



THE BISHOP OF CHESTER

April 2019

Ad Clerum

I trust that you have had a splendid celebration of Easter, and that you are enjoying, or have enjoyed, a good post-Easter break.

I am writing to inform you that I will be retiring as Bishop on 30 September 2019.

I would have had to retire by next March, but +Libby's move to Derby concentrated my mind. Although we began the process of identifying a new Bishop of Stockport, I found myself reluctant to select a suffragan Bishop with whom my successor, but not I, would need to work. There was an added complication in that the Dioceses Commission has put us on notice that at the next vacancy, when +Keith retires, it would intend to review the overall episcopal provision in the Diocese, with the possibility that we might move to one Suffragan, and one or more additional Archdeacons, as some other Dioceses have done.

This certainly merits discussion, but that must engage my successor, and not me. To appoint a new Bishop of Stockport now, with a real possibility that the role might change significantly in the near future, didn't seem right. The future shape of episcopal and archidiaconal ministry in the Diocese arguably needs to be settled before any new appointments are made.

At 69, I was beginning to feel ready to retire - with Elisabeth in strong agreement! We will move to our house in Scotland, which we have lovingly helped to build over the past decade or so, and which is ready and waiting for us.

Bishop Keith will become Acting Bishop from 1 October, and he will be consulting about adding some temporary capacity to the senior team for the period until my successor is in post.

The clergy conference at Swanwick at the end of June will provide a good focus for the end of my ministry here, from the perspective of the clergy in the Diocese. A farewell service has been arranged in the Cathedral at 11am on Saturday 20 July, when I will preside at a service of Holy Communion, and more details will be provided about tickets for this in the near future. In August and September we will finalise the practical issues around leaving the Diocese, and moving out of Bishop's House, but my office here (and some ministerial commitments) will be maintained in September. We will be in touch with those parishes where I have commitments later in the year, which will now need to be rearranged.

Please make a local announcement in your benefice, as appropriate.

It has been a huge privilege to serve in this Diocese, and I am looking forward to my final months in post. The Diocese will always remain in our hearts, and in our prayers.