

Thank-you notes and prayer requests in troubled times

Many of our readers have quietly got on with supporting parishes and their clergy during the present Pandemic and its associate lockdowns. Channels of communications have both stuttered and changed, who had previously heard of Zoom? It has been difficult sometimes to keep up to date with what is going on both in the Diocese and the wider church.

We know, that the financial impact of the Covid Pandemic has brought with it the need to discuss a morass of, often conflicting, issues including reductions in clergy numbers, pastoral reorganisation and what the future priorities of the Diocese might be. There are no easy answers here.

Bishop Debbie, wrote on May 19th: “Bishop Tim has today informed me that he will be stepping back from his role as Bishop of Winchester for the next 6 weeks, so that he can focus on discussions about future leadership and governance reform in the Diocese.” She went on to say “Lambeth Palace has requested that, over this period I temporarily take responsibility for the Diocese.” She ends by offering “my prayers for you all”

If you have PTO you will have received a letter from Bishops David and Debbie thanking you for your quiet, continuing response at this time of change when parishes have had to respond to disruption and uncertainty. They say “As we reduce our stipendiary clergy numbers over the coming months, we know that the support many of you are able to offer in your local communities will be even more important. Please know how much we value the support you offer and we thank God for all you do and beyond.” They also ask us to pray for them.

Bishops’ Call for Prayer

For our Bishops . . .
As Bishops Tim, David and Debbie navigate their way through the morass of issues they face.

For our clergy . . .
As they lead their parishes through such trying times

For those implementing change .
That they will do so with wisdom and humility and in a spirit of hope for the future.

For all people of God . . .
That they may have the inner strength of the Holy Spirit to continue to serve their communities and live out their faith.

Returning to a New Normal . . . *the same but different?*

What does it mean if you are asked to?

- Join** a Benefice Ministry Team . . . page 2 & 3
- Join** a relaunched Clerical Registry . . . page 4
- Check** your entry on the National register of Clergy . . . Page 3
- Take** a wedding under the new regs . . . Page 4

As we take the first steps out of lockdown we do so both with anxiety and excitement. We wonder what the church will look like in the months and years to come? We talk about getting back to normal but it is clear that the normal we go back to will be different from the normal we left. This edition of Oldhabits points to some of those differences so that if you are asked to help in a new way you at least have some idea of what saying “Yes” might let you in for.

So what actually is a Benefice Ministry Team?

When I was ordained in 1986, my current four Parishes each had their own Incumbent or Minister. Since about 2000, these four Parishes have made a journey towards becoming one Benefice with one Incumbent, and are now in the final stages of becoming one Parish with one PCC. Parish Ministry, and especially Rural Parish Ministry, has changed over the past 50 years (we may argue about whether that is a good thing or not, but that's by the bye!), and our structures for care and vision need to change, too.

One of the things I've learnt more and more is that there needs to be an overall vision for the mission and the ministry of a Benefice; each of the constituent parts might have its own history and tradition and 'flavour', and that has to be very much encouraged and respected, developed, even, but each of the parts has to have a vision for the whole to enable mutual flourishing.

And that's where Benefice Ministry Teams (BMT) come in. Some important points:

- There is not one model for a BMT – each place will have to devise its own, although it can draw on the wisdom of others who are travelling along the same path.
- The idea is being promoted by the Diocese, but not the form in which it takes in each Benefice.
- Clergy are being offered training to reflect on what a BMT would look like and hope to achieve in each place.
- A BMT will aim to have a mixture of ordained and lay members, from across the Benefice, including a range of views and abilities.
- Not everyone in each category (ordained, LLM, BCM, etc.) will necessarily be on the BMT – in some places, that would make it too large to be workable. There will be representatives of the different groups.
- The BMT does not replace the PCC(s), nor even Staff Meetings or other groups.
- The BMT aims to coordinate the vision for ministry across a Benefice, and feed and stimulate the ministry of the various parts.

In the Avon Valley Churches where I serve, one of the pilot 'Benefice of the Future' projects, we haven't yet gone down the formal route of a Benefice Ministry Team, but we do have a de facto grouping which fulfils that function.

This includes the Incumbent (and Curate, when we have one), LLM/LLW, the Youth Worker and Communications Role, and the retired clergy. In the AVC, we are very fortunate in that our retired clergy are very active in both worship and ministry. They are a full part of the team; one oversees Pastoral Care across the Benefice; another looks after our BCM Worship Leaders; and another is very involved in one of the Parishes. All are a vital part of our ministry here.

The new norm, especially in rural areas, is becoming clergy and lay people, licensed and commissioned, working together across larger Benefices to support and enhance the ministry as a whole. I think we are discovering, perhaps rediscovering, a way of encouraging the ministry of all believers, locally rooted, collaborative, and enabling, which will equip the Church for the next stage in its journey of faith and witness.



*Canon Gary Philbrick,
Rector of the Avon Valley Churches
and Area Dean of Christchurch*

Rev John Towler writes



Currently, I work as a retired Associate Priest in the Avon Valley Churches, a largely rural benefice which is currently working towards a Benefice Ministry Team. The journey has been demanding and challenging for the parishes

involved not least for a fear of losing their 'local sovereignty'. My hope is that BMT's don't become sacred cows. We need flexibility; a spirit of experiment; a willingness to learn from each other; to develop an evolutionary spirit in which the BMT will evolve according to need; a valuing of the distinctiveness of lay and priestly ministry.

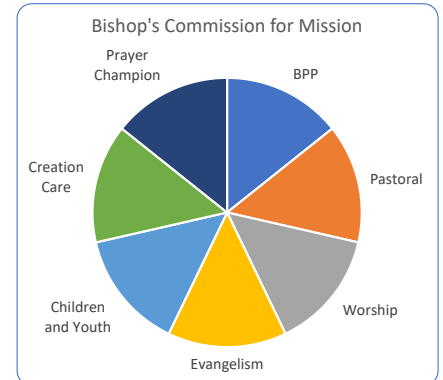
The simplification process has been extremely well organised and facilitated by the Rector, Gary Philbrick. It makes plain common sense to pool our gifts, talents and resources in this way.

Hopefully it will free up clergy and lay folk to travel light without so many bureaucratic incumbrances i.e. administering four PCCs. I hope it will give us a greater sense of being one, Christ's Body.

Bishop's Commission for Ministry (BCM) ... the new kid on the block

Over the past few years, one of the things the **Winchester School of Mission** (WSM) has been prodigiously producing is three-letter acronyms. Gary Philbrick has already introduced the **Benefice Ministry Team** (BMT) to this issue of Oldhabits, and we trust that some **Licensed Lay Ministers** (LLM's) will play key roles in BMTs. The WSM is currently recruiting for the next cohort of **Bishop's Permission to Preach** (BPP). This is a one-year programme of Durham University Common Awards modules in Biblical Studies and Preaching that leads to the Bishop giving Permission to Preach according to canon B.18.

The new kid on the acronym block is BCM: **Bishop's Commission for Mission**. Every year, in the service when we license new LLMs, there have been up to 100 people commissioned by the bishop to join in with God's mission in their parishes. The BCMs provide an eight-week training focus in just one of the areas that a LLM may be engaging in: such as children or youth ministry, being a prayer champion for your parish, taking a lead on your parish's response to becoming an eco-church, serving in pastoral care, or leading worship. Each programme starts with the focus on what it means to join in God's mission, before six evening sessions are taught by experts in the field. The closing morning helps participants work out what ministry God is calling them to lead in their own community.



I think about all the various ways that an LLM can serve, and like the slices of a cake, the BCM provides one slice of that ministry. BCM's are authorised for their ministry by the bishop, but they are not licensed like LLMs or **Licensed Lay Workers** (LLWs). After five years their commission needs to be renewed alongside all their safeguarding checks and training. Like LLMs and LLWs they minister under the authority of their incumbent, and have a clear role description and accountability.

There have been over 400 people commissioned by BCM so far. For some it is the first step towards a deeper calling, either as an LLM or sometimes to ordination. Is there someone in your church who you discern has a gift in one particular area of ministry? Why not suggest to your incumbent that they be invited to find out more about BCM? Details are on the Diocesan website: <https://www.winchester.anglican.org/bcm/>.

Revd Canon Dr Mark Collinson, Director of Ministry

National Register of Clergy

The National Register of Clergy has been established so that members of the public can search to verify whether someone has PTO or licence to hold office in much the same way as you can search for a qualified medical professional on the National Medical Directory.

Information about retired clergy with PTO included in the National Register is taken from the newly established Church of England's People System and gives name and title along with information about where your PTO is valid. It does not include any other personal information or contact details. If you are retired and do not presently hold a PTO your name is not included in the National Register.

The Church of England's People System contains all the basic personal information about you that is held by the Church. You need to check that the information held both in the National Register and the People System is accurate. You can check and alter information in the People System by logging in using details sent to you in recent emails. However, you will need to ask the Diocese to correct any errors in the National Register.

When you check the information held on the People System you will also be invited to add further information particularly in response to recommendations made in the Archbishop's Anti-Racism Taskforce Report - From Lament to Action and the Living in Love and Faith report.. The People System will not hold any pay documentation for retired clergy information of this kind is only held for stipendiary clergy.

National Register of Clergy

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/national-register-clergy>

Church of England's People System

Search online for "Church of England People System" and log in using the details that were sent to you in a personalised email. If you have not received this information please contact jayne.tarry@winchester.anglican.org

Biggest change to marriage registrations since 1837

Major changes to the way marriages in England and Wales are registered have been introduced to help modernise the system. From May 4th a single electronic marriage register will be created to make the system simpler and more efficient. It will also correct, along with other small changes, a historic anomaly to allow for the names of both parents of the couple to be included in the marriage entry and on marriage certificates for the first time, instead of only their fathers' names. Marriage can no longer be seen as a business transaction between the father of the bride and the father of the groom.

These regulations to amend the Marriage Act mark the biggest changes to the marriage registration system since 1837. Creating a single electronic marriage register will save time and money and is a more secure system, eliminating the need for data to be extracted from hard copies. The changes have been made in consultation with stakeholders, including the Church of England.

The Reverend Dr Malcolm Brown, Director of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England, said: "We are very pleased that the marriage registration system can now include the names of mothers as well as fathers on registers. Changing practices that go back many years is never straightforward, but we believe the new system changes as little as possible in terms of the couple's experience of their church wedding and that the clergy will find the new regulations become second nature very quickly."

Retired clergy with PTO can be called upon to conduct a marriage service. The General Registry Office (GRO) has provided training on the new procedure and you should have received an email, forwarded by Jayne Tarry (dated 7.3.21), about how to access this. However, the GRO have asked that this access information is not publicized so if you no longer have access to this email please contact Jayne on jayne.tarry@winchester.anglican.org

A more helpful introduction to the changes by Revd Canon Dr Sandra Miller (*Head of Welcome and Life Events; Evangelism and Discipleship Team for the Church of England*) can be found on a webinar from the Church Support Hub (with captions and BSL interpreter), along with an FAQs sheet, a step-by-step guide, and additional information. To view this go to churchsupporthub.org/marriage-registration-changes/ and click on "Watch our Webinar".

Partially Relaunching the Clerical Registry

The Clerical Registry has proved over the years to be a valuable means of putting parishes and their clergy in touch with retired clergy who have PTO and are willing to help out during emergencies, with holiday cover and during interregnums. Unfortunately the pandemic forced the Registry to close some 15 months ago, but as we start to move away from lockdown it looks as if it is now possible to partially relaunch it at the start of June.

A lot has happened while the Registry has been closed and it is thought wise to ask both former Registry members and those wishing to join for the first time to complete an application form so that the Registry is fully aware of how you wish to be involved in its work. This is doubly important in that it is now 11 months since Liz Wilkinson, who formerly ran the Registry, retired taking with her all the incidental information she gathered over the years about members wants and requirements. So far only 45 clergy have rejoined the Registry. More are needed if it is to meet the likely demand. Can you help?

Application forms and details of the Registry can be obtained from Angela Brown. The fee payable for regular weekday and Sunday services is £32.25 plus travel expenses. Angela will be adding responsibility for the Registry to her other administrative duties in the Parish Support Team. The Registry has a new dedicated email address clerical.registry@winchester.anglican.org



Introducing Angela Brown

I joined the Diocese in 2019 and really enjoy being part of the Parish Support Team, supporting colleagues and helping to direct any external enquires appropriately.

I am very much looking forward to helping support parishes with the opening of the Clerical Registry and also welcome the opportunity to get to know Registry members.

In my spare time I enjoy gardening and walking my three dogs.