Hundreds bid fond farewell to Bishop James

Hundreds of friends, colleagues and parishioners from across the diocese and beyond bid a fond and fittingly joyful farewell to Bishop James Bell, the Bishop of Ripon, at a service in Ripon Cathedral on April 30 to mark his retirement.

Leading the well-wishers, Bishop Nick said “James’s ministry has been one of faithfulness and one of encouragement. The last three years have not always been the easiest and James is one of the people who knows the cost of that. James has been faithful, he has been diligent, and he has reimagined not only his role but his ministry in the light of that reality and so we owe him a huge debt.”

Others paid tribute to Bishop James’s enthusiasm and encouragement. Canon Michael Hepper, Area Dean of Wensley, said, “For me and for many of us, Bishop James has been a great source of inspiration and encouragement over the years. He lives out his faith with real enthusiasm, his joy is infectious, his commitment to the Lord, deep and genuine.”

In response to the tributes and gifts, Bishop James said, “Just as you think retirement is on the horizon, the Church of England decided to reorganise three dioceses into one, the first time it’s ever done this, and I get a great big challenge. Not least, it has been a huge joy because of the larger, greater team created ... so I give thanks for colleagues and I give thanks for the excitement of ministry, not least being part of the creation of this great new diocese.”

Archbishops encourage election engagement

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have urged all Christians to vote on June 8th and exercise “the Christian virtues of love, trust and hope” in exercising their choice. In a pastoral letter for churches, the Archbishops urge Christians to “... set aside apathy and cynicism and to participate, and encourage others to do the same. The Christian virtues of love, trust and hope should guide and judge our actions.”

Commenting on BBC Radio 4’s Sunday programme, Bishop Nick Baines said, “The first call on Christians is to pray for those who are standing for office and to continue to pray for them... This is not saying here is a policy document- it is saying you have an obligation in a democracy to participate in this, not just complain about the outcomes.”

Bishop Nick writes about the Archbishops’ letter overleaf.
**Ticking boxes**

**Bishop Nick Baines**

We are about to vote in a General Election - three years before we expected to. It is to be hoped that a snap election will not provoke snap judgments.

Although not welcomed by everyone, it is indisputable that this election matters. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have sent out a pastoral letter to all the clergy and parishes of England. It is not intended to tell people how to vote or which ‘side’ God is on; rather, it is written to encourage all eligible Christians to vote, to engage in serious democratic responsibility, and to pray for all who ask us to entrust to them the government of the country.

The letter calls for us to focus on the common good - which will involve replacing narrow self-interest with a consideration of how we treat each other, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. But, perhaps the sharpest element in the letter is not just to commend the “Christian virtues of love, trust and hope” in guiding our actions, but also to urge a rejection of apathy and cynicism on the part of those who trust in the God of resurrection. Apathy can result from a feeling of being disconnected from the complexity of political debate; cynicism can emerge from a frustration with the slanging matches and competing claims of those vying against one another for power.

Essentially, an election provides a focus for alternative visions. In the UK these visions relate largely to how the common good can best be served while individuals are enabled, encouraged or coerced into behaving differently.

All these alternative visions involve compromise; all will find their ideals re-shaped by reality. And this should evoke in politicians and electorate a genuine humility.

As the Archbishops conclude: “All of us as Christians, in holding fast to the vision of abundant life, should be open to the call to renounce cynicism, to engage prayerfully with the candidates and issues in this election, and by doing so to participate fully in the life of your communities.”

**+Nick**

**Bishop of Leeds**

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**Rambling through Nidderdale with Clare Balding**

TV and radio broadcaster, Clare Balding, has been walking the Nidderdale Way in the company of two local clergy for the next series of her Radio 4 programme, Ramblings.

Vicar of Upper Nidderdale, the Revd Darryl Hall, and the minister of Pateley Bridge Methodist Church, Revd. Mike Poole with his wife, Julia Wyatt, accompanied Clare on a stretch of the Nidderdale Way as she recorded an episode of the Radio 4 Ramblings series. Darryl ended the walk with a blessing.

Along the way, Clare discussed how Christianity and community make a meaningful difference to life in the dale. The full walk will be aired over several weeks from 18th May.
‘We need a vicar’ - children’s video prayers answered!

BRADFORD Young people in Shipley, whose Facebook video for a new vicar went viral last February, have had their prayers answered – and made a new film to celebrate. The Revd Henriette Howarth is the new Vicar of St Paul’s Church, Shipley and to mark the good news, she joined members of the Junior Choir in the making of a new film welcoming her to the church. The film was shown at her installation service, and can be seen on St Paul’s Facebook page.

In their original video, featured on TV, the children of the Junior Choir spelt out the type of Vicar they wanted: “If you want this choice position have a cheery disposition, make us laugh, smile lots, play games, tell jokes.”

Henriette, who is married to the Bishop Toby Howarth, says she will be doing her best to match the children’s hopes. “It’s exciting that the children in the church were involved in the advertising for the new vicar. I hope I can fulfil their expectations!”

HUDDERSFIELD The Tuesday Welcome group from St James’ Church, Heckmondwike have been up on the roof to share the news they have been granted £176,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for major repairs to their church roof. The project aims to repair and re-cover the roofs of the almost 200 year old church building on Church Lane in the centre of town to ensure that the building is dry, watertight and secured for many more years. In addition, the project will involve producing information that will allow people in the community to find out more about the Church and its heritage.

The Revd Karen Young, the Vicar of Heckmondwike said: “We’re delighted that we’ve received this support from the National Lottery.”

Feeding families

WAKEFIELD More than 35 families were fed this Easter break thanks to St Peter’s Church Barnsley. St Peter’s Church hosted two community lunch projects in partnership with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council as part of a pilot scheme to meet the needs of those most vulnerable in the town. The Parish of St Peter the Apostle and St John the Baptist is ranked 401 out of 12,599, where 1 is the most deprived parish in the country on the Church Urban Fund index of deprivation. The vicar of St Peter’s, Fr Paul Cartwright said: “It’s been a fantastic opportunity to work with the Local Authority Ward Alliance, and to show local families that we are Easter People!”

LEEDS A Church of England academy chain is hoping to receive community support for an application to open three new schools in Leeds to help meet the growing demand for places. Abbey multi-academy trust currently comprises Abbey Grange in West Park, St Chad’s Primary in Headingley and Lightcliffe Academy in Calderdale near Halifax. The proposals for a primary school and two secondaries (by 2020) would create a total of 2,720 pupil spaces. The Trust is hoping to submit an application to the Department for Education soon but needs community support.
Archbishop Justin said: “The Great Get-Together is an excellent opportunity for all of us to strengthen the ties that bind us – as local communities and as a country – and to practice our values of hospitality, welcome and generosity, which are a gift that the followers of Jesus Christ can model for the benefit of our wider society.”

Picnics, BBQs, sports days, and lunches are just some of the events being organised by communities across the diocese designed to celebrate what people have in common to mark the anniversary of Jo Cox’s murder.

Organised by the Church Urban Fund and Near Neighbours with support from Brendan Cox, the Jo Cox Foundation and Archbishop Justin Welby, churches are urged to hold “Great Get-Togethers” over the weekend of 16-18th June.

The Great Get-Together initiative has the support of Bishop Nick. “Jo Cox was driven by a desire to heal divisions and to help people, so this is a great way to both honour her memory and to foster a more tolerant society – starting with the neighbours in our own streets. I hope as many churches and parishes as possible will join in the event, bringing people together to show, in Jo’s words: we have more in common than that which divides us.”

Bradford, Ripon and Wakefield Cathedrals are all involved in ‘Thy Kingdom Come’, described as a global wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost 2017. Beacon events begin at Bradford Cathedral at 7pm on Ascension Day, May 25th. Six prayer stations are open throughout the ten days until Pentecost, coming to a climax on Pentecost Eve, Saturday 3 June, at 7pm with a praise and thanksgiving event.

At Ripon Cathedral, a ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ service will take place on Sunday May 28 at 3.30pm. Music will be led by singers from Whitkirk Deanery and the preacher will be Bishop Toby.

Bringing ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ to a conclusion, Wakefield Cathedral will host the Diocesan Pentecost Service of Celebration at 3.30pm on Sunday June 4th. Bishop Nick will be the speaker.