

## Bishop Nick urges Synod to oppose religious persecution

The Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, has told General Synod that “human dignity and flourishing is diminished” when religious believers and atheists are persecuted.

He also warned the Church of England’s decision-making body that it would be an “act of self-harm” only to speak up for persecuted Christians.

Speaking in a debate on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), Bishop Nick addressed many abuses including against Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China, atheists in Saudi Arabia, and Christians in Pakistan.

“If human rights mean anything, then the freedom to choose our religion or belief, the freedom to change our religion or belief and the freedom to have no religion or stated belief at all is a right we all have by virtue of being human,” Bishop Nick said.

He continued: “Violations are increasing and intensifying involving not just intolerance and exclusion but active

discrimination.

“In its ultimate form this can culminate in genocide, a



phenomenon that has sadly been seen with increasing frequency, whether that of Christians and Yazidis at the hands of Isis in Iraq, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar or Uighurs in China.

“In today’s interconnected age it is no longer possible to claim ignorance of these terrible events.

“To quote William Wilberforce: ‘You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know.’”

## Vaccination session held at Keighley church

Keighley Shared Church in the Bradford area has been doing its part in helping 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 including Project 6, the Good Shepherd Centre and the Salvation Army.



The Revd Natasha Thomas, Curate at Keighley Shared Church, said: “It was wonderful to make our space available for people to be vaccinated.”

# Prayerful hope for the future

## Bishop Tony Robinson

I live just 100 yards from Sandal Castle where the Battle of Wakefield took place in 1460 on 30th December. It was a very significant moment in the Battle of the Roses which resulted in the death of Richard, Duke of York. You may remember the nursery rhyme 'The Grand Old Duke of York...' which tells the story of the battle.

Each year for some time Christians in Wakefield have gathered early on Ascension Day at the castle for worship as we recalled what happened to Jesus.

Jesus's followers might understandably have reacted with dismay at him leaving them forty days after his Resurrection. Instead, they were filled with great joy. They had hope, hope based on all they had experienced with him and had been taught by him, culminating in his miraculous transportation out of their sight. When we celebrate the Ascension on Thursday, May 13, I encourage you to reflect on the nature of hope. Our current tribulation in the shape of the Coronavirus and the consequent lockdown challenges us to be patient and embrace change. As with all change, even if it springs from suffering, there is the potential



for new experience which can engender hope. Reduction in levels of pollution, healthier modes of getting about and signs of a more cohesive and caring community spirit are well publicised but small changes in our everyday lives are also indicative of hope. In my own experience, lockdown-related telephone conversations have led to a deepening of relationships and immediate neighbours are now looking out for each other as never before. We have more time for each other. So, let us look to the future with hope and thankfulness based on the good experiences from our present tribulation rather than dwelling on its losses and sorrows.

Ascension Day also marks the beginning of 'Thy Kingdom Come'. This is the sixth year where we are encouraged to pray with our fellow brothers and sisters around the world for more people to come to know Jesus. In Wakefield we are organising a 24/7 prayer chain. Please do consider joining us.

**+Tony  
Bishop of Wakefield**

# Support for Tanzania from the diocese

During these difficult times we still need to support our sisters and brothers in Christ around the world, something the Diocese of Leeds Tanzania Link Committee has been doing.

It manages our link with the dioceses of Mara, Rorya and Tarime in Tanzania, and has worked to improve awareness



of COVID-19 and promote preventative measures in churches and schools. Funds have been provided for buckets and soap so people can wash hands before entering churches for worship, and, most recently, the diocese has been able to fund some COVID-19 support training for clergy and diocesan staff in Tarime Diocese.

Bishop Tony Robinson, said: "We have feared for our brothers and sisters and want to help them to become more aware of the dangers of COVID-19 and try to take preventative measures."

# Our gratitude for Prince Philip's life of devoted service and prayers for the Queen

The passing of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was a time for both prayer and gratitude for a life of devoted service, said Bishop Nick Baines in a sombre reflection.

"The death of the Duke of Edinburgh brought great sadness, even though it was not entirely unexpected.

"He lived to a grand age and lived an extraordinary life in extraordinary times. But first, he was a husband, a father, a grandfather and a great-grandfather and it is the Queen and her family that we hold in our thoughts, and most particularly, in our prayers.

"I speak on behalf of the bishops and the parishes and clergy of the Diocese of Leeds as we continue to send our condolences and promise our prayers for all of the Royal Family, the nation and the Commonwealth, as we move from one age to another. The Duke had a remarkable life in which he devoted himself to public service. Putting himself second, he served his wife, the Queen, and we express our gratitude to him for the life he has lived on

behalf of the nation and the Commonwealth.

"So, we remember him with gratitude and we pray that he would rest in peace and rise in glory."



A prayer:

Lord God who has made us in your image, we thank you for the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, for his life and all he has given to his people.

We commend him to you in his death and pray for the Queen and the Royal Family as they grieve and mourn.

We commend him to your love and mercy in sure and certain hope of the resurrection 'til life eternal and we pray this in the name of Jesus.

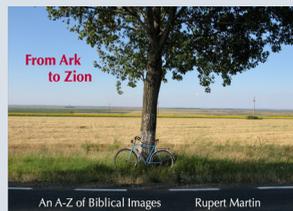
Amen

## "From Ark to Zion" explores Biblical images

One of our priests in the Wakefield area hopes to make looking through the Bible easier with a new book taking us through it from A to Z.

'From Ark to Zion' has been written by the Revd Rupert Martin, Vicar of Sandal Magna, and looks to share a treasure trove of Biblical images, symbols, metaphors and parables.

By focussing on how each image develops in different contexts, the book encourages us to read the Bible with our imaginations fully engaged.



The book, with design work by the Revd Bob Bailey, Vicar of Kippax, is illustrated with the author's photographs, and works of art which complement and enhance the verbal images.

Revd Rupert said: "I hope that the book will provide food for thought and spiritual nourishment, giving a fresh insight into the beauty and meaning of the Bible."

## Making time for ministry

**Kay Brown**  
Lay Chaplain, Abbey  
Grange CofE Academy



It has just been Vocations Sunday and I find myself reflecting on the ministry we all hold, what I like to call the ministry of availability.

As we emerge into the new reality of our (hopefully) post-pandemic world, the questions about how different things will be are part of the conversations we are having, whether real or virtual! What will we rush back to? What will we keep from our experiences of the past year? For many there seems a reluctance to pick up the busyness of former times. Some of us have got used to being able to talk to neighbours and share more than a cursory wave. Maybe we've had time to notice those who need a helping hand or to share conversation as we negotiate the challenges of our daily lives. In these simple actions we become available to those around us, those whom God places in our paths, those we might have been too busy to stop and talk to or even notice in the past.

In my day job as school chaplain in a large secondary school in Leeds, the busyness is all consuming at times and it is easy to be swept along on the constant wave of demands of timetables and emails. Yet I am learning (slowly!!) to be available to those I meet, whatever the context. This might lead to a conversation with a colleague who shares his experiences of migration; the chance to pray with a child worrying about an ill mother; finding a safe place for an overwhelmed young person to close their eyes and take the micronap that enables them to cope for the rest of the day or share a word of encouragement with someone who is fasting this Ramadan- my 'lunchtime' today.

I find the words of the Northumbria office helpful as I set out on my daily journey 'Be in the heart of each to whom I speak; in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.' May we seek to be available to those we meet and find God in the meeting.

## New blog will highlight daily life with disabilities

A new online space for people to share their experiences of daily life with disabilities



has been launched on the diocesan website. The new Disability Blog can be found here and is being run by Katherine-Alice Grasham, our Disability and Inclusion Officer.

"We're hoping it will be a place for disabled people to share their stories, and for people to share thoughts and wisdom with each other about disability inclusion, theology, and what it's like to live with a disability day to day," said Katherine-Alice, pictured.