

Bishop of Maidstone's Newsletter

Summer 2022

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Pastoral Letter from Bishop Rod

Dear Fellow Ministers,

This will be my last newsletter piece before retirement and I do want to thank you for the support and encouragement you have given to me over the last seven years. When I first started, back in 2015, it was unclear what shape the provision under the House of Bishops' Declaration would take. The fact that since then a number of dioceses have established protocols and there is, generally speaking, a welcome for my involvement, is as much a result of individual incumbents engaging with their own Diocesan Bishops in gracious and courageous ways as it is to do with me. In addition there has hardly been any occasion when on visiting a 'resolution' church I haven't been asked 'how can we pray for you?' I have been so conscious of the Lord graciously answering your prayers over the years.

Although I trust that the Lord has further ministry for me in retirement, this particular role is ending for me – and that has prompted me to look at the 'endings' of the New Testament epistles. A number of them finish with some very practical instructions. Most are full of greetings. But I was particularly drawn to the ending of 2 Peter. It urges readers to pursue righteousness and peace, but particularly calls for 'stability'. After all the challenges we have faced over the past few years, we certainly need to heed the former injunctions. However, at a time of continuing uncertainty about how the Church of England will conclude its 'Living in Love and Faith' process, the call to be stable is one which is very relevant. It brings to mind Paul's command to Timothy to 'keep your head in all situations' (2 Tim 4:5 – NIV). In 2 Peter 3:17, the stability the Apostle calls for requires us on the one hand 'not to be carried away' by those who distort the Scriptures, but on the other to 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' I do pray that as we engage with the one, we won't cease to be aware of the riches of knowing the Lord Jesus and of his astonishing grace to us – so that in turn we are able to relate to others graciously and with a focus on Christ's goodness.

At my recent regional meetings, which were so helped by the Church Society, I was able to offer a reflection on the many positive developments among us over the past seven years. The fact that we meet together regionally is itself a source of joy. This year over 300 of us participated. These meetings are a real encouragement, not least because they enable us to get a feel for the impact we are having and to offer support to those who feel a bit out on a limb. Thank you to all who have been able to be a part of this. At this year's meetings we updated everyone on what has been happening with the appointment of my successor; the launch of the Maidstone Commitments; and the development of complementarianism in practice – not least in the way in which it bears on women in ministry. All of these will be continuing after I retire – and there is more to say later in the newsletter.

Finally, it would be wrong to finish without a profound 'thank you' to those who have been closely involved in helping me develop this role. First and foremost there are my office colleagues, Rachel and Naomi, who have been instrumental in turning aspiration into practice, and who have been very patient with my own particular style of working! Latterly, Mark Wallace has been a dearly valued colleague in ensuring the delivery of various initiatives, in advice and in briefing. My pastoral advisers – first David Banting and then Dick Farr and Mark Burkill have been crucial in providing practical assistance to churches; and their coverage has been amazing. Lastly, there are the two Advisory Groups (North and South). I have so valued their advice and friendship. The one in the South has been in existence longest and members have given up time very sacrificially to think issues through with me. I am very grateful to God for you all.

I am looking forward very much to hearing who will be my successor and will always seek to keep him in my prayers. There are clearly some testing times ahead – and I hope to see out my own role on the 'Next Steps' Group through to January – hopefully the month in which the new bishop will be consecrated. However, I want to finish with the 'ending' of 2 Corinthians: 'Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.'

With love in Christ,

Rod

From Maidstone to Ebbsfleet

It has recently been announced by the Church of England that Bishop Rod's successor will be appointed to the See of Ebbsfleet. This means that the next complementarian evangelical bishop, who we expect to be consecrated in January next year, will be known as the Bishop of Ebbsfleet (and not as the Bishop of Maidstone).

We do not expect these changes to make any difference to our current ways of working, although we acknowledge there may be some initial confusion. Various administrative changes will be required (eg change of email addresses, change of website address), and the intention is to have these in place before the consecration of the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet. This consecration is expected to be in late-January, and so we expect to be contacting people again in the late-autumn with further details. The Maidstone Office in Blindley Heath will remain open after Rod's retirement, although it is expected that the office will move once the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet is appointed and is in a position to determine their own housing and office requirements.

Bishop Rod is intending to write to all Diocesan Bishops with whom he has been working, to request that arrangements made with 'Maidstone-parishes' are simply transferred to all 'Ebbsfleet-parishes' once the change of see has been completed. If any incumbent has a particular concern about how this

might work out in practice in their context, they are encouraged to contact Rod's Senior Chaplain, Revd Mark Wallace, who will be seeking to oversee arrangements during the vacancy transition.

Meanwhile, please continue to pray for the process by which Bishop Rod's successor will be appointed. The process is already underway (and, again, our thanks to everyone who was involved in the consultation process earlier in the year, and it is expected that interviews will take place in September with an announcement expected sometime, we hope, in November.

Bishop Rod's Farewell Service

As we prepare to say "farewell" and "thank you" to Bishop Rod, do please consider joining him and his staff team in London on Saturday 1st October at All Souls, Langham Place. This Farewell Service will be at 2pm, with afternoon tea being served afterwards. It would be very helpful, for planning and catering purposes, if you could register as soon as possible via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bishop-rods-farewell-service-saturday-1st-october-2022-tickets-302619321537>

The service 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.

Thank you to Rachel Lickiss

Rachel Lickiss has been Rod's PA right from the start, but has decided to step down shortly after Rod's retirement. For many, Rachel has been much more than a PA. She has been the 'go to' person for advice; she has developed all the administrative systems on which the Maidstone office now relies; she has organised the publications, communications, meetings and conferences; and has been instrumental in making sure that there is good liaison with dioceses over confirmations, ordinations, the sponsorship of BAP candidates and MDRs. In addition, she has wonderfully mastered the logistical nightmare of organising Rod's travel and accommodation.

In thanking her, Bishop Rod said 'God very wonderfully provided me with Rachel as a partner in this ministry from the very start. She has had a very demanding role and one which has developed in ways neither of us could have predicted as time has gone on. She has been very much a partner in this gospel work: I relied on her entirely for my own diary commitments; for working out the practicalities of each week and for following up decisions. She has combined high administrative competence with real friendship – and I know that what is true for me is also the case with many church staff throughout the country. I put on record my great debt to her, my thanks, and my best wishes for her own retirement.'

Vacancy in the Maidstone Office

We have a vacancy for a temporary Administrative Assistant in the Maidstone Office. This role is to provide administrative support to the Bishop's Chaplain during the vacancy period and during the first few months of the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet's ministry.

The post is for 15 hours/week, from 1st September 2022 to 30th June 2023. The successful applicant will join the Maidstone Staff Team, and work alongside Naomi Teasdale. The post will be primarily on a remote-working basis, although occasional face-to-face meetings will also be required. Anyone

wanting further information, or an informal conversation about the role, is welcome to contact Mark Wallace before 22nd July.

Further details are available via the Pathways website [[Administration Assistant to Senior Chaplain in the Bishop of Maidstone's Office - Pathways | Pathways \(churchofengland.org\)](#)].

The closing date for applications is Wednesday 3rd August.

The Maidstone Commitments

The Maidstone Commitments are now available in printed form, and booklets will shortly be sent to every resolution parish. Any church wanting additional copies should contact Naomi Teasdale in the Bishop's Office. The PDF is still available for download [from the Bishop's website](#).

As you may recall, the Maidstone Commitments were formulated by a working group established by Bishop Rod in 2021, in the wake of concerns that had been raised about the culture of some evangelical churches. These five commitments are specifically for those complementarian parishes under the Bishop's pastoral care, and form part of a series of initiatives designed to promote the gospel by generating fresh confidence in the culture of conservative or 'classical' evangelical churches.

The Maidstone Commitments include commitments to act justly towards everyone in the church community, to signpost publicly safe pathways for raising concerns, to state openly their theological convictions over men's and women's ministry, to engage positively with senior diocesan clergy, and to review carefully their own church culture. Clergy and PCCs are being asked first to make these commitments, and then to work together to meet these commitments over the coming months.

At the time of their release, Rod said "Complementarian evangelical churches have some of the most outward-looking, caring and gospel-oriented ministries in the Church of England. There have been times when these ministries have been undermined by behaviours which have failed to be properly pastoral. I do not believe such issues are necessarily any greater in evangelical churches than those of other traditions, but when problems are exposed, they need to be addressed. My hope is that these commitments will not only help to address the concerns that have been raised, but also help those outside the church to see the attractiveness of Christ as churches strive to put his teaching into practice."

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.

The membership of the Standing Commission has recently been announced:

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| Bishops: | The Bishop of Lichfield, Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave (chair) |
| | The Bishop of Fulham, Rt Revd Jonathan Baker |
| | The Bishop of Ripon, Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley |
| | The Bishop of Ebbsfleet (once appointed as Bishop Rod's successor *) |

Clergy: Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes
Revd Canon Tim Goode
Venerable Pete Spiers
Revd Canon Smitha Prasadam

Laity: Dr Ros Clarke
Mrs Emma Joy Gregory
Canon Dr Addy Lazz-Onyenobi
Peter Collier QC

* Revd Charlie Skrine will stand in until Rod's successor is appointed

The Standing Commission met for the first time earlier this month, and it is hoped that an update on progress can be offered in future Newsletters.

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

The co-workers network continues to develop, led by Dr Ros Clarke. The issues facing women in ministry were explored in a major session at this year's regional meetings in the light of the 2021 survey findings. One of the issues with which we are grappling is the range of different understandings of how to apply complementarianism in practice – which in turn makes for inconsistency in the range of opportunities available to women. Work to offer a more uniform understanding is underway.

2. Development of a sustainable pattern of pastoral care

With one pastoral adviser in the north and one in the south, there continues to be a need to supplement the availability of pastoral care and support. David Banting has agreed to offer help as the occasion demands in the south, now that he has moved back to Essex. Bishop Rod believes that the appointment of a female pastoral adviser, focussed on support for women in ministry is needed, but it will be for his successor to assess this.

3. Promotion of excellent and affordable training opportunities for ordinands

Bishop Rod continues to support and encourage new ordinands at Oak Hill and other theological colleges. In the last month he has ordained seven men to either the diaconate or the presbyterate.

4. Promotion of senior leadership

We were delighted to hear that the Revd Greg Prior has been appointed as the new Archdeacon of Croydon. We assure him of our prayers for this significant role. Bishop Rod has also thanked the Bishop of Southwark for his continuing commitment to mutual flourishing.

5. Engagement with church planting programmes

Bishop Rod continues to explore whether or not there is a need for a new Trust to help conservative evangelical churches engage with their dioceses over the planting of new congregations in new estates and deprived areas – particularly since such areas form a key funding priority in the new money which the Church Commissioners are making available to dioceses over the next three triennia.

6. Resolution on issues of controversy

The findings of the 'Living in Love and Faith' exercise are likely to be published in September and there will then follow four residential meetings of the whole College of Bishops as they discern the way forward for the Church of England. The final meeting will be in January. Bishop Rod will be attending each of these. In the meantime a discussion book on 'The Gift of the Church' is planned, but the publication deadline is as yet not known.

Requests for the Bishop's Diary

Please note that Bishop Rod's diary is now full. It is extremely unlikely that any additional engagements can be squeezed in, but please contact Rachel Lickiss in the Maidstone Office with any enquiries about existing events in Rod's diary before 2nd October.

The Office is keeping a list of requests and invitations for the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet's diary. These are being held by Naomi Teasdale in the Maidstone Office, ready for the new Bishop's consideration as he begins his public ministry. If you have an urgent or important request for the diary of the incoming Bishop of Ebbsfleet, please contact Naomi.

Please remember that the Pastoral Advisers will continue to be 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) 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/Ebbsfleet in the present climate.

Preparing for the Vacancy-in-See

Bishop Rod will continue in ministry until Sunday 2nd October. From this date, and until the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet begins their ministry, Revd Mark Wallace will be seeking to oversee arrangements during the vacancy, and is available to assist with any questions or concerns.

Many episcopal functions will not be possible until the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet is in post. For example, confirmations and ordinations will need to await the new Bishop's consecration and will then be subject to the restrictions of his diary. Please liaise directly with Mark Wallace if this poses a specific issue or concern in your context.

In other areas of church life, it is expected that the Bishop's Staff Team will be in a position to assist parishes during the vacancy. For example, arrangements are being made to help with:

- pastoral support of clergy and parishes
- preaching requests in resolution parishes
- vacancies, and interview processes, for resolution parishes
- preaching at licensing services (even if the licensing itself cannot be done by the Staff Team)

- supporting ordinands, and those considering ordinations
- engagement with dioceses on behalf of resolution parishes
- requests for meetings with PCCs considering passing a resolution
- requests for information from PCCs needing to review their resolution

For further information, or with specific concerns, please feel free to contact Mark Wallace directly via mark.wallace@bishopofmaidstone.org, or either of the Pastoral Advisers.

Meanwhile, the Maidstone Office will remain open after Rod's retirement, and Naomi Teasdale will be available to answer administrative enquiries. Please be aware that Naomi's working hours are 9am-1pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Episcopal Encouragements...

Bishop Rod would briefly like to highlight...

- the ReNew conference is in Leeds, 26th-27th September – do please make this a priority, and encourage other members of leadership teams in your parish to attend.
- the GAFCON conference is in April 2023 – please consider attending yourself if appropriate and/or invited, and/or giving money to enable others to attend.
- the Network of Revitalising Ministries (NoRM) now offers a newsletter and other encouragements – please see <https://www.churchsociety.org/norm/> for further information.
- throughout his time as Bishop, Rod has received updates from Mrs Pauline Barnett about her ministry in a local home for the elderly. It is such an encouragement to hear of faithful work being done 'behind the scenes', and Rod would like to commend and encourage all those involved in similar ministries to persevere through the coming months!
- Rod was delighted to hear from Revd Alan Purser of plans to launch a weekly Holy Communion in Buxton specifically for Ukrainian refugees and their hosts, and warmly commends initiatives of this kind.

Bishop's Staff Team & Contact Details

Rt Revd Rod Thomas, the Bishop of Maidstone (*until 2nd October*)
01342 834140 bishop@bishopofmaidstone.org

Revd Mark Wallace, Senior Chaplain to the Bishop of Maidstone
07772 615378 mark.wallace@bishopofmaidstone.org

Revd Dr Mark Burkill, the Bishop's Pastoral Adviser for the Northern Province
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Revd Dick Farr, the Bishop's Pastoral Adviser for the Southern Province
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Mrs Rachel Lickiss, the Bishop's Senior PA (*until October*)
07377 362407 rachel.lickiss@bishopofmaidstone.org

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If you wish to unsubscribe from our newsletter, please email naomi.teasdale@bishopofmaidstone.org

Prayer Requests

Please give thanks to God for:

- the smooth progress of arrangements for the appointment of Bishop Rod's successor
- encouraging times at the Regional Meetings in May and June
- the ongoing ministry of Mark Burkill and Dick Farr, Bishop's Pastoral Advisers
- the work of Rachel Lickiss, Rod's PA, as she prepares to retire in September

Please pray for:

- the process of short-listing and interviewing for Bishop Rod's successor
- Rod's ongoing involvement in the LLF process, reaching its culmination early in 2023
- important conferences coming up soon: ReNew in September, GAFCON in April
- the process of transition as the next bishop is appointed
- Rod and Lesley, as they prepare together for Rod's retirement from 2nd October

List of Resolution Parishes (147, as of 30th June)

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