

The Bishop of Selby and the Bishop of Whitby in the Diocese of York have announced that they are both to retire in July 2024.

Bishop of Selby the Right Reverend Dr John Thomson and Bishop of Whitby the Right Reverend Paul Ferguson will each have served ten years



Sentamu, in York Minster on the 3rd July 2014.

Bishop of Selby

Working with the Archbishop of York, Suffragan Bishop of Selby Dr John Thomson has held a particular responsibility for the care of the people, parishes and clergy in the Archdeaconry of York, which includes Selby, Market Weighton, Malton, Easingwold and latterly the City of York itself.

Brought up in Uganda, Bishop John studied at York University, trained for ordination in Oxford and South Africa, and following four years in a Sheffield parish was a Tutor at Saint Paul's College and an Assistant Priest at St Bartholomew's Church in Makhanda (formerly known as Grahamstown), South Africa, and an Assistant Lecturer at Rhodes University. In the 1990s he became Vicar of St Mary Doncaster, and gained his PhD at Nottingham University. From 2001 until moving to Selby he was Director of Ministry in the Diocese of Sheffield and an Honorary Canon of Sheffield Cathedral. Bishop John is a recreational and passionate cyclist who has become known as 'the Biking Bishop of Selby'. He is married to Susan and they have two grown-up children and two grandchildren.

As Bishop of Selby he has also served within the Diocese of York as Ambassador for Mission and Ministry, Ambassador for Rural Life and Faith, the lead Bishop for the Diocesan Link with three Dioceses in the Western Cape of South Africa and on the Diocesan Environment Steering Committee. He has also served as Chair of St Hild College Council, Co-Chair of the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM), as a Member of the Church of England Environmental Working Group, chairing its Net Zero Carbon 2030 subcommittee, as a Trustee of the Selby Abbey Trust and the Yorkshire Churches Rural Business Support Charity (YCRBS), as Patron of Citizens Advice, Selby, and of the Abbots Staith Partnership (Selby) and as a Member of Selby Educational Trust.

Bishop John said, "The past ten years have been a remarkable journey serving in this Diocese and it will be a huge wrench to leave even though the time to do so is right.

"Highlights for me have been the Archbishop Sentamu missions, advocating for the Green and Rural agendas, nourishing and visiting our link Dioceses in South Africa, the 950th anniversary of Selby Abbey and the renovation of its Hill Organ, supporting the parishes and deaneries through the Covid pandemic and more recently working with Archbishop Stephen, the York Diocese Leadership Team, Officers, Deaneries and Parishes to develop our Living Christ's Story vision and strategy. In particular, I am grateful to God for the gift of sharing this ministry with the four excellent colleagues who have held the roles of Archdeacon or Interim Archdeacon of York during my time in this office. I am also grateful to my four successive Personal Assistants who have ensured that the office has served us so well.

"Beyond the Diocese it has been a privilege to have shared in developing the Church of England 2030 Routemap to Net Zero, to have been involved with St Hild College, MAPUM, YCRBS, Selby Citizens Advice and the Abbots Staith Partnership and to have had opportunity to build links with local civic and community life in the Selby region.

“Sue and I have loved living in the Selby area. Selby is a town of warm-hearted and delightful people hosting an internationally recognised iconic Abbey and set amidst wonderful countryside which has also provided great cycling for a middle aged man in lycra. We are grateful to God for the experience of living and learning in such a special place.”

Bishop of Whitby

Working with the Archbishop of York, Suffragan Bishop of Whitby Paul Ferguson has held particular responsibility for the care of the people, parishes and clergy of the Archdeaconry of Cleveland, which includes Middlesbrough, Northallerton, Thirsk, Pickering and the Cleveland coast from Robin Hood's Bay westwards.

Brought up in the Wirral, Bishop Paul studied in Oxford and then Cambridge, where he went on to train for ordination at Westcott House. He served for three years in a parish in Chester before becoming Sacrist and Chaplain at Westminster Abbey in 1988, and later Precentor. From 1995 to 2001 he was Canon Residentiary and Precentor at York Minster, and in 2001 became Archdeacon of Cleveland. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, and is believed to be the first Fellow to be consecrated a bishop. Paul's wife, Penny, died early in 2022; they have three grown-up children and five grandchildren.

As Bishop of Whitby he has also served within the Diocese of York as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, Mission and Pastoral Committee and Sub-Committee, and Vice-chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance. He has been Chair of the Diocese of York Education Trust, Dales Academies Trust, Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland, DBE Services Ltd, and of the Council of Westcott House (Cambridge). He is a Governor at York St John University, a Member of Hope Sentamu Learning Trust, Pathfinder Academy Trust, and Ebor Academy Trust; a Director of Methodist Chapel Aid Ltd, and Co-Convenor of the Anglican-Lutheran Society, and a Member of the Church of England's Porvoo Panel.

Bishop Paul said, “I get up every morning looking forward to a day's work, which is a real gift: but the time comes when it's right to move into the next phase of life and discipleship, so I shall be leaving my post as Bishop of Whitby next July when I shall be just 69.

“There will be opportunities then to thank friends in the diocese more fully for the pleasure of serving with you, and of course for your kindness around the time of Penny's illness and death.

“It has been the greatest privilege to have a share in the mission of the diocese and its parishes, to work with wonderful colleagues, and to have particular areas of responsibility, especially in education. Beyond the diocese, my involvement with Anglican-Lutheran relations and the Council of Westcott House have been very special too.

“Meanwhile, over the coming months there is still much to do together, developing our strategy and continuing to embed Living Christ's Story in our way of being and ministering.”

October 2023 marks the centenary of the creation of the suffragan see of Whitby; Bishop Paul will be leading a celebratory four-day walk (12th-15th) from Whitby to Lastingham, of which more details will be published soon.

Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell said, “It's been such a privilege to work and to share God's ministry in this diocese with such talented and warm colleagues. Paul and John each bring clear vision and a sharp mind to bear on every issue and challenge, and they share a gift for passing on their own excitement and enthusiasm for the Gospel and for their experience of encountering Jesus Christ wherever they go and in everyone they meet.

“I'm very glad that we still have them on board for the next year while the Diocese of York continues prayerfully to discern how we can live Christ's story in a fast-changing world.

“Just as they arrived together in 2014, we will be there to celebrate and give thanks with John and Paul as they leave together and go their separate ways, finding their own new ways of living Christ's story in the years to come.”

Events in July 2024 to mark the retirement of Bishops Paul Ferguson and Dr John Thomson will be announced nearer the time.

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