Your vote counts – General Election, May 7

Churches take the lead, organising hustings across the diocese

Scores of hustings and question-time events are being hosted by churches across the diocese in the run-up to this year’s General Election on May 7. In what is said to be the most closely fought election in modern times, churches in our 28 constituencies have taken the lead, many in response to the House of Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, Who is my Neighbour, which urges Christians to use their vote and become politically engaged.

Interest in the House of Bishop’s Letter, meant that last month All Saints Ilkley was packed for a public forum on the letter. Taking part were Bishop Nick, Ann Cryer (former MP for Keighley) and Professor Arthur Francis (former Dean of Bradford University School of Management). Bishop Nick told the meeting, “In the context of massive political apathy, we wanted to find a non-party-political way of encouraging people to take seriously their responsibility as citizens in a complex society.”

For further hustings leading up to the election visit www.westyorkshiredales.anglican.org/content/general-election-2015.

Lottery and budget windfall for churches

Seven churches have shared in a windfall of almost £1m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, while twelve churches have benefitted to the tune of between £10k and £100k from the Roof Repair Fund announced in the Budget. Lottery grants go to St Mary’s Church, Middleton, Leeds, which received £115,400 for vital structural work. The 12th century St Wilfrid’s Church, Calverley is awarded £39,100 for a heritage project focussed on its tower. In the Huddersfield Area, St John the Baptist, Coley near Halifax is awarded £170,500 and St Thomas’s Church Huddersfield, gets £244,500 for a new roof. Thornhill Parish Church, Dewsbury was granted £61,900 to restore its organ, and the Friends of St Matthew’s Churchyard, Lightcliffe, have been granted £14,700. And in the Ripon Area, the ancient St Michael’s Church Well, near Bedale (pictured), is to receive is a grant of £124,400 for vital repairs. The present church building was built around 1330 on Saxon foundations. For the full list see www.westyorkshiredales.anglican.org
There are a lot of people who do not know how to live without excitement, without stimulation. Whether it comes from pleasure or from crisis, they thrive on activity, on doing things, on solving problems, on adrenaline.

Even people who are not adrenaline junkies find it difficult sometimes, difficult to face a period of time in which not much is happening, a period of time in which they must wait for a promise to be fulfilled, for an event that they are looking forward to take place.

Ascension Day reminds us that the disciples found themselves in this kind of situation. Jesus told them that they should go back to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The power they would need to witness to him there, and in Judea and all of Samaria, and ultimately in all the world.

For many, waiting is a dreadful thing. Just ask any child but it doesn’t have to be like this. Living between times, living between occasions in which all of our minds and hearts and energy are absorbed in affairs of significance can, in fact, be quite wonderful. It can be for us, a pause that refreshes. A time in which we gain strength and in which we quietly grow and are prepared for that which will come next.

But living in the times between, in those times between one phase of our lives and the next can be difficult for us if we do not know how to wait in the manner recommended by the word of God.

In this Diocese we are living between times! Between three familiar dioceses and how we used to do everything and a new diocese which is only just beginning to take shape with new ways and practices. We need to trust and have confidence that what has been promised to us by God will come to pass. We need the confidence not because it will change the outcome but because when we have it we open ourselves up to the peace of God and other blessings that God has for us – right now – now in the time between all those other promises and the time of their fulfilment.

+Tony
Bishop of Wakefield

Hundreds of clergy and lay people gathered in Wakefield Cathedral on Maundy Thursday to renew their vows and commitment to God, the first time such a service has taken place since the diocese began a year ago. The Chrism Eucharist was led by Bishop Nick, who preaching from from 2 Corinthians, said that ministry flows from discipleship.

“We may be joyful in the calling that God has given to us, but there are times when we wish he had called someone else. There are times when we wish we could be somewhere else... But the truth is God calls us to where we are, knowing who you are, and saying ‘Get on with it!’.”
Bishop Jonathan Gibbs took faith to the pub last month as part of a new initiative to reach out to the community. Bishop Jonathan, a card carrying member of CAMRA, was in the Waggon and Horses at Meltham for the first AleTalk – an initiative set up by local Christians.

A new covenant setting out the principles which will strengthen the relationship between Leeds City Council and faith groups has been officially signed this week. The Faith Covenant will focus on ensuring the council and faith groups share learning opportunities, provide clarity around the availability of support and funding from the council and ensure the faith groups take part fully in city wide and local community consultations. Pictured are (left to right) Leeds City Council deputy leader Cllr Peter Gruen, chair of Leeds Faiths Forum, the Canon Charles Dobbin and national executive director of Faith Action Daniel Singleton.

‘Make everyone’s life FAIR!’ was the caption on one of the winning posters for the ‘Think Chocolate! Fairtrade Poster’ competition. More than 1500 entries were sent in from across the length and breadth of the diocese.

Sophie Armitage, age 13 from the youth group at St John’s Church Ben Rhydding won first prize in the Secondary Section with a decorative poster enticing us to eat Fairtrade chocolate. She is pictured with her prize and Peter Willox, Vicar of Ben Rhydding drinking a cup of Ethiopian Sidamo Fairtrade ground coffee.

Charlotte Rutter, age 11 from Croft CE Primary School near Darlington, in the north-east of the diocese, won first prize in the Pre-School and Primary Section with her poster emphasising that buying Fairtrade chocolate makes “everyone’s life FAIR!”. Cat Chadwick of St Thomas’ Church, Batley, won first prize in the Adult Section.

The Revd Ruth Hind (pictured left) has been announced as Ripon Cathedral’s first ‘Canon Evangelist’. She will take up her post early in the summer. Ruth, 43, has two daughters and is currently Rector of the parishes of Kirklington, Burneston, Wath and Pickhill and Assistant Area Dean of the Wensleydale Deanery. She sits on General Synod.

1500 entries to diocese-wide Fairtrade poster competition
Synod adopts ‘innovative’ governance proposals

Diocesan Synod met for the second time at the end of March (at St. Aidan’s High School Harrogate) and revised proposals for a new slim-line system of diocesan governance were adopted unanimously. Central to the running of the diocese will be a single main board which will address strategy and policy and will be accountable to the Synod. Members heard that the aim would be to ensure that those who make policy decisions also take responsibility for financing them as well as reducing bureaucracy.

Area Bishops will work with people in their areas to support local communities and develop the mission of the Church on the ground. Synod members will be members of the new Diocesan Board of Finance Company and will also form scrutiny groups to explore diocesan activities.

In his Presidential Address, Bishop Nick said that aim of setting up a new system of governance was so that “our energies and resources get directed to prayer, evangelism, nurture, teaching and worship, and don’t exhaust us all in too much bureaucracy or administration”.

Sanctions on benefit claimants

At the diocesan synod in July, a motion will be put forward concerning the impact that sanctions are having on benefit claimants. Canon Gordon Dey asked members to prepare by reading ‘Feeding Britain’ - an all-party parliamentary enquiry into hunger and food poverty - and he urged parishes and deaneries to discuss the issue at PCCs and Deanery Synods.

Diocesan Secretaries

It was announced that Debbie Child and Ashley Ellis have now been appointed as Joint Diocesan Secretaries.

In a small but significant change, Bishops James Bell and Tony Robinson (pictured left) will now, by royal assent, be titles Bishop of Ripon and Bishop of Wakefield, respectively. “At last, all our bishops have their right titles and another piece in our transformation jigsaw is in place,” said Bishop Nick.

Thanks to Peter Mojsa

Bishop Nick paid tribute to Peter Mojsa for his 23 years of service to both the Diocese of Ripon & Leeds (mostly as Deputy Diocesan Secretary) and the Diocese of West Yorkshire & the Dales (as Synodical and Administrative Secretary), as he moves on to work with the All Churches Trust.