



Adelaide welcomes its new Bishop Sophie

Sophie Relf-Christopher was consecrated bishop in St Peter's Anglican Cathedral on 15 August, becoming the second woman bishop for the Anglican Church of Adelaide and one of the youngest bishops in Australia.

Hundreds packed the cathedral to welcome the mother of two as Assistant Bishop of the Adelaide Diocese.



Bishop Sophie Relf-Christopher with bishops from around Australia after her consecration in St Peter's Cathedral

Bishop Sophie was born in London and moved to Adelaide as a child. She was ordained as a priest in 2011 and has served as parish priest at St Jude's Brighton for the past eight years. She has also been Archdeacon of Sturt since 2022.

She aims to help the Diocese of Adelaide be faithful, connected, and courageous.

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



She hopes her ministry will be marked by compassion and a focus on justice.

“The Church is called to advocate for the oppressed, to share the hope entrusted to us, to encourage one another, and uphold the cause of the downtrodden,” Bishop Sophie said.

“Witnessing cruelty and disadvantage in its many forms is not enough for Christians; our hope in God calls us to resist injustice. As Christians, we each have a part to play in giving our account of our hope.

“We are called to be as zealous for justice and mercy for others as we are for ourselves. Through service and love, the church will meet people where they are and be relevant as we challenge economic and social oppression in this new era.”

Archbishop of Adelaide, Geoff Smith, who chose Bishop Sophie to follow Bishop Denise Ferguson in the role after Bishop Denise’s retirement, was chief consecrator.

He 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.

Bishop Chris McLeod, with whom Sophie served as curate in Brighton at the beginning of her career in the Church, preached the sermon.

“Sophie is young,” he said. “She will bring with her a different way of seeing things, fresh eyes, new thoughts, some of these might be troubling to us – I hope so.”

Speaking on behalf of the laity, Ann Nadge, welcomed the new Bishop.

“Bishop Sophie, I don’t know your favourite Bible verse but I have sensed that sometimes you ask what St Paul did in this version of Romans ch 11, vs 33,” she said. “Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It’s way over our heads. We’ll never figure it out.’

“But you try to. Your work as parish priest and archdeacon, on Boards and committees with clergy and laity in the Diocese, has reflected, not only the extravagant generosity of God, but your entrepreneurial quality and commitment to discerning a strong future for the Diocese.”



Ms Nadge also praised Bishop Sophie’s work, based on her research into the cultural health of the Diocese.

“That report, [published in *The Adelaide Guardian*](#), and beyond, reflects your creativity, vision and pragmatism. Bishop Sophie, that has been your leadership journey so far. We look forward to joining in with you as you share more fresh insights,” she said.

“Bishop Sophie, as you take up your new role, its changed relationships, its challenges and opportunities, we stand with you, with Paul, Moses and Rupert, and continue to ask as St Paul did ‘Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It’s way over our heads. We’ll never figure it out.’ But with your new opportunity for leadership, we’ll all work on it together.”

The Rev’d Paula Bullock, Chaplain Central at AnglicareSA welcomed Bishop Sophie on behalf of the clergy.

“We watched with delight, at the laying on of hands, as the relationship between you and the Diocese, the people of God, was consecrated, was made holy for a purpose.....and it was a delight, because of course we welcome you, not as a stranger, but as someone who is already known to us *and* as someone who already know who we are – the good, the badand the other bits,” she said.

“That moment of consecration felt pregnant with possibilities and hope.

“We the Clergy welcome you as our Bishop, as a shepherd who will lead and guide us. With love and

kindness, we remind you that God's holy purpose is a mutual mission – you don't have to do it alone – we want to do this with you, because together, we embrace the future God offers us.”

As a young adult, Bishop Sophie served in a variety of lay roles in the diocese, including liturgical assistant, community visitor and youth minister. As well as Brighton, Bishop Sophie was a curate at Glenelg with the late Reverend Tony Tamblyn.

Her first appointment as a parish priest was at the parish of Broadview and Enfield from 2012 until 2016 when she became the parish priest at St Jude's Brighton, where she served until being consecrated as a bishop in 2024. During her time at Brighton, the dynamic parish flourished, growing a thriving outreach program for all ages of community engagement with a justice focus. Sophie was a Canon of St Peter's Cathedral Chapter from 2019.

Before becoming a priest, Sophie taught film and television production and communications studies at [UniSA](#), ran a divisional mentoring program, and worked to support university students with low retention rates through the National Center for Student Equity in Higher Education.

You can see [more photographs from Bishop Sophie's consecration here](#).

Date Created

August 16, 2024