

Ministry in the Diocese of Peterborough

Warm greetings as you explore the possibility of ministry in Peterborough Diocese. Dioceses vary greatly in their culture and their approach to ministry and mission. I hope it will help if I spell out some of our commitments, expectations and aspirations. You can find much more detail on our website; this is intended to paint the picture in broad brush strokes.

Roughly speaking the diocese covers Northamptonshire and Rutland as well as the City of Peterborough (which used to be in Northants, is now in Cambridgeshire for ceremonial purposes, but is a unitary authority running its own affairs). The Archdeaconry of Northampton covers the boroughs of Northampton and Wellingborough, and the districts of Daventry and South Northants. The Archdeaconry of Oakham covers Peterborough, Rutland, the boroughs of Corby and Kettering, and the district of East Northants.

The diocese is medium sized in population with a little under a million people, but the rural areas of Northants and Rutland include many very small villages with fine, and usually modestly proportioned, medieval churches. The rural parishes are almost all linked with others in multi-parish benefices. There is one suffragan bishop, John Holbrook, Bishop of Brixworth since 2011, and two archdeacons: Gordon Steele of Oakham since 2012 and Richard Ormston of Northampton since 2014. I came to the diocese in early 2010 with a brief both from the diocese and from the Archbishop of Canterbury to reverse the serious decline in churchgoing and to instil a greater sense of diocesan identity and unity.

Clergy morale is very important to us. I visit all licensed clergy in their homes every three years on a purely pastoral basis. We talk about “shared episcopate” and I encourage rural deans and parish clergy to be leaders in mission, confidently getting on with ministry. I am radically revising the former *Bishop’s Regulations* into *Diocesan Guidelines*. We have scrapped plans to reduce clergy numbers further, and are actively increasing the number of ordinations and of parochial clergy.

We believe in church growth. All our senior staff saw growth in their earlier parish ministries, and it is our expectation for every healthy church. Rather than a detailed diocesan strategy we are working in terms of a vision for each parish or benefice to develop and own a growth action plan. Interdependency and a shared belonging and commitment to mission are important, but each local unit should have its own aspiration to being a growing, viable, missional, serving and worshipping community.

We have ended the previous informal episcopal area scheme, and both bishops now cover the whole diocese with distinct responsibilities rather than geographic areas. The Bishop of Peterborough takes responsibility for ordinands, curates and clergy in parish ministry. He also has responsibilities outside the diocese, most notably

chairing the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity, and sitting in the House of Lords from late 2013. The Bishop of Brixworth chairs the Diocesan Board of Education and is responsible for retired clergy, sector chaplaincies and lay ministry. The Archdeacon of Northampton chairs the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, and has a brief to lead the church growth agenda across the diocese. The Archdeacon of Oakham has spiritual oversight of financial matters including parish share issues across the diocese.

The Bishop and the Dean, Charles Taylor, work closely together, and we seek to present the Cathedral (even though geographically it is very much at one end of a long and narrow diocese) as the spiritual centre of diocesan life. Most of our licensed clergy come to the Renewal of Ordination Vows and the Blessing of the Oils on Maundy Thursday Morning, then move next door for a cooked lunch in the Bishop's Palace. The retired clergy come to the Cathedral for a summer Eucharist then lunch in the Palace. The licensed clergy return in the autumn for a day of worship, teaching and fellowship with another cooked lunch. Ordinands come to two social events at the Palace each year, and deacons and priests are all ordained in the Cathedral at Petertide.

As we look for and encourage clergy to join the diocese we are committed to providing them with good and well maintained housing, a decent stipend and appropriate training and support. In turn, we look for certain commitments:

- to share with the Bishop in the cure of souls and to work strategically for growth in numbers among the worshipping community
- to teach Christian discipleship including the principles of giving
- to be involved in deanery and diocesan activities and in the life of the local community
- to be involved in both church and other local schools as far as possible, actively seeking opportunities for mission and preferably offering a chaplaincy role and leading collective worship rather than chairing the governing body
- to take part in the diocesan ministry review process which involves an annual consultant assisted review and a three-yearly senior staff review
- to engage with the continuing ministerial development programme offered by the diocese and in personal study, nurturing your own spirituality
- to undergo safeguarding training as required by the bishop and to follow and promote the diocesan safeguarding policy.

We look forward to meeting and welcoming those who share our values and want to serve the Lord, the Church and the Gospel with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald".

Bishop of Peterborough