

The Diocese of
Southwark

The Bishop of Southwark

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To: all Incumbent Status clergy

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In September 2017 I sent a letter about arrangements for dealing with pastoral problems that have a paranormal or demonic element to them. Our Deliverance Team has recently been augmented by the addition of some new members, and formally re-Commissioned, so I am writing again to ensure that you are aware of the resources in place and how to access them.

Please note that it is your responsibility to contact the Team via Gavin; you should, however, treat any information about the Team, including Gavin's identity, as strictly confidential. Any contact the Team has with the person you are concerned about will be through you and with your involvement.

From the guidelines which I commend to you, I would like to highlight that: *'It is important not to jump in with quick solutions until the situation has been fully investigated'* (para 5). Whilst many problems that arise may be dealt with through normal pastoral ministry, if you find that you are dealing with paranormal experiences please always contact the Team. It is also important that you remember that any Exorcism of a person may only take place after careful preparation and with my permission as Diocesan Bishop.

It would be good for all clergy to obtain some training on paranormal/deliverance ministry, and opportunities for this will be made available through Ministry Matters Area Deans may also wish to invite a member of the Team to talk at a meeting of Chapter. I attach some guidelines on approaching pastoral matters of this kind.

With thanks for our life together in Christ and with my prayers for you and the ministry entrusted to you,

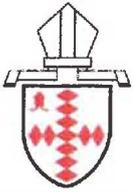
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Bishop of Southwark

Some guidelines for Parochial Clergy in dealing with the Paranormal

1. Make sure you have the contact details of the Diocesan Team and consult them if you have any doubts or problems.
2. Treat every approach made to you seriously and listen prayerfully with attentive care. Help the person to feel at ease and be reassured that they are being taken seriously. Try not to express shock or surprise at anything you are told. The initial objective is to reduce panic, and to help the person feel reassured that you will work with them prayerfully to get to the root of what is happening and with God's guidance and strength, help them find a way forward.
3. Do not collude with their diagnosis of what is going on. People who are frightened often jump to quick conclusions or latch on to what they have been told by someone else. It is important take their concerns seriously but encourage them to be open to the possible cause of their concerns.
4. Investigate carefully and sensitively. There are many possible causes of what may be, or else seem to be, paranormal experiences. They can be caused by family or social tensions and stress, medical conditions, drug use, watching inappropriate films, or bereavement. They may even have simple explanations such as draughts, old creaky woodwork, poor plumbing *etc.* Whatever the cause, it can be very frightening for the person experiencing it and sensitive handling is vital.
5. It is important not to jump in with quick solutions until the situation has been fully investigated. We often collude with people's own assessment of what is wrong by doing house blessings or prayers of deliverance too quickly. Once we begin to do such things it reinforces the person's assessment that a place is haunted *etc.* Blessings and prayer are important at the appropriate time, but not as a quick fix. In many situations the root cause is more to do with what is going on in the person's life rather than any outside influence.
6. Before dealing with a problem of the paranormal it is always important to prepare yourself with prayer. Even if the situation does not turn out to be anything of a sinister nature you can still become bombarded by negative emotions, so going in prepared and protected is important. The following prayer, known as Saint Patrick's Breastplate, may be useful:

*Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all who love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
I bind unto myself the Name, the strong name of the Trinity;
By Invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three.
Of whom all nature hath creation; Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation; salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

7. Please be sure to follow Diocesan Safeguarding Guidelines when working with children or vulnerable adults.
8. It may be helpful to read *Deliverance* edited by Michael Perry and published by SPCK which is a good overview of circumstances we may come across.
9. To reiterate: If in any doubt please consult with the Diocesan Team for advice, and especially if you suspect any demonic activity. Please do not give names or contact details for members of the Team to the person who has approached you.



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copy of previous letter sent

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26 September 2017

To all Incumbent Status clergy

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

It is possible that during the course of your ministry you will be presented at times with pastoral problems that have a paranormal or demonic element to them.

The Diocese take these concerns seriously and has an Authorised Commissioned Team to advise and support clergy in this ministry. If you are unsure about the right approach or way forward when confronted with any situation I would very much encourage you to make contact with them.

Any contact the Team has with the person you are concerned about will be through you and with your involvement.

Whilst many problems that arise may be dealt with through normal pastoral ministry, if you find that you are dealing with demonic activity on a serious scale please always contact the Team. It is also important that you remember that any Exorcism of a person may only take place after careful preparation and with my permission as the Diocesan Bishop.

It would be good for all clergy to obtain some training on paranormal/deliverance ministry. There is an annual opportunity to do this in a session at Trinity House (see Ministry Matters), or Area Deans may wish to invite a member of the team to talk at a meeting of the Deanery Chapter.

Enclosed are some simple guidelines on approaching pastoral matters of this kind: please read them carefully and contact the Advisors as necessary.

With thanks for our common life in Christ and with my prayers for you and the ministry entrusted to you.

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun,
Bishop of Southwark