

***To all Clergy and Lay Ministers, Churchwardens, PCC Secretaries and PCC Treasurers***

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Our Ref: MS/ec-bp9581

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

You may have heard by now that last Saturday, Diocesan Synod voted in favour of a new diocesan framework called Minster Communities. The Synod debate was marked by a spirit of generous listening and careful discernment and in the end, the vote not only passed the 2/3 majority which I had asked for but reached 72% in favour.

This is clearly a strong endorsement and gives us a clear mandate to start work on implementation. However, I am very aware that some people still have serious concerns, and we will need to take account of these concerns as we move forward. Unsurprisingly, some people at Synod felt unable to support the proposals until they could see exactly what it would look like in their context. So, I want to restate my promise that PCCs and other governing bodies will be involved in the next round of conversations and will ultimately decide on how the diocesan framework is applied in their context.

I have now recorded a video message to accompany this letter (an adaption of my address to Diocesan Synod). [It can be accessed here, and I hope you might consider showing this to your PCC or even in a church service.](#)

In this letter, I want to set out very clearly the next steps. Firstly, there are two gatherings in the next few weeks which are intended to provide an opportunity for all clergy and lay ministers to explore the implications of this decision – one is on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October and the other on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. You will need to book in for these events by Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October by emailing [MMbookings@leicestercofe.org](mailto:MMbookings@leicestercofe.org). For those wishing to attend in person please let us know of any special dietary requirements when booking please. You are welcome to choose which day, and indeed, method by which you attend. Our ministry categories are broad and cover a lot of nuance and individual roles – but as numbers in St Martins House will be limited we would ask PTO ministers to attend by Zoom if possible. However, if you are PTO and would prefer to attend in person, please say so on your reply and we will do our best, given all the constraints we are working within.

Secondly, we hope in the coming weeks to have similar opportunities for Churchwardens and other church officers to meet to explore any questions you may have. We will be back in touch with you about this.

Thirdly, we are looking to pilot Minster Communities in three different places around the diocese starting in early 2022 (rural, urban and market town). If you might be interested in being part of one of these pilots, please contact Claire Bampton [Claire.bampton@leicestercofe.org](mailto:Claire.bampton@leicestercofe.org) We cannot guarantee that you will be able to be part of a pilot but nevertheless it would be good to know of your interest. For the pilot parishes / fresh expressions of church / schools, there will be a series of conversations facilitated by

diocesan staff. And once the Minster Communities are established, we will conduct a learning review before starting conversations in other places. Our aim is that every parish / fresh expression of church / church school will be part of a Minster Community by 2026.

Fourthly, we are currently exploring what sort of ongoing training and support will be needed for all those involved in Minster Communities. This is likely to be the major focus of all our training work in the coming years and more details will be available soon.

Finally, we are aware that we need to strike a careful balance in terms of the pace of change. If we move too fast, we risk making bad decisions and causing much upset. But if we move too slowly, we risk further pressure on clergy and lay ministers, further unresolved issues with church buildings and ever greater financial problems. So we hope that you will be patient, but also that you will always feel able to contact us if you have concerns.

### **Season of Remembering**

As I write this, I am very aware that we are only a few weeks away from All Saints / All Souls / Remembrance Day. Just as last year, these events take on a special significance during a time of pandemic when so many have experienced great loss. While not expecting that every parish will be able to lay on special events, I hope you might feel able to offer something within your existing services which acknowledges the grief and loss and points people to the hope we have in Christ. Please also be aware that many of our schools are also struggling with expectations around special events and again there may be opportunities for doing things in partnership. It is so important that during this time of transition in the diocese, we keep focused on those we are called to serve.

### **Christmas**

As you will no doubt be aware, Christmas this year falls on a Saturday which leaves many churches questioning what they should do on the following Sunday. This is of course entirely a question for Incumbents and PCCs but in the interests of the wellbeing of clergy and lay ministers and given the experiences of the last year and our learning around virtual services, I want to point out that services do not have to be 'in person' and can be pre-recorded or indeed shared with another church. The Cathedral will have a service on the 26<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am which will be livestreamed.

This comes with my warm greetings and my thanks for the many expressions of support and prayers that I have received in recent weeks. Please know that I pray for you regularly.



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow  
Bishop of Leicester

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