Dear churchwardens

A warm welcome to those of you who are being admitted as Churchwardens for the first time. A warm welcome too, to those of you who are already churchwardens and are committing yourselves to another year in this vital leadership role.

I would like to ask each of you the same question: What do you hope to be remembered for in your role as churchwarden?

I have had the privilege of serving with many different churchwardens during the 35 years I have been ordained, and I remember each of them for different things.

- One I remember because he locked me in the church twice (by accident!)
- One because she was our ‘rolefinder’ – she had a great gift in prayer, and as she prayed for each church member she found herself identifying many new gifts and ministries
- One because he brought his experience as a quality manager in business to his role on the PCC, constantly helping us to think about how we might do things better, rather than just repeating what we did last year
- One because of his personal kindness when I was under pressure and facing criticism – coming alongside me to listen and then dragging me off to the football
- One who would be disturbingly quiet in meetings, quietly listening to God, and would then suddenly ask a really challenging question that would take us off in a whole new direction
- One who was a great administrator, who would take my bright ideas and turn them into a feasible plan that might actually work

Another churchwarden committed himself to coming to praying morning prayer with me at 7.30am each Wednesday, before he went off to work. I was so grateful for those times reading the Bible and praying together. He really encouraged me in sustaining my daily round of prayer for the parish, and he found that praying together made a difference to the way he undertook his demanding job in the local police.

In other words, there is no one way to be a churchwarden. You can shape the role according to your gifts. However, you need to make sure you do the job in a way that feeds you, so that you are receiving as well as giving. Otherwise you will dry out! I know from experience that just the same is true of being a priest. Perhaps you could make a time to pray together each week with your incumbent? That way you will be able to strengthen and encourage each other for challenges of the year ahead.

Thank you so much for all that you do in Christ’s name.

Archdeacon Mark
At the heart of delivering our Diocesan Vision 2026 is the call to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It is the focus of Jesus’ teaching. In Matthew’s Gospel, He commands His followers to make disciples. He doesn’t say worshippers, or reconcilers, or ordained or lay leaders, or prayers or witnesses or good neighbours. When a person becomes a disciple, they then learn to enter into those other privileges.

We do not always remember what Jesus said next: ‘baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you’. The visible sign of baptism makes clear that being a disciple is not a private or secret matter. Obedience to everything He has commanded suggests that being a disciple is intensely practical and down to earth, influencing how we live and behave.

One way we can grow in discipleship is through the learning of key verses of Scripture on the themes of making disciples, being witnesses and growing leaders. Memorising parts of God’s Word provides an internal treasure store of commands, promises and principles by which a disciple of Jesus Christ is intended to live, and from which we can draw guidance and inspiration.

The words used when the Queen was given her Bible at her coronation remind us of the value and importance of the Bible: ‘Our gracious Queen, to keep your majesty ever mindful of the law and Gospel of God, as the rule for the whole life and government of Christian princes, we present you with this book, the most valuable thing this world affords. Here is wisdom. This is the royal law. These are the lively oracles of God’.

The Bible itself makes such a claim in the Apostle Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 3.16: ‘All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’

It is for that reason and to deepen our discipleship, that my Bible Challenge is being launched during the visitations. My hope is that many across the diocese will engage with it and, as a result, our church communities will be more healthy examples of what it means to be a body of Jesus’ disciples.

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ is the first of the key strands of Vision 2026. Ruth Hassall is the recently appointed Diocesan Director of Discipleship. She will develop and implement a diocesan strategy to form ‘whole-life’ disciples.

“I am here to support the ongoing work in parishes of inspiring, teaching and training church members to live out their Christian faith wherever their ‘frontline’ is, whether in their work, leisure, family or local community,” said Ruth. “I am excited that a key part of the role will also be to oversee the transition of the diocesan retreat house Whalley Abbey to become a centre for Christian Discipleship.”

Earlier in her career, Ruth worked as Youth and Children’s Pastor at St Thomas’ in Lancaster. Most recently, she was Director of Growing Younger at Birmingham Diocese with responsibility for their Children’s and Families’ Missioners’ programme, as well as holding responsibility for children’s and families’ work across the diocese.

Bishop Julian launches Bible Challenge... for an internal treasure store

Ruth supporting parishes in ‘whole-life’ discipleship

Ruth said: “I count it a huge privilege to have been appointed to this role as I am convinced that one of the most urgent issues for today’s church is to inspire and equip every Christian to work and witness for God’s kingdom in their everyday life. “I’m so encouraged to hear of the appetite that there is, all across this diocese, to see Christians deepening in their faith and to being equipped to confidently live fully for the glory of God wherever they find themselves, recognising that Monday mornings can be as filled with worship as Sunday mornings.”

Ruth is available to deliver training and offer resourcing to parishes and deaneries in making disciples, and advising on suitable courses and resources in this whole area of whole-life discipleship. Please do get in touch with Ruth at ruth.hassall@blackburn.anglican.org for more information on how she can support discipleship in your parish.
Parish Pixels – show us what makes your church special

We’ll be asking every church to send us a single photo showing what makes their church special, whether taken by a professional or a member of the congregation on a smartphone.

We know that every church, its congregation, and community is unique. From the volunteer who holds everything together, to the children’s groups who brighten up the Sunday services. From the beautiful flower gardens, to the exceptional architecture of your church building. No two churches are the same, and we want to celebrate what makes your church special.

How would you show how unique and special your church is in just one photo? Find out more about the competition and how your church can enter at: www.ecclesiastical.com/parishpixels

Insurance advice that’s right up your street

Our Church Insurance Consultants offer a locally-based advisory service to churches up and down the country, either face-to-face or over the phone.

Our five consultants are responsible for a particular region of the country, and are available to visit your church and parish to give on-the-spot advice, as well as scheduling seminars and training. This could include help with explaining your insurance policy, to giving risk management presentations, and providing churchwarden training.

Each member of the team isn’t just an expert in insurance, they also have a deep involvement with the church themselves. Thanks to their background in the church, they appreciate and understand the concerns that PCCs and congregations have.

Through support and guidance, and by giving our customers the reassurance that they are doing things safely and securely, our consultants can enable churches to focus on what really matters: worship, mission and outreach. With their support, we hope to help make our nation’s churches a vibrant, vital and exciting part of the community for the twenty-first century and beyond.

Find out more about your Church Insurance Consultant in your area on our website: www.ecclesiastical.com/cic

Our specialist customer service team

Our dedicated church customer service team have a deep understanding of the specialist needs of those who look after, and protect, churches. Our friendly team are ready to help you with any query, no matter how big or small, and are available by telephone, email or post.

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(8am-6pm Monday to Friday except Bank Holidays)
Email: churches@ecclesiastical.com
Post: Church customer services, Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester GL1 1JZ
Unique research bolsters our advice for churches on slips and trips

Although churches are generally low-risk environments, slips and trips remain the most common cause of injury. In some cases, these can be severe, so taking sensible and adequate precautions is essential. Sometimes, this is more difficult in church premises, usually because of design constraints or the heritage fabric of the building itself. Here, it is usually necessary to consider a wider range of precautions.

We understand this challenge, and it’s why we have teamed up with leading health and safety researchers at the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) to look at the problem. We have conducted research across a range of historic buildings (including churches) with a view to developing practical advice in the prevention of slips and trips. This is in a way that is both sympathetic with the history of the building and is cost effective.

Our new guidance looks at a range of topics identifying best practice and exploring a range of precautions. You can find out more and read the guidance on our website at: www.ecclesiastical.com/churchslipsandtrips

We’ve donated over £285,000 to churches across the UK so far!

For every new home insurance policy taken out with us, we have donated £130 to the church of the policyholder’s choice, and so far these donations add up to over £285,000!

We are delighted that this offer is now running until the end of 2019 and many more churches are set to benefit from our donations.

How your church can benefit

For every new home insurance policy taken out where ‘Trust130’ is quoted, we will ask the customer what church they would like a donation of £130 to go to. So, by spreading the word around your church workers, volunteers and congregation, your church could benefit, and as there is no limit to the number of donations one church can receive, the donations could make a big difference to your church.

Has your church already received a donation?

If your church has received a donation, we’d love to hear how your church has used the money. Whether you’ve used it for a large project or event, or just to buy biscuits for coffee mornings, we want to hear about it. You can either tell us by email at: Trust130@ecclesiastical.com or via facebook tagging us @churchmatters and we might share your story too!

Find out more about our home insurance at: www.ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance

Do we have up-to-date contact details for you?

If you need to update us on changes to names, email addresses, phone numbers and changes to PCC members, you can do this by calling our team on: 0345 777 3322
Taking a sabbatical in 2020?

Ecclesiastical’s Ministry Bursary Awards provides financial support for members of the clergy taking extended study leave, and we are now accepting applications for sabbaticals taking place in 2020. You can find out more about the awards, check the eligibility criteria and apply on our website: [www.ecclesiastical.com/mba](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/mba)

Rewarding the good work of others with our Movement for Good Awards

At Ecclesiastical, we’ve always believed in supporting the causes that can make a positive difference to people’s lives. That’s why we work closely with the communities we serve to tackle the issues that are important to them.

On Tuesday 23rd April, we launched our Movement for Good Awards – a programme designed to give £1 million to charities. Our Movement for Good Awards are a way of recognising and supporting the efforts of these dedicated men and women – people who devote their energies to changing people’s lives for the better.

500 charities will receive a £1,000 donation

Anyone can get involved by simply nominating an eligible charity*. You can nominate between Tuesday 23 April and Friday 17 May.

10 charities will be awarded a £50,000 grant

Eligible charities* can apply for a grant via a simple online application. Applications open on Monday 23 June and close Friday 26 July.

So, if your church is a registered charity, you have a charity associated with your church, or there’s a charity anyone in your congregation is associated with, you can get involved.

You can find out more on our website at: [www.ecclesiastical.com/movementforgood](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/movementforgood)

*Risk Management Advice Line

We know that managing the risks of a church or church hall can be a demanding responsibility.

That’s why we’ve introduced the Risk Management Advice Line. Whenever you need information about managing risk and can’t find what you are looking for on our website, our experts are here to help.

Call our Risk Management Advice Line: 0345 600 7531

The line is open from 9:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays.

Alternatively you can email us at: [risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com) and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

Our Risk Management Advice Line offers Ecclesiastical customers free risk advice. Please have your policy number to hand when you call.

Our new-look website

Have you seen our newly refreshed website? We’ve changed our site to make it easier to use, but you will still find all our useful guides, information and videos available on the site.

The website has a clean and fresh style, which makes it easier for you to find the information you need. If you have any trouble finding information on our new site you can always call our team who will be happy to direct you to the right place.

Call us on: 0345 777 3322

[www.ecclesiastical.com/church](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/church)

We would like to hear what you think of our new website. You can email comments and feedback to: churches@ecclesiastical.com
Allchurches announces record giving and changes to grant programmes

In 2019, Allchurches Trust, owners of Ecclesiastical, is making changes to its giving that will place even more of an emphasis on helping organisations in less-affluent areas.

The changes have come about following a Strategic Grants Review, which set out to ensure that the Trust continues to meet the needs of its beneficiaries and make the greatest possible impact with the funds available. The aim is to improve effectiveness, transparency and reporting, including for annual grants to dioceses and cathedrals.

These annual grants are now guaranteed until 2022, facilitating longer-term, strategic planning. At the same time, the Trust aims to steadily make a greater amount of funding available to churches, charities, dioceses and cathedrals that apply for grants to fund projects in their communities.

As well as giving a higher percentage of the total project cost, Allchurches has doubled the uplift on grants to projects in areas of greatest need.

Annual grants are also now allocated based on population and the degree of deprivation of the area, and dioceses and cathedrals have been asked to provide more information about what they intend to spend their grant on and report back on the impact that the money is having.

Chairman of Allchurches Trust, Sir Philip Mawer, said: “We’ve already heard about some great initiatives being funded by our annual grant, including a youth outreach partnership project called Growing Faith for Generations (GF4G) in the Isle of Man. We’re keen to work with dioceses to share these stories about the good work our funding is helping to enable in their parishes.”

You can find out more about Allchurches Trust at: www.allchurches.co.uk

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*Ecclesiastical claims satisfaction survey 2017 - direct customers

Funeral Plans

A funeral plan from Ecclesiastical is an ideal way to make financial provision for your funeral, as well as reducing the worry for your loved ones at a difficult time. Making your funeral wishes known in advance and providing for the cost makes sound financial sense.

Call: 0800 055 6503
www.funeralplans.co.uk

NOW available to PCC members!
‘We need a culture of courage and risk’

Bishop Jill’s call to be brave witnesses

I love a good quiz...

So, here’s a question for you. Looking nationally and internationally where churches are growing, what is the biggest data point feeding evangelism, discipleship, church health, church growth and church unity?

The answer: church or congregation planting.

A key objective of the Being Witnesses Team I lead, is to plant or renew 50 new strategic congregations by 2026. Historically, for The Church of England, planting congregations has been completely normal. Yet over the last 100 years, there has been a sleepy sluggishness attached to it.

Not without good reason. The phrase ‘church planting’ is not a good one! It can give the impression of invading someone else’s territory, an impossibly big step or even a fantasy; deep down we expect churches to decline.

We need a culture of courage and risk where it’s OK to try things. New ventures are fragile. They often fail. The Church of England’s definition of church is wonderfully simple (39 Articles, XIX): “A congregation... where the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered.”

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus assured us that some seed will be pecked up by the birds or strangled at birth. Still, he asks us to sow generously (you could say, even irresponsibly) because the seed that finds good soil will produce 30, 60, 100 fold.

So where do you start? Three words: pray, pray, pray. We are dependent on the Spirit to lead us to the ‘people of peace’ in our neighbourhood and networks who are open to the Gospel. We need the Spirit to inspire and fire Mission Action Planning. We need the Spirit to shift the forces in the heavenly realms.

I am deeply thankful for the work of God in our strategic church plants in Buckshaw Village Church, Freedom Church Mereside, and Preston Minster.

Would you be up for developing a new local congregation over the next few years? These are based on WHO not HOW! Who is missing? If your local kids are involved in sport on a Sunday morning, why not try a service at 4pm? Or around networks after school on a Thursday? Around ready-made sporting networks? In a fresh venue (e.g. some coffee shops)! Across all traditions too. What about creating space regularly for Benediction?

Why not pray that God will lead you to ‘people of peace’ – people who are open to the gospel, and have an astonishing number of networks. Coming from Bolton, I’ve been praying for Lancashire for quite a few years. An enduring picture in my prayers is of chains of beacons being fanned into flame by prayer, and kindling hope across the Diocese.

Bishop Jill

Pathways to Prayer

Pathways to Prayer is a series of workshops on different approaches to prayer. They are designed to equip people with new ways of praying drawn from the riches of the Church’s tradition of prayer. Through these workshops it is hoped that part of our growing as disciples will be to discover new and rich ways of praying.

Three faster days are planned across the diocese this year, on Saturdays, each introduced by a Bishop or Archdeacon.

July 6th – St. Oswald’s, Preesall from 10am to 2.45pm

Sept 21st – St Ambrose, Leyland from 10am to 2.45pm

Oct 19th – Xaverian Mission Spirituality Centre Preston from 9.30am to 1pm

Each day will consist of a series of hour long workshops with some introductory teaching on a particular style of prayer, time spent in that way of praying and time for reflection on it afterwards. If your deanery or parish wishes to hold its own event, do consider inviting the Pathways to Prayer team to lead it. Contact Tricia Impey – patriciaimpey@btinternet.com or Gill Ireland – gillyireland@gmail.com

Thy Kingdom Come

During the 10 days from Ascension Day to Pentecost (30 May – 9 June 2019) people have set aside time to join ‘Thy Kingdom Come’, the global wave of prayer, praying that people they know might know Jesus.

Churches Together in Lancashire is holding a launch service on Wed 29th May at Crossgate, Preston PR1 5LG, starting at 7.30pm.

The next step after this year’s event is to invite those we’ve prayed for to come to an event or service in your local church. There are lots of resources and ideas to help: Throughout the country, churches will be using the weekend of 21 – 23 June as a National Weekend of Invitation (organised by the team who created ‘Back to Church Sunday’). Visit www.weekendofinvitation.com for more information.

The Hope Together website gives a whole number of ideas for welcoming and engaging with people. For more information, visit www.hopetogether.org.uk.

Perhaps your church could join with others in your community to organise an event as part of the ‘Great Get Together’ (www.greatgettogether.org) also from 21-23 June 2019.

Let’s take time to pray during Thy Kingdom Come 2019 and then follow it up by inviting our friends, families, neighbours and work colleagues to an event where they can meet Christians and the Good News of Jesus.

Thy Kingdom Come

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