

Farewell and thanks to Bishop Denise

The Adelaide Diocese has said a fond farewell to Bishop Denise Ferguson as she ends fives years of service and heads to retirement with her family in Brisbane. A congregation gathered on a cold and wet Saturday July morning to give thanks for her time in the Diocese.

â??To those of you gathered in the Cathedral this morning, and to the Whole People of God in the Diocese of Adelaide. Thank you feels so inadequate as I reflect on these past years,â?• Bishop Denise said. â??Yes, there have been great challenges, but there has also been great joy.

â??Five years ago tomorrow I was consecrated a bishop in the Church of God to serve in the Diocese of Adelaide. Coincidently I was a woman, and the first to serve in this Order in Adelaide. I havenâ??t focused specifically on being your first bishop who is a woman, because I believe when we are called it is out of our humanity, and Godâ??s grace, not gender. But I am also aware of the cultural challenges to women in both church and society that continue to discriminate in so many ways.

â??I am delighted that the next person called to be an Assistant Bishop for the Diocese of Adelaide is also a woman; a competent, faithful and committed priest in her own right, and will lead and serve God and the Church well,â?• Bishop Denise said in reference to the Venerable Sophie Relf-Christopher who will be consecrated as bishop in St Peterâ??s Cathedral on 15 August 2024.



Bishop Denise with the Venerable Sophie Relf-Christopher (left) who will succeed her as Assistant Bishop in the Adelaide Diocese and the Revâ??d Canon Dr Joan Riley, Principal of St Barnabas College

Bishop Denise began her farewell sermon on a light note: â??I must admit, as I was preparing todayâ??s sermon I was reminded of a cartoon. The minister is standing in the pulpit, surrounded by packing boxes ready to leave. His opening words being *â??Todayâ??s sermon is one Iâ??ve wanted to preach for some time now.â?•*



Clergy gather after the farewell Eucharist to Bishop Denise Ferguson

She went on to explain the significance of the readings she had chosen. You can read the full text here.

â??Mark, many years ago you said to me that I had followed you for 15 years as an Army Wife, and now you would follow me in this call to serve. Well, I think I have stretched the time limit. I am forever grateful for your love, care and support, and for your faithfulness to Godâ??s call on your life. I appreciate that I am not always easy to live with, but you have persevered, and I am so grateful.â?•



The Venerable Sophie Relf-Christopher and Bishop Denise during the Bishopâ??s farewell service

She also paid tribute to her family, Cara, Tony & Bella. â??Thank you for gifting Dad and I the freedom to follow this call to Adelaide. We know the cost of that gift and words will never express our gratitude. We are so looking forward to being back in Brisbane with you, and with Ammie & Fin.



The Band With No Name plays at Bishop Denise Fergusonâ??s farewell service

She also thanked Archbishop Geoff. â??When I answered the phone that day back in 2019, I couldnâ??t have comprehended how the ensuing years would unfold. Serving alongside you has been one of the greatest privileges of my ministry. Your faith, wisdom, leadership and guidance has touched me deeply,â?• she said.

She acknowledged her fellow bishops both within the diocese, the province, nationally and internationally. â??You are awesome. These years have been tough as we have grappled with so much change and challenge. Your faith, collegiality and friendship is priceless beyond measure.â?•



Bishop Denise Preaches at her farewell service.



Bishop Denise serves during her farewell Eucharist

Bishop Denise also said she was grateful to the clergy, who had accepted her into their midst, â??not only as the first bishop who is a woman in this diocese, but for your collegiality, confidence and support. Ministry is increasingly challenging, but you too remain faithful to the call to â??feed my sheepâ??. Please take care of yourselves.â?•

Finally she addressed the wider congregation.

â??To all of you, the Whole People of God â?? you are the constant in fulfilling Godâ??s call in this place and for this generation. Thank you for your faithfulness, stewardship, and commitment as you too answer that call to follow.â?•



Bishop Denise her husband Mark and their family as she bids farewell to Adelaide.

You can access more pictures of the service here.

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