

Episcopacy
in the Diocese of Winchester
A new Bishop of Basingstoke:
A Pastor in Mission
An Agent of Renewed Ministry

March 2025



1. Introduction: the vacancy:

Late in 2024 it was announced that Rt. Rev. David Williams would become the next Bishop of Truro, thus creating a vacancy in the See of Basingstoke. Consequently, the Bishop of Winchester has, within the constraints of relatively tight timetable, consulted with key leaders in the Diocese, via Bishop's Council¹, and sought – and obtained - their approval to take a case to the Dioceses' Commission for the appointment of a successor. Whilst enthusiastically endorsing what follows, they are strongly of the view that not making an appointment to the vacant See would be seriously detrimental to the mission and ministry of the Diocese of Winchester, and offer further thoughts on that theme below.

2. The Context for an Appointment:

a) Area, people and community:

The contemporary Diocese of Winchester² is an exciting and challenging mix of rural and urban, new and old, innovative and traditional. It was founded in 676 AD and has changed and developed consistently over time – and is changing still. We serve a growing population of 1.27 million, of whom over 22,751 regularly attend worship in one of the 350 church buildings across our 232 parishes, led by our 224 ordained clergy, 137 Licensed Lay Ministers and a significantly growing number of lay people commissioned for ministry (15 LLW, 377 BCM).

The diocese consists of about two-thirds of the county of Hampshire, excluding Portsmouth and the area immediately to its north and north-east, and most of Bournemouth in Dorset.

Stretching from the Surrey border to the beaches of Bournemouth, and from the River Hamble to the outskirts of Newbury, over half of the diocese is geographically rural and yet nearly 80% of the population live in urban areas. In both urban and rural areas some people face deep social and economic challenges while others live in relative affluence.

While the diocesan population as a whole is predominantly 'white British', there are a number of areas in which religious and ethnic diversity is a significant part of the cultural landscape. In line with much of the country, there have been transformations in ethnic and cultural mix in recent years through patterns of migration. There is a large Polish community in Southampton and there are Chinese and Nepalese communities in Basingstoke. Southampton is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic city where diverse faith communities live side by side and in which an active Council of Faiths, composed of Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh representatives, works hard to build social capital and a cohesive city. Most recently, our churches have welcomed refugees from countries such as Iran and Somalia, while local authorities and families in the diocese have also offered temporary homes to Ukrainian refugees whose numbers have grown.

As the cost of living and energy crises hit our poorer communities hard, churches are offering warm spaces, increased food bank provision and emotional support, aware of the lack of hope felt by many in our urban areas and building on initiatives begun during the pandemic. Socioeconomic deprivation, drugs, and human trafficking are realities in our urban areas and present a challenge within the diocese.

The northern Archdeaconry of Winchester is mostly rural. Within it lie the market towns of Andover, Overton, Alton, Odiham and Alresford. The city of Winchester is the home of our cathedral and as

¹ Simply for reasons of timing it has not been possible to consult the Diocesan Synod: it met in November 2024 and will not meet again until after the next meeting of the Dioceses' Commission.

² Please see Appendix I for some key diocesan statistics

the ancient capital of England has an important place in the nation's history. Basingstoke, which hosts some major corporate headquarters, is the largest town in the Archdeaconry.

The southern Archdeaconry of Bournemouth is home to about 60% of our population, most of whom live in the city of Southampton, and the towns of Bournemouth, Eastleigh and Christchurch. It also includes the New Forest, a National Park of 220 square miles, a place of beauty and history, and a popular tourist destination.

There are five universities: Bournemouth, Bournemouth Arts, Southampton, Solent and Winchester comprising c. 60,000 students in total undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including many international students. There is also significant FE provision. We know we need to engage more effectively and consistently with the student populations of our cities and towns.

The diocese has valued links with the many parts of HM Armed Forces that have bases here - the Army Training Regiment at Winchester, the Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration at Worthy Down, the UK Land Forces HQ at Andover, and RAF Odiham which is home to the Chinook and to the King's Helicopter Flight.

The Commission will also want to be aware that the Diocese is committed to collaborative working with neighbouring dioceses in a number of ways: via the Regional Learning Partnership; informal collaboration with Salisbury in the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole conurbation, and with Salisbury, Portsmouth and Bath and Wells in engaging with Sarum College; via a shared Finance team with Portsmouth, and via shared IT support with Guildford and Portsmouth. We are also unusual in sharing a joint DBE (with shared staff) with Portsmouth. We remain open to exploring further possibilities.

There are two specific issues arising from all this above that are worth highlighting regarding an appointment to Basingstoke.

One is that the population of the Diocese is growing, whilst the number of stipendiary clergy has fallen³: as more falls on the shoulders of fewer clergy there is a consequent need for more episcopal support, in providing adequate pastoral care and ensuring clergy well-being.

Another key feature of Winchester, and a reflection of its current culture, is that both women and those of global majority heritage remain under-represented in the Diocese and specifically in its leadership. Those will be key factors to be considered in appointing a new Bishop of Basingstoke.

b) 'The North':

There is no area scheme in place within the Diocese of Winchester and both the Bishops of Basingstoke and Southampton are expected not only to hold briefs across the Diocese, but also to minister more broadly too, according to need and opportunity.

That said there is clearly a weighting in this role towards what is commonly termed 'The North' and to the Archdeaconry of Winchester⁴. This area of 132 parishes, in seven deaneries, is served by 75 licensed clergy (including 55 stipendiary or house for duty incumbents and associates and 14 stipendiary curates). It embraces England's ancient capital, Winchester (a status of which it is very aware!) a place of significant wealth yet with pockets of real deprivation. Basingstoke and Andover are the other two main centres of population. Although there are a number of significant employers in the former, and it is considered a part of the 'tech corridor', there is also significant deprivation and poverty of aspiration in both.

³ In response to the financial challenges faced in the pandemic in October 2020 22 FTE stipendiary clergy posts were removed from the budget, including 11 posts in the Northern Archdeaconry.

⁴ There could be a case to be made, as vision and strategy develops, for formalising the current informal arrangement in the Diocese via an Area Scheme, but this is not under immediate consideration.

Both Basingstoke and Andover have benefited from SDF investment which has brought real change. In the latter in particular there has been a very high level of civic engagement with the church offices co-located with the Primary Care Network. There is undoubtedly more to be done in sharing the benefits of the SDF investment more widely, and yet both projects feel under pressure to produce results with diminishing resources.

Alongside that there is significant affluence in the rural areas of 'the North', in multiple Hampshire villages. Such communities provide significant financial resource to the rest of the Diocese, but there remains the need for the Bishop of Basingstoke to be an ambassador who can continue to sensitise people in 'the North' to the missional needs of urban areas. It remains a sobering fact that (because of small village communities each with their own parish church) the Diocese spends ten times more *per capita* on the population of our most wealthy deanery compared to our poorest. An incoming Bishop would need to challenge that situation prophetically.

c) Recent history:

The corporate trauma suffered through the departure of the previous Bishop of Winchester belongs, now, largely in the past, and the Diocese is in a more positive place. Nonetheless there are some local factors which should be taken into account in considering the need for a new appointment to this See.

First, the Diocese of Winchester has suffered from something of a 'revolving episcopal door' in recent years with the departures of Bishops Tim, Debbie and David, and the arrivals (so far) of Bishops Philip and Rhiannon. The Diocese needs to have a settled episcopal team in place: it should be borne in mind that by the time a new Bishop of Basingstoke is in place (if approved) it will be the best part of five years since a settled episcopal team was in place for any significant period of time (and arguably that earlier team had ceased to be effectively functioning for some time before that). That loss has undoubtedly had an impact, pastorally and missionally, and we urgently need to return to a full establishment.

Secondly, recent events in the Church of England leading to and arising from the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury have had a significantly negative effect on the morale of clergy in the Diocese of Winchester (and no doubt elsewhere). At time of writing this crisis shows little sign of abating and effective pastoral care by a full episcopal team is certainly needed.

d) The Role of the Bishop of Winchester:

As one of the five senior Bishops of the Church of England there is a clear expectation placed on the Bishop of Winchester that he or she should play a key national, and indeed international role, alongside their significant diocesan responsibilities.

In Bishop Philip's case these broader responsibilities include:

- Attending and speaking in the House of Lords.
- Chairing the Redress Board tasked with putting in place a multi-million-pound scheme to provide redress to victims of church-based abuse.
- Episcopal Vice Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council
- Chairing the Church Works Commission in succession to +Paul Butler⁵
- Chairing the Church of England's Partnership for World Mission
- Continued engagement, nationally with the Government, and internationally, in the field of Freedom of Religion or Belief

⁵ Church Works is a major national ecumenical initiative co-ordinating national efforts such as the Warm Welcome campaign, and programmes in mental health and well-being, and child and family poverty.

In the current crisis +Philip has also been called on frequently to engage in national media and to chair the House of Bishops as a trusted honest broker.

All these responsibilities are significant and argue for the appointment of a Bishop of Basingstoke, alongside the Bishop of Southampton, to allow +Philip to exercise them without detriment to the Diocese of Winchester.⁶

3. Diocesan needs and priorities

In autumn 2024, Bishop Philip launched a fresh vision for the Diocese of Winchester, under the title of '[Walking the Wessex Way](#)'. This vision draws, intentionally, on Winchester's deep and rich history as a wellspring for future progress. It is framed around a simple commitment to 'learning, serving, growing and loving', illustrating both how these four have been key features of Winchester's past, and how they are expressed now. It then goes on to invite churches, schools and chaplaincies to consider, prayerfully, how those four might feature in their own corporate life. As such, given the recent history in the Diocese, it eschews central 'top down' initiatives, and issues, instead, an invitation to engage.

The Bishop's Staff Team (BST) have themselves responded to this invitation. That response recognises that much significant change happens at a local level and it is not the task of BST to dictate how that might happen. And yet at the same time BST wants to own, appropriately, its own agency in bringing about change. In particular it recognises its need to lead in five specific areas:

1. Ensuring our models of ministry are appropriate for the third decade of the 21st Century.
2. Ensuring the health and growth of the Church, that it might be fit for mission.
3. Paying due attention to clergy well-being.
4. Addressing issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).
5. Investing significantly in ministry with children and young people.

The first and second are dealt with further, below, in discussing the suffragan bishops' portfolios. Under the leadership of the Archdeacon of Winchester significant progress is being made on 3. including the provision of supervision for clergy. In addressing EDI, the Diocese is in the process of appointing a Diocesan Advisor for Women's Ministry and has recently adopted a Racial Justice Strategy, though there is more to be done in this general area. Finally, a working group under the Director of Education has taken initial steps in developing a strategy for better engaging with children and young people.

The development of vision and strategy for the Diocese of Winchester, across these five areas, will be supported by an ambitious bid to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board, to be submitted in December 2025, to leverage significant change across the life of the Diocese. This is currently in preparation and whilst certainly exciting (and much needed) it will have significant resource implications, demanding a significant amount of time and attention from the BST, thus making the appointment of a new Bishop of Basingstoke all the more essential.

Finally, the Diocese of Winchester wants to respond appropriately to the many wholly justifiable but increasing calls from the national church to address issues such as episcopal leadership of SMMIB and DIP programmes, clergy well-being, creation care and carbon net zero, racial justice (and EDI issues more generally) and – of course – safeguarding. Each and all of these have significant resource implications and also argue for the appointment of a new Bishop of Basingstoke.

⁶ It has been suggested that (as per Durham) Winchester might only 'qualify' for one suffragan. However, the comparisons do not justify that. Many dioceses with a smaller population have two suffragans (Winchester, 1,270,000; Salisbury, 1,100,000; Exeter, 1,230,000; Norwich, 1,030,000) and some with only one are much smaller (Truro, 570,000; Eps & Ips, 631,000; Gloucester, 647,000).

4. Priorities for the Bishop of Basingstoke

Alongside the core task of episcopal ministry, as outlined in the Ordinal, there are two clear areas for a new Bishop of Basingstoke to focus on, summarised by a twin commitment to him or her being 'a pastor in mission; an agent of renewed ministry'.

To deal with the first (more briefly) there is certainly a need for the north of the Diocese to be pastored lovingly and caringly, following in the footsteps of +David Williams, whose pastoral care of clergy and laity was exemplary: this will need significant time and attention. There is also a need for a new Bishop of Basingstoke to take advantage of the many missional opportunities with which they will be faced, making disciples, and exercising a prophetic voice in calling parishes boldly to address the challenges they face, such as an aging population, while also (as argued above) challenging the wealthy joyfully to shoulder their responsibility towards the poor elsewhere in the Diocese.

Turning to a new Bishop being 'an agent of renewed ministry' the departure of +David gives an opportunity to re-evaluate the suffragans' portfolios. Recognising +David's particular strengths in pastoral ministry it was felt appropriate to give +Rhiannon a substantial brief in mission and ministry. With +David's appointment to Truro, and recognising +Rhiannon's very significant experience in reshaping the Church in mission, which has borne very significant fruit in Ipswich, it would seem sensible to separate the mission and ministry portfolios and ask a new Bishop of Basingstoke to take responsibility for the latter.

More specifically, BST has recognised five particular priorities in ministry to be addressed:

1. Oversight ministry: ensuring that this happens intentionally, rather than accidentally - with the consequent damage that can be incurred.
2. Focal / local ministry, acknowledging the value of recognised local church leadership.
3. Pioneering: releasing the gifts of those whose primary calling lies on or beyond the margins of church.
4. Youth and children's ministry: recognising how much poorer the church is without the presence and gifts of children and young people.
5. Chaplaincy: celebrating much that is good in this oft-neglected ministry and further encouraging it, recognising how 'of the moment' it seems to be.

There has already been significant progress and change in ministry in the Diocese. The Bishop's Commission for Mission programme (see footnote on p. 10) has led to a very significant number of people stepping into new areas of ministry. As a consequence, and against the national trend, ordinand numbers in Winchester are healthy. Nonetheless, there is a real need for 'renewed ministry' as expressed by the five priorities above, so such momentum as there already is can be further increased.

Thus it is Bishop Philip's hope that the next Bishop of Basingstoke will, under his leadership, take on the ministry brief for the whole Diocese, co-chairing a new Diocesan Mission and Ministry Council with the Bishop of Southampton. He or she will take leadership of the Ministry Team, act as Sponsoring Bishop for those seeking ordination and as Warden of Readers, casting a vision for hopeful, fruitful, joyful, loving value-rich ministry, and doing all that he or she can for the renewal of ministry across the Diocese of Winchester, ensuring that the work of the Diocese of Winchester aligns with the Church of England's national priorities.

5. The implications of not making an appointment

Bishop's Council feel it vital that the Dioceses' Commission are aware of what they consider to be the serious implications for the Diocese of not making an appointment to Basingstoke:

- Pastoral care of clergy would suffer significantly;

- There would be a significant loss of visibility and credibility of the Church in the public square;
- The economic 'engine' of the north of the Diocese would suffer and undermine diocesan finances;
- Trust within the Diocese of the wider Church would be significantly eroded and diocesan recovery from recent history impaired;
- With episcopal leadership stretched to cover larger rural areas, the urban, poorer, south of the Diocese would suffer;
- The development of lay and ordained ministry, vital for the future of the Diocese (and a key feature of +David's ministry) would be impaired.

6. Role Description and Person Specification

This section sets out a summary of the challenges and leadership roles of the next Bishop of Basingstoke, as well as a person specification, as agreed by Bishop's Council. As with any role profile it will need to be kept under review. If there are any particular concerns after six months the Bishop may wish to raise these with the Diocesan Bishop. The Bishop will also wish to ensure that at their first Ministerial Development Review with their Diocesan Bishop this document is discussed and amended as appropriate.

The Role Description and Person Specification should not be considered in isolation but in the context of the vows and duties undertaken at ordination and consecration as a bishop, and the Canons of the Church of England.

ROLE: BISHOP OF BASINGSTOKE

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE:

To provide effective, inspiring transformational episcopal leadership in the Diocese of Winchester, especially, but not exclusively, in the north of the Diocese, in close collaboration and partnership with the Bishops of Winchester and Southampton.

CHALLENGES /PRIORITIES OF THE ROLE

- To be a confident, caring, prophetic and missional pastor and leader for the communities of the north of the Diocese, including the particular strategic support required for two Resource Churches, alongside nurture and encouragement for rural parishes;
- To lead in the renewal of ministry across the Diocese as a whole.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ROLE

- To be a colleague and critical friend to the Bishop of Winchester and the Bishop of Southampton; playing a full part in the collegial life of the senior staff, sharing in the leadership, oversight and development of the Diocese;
- To engage effectively with communities and their leaders both lay and ordained across the north of the diocese, as a leader in mission, offering pastoral care with prophetic edge, and enabling churches, their leaders and people to be more confident in their calling to grow the Church and make disciples, and more creative in pursuing it;
- To co-chair the Diocesan Mission and Ministry Council and take the lead, in collaboration with the Head of Ministry, in overseeing the development of ministry, lay and ordained, across the Diocese of Winchester, *'to equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up'* (Ephesians 4:12);
- To act as Sponsoring Bishop working closely with the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and her team;
- To be Warden of Readers, supporting the Diocese' 137 Licensed Lay Ministers
- Taking whatever strategic steps are necessary to ensure that cultural change in ministry is effective and sustained;
- To work both with existing SMMIB funded projects, to ensure their own sustainability and fruitfulness, and to play his or her part in the roll-out of the diocesan vision and strategy, supported, hopefully, by further SMMIB resources;
- To ensure thereby that the mission and ministry of the Diocese of Winchester aligns with the Church of England's national priorities: to be a church that is younger and more diverse; to be a church where mixed ecology is the norm; to become a church of missionary disciples where all God's people are released to live the Christian life.
- To work with colleagues to ensure that other national priorities in e.g. safeguarding, clergy well-being; creation care, EDI are properly addressed;
- To share with Archdeacons and Area Deans in making clergy appointments, offering pastoral care and support to lay and ordained ministers and engaging diligently in the clergy MDR process;
- To exercise responsibility for safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, the provision of pastoral care of survivors, and creating a culture in which all will flourish and which is coherent with the safeguarding policies of the Church of England;
- To exercise all usual episcopal functions such as pastoral visits to parishes, conducting confirmations, licensing and instituting priests;
- To undertake other appropriate lead functions as agreed with the Diocesan Bishop
- To proclaim the Christian faith with confidence, in preaching, through media engagement and in any other appropriate ways;
- To assist in relating the local church to the national and international Church (and vice versa) through participation in the College of Bishops, regional bishops' meetings, ecumenical gatherings and diocesan links;
- To continue personal, professional, theological and ministerial development and formation;
- To uphold the Five Guiding Principles as set out in the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops, and to promote the flourishing of churches across the range of the theological breadth of the Church of England; and
- To discharge all other duties as set out in canon law.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

We seek someone who, in the following areas...

Spiritual life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is confident in Christ, and grounded in their life of prayer; • is at home in their own church tradition but rejoices in the breadth of the Church of England;
Theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is theologically literate; educated in theology at least to degree level; and is capable of creative and innovative theological reflection that is faithful to Christian tradition; • can articulate a clear and compelling theology of ministry enabling others to be curious and engaged;
Experience in mission and ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates evidence of engagement in innovative and fruitful mission and ministry, church growth and disciple-making, ideally in a parish context; • has a track-record of change and growth in a significant area of church life, ideally in the area of ministry development;
Formation of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a natural pastor who delights in exercising positive creative influence over others that allows them to explore and develop their vocation and fulfil their potential in Christ; • good experience in making effective appointments;
Engagement in community life and public issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a confident articulator of the Christian faith, relating it well to issues of contemporary concern and can address a range of audiences with both charity and clarity; • is a trusted partner with those in wider society and has a clear track record as such and can encourage parishes in the development of civic links;
Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes safeguarding issues with the utmost seriousness which they warrant, understanding the role of a suffragan in this area, working with his or her Diocesan and the diocesan safeguarding team;
Leadership and oversight of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a self-aware leader who is comfortable with being so; • is patient, kind-hearted and resilient able to deal positively but decisively with challenge and conflict; • is aware of the dynamics of power and their possible abuse and who always seeks the flourishing of others;
Working with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is sufficiently self-aware and emotionally intelligent to be able to form strong, purposeful and fruitful relationships both with individuals and teams;
Management of resources and structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is experienced in issues of organisational leadership and financial discipline, understanding due accountability and is confident in exercising 'cabinet' responsibility.

Appendix I

Some key diocesan statistics are as follows:

Geographical Area	1,130 square miles
Population	1.27 million
Archdeaonries	2
Deaneries	13
Benefices	129
Parishes	232
Churches	350
Population per church	3,628
Percentage of GMH population	10%
Stipendiary clergy	111 (includes SDF posts but not HfD)
Self-supporting ministers	59
Percentage of female incumbents	28%
PTO clergy	242
LLMs (Readers)	137
Bishop's Mission Orders	1 under consultation
Bishop's Permission to Preach	48
Bishop's Commission for Mission ⁷	377
Chaplains	26

⁷ The Bishop's Commission for Mission (BCM) programme offers a number of 8-week training courses throughout the year for lay people discerned and identified by their incumbent. There are a range of BCM courses to choose from covering different areas of ministry – from leading worship, working with children and families, pastoral care and discipleship. At the end of the course the trainees receive a Commission from the Bishop to minister in their context.