

The Bishop of Oxford's Office

28 July 2016

Dear Friends and Colleagues

Thank you for your various messages of welcome and for your prayers following the announcement of my nomination as the Bishop of Oxford. It's an enormous honour and privilege to be appointed to this role and I look forward very much to serving the communities of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire in the coming years.

My Confirmation of Election as Bishop of Oxford was held on 6 July, and I have now paid homage to Her Majesty the Queen and resumed my place in the House of Lords. I will continue to meet with the senior team in Oxford and plan for the autumn.

Ann and I hope to move to the new See House in Kidlington at the end of August and I will be working to a normal diary in the diocese from early September. My inauguration is set for Friday 30 September in the Cathedral.

There will then be four Welcome Eucharists at which I will preside and preach, one for each Archdeaconry:

<b>Episcopal Area</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Reading	5 October	Wednesday	19.45	Reading Minster
Dorchester	9 October	Sunday	15.30	Dorchester Abbey
Oxford	12 October	Wednesday	19.30	Church of the Holy Family, Blackbird Leys
Buckingham	13 October	Thursday	18.00	All Saints, High Wycombe

I would like to meet as many people as possible over the first few weeks in post so please put one of these dates in your diary and I look forward to seeing you there.

I hope to visit the parish clergy of the Oxford Area in October and November. I am also planning a series of Deanery Days from November to July to begin to get to know and to listen to the whole Diocese. During those visits I look forward to engaging with lay people and clergy and getting to know the wider community as well as the church. I also look forward to being out and about across the whole Diocese Sunday by Sunday.

You can discover something about me in advance from the Diocesan website, should you wish to do so. I was formed as a parish priest in Halifax. I was shaped as a thinker and writer in Durham and through travelling the country as Archbishops' Missioner. I have been forged as a Bishop in Sheffield and South Yorkshire, seeking to recall the Church here and elsewhere to the mission of God.

I'm conscious I will have a much to learn in my early years in Oxford. Please pray for me: for the gifts of humility, wisdom and gentleness for this new ministry. Pray in the words of the ordinal that my heart may daily be enlarged to love this great Diocese to which God has now called me.

I'm looking forward very much to working with Bishop Colin, Bishop Andrew and Bishop Alan in the coming years and with the rest of the senior team. I'm conscious that the Diocese owes a particular debt to Bishop Colin for his care and leadership during the long vacancy.

Based on the listening I have done so far, I will focus my ministry across the whole Diocese in three areas in the early years: on engagement with children, young people and young adults; on enabling lay discipleship in the world and on engaging with the poorest communities across the Diocese. These priorities are not a new Diocesan strategy. That may emerge over time. They are initial themes for my own engagement with the whole Diocese and I look forward to taking them forward with you.

I believe that the Christian faith and the Christian Church will become ever more central in the life of our nation and the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as people seek again for meaning, for values, for purpose and for hope.

God has called the Church to be a community of mercy and kindness, reflecting the nature of Jesus Christ and telling the good news of his love. Together we are called to be a community of missionary disciples: faithful, united, hopeful, creative and rejoicing in God's grace.

I look forward very much to meeting you, to knowing you and being known and to working with you,  
In Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Croft". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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PS I would be very grateful if this letter could reach as many people as possible and be reproduced in parish newssheets, on websites and in magazines. Thank you.