

Message from Bishop Robert

11 February 2025



Both Bishop Rachel and I find that one of the delights of our ministry is visiting parishes and communities, Sunday by Sunday and week by week, joining with communities, sometime large, often small, in worship and in service. So far this year I have travelled from village to market town, from the Cotswolds to the Forest of Dean, delighting in our common life, so grateful to be rooted in the communities that together make us the Diocese of Gloucester.

This week the Church of England's General Synod is meeting, and they have important business to do, not least in making decisions on the future organisation of safeguarding. Please do hold in your prayers not simply the Synod but especially our own representatives, clergy and lay, elected and chosen by us, that they may have wisdom and insight, and that they may know God's abiding presence with them in these days. I suspect that their discussion and decisions will get much coverage and much comment. Yet while the Church is fully present at Synod, we know that is not the full story, for the Church is also fully present in the communities where we worship and where we serve right across our diocese and each of the dioceses that make up the Church of England, and beyond in the Anglican Communion and the worldwide Church. There is not just one story of the Church, there are many stories that together make our life.

We will tell of ways in which those in need are cared for, supported and encouraged by our communities of hospitality and friendship. We will tell of the work of the Church, often in partnership with others, providing support through foodbanks, bereavement care, supporting children and families, the elderly and vulnerable. Nationally we will tell of our work tackling the housing crisis, combating the climate crisis and speaking for those on the margins of society. Beyond our own shores we see, in our own partnerships in Africa, India and Sweden, the Church, diverse, full of life, seeking to share the love of God, working for the Kingdom. Each story we tell is important.

We must also tell the challenging stories, for it is only in doing so, as we see with our safeguarding practice, that as a Church we can face our failures and make necessary change. As we address our failings as a Church, we pray that those other stories of God at work may shine even brighter with the light of Christ and the Kingdom of God might grow in and through us.

I know, and Bishop Rachel knows, from our engagement with you and the communities of our diocese how much good news there is to tell, the good news of our God in in Jesus dwells in the mess of life. Thank you for the life in which we share, for your encouragement, for all you are and all you do.

+ Robert