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PRAYING THROUGH THE VACANCY IN SEE

A PRAYER FOR THE 100TH BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

Eternal Father

You have provided faithful pastors in every age
to watch over your people and lead them in your ways:
as you chose your servant Chad
to be the first bishop of your church in Lichfield,
so raise up for us, who follow Christ in your footsteps today,
a shepherd to lead your people
in the joy and steadfastness of the Holy Spirit,
that all may know the abundant life
which you give us in Jesus Christ your Son.
Amen.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN OF LICHFIELD



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Here at your Cathedral, we take seriously our call to pray three times each day for our Bishop, and also for the Area and Suffragan Bishops, Archdeacons, Diocesan Staff Team, and for the ministry of our parishes and church schools.

We invite you now to pray with us as we prepare, as a diocese, to say farewell to Bishop Michael and Julia, and as the Vacancy in See process begins, culminating in the appointment of the 100th Bishop of Lichfield.

Bishop Michael has been a much loved and faithful bishop, pastor, and chief shepherd. It is hard to imagine the Diocese without his wise leadership and pastoral care of his flock. We pray for him and Julia as they face the huge task of saying farewell to one of the largest dioceses in the Church of England. We pray too for those who will take on extra responsibilities during the Vacancy in See, most especially Bishop Sarah, but also Bishops Matthew, Tim and Paul; our Diocesan Secretary, Sam Rushton; the Bishop's Chaplain Treena Larkin, and Executive Assistant, Sally Churchill. We are grateful to those who will continue the mission and ministry of our Diocese, and who will ensure that our Seeking the Kingdom plans for discipleship and growth remain on track, as we continue together to follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad.

The appointment process for a new Diocesan Bishop is long and complicated, but it must also be a process of Spirit-led discernment. Not many of us will be members of the Vacancy in See Committee, and even fewer will sit on the appointment panel, but every one of us can play our part by praying faithfully and earnestly for the process itself, and for the person whom God is already calling to be our next Diocesan Bishop.

The key stages in the process, where our prayers will be most especially valued are:-

Retirement of Bishop Michael : End of September 2026

Interim Ministry of Bishop Sarah:

August and September 2026 : Bishop Sarah leads with delegated powers

September 2026 to the end of the Vacancy : Bishop Sarah is Acting Bishop of Lichfield

Vacancy in See Committee meets: May-October 2026

June-October : Consultation with the Diocese

June: the Diocesan Crown Nomination representatives are elected

October: the Statement of Needs is approved

Crown Nomination Commission

Summer 2027: Crown Nomination Commission meetings and interviews

Autumn 2027: Announcement of the new Bishop

Early 2028 : Installation of the 100th Bishop of Lichfield

Please pray for all involved, as we will be praying daily here at your Cathedral.

With every blessing and with joyful anticipation of all that lies ahead.

For all that has been, thanks.

For all that shall be, yes.

Dean of Lichfield



Simple ideas to help people to pray during the search for a new Bishop of Lichfield:

Bishop Michael and Julia, Bishop Sarah

Give thanks for Bishop Michael and for Julia, and all that they have given to the Diocese of Lichfield over the last 10 years. Pray for them as they move into retirement, that they will know God's peace. Pray for Bishop Sarah, as she holds the space as Acting Bishop, and for all our Bishops, Archdeacons, cathedral and diocesan staff as together they lead the Diocese through this transitional period. Pray for wisdom, stamina and joy over this season.

Consultation Process

Pray for open, humble hearts in the consultation process — that people speak truthfully and listen deeply, especially to under represented voices. Ask God to reveal how the diocese should be led in order for our churches to be beacons for the Kingdom of God. Pray for Sam Rushton, our Diocesan Secretary, as she takes on the extra responsibilities and work at this time.

Drafting the Statement of Needs

Pray that the drafting of the Statement of Needs is Spirit-led, honest, and courageous — reflecting both the Gospel and the diocese's challenges and strengths. Pray for unity and clarity among the Vacancy in See committee.

Choosing the Crown Nominations Commission

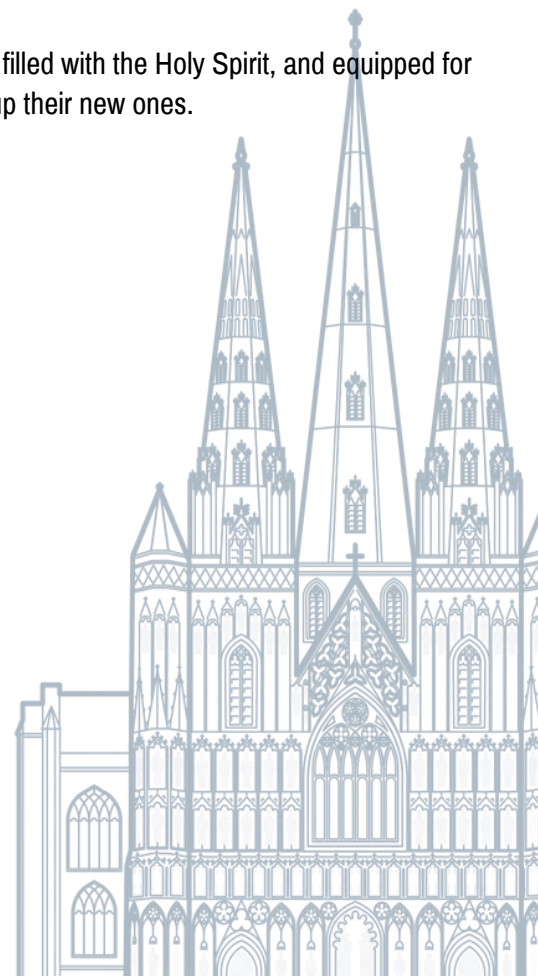
Ask for a diverse and prayerful panel to be chosen which truly represents the breadth and variety of the life of our Diocese — one that listens well, discerns wisely, and carries out its role with integrity.

Candidates and appointment process

Uphold all candidates in prayer. Pray for spiritual discernment, fairness, and pastoral care for those shortlisting and interviewing — that the process is guided by faith, not fear, and that each candidate will know the comfort of the Holy Spirit, through it all.

The New Bishop

Pray for the person who is called to be the new Bishop of Lichfield. Pray that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and equipped for their new minstry. Pray for them as they lay down their current responsibilities and take up their new ones.



Resources: Liturgical Texts, Readings & Prayers

The texts which follow may be used in a celebration of the Eucharist or as appropriate, in Services of Morning or Evening Prayer, or a Service of the Word. These should not normally replace the materials proper for Sundays or Feast Days, but some parts may be used in addition. You may wish to use them where a day is set apart to pray for the appointment of a new bishop, where this is the particular focus. The choice is yours.

The texts which follow are taken from a variety of places in Common Worship mainly from services for Embertide; The Ordination and Consecration of Bishops; and For the Guidance of the Holy Spirit. Other prayers are ascribed where sources are clear, or are original compositions for these resources where there is no other authorised material available.

Short Passages of Scripture

And I will raise me up a faithful priest,
that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind:
and I will build him a sure house;
and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

1 Samuel 2:35

Look around you,
and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.

John 4.35

You did not choose me but I chose you.
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

John 15.16

The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few;
therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest
to send out labourers into his harvest.

Matthew 9.37-38

Go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

Matthew 28.19,20

Kyrie Confession

Lord Jesus, you said to your disciples:
'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, we know that the harvest is plentiful
but the labourers are few.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you appointed us to go and bear fruit that will last.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Common Worship: Times & Seasons: Embertide

or

There is one Body and one Spirit,
and one hope of our calling.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

There is one God and Father of us all,
above all and through all and in all.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Collects

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church
is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth
to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

or

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts,
by your Holy Spirit you have appointed
various orders of ministry in the Church:
look with mercy on your servant
now called to be Bishop of Lichfield;
maintain them in truth and renew them in holiness,
that by word and good example they may faithfully serve you
to the glory of your name and the benefit of your Church;
through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

or

O God, eternal shepherd who governs your flock with unfailing care,
grant in your boundless love a pastor for your Church
who will please you by their holiness and to us show watchful care.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever, Amen.

or

Almighty God,
you have entrusted to your Church
a share in the ministry of your Son our great high priest:
inspire by your Holy Spirit the heart
of the one you call to be Bishop of Lichfield,
that, strengthened by his power,
they may work for the increase of your kingdom
and set forward the eternal praise of your name;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

or

Almighty God, giver of every good gift:
Look graciously on your Church,
and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a bishop for this Diocese,
that we may receive a faithful pastor,
to care for your people and equip us for our ministries;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer 1979

Suggested Readings

Where appropriate, these readings may be used at a service where the focus is to pray for the appointment of a new Bishop of Lichfield. They could, for example, be used at a stand-alone service; at a special service of Morning or Evening prayer or at a celebration of Holy Communion.

Where they are used at Holy Communion, the readings set for the day may also be used – there must always be a Gospel Reading.

Proverbs 24.3-7

Isaiah 30.15-21

Isaiah 42.1-9

Isaiah 61.1-3

Ezekiel 34.[1-10,] 11-16, 23

Wisdom 9.13-17

Through wisdom, a house is built

God promises a teacher of faith

Here is my servant who I uphold

The Spirit of God is upon me

God the true Shepherd

Who can learn the counsel of the Lord

Psalms 25.1-9

Psalms 40.1-14

Psalms 89: 89:4-5, 21-22, 25+27

Psalms 99

Psalms 100

Psalms 104.26-33

Psalms 143.8-10

Acts 15.23-29

Acts 20.17-35

Romans 8.22-27

1 Corinthians 12.4-13

1 Timothy 3.1-7

2 Timothy 3.14-4.5

1 Peter 5.1-11

Hebrews 5:1-10

Ephesians 4: 11-16

The companions of Paul

Paul speaks to the Ephesian Elders

Creation groans as it awaits

There are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit

The qualification of bishops

Proclaim the teaching of Christ

Tend the flock of Christ

Offer gifts and sacrifices

Equipping the saints for the work of God

Matthew 18.1-6

Matthew 28.16-20

Luke 14.27-33

John 14.23-26

John 15: 9-17

John 16.13-15

John 17.1-9, 18-21

John 21.15-19

Unless you become like a little child

The great commission

The cost of discipleship

If you love me, keep my commandments

Love one another, as I have loved you

When the Spirit of truth comes

Jesus prays for his disciples

Feed my sheep

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Go out into the whole world
and make disciples of all the nations.

Matthew 28.19

Alleluia.

During the Intercessions

We give you thanks for your Church and for the ministry of Bishop Michael.
Support him as he prepares to retire
And give grace to those who help choose his successor.
Lord in your mercy:

Father, we pray for this Diocese as we seek to appoint a new Diocesan Bishop.
For Bishop Sarah in her administration of the Diocese,
For the Vacancy in See committee
For those to serve on the Crown Nominations Committee
For those called to test their vocation to this responsibility.
For all who support them in their work and ministry.
Help us to discern your will, hear your voice, and walk in the way you now set before us.
Lord in your mercy:

Introductions to the Peace

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,
not counting our trespasses against us,
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

or

We are all one in Christ Jesus.
We belong to him through faith,
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

Prayer at the Preparation of the Table

Heavenly Father,
as we set before you these gifts of bread and wine,
bless also the gift of our hearts and minds
as we offer our lives in your service;
for Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

or

May your abundant kindness favour us, O Lord,
That through these gifts we set before you,
we may come to rejoice that a pastor pleasing to you
may be appointed to this diocese.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Short Proper Preface

And now we give you thanks
because Christ came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.
He calls his faithful servants
to lead your holy people in love,
nourishing them by your word and sacraments.
Therefore ...

Extended Preface

For use with Eucharistic Prayers A, B & E

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Christ is the Good Shepherd of the whole flock,
for which the Holy Spirit ordains bishops
to govern the Church bought by the blood of the eternal covenant.
In this joyful community of faith,
your people, filled with the gifts of the Spirit,
assemble together in one communion of love.
Here the gospel is set forth
and fulfilled in the Supper of the Lord
to make your Church a sign of love and unity for all.
Therefore with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
for ever praising you and *saying*:

Common Worship Ordinal

Prayer after Communion

Heavenly Father,
whose ascended Son gave gifts of leadership and service
to the Church:
strengthen us who have received this holy food
to be good stewards of your manifold grace;
through him who came not to be served but to serve,
and give his life as a ransom for many,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

or

Lord of the harvest,
you have fed your people in this sacrament
with the fruits of creation made holy by your Spirit:
by your grace raise up among us faithful labourers
to sow your word and reap the harvest of souls;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

or

Renewed, O Lord by the Sacrament of Salvation
Through your grace gladden us with the gift of a shepherd
To lead us in love and teach us in truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Other Prayers which may be used

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
Look favourably on your whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery.
By the effectual working of your providence,
carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation.
Let the whole world see and know
that things which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and that all things are being brought to their perfection
by him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The book of alternative Services: The Anglican Church of Canada

Almighty and ever-living God,
source of all wisdom and understanding,
be present with those who take counsel for the appointment of a new Bishop of Lichfield.
Teach us in all things to seek first your honour and glory.
Guide us to perceive what is right,
and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray
from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the
Father and the Son, forever and ever.
Amen.

St Isidore of Seville 560-636

Gracious God,
we pray for our Diocese
as we take this journey of discernment for our new bishop.
Open our hearts and minds
to hear what your Spirit is saying to the church.
Be with those who sense a call to this ministry,
and with all those leading and serving us at this time.
Living God, in this shared discernment, and always,
draw us deeper into your love,
that we may live it for your world,
in the name, and for the sake of Christ, our Saviour.
Amen.

Most loving God,
Pour out your spirit on those charged with discerning a new bishop for this diocese.
Give them wisdom and insight, courage and compassion, love and mercy,
That they may set aside their own desires, and seek only to hear your voice.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Bishop Michael:

Heavenly Father,
we give you thanks for the ministry of Bishop Michael,
for his leadership of this Diocese, for his work and labour in your name.
As he now enters a new season of service:
renew him in spirit,
grant him health and wholeness,
and the support and assurance of the prayers of your people.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Bishop Sarah:

Loving God,
You have called your servant Sarah
to lead this Diocese in a time of change.
As we await a new Bishop of Lichfield
grant to her the mindful gifts of grace
and the assurance of your love
that she may lead your people in faithfulness and love
to the praise and glory of your name.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For the Vacancy in See process:

God our loving Father,
You pour out upon your people the Spirit of your love,
as we seek your will and follow it.
Be with those whose charge it is to discern the new Bishop of this Diocese.
Empower them to know your will,
set aside their own wants and wishes,
and seek that which is good for all your people in this place.
For we ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For the Diocese:

God of all blessing,
we praise you for your love, in guiding your people in every age.
We pray for this Diocese of Lichfield:
for the appointment of a new Diocesan Bishop,
For its Bishops, clergy, ministers and people and for all who follow your Son.
Grant us the help of your holy Spirit, that together, we may know your will,
so that from the rising of the sun until its setting,
we may never cease to praise your name.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

THE DIOCESAN FAREWELL SERVICE

for Bishop Michael and Julia

at Lichfield Cathedral,

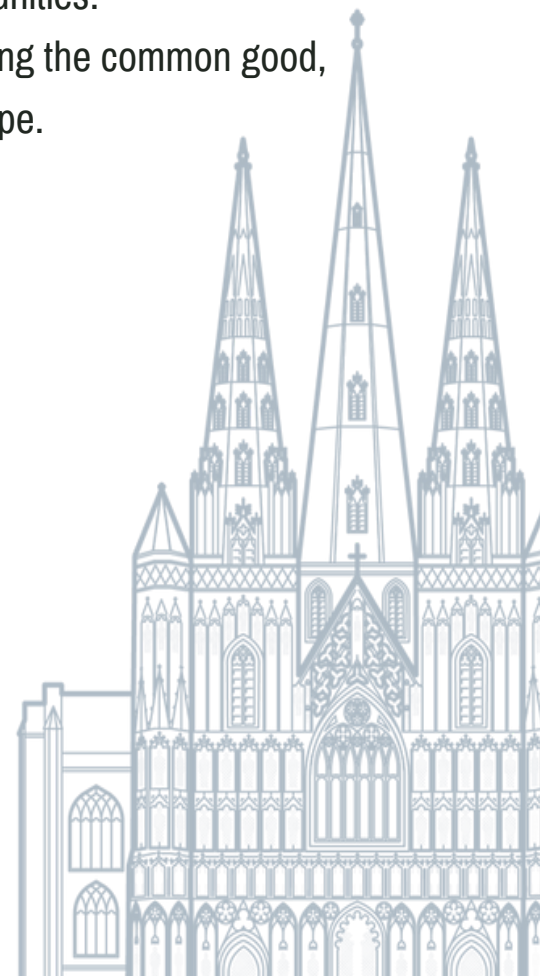
Sunday, 27 September: Morning Eucharist and Evensong.

Details, including ticketing requirements will be posted on www.lichfield-cathedral.org in due course.

A PRAYER FOR OUR DIOCESE

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad,
we pray that the two million people in our Diocese
encounter a church that is confident in the Gospel,
knows and loves its communities,
and is excited to find God already at work in the world.

We pray for a church that reflects
the richness and variety of those communities.
We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good,
working for justice as a people of hope.
Amen.



Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance,
St Mary's House, The Close, Lichfield WS13 7LD
Automatic switchboard: 01543 306030
www.lichfield.anglican.org

Chapter Office
19a The Close, Lichfield, WS13 7LD
01543 306100
www.lichfield-cathedral.org

