Synod leaders agree new diocesan-wide financial Share system for parishes

Church leaders meeting in Harrogate have agreed a new scheme for collecting parish financial contributions - 'parish share' - which will be applied across the diocese from January 2017.

The bulk of Share is used to pay for ordained ministers but until now three different methods of Share calculation have been carried over from the three former dioceses.

In his Presidential address to Diocesan Synod (meeting at St Aidan’s High School on July 16), Bishop Nick (pictured above) warned that “what is clear in any such proposal is that not everybody will be happy.” Although not everybody was happy, the scheme was supported by a large majority and parishes will now hear in the Autumn how much they will be asked to pay next year. The scheme will be based on three components - the number of clergy in a parish, the relative ability of each parish to pay and the size of the church based on regular Sunday attendance (fixed for three years so as not to stifle church growth).

Several modifications have been made to the scheme since it was last seen by Synod members. Share requests will be capped at 80% of a church’s total voluntary income, while any increases caused by the new system will be restricted to no more than 15% and decreases restricted to no more than 8%. However, an amendment from the Revd Canon Paul Ayers, Vicar of Pudsey, to ask the Diocesan Board to investigate how these restrictions and caps may be phased out, was also supported.

Other Synod business

In a packed meeting, Synod members also agreed a budget for 2017 which means that parishes will be asked to pay, on average, 2% more next year. Green energy was on the agenda as the meeting heard that a scheme piloted in Leeds and Bradford has netted churches substantial savings and will be rolled out to other parts of the diocese. And the military was represented at the Synod meeting as it was agreed to write to churches encouraging every parish to take practical action to support the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant. (Pictured below are Major Derek Tickner, Quartermaster of the 5th Regiment, the Royal Artillery with Revd Lindsay Southern).
Faithfulness in suffering

Bishop Toby Howarth

Last month, Bishop Toby visited war-torn Sudan and here he reflects on his experiences.

I have just returned from a few days in Sudan, representing the Archbishop of Canterbury on a delegation from the Anglican Communion. We were looking at the capacity of the church in Sudan to become a full, autonomous province.

Since Sudan and South Sudan divided into two separate countries, the church has found it hard to operate as one single province. Apart from the difficulties of communicating across a closed international border with fighting between the Sudanese army and rebel groups, South Sudan is predominantly Christian and looks to Sub-Saharan Africa while Sudan is predominantly Muslim with Arabic as the main language.

Much of our discussions as a delegation focussed on the need for the church to play a strong role in nation building, drawing on its long history. Sudanese Christians want to engage in the life of the nation as indigenous citizens with equal rights and responsibilities.

The Sudanese government welcomed us as a delegation, an encouraging sign given the difficulties that Christians continue to experience.

The highlight of the visit was a church service in Omdurman at which the news that the church may become its own province was greeted with huge excitement. I was privileged to preach at that service, bringing greetings from the Diocese of Leeds, and pledging our continued support and partnership in the Gospel. While many had travelled long distances to attend, and the congregation was far too large to fit inside the building, there was a powerful sense of God’s presence in worship and prayer. Although the Sudanese church may struggle financially and in other ways, we recognised as a delegation that the prime asset they bring to the Communion is faithfulness in suffering.

+Toby
Bishop of Bradford

Disability network grows

BRADFORD More than thirty parish disability representatives, many of them recently elected at annual parochial church meetings, have been learning how churches can better support those with sight loss.

James Seager from the TorchTrust spoke about helping those with sight impairment and sight loss and how parish disability reps can promote and facilitate their better inclusion in church life and worship.

The parish reps are part of a network originally set up twelve years ago in the former Bradford Diocese. Future plans include a day session at St Peter’s Shipley on Saturday 15th October on “Keeping Healthy Minds”, which will be open to all.

For more information contact Janet Bower via janetbower1970@gmail.com.
Schools to promote unity on International Peace Day

**HUDDERSFIELD** Three diverse Huddersfield schools will use art to bring people together for this year’s United Nations International Day of Peace, on September 21.

Linthwaite Clough School, Spring Grove School and Longley School are creating peace-themed artwork which will be displayed in Huddersfield Parish Church, where they will then contribute to a Peace Day ceremony. The pupils will be joined by the Mayor of Kirklees, the Revd Simon Crook, Curate at St Peter’s Church in Huddersfield, is helping to organise the project: “A message of peace like this from children is very poignant and makes such an impact on people of all ages.”

A song for Rio’s Team Refugees

**LEEDS** A Leeds church was transformed last month when almost 200 singers gathered to record an unofficial Olympic anthem for Rio’s Team Refugees. Written by singer/songwriter, Becky Owen with the help of Boff Whalley, formerly from Chumbawumba, “The World is our Song” got its world premiere on Radio Leeds. It was promoted on social media by PAFRAS, (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), which helped host the evening, and will receive the proceeds of the song sales. All Hallows, Leeds, works with asylum seekers and refugees. Their vicar, the Revd Heston Groenewald, said it was a lovely surprise to have the pop up choir in church. “They sounded wonderful!”

Follow Me talks return

**WAKEFIELD** Bishop Tony Robinson has announced the speakers who will be leading this year’s Follow Me – a series of five evening teaching sessions in Wakefield Cathedral for lay people and clergy to explore faith and discipleship. Bishop Tony said: “The Follow Me evenings are an opportunity to invite some excellent speakers to Wakefield to encourage and inspire us to deepen our faith.” Follow Me begins on Thursday September 29 with Bishop John Pritchard. Other speakers include Bishop Nick Baines (Nov 17); Revd Canon Angela Tilby (Jan 26); Very Revd Lister Tonge (Feb 23); and Bishop Philip North (April 27). For more, contact caroline.asquith@leeds.anglican.org.

Sign of the times

**RIPON** Visitors to St Mary’s, Embsay-with-Eastby, near Skipton, can now learn about its medieval past with a new information board in the churchyard. The board was unveiled by Bishop James Bell last month. The church has engaged with the local community in a major project, “A Roof for the Future and Discovering our Past”, which has received Heritage Lottery funding and support from the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Embsay was the site of a priory for a small 12th century Augustinian community. The monks later moved across the fields to found Bolton Abbey.
Bishops hear Brexit concerns at Great Yorkshire Show

Bishops from across Yorkshire have been hearing of the difficulties and uncertainties facing farmers and farming on a fact-finding visit to the Great Yorkshire Show in Harrogate.

The group of five bishops, including the Bishop of Ripon, Rt. Revd James Bell and the Bishop of Huddersfield, Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs, met with NFU leaders, landowners, representatives of tenant farmers and charities working with farmers facing personal and financial difficulties.

Brexit concerns were raised by a number of organisations including the Countryside Landowners Association. Their regional director, Dorothy Fairburn said key post-Brexit issues which needed to be addressed were farming support, regulations, international trade and ensuring the labour supply. The NFU has called for a new UK domestic agricultural policy to be introduced as soon as possible, saying that there is a need for certainty and clear decisions.

Bishop James said, “Clearly the whole area of Brexit is really important and the uncertainty that involves. We have heard a whole range of issues raised already. And alongside that we have heard there are the ongoing issues of affordable housing, access to services, isolation and mental health. These are really important issues.”

(Picture - Bishop James Bell and Bishop Alison White, Bishop of Hull)

Engaging with Primary Schools

Churches can learn how to engage with their local primary schools at a training day for parishes taking place this month in Leeds.

Speakers at ‘Resourcing Churches to Engage with Primary Schools’, on Saturday September 17th, include Geoff Brown, Schools Development Worker from Scripture Union. “My work involves me in helping churches form stronger links with their local schools. I am keen to share this vision with local churches, to train them, resource them and put them in contact with others doing similar work.”

The day will include workshop sessions packed with ideas and resources to help churches engage with schools. These include Open the Book, Journey Makers, Godly Play, Rewind, Prayer Spaces in Schools, Fairtrade & Environment, and Schools Visiting Churches.

The cost of the day is just £15 including lunch and it takes place on Saturday 17 September, 10 -3pm at The Moyes Centre, David Young Academy, Seacroft. To book places, contact anne.carter@leeds.anglican.org