



The Bishop of Chichester
The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner

Vigil of the Feast of St Peter, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

1. Reasons to be cheerful

Three events, in glorious summer weather: packed services for pupils and their families who are leaving our Church schools; ordinations to diaconate and priesthood; a tea party for retired clergy and spouses or partners.

These are all about the future. Thank you to retired clergy who continue to minister across the diocese in so many ways. It's good to recollect the past, and give thanks for God's grace in all the twists and turns of our life.

The ordinations renew the Church's life. Please pray for those newly ordained, for those in training, and for an increase of vocations to priesthood and diaconate, especially among young Christians.

We should give thanks for the opportunity to send pupils from our schools into the next stage of their lives, aware of the dignity of being made and gifted by God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, reveals God's love for each of them.

2. Causes for concern

Please pray for the forthcoming General Synod. The slow and painful LLF process will again threaten to divide and damage people in every part of the Church's life, as another debate takes place.

The payment of parish share has become an item in that debate. We are fortunate that in this diocese we have an agreement for the arrangement of parish share that allows us to hold together the funding of parish ministry.

However, the cause for concern is that this year the payment of parish share, in whatever form you make it, is falling noticeably below expectations based on previous years. This is not because share is being withheld for LLF reasons.

As you will know, the cumulative effect of post-covid recovery and a cost of living crisis had already dented levels of giving. The deficit for this year is heading towards £2m. That cannot continue.

We believe that this is not simply a blip. Costs at Church House, Hove have already been cut dramatically. The next challenge is how we manage ministry costs without damage to mission.

We do not believe that huge multi-parish benefices assist the growth of the Church. We do believe that adjustments to ministry can yield a different pattern of deployment which will nurture a pattern of liturgical and sacramental life that feels like growth in holiness, and is evidenced by growth in numbers.

More on this will follow in the autumn. This financial challenge has given us a serious jolt. We are confident that we can manage the challenge by a judicious balance of cuts and increased income, but there will need to be some reduction in stipendiary clergy.

3. Celebrations ahead

I hope you have all seen the trailer for next year's celebration of the 950th anniversary of the re-establishment of the diocese in Chichester, and the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the forming of our creed.

We intend the celebration to be a celebration of our inheritance of faith, as the foundation for our confidence in the mission that will unfold into the future.

Please encourage the people you serve to take part in as much of this year of celebration as possible.

In particular, please encourage people to respond to the voices of Chichester [questionnaire](#). We are already getting some great feedback, and some wonderful photographs.

It is so important that every parish is able to recognise something of its own life as we use what you tell us about your faith and what it means to you – a great way of describing the diocese of Chichester.

4. Christian initiation

Just prior to the Covid pandemic, a team of people from across this diocese created some really excellent resources for nurturing the faith of people preparing for their own baptism or the baptism of their young children, for admission to holy communion, and for confirmation.

The presentational design and publication of these resources is now taking place and we plan to launch them next year. The resources will continue to develop as we get feedback from their use, and expand the design to make best use of technology and social media.

Please note the principles on which all three of the bishops are basing this initiative, in order to make the nurture of new Christians a sharing of faith in which everyone has a part to play.

- **The resources will be flexible, online, designed for use in small groups, in a family, in one-to-one faith-sharing, in schools and youth groups.**
- **They will be accessible in style, offering an exploration of the bible, the sacraments, the Church, prayer and Christian social action as the foundation for the life of a missionary disciple of Jesus Christ in the 21st century.**
- **They envisage that candidates will be accompanied by a member of the local congregation who is a sponsor, ensuring that new Christians are supported in the early stages of faith.**
- **The resources must begin to be used prior to baptism and confirmation, but may continue afterwards.**
- **We expect that Confirmations will normally take place after Lent, when candidates and their sponsors will be using the resources to prepare.**
- **Liturgical resources will be suggested for a Sunday in Lent marking their progress towards initiation.**
- **There will also be resources for welcoming newly initiated Christians into their local congregation if they have been baptised and confirmed elsewhere.**
- **Our expectation is that candidates for confirmation should be no younger than 12 years old (school year 7), unless there are exceptional circumstances to vary that.**
- **Clergy are asked to observe the integrity of the rite of Christian initiation for adults, which envisages that baptism and confirmation take place together. Please resist the practice of fracturing this pattern, which connects us with the early Church in its formative mission and worship.**

5. INEQE audit and questionnaire

It is very good news that we are to receive an INEQE safeguarding audit later this year, at an early stage of this programme being rolled out across the whole of the Church of England.

The record of safeguarding failures in the diocese of Chichester is well-known. We also know that under the leadership of our current Safeguarding team, we have committed to culture change at parish and diocesan levels in order to ensure that our sacred places and institutions are the safest they can be for children especially, and for any person who is vulnerable or at risk.

There is a good story to tell: a positive response by so many committed people. This does not make us complacent. The INEQE audit is an opportunity to assess how much has changed for the better, and where gaps remain or new circumstances present challenges we have not foreseen.

Please welcome and participate in this audit. We have nothing to fear, and much to value in what it can reveal about the priority we attach to safeguarding in this household of faith. You can find out more [here](#).

6. Concerts and non-liturgical events in Churches

The ways in which our places of worship are used, protected and made available is largely regulated by the Canons of the Church of England. Our mission and responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults extends not just to those who come into our churches, but also to those who might be affected by the way our churches are used.

Canon F16 deals with “plays, concerts, and exhibitions of films and pictures in churches”. These opportunities challenge us to regulate the involvement of every person who plays any part in the concerts, plays and performances that happen in our buildings.

I have sought updated advice on ways of addressing these challenges and, following consultation with the National Safeguarding Team, I am reissuing Directions under paragraph 2 of Canon F16. These can be found [here](#), and all clergy, churchwardens and PCCs must read and apply these.

Please include on the agenda for your next PCC meeting. The Directions set out some process requirements when permitting third party use of a church or chapel for these purposes and, in particular, prohibit certain categories of people from undertaking particular roles in the event. Those requesting permission to use the building must be provided with a copy of these Directions and must take responsibility for ensuring they are complied with in respect of their personnel.

I hope that you will gladly undertake the additional administrative tasks that are necessary to ensure that our sacred places are safe spaces, especially for victims of abuse and their families. Please liaise with our Diocesan Safeguarding Team on any difficulties that arise in connection with these Directions.

7. Confidentiality of Blue Files

The duty of care that we owe to the confidentiality of information held in your Blue File is a matter of paramount importance to us. Protocols govern how the files are accessed and where they are kept.

A new Privacy Notice has been issued by the national Church that brings this duty of confidentiality up to date. It ensures that access to your Blue File is in accord with all our safeguarding policies. It continues to regulate who may have access to your Blue File: details of this are set out [here](#).

8. National Clergy Register

Many of you will be familiar with the request by an ordained minister from outside the diocese to conduct a baptism, wedding or funeral in your church (or institution), and the need to clarify the status of that person as currently authorised to minister. This applies to you if you are invited to minister in another diocese.

Details of the legal implications of this are set out in the document linked [here](#).

It is important to note the following:

- a. The list of clergy who are authorised to minister in the Church of England (see Canon C8.3). Details about clergy from outside the Church of England should also be noted.**
- b. A minister with the cure of souls (or a sequestrator in a vacancy) has the right to invite another minister, who is ‘of good life and standing’, to exercise ministry in the parish (or institution).**
- c. There is a time limit to the duration of that invitation.**
- d. If you do not know the minister who is to be invited, inclusion of that person’s name on the National Register of Clergy is ‘good and sufficient reason’ for you to allow them to minister.**
- e. The invited minister must sign the services register. Note that the signature should be legible, as yours should be.**

NB If you are in doubt about any of this, please contact Paul Nash in the Palace office and ask for advice.

9. General Election

We know that a number of our MPs will be standing down at this election: there is also a chance that some may not be re-elected.

My experience is that, irrespective of political party, they have been diligent constituency MPs and it would be a generous thing to write and thank them for their public service.

#PrayYourPart offers a thoughtful contribution to the election process, reminding us that prayer for those in authority is an integral aspect of the Christian world-view.

A number of clergy have already indicated to me that they will be opening the church for prayer on election day. I do commend this to you, where it is appropriate. And in every parish it will be appropriate to ask the congregation to pray for those who are standing for election and for the outcome.

Welcoming the new MP is also a recognised response, whatever you might think of that person's politics. It does remind us that licensed clergy hold public office. And if we wish to be taken seriously in that office, we can model a pattern of courtesy that indicates we take our office seriously and hope others feel able to reciprocate.

10. The Royal Portrait

Seeing the photographs of former incumbents in the vestry of our churches is always a fascinating statement of identity. Occasionally there are photographs of a bishop, and sometimes of the Late Queen.

Following the coronation of King Charles, a framed photograph of the King has been made available, free of charge, for institutions within the United Kingdom. Your Church school should already have been able to apply for one. Earlier this month, Church of England churches were also invited to apply for a framed photograph.

I do encourage you to apply (there is sometimes a photograph of Queen Elizabeth II in a Church Hall, if not in the vestry!).

I shall try to get one for the Bishop's Palace, adding to the photograph of the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh when they visited Chichester in 1956 and the Duke planted a tree in the Palace garden.

For applications, please follow this link: [His Majesty The King's Portrait Scheme](#)

11. Are you going on a summer holiday?

I hope that you are! If you are not, there ought to be some sort of reason why!!
(Avoiding the school holidays is the beginning of a reason.)

Few understand the pressures under which most clergy serve, and the demands that ministry can make at an intensely personal level. This can have serious implications for our family and the people that love us.

Please ensure that you give yourself and your household, whatever form it might take, the care you need and deserve.

Clergy also face financial pressures that are obscured by what is perceived as the privilege of status and a smart house, neither of which put food on the table or pay the bills.

If you are unable to go on holiday, or afford days out that offer a refreshing change of routine, you are probably not alone. Please feel able to speak to an archdeacon or bishop, and we will do whatever we can to assist. This is not luxury: it is about survival, in order to be cheerful in the Lord's service.

Rejoicing in the hope that is in us,

+Martin