



**The Rt. Revd. Jackie Searle
Acting Bishop of Exeter**

32 The Avenue
Tiverton

EX16 4HW

Tel 01884 250002

bishop.of.crediton@exeter.anglican.org

www.exeter.anglican.org

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‘May the God of hope fill you with all you joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ Romans 15:13

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Our New Diocesan Bishop: It was a joyful day on Tuesday when it was announced that the next Bishop of Exeter will be the Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison. Bishop Mike is currently Bishop of Dunwich in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Full details can be [found here](#), and a full report of his announcement day can be [found here](#). You can view the photo gallery [here](#) and watch Bishop Mike’s introductory video [here](#).*

There are some further protocols to be followed – his election by the College of Canons, then the Confirmation of Election. It is at that point that Bishop Mike officially becomes the Bishop of Exeter. He will be installed in a service at the Cathedral in the Autumn (the date is yet to be confirmed, I will let you know as soon as I can). Meanwhile he has asked me to continue as Acting Bishop of Exeter until his installation.

Many thanks to the Vacancy in See Committee, chaired by Mrs Anne Foreman, for the work last year in producing our Diocesan Statement of Need, and I heartily thank the members of the Crown Nominations Commission. The appointment of a Diocesan Bishop is a significant and weighty responsibility - we thank you for your commitment, effort, prayers and discernment on our behalf. Many of you in your churches, chaplaincies and schools have been regularly praying for the appointment process, thank you, and do please continue to pray for Bishop Mike and his wife Rachel as they live this time of change and transition, preparing to leave Suffolk and move to Devon. They will be so warmly welcomed, and we look forward to the future with hope and joy. Bishop Mike is eager to get to know the diocese and all of you. He is planning a couple of brief initial visits in the summer and intends to spend the first 6 months in post getting to know as many of you as possible. My thanks to everyone who worked behind the scenes to make the announcement day such a success.

Thy Kingdom Come: Pentecost Sunday evening saw a large gathering at the Cathedral to worship and pray together as we celebrated Pentecost, marking the end of the nine days of ‘Thy Kingdom Come.’ Christians of different denominations came together, and it was great to welcome Ruth

Valerio as the key speaker, Ben Aldous from Churches Together in England and Andy Flannagan and the band. How wonderful to see so many of you, and to be encouraged and challenged in equal measure. We live as an eschatological community, called to believe in God's restorative work in creation, and to partake in that work – as those who belong to the Kingdom of God. If you would like to read more I recommend 'L is for Lifestyle' by Ruth Valerio, and 'Surprised by Hope' by Tom Wright. The service made strong connections with the Eco Church service held at the Cathedral at the end of April – it was a very great pleasure to give out the Eco Church awards, well done to all the recipients. If you have not yet engaged with Eco Church awards you can find information [here](#).

Good News:

National Mission Data. It has been reported that the average weekly attendance at Church of England services rose by almost 5% in 2023, which marks the third year of consecutive growth. Weekly attendance by children was up by almost 6% last year according to an early snapshot of the national annual Statistics for Mission findings. Although total church service attendance is still below the 2019 levels, the figures suggest in-person attendance is drawing closer to the pre-pandemic trend. I add my thanks to that of the Archbishop of Canterbury who said, 'This is very welcome news and I hope it encourages churches across the country. I want to thank our clergy and congregations who have shown such faith, hope and confidence over recent years to share the gospel with their communities.'

Parental Leave Policy: The 'Clergy Babies Maternity Policy Audit', which took a group of women priests two years to complete, includes an analysis and comparison of maternity provision in each diocese, and makes more than 100 recommendations. Exeter Diocese came out with a gold star, with the report highlighting the excellent provision and the pastoral tone of the document.

The General Election: We had a very helpful focus on this at the March Diocesan Synod: Please find ideas of how to engage [here](#), information about holding a hustings [here](#), and the Church of England 'Pray Your Part' resources and daily reflections [here](#). Further resources can be found on the [Christians in Politics website](#).

Diocesan Synod 15th June: It is unusual to hold a Diocesan Synod in the summer, but essential this year to focus on the mission and ministry of the diocese in relation to diocesan finance, and the budget for 2025 and beyond. There will be work in groups considering a range of options. Please pray for the Diocesan Synod as we meet, and especially for the finance and stewardship of our resources.

Clergy Stipend: The incumbent stipend set by the Diocesan Synod for the 2024 budget had an increase of 5%. This came into effect from 1st April 2024. The Archbishop's Council then recommended an increase to 7% (because dioceses, which fund the stipends, would be paying a lower pension contribution rate from April this year following the latest review by the Pensions Board.) Having looked at the figures, and in view of the overall budget deficit, the Bishop's Diocesan Council have agreed to stay with a 5% increase for this year. Curates will automatically receive the set stipend for curates. The stipend level will be reviewed when, subject to Diocesan Synod's approval of the budget, it is anticipated that the stipends will be linked to the published National Stipends Benchmark for April 2025.

Looking ahead: There are some significant services and events coming up:

- The St Boniface service this Sunday 9th June at 4pm when lay people from across the diocese are thanked and honoured for their outstanding work in serving Jesus Christ in their actions, work, and ministries. Do please come, all are welcome at this Diocesan service.
- Ordinations are taking place at the end of the month. The ordination of priests will be taking place at churches around the diocese over the weekend 22-23 June. The ordination of deacons will be in Exeter Cathedral on Saturday 29th June. Do please pray for all those who are preparing for ordination.
- The Clergy and LLM study day on Saturday 23rd November 2024 will be a great chance to get to know our Bishop who will be a key speaker, and we will welcome Lucy Moore, head of the Growing Faith Foundation. Do please make sure you have the date in your diary.

This is my fourth Ad Clerum, a sign of time passing, the seasons changing and here we are in 'Ordinary Time.' Ordinary Time reminds us of the rhythm of the year and the seasons, and of the presence of God in all moments of life.

This comes with my prayers, that you may know God's faithfulness and blessing in your life and your ministry,

+Jackie



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