

The Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, has accepted an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to be the Church of England's lead bishop for Higher and Further Education, succeeding the Bishop of Winchester who has held the role for the last six years.

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Bishop of Coventry Christopher Cocksworth smiling

In 2020 the Church of England launched its [Vision for Higher Education](#) and in 2021 set out plans for a major shift in engagement with the sector as part of its [Vision for Further Education](#).

Bishop Christopher has been Bishop of Coventry since 2008. After teaching in secondary education, he trained for ordination and pursued doctoral studies. He has served in parochial and chaplaincy ministry and in theological education, latterly as Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge and in 2010 was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of London for his services to education. He was also awarded a Lambeth DD earlier this year.

Commenting on his appointment Bishop Christopher said, "Coventry Diocese is home to a number of Further and Higher Education institutions, and I am looking forward to extending my links with other institutions more widely and to demonstrating the Church's commitment to this vital sector of our national life."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "We are delighted that Bishop Christopher has accepted this role. His academic background, experience and wisdom will be a blessing to this important area of our work.

"As we take forward our Vision for Further and Higher Education, Bishop Christopher will champion the church's commitment to supporting excellence and educational opportunities for all, as well as encouraging the important work chaplains do across educational communities."

Until the 19th century, all British universities were religious foundations, and The Church of England has maintained this long-standing involvement. It has a particular connection with the universities that make up the Cathedrals'

Group of universities. These Anglican foundation universities have a historic church foundation which is a core part of their ethos and commitment to creating a fairer, wiser and more caring world. They fulfil a vital role in their local communities, and are significant contributors to the development of education as they train a quarter of all the teachers in England between them.

The Church of England also has a presence of around 1,000 Anglican chaplains across higher and further education institutions in England, supporting students and staff of all faiths and none.

Nigel Genders, the Church of England's Chief Education Officer said: "The Church wants to see people flourishing in all aspects of their lives. For us that means working with universities and colleges as well as government departments, getting involved in national debates about what universities and further education colleges are for. Bishop Christopher will bring great wisdom and experience to this engagement."

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