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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In some ways this summer has been a glorious time. I have heard from the leaders of a number of camps and ventures about young people being converted and others growing in their faith as they reach adulthood. I have continued to book confirmations for the months ahead – and each time I do so I look forward to the occasion, both because it represents a great gospel preaching opportunity and because it gives great joy to hear in the various testimonies of how God has taken a saving initiative in the lives of the confirmation candidates. At the end of June, I also had the joy of ordaining 12 new deacons and presbyters.

There have been sadnesses too as we have heard about the way Pride has been celebrated in some church settings, read the IICSA report on the Diocese of Chichester and Peter Ball, and as we have also had to start taking a clear look at our own evangelical culture given what has come to light in relation to Jonathan Fletcher. In their different ways, events such as these should remind, those of us who are ordained, of the responsibilities we have. In the Common Worship Ordinal we are charged to guide people through the 'confusions' of this world 'that they may be saved through Christ for ever'. Doing so requires us to be 'formed by the Word' so that we can 'call ... hearers to repentance and ... declare in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins'. However, we cannot do these things if we are not applying God's Word to our own lives. As pastor teachers we are called to 'flee' from false teaching, divisiveness and worldly desires and instead 'pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness' (1 Tim 6:11). We are to 'take hold of eternal life' in a way that is 'unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ' and we are to 'guard the deposit' entrusted to us (1Tim 6:12, 14 and 20).

For me, a large part of the summer was also taken up by my sabbatical. One of the exercises I undertook was to think through some of the consequences for us in the Church of England of the various moves towards liberalisation of the Church's teaching on sexuality. I have put some of this thinking on paper but it is not yet for public circulation since I'm keen to hear from others about the extent to which it would address current needs or pose significant challenges. Hopefully I'll be able to say more about all this at future regional or other meetings.

My sabbatical took place at something of a 'half-way' stage of my ministry as a bishop now that I have served for four years. As a result, I began thinking about what would be necessary to make this ministry more effective over the next three years. I have particularly been thinking through how others might be involved in providing pastoral support on a regional basis. This is because an increasing number of issues are being referred to me in the areas of preparation for vacancies; ministerial development reviews; safeguarding; tensions within congregations; relations within dioceses; practical issues associated with impaired communion; and finance. As a result, my next Advisory Group meeting in October will consider various proposals – the outcome of which we may also be able to discuss at future meetings.

As we approach the autumn, all sorts of challenges lie ahead for the Church nationally. However, while we must play our part in 'guarding the deposit', I cannot think of a time when it has been more important for us to take heed to

ourselves: to ask if we are truly being ‘formed’ personally by ‘the Word’ and if we are demonstrating the new life we have in Christ in a way that is ‘unstained and free from reproach’.

Working with Dioceses

When I am asked to conduct services I always, as a courtesy, write to make the Diocesan Bishop aware of the arrangement. However, I am increasingly aware that, while bishops value me letting them know, they would almost always also prefer to hear direct from the parish. So, if you are arranging a service of any kind with me, once we have agreed a date, it would be helpful if you could send an email to your diocesan bishop. In some cases this will be to request permission; in others (particularly where I am an Assistant Bishop) it will be more a matter of keeping them informed.

Website

Throughout the summer we have been working on updating the Bishop of Maidstone website. This is now up and running at www.bishopofmaidstone.org - please do have a look. A new feature is the map which can be seen under the ‘Parishes’ tab. This shows the location, with details of address and website, for all evangelical churches which have passed a resolution. We will continue to update content and are also working on preparing a more comprehensive directory of evangelical churches which have passed resolutions.

Regional Events

We are currently planning for our next series of Regional Events to run through 2020 and 2021. As soon as we have set dates we will publicise them so that you are able to hold the date relevant for you. If you would like to be invited to the next meeting in your area and fall into the category of clergy whose church has not passed a resolution, then please let Naomi know by emailing her at: office@bishopofmaidstone.org (If you were invited to the last meeting there is no need to get in touch again as we will have kept your details on our records.) We are planning to hold meetings in the North West and in the North East with Yorkshire in the first three months of 2020. We will send out the date to people in those regions in the next few weeks.

Work of the Pastoral Adviser

As most of us will be fully aware, David Banting works for one day a week as my Pastoral Advisor, focussing particularly on the northern province. Needless to say, the demands on his time very often exceed a day a week! I am enormously grateful to him for his assistance, since he has enabled the particular ministry associated with my role to be given greater depth. I look forward to the day when I can extend this work more fully across the whole country.

You can get a flavour of how significant the work is from this extract from his recent letter to evangelical resolution parishes in the northern province:

“Most of my visits to date have been to preach, and occasionally lead, on a Sunday morning ... or to PCCs for various reasons (issues around vacancies, resolutions for extended oversight, or leadership responsibilities), sometimes with my CPAS Patronage Trustee hat on as well. Destinations have included churches in: Burton-on-Trent, Winsford, Doncaster, Darfield, Cheadle Hulme, Chadderton, Rochdale, Skellingthorpe, Blackburn, Southport, West Bromwich, Derby (two), Wilmslow, Sheffield (two), and four back in my home diocese of Chelmsford – with new visits to Kilnhurst and Lincoln and a number of return visits (where there are vacancies) already in the diary for after my family holiday.”

Ordinations

During the summer of 2019 I ordained 12 people – seven as deacons and five as presbyters. The ordinations took place at services in four dioceses, two in cathedrals and two in parish churches. Photos of the ordinands are on the next page. If you are considering asking for an ordination to be taken by me in 2020, please let me or Rachel know as soon as possible.

Ordinations by the Bishop of Maidstone, Summer 2019



Sheffield Diocese, ordination at Sheffield Cathedral, 30 June of Stewart Deering and Tom Brown as Presbyters and Ben Tanner as Deacon



London Diocese, ordination at Christ Church Mayfair on 1st July of Philip Martin and Scott Furey as Presbyters; Luke Cornelius, Jim Houghton, Nick Ashton and Rich Powell as Deacons



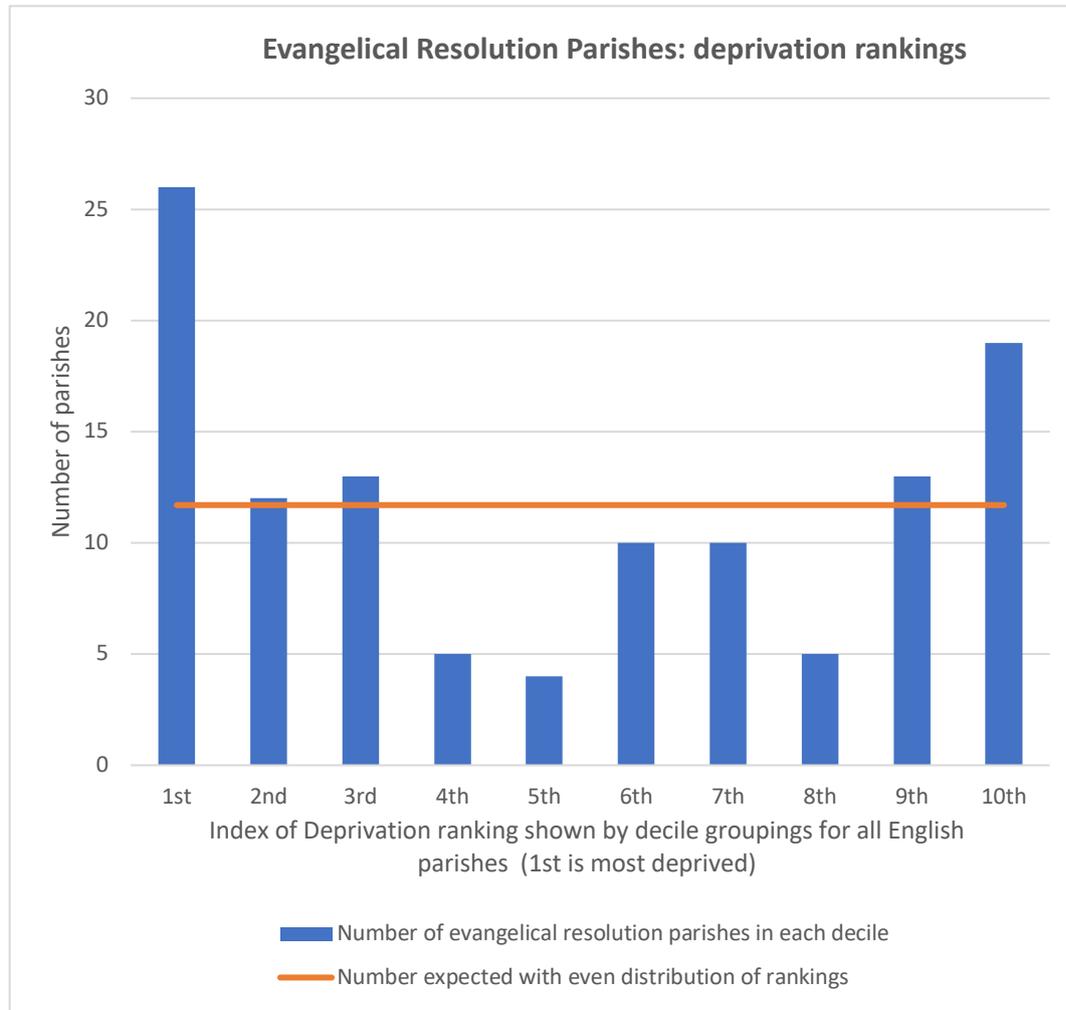
Manchester Diocese, ordination at Manchester Cathedral on 3rd July of Richard Criddle as Deacon



Derby Diocese, ordination at St Giles, Normanton, 7 July of Steve Boswell as Presbyter and Will Eley as Deacon

Deprivation Within Evangelical Resolution Parishes

You may remember that we conducted a survey in early 2018 on how evangelical resolution parishes understand male headship. As part of that we asked you to supply a sentence on the socio-economic circumstances of your parish. This led us to consider how resolution parishes compare with the rest of the country in terms of deprivation and affluence. Rachel has been able to use data from the CoE Research and Statistics Division to identify resolution parishes and compare their deprivation rankings with the national data. The results are shown in the graph below. Data are only available for those resolution churches which are formal parishes ie for 117 of the current 142 churches.



IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) figures from <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/18338> accessed Aug 2019

The IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) data were ranked in order of how each parish scored, with 1 indicating the greatest deprivation. The horizontal axis of the graph is divided to show how many resolution parishes have deprivation data scores falling within each tenth (decile) of the total number of parishes in England, ranked in order of their IMD score. The blue bars show how many of the 117 evangelical resolution parishes fell in each decile. The orange line shows how many parishes would fall in the decile if evangelical resolution parishes were evenly distributed across the rankings ie 117/10 (11 or 12) in each group. The graph shows that over twice as many parishes as expected fall in the 10% most deprived parishes with slightly more than expected in the second and third deciles. However, there are also above average numbers of particularly affluent parishes with 19 in the 10% of most affluent parishes and slightly more than expected in the ninth decile. The least frequently occurring rankings are in the mid range. So, it seems that conservative evangelical churches are flourishing particularly in some of the most and least deprived areas, bringing with them a wide range of opportunities and challenges.

Implementation and Dialogue Group

Over the past year, the Implementation and Dialogue Group (IDG) of the House of Bishops has been examining what steps might be needed to make mutual flourishing more of a reality through the Church. An interim report has been made to the General Synod but final recommendations have not yet been made. I am hoping that the IDG will advise the promotion of the London Plan across dioceses and also that action will be recommended over the appointment of complementarian clergy to 'senior' positions in Dioceses.

Vacancies

From time to time I am made aware of vacancies and of those seeking a new position. Please continue to let Rachel know if you are advertising a vacancy or seeking a ministry position. We are currently aware of the following vacancies. Further details of the post or of who to contact are available from Rachel at: admin@bishopofmaidstone.org

At present, we know of vacancies for:

- Curacies at Castle Church Stafford and Holy Trinity Oswestry
- A Ministry Trainee at St Alkmund Duffield.
- A Senior Associate Minister at Christ Church Cambridge
- School Chaplain for St Cecilia's Church of England School in south west London
- Associate Pastor at St Peter's Barge in London, closing date 31 Oct 2019
- Associate Minister, St John's and St Mark's Great Clacton.
- Priest in Charge at St Andrew's Frimley Green and Mytchett, Guildford Diocese, closing date 7 Jan 2020; www.st-andrewschurch.org.uk/vacancy.htm
- Incumbency at Becontree, St George – yet to be advertised but please let us know if you would like details when they are available.
- A half-time incumbency at St Mary Balderstone , Rochdale.

As many of us know, a number of other vacancies are to be announced in the coming months so it is always worth a phone call to find out about the present situation.

Prayer Requests

Thank God for the outcome of summer ventures and houseparties:

- conversions
 - the encouragement to grow as disciples
 - the training of leaders.
1. Thank God for those who are newly ordained.
 2. Pray for the forthcoming ReNew conference and also the College of Bishops meeting at the same time.
 3. Pray for those parishes which are experiencing difficulty in attracting candidates for vacancies
 4. Pray for concrete recommendations to emerge from the IDG
 5. My Advisory Group meets in early October. Please pray for wisdom as we think about how to structure my ministry over the next three years; what to propose in the face of liberal ????, pressure over sexuality; and what changes should be made to the bi-annual programme of regional meetings.

List of Resolution Parishes

A list of the 142 conservative evangelical churches which have passed resolutions is attached at the end of this newsletter. Please let us know if we are missing any.

With love
Rod Thomas

**Resolution Parishes - resolutions passed by conservative evangelical churches,
1st September 2019: 142 resolutions**

Baths & Wells	St George, Wembdon	Bishop Hannington Hove
Birmingham	St Agnes, Moseley St Stephen & St Wulstan, Selly Park	Emmanuel Hastings Holy Trinity, Eastbourne Little Common, Bexhill
Blackburn	All Hallows Bispham All Saints Preston Christ Church Blackburn Church of the Saviour Blackburn Padiham St Andrew, Blackburn St Andrew, Ashton on Ribble St Andrew, Leyland St Bartholomew, Ewood Wellfield Church	Derby Little Eaton St Alkmund, Duffield St Giles, Normanton St Mary, Chaddesden St Peter, Stapenhill St Stephen, Sinfin Trinity Church Buxton
Canterbury	All Saints, Loose Christ Church, Ramsgate St James, Westgate	Ely All Saints, Little Shelford Christ Church, Cambridge Christ Church, Huntingdon St Andrew the Great, Cambridge St John, Orchard Park St Matthew, Cambridge
Carlisle	Houghton and Kingmoor St Bridget, Moresby St James, Burton in Kendal St John, Hensingham St John, London Road, Carlisle	Europe Leipzig
Chelmsford	Becontree, St Elisabeth Chadwell, St Mary Christ Church, Leyton Crossway Stratford Elsenham Fordham Henham Holy Cross, Felsted Immanuel, Brentwood St George, Dagenham St John, Walthamstow St John, Great Clacton St Michael, Braintree St Paul Harold Hill & St Thomas Noak Hill St Peter and St Paul, Dagenham St Peter, Harold Wood Ugley	Exeter Christ Church, Paignton St Leonard, Exeter St Matthew, Elburton
Chester	Christ Church, Wharton Holy Trinity Poulton Lancelyn St Catherine, Tranmere St John, Hartford St John, Over St John, Lindow St John, Knutsford St John, Toft St Mark, New Ferry St Mary, Cheadle	Guildford St Andrew, Frimley Green & Mytchett
Chichester	All Saints Crowborough All Souls Eastbourne	Leicester Enderby Holy Trinity, Hinckley
		Lichfield Castle Church, Stafford Holy Trinity, Oswestry St James, Audley St Luke, Wolverhampton St Thomas, Kidsgrove
		Liverpool St Philemon Toxteth St Simon and St Jude Southport
		London Christ Church, Cockfosters Christ Church, Mayfair Euston Church Grace Church, Highland St Anne, Limehouse St Benet, Paul's Wharf St Botolph without Aldersgate St Helen, Bishopsgate St John, Downshire Hill St John with St Andrew, Chelsea St Luke, Hampstead St Michael, Cornhill St Nicholas, Cole Abbey St Paul, Hadley Wood St Peter, Cornhill St Peter's Barge, Limehouse St Peter, Fulham St Thomas, Oakwood
		Manchester Christ Church, Chadderton

	St Mary, Balderstone
Norwich	Christ Church, Lowestoft St Andrew, Honingham
Oxford	Arborfield Barkham Christ Church, Wokingham Holy Trinity, Nuffield St Ebbe, Oxford St Mary, Maidenhead St Paul, Banbury
Peterborough	St Peter and St Paul, Moulton
Portsmouth	St James, Ryde
Rochester	Christ Church, Bromley St John, Tunbridge Wells St Nicholas, Sevenoaks St Peter, Bexley Heath St Peter, Tunbridge Wells
Salisbury	St John, Wimborne
Sheffield	All Saints, Darfield Christ Church, Endcliffe Christ Church, Fulwood Holy Cross, Gleadless Valley St Andrew, Kendray St Mary, Wheatley St Thomas, Kilnhurst
Southwark	Dundonald Emmanuel, Wimbledon Grace, Dulwich Grace, Greenwich Holy Redeemer, Streatham Vale Holy Trinity, Wallington St Luke, Wimbledon St Nicholas, Tooting St Stephen, South Lambeth
Southwell	St Mary, Wollaton Park
St Albans	All Saints, Riseley Holy Trinity, Frogmore
Truro	Fowey
Winchester	Christ Church, Westbourne Sherbourne St John, Basingstoke St Mary, Basingstoke
York	St Andrew, Kirk Ella, Hull