

# Bishop of Maidstone's Newsletter

Pre-Easter 2022

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## Pastoral Letter from Bishop Rod

Dear Fellow Ministers,

Living in limbo is, I believe, a normal experience for Christians. You cannot read a letter such as 1 Peter without being struck by the way we are encouraged to live our lives with a clear focus on what is to come rather than on our present experience. It is addressed to 'elect exiles' in 1:1, later called 'sojourners and exiles' in 2:11. It describes the living hope we have of an imperishable inheritance in chapter 1, though 'now for a little while' there may be various trials. Later, in chapter 4, these are described as 'fiery trials' which test us and enable us to share Christ's sufferings that we 'may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed' (4:12-13).

There is, therefore, a way in which our whole life is a matter of waiting. This does not mean inaction or a lack of fulfilment. On the contrary, there is enjoyment, service, love of others and opportunity for gospel proclamation. But it always awaits completion. This is such an encouraging truth to live by. When internationally events are bleak, as in Ukraine, we seek to support those in need, but know that the full resolution of injustice lies in the future. When ministry objectives seem to continue to elude us, and when tasks remain unfinished (of which I am conscious as I head towards retirement), I am reassured that perfection is what lies ahead, not something I can achieve in present experience – and that God, in his loving, sovereign purposes will work all things together for good for those who love him (Romans 8:28).

As evangelicals in the Church of England we currently face a number of 'limbo' experiences. We are waiting to hear more later this year about the findings of the LLF exercise and about proposals (which may emerge this time next year) for handling issues of sexuality and gender. Consultations continue over the succession to my own role. Within individual churches, many are still waiting to see if those

who are most cautious about returning to physical gatherings following the pandemic will indeed return, and how quickly youth work will revive.

In all these things our call is to persevere faithfully with our gospel ministries knowing that the Lord is sovereign. As Paul puts it in Romans 15:4, God's purpose is that through 'endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.' Let's therefore approach the Easter season and all that follows it as people of hope.

With love in Christ,

Rod

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## A new Northern Pastoral Adviser: Mark Burkill

*Mark writes:* As Rod's pastoral adviser for the north I am taking up the ministry which David Banting has been doing. We should be very grateful for David's work, much of which is inevitably unseen. In Sept 2021 I retired after 30 years as Vicar of Christ Church, Leyton in London – a church family which welcomed Rod's ministry. My wife Christina and I have moved to Sheffield which is where I grew up and where Christina worked for some years in the 1980s. We met while I was curate at St Mary's Cheadle. Like Dick Farr I have been involved in the patronage work of Church Society Trust for many years.

In reflecting on issues of church leadership and pastoring recently I have returned to John 21. Many reading this newsletter will have worked out that this chapter exists as John's way of telling us about Jesus' plans for the care of his people after his resurrection and ascension. Of course in 21:15-19 Jesus is addressing the apostle Peter and in the background there is Peter's betrayal. However a focus simply on that may obscure the universal significance of this for us today.

It is the link between 'loving Jesus' and 'feeding/caring for Jesus' sheep' which has struck me as being of great significance. No-one can do the work of feeding and caring for Jesus' people as an under shepherd without truly and sincerely loving Jesus our Lord and Saviour. The repeated question of Jesus to Peter 'do you love me?' hurt Peter. But perhaps in that there is a lesson for us. We need to keep on asking (even to the point of embarrassment) ourselves and each other whether we do indeed love Jesus Christ more than anything else. We cannot take it for granted. This must lie at the heart of a fruitful pastoral ministry in our churches.

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## Thank you to David Banting

*Bishop Rod writes:* I have been enormously grateful to David for pioneering the role of pastoral adviser in the Northern Province. Every evangelical church which passes a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration is involved to some extent in the ministry which I seek to undertake – and with the numbers and geographical spread involved this would be impossible without the assistance of pastoral advisers who are available not only to provide pastoral advice to parishes, but to help during vacancies, to preach, to be involved in selection processes, to liaise with archdeacons and to secure my involvement at appropriate times. David has undertaken all this with tremendous energy and commitment. In addition, he continues to handle the time-consuming work of consulting both with evangelical clergy and officials at Lambeth Palace about my successor. He has always proved to be a real partner in this gospel ministry and I am delighted that he also agreed to make

himself available to offer pastoral support and advice in the south-east in the period between my retirement and the appointment of my successor.

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## Progress from the Bishop's Working Group

The Maidstone Commitments, one of the key outworkings of the Bishop's Working Group, has been going through a process of consultation in recent weeks. Much helpful feedback has now been received, and is in the process of being incorporated into the document.

The text will be made available to incumbents as soon as possible after Easter, and we hope that incumbents and PCCs from resolution parishes will commit to spending time over the coming months: first, to make the Commitments, and then to seek to meet them.

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## Regional Meetings (May & June 2022)

Thank you to all those who have registered for the Regional Meetings in May and June. If you have not yet done so, may we encourage you to register via EventBrite as soon as possible.

Please note that these Regional Meetings are not just for clergy, although we hope that all clergy in resolution parishes will wish to attend. Please ensure that others in leadership of resolution parishes (Churchwardens, lay ministers, PCC members etc) know that they are welcome at these meetings.

As you may recall from the previous Newsletter, we are planning five Regional Meetings, with each one running from 10am to 4pm. If possible, please register for the venue recommended for your diocese. If this isn't possible, please feel free to register for whichever is most convenient.

- **in London, on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May** – this is particularly for those in the Dioceses of Canterbury, Chichester, Guildford, London, Portsmouth, Rochester, and Southwark [[register here for 12th May in London](#)].
- **in Bristol, on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May** – this is particularly for those in the Dioceses of Bath & Wells, Bristol, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Salisbury, Truro, and Winchester [[register here for 17<sup>th</sup> May in Bristol](#)].
- **in Leicester, on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May** – this is particularly for those in the Dioceses of Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Leicester, Lichfield, Lincoln, Peterborough, Southwell & Notts, and Worcester [[register here for 19<sup>th</sup> May in Leicester](#)].
- **in London, on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June** – this is particularly for those in the Dioceses of Chelmsford, Ely, Europe, Norwich, Oxford, St Albans, and St Eds & Ips [[register here for 9<sup>th</sup> June in London](#)].
- **in Manchester, on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June** – this is particularly for those in the Dioceses of Blackburn, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, and York [[register here for 15<sup>th</sup> June in Manchester](#)].

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## An Update on the Bishop's Six Priorities for this Quinquennium

The Bishop's Five Year Review, published last year and [available here](#), identified six priorities for this quinquennium (ie 2020-2025). Here is a brief update on progress:

### **1. Active encouragement of the complementarian ministry of women**

Now that 130 women ministers have joined the Co-Workers network led by Dr Ros Clarke and a programme of peer support arrangements, mentoring and webinars is underway, we are looking forward to as many as possible joining us for the forthcoming regional meetings, which will include a session on 'Women in Ministry'. The outcome of Bishop Rod's Working Group (reported above) will also address the issue of ensuring that complementarian women's ministry is properly valued.

### **2. Development of a sustainable pattern of pastoral care**

This continues to be a challenging priority. The recent sequence of 'Bishop's coffee breaks' which took place over Zoom have now been concluded. These proved very helpful for several clergy, but the numbers involved were low. However, the number of engagements in which Pastoral Advisers are involved continues to grow, so it is clear that the more that this system can be developed, the more helpful it will be. As a first step, the number of advisers is being increased to three and Bishop Rod is still seeking a further adviser dedicated to women in ministry.

### **3. Promotion of excellent and affordable training opportunities for ordinands**

A number of steps have been taken so far this year: Bishop Rod and his chaplain, Mark Wallace both took part in a half day seminar for people exploring the possibility of ordination at Oak Hill. Bishop Rod has also had meetings with Nigel Styles of Cornhill and the Director of the CoE's Ministry Division in order to discuss ways of introducing flexibility into the pattern of approved training pathways.

### **4. Promotion of senior leadership**

Most of the effort here has been devoted to supporting the process for securing a successor to Bishop Rod. However, opportunities have also been taken to encourage those advising the Dioceses Commission to consider appointing more complementarian suffragan bishops who might be able to offer episcopal support to 'resolution' churches on a regional basis. In private conversations, Bishop Rod has also pressed the case for complementarian archdeacons to be appointed.

### **5. Engagement with church planting programmes**

Bishop Rod is currently exploring the possibility of setting up a new Church Planting Trust which would have independent financial backing in order to provide better resources for those conservative evangelical churches who are considering planting or revitalisation initiatives. He is doing this with the support of Bishop Ric Thorpe, the Bishop for Church Planting. Nationally, the Church of England is aiming to initiate 10,000 new plants or revitalisations by 2030, so there is much scope for conservative evangelical churches to scale up their own contribution to this figure.

### **6. Resolution on issues of controversy**

Bishop Rod continues to be involved both in the LLF Next Steps Group and in the discussions within the CEEC on differentiation. The latter took place most recently at the CEEC residential meeting in January. Although he retires in October, Bishop Rod will continue his involvement with the Next

Steps Group until the conclusion of its work and plans to attend the three residential meetings of the College of Bishops which will be meeting from September to December to consider the LLF outcome.

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## Bishop Rod's Farewell Service

With Bishop Rod having announced that he will be retiring with effect from early October, we are planning a 'Farewell Service' to take place in London on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October, at 2pm. The service, which will be at All Souls, Langham Place, will be livestreamed for those who are unable to attend in person, but we hope that many will be able to join us in London that afternoon. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

If you would like to attend, please [register via EventBrite](#).

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## The House of Bishops' Standing Commission

The Five Guiding Principles remain the basis on which complementarian evangelicals are assured of a valued place in the Church of England. When, last year, the *Implementation and Dialogue Group* concluded its work of assessing whether or not they were still fit for purpose, and offered a number of recommendations for the future, a Standing Commission was established by the House of Bishops to keep these matters under review.

Sadly, the Archbishop of York confirmed (in answer to a question at General Synod in February) that the Standing Commission has not yet been established, but confirmed that it will have been by the end of the year. We hope therefore to be able to offer an update on progress in future Newsletters.

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## Requests for the Bishop's Diary

Please note that Bishop Rod's diary is now very full for these last few months before his retirement in October. He has very limited availability for Sunday engagements in particular, but while bearing this in mind, please contact [Rachel Lickiss](#) in the Maidstone Office to enquire about availability. Meanwhile, a list of invitations and requests (especially for confirmations) will be kept in the Maidstone Office ready for when Rod's successor is in post, but will obviously be subject to the appointment and availability of the next Bishop. Please continue to contact Rachel if you would like a conversation, or to pass a query, to Bishop Rod.

Please remember that the Pastoral Advisers are available, both for Sundays and for mid-week meetings. Please feel free to contact Dick Farr (in the Province of Canterbury) or Mark Burkill (in the Province of York, from Easter) if you would like to invite them to your church. Dick and Mark are also available to help those PCCs who are considering passing a resolution under the House of Bishop's Declaration, or who have wider questions about the role and value of the Bishop of Maidstone in the present climate. Bishop Rod's Chaplain ([Mark](#)) and PA ([Rachel](#)) will of course continue to be available to deal with queries.

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## Vacancies & Curacy Opportunities

Please continue to let [Rachel Lickiss](#) know if you would like her to circulate details of vacancies to resolution church incumbents for dissemination.

We are also aware of ordinands looking for title posts in the coming year, so do get in touch if you have a curacy to fill.

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## Bishop's Staff Team & Contact Details

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## Prayer Requests

Please give thanks to God for:

- the timely and positive conclusion to the consultation process regarding Rod's successor
- good numbers coming forward for confirmation
- those who have signed up for the Regional Meetings
- the appointment of John Dunnett as Operations Director with CEEC

Please pray for:

- Mark Burkill, as he takes over as Pastoral Adviser in the north
- the Regional Meetings in May and June
- the annual ReNew Conference in September

- the process of transition as the next bishop is appointed
- ongoing discussions with Lambeth & the Dioceses Commission about the succession process
- Rod and Lesley, as they prepare together for Rod's retirement from 2<sup>nd</sup> October

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## List of Resolution Parishes (147, as of 24<sup>th</sup> March)

### **Bath & Wells**

St George, Wembdon

### **Birmingham**

St Agnes, Moseley

St Stephen & St Wulstan, Selly Park

### **Blackburn**

All Hallows Bispham

All Saints Preston

Christ Church Blackburn

Church of the Saviour Blackburn

St Andrew, Blackburn

St Andrew, Ashton on Ribble

St Andrew, Leyland

St Bartholomew, Ewood

St Leonard, Padiham & St Margaret, Hapton

Wellfield Church

### **Canterbury**

All Saints, Loose

Christ Church, Ramsgate

St James, Westgate

### **Carlisle**

Houghton and Kingmoor

St Bridget, Moresby

St James, Burton in Kendal

St John, Hensingham

St John, London Road, Carlisle

### **Chelmsford**

Christ Church, Leyton

Crossway Stratford

All Saints, Fordham

Holy Cross, Felsted

St George, Dagenham

St John, Walthamstow

St John, Great Clacton

St Mary, Elsenham

St Mary, Henham

St Michael, Braintree

St Paul Harold Hill & St Thomas Noak Hill

St Peter, Colchester

St Peter and St Paul, Dagenham

St Peter, Harold Wood

### **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

### **Chichester**

All Saints Crowborough

All Souls Eastbourne

Bishop Hannington Hove

Emmanuel Hastings

Holy Trinity, Eastbourne

Little Common, Bexhill

### **Derby**

St Alkmund, Duffield

St Giles, Normanton

St Mary, Chaddesden

St Paul, Little Eaton

St Peter, Stapenhill

St Stephen, Sinfin

Trinity Church Buxton

### **Ely**

All Saints, Little Shelford

Christ Church, Cambridge

Christ Church, Huntingdon

St Andrew the Great, Cambridge

St John, Orchard Park

Terrington, St Clement

St Matthew, Cambridge

### **Europe**

Leipzig

### **Exeter**

Christ Church, Paignton

St Leonard, Exeter

St Matthew, Elburton

### **Gloucester**

St David, Moreton-in-Marsh

### **Guildford**

St Andrew, Frimley Green & Mytchett

### **Leicester**

Enderby Parish Church

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**

All Souls, Langham Place  
Christ Church, Cockfosters  
Christ Church, Kensington  
Christ Church, Mayfair  
Euston Church  
Grace Church, Highlands  
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  
Trinity Islington

**Manchester**

Christ Church, Chadderton  
St Mary, Balderstone

**Newcastle**

Elswick Parish Church

**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 Botolph's, Barton Seagrave  
St Peter and St Paul, Moulton

**Portsmouth**

St Paul Barton

**Rochester**

Christ Church, Bromley  
St John, Tunbridge Wells  
St Nicholas, Sevenoaks  
St Peter, Bexley Heath  
St Peter, Tunbridge Wells

**Salisbury**

St John, Wimborne

**Sheffield**

Christ Church, Endcliffe  
Christ Church, Fulwood  
Holy Cross, Gleadless Valley  
St Andrew, Kendray  
St Mary, Wheatley  
St Thomas, Kilnhurst

**Southwark**

Dundonald Church  
Emmanuel, Wimbledon  
Grace Church Dulwich  
Grace Church 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**

St Fimbarrus, Fowey

**Winchester**

Christ Church, Westbourne  
Sherborne St John, Basingstoke  
St Mary, Basingstoke

**York**

St Andrew, Kirk Ella, Hull  
St Mark's Anlaby Common  
St Peter, Anlaby