

Benefit sanctions inquiry call from WYAD receive national backing

Unanimous General Synod support for motion

A motion on the impact of sanctions on benefit claimants which originated in the Airedale



Deanery, and was then debated and approved by the West Yorkshire and the Dales Diocesan Synod, has been given full national support by General Synod meeting last month in London.

Synod members from across the country unanimously backed the WYAD call for the Government to fully implement the recommendations of the All Party Inquiry report into hunger in the UK – the ‘Feeding Britain’ report. They also agreed to call for a full independent review of the impact of benefit changes. Leading the debate, **the Revd Canon Kathryn Fitzsimons (pictured above)**, Priest in Charge of the Epiphany Church, Gipton, Leeds, said, “We are questioning

recent substantial increases in the severity of the sanctioning process and in the frequency of sanctions being applied. ‘Does the sanction fit the crime?’ is a key question. We are concerned about the disproportionality of the measures currently being applied.” She went on to describe changes to the process including being late for a job centre interview which leads to an immediate loss of benefit for at least four weeks.

Milly Holmes (pictured below) gave examples from her work with the Lighthouse, a fresh



expression of church working with St George’s Crypt. She was given warm applause as she quoted words from Isaiah “... to remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free.”

Blood donation challenge goes national

A second motion from the diocese has also been given national backing. General Synod supported a call from West Yorkshire and the Dales for all 16,000 CofE churches to encourage parishoners to become blood donors and register as organ donors.

The WYAD motion was introduced by the Revd Paul Cartwright, a priest in Barnsley, who said he had seen lives transformed by organ donation while working as a police family liaison officer supporting families of those seriously injured or killed in road traffic collisions.

He said own life was saved by donated blood products when he was diagnosed with acute leukaemia in 2008.

“For my wife and two children, as well as my extended family, the kindness of people donating blood and blood products has meant that I have so far been able to spend seven extra years with them,” he told Synod.

The motion originated in Allerton Deanery and was backed by the WYAD Diocesan Synod before being sent on for national debate.

“They were afraid”

Bishop James Bell

So ends Mark’s account of the Good News of Jesus Christ! It is the reason given for the response of the women to the empty tomb and the message of the young man telling them that Jesus was not there but was going ahead of his disciples to Galilee. “They went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

What they had been told was incredible; what they had experienced was impossible. How could they tell anyone that Jesus was not in the tomb? How could they tell anyone that Jesus was going ahead of them? Terror, amazement, silence, fear: if we cannot feel what it was like, perhaps we can try to imagine. And then we can begin to grasp the awesome truth that violence, persecution, destruction, death do not have the last word. The resurrection tells us that the cross was in fact a victory. Alan Lewis comments: “The Lord of life triumphs over death, the inimical opposite of life, not by cancelling out the adversary, but by succumbing to the victory of all that God opposes.”



This is the frightening event that takes away our fears of violence, destruction and death; this is the impossible occurrence that gives birth to an irrepressible hope of the reign of God.

So what does it look like to be the people of the cross and resurrection? If we can catch the fear of the women in the face of the empty tomb and the promise that Jesus will meet us, then we can cease to fear everything else, cease to fear the loss of everything, cease to fear for the future of the church and instead grow in the confidence that God cannot be defeated, the hope that life will be restored. And we can also give thanks for our sisters and brothers who even today witness to the resurrection in the face of violence, persecution and even death, and celebrate their victory, like that of Christ.

**+James
Bishop of Ripon**

Archbishop’s Intervention

BRADFORD Two Sudanese bishops who have been visiting the diocese would never have made it here without the intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

When visas were refused for Bishop Abdu Al-Nur Kodi and Bishop Hassan James, Lambeth Palace stepped in



and persuaded the Home Office that their visit to the UK should go ahead. The two bishops visited churches and met supporters in the Bradford and Ripon Areas. They experienced falling snow for the first time in their lives, but have now returned to the heat of Sudan accompanied by a visiting group from the diocese, including the Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth.

Bishop Hassan (pictured), the assistant Bishop of Kadugli, worked with livestock as a young man, and met farmers in the Craven area.

Festival Makers recruited for Ripon Cathedral Revealed

RIPON Volunteers from across the diocese have been recruited as Festival Makers for an ambitious five-day event taking place at Ripon Cathedral from 28 April – 2 May this year. *Ripon Cathedral Revealed* is described as

a ‘fantastic festival of flowers, music, spirituality, food and drink’ celebrating the life of the Cathedral and showcasing the work and preparation that goes on behind the scenes. Events will include the well-



established Bank Holiday Monday Beer Festival on May 2, a Flower and Jazz Preview evening (Apr 28), musical events, a food festival, children’s activities, a carousel, opportunities to play the organ or tour the Bell Tower, history lectures, a Festival Songs of Praise, together with displays and workshops.

Tickets for the festival are available from www.riponcathedral.info/revealed/

Bishop becomes elderly care ‘ambassador’

WAKEFIELD The Bishop of Wakefield, Tony Robinson, has become Pinderfield Hospital’s first-ever elderly care ambassador. The idea to create elderly care ambassadors came from Lead Dementia nurse, Anita Ruckledge MBE. “It is wonderful that the public support children’s wards, but that compassion doesn’t always extend to the elderly,” said



Anita. “Yet they are just as vulnerable and are less likely to be surrounded by visitors and family.”

David Melia, Acting Chief Nurse at The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust said: “We believe that

Bishop Tony and all of the ambassadors we recruit over the next few months will spread a message of hope.”

Harold Wilson centenary

HUDDERSFIELD Huddersfield has been celebrating the centenary of its most famous son, Harold Wilson.

The Bishop of Huddersfield, Jonathan Gibbs, was invited to preach at a special choral evensong to mark the centenary of Harold Wilson’s birth (11 March 1916) at Huddersfield Parish Church. Each year the former Prime Minister’s birth is also celebrated with the Harold Wilson Lecture which is jointly run by the University of Huddersfield and the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, in partnership with the Huddersfield Literature Festival.

New look Otley church

LEEDS A champagne fountain, a brace of bishops and Handel’s Zadok the Priest were just some of the highlights of a special weekend marking the completion of the £600,000 refurbishment of Otley Parish Church at the end of February. Associate Priest, the Revd Paul Walker, said, “Hundreds of people participated in two days of hospitality, worship and celebration. A constant stream of people came to view stalls and prayer stations and simply to gaze in wonder at the transformation that has taken place.”

Ex-addicts and homeless from Halifax Fresh Expression star in national CofE prayer campaign

Men and women who found faith at a homeless centre in Halifax have been featured in a series of short dramatic films for Lent and Easter



The first short film featured **Emma, 24, (pictured)** who came to faith a year ago and still struggles

with questions and doubt. In a podcast interview accompanying the film Emma says: "Having faith is really hard. It's not easy to pray when you think no one is listening, it's not easy to wake up knowing you're going to go through the same stuff every single day.

launched by the Church of England. The five people who star in the films have all recently come to faith through the 'Saturday Gathering', a fresh expression of church in the town - and most have experienced crime, alcohol, drug addiction, homelessness or violence in their lives.

The "Psalm 22 project" follows on from the Church of England's "Lord's Prayer" campaign which was banned by cinemas before Christmas and promotes the justpray.uk website. The new justpray.uk campaign has featured short teaser films and concludes with a two minute film, launched on Easter Sunday which casts the five main characters in their own interpretation of a scene from the Passion of Christ. The film is

based on Psalm 22 which includes the words "my God, my God why have you forsaken me?" spoken by Christ on the cross.

with questions and doubt. In a podcast interview accompanying the film Emma says: "Having faith is really hard. It's not easy to pray when you think no one is listening, it's not easy to wake up knowing you're going to go through the same stuff every single day.

"Without God, I'd still be drinking, taking drugs. I don't even know if I'd be here, because I was a self harmer, I would have probably taken my own life at some point."

Another of the films features **Howard, 40, (pictured right)**

who after eight months clean of drugs, alcohol and crime, got baptized and immediately used drugs again. His story is a battle between walking in faith and having doubts but he says that his faith has kept him alive: "Where would I be without faith? I'd be dead a long time ago I believe. Yeah, I'd be dead. Not just spiritually but probably physically dead in a box somewhere. Faith's everything to me. It keeps me going, it gives me hope."

To watch the films and read the stories behind them, go to www.justpray.uk



West Yorkshire & the Dales News

The interim editions are being distributed to churches across the diocese. A new publication for the whole diocese is being planned for the near future. © Diocese of Leeds, 2016