

The Archbishop delivered a speech in today's session of General Synod, saying farewell to the Bishop of Carlisle, James Newcome, who is due to retire from his role next month. His speech follows here...

James, retiring Bishop of Carlisle, who when he was considering ordained ministry as a pathway for his life, a referee wrote this about him –

'James is not ambitious for worldly advancement and is free from self-importance... he is well-balanced... he is seriously committed to God, (other people) and his vocation'.



self-effacing, and gospel focused Christian gentleman.

Ordained for 45 years, suffragan bishop of Penrith for 7 years, and Bishop of Carlisle for 14. He has had a huge impact in many places and in many people's lives. In particular, his vision, and ecumenical vision, has left a mark on Cumbria, often now spoken about as the ecumenical county.

This commitment began in his first incumbency in Ely where he oversaw a local ecumenical project and throughout his ministry, and today, where he hosts a biannual meeting with the Church of Scotland, James is deeply committed to collaborative ministry, to working together.

One of the photos behind me, shows him in the Ridley/Westcott Eight in the Cambridge May Bumps 1978. You may also notice that Malcom Brown is the Bow man. But what I think you all know is that you only succeed in rowing by working together.

Everywhere you go in Cumbria, people know James. He of course would claim otherwise. However, I have it on good authority, that on one occasion he was walking with a friend down a country lane in a beautiful and remote part of the Lake District and explaining to his friend that despite being in the public eye he was rarely recognised, at which point a man rode by on a horse, doffed his hat and, and said “Good morning, Bishop”.

James is also deeply committed to the other responsibilities that come with episcopal ministry. A member of the House of Lords for the last 10 years, covering several portfolios, particularly Lead Bishop on health where he has been a gentle, persuasive and compelling voice for the Christian faith in the corridors of parliament and here as well.

Another good story about James is of how he got the job. They needed a new lead bishop and somebody said, ask James Newcome because he used to be a healthcare chaplain. Malcolm Brown was then tasked with approaching James. They met in a bar over Synod and after having said yes, James accepted asked, “Why did you ask me?” – “because you used to be a Healthcare Chaplain” Malcolm replied. James shook his head – “Actually no. But I did briefly drive an ambulance once during a long vacation from university.”

In 2018 he held a Synod debate affirming people with Down’s syndrome as precious in God’s sight. James brought into the Synod through a video the voices of people. It was very very beautiful and shows his spirit.

Most intriguing of all, James is the bishop who has the magnificent title of Clerk of the Closet. Since 2014, all bishops paying homage to the Sovereign have been accompanied by James, myself included. So when I paid homage in 2020, me and James were dressed like Episcopal ships in full sail, only it was a Zoom conference with Her Late Majesty - she was in Windsor, we were in the cabinet office. Someone, not James, had forgotten to bring a Bible, but amazingly the cabinet office had one. And half way through, the fire alarm went off, but that’s another story. But James puts you at your ease.

And I think these qualities are simply because James takes the gospel of Jesus Christ very seriously indeed, but he doesn't take himself too seriously. So whether he's serving the king, or the other week when the two of us were having tea with the King of the Gypsies at the Appleby Fair, James is just James.

Being alongside people, demonstrating the love of Christ. Episcopal ministry has its costs and James, like all the bishops who are retiring has carried the cost of that, but James, and also please to Alison, we thank you so much for your service to the church

I stayed with them in Keswick a few weeks ago where I saw the beautiful gardens that Alison has created from scratch. So please pass on our thanks to Alison for all she's done and for all the ways James she has kept you fertilized, nurtured, and where necessary, pruned.

As you lay down your crozier later this summer, I'm sure God will open new doors of opportunity for you and for Alison new gardens to tend.

And now, we thank you for your faithfulness and for your witness because you've shown us what it looks like to follow Jesus. May God bless richly bless you in all that lies ahead.

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