



## Sophie Relf-Christopher named as new assistant bishop in Adelaide

The Archbishop of Adelaide, Geoff Smith has named the Venerable Sophie Relf-Christopher as a new Assistant Bishop in the Adelaide Diocese.

Archbishop Geoff said he was delighted Sophie had agreed to accept the appointment.

“Sophie will bring to the ministry of bishop a convinced commitment to the mission of God and deep faith in Jesus Christ, a track record of leading a growing parish which connects well with its community, an acknowledged pastoral heart and capacity, a sharp theological mind, a gift for communication and an entrepreneurial talent,” he said.

Sophie is currently parish priest at St Jude’s Brighton, where she has been for eight years, marked by congregation growth and significant ministry engagement with the wider community. She has also been Archdeacon of Sturt since 2022.

“I am honoured that Archbishop Geoff has chosen me for this role, and I am looking forward to serving the Diocese in this new capacity,” said Sophie.



***Archdeacon Sophie Relf-Christopher, who has been named as the next Assistant Bishop in the Adelaide Diocese***

"I know that these are difficult times for the Church, but I believe that God has not finished with Adelaide. Our Diocese has the faithful people, strength, resources, and gifts, to meet the contemporary challenges."

Archbishop Geoff plans to consecrate Sophie as a bishop at 7pm on August 15, the feast of Mary, mother of our Lord, in St Peter's Cathedral.

Secretary of the Synod Joe Thorp said he was delighted that Sophie was taking on the job.

"I am sure you join with me in welcoming Sophie to the role and look forward to the energy and Christian commitment she will bring to the ministry of bishop," he wrote in an update to the Diocese.

Before becoming a priest, Sophie was a lecturer in communications, film and television production at UniSA.

She was made a deacon in 2010 and a priest in 2011, and served as a ministry student at Brighton, and assistant curate St Peter's Glenelg, before becoming parish priest of Broadview and Enfield from 2012 until 2016, when she returned to Brighton.

"I owe a great debt to all the people who have been so generous to me in my journey to date – especially my husband and children, my clergy colleagues, academics from St Barnabas college, all the wonderful people of St Peter's Glenelg, the whole fabulous parish of Broadview and Enfield, and of

course the brilliant and loved people of St Jude's Brighton," Sophie said.

Apart from a BA in communication, Sophie holds a Bachelor and Master of Theology. Her master's dissertation researched the Diocese's cultural health, and the potential flourishing of its parishes. She shared insights from that research in [a series of articles in the \*Guardian\*](#).

In that she counted the Diocese's blessings.

"Our Diocese is in an exceptional position to reap the strategic benefits of a brand-new Diocesan Vision 2023-2025," she wrote.

"We are led by an Archbishop who is also the head of the Anglican Church, the Primate of Australia. We also enjoy significant financial reserves, with modest income, substantial land holdings, some continuing standing in the community, and a faith that contains an internal logic toward sharing its story (Mark 6:15; Matthew 28:19; Matthew 24:14; Luke 4:18) and expanding the kingdom of God."

But she also acknowledged the challenges facing the Church.

"The prestige and cultural power it once enjoyed is waning, and it has seen a dramatic reduction in church attendance and adherents in recent decades," she wrote. "Added to this, we find ourselves within a broader culture that is increasingly secular, and from which we have become distant both culturally and demographically."

Nevertheless, Sophie saw hope and raised possible ways the Diocese could raise to these challenges and flourish.

"Despite its challenging mission environment and sub-cultural divisions, real possibilities exist for our community to flourish in mission," she wrote.

"We just need intentional and sustained strategic action toward a future in which we increase clan culture so that we feel like a truly connected family of believers; and where we are empowered to take risks, and to be creative."

Sophie is married to Paul and has two children Moses and Rupert. In his announcement of her appointment, Archbishop Geoff asked members of the Diocese to keep the parish of Brighton, Sophie and her family in their prayers as they begin a significant period of transition.

### **Some articles in the *Guardian* by Sophie Relf-Christopher**

<https://guardian-prod.shared.lightbulb.digital/2023/02/10/before-the-lights-go-out>

<https://guardian-prod.shared.lightbulb.digital/2023/02/17/who-do-you-think-you-are-adelaide-anglicans>

<https://guardian-prod.shared.lightbulb.digital/2023/02/24/ill-tell-you-what-you-want-what-you-really-really-want>

<https://guardian-prod.shared.lightbulb.digital/2023/06/29/sacred-porn-stars-online-the-sometimes-unwelcome-reminder-of-the-holiness-of-ordinary-people>

<https://guardian-prod.shared.lightbulb.digital/2023/08/18/how-do-we-address-the-moral-failings-of-the-housing-crisis>

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