Lay Conference marks a new chapter for lay ministry

This month marks a new chapter for lay ministry in the diocese as hundreds of delegates from churches across the diocese come to Harrogate on Saturday 9 June, for the first ever diocesan wide lay conference, ‘Together in Faith’.

The ground-breaking gathering of 1600 participants takes place at the Harrogate Convention Centre and as well as nationally known key-note speakers, resources, displays and more than 20 different ‘self-select’ sessions to choose from during the day, the conference will be the launch-pad for new lay training opportunities. Being seen for the first time is a new diocesan ‘online learning platform’ which will be introduced at the conference giving church members access to a wide range of training and resources.

“We have developed our own learning platform which will act as a shop window for courses, events and resources,” says Canon Andrew Norman, Director of Ministry and Mission and chair of the conference planning team. “It will help to make accessible training opportunities and means of equipping lay people for ministry in their local churches and living as Christians during the week.”

Keynote speakers include head of the Church Army, Mark Russell (pictured above). More details can be found on the diocesan website, www.leeds.anglican.org.

MU President re-elected

Jean Thurman, the President of the Mothers’ Union for the Diocese of Leeds has been re-elected to continue as president for another three years.

Jean became the first President of the new diocese in January 2016 and was a vice-president of the historic Wakefield Diocese. She lives in Halifax and has been a member of Mothers’ Union since 1981.

During the present ‘triennium’, Jean’s focus has been on working hard to bring together Mothers’ Union members in the five Episcopal Areas.
This time tomorrow

Bishop Toby Howarth

I wonder if your Sunday service has ever featured something called TTT? The letters stand for “This Time Tomorrow” – a moment in which someone from the congregation shares what they will be doing at the same time on Monday morning. This could be anything from volunteering at a coffee morning to performing an operation on someone’s brain. One of the great values of TTT is that it makes us aware of the discipleship that all of us are called to during the week in so many different ways.

The Diocesan Lay Conference being held in Harrogate this month is a celebration of Jesus’ calling on all of our lives, and an affirmation of one of the central planks of our emerging diocesan strategy – which is about lay people and clergy working together. As one of the draft strategy reports makes clear: “This is a two-way street that entails equipping congregation members to speak of, and live out their faith outside church, and at the same time equipping clergy to recognise their parishioners as whole people, helping them to bring their Monday to Saturday roles into the church on Sunday.”

At the Lay Conference there will be lots of sharing of people’s stories affirming, as TTT does, the value of our ministry, as followers of Christ, in our everyday lives. I have been struck as I visit congregations and listen to people’s stories just how challenging some people’s discipleship can be, whether negotiating a debilitating illness of their own or a loved one, or dealing with complex technical or ethical issues at work.

Even for a conference of 1700 people, there is only room for a very few from each parish in our wonderfully large and diverse diocese. We can still, all of us, however, make the most of this opportunity by talking with those from our parish who will be going along, praying for them and all who participate, and making sure we ask them about it in detail when they come back. Let’s learn more and more to listen for the work of God in other people’s lives, and learn to share what God is doing in and through our own.

+Toby
Bishop of Bradford

Duke of York Award for community work

Members of St Helen’s Sandal, pictured alongside residents of the Portobello Estate in the parish, have received an award in recognition of their work in the community.

The Portobello Community Forum, part of the church’s outreach received an Award from the Duke of York’s Community Initiative ‘for its excellent work in its own community’.

Leaders of PCF, Janet Gardiner, Pam Payling, Mary Greenwood and Sally Martin are pictured in Sheffield Cathedral before the presentation. Through PCF, local churches along with other agencies encourage positive, inclusive work in the community, with events such as Soul Portobello, and running the Portobello Community Centre.
Drums and dance for Commonwealth celebration

LEEDS Civic, community and faith leaders came together last month for a service to celebrate the Commonwealth. The celebrations at Leeds Minster got off to a lively start as the civic procession was led into the Minster by the drummers and dancers of the Punjabi Roots Academy. Flags from the 53 nations of the Commonwealth hung from the balconies of the Minster.

The Bishop of Leeds, Rt Revd Nick Baines was the preacher and among those taking part was the Lord-Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, the Lord Mayor of Leeds Cllr Jane Dowson and many people from across West Yorkshire with Commonwealth connections.

The service of celebration was timed to coincide with the end of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London. It also followed the very successful Commonwealth Games in Australia.

Pioneering project

HUDDERSFIELD All Hallows’ Church, Kirkburton and Emmanuel Church, Shelley, in the Huddersfield EA have received £6,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a unique project to digitally map 6,000 gravestones in their churchyards. The resulting images will then be put online to help researchers locate and view gravestones and memorials.

This innovative project will involve pioneering research to develop the distinctive heritage of the two churchyards, and will add great value for the local and wider communities of all ages. The research work will begin this month and the project will last one year.

Grand re-opening at Sharow

RIPON The church of St John’s, Sharow near Ripon threw open its doors last month after half a million pounds worth of conservation, restoration and building works. For several months the church has been shrouded by scaffolding inside and out as conservators worked on stained glass and wall paintings alongside the construction of new, modern facilities, thanks to money from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Dean of Ripon, John Dobson, cut the ribbon welcoming everyone to the building. He said: “The Vision Project at St. John’s, Sharow is a shining example of how the Church’s vision to serve can lead to transformation for both the community and the church’s heritage.”

Later, the Bishop of Ripon Helen-Ann Hartley joined Revd Ruth Newton for a celebratory evening service, followed by a reception with live jazz, fizz and canapés.

New posts

BRADFORD Two new key appointments have been made at Bradford Cathedral. Sarah Field-Blešić has been appointed as the Cathedral’s new Chief Operations Officer. She comes from 16 years in the legal sector with top UK law firm, Irwin Mitchell. “This is a change from the legal sector,” says Sarah. “However I am excited about getting to know the team and working with everyone to help the Cathedral achieve its goals.” Also appointed is a New Director of Education and Visitors. Maggie Myers is an experienced secondary school teacher.
A new team of thirty five church growth companions from across the diocese has been launched as part of an innovative initiative, the Church Growth Companions Project.

The group of thirty five include both clergy and lay leaders and the aim will be to come alongside other churches to support them in their parish mission.

Last month’s meeting kick started the project, with training provided by Church Growth Adviser, Canon Robin Gamble, who established the initiative.

It is hoped that this support network will increase the impact made by the ‘Leading Your Church into Growth’ programme and give the extra support that some churches may need to help them thrive.

Canon Robin Gamble said, “This is an exciting step forward for our Diocese in our church growth journey. The hope is that every church will have the chance for a companion to come along side and bring that extra bit of support that could help transform their churches.

“Companions won’t claim to be experts, but are just good vicars who can come alongside others to share their experiences and walk with them on their journey towards growth.”

The team will next head to Scargill House this month where they will spend a further weekend completing their team training. Churches will then have the opportunity to connect and work alongside a companion.

A school in Sri Lanka, badly damaged in the flooding of summer 2017 has been restored and repaired thanks to an appeal within the Diocese of Leeds.

The Molkawa pre-school was badly damaged and classrooms were swept away. Now rebuilding work has taken place thanks to approximately £9000 given by the Diocese and sent by Bishop Paul Slater to the Diocese of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

“We have used the money that you have send to us to redo the school,” said Suren Goonesekera, Secretary of the Diocese of Colombo Board of Social Responsibility. “We are indeed very grateful to you for initiative this project and partnering with us for this worthy cause. “

The school is situated at the centre of the disaster area when heavy rain caused flooding in May and June 2017.