

Pastoral Statement for St. Paul's Monaco

Sunday 27th January 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which concluded last Friday, the worldwide Church has been praying Christ's own prayer from John's Gospel: that we may be one as Christ and the Father are one. I am acutely aware that that this prayer could not be more urgent for St Paul's, Monaco, at this time.

I have been concerned for a number of months by the deterioration of key relationships at St Paul's. With the Archdeacon, I had begun to seek the agreement of the various parties for a process of mediation, which I had hoped would lead to lasting resolution. The fact that few of you know about this is simply because of the mutual commitment to respect the confidentiality of those involved. The Archdeacon's visit this weekend was planned to be, among other things, an opportunity to take this process forward.

However, events over this past week, both at the meeting of the Chaplaincy Council and subsequently, have left me astonished. They have propelled us into new territory, which has placed me in a very difficult situation. I have no other option but to respond effectively. I have begun consulting my legal officer and, alongside enquiries being made by the Archdeacon this weekend, the statutory authorities in Monaco will be consulted. One of the underlying concerns about the long history of the conflict at St Paul's is centred round the lack of consistency between the constitution of the Chaplaincy Council and its membership, and the clear requirements of the Church of England Representation Rules. Seeking to bring these into alignment is a priority.

Regardless of the motion voted on at the Chaplaincy Council meeting last Tuesday, I need you to be in no doubt that Father Lawrence MacLean remains your chaplain and continues to hold my Licence.

Clearly, there are more discussions necessary to progress this deeply unhappy state of affairs towards some form of lasting resolution. All my experience leads me to believe that the situation at St. Paul's will only be resolved by prayer and careful reflection, rather than by precipitate action. At the same time, we rightly demand high standards of those who hold office in the Church,

and I am committed to robustly addressing all instances where those who exercise a public ministry fall short of these standards and fail to keep the commitments they have publicly made.

Sadly, conflict is part of the historic and contemporary experience of the Church, a fact your patron, St Paul, never sought to deny. Nonetheless, as the Church seeks to resolve conflict, we are called to treat one another kindly and respectfully as those created in the image and likeness of God. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: 'God has reconciled us to himself through Christ, who gave us the ministry of reconciliation'. Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel. It is time to practice what we preach.

With my blessing and the assurance of my prayers.

+Robert Gibraltar in Europe