Diocesan Secretary announces retirement

Debbie Child, Diocesan Secretary for the Diocese of Leeds, is to retire from her post on 31 March 2020.

Debbie has served the Diocese of Bradford and, latterly, Leeds since 1991.

Bishop Nick said: “Debbie is a remarkable servant of the Church, bringing compassionate pastoral skills to bear on organisational and business demands.

“She has been an essential leader of change as three historic dioceses were dissolved in 2014 and the Diocese of Leeds was created.”

Christmas calls

Bishop Nick Baines

Advent is here and Christmas beckons. It doesn’t seem so long ago that we were working out how to tell the Christmas story afresh, and now we have to do it again. Is there anything new to say? I guess the answer is ‘no’ – even if we might find new ways to say the same old thing. Christmas opens up for us, after a month of waiting and preparing to be surprised, to wonder again about God, the world and ourselves. If the story has become stale, it is not the fault of the story, but a problem with our imagination. The birth of Jesus sees God entering the real human experiences and dilemmas that we face as we seek to live faithfully in a conflicted society. God takes creation seriously, takes the risk of being born as a mortal baby, and surprises earth with heaven in a way least expected. The season of Advent challenges us to ask hard questions about what we hope and pray for. Just as the people of Jesus’ time longed for security, an end to suffering and oppression, and a future free of challenge to their faith and identity, so do we today long for a resolution of our problems and struggles. But, in a funny sort of way, Christmas offers an answer that the question of Advent did not expect. God did not come among us on a war horse. God didn’t wipe out the contradictions and sufferings in a single sweep of power. Rather, God finds himself born in a feeding trough at the back of the house – subject to all the diseases, violence and dangers any baby faced in that place and at that time. That’s what I mean about God taking a risk – this baby being subject to all the world might throw at him and not being exempted from it. If Advent (to use the title of a new book) cries ‘Freedom is Coming’, then Christmas whispers back: ‘But not in the way we might have expected!’ I wish you a happy and surprising Christmas.

+Nick
Bishop of Leeds
Positive progress outlined at Autumn Diocesan Synod

Growing young people as Christians, the Parish Giving Scheme and a review of reader ministry were among the topics under discussion by the Diocesan Synod, the church’s ‘parliament’, which met in Harrogate. Elected lay and clergy members from across the diocese came together at Ashville College with an agenda that also included the safeguarding annual report, and the backing of the budget for 2020 and a motion about parish allocations for the 2020 Deanery Synod elections.

Diocesan Budget 2020

Other business at Synod included a presentation from the Revd Canon Andrew Norman, Director or Ministry and Mission, and Kay Brown, Lay Chaplain at Abbey Grange C of E Academy, about the review of licenced Reader ministry in the diocese that has recently taken place.

Growing young people as Christians
Liz Morton, team leader of the Children, Young People and Families Team gave a presentation about the work they are doing to support Goal 5 of the Diocesan Strategy, Growing Young People as Christians.

Liz set out the diocesan-wide initiatives to achieve the aspiration for Goal 5, which includes children and young people being part of a welcoming, enriching and safe worshipping community in every benefice and cathedral, and that every child in a Church of England school encounters Christ and the Christian faith in a way which enhances their lives.

Bus to boost mission and ministry in Dewsbury

HUDDERSFIELD A bus is now part of ministry work in Chickenley thanks to a partnership of local church and community groups. Destination 211, the new ministry based in a double decker bus, has been launched by Dewsbury Team Ministry Parish in partnership with The Church of the Nazarene and Dewsbury, and the District Street Angels group.

This outreach is the result of a vision by Revd Neil Walpole (pictured at the wheel), curate at Dewsbury Team Parish, to better serve the people of Chickenley. Neil said: “We are excited and confident that we will see God move in powerful ways as we serve the Chickenley community together and share our faith.”
New commission to address rural decline launched

**RIPON** A panel of experts chaired by the Dean of Ripon Cathedral will attempt to tackle the decline of North Yorkshire’s most rural communities.

North Yorkshire County Council has invited eight people with extensive knowledge of rural affairs, the environment and tourism, upland farming, economics and the county’s culture and geography to examine key issues and challenges.

Dean John Dobson said: “There is no doubt that our very rural communities face many pressures in the modern world, but by exploring these together in a structured way we hope to get a greater understanding of the issues and therefore the potential solutions.

“Engaging with this great rural region and its particular challenges and opportunities is a priority for us.”

Friendship cafe marks first year

**BRADFORD** A café which tackles rural isolation in Oxenhope has marked its first anniversary with a party. Some 25 people attend the Oxenhope Community Café, which has become an established part of local community life.

Volunteer Sam Mawer said: “The café attracts all ages, with toddlers and people in their 90s all coming together. This project is about building friendships and is making a big difference to the lives of people who may otherwise lack opportunities to talk and meet with others regularly. It is part of a trial that could see rural churches across the county playing a wider role in their community.

Walk for Peace brings people of faith together

**WAKEFIELD** Some 80 people of different faiths have taken part in the Wakefield Faiths Forum’s inaugural Walk for Peace. The walk included visits to places of worship of different denominations and faiths, including several Anglican and Methodist churches, the Markazi Jamia Mosque, the Wakefield Central Mosque and Wakefield Cathedral.

At the Cathedral, the Dean, The Very Revd Simon Cowling, conducted a brief ceremony on the steps of the precinct. Of the event, he said: “At a time of national and international tension it was very good to welcome friends from across faith traditions to the Cathedral. “What better way is there to work for peace than walking alongside our neighbours?”

Housing Hub

**LEEDS** Christians will be coming together to discuss how best to respond to new housing developments in their neighbourhoods at a conference this November.

The New Housing Hub Conference provides a forum to explore a range of issues. The New Housing Hub is a network for Christians of all traditions who have a vision for engaging with new housing communities, with the aim of inspiring, resourcing and connecting people to help them approach the challenges and opportunities these developments bring.
A unique celebration of religious friendship has been held at Bradford Cathedral to mark the 550th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

Christians and Sikhs from across our region joined in song and prayer and heard a powerful address by Lord Inderjit Singh of Wimbledon.

“It was a wonderful, ground-breaking event,” said Bishop of Bradford, the Rt Revd Toby Howarth who helped organise the evening in the 800-year-old cathedral. “There were hundreds of people from Leeds, Bradford and beyond representing all the different Gurdwaras.”

German choir delights audiences with concerts across the diocese

Performances of choral pieces have pleased audiences in churches across the Diocese, as part of a German choir’s visit to the North.

The Augustinian Church Choir, from Erfut in Germany, have recently completed a tour to mark 21 years of the partnership between the Diocese and the Erfurt Kirchenkreis. The choir sang at churches across the region, holding concerts at Wakefield Cathedral, Bradford Cathedral, Ripon Cathedral, Leeds Minster, Howden Minster and St Margaret’s Church in Ilkley.

They also sang at regular services in the some of the churches, including during eucharist services at Halifax Minster and Bradford Cathedral.

They had chance to explore the sights of the North, with visits to local landmarks such as Salt’s Mill in Saltaire, the Bronte Parsonage Museum in Haworth, Ilkley Moor, the famous Oldroyd’s forced rhubarb farm and the cities of Ripon and York.

Rosalind Beeson, Chair of the Leeds/Erfurt Diocesan Link subgroup, said: “It was wonderful to welcome our partners from the Erfurt Kirchenkreis, as the 30th anniversary of the link between Bradford, now Leeds, and Erfurt approaches, and particularly as we face whatever challenges Brexit may bring.”