

At Your Service

The consecration of the Right Rev Dr Graham Kings, new bishop of Sherborne, at Westminster Abbey

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Girls, pastel-hatted and pearled, dark-suited men and the College of Bishops in red, white and black gather in the abbey's gothic spaces and places for the consecration of the new bishop of Sherborne, and suffragan of the Diocese of Salisbury Canon Dr Graham Kings.

He walks in a stately progress of Chapters and Deans, Bishops' Chaplains, Prebendaries, Archdeacons, Canons, Priest's vicars, choristers, Queen's Almsmen, titles like a character-cast from Trollope, filling the width of the chequerboard aisle.

From my seat, on the edge of the quire, within striking distance of the row of ruffle-collared red-gowned choristers, whose voices will later soar in ethereal kyries, this feels an intimate consecration. In fact, some 450 guests are present, spaced through the quire and north and south transepts

A vibrant theologian and the founder of [Fulcrum](#) the website that aims to be a "middle point" for all shades of Anglican Evangelical, Kings, formerly vicar of St Mary's Islington has an imaginative, pioneering enthusiasm for spirituality and art.

The Bulgarian artist and iconographer [Silvia Dimitrova](#) has produced a striking painting for the consecration of the Baptism of the Macedonian Lydia, a God-fearing dealer in purple goods, by St Paul, an episode narrated in Acts 16: 9-15. The baptism is signified by the flowing river behind Lydia and Paul, an apt image for today's consecration takes place on the solemnity of St John the Baptist.

The readings reflect this. The first, read with gravitas by a young Kenyan, David Njogu (Kings spent seven years as CMS missionary in Kenya) is Isaiah's foretelling of the coming of John, that "voice" would "cry out" in the "wilderness" of the coming of Christ.

Cries are the motif of the [sermon](#), a dazzling tour-de-force from David F Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. The psalms, he says, are one extended "cry", and in fact our world is full of them. "Among the most important decisions for any of us are about which cries to try to shut out, which cries we will pay most urgent attention to, and what we ourselves will cry out." He suggests the "Christian drama" of God's involvement with the world is a heart "a code of cries" that might be compared to a "genetic code, a sort of double helix – one strand of core cries to be heard, and an answering strand of cries to be uttered."

Just as God called to Moses, as recorded in the Book of Exodus, Ford suggests that he calls to each one of us, with a specific call or vocation "The God who created us all calls each of us by name." Today Kings is called as Bishop, and we in the congregation are called upon to pledge to pray "uphold, " and "encourage" his ministry.

The Archbishop of Canterbury reminds us that Kings cannot bear the weight of Episcopal office alone, but rather through the "grace and power of God,". It is not something the new bishop is likely to forget, for engraved on his 18-carat gold and amethyst bishops' ring designed by the jeweller Jivan Astfalck, are these words from a poem by George Herbert "God help poore Kings."

He will see it each time he prays, hands cupped open, each time he presides, as he does today at the Eucharist. "It reminds me," Kings says with customary modesty, "of my inadequacy for the task."