Flood-hit communities pull together in our rural parishes

Resilient rural communities hit by devastating floods have been visited and praised by the Bishop of Ripon, the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley.

Revd Caroline Hewlett, vicar of Swaledale with Arkengarthdale, was one of dozens in Swaledale and Wensleydale forced out of their homes and she told Bishop Helen-Ann what happened to her Reeth vicarage:

“Suddenly there was a three-foot deep torrent of water which tore through the house. “The water surged on through the garden and carried my shed into the farmer’s field across the road,” Caroline said.

At nearby Bellerby, church warden at St John the Evangelist, Dr Chris Wheatley and PCC vice chair Bob Walker pitched in to help friends and neighbours who suffered severe flooding, some of whom met Bishop Helen-Ann on her visit and showed her the scale of the damage to their properties.

“This has been a terrible time for people and there is clearly so much work to be done. We’ll do all we can to help,” said Bishop Helen-Ann.

“But as is so often the case, we are struck by the strength and resilience of these remote rural communities where people pull together in a crisis.”

£1/2m CofE fund for Keighley churches

The Church of England has announced a £490,000 fund to be shared amongst Anglican churches in Keighley that have a strong mission to help those battered by the storms of life.

The cash will go towards both existing work and fresh initiatives, and support long-term commitments to local people. Plans include outreach work in the town centre and a reinvigoration of work with children, families and estate communities.

The money is part of a £1.03 million grant from the Church Commissioners’ Strategic Development Fund that will be shared between Keighley and four other ‘resourcing churches’ in Bradford.
175 years of worship celebrated in Yeadon

LEEDS  St John’s Church in Yeadon has celebrated 175 years as a place of worship. To mark this special occasion the church opened its doors and grounds to the public last month for an action-packed free community fun day.

Local dance groups and singers performed in the church and outside there was much fun to be had with a bouncy castle, penalty shootout, tin can alley and a whole range of other games for children to enjoy – including ‘Soak the Vicar!’

On the Sunday, the church was then packed for worship, with a specially made cake for the occasion enjoyed afterwards, displaying St John’s Church as it originally looked.

The vicar of St John’s, Revd Richard Walker, said, “We are delighted with how this weekend has gone. Hundreds visited us and there was something for everyone to enjoy.”

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Christ’s light in testing times

Bishop Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

The scene could not have been more different. I’d just enjoyed a delicious lunch in the Reeth vicarage with vicar Caroline, curate Alison and Kris, an ordinand on Summer placement from Cranmer Hall in Durham. Kris was enthusing about his experience of rural ministry. It was a delight to listen to his growing discernment that this was exactly the sort of context in which he felt God was calling him to serve.

A week or so later I was back; this time wading through thick mud. The smell of decomposing ‘who knows what’ was overwhelming. I could just about make out the garden shed on the other side of a field, wedged sideways between trees. The water came with such suddenness and force that the floodgates were no barrier to nature’s determined strength. The ground floor of the vicarage squelched; tables and chairs piled up. My visit to Reeth that day took me right into the heart of Yorkshire grit and resilience. Community spirit was palpable, and everywhere we went people expressed concern for their beloved priest. Caroline was having none of it of course: she was out there doing her job, taking the light and presence of Christ with her.

In the village hall, the local lady coordinating the initial response to the disaster wept out of fear for a small-holder for whom the floods were simply too much. The Farming Community Network were sending up a volunteer to check on him later that day. She was relieved. I took Caroline out for lunch, and I had the best flat white coffee I’ve had in ages. Floodwater had got into the café, but they’d got it sorted, and the aroma of fresh baking and cakes filled the air. There was laughter and smiles. We chatted as we broke bread together. The sun shone; the hills around us glistened in the heat.

‘A Christian presence in every community’ is the strap-line of the Church of England. That is a tremendous challenge as well as an opportunity. May we never take its value for granted.

+B Helen-Ann Bishop of Ripon
Caring for creation on the menu at the local pub

RIPON “An inspiring and challenging service” focusing on ‘Caring for Creation’ has been held in a local Langthorpe pub.

The service was led by lay members of All Saints’ Kirby Hill, who praised God for the beauty of creation and reflected on the fragility of the world.

Those present divided into groups to discuss and commit to practical tasks which can be done to reduce waste and the impact of climate change. Members of All Saints’ Kirby Hill also pledged to work towards becoming an eco-church and thought carefully about how they live their lives as stewards of God’s creation.

The Revd Alison Askew, vicar of All Saint’s Kirby Hill said: “It was a great morning and hopefully the launch pad for further activities and initiatives both in the church and wider community.”

‘Care for soil, soul and society’ at environment service

HUDDERSFIELD A Kirklees farm and its community received a ‘big blessing’ during a special service attended by members from the Almondbury Deanery and two local Green Party Councillors.

The environment-focused service was led by Revd Canon Debby Plummer and held at Stirley Community Farm. It included prayers for God’s blessing on the farm, the beef shorthorn cattle, training allotments worked by volunteers, plus the bees and the orchard.

“We committed ourselves to ‘touch the earth lightly’, to care for soil, soul and society,” Revd Debby said.

Cathedral hosts sculpture event

WAKEFIELD The prestigious Yorkshire Sculpture International arts festival came to Wakefield Cathedral this summer, featuring a unique musical installation that resonated with the building’s beautiful interior.

Nearly two hundred people came to hear Beirut composer and sound artist, Tarek Atoui’s Shuffle Orchestra. It included a series of performances in which the artist activated instruments in which the artist activated instruments that then became part of an art installation.

The Dean of Wakefield, the Very Revd Simon Cowling, said: “The wonderful acoustics of the Cathedral made it a memorable experience.”

Fountains Church

BRADFORD Plans have been revealed to turn a Bradford nightclub into a new place of worship following the promise of investment from the national Church of England’s Strategic Development Fund.

A new planning application has been submitted to turn buildings at Glydegate Square, between the Alhambra Theatre and the National Science and Media Museum, from a nightclub into a church.

The Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth, said the new place of worship will be a “focus point for faith in Bradford.”
Bishop of Huddersfield, Jonathan Gibbs, expressed his “warmest congratulations and very best wishes for their new ministries,” as he ordained Jenny Clarke, Jane Finn, Jessica Malay and Neil Walpole at Halifax Minster (pictured above).

At Holy Trinity Church in Ripon, Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley ordained Chris Clayton and Kim Mason (pictured above), giving thanks to the Dean of Ripon Cathedral, John Dobson, for a “wonderfully inspiring sermon.”

Brian Greenfield, Steve Nuttall, Hannah Raitt and Natasha Thomas were ordained at Bradford Cathedral by Bishop Toby Howarth (pictured above), along with Philippa Slingsby who was ordained a week earlier at St Christopher’s Holmewood.

Bishop of Wakefield, Tony Robinson, ordained a further two new priests, Andrew Griffin at St Catherine’s Centre and Blair Radford at Monk Bretton, who gave a blessing to Bishop Tony as part of the service (pictured above).

At Leeds Minster, Bishop Paul Slater ordained Matthew Broughton, Rob Denton and Ericcson Mapfumo (pictured above).

**RIPON**  
Chris Clayton will serve at St Peter’s Harrogate.  
Kim Mason will serve at St Mark’s Harrogate.  

**LEEDS**  
Matthew Broughton will serve at St Paul’s Ireland Wood.  
Rob Denton will serve at Osmondthorpe & Halton.  
Ericcson Mapfumo will serve at Pottermewton & Little London.  

**WAKEFIELD**  
Andrew Griffin will serve at St Catherine’s Sandal & St Andrew & Mary’s Wakefield.  
Blair Radford will serve at St Paul’s Monk Bretton.  

**BRADFORD**  
Philippa Slingsby will serve at Tong and Laisterdyke.  
Brian Greenfield will serve at Sutton with Cowling and Lothersdale.  
Steve Nuttall will serve at St John’s Greengates and St John’s Thorpe Edge.  
Hannah Raitt will serve at West Bowling & Bankfoot.  
Natasha Thomas will serve at Keighley.  

**HUDDERSFIELD**  
Jenny Clarke will serve at Bradshaw and Holmfield.  
Jane Finn will serve at Halifax with Siddall.  
Jessica Malay will serve at Almondbury Team.  
Neil Walpole will serve at Dewsbury Team.