Developing digital skills and ways to ‘reach our communities’

Website and social media users from churches across the Diocese have been learning how to make the most of digital communications.

The popular one day course in Leeds was oversubscribed and was led by two of the Church of England’s Westminster based digital team, Liz Morgan, Churches Digital Champion and Isobel Neville, pictured, the Church of England’s Social Media Officer.

The team has already delivered training to hundreds of parishes in other dioceses and will continue to do so as they seek to support, equip and enable local churches to maximise their digital presence and share the Christian message in an increasingly online world.

“It has been great to be here in Leeds to explore all things digital and what engaging content can be used on Church social media platforms,” said Liz Morgan.

“We believe websites such as Facebook, Instagram and A Church Near You can be great ways for parishes to effectively reach their communities and invite more people in.”

More courses are planned in the Diocese of Leeds as part of communication plans in 2019 to equip and build confidence in the use of digital and social media. Another training day will be repeated in September, plus Social Media Skills Camps in each of the five areas.

The national digital team will also be returning to Leeds on Saturday, September 7 as part of their Digital Communications Roadshow. The event at St George’s Church, is expected to draw more than 100 skilled digital and social media users. Full details are on our website.

Royal visit for community church

Prince Edward, HRH the Duke of Kent, has paid a special visit to St John’s Church, Ingrow, where he was welcomed by Revd Dr Tracey Raistrick. The church has stood at the heart of the Ingrow community since its construction in 1842. It was part paid for by mill owners who supported the original creation of the branch line that now occupies the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway.

Our 15 new deacons will be ordained at Wakefield Cathedral on Saturday, June 29 at 11am and 3pm. They will be ordained by the Bishop of Leeds, the Rt Revd Nick Baines.
Clear goals for the years ahead

Bishop Nick Baines

I was really pleased to hear that in my absence on sabbatical (February and March) the Diocesan Synod wholeheartedly approved the Diocesan Strategy, commended the objectives and initiatives and welcomed the toolkit.

Now it’s up to all of us to see that it’s rolled out across our parishes, cathedrals, deaneries and episcopal areas.

How will we do that? Well, we’ll begin by engaging our PCCs and congregations, picking up initiatives at episcopal area level and shaping the work of our support teams across the diocese as a whole.

For those suspicious of the word ‘strategy’, please remember that it simply describes the ‘plumbing’ — how to get most directly from here to where we think we need to be. It addresses the ‘how’ question without which there can be no direction. It is not a magic formula.

The toolkit is being piloted over the next few months and will be in a form ready for use in every parish on September 1. The current draft is available on the website and, while it will be tweaked, there will be no major changes.

Every parish can work with this and allow it to shape their plans as they progress, and every support team at Church House or across the diocese can refocus their work to support the roll-out of the strategy. For example, Area Bishops and their Area Teams will be looking at the initiatives which will help them to flourish in their specific context. One illustration might be for area lay training officers to provide training to develop more nurture course leaders.

All diocesan support staff will be shaping their work to help parishes to focus on strategic priorities and how we all work together to deliver our vision and mission - to create confident Christians, to grow our churches and to transform our communities.

This is for everyone in the Diocese - as a Christian, a PCC member, a leader, teacher, administrator, clergy or lay. All the strategy information is on the diocesan website at present and there will be regular updates as it develops.

I commend it to you.

+Nick
Bishop of Leeds

Links between Queen Victoria and first Bishop of Wakefield unveiled

He was the Bishop commissioned to pen her Majesty a hymn for her Diamond Jubilee and she, the Queen who gave Wakefield its city status.

Now, in the year that marks Queen Victoria’s 200th birthday and 130th year of her granting Wakefield city status, Wakefield Cathedral’s Community Outreach officer, Gillian Bunn has been discovering little known links between Queen Victoria and William Walsham How, the first Bishop of Wakefield, whose effigy lies in Wakefield Cathedral.

A card of condolence written by Queen Victoria and attached to the wreath her representative, Lord Cecil presented at Walsham How’s funeral in Whittington, Shropshire, has been discovered in Wakefield Cathedral. The card, handwritten, reads: A mark of the truest esteem and sincerest regard from Victoria RI.
Churchyard recognised as an ‘Ark’ for vulnerable species

RIPON A Church in the Ripon Episcopal area has been recognised as a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC) and declared a County Wildlife Site by North Yorkshire County Council.

St John’s Sharow holds one of the largest open churchyards in Northern England and is home to over an acre of meadowland.

The churchyard is managed by a number of conservation volunteers who have reintroduced traditional conservation techniques and worked with partners including Open Country and Caring for God’s Acre to create new areas of meadow around the churchyard.

Their hard work has seen a string of recent accolades, including being highly commended in the Church Times Green Award.

Ramadan experience for clergy

HUDDERSFIELD Community meals to mark the end of daily Ramadan fasts took place across our diocese and were widely supported by our clergy.

Iftars, where guests included MPs, council leaders, police and other faith groups, were held in all of the areas.

One of the largest was the Big Iftar at the Masjid Ghausia mosque in Huddersfield, attended by the Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs. He was one of a large number of guests, including the Leader of Kirklees Council, Cllr Shabir Pandor, as well as several other Councillors and officials from Kirklees and the Community Policing Team. Bishop Jonathan said: “I was honoured to be able to give an address to those attending the Iftar, and to bring greetings on behalf of the Church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Churches back weapons bins

LEEDS Leaders of Chapeltown and Harehills Churches Together (CHCT) have come together to help tackle violent crime in Leeds and are raising funds for two specialist weapon bins.

Revd Nicholas Io Polito, incumbent at Potternewton with Little London, said: “Like everyone else in the country, the members of Christian churches in Chapeltown and Harehills have been deeply saddened and worried at the tragic loss of young lives to violent crime.

“Our congregations are often directly affected by such violence and we feel it is time to go beyond the daily pastoral care of victims and their families.”

Wheels on fire

BRADFORD To mark the 150th anniversary of St Thomas’s Church Sutton in Craven, the Revd Brian Greenfield, curate at St Thomas’s, and the vicar’s husband, Simon Collings, have cycled 150 miles.

From June 10th -12th, Brian and Simon cycled along the Leeds - Liverpool canal to raise money for two causes important to the community: POPI (Pass on Pre-Loved Items) and St Thomas’s Church, Sutton.

They were cheered on their way by the children of the two village primary schools, Sutton CE Primary School and Sutton County Primary School.
The diocese marks Thy Kingdom Come with beacon event

A carpet-like map of the world, prayer weaving, and candles in the crypt were amongst the prayer stations at Ripon Cathedral when the diocese marked this year’s Thy Kingdom Come event.

The 11 day wave of international prayer in the run up to Pentecost has seen enormous growth, since it was launched by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York three years ago.

And the choir section of the cathedral was full with people from across our region for a brief, dedicated service with an address by Bishop of Leeds, the Rt Revd Nick Baines.

Drawing on the significance of the ancient crypt, where St Wilfrid founded the cathedral in 672, Bishop Nick said: “Our roots go very deep.

“Prayer and worship have taken place here for 1,500 years, as Ripon and the world have changed.

“Christians have carried on praying through dark times and the light may have flickered, but they have carried on trying to shine a light in a sometimes very dark world.”

Before the service, Dean of Ripon Cathedral, the Very Revd John Dobson urged people to enjoy “the freedom to perambulate” and visit the ten prayers stations around the cathedral.

Set up by the area deaneries, they included a Lollipop Prayer station, a weaving loom where people could pray and add to a tapestry and a contemplatory colouring session.

Diocesan Synod took place on June 8 and included enthusiasm for the future, positive financial news, the need to respect differing views and the Church of England’s ability to bridge Brexit divides.

A full report is on our website.

Canon Tony moves on

Warm tributes have been paid to Revd Canon Tony Macpherson, the Sub Dean and Canon Pastor at Wakefield Cathedral, who is leaving the diocese after 24 years in the city.

Canon Tony will become Priest in Charge of the parishes of North Sunderland, Beadnell and Ellingham in the Diocese of Newcastle and will be licensed in that role on Wednesday, September 11.

Commenting on the news of Tony’s new role the Very Revd Simon Cowling, the Dean of Wakefield, said: “Wakefield Cathedral has been richly blessed by Tony’s ministry for over a decade.”

Explaining his move, Canon Tony said: “We have lived in Wakefield for 24 years and worked at the Cathedral for 12 and so it will be a big wrench to leave everyone.

“This newly created post in north Northumberland is a very exciting opportunity.”