



DIOCESE of  
**WINCHESTER**

## Message for Easter 2023

From Bishop Debbie and Bishop David

At the top of St Catherine's Hill in Winchester is a labyrinth, cut into the grass. Its origins are not fully known but it's believed to date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and it's a place we often like to come to.

Now a labyrinth is not like a maze where you have to find the right route, sometimes confronting dead ends and having to retrace your steps. Instead a labyrinth has just one path, but it's a path with twists and turn which eventually leads you directly to the centre. The labyrinth forces us to slow down, to take our time and to think about the journey of our own lives, the lives of others, our families, our communities, our churches and schools, our diocese.

As we travel through Holy Week it might be helpful to think of that journey like the one through the labyrinth. There are twists and turns, but each event leads to the ultimate destination of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's a week of deep emotion, questions, challenges – and each year we find deeper understanding of the journey Jesus took on our behalf.

Reflecting on the labyrinth it feels the path has taken a complete turn – going in the opposite direction to the promise of salvation. Because there's death on a cross, the sense of isolation – “My God, why have you forsaken me.” And the truth is, time and again we're caught between the challenges of life and the promise of what is to come. To wait in this space means we have to trust, to trust in the Lord who is always faithful.

But the wait doesn't last forever – on Easter morning the joy and discovery of the risen Christ. We have reached the centre of the labyrinth. And we get to the centre, to Easter Sunday morning and the stone has been rolled away – not by the way to let Jesus out but to let us in, into the joy, into the hope that replaces despair!

Our prayer is that we would all know the joy of Easter and you experience the reality of the risen Christ; and our prayer is that as a Diocese we continue to travel together knowing that Jesus at the centre, alive and risen and walking with us.