

DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

The Bishop in Europe:
The Right Reverend Dr. Robert Innes



September 2018

AD CLERUM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Whilst January is the beginning of the calendar year and Advent the beginning of the liturgical year, for most of us it is September and the beginning of the new academic year that has the greatest psychological impact. I trust that each of us had some opportunity during a glorious summer for rest and refreshment. I am writing this letter on a cool and wet afternoon, on a day that feels like the first sign of autumn. 'La rentrée' in Belgium is now fading into the past, and our churches, like our schools, are now properly into the new term's programme of work. So this is a good time to update you on developments in various areas.

The Financial Plan

I wrote to you in June concerning the Financial Plan that was approved in principle by our Diocesan Synod at the end of May. Since then, several archdeaconry/deanery synods have had opportunity to engage with the implications of the plan. Bishop David attended the recent Nordic and Baltic Deanery Synod. I have just returned from the synods of Italy & Malta and the East. I am very grateful to all who have engaged thoughtfully with the issues and for different ideas and suggestions made. I am completely aware of the complexity of decision making processes in church life and of the importance of patient and coherent explanation at all levels.

The Diocesan Synod requested a number of pieces of work.

- *A plan for the deployment of archdeacons and area deans.* Our team of bishops and archdeacons has been working on this, and I will have a plan to present to the October Bishop's Council. One significant factor to take into account is that three of our excellent archdeacons (Vickie Sims, Colin Williams and Geoff Johnston) will be retiring from their archidiaconal responsibilities during 2019, so there will be major gaps to fill in the next 12 months.
- *A fresh look at the common fund share formula.* This is a potentially big project, and Mike Fegan set the ball rolling by gathering a group of representatives from different archdeaconries together in Brussels in August. Each representative has been asked to look at different share formulae used in English dioceses so that the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches can be evaluated.
- *Different options for phasing in common fund increases.* Mike is currently working on different models, which he will present to the Bishop's Council next month.

An independent peer review conducted by the Church Commissioners earlier this month commends the actions we have taken to secure the diocese's financial sustainability and offers 'warm congratulations'. The reviewers particularly commend our plan to appoint more stipendiary archdeacons. I hope all our chaplaincies can share in this praise. I am convinced we are on the right path, but acutely aware that our plans can only materialise through the generosity of chaplaincy members.

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New Staff Appointments

After a long period of interim appointments, it is very good to be making several key permanent appointments which will give us a new measure of stability.

- **Chief Operating Officer (Diocesan Secretary): Andrew Caspari** will be joining us from January 2019. Andrew has had a distinguished career in leadership and management in BBC Radio. He has also been churchwarden of St. Martin's in the Fields, seeing through their £34million renewal programme and is chair of the governors of St. Mary Magdalene Academy, an inner city Church of England Primary and Secondary School in England. Andrew will be taking over from Mike Fegan, who leaves us at the end of 2018. Andrew will be based in the London Office.
- **Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor: Andrea Watkins** has recently begun this role, and works with us Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. (On Mondays and Tuesdays she continues her senior clergy training role in England.) We are grateful to Tola Hummel for holding this management role on an interim basis. Andrea is responsible for managing our safeguarding team. She brings experience of safeguarding in the Middle East and North Africa as well as two London Boroughs. Andrea is based in the London Office.
- **Diocesan Communications Director (50%) & Bishop's European Institutions Attaché (50%): Damian Thwaites** is a former senior civil servant whose posts have included diplomatic relationships with Russia and trade relationships with Turkey. He speaks several European languages. Damian will be based in the Brussels Office.
- **Appointments Secretary: Barbara Omoro** takes over from Jeanne French who had been helping us on an interim basis after Catherine Jackson left us to join the civil service. Barbara works in the Brussels Office.

Representational Appointments

- **The Reverend Peter Jackson**, chaplain of Nice, has agreed to be our LGBTi liaison officer. The purpose of this post is to provide the bishop(s) with information about the concerns and needs of LGBTi people within the diocese and to be a point of listening and reference. The post holder is not expected to be an advocate for change in legislation or theological position. The post is essentially to enable the better fulfilment of the Church's responsibility to be a place of inclusion for all.
- **The Reverend Augustine Nwaekwe**, chaplain of Brugge and Oostende, and **The Reverend Smitha Pradam**, chaplain of Copenhagen, have agreed to be Bishop's Advisors in Black and Minority Ethnic concerns. Their role is to advise the Bishop on matters particularly relating to the ministry of BAME clergy in the diocese; to support BAME clergy in the diocese through prayer, challenge, counsel, advocacy and other appropriate ways. They are to encourage the fullest possible participation of BAME clergy in the life and mission of the diocese, and to be a link between the Bishop and BAME clergy of the diocese. **The Revd. Augustine Nwaekwe** will have additional duties in respect of encouraging BAME vocations to ordained ministry, in virtue of his role as a Vocations Adviser.

Peter, Smitha and Augustine will all be members of Diocesan Synod either as my nominees or as elected members.

Safeguarding

At recent synods, several people have asked me if we could find ways of making 'people in the pew' more aware of the safeguarding agenda. I continue to believe that safeguarding is of central mission importance. It is a simple fact that church communities and dioceses that don't

take safeguarding seriously are losing public trust and losing numbers. One of the best ways of communicating the importance of safeguarding to congregations is through preaching. I therefore encourage all our clergy and readers to think about how you can preach about safeguarding. There are some obvious biblical texts (Mark 9 and 10). The C of E's Faith and Order Commission's 'The Gospel Sexual Abuse and the Church' provides an excellent theological resource. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/theologicalresourcefaocweb.pdf>. And this is the season when our children and youth work is restarting.

My own personal journey has been from seeing safeguarding as a somewhat secular imposition on the trusting relationships at the heart of Christian community, to realising that it sheds powerful light on neglected Christian truths about the nature of humanity, the deep rootedness of sin, and the costliness of grace and forgiveness. So I encourage you brothers and sisters to preach it!

Brexit

Most of us are concerned about the implications of Brexit. I try to give updates on Brexit on my blog, and some of you may have read my recent article in the Church Times. My own information comes from sources in Brussels, where the negotiations are actually taking place. Much has already been agreed, including all the clauses that relate to citizens rights and that directly affect members of our chaplaincies. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/draft_agreement_coloured.pdf. Nonetheless, 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' and there is going to be a great deal of political flak over the next six months which will be unsettling for all of us.

Some of you have asked for us to do contingency planning in the event of a 'no deal'. I have received helpful suggestions in regard to provision of health insurance for PtO and Locum clergy in the event that 'S1 forms' disappear. If there are other specific areas that you think the diocese should research please do let me or Mike Fegan know.

Finally, I wish you well for all that lies ahead in the coming term and coming academic year. We have already had some excellent local synods, an affirming peer review and a very encouraging zoom conference for 20 people involved in children's and youth work – a first for us. I am thrilled with the high quality appointments we have made and the general level of wider interest in and support for the work of our Diocese. From the perspective of the Bishop's office, it has been a great start.

May God bless you richly in your work and your ministry. Thank you for all you do.

Bishop David joins me in sending warm greetings to you.

Yours sincerely,

+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe

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