

Diocesan News

November 2024

Listen, learn and debate, is the invitation to all our Synod members



Diocesan Synod members listened and learned together at their first meeting of the new triennium held at Holy Trinity, Boar Lane, Leeds last month.

Topics included work towards becoming net zero, being a diocese that supports Fairtrade, our diocesan budget for 2025, engagement with Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence and more.

It began with a Eucharist, allowing members to worship and pray together before the day's business.

Bishop Nick especially welcomed newcomers to Synod. He urged everyone to be faithful in their approach to the real life matters that would be discussed, and to heed the words of others, while always being ready to ask questions and voice opinions.

The first motion came from the Pontefract Deanery, calling on the Church Commissioners to release funds in the next triennium of General Synod to support all parishes in the installing of net zero carbon infrastructure.

After an engaging debate, the motion was referred back to Pontefract, with a view to it returning to a future Diocesan Synod.

Revd Jude Smith, Director of Church Revitalisation, gave an update on how parishes have been engaging with our Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence programme and how over 45% of our parishes have already engaged with the work of Barnabas.

Synod strongly reaffirmed our diocesan commitment to Fairtrade, passing a motion that all in the diocese are further encouraged to engage with Fairtrade in support of justice for all.

Members also voted to approve the diocesan budget for 2025.

Archbishop Stephen launches Lord's Prayer project for the North



The Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell will teach the Lord's Prayer across the North of England throughout 2025, a priority of his vision for Faith in the North.

Working alongside others Archbishop Stephen is encouraging prayer, storytelling and church planting inspired by the Northern Saints such as Hild, Cuthbert, Bede and Paulinus.

Archbishop Stephen said: "In less than 70 words, Jesus gives us a prayer to learn by heart and a prayer that gets inside our hearts, shaping the way we live. The Lord's Prayer surely is the best place to start. It is said in just about every church service, from the coronation of the King to the christening of a child.

"It teaches us how to pray. But it also teaches us how to live".

Parish ministry is based on love and trust

Revd June Cockburn

It was with exhilaration and trepidation that I stepped into the role of Vicar of Beeston in January this year.

The privilege and responsibility of this sacred calling weighs heavily on me.

At times it can be quite overwhelming, however, I am blessed to be ministering in a diocese where diversity and inclusion are very much present; and here in Beeston I have found a reassuring openness and a warm welcome.

I was so worried that my sermons might sink, that the primary school teacher in me spent hours putting together pristine PowerPoints to support them. One Sunday the screens failed, so I had to adjust what I was going to say: no notes; no slides.

It was then I truly understood that whilst crafted sermons with 'whizzy-bang' PowerPoints are great, your congregation often just wants to connect with you and there are few better ways to do that than through story.

It's all well and good to bring new ideas, but unless the congregation get to know you and trust you, there can be a reticence in gaining co-operation. After all, most of them have been there a long time, holding the fort.



When you – not just the new vicar, but the *newbie* vicar bursts onto the scene – just like Joshua, what they are wordlessly asking is “Are you for us or against us?”

Like the angel you must be able to answer just as wordlessly (i.e. through your care and ministry) that you are there as the commander of the Lord’s army: then equally wordlessly, we can together fall facedown to the ground in reverence, there to build and to add to the Kingdom of God. (Joshua 5:13-14).

This takes patience, encouragement and more than anything an ability to love: and it’s impossible to love this way with just your own strength.

I am learning to adapt – laying down my plans, noble though they might be, to embrace what God is saying through the circumstances and situations I find in front of me, and asking “What message does my Lord have for his servant.”

So, even though as the weeks, months and years roll by and I become seasoned through experience, I must never be too proud or too embarrassed to say, or lose sight of the fact that “I’m new to this”.

13 people confirmed at new inner city worshipping group

13 members of The Feast, a new worshipping community built around a shared meal in Searcroft, Leeds have been confirmed by the Rt Revd Arun Arora, Bishop of Kirkstall.

The Feast meets every Tuesday in Searcroft Parish and includes a meal shared together. It reaches some of the poorest families in the community and has been supported by a grant from the diocesan initiative Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence.

One candidate, following years of addiction, said: “The church is my safe place now where I can help volunteer at our cafe and through the week. I like to keep busy and praying with the vicar has helped me get through the darkest times.”

Revd Canon Anne Russell, Team Rector of the Parish of Searcroft explained the launch of the new worshipping group: ‘There’s a great hunger for the good news of Jesus in our poorest communities. The Feast centres around a shared hot meal with activities through which we believe Jesus becomes alive and relevant to all who come.’



Prize piece of medieval Christian heritage is shared for all to see



A prized fragment of the Croft Cross, is now on display at the Yorkshire Museum, thanks to the churchwardens of St Peter's Church, Croft-on-Tees in the north of our diocese.

The base piece of the medieval standing cross is a beautiful example of elaborate and skilled stone carving and religious expression from the late 8th Century and is now for all to see at the popular York centre museum.

Andrew Woods, Senior Curator at the Yorkshire Museum, said:

"The Croft-on-Tees cross shaft is an exquisite example of the labour of skilled artisans who were influenced by the spread of Christianity across the north of England during the 8th Century."

The Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon added: "The Diocese of Leeds is delighted that this treasure from the parish church at Croft-on-Tees is to be on display in one of Yorkshire's premier Museums.

"The Croft Cross, with its intricate carving and ancient symbolism, is a tangible connection to the region's early Christian history kept safe for all these years in a church which is still active in serving local people in the present day."

The Croft-on-Tees cross shaft is a significant archaeological and religious object as it displays motifs of vines, birds and beasts. This iconography is both of international and local significance. Thought to be quarried from Tadcaster stone, the cross is a high-quality piece of northern heritage, a symbol of social and religious transformation.

Pam Dunn, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council said, "St Peter's Church attracts a lot of visitors who take a keen interest in its history.

"The Saxon Cross Shaft (of which a replica is displayed in the church) is a prominent feature of these guided tours.

"We are proud of our heritage and pleased that the original is now on display in the Yorkshire Museum where more people can view it and it can be preserved for future generations."



Generous church celebrates God's gifts at harvest



St Mary's Swillington celebrated harvest by thinking about God's generosity in its many forms.

The church reflected on God's gifts to us by preparing harvest gifts for a local community pantry, and by relaunching the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS).

The familiar hymns of 'Come ye thankful people come' and 'We plough the fields and scatter' were sung, and the church also enjoyed a rendition of 'Our God is a great big God', including all the actions.

For the prayers, the church's children gave out mustard seeds, showing how something so seemingly small, weak and insignificant can grow into something big and mighty.

The Revd Sarah Harrison, Team Vicar in the benefice, said: "This helped congregation members to think about how the kingdom of God is like a tiny seed - when we look at it, we see smallness, weakness and insignificance but God sees potential, growth and significance in our churches and in our own lives."

Please contact the diocesan Stewardship Team to learn more about the Parish Giving Scheme.

The ways people come to worship

Revd Marianne Clough, Curate at St James Bradford and at Sorted



What brings someone to Christ, to church and what helps them stay?

How would you answer regarding your own journey with Him?

I'm fascinated what we communicate to people, in our words and actions, and how it's received. What motivates people to give God a go?

I asked some newcomers at our church what attracted them and what's made them stay. A man who comes along with his wife and little girl, told me that in response to all the turmoil in the world, they needed some joy.

That joy is evident as the congregation worships and together they are discovering the goodness of God is available for their family too.

Another newbie, a woman, saw a Facebook reel about an Ash Wednesday service. This particular service synched with her work schedule and so she found the courage and went. The worship leader said: "Please stand if you are able." As someone with chronic migraines, this really chimed

with her, as her seated worship was declared equally valid. She has since been baptised. The third newcomer came because of a parade service with cubs and scouts. He was surprised by the easy-going atmosphere and how no one blinked when the children weren't quiet.

After many years of absence from church, he felt God drawing him back in. He has felt loved and accepted and his trust is being restored. What do we learn from these stories?

For me, I learn that as a community we can prayerfully try to get our publicity right, to take time to connect and welcome people and be accepting. However, in every situation, the Holy Spirit has been at the heart of drawing people in and helping them find courage to discover more. Some plant, some water but God himself makes it grow, says 1 Cor 3: 6-9. What a joy to find ourselves in a team with the Lord of the harvest.

Now, call me greedy, but I'm praying for more.

Nice day for a warm wedding - thanks to eco-friendly heating



Wedding guests at St Mary's, Emsay had a warm, green welcome recently, thanks to a newly installed eco-friendly heating system that was switched on for the first time.

The old gas boiler had been turned off and the new Zero Carbon system of underfloor heating and wall mounted FAR infra-red units worked wonderfully, said Revd Canon Marion Russell.

"On its very first use for a wedding, the guests asked for part of the heating to be turned off as it was becoming too warm!" Revd Marion said. "This gives us assurance of the effectiveness for cold weather ahead."

Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretary Lisa McIntyre offered her congratulations: "It's been a pleasure supporting people who have been so enthusiastic in their environmental mission – both in seeking advice from the DAC and their architect throughout and in sharing their learning with other churches with similar ambitions."