

Diocesan News

April 2024

Bishop Tony to retire this summer after 42 years service



The Rt Revd Tony Robinson, Bishop of Wakefield, will retire this summer after 42 years of ordained ministry.

On December 6, 2002 he was consecrated as Bishop of Pontefract in York Minster by the then Archbishop of York, David Hope and after the creation of the Diocese of Leeds in 2014, he became its first Bishop of Wakefield in 2015.

“Having spent nearly two thirds of my 42 years of ordained ministry here in Wakefield the time has come to retire. Sue and I have loved living in Yorkshire and it has been a great joy to share in the lives of countless people, clergy, parishes and communities,” said Bishop Tony.

“The creation of the Diocese of Leeds was something that I couldn't have imagined back in 1997, but it was worth all the incredible upheaval and

adjustment under Bishop Nick's leadership so that is ready to face the challenges facing the Church of England today.”

In tribute to Bishop Tony's faithful work for the church and communities, the Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds said: “I first worked with Bishop Tony in the Diocese of Leicester from 1991 where we were both incumbents and then area deans. It was a privilege to serve with him then and, later, to follow him to West Yorkshire.

“He could not have been a better episcopal colleague during a time of change, challenge and opportunity. I will miss his calm, steady commitment to our diocesan ministry and mission. I am indebted personally to him for his constant support and encouragement.

“This diocese will lose a dedicated pastor, wise counsellor and exemplary bishop. In wishing him and Sue a long and happy retirement, they go with our love, gratitude, prayers and blessing.”

Synod affirms our commitment to God's Creation and His people



Affirming our commitment to God's Creation and the people in it were the topics of the most recent Diocesan Synod.

The Bishop of Leeds, the Rt Revd Nick Baines, gave his Presidential Address, saying that in a world where news reports swing violently between troubling subjects, Christians must engage hopefully with reality, not turn away.

The Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon, proposed a motion confirming our diocesan commitment to not invest in companies with significant revenues arising from fossil fuels, which passed with an overwhelming majority.

The Very Revd Andy Bowerman, Dean of Bradford, gave a presentation on his recent report which recommends the establishment of a new oversight groups for our overseas links, to champion them more effectively and allow for across links connections.

Christian defiance brings hope

Bishop Nick

There was once a very popular Easter song or hymn, but it actually got sung throughout the year, and one line confidently proclaimed about Jesus, 'back to life He came.'

No, he didn't! What happened to Jesus was resurrection, not resuscitation. The Christian can be confident because, as Paul puts it, God raised Christ from the dead. He didn't simply get his breath back after a long pause.

Now this matters. As John Wesley made clear, if we sing bad theology, then we will believe bad theology. So we must be clear what we are singing, what we are proclaiming, and therefore what we are believing. Now, I think this is very encouraging. We live in a world in which the film industry and the military political complex tell us that violence and destruction are the real powers. Death is final and to be avoided at all costs.

But Jesus took a different view. On the cross, he looked death, violence and destruction right in the eye. And he defied them. He exposed the sham and disempowered what looked to be invincible.



No wonder the early Christians were mocked for their apparent weirdness. A slain lamb sitting on the Emperor's throne at the heart of the Roman Empire?

But this is what defiant Christianity says. As the previously hopeless Peter, the friend who deserted Jesus at the crucial point of his suffering, now preaches in the streets, God raised this dead Jesus and the world is changed forever. It's in Acts chapter ten verses 39 to 40. Now there are many times in life when we feel defeated. It seems as if the power of death or violence or loss simply can't be overcome.

It can hit us when we least expect it. Like the first disciples of Jesus, we can find that the God who raised Christ from the dead is the same God who promises never to leave us or forsake us. So like the first friends of Jesus, we might wake up on Easter Day bewildered and confused. Less, "Christ is risen, Hallelujah!" And more, "you've got to be joking." But the last laugh and the last word belong to this God who defies even death with hope.

Bishop Smitha marks International Women's Day at special regional event

The Rt Revd Smitha Prasadam, Bishop of Huddersfield, attended a special International Women's Day event hosted by West Yorks Mayor, Tracey Brabin.

Women of West Yorkshire, was organised by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Bishop Smitha was there with Revd Canon Rachel Firth, Women's Advisor for the Huddersfield Episcopal Area and Kaneez Khan of Wellsprings Together.

They joined other prominent women from across the region for a day of celebration, education and inspiration.

Speaking after the event, Bishop Smitha highlighted the historic progress towards equality within the Church of England.

"In the year that Leeds Diocese celebrates its 10th anniversary, the CofE marks the 10th anniversary of women's ordination as bishops, and the 30th anniversary of women's ordination to the priesthood, I'm thrilled to be joining Bishop Anna who is Lead Bishop for women in the diocese, to celebrate these milestones in Bradford Cathedral on Saturday, May 4."



Charity founded on prayer receives King's Award for helping former prisoners



Alpha House, a charity which prepares people for mainstream society after prison and was born out of prayer has received the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service.

Concerned by the lack of housing and support for male prison leavers returning to Halifax and their social issues including drugs and alcohol dependency, former Probation Officer Fran Nowell decided to do something about it – with God's help and guidance.

Back in 2010, she began a project which now offers supported accommodation, help with mental health plus training and coaching to help residents turn their lives around, restore relationships and become productive members of society.

A worshipper at Christ Church, Mount Pellon, in our Huddersfield Episcopal Area, Fran had spent the last two decades of her 25 year career with the Probation Service in Calderdale and knew the hard road faced by former drug and alcohol addicts freshly released from jail.

"One night, I was praying and I heard God say: 'Do something about it' and I had the image in my mind of a large house with a garden – a real home offering wrap-around support," said Fran.

The project now has its own offices in Halifax centre, with enough space and facilities for groups of people to be helped with mental health issues, anti-addiction support and also gain access to literacy and numeracy coaching.

The first step is when they are collected from the prison gates by Alpha House staff and taken to a large house converted into seven individual flats.

The men are chaperoned while living in that building and when ready to move on, they go to a block of 18 flats next door.

From then, they start volunteering or going to college and become ready to move on to independent living and get own place.

Fran said: "Receiving the King's Award was a massive encouragement for the residents who were told that the whole project wouldn't work if it wasn't for their personal bravery and commitment.

"It really built them up and was also wonderful for the staff, volunteers and me."



Bishop Toby visits new ecumenical coffee shop mission

St. Mary's Church in Wyke were very excited to welcome the Bishop of Bradford, the Rt Revd Toby Howarth, to their newest ecumenical mission project.

Together with the Moravian, URC, Methodist, catholic and free churches locally, the church has opened The Meeting Place, a coffee shop in the village centre.

The Meeting Place offers a warm space and welcome to all who might be seeking friendship and pastoral care, along with an advice centre, meeting people's other needs in a variety of ways.

The Revd Lucy Wormsley, Vicar of St. Mary's, said: "The Meeting Place has been a new opportunity for the Church to meet people's needs whilst also offering the love of God to new people."

Bishop Toby said: "This project is a much needed provision for the people in this area, and it is great to see the churches working so closely together ecumenically."



The Calling

Revd Olasupo Ogunyinka
Team Vicar, Benefice of
Morley

Have you been called or did you call yourself? Well, I think either is okay with God who created us and knows us intimately. Remember the excitement you felt when you think you're called by God to his mission. The excitement of talking to your vicar, making several visits to the DDO and eventually attending BAP and afterwards receiving that important call from the Bishop telling you the good news... Well, where are you now in your calling?

The burning question is: if we are so sure of our calling at the beginning, why then are we sometimes acting like those without faith and trust in God? We are very quick to give up and feel powerless as if we are in control of everything in the first place. We are not in control, God is. He is the one who called us into his mission.

We are called to embrace everything that is beautiful, peaceful and loving and not to run away from putting right everything that is ugly, destructive and hateful no matter how hard it is.



After all, Christ, who we follow, made himself powerless, suffered humiliation, torture and death on the cross all because of His love for us. He could have forced us to submission instead.

We recognise the love of God in the joy we feel when we are in contact with all that is pure and beautiful, but fail to recognise that adversity is the wound of contact with God when it is painful and sorrowful.

We experience the will of God's nurturing pressure on us when it is necessary for us to experience it. And to the extent that we are obedient to his will he rewards us with the knowledge of his faithfulness and love for us.

Now that you're faced with the reality of who you are and who you're called to be, wake up from your slumber, ignite that passion you felt at the beginning and let it burn by the power of the Holy Spirit which is in all of us. Amen.

Churches raise £57,000 in Give To Go Green project

Churches across the diocese have raised some £57,000 in just six weeks to help reach carbon net zero, as part of the Give To Go Green project.

11 churches took part in Give To Go Green, a match-funding pilot from the Church of England working with churches to double local digitally-raised donations, to allow for more work on reducing carbon emissions.

The Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon and Lead Bishop for the environment in our diocese, said: "It's wonderful to see our churches do so well fundraising in the Give To Go Green pilot.

"I want to say a massive congratulations to all the churches for their efforts, and how much I am looking forward to seeing the positive results of the works this money will support."

It has been confirmed that the diocese will be taking part in the second round of Give To Go Green when it launches, with more details to come.

