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To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

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My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, I am conscious that many people are reading, in the press and media, about turbulence and disagreements in the Diocese. It is never good for our disagreements to be handled in this public way, rather than by our making an attempt to address them within our own life together. I am conscious that much reporting relates to both myself and the College of Bishops. While it may seem by some to be an attempt simply to justify myself, this is not my intention in writing to you. My hope is that I might communicate with you directly rather than through media communications, to be able to share part of my perspective on the current issues being faced, and consider a way ahead for us together.

As is well-known, in February I approached the College of Bishops for help in understanding some of the puzzling and distressing issues which I was experiencing in the diocese. Many, indeed most, of these issues went back to the time of my arrival in the Diocese, and even before. To this end the College invited Professor Torrance to look at the issues I had raised, and offer a reflective comment on them.

Professor Torrance's report addresses some of the unease felt in the Diocese. I am very sorry indeed that some in the diocese feel this way, and want to attend to the matters and concerns raised as a priority.

However, I felt that Professor Torrance's report did not fully address the issue which I had originally raised with the College. Some, through the press, had raised concerns about how they felt they were treated by me. Elsewhere, many others had shared with me their own experiences of feeling unsafe or unwelcome in our churches. Alongside this, I had also felt myself, since I arrived, to be subject to significant bullying and harassment on a number of fronts. It was all of this that prompted my request that a review should take place. I can't say that I found these matters of early conflict, which I encountered, easy to deal with. Indeed had I found them easy I would not have raised them for consideration with the College.

I appreciate that participating in the review has been an emotionally costly exercise for many. This is certainly true for those whose submissions are referenced in Prof Torrance's report. It is also true for those who have a different story to tell, but who are now feeling that their voices have not been heard or have been excluded. There are a diversity of views in the diocese, different perspectives and understandings of what is happening among us. In addition, I am also conscious that since his investigation was carried out, I have continued to be subject to repeated attacks on Social Media, some of which has been described as simple "harassment", and others reported to the police as possible "hate crimes". Many of us are feeling bruised at present.

It is my earnest desire to seek to understand and take responsibility for my contribution to the present distress. I want to take very seriously the feelings and opinions of those who are represented in the report.

I also want to understand the feelings and opinions of those whose contributions have not yet been included. However, we need to hear and understand these things together if we are to take responsibility, say sorry where needed, and look for a way ahead.

It is my hope and prayer that we together will engage in whatever process of listening and mediation is ahead. For healing to happen, we will need to commit to work together towards relationships of mutual respect, trust and love. For us to participate in confidence, knowing that we are safe, this mediation process will need to be of high quality. I am grateful, on behalf of us all, that the bishops, acting as an Episcopal Synod will consider initiating the setting up of this process.

I do need to say that despite all this I have not regretted my accepting the election by the College of Bishops and my consecration as the Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney. To hold this post is a privilege which I have always sought to exercise fairly. While I have been delighted to receive the welcoming support from so many in the diocese, I cannot but acknowledge that some more negative emotions have also been generated during my time in office. I have felt a measure of bruising over the time I have been here, and others have felt bruised through me. I do not wish to deny the real responsibility I must have here. My sincere hope would be that these matters could be looked at by us, together, in the context of our common life, acknowledging Christ in our midst, who is our help and redeemer.

Please find below this letter prayers that you might use in your own devotions, or in shared worship in the churches.

With love in Christ, and with my prayers for you all

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and the name 'Anne Jewell'.

Prayers to be used at this time in the life of our Diocese.

Clothed in God's grace, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For all those made in God's image, chosen and beloved by God we pray:

For all those reborn in Christ, clothed in compassion and gentleness, we pray:

For all those in conflict with each other, forgiven and called to forgive, we pray:

For all those in search of God, sought by the Word that dwells in them richly, we pray:

For all those in pain, accompanied by prayers, hymns, and spiritual songs, we pray:

For those who have asked for our prayers, we pray:

For all those asleep in death, held in the eternal peace of Christ, we pray:

Hear our prayers, God of gentle beauty,
and clothe us with kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.
May Christ dwell in us richly that in all we do we may ever give thanks to you,
now and for ever. Amen.