

The Charge 2022

This year, the Archdeacons are providing The Charge as a separate document. In St Albans and Bedford Archdeaconries, the Visitation Services will be times of worship and prayer with preaching. In Hertford Archdeaconry, this year, Churchwardens are being sworn in locally. This technical document is provided for all to add to the information contained in the Archdeacons' Visitation News (https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/AVNews22_StAlbans.pdf).

As Archdeacons, it is our pleasure to take this opportunity to record our gratitude and thankfulness to all Churchwardens for taking on this important office in the Church with all the responsibilities that it involves. We welcome those who are continuing in the role and record a particular welcome for those who are new to the position – please know that we will continue to pray for you all as we ask that you pray for us as we work together to Live God's Love with generosity and joy, imagination and courage. We also give thanks for all in your families and communities who support and encourage you in your role. It is also an opportunity for us to thank our PAs Shirley, Lynne and Tricia who work so hard in our offices to support us all.

Well Being

We are all aware the last two years have been a time of great uncertainty, change, and challenge for many in society, and certainly in church leadership. While some churches and individuals have flourished under these circumstances, for many it has been a time of both anxiety and confusion. This has certainly impacted church officers, clergy and others in church leadership roles. May we thank you for all that you have given to maintain the mission and ministry of our churches through these unprecedented times.

The strain has impacted many in our churches and therefore there is probably generally a greater level of tiredness, 'grumpiness', and fragility amongst all of us. May we encourage each of us to treat one another lovingly, graciously, and carefully, in our words and in our actions and we all seek to recover emotionally from this time of pandemic.

As a Diocese we have a number of initiatives in place to support laity and clergy. Please may we remind you of:

Support in Ministry (SiM) – for clergy, readers, Churchwardens and their partners

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/support-in-your-ministry/>

St Albans Dispute Advisory Service – for anyone in the church community, lay or ordained, and where conflict has arisen

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/dispute-advisory-service/>

Spiritual Direction – for those seeking a spiritual accompanier to seek the place of God in our life and work, where-ever God places us

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/spiritual-direction/>

These and other resources are summarised in the Flourishing in Ministry booklet we produced a couple of years ago, which is for everyone, lay or ordained, in any type of ministry:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/ministry-flourishing/>

Please know our support and prayers for you as church leaders, as you lead the mission and ministry of our churches, and as we move hopefully out of this time of pandemic and adjust our church-life according to the 'new world' in which we now find ourselves. Please feel free to contact your Archdeacon if you feel we can offer appropriate support and guidance.

The Racial Justice Charter

People from UK Minority Ethnic/Global Majority Ethnic Heritage do not feel welcome or represented in church and, at times, individuals or groups have been poorly treated. We are committed to doing all that we can to put this right. Consequently, the Diocese has issued a Racial Justice Charter which sets out its commitment to becoming a family of churches, schools and chaplaincies within which all can flourish. A Racial Justice Action Group has been formed to take this work forward with a detailed action plan which has been adopted by the Diocesan Synod. We also need to ensure that racial justice is addressed by all in our diocesan family, including at parish level. The Racial Justice Action Group is looking at this as it continues its work. More information on this work can be found at <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/ethnic-minorities-concerns/> and the Racial Justice Charter can be found at <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Ethnic-Minorities-Charter-10.7.20.pdf>

Safeguarding

There have been significant changes in how we promote Safeguarding. Safer Recruitment and People Management is an integral part of keeping people safe. Reinforcing the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults throughout the process and beyond will help create and maintain a safe and positive environment that inspires trust, enabling them to thrive and grow and have the very best experience of Christian living through the work of the Church.

We must respond promptly to all safeguarding concerns and support those who are victims and survivors of abuse and provide a robust approach and response to those who present a risk.

Please visit our website for full details:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/Diocese/safeguarding/>

The Church of England is pursuing a major change with safeguarding learning and development. We ask that all those who have a role at church to ensure

that you complete all the required safeguarding learning modules and to encourage others to do so.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Safeguarding-Training-Newsletter-November-2021-1.pdf>

Church Growth and Health

As we move forward as a Diocese from this time of pandemic, we are conscious that while some churches have flourished, and even grown, during the last two years, for many there are challenges around buildings, finances, shortage of volunteers, re-establishing and rebuilding parish life and activities, and more. There are also lessons for all of us to learn from COVID where we've seen many churches take risks, respond to changing circumstances, and try new activities and services.

The desire from all of us is to have flourishing, viable, sustainable, growing churches, across the Diocese, and therefore we need to work with one another, and learn from one another, as we reimagine and rebuild church. The Mission and Ministry Department and Flourishing Churches Team would love to offer advice and support where they can, and work with your parish or benefice as you explore church growth, both spiritual and numerical, and health:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/mission-and-growth/>
<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/flourishing-churches/>

The Flourishing Churches team have developed the "Mission Tree" and accompanying resources, to help churches consider what makes a healthy church and how to develop healthy mission and ministry within your parish or benefice:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/mission-tree/>

As a Diocese we see Mission Action Plans (MAPs) as a tool to help us all think and work through our plans and priorities, especially in the light of the impact of covid. MAP workshops and resources are also available:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/mission-action-plans/>

Thank you for all that you are doing to maintain the mission and ministry of your parish.

Diocesan Office Support

As with many offices, the Diocesan Office has gone through rapid changes in the last two years as the concept of 'working from home' has been adopted through the pandemic. However, the support that those who are based in Holywell Lodge, or in the virtual diocesan office, remains consistent. The diocesan office staff are there to support the work of the parishes in areas of mission, ministry, finance, buildings, church schools and safeguarding so please do make use of the support on offer. If you're not sure who to contact feel free to contact your

Archdeacon and we would be glad to connect you with the right person. One particular development over the last year has been the provision of Human Resources support for parishes. The services of Redway HR have been secured and will provide HR support for parishes on the basis of the initial conversation being free, with subsequent support being charged to the individual parish.

More information can be found at <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/Diocese/employment/>

Finance

As Glyn Barker, our Finance Director, shared with us at the recent Finance Roundtables, our position is better than many dioceses. Significant generosity from within parishes has kept parish share levels up. We ask that you continue to share our thanks with all those who have limited our deficits over the past two years. As a Diocese, we are clear that future planning for mission and ministry is not being driven by finance – though finance needs to underpin our strategy which is why we need to continue to ensure diocesan viability. We all need to ensure that we are both maintaining ministry and adapting to the current and future needs of parishes and communities. Developing mission to enable more people to experience God's love through sharing the gospel and through service will enable us to continue to Live God's Love across our parishes, schools and chaplaincies.

The full presentation from the Finance Roundtables has been circulated to all Incumbents and Treasurers, and the Church Growth Officers are happy to work with parishes and benefices – (Kate Lomax klomax@stalbans.anglican.org and Paul Davies pdavies@stalbans.anglican.org)

Environment

Care of creation has long been part of the church's mission but is increasingly coming to the fore front of people's minds, alongside a Church of England commitment to be net zero by 2030. As a Diocese we are responding in a number of ways, spearheaded by the newly formed Diocesan Environmental Group. This group's work is focusing on practical ways of caring for God's creation as well as wider policy matters. Individual parishes are encouraged to engage with this area in both small and large ways with a steadily increasing number using the A Rocha Eco Church award scheme to help focus the mind and actions. For more details of how to get involved or receive support in this vital area of our life and mission please go to <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/environment/>

Schools

We are all aware that the last two years have been times of considerable strain and anxiety in schools and colleges across the Diocese. We are very grateful for staff and governors for all their hard work and dedication in maintaining the life of our schools, and supporting pupils and their families, through these

unprecedented times. Please may we encourage you to thank your local school, to continue to pray for staff and pupils alike, and to offer support and pastoral care where you can. As I'm sure you're aware education is currently in a state of flux, and therefore support and encouragement from the local parish church is vital.

Whether a church or a community school we know that many schools appreciate the support and input from their local parish. As a parish please do ensure you make connections, or perhaps reconnect with your local school to offer what you can, now we're hopefully coming out of the pandemic.

Across St Albans Diocese we have 138 Anglican church schools, covering six Local Authorities: Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton, the London Borough of Barnet and Buckinghamshire. 32 schools are academies. Most of the schools are primary schools, but there are 6 secondary schools and 3 middle schools. Further information about our Church Schools can be found on the diocesan website:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/>

The Schools' Team are very willing to offer advice, support, ideas and pastoral care to those in our church schools and those in the parish seeking to support church schools.

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/who-s-who-in-the-schools-team/>

The Board of Education is the statutory body established under the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021, and is chaired by the Bishop of Bedford, and both laity and clergy members from across the Diocese.

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/Diocese/board-of-education/>

Thank you for your support for the schools across the Diocese.

Church Buildings

Thank you for all that you are doing to care for your buildings. For advice and guidance, do look at the relevant pages on the Diocesan Website to support you. Emma Critchley (DAC Secretary) and her team are happy to help and support your work. The DAC pages have much useful information and many Advice Leaflets. Look out too for the bi-monthly Newsletter. Previous editions can be found on the DAC page of the website at the tab DAC updates for Churchwardens:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/dac-updates-for-churchwardens/>

Maintenance

There has been continued talk about the maintenance of our churches and church halls recently. With COVID restrictions having lifted, it is now much easier to check buildings more regularly and more thoroughly. This is a good time to do these checks. With finances tight and many grants hard to get, time and money spent on maintenance which stops greater damage and cost is worth

its weight in gold. For advice on organising inspections and maintenance by parish volunteers, see the Church Maintenance advice note.

(<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/church-maintenance/>)

Churchyards

The autumn 2022 Churchwardens online trainings will look at Churchyards and all things associated with them. These sessions will take place at 7.30pm on November 8th and November 14th and at 2.30pm on November 21st. Please do note the dates. Further details and booking instructions will be circulated by the end of September. They will be led by Emma Critchley and Archdeacon Janet.

As we continue our work together and look to the future with hope, let us remember that it is by sharing our faith stories, by sharing the faithful examples of those who have inspired and encouraged us in our journey of faith, by praying together and working together and dreaming together, that we learn how to live a faithful life for today - a faithful life which is meaningful, relevant, and life giving, not just to ourselves, but to everyone we meet.

As we say thank you for all that you and those you work with and support are doing, we invite you to reflect with us on how we will heed God's call to participate in his work in our parish or school or chaplaincy, at work and school and at home, in the PCC and Synod and Chapter, using the gifts he has given us.

Let us then go out in the light and faith of the God who loves us.

With our thanks and prayers and good wishes,

Archdeacon Janet

Archdeacon Dave

Archdeacon Jane