

**To all clergy and lay ministers (including PTO)
cc Churchwardens**

Date: 27 July 2020
Our ref: MJS/rhw-bp9118

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This is a rather different pastoral letter from the many others we have sent recently. We hope it will be the last that we send for at least a few weeks, although that will depend on the situation with the lockdown in Leicester, Oadby and Wigston.

So firstly, we sincerely hope that you will all have the opportunity for rest, refreshment and spiritual renewal over the coming weeks. Once again, we would refer you to the wellbeing page on the diocesan website and encourage you to have at least a week's complete break from work and ministry (but ideally two weeks). And we would remind you of the culture of wellbeing that we are wanting to encourage and foster, which is that as far as possible each of us takes responsibility for our own wellbeing within the context of a diocese where we care for one another.

Secondly, we want to let you know of plans for the autumn and the start of a process which we are calling ***Shaped by God Together***. In the next few weeks, invitations will go out to participate in this process which is primarily about sharing learning of the ways in which God has been re-shaping the church. We've all been learning more about our Everyday Prayer, Everyday Witness and Everyday Action both before and during the pandemic and lockdown, and we have experienced significant changes in how we worship, serve and live together as church communities. We want to explore this in more depth over the coming months as we invite everyone to share stories, pictures, biblical reflections and social media posts, such that we can then use these to generate insights to help our future planning. More information about this will be on the diocesan website from the beginning of August. Please do encourage as many people as possible to take part – particularly those who might not think they have anything to share, or who wouldn't normally be a part of such processes.

We hope that the *Shaped by God Together* process will also build on the recent campaign '*Together in Hope*' in which we partnered with many other organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire to celebrate all that is good about our city and county. This partnership work will continue in the coming months as we explore how we work with others to re-shape society.

We will also be issuing a diocesan wide call to prayer this Autumn as we discern together the future shape of the diocese. The stories and insights gathered will feed into a process of discernment about what God is doing so that we can consider our strategic priorities as a

diocese and in particular how we will use the resources God has given us to grow the numbers of disciples, the depth of discipleship and our loving service of the world. Alongside this, we will consider together how we care for our buildings, share financial resources and reshape our models of ministry. We anticipate that much of this wider work of discernment will happen in the Spring of 2021, leading to final decisions at Diocesan Synod in May.

To support the *Shaped by God Together* process, we have received funding from the national church to employ a Programme Manager for three years, who will work alongside the Mission and Ministry Team and seek to ensure that we hear the voices of those who don't usually participate in the decision making processes of the Church of England – for example, children and young people, those of BAME heritage, and those from more deprived communities. This post is now being advertised and the post holder will join the Bishop's Leadership Team from around October.

We hope that you will feel that this is a reasonable timescale for sharing learning and discerning where God is leading us as a church. Many of you may not feel ready to engage with this yet – that's fine. Others may long for the church simply to return to the way it was before lockdown – that too is understandable, and we want to assure you that the core of who we are remains unchanged. Yet we cannot deny that this period, for all its pain and its challenges, has also raised some helpful questions about how we express our life together, how we care for one another and our planet, and how we share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

If you have questions about this process, please feel free to write to us, or to Stuart Burns, Director of Mission and Ministry, who will be coordinating this work.

We continue to give thanks for your faithful ministry, and we continue to hold you in our prayers.

In Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Bishop of Loughborough