

Diocesan News

July 2025

Public consultation about the next Bishop of Leeds launches

The Diocese of Leeds has launched its public consultation looking for the views of all people across our region about the next Bishop of Leeds.

We are asking for people to answer three questions about our new bishop and the future of our diocese, which are:

- What are your three hopes for the future of the church in your community?
- What three words describe the main skills and qualities the next Bishop of Leeds needs to have, to help us grow in confidence as a diocese?
- What is the one thing you want to say to the next Bishop of Leeds?

These questions can be answered by filling in our online form, which can be found here, or by scanning the QR code below.



The Rt Revd Toby Howarth, Bishop of Bradford and the chair of our Vacancy in See committee, said: "This is a major moment for our diocese as we look forward with confidence to the next stage of our shared future.

"In doing so we would really like to hear what people think.

"Our prayer is these questions enable everyone in our diocese to have their say and to feel part of the process."

As part of the consultation process, we have produced postcards with the questions on them which are being sent to every church, which can be filled in by hand and are pre-addressed to be posted back to Church House in Leeds.

Alongside these we have produced and are sending a poster advertising the consultation to every church, with a QR code to access the online form on it.

Mission Apprentices and Interns celebrate serving churches and communities



Some 60 people gathered at Fountains Church on Tuesday, June 10, to celebrate and give thanks for our Bradford Mission Apprentices and Diocesan Interns, celebrating all that God has done in and through them during the time they have been serving their churches.

11 of our Mission Apprentices are approaching the end of their two year part-time role working in Resource or Resourcing Churches, or churches linked with them.

During this time, they have taken on responsibility for developing or growing areas of church life, ministry or mission in response to their particular gifts and sense of calling, and engaged with theological and practical learning through the Monday Learning Community.

The highlight of the evening was hearing from the interns and Mission Apprentices themselves about what they have been doing.

"There's an ancient path in Yorkshire's hills, marked with crosses of stone"

Bishop Smitha

"Sing to the Lord a new song," says the psalmist. From well-known hymns to contemporary worship songs, each of us carries a song in our hearts to express the heights and depths of our lives, to give voice to and help articulate our praise and prayer.

In the modern era, our worship is often shaped not by the local but global. Whether choral or contemporary music is used, large publishing houses have become powerful forces to shape the style and sound of worship across continents. This is a far cry from the ancient world of Whitby, in which the 7th century cowherd Cædmon is believed to have written sacred songs for his community. With compositions deeply rooted in local traditions and musical styles, he's said to have engaged with the cultural rhythms of Yorkshire.

Drawing on this heritage of spiritual song that has seeped into our culture, can we now raise up our local musicians to craft music and lyrics that are suited to our northern dialect and reflect the spiritual needs of our local congregations? Can we encourage those who are gifted to write their own songs to draw authentically on our unique experiences and spiritual journeys? Locally written songs give voice to the specific joys, struggles, and stories of a congregation, making worship more meaningful and rooted in the realities of our shared life.



Writing local music also honours the incarnational nature of our Church where we see God at work in our people and place.

In Halifax and Calder Valley Deanery, contemporary worship musicians have come together from different places to share their songs with each other. Some bring their own compositions whilst others bring songs which speak particularly into their community.

Longing to connect the congregation with their spiritual roots here in Yorkshire, Robb & Ruth Sutherland have written a song about the Yorkshire Saints. It begins with the line "There's an ancient path, in Yorkshire's hills, marked with crosses of stone" and speaks of building God's kingdom here, as heroes like Hilda, Margaret and Paulinus once did.

One of the greatest charisms of our Church of England is a commitment to incarnational ministry through the local parish. As we faithfully declare that God became flesh and lived amongst us in the person of Jesus Christ, two millennia later, we form Christian communities that seek to live this reality each day. A living witness to God's grace and compassion which flows out through our worship, pastoral care and social outreach and responds directly to our local needs and culture.

Cornerstone helps churches think about generosity and grow giving

Churches across the diocese have been able to take advantage of a new online learning platform to help them with their giving and generosity.

Cornerstone is a platform from the Church of England's Giving Team designed to support churches in all aspects of giving and generosity by using clear, step-by-step practical actions to grow giving and develop a deeper understanding of generosity.

Some 15 churches in the Harrogate deanery took part in our pilot for the Cornerstone platform in the autumn of 2024.

Following the workshop in October, the group from St Andrew's, Starbeck have worked through many pathways and have engaged the PCC in embedding generosity in the church.

The Revd Phil Carman, Vicar at St Andrew's, said: "One of the main learning points for us has been about how we communicate our impact and not just our need."



New deacons ordained at Wakefield Cathedral



Thirteen new deacons were ordained at Wakefield Cathedral on Saturday, June 28 at a joyful service of celebration.

At the service the new deacons were presented by to the Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, in his last ordination service as Bishop of Leeds.

The Revd Henriette Howarth, Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator, preached on the first chapter of the book of Jeremiah, encouraging the new deacons to respond to their calling at this moment in time and in the places they will be serving.

After Bishop Nick laid out the responsibilities and duties of a deacon, the new deacons made their declarations, while the congregation, made up of friends, family members and more, affirmed their support and encouragement for them.

Bishop Nick prayed for each deacon, and with the laying on of hands called for the Holy Spirit to help each deacon in their office and work.



The deacons were welcomed enthusiastically by all present, before being given a copy of the New Testament.

The service ended with Holy Communion, before the deacons were sent out to begin their ministry.

A full list of those ordained can be found below.

For the Bradford Area
Marc Voase - Benefice of Ilkley St Margaret
Zoe Smith - Benefice of Burley in Wharfedale

For the Huddersfield Area
Victoria Angell - Benefice of Birstall and Benefice of Brownhill

For the Leeds Area
Jessica Farrant - Benefice of Upper Armley
Rebecca Davidson - Benefice of Moor Allerton & Shadwell
Rosie Phillips - Benefice of Morley
Joanna Barrington - Benefice of Headingley and All Hallows

For the Ripon Area
Lee Finnegan - Benefice of Bedale, Leeming and Thornton Watlass
Clare Wood - Benefice of Skipton Christ Church with Carleton
Scott Lunn - Benefice of Penhill
Emma James - Benefice of Lower Wharfedale
Anna Boyce - Benefice of Ripon Cathedral

For the Wakefield Area
Edward Parker-Sunderland - Benefice of The Priory

Ackworth Howard School benefits from new solar power



One of our Wakefield area schools is using solar energy to power its classroom, thanks to a £2 million investment.

Ackworth Howard School is the first to benefit from the investment from the not-for-profit organisation Solar for Schools Community Benefit Society.

The school's solar panels are now installed and generating power.

The project has students to thank for encouraging it to be done.

These voices included Ben, a Year 6 pupil at the school, who spent years encouraging school leaders to do something to respond to the challenge of climate change, including getting solar panels for the school.

Beth Maclean, Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Programme Manager, said: "It's exciting to see solar panels now installed at Ackworth Howard!

"This project is a shining example of the positive change we can make.

"I hope it sparks more renewable energy projects across our schools."

Reflections of a Retiring Dean

Very Revd Simon Cowling
Dean of Wakefield

There is much for me to give thanks for as I prepare for my diocesan farewell service on Sunday, July 6 at 3.30pm and my subsequent retirement as Dean of Wakefield: the privilege, along with my fellow deans in Ripon and Bradford, of supporting the ministry of Bishop Nick; the gifted team of staff and clergy I have worked with; the joy of worshipping in such a beautiful space every day; and the wonderful diversity of the congregations who make up the cathedral's worshipping community. But above all I give thanks for the opportunities for mission and ministry that Wakefield Cathedral, right at the centre of our great city, enjoys. My colleagues here are used to me referring to my stated wish, when I was appointed, to 'turn the cathedral inside out'. In other words, to make ourselves open and available to our partners across the various sectors of our city, district and diocese. Art exhibitions, concerts (ranging from the Sixteen to Jethro Tull!), graduations, nave dinners, civic services, Messy Cathedral, diocesan spirituality days, all this and much else besides brings people from a huge range of



demographics into the building.

The first thing you see when you come into Wakefield Cathedral is a magnificent rood beam: the crucified Christ flanked by St John and the Blessed Virgin; and underneath the words of John 3.16: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. This verse is sometimes called 'the Gospel in a nutshell', and we hope that the unconditional welcome we seek always to offer to all, along with the understated but profound beauty of the building, combine to offer this Gospel message of God's love for all who come through our doors, for whatever reason.

I leave the cathedral, the city and the diocese with thankfulness for God's blessings during my time as Dean of Wakefield, with hope and confidence for all that is to come – and with a final reminder that it is your cathedral where you will always find a welcome.

Confidence and generous giving help make St John's fit for the future



Worshippers at St John the Baptist, Knaresborough chose the Feast of St Barnabas to hold a celebration service attended by Bishop Anna to mark the end of a three-year re-ordering project, made possible by £180,000 donated by local residents Barney and Julia Skrentny.

Key elements of the re-ordering included new easy-access glass doors, improved lighting, added pew-cushions, and new screens.

"A small kitchenette now helps us offer more friendship and fellowship for small groups, plus we have a bespoke creche area and better storage solutions throughout," Revd Gary said.

He explained that the project, although enthusiastically supported by the church congregation, was only made possible through the extremely generous support and funding of Mr and Mrs Skrentny of Scriven Park, Knaresborough.