

Christian links strengthened during trip to Sri Lanka

Friendships forged, Christian links strengthened and inspiring mission marked an overseas visit to the link dioceses of Sri Lanka.

The Church of Ceylon, made up of the dioceses of Colombo and Kuranagala in Sri Lanka, is one of several partnerships that the Diocese of Leeds has with other countries.



A team of clergy and laity spent twelve days travelling across the island learning about missional projects set up by the church to help those in need, provide education and share the Good News of the Gospel.

“We have renewed old acquaintances and friendships, as well as making new ones, and it provided us with lots of ideas of how we can take forward the link,” said the Rt Revd Paul Slater, Bishop of Kirkstall and part of the Diocese of Leeds Sri Lanka Task Group.

Bishop of Colombo, the Rt Revd Dhilloraj Ranjit Canagasabay, said: “The link between our two countries continues to be strong and provide fruitful connections between people, organisations and schools.”

Bishop of Kurunegala, the Rt Revd Keerthisiri Fernando, said: “Our people really enjoyed your visit. As a group of people living in the middle of the country of an isolated island in the Indian Ocean your visit reminded us that we are part of a global family.”

Green Lent path to Easter

God’s trust in us to care for all creation has been central to this year’s CoFE Lent challenge.



#LiveLent called on Christians to make daily changes to help the environment.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: “We urgently need to rebuild our relationship with our planet.

“To do this, we need to change our habits – in how we pray and how we act.”

Diocesan Environment Officer Jemima Parker said: “Every Christian needs to know why and how they can respond to the climate emergency and nature crisis.

“Scripture is full of God’s loving relationship with his creation.”

Learning to Wait

Bishop Nick Baines

I would love to begin this letter by wishing you a very happy Easter as we celebrate what one German theologian called the “invasion of the future in the present” – the resurrection of Jesus. But, I am writing this at the beginning of Lent and there is a long way to go.

Lent gives us the gift of space, urging us to stop and to wait – to reflect and take stock. It is the season when we defy the gods of instant gratification, easy solutions and the desire to escape from the routines or challenges of our lives in a complex world.

Yet, this year already, some of our churches and their surrounding communities have been flooded, unable to withstand the sheer power of wind and rain. Much time will pass before livelihoods have recovered and homes and businesses been restored.

Then came the coronavirus, paying no attention to national borders, theological preferences or political allegiances. This has had (is having?) a massive impact on human living, global industry, tourism and the movement of people. At the time of writing we have little idea of how this pandemic might (or might not develop) or what the ultimate human cost will be. And what do Lent, Holy Week and Easter have to say to us in these



circumstances, faced by these fearful uncertainties?

Well, they remind us forcibly of what mortality looks like. There are some things human beings cannot control. In the face of this fragility, we might just learn a little humility. We are not the Creator; but, we are co-dependent on other creatures, morally interdependent as we face common threats and challenges.

Lent offers us the gift of space and an honest look in the mirror. Holy Week sees Jesus and his odd group of friends walking together towards an uncertain destination – an end that would turn out actually to be a new beginning. The walking together matters.

Easter shines a blazing light through the darkness of violence, death and destruction, boldly whispering that only God has the final word in this world – both in our living and our dying. This word is ‘resurrection’.

We need not fear uncertainty ... or, even, fear itself. For God is God and we are his. And that is good news at Easter.

**+Nick
Bishop of Leeds**

Glorious mural restored thanks to generous worshippers

Huddersfield Restoration of an inspirational mural at Birstall Parish church has taken place thanks to the determination and generosity of worshippers.

The glory of the chancel arch mural has just been completed at a cost of some £22,000 – all of which was given by members of the congregation and friends of the church.



“People have looked at the dismal and darkening mural for generations and it’s wonderful to see it restored to its former inspirational glory,” said Revd Paul Knight, who has longed for this moment since he arrived at the church 22 years ago.

“Happily, this also falls within our year of celebrations for the church’s 900th anniversary.

“One of our congregation made a donation of £10,000, which suddenly made the project viable,” Revd Paul said.

“Then we asked for support on social media and the money just came in. We are so grateful!”

Joyful image of a reborn church wins national photo prize

BRADFORD A worshipper's photo of her lively and rejuvenated church is a regional winner in a national photography competition. The image, by church member Hannah Owens, shows families dancing at the reopening of St Stephen's, in West Bowling, Bradford last summer.



The photo has now been named as the North East winner of Ecclesiastical Insurance's Parish Pixels competition.

Revd Canon Jimmy Hinton said: "The church was scheduled

for demolition, but it was kept open, and is now thriving, with refugee groups, a job club, drop-in support groups,

a children's clothes bank and much, much more."

The church received £1,500 for winning the regional award, and if named the national winner later this year, might be awarded an extra £5,000.

Pilgrims tell of hardships and hope in the Holy Land

RIPON Pilgrims from the Ripon Deanery have returned from witnessing hardship in the Holy Land, including the occupied West Bank of Palestine. The 15-strong group, led by Revd Alison Askew of Kirby-on-the-Moor,



Cundall with Norton-le-Clay & Skelton-cum-Newby, stayed in Jerusalem and Beit Sahour, Bethlehem.

"We visited and prayed at the holy sites, spent time with the local Christians enjoying their

generous hospitality, whilst learning how hard life is for them," Revd Alison said.

"In Jerusalem, we engaged with the atrocities of

the holocaust at Yad Vashem, and on the Mount of Olives we wept with Jesus over the brokenness of the region."

"Make religious education real"

LEEDS Boosting religious education in our region was the subject of a major conference hosted by the Diocese of Leeds. 'Developing Challenging and Engaging RE' offered practical ideas and strategies to develop inspiring teaching of this key subject.

Delegates at St George's, Leeds, heard from Mashuda Shaikh, Faith and Community Integration Manager at Kirklees Council, who delivered an engaging workshop and said: "Making RE real for children, to enable them to ask questions in safe spaces, is essential for cohesion. RE is integral to learning about and sharing the commonality between our faiths and each other."

Giving Scheme

WAKEFIELD The Parish Giving Scheme launched this year is proving to be a welcome asset across our diocese. Dean of Wakefield, the Very Revd Simon Cowling said: "One of our Chapter members attended an excellent Parish Giving Scheme Information evening and returned full of enthusiasm. "As a result, Chapter agreed unanimously to adopt the Scheme, which will be at the heart of our forthcoming stewardship campaign." Diocesan Stewardship Officer Janet Edmond said more than 40 parishes have already joined the Parish Giving Scheme.

Unique church mapping project successfully launched

A groundbreaking churchyard mapping project has been launched in our diocese.

All Hallows, Kirkburton and Emmanuel, Shelley, near Huddersfield, received a Sharing Heritage grant of £6,100 in March 2018 from The

National Lottery Heritage Fund for the pilot project focused on their two churchyards.

It is the first project of its kind in the UK to go live and genealogists, historians and researchers can now access information at two online sites. Atlantic Geomatics (UK) Ltd digitally mapped the historic churchyards at Kirkburton and Shelley.

Volunteers from the churches and a local history group were trained to take high-quality photographs of approximately 6000 memorials, which are now linked directly to the memorial location on the map. The burial registers were scanned and the volunteers transcribed the text in the registers onto the portal, linking them to the images and map. Sylvia Johnson, who chaired



the volunteer group behind the project said:

“It has been a fascinating period and very rewarding to see how the volunteers have worked with Atlantic Geomatics: putting in so much hard work and effort in all weathers photographing the memorials in both churchyards, and transcribing Burial Registers with old style handwriting and letter formation,” said Sylvia (pictured far right).

“The team deserve an enormous thank you as their work will benefit so many different people locally, nationally and even internationally.”

Direct links for the two sites are as follows:
www.kirkburton.burialgrounds.co.uk
www.shelley.burialgrounds.co.uk

Coronavirus advice for parishes issued by Church of England

Church of England advice on the Coronavirus outbreak is being constantly updated on the diocesan website. Its Ministry and Public Affairs division has created a dedicated web



page which contains the latest information on how parishes and worshippers may take practical steps to reduce the risk of infection.

The Bishop of Carlisle, James Newcome, the Church of England's lead bishop on health issues, said: “We pray for all those affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19) here and around the world and for all those caring for them.”

The full guidance, written by Dr Brendan McCarthy, the Church of England's Adviser on health issues, can be found at www.leeds.anglican.org