

# Address by The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally

03/10/2025

*Read Bishop Sarah's address in full:*

Thank you Alanis. Shall we pray.

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit  
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:  
grant that your people may be fervent  
in the fellowship of the gospel  
that, always abiding in you,  
they may be found steadfast in faith, active in service;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

Today, as I respond to the Call of Christ in this new ministry, I remain rooted in my first calling: to follow Christ, to know him – and to make him known to the world.

Reflecting on the experiences which have prepared me for this role, I am deeply thankful to the people, the churches and communities of the Diocese of London. It is my deep privilege to have shared ministry with you for almost eight years. In discerning this step, it has not been easy to accept that I will be leaving you.

Washing feet has shaped my Christian vocation as a nurse, then a priest, then a bishop. In the apparent chaos which surrounds us, in the midst of such profound global uncertainty, the possibility of healing lies in acts of kindness and love.

With humility and grace, we uphold and support those in need of our help. We do this to the best of our ability, in small ways and big, according to our own very particular gifts. That too is the service which I offer to the Church today.

Given the many struggles of our Church and of societies here and around the world, I am often asked where I see hope. I have the privilege to see hope in communities, chaplaincies and churches in the Church of England and across the wider Anglican Communion.

In parishes across this nation, I see faithful clergy and congregations worshipping God and loving their neighbours. I see thousands of churches running food banks and homeless shelters. I see hospitals and prison chaplains caring for people and families in times of desperation. I see Church of England schools educating a million children across this country.

I hear parishioners ringing bells and inviting people to pray. I hear the quiet hum of faith in every community, the gentle invitation to come and be with others, and the welcome extended to every person. In all of this, I see hope – because I see the person of Jesus Christ, reaching out to us all.

Last summer, I found myself in three Anglican churches—in three different countries—in rapid succession. In Brazil, Canada and Barbados.

In each one I was able to follow the liturgy without hesitation: Morning Prayer, the Eucharist, collective prayers for the people; the rhythms of Anglican worship echoed with familiar grace. I saw something deeply distinctive, coupled with mutual understanding: a shared inheritance of history, of family of worship, Sacrament and Word—made real in global diversity. Anglican Churches and networks around the world working together in mission, joining their voices in advocacy for those in need.

In an age that craves certainty and tribalism, Anglicanism offers something quieter but stronger: shared history, held in tension, shaped by prayer, and lit from within by the glory of Christ. That is what gives me hope. In our fractured and hurting world, that partnership in the Gospel could not be more vital.

Hope is made of the infinite love of God, who breathed life into creation and said it was good. Hope shimmered in the courage of Abraham and Sarah and the challenging call of the prophets. Hope resounded through Mary's 'yes' to God's call to bear His Son. Hope is found in Christ's triumph over sin and death.

Hope doesn't skip over grief, pain and messiness of life but enters into it, and tenderly tells us that God is with us.

Across our nation today, we are wrestling with complex moral and political questions. The legal right of terminally ill people to end their own lives. Our response to people fleeing war and persecution to seek safety and refuge. The pressures on communities who have been overlooked and undervalued. The deep-rooted question of who we are as a nation, in a world that is so often on the brink.

Mindful of the horrific violence of yesterday's attack on a synagogue in Manchester, we are witnessing hatred that rises up through fractures across our communities. I know that the God who is with us draws near to those who suffer. We then, as a Church, have a responsibility to be a people who stand with the Jewish community against antisemitism in all its forms. Hatred and racism of any kind cannot be allowed to tear us apart.

In every church you will encounter Jesus Christ, and his teaching to love one another: our source and our standard. This is both gift and responsibility. Jesus Christ is the life-changing hope that brings us together as church, even in our own brokenness and messiness – and sends us out into the world to witness to that Love.

I long for that same hope for all those around the world caught up in war. For those living in extreme poverty. For those on the front lines of the ever-worsening climate crisis. For our Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters, and all the peoples of the Middle East. For the people of Ukraine, Russia, Sudan, Myanmar and the DRC. May God end the horrors of war, comfort those who mourn, and bring hope to those living in despair. And I pray especially for Anglicans in those places, as they suffer alongside the people they seek to love and care for.

The Christian faith is unwavering in its teaching that we are all made in the image of God. Each one of us deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. Christ commands us to love God, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

In living in the service of others, we must also confront the dynamics of power— an issue brought into sharp focus by the recent safeguarding reviews and reports. As a Church, we have too often failed to recognise or take seriously the misuse of power in all its forms.

As Archbishop, my commitment will be to ensure that we continue to listen to survivors, care for the vulnerable, and foster a culture of safety and well-being for all.

This will not be easy. Our history of safeguarding failures have left a legacy of deep harm and mistrust, and we must all be willing to have light shone on our actions, regardless of our role in the Church.

Since my ordination, I have witnessed a significant professional and cultural shift in safeguarding. I know the National Safeguarding Team continues to work tirelessly alongside diocesan professionals and countless parish volunteers, to ensure that we are a Church that not only prevents abuse, but responds well when it is reported.

Safeguarding is everyone's business. But for those of us in senior leadership, it carries an added weight of accountability.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury is complex and challenging. But there is also something very simple about it. Along with my colleague bishops, I am called to share the hope that we have found in Jesus Christ – and what it means for us all as individuals, and as a society.

The role that I will take on next year is one that can only be done together. I look forward to sharing my ministry with the Archbishop of York, with Bishop Rose, the wider College of Bishops, and with Primates and Bishops across the Anglican Communion.

I will share it too with the clergy, congregations, schools and people of Canterbury diocese. And I am especially grateful to the students of

Archbishop's School. Thank you for being here today as we begin this new chapter together.

Our ministry, our ministry as Christians is always shared. The proverb tells us if we want to go fast, go alone, but if we want to go far, go together.

I'm told that there will be much talk today of this being an historic moment – and a joyous one for many. I share with you in that joy – not for myself, but for a Church that listens to the calling of God and says: yes, we will follow you.

Some will be asking what it means for a woman to lead the Church of England, and to take on the Archbishop of Canterbury's global role in the Anglican Communion. I intend to be a shepherd who enables everyone's ministry and vocation to flourish, whatever our tradition.

Today I give thanks for all the women and men – lay and ordained; deacons, priests and bishops – who have paved the way for this moment. And to all the women that have gone before me. Thank you for your support and your inspiration.

I was recently asked, if I was called to this role what would my legacy be. I said that I would want to nurture and cultivate confidence in the Gospel—both within individuals and across churches, in the Church of England and in the wider Anglican Communion.

I humbly offer myself, and the gifts and experience that God has given me, in service to God's world and God's Church.

I will not always get things right. But I am encouraged by the psalmist who tells us that, 'Though you stumble you shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds you fast by the hand.'

I trust in the truth of those words for me, for you, for the Church of England, for the nation, for the Anglican Communion and for the world. Held fast by the Lord's hand, please pray for me as I will pray for you.