

**To all Licensed Clergy, Clergy with PTO, Licensed Lay Ministers, and Safeguarding Coordinators.**

Date: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025

Our ref: MJS/ec-bp5194

Petertide 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am writing this having just participated in three ordination services in Leicester Cathedral. We roasted in the summer heat, but I found my conversations with the ordinands to be refreshing and renewing in equal measure. It continues to amaze me that God calls such talented people and that they, in turn, respond to God's calling with passion and commitment. Some of their stories are included in the latest edition of Diomail – do take a look.

**BBC News Report**

Many of you will have seen the BBC news article and documentary (File on 4) heavily critical of how the diocese, and I in particular, handled complaints made against a lay minister.

While the diocese has made a formal response to the media reporting (available [here](#)), I want to take this opportunity to offer a personal note to you as ministers and leaders within the diocese.

Firstly, my thoughts and prayers have been with the people at the heart of this story – two people in particular were interviewed by the BBC and their stories are heartbreaking. Long before this became public, I had met with them both and apologised for my part in this distressing series of events. I am aware that others were also affected by the conduct of Venessa Pinto (a former employee of the diocese) and I want to offer a similar apology to them – as well as encouraging all affected to seek support and care (either through the [diocesan safeguarding team](#), or Safe Spaces - 0300 303 1056 or visit [safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk](#))

Secondly, I am very sorry that you may have found yourselves being questioned about these events. It is quite likely that many of you will have known nothing of them – not because we tried to hide them (there was a statement on our website at the time of Ms Pinto's conviction), but because we did not want to publicise them in a way which would cause further hurt. If you are asked about this situation, please do point people to the statement on our website.

It is important to say that some of the reporting has not been accurate. We submitted a statement to the BBC in advance of the report and documentary, but they chose to use very little of this material. This has led to all sorts of harsh comments on social media – a

reminder, if we needed one, of the importance of treating one another with respect and kindness even when we have strong feelings about a matter.

Thirdly, I have been very keen to learn the lessons of these events since they transpired. To that end, last year, Jonathan Kerry and I commissioned an independent review of our response, and we are committed to implementing the recommendations of this review. As the review contains confidential information, we are unable to publish it, but the main recommendations concern the need to be much clearer on our HR processes for employees, especially when they are also Licensed Lay Ministers (hence subject to Canon Law as well as Employment Law), and to be much clearer on the distinctions between safeguarding and HR, and to resource both areas of work effectively in the diocese. Work is progressing on implementing these recommendations.

I will also be writing again soon on the Safeguarding Culture Survey, which was undertaken for us earlier this year by Margaret Gildea, an independent facilitator. She has now reported to the Bishop's Leadership Team and we look forward to sharing this with all who took part, and the wider diocese.

I remain truly grateful for all you do to keep our churches safe and welcoming places to worship God. And as always, if you have comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of diocesan staff.

Your faithful servant,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a small cross followed by the name 'Martyn' in a cursive script.

The Rt Revd Martyn Snow  
Bishop of Leicester