

FOREWORD

“The updating of an authoritative text such as this can be lonely, tedious and time consuming.”

That is a quotation from the Preface of “Ecclesiastical Law” (Third Edition) by Mark Hill. The book is a comprehensive and magisterial account of the current state of the Laws governing and guiding the Church of England.

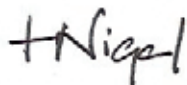
By contrast the Diocesan Handbook is a user friendly guide to procedures, rules and regulations that we need to live by if we are to be a coherent organisation. Yes the rules are there, but there are also answers to questions; “What do I have to do to get permission for someone to administer the Holy Communion?; Who can give me advice about Ecumenism, or Agriculture or Community Affairs? What are the rules for an Annual Parochial Church Meeting? And so on.....”

Quite often an e mail arrives asking such questions, and the enquirer can be guided to the relevant section of the Handbook.

The Foreword in the last Handbook advised people to keep them carefully and to hand them on to their successors as they are revised only “about once in a decade”. However that was written three years ago! This is partly a reflection of a number of significant changes to aspects of church life enacted by the General Synod, partly because experience has shown what might be really useful to include.

It is of course easy to complain about burdensome regulation. However much of what is set out is about fairness, justice and order, all of which can be expounded theologically. However all of this only works well when we live out our Christian call to manifest the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. We should pay attention to the needs of others, and know what we should do to treat them fairly and well.

Bringing this Handbook up to date has been carefully and conscientiously done by busy people, and I am very grateful to them. I hope that it has not been quite as burdensome as updating Ecclesiastical Law. Most of all I hope that it is a real and accessible help to all those in ministry in the Diocese.



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