



The Bishop of Gloucester
The Rt Revd Michael Perham

PASTORAL LETTER

To All Clergy

To be read in churches on Sunday 13 July

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This weekend we are welcoming to the Diocese bishops from India, Japan, Australia, the West Indies and the United States, our guests in the days before the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops throughout the world that takes place from Wednesday of this week until 3 August. Bishop John and I will be among the bishops gathering in Canterbury for the Conference. We ask for your prayers for us, for Archbishop Rowan in his leadership, and for all those participating in the Conference.

As you read and listen to the media, you may be greatly alarmed by reports of deep divisions and rifts in the Communion. Such divisions do indeed exist. The presenting issue around which they focus is the proper Christian attitude to homosexuality and to gay relationships. Behind that presenting issue lie deeper issues relating to the authority and interpretation of the Bible and the development of doctrine – the Church trying to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying as God leads us into all truth.

These are issues on which Christians, all of them wanting to be faithful to the Scriptures, find it difficult to agree. For some the issues are so fundamental that making a stand for truth takes priority over maintaining fellowship and communion with one another. This is certainly not the first time, nor will it be the last, where the unity of the Church has been put under severe strain by passionately held views.

So there are real tensions and we ask for your prayers that those who share in the Conference will be given the grace to hold together in mutual respect and affection and to conduct our conversations with clarity and charity. The national media will probably continue to present the issues in an over-simplistic and inaccurate way – please do not believe premature predictions of the break-up of the Anglican Communion or the disintegration of the Church of England! Instead take heart from many signs of faithfulness and growth in the churches of our Diocese, evidenced by the ordination of twelve new priests and seventeen new deacons in the Cathedral two weeks ago, and from our own strong partnerships with churches across the world. Take heart and do not be fearful for the future, but please do be unceasing in your prayers.

With Every Blessing

Yours sincerely

† Michael Gloucester