



PASTORAL LETTER TO ALL SAINTS MARGARET STREET

FROM SARAH, BISHOP OF LONDON AND JONATHAN, BISHOP OF FULHAM

To our dearly beloved in Christ at All Saints Margaret Street:

We are writing together, and with one voice, to offer you our love and support as you continue through the process of vacancy and towards the appointment of a new incumbent. We are well aware that there have been longstanding disagreements among you, including disagreements about the sacramental ministry of bishops and priests who are women. You have participated in a substantial time of reflection and discussion on this question, and we are very grateful for your deep engagement and mutual listening.

That process, the most recent phase of which we initiated in our joint meeting of November last year, has now come to a conclusion following the PCC meeting on Monday 13th July. At this meeting there was a vote resulting in a majority to affirm the Resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration passed in November 2016. Bishop Sarah has therefore asked Bishop Jonathan to exercise episcopal oversight of the parish according to the provisions of the London Plan. The Bishop of London remains your Diocesan Bishop as well as being the Patron of the church.

The London Plan (first established when Bishop David Hope was Bishop of London) now incorporates the Five Guiding Principles which are themselves the foundation of the House of Bishops' Declaration of 2014. Together, these documents allow for those whose theological convictions differ to belong in one Church, members together of the Body of which Christ himself is Head, in St Paul's memorable image. We commend to you this way of being, and that call to holiness which puts Christ first and not ourselves.

We pray that you will see Christ in one another, respecting those whose views differ from your own, and rejoicing in the ministry to the world in Christ's name in which each one of you is called to share by baptism. This is the task that now lies before you: to model unity in diversity for the sake of the Gospel. In so doing, you will demonstrate leadership for the sake of the whole Church.

We both recognise that the ministry of women at All Saints needs to be encouraged and enhanced. Under your next incumbent we expect there to be joyful progress in unity of purpose and in the affirmation of one another. We need one another and the Church in London, indeed the Church of England, needs this parish, congregation and community to become the best possible version of what Christ would want you to be.

As your Bishops we offer you not just this encouragement but also our prayers. We assure you that we are available to listen to, and engage with, any matters of pastoral concern which you would like to share with us. We now turn with real anticipation and excitement to discerning and appointing that priest whom God is calling to be your next Vicar, and who will share in our oversight as shepherds and pastors in Christ's name. These are important times and require a renewed commitment to earnest prayer for this church you love.

Brothers and sisters, let Love now become the hallmark of this church. May there be an end to any divisions and a magnificent renewal of devotion. Let there be no talk of factions and opposition. There is now a great purpose which requires unity and the love of deep Christian friendship. Where there has been enmity we urge in the Name of Christ forgiveness and reconciliation that is active and, we sincerely believe, will be transformative.

As your own late Fr Ross has said "The church is both an organism and an organisation, and so membership can be thought of in two ways. To be a member of the mystical body of Christ one must receive the life of Christ and 'abide in the vine', and one must have a place in the outward organisation of the physical society". Your abiding in Christ really matters. Your belonging to the mainstream of the Church of England which we affirm here really matters.

We greatly value what God continues to do in your midst. The online viewing figures are just one example of how All Saints Margaret Street is regarded around the world. We certainly join you in seeking for this church to be revitalised in its mission within the parish, the Deanery and Diocese, as well as for there to be a renewal of life in our Church inspired by what gripped the hearts of those who began the Oxford Movement.

We look back with thankfulness but we also now look ahead with great anticipation and eager hope that, joining the prayers of the Saints, you will enable a revitalisation of faith that lasts for generations to come.

+ Sarah Londin

+Sarah Londin

+Jonathan Fulham.

+Jonathan Fulham

The Feast of St Mary Magdalene 2020