

DOWNING STREET today (Oct 8) announced that the new Bishop of Portsmouth will be the Rt Rev Dr Jonathan Frost, who is currently the Dean of York.

The announcement from 10 Downing Street this morning (Oct 8) confirmed that HM The Queen had approved the nomination of Bishop Jonathan to be the tenth Bishop of Portsmouth, succeeding the Rt Rev Christopher Foster, who retired in May.

Bishop Jonathan will lead the Church of England's Diocese of Portsmouth, which covers 133 parishes across south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. His current role involves him leading the historic York Minster, where he has served since February 2019.

He was unveiled as the new Bishop of Portsmouth this morning at Charter Academy, the diocese's only Church of England secondary school on the mainland. He joined pupils in a science laboratory, as part of his desire to start his new role by engaging with young people living in the diocese.

Later in the day, he is due to meet worshippers at three different parts of the diocese: at Portsmouth Cathedral, at Newport Minster, and at St Peter's Church, Petersfield. In all three places, he will ask others to pray for him.

He is also due to visit St Mary's Church, Brading, on the Isle of Wight, where worshippers have put environmental concerns at the top of their agenda. He will see the ethical and environment shop they have created in their church hall, and the goats and pigs they care for in a small farm next to the churchyard, to emphasise his commitment to combatting climate change.

He is also due to visit Carole Damper MBE, at the Roberts Centre in Portsmouth, which supports children, families and vulnerable people in Portsmouth, Gosport and Havant. It was created in 1987, and the centre in Landport was built thanks to a bequest left to a former Bishop of Portsmouth to spend on alleviating poverty.

Bishop Jonathan has also asked for a private meeting with staff from HMP Isle of Wight on the day he is announced as the new bishop, as part of his commitment to understanding issues relating to justice and imprisonment.

Bishop Jonathan said: "I believe the role of a bishop is to pray, to share the story and the love of Jesus, and to speak up for the marginalised and voiceless.

"I've got Portsmouth on my heart. Many people across this diocese have had a tough time through the pandemic, especially the most vulnerable, and I know Christians here played their part with others to support those in need.

"I'm looking forward to working in partnership, as together we tackle the biggest issues facing us today – such as the poor mental health and wellbeing of so many of our young people; climate change; and the scandal of poverty, which restricts opportunities and life chances.

"I am, of course, sad to be leaving York Minster and valued colleagues there. It's a real privilege to be called to the work God is doing in south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, said: "I'm so pleased that Bishop Jonathan has accepted this invitation to become the next Bishop of Portsmouth."

"His wide range of interests and experiences, from youth engagement and interfaith relations to social justice and community building, will be invaluable in bringing the people of Portsmouth together as he begins this new role. Please join me in praying for him and his wife Christine as they take this next step in their journey as disciples of Jesus."

And the Archbishop of York, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, said: "Jonathan Frost has been an outstanding Dean of York. He is a leader who knows how to be led, a man of prayer and a servant of the gospel."

"He has very successfully steered York Minster through difficult and challenging times. But he has also enabled it to focus on its primary purpose as a place of prayer and a centre for mission. Although we are very sad to see him go, we are delighted that he has been called to use his considerable gifts of leadership, pastoral care and missionary endeavour as the next Bishop of Portsmouth."

Bishop Jonathan was educated at the universities of Aberdeen and Nottingham, and prepared for ordination at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. He served his curacy at St Giles – West Bridgford, Nottingham. Jonathan was ordained priest in 1994 and, alongside parish duties, served as a police chaplain.

From 1997-2002, Jonathan was rector of Ash in the Diocese of Guildford. In 2002 he took up a new joint post as Anglican Chaplain to the University of Surrey and Residentiary Canon at Guildford Cathedral. For 11 years Jonathan taught Christian doctrine on the local diocesan ministry course. He served as bishop's advisor for interfaith relations and on General Synod. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Surrey in 2012.

Jonathan served as suffragan Bishop of Southampton, in the Diocese of Winchester, from November 2010 to January 2019. In these years, Jonathan chaired the Portsmouth and Winchester Joint Diocesan Board of Education and became honorary assistant bishop in the Diocese of Portsmouth.

He was installed as Dean of York in February 2019. Among his priorities are prayer and Benedictine spirituality, evangelism, discipleship, and working alongside others to tackle the scandal of poverty.

Jonathan is married to Christine, an integrative child psychotherapist. They have three adult children. He supports Fulham Football Club. He enjoys live jazz, the Taizé community, armchair sport and walking.

Because various legal formalities have to take place before Bishop Jonathan can take up his new role, his installation service in Portsmouth Cathedral is not expected until the New Year. Between now and then, he intends to visit the Diocese of Portsmouth regularly as he begins to get to know the area and its people.

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