

The Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart, has been appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury as Convenor of the Lords Spiritual.

Bishop David takes over the role of coordinating the work of the 26 bishops in the House of Lords with immediate effect. He succeeds the Bishop of Leicester, Tim Stevens, who was Convenor for nearly six years and retires as a diocesan bishop in July.

Bishop David said: "I am very much looking forward to following Bishop Tim as Convenor of the Lords Spiritual. A new Parliament and new Government brings with it fresh challenges and opportunities.

"I look forward to playing my part in helping frame the response of the Bishops' Benches to the legislative programme, debates and discussions to come over the next five years."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "I am delighted that Bishop David has agreed to take on this important position. As the lead bishop in the House of Lords, the Convenor is relied upon to speak on my behalf and that of all the Lords Spiritual, often engaging with the leaders of other benches across the House on complex and detailed legislative issues.

"Bishop David brings great qualities to the role and will be a vital bridge between the Church and the political world at Westminster. In recent years those bishops who have served in Parliament have been fortunate to benefit from the wisdom and dedication of Bishop Tim and the Lords Spiritual owe him a huge debt of gratitude, as he hands over the Convenorship to Bishop David."

Bishop Tim said: "It has been my great privilege to serve as Convenor of the Lords Spiritual for the past six years. It is a role that is in turns fascinating and demanding, sometimes tricky - but never dull.

"To be able to work with political leaders in advancing some of the causes of greatest concern to the Lords Spiritual and the wider Church has been the most rewarding aspect of the role. I wish Bishop David every success and offer him my prayers and best wishes as he takes over the Convenorship."

In the House of Lords, Bishop David leads for the Lords Spiritual on business and economic policy, and also takes a close interest in local government and foreign affairs.

He worked alongside Archbishop Justin on the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013 and was appointed earlier this year to the newly formed Banking Standards Board.

Bishop David is coordinator of the Birmingham Social Inclusion Programme and is a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Inclusive Growth.

A former BP executive with a degree in business studies, Bishop David trained for ministry at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and was ordained in 1984.

He served as a parish priest in Hull and Coventry before he became Bishop of Birkenhead in 2000. Bishop David was inaugurated as ninth Bishop of Birmingham in 2006, joining the House of Lords in 2010. In his spare time, Bishop David enjoys walking in the Scottish hills, watching rugby, reading history and riding his motorbike.

Notes

The Convenor ensures that the work of the Lords Spiritual is coordinated and supported and that the interests of the Bishops' Bench are represented fully in and outside Parliament. The Convenor is the primary point of contact and liaison on behalf of the Bishops' Bench for the party leaderships in the Lords, Convenor of the Cross Bench Peers, officials and business managers.

Bishop Tim Stevens was appointed as Convenor in November 2009. He has led for the Lords Spiritual on issues of political and constitutional reform, children and families and welfare reform. He sat as a member of the Joint Committee examining the House of Lords Reform Draft Bill in 2011-12 and played an instrumental role in delivering legislation to enable women bishops to join the House of Lords. Bishop Tim was appointed Bishop of Leicester in June 1999 and will have completed 16 years as a diocesan bishop on his retirement.

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