

DCO BISHOP PENRITH RETIRES

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Bishop of Penrith to retire at Easter 2018

The Bishop of Penrith, the Right Reverend Robert Freeman, will be retiring next Easter after working across the communities and churches of Cumbria since 2011.

Explaining his decision to retire, Bishop Robert said, “I have just celebrated my 65th birthday and this year have completed 40 years of being ordained. It seems a good time to explore the next phase of life.”

“My wife, Chris, and I have been so fortunate to have spent the last 6 years in Cumbria with all the opportunities there have been to contribute to what God is doing across our county. It has been thrilling to meet different people and churches and see how lives are being transformed, communities are being served and the love and truth of God is being shared.”

“It has been particularly heart-warming to see the way the Church across Cumbria has embraced the need to find new ways of working, and of working together. We don’t realize that in Cumbria we have what is perhaps the best example across the whole country of different denominations sharing their ideas, insights and endeavors – we are the first ‘Ecumenical County’. And what makes that working together special is that the main purpose of it is so that we are better equipped to show and share our faith; strengthen what is good in our churches and develop new ways of connecting with people. This is all summed up in ‘God for All’, the big plans and vision to help everyone in Cumbria discover more of God and God’s purpose for their lives.”

“It has been such a privilege to be part of all that, and I have greatly appreciated the way in which colleagues, clergy and those in our churches have offered their friendship, support, prayer and insight to help make this possible.”

At a personal level I am looking forward to having time and energy to be a better dad and grandfather to our four and a half grandchildren, and discovering the new opportunities God might bring our way. We plan to retire to Leicester, where we have friends and nearby family. Leicester is quite a contrast to Cumbria, and we will hugely miss both the people and the places we have got to know and love over these past years.”

Commenting on Bishop Robert’s announcement, the Diocesan Bishop, Rt Revd James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle, said: “We have enormously valued Bishop Robert’s contribution to the life of the diocese and across the different denominations. He has been actively involved at local level in all sorts of events and activities, and has made a crucial contribution to God for All – the initiative that is helping to shape and revitalize our churches and help people across Cumbria better connect with the reality of God and God’s love and truth. We will greatly miss his insight and enthusiasm, and wish him and Chris enormous joy and blessing in their well-earned retirement.”



Chris Angus, the Diocesan Lay Chair, added: “Bishop Robert, in addition to his work as Suffragan Bishop, has played an absolutely key role in the God for All initiative and has made a really substantial and I believe lasting contribution to the Church in Cumbria. It has been a great privilege and a source of great joy to work alongside Robert and experience his deep dedication to making God known to all, his insight and great focus, his humanity, his whimsical sense of humour and his ability to get things done. We shall miss him enormously as a friend and valued colleague.”

Before moving to Cumbria, Bishop Robert was Archdeacon of Halifax in West Yorkshire. Prior to that he was National Mission and Evangelism Adviser for the Church of England and in that role he played a major part in the development of the movement that has become known as ‘fresh expressions of church’ – the development of different styles and types of church life and community that enable people who are not used to conventional patterns of church to explore Christian faith and life in a way that relates to their lifestyle and interests. He was a vicar in inner city Leicester for fourteen years, spent a time as a vicar in Chigwell in Essex, and began his ministry as a curate in Blackpool (where he was also Chaplain of the Tower Circus and Winter Gardens). Bishop Robert is married to Chris, who is a web site manager and former teacher.

Bishop Robert’s farewell service will be at **Holy Trinity Church, Kendal on Wednesday 14 March 2018 at 7.00pm.**