

Let me start with an admission: I am delighted but, yes, slightly terrified to be the next Bishop of London.

I have spent 32 years of my life in London so, for me, this will be returning home.

London is a world-facing city - multi-cultural and multi-faith.

It is a city of energy and diversity. London is open to all.

But it is also a city of inequality and deprivation. A typical woman in Tower Hamlets in east London will live 30 years in poor health, compared to only 12 for a man in Enfield further north.

It is a city where the number of people living alone will rise by over 50% in the next 25 years.

And it is a city where people feel ignored, marginalised and angry.Â

These emotions were present in St Paul's last week for the Grenfell National Memorial Service.Â People stood together to remember those who died, to support the bereaved and offer a way forward for those who survived.

But the unity we witnessed doesn't mean those issues have been resolved.

 Bishop Sarah Mullally in sleeping bag on stairs with others

Although the time when people described themselves, by default, as Christians may be over, there is a huge hunger for spirituality and new ways for the Church to meet that hunger.

Perhaps nowhere in the country is that more evident than in London.

The Church of England wants to be a Christian presence in every community â confident in prayer; speaking about and living out its faith; working creatively with the people around. This diocese is halfway towards its target of creating 100 new worshipping communities by 2020.Â Many congregations are growing and planting. Just last month London's first entirely new parish church for 40 years, St Francis, opened in Tottenham.

And just like London itself, the Church here reflects a real diversity of traditions and outlooks. I hope and pray that everyone can find a spiritual home within it and that this diversity can be a model of unity to the whole Church of England.

I made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as a teenager. As one hymn puts it, I found in him my Star, my Sun. I look forward to sharing that good news with others as I come to London.

Before becoming a priest, I was a nurse and then the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England. People ask what it is like to have had two careers. I reply that I have always had one vocation â to follow Jesus Christ, to know him and to make him known.

For me that means living in the service of others.Â

Washing feet is a powerful image which has shaped my life.Â

As a nurse, the way we wash feet affords dignity, respect and value. As a priest I am called to model Jesus Christ, who took off his outer garments and washed his disciplesâ feet, even the one who would betray him.

I keep that model of service before me, seeking to serve others and value them.

To be able to do that here is a wonderful privilege.Â

Bishop Sarah Mullally

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