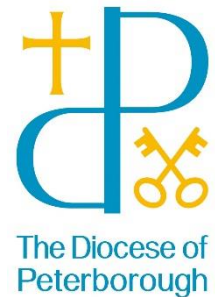


**BISHOP'S LETTER    No 45    11 December 2022**

**From Bishop Donald**

*To: Licensed Clergy, Licensed Lay Ministers, Clergy with PTO, Bishop's Council, Diocesan and Cathedral Staff, Diocesan Registrar, Churchwardens, Deanery and Diocesan Lay Chairs, final-year Ordinands, final-year Lay Ministry students; copied for information to Yaxley Clergy and Lay Chair*



Dear friends

Advent greetings.

**Christmas thoughts**

As we look forward to Christmas, and as we hear the news that less than half of people in this country described themselves as Christian in the 2021 census, we have some serious thinking to do. Doubtless the purveyors of chocolate, alcohol, luxury foods, toys, video games, decorations, jewellery and books will continue to do well this month: our nation will still celebrate Christmas after a fashion. But Christ is less and less at the centre of it. Increasingly our task as Christians and Churches is to teach again the very basics of the faith, not assuming that people know anything at all about it. The simple Christmas story is a good place to start, but we also need to explain the deeper meaning and encourage people towards commitment.

So I have a double-barrelled Christmas message this year. To Christians and Churches I say: Rejoice in Jesus, all that he is and means, and seek to find new ways of sharing him with those around you. To the majority of people, who don't associate with Christianity and Church: I encourage you, not just to celebrate Christmas, but to let your local church, or a Christian friend, share with you more of its wonderful deeper meaning. A very happy and meaningful Christmas to you all.

**Lay Ministry**

I want to outline some significant changes to the oversight and care of our Readers and Lay Ministers as we move into the New Year.

In recent years I have held direct oversight in this area. I have asked Canon Andrew Coleby, our Lay Ministry Training Officer, to hold this responsibility until a new Diocesan Bishop arrives, and I am grateful to him for agreeing to do so.

I am very grateful to Canon John Hall and Ben Lewis for acting as Wardens of Lay Ministry in our two archdeaconries. They are stepping down at the end of this year, and I shall be appointing a priest and a Reader to work together in each archdeaconry: offering pastoral care, ensuring ongoing ministry development and training, and monitoring the working agreements between incumbents and lay ministers. Those four appointments will be announced soon: they will work under Andrew's leadership and alongside Canon Vyv Wainwright who has a diocesan role in convening and caring for Readers.

Rachel Lomas in my office has been supporting Joanne Gibson in the huge task of paperwork, admin, and safeguarding checks for the lay ministers. I am grateful to them both. Rachel will take full responsibility for that, working with Andrew Coleby, from January.

### **Video Sermons and Psalm Meditations**

I have continued to record these for every Sunday and Tuesday. Our new website doesn't put them up automatically, but they do appear there, and on the Diocesan Facebook page.

Sunday sermons: <https://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/church-resources/what-we-believe/bishops-sermons.php>

Tuesday Psalms: <https://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/church-resources/what-we-believe/bishops-reflections-on-the-psalms.php>

I have decided, before I leave, to complete the three-year cycle of Gospel readings, taking us to just after Easter, and to cover all the Psalms, running to the end of March. I believe that they will continue to appear on the Facebook page, but they will also be available on my personal YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJllxetl3TOzfZwOdQKocBw>

### **Bishops' Office**

I want to let you know about some changes in the Bishops' Office, with effect from the start of next year. It's probably easiest if I mention everyone and their roles.

**Joanne Gibson** will step down as PA to the Bishop of Peterborough at Christmas. She and André are moving to Hereford, where she will become PA to the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral. Jo has been an outstanding support to me over the last three years, and they go with my deepest thanks and best wishes.

**Steve Benoy** will continue as Chaplain, and the first point of contact for all matters pastoral and liturgical.

**Alex Tolley** will move back to the PA role for the Bishop of Peterborough, though part-time. **Rachel Lomas**, also part-time, is stepping up to a new role as Assistant PA to the Bishop of Peterborough. Alex and Rachel will share the substantial workload between them: you might hear from either one. If you aren't sure who to contact, use the bishop@ email address (see below) and one or other will get back to you.

**Suzanne Carter** will remain as PA to the Bishop of Brixworth, also part-time, supporting Bishop John in the various admin responsibilities of that role.

**Bishop John**, as Acting Bishop, and **Bishop Jonathan**, as Archbishop's Commissary, and our Honorary Assistant Bishops **Ed Condry** and **Andrew Proud**, will be supported in complementary ways by Steve, Alex and Rachel.

I'm sure you will hear more detail on all this once I've moved on, including the probable appointment of an admin assistant in the spring. There may well also be changes to the office phone system and the email addresses during the next year, but in the meantime please use the one phone number, 01733 562492, for the whole team, and the current email addresses: bishop, bishop.brixworth, steve.benoy, alex.tolley, rachel.lomas, suzanne.carter – all ending with @peterborough-diocese.org.uk.

### **Moving on**

I look forward to seeing those who can make it at my farewell service, Cathedral Evensong at 3.30pm on Sunday 8 January. I believe the organisers would be glad of numbers in advance to help with catering. Please email [Rachel Lomas](mailto:rachel.lomas@peterborough-diocese.org.uk) to let her know.

As I move to Edinburgh and discover the ways of retirement ministry, I will leave you with great thankfulness for almost thirteen years of love and fellowship in the gospel, and with my prayers and blessings for you all. To God be the glory.

+ Donald