



The Bishops' Office

Pastoral Letter to the people of the Diocese of Lincoln

Monday 21st September 2026

Dear friends,

Today's News

Today we have all received the news that Bishop Stephen is resigning as the Bishop of Lincoln, with effect from the 1st October. The statement from the national Church ([click here to read](#)) confirmed that Bishop Stephen remains the subject of an ongoing investigation. Our diocese will now enter a period of vacancy-in-see and the process for discerning the appointment of a new diocesan bishop will begin.

We recognise that this news may provoke a range of feelings. It may unsettle you and may have caught you as unexpected. Some may feel anxious about the future. Some may have very different responses. We share this range of reactions. However you respond, we encourage you to reach out to each other as Christians together. Support will be available from your church community, from diocesan colleagues, and from us. If the news distresses you, then there are contact details at the end of this letter for other sources of support.

Gathering in Prayer

Over the coming months, there will be different opportunities to gather as a diocesan family to pray together and seek that 'still small voice of calm' which is the reassurance that God is at work even through moments of human frailty, along unexpected journeys, and during seasons of change.

St Paul encourages us more than once to pray ceaselessly; to devote ourselves to prayer (Romans 1.9, 1 Thessalonians 5.17, Colossians 4.3). And so we invite you to join us in prayer for each other, for those in need or distress, for this diocese and our journey ahead, for those who report abuse or harm and those who respond and support them, for our colleagues who investigate concerns and oversee safeguarding (particularly our diocesan and national safeguarding teams). Pray also for Bishop Stephen, and for all those who will carry the responsibility of discerning God's call in the forthcoming appointments process.

Let us find reassurance in the words of Psalm 121: 'Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.' This is a timely reminder, just at the moment we are driven to ask 'I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?'

Thanksgiving and Faithfulness

Over the last months, with our Diocesan staff colleagues, we have sought to continue God's work in Greater Lincolnshire, which is our primary calling. In doing this we have the privilege of sharing in this ministry with you all. Thank you for your ongoing faithfulness during a time when the ground under our feet has often felt unsteady. Your encouragement, prayers, and shared commitment have been humbling. We believe that God is with us in times of sorrow and joy, in times of lament and hope, indeed at all times. This is the foundation of our faith and our life together.

Continuing our Shared Work

When Archbishop Sarah came to visit us in February, she encouraged us to press on with our vision and strategy for the diocese, *Time to Grow Together*, and to work together for the sake of God's kingdom in our parishes and partnerships. That strategy will be presented to the Bishop's Council of Diocesan Trustees this month, with a formal launch for *Time to Grow Together* planned for Diocesan Synod in November.

As we move into this new season, we are conscious of the limits on our capacity as a senior leadership team in the past seven months, and that this has impacted the ways in which we want to serve you. We are pleased to share with you now that we are in the final stages of appointing an acting archdeacon to increase that capacity – a colleague who will be working two days a week to provide leadership and support, primarily in the South of the diocese. We are also exploring supplementing each of our two archdeaconries with an associate archdeacon. Funded centrally and holding parish responsibilities, we hope that these new colleagues will be a resource for our local mission partnerships, helping our churches to navigate the complex demands of ministry, especially those which relate to complaints, compliance and what seem to be ever increasing expectations with respect to administration. We will write again about these plans, but our over-riding hope is that this will help to release our church leaders, lay and ordained, for pastoral care, mission and ministry.

Drawing on what is Old and New

When Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of heaven, he spoke of one 'who brings out of their treasure what is new and what is old' (Matthew 13.52). Let us do the same: looking to the past as it gives us strength and looking to the future with a renewed sense of hope.

Our letter comes to you in these final days of the Season of Creation, which is itself drawing both old and new from the riches of our heritage. The season began with the new Festival of Creation in Christ and ends with the Feast of St Francis on 4th October. In these days, we have been reflecting on fallenness and limitation, but also gift and opportunity. We are reminded that we are a new creation in Christ, and with that comes a responsibility for stewarding all that God has entrusted to us.

St Francis was charged to go and rebuild God's house, and he did this with courage and humility. Might we be inspired by his example, and that of his early followers, in the Diocese of Lincoln in 2026? Let us go and build and rebuild together, in the service of God's kingdom.

With our thanks and prayers,



The Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain
Bishop of Grantham
Acting Bishop of Lincoln



The Rt Revd Jean Burgess
Bishop of Grimsby

Support

Support is available through the independent Safe Spaces helpline on [0300 303 1056](tel:03003031056) or visit safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk.

Diocesan Safeguarding Team

Email safeguarding@lincoln.anglican.org or visit the website here: www.lincoln.anglican.org/parish-support/safeguarding/contact-us/

National Safeguarding Team

Email safeguarding@churchofengland.org or visit www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding

Diocesan colleagues

Visit www.lincoln.anglican.org/contact/directory/