

12 November 2024

**A letter to the Diocese of Winchester from Bishop Philip:**

Dear sisters and brothers,

I want to write to you as soon as possible after the news of Archbishop Justin's resignation, recognising that these last few days in the life of our church have been very turbulent, following the release of the Makin Review.

Any reflection of ours should start, though, not with that news, but by acknowledging the appalling abuse that many people suffered in Morestead, in this diocese, at the hands of John Smyth: abuse which left physical scars that took a long time to heal, and mental scars that might never heal. To say that this was done in the name of God is utterly appalling and a travesty of the truth and love that are found in Jesus Christ.

In my view, in shouldering what he describes as his personal and institutional responsibility, Archbishop Justin has acted with honour and integrity, and I believe he has shown immense leadership in doing so.

It is that quality of leadership which has been a hallmark of his time as Archbishop and his legacy will be very significant.

The news has another local resonance for us in that he so recently visited us for a weekend of mission. It really was a very moving time. Archbishop Justin shared his own story with simplicity, conviction and humour and spoke eloquently and passionately of his own faith in Christ – a faith to which his resignation statement bears eloquent testimony.

Personally, I am immensely sad that Archbishop Justin has had to resign, and I count him as a friend. But let us take this news as a reminder that at the heart of our failures in safeguarding are vulnerable people who have been immensely hurt and it is the responsibility of us all, whatever our role, whomsoever we may be, to ensure God's church is as safe as it can be.

Let us recommit ourselves to that task, and to the Lord who is himself our own shield and defender.

With my love and prayers, in Christ,

+Philip  
Bishop of Winchester