

DCO BISHOP ROB 010324

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News Release – Update from Bishop Rob

Hello.

One of the joys of my role is that I get to travel around our diocese, visiting people and parishes, working with and encouraging local churches and our church schools. I'm encouraged by all that God is doing here in Cumbria - people coming to faith, people growing in faith and churches serving their communities with love, hope and imagination.

I've been the acting Bishop of Carlisle since September and it is a joy and privilege to serve God, and you, in this way. I'm so very grateful for your prayers and for the support I've received.

Many of you will know that in December we expected a new Bishop of Carlisle to be appointed. However, the Crown Nominations Commission was not able to appoint and so the discernment process goes on.

We now know that the CNC will meet in January 2025 to shortlist ahead of interviews on the 13th and 14th of March. However, it is still unlikely that a new Bishop of Carlisle will begin until Autumn next year. We owe great thanks to those who represent us on the CNC for their prayerful dedication and sheer hard work, which will now continue for another year. Please pray for them and for this discernment.

Whilst the appointment remains some way off, I want to assure you that we will not stay still. God continues to call us onwards, to step out in faith, and to continue our work in his name.

As Christians, we are apprentices of Jesus Christ, and he has commanded us to go out into the world and make new apprentices. He also calls us to make the things of his kingdom our first priority. Over the next 18 months we will continue to honour our Lord's command with faith, hope and love.

Far from treading water, this will be a time to start new things as well as to support and deepen the life of our existing Christian communities.

We're working closely with the Church Commissioners to seek some initial capacity funding and, eventually, support for the development of our work with children and young people, our Mission Communities and our plans for church planting in Carlisle, Barrow and along the A66 north of Keswick. Our prayer is that these new initiatives will help people come to faith in Christ, grow in that faith and help us seek the kingdom in those places, and that they will spill out into a new wave of evangelism, church planting and revitalisation over the coming years.

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We're also going to focus on our vocations work, looking to release the gifts of all, whether that vocation is to church focused ministry, or the variety of ministries that people are called to in work, family and community.

There are, of course, some challenges, and we're going to tackle these too.

So, let's get on with our work, and a new Bishop can join in! But important though our continued work and our new initiatives are, let me urge us to the greater thing.

Through anxiety or enthusiasm, we can come up with lots of worthy activity, yet forget God. "Don't worry God, we've got this..." But only God can do this.

So, let's make sure we pray. Let's raise the spiritual temperature in our county and our reliance on God through our urgency and persistence in prayer, and our utter reliance on God. If our frantic activity is pushing out prayer, let's stop that thing and get on our knees. Let's light some spiritual beacons.

So, we go forward with hope and purpose to seek our Father's kingdom across the wonderful communities and county we are called to serve. Thank you for our partnership in the good news of Jesus Christ which we share. Please be assured of my prayers for all of you.

God bless you.

ENDS

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