

++++ BISHOP KENNETH'S FAREWELL +++++

Tears and laughter as we say a fond farewell



Kenneth and Sarah listen to tributes after the farewell service at Newport Minster
Photo courtesy Isle of Wight County Press

Islanders gather to pay warm tributes to gifted bishop

THEIR prayers were heartfelt – and much appreciated.

Children from two primary schools on the Isle of Wight prayed that Bishop Kenneth might be able to spend an extra hour in bed in his retirement. The packed congregation appreciated the sentiment.

Hundreds of Isle of Wight worshippers had gathered to say goodbye to Kenneth and Sarah at a special Evensong in Newport Minster. The Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Caroline Baston, led the service and Bishop Kenneth preached.

And it was children from Newport C of E Primary and Sandown C of E Primary Schools who led the prayers. Eight-year-olds William O'Regan, Eliese Lawrence, Aimee Askins, Tia Dubois and Georgia Hudson, all from Sandown, took turns to pray while the Newport pupils led the congregation in a sung response.

At the end of the service, a tearful Sarah joined Kenneth at the front of the church to hear tributes from the Lord Lieutenant, Major General Martin White, and from Caroline Baston.

He was presented with a framed picture of Newport Minster, bottles of beer brewed on the island, and a card in the shape of a mitre made by adults with learning disabilities from Newchurch.

"We will miss your leadership skills, your gift for communication and your

instinctive feel for the special conditions on this side of the Solent," said Maj Gen White.

"Your achievements have included the creation of this minster to be a focus of worship for the whole community, your support for education on the island, riding top cover for us in the House of Lords and your appointment of Caroline Baston as archdeacon.

"I was at your final confirmation service in St Peter's, Seaview, and felt the warmth for you from the congregation, proof, if any were needed, that you will be missed."

And Caroline said: "Kenneth always makes sure the island is remembered as part of the Diocese of Portsmouth.

"He has been across for the launch of the eco-island initiative, confirmation services in parish churches and the opening of Christ the King College. We're grateful for his time and willingness to support those events.

"He has an amazing ability to proclaim the truth of the gospel in a way that is understandable. And working with him has never been boring.

"I'd like to add my personal thanks for his support for the ministry of ordained women."

Bishop Kenneth said: "Thank you for all that you have been. Thank you for your love and support and prayers. Carry on being the island!"

THE applause was long and sincere as the entire Stevenson family walked through the cathedral.

Worshippers gave Bishop Kenneth and his family a standing ovation lasting several minutes at the end of his final service as Bishop of Portsmouth. It was a moving occasion with inspiring worship, heartfelt words and much genuine affection as our diocese said a fond farewell.

And Bishop Kenneth's voice cracked with emotion only once – as he paid tribute to the medical teams at the hospitals in Portsmouth and Southampton who had kept him alive to see this day.

More than 650 churchgoers, clergy, former colleagues, friends and family members turned out alongside MPs, representatives of local authorities, community leaders and denominational leaders. The actress Patricia Routledge rubbed shoulders with members of the House of Lords, clerics in robes sat alongside judges in wigs.

Bishop Kenneth preached and presided over his final Eucharist as bishop. There was also a moving moment at the end of the Eucharist when he ceremonially laid his mitre and crozier on the altar and removed his vestments to symbolise the end of his time as our bishop.

Each of his four children played their part in the service, just as they had done at his enthronement in 1995. James was bishop's chaplain for the day, Alexandra was a guest soloist, and Kitty and Elisabeth led the prayers. This time Kenneth and Sarah's grandchildren Jacob and Matthew were also there to sample the atmosphere.

Worship was led by all three cathedral choirs – the youth choir Cantate, the St Thomas parish choir and Portsmouth Cathedral Choir.

The latter performed an anthem written specially for the occasion by David Price, Kenneth's son-in-law, who is also the cathedral's master of choristers. A music group from St Jude's Church, Southsea, also led worship before and during the service.

Students from the new Charter Academy led prayers of penitence. And a collection was taken for the appeal to create a new bone marrow transplant centre in Southampton, which will help leukaemia patients from across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The bishop



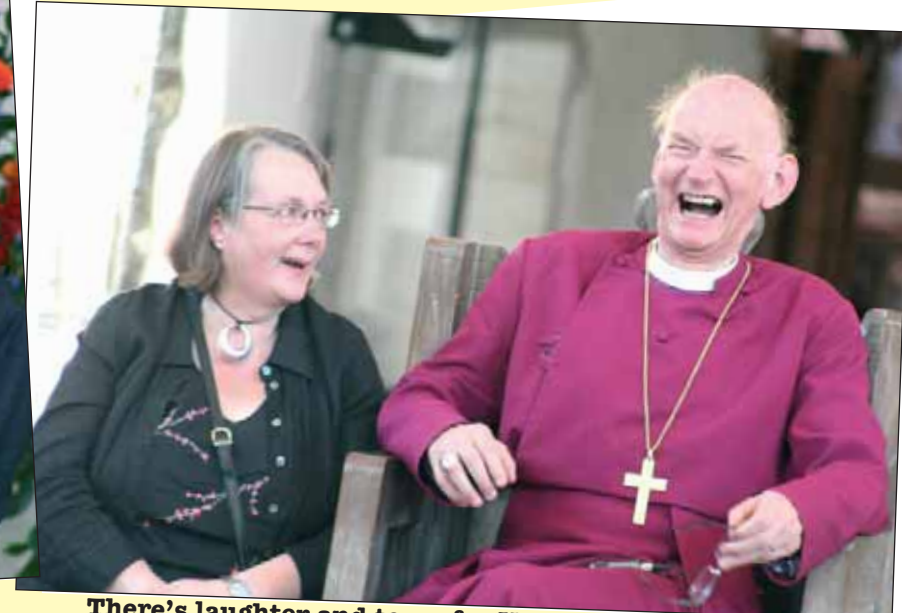
Bishop Kenneth and his son James, who was bishop's chaplain for the day



Alexandra joins the choir to sing the Gloria - later she would perform a solo



Kitty (left) and Elisabeth lead the intercessions



There's laughter and tears for Kenneth and Sarah as they hear a series of tributes after the service

has undergone two bone marrow transplants in recent years to combat leukaemia.

At the end of the service, dignitaries and overseas visitors paid tribute to Kenneth's courage, spirituality and leadership in his 14 years as our bishop.

Christine Atkinson, representing the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, said: "He has been an outstanding bishop and has made an outstanding contribution to our community as well as to the diocese. He has been an example to us all in the way he has fought his illness. Sarah has been the most marvellous support, and Fareham will miss a very popular lollipop lady!"

Professor John Craven, vice chancellor of

the University of Portsmouth, said: "Bishop Kenneth led the national Church's Board of Education with wisdom and insight, he spoke about education with a passion in the House of Lords, and he has always supported St Luke's School. I am privileged that my world and Kenneth's intersected in so many ways."

There were greetings from both the Diocese of Stockholm and from Ghana – two places that Kenneth has encouraged us to strengthen our existing links with.

The Rt Rev Daniel Allotey, Bishop of Cape Coast, had travelled from Ghana for the service and delivered a citation to Kenneth and Sarah. Generous worshippers have raised thousands of pounds for the theological semi-

nary in his diocese, responding to Kenneth's Lent Appeals. And some of Kenneth's theological books are now being studied by Ghanaian ordinands in the Stevenson Library in St Nicholas's Seminary, Cape Coast.

"We thank God for what he has done through Kenneth," said Bishop Daniel.

And Canon Peter Kelly, vicar of St Barnabas, Swanmore, paid tribute to Kenneth and Sarah on behalf of our diocese's clergy.

"There is no doubt of the enormous affection felt for Kenneth by many clergy in the diocese," he said. "The attributes that stand out are your courage, stature, erudition and hospitality.

"We salute you for your extraordinary resilience in the face of your illness. You are a fount of inspiration for those who are called to go through the same illness. We thank God for your amazing resilience and tenacity.

"Your stature is to do with your spiritual as well as your physical presence. And your erudition includes writing letters of encouragement, appreciation and thanks to clergy and people of his parishes. Your courtesy and overwhelming hospitality at Bishops Grove are the stuff of legend. We should like to thank your family because they've always shared you with us so generously."

Our diocese presented Kenneth and Sarah with some garden furniture for their new home in Chichester and a professionally printed book of photographs from their 14 years in the role.

Bishop Kenneth said: "Portsmouth is a special part of our lives, and I can't tell you how grateful I am to you all. There are so many people to thank, but I want to thank the medical teams at Portsmouth and Southampton. Without them, I wouldn't be alive. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

For those who attended, it had been a moving afternoon. The Rt Rev Michael Yorke, former cathedral provost, said: "It was lovely. It's only the third time I've been back since I left, but I'd enthroned Kenneth and I thought I should be here when he left too!"

Bishop's Council member Stuart Forster, from Holy Rood Church, Stubbington, said: "It was very moving. It was a service that brought together people of different traditions, with different styles of worship involved. I thought it was a fitting end to his 14 years."

And Jenni Hogg, a churchwarden at St Mary's Church, Liss, said: "It was tremendous. It avoided being 'yucky', but there was a real warmth to the service.

"There was a lot of spontaneous emotion – laughter, applause, tears – and the singing was glorious. It couldn't have been done any better."

frequently-asked questions

Q: What happens to the bishop's role between Kenneth retiring and a new bishop being appointed?

There are some things a bishop does that others are also able to do. Licensing new clergy and Readers, for instance, can be done by an archdeacon. This role will primarily be undertaken by our three archdeacons during the break between diocesan bishops. Other duties will be handled by members of the bishop's staff team, or the office staff at Bishops Grove.

But there are some things that only a bishop can do – confirmation and ordination services, for instance, and various legal formalities. A 'commissary' has therefore been appointed to take on that role. The Rt Rev Ian

Brackley, Bishop of Dorking, has agreed to take on these functions in addition to his current responsibilities in the Diocese of Guildford.

The Crown Nominations Commission (which includes six members from our diocese) is meeting this month and next month, and at the end of that period should come up with two names for our new bishop. The first name will be passed to Downing Street and the Queen for approval, and the name of our new bishop should be known by the end of the year.

Have you got a question about the diocese you'd like us to answer in *Pompey Chimes*? Contact us on neil.pugmire@portsmouth.anglican.org or 023-9289 9673 and we'll do our best to help!



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To see more photos from the bishop's two farewell services, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org