

Reflection for BBC Radio Merseyside Daybreak Sunday 16th November 2014



Yesterday I began my public ministry as Anglican Bishop of Liverpool. And a few weeks ago we moved house and began a new chapter of our lives here. You'll be glad to know all the boxes are unpacked and the pictures are up in our new home!

We've never lived or worked in Merseyside before. So this really is a new beginning for us. Like all new beginnings it's exciting but also a bit scary. Everything is strange at first – from knowing where the new shops are to getting to know new colleagues and making new friends. And at first you really have to rely on other people to point you in the right direction. You rely on the kindness of strangers.

In my sermon in Liverpool Cathedral yesterday I spoke about the church as one big table, where Jesus invites us to sit and eat with him, and to work with him to bring justice for all people. A table with room for old friends, and room for strangers too. Room for everyone.

As a stranger – a migrant, you might say – I've found Merseyside people to be really welcoming and warm. Kate and I have felt included in the life of this wonderful community from day one. And I hope and pray that all strangers and travellers who come here will receive a welcome such as we've received.

New beginnings remind us that we live in a world where people depend on each other every moment. It's a world of change, and we all know that change can be scary and can make people defensive and even hostile. But change can also be exciting and enriching, and our world can be a world of welcome and openness and love. That's the world I've found here in Merseyside.

As I begin my work as Bishop here, I pray that I'll always remember what it feels like to be a newcomer and to depend on the kindness of strangers. If I remember that, I'll always want to make room at the table for other newcomers, and to learn from them and build a world of love alongside them.

For me as a Christian that's what Jesus came to do – to teach us to open the table to all, and to make room for all. I'm grateful to God, and to the people of our region too, for giving me and all strangers a place to sit and eat.

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