



AD CLERUM: Passiontide 2019

Dear Colleagues

I write this as the Government has petitioned for a further delay in our departure from the European Union. Whichever way you and your parishioners voted in the referendum, what cannot be denied is how profoundly unsettling and politically divisive the last two years have been. As we edge little by little into the next chapter in the life of our nation, whatever the shape of that next chapter, we need to give energy to rebuilding trust and encouraging people to work together for the common good. As ministers of reconciliation we have an important part to play in building bridges of cooperation and friendship, and promoting a culture of genuine partnership. The National Church has issued liturgical resources as together we pray for our nation: www.churchofengland.org/together. I particularly commend the prayer that the Archbishops have issued:

God of hope,
in these times of change,
unite our nation
and guide our leaders with your wisdom.
Give us courage to overcome our fears,
and help us to build a future
in which all may prosper and share;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Boniface: Patron Saint of Devon

In the midst of the political turmoil, an unexpected surge of energy to have St Boniface acclaimed Patron Saint of Devon has catapulted the proposal onto the agenda of the County Council. There is no official process for declaring someone to be a patron saint: it comes from the bottom up. In this case there has been a groundswell of enthusiasm from the town of Crediton where Boniface was born in 675. His Anglo-Saxon name was Wynfrith, but when he entered the monastery in Exeter as a young man he adopted the Latin name Boniface. A gifted scholar, linguist and preacher, he later travelled to Frisia (in what is now Germany) to preach the Gospel, ending up as Archbishop of Mainz. On 5 June 754 he was martyred by a group of mercenaries. Boniface is honoured as the 'Apostle to the Germans' but sadly in this country he is hardly known.

At a time when our links with Europe are strained, it would be good to celebrate our spiritual heritage and reinforce links with our European neighbours by honouring this extraordinary Christian of whom all Devon can be proud. There will be a special ecumenical celebration in honour of St Boniface in Crediton on the afternoon of Sunday 9th June which is the Sunday closest to his Feast Day and also, by coincidence, this year also Pentecost. The

celebration will begin with Evensong in the Parish Church at which Bishop Jackie will preach. This will be followed by a procession to the Roman Catholic Parish Church at which Bishop Mark O'Toole, RC Bishop of Plymouth will preside at benediction. More details will be available nearer the time.

Companions of St Boniface

In parallel with all this I have established a 'Company of St Boniface' as a way of honouring those women and men in our Diocese who have made an exceptional contribution to the life of the Church in Devon or who have built up our overseas links in witness to Jesus Christ. A special commemorative medal has been struck and a service will be held in the Cathedral on Saturday 9th November at Evensong (5.30pm) to honour the first recipients of this award. If you would like to nominate someone to be considered for recognition, you can download a nomination form: <https://exeter.anglican.org/who-we-are/company-of-st-boniface/>

Easter Pilgrim

Easter Pilgrim invites you to explore the teaching of Jesus about prayer. All over the world Christians pray the Lord's Prayer. It shapes our lives in times of sorrow and in joy. Easter Pilgrim is an exciting opportunity to engage with this prayer during the 40 days from Easter to Ascension. It can be used to help prepare for baptism and confirmation, or as a way of going deeper in prayer. Published by Church House Publishing, Easter Pilgrim is available either as a booklet or in app form via the Apple App store, and the Google Play store for Android phones and tablets. Each day offers scripture, a reflection and a challenge to action. We are a pilot diocese for this project and the designers have enabled people from the Diocese of Exeter to receive additional material written by me. So please try it out and encourage young people to sign up. There is huge potential for this type of digital engagement to help renew our discipleship. Further information including how to sign up is on the Diocesan website <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/stories-and-features/five-ways-your-church-get-involved-lentpilgrim-and>.

Thy Kingdom Come: Ascension to Pentecost 2019

It was exciting to see a growing number of churches in Devon host *Thy Kingdom Come* events last year as part of the Global Prayer Focus held during the nine days between Ascension Day and Pentecost. There were events in churches, local parks, cafés, schools, homes, shop spaces and market places. Hundreds attended our Beacon event in Exeter Cathedral. The theme this year, *Fields of Gold*, is drawn from Jesus' description of discovering the Kingdom of God like a farmer finding treasure in a field, or a merchant discovering a pearl of great price, both selling all to possess it. Our Diocesan Mission Enabler, Barry Dugmore, has already sent out information about resources, creative ways to pray, and how every Mission Community can pledge to pray *Thy Kingdom Come* and be involved. I very much hope you will come with a group from your parish to this year's Beacon Celebration Event on the evening of Pentecost Sunday 9th June at 6.30pm in the Cathedral. For more information: www.thykingdomcome.global

25th Anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. There have already been a number of national events in celebration of this historic milestone, and our own Diocesan celebration will be held in the Cathedral on Sunday 30th June at 4pm at which Bishop Jackie will preside. All are welcome.

Farewell to Christopher Futchter and Kathy Roberts

I very much hope to be able to announce the appointment of two new archdeacons for Plymouth and Exeter, together with arrangements for the inauguration of their ministries, this side of Easter. In the meantime please make a note of the date of the Farewells to Christopher Futchter, Archdeacon of Exeter, and to Kathy Roberts, Dean for Women in Ministry which will take place in the Cathedral in the context of Choral Evensong on Wednesday 3rd July at 5.30pm. All are welcome. Christopher and Anne are migrating to our companion Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf where Christopher will be taking up the post of Archdeacon of Cyprus. Although Kathy is retiring from Black Torrington and her wider diocesan role, she and Peter are staying in Devon; so we shall still see them around. Our thanks go to both Christopher and Kathy for their faithful ministry and leadership.

Clergy and Readers Diocesan Day Conference 2019

The last clergy conference at Cirencester in September 2017 was a great success, giving opportunity for mutual support and encouragement alongside some excellent input from speakers. As the next conference will not be until 2021, we are planning a day conference in Exeter on **Saturday 16th November** for all who hold my license. The day will include input from one of our Canon Theologians, the Reverend Sue Gillingham who is Professor of Old Testament at the University of Oxford, and from the Reverend David Runcorn, a well-known spiritual writer. They will be speaking on the themes of Praise and Lament. The day will also include workshops and a Eucharist. More details will be circulated in due course, but please put the date in your diary *now*.

Pastoral Principles for living well together

As communities of Christians we are held together in the love of Christ. Sadly LGBTI+ people in our churches have not always experienced the unconditional love of Christ and we need to admit and address this reality. The Pastoral Principles, crafted by the national Pastoral Advisory Group of which I am a member, were commended by the House of Bishops at the February session of the General Synod. They invite church communities to examine afresh their life together. They were developed with LGBTI+ people in mind, but apply to all sorts of difference and diversity among God's people. They identify six pervading evils that undermine the quality of our relationships. Parishes are invited to consider whether these are at work in their church community and how we might....

acknowledge PREJUDICE

cast out FEAR

speak into SILENCE

admit HYPOCRISY

address IGNORANCE

pay attention to POWER

Each of the Pastoral Principles is set out with material to encourage reflection and has questions to explore. My hope is that they will be used by those with responsibility for welcome and pastoral care in the church, and as a resource for discipleship and study groups. They are available in printed form on individual cards from Church House Publishing or can be downloaded from the Church of England website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-launches-pastoral-principles-welcoming-lgbti-people>

Diocesan Priorities

We have produced a new video outlining the Diocese of Exeter's four key aims for 2019: to engage better with Children and Families, Young People aged 18-25, People over 55 and People on the "Fringe" of church. It features lots of great projects already happening across Devon. You can watch it here and I would encourage you to share it with your congregation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=CpEG_8r9VTo

Safeguarding

The visibility of and access to safeguarding advice on all parish websites is an important element in an effective response to any potential abuse and helps prevent future repetition. Last month Stephen Hancock, the Diocesan Secretary, wrote to you all to stress the importance of complying with the new regulations in this area and set out clearly what needs to be done. I would like to follow this up by asking and requiring you to check and, if need be, amend your websites to ensure that your parish conforms to the national guidance. This isn't cosmetic. It is important. Please don't put this scrutiny on the back burner and then forget all about it. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Charlie Pitman.

Operation London Bridge

At the last meeting of Rural Deans, we again considered the Church's response in the event of the death of a senior member of the Royal Family. This is a matter for which we all need to be prepared. The Rural Deans and Archdeacons are aware of the protocols that will be observed as and when such an event happens. The Church of England website will swiftly publish prayers, liturgy, free-to-use images, statements from the Archbishops and advice for churches. The Diocese of Exeter website will publish local statements, images and links to liturgical resources. Memorial services will be planned in regional hubs around the diocese and necessary information has already been shared with those who need to know. Our Director of Communications and Engagement, Chloe Axford, will be happy to offer advice on the use of social media at that time.

New look Cathedral Confirmations

We are trying to make something more of the two annual confirmations at the Cathedral and to make them powerful celebrations of the life of discipleship. These occasions can be very moving, particularly if there are a goodly number being confirmed. Worshipping at the Cathedral generates a special sense of belonging to a world-wide church which is a real force for good in God's world. The afternoon will start with a teaching session by the confirming bishop, followed by afternoon tea, and then the service itself at 4pm. The Bishop's teaching session is intended to build on the preparation that has already taken place in the local church and to give a chance for the bishop and the candidates to get to know each other. The first of these new-style confirmations will be in the afternoon of Sunday 19 May. Please contact Tom Salmon (liturgy@exeter-cathedral.org.uk) if you would like to present candidates at this service.

Church and Society

I am delighted to announce that Mr Chris Keppie has been appointed as our new Church and Society Officer. Chris brings extensive experience working with local government in the field of housing and homelessness. Meanwhile *Transforming Plymouth Together* is seeking to

recruit a new part-time Project Support Development Worker to assist its Board of Trustees and Chris Forster, the lead Development Worker. Applications close soon; so if you know anyone who is interested, please draw their attention to the advert and details of the appointment on the diocesan website: <https://exeter.anglican.org/vacancies/project-support-development-worker/>

Clergy with Permission to Officiate

The Diocese values the ministry of its clergy with Permission to Officiate enormously. The experience, wisdom and energy which you bring are a huge resource for both stipendiary clergy and laity in our Mission Communities. In the light of tighter rules about Safeguarding and the need to establish clearer channels of support and accountability, the House of Bishops has published a new *Policy on the Granting of Permission to Officiate*. This creates a new national framework for the granting and support of clergy with PtO. It has implications not just for clergy with PtO, but also for the clergy of parishes in which they serve. There are four main changes:

- A national register of all clergy with PtO will be established.
- All PtO clergy will have a Designated Minister to support and meet with them on an annual basis (usually the incumbent with whom they work most closely or, failing that, their Rural Dean).
- PtO clergy will need to draw up a simple Statement of Agreed Expectations with their Designated Minister, using the Diocesan template provided.
- PtO will need to be renewed every 5 years up to the age of 80, and in this Diocese every 2 years over the age of 80.

There is no need to do anything at the moment because all current PtOs continue to be valid, but after Easter the Suffragan Bishops will be writing to all clergy who currently hold PtO to explain the new national system.

Bishop Nick and Bishop Jackie join me in sending you our greetings and prayers as we enter Passiontide and prepare to walk the way of the cross. For some Good Friday is just one more shopping day with nothing 'good' about it. Others hurry past it in an effort to reach Easter Day. But the route to resurrection is always via Gethsemane and Golgotha, and we need to be faithful in our witness to Christ crucified.

We look forward to seeing you in the Cathedral on Maundy Thursday at the Chrism Eucharist when we renew our ministerial promises. May the crucified and risen Lord renew us all with his grace.

+ Robert Exon