

## A message from the Archdeacons

Tuesday 24 March

### Update for Clergy: APCMs, Visitations, PCCs and Marriage Common Licences

**APCM's.** We attach a copy of a 'Bishop's Instrument' (visit: <https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BishInstrumentreCovid.pdf>) that postpones the date by which APCMs need to be held until the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020. Our advice is that APCMs that have not already been held should be suspended with immediate effect. Please read the explanatory note at the end of the instrument which also give advice for those of you who have already held this year's APCM.

**Archdeacons' Visitations.** Please note that this year's Visitation Services are now suspended. The Bishop's instrument means that existing churchwardens (even where an APCM & Vestry meeting has already taken place) will remain in place until new churchwardens are 'sworn in' in due course (the instrument delays the deadline for this to January 2021).

**PCC's and Synods.** Paragraph 6 of the Instrument (and the explanatory note) gives advice on the situation with respect to PCC and deanery synod membership. The Diocesan Secretary will be writing separately to Area Deans and Lay Chairs with more information on how this affects elections to synods (including General Synod).

**Marriage Preliminaries.** Following last night's message from the Prime Minister **marriage services will not be able to continue for the moment** and any advice we are able to give will need to be set in that context. However, given that you will be being asked about future weddings, it might be helpful to clarify the arrangements that would come back into force if and when we revert to the position where regular public worship services are suspended, but marriages may recommence. In this situation banns will not be an option as preliminaries. All couples who were due to be married by banns should then be directed to obtain a Common Licence. This still requires them to have a qualifying connection with the parish in which they are to be married. Generally Common Licences should be obtained from the Registry but there is also the option of doing so through a Surrogate. At the moment we have 2 Surrogates in the Diocese – the Revd Canon David Bowers and the Revd David Russell. The Revd Gary Grady has also been trained and will shortly be made a Surrogate and plans are in hand to swear in both of us as Surrogates shortly. Ordinarily a Common Licence costs £200 but we are pleased to be able to report that, following discussions with the Registry, the Chancellor and the Diocesan Secretary, it has been agreed to waive this fee **for those who would otherwise have been married by banns** during these difficult circumstances.

**Qualifying Connections.** One issue that several of you have raised is the ability to gain a 'qualifying connection' through habitual attendance at public worship for a minimum of 6 months. Although this will cause difficulties for some couples, we do not believe that it is

possible in the current situation to establish this connection if it has not already been established. If we get legal advice to the contrary we will of course let you know. The option of an Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Licence (see <http://www.facultyoffice.org.uk/special-licences/obtaining-a-special-marriage-licence/>) may still be a possibility for some – although note that even here there is the need to show a 'genuine connection with a particular church or chapel'.

Please do continue to come back to us if you have questions that cannot be answered by the advice already contained on our Diocesan or the National Church websites, although there is now a wealth of information on these. It would also help us if you wouldn't mind passing this information on to your churchwardens and PCCs.

With our ongoing prayers and thanks.

Phil Andrew  
Archdeacon of Cheltenham

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