Hundreds pack Ripon Cathedral to welcome the new Bishop of Ripon

In one of the most dramatic services ever seen at Ripon Cathedral, Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley has become the new Area Bishop of Ripon.

It was standing room only in the packed cathedral as a large contingent from New Zealand, where Bishop Helen-Ann has been Bishop of Waikato, joined the congregation of several hundred clergy and lay people from across the Episcopal Area. Leading the service were the Bishop of Leeds, Rt Revd Nick Baines, the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Dr John Sentamu, and the Dean of Ripon, the Very Revd John Dobson.

Maori chants echoed around the ancient building as Bishop Helen-Ann was ceremonially brought forward by representatives of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. Leading the Maori songs and chanting were Maori priests who introduced Bishop Helen-Ann as their tribal leader and a treasure.

Noses and foreheads were pressed together as the visitors exchanged the traditional ‘hongi’ greeting.

Young people played a large part in the service which blended traditional and modern. The newly formed Cathedral Youth Choir led the New Zealand worship song, ‘For everyone born, a place at the table’, as families from churches across the area translated the words into movement.

Students from St Aidan’s Church High School, Harrogate, led prayers and gave Bishop Helen gifts symbolising the North Yorkshire area.

In her sermon, Bishop Helen-Ann said she was touched by those who had travelled half-way around the world to be there. “It is a measure of the depths of connection, and bonds of affection across the Anglican Communion that you are here today. I am moved beyond words.”
Tackling isolation

A church project to connect community and reach out to those more isolated, through a programme of activities and crafts, is going strong in its third year. Aspire is the brainchild of St John’s, Birkby where the vicar, the Revd David Carpenter wanted to build community by encouraging older people to try doing new things together.

“The key for this was to help reduce isolation and build community. We wanted to do that by offering different experiences and a different outlook that would bring people together and build bridges in a new way,” he said. “Aspire does just that. It addresses social poverty and bridges ethnic and inter-generational divides in Birkby, improves community relations through education and support, and helps older people engage with contemporary culture and social change.”

So far the groups have explored paper-making, felt-making, flower arranging, pottery, community art work, wildlife photography and learning more about local history.

Living Lent
Bishop Nick Baines

Lent is the season of the year when a pile of books and articles is published telling us to “slow down”. Every year I try to do it differently, and most years I fail miserably. It seems that even if I want to slow down, the world doesn’t slow down around me, and I just end up feeling guilty.

Am I the only one? Or does this experience ring a bell?

Of course, slowing down is not always something we choose to do - it is done to us. When the Israelites fled from captivity in Egypt (the Exodus) they didn’t suddenly emerge into the land flowing with milk and honey; rather, they spent forty years in a desert learning that freedom is not just ‘from’, but also ‘for’ - that we learn our need of God and each other, working out our lives in community.

When Jesus was tested in the desert for forty days, he didn’t just slow down and have spiritual thoughts. Rather, with all the distractions of ordinary life stripped away, he couldn’t avoid himself and the sharp questions about what really drove him: the short cut to glory or a willingness to walk what would become a road to the cross.

I think this points us to the actual point of Lent. Once a year we are offered the opportunity to examine ourselves and ask what we are really about. Making the space - once a day, once a week, once in Lent? - to take a long, hard look at who we really are and why we make the choices we do, that is the gift of Lent.

Each Saturday this Lent each of the bishops in our diocese will spend some hours praying in a cathedral, minster or parish church. Each hour on the hour we will lead a short liturgy for whoever cares to join us. Not a navel-gazing self-help exercise, but a simple opening up to the searching love of God.

Lent offers the space for us together to learn to love and to live faithfully, however fast or slow the world might turn.

+Nick
Bishop of Leeds
Churches in the Bradford area have been learning how to be more welcoming to visitors and those in need, with a training day on hospitality led by the Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth. Sixty delegates from across the Episcopal Area took part in ‘Stretch Wide Your Curtains’, an event jointly hosted by Wellsprings Together Bradford and the Episcopal Area lay training team. Practical workshops included understanding the changes coming with Universal Credit, accessing funding for projects and sharing the Christian faith. “There was a great buzz as people shared experiences and expertise,” said Liz Firth of Wellsprings Together.

**Students bring faiths together**

An inter-faith group of Leeds students have taken to social media to put out positive stories about religions working together in an attempt to counter negative stories and ‘bad news’. The students, who include young Jewish students, Christians from St George’s Church and Muslims from two Muslim youth groups, have been meeting together in Leeds. Together they have started a Facebook Page, ‘FaithsTogether’, which they began because they say they felt that there wasn’t enough good news about religion.

**Welcoming the stranger**

Churches in the Bradford area have been learning how to be more welcoming to visitors and those in need, with a training day on hospitality led by the Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth. Sixty delegates from across the Episcopal Area took part in ‘Stretch Wide Your Curtains’, an event jointly hosted by Wellsprings Together Bradford and the Episcopal Area lay training team. Practical workshops included understanding the changes coming with Universal Credit, accessing funding for projects and sharing the Christian faith. “There was a great buzz as people shared experiences and expertise,” said Liz Firth of Wellsprings Together.

**Open hands ...**

... is the name of a new type of service designed specifically for those more vulnerable who might need a helping hand in the Wakefield area. St Catherine’s church is already the city’s biggest food bank and gives out emergency food parcels five days a week as well as running a variety of community projects. Now, on Monday evenings, the St Catherine’s Church Centre will open its doors for Christian worship - followed by a free meal and chance just to sit and chat. Vicar, the Revd David Gerrard said he had been inspired by the success of the Saturday Gathering in Halifax.
Easter confirmation and baptism service for the whole diocese

The Christian tradition of holding large-scale baptism and confirmation services on Easter Eve is making a return to the diocese this Easter. Bishop Nick has announced that the first-ever confirmation service for the whole diocese is to be held on Easter Eve, March 31 and will become an annual event.

The inaugural Easter baptism and confirmation service will be held at Ripon Cathedral at 7.30pm on Easter Eve and in following years will take place at each of the three cathedrals in turn. Aimed at encouraging joint participation, all parishes are invited to bring candidates for baptism and confirmation following suitable preparation.

Bishop Nick says, “In the early days of the Christian Church people came for baptism on Easter Eve. From 2018 onwards I will be conducting a Baptism and Confirmation Service in one of our cathedrals, inviting people from across our diverse diocese to join with other new Christians from near and afar in making a big commitment to follow Jesus Christ. I look forward to it”.

A rehearsal for the service will take place at 5.30pm in the Cathedral’s nave, followed by tea and cake in the library prior to the service.

Parishes who can bring candidates to the service should email the Dean of Ripon’s PA with details of the parish and names of those to be baptised, confirmed, received into the Church of England or who wish to renew their baptismal vows. Contact JudithBustard@RiponCathedral.org.uk

Leeds launch for new book

A major new book on the Anglican Communion by the Diocesan Director of Ministry and Mission, the Revd Canon Andrew Norman, has received its official launch at Church House in Leeds. A Church Observed: being Anglican as times change, is described by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, as “a very significant book indeed.”

Amongst those at the launch was Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, who said that the autobiographical vantage point made the book very accessible. “It’s a really good read – it’s very well written and it takes you through the story of Andrew’s life and his family so you are reading about the development of the Anglican Communion against that autobiography. I got through it in three goes – it was great and I do commend it.”

Copies cost £9.95 and can be ordered online on www.GileadBooksPublishing.com