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Dear Brothers and Sisters

I know that a number of congregations have been promoting Christopher Ash's book 'Repeat the Sounding Joy' during Advent. As it walks us through Luke 1 and 2, we are given reason after reason for being joyful, whatever our experience of the past year has been and even if the future looks challenging:

- God fulfils his promises! 'You will conceive and give birth to a son ... The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David' (Luke 1:31-32). The ancient promise of God from 2 Samuel 7 is fulfilled in Jesus.
- Jesus Christ enables us to have hope. We have been and will be rescued (Luke 2:38), so we wait in hope of his glorious return
- Waiting means trusting. Our experience can be one of experiencing God's goodness (Luke 1:34-38) or of hostility (Luke 2:33-35). Both are the results of faithful gospel work. But Mary gives us an example of trust: 'May your word to me be fulfilled' she says.

So in that spirit, I'm giving thanks for all God has done in 2019. While there have been grievous difficulties, particularly as certain harmful practices have come to light, and from which we must learn, there have also been wonderful opportunities too, as the statistics at the end of this newsletter show. I'm particularly thankful for all the confirmations which have taken place; these have proved very uplifting as people have witnessed to God's saving work in their lives and congregations have rejoiced in their unity in Christ.

In the New Year there will no doubt be controversies around the publication of the 'Living in Love and Faith' resources, the Lambeth conference and the election of a new General Synod (in the autumn). We will need to think and engage clearly – and then encourage clergy and lay members of deanery synods to stand for election. I have been very encouraged by all that the Church of England Evangelical Council is doing to prepare for the General Synod elections – and it would be good if you could be in touch with the local chairs of Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships to ask what you can do to help.

In the meantime, I am holding a series of regional meetings between February and June to enable us to think through a number of the issues we face. The mornings will be devoted to issues facing us in pursuing complementarian ministry and these sessions will finish with lunch. After that, I would encourage everyone to stay on for the afternoon Church Society conferences where we will be examining the whole issue of relating to bishops. Further details can be found later in this newsletter.

So, as you read on, I would like to finish this personal message with my very best wishes for a great time both of outreach and rejoicing this Christmas and a fruitful New Year. Best wishes come too from Rachel and Naomi in the office and David Banting in the Northern Province.

Rod Thomas

## Regional Events

We will be running a series of meetings around the country between March and June 2020. These will differ from previous regional meetings in that:

- There will only be 4 venues covering the whole country;
- The first part of each meeting will be dedicated to the discussion of complementarian issues and will be aimed at those whose PCCs have passed resolutions under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests and other complementarian clergy;
- The afternoons will be organised by the Church Society and will be open more widely but will deal with an issue that is of significance to us all, namely, Episcopacy - in principle and in practice. Bishop Rod will be on the panel for the Q&A session at the end of this part of the day.

Dates and venues are as follows:

*Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, Manchester:* aimed at those from Blackburn, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, York dioceses.

*Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, Bristol:* aimed at those from Bath & Wells, Bristol, Exeter, Gloucester, Salisbury, Winchester, Truro dioceses

*Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May, Birmingham:* aimed at those from Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Ely, Hereford, Leicester, Lichfield, Lincoln, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Peterborough, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Worcester dioceses.

*Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, London:* aimed at those from Canterbury, Chelmsford, Chichester, Europe, Guildford, London, Portsmouth, Rochester, Southwark, St Albans dioceses.

There will be no charge for the day. Those attending the morning session will also benefit from a free lunch. You would be welcome to attend the morning and lunch only if you wish but, needless to say, we hope everyone will stay on for the whole day. Timings will be:

- Morning session 10.30am – 12.45pm;
- Lunch for those attending morning session, only;
- Afternoon session 1.30pm – 4.00pm

These are confirmed dates and locations; please make a record of the meeting you hope to attend in your diary. There will be no charge for either part of these meetings but it is essential that you book in advance. Further details of venues will be available in the new year and we will be sending out information and booking forms in January for the two meetings to be held in March

## Seeking Consistency Across Dioceses

As you will know, Rod has been urging dioceses to examine the London Plan and see whether or not they could implement something similar in order to achieve greater consistency in the provision that is made once a PCC passes a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the ministry of Bishops and Priests. As a result, it is very pleasing that the Diocese of Oxford has adopted most of the London Plan. This will enable Rod to be a Sponsoring Bishop for ordination candidates as well as to have a much clearer role in ordinations, the filling of vacancies and the placement of curates.

Elsewhere, the Diocese of Truro have implemented an amended form of the London Plan and the Diocese of Liverpool are also working on a draft. Rod is hoping to see the Bishop of Warrington early in the New Year to discuss how he might be involved in sponsoring candidates for ordination training in the Diocese of Liverpool.

Rod is also commending this approach to the Implementation and Dialogue Group (see separate item below).

## **Pastoral Adviser**

David Banting continues to support churches which have passed resolutions in the Northern Province as well as individual clergy working in non-Resolution settings. He has advised PCCs and their representatives on the processes involved in filling vacancies; provided ministry to churches during vacancies; been involved in discussions over parish reorganisation; spoken at church weekends and PCC Awaydays; and also been a member of my Advisory Group. His help has been invaluable. As a new relationship with the Archbishop of York begins with the appointment of Stephen Cottrell, the fact that David has been closely involved with the new Archbishop during his previous time in Chelmsford Diocese will be of great benefit.

## **Implementation and Dialogue Group**

This is a group set up by the House of Bishops to follow up the Independent Reviewer's report on the withdrawal of Philip North from nomination to the See of Sheffield. Its purpose is to look at how well the Five Guiding Principles underlying the House of Bishops' Declaration are being implemented and to suggest ways in which they can become more firmly embedded in church life. I am a member of that Group (with David Banting standing in for me during my absence earlier this year on sabbatical).

A draft report went to the House of Bishops this month and further work is being done before it is brought back to the House and subsequently presented to General Synod. One of these areas of work relates to examples of good practice. As part of the IDG exercise a number of dioceses were visited and several clergy and other leaders from evangelical resolution churches were able to explain about difficulties they had encountered. However, while these are likely to be set out in the report, there is also a desire that readers should be encouraged by examples of good practice. It would be very helpful therefore if you could provide us with any examples where mutual flourishing has clearly been put into practice. Examples might include:

- Invitations to female bishops to attend and speak at particular events at resolution churches;
- Any diocesan initiatives to ensure that the complementarian voice is heard;
- Help provided to women enquiring about ordination – including referral by resolution clergy to neighbouring female presbyters for mentoring;
- Mutual support between clergy irrespective of their gender;
- Any joint meetings with clergy who take different views over women's ministry.

Do let us know if you can help.

## **Ordinations**

If you are considering asking for an ordination to be taken by me in 2020 and have not yet contacted us, please let Rod or Rachel ([admin@bishopofmaidstone.org](mailto:admin@bishopofmaidstone.org)) know as soon as possible.

Whilst difficulties persist in the Diocese of Southwark both over those involved in the discernment process for ordination candidates and over activities sponsored by the Cathedral, some more positive steps are also being taken. As many will know, Dundonald continues to be in impaired communion with the Bishop, but has nevertheless been able to secure the ordination of one of their ministry team – Santhosh Thomas. Santhosh was ordained as deacon at St Mark's, Battersea Rise, on 7<sup>th</sup> December. He will formally serve his title at St Andrew's, Wimbledon, but will continue to gain most of his ministerial experience at Dundonald.

## **ReNew Edmonton Joint PCC meeting**

We are very thankful to Rod for coming to help us out at our ReNew Edmonton Joint PCC meeting in October. The aim of the morning was two-fold. First, we wanted to grow a greater sense of regional gospel partnership among our churches as we seek to work together to pioneer, establish and secure healthy local Anglican ministry in this part of London. Second, we wanted to educate and train our PCCs regarding some

of the current issues and debates in the wider church. The morning was held at Oak Hill college, with 12 'ReNew churches' represented, and around 100 in attendance. Johnny Jukes (President of Oakhill) kicked things off by opening up the book of Titus, helping us to consider this great task of multiplying faithful ministry and silencing unfaithful ministry in our area. Rod then gave us an Anglican Update, considering some of the current opportunities and challenges we face as PCCs. Following the success of the morning, we plan to gather our PCCs together for a joint meeting like this once a year - perhaps each year considering a different aspect of the task of pioneering, establishing and securing.

Rich Aldritt

## Statistics

As Rod enters his fifth year of ministry as the Bishop of Maidstone, we thought you would be interested in some facts and figures.

- 144 evangelical churches have now passed resolutions under the House of Bishops' Declaration. Rod has episcopal oversight of 83 of these, in the remainder oversight is retained by a diocesan or suffragan bishop. We are aware of around 40 more evangelical parishes considering passing a resolution in due course.
- Rod has confirmed 722 people in the last four years.
- Rod has ordained a total of 16 presbyters in 8 dioceses and 14 deacons in 4 dioceses, 13 of these 30 people were ordained in 2019.
- In 2019 Rod became a sponsoring bishop in London Diocese and sponsored 4 candidates who attended a BAP. He is now also a sponsoring bishop in Oxford Diocese and hopes that this list will grow.
- 269 parish visits have been made: most to preach, and many also to confirm. He is also invited to attend PCC meetings, parish meetings, vacancy meetings and other events.
- Rod is an honorary assistant bishop in 14 dioceses, with another such appointment to take effect in 2020. He is actively encouraged to provide ministry in a further 5 dioceses.
- A series of regional meetings, covering the country, was held between Feb 2018 and Mar 2019. A total of 276 people attended these events. A second series of meetings is to be held in the first half of 2020 – see above.
- Wider church ministry includes serving as President of Church Society, Vice-President of CPAS and a member of CEEC. Rod is a member of the House of Bishops' Implementation and Dialogue Group – see above.

## Prayer Requests

Please give thanks to God for:

- The adoption of the London Plan by Oxford Diocese;
- The Gospel opportunities presented by those organising confirmations;
- The ordination of Santhosh Thomas.

Please pray for:

- Those seeking to uphold the Bible's teaching on sexual intimacy as part of the LLF exercise;
- The CEEC Council as it meets in early January and continues to consider the issue of 'differentiation';
- Evangelical bishops meeting in early January;
- Rod's continuing efforts to secure additional staff support for his role.

## List of Resolution Parishes

A list of the 144 conservative evangelical churches which have passed resolutions is attached at the end of this newsletter. Please let us know if we are missing any.

**Resolution Parishes - resolutions passed by conservative evangelical churches,**

**1<sup>st</sup> December 2019: 144 resolutions**

|                          |   |  |   |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Baths &amp; Wells</b> | St George, Wembdon  |  | Holy Trinity Poulton Lancelyn   |
| <b>Birmingham</b>        | St Agnes, Moseley<br>St Stephen & St Wulstan, Selly Park  |  | St Catherine, Tranmere<br>St John, Hartford<br>St John, Over<br>St John, Lindow<br>St John, Knutsford<br>St John, Toft<br>St Mark, New Ferry<br>St Mary, Cheadle                    |
| <b>Blackburn</b>         | All Hallows Bispham<br>All Saints Preston<br>Christ Church Blackburn<br>Church of the Saviour Blackburn<br>Padiham<br>St Andrew, Blackburn<br>St Andrew, Ashton on Ribble<br>St Andrew, Leyland<br>St Bartholomew, Ewood<br>Wellfield Church  |  | <b>Chichester</b> All Saints Crowborough<br>All Souls Eastbourne<br>Bishop Hannington Hove<br>Emmanuel Hastings<br>Holy Trinity, Eastbourne<br>Little Common, Bexhill               |
| <b>Canterbury</b>        | All Saints, Loose<br>Christ Church, Ramsgate<br>St James, Westgate  |  | <b>Derby</b> Little Eaton<br>St Alkmund, Duffield<br>St Giles, Normanton<br>St Mary, Chaddesden<br>St Peter, Stapenhill<br>St Stephen, Sinfin<br>Trinity Church Buxton              |
| <b>Carlisle</b>          | Houghton and Kingmoor<br>St Bridget, Moresby<br>St James, Burton in Kendal<br>St John, Hensingham<br>St John, London Road, Carlisle   |  | <b>Ely</b> All Saints, Little Shelford<br>Christ Church, Cambridge<br>Christ Church, Huntingdon<br>St Andrew the Great, Cambridge<br>St John, Orchard Park<br>St Matthew, Cambridge |
| <b>Chelmsford</b>        | Becontree, St Elisabeth<br>Chadwell, St Mary<br>Christ Church, Leyton<br>Crossway Stratford<br>Elsenham<br>Fordham<br>Henham<br>Holy Cross, Felsted<br>Immanuel, Brentwood<br>St George, Dagenham<br>St John, Walthamstow<br>St John, Great Clacton<br>St Michael, Braintree<br>St Paul Harold Hill & St Thomas Noak Hill<br>St Peter, Colchester<br>St Peter and St Paul, Dagenham<br>St Peter, Harold Wood<br>Ugley |  | <b>Europe</b> Leipzig   |
| <b>Chester</b>           | Christ Church, Wharton  |  | <b>Exeter</b> Christ Church, Paignton<br>St Leonard, Exeter<br>St Matthew, Elburton   |
|                          |   |  | <b>Guildford</b> St Andrew, Frimley Green & Mytchett  |
|                          |   |  | <b>Leicester</b> Enderby<br>Holy Trinity, Hinckley  |
|                          |   |  | <b>Lichfield</b> Castle Church, Stafford<br>Holy Trinity, Oswestry<br>St James, Audley<br>St Luke, Wolverhampton<br>St Thomas, Kidsgrove  |
|                          |   |  | <b>Liverpool</b> St Philemon Toxteth  |

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
|                     | St Simon and St Jude<br>Southport  |
| <b>London</b>       | Christ Church, Cockfosters<br>Christ Church, Mayfair<br>Euston Church<br>Grace Church, Highland<br>St Anne, Limehouse<br>St Benet, Paul's Wharf<br>St Botolph without Aldersgate<br>St Helen, Bishopsgate<br>St John, Downshire Hill<br>St John with St Andrew,<br>Chelsea<br>St Luke, Hampstead<br>St Michael, Cornhill<br>St Nicholas, Cole Abbey<br>St Paul, Hadley Wood<br>St Peter, Cornhill<br>St Peter's Barge, Limehouse<br>St Peter, Fulham<br>St Thomas, Oakwood |
| <b>Manchester</b>   | Christ Church, Chadderton<br>St Mary, Balderstone  |
| <b>Norwich</b>      | Christ Church, Lowestoft<br>St Andrew, Honingham   |
| <b>Oxford</b>       | Arborfield<br>Barkham<br>Christ Church, Wokingham<br>Holy Trinity, Nuffield<br>St Ebbe, Oxford<br>St Mary, Maidenhead<br>St Paul, Banbury  |
| <b>Peterborough</b> | St Peter and St Paul, Moulton  |
| <b>Portsmouth</b>   | St James, Ryde   |
| <b>Rochester</b>    | Christ Church, Bromley<br>St John, Tunbridge Wells<br>St Nicholas, Sevenoaks<br>St Peter, Bexley Heath<br>St Peter, Tunbridge Wells  |
| <b>Salisbury</b>    | St John, Wimborne  |
| <b>Sheffield</b>    | All Saints, Darfield<br>Christ Church, Endcliffe<br>Christ Church, Fulwood<br>Holy Cross, Gleadless Valley<br>St Andrew, Kendray   |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
|                   | St Mary, Wheatley<br>St Thomas, Kilnhurst   |
| <b>Southwark</b>  | Dundonald<br>Emmanuel, Wimbledon<br>Grace, Dulwich<br>Grace, Greenwich<br>Holy Redeemer, Streatham<br>Vale<br>Holy Trinity, Wallington<br>St Luke, Wimbledon<br>St Nicholas, Tooting<br>St Stephen, South Lambeth |
| <b>Southwell</b>  | St Mary, Wollaton Park  |
| <b>St Albans</b>  | All Saints, Riseley<br>Holy Trinity, Frogmore   |
| <b>Winchester</b> | Christ Church, Westbourne<br>Sherbourne St John,<br>Basingstoke<br>St Mary, Basingstoke   |
| <b>York</b>       | St Andrew, Kirk Ella, Hull<br>St Mark's Anlaby Common<br>St Peter, Anlaby   |