

Bishop John Dennis

I am probably the last clergyman still in post in this diocese since the time of Bishop John Dennis. He appointed me to Christ Church, Moreton Hall, in 1990. I always found Bishop John Dennis incredibly supportive of my ministry. I particularly remember him for his two cycle tours around the diocese, both of which he turned into a very entertaining book which he sold for charitable purposes. It really did form a connection with us clergy, we had a sense that the Bishop really was visiting us in our own situations and I had a real sense of partnership with him in the gospel.

He and his wife, Dorothy, always made Park Road a place of welcome and I can remember some very nice lunches there as a new incumbent. John always struck me as a very kind and wise man who never took himself too seriously but took the ministry and his role as Bishop very seriously indeed. He was a prodigious hard worker and I never went into his office without finding his desk perfectly tidy and his office a relaxing place to be.

He was a committed ecumenist who took time to preach at churches from many denominations. He was a good trainer of senior clergy and a number of Archdeacons and suffragan bishops went on the more senior post after on a short time with him.

He had a keen sense of humour and he was immense fun to be around. I remember on one occasion when we were blessing the footings of the new church building, he arrived for the inevitable photo shoot with other ecumenical leaders, to find that it was raining quite hard. I, of course, apologised to him and the others that they would have to stand in the rain while they had their photographs taken. With a twinkle in his eye he replied, 'Don't worry Jonathan; we are not made of sugar.'

In a sense that summarised my feelings for Bishop John, he was an immensely sweet person full of all the gifts and graces that go with true Christian living, but he was certainly not made of sugar. He was always prepared to take the hard decisions that needed to be taken in the challenges today's ministry.

He was greatly loved and he will be sorely missed. But if ever I am sure of anything it is that he and Dorothy will be reunited in heaven enjoying together all the blessings of being in the presence of their Saviour.

Jonathan Ford
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