

*Providing ministry, sacraments and oversight which we can receive with confidence*

*We invite you to read this Pastoral Letter, and make it available,  
in all our churches on Sunday 4 December 2016.*

### **A PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

In this season of Advent, at the beginning of the Christian year, we look back – to those who prepared the way for Our Lord’s first coming – as well as forward to the celebration of his incarnation and to the time when he will come again in glory. In other words, we look back with thanksgiving to God and forward in hope and expectation.

In November the two-year transitional period under the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests came to an end. We give thanks that 412 parishes (a 12% increase) have passed a resolution that places them within the fellowship of parishes committed to our care. The majority have also affiliated formally to The Society under the patronage of St Wilfrid and St Hilda, in order to make our belonging together more visible. We encourage parishes that have not yet taken this further step to do so.

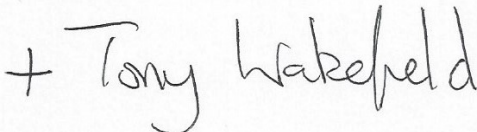
We are conscious that in some dioceses, and for some parishes, the process of passing the resolutions and receiving a response from the diocese has not been an easy one. In many places, however, the process has given opportunities for affirmation of our place in the Church of England’s life and witness. Responding to a letter from us, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have written:

“Please reassure members of The Society of our confidence, going forward, in the affirmations that have already been made [in the Declaration and its Five Guiding Principles], and of our gratitude for their part in making this happen. We are heartened to read, in your letter, the evidence you present of how traditional catholic parishes are thriving, in some cases with growing congregations.”

It is indeed to spiritual and numerical growth that we all now need to turn our minds. During our recent meeting as a Council of Bishops we continued to develop plans to support our parishes in this. A consultation exercise is underway and we shall make announcements during the coming year.

We pray that in this season of preparation you will experience God’s blessing richly.

On behalf of the Council of Bishops



The Rt Revd Tony Robinson  
Bishop of Wakefield  
Chairman

30 November 2016