

Looking Forwards

This is my final “parish magazine” letter as your bishop. I’ve been writing such pieces since I became a vicar almost forty years ago, and I’ll miss that joyful task. I’ll miss the people I write to even more. Over forty-six and a half years of ordained ministry, almost thirteen of them here in Peterborough, I have worked with many people in many contexts, and made many friends. I am grateful to this diocese for making me welcome and letting me have a part in the great ministry here. I will take a lot of good memories with me.

But (and I expect you could feel a “but” coming) my leaving should not be about looking back, but we should all be looking forwards to what is next in God’s plan for us. Whenever I write a December letter, I get some flack for giving more space to Advent than to Christmas, so (not wishing to disappoint the critics) I am doing the same again now. Advent, at the start of the Church’s year, and setting the tone for the whole year, points us forwards rather than backwards. That is the Christian direction of travel.

As I write, we are getting ready for our three-yearly ministers’ conference (the last one was five years ago, but covid caused two postponements). It will be over before you read this. I will certainly miss those wonderful gatherings of around three hundred clergy and lay ministers sharing together for the best part of a week.

The previous three which I have led for this diocese have had as their themes, ***Joy in Ministry, Building the Church, and Sent by Jesus***. This

time, avoiding any backwards look, I have chosen ***Rejoice in Hope*** as the title, with studies and talks on the great Bible theme of Hope.

Hope is about putting our trust in Jesus for the future: looking joyfully to him, his wonderful promises, and his perfect plan. It is about his coming, his kingdom, the fullness of his salvation. It is about living for him, rising with him, being glorified in him.

Dear friends: my prayer is that we all rejoice in hope, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, this Advent, into Christmas, the New Year, and beyond.

God bless you



+Donald
Bishop of Peterborough



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