14th September 2017

*To All Licensed Clergy*

Dear Colleagues,

I hope the Summer has been a good time both for you and for the people you love and that you have been able to get away for a time to recharge the batteries. I spent a few days battling into a headwind on a bicycle in Ireland but will resist all attempts to draw a crass comparison between that and ministry in the Church of England!

September is the month when many of us plan the year ahead for our churches or chaplaincies, so it seemed a good time to write to you with a few events that you may wish to place in your diaries.

**The Reformation: Triumph or Tragedy**

*Monday October 30th 7pm-9pm Whalley Abbey*

To mark the 500th anniversary of the Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, Archdeacon Mark and I will be leading a relaxed debate to explore the legacy of the Reformation with the Dean in the Chair. Guess who will be arguing for which side? Drinks will be served from 7pm to help loosen tongues! And book fast as there are only 35 places. Ring Whalley Abbey on 01254 828400 to book.

**A Festival of Prayer**

*Saturday February 3rd2018 10.30am – 3pm Blackburn Cathedral*

Following last year’s very successful Festival of the Eucharist, all ages are invited to share in a Festival of Prayer at the Cathedral. The theme for the year across the Diocese is ‘Transforming our Communities,’ and on February 3rd we will explore how prayer lies at the heart of the ministry of transformation to which Christ calls us. The day will feature:

* A Keynote Address given by Canon Angela Tilby (writer and broadcaster)
* Messy Church from 12 noon for children and their families, exploring prayer by making lots of mess
* A huge range of short workshops offering different ways to pray and suggestions for how to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ
* An opening celebration of the Eucharist with the Cathedral Youth Choir and a choice of prayer in different styles to close the day

The day will include plenty of rich content for Christians of all traditions. A poster will follow, but meanwhile you might like to think of ways of incorporating the day into your programme for the year.

**An Evening with Mark Greene**

*Monday March 12th 2018 7.30pm St James’s, Lower Darwen*

Mark Greene is the Director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) which has a remarkable and visionary ministry in encouraging laypeople to live out their faith vividly and confidently in their daily lives. This evening event, aimed at clergy and laity, will explore what it means to be disciples in our daily lives. Booking details will be sent out nearer the time.

**And whilst I have your attention…**

It has been great to see a significant increase in those exploring vocations to the priesthood over the past few months, but there are a few signs that numbers are dropping again. We are committed to maintaining clergy numbers at their current level for as long as possible, but can only do this if we maintain a steady flow of vocations. God calls people of all ages, but we are also placing a particular emphasis on those under the age of 30.

Is there anyone in your congregation whom God might be calling to Ordained ministry? If so, don’t wait for a blinding flash of light from heaven. Have a word with them and suggest it. If there is anyone who would like to explore more, they should be referred in the first place to our DDO, the Revd John Darch ([j.darch248@btinternet.com)](mailto:j.darch248@btinternet.com)). Alternatively for a more informal conversation you could talk to our Young Vocations Champion Alice Cole ([rev.alicecole@gmail.com](mailto:rev.alicecole@gmail.com)) or Cath Hale who leads the Vocations Team ([cathbraithwaite@googlemail.com](mailto:cathbraithwaite@googlemail.com)).

In order to nurture vocations we will soon be launching the Blackpool Ministry Experience Scheme with the first three participants formally commissioned on Thursday September 28th in Holy Trinity, Blackpool at 7.30pm. This is a great way for people aged under 30 to experience a wide range of styles of priestly ministry at first hand in an urban context. If you know anyone who may be interested in being part of this from September 2018, get in touch with Linda Tomkinson ([revlindat@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:revlindat@hotmail.co.uk)).

Thank you for all you continue to do in the Lord’s service. I am constantly moved by the incredible commitment and dedication of our clergy, and please be entirely assured of my prayers for you.

Yours sincerely

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The Rt Revd Philip North

Bishop of Burnley