

Diocesan News

March 2025

Diocese of Leeds launches Compass tool



The Diocese of Leeds is pleased to be launching Compass, our tool for helping parishes talk about their next steps in mission.

Compass is a process that churches can do over a few hours to come up with a simple plan to do something different or new.

Compass doesn't just adopt a one size fits all approach, but builds on the strengths, weaknesses and unique challenges a church might face to help them make a plan that is possible.

It also connects those plans and ideas up with support that the diocese and our partners elsewhere can offer.

The Revd Canon Jude Smith, Director of Mission and Revitalisation, said: "We have been working on Compass over the last few months, and I am

pleased that we can now offer it widely in the diocese.

"Compass is a tool that can help churches identify their strengths and their challenges, and how they might move forward in mission.

"It is based around what we can do, rather than what we can't - it focuses on finding one or two next steps."

Compass is designed to be done by groups of four or more people who know what goes on in the life of their church, with one person facilitating the work.

It can be run to look at what goes on across the whole church, or to focus on specific areas of ministry in larger churches, which could be brought together into a Mission Action Plan.

Compass can be run at any time, and the process can be a good opportunity for churches in vacancy to think through what they are already doing, if there is anything that should stop or what they may want to do in preparation for a new priest.

Dean Simon to retire from Wakefield Cathedral in July



The Dean of Wakefield, the Very Revd Simon Cowling, has announced in Wakefield Cathedral that he will be retiring on Thursday, July 31 this year.

Dean Simon took up his post in September 2018, having previously served in parish and cathedral ministry in Leeds, Sheffield and North Yorkshire.

Reflecting on his time in Wakefield, Dean Simon said: "It has been a huge privilege to serve as Dean of this wonderful cathedral, to support Bishop Nick in his leadership of this young and unique diocese, and to work with so many people both within and beyond the Church for the common good of our city, diocese and region.

"I will miss Wakefield Cathedral and my colleagues here very much, but I am confident for its future under God."

What are you giving up?

Archdeacon Cat

This week is the first full week of Lent, a time when many people choose to give something up or stop doing something. For some people – including some who aren't regular churchgoers – it can almost be a kind of second opportunity for those New Year's Resolutions. I'm going to stop eating chocolate, or avoid alcohol or caffeine, or try to become vegetarian, or even quit smoking. The difference between now and January is that in Lent you have the promise that on Easter Sunday you can come back to the thing you've been avoiding – unless in the six week period you really have managed to break the habit!

The theological idea behind giving things up is, of course, that Lent is a time of discipline, when we examine our lives and consider how we can become more Christ-like, perhaps removing those things which can become distractions from our discipleship.

But the Christ we serve is a Christ of abundance and blessing. "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Or, in the Message translation, "I came so they can have real



and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of".

So I wonder if a different way of looking at our journey through Lent is, instead of deciding what to give up, considering what we can do towards ourselves and others having that more and better life?

Of course, if smoking or alcohol is an issue for us, then giving up may well be a key part of that. But, just maybe, Lent could be about adding something in or taking something up. Perhaps that could be about taking up a new hobby that we've been meaning to get stuck into, or getting out and walking in the countryside or a park. Perhaps you could commit to a regular contribution towards a foodbank or a charity. Perhaps it could be as simple as making time to read your Bible and pray on a daily basis.

So I'm committing to playing my piano every day during Lent, to try and re-discover some of the proficiency I used to have. And I'm not going to give up chocolate!

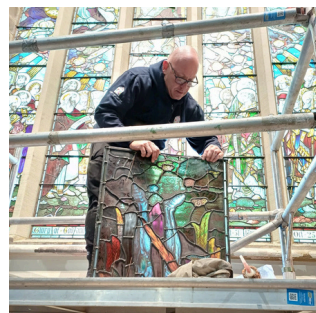
St Stephen's West Bowling shine God's light through their stained glass windows

St Stephen's West Bowling have been able to restore their stained glass windows, thanks in part to a grant from the diocese.

The church's west window has been telling the story of Jesus to churchgoers for centuries, and will continue to do so into the future thanks to a restoration project that was successfully completed late in 2024.

All of the windows are now lit with LEDs, so they are visible at night and from outside the building, and as part of the project videos have been created to explain the Bible stories shown in the windows, which are accessible on the St Stephen's website or by scanning QR codes inside and outside the church.

The project was supported by some £4000 from the diocese's Grants for Church Buildings scheme, with money from two of our funds, the Diocesan Church Buildings Grant Scheme as well as Buildings for Mission Minor Repairs and Improvements.



Team Leeds contribute to packed agenda at General Synod



Representatives from the Diocese of Leeds took part in a range of debates at the most recent General Synod.

Held in London from Monday, February 10, to Friday, February 14, General Synod dealt with a packed agenda, covering items including racial justice, supporting working class vocations, approving the new Clergy Conduct Measure, supporting sports and wellbeing ministries, new governance for the national church institutions, promoting young adults' voices in church decision making, and changes to processes around the Crown Nominations Commission.

Of the Synod, the Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, said: "This Synod covered debates on a range of issues, some of national importance.

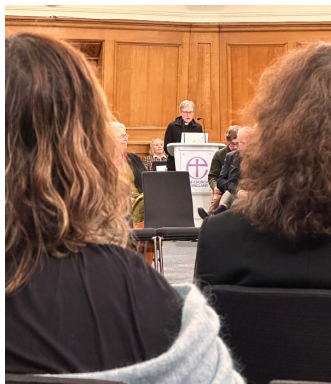
"The media agenda was challenging and sometimes difficult to navigate.

Members of the Synod from the Diocese of Leeds engaged fully, wisely and intelligently with a number of agenda items.



"Their voices were heard and I am pleased with our contribution as a diocese to these national agenda issues."

One of the main items at Synod focused on the future of safeguarding in the Church of England, and after a spirited debate Synod approved a motion which included setting up an external scrutiny body; transferring most functions currently delivered by the National Safeguarding Team (NST) to an external employer; agreeing to further work to determine the legal and practical requirements necessary to implement the transfer of safeguarding teams in dioceses and cathedrals to the same external employer as the NST; and lamenting and repenting of the failure of the Church to be welcoming to victims and survivors and the harm they have experienced and continue to experience.



From Leeds, our representatives on General Synod made contributions to the full range of debates.

New Relaxed Church congregation in Harrogate supported by Barnabas



One of our Harrogate area churches has been able to support people with diverse needs with a new congregation, thanks in part to a grant from the diocese.

One of the ways that the Barnabas programme has been able to help churches is by offering small grants of £500 to make it easier to start a new congregation.

Kairos Church in Harrogate recognised that gathered worship, with all its vibrancy and noise, was too overwhelming for some of their families with diverse needs.

Aided and encouraged by a £500 grant from Barnabas, some volunteers within the church set up 'Relaxed Church'.

This gathering is a creative, child-led expression of church using interactive activity stations enabling everyone to connect with God at their own pace.

Over the last few months Relaxed Church has become an important part of the church's family worship.

What's the Church of England about?

Canon Jane Evans
General Synod Member

What do you think the Church of England is really all about at the moment? It might be the need to become a safer church. Perhaps, it's the difficult task of finding a united way forward on same-sex relationships, blessings, marriage. Maybe, the task of choosing a new Archbishop of Canterbury. Or, if you've read some of the coverage following the last General Synod, you might think the main issue is whether or not we can receive gluten-free bread and non-alcoholic wine at communion.

Someone asked me about that one, wanting to know why church leaders had spent a "whole day" debating this matter. I was able to explain that it was a question posed to church leaders, answered, and then the answer corrected. We certainly are allowed to receive (almost) gluten-free wafers and (almost) no-alcohol wine – and it took no more than a few minutes to clarify that. Praise God!

Some of the good and important things that are debated at General Synod



regularly get overshadowed by the big-ticket stuff. Last time, for example, we discussed how to bring younger voices into our debates, discussions and decisions. We considered how to make ordination and other lay and ordained ministry pathways more accessible for working class people. We looked at the potential for ministry in sports and wellbeing situations. We backed the continued striving for racial justice in our church.

But for me, one of the most powerful sessions was held outside the main meeting, when some of us attended a prayer vigil for peace in the Middle East. No fuss, no media coverage, no conflicting views. Just a group of people coming together to pray for peace and to express support for our fellow human beings. The church looking outward, and praying for the world.

I think that's what the Church of England is all about.

A plan for a song to celebrate women's ministry seeks funding



A crowd-funded project to commission a song to celebrate women priests in the Church of England has been launched in our diocese.

Revd Catherine Shelley of St Mary's Todmorden is one of our Diocesan Advisers on Women's Ministry and said the initiative would mark 30 years of women's ordination and ten years of women bishops.

"We want to commission O' Hooley and Tidow, a Yorkshire-based folk band of Gentleman Jack fame, to write a song celebrating some of the first women to be ordained," Revd Catherine said.

The project is supported by NADAWM, the National Association of Diocesan Advisers for Women's Ministry and friends, CofE members and wider communities, across the UK and beyond.

The Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon praised the idea: "The idea of retelling the stories through song, of some of the first women ordained in 1994, is absolutely brilliant!"