

Churches from all across diocese celebrate Yorkshire Churches Day

Churches from all across our diocese are throwing their doors open and sharing their history as part of the Heritage Open Days initiative this September.

As part of this many of our churches are also taking part in the Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust's Yorkshire Churches Day, on Saturday, September 10, celebrating the best of our region's beautiful buildings.

It is hoped to be one day a year when all places of worship in the region open up and share all that can be found inside their buildings.



It also provides an opportunity to showcase the many historic religious buildings in Yorkshire as places of worship and important centres for the local areas they serve.

The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, said: "I'm pleased that so many churches in our diocese are taking part in Yorkshire Churches Day this year.

"It's good to open our buildings to share their history and importance to the local community, and to also let people see what we're currently doing, along with our hopes for the future.

"I hope many people will visit and learn a lot – both on the day and through the wider Heritage Open Days programme."

Boundary walk brings prayer and parishes together

Congratulations to one of our Leeds curates who has beat the bounds of his parish, successfully completing a 21km walk whilst praying for the people and places of the region.



Setting off in the early morning rain the Revd Chris Balding, curate in the parish of Wortley and Farnley, was joined on his walk of the parish boundary by neighbouring vicars, parishioners and friends.

Their journey included passing by eleven other parishes that border Wortley and Farnley, and prayers of growth and transformation were offered for each one.

Looking ahead, looking back

Bishop Helen-Ann

September is often a month of looking ahead, and of new beginnings: the school year in so many ways continues to exercise influence across our rhythms of life. Yet as I write, I am still in looking-back mode, specifically on the experience of the Lambeth Conference.

When I returned home feeling exhausted, I only had to look at my smart-watch statistics which cheerily informed me that over the course of the almost two-week conference, I had walked and ran (mostly walked) a whopping 96 miles! One of the many worship songs that I most remember from the gathering is one that had the line ‘we walk his way’, meaning that in our lives as disciples, we walk God’s way in the dynamic life of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. This may at times be difficult and unforeseen, but in the journey lies grace, and the ever-present resonance of hope.

The Anglican Communion matters because it draws us out of our own self-obsessions and anxieties to look at God’s world through one another’s eyes. The stand-out for me was the Bible study group I was part of: as I studied the first letter of Peter together with bishops from the USA, the Philippines, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Ireland my commitment to engage in God’s



mission was renewed. I loved talking about rural ministry with my brother bishops from Zimbabwe and Tanzania (turns out there are lots of similarities), and +Pat from Ireland gifted us all a small St Brigid’s cross for us to wear on our conference lanyards.

During the conference, the Leeds bishops were able to connect with bishops from our link dioceses in the USA, Sri Lanka and Sudan. It was very good to renew our conversations face-to-face, and as we look ahead to the post-Lambeth season we will continue to reflect and pray about how best to develop these valued partnerships.

The theme of Lambeth this time was ‘God’s Church for God’s world’; I hope and pray that as a diocese, we can continue to echo that phrase with revitalised energy and joy to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all our communities.

**+Helen-Ann
Bishop of Ripon**

Reaching the next generation at St Peter’s Morley

In a newly published video, the team at St Peter’s Church in Morley share how their work with children and young people has experienced an encouraging journey of growth.

Through intentionally making next generation ministry a priority in the parish and ensuring it is resourced appropriately, St Peter’s has seen an increase in the number of children and families attending and exploring faith.

The Revd Phil Harris, who joined St Peter’s as the vicar in 2020, said, “Over the last two years we’ve seen God do some amazing things in growing our ministry to children and young people.”

“For the first few months I lead the kid’s ministry during the service. What that said was that the children are a priority, they matter just as much if not more sometimes than us as grownups.

“As we set out on this journey we made a decision to invest in children and help them to grow in faith.”

Praise on the beach this August Bank Holiday weekend

'Beside the Lake', an open-air service of thanksgiving, returned to the beach of Semerwater in Raydale on Bank Holiday Sunday.



Accompanied by Hawes Silver Band, the theme of 'Joy and Hope in Jesus Christ' was shared with the crowd who gathered on land and on the water in the Wensleydale scenery.

Readings were taken from Psalm 103 and Isaiah 40: "Those who Hope in the Lord shall renew their strength."

A 'Praise Shout' has been a regular feature of the outdoor event along with singing and a practical prayer activity, featuring the pebbles on the shore, before a rousing finish, singing 'I'll go in the strength of the Lord.'

Refreshments were then served in the church of St Matthew's in Stalling Busk where everyone could appreciate the celebration of colour in the village's flower festival.

The Revd Dave Clark, Incumbent of the Upper Wensleydale benefice, said: "It's so good to be able to return and celebrate in this way once again!

"When the news seems to be so dark and gloomy, it's important to remember that we can always find Hope and Joy in the presence of Jesus."



Summer breakfast club is a big hit with youngsters and grown-ups

Christ the King in Battyeford has welcomed children and their grown-ups to a free breakfast club every Friday in August and up to fifty joined in for food and fun on its first day.

Warm croissants, toast, cereal, juice and hot drinks were served. Crafts and play areas, inside and outside were set up for children aged up to 11.



"It was awesome - I really enjoyed it and had so much fun. Can I come back next week?" asked one of the children.

Natasha Lee, Childrens and Families Worker at CtK explained, "We wanted to provide a safe, relaxed space for families to come over the summer which included food.

"Breakfast seemed the perfect choice and the reception has been really positive, especially the warm croissants!"

The Word in our Hands

Revd Mark Smith

When I first encountered the Deaf Christian community they told how as children their hands were hit with a ruler if they were caught signing, and recounted how they had their hands tied behind their back at school to stop them using sign language.

Some weeks later I had a vision of Jesus signing to me, somehow I understood him (a sort Pentecost experience with hands replacing tongues!) and then His hands were nailed to a cross and he could not sign. He stood with the Deaf people. The Living Word was also the Living Sign.

I started sign language classes. My prayer life had grown. But I found as I signed, my prayers and praises became more real and authentic.

Today there is hope. Watching Rose–Ayling Ellis win “Strictly” in the UK with her sign language interpreter supporting her, has raised awareness of Sign language across the UK. We’ve come a long way from the days when Deaf kids were teased for using “monkey language” and



their beautiful hands were tied and beaten.

In the Diocese of Leeds it has been a privilege to see God at work in our own Signing Deaf Community. During Covid we took those once scarred and abused beautiful hands online, with signed scriptures, songs, drama and teaching on YouTube, Facebook and Zoom. We found Deaf Christians in Yorkshire could join Bible studies led in Bristol and Salisbury, and those in Norwich, London, Cambridge and Plymouth could join in signed worship in Yorkshire.

This September as I retire after 42 years of ordained ministry, 20 years working in the Deaf community and 7 years here in the Diocese of Leeds, it is good to reflect on what God is doing among Deaf People across the UK and in the Diocese.

Love them and bless them, minister to them and let them minister to you and they will bless us with the gift of their beautiful, complex rich and expressive language.

St Stephen's Steeton becomes Eco Church

In recognition of their commitment to live and work more sustainably, the community at St Stephen's Church in Steeton have been given the bronze Eco-Church award from A Rocha UK.



The award covers areas of church life such as the management and maintenance of church buildings and land, engagement with the local community and global environmental campaigns and also the environmental impact of the personal lifestyles within the congregations.

Dr Tom Chilton, the church's environmental officer, said, “the challenge now is to do more. The problems facing our planet can feel immense, but we can all do our bit to help.