Diocese motion on Wealth Gap passes at General Synod

The Diocese of Leeds was pleased to have a motion passed at the most recent meeting of General Synod on what we can do to tackle the wealth gap and rising social inequality.

The motion was moved by the Revd Canon Paul Cartwright, Priest-in-Charge of the Priory Benefice in our diocese (pictured, on the left, with Fr Gary Waddington, right), and amended by Professor Muriel Robinson from the Diocese of Lincoln, before passing.

Addressing Synod, Revd Paul said: “Sisters and brothers, we are told in Proverbs 31:8-9 to ‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy’

“But it is not only the poor who we should worry about, as we are also told in Matthew 19:24 that “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” Surely we have to call out the dangers of such inequality around wealth that we experience in our country today.

“Some of those who are fortunate enough to have above average wealth use their resources to try and redress the balance, but this depends upon their social conscience.”

Breaking out of the “faith bubble”

Students of different faiths in Leeds have been helping break out of ‘faith bubbles’ thanks to the work of one of our churches.

A few years ago, a Jewish student in the city remarked to some Christian and Muslim colleagues in a coffee shop in Leeds that ‘We Jewish students live in a faith bubble.’

For a number of years, a group of families at St George’s Church in Leeds have aimed to help Jewish, Christian and Muslim students to break out of their bubbles.

Over the last few weeks members of St George’s have been working with the University’s Jewish Society (known as JSoc).
Welcome to Advent! But, what is Advent for?

According to the Welsh poet RS Thomas, “the meaning is in the waiting”. In an age of instant access and thinking we are in control, waiting is not part of the deal. I remember the 1990s advert for a famous credit card that seduced us with the claim: “Takes the waiting out of wanting”. Yet, learning to wait tells us that we are not in control – that, together, we are subject to the weather, the seasons, the decisions of others, and so on.

So it is that Advent is countercultural. It goes against the flow of common expectations. It invites us to stop and reflect on how we got here and how our living now shapes how we shall be in the future. It goes like this …

A people have waited for several centuries for their prayers to be answered – for God to return to his people and set them free. Yet, still they suffer under Roman occupation and all the evidence of their eyes tells them that God is absent. Every day they confront the reality of their predicament and ask where God is in it (or not). They are compelled to question their own behaviour and choices – their ethics. So, the waiting time is not an empty time. And, for Christians, Advent creates a space for that same reflection: how did we get to where we are; and are we prepared to face judgment on our lives, choices, ethics?

For me this means being open to the surprise of Christmas when it comes. I would love God to intervene and sort out the world’s – and my personal – messes. I might imagine God coming in power and glory, leaving no cracks for doubt. Yet, in the end, he comes as one of us – in the vulnerability of a dependent baby born into a conflicted and dangerous world.

Am I open to God surprising me and us this Christmas, subverting expectations of his presence? Seeing God in the restrictions and limitations, and not just waiting for heaven?

Nick
Bishop of Leeds

Welcome to Advent! But what is it for?

Bishop Nick Baines

Rhythm of Life Advent course launched

Rhythm of Life, our diocesan venture of prayer, reflection and support, is now focused on our shared progress towards Christmas with the launch of a new course.

The Advent course comprises seven full sessions to cover each theme from the Rhythm of Life, beginning with the season of Remembrance, through Christ the King, to Advent itself and on to Christmas.

These can run in person or online with your deanery, team, parish or fellowship groups. The course can be adapted to be shorter in length for groups who are restrained by time, as each session stands alone.

All course materials can be found via our website. This includes readings, ideas for worship, two videos and a collect for each of the seven weeks.
Interfaith Mitzvah Day helps support victims of domestic abuse

Members of faith communities in Bradford and Leeds worked in collaboration for this year’s Mitzvah Day, the annual Jewish community-led day of social action, which took place across the country on Sunday November 21, which was also the final day of ‘Interfaith Week’ 2021.

The initiative was coordinated by Simon Phillips, Director of Interfaith for the Leeds Jewish Representative Council, and Jenny Ramsden, Interfaith Advisor to the Diocese of Leeds, in partnership with Kaneez Khan from Wellsprings Together and Humayun Islam from the BEAP Community Partnership.

This year’s theme was ‘Together This Mitzvah Day’, and in the run up to Mitzvah Day a range of faith institutions, community organisations and individuals from the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Christian faith traditions donated a wide range of items to support two local domestic abuse charities.

On Mitzvah Day itself members from diverse faith communities from across Bradford and Leeds gathered together at the BEAP Community Partnership in Manningham, Bradford, to sort and pack the donated goods, which were then delivered to ‘Staying Put’ and ‘Leeds Women’s Aid’.

The Bishop of Bradford, the Rt Revd Toby Howarth, and MP Alex Sobel were both in attendance.

Bishop Toby said: “Today has been a wonderful example of how our diverse faith communities in Bradford and Leeds work so well together to meet the needs of vulnerable people in our communities”.

Kaneez Khan said: “I am so grateful for these relationships and for these really giving organisations for what they’ve done for us”.

MU support victims of domestic abuse

Mothers’ Unions around have joined together to highlight the fact that one in three women will experience domestic or sexual abuse in their lives.

This includes the Mothers’ Union in the Diocese of Leeds, who held a special prayer vigil hosted by Wakefield Cathedral.

This service was followed by three-minutes of silence, taking place on the South Steps outside the cathedral, focusing on the fact that one in three women will be impacted by some form of violence in their life.

Jean Thurman, President of the Mothers’ Union for the Diocese of Leeds, said: “Mothers’ Union worldwide support the United Nations’ 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence and abuse every year. This year it is especially important, with domestic violence being described as ‘the second pandemic’.”
January 2021
Diocese supports church mission with £80k in grants

Grants awarded to parishes by the Diocese of Leeds in 2020 are already helping emerging mission projects to take place. The Emergence Mission Grants scheme was launched back in June to facilitate initiatives that allow church mission to flourish in the current context or to revive work that may have stalled, contributing to over a hundred church projects across the diocese.

February 2021
Rhythm of Life course launches

A new way to explore how we live the gospel in our daily lives was launched with the Rhythm of Life course for Lent. The course provides an opportunity to learn more about how we can provide structure to our lives in seven key areas: praying, reflecting, encouraging, sharing, resting, celebrating and creating.

March 2021
Dean Jerry to retire

Bradford Cathedral and the Diocese of Leeds learned we would bid a fond farewell to Dean Jerry Lepine. He arrived at Bradford Cathedral in July 2013 and built its reputation as a worship space and meeting place for all the city’s communities.

April 2021
Don’t be a-llama-ed – alpacas at work!

A church in the Leeds area found local fame as it played host to two new four-legged friends who helped keep the vegetation under control; alpacas Pablo and Geoffrey. St Wilfrid’s Calverley boasted a team of grazing animals now including the two alpacas.

May 2021
Vaccination session held at Keighley church

Keighley Shared Church in the Bradford area helped deal with COVID-19 by hosting a vaccination drive. Some 120 COVID-19 vaccinations were given as part of an initiative organised by the Modality Partnership, and involved other partners.

June 2021
£1.5m grant for new student outreach work

Thousands of students in Leeds and Huddersfield who have never been to church will encounter the Christian faith, thanks to a £1.5 million Church of England grant. The funding will be shared between projects to engage with young adults at two of our churches.
July 2021

New priests ordained across the diocese

The diocese of Leeds welcomed many new priests, with ordination services taking place across the whole diocese. The new priests were ordained as such after being ordained deacons last year.

August 2021

A score of new deacons ordained

Twenty men and women began ministry as deacons in parish churches across the diocese following two joyful ordination services at Ripon Cathedral. New arrivals included former teachers, an academic in the field of Italian Studies, a Professor of Victorian Studies, and a social worker.

September 2021

26 prayers shared ahead of COP26

The Climate Emergency prompted the publication of 26 prayers dedicated to the environment by Leeds-based priest Revd Jon Swales. An Associate Priest at Leeds St George, Revd Jon has long been a champion of green issues and active in efforts to promote awareness of threats to the environment. Our drive towards carbon net zero progressed with the presentation of Saving Creation: Strategic action to combat climate change to an in-person Synod at Bradford Cathedral.

October 2021

We have the “Best churchyard in the Dales”

One of our churchyards in the Dales was declared the best in North Yorkshire and praised for its wonderful range of wildlife. St Mary’s Church, Kettlewell was the “overall and unanimous winner” of the first-ever Best Churchyard competition held in the county by CPRE the Countryside Charity - formerly known as the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

November 2021

Farewell to Archdeacon Anne

The Diocese of Leeds thanked the outgoing Archdeacon of Halifax, Ven Dr Anne Dawtry, at a retirement service at Halifax Minster. Around three hundred people gathered for the service, giving thanks to Anne for her ten years of faithful service as Archdeacon of Halifax and Warden of Readers. Archdeacon Anne said: “It has been a real privilege to have worked as part of Bishop Nick’s Senior Leadership Team and alongside Bishop Jonathan, the area deans and parishes of the Huddersfield Episcopal Area.” Incoming Archdeacon Bill Braviner, is to join us from the Diocese of Durham.
Hope and unity in the farming community

Hope, unity and the need for people across agriculture to come together in support of one another as part of a community were highlighted during the Farming Community Network’s (FCN) Remembrance and Thanksgiving Service at Ripon Cathedral.

The ecumenical service paid tribute to those who have died in farm communities, with a particular focus on farm accidents, COVID-19, and those who have died by suicide. It recognised the experience of loss felt by all those who have been bereaved.

The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Ripon, led the service, which included hymns, readings and personal accounts of those being remembered.

More than 100 people attended the service, both in-person and tuning into a livestream from home. In attendance were the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire; Stuart Roberts, Deputy President of the National Farmers’ Union; FCN volunteers and staff.

Hilary Benn MP opens St Luke’s new Community Hub in Holbeck

St Luke’s Church has officially opened the doors of its brand new Community Hub with an activity-packed day for the Holbeck community.

Some five hundred people attended the joyous event, including local MP Hilary Benn, who cut the ribbon at an official opening ceremony.

Building work on the Community Hub began back in 2019 and continued for a year, until the updated facilities were finally ready in August 2020.

The COVID-19 Pandemic postponed the celebrations until November when local people were invited to look around the fantastic, fresh new community space, which includes a large function hall, comfortable meeting rooms, a computer suite, rentable office spaces, a fully-equipped catering kitchen and modern accessible toilet facilities.

St Luke’s Church, on Malvern Road, Beeston Hill, are already using the new facility to runs English to Speakers of

Other Languages (ESOL), an environmental project, as well as all age activities throughout the week. The church host several different charities including youth groups, a job club, a computer class and a play group. They also hope to open a community cafe in the near future.

Vicar of St Luke’s Church, Revd Alistair Kaye, said, “After two years of community consultation, a year of building work and through the incredible generosity of local people, the church family and national funders, we are now opening the St Luke’s Holbeck Community Hub.

“We hope and pray that for years to come it will be the perfect base for local charities and projects to do life changing and transformational work in our wonderful, diverse inner-city community.”
Diocese of Leeds Podcast launches

Faithful North is the name of a new podcast produced by the Diocese of Leeds.

A first season of six episodes, featuring voices from a variety of church backgrounds, is now available from popular podcast providers during our Podcast Week.

The podcast is hosted by the Revd Canon Rachel Firth, Vicar of Huddersfield, and David Brighton, member of the Communications Team for the Diocese of Leeds.

The aim of the podcast is to share engaging stories from around the diocese, hearing from people with experiences, training and backgrounds that can enrich and help us. It hopes to give people an opportunity to reflect on their faith, and issues around faith, from perspectives that they may not have considered before.

Each episode features a particular guest but is also based around a topic, with subjects covered including inclusion and disability, the environment, vocations and lay ministry.

Rachel said: “I’ve really enjoyed making these podcasts with the team and I hope people enjoy listening to them too. As everyday Christians across a huge and diverse diocese, we still, I think, have common interests. In this first group of conversations we’ve started with some really basic universal stuff – environment and creation, ministry on our estates, how we live our calling and the training support that the church offers- whether that calling is to ordination or any other area of church life.”

Living in Love and Faith’s spring deadline

Living in Love and Faith, the Church of England’s resources to encourage and enable engagement and learning on matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage was launched in our diocese at the start of the year.

Hosted in a variety of settings, this church-wide project in learning together, listening to one another, and listening to God is part of discerning a way forward for the Church of England.

At a recent meeting of the Living in Love and Faith Next Steps Group a decision to extend the period for receiving responses to April 2022 was made and agreed by the Archbishops.

More details and how to take part can be found on the Living in Love and Faith section on the diocesan website.
Scientists inform us chillingly of what happens to airborne particles and droplets. An unseen scourge can hang around us, unawares. Colder winter days remind us of its reach, as we “see our breath” in clouds, suspended in freezing air. How we and others breathe has never had so much attention! But the crisis has also released some amazing creativity and challenged us all about what really matters. We have become so grateful we can actually breathe, when COVID-19 sufferers have been fighting for breath.

The pandemic’s impact has startled us all; but from under the virus cloud, there has appeared a shining silver lining: an explosion of prayer to our God, across the airwaves. Church groups and Bible teachers have freely spread, for all to find, Bible and prayer resources, support by phone, online prayer gatherings and new ways for all of us to read and pray, either on our own or in groups, whether regulars or casual explorers. Speaking personally, I have never prayed so much and with so many different groups and individuals.

 Asked what was more important, prayer or reading the Scriptures, noted preacher, C.H Spurgeon wisely countered: “What is more important, breathing in or breathing out?” As we practice Scripture-reading and prayer more and more, they become as natural as breathing. Breathing in the Word informs our prayers and gives us confidence to approach through Jesus, the One with all the power. His Spirit sheds a new light and guides us as we breathe out our prayers.

Long after the censer had released its fragrant mists over the Holy Scriptures, those ministering and the gathered people, I noticed something... way above the transept, the dying evening light caught their glistening clouds, suspended, yet upward-moving, as prayers based on Divine promises ascended to the throne-room. A reminder and comfort that, as we breathe, however uncertain the days, “the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away”

“May my prayer be... incense before you.”
Psalm 141:2  NRSVA

Mingled Spirit, Word and Prayer were beautifully symbolised recently, as, unusually, I caught York Minster’s Evening Eucharist.

For more news, help and advice for parishes, visit www.leeds.anglican.org