Science and faith in debate as Brian Cox addresses 400 clergy

Two leading scientists with very different views on faith have taken part in a debate over science, the cosmos and human meaning at the first Diocese of Leeds clergy conference, held from September 6th-8th at Hope University, Liverpool.

Professors Brian Cox and Prof David Wilkinson debated their views of the cosmos in front of an audience of 400 clergy introducing them to such current cutting-edge theories as the multiverse, the horizon problem and inflationary cosmology.

Brian Cox, said he was delighted to address the conference because such encounters enrich society: “I’m really concerned about the polarisation of debate in this country, the lack of ability to accept there are other points of view. I think difference of opinion is to be celebrated - it’s indicative of a free society. We can find ways of accommodation and of celebrating our mutual love of nature.”

David Wilkinson, Principal of St. John’s College Durham, said, “The good thing about this conference is the endeavour to build confidence among clergy and show that science isn’t necessarily a threat to faith. Science is a gift from God.”

Bishop Nick Baines said afterwards “it was inspiring, educative - and sometimes mind-boggling.”

Hope and challenge

The Dean of Salisbury, Very Revd June Osborne, challenged the 400 clergy at the Hope 16 conference to be outward looking, boldly imaginative and humbly confident in a God. ‘Here is my challenge to you as the Diocese of Leeds’ she said. ‘Consider carefully what is going to be your approach to the missional agenda for it’s possible to inhabit a ministry which is fearful and narrow ... Mission, the transformation of reality, happens most effectively in the public square and if we withdraw into simply running the church we don’t leave the public square empty - we surrender it to secular instincts.’

Other speakers at the three day conference included the Bishop of Liverpool, Rt Revd Paul Bayes, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, Most Revd Malcolm McMahon and writer Catherine Fox who gave an after-dinner talk in the Victorian grandeur of Liverpool’s St George’s Hall, which was peppered with hilarious anecdotes and tales of bishops and cathedrals.
Can your church help asylum seekers this winter?

Churches are being invited to take part in a scheme to provide shelter for destitute asylum seekers in Leeds.

Last year, churches were among the different organisations who took it in turns to become a week-long night shelter for the homeless as part of a pilot scheme run by the West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network (WYDAN).

This winter, organisers are looking for churches with space for up to ten beds and volunteers who can provide a warm, safe and welcoming environment for the guests. The ‘shelter’ is delivered on a Monday morning and guests arrive at 6pm and leave at 8am every day for a week. Full training and support is provided.


Star Struck

Bishop Nick Baines

Two years ago, when our diocese began, we aimed to become “a vibrant diocese, equipping confident clergy to enable confident Christians to live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ in West Yorkshire and the Dales”. In fact, this describes what has always been the job of the church. Nothing new, nothing radical about it.

But, the generation of confidence is not easy. We know that if clergy are not confident (about God, the gospel, the church, their ministry), then it is unlikely they will inspire confidence in the people they serve.

Most of our clergy will have come back from the first Clergy Conference in Liverpool in early September with some renewed vision and confidence. Why? Well, it offered an opportunity for inspiring worship with 400 other people. Furthermore, it provided space for clergy to meet colleagues from across our large diocese over drinks, meals or in sessions. The programme - balancing space with input from speakers - was unbelievably stimulating. Reports can be read on the diocesan website.

Excellent Bible studies by the Anglican Bishop and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool rooted us in the Scriptures. The Dean of Salisbury turned us out to the world the church is called to serve. But, the heart of the conference lay in two sessions with astrophysicist and theologian Professor David Wilkinson and the physicist and cosmologist Professor Brian Cox. Addressing the theme of ‘Science, the Cosmos and Human Meaning’, they engaged in a conversation about the implications of what we are discovering about the universe. The science was a bit complicated! But, the serious and respectful engagement of both professors was a model of good public debate.

Christian faith looks in wonder at the stars, with its feet rooted firmly in the earth. Which isn’t a bad line to hold onto as we move into the future: loving God and our neighbour, living abundantly and curiously, learning more about God, the world and us as we go.

Nick
Bishop of Leeds
Plans go on view for flood ravaged church

HUDDERSFIELD Plans have gone on show to reshape a flood-ravaged church that was hit by last year’s Boxing Day floods.

The congregation of St Michael’s, Mytholmroyd, had to move out of church when the River Calder, the local canal and local beck all rose to cover the main road through the village and surrounding streets. Hundreds of homes and businesses were affected, local churches became a hub for help, and many businesses are still counting the cost.

Vicar, the Revd Cathy Reardon, said: “The flooding touched everyone...For us here at the church it was particularly hard. Usually a church can be the hub of a community, helping and providing warmth and shelter, but we were flooded out too,” she added.

Worship has been taking place at the cricket club and local Roman Catholic church. It is hoped the church can reopen later this year - plans are on view in the community room.

Church about the Dale tweets

RIPON Hundreds of prayers gathered at the Wensleydale Agricultural Show and the annual beach service at Semerwater have been have been sent out on Twitter, the social media tool, for hundreds of others to see.

More than 350 people visited the Church About the Dale trailer at the Wensleydale Show in late August and a further 50 arrived at Semerwater for the annual beach service there. For the first time, a centrepiece was the prayer tree for people to write their prayers.

Overnight rainfall meant local vicar, Revd Ian Robinson, had to roll up his trousers and lead the service in his bare feet. The Hawes Silver Band led the music as walkers, campers and members of the local congregations gathered for the annual service.

‘A Beautiful Life’

WAKEFIELD Three generations of one family came together for the launch of a memoir to celebrate the life of Rosemary Holmes, who died last year. ‘A Beautiful Life’ has been written by Rosemary’s husband, retired Diocesan Missioner, Canon John Holmes. Its publication was launched at an open Mothers’ Union meeting held at Wakefield Cathedral where John was based until his retirement in 2007. His memoir of his wife is described as a touching reflection of a life lived in light – a life loved and cherished. It chronicles Rosemary’s early upbringing, her love of dancing and walking, her and John’s life together and her faith and influence. Copies are on sale at Wakefield Cathedral.

West End singer

BRADFORD West End singer and actress, Tabitha Webb, will be bringing an evening of music to St John’s Great Horton this month, as part of a national tour promoting the work of charity, Interserve. The ‘Love Changes Everything’ concert on Saturday 8 October will include music from local students and an exhibition of art by pupils of St Oswald’s CoE Primary Academy, Bradford. Interserve works in 35 countries in Asia and the Middle-east, helping the homeless, the hungry, the trafficked, as well as those who are disabled or orphans.

Tickets: email office@stjohnsgreathorton.org.uk
Cricketing finalists, but a brave defeat for Leeds clergy team

It was a huge achievement to reach the final of the national Church Times Cricket Cup, but in the end the clergy team from the Diocese of Leeds were defeated by 9 wickets in their match against a more experienced Diocese of London team, cheered on by home supporters including the Bishop of London Richard Chartres.

Leeds captain, the Revd Phil Arnold (Vicar of St Wilfrid’s in Calverley), and his team travelled to the Walker Cricket Ground, Southgate direct from the diocesan Clergy Conference in Liverpool and despite the 200 mile journey they got off to a strong start. The opening batsmen reached 103 without loss but after lunch came the collapse and the northern team were all out for 167.

Set 168 to win off 40 overs the Diocese of London overhauled the total in 29 overs with the loss of just 1 wicket.

Afterwards it was time for commiserations. “After a great start by Dan Tyler and Heston Groenewald putting on 100 for no loss we couldn’t maintain the momentum, “said captain, Phil Arnold. But, he added, “It was a great day and we hope the first of many.”

For the Diocese of London clergy it was the fourth victory in a row in the annual Church Times tournament. But the Leeds team can look back on victories against Chester, Carlisle and Lincoln - and they hope to build on the experience next year.

Celebrate Church Growth

There is still time to join in the C5 celebrations taking place in each Episcopal area to celebrate Church Growth. While the Huddersfield area celebration has been postponed, and Bradford Cathedral’s celebration was scheduled for September 24 at 7.30pm, there is more to come.

On Saturday October 1 at 10am, Ripon Cathedral will host its C5 event with Bishop James. In Leeds, the C5 celebration takes place in Leeds Minster at 4.30pm on Saturday October 8.

The final event will be held in Wakefield Cathedral on Tuesday November 1 at 7.30pm when Bishop Tony will launch the Community of all Saints.

The C5 celebrations are co-ordinated by the Bishop’s Adviser on Church Growth, Revd Robin Gamble, who will co-host each of the events.