Putting prayer at the heart of the diocese

Prayer has been at the heart of diocesan life during February and March as a series of Lent prayer events have taken place each Saturday at a different cathedral or church led by each of our six bishops in turn. Spending five hours in silent prayer, each bishop has also invited anyone to join them for a short simple liturgy on the hour.

Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley, the Bishop of Ripon launched the series at Ripon Cathedral. She said, “The Diocesan Vision ‘Loving. Living. Learning’ begins in prayer, and this year, the six bishops decided that we needed to model that in a visible way. Prayer is not an end in itself of course, it leads to action and a constant search for peace and justice. We hope that the pattern of prayer which we commit to this Lent will be an ongoing sign of our commitment to love, live and learn together.”

The following week, Bishop Paul Slater was joined by others at Leeds Minster. “I really welcome the opportunity to pray in the heart of Leeds for the diocese.” Bishop Jonathan Gibbs led prayers at Dewsbury and Halifax Minsters on Saturday 3 March.

Bishop Toby Howarth is leading prayers March 10 at Bradford Cathedral, whilst on Saturday 17 March, Bishop Tony Robinson will be praying at Wakefield Cathedral. On Saturday 24 March, Bishop Nick Baines will be at Holy Trinity, Skipton. All these prayer events run from 10am until 3pm.

Welcome for digital ‘accord’

Bishop Nick has welcomed a national agreement between the government and the Church of England encouraging greater use of church spires and towers to boost mobile connectivity in rural areas.

Bishop Nick said, “We already have a number of churches across our diocese, particularly in rural North Yorkshire, which have installed Wi-Fi transmitters to connect remote communities and boost the local economy. This accord will encourage more churches to do so, helping to tackle two of the biggest issues rural areas face - isolation and sustainability.”
Easter challenges
Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley

I’m a bit of a Dr Who fan, and I vividly remember the scene during Christopher Eccleston’s tenure as the ninth Doctor, when the Daleks said that fateful word: ‘elevate!’ Interestingly, one thing I’ve had to get used to again since returning home is climbing stairs. Not an obvious thing you may think, but in a context where earthquakes are prevalent, homes don’t tend to be built on more than one level. So I’m enjoying becoming reacquainted with steps and stairs of varying types. It’s the little things, so the saying goes.

One thing is certain about Easter, and it’s not a little thing at all: Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is a bold challenge to the level playing field of life. The wrench from death to life elevates each one of us into a new reality, and nothing can ever be the same again. That has some serious implications for how we live in the here and now, and how we plan for the future. Easter is good news for each person, and it is also startling news for those who think that the game is up for Christianity.

I have been constantly inspired by the people and places I have encountered on my travels as a new bishop in this diocese. There are some incredible faithful and committed people in our midst.

There are also hard questions that need to be asked. The cross (as priest and writer Sam Wells puts it) is itself more of a question these days, than an answer. We must have courage to reimagine where we are, to let go of things that we have held dear, but not let go of the places to which God calls us.

Each one of us in the light of the resurrection is invited to galvanise the courage and strength that it gives us. With wisdom and imagination we are called to live in this age, ‘for such a time as this,’ and to be a support and resource to one another. What a gift of new life that is! I for one can’t wait to see what God has in store in this season of resurrection and hope.

+Helen-Ann
Bishop of Ripon

Cathedral serves up surprises at Wakefield’s Rhubarb Festival

Wakefield is at the centre of the Yorkshire Rhubarb Triangle and the cathedral has been celebrating the famous pink vegetable during the city’s rhubarb festival, with a rhubarb inspired menu, a rhubarb trail, and a rhubarb theme to the Sunday morning service with Bishop Nick.

More than 2000 people visited the cathedral over the festival period. In the cathedral kitchen, catering manager, Ea Nielsen, created rhubarb inspired sausage rolls, hot pork sandwiches with rhubarb sauce, rhubarb scones, crumbles and tarts. They all sold out early and takings exceeded expectations.

While welcomers guided cathedral visitors on a Rhubarb Trail, the cathedral also held an outdoor procession and thanksgiving led by Bishop Nick on the Sunday of the Festival.
Lay and clergy leaders from churches in the diocese have been among those taking part in the national New Wine leadership conference at Harrogate. Despite heavy snow, 1500 church leaders met at the Harrogate Convention Centre where the focus was on ‘transforming communities’.

The Archdeacon of Bradford, Ven. Andy Jolley, was one of the conference speakers and is New Wine’s Head of Urban Ministry. “We have been looking at how lay discipleship is a really important way in which churches can transform communities. It’s not just what churches are doing, but the way individual Christians work in their respective spheres.”

The Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth, was one of many Christians who visited a mosque last month as part of the ‘Visit My Mosque’ initiative. Bishop Toby is pictured at the Madni Masjid in West Bowling, Bradford, one of nearly 200 mosques across the country to open their doors. Visitors got to learn about how Muslims pray, and the importance of mosques to the faith.

Leeds City Council has approved a £5 million investment through a mix of grant and loan funding, to enable St George’s Crypt and Latch (Leeds Action to Create Homes) to provide supported accommodation for some of the city’s most vulnerable adults, young people and families. It’s the first time Leeds City Council has provided loan funding to support new affordable, supported housing to be developed in the city, enabling St. George’s Crypt and Latch to acquire and develop 45 new affordable, supported emergency accommodation and works with partners to prevent or alleviate homelessness. It aims to develop a total of 150 units of supported and affordable housing over the coming years.

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A recent poll commissioned by the MCB found that almost 70 per cent of Britons hadn’t seen the inside of another faith’s place of worship, and almost 90 per cent hadn’t been inside a mosque. (Photo credit: Bradford Telegraph & Argus.)

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Bookings have opened for the Diocesan Lay Conference which will bring together more than 1600 participants from across the diocese.

The first diocesan conference for lay people in the Diocese of Leeds is being held on Saturday 9 June 2018 at the Harrogate Convention Centre and is designed to support church members and boost their efforts to live out their faith in parishes, schools and workplaces. Keynote speakers include the head of the Church Army, Mark Russell, and the Bishop of Dorking, the Rt Revd Jo Bailey-Wells.

Each parish is being asked to send between two to six delegates, chosen for their potential to play a leading role in parish life, for their strong interest in relating faith to daily life or because they are already engaged in church-based ministry.

The Lay Conference will also be the launch pad for new ways of supporting and training lay ministers. Director of Ministry and Mission, Canon Andrew Norman, Director of Ministry and Mission and Chair of the planning team, says that plans being developed will aim to offer training and support for many different forms of lay ministry. “The Lay Conference is going to be a really exciting day in itself, but it also marks a new and exciting chapter for Lay Ministry across the diocese.”

Extra places will be available for four young people (aged 14-17) per deanery and for people with disabilities or who are BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnicity), in line with national efforts to increase inclusion and encourage diversity.

Full information is available online at www.leeds.anglican.org/lay-conference.