



Ad Clerum

4th December 2024

Dear sisters and brothers,

Advent

The Episcopalian scholar and priest Fleming Rutledge described John the Baptist as “Mr Advent” and he certainly makes regular appearances in the lectionary at this time. He is of course the forerunner, the one who points to Jesus Christ, the one who says he must decrease while He (Jesus Christ) increases. So too we are called in this season, despite all that might distract us, to focus as Mr Advent does on the person and way of Jesus Christ and encourage those in our pastoral care to do the same. Advent is a time to focus both on Incarnation and Parousia, the first coming of Our Lord in humility, and the second coming of Our Lord in glory. Both of these have something to teach us. The coming of Jesus in humility in Bethlehem is among other things a reminder that God is committed to working in surprising ways, dwelling in the easily-overlooked, inhabiting that which, in worldly terms, appears small or irrelevant. That our God chooses to make his home amongst the humble and insignificant further reminds us of the revelatory possibility of all things.

The second coming is a reminder that our ultimate destiny is in God’s hands, and that whatever transpires in this world, there is a faithfulness and a love which transcends the limitations of time and space and allows us to point beyond whatever life throws at us towards an eternal hope. “In the darkness, light” is a profoundly important message for

this time, and I hope that you will experience this light through this season of anticipation and expectation.

Bishop Jackie's farewell service

A sadness for me in joining Exeter diocese at this time is that it is just when Bishop Jackie is leaving. Bishop Jackie has enriched the diocese in all sorts of ways, and we will be celebrating her episcopacy at a Farewell Eucharist Service at Exeter Cathedral on Saturday 18th January at 3pm, (to be followed by refreshments). You are warmly invited - please feel free to share this invitation with others in your Mission Community or organisation. To give an indication of numbers, please book your seat here:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/exetercathedral/t-xmlqoqk>

A leaving gift of a book of photos and messages of appreciation from across the diocese is being collated – if you have a photo and/or a message (selfies appreciated!) for inclusion in the book then please upload to: <https://forms.gle/G4btGTirSVsSvjmN7>.

If you would like to contribute to a gift for Bishop Jackie, please make a BACS payment to:

NatWest Bank, High Street, Exeter

Sort Code: 56-00-49

Account Number: 00717673

Account Name: Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

Reference: Bishop Jackie (please ensure you use this reference otherwise your donation cannot be allocated to Bishop Jackie's farewell gift).

(See also attached picture of +Jackie's last Bishop's Staff Meeting with home-made Black Forest Gateau – yumzas).

Follow the Star Christmas campaign

The theme of this year's Church of England Christmas Campaign is: Follow the Star: Calm and Bright. There are booklets, prayer cards and family resources which are ideal for giving away at Advent and Christmas services. These are available from [Church House Publishing](#). The reflections are designed to be used between Christmas Day and

Epiphany. There are also new Christmas episodes from the Cheeky Pandas: These free resources feature cartoons, songs, and Bible stories to help you engage the children in your church with the Christmas story. [Find videos on the Cheeky Pandas website](#). Get downloadable resources including digital Christmas card templates, colouring sheets for children, social media covers and templates, 'What's On' and 'Keep in Touch' flyer templates, poster templates, and PowerPoint templates from [AChurchNearYou.com](#) (login required). There is [also a directory of resources for use at home, church and school](#), provided by members of the Parachurch Organisations Network of the Growing Faith Foundation:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/advent-and-christmas-resources-from-the-growing-faith-parachurch-organisations-network.pdf>

Assisted Dying

You will be aware that Parliament agreed to move forward with the Assisted Dying Bill on Friday 29th November. While personally I am disappointed with this outcome, commentators have pointed out that there is still much ground to travel and many reassurances needing to be sought, not least concerning how the vulnerable will be protected from coercion. Prayers please for all those involved in this process of close scrutiny. In an interview with Plough Magazine in 2016 the theologian Stanley Hauerwas said “I say that in a hundred years, if Christians are identified as people who do not kill their children or the elderly, we will have done well. Because that’s clearly coming.” I thought when I read that, that he was being overly apocalyptic, but his words give pause.

INEQE Independent Safeguarding Audit of Exeter Diocese and Cathedral

The INEQE report on Exeter Diocese and Exeter Cathedral was published on Wednesday 4th December and describes the safeguarding processes and policies of the diocese and Cathedral as “robust”. In the last month with the Makin Review and its ramifications, there has been considerable soul-searching and loss of heart in our Church around the issue of safeguarding. I hope that this detailed and significant report will be a timely reminder of our commitment to live out Christ’s call to love our neighbour by putting the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults at the heart of

everything we do. It is evidence that our safeguarding structures and management are of a high standard, and that our parish safeguarding representatives are doing invaluable work on the ground.

We know there is always more we could be doing, and we will be carefully considering all the report's recommendations, particularly how we can better engage with victim and survivor representatives. We are also investing in the safeguarding team with the appointment of a new Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor to build capacity. We will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that our churches are safe places for all and build on the work already done to foster a healthy safeguarding culture across the diocese. You can read more about our response to the report here

<https://exeter.anglican.org/exeter-diocese-and-cathedral-safeguarding-robust-according-to-independent-audit/>

Growing Faith Study Morning

It was a joy to see so many of you at the Bishop's Study Morning on Growing Faith a few weeks' ago. Thank you for the helpful feedback, and the encouraging 'In Your Experience' stories that were shared. I hope that it instilled in you as well as myself a real sense of hope and encouragement about what 2025 will bring. We will look to organise other opportunities to gather together over the next 12 months.

Be Refreshed

I hope that in this season amidst the busyness of church and community life you will have space to attend to and be refreshed by the One who comes as Light and Life into the world; may you be blessed in your preparations for worship, preaching and proclamation, in the two holy seasons of Advent and Christmas this year.

With Advental Blessings

+Mike Exon

