

Archdeacon of Hertford's Visitation Charge 2016

Welcome

It is always a great pleasure to welcome you to these Visitations. I am grateful to you as churchwardens for taking on this important office in the Church with all the responsibilities it entails. Please be assured of my prayers for you. In welcoming you of course I also welcome those who come to support you.

When I was installed as the first Archdeacon of Hertford back in 1997, Bishop Christopher, the Bishop of St Albans, told the story of a 19th century churchwarden in the diocese, which of course would have been the diocese of Lincoln, who in his log book wrote this:

'The Archdeacon he come today; we 'ope he come no more'! Well, my friends, today this saying is fulfilled in your hearing; this, my 19th visitation is my last, I shall come no more. Thank you for your love, support and conversation over the years which for me has made being your Archdeacon a real honour, a joy and a privilege as together we have journeyed in the discovery and service of God's mission. But now down to business.

LGL 2020

You will know that as a Diocese we have been 'Living God's Love' since January 2011. Last year we undertook a thorough review of progress and responses to this initiative – you may have been involved in some of the listening exercise undertaken by our Vision Enabler, Kathryn Alford. The result is a renewed vision – Living God's Love 2020, with the familiar three strands of Going Deeper into God, Making New Disciples and Transforming Communities. You will find an article in Archdeacons' Visitation News by our Parish Development Officer, Revd Jeanette Gosney, which gives much more information on this.

In the review it was encouraging that many parishes said how helpful they had found using Mission Action Plans to help them to focus missional ministry in their churches and communities. So in the coming months we will be asking parishes to commit to renewing or reviewing their MAPs – or, if your parish has no MAP, to doing one for the first time. There will be events in each deanery in the autumn where parishes will be encouraged to look back and share the good things that have helped them to Live God's Love, as well as looking forward with renewed hope to our future journey together. Supporting one another in the deaneries so that we can grow spiritually and numerically with generosity and joy, imagination and courage is at the heart of our renewed vision. Please encourage your parish to take part in the autumn event in your deanery – your Rural Dean will have the date – and to engage actively in renewing or reviewing you MAP in the coming year.

Safeguarding

There is no more important issue in our corporate church life than Safeguarding. The press and media coverage about the Church of England convinces us of this truth. Regrettably every month now seems to bring instances where the Church has been a place where some individuals have abused the trust placed in them and caused terrible hurt, harm and damage to those who were in their care. Such incidents are isolated, but this does not give any grounds for complacency. It is an absolute core belief and practice that anyone looking to the Church and its ministers for spiritual and pastoral help must always do so in absolute safety.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group, under the chairmanship of Judge Phil Waller, is responsible for overseeing the implementation and review of policies and procedures for Safeguarding throughout the Diocese and for developing and maintaining good practice. The past year has been one of intensive Safeguarding activity at national level with the publication of key policy documents and the start of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

In this Diocese we have been extremely well served by our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser Chris Lees. Chris has announced his intention to retire later this year and the Bishop is minded to ensure that his replacement will be a full-time post. We thank Chris for his unfailing professionalism and wise counsel. Much of the Safeguarding training has been undertaken on a voluntary capacity by Mrs Carol Taylor, a former Head of Child Protection at Hertfordshire County Council. In recognition of her service Bishop Alan awarded Carol an Honorary Lay Canonry of the Cathedral last year.

The National Safeguarding Team has called for all dioceses to review their practices and procedures and prepare detailed information to support responses to the Inquiry. A National Audit Programme is underway and will involve visits to dioceses. The Audit for the Diocese of St Albans will take place in the autumn of 2017. We must be in no doubt that this will be a rigorous audit and if previous experience of other dioceses is a guide, the auditors will choose a few parishes in the diocese, both urban, suburban and rural and will undertake a detailed examination of safeguarding policy and practice in that parish. It is therefore essential that every parish, without exception, has an up to date Safeguarding Policy and that each year the PCC reviews this Policy and an assessment of its efficacy. There can be no exceptions to this. Guidance as to a model policy can be found on the diocesan website at: <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/safeguarding-documents/> and the Safeguarding Management Group are always prepared to offer advice and guidance. The importance we place on Safeguarding is evidenced by this being the first section of the Archdeacons' Articles of Enquiry for 2016.

The Archdeacons and the Bishops of this Diocese regard Safeguarding as the most important area for good practice. We must all do everything we can to ensure that those who come to be part of our church communities or to receive the ministry the Church offers must do so in absolute safety and security.

Vocations

Our Articles of Enquiry (2015) asked about vocations to ministry. Overall the returns indicated that most parishes cannot remember when they had a candidate for ordained and Reader ministry; rarely is the matter discussed at PCC's, despite the significant contribution through Parish Share to supporting ordinands in training. We need to remember that if our parish wants a vicar in 10 years' time then we need to play and pay our part now. A significant number of clergy will be retiring over the coming years and, in order just to 'tread water' with our numbers, we need a 50% increase in ordinands now. Most, if not all ordinands come from parishes, so we need to encourage growth through our prayers, support and finance. Otherwise, what right have we to expect someone else to do it for us so we can have a vicar? Let's get this on the agenda of our PCC's and attempt to see growth in this vital and joyful duty of vocations placed on the whole church. You can get more details from our Vocations Team.

Collections for Ordinands in Training

When a vacancy ends and we put the new priest in, the collections at the service are for Ordinands in Training. In 2015 we had 12 such services in the Hertford Archdeaconry and the collections raised over £5,500.00. This comes with a deep sense of gratitude for the generosity of giving and my thanks to you and your colleagues for administering it.

Parish Share

The diocesan accounts for last year show that there was a surplus of £100,000 on the Common Fund – that really is good news, albeit that it only represents less than 1% of our total expenditure. In addition last year the Diocese received 94.7% of the amount of Parish Share requested which was an increase from 94.5% the previous year. So, thank you to you all and to your parishes, especially your Treasurers.

However we do face some significant challenges that will have an impact on our budget. First, the effect of Safeguarding will require a significant increase in expenditure. Secondly in the next 10 years, 40% of our clergy will reach the age of 65. Most will be retiring. They have to be replaced. Thus an extra 2 curates a year are being ordained and there is substantial cost for that. It costs us as a Diocese £52,000 a year to have a parish priest in place but every single penny given in the Parish Share is spent on resourcing the parochial ministry and the budget is scrutinised very carefully. Above all I would like to place on record my thanks to the Finance Team at Holywell Lodge who work so hard on our behalf and thanks to you for all your generosity.

Churchwardens email addresses

It has been suggested to me that Churchwardens might consider having a designated email address, for example 'Churchwardens@.....' Or 'churchwarden1@....' 'churchwarden2@.....' perhaps set up by your parish. On the one hand this will help wardens to focus on specific communications to them, perhaps from the incumbent

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or a parish officer or parishioner. On the other hand it would save spouses or members of the family having to trail through a variety of correspondence which is specifically, and sometimes confidentially, for you as the churchwarden alone. Furthermore it will provide continuity when the office holder changes as, for example when I move on later this year the email contact address will continue with my successor. This is simply a suggestion that has come to me and I warmly commend it to you for your serious consideration.

Miscellaneous

Thank you for returning the Articles of Enquiry. Our Articles of Enquiry for 2016 come to you in a different format. There is now one document, all Articles of Enquiry replacing two documents in the past – Articles and Inspections Questionnaire.

The Visitation continues, and we have now changed the language away from 'inspections' to 'parish visitations'. But whereas I have, to use the old language, Inspected personally in two deaneries of the Archdeaconry, this year I am delegating all this to the Area/Rural Deans and their teams of Visitors as they will now be known. Obviously I shall not be around to offer and receive feedback and it is sensible for this year to delegate this important task to commissaries. However, as always I am grateful to churchwardens and parish officers for all the work of preparation for these visits and for the welcome and hospitality you have given me and, I have no doubt, will give to the area/rural dean and their teams. Churchwardens' training is held on Saturday 11 June at St Joseph's in the Park School, Hertingfordbury.

Thank you to those parishes who contribute to the Discretionary Fund which is used to relieve need, often sudden and unexpected, amongst our clergy. Contributions are always gratefully received. The offering at this Visitation is for the Archdeacons' Discretionary Fund and there are Gift Aid envelopes; please give generously. Last year the same offering raised £647.00 for which I am most grateful.

Copies of this Charge will be distributed at the end of the Visitations electronically, with hard copies in the post for those not able to receive email. As always I am most grateful to the diocesan officers and other representatives for attending this Visitation. There are displays available for you to visit over refreshments and the opportunity for you to meet colleagues from the diocesan office and others from the diocese who are here to support and assist you tonight.

Before my concluding remarks may I again re-iterate my thanks to you and your parishes for all that you do and for your friendship, kindness and service? As you may know there is to be a farewell service for me in All Saints' Hertford at 5pm on Saturday 25 June and I shall leave the diocese for our home in Lympstone in Devon with many rich and happy memories in mid-July.

Conclusion

Our reading from Matthew's gospel¹ reminds us that we should expect things from God. Jesus says to us: 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you'. One of the intricate challenges of the growth towards maturity, through childhood and adolescence to adulthood is, of course, learning to ask for the right things and to have a deep sense of gratitude to God when he bestows his abundant generosity on us.

So, what is the greatest problem facing the church? Would we say, maintenance, money, parish share, lack of people, not enough young people, no effective missional engagement - I wonder what we would say? Well, two theologians, Daniel Hardy and David Ford, addressed that very question in their book, 'Jubilate: Theology in

¹ Matthew 7:7-12

Praise² and they suggest that our problem is simply recognising, then coping with, the abundant generosity God bestows on us liberally and lavishly.

Jesus says to us, 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you'. It is the language, not of certainty, but of faith; not of hesitancy, but confidence, not of selfish desire but of the wise discernment of need; not of vacillation but urgency. It's about living God's love, living our lives, with 'generosity and joy, imagination and courage', all grounded in a deep sense of gratitude to God, for it is gratitude that shapes attitude. As the old hymn says, 'count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.'

Trevor Jones

Archdeacon of Hertford

May 2016

²Hardy D and Ford D, *Jubilate: Theology in Praise*, (London: DLT, 1984)