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BISHOP MARK RETURNS TO DIOCESE TO BECOME A PARISH PRIEST AGAIN

A former canon of Exeter Cathedral who became Bishop of Shrewsbury has returned to ministry in Devon after he 'sensed God's beckoning to serve as a parish priest again.'

The Right Revd Mark Rylands was licensed as priest-in-charge of the Ashburton & Moorland Team Ministry at the end of July. He served in the Diocese of Exeter for seven years, as Diocesan Missioner and Residentiary Canon before his move to Shropshire in 2009.

He has also been appointed Honorary Assistant Bishop by the Bishop of Exeter, the Right Revd Robert Atwell.

Bishop Mark is married to the Revd Prebendary Mandy Rylands, who was the Diocesan Director of Ordinands for Exeter, Bishop's Adviser for Women in Ministry and a Prebendary of the Cathedral.

He said: "I have sensed God's beckoning for me to serve as a parish priest again and I am delighted to be back in Devon. For the last 16 years, as both Diocesan Missioner in Exeter and Area Bishop in Shropshire, much

of my ministry has been to encourage, challenge and help churches and church leaders to embody and share the good news of Jesus Christ in the local community. I have heard God calling me now to 'go and walk the talk'.

"I am aware that, in taking this step, I have a great deal to learn. I am slightly daunted but know that where God calls he also equips. We have already received a very warm and kind welcome in the parishes. Mandy and I look forward to participating in God's Mission on Dartmoor."

Devon's gain is very much Shropshire's loss, where congregations across the Diocese of Lichfield were sad to say goodbye to both Bishop Mark and his wife, who had served



Credit: Shropshire Star

in several posts during their time in Shrewsbury. Prebendary Mandy now looks forward to being closer to her 90-year-old father and other family members in the South West.

A passionate cricketer and angler, Bishop Mark has been a regular fixture in the Diocese of Lichfield's cricket team, and also manages the Archbishop of Canterbury's Cricket XI.

Since leaving Devon, the couple have retained a family home on the edge of Dartmoor. They have two adult children: Frances and Sam.

MOSAIC CREATIVE BIBLE STUDY DAYS GET COMMUNITY THINKING ABOUT FUTURE

Shirwell Mission Community has enjoyed a series of imaginative study days, 'Stories on the Street', led by Mosaic Creative as part of the diocesan Growing the Rural Church initiative.

The project was inspired by the work going on in the Diocese of Exeter's link diocese, the Diocese of Thika, in Kenya.

Through dramatised Bible studies and community mapping, the workshops explored God's calling to participants to bless their communities with the resources they have.

There was also a service at the end of July which was a chance to reflect on the process and move forward, and to offer hospitality to companions from Thika, Cyprus and the Gulf.

The Rector, the Revd Rosie Austin, said: "For me it began with this phrase, 'God has put us in this place for a reason, and he has given us everything we need.' This is as relevant for our small churches on the edge of Exmoor as for any church around the world - but sometimes we need reminding. The study days delivered by Mosaic Creative enabled us to focus on some key Bible passages in creative ways, improve our listening skills and ponder on the many resources that God has provided.

"We also enjoyed a short service with three community choirs, a 'prayer walk' and a meal in the village hall. I particularly appreciated the presence and support of the Bishop of Thika at the service. It was the churches in Thika which first challenged us to think about this resource."



Shirwell Mission Community and visitors from the Dioceses of Thika, Cyprus and the Gulf join for a celebratory service at St Peter's Church, Bratton Fleming.

HELP EXETER TO BECOME AN ECO DIOCESE

Church congregations across the Diocese are being encouraged to register for an Eco Award, as Exeter strives to become an Eco Diocese.

Congregations can take part in an online survey by A Rocha UK to find out how well their church is doing in demonstrating that the Gospel is good news for God's earth.

Ideas for action include installing a bug hotel in the

corner of the churchyard or switching to ecologically friendly cleaning products.

These small steps may be enough to win a bronze, silver or gold award. For further information on the A Rocha Eco Church project, see <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

There will be an Eco Church gathering at St Edward's Church, Eggbuckland, Plymouth on October 24.

NEWS FROM THE DIACONAL COLLEGE

The diaconal college of St Philip the Deacon is delighted to hold its first-ever Sung Evensong for its patron saint, St Philip the Deacon. This takes place on 11 October at the Cathedral at 5.30. Deacons and enquirers are welcome to meet from 4pm onwards at the Cathedral cafe for cake and 'deaconversation'.

The first national conference for distinctive deacons will

take place on Saturday 27 October at Queens Foundation College, Birmingham University. Our keynote speaker is Rev Professor Paul Avis on the theme 'A Flagship Ministry: Deacons and the Church's Mission'. Further details are available here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/deacons-on-the-move-tickets-42469581662?aff=estw>

This month, we chat to the Rector of Holyford Mission Community, the Revd Preb Hilary Dawson, who was brought up in north Devon and went on to read Theology at the University of Wales, Lampeter. She was appointed Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral in 2017.

Spotlight on Hilary Dawson

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

For as long as I can remember I have had a sense of the reality and presence of God. My faith was nurtured through the Anglican and Methodist churches in Shebbear where I grew up, and in Bideford where I later went to a Methodist school.

When did you first feel called to ordination?

Before I was ordained I was a teacher. As I became more active in my local church and moved into school chaplaincy, people started asking me the question: 'Have you ever thought about ordained ministry?' It is fair to say that for me the call to ordination was a surprising one and came through the prompting and nudging of others.

What / who sustains you in your ministry?

My family and friends, those with whom I share my life in the Holyford Mission Community, and lots of great colleagues. Silence, prayer, reading.

When / where do you feel at your most spiritual?

At the Eucharist; in the early morning in my garden; listening to music; and, always, by the sea!

What do you think is the most important aspect of being a priest?

I recently came across a phrase from the theologian Hans



Urs von Balthasar which says that a priest: 'stays alongside with unwavering love'. That sums it up for me.

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?

The Church of England is hugely privileged in its potential to share God's love and good news with everyone through the parish system. The current work of the Church of England on life events/occasional offices is timely. I think that everything that helps us to look outwards rather than inwards, serve our communities, speak in the public square and properly engage with social justice must be encouraged.

What do you do to relax?

Walk, make quilts and play the piano – but not all at the same time!

What book are you currently reading?

Leading by story: Vaughan Roberts and David Sims; and Clock Dance by Anne Tyler.

