



To

- licensed clergy
- Clergy PtO
- LLMs

2 July 2021

Dear brothers and sisters

I am sorry that the restrictions caused by the pandemic mean it is not possible for us to gather so that I can say thank you and goodbye in person. Thank you to those who have written to Helen and myself. We have enjoyed being here, are grateful for any good we have been able to do and sorry for what we have got wrong or could have done but failed to do. Now it is time to give it all to God with thanksgiving, particularly for the ways in which we have shared with you in ministry and mission in service of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the last few weeks, it has been possible for me to make a number of visits to parishes, two schools, a hospital, prison, Hilfield Friary and the Pilsdon community. These included 38 confirmations and, last weekend at the Cathedral, the ordination of 14 priests and 9 deacons. Thanks be to God for all of that and thanks be to God for each of you. I very quickly came to see the Diocese of Salisbury as one of God's small miracles and that people here pray as if it depends on God and work as if it depends on us.

The last 17 months have been particularly testing for everyone. Churches, chaplaincies, schools, academies, colleges, communities and projects across the Diocese have done well in adapting patterns of prayer and worship, care and service, education and teaching. As we come into the middle of summer and the traditional holiday break, my sense is that everyone is tired so I hope you are able to plan time off. That can be difficult for parish clergy to do if you stay at home so I also hope you will be able to get away for at least part of the break. One day out might be to play or watch some cricket. The Diocese has usually entered a cricket team in the *Church Times* competition but these last two seasons have, of course, been disrupted by the pandemic. Pip Martin has nevertheless volunteered to arrange a friendly clergy cricket match, either among ourselves or involving our old friends from Exeter and other neighbouring dioceses, at the end of the summer. As a venue he suggests, possibly, Sherborne (a very pleasant and the least inconvenient venue for games on former occasions) on Monday the 6 September with Monday the 13 September as a reserve date. If you would like to play, please do be in touch with Pip (frphilipmartin@gmail.com | 07597 534495). We have always regarded clergy cricket as 'work' for clergy and not using up a day off.

Before I finish as your bishop, there are a few notices that need to be given. The Government are indicating restrictions will be lifted on the 19 July, but it seems certain that we will be living with this pandemic for quite some time. You will need to continue to exercise care in all you do. The [diocesan website](#) will continue to link you to the Church of England's guidelines so that you are able to make informed local decisions suitable for your circumstances.

In my time as bishop, I have been grateful for the small group that has had a care for the ministry of deliverance throughout the Diocese. Most recently this has been overseen by the Ven Stephen Robbins. Stephen is going to be away from the Diocese for the next year so the Ven Penny Sayer, Archdeacon of Sherborne, will be chairing the group and advising the acting Bishop. Penny will be the point of contact with effect from the 1 September 2021.

The June meeting of Diocesan Synod was the last before elections for a new Synod. Similarly, next week's meeting of General Synod is the last before there are elections for new diocesan representatives. If you don't consider standing yourself, please don't complain if your representatives don't do what you would have wanted them to do! Make sure you elect the people you really want to represent you on both Diocesan Synod and General Synod. Gillian Clarke has been a wonderfully cheerful and diligent Chair of the House of Laity and has been joined more recently by Lydia Cook as Chair of the House of Clergy who was just getting into her stride when she was appointed to a living in our neighbouring Diocese of Exeter with effect from October. I am grateful to them both for their chairing of Synod and for their significant contributions to our common life.

The Bishop's Council is elected by the members of Diocesan Synod from among their number as, in a way, a standing committee that keeps the work of Synod going between meetings. The Council meets on some nine occasions each year (including a residential) and deals with a lot of the detail checking and refinement that is required to enable the Synod's business to proceed smoothly. I am greatly indebted to its members for giving up so much time to attend what are usually evening

meetings to which many travel on dark wet winter evenings from the far corners of the Diocese to which they then return late at night. Thank you to all of them.

I had hoped we would have reached more of a 'staging post' before I leave but it is not so. This side of the kingdom of heaven, we are always on the way rather than having arrived. There is very good work in progress renewing hope across the Diocese. As a Diocese we have led on the care of creation but, my goodness, there is a lot still to do in response to climate change and damage to the environment. Renewing Rural Hope has given welcome profile to the rural Church and there is more to do. The Diocesan Board of Education has been working to strengthen the relationship of schools, churches and local communities and, with the Government's academisation programme, the Diocese is securing a strong distinctively Christian contribution to the education of 43,000 children and young people. If the Lambeth Conference goes ahead next year, there will be an opportunity to renew the partnership with the Episcopal Church in the Sudan and South Sudan. It will be good to finalise the legalities of the Channel Island deaneries being attached to the Diocese. They will be a blessing to the Diocese and the Diocese will be a blessing to them.

There are some big challenges to be addressed in the next few years. It will be good to have a new diocesan bishop able to take a longer view than is possible for me. As a Diocese, we have agreed a Financial Framework to restore a balanced budget in four years. We have a Mission and Pastoral Plan to ensure decisions about ministry and mission are creative and supportive of the local Church. How this works out will depend a great deal on the response to the Generous Giving campaign in September. Please make the most of this opportunity to address the issues of stewardship because an increase in financial giving from those who can give more will make a very big difference to the life and work of the Church locally.

As in every ministry, the work of the Bishop is with a team. Nigel Salisbury chairs the Board of Finance and it has always felt very well led. Bishops Karen and Andrew and Archdeacons Alan, Sue, Antony and Penny have been great colleagues. I am also grateful for David Pain, our Diocesan Secretary, and Joy Tubbs, our Director of Education. The Dean of Salisbury, Nick Papadopoulos, has led the Cathedral through very challenging times since his arrival. This Bishop's Staff has been marvellously well served by my chaplain, Tony Monds. I also want to acknowledge and thank the admin team at The South Canonry, Mel Davies and Sally Ruffer who, with Tony Monds, are so crucial at the interface between Bishop and Diocese. All of these, and their predecessors, have worked with me to renew hope across the Diocese through a shared commitment to pray, serve, grow.

I was ordained bishop on St Mary Magdalene's day and will finish in the Diocese all but ten years later on St Thomas the Apostle's day. These two are saints not because they were perfect but because they loved and responded to the risen Jesus Christ. They are good saints to frame the ministry I have exercised here as your Bishop. Although the number able to attend Evensong in the Cathedral on Saturday at 5.30pm is very limited, I hope those who want to will join us online:

<https://youtu.be/mD8Mblw369A>

On Saturday at Evensong on the last day of the week, I will give the oversight and

care of the Diocese to Bishop Karen. Pray for her and support her in the ministry she will exercise until the next Bishop has been appointed. Pray also for the members of the Crown Nominations Committee as they seek the next Bishop of Salisbury.

In August Helen and I will be moving to Brighton, to a flat looking out to sea. Please continue to pray for us as we will for you. We will thank God when we remember you.

And finally, I love this short prayer of Dag Hammarskjöld:

For all that has been, thanks.
To all that will be, yes.

Amen to that and may God continue to bless you abundantly,

+Nicholas Sarum