

Diocese supports church mission with 80k in new grants

Grants awarded to parishes by the Diocese of Leeds in 2020 are already helping emerging mission projects to take place.

Covid-19 secure, allowing visitors to attend worship services without the risk of coming into close contact with other households.



The Emergence Mission Grants scheme was launched back in June to facilitate initiatives that allow church mission to flourish in the current context or to revive work that may have stalled.

As a result, nearly £80,000 was awarded, contributing to over a hundred church projects across the diocese.

It included building works to create an important one way system at Christ Church, Sowerby Bridge. This ensured the church building was

At the start of 2020, St Mary's Kippax also planned to launch a new initiative called 'God's Little Acre', providing outdoor activities for children that encourage them to interact with creation and the environment (pictured above and taken in a Covid secure way).

The project was delayed because of the pandemic but was eventually launched later in the year, with funding from the diocese helping to provide high visibility vests, gloves, and safety spectacles.

Bishop Nick sends message of lockdown support

Bishop Nick sent a message of support to parishes across the diocese, as the country entered its third lockdown.

Amongst the key points he made, Bishop Nick said local decisions on opening or closing churches would be supported by bishops, and he wanted parishes to contact the diocese for help without hesitation.

"The Church House team continue to be available to support you in any way they can and can be contacted at covid-19help@leeds.anglican.org.

"You are in our prayers. Please pray for those particularly in the NHS and in education as they handle this continuing crisis and uncertainty.

"God bless you."

New Year's Resolution

Bishop Toby Howarth

Resolution – it is a word worth considering as we begin 2021 fully aware of the challenges that will test ourselves and our communities in the weeks and months ahead.

This time last year you, like me, may have firstly struggled to find a New Year's resolution other than "the usual" and by this point in January were already struggling to keep it.

To resolve to do something means taking a serious and firm decision, coupled with a high level of commitment.

As we look ahead, we know we must be resolute in our behaviour as individuals, as families and as members of society in ways that are vital to ourselves and everyone.

Sadly, it's no exaggeration to say that this year, lives depend upon our personal resolve.

A resolution also defined as a good outcome to a tough problem, achieved through mutual interest and hard effort.

As science and medicine take us closer to a resolution of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are problems to address that will need more to solve than what those two disciplines can deliver. People have been left traumatised and economic and mental health issues



will remain for years. Covid-19 has both revealed and widened health and other inequalities that cannot be ignored any longer.

The familiar 'rod and staff' of the 23rd Psalm are symbols of resolve. They speak of God's resolve to bring us through the valley of the shadow of death and into new, greener pastures. They also remind us, often recalcitrant sheep, of God's willingness to strengthen our own resolve in following the Good Shepherd. We are going to need both if we are to engage seriously with the challenges that face us.

In Bradford, as in all of our episcopal areas, I have been inspired and encouraged by congregations and clergy who have reached out to their parishes with the love of Jesus through prayer, witness and support of the most vulnerable. They have done all this with creativity, humour and resolve.

Of course, we will continue for as long as it takes, drawing on the strength of the Holy Spirit to the best of our abilities and resources and with the confidence that God is making all things new.

That's what we do.

New grants for historic churches - but deadline looms

New grants for 2021 to help support our listed churches are now available as part of the Cultural Recovery Fund - with three weeks to apply.

The Cultural Recovery Fund for Heritage has just been announced and the closing date for application is **January 26 2021**.



Not all churches will be eligible, but it is worth exploring if your church is historically significant and needs assistance to get back onto a financially sustainable footing, advises Becky Nicholson, diocesan Lead Stewardship Officer.

"There is a real will to give money to places of worship from this fund," Becky said.

"The scope of the funding is quite broad, so I would encourage everyone to think about any works or adjustments that will make their churches welcoming and safe for congregations and visitors and view the Church of England guidance notes to check if they are eligible to apply."

Diocese of Leeds online communities help people stay connected over lockdown

At the start of 2021, parishioners are invited to join and take part in a number of supportive online communities set up by the Diocese of Leeds. Hosted on Facebook, these private groups have been created to offer a safe space to share tips, good news and ideas. Each has its own particular emphasis and details of each one can be found below.

Leeds CofE Comms Champions

A group for those in the diocese interested in all things digital. All churches are welcome to share tips, good practice and ideas for social media, church websites and the A Church Near You platform.

Leeds CofE Camera Club

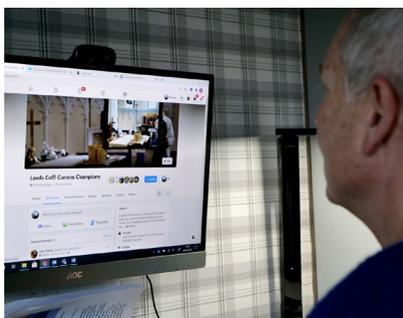
Keen photographers are invited to join this online camera club which celebrates the events and beautiful places of our young diocese.

Safe Togetherness - guidance and support regarding COVID-19

Set up in the wake of the pandemic last year, this is a group designed to give easy access to information and church resources for those across the diocese, regarding coronavirus.

Leeds Candy

An online group hosted by the Children, Young People & Families Team in the Diocese of Leeds. It is open to anyone involved or interested in ministry with under 18s and their families,



whether you are paid or voluntary, experienced or new to this line of work.

Environment - Diocese of Leeds

A way to keep up to date with the latest environment news, views and resources from across the diocese, to help you and your church take care of creation.

Diocese of Leeds Disability Network

A group for anyone involved in advocating for people with disabilities within the Anglican Diocese of Leeds.

New climate training launch

The climate crisis is at the heart of plans from St George's Leeds for this year, with a new series of training events launching this month. The free programme of virtual sessions aims to help take individuals and churches on a journey of learning, prayer and action, preparing people to confront the climate crisis head on.

The sessions are in three main strands (climate thinking, carbon detox and climate advocacy) and run from January to July this year.

Ewan Jones, Environment Officer for St George's Leeds, said: "Christian Aid got it right when they said: 'Right now, millions of the world's poorest people are feeling the worst impacts of climate change, and experts predict more floods, drought and extreme weather patterns to come.

"For those living in poverty, this means more hunger, conflict and insecurity, and a more uncertain future for us all."

"And, as the Archbishop of Canterbury said, 'reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith.'"

St George's wants to open the events to all across the diocese; for more information, and to book onto the sessions, please visit: www.stgs.org.uk/climatejustice

Comfort in a time of doubt

Revd Canon Stephen Race, Area Dean of Barnsley

On the top shelf of my bookcase is an old, green New English Bible, held together with black gaffer tape and a good deal of hope. I don't have an old family Bible such as we still see on TV programmes, but this is the nearest I have to a record of my own life of faith. I was given this Bible sometime around my Confirmation in the 1970s, when I was eight or nine years old. Since then, every time I've wanted to remember a prayer, a place, a person or a thought I have slipped something between its covers – photos, postcards, prayers, church notice sheets, sermon notes and more.

This Bible used to be my only one and is therefore rather dog-eared too, but over the last thirty years or so it has become more of a repository than a daily reference book. I love it deeply because of what it represents and what I know it stores. It reminds me who I am, encased and bound together with the printed word that reveals the Living Word, the One “through whom all things were made; without



whom nothing was made that has been made”.

Like the events in its texts, my random collection of memories recalls how my own faith has ebbed and flowed. How I've been riddled with doubt and overcome with joyful certainty. Even if we don't all have a collection of memories such as mine, we can all recall similar moments that have informed us and our faith in the One who creates and sustains, who often feels distant and unreal, but is also so often present that we cannot believe we once doubted.

If, at this moment, you're in a place of doubt and perplexity, remember the two at the foot of the Cross addressed by Jesus: “Behold your son ... behold your mother.” We belong to that new family. It is there to sustain us. If you're in a place of joy, please recall those same words and reach out: “Who ever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Revd Canon Stephen Race

Kids' video challenge helps Faith at Home

A new series of video challenges from our Children, Young People and Families Team is aiming to help people keep their Faith at Home.



The 12 videos will be released over the coming weeks, with a new message or story to engage with each time.

The videos are designed to be used by individuals and churches, at toddler groups, Messy Churches, Sunday gatherings, food banks, midweek groups and anywhere else that you can use them. Each activity has resources to support it, available from the team.

A sample video, to help illustrate what they are like, can be seen on the Diocese of Leeds websites, and the resources for each of the challenges can be found on the Digital Learning Platform.