

# PRAISE GOD FOR OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS

The Very Revd Jonathan Greener, Dean of Exeter



Those heartbreaking images of Notre-Dame burning continue to haunt me. That will be true for many of you too, for this is a place that has touched the world's soul. I first went 49 years ago, and when I lived in Paris for a short while before university I was a regular there. So a little piece of my life was going up in flames.

The collapse of Viollet-le-Duc's 19th century spire was a breath-catching moment, but it was watching the roof burn that caused me real distress; pointing up for me the blessings of our medieval cathedral here in Exeter, with its spectacular vaulted ceiling, along with the burden of responsibility we bear as a Chapter in caring for this remarkable building. Fortunately we're well protected, having invested considerable sums in fire protection over the past few years; and so far, praise God, there's never been a fire in Exeter Cathedral, though the Royal Clarence Hotel was dauntingly close.

No one can fail to have been touched by the outpouring of emotion at the burning of Notre Dame. Sadly these buildings are taken pretty much for granted while all is seemingly well; people only express their appreciation when tragedy strikes.

Nevertheless, while regular church attendance may have diminished, church buildings great and small



PHOTOS: REV'D HUW RIDEN

Notre-Dame the day after the fire in April that shocked people all over the world.

continue to touch people's lives profoundly. What Notre Dame is for Paris and France, our cathedral is for the people of Devon; and the parish church fulfils the same role for the local town or village.

I've often quoted a survey which claims more young people come to faith because of buildings than because of people. Is that perhaps because church and cathedral speak confidently of the glory of God, but are less threatening than some enthusiastic Christian bursting to share the Christian Gospel with a tentative visitor?

Moreover we must not underestimate the power of beauty in our world. Nearly two and a half thousand years ago, Plato was talking about a vital trio: truth, goodness and beauty.

For centuries, the Christian Church has focused on the fact that Christian faith is true and good; and we've tended to downplay the beauty of God. And yet in many cases, it is God's beauty that will attract people - a beauty reflected in our worship, our music, and of course our buildings.

Praise God then for our many church buildings. Sometimes they feel like a great burden, given the cost of upkeep and the huge amounts of work involved, but they stand all across our land, pointing people to God as they have done faithfully for hundreds of years.

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND DEVON

GOOD NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE OF EXETER | JUNE 2019

### Inside: WELCOME, NEW ARCHDEACONS



New Archdeacons of Exeter and Plymouth are announced



### FOR OUR CHURCHES

The Dean reflects on the importance of our buildings after the devastating Notre-Dame fire

## BISHOP'S AWARD TO RECOGNISE THOSE 'WHO TIRELESSLY GIVE'

The Bishop of Exeter has launched an annual awards investiture to honour people who have made a substantial contribution to the church in Devon.

The Company of St Boniface will also seek to recognise people who have built up overseas links in the Diocese of Exeter's witness to Christ.

Up to six Companions of St Boniface will be admitted each year and a service of investiture will be held in Exeter Cathedral as close to the feast day of St Boniface on June 5 as possible.

The Bishop of Exeter, the Right Revd Robert Atwell, said: "There are so many members of our church communities across Devon who tirelessly give their valuable time and energy to serve others. I feel this is a great way of recognising them and celebrating them." People can



Father Andrew Johnson shows the St Boniface medal that he has designed

be nominated to be recognised with the honour for a number of reasons including: making a difference to the community or in their field of ministry; enhancing the church's reputation; long-term voluntary service; innovation and entrepreneurship; changing things with an emphasis on achievement; improving lives for people less able to help themselves; displaying moral courage and

vision in making and delivering difficult choices.

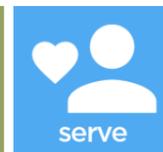
The Companion of St Boniface medallion has been designed by the Revd Andrew Johnson, assistant curate of Heavitree and Saint Mary Steps, and a professional stained glass artist.

Father Andrew said: "It took between six and nine months to achieve the final result. I got the idea from the St Edward's Canon's medal which I designed a number of years ago.

"The mitre is at the top of the medal because the medal is from the bishop and will be from Bishop Robert's successors in time as well."

The deadline for nominations this year is September. You can fill in a nomination form on the Diocesan website.

St Boniface was born in Crediton around 675AD and is credited with taking Christianity to Germany.



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WELCOME: Prebendary Nick Shutt, left, and Canon Andrew Beane, who will serve as the new Archdeacons of Plymouth and Exeter respectively.

## NEW ARCHDEACONS FOR EXETER AND PLYMOUTH

THE Bishop of Exeter has appointed new archdeacons of Exeter and Plymouth after a rigorous selection process.

The Revd Preb Nick Shutt has been appointed Archdeacon of Plymouth, having been Acting Archdeacon for more than a year. His ministry will be inaugurated in St Andrew's, Plymouth on June 18.

The Revd Canon Andrew Beane, who is currently Team Rector of Aylsham in Norfolk, has been appointed the new Archdeacon of Exeter.

He succeeds the Venerable Christopher Futcher who is moving to become Archdeacon of Cyprus. Canon Beane will be welcomed to the Diocese in Ottery St Mary church on September 25.

Bishop Robert said: "I am delighted that Nick and Andrew have accepted my invitation to become Archdeacon of Plymouth and Archdeacon of Exeter."

There are four archdeaconries in the Diocese of Exeter based in Plymouth, Exeter, Totnes and Barnstaple.

### NATIONAL ROLE FOR MARION CARSON



Marian Carson, the head of the Growing the Rural Church project in Devon, is to take up a new national role as Director of Operations with the Churches Conservation Trust. Marian has worked for the Diocese for the past 2.5 years. The Diocese will recruit her successor over the summer and we wish her well!

### THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR FIRST WOMEN PRIESTS

A thanksgiving service to mark 25 years of women's ordained priestly ministry will be held in Exeter Cathedral on June 30th.

In March 1994, the Bishop of Bristol ordained 32 women to the priesthood – the first in the Church of England. In June and October of the same year 28 women were ordained in Exeter and Plymouth.

Prebendary Kathy Roberts, Dean for Women in Ministry, is organising the service to give thanks to God for all women priests and their ministry.

She said: "By remembering this very significant year we are celebrating the recognition that women and men in ordained priestly ministry together bring wholeness to the life of the church. We will also be honouring people – women and men - who worked and prayed for so long to make ministry by both gender possible."

All are welcome. Visit: <https://exeter.anglican.org/events/a-service-to-celebrate-the-25th-anniversary-of-the-first-women-priests-being-ordained>



Serving with joy ...

## REVD JOHN FISHER



This month, we meet the new Diocesan Director of Ordinands, the REVD JOHN FISHER, about his own vocation, the need for diversity in the church and the challenges facing the church today...

### Was your Christian faith kindled from birth by church-going parents or was it more of a Damascus road experience?

I grew up in Reigate and came to faith through the ministry of the church-based CYFA group at St Mary's. I was confirmed because I wanted to be and never looked back. Following Jesus and being a disciple are the important things and this has always been expressed, for me, within the C of E.

### When did you first feel called to ordination?

I first sensed the call at university in Bath. I was well supported by my vicar, Philip, who had a great gift for nurturing God's call among young students. I was one of these people but I was not ordained until 1994 (it is the 25th anniversary this year) so the journey took a few years.

### Regarding diversity within the church, are you keen to encourage more people from different backgrounds to come forward as potential ordinands?

Of course the answer is a resounding yes! The church needs to encourage people from all walks of life and from all communities to consider what their gifts are and how God is calling them to serve. For some this will be as deacons and priests.

### What / who sustains you in your ministry?

I have always recalled a word of advice that Philip once gave me when I was considering ordination. "John," he said "It is your relationship with Jesus that will keep you going." How true these words have proved. For all disciples it is the relationship that we have with Christ that underpins our life and work.

### Are there areas in the Church of England that need to be changed / adapted in the great work of growing the Kingdom in the 21st century?

These are challenging times for the church but I have every faith that if we listen to God, discern his call and are faithful then the church will rise to the challenges. The leadership of the bishops in this diocese is so positive with the strategy to pray, grow and serve being worked out in creative and different ways all over Devon. This is needed!

### What do you do to relax?

My former professional life was in horticulture, so the outdoors and the garden is very important to me. I love plants and trees! We have a dog so you can often find me on the beach walking Poppy! I picture frame and am itching to get my equipment out of store following recent construction work at home.