

Diocesan News

July 2024

Our deacons welcomed into their new exciting roles at packed ordination service



A "Leeds Eleven" of new deacons were welcomed into their exciting roles at a packed service in Ripon Cathedral, led by the Anglican Bishop of Leeds, the Rt Revd Nick Baines.

The new signings include a former lawyer, a former combat medic and a TV production assistant and family, friends and well-wishers gave them all a long round of applause.

Preacher, the Rt Revd Smitha Prasad, Bishop of Huddersfield described them as "ambassadors of God's Kingdom" embarking on roles that are about sharing the Good News and putting other people first.

"God needs agents and disciples and it's about living a

life that will demand courage, but that will be reflected back to you in the compassion and generous hospitality that you receive."

Bishop Smitha also highlighted the steady rise in Church of England membership during the last three years and said to the full cathedral: "If you haven't joined the club yet, please do so today!"

The Very Revd John Dobson, Dean of Ripon said after the service: "It is always a privilege for a cathedral to host an ordination service and we pray for the deacons, their families and the parishes in which they serve."

Within the Church of England there are three stages of ordained ministry: deacons, priests and bishops.

Lord Mayor of Leeds welcomed at city's Faiths Forum event in Church House



The Lord Mayor of Leeds Councillor Abigail Marshall Katung was welcomed by Bishop Arun at a special meeting of Leeds Faiths Forum in Church House.

The Rt Revd Arun Arora, Bishop of Kirkstall chairs the well-established interfaith group that is dedicated to building knowledge and understanding of the diverse faiths within the city and its communities.

And Cllr Marshall Katung received a warm welcome at the informal gathering where Bishop Arun said: "You may be sure of our support and blessings in all that you do."

Born in Nigeria, she is the first African Lord Mayor of Leeds and said while the importance and breadth of her role was still sinking in, she was committed to engaging with all faith groups and bringing people together.

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly

Bishop Anna

In 2018 I could not wait to take my two young daughters to see the 'Vote 100' exhibition at the Houses of Parliament marking the anniversary of the first time women, over the age of 30 and with certain property rights, were able to vote and stand for election. I was so moved to see my 6 year old 'role play', giving a speech in the House of Commons, pointing her finger with great authority and talking about fairness.

During a recent day trip to Manchester, I reminded my daughters again about their 'herstory' when the three of us had a photo taken next to the Emmeline Pankhurst statue in the centre of the city of her birth that recognises the contribution of Emmeline and her daughters to British politics.

While pointing fingers may be part and parcel of electoral politics, as my daughter had already learned, in recent weeks we will have seen politicians intentionally avoid pointing their fingers, instead bending fingers inwards so knuckles awkwardly protrude prodding the air, a practice first introduced by Tony Blair.

In contrast, the statue in Manchester (and the statue of her in London), has Emmeline reach a hand out, suggesting either an invitation to join her hand-in-hand in the struggle or a command to go and do what was needed. After all the Women's Social and Political Union was dedicated to 'deeds, not words'.



The story of the gift the suffragettes gave to our nation (and the wider world) still empowers me as a woman today. Not only politically but professionally, personally and prophetically, in my faith. I still find it incredibly humbling to hear the stories about women who gave so much, in some cases their lives and I find it shocking that so many people don't bother to vote today. Exercising our democratic right to vote is an act of respect not only for the suffragettes, but the millions (mainly men) who fought and died in two world wars, for our democratic freedom.

Following the General Election result, let us use our democratic freedom well, not just in how we vote at election time, but also how we continue to lobby and campaign around the matters which matter in our lives and faith, holding the government we have just elected to account. Let us also hold out hands of invitation to others to active collaboration to improve our lives and the lives of others.

In gratitude and debt to the prophets of old, and the prophets of more recent times, let us like them 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God'. (Micah 6v8)

One of our schools celebrates its journey from broken to brilliant

One of our schools has gone from "broken to brilliant" and been praised in a recent Ofsted report for being Good in every area.

Bishop Young Church of England Academy, in Seacroft, Leeds, was rated as Inadequate in 2017 when the school first joined the Abbey Multi Academy Trust – with the then National Schools Commissioner ranking Bishop Young as one of the schools causing the most concerns in the country.

Fast forward seven years, and Ofsted has now found the school (visited recently by Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell and Bishop of Kirkstall, Arun Arora) has "high expectations", students can access "a richer, more ambitious curriculum" and there is an "inclusive and accepting environment" that helps to "raise pupils' aspirations of what they can achieve".

Rachael Cole, Bishop Young's Head of School, said: "This is one of those milestone moments that our community should really celebrate."



Diocesan Synod tackles busy agenda in last meeting of triennium



How we continue to grow God's Kingdom here in our region was the theme of the most recent Diocesan Synod, which took place on Saturday, June 15 in Leeds.

The busy agenda covered topics including the work of our Children, Young People and Families Team, diocesan finances and an update from our Barnabas team on a new tool to help parishes chart ways forward.

Bishop Nick gave his Presidential Address, which highlighted the desperate situation of Christians in war-torn Sudan and their need for our prayers and support, and also examined the intellectual challenge of deciding personal priorities in the face of constant and often conflicting media.

After this, Bishop Nick outlined the process for choosing a new Bishop of Wakefield to Synod, which was a moment where members showed their full appreciation for the work of the outgoing Bishop, the Rt Revd Tony Robinson.

Synod then heard from Liz Morton, Team Leader for our Children, Young People and Families Team, as part of a motion about Synod received the annual reports from all our diocesan teams.

Synod then heard from Elaine Swinhoe, Mothers' Union President for our diocese, about the work of the Mothers' Union, which has over 4 million

members in more than 80 different countries.

Irving Warnett, Chair of our Finance, Assets and Investments Committee, and Geoff Park, Chief Finance Officer for the diocese, then gave a presentation on our 2023 accounts, looking at the current situation and giving an outline of where we would like to be in the coming years.

After a good debate, Synod approved the motion receiving the accounts.

The Revd Jude Smith, Diocesan Director of Church Revitalisation, then gave a presentation of Compass, a new tool for parishes from the Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence team.

Compass is a tool designed to help churches work out where they are in ministry and mission, chart what they are currently doing, and help them decide what comes next, the barriers to this and how the diocese can support churches to move forward.

As Synod drew to a close it ended with a Eucharist for members, as it was the last Synod of this triennium.

Bishop Nick thanked all Synod members for their contributions over the tumultuous last three years, with a particular thanks to Matthew Ambler, outgoing Chair of the House of Laity, and the Revd Canon Rachel Firth, outgoing Chair of the House of Clergy.

Bishop Nick and Bishop Toby take messages of support to war-torn Sudan



The plight of people in war-torn Sudan was witnessed first hand by Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines and Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth during a recent visit to our link diocese.

This significant visit to a country riven by conflict was aimed at showing our diocese's ongoing support for the many Christians displaced by hostilities.

Bishop Nick said: "In conversations with Archbishop Ezekiel, who now runs the whole province from a small desk in the corner of his bare bedroom in Port Sudan, we pledged our continuing support – our love and commitment to him and his people. Thank you to all in this diocese who have given money in order to keep besieged clergy paid, fed and resourced to feed and serve others."

Bishop Toby told how they hoped to make people feel that they are not abandoned:

"The main reason Bishop Nick and I went was basically to say, 'you are not forgotten, we pray for you every day, we love you, we stand with you'," he said.

A call to rest

Revd Phil Arnold
Vicar of Upper Armley

Each Wednesday afternoon at Christ Church, we have Warm Welcome, joining with churches across the country to welcome people to a safe space who may not otherwise make it to church.

In our case, this involves table tennis, pool, tea, coffee and a meal high on calories and low on nutrition. One of our regulars who is currently homeless has a cup of tea and takes his place at the piano where he sits and plays jazz piano, tears often streaming down his cheeks.

Last month we added a 'circle time' where everyone shares something that has happened in the last week, along with a small act of worship: listening to a worship song, a passage, and a simple response like lighting a candle.

The challenges in the inner-city and outer estates are well-known: poverty, isolation, and poor mental health are all common. However, accompanying that is often a sense of gratitude for what I take for granted.

Listening to people wonder at



the sense of peace from sitting in church, seeing people's pride at reading a Bible passage: these are challenges to us all.

In this election, with all the discussion about manifestos, it's made me wonder what Jesus would have chosen as his manifesto commitments?

Perhaps the statement early in his ministry in Luke 4:18-21 about his purpose, or Matthew 5:1-12 as he describes who is to be 'blessed'. I've settled for Matthew 11:28: 'Come all you who are weary, and I will give you rest.'

Increasingly in a weary world, I suspect that it is this verse that would resonate with the electorate. I am aware that the lens I look through is different to what people in other contexts see. However, I think in Jesus' genius for capturing people's hearts and minds, his call to rest would speak to people from all walks of life. This is good news indeed.

First conference held for new Church Buildings Support Officers

Our new Church Buildings Support Officer Alena-Rose Douglas has reported back from a conference at Peterborough Cathedral for people in her role who are now helping churches across the country.

Alena-Rose has already visited 29 churches in the diocese over the six months since her appointment, providing expertise and advice in areas ranging from starting long term church re-ordering projects, to help with application forms to grants panels.

Alena-Rose said: "It was great to meet with the other Church Buildings Support Officers in person and see how every diocese is working to support parishes.

"In ours, the role is focused on providing bespoke, tailored, ongoing support for selected parish churches, following the priorities of our Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence initiative."

