

Message from Bishop Rachel 3 March 2026



‘O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand’. Isaiah 64:8

On Sunday evening I found myself watching a TV programme I have never seen before – *The Great Pottery Throwdown*. It was the semi-final and four contestants were moulding and shaping clay to make extraordinary and beautiful items. It seemed apt at the end of a weekend in which I had been very aware not only of hands but also of the faithful, creative and restorative love of God, the ultimate potter.

On Saturday morning I had the privilege of using my hands to make the sign of the cross in ash on the foreheads of girls and staff at Cheltenham Ladies College who chose to come forward during the service of ‘Ash Saturday’ (they had been on half term break when Lent began). Later that day I joined the diocesan ‘Faithful Generations’ event taking place in Cirencester parish church, and it was a joy to see so many children with parents and grandparents exploring different activities focused on the love of God in Jesus Christ. Little hands were sticking and colouring and moving in action to music. That was also the case on Sunday morning at ‘The Ten’ – an interactive service at St James’, Chipping Campden, in which adults and children alike were engaged in different activities and worship with their hands, as we focused on the theme of generosity, rooted in the love of our generous God.

In the midst of all of these weekend events was the unfolding news of the terrifying conflict in the Middle East, and with my hands I opened a WhatsApp message from [Archbishop Hosam in Jerusalem, sharing his letter with Anglican brothers and sisters across the world](#). The hands of powerful leaders unleashing their might and destruction on people and places, was in such contrast to the tiny hands in St John Baptist, Cirencester, which were seemingly God-like in their careful handling of gingerbread figures as they decorated them and named them after different family members.

At the end of each of the weekend events described above, I used my hands to bless the children and adults present, yet I am acutely aware that hands can both bless and hurt. Hands can be used to destroy and wield domination, yet they can also be used to create, care and restore.

In this season of Lent when we learn to be God’s people once again, perhaps we will be open to not only learn more about the clay of ourselves and God as potter, but also to explore how we might use our hands and hearts to further join in with God’s work of creativity, remoulding and transformation amidst the mess of our world.

+ Rachel