

Christmas Newsletter

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Preaching that Presents Christ

'Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for' (Mark 1:38). What a great text for linking Christ's appearance with being a preacher! It's a real privilege to be able to preach, not least because it's a primary way in which Christ is revealed to people. Yet it can be tough to keep going faithfully as preachers, particularly when society generally is not immediately sympathetic to what we have to say – and when church attendance is a concern. So this newsletter comes with every encouragement to keep applying effort to our preaching in the New Year. And it is an effort if we are to achieve simplicity and clarity. At a recent preaching workshop, after I had ploughed through my complicated sermon outline, I was gently reminded that we should aim to be preachers, not lecturers. As one person put it, sermons should have heads and tails – clear headings and a good sprinkling of stories (tales!)

Significance of Bishop of London's Appointment

The appointment of the Rt Revd Sarah Mullally as the next Bishop of London was announced on 18th December. While there is no doubt about Bishop Sarah's considerable gifts, in one of my public comments I said that it brings into sharper focus the needs of evangelical parishes which have passed resolutions under the House of Bishop's Declaration.

Bishop Sarah has publicly committed herself to the process of 'mutual flourishing' and went out of her way in her press conference to highlight my own role and that of the Bishop of Fulham. As I understand it, the intention is that the London Plan should be revised, not least to be much clearer about the specific ministries for which parishes can look to me. Bishop Sarah said that her hope was that London should model what mutual flourishing should look like.

The way in which my ministry is enabled to develop in London will be very significant more generally. At the moment there are two other dioceses where the Diocesan Bishop is female

(Gloucester and Newcastle) and I am not actively involved in either. If a really positive set of relationships were to be forged in London, this would be of enormous use in encouraging future female diocesans elsewhere to contemplate a more extensive role for me than might have been considered otherwise.

Bringing Forward Your Plans for Church Planting

I have recently had very preliminary discussions with staff of the Church Commissioners and with the Bishop of Islington (Ric Thorpe – the bishop for church planting) in order to explore the possibility of obtaining Strategic Development Funding for conservative evangelical church plants. My aim is to develop a two-stage proposal for the funding of plants in areas of deprivation and in new housing estates. In the case of each plant, the intention would be to demonstrate how it contributed to the achievement of diocesan aims and objectives.

What I need to do first of all is to submit a preliminary description of the project, describing how it would seek to achieve its aims; how it would fit with diocesan plans and how it would be run and administered. The purpose of this preliminary work would be to find out from the Church Commissioners whether or not they would be prepared to entertain a bid. If the answer were to be positive, then the first stage would be to put in a bid for funding a programme manager, possibly for a three-year period. Once in place, that manager would then develop the full bid, and subsequently oversee the project's delivery.

The purpose of drawing your attention to this now is to ask you to let me know if this type of church planting has been in your mind – and if it has, to ask you to describe (briefly) the situation and your hopes. This will enable me to include a number of examples of potential plants in my preliminary proposal. Needless to say, I cannot guarantee that anything will come of this. However, it would be wrong to overlook this potential source of funding for gospel ministry – so if you can help, please do.

Engagements during 2017 and Bookings for 2018

During 2017 I have taken 27 confirmation services in 15 different dioceses, confirming 212 candidates. In many cases these services included adult baptisms. I have also licensed ministers taking up new posts on 3 occasions and taken 1 service of ordination to the presbyterate. Other parish engagements have been for preaching and teaching at Sunday services and mid-week meetings, speaking at PCC meetings, sitting on appointment panels, and meeting with clergy and bishops to discuss particular issues.

In 2018 I have already arranged to take 15 confirmations. I also have quite a number of bookings for preaching engagements for 2018. As the number of requests increases it would clearly be helpful to try to cover more than one request on a Sunday. I can offer more flexibility for bookings on weekdays. Since I currently have most Sundays booked up somewhere all through 2018, it would be helpful if you could contact Rachel Lickiss in my office to find out when I will be in your area so that we can make arrangements alongside existing engagements.

List of Current Resolution Churches

Diocese	Parish
Birmingham	St Stephen / St Wulstan, Selly Park St Agnes, Moseley
Blackburn	St Bartholomews, Ewood The Church of the Saviour Blackburn Christ Church Blackburn Wellfield Church, BMO St Andrews Ashton on Ribble St Andrews Leyland All Hallows Bispham Padiham All Saints Preston
Canterbury	St James Westgate Christ Church Ramsgate All Saints Loose
Carlisle	St James, Burton in Kendal Houghton and Kingmoor St John's, London Road, Carlisle St John's, Hensingham St Bridget's Moresby
Chelmsford	St George Dagenham Chadwell St Mary St Peter's Harold Wood Immanuel, Brentwood Henham, Elsenham and Ugley Becontree St Elisabeth Christ Church, Leyton St Peter and St Paul Dagenham Fordham St Paul's Harold Hill & St Thomas Noak St Michael's Braintree St John's Great Clacton St John's Walthamstow
Chester	St John's Lindow St John's Church, Over St Mary's, Cheadle St John's, Knutsford Toft St Mark's New Ferry Holy Trinity Poulton Lancelyn Christ Church, Wharton
Chichester	Holy Trinity, Eastbourne All Souls Eastbourne Little Common, Bexhill Emmanuel Hastings Bishop Hannington Hove All Saints Crowborough
Derby	St Peter's Stapenhill Little Eaton St Alkmund's, Duffield St Mary's Chaddesden St Giles, Normanton Trinity Church Buxton
Europe	Leipzig
Ely	St Andrew the Great, Cambridge Christ Church Cambridge All Saints Little Shelford St John's Orchard Park, BMO St Matthew's, Cambridge
Exeter	St Matthew's, Elburton St Leonards Exeter Christ Church, Paignton
Guildford	St Andrew's Frimley Green & Mytchett
Leicester	Enderby
Lichfield	Oswestry, Holy Trinity Audley Castle Church Stafford St Thomas Kidsgrove St Luke's, Wolverhampton
Liverpool	St Philemon's Toxteth, DCC
London	St Thomas', Oakwood St Helen's Bishopsgate St Anne's Limehouse St Botolph without Aldersgate St Luke's Hampstead St Paul's Hadley Wood Christ Church Cockfosters St John with St Andrew Chelsea St Peter's Barge, Limehouse St Peter's Fulham
Manchester	Christ Church Chadderton St Mary's Balderstone
Norwich	Christ Church Lowestoft
Oxford	St Ebbe's, Oxford Arborfield Barkham Christ Church Wokingham Holy Trinity Nuffield St Paul's Banbury St Mary's Maidenhead
Peterborough	St Peter and St Paul, Moulton
Portsmouth	St James Ryde (proprietary chapel)
Rochester	St Nicholas, Sevenoaks St Johns, Tunbridge Wells Christ Church, Bromley St Peters Bexley Heath St Peters, Tunbridge Wells
Salisbury	St Johns Wimborne
Sheffield	Christ Church, Fulwood St Andrew's, Kendray St Thomas Kilnhurst Christ Church Endcliffe BMO Gleadless Valley
Southwark	St Nicholas Tooting Emmanuel, Wimbledon Dundonald St Luke's, Wimbledon Holy Redeemer, Streatham Vale St Stephen's, South Lambeth Holy Trinity Wallington
Southwell	St Mary's, Wollaton Park
St Albans	Holy Trinity, Frogmore
Winchester	St Mary's Basingstoke Christ Church Westbourne Sherbourne St John, Basingstoke

114 Resolutions passed by Conservative Evangelical Churches. 53 parishes have arrangements in place for Rod to have episcopal oversight – with others having agreements in place that Rod can minister at any time

Programme of Regional Meetings 2018-2019

I am planning a series of Regional Meetings to cover the whole country over a two year period. These will run from 12 noon to 3 pm for clergy and others in positions of leadership at churches which have passed Resolutions. They will include free buffet lunches. Rachel will send information and invitations out to relevant incumbents in advance of each meeting. The programme of locations for these events is as follows:

Leyland 28th February 2018: Manchester, Blackburn, Liverpool and Carlisle Dioceses

Sheffield 2nd July 2018: Sheffield, Leeds, York, Nottingham, Newcastle, Durham, Lincoln and Derby Dioceses

Reading Nov 2018 : Oxford, Winchester, Salisbury, Portsmouth, Guildford, Bath & Wells, Bristol, Gloucester, Exeter and Truro Dioceses

Cambridge Nov 2018 : Ely, Peterborough, Norwich, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, St Albans Dioceses

Tunbridge Wells Jan 2019: Rochester, Chichester and Canterbury Dioceses

Birmingham Feb 2019: Birmingham, Lichfield, Hereford, Worcester, Coventry, Leicester and Chester Dioceses

London March 2019 – London, Chelmsford and Southwark Dioceses

Training Events for Curates

The Regional Meetings also provide an opportunity for supporting curates in their training. While it would take some time to persuade dioceses to allow me to offer specific IME training for curates, there is nothing to stop me from offering supplementary training – and, indeed, this is just what happens with PEVs and traditional catholic clergy. Accordingly, I will be inviting those who are in their second, third or fourth years of curacy to stay on for the afternoon after the Regional Meetings have concluded (ie from 3.30pm to 5.30pm). My aim will be to cover two topics:

- The practical implications of seeing presbyters as teachers
- Issues to consider in applying for incumbencies

Finally

I hope it goes without saying that I wish you a very good Christmas, a decent break and recharged batteries for the New Year!

With love,

Rod Thomas
Bishop of Maidstone