

Laughter and sadness at a special farewell for Archdeacon Peter Townley



Wakefield Cathedral was packed for a farewell service to the Ven Peter Townley, Archdeacon of Pontefract who has now left to become an Assistant Minister in the Diocese of York.

In his sermon, Peter described how he had wished to be a priest from the age of eight.

He said that he has remained in awe of how God – Alpha and Omega – is bigger than we can imagine, and how that was also true of the church, citing his experiences of working in desperate times with devoted Christians in South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Oldham council estates.

Peter said it was a constant duty of Christians “to call out what is unjust, what is untrue, or plain wrong” before he said a thankful farewell and how “another adventure begins.”

The Rt Revd Tony Robinson, Bishop of Wakefield, paid a full tribute to his colleague of 15

years, likening him to an amalgam of well-known literary Archdeacons in his pastoral engagement with the Wakefield Episcopal Area.

He presented Peter with a silk-screen print of himself above the words “Say your prayers and love the people” which is a phrase commonly heard in his sermons.

The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, concluded the thanks by saying how Peter had played a vital role in the creation of the Diocese of Leeds and that his pastoral care for people was unsurpassed.

“Thank you for that pastoral care and support and your wisdom and wise perspective on what’s going on,” Bishop Nick said.



Special event highlights hidden tragedy of modern slavery

How victims of modern slavery are secretly exploited in our communities was the subject of a recent event, hosted by Wellsprings Together at Bradford’s Fountains Church.

The Rt Revd Toby Howarth, Bishop of Bradford introduced the day conference by pointing out the serious nature of modern slavery and how we can work as a faith community to combat it in our parishes.

Speakers from The Clewer Initiative, West Yorkshire Police and Shine West Bowling spoke to a varied audience from church and other faith groups, local authority, NHS and local charities about the impact of modern slavery, including insights around domestic servitude, debt bondage, county lines, labour and financial exploitation.



Pilgrimages

Bishop Anna

I have only been on a few short pilgrimages in my life, but when I have they have been a rich blessing. I am always grateful for even just a few hours walking along paths where others have trod before and alongside those who walk with me now. And on any pilgrimage, or even a good hearty walk, what we experience, see and hear can speak to our souls.

And so I enjoyed a September Saturday in good company walking from St Mary's Richmond to St Michael's Downholme, via Hudswell in the heart of the Dales. There was much I received that day, but I share just a few thoughts about 'being church' that particularly touched me.

We began and ended our day in church, in prayer. This is where we as Christians must start. But then we stepped outside and walked with others who were many in number and diverse in spirit. Some had association with the church but many did not. Some were local, others had already travelled far. We walked together, joined in spirit, held together in community. While the church and prayer was at start and end, the church oozed beyond its walls, as it must, to share the Christ who is living and walks with all.

Secondly, we did stop at another church for much needed tea, pie and cake! But on paper St Michael's, Hudswell church closed 6 years ago and what has grown out of the apparent death of a church is tremendous new life and hope. Led by the incredible Michael Taylor, he with others had a vision to re-purpose this now



unused church as a walkers' hostel. The project is still in progress, but with half the funds raised and plans drawn up, it will happen. Another conversation with a seasoned Camino pilgrim helped me see that this church was being re-born as a place of Christian witness. It will offer sanctuary, rest, kindness and pastoral care, enabling those who are on both outer and inner journeys to receive something of God.

Finally, five minutes from the end a group of us took a wrong turn. We found ourselves trapped with no way out of a deep gully. Beyond someone was tolling the bell of Downholme church to guide us home. My two 'tween' children had taken a different turn ahead of us seeing a gate they thought was the right way and calling us to come. But was it the right way? Didn't we adults know best? Well some half an hour or so later when we retraced our steps and found the same gate the only two youngsters with us had instinctively known was right, we all found each other in the light, warmth and peace of the church. Was God saying to me and to us, 'listen to the young, be guided by them, trust what they have to say for there you'll find church, and God.'

A few hours, one Saturday, walking, talking, listening and praying with others. But the conversations will continue in the hearts and minds of those pilgrims for many days to come. And continue to guide and to bless.

Bishop Arun says Stick With Love in Archbishop of York's 2023 Advent book

The Rt Revd Arun Arora, Bishop of Kirkstall, has written the Archbishop of York's Advent book for 2023.

In 'Stick With Love', Bishop Arun guides people through the Advent season with daily readings, rich in reminders of the love of Christ that unites every tongue, tribe and nation in our diverse global church.

Filled with reflections on the lives of Christians from St John of the Cross to Stormzy; George Floyd to St Lucy of Syracuse, 'Stick With Love' spans the centuries and countries of the world telling the stories of the everyday saints, martyrs and mystics who light our advent way.

At a time which increasingly feels dark and challenging, these stories offer light and hope reflecting on the lived experience of faith, its inspiring nature and the love of neighbour and of God which underpins each of these stories.

"The theme of waiting for light is one Lent shares with Advent, as each week, candles are lit to anticipate the coming of Christ into the world", writes Bishop Arun.

"The invitation to each of us is not to ignore the reality of the darkness, but to acknowledge it, to confront it with the light that shines in."



New interns gather as their time of service gets underway



The Diocese is thrilled to welcome our new community of 28 interns and Mission Apprentices as part of its 2023-24 Diocesan Internship programme.

Our Diocesan interns give a year of their lives - or two if they are a Mission Apprentice – to deepen their roots of faith, grow in discipleship and maturity as followers of Christ, and develop an area of the church's mission to show love to their neighbours in the churches and communities where they serve.

The 18 placement churches sit across three of the Episcopal areas, from Kairos Church in Harrogate through to St John's Great Horton in Bradford, Keighley Parish Church to Leeds Minster.

The Diocesan Internship programme looks to equip them for life, work and leadership through training on the ground in their placement churches, but also through bringing them together once a week for a day of teaching that covers theology, discipleship, spiritual gifts but also builds practical and leadership skills.

Intern Joseph shared some of his aspirations: "A lot can be learned from a good book, but real life

experience is second to none.

"Through this internship I hope to acquire the knowledge needed to become a successful and skilled chaplain one day and even make some good friends along the way."

The Ven Andy Jolley, Archdeacon of Bradford, said: "It's great to see this wonderful and diverse group of people get started on the next stage of their adventure with God.

"Let's be praying for them for this to be a fruitful time in their lives and in the churches and communities where they are serving."

The Revd Jude Smith, Director of Church Revitalisation added: "I'm really grateful to be around our latest cohort of diocesan mission apprentices and interns.

"Every one of them has chosen to give of themselves in the next year or two.

"It seems to me that whenever people make that choice they grow; yes in skills and experience but also in depth and discipleship.

"I'm also really grateful for churches who take the risk of bringing an addition trainee into their midst- taking the time to work with them through all the ups and downs- before sending many of them off to bless the wider church in other ways."

Church work to support Hong Kong arrivals in Leeds makes national news

The welcome given to arrivals from Hong Kong by one of our churches is profiled in a national magazine.

Revd Dave Ho Young, vicar at St Barnabas, Alwoodley, Leeds spent a recent sabbatical researching migration from Hong Kong and met with Cindy Yu, assistant editor at the Spectator magazine and host of the 'Chinese Whispers' podcast.

A expert on China and Hong Kong, Cindy originally comes from Nanjing in China, emigrated to Britain as a child, and now is a leading commentator on Chinese politics, society and culture.

St Barnabas runs a successful informal English classes programme for Hong Kongers and has a number of the congregation who come from Hong Kong.

With those Hong Kongers she met at St Barnabas, Cindy explored some of the challenges that they are facing in their new home, including the difficulty in finding jobs, navigating British society and culture, and gaining confidence in speaking English.



Reflecting God's generosity

Revd Canon David Gerrard
Vicar, St Catherine's Wakefield

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.' Luke 12:22-23

I must admit that I have found these words of Jesus more than a little troubling at times. St Catherine's Church in Wakefield, where I serve, has been at the forefront of emergency food provision for well over a decade. Telling people whose biggest anxiety is whether they can afford a summer holiday next year not to worry, is one thing. However, when you speak to people who literally do not know where their next meal is coming from, telling them not to worry about what they will eat seems more than a little pastorally insensitive!

Yet it is worth reflecting on exactly who Jesus was speaking to. Most of the first hearers of Jesus' words would have known all about anxiety. The average person would be just one disaster



away from desperation. A single sickness or an unexpected injury, and the family would be destitute. When you read Jesus' words with this in mind they suddenly seem very different.

Jesus is well aware of people's desperation and has no illusions about the world. However, he still points people to a God of generosity and love. A Father who longs to lavish good gifts on his children.

If we are to point people to the same God, the only way is to not only speak about a generous God, but to show it in our lives. Are we able to give our food and clothing to those who need it, even if it hurts us, confident that our Father God will not let us down? Jesus' words are not only a call to those who are struggling, maybe they are also a call for us to give away enough that we too have to trust in the generosity of our Father God.

New pilgrimage route walked and new life for closed church

Some 60 Ripon area walkers have taken part in a pilgrimage raising awareness for a new pilgrimage route, as well as a new life for a closed church.

The 'Friends of Finchale Camino' are setting up a new pilgrimage route from Durham Cathedral to York Minster, via Ripon Cathedral.

Part of the new route links Richmond with Downholme via Hudswell, which is where the inaugural walk took place on Saturday, September 30.

Joined by the Bishop of Ripon, the Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, the new pilgrims started at 11am from St Mary's Richmond, with Bishop Anna blessing the walkers on the way.

The walkers stopped halfway along the route at St Michael's church in Hudswell, where lunch was provided.

The walk concluded with a short service at St Michael's church in Downholme.

