

The Archbishop of York will journey alongside the Bishop of Carlisle as part of a Lent Walk which begins next week.

Bishop James is grateful to his Chaplain, Canon Cameron Butland, who has drawn up a 21-day schedule which will see him criss-cross Cumbria to spend time with and draw alongside clergy in the Diocese throughout March.

The Lent Walk begins on Thursday 3 March, from the Diocese of Carlisle's Church House office in Penrith, concluding on Wednesday 30 March at Carlisle Cathedral. On Thursday 17 March, he will be joined by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, on his first official visit to the Diocese since enthronement. The pair will visit the Crosslacon Team (Cleator Moor, Cleator, Arlecdon and Frizington) and Ennerdale.

Bishop James said: "I very much look forward to welcoming Archbishop Stephen to the diocese and tasting some of parish life in West Cumbria. It will be wonderful to be able to walk and talk together – alongside clergy colleagues and others – and to reflect on the wonderful mission and ministry which is ongoing in church communities across the county through our ecumenical God for All vision.

"It will be particularly enjoyable to get out and about again after the coronavirus put paid to similar plans in the past two years. For me, the Lent Walk is an important way in which I can continue to draw close to clergy colleagues who have had to contend with all the challenges that the pandemic has created. It is an opportunity to chat together and to pray together. A particular prayer from me would be that the recent storms will have blown themselves out before we set off!"

As part of the day's walk, plans are also in place for the pair to meet Gary McKee, a Cleator Moor man who is currently running a marathon every day to raise funds and awareness for two charities: West Cumbria Hospice and Macmillan Cancer Support.

Archbishop Stephen said: "I very much look forward to joining Bishop James for a day's walking in West Cumbria. It will be a wonderful opportunity to catch up with both him and others and to hear how the ecumenical county's God for All vision continues to develop.

"Likewise, it will be good to hear from members of the clergy who have had a challenging two years due to the pandemic and to reflect on how they've faced up to the realities of coronavirus both prayerfully and practically. I shall also enjoy the chance to meet Gary and to hear more about his amazing fundraising efforts - though I shan't be bringing my running shoes!"

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