

# Emotional farewell to Bishop Christopher

It was no surprise that Bishop Christopher chose his farewell sermon and farewell speech to speak on behalf of society's most marginalised.

Both in his final sermon from the pulpit of Portsmouth Cathedral as our bishop and his final speech in the House of Lords, he chose to advocate on behalf of those whose voices are not always heard.

His farewell service in our cathedral was a moving Choral Evensong, which included tributes to his caring, thoughtful ministry, and some of the music that has been important to him in more than 40 years of ordained ministry.

It included the world premiere of a piece by contemporary US composer Nico Muhly, which was specially commissioned for the moment when Bishop Christopher handed over his crozier to be placed on the altar, marking the end of his time as Bishop of Portsmouth.

As Bishop Christopher and his family then processed to the west door, the congregation rose to applaud, thanking him for a decade of faithful service to our diocese and our community.

Civic, military, church and community representatives were among the limited congregation physically present in the cathedral, while hundreds of others watched the live-stream from home. Also among the guests were Aamir and Sana and their children, who had fled persecution in Pakistan to seek asylum in the UK. Christopher and



Left: Bishop Christopher with Justine, Richard, Sally and Miriam; top and right: saying farewell to invited guests after the service; above: handing over his crozier to the lay chair of Diocesan Synod Debbie Sutton

## TRIBUTES TO BISHOP CHRISTOPHER

"You sat down with our bishops and heard their stories, full of dreams, successes, disappointments and failures. You were a pastoral figure to us during those visits." **Rt Rev Matthias Mededues-Badohu, Bishop of Ho, Ghana**

"When Chris speaks, people listen, knowing that his voice represents and reflects the role of caring but impartial reason." **Professor Graham Galbraith, vice-chancellor, University of Portsmouth**

Sally had befriended them over the past few years, and the bishop was pleased to announce during the service that they've been given permission to remain here.

The service included his favourite hymn, *There's a Wideness in God's*

"As well as being diligent, Chris is well known for his pastoral care. Chris and Sally are also famous and much-loved for their hospitality." **Most Rev Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury**

"It is abundantly clear that Bishop Christopher loves and prays for his flock. We have heard much about his pastoral gifts and care for the people of this diocese. No priest or bishop has known me better." **The Ven Peter Leonard, Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight**

Mercy, which reflected the words of his sermon.

He said: "Throughout Jesus's ministry, there was space for the unlikeliest, the least attractive, those of no reputation, those with questions and hesitations, those

who are ill, the ostracised, and the disliked or hated. There is space for all in the kingdom which Jesus comes to proclaim and herald. There is a wideness in God's mercy and so there must be in the Church.

"We are called to be spacious Christians, giving opportunity to outsiders rather than insiders, young more than older, black more than white, gay more than straight, women more than men, refugees and asylum seekers more than those settled and comfortable, those whose learning or health is impaired or thwarted rather than the educated and well-to-do.

"It's not because they are more precious in God's sight, but because there are very many who we, the Church, continue to treat as different. We make God's love too

narrow by limits of our own, and we must not."

He picked up on a similar theme in his valedictory speech in the House of Lords, recalling the same hymn as he commented on the Queen's Speech in which the government had laid out their legislative programme.

"The Diocese of Portsmouth has many at the sharpest point of the sharp end," he said. "The third of children living in poverty; that is 7,000 children whose lives and life chances are being blighted. Or the people of Charles Dickens ward, which is in the one per cent of most deprived wards in the country. I find myself asking what in the programme will benefit them - not least since their lives have been hit hard by the pandemic."



He also criticised the government for the continued lack of a plan to tackle social care or to help those whose fragile employment was hit hardest by the pandemic.

His final words as bishop in our cathedral included a reflection on more than 10 years in the role, saying: "There is much I leave undone and still to do. Where I have failed you or fallen short, I am sorry. Where we have grown in depth, impact and number, let's rejoice. Thank you all for helping me as we have tried together to build that kingdom, and the coming of that kingdom is my deepest hope and prayer.

"We are proud to be Portsmouth, I am proud to have been Portsmouth with you, but prouder still to have been your fellow disciple. Thank you."

Bishop Christopher retired at the same time as his wife, the Rev Sally Davenport, retired as team rector of Holy Trinity and St Columba Church, Fareham. They've now begun a new phase of their lives in Somerset.