New priests ordained across the diocese

The Diocese of Leeds is pleased to welcome many new priests, with ordination services taking place across the whole diocese this past weekend.

The new priests were ordained as such after being ordained deacons last year, in services taking place at Leeds Minster, Bradford Cathedral, Wakefield Cathedral, Huddersfield Parish Church and St John’s Bilton.

One of those was the Revd June Cockburn who was ordained priest at Leeds Minster and presided in the open air at Upper Armley, where she will be serving as curate.

Christ Church Upper Armley is currently having all its ‘in person’ services outdoors when the weather allows. This enables more to attend, along with socially distanced singing, picnic blankets and space for children to relax and bring their pets to church.

Revd June said, “It was an honour to be able to preside for the first time. It was lovely to see everyone participating and I look forward to what ministry here will bring.”

The size of the congregation is about thirty percent larger for outdoor services each week, and people walking have come and joined in too. The new approach is going to be trialled throughout the summer.

Revd Phil Arnold, vicar at Christ Church, said, “Worshiping outside is both practical and one way of taking church into the community. We love the opportunity to worship outdoors, breaking down barriers as we do it.”

New Lay Ministers commissioned in Cleckheaton

A Lay Pastoral Minister and Worship Leader have recently been commissioned at St John’s Church, Cleckheaton.

Richard Bentley and Robert Cave, both pictured with their commissioning vicar Revd Brunel James, are members of St John’s Church and joined others across the diocese who have completed the three stage pathway this year.

Speaking about his journey to becoming Lay Pastoral Minister, Richard said, “I strongly recommend the lay pastoral assistant and minister courses to anyone who has a inclinations towards a pastoral and caring vocation, because it offers invaluable training.”
I’m writing following the result of the Batley & Spen by-election. As Bishop of Huddersfield, I had the sad duty of trying to support that community following the murder of its MP Jo Cox.

Together with our clergy, lay leaders and parishes, we did all we could to give help and above all hope in a very dark time.

And it’s the power of faithful hope that I’m thinking about today. Hope has risen and fallen, ebbed and flowed during the pandemic and now we look forward to the return of longed-for freedoms that are expected to be confirmed this month. Perhaps “expected” is too strong.

We hope for social reunions, for physical worship – and singing – in churches and for absences to be ended. The pandemic has created physical and emotional divisions and barriers, and in doing so has reminded us of the power of natural forces beyond control.

There are of course, other darker forces which seek to sow division and to build barriers.

Despite the tragic political history in Batley & Spen, ugly voices and attitudes were aired on its streets before the election, to which Bishop Nick responded with these strong words:

“The Church’s vision for public life, flowing from the Christian understanding of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is one where the common good is served such that all communities, of whatever culture, ethnicity, religion or belief, can flourish together.”

After the election, let us hope and pray everyone will serve the common good in that spirit. The story of Exodus tells us of joyful release from captivity, just as Easter speaks of Jesus’ release from the bonds of death, but after both God’s people still faced uncertainty as they sought to create a “new normal”.

Faithful hope sustained them and has sustained Christians through a thousand new normalities since then, whether after tempest, war or pandemic.

So, let us focus on the sure hope that we have through Christ, as we look forward to seeing each other soon - in church and with joyful songs on our lips. Alleluia!

+Jonathan
Bishop of Huddersfield
Use Minecraft to explore faith with our Children and Youth Team

How the PC game Minecraft can be used to explore faith will be the topic of an upcoming showcase from the diocese’s Children, Young People and Families Team.

Working with Missional Generation, a charity supporting youth leaders in the region, the diocesan team are inviting leaders and parents to explore what Minecraft is and how it can help look at Christianity in a new way.

They will be demonstrating what Minecraft is, what it looks like and what it could look like for churches to use Minecraft within their work with children and young people.

The session will include information on building, adventures with young people around topic and themes and how it can be used to explore seasonal times of the year.

The team want to grow parents’ confidence in the benefits of Minecraft, why it is exciting to children and young people, how it can be used positively and the benefits of the game.

At All Saints Church in Ilkley young people recently used Minecraft to help explore the Easter story.

Ollie Greenfield, All Saints Young People and Families Worker, said: “In our most recent link up, Ben Jones from Missional Generation joined our youth gaming group to play Minecraft.

“Ben challenged us to build the story of Easter into a Minecraft world. Witnessing the pride our youth took in bringing the Bible, the Easter story, to life in Minecraft was so uplifting. They were able to engage with the Bible in a way they never have before, and I cannot wait to do this again.”

The diocesan showcase will be taking place on September 14 from 7pm until 8.30pm.

New disability resource pack produced

A new resource pack to help churches better support people with disabilities has recently been produced by the diocese and churches across the British Isles.

The resource pack, called ‘A Welcoming Church’, has been produced by the Diocese of Leeds in collaboration with Dublin and Glendalough Youth Officer Susie Keegan, and The Church of Ireland Youth Department.

It aims to help churches think about how they might better support people with different disabilities in the church environment.

Katherine-Alice Grasham, Diocesan Disability Officer, said: “We’re really hoping that this new resource will be a way to start parishes thinking about small changes that they can do to make a big difference to disabled people.

You can find the resource at www.awelcomingchurch.com.
The need for honest change

Bob Matthews
Assistant Warden of Readers, Ripon Area

As I look out from my garden, I can see glorious views across Wensleydale and Coverdale and thank God for the glorious dales in which I live. I can sit here and ignore the pandemic and the crisis which has swept across the world for the past eighteen months because it has passed me by. I can quote Psalm 91:

1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.[a]
2 I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”
3 Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence.
4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

I could be optimistic and say that in this area the level of vaccinations is high and the level of infections is low and soon we will be able to return to normal.

However I cannot ignore Jeremiah’s warning to Judah, in 6:14

14 They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious.
‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.

Covid 19 seems to have highlighted many weaknesses in our world and society which we have been ignoring for years and need attention, whether the underfunding of care-homes or pollution from package holidays and cruises.

The Church of England similarly exhibits such signs e.g. difficulties in paying parish share, or the age profile of many of our congregations. Seen from my pew rather than continue to ignore them or expect them to be sorted by others we all need to admit that all is not well and we should ask ourselves what is God’s view. I suggest that we who fill pews need to come in prayer and ask what changes we individually have to make.

Synod learns about Living in Love and Faith

Personal stories of modern Christian relationships featured in a special presentation on Living in Love and Faith given to the June meeting of Synod.

The Bishop of Ripon, the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, led the hour-long session on the Church of England’s invitation to all worshippers to consider questions of sexuality, gender and identity.

Backed by a book, courses and a library of more than 300 resources, Bishop Helen-Ann described how Living in Love and Faith (LLF) is a radical new approach. “The Bible has a lot to say about what it means to be human, but so do other disciplines therefore LLF takes a multidisciplinary approach (Bible, theology - but also sociology, biological sciences, history) which enriches our understanding.”

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