

## *Ad Clerum 1.1*

### **Episcopal Partnership**

The bishop of the diocese has ultimate responsibility in the exercise of episcopal authority and pastoral care throughout the diocese. However, as diocesan bishop, I would be in an impossible position if I were not able to share my responsibilities with others and particularly with the Suffragan Bishops, the Archdeacons, the Dean and the Diocesan Secretary.

In any case I am committed to the truth that, at every level of church life, we are called and commissioned to share together with our ordained and lay colleagues in the one ministry of Christ.

I make it a priority to pray for all the clergy of the diocese. I particularly value the opportunity of hearing from you at the time your name comes up on the diocesan calendar of prayer and feeling in this way a close link in prayer and in the ministry we share. Please be sure that my thoughts and prayers are with you, in particular if you are experiencing a time of stress, illness or other particular need.

Given the size of our Diocese you will understand that it is not possible for me, or indeed for any one of my staff, to be in very close touch with everyone all of the time. But we all want to be easily accessible to you, either for a phone call or an appointment when you need us. We operate as a close team and, at the Bishop's Staff meeting, we share information and concerns in the context of worship and prayer together. Needless to say, the confidential nature of any conversation is always respected.

#### **1. Suffragan bishops**

The Bishops of Bedford and Hertford share in those aspects of my ministry that are proper to the order of bishop.<sup>1</sup> They share with me that teaching ministry which is central to the bishop's office, and they assist me in exercising the pastoral care and oversight of the clergy and authorised lay ministers. They take part with me in the ordination services at the Cathedral, and share in Confirmations and the inauguration of new ministries across the Diocese.

Confirmations are shared by all three bishops approximately equally. All of us find them immensely moving and special occasions. I undertake them throughout the diocese; the Suffragan bishops take confirmation services substantially in their own archdeaconries, though to keep the work load equitable, the Bishop of Bedford does more in Hertfordshire than the Bishop of Hertford does in Bedfordshire.

For institutions and licensings, the general policy is that I institute or license those coming into the diocese, while the Suffragans will institute or license in the case of internal moves. Clearly there will be exceptions to this policy from time to time due to pressure on our diaries.

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<sup>1</sup>*Canon C 20*

The Suffragan bishops work mainly in their respective archdeaconries; that is, the Bishop of Bedford with the Archdeaconry of Bedford, and the Bishop of Hertford with the Archdeaconries of Hertford and St Albans.

Working with the Reader Association and the Ministry Department, the Bishop of Hertford as Warden of Readers deals with matters concerning Reader ministry across the Diocese.

## **2. Archdeacons**

The Archdeacons of Bedford, Hertford and St Albans also assist me in my 'pastoral care and office'. They hold an 'ordinary jurisdiction'<sup>2</sup> which means that they are legally responsible for aspects of church order within their respective archdeaconry.

They work to support those who hold ecclesiastical office enabling them to carry out their duties with diligence, bringing to my attention 'what calls for correction or merits praise'.<sup>3</sup>

They hold Visitations and admit into office Churchwardens as Bishops Officers. They, or their appointed deputies, visit parishes annually as part of the Visitation Inspection process. As experienced priests they sit on all our major committees and boards in order to represent the diocese to the parishes and the parishes to the diocese, so that we have a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities we face together.

## **3. The Dean**

The Dean and his colleagues in the Cathedral and Abbey Church seek, as far as they can, to respond to invitations from parishes and deaneries to share in teaching the faith and in preaching. The dean's membership of my senior staff, as Dean in the Diocese and not simply of the Cathedral, underlines that the immense resource of our Cathedral Church is available to all of us.

## **4. The Diocesan Secretary**

As the senior lay member of the diocesan staff the Diocesan Secretary contributes to our corporate life as a full member of my senior staff as well as co-ordinating the services provided by her colleagues from Holywell Lodge. These services are more fully outlined in the Diocesan Handbook.

## **5. Rural Deans**

As you know, our rural/area deans are hard-working priests who command the confidence of their Deanery and who shoulder its responsibilities in addition to their other work. I am enormously grateful to them, and also to the lay chairs, for all the

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<sup>2</sup> *Canon C.22.2.*

<sup>3</sup> *Canon C.22.4.*

detailed pastoral and organisational work they do.

We have developed a regular pattern of meetings between the Suffragan bishop, the archdeacon and the rural/area deans in each of the three archdeaconries. This aims to give our rural/area deans the opportunity to bring matters of concern to my attention quickly and in detail, and to provide a forum for sharing information, prayer and concerns. There is also a meeting annually at which I take counsel with the rural/area deans and the deanery lay chairs of the Diocese directly. I also ask my senior staff to be present on that occasion.

## **Conclusion**

As we seek to pray for you, may I say how much I am strengthened by the knowledge that I am regularly prayed for throughout the diocese. I would ask that the members of my senior staff are similarly remembered.

+Alan St Albans

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### Appendix 1: Vacancies

While I retain certain legal responsibilities, the practicalities of a vacancy, and of the appointment process, are left in the hands of the respective Suffragan bishop and archdeacon. Normally the archdeacon's office makes the arrangements with the Patron and the parish(es) for interviews etc., and the Suffragan bishop's office issues the announcements of vacancy and appointment. All appointments are fully discussed regularly at the Bishop's Staff meeting.

### Appendix 2: Specific areas of work.

The Suffragan bishops deal directly with matters of:

- Baptismal discipline
- Permission for lay people to administer the bread and wine at Holy Communion
- Permission for lay people to take the reserved sacrament to the sick and housebound
- Consecration of burial grounds
- Requests to receive into communion members of other Churches
- Interviews of candidates for selection for ordained or accredited ministry
- Interviews of prospective deacons for titles

On occasion I may ask a Suffragan bishop to perform my role under The Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

The archdeacons deal directly with the following matters:

- Clergy housing
- Inducting and installing clergy into their benefices

- Issuing Statements of Particulars under common tenure
- Issuing Role Descriptions under common tenure
- Confidentially administering the Archdeacons' Discretionary Fund
- Implementing the 'Capability Procedure' under common tenure
- Commissioning new Rural Deans
- Issuing Archdeacons' Faculties and Letters of Authority
- Requests under the 'discretionary procedure' in the Churchyard Regulations
- Issues delegated by the Chancellor in the Consistory Court
- Pastoral provision and preliminaries to proposals for re-organisation
- Overseeing conflict resolution in parishes
- Termination of the appointment of musicians (under Canon B 20)
- Appointment of school Foundation Governors in the absence of an incumbent
- Extraordinary APCM's under rule 23 of Church Representation Rules.

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