

FROM BISHOP MICHAEL

19th November 2014

To the Licensed Clergy, Readers and Lay Workers of the Diocese of Gloucester

Dear Brothers and Sisters

I am writing this to you, the clergy and lay people who have held my license.

On Friday I will cease to be Bishop of Gloucester and my retirement will begin. The last period of nearly four months in which I have not been able to exercise my ministry has, of course, been distressing and painful and the fact that a proper leave-taking cannot happen yet is a sadness.

Meanwhile my concern now is not to dwell on these last weeks, but to give thanks for the 10 years in which it has been my privilege to be a bishop for the people of Gloucestershire and beyond. Gloucestershire is a wonderful county, with all its variety yet its sense of common identity, and the diocese, which of course extends a little beyond the county, is a family in which much faith and hope and love are found. To have been here a pastor and teacher, a leader in mission and a sign of unity, which is what I have sought to be, has brought me great joy.

For these 10 years I am profoundly thankful, first of all to God, whom I believe called me to this ministry here, but also to those who have worked with me, supported me and encouraged me. I owe a huge amount to Alison, my wife, and my family, to my personal staff and to my senior colleagues in the diocese. I owe much to the college of clergy, grateful for our mutual support and affection. But I am also full of gratitude for the lay people in the parishes of our diocese, who are in the forefront of the Church's mission and make all the difference to its effectiveness, and for those who are leaders in our civic and community life across the county. I thank God for all of you from the bottom of my heart.

It is a few weeks before Alison and I move to Somerset but, after Friday, you will no longer be able to pray for "Michael our Bishop" as so many have done regularly over 10 years, something I have valued much. But I hope perhaps you will sometimes remember us in your prayers for the future and I assure you that my prayers for the Diocese of Gloucester and for those who have been my colleagues in ministry will long continue. And they will always be thankful prayers to a gracious God who has blessed our time together.

Alison also wanted to express her thanks to everyone and I attach below a letter from her. We would be happy if you share the contents of our letters more widely.

I find myself wanting to echo the words of the apostle Paul to the Philippians that begin, "I thank my God every time I remember you." (*Philippians 1.3ff*)

With love and blessing

+Michael

FROM ALISON

19th November 2014

Dear All

As the last day of Michael's ministry draws near, I would like to say a big thank you to all of you, not only for the support you have shown Michael, but also for the support and affection you have shown to me over the last 10 years. I have so appreciated the understanding of the diocese of my own work and the fact that I wasn't always present in Gloucestershire. I have also appreciated hugely the support and kindness given to me following my knee operation earlier this year and, most importantly, over the recent difficult months.

We have both enjoyed our time in Gloucestershire immensely, and I know Michael has been extremely happy in his ministry here. In fact I don't think he could have been happier. I have loved the opportunities presented to us but, most importantly, I have enjoyed meeting the clergy and laity of the diocese, and have learnt much from many of you, and you have all enriched our lives.

It is difficult to leave without saying a more personal goodbye and thank you, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your friendships and for all your prayers in recent times. We have a debt of gratitude, which will be impossible to repay, and I wish you all much joy in times to come.

With love

Alison