

Ministry in the Diocese of Peterborough

Warm greetings as you explore the possibility of ministry in Peterborough Diocese. Dioceses vary 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 more on our website; this simply paints 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 towns of Northampton and Wellingborough, and the rural areas, market towns and villages of West Northants. The Archdeaconry of Oakham covers Peterborough, Rutland, the towns of Corby and Kettering, and the rural areas, market towns and villages of North 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 small villages with fine, and usually modestly proportioned, medieval churches. 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 2010 charged to reverse the serious decline in churchgoing and to instil a greater sense of diocesan identity and unity.

Clergy morale is important to us. I visit all licensed clergy in their homes every three years on a purely pastoral basis, though during covid times these visits have been by Zoom. During lockdown I have produced video sermons for each Sunday, and midweek Psalm meditations each week, to help the clergy offer online worship. We talk about “shared episcopate” and I encourage rural deans and parish clergy to be leaders in mission, confidently getting on with ministry. We are 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.

Both bishops cover the whole diocese with distinct responsibilities rather than geographical areas. The Bishop of Peterborough takes responsibility for clergy in parish ministry, and for lay ministry. He also sits in the House of Lords. The Bishop of Brixworth is responsible for ordinands, curates, retired clergy, sector chaplaincies, and environmental matters.

The Archdeacon of Northampton chairs the Diocesan Board of Education. The Archdeacon of Oakham has spiritual oversight of financial matters including parish share issues across the diocese. These responsibilities change from time to time.

The Bishop and the Dean, Chris Dalliston, work closely together, and we present the Cathedral (even though geographically it is at one end of a long and narrow diocese) as the spiritual centre of diocesan life. Most of our clergy come to the Renewal of Ordination Vows and the Blessing of Oils on Maundy Thursday, followed by lunch in the Bishop's Palace. Retired clergy come for a summer Eucharist and lunch. Parish clergy return in the autumn for a day of worship, teaching and fellowship. Ordinands join the senior staff for two social events at the Palace each year. During lockdown our meeting together has been reduced, temporarily.

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 take seriously the pastoral and missional opportunities of occasional offices, aiming for good working relationships with funeral directors and others
- to enable the full participation of children and young people in the whole life of the church, and to develop mission among the younger generations
- 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, leading collective worship and perhaps serving as a foundation governor rather than chairing the governing body
- to be involved in deanery and diocesan activities and in the life of their local community
- to promote and enable lay ministry in both church and community
- to take part in our ministry review process, consisting of a three-year rolling programme: a pastoral visit by me to your home, a formal review by a member of my senior team, and a review of training needs
- to engage with the continuing ministerial development programme offered by the diocese and in personal study, nurturing your own spirituality
- to hold a current DBS certificate, 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