

The Right Rev Dr Nigel Peyton is retiring as Bishop of Brechin after a 41-year relationship with Dundee. He tells **Michael Alexander** his thoughts about the area's past and present

# Bishop bids a final farewell

When the Right Rev Dr Nigel Peyton was consecrated Bishop of Brechin in 2011, it returned him to the diocese and city where his ministry began in 1976.

While the London-raised Scottish Episcopalian priest spent much of his career in England, he retained a "deep affection" for the cathedral and its place in Dundee.

He appreciates it's highly unusual for a priest to "bookend" a 41-year career in the same place.

Yet despite the passing of four decades, Bishop Peyton is struck that the "two Dundees" he experienced in the 1970s are as identifiable now as they were then.

And while he admires the development of the £1 billion Dundee Waterfront, he says a "huge challenge" remains to secure sustainable jobs for many young people in a city blighted by child poverty, food banks, rampant drug and alcohol abuse and rough sleeping problems.

"In many ways there are similarities now to the 1970s," reflects Bishop Peyton ahead of his retirement on July 31.

"I discovered quite quickly that even in those times there was a sense that many people on the north side of the Kingsway were not really thought about. Today, the situation remains very much the same.

"I think the V&A is great. I think the Waterfront is great. But I worry about what might be in the V&A. I hope it really is good enough quality and sufficiently attractive to the people of Dundee as well as trendy people who like to visit.

"I think it's great visually for the city but if you ask me, what really matters is

**What really matters is building the economy so there are jobs for young people and their families - sustainable jobs and prospects**

building up the economy so there are jobs for young people and their families - sustainable jobs, hopes for the future and prospects for youngsters.

"I think there is a lot to be done giving our children the very best of education, and at the other end caring for the elderly."

Born in London, Bishop Peyton, now 66, went to Edinburgh University.

After a "strong calling" to the church, he trained as a priest before being sent to be chaplain, aged 25, at St Paul's in Dundee - a move that he describes as "quite life changing really".

He says Dundee has always had a very vibrant congregation.

He returned as bishop in 2011 and took over an area stretching from the Carse of Gowrie almost to Aberdeen.

As well as exercising oversight and pastoral care, Bishop Peyton, who pioneered the Dundee Centre of Mission, has taken a strong part in the public affairs of the city, as well as contributing regular articles to The Courier.

He has cleaned the shoes of

Dundonians on Maundy Thursday - symbolically trying to make ordinary peoples' lives better - and has been chairman of the trustees of St Margaret's Home for the Elderly and a governor of Abertay University.

He has also organised cafe churches, food banks, children's activities and even meetings held in pubs to offer "unconditional" support to those in need.

"People who don't perhaps go to church very often still have spiritual values or spiritual awareness or cravings," he adds.

Last December he presented the Time for Reflection in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood and reminded politicians that government has a responsibility to care for the elderly.

While he tries to avoid party politics and favours "competent government and progressive legislation", it's the recent decision of the Synod of the Scottish Episcopalian Church to allow gay marriage - the first church in the UK to do so - that has inevitably made headlines.

"Gay marriage is a discussion that's going on in all churches," he says.

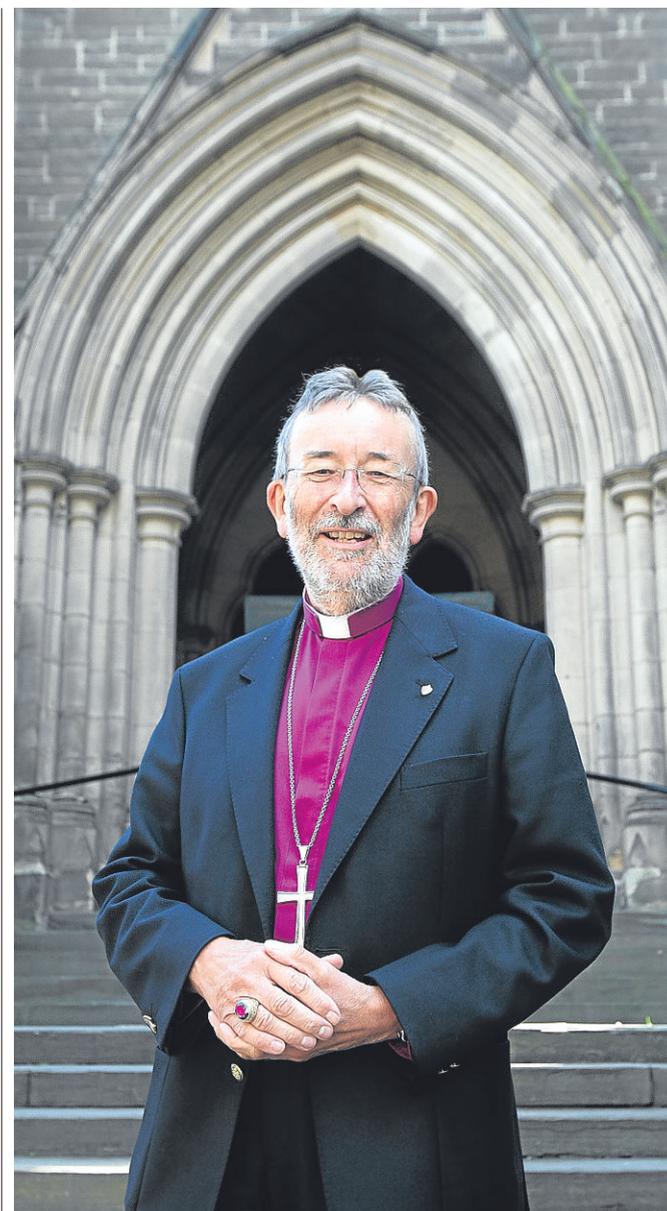
"I think we just so happened to be at a stage with it. It's a measure of who we are as a church that we've found a way forward that hasn't split the church massively. So I think we can be proud of that achievement."

Bishop Peyton and his wife Anne are looking forward to retirement near Lincoln, closer to children and grandchildren and his "beloved and infuriating" Nottingham Forest Football Club.

However, he insists he will never forget Dundee and intends to keep tabs on its renaissance.

A farewell service and reception takes place at 4pm tomorrow in St Paul's Cathedral, Dundee.

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The Bishop of Brechin, the Right Rev Dr Nigel Peyton, on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral, Dundee, where he will be wished a fond farewell tomorrow. Picture: Kris Miller.

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