

May His Kingdom come and will be done in Lancashire

In her very first column for the Diocesan magazine 'The See' our new Bishop, Rt Rev Dr Jill Duff, reflects on three particular gifts given to her as she became the new Bishop of Lancaster ...

I have no words to sum up our wonderful welcome to the Diocese of Blackburn, my Installation in Blackburn Cathedral and Consecration at York Minster. *To God be the glory.*

It appears He has woven together so much, and I am glimpsing just the outer fringes of his work.

So instead, I will reflect on three significant gifts presented to me as the Eighth Anglican Bishop of Lancaster.

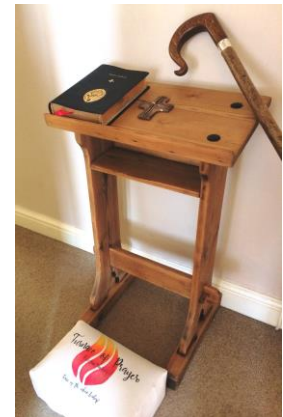
First, a Bible. This was presented to me by the Archbishop of York at my consecration. I was sent to Sunday School in Bolton as a child. I tried to read the Bible, but I came to faith aged 11 when a leader on a Scripture Union kids camp advised me: "Ask for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes as you read it. (Psalm 119.18) You'll be amazed."

God speaks his word and the universe comes into being. Nowadays I always try to carry a Bible with me - His word is like a sword in my hand.



Second, a pastoral staff. 'A bishop knows and is known by their people' it says in the consecration service. My staff is a gift from Bishop Julian. It matches his staff and Bishop Philip's. It meant a lot to me that we each carried our matching staffs at my Installation service in Blackburn Cathedral (in a departure from tradition) signifying our calling to be one team.

My delight at working with two such remarkable colleagues (and indeed the wider Bishop's Leadership Team) is not possible to put into words either. The staff was engraved with my 'theme' verses from Matthew 9.35-38: "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them ... because they were harassed...like sheep without a shepherd ... Ask the Lord of the harvest to drive out workers into his harvest fields."



Third, a prayer desk. The original prayer desk of the Bishop of Lancaster was recently found in a skip, lovingly restored by a vicar in the Diocese and presented to me with a fresh kneeler gifted to me by Rev Tim Horobin and his wife Lisa. The wording on the kneeler is: 'Furnace of Prayer for the Nation.'

As I offered in my Installation Service sermon, I would particularly welcome invitations to come to pray across the Diocese; Sunday evenings in churches, or weekdays in schools, workplaces, football clubs ...

For my diary availability just get in touch with my secretary, Judith, on judith.henderson@blackburn.anglican.org

May His Kingdom come and will be done in Lancashire, as it is in heaven!

Bishop Jill