

To all Licensed Clergy, Clergy with PTO, Licensed Lay Ministers, Focal Ministers, PCC Secretaries and Safeguarding Coordinators.

Date: Tuesday 4th February 2025

Our ref: MJS/jp-bp5034

Presentation of Christ

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The last few weeks have been a time of extraordinary turbulence in the Church of England. We are therefore writing again, on this feast day of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, to thank you for your service of Christ, and your willingness to persevere in the face of so many challenges.

On this feast day, we are reminded again of the humility of our Lord's family – they offered the sacrifice of turtle doves or pigeons, according to the Leviticus instruction: "such as they can afford." From these humble origins, the church has grown in wealth and power. And while these attributes are not evil in themselves, and can be used for both good and ill, they can lead us to lose sight of our purpose and calling. Tragically, recent events have again highlighted abuses of power by senior figures in the church, and the press is rightly holding us to account for these failures.

Next week, General Synod will be considering further proposals for changes to our safeguarding work. We are all agreed that care for victims and survivors of abuse must be at the core of our work – it is central to our calling and purpose as a church. Yet tragically, we have struggled to put this into practice. So, Synod will be asked to choose between two options (more details are on the national church website) for greater independence in our safeguarding practices, ensuring that the voices of victims and survivors are truly heard, and that independent experts hold us to account. It is fair to say that both options will involve considerable change, particularly for our safeguarding staff. Please hold them in your prayers, alongside Synod and all those for whom this is a very personal and painful discussion.

We are very mindful that many of you will have faced difficult questions and comments from people in your congregations and communities who have read the press reports. Often there is not much that we can say – other than to be as gracious and pastoral as possible with the person asking the question. Personally, we have not felt it appropriate to comment publicly (despite many media requests), but privately, we have expressed our shared view that this needs to be a watershed moment for the church when we humbly accept our loss of status and power and return to our primary calling of humble discipleship and pointing people to Jesus Christ, the suffering servant.

By God's grace, the failings and brokenness of the church are not the sum total of who we are. There is a place – sensitively and with humility – to point people to the excellent work being done by many individuals and communities in the name of Christ. In particular, we are so grateful to our Diocesan Safeguarding Team and our Parish Safeguarding Coordinators who

are making a real difference through their tireless work. Please take every opportunity to encourage them and express your support.

In addition, we have churches and chaplaincies in the diocese which are serving the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities with genuine compassion and commitment. We have churches which have significant numbers of new people coming to faith and growing in faith (we get the privilege of meeting many of these people in confirmation services and their stories are quite remarkable). And we have people, young and old, exploring their vocation to ministry in the church (some of them prompted by Minster Community conversations!) So, even as we work for change within the institution of the church, so too we give thanks for the way God continues to use us to bring blessing to others.

Safeguarding Training

In view of all this, we need to remind you of your responsibilities in terms of safeguarding. We regularly say that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and this is true. Yet different roles within the church bring different responsibilities – those who preach and teach should be speaking of safeguarding on a regular basis and reminding people of the theological foundations, as well as the practical out-workings; those who serve on PCCs should be receiving regular updates on safeguarding work in the parish and be well-enough informed such that they can ask appropriate questions and be confident that policies and procedures are being properly implemented.

This means that different roles have different needs in terms of safeguarding training. A full summary of these different requirements can be found [here](#).

We need to stress that it is **your responsibility to ensure your safeguarding training is up to date.** Although we hold records of training undertaken, we do not have the capacity to send reminders to everyone individually. So please check **now** when your training needs to be updated and make a note in your diary well in advance, so you have time to register for a course and complete the on-line courses as well. Failure to participate in appropriate training is a serious matter.

For courses completed on the church of England safeguarding training portal, you can check expiry dates under 'My Records'. [Safeguarding Training Portal FAQs](#). For courses completed with the Diocese you can find the expiry date on your certificate. You can find information about safeguarding training, including links to course dates [here](#).

The Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse course (RADA) is due to be updated in May 2025. Therefore, if you need to renew your training please wait until May to avoid repetition. If you need to complete the RADA training for the first time, then you can complete it on the safeguarding training portal : [Home | Safeguarding: Training Portal](#)

In addition, we want to let you know that as part of the safeguarding standards to which the whole church is now working [National Safeguarding Standards | The Church of England](#), we are doing a particular piece of work on standard one – leadership and culture. We have engaged an independent consultant Margaret Gildea (some of you may remember her from

the post-pandemic focus groups) to meet with people to assess the culture of the diocese and address the particular question, “how comfortable do you feel in raising concerns in the diocese – and how confident are you that such action would receive a good response?” A letter will be sent in the next few weeks to give details of how you can engage with this work, with strict confidentiality around such engagement.

For those with PTO, and clergy who act as their DRP's (Designated Responsible Persons), we have updated the Statement of Expectations and Ministerial Return to highlight the Safeguarding Requirements, so please use the attached forms going forward.

Deliverance Ministry

It is perhaps timely to remind you that the diocese has a Bishop's Deliverance Team which exists to support clergy and lay ministers who encounter what they think may be paranormal phenomena. The Team is overseen by Bishop Peter Fox, one of our Honorary Assistant Bishops and has both a Psychiatrist and a former Psychiatric Nurse as members, as well as having regular contact with our Safeguarding Team.

This work is one part of our wider ministry of healing, but it is specialist work and Team members receive training and have clear accountability structures. Please do call on them (contact via the Bishop's Chaplain) even if you are unsure whether what you have encountered is real or imaginary. They always work with the parish priest or local lay ministers, and even when they are directly involved in praying for someone, they will always ask you to follow-up.

Bishops' Study Day's 2025

Our next Bishops' Study Day takes place on **Thursday 15th May 2025** at St Martins House and will have the theme of 'Prayer and Spirituality'. I am delighted to say that the Launde Abbey Ministry Team have agreed to lead the day. Although we are always hesitant to speak of the "three-line whip", we do want to be clear that stipendiary clergy are expected to attend the whole date unless there is a very good reason. Further details of how to book through The Hub will follow in due course. Also please mark the Autumn study day in your diary as **Tuesday 25th November 2025**.

Bishop's Chaplaincy Lectures

In the first Bishop's Chaplaincy lecture of 2025, Lord Woolley of Woodford is joining us to address how we can seek to increase the diversity and representation of minoritised groups. Having grown up in Leicester, Simon Woolley went on to found Operation Black Vote, and is now Principal at Homerton College, University of Cambridge.

The lecture is taking place at St Andrew's Jarrom Street on **Thursday 27th February at 6pm**. This is a free event and open to all, to find out more and register to attend please [click here](#).

The next two lectures are taking place on:

Thursday 8th May at 6pm, at Leicester University, where Revd Dr Israel Oluwole Olofinjana will be speaking on 'Decolonising the Church - An Intercultural Approach'.

Thursday 30th October, at University of Loughborough, where Lord Tarassenko will be addressing Artificial Intelligence within society.

Details about each of the lectures will be shared in Diomail, so please do look out for them.

Retreat Days at Launde

Finally, a reminder of the retreat days at Launde which are open to all clergy and lay ministers and are intended simply as a gift of time and space.

Dates for the next few months are:

Thursday 13th March

Wednesday 9th April [limited availability left]

Thursday 6th May

Thursday 5th June

Thursday 10th July

Wednesday 13th August

Saturday 6th September

Tuesday 16th September

Thursday 9th October

Tuesday 4th November

For more information and to book your place, please contact our office on Bishops.office@leicestercofe.org or 0116 2708985.

Chrism Service

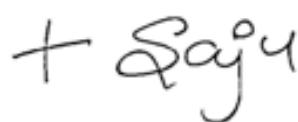
Once again, we will gather on **Maundy Thursday, 17th April 2025 at 11am** at Leicester Cathedral, as deacons, priests and bishops, to renew our ordination vows. This service is open to anyone, so please do extend a warm welcome to others, including church officers and lay ministers. Further details for booking on will follow in due course.

With continued thanks for your ministry

Yours in Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Saju Muthalaly
Bishop of Loughborough

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