

Our Ref: +RT-ADs/ajh

12th March 2021

To: All Licensed Clergy, All Chaplains, Churchwardens and Chapelwardens, Parish Officers, All Readers, PTO, Honorary Assistant Bishops, Area Deans, Assistant Area Deans, Lay Deans, Deputy Lay Deans, Diocesan Staff, Diocesan Registrar

Dear Brothers and Sisters

You will have received this morning the letter from Bishop Peter sharing the news of his retirement on medical grounds. It is with much sadness that we hear that he will not be returning to minister as Bishop amongst us. However, his recovery and health are of greater importance at this time and our prayers continue for Peter, Jane and the whole family. May they know God's hope, grace and joy as they step into the future.

Bishop Peter and Jane hope to return home to their flat next week for his recovery to continue. Clearly, he will need to remain free from infections and spend plenty of time resting and recuperating. There will also need to be time to complete some tasks in preparation for a move to a new home in the summer. He will not be stepping back into leadership within the diocese during this time however, we are delighted that he has agreed to record a special Easter Sunday morning reflection for the whole diocese to share in. Details of this and reflections for each day of Holy Week contributed by other Bishops within the diocese will be available on the diocesan website.

Bishop Peter has been a wonderful, warm and wise pastor to us all in the last seven years. Many of you will have your own very special memories of him, conversations had, visits made, sermons preached. We shall have an opportunity to mark his time with us and celebrate all he and Jane have given us, on Saturday 22nd May. We will not be able to have a large gathering of 'in person' worship but we intend to make this a moment to remember! Details of this will be announced as we know them. We will also shortly send you information as to how you can contribute messages of thanks and participate in a gift.

Cont'd ...

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As to the future, we continue to look to God for our hope, joy and direction as we seek to continue to share the story of His love for the world. As Easter approaches, we note that walking the way of the cross is costly and challenging but it leads us into the very heart of God, where grace and forgiveness can be found.

As Archdeacons and Bishop, we want to assure you of our commitment to faithful and prayerful leadership, shared with you. As brothers and sisters together with you, we encourage us all to remember the charge to the church at Colossae and as we remember that we are chosen, holy, beloved and clothe ourselves in love, we pray that we might 'let Christ's peace rule in our hearts'.

We close with a prayer especially written for this time by our Palace Pastor, Rosey Lunn. A copy is attached which you may wish to post within your church buildings or on your websites.

Gracious and loving God

We give thanks for the ministry of Bishop Peter in this our Diocese of Bath and Wells: for his wise leadership, for his gentle pastoral care for all those entrusted to his charge, for his integrity and his faithfulness, and for all that he has given to so many over the past seven years.

You have brought him through these challenging months of sickness and treatment, and we give thanks for strength recovered and for hope renewed.

As we learn with deep sadness that he must lay aside his duties as our Bishop, we pray for your blessing on him and Jane as they look to the future: enfold them in your love, fill them with your peace, and give them the strength they need to move through this time of transition and letting go. Give them the assurance that you will always hold them fast, that this time of loss may, through your grace, become a discovery of knowing you more deeply, serving you in new ways, and delighting in the life of their family.

And we pray for our Diocese at this time, especially for Bishop Ruth, that you will give us patience and discernment as we seek the way forward, vision for the future, unity to support one another in uncertain times, and trust in your loving purposes for us all.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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With our prayers and love.

+ Ruth

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Aree

Sami

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