

Our new Bishop

As you prepare to answer our survey on your thoughts regarding the next Bishop of Chichester, you might find it helpful to:

- spend a little time in prayer – we've provided the vacancy prayer below to help you.
- consider some scriptures relating to the gifts and fruit of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:6-8, Galatians 5:22-23.
- reflect on some words from the service of the ordination and consecration of a new bishop.

Our Vacancy Prayer

*Almighty God, giver of every good gift:
We thank you for the faithful ministry of Bishop Martin.
As we seek a new bishop to serve our household of faith,
send your Holy Spirit to deepen our trust in you,
and to guide all those who will discern the person you are calling;
that we may know, love, and follow Jesus, today and always*

Amen.

What is a Bishop?

The Bishop is often seen as the chief pastor or shepherd, and this image helps to explain the role of the Bishop – to both lead and look after the Church in their diocese (the geographical area of responsibility for a Bishop).

The Bishop is called to lead and teach, and also to perform certain important tasks, such as ordaining the Church's ministers (priests and deacons), licensing others to carry out different types of ministry on behalf of the Church, and confirming new Christians. As 'chief pastor' the Bishop has a key role to play in the decision-making, leadership and governance of the Church – both locally and as part of the wider Church of England.

The service of ordination & consecration of a Bishop

During the service the following words are used to describe the role of Bishop:

Bishops are called to serve and care for the flock of Christ. Mindful of the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep, they are to love and pray for those committed to their charge, knowing their people and being known by them. As principal ministers of word and sacrament, stewards of the mysteries of God, they are to preside at the Lord's table and to lead the offering of prayer and praise. They are to feed God's pilgrim people, and so build up the Body of Christ.

They are to baptize and confirm, nurturing God's people in the life of the Spirit and leading them in the way of holiness. They are to discern and foster the gifts of the Spirit in all who follow Christ, commissioning them to minister in his name. They are to preside over the ordination of deacons and priests, and join together in the ordination of bishops.

As chief pastors, it is their duty to share with their fellow presbyters the oversight of the Church, speaking in the name of God and expounding the gospel of salvation. With the Shepherd's love, they are to be merciful, but with firmness; to minister discipline, but with compassion. They are to have a special care for the poor, the outcast and those who are in need. They are to seek out those who are lost and lead them home with rejoicing, declaring the absolution and forgiveness of sins to those who turn to Christ.

Following the example of the prophets and the teaching of the apostles, they are to proclaim the gospel boldly, confront injustice and work for righteousness and peace in all the world.

During this service, the new Bishop is asked to answer the following questions:

The Bishop-designate is expected to answer 'By the help of God, I will' to all of the following questions:

- Do you accept the Holy Scriptures as revealing all things necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?
- Will you be diligent in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and fit you to bear witness to the truth of the gospel?
- Will you lead your people in proclaiming the glorious gospel of Christ, so that the good news of salvation may be heard in every place?
- Will you teach the doctrine of Christ as the Church of England has received it, will you refute error, and will you hand on entire the faith that is entrusted to you?
- Will you be faithful in ordaining and commissioning ministers of the gospel?
- Will you promote peace and reconciliation in the Church and in the world; and will you strive for the visible unity of Christ's Church?
- Will you be gentle and merciful for Christ's sake to those who are in need, and speak for those who have no other to speak for them?
- Will you endeavour to fashion your own life and that of your household according to the way of Christ and make your home a place of hospitality and welcome?
- Will you work with your fellow servants in the gospel for the sake of the kingdom of God?
- Will you accept the discipline of this Church, exercising authority with justice, courtesy and love, and always holding before you the example of Christ?
- Will you then, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually stir up the gift of God that is in you, that the good news of Christ may be proclaimed in all the world?

More information can be found at: www.chichester.anglican.org/vacancy-in-see/

You can have your say at: www.tinyurl.com/next-bishop until 26th May 2026.