

It was a great joy to be installed and enthroned last Saturday as your Bishop. I was very moved by my preliminary service with children from our church schools at St Peter on Eastgate. They prayed for me and robed me ready for the procession to the Cathedral. On the procession I served as a rather colourful Lollipop person in the middle of the road while children crossed safely. My intention for both elements of the installation at St. Peter's and at the Cathedral was fulfilled that children and young people should be key participants at the heart of our worship and common life. You can watch the Cathedral service online and read the sermon on the website. I hope it all captured our purpose to become more like our Saviour Jesus Christ and to serve the building of his kingdom across Greater Lincolnshire through worship, discipleship, evangelism and public service. One of the key messages of Saturday was not just spoken but experienced which was infectious joy in the Lord. This is not determined by our passing mood, or contentment with the status quo: this is our living the joy of being in God's heart right now. Heaven is not postponed. We are fast approaching the season of Advent when we reflect on the coming of the Lord in glory and his coming to our hearts now. We live eschatologically, which is to say that we draw the grace and power of that glorious future into the present to equip us to be useful agents of God's mission now.

I received a number of prayers and goodwill messages on the Feast of St Hugh yesterday. One of the messages contained a quotation from the Life of St Hugh by Adam of Eynsham: "With the help of many gifted people as his counsellors and members of his household, the new Bishop of Lincoln immediately transformed his diocese." The message was accompanied by several emojis of prayer. No pressure then! The prayer is the vital part as it connects us with the source of our life and hope, the Three-in-One God. He is God the Father, who is greater than great; He is Jesus the Son, more loving than love; and He is God the Holy Spirit, who is closer than close. We have no life or purpose other than in Him. I said in my sermon on Saturday that Time to Change Together is not about diverting the Titanic but about our being Transfigured with and by Jesus into the people and communities He calls us to become. We pray to become the people we really are in Christ. That's the Advent yearning for all followers of Jesus. As I preached on Saturday, Jesus came not to turn the world upside down, but to turn it the right way up, He joined our life in order to change it. At 65 I am not an old priest by the Church's standards. But, if the Lord spares me, I have five years to serve Jesus among you. As St Augustine said, I am with you as a Christian and I am for you as your Bishop. Five years is not long, but long enough for us build on the firm foundations of faith to be 600+ communities who show the world the fruits of our redemption in pastoral evangelism, radical commitment to how we serve our neighbours and the generations to come who will live the consequences of our selfishness, and worship and formation as disciples which roots us in the Bible and the sacraments.

I have been encouraged by the attendance and participation at the two sets of vision days of which I have been part. I want to thank Richard Crossland for doing all the ground work. I am grateful to the host churches and to the talks by Bishop David, Bishop Nicholas and Simon Dean, grounding our vision in sharing our faith, rooting our mission where we are and being generous. I have just sent out a notice that all of our oversight ministers and curates will be called to Swanwick in February for a residential gathering with me and senior colleagues to work together towards a clear plan for how that oversight can release wider gifts and more diverse ministries. I became a parish priest in 1994, so I've been involved in oversight ministry for nearly thirty years, but I still have more to learn, mostly from you. My ambition for our time away is that we can bring to this synod a way forward for full-scale focal ministry locally with legally delegated authority to focal ministers in almost every church. Not all oversight ministers need be stipendiary; but some focal ministers will be SSOMs, along with retired clergy and LLMs, but mostly lay people who don't need a certificate with local approval for the bishops to honour.

I had a busy weekend one way and another. The installation on Saturday was followed by the keeping of Remembrance Sunday at the Cathedral with upwards of 1,500 people in attendance, including many serving members of our Armed Services, with the RAF in the greatest number. Our remembering is always of those who suffered and died in both World Wars and all conflicts since. That includes the conflict and suffering going on around the world now. Our hearts go out both to the people of Israel and the Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Israel has the absolute right to defend itself against the atrocities committed by the Hamas terrorists and all others who wish to drive then

into the sea. Nonetheless, Israel needs to pursue its lawful objective to remove the threat of Hamas according to the dictates of international law. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke passionately in favour of a cessation of fighting and bombing. There is such desperate need among the civilian population and there has at least to be pauses in hostilities to allow the necessary aid into Gaza both from Egypt and by sea. At the same time, we need to be vigilant in our own communities against both anti-semitism and Islamophobia. Yesterday I attended a lecture about the successive Jewish communities in Lincoln - medieval, eighteenth century and modern - as part of our celebration of the feast of St Hugh of Lincoln. St Hugh was unusual for his time in his active support and protection of the Jews, both in Lincoln and Northampton. The lecturer focused for most of the time on the historical picture; but inevitably he strayed into the present as a liberal Jew who wants justice for the Palestinians but who is both angry and fearful of the terrorist desire to kill every Jew in the Middle East but also the way people here on the London Underground openly watching extreme videos about killing Jews wherever they might be found. Every Good Friday one of the special intercessions at the Liturgy is for God's first people the Jews, our forebears in faith. Although the complexity of issues around the protection of the Jewish state and justice for Palestinians is severe and enduring, we need to be people of peace, servants of the Prince of Peace who wept over Jerusalem. I am still hoping to lead a joint Lincoln-Ely pilgrimage to the Holy Land next May. My long experience of visits to Israel and the West Bank reinforces my deep conviction that the only sustainable future requires a two-state solution brokered internationally. The current conflict following the murderous action of Hamas against innocent Israelis drives peace further away into the future, as does the legacy of the fight for Gaza now. Today I invite us to pray for a cessation of violence and the positive impact of humanitarian relief. Please consider giving generously to Gaza relief.

The weekend segued into the General Synod, the main focus of which was the House of Bishops' motion on Living in Love and Faith. Nigel Bacon will deliver his General Synod report later in our agenda, so I will not steal his thunder. Those of you who are interested in these things can see my voting record. There has been a lot of rather competitive talk about exclusive integrity. All I can say is that I have sustained a consistent and I believe authentic position that I strongly support the College of Bishops' apology to LGBTQIA+ Christians for the systemic homophobic stance of the Church up to now. It is a matter of public record that I have supported the blessing of gay people in faithful and lifelong partnerships. At the same time, I have always asserted that I am not convinced that same sex civil marriage is the same as holy matrimony. I am pleased that this is the sustained understanding of the House and College. I appreciate that my stand on these matters goes further than some would want and not as far as others would desire. That's often where integrity leads. My message to all of you and all the clergy and parishes who you represent is that I shall never other any person or place. It will always be 'we' and not 'them', even if a distance is created. We are blessed to have a new Chair of the House of Clergy who represents a very different view than mine. I rejoice that this is so. With him and others we shall discern how shared mission and ministry continues with whatever differentiation is determined by the General Synod. We will know the draft shape of that at the February meeting of the General Synod with possible conclusion in July - although that is just my personal reading of things. In the meantime, the suite of Prayers of Love and Faith will be commended for use before the end of the year, along with the experimental use of the stand-alone services. I have already given a personal assurance to clergy who in conscience cannot use these prayers or services that I shall write to them formally to confirm that they are not required to use them and that any local division or complaint should be referred directly to me as the Bishop defending the integrity of my priests and licensed lay ministers.

I missed the final vote at the General Synod because I was summoned to Buckingham Palace by the King to do homage as Bishop of Lincoln. I did this thirteen years ago as Bishop of Ely. I got changed in the same sitting room and waited in the same reception room and I was presented to the King in the same saloon as last time. The difference was that the walk towards the King felt much shorter. It was an unexpectedly intimate and warm encounter. As I knelt to swear the oath of allegiance, King Charles was deeply in prayer. He was very well-informed about Lincolnshire. He spoke about the challenge of rural poverty as well as urban as an issue for us, and the challenge of food waste in a region that produces so much food. He was full of love for our cathedral and

expressed the wish to come and visit us. As I promised at my enthronement, I told him that Greater Lincolnshire was a large hidden gem in his crown.

Yesterday I made new canons of the Cathedral. I reinforced our ecumenical partnership in the gospel by inviting the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham, the Methodist Chair of District and the Co-Lead of the Assemblies of God in Lincoln to be canons. I appointed as Lay Canons Paul Thompson, our Director of Education, to highlight that our church schools and academies are at the heart of our mission as a diocese, particularly through our Growing Faith initiative to draw together schools, churches and households. I cannot put into words how important it was to me personally to have been prepared for my installation by children and young people from three of our primary schools and one of our secondary academies. I also appointed Sarah Spencer, our diocesan mission lead, who has done a remarkable job in helping us to inhabit all of the Five Marks of Mission, including the treasuring of creation. She is leading the way on our journey to be a carbon-zero diocese. I was struck as never before by the presence of the Archbishop of Polynesia at my enthronement. Some of you will have seen my wearing the Polynesian equivalent of a pectoral cross last Saturday. As I said in my sermon, we are linked as Anglican dioceses by the very real threat of inundation through climate change. Our shared hope and plan is a further conference in the Pacific on a common approach to the challenge as Christians, probably in 2025, triangulated with our other sister dioceses in Sweden and Belgium.

You will not be surprised to know that I am already being asked to write, deliver and record Christmas messages for various media outlets. I am glad to respond to all - better always than the true message of Christmas being sidelined. After a recent BBC Radio Lincolnshire live interview I was advised to give up the day job and make a living doing voice overs. I shall stick to what I know and love which is to preach the gospel, to proclaim that God is real and sovereign and the source of all love and healing. I review the retail Christmas videos and I tell myself that there is no greater message to market than that the Son of God embraced the risk of being born and becoming human that we might go to heaven with him. The wood of the manger was the prelude to the wood of the Cross. As we welcome people for Christmas, I am tempted to invite you to wish people a happy Easter while you are about it.