

To all licensed clergy, clergy with PTO and licensed lay ministers

Date: Thursday 12th October 2023

Our Ref: MJS/SM/bp2405

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

We are writing to you at the end of the Church of England Season of Creation (or Creationtide – officially 1st September to 4th October). We hope that you have been able to set aside time to enjoy God's creation during this season, as well as considering how we care for it. There is no substitute for enjoying God's gift of this world (or 'seeing that it is good' to paraphrase Genesis 1), both in terms of our own wellbeing and in terms of our motivation to take action to nurture and sustain it for future generations.

Bishops' Study Day – 30th November, St Martins House – 9.00am to 4.00pm

We are delighted to say that the Church of England's Lead Bishop for the Environment, Graham Usher will be our keynote speaker at the next Bishops' Study Day. Bishop Graham will help us reflect theologically on this theme as well as updating us on national work. There will also be an opportunity for everyone to share something of what you are doing locally and to learn from one another. So ahead of the day, you might want to take a look at the eco-church resources (<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>) and, if you haven't done so already, consider where you are on the journey to gaining a gold award!

The day is primarily for Licenced Clergy and booking is essential through the Hub: [Bishops' Study Day - The Hub Diocese of Leicester \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/bishops-study-day)

We very much hope to welcome lay ministers and clergy with PTO to this event, but due to the limitation on numbers, these places will be allocated nearer the time. Therefore, if you would like to attend, please email Bishops.Office@LeicesterCofE.org and places will be assigned on a first come, first served basis.

Cathedral re-opening – Sunday 26th November 2023 – services 10.30am and 3.30pm

The beautifully timed 'soft-re-opening' of Leicester Cathedral means that the Bishops' Study Day will include a Eucharist in the Cathedral, with time afterwards for you to explore the newly refurbished interior – we can already tell you that it looks stunning! The first services – on the 26th November – are open to anyone, as we are saving the 'grand re-opening' until 2024 when the new building will also be complete. In the meantime, please spread the message that the Cathedral will be open and ready to receive visitors from the 26th November.

Communion by extension and children being admitted to communion.

We are getting increasing requests for permission to have communion by extension. While this is completely understandable given the reduced numbers of full time stipendiary clergy, we want to remind you that, while communion by extension is valuable in particular circumstances, it should

not become the normal setting in which people receive the consecrated bread and wine. Rather, it is a way for those who are unable to make the main gathering of worship to partake in the Eucharist, and it is intended to be used with 'a minimal interval of time' between the service where the bread/wine is consecrated and the communion by extension service. The Bishops' Guidelines can be found here: <https://www.leicester.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/communion-by-extension-in-the-diocese-of-leicester.pdf>

Just as adults are sustained through the bread and wine of Christ, children also are as well. You will find here <https://www.leicester.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/admission-of-children-to-communion-2023.docx> the diocesan guidelines to admitting children to receive Communion. Enabling this for children between ages 8-11 can also be a good way of beginning the preparation with them towards confirmation.

Other frequently asked questions about services can be accessed here:

<https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f3ffd8a9f6aa/content/pages/documents/bishops-office-faq-s.pdf>

Living in Love and Faith

We know that this continues to be a challenging time as we live with uncertainty around proposals for prayers with same-sex couples. Following this week's House of Bishops meeting, a short report can be found on our website <https://www.leicester.anglican.org/update-on-llf-process-from-the-house-of-bishops.php>. Further meetings of the College and House of Bishops are planned in the next few weeks, ahead of the November meeting of General Synod. Much of this time will be spent on agreeing the pastoral guidance and the appropriate reassurances for clergy and PCCs so that, whatever their views, they will continue to be supported and honoured within the Church of England. Both of us would be very happy to talk with anyone who has questions about this process. And following General Synod, we will write again with more details about how we hope to engage in conversations around the diocese.

Finance and Strategy

In a similar vein, our diocesan finances continue to be very challenging. We have been greatly encouraged by the increase in parish contributions which we have received so far this year (we are one of only a handful of dioceses which have seen an increase). So, we want to offer our sincere gratitude to you all for your efforts in this regard. However, the structural deficit within our budget is still very large and we were reminded at the last Diocesan Synod that we can only afford to run with such a deficit for four or five years. After that, our reserves are gone. Therefore, we have only a limited amount of time to either / both increase our income and decrease our expenditure. This is going to entail some very painful decisions about what we can, and cannot, continue to do (remembering that this is about diocesan finances, and therefore a separate question to what the national church will fund through grants).

In the last few months, we have received a further national church 'capacity fund' grant. This will help with the roll out of the Minster Community programme. As part of this, we have created the post of Diocesan Strategy Development Enabler and we very pleased to say that Rev'd Barry Hill has agreed to take on this role for two years. He will lead a process of exploring how we fulfil our vision for the Kingdom of God, and our mission, which is summarised in the three key questions about discipleship, in the context of our financial constraints, and the issues that many churches are facing

regarding the sustainability of their buildings. A key part of this process will be a joint meeting of the diocesan governance bodies on Saturday 27th January 2024. Again, we will communicate more after that meeting.

Minster Communities (staff wellbeing)

Even as we review our strategy and continue with the early pilots for Minster Communities, we want to make it clear that we are committed to this process. We know that there have been various press reports (and lots of letters) questioning what we are doing. However, what these reports fail to note is that we have always said that we will learn and adjust as we go. We are not claiming to have all the answers about the future shape of the church. Rather we believe that God will lead us as we journey together.

We understand therefore, that there is considerable anxiety about this process. However, we do want to ask for your understanding and patience as we learn together and wrestle with the current challenges. In particular, we have a duty of care to diocesan support staff, just as to clergy, lay ministers and all the people of God. So please be considerate in your communications, whether verbal or written. The question of how we relate to one another is linked directly to the question of what it means to be the church – the body of Christ. So, as your Bishops, we appeal to you to show love, patience and understanding towards all your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Clergy Support Trust, Counselling Service and Retreat Days

Finally, a reminder, and an encouragement to join us for one of our regular retreat days at Launde. We have deliberately added some Saturdays in the hope that this might help lay ministers and SSMS who work during the week attend a retreat. In addition, we want to remind you of the support available from the Diocesan Counselling Service, and the financial support which is available from the Clergy Support Trust (<https://www.clergysupport.org.uk>), as well as from our Bishops' Discretionary Fund. Please do not hold back in asking for help. Details about the counselling service and retreat days can be found here: www.leicester.anglican.org/info-for-leaders/wellbeing .

Once again, this comes with our prayers and thanks. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours, in Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow
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