



The Bishop of Chichester

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There are just four matters that I wish to share with you. They are about the LLF process, patterns of preaching in the coming year, arrangements for the Chrism Eucharist, and nominations for the Order of St Richard.

1. The LLF Process

The announcement that is dominant in the news right now follows a series of meetings for all the bishops of the Church of England. It is that there is no proposal to change the doctrine of marriage as it has been received and is outlined in Canon B30 and our authorised liturgy.

For many people this is a key issue that will bring dismay or relief.

We should also note that the bishops will be making a public apology for the evidence, historic and still wide-spread, of homophobia within the institutional life of our Church. In addition, bishops will, for the first time, be commending prayers for people in same-sex relationships, with suggestions about how the prayers might be used in church services.

Some people will feel an obligation to register their profound and sincere reaction to the bishop's decisions. That is a sign of honesty within the community of the Church. But I hope that we shall keep in mind what it is that we are speaking about in these communications with each other.

We are trying to speak about the material of God's creation, both in the life of a person made in God's image, and in a sacramental sign that is the foretaste of the new creation. These are holy matters that must be treated with reverential care.

Whatever our hopes and griefs, it is essential that we strive to love those we do not understand, to love those who might misrepresent us and, especially within the household of faith, the Church, to love those with whom we share commitment to Jesus Christ through the commonality of our baptism. Together with the bishops of Horsham and Lewes, I hope that we shall be able to respond in person to those who are most distressed, while at the same time ensuring that we sustain the common life of this household in seeking to know, love and follow Jesus Christ.

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2. Preaching the Word of God in the Year of the Old Testament

This is simply a request. In this Year of the Old Testament, all three bishops, together with archdeacons and other colleagues, will be paying attention to how the Old Testament leads us to Jesus.

We would encourage you to ensure that you include the Old Testament reading in your Sunday worship, and that you preach on it.

There is so much that people do not know about the Old Testament. Finding something that can renew and enrich their faith in Jesus Christ should not be difficult.

To encourage this exploration, we will be offering a range of material on-line and through social media, including on a short video that shows an act of Christian witness in Preston. This rehearses how Jesus is present in every book of the Bible. I commend it to you as a key to understanding the sweep of revelation in all of Holy Scripture.

There will also be CMD talks and seminars on the Old Testament throughout this year. **I do urge you to attend at least one of these events (advertised on the website) and to discuss your assessment of it at your next MDR.**

3. The Chrism Eucharist

The arrangements for the Chrism Eucharist this year will be similar to last year, but using different locations.

On Tuesday 4 April, the Bishop of Horsham will preside at the Eucharist and bless the oils at St Mary's, Horsham at 12.00 noon.

On Wednesday 5 April, the Bishop of Lewes will preside at the Eucharist and bless the oils at St Saviour's, Eastbourne.

I shall be present at both locations to preach and to receive the renewal of commitment to ordained ministry.

As your bishops, we look forward to sharing with you this important moment in our life and apostolic ministry together.

4. Nominations for the Order of St Richard

In 2019, we launched the Order of St Richard as an annual award for lay people within the Diocese who have made exceptional contributions to their parish, the local community, or the Diocese. This is an award for those whose contribution might have been taken for granted or been a small but invaluable work undertaken for many years. We particularly value a wide and diverse range of nominations that will include the contribution of young people.

I am writing to you now to encourage you to nominate someone in your congregation(s) who fulfils this example of 'exceptional service'.

Your nomination should be made using the specially designed nomination form which is attached to this ad clerum and is also available on the diocesan website.

Please can you make sure you mention all the service given by the nominee, not only to their church but also to their local community. Please make the information concise!

The nomination should be completed by the incumbent or priest-in-charge and a lay sponsor. If yours is a parish in vacancy, please discuss making a nomination with your archdeacon.

All nominations are strictly confidential. Closure date is 12th May 2023. Any nominations received after that date will be referred to the 2024 awards. The nominations should be e-mailed to rsvp@chichester.anglican.org. They are sent first to the relevant Archdeacon for comment, then to a Nominations Panel (6 lay people chaired by Mrs Sara Stonor DL) who will select 40 nominations for me to approve.

This year's Service for the Order of St Richard will be on Saturday 30th September at the Cathedral.

This brings my prayers and good wishes as we prepare to observe the seasons of Lent and Easter.

Louise,

+ Martin