idea is that all three bishops will spend the same weekend in an archdeaconry. We hope this will have a greater impact and reduce the burden of organisation on hard-working Rural Deans and Lay Chairs. If these visits are to be worthwhile, then we are heavily reliant on clergy, readers and churchwardens putting their heads together to work out an imaginative programme. I am always encouraged by the way our churches, schools and chaplaincies engage in service to local communities, but I am also aware of the fact that even in this secular age the visit of a bishop can open a door that has been wedged shut to the church for years. So if you have an idea for a visit, please be in touch with your archdeacon!

Bishop Nick and Bishop Jackie join me in sending you our greetings and prayers for a blessed Advent and Christmas. May the Lord find us all watching and waiting for the fulfilment of his Kingdom in love, joy and peace.

+ Robert Exon