

Ad Clerum

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Today we are inviting people to join us in keeping a holy **Lent** preparing the way for Passiontide and Easter. This is a time of self-examination and repentance. In Lent Christians often commit to prayer, fasting and self-denial, to generosity in giving to those in need and to taking greater care to read and meditate on God's holy word. It is a joyful duty, and for all of us it is an opportunity for renewal as we turn again to Christ. I hope it goes well for you and for the people in your care.

The creativity with which Lent is used is more and more striking. Last year there was a lot of interest in a plastic-free Lent. I found it impossible but given the extent of pollution and waste it is a great challenge and causes us to think hard about lifestyle and choice. Food is a big issue in our world. In the UK we waste about 40% of what is grown. The average UK household wastes £470 worth of food a year, a collective £13 billion. The frequently used mantra - reduce, re-use and recycle - works well in Lent. Find ways to be generous. A weekly simple shared meal works well in many places and often raises money for church and charity. Where you can, involve families and young people and people on the fringe of church. One thing we know is that people are made for goodness. Lent reminds us of this simple truth and most people want to respond positively.

As a diocese we again have an opportunity of **Praying Together** by using the little booklets distributed to every church. There is a daily reading from Luke's Gospel followed by a short meditation and prayer. I have written the one for today and there follows a rich variety of contributions from people across the diocese coming home to our cathedral with the Dean on Easter Day. We have distributed 30,000 copies. Please make sure they are given out through our churches and schools. Encourage people to join together in this simple shared activity encouraging us to travel together towards Holy Week and Easter.

In previous years these booklets were well received in church and school as well as by people beyond church as a gift to help them to pray. You might also be pleased to know that they are a gift from Bishops Karen, Andrew and myself, at no cost to the Diocese. If you like it, feel free to encourage people to make a thank offering in response.

In the current political turbulence it is difficult to be sure of much but on **the 29 March**, there is likely to be a change in our relationship with the remaining countries in the European Union. Some will be jubilant; others will despair. There is not much at the moment by way of specific liturgical resource. The deep resource of the gospel and of liturgy provides a framework with which to work.

[The Archbishop of York's prayers for Parliament and for the EU](#) have had some publicity and might be useful this month.

I have never felt the urgency of the gospel more than at present. The need for Christians to witness to what it means to love God and love our neighbours as ourselves is profound in a world in which people and nations are turning inwards. Our commitment to live as citizens of God's kingdom through seeking truth, justice, peace and love matters deeply. In the UK the political pressures of Brexit have exposed deep divisions. My own prayer at the moment is that we will be a happy country once again.

I would be grateful to use this letter to draw a few other matters to your attention.

Confidential care

Confidential care and help is available to clergy and their families who are experiencing difficulties which adversely affect their wellbeing. Robert Kelso has taken over from the Revd John Whittle as the contact for advice where counselling might be sought. His contact details are t 01258 881550 | e robert@kelso.org.uk.

Reflective practice groups

Another part of our wellbeing programme is the provision of Reflective Practice Groups where we may reflect together with colleagues on the ministry that we share. Clergy sometimes feel lonely or isolated, particularly in rural ministry, so these groups can also serve as a useful reminder that we are part of a greater whole and wider Church. The groups normally have up to six members meeting together with an external professional facilitator once a month (except in Advent and August) for two years. There are further details on page 57 of [the CMD brochure](#). Please do have a look at what is on offer through these groups and for more information contact Sue Chandler (t 01722 411944 | e sue.chandler@salisbury.anglican.org).

Safeguarding

As part of our endeavour to make our churches safe places for everyone, there is a provision in the [parish safeguarding handbook](#) (page 9)(to which all parishes are required to subscribe) that the incumbent and the PCC will

- display a formal statement of adoption of the House of Bishops' *Promoting a Safer Church; Safeguarding Policy Statement* signed on behalf of the PCC;
- ensure information is displayed about how to contact the DSA(s), Parish Safeguarding Officer and how to get help outside the church with child and adult safeguarding issues; and
- ensure that safeguarding arrangements are clearly visible on the front page of the parish website (or on the relevant page of the *A Church Near You* website if your parish does not have a website of its own).

Do please ensure that your benefices are complying with the requirements of the handbook.

And finally....

Chrism Eucharist: Maundy Thursday 18 April at 11.00am in the Cathedral

We begin our final preparations for the joy of Easter Day by a faithful keeping of the Triduum. I do hope you will begin those great three days by joining Bishops Karen, Andrew and myself and colleagues from across the diocese at the Chrism Eucharist in the cathedral. It is the one occasion in the year when I ask you all to come to the cathedral to worship together, to renew our ordination vows and to receive anointing or laying on of hands if you so wish. At the service I shall bless oils for baptism, chrism and the sick which will be available for distribution at the end of the service for use in your benefice or chaplaincy.

I know that, for many of you, it is a long way to come and I am enormously grateful for the effort that you make to be there at a busy time of year. That effort is a sign of the commitment we have to each other and to the body of Christ to which we all belong. We make a gift of our presence and attention to each other. If you don't come, not only will we miss you but we shall not be complete. If you are unavoidably unable to be with us, please send me a note or email (bishop.admin@salisbury.anglican.org) to let me know why. As you will recall from previous years, I

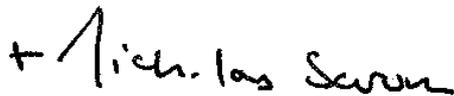
always suggest that you avoid arranging services requiring your attendance that clash with your being able to be with us in the cathedral.

Please robe in the Chapter House and join in the procession. It is a diocesan and cathedral occasion so the dress is alb and white stole. If you have a conscientious objection to an alb or just don't possess one, then please wear cassock, surplice and white stole instead. If you have a conscientious objection to a stole, then please wear a black scarf with cassock and surplice.

At the service we shall also be inviting those who serve in the Church Army or who are Licensed Lay Ministers, Lay Pastoral Assistants or Lay Worship Leaders also to renew their commitment to ministry. Please encourage those with whom you share ministry to come although for reasons of practicality we are not inviting them to robe and join the procession.

Will you also please extend this invitation to any in your benefice or chaplaincy who might like to come, particularly those who are exploring a vocation to ministry? They will be very welcome. I have referred earlier in this letter to the sense of isolation that we can sometimes feel. The Chrism Eucharist is one of those occasions when we are able to sense the power of the ministry we share with each other and with the Lord in whose name we minister. The cathedral very kindly provides a cup of tea or coffee at the west end of the nave of the cathedral after the service for those who would like to stay and eat a picnic lunch together.

Have a good and holy Lent and with thanks for your part in the ministry which is both yours and mine.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicholas Holtam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam
The Bishop of Salisbury