

Diocesan News

December 2024

Bus stop nativity brings people together at Advent



People at a bus stop outside a Bradford church are enjoying a special nativity just for them.

Members of St James' Community Church on Bolton Road in the Bradford area have used old pop bottles and milk cartons to create the festive scene, to remind people of Jesus as they travel into the city centre.

The Revd Marianne Clough, curate at the church, said: "It's a really busy bus shelter right outside our church and so last year, we tried doing a little display using pop bottles dressed as the characters to tell the story, all with googly eyes, obviously!

"It had a great response and really seemed to bring people together.

"We had people waiting for buses talking to us, and we had nice chats with local dog walkers, as we were out changing the scenes each week.

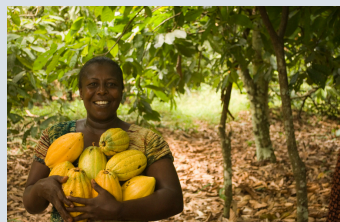
"The Scouts kindly built us a manger and it became something that people really got behind.

"We did have a few issues with the milk carton angels when they got a bit over excited in a high wind and took off down Bolton Road but we'll be fastening them down a bit tighter this year!"

This Advent, the church enlisted the help of their Wednesday drop-in Place of Welcome, who have helped remake the characters and all are now enjoying the Bus Stop Nativity's first scene featuring Mary and Gabriel.



Diocese of Leeds reaffirms commitment to Fairtrade with new resources



The Diocese of Leeds is committed to sharing and supporting Fairtrade, and has launched a refreshed website page with resources for parishes.

At Diocesan Synod in 2016 a motion was approved supporting our diocesan commitment to Fairtrade, which was reaffirmed with another vote at Synod in 2024.

The refreshed Fairtrade page has information including ten steps to becoming a Fairtrade church; a Bible study guide introducing the ten principles of Fairtrade; some answers to common questions about Fairtrade; and links to more resources, information and supportive organisations.

The diocese aims to take steps to ensure that all deaneries, parishes and schools are encouraged in sourcing Fairtrade products, promoting Fairtrade principles and participating in Fairtrade campaigns.

Yule never walk alone

Bishop Nick

I have just seen an advert for a red Christmas jumper with the words "Yule Never Walk Alone". Now, I know this is a bit of a niche interest – basically only Liverpool fans are likely to buy one – but it hits the Christmas spot for me.

Why? Because Christmas, once you strip it back to the core, is the fulfilment of God's promise to come among us as one of us. This is why we are invited to celebrate the fact that whatever the world and life can throw at us, we never have to walk alone.

Fantasy? Vague spiritual nonsense for the gullible?

Not so. The people of Jesus's time had no illusions. They lived under oppressive military occupation by the Roman Empire. Life was cheap – people crucified or summarily snuffed out – every day of the week. No human rights legislation applied, no right to life, liberty or happiness. Their longing was for liberation, but the quick fix never seemed likely to come. Messiah was supposed to solve the problems, but the power of the violent never dimmed.

And there lay the problem. How are you supposed to spot



the presence of God in a confusing world when he refuses to give us what we want? We look for the giant saviour, but are offered a mere baby in a feeding trough. We long for security, but find only this same baby hunted at birth by a paranoid ruler's troops. We seek our salvation in things going our way, but discover in this baby that it is OK not to be in control of the world. And it is into this dark night in an obscure part of the Middle East that God comes among us.

Small. Vulnerable.

Unprotected from all that real life brings. God, in person, whispering into the silence of fear or bewilderment that we are not alone.

So, after Christmas we are invited to grow up with the baby we read about in the gospels; journey with the man and his friends; live with the hopes and expectations, fears and suspicions of his close society; Christmas is the beginning of surprise, not the end.

Happy Christmas! Yule never walk alone.

'Oh yes it will!': Panto donation to support ministry in Pontefract

A generous donation of £5,000 from the St Giles with St Mary's Pantomime Theatre Society will help boost church ministry in Pontefract, says the group's new president Fr Ian Bullock.

"The Society's Constitution states that "The Vicar of St Giles' Church shall be the standing President of the Society and we are delighted to have Fr Ian joining us in the role," said a spokesperson.

"Despite our best efforts he hasn't yet agreed to appear on stage, but we will keep trying!

"The Society was delighted to give a financial donation to St Giles and St Mary's churches this year and is now busy rehearsing for its next pantomime 'Hansel and Gretel'."

Fr Ian commented: "As I've always had a love of all things theatre, I am delighted to take up this role and I am looking forward (yes I am!) to working closely with them"

"St Giles and St Mary's are immensely thankful for their recent donation of £5,000 towards the ongoing work and ministry of the church."



Diocese of Leeds welcomes Bishop Moses from Tanzania



The Diocese of Leeds was pleased to host the Rt Revd Moses Yamo, Bishop of Rorya in Tanzania, on recent visit.

Bishop Moses arrived on Monday, November 18, and got to experience snow and have his first ever snowball fight.

On Tuesday, November 19, Bishop Moses visited Wakefield Cathedral, while on the Wednesday he visited Almondsbury.

On Thursday, November 20, Bishop Moses visited Halifax Minster, presiding at the daily Eucharist service, eating with members of the Mothers' Union and meeting with the Mayor of Calderdale.

On Friday, November 21 the Benefice of Hartshead, Roberttown and Scholes hosted Bishop Moses, where he spent time visiting each of the three churches in the benefice and speaking with parishioners.

There he explained about the challenges faced by the church in Rorya.

After being shown around Roberttown C of E Junior and Infants School, Bishop Moses

enjoyed a classic lunch of soup followed by Yorkshire curd tart and Parkin.

The visit concluded with a visit to Hartshead Junior School, where he was guest of honour at their celebration assembly.

After a quiet Saturday, Bishop Moses spent Sunday, November 23 at Bradford Cathedral, and attended a service for installing new Canons at the Cathedral.

The Ven Cat Thatcher, Archdeacon of Pontefract, said: "We have been delighted to welcome Bishop Moses of Rorya in Tanzania to the diocese, and to refresh the friendships he made when he was with us a year ago.

"During the week he has visited friends across the diocese, as well as joining us for a special service of Choral Evensong at Bradford Cathedral for the installation of Honorary Canons.

"My huge thanks go to the many people involved in welcoming and hosting Bishop Moses, especially to the Revd Canon Hilary Barber, and to the Revd Bill Henderson, without whom the visit could not have happened."



Diocesan schools helped to go green with government grants



Schools across the diocese will be able to help plan for the sustainable future of their buildings, thanks to some £40,000 of government grant funding.

Some 47 diocesan Voluntary Aided (VA) schools have secured the funding from Phase 5 of the Low Carbon Skills Fund, which is a government fund for providing grants to public sector bodies to access skills and expertise to unlock heat decarbonisation on their estate.

The funds, run by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and delivered by Salix, will allow each school to undertake an energy survey.

The energy surveys will allow schools and the diocesan Education Team to get a clearer picture of what improvements might be needed for VA schools.

The Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon, diocesan bishop for the environment and Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, said: "I'm really pleased that we've managed to secure this funding for our schools, which will help reduce emissions."¹

Waiting for God

Revd Canon David Gerrard
Vicar of St Catherine's Belle Vue

Yesterday I ordered my 'Real Advent Calendar' (OK, I ordered 4 of them, but they're not all for me - honest!). I'm sure many of you are familiar with them - Advent calendars telling the Nativity story and containing delicious Fairtrade chocolate. One of a number of ways in which we mark the progression of Advent.

Advent is about waiting or at least that's what I was always taught. Which unfortunately made me approach Advent with frustration. After all, who likes waiting? Waiting makes me think of dentist's waiting rooms or standing on train station platforms. Maybe those places fill you with excitement and anticipation. They fill me with boredom and dread. Which always makes it a little difficult when people try and tell me that there is joy in the waiting.

All this, I expect, would lead you to assume that I dislike Advent. However, you'd be wrong. I love Advent. I love seeing lights appearing in the darkness, terrible Christmas jumpers starting to be worn and even Mariah Carey's annual reappearance on the radio. And yes, I love the Advent calendars, Advent wreaths



and even the purple colour of the churches.

Why do I hate waiting, but love Advent? Because I'm not convinced Advent is about waiting at all. I think Advent is about expectation.

The expectation that God can, and will, turn up. The sure and certain hope that God has turned up, will turn up and is turning up - if only we have eyes to see it. In a world that feels divided - in a church that feels divided - it seems good to me to be reminded of that expectation.

One of the (numerous) ways I believe God has turned up recently is in our diocese's recommitment to Fairtrade. If the world is dark, it is even more important that we stick to the basic principles about justice and fairness. So why not check out the diocese's new Fairtrade page on the website, sign up to make your church a Fairtrade Church and order yourself a Real Advent Calendar - you know you want to!

St Mary's Todmorden raise funds for food at Christmas Fair



The people of Todmorden have been able to look towards Christmas and raise funds to help provide meals at their recent Christmas fair.

St Mary's Todmorden held their Christmas Fair on the first weekend of December, with the Mayors of Calderdale and Todmorden officially opening the event alongside in the Todmorden Town Crier.

Some 20 stallholders took part, including makers, bakers and crafters.

Over 200 families explored the church's Follow the Star trail whilst queuing to meet Santa.

Attendees enjoyed live music from the Three Valleys Gospel Choir, and guests could also take part in Christmas karaoke which was fun for all in the community.

Luke Greenwood, Safeguarding Officer at the church, said: "It has been a resounding success and funds raised will help us support our new community food project: School Holiday Meals 2025."