



**Press release: 8 January 2018**

## **Celebration of Ministry of Rector of Bath Abbey**

The Revd Edward Mason retired from his role as the Rector of Bath Abbey after 13 years of service to the city and the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

A special service of thanksgiving and celebration of Edward's ministry was held yesterday (Sunday 7 January) at the Abbey. Over 500 people including friends, family, the Abbey community as well as industry leaders and representatives from the city's various charities joined together to say farewell to Edward and his wife, Hilary, and to wish them well for the future. A formal presentation thanking Edward for his service was made by the Archdeacon of Bath, Revd Dr Adrian Youings, and the Abbey's Churchwardens, Dr James Playfair and Mrs Liz Westbrook.

In addition to his role as Rector, Edward is also a Chaplain to Her Majesty The Queen. He will continue to serve in this role after his retirement.

On announcing his retirement to the Abbey community, Edward said, "I have enjoyed my time here at Bath Abbey and in Bath immensely. Being rector of this busy, thriving church in the heart of Bath has been a wonderful experience and a privilege. In my 13 years as rector, the Abbey has undergone many changes and it will continue to do so in order to adapt to and meet the needs of the community. There is now a very strong team, both lay and ordained, staff and volunteers, here at the Abbey and I am confident that the Abbey will continue to thrive under their guidance."

"The timing is also right on a personal level. My wife and I have our sixth grandchild on the way, so I will be busier than ever! I also expect to continue serving the church in other ways. My passion has always been for sharing the Christian message and I hope to have more time to focus on specific interests, especially supporting the church in the Holy Land and opportunities for broadcasting. I don't believe that Christians ever retire from learning about their faith and being a follower of Jesus Christ. As soon as you leave one responsibility something else appears. There will be opportunities between now and November to say more, but my overwhelming sense is a deep gratitude for the privilege of serving amongst you all."

Edward was appointed as Rector of Bath Abbey in 2004. From being Director of Music at a comprehensive school in Gloucestershire, Edward and his wife Hilary spent six years in Uganda with their family as Mission Partners with the Church Mission Society working as Christian educators. He was ordained in 1991 and has served in both inner-city and suburban contexts.

Liz Westbrook and James Playfair, Bath Abbey's Churchwardens, said: "With the Abbey's two vision statements of the last thirteen years – "Where Heaven and Earth Meet" and "People and Place Fully Alive" – there has been a transformation in almost every facet of Abbey life – from our prayer life and worship, to

our focus on people, to our welcome, to our position in the city and local community, our heritage and music, mission and pastoral support, to the vision, creation, detailed planning and achievements of Footprint. It has to be said that such unique progress, over the last thirteen years, has been in every way due to the exceptional, dedicated but modest and sacrificial leadership that Edward has given to us all. A sincere and heartfelt thank you – to you – from us all.”

As the Abbey says a fond farewell to Edward and the page is turned on another chapter in its rich history, the next step will be to start on the process of finding his successor. The process to nominate the next Rector of Bath Abbey will be led by the Bishop of Bath and Wells and will start now following Edward’s retirement. The Revd Stephen Girling will take over as Acting Rector of Bath Abbey until a new Rector is appointed.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Rt Revd Peter Hancock says, “Edward has overseen a great many changes at Bath Abbey in his time as Rector, not least as a driving force behind the innovative Bath Abbey Footprint project which will open up the Abbey to more people, enrich worship and reduce the Abbey’s carbon footprint. Over the years he has wisely shepherded and served the Abbey congregation and the wider community, ensuring the Abbey has a special place - spiritually as well as physically - at the heart of the city.

“May I express my sincere thanks to Edward for all he has done and wish both Edward and his wife, Hilary well as they prepare for this new chapter.”

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#### **Notes to editors:**

For further information please contact Elaine Teh or Lucy Ryder, Communications Officer, on 01225 303320 or [comms@bathabbey.org](mailto:comms@bathabbey.org).

#### **About Bath Abbey**

Bath Abbey is a flourishing Church of England parish church which technically serves a small city centre parish (Bath Abbey with St James). This parish has a small residential population and primarily consists of commercial properties; and most of the regular congregation and the 692 people on the electoral roll live in other parishes or come from outside the city of Bath. The Abbey holds daily services of morning or evening prayer or Holy Communion; and the standard pattern of Sunday worship is for five daily services attended on average by 630 people. Special services at Advent, Christmas and Easter are well attended; and many local organisations hold annual services in the Abbey. The Abbey has four choirs: Men’s, Boys’ and Girls’ choirs support worship in services; whilst Melody Makers is a choir for younger children which performs in concerts in the Abbey once a term and at other events in and around Bath. The Abbey runs a successful Schools Singing Programme, an outreach activity which supports singing within local schools and holds regular workshops and concerts in the Abbey. The Abbey welcomes approximately 400,000 visitors annually and is open daily all year round; many of these visitors being families and school parties. Apart from being a place of prayer, worship, weddings and funerals, the Abbey has an important role as a visitor destination, a performance space (for audiences anywhere between 10 and 1,000), a general civic space and an exhibition space. [www.bathabbey.org](http://www.bathabbey.org)

#### **About Bath Abbey’s Footprint**

The £19.3 million Footprint project aims to carry out essential repairs to the Abbey’s collapsing floor, install a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath’s unique hot springs as a source of energy and enlarge capacity by creating 200 sq metres of new facilities to fulfil the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and

hospitality. A programme is also planned to record and interpret the Abbey's 1,200 years of history and this iconic church for millions of visitors including educational visits. [www.bathabbey.org/footprint](http://www.bathabbey.org/footprint)