



THE BISHOP OF CHESTER

August 2017

Ad Clerum

I trust that you have had - or are having a good break this summer. I am writing about a few matters, and, as usual, there is no significance in the order.

Triennial Swanwick Conference 2019

This has been confirmed as from Monday 24th until Thursday 27 June 2019. Please put these dates firmly in your diary.

The planning group has been appointed, chaired by Jane Proudfoot, the Rector of Grappenhall. The other members are: Ian Bishop, Veronica Green, Emma Handley, Mark Hart, Jess Piper, Andy Stinson and Stan Tomalin. As for recent conferences, Peter Hall will be the Executive Secretary.

We shall take as our theme 'How shall we sing the Lord's song....?' We are beginning to approach possible speakers, and I'm pleased that Professor John Barclay, from Durham University, will give the Bible readings from St Paul's epistles. (Professor Barclay's recent *Paul and the Gift* looks likely to prove to be a landmark study, drawing together the 'old' and 'new' perspectives on St. Paul.)

Please contact a member of the Planning Group if you have any suggestions about aspects of the conference.

Birkenhead Mission

On Thursday 7th September, we will welcome the Archbishop of York to lead the weekend of Mission in the Deanery of Birkenhead. Please pray for him and the team, as they will be speaking in schools, visiting Cammell Laird and attending a number of activities that different parishes are putting on.

Details of the programme will follow and be available on the Diocesan website and I know the Deanery would hugely value your prayer support.

The Archbishop has now conducted three Diocesan-wide Missions in the Northern Province, as well as a number of these Deanery events. We need to continue to pray with discernment about effective evangelism and shifting the ground of our culture so that people may see and hear the word and works of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

We will evaluate the impact of this Deanery Mission, as we plan our future strategies in the Diocese.

Dean of Chester

As I am sure you will be aware, Gordon McPhate will retire as Dean on 30 September. The Cathedral will host a farewell service on the morning of Sunday 1 October, and a wider diocesan farewell will be held at Evensong, at 5.30pm, on Thursday 28th September. The latter will obviously be more convenient for most clergy.

The Chapter has decided to mark Gordon's retirement by introducing an undergraduate prize (at the University of Chester), named 'The Gordon McPhate prize for Science and Religion'. Contributions should be sent to Canon Jane Brooke at the Cathedral.

Jane has been appointed as Acting Dean, with effect from 1 October. Other changes are that Canon Dr Barry Wilson, Rector of Nantwich, is becoming a Residentiary Canon, and Vice-Dean designate. He will be installed during Evensong on Sunday 3 September. At the same service, Paul Dawson, Rector of Handbridge will be installed as an Honorary Canon.

The Archdeacon of Chester will be joining the Chapter as an additional member, but not as a Residentiary Canon.

Canon Wilson's appointment is for an initial 2 years, to help see the Cathedral through the process of the appointment of a new Dean. This process is underway. The Advisory Committee for the appointment will be chaired by Mrs Joelle Warren, former Churchwarden at Christ Church Alsager, who is Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, and who runs a specialist recruitment agency based near Knutsford. We anticipate being in a position to advertise the post early in 2018.

Ministerial Service beyond 70

There has been a gradual move in the Church of England to permit clergy to continue in licensed ministry beyond the age of 70, especially since the introduction of the Common Tenure arrangements. We have been somewhat in the forefront of this trend, and currently we have nearly 30 clergy, aged 70 or over, who hold licensed positions. Some are self-supporting, some part-time stipendiary, and a couple are in full-time stipendiary posts.

New regulations have recently been introduced, to provide an agreed structure for these possibilities. Where appropriate, an occupational health assessment will be arranged, and in all cases the formal agreement of the PCC(s) will now be needed. Although extensions for several years are possible, we have decided that we should continue with an annual review of any extensions, but there is no formal upper age limit.

Either I or my Chaplain, Canon Roger Clarke, will be in touch as appropriate as this process is overseen.

For the avoidance of doubt, I should make clear that while these new arrangements will permit the Archbishop to extend the ministry of a diocesan Bishop (up to 75 only!), I have no intention of seeking to serve as Bishop beyond 70 which, subject to St James 4:15, will be in March 2020.

Bishops Keith and Libby join me in wishing you every blessing for your ministry, as the *de facto* church year begins afresh.