

Message from Bishop Robert

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Both Bishop Rachel and I are immensely thankful for the ministry of our retired clergy who contribute so much in active ministry and in prayer to the way we live out our LIFE vision in our parishes, chaplaincies and fresh expressions

It was my immense privilege to visit one of their number, The Revd Ray Probart last week. Ray will be celebrating his 100th birthday next month, but before that, last Thursday, he marked the 70th anniversary of his ordination as a deacon, in 1951, in Blackburn Cathedral. It was moving to spend time with him and hear something of his story, not least of how, not growing up in a Christian household, he came to faith.

Ray told me of a friend he got to know when he first started working, who shared with him his faith in Jesus Christ. Because of this he wanted to know more, seeking out his chaplain when serving in the army and eventually discerning the call to ordination. We talked more of the places where he had served and the people he had ministered to. Yet more stories and I came away reflecting on how vitally important these are. The best stories engage us, draw us in, connect to our experience, help us notice God at work in the everyday of our lives, make us long for more and enable us to tell our story. The story of faith, of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that Ray heard from his friend all those years ago undoubtedly changed his life and indeed changed countless more though his life and ministry, the stories that he in turn was to tell.

As we continue to live our LIFE vision in this Diocese rooted in Jesus' promise abundance in John 10v10, it is good to be reminded to ask what are the stories we have heard that have shaped our lives and our faith and what stories we tell of our life and faith today that will shape the lives of this generation. These are stories that will help us give thanks for the past, be confident in the future and rejoice in the knowledge that God walks with us in Jesus Christ, sharing in our lives and in our story.

With every blessing

+Robert