



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  
Diocese of Chelmsford

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## To all clergy and LLMs in the Diocese of Chelmsford

20<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear friends,

As we continue our journey through Lent, I wanted to be in touch to remind you of my ongoing prayers and to thank you for your ministry and contribution to the life of our Diocese. I know there is always much to do but I very much hope that this period of Lent will also provide you with the opportunity to pause a little – to read and reflect, to dwell on the call to repentance and to rest in the assurance of God’s forgiveness. For my Lenten reading this year I’ve chosen an old classic, *Life Together*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and a new book by Rowan Williams, *Passions of the Soul*.

### Chapter visits

I try each year in Lent to incorporate into my diary something that will disrupt my usual routines. You will probably be aware that this year I am hoping to visit each Deanery Chapter to meet with, pray and spend time with Chapter members. I have no agenda beyond this but hope that these meetings will be mutually encouraging and fruitful. Given the number of Chapters we have in this Diocese, it’s not possible to fit everyone in during Lent itself so my visits will be spilling over through to June.

### March Diocesan Synod

Those of you on Diocesan Synod will know that the Standing Committee took the decision to cancel the meeting planned for 16<sup>th</sup> March. This decision was taken purely on the basis that there was not sufficient business to draw up a strong enough agenda. Like General Synod, there is a statutory requirement for Diocesan Synod to meet twice a year and so we will definitely proceed with the next two meetings on 15<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

### Lent Appeal & Wellbeing news

At the recent Bishop’s Study Day on Shrove Tuesday, we launched this year’s Lent Appeal and shared information about new resources to help support the wellbeing of licenced ministers. The funds raised through the 2024 Bishop’s Lent Appeal will help the Diocese of Jerusalem continue to offer essential health care to those in need, regardless of race, religion, or ability to pay. Please do share information about this year’s Lent Appeal with your PCCs and church



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communities. This vital healthcare ministry is needed more than ever during this time of war. [You can find out more about this year's Lent Appeal on the diocesan website.](#)

Ministerial wellbeing is a diocesan priority, and we are committed to supporting ministers across East London and Essex. I am grateful to the Wellbeing Implementation Group chaired by Bishop Lynne and supported by Revd Andy Griffiths for this new resource. Our new wellbeing groups and learning communities will be starting in the coming months. Please do visit the diocesan website, see 'Support for Ministers', and click on 'Ministerial Wellbeing'. There you will find a link to ['Wellbeing Groups and Learning Communities'](#), find out more and sign up should you wish to.

### Confirmation services

Lent is traditionally a time during which candidates are prepared for Baptism and/or Confirmation and I'm already looking forward to the Confirmation service that will take place in the Cathedral during the Easter Vigil. Please be in touch with Revd Kate Moore at the cathedral if you have candidates who would like to be confirmed at this service: [kate.moore@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk](mailto:kate.moore@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk). Confirmations are, of course, one of the great privileges of episcopal ministry and something that the Area Bishops and I enjoy immensely.

It's always a great delight to share these special occasions with parishes and deaneries and to meet those who have chosen to declare their allegiance to Christ and whose stories are often profoundly moving and humbling. I'm immensely grateful to all those who journey alongside candidates, teaching and supporting them. I say this in order to emphasise the importance of Confirmation as a step along the journey of faith and discipleship and to encourage you to prioritise both preparation and continued care beyond the Confirmation itself. Do use this time to help develop a deepening understanding of the Christian faith and our Anglican tradition in all its richness and do urge your congregations to attend the service and continue supporting the candidates in the following weeks and months. Whilst there is no right age for a person to be confirmed, 10 is generally thought to be the minimum acceptable age and one which seems right to me. There is, of course, always the possibility of admitting children to Communion before Confirmation from the age of 7. Perhaps reflecting on Confirmations is one of the topics we might make time for when I visit Chapters.

### Healing Ministry

For those who may not already be aware, this is to bring to your attention the fact that good practice for healing and deliverance ministries has changed a great deal in the past few years. Safeguarding guidelines, as well as legislation about informed consent and people's expectations mean that clergy who pray for healing with people in ministry need to pay particular attention. The guidelines can be read in full on [the Diocesan Healing and](#)



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[Deliverance Ministry page of the Website](#), and I strongly recommend that you make yourself familiar with them. Advice should always be sought before healing ministry with anyone under the age of 18, informed consent must always be given by all, of any age, who receive healing ministry and there cannot be any touch without specific and explicit consent. Deliverance ministry should not be offered without contacting the Deliverance Ministry Team: [deliverance@chelmsford.anglican.org](mailto:deliverance@chelmsford.anglican.org)

Please also be aware that [in 2017 General Synod supported a ban on the practice of Conversion Therapy](#) aimed at altering a person's sexual orientation.

### Living in Love and Faith

Conversations continue locally in the Diocese and nationally around the way ahead regarding Prayers of Blessing for those in same sex marriages and provision for those who cannot in conscience use the Prayers. My colleagues and I on the Bishop's Leadership Team are engaged in a series of listening exercises and will continue to discern how best to have conversations with groups and individuals, across a range of views, going forward. The next event takes place at the Cathedral at 2.30pm on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March and is for licensed clergy and clergy with Permission to Officiate, who have already used or are intending to use the Prayers of Love and Faith and bless couples who have entered same sex civil marriages. The meeting is also for those clergy who are considering whether to use the prayers but have not arrived at a firm decision. [If you would like to attend the meeting and have not yet registered, you can do so here.](#)

In this time of uncertainty as we and the wider Church of England discern a way forward, I am committed to ensuring all voices are heard. While there are those who have reached a settled decision about the PLF, there will be others who are less certain. I am particularly interested to hear from anyone who finds themselves in this middle ground, wanting to explore the uncertainties and questions further. I know the process is taking longer than many would like and, of course, there is much that we cannot control directly in the Diocese while we await national decisions. I know, too, that the ongoing uncertainty is still causing a great deal of anxiety, frustration and anger on all sides.

As I continue to encourage us to be gentle and to think well of one another despite deep and painful divisions can I reiterate the words Bishop Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Winchester, offered us during the recent Bishop's Study Day. In a comparative study of the Church in Jerusalem and Antioch, +Philip endorsed the need for churches "to breathe in and breathe out". Breathe in by building community, through prayer, worship and mutual encouragement, and breathe out by joining God's mission in service to the world through the outpouring of faith. And I want to suggest that it is good, in times of stress and challenge, intentionally to slow down our breathing, being gentle with ourselves and with one another, giving space for the Holy Spirit to continue working in and through us in ways that may be





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unexpected and full of blessing. [You can watch Bishop Philip's address to the Bishop's Study Day here.](#)

### Chrism Eucharist

I want to end with a look toward the latter part of Lent and a reminder about our Chrism Eucharist at the Cathedral on Maundy Thursday at 11 am. This is a time when traditionally clergy renew their ordination vows and so I warmly invite and encourage all clergy in particular, and LLMs if they wish, to prioritise being present at the service, as we *breathe in and out together*, sharing in fellowship and being sent out in mission.

Others, of course, are also welcome to attend.

Robing for clergy and LLMs: cassock, surplice, white stole or preaching scarf.

*And finally, a blessing for Lent:*

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,  
to deny yourselves, take up your cross,  
and follow him.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
rest upon you, and the communities of which you are a part,  
throughout this season of Lent and always. Amen

With my prayers and good wishes

Yours,

+ Guli

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