



## Harrogate Deanery Synod 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

St Andrew's Church, High Street, Starbeck, HG2 7JE

### **Guest Speaker: The Rt. Revd Nicholas Baines, Bishop of Leeds**

The Bishop spoke on a number of issues, before opening the floor to questions.

- **No applications:**

The Bishop began by urging the Benefice of Walkingham Hill not to be disheartened by the lack of applications for the post of Rector. He explained that there are few applications for many positions at the present time. He said that everything is very static around the country and explained that when there is a time of uncertainty people tend to stay put. Also, with the run up to Christmas people are reluctant to move. There may be greater interest in January and February. He informed that there are patterns of movement throughout the year and urged members not to feel discouraged.

- **Encouragement and Challenge:**

The Bishop highlighted the words 'encouragement' and 'challenge' used by Phil during the opening prayers. The Bishop explained that for him the 'challenge' is 'encouragement'. When you are being challenged, you know you are alive to the possibility of change. He urged us to change the way we *look* at God, the world and us, in order to change the way, we *see* God, the world and us, which in turn will change the way we *think* about God, the world and us, and thereby change the way we *live* in the world, *with* God and us. He explained that this is what *repentance* is about and stressed the importance of 'encouragement' to keep us 'alive' in several ways.

- **From Baptist to Anglican**

The Bishop stated that the Church is an easy target, and challenged us not to 'kick' the Church, because if we criticise the organisation, why should anyone else trust us? He explained that he had grown up in a Christian culture which told you all the answers and did not give you any space to think for yourself. When he attended his first Anglican service as a student, he felt treated as an adult and the preacher, rather than telling him what to think, had enabled him to start asking questions. The Bishop explained that he never returned to his previous denomination, rather, he was baptised by the Bishop of Gloucester, and started his journey as an Anglican.

- **The unique vocation of the Church of England**

The Bishop explained that the Church of England arose from a settlement, which was designed not to hold the church together, but to hold England together; a much bigger vision. He stated that this lies at the heart of who we are. We do not exist as a church to save the church, or to keep a congregation happy; we exist as a church with a unique vocation to give our lives for the sake of the people in our parishes. He informed that the parish system gives us a missional obligation to the people who live in our parish. As Anglicans we don't just look after Christian; people of all faiths are as much our parishioners, as the committed Christians who belong to the church.

When looking for a new vicar, the Bishop said that the process should start by asking, 'What is the parish that we are called to serve?' Having identified the needs of the parish, we should ask 'What sort of church do we need to serve this parish? Then finally, 'What sort of vicar do we need to lead the church to serve this parish?' He stressed that Anglicans exist for the world out there and because the Church of England was established by law, Anglicans have a legal obligation to serve the people of our parish.

- **Be kenotic**

The Bishop stated that it is in our English Anglican DNA to operate on behalf of the common good, not just to defend our own interests. He explained that in many of our communities, we have a convening role, because we are trusted to broker difficult conversations and steer what will work for the common good. The Bishop referred to 'kenosis', the act of emptying ourselves for the sake of others. He urged members to be kenotic, as this is our unique vocation. He encouraged us to be proud of being Anglicans.

### **Questions & Answers**

- 1) The Area Dean asked the Bishop to give an inspiring pitch about Parish Share:** The Bishop described 'giving' as a 'joyful obligation'. He explained that in Anglican ministry, there are some places which can afford more money to enable ministry in places which cannot afford anything. This is about us buying into a vision which will enable us to fulfil this unique vocation. The Parish Share should be a joyful obligation which allows us to minister beyond our own parish. The Bishop explained that we are 'in it together'; trusting and helping each other. He stressed that underlying this is the fact that God has been generous to us, and loves us, and we in turn need to be generous to others.
- 2) The Revd Suzy McCarter, Vicar of Birstwith, Hampsthwaite and Killinghall, asked what to say to someone who challenges why the clergy should be taking a stipend rather than earning their own living and working as the clergy as well:** The Bishop stated that a stipend enables clergy to live and not have to work, in order to be available to do ministry. He stressed that this imposes on clergy an obligation to be professional, and worthy of the money people give to enable clergy to have this privilege. He shared that he says to ordinands, that 'your ministry has to be derived from your discipleship which is derived from your humanity. You are made in the image of God, out of this comes your discipleship; your call to follow Jesus. Your ministry is then derived from that. If you get them the wrong way round, i.e. your discipleship is defined and determined by your ministry, this quickly becomes about you getting your needs met, at this point things have gone wrong.' The Bishop stressed that we 'give up' financial status for the sake of the parish and the people.
- 3) Dr Sue Atkin, Lay Chair, asked if the Archbishop of Canterbury's role in the wider Anglican communion, is viable in the future:** The Bishop replied that the Anglican communion grew with the British Empire. The British Empire has now gone and many of the vestiges of the Anglican

communion are currently being fought against. We are in a period of recalibration of power. Nigeria accuses the Anglican communion of racism and neo-colonialism and Sudan and South Sudan have excommunicated themselves from Canterbury. This affects our links with these countries, which are in desperate need. The Bishop posed the question, if they do not want to have an Anglican relationship with us, is it possible to have an ecumenical relationship? He stressed that there will be changes, and the Anglican church will need to recalibrate and reshape. We will survive!

- 4) **Mrs Christine Jack, Christ Church, asked a question about whether we have the right links:** The Bishop replied that sometimes we have to let things die. He acknowledged that this is a problem for the church as many of our links are run by people who have been running them for 30 or 40 years. The Bishop asked, so where is the next generation? He recommended that now is a good time to question if we have the right links and to introduce a different way of doing things.
- 5) **The Revd Stroma McDermott, Rector of the Benefice of Lower Wharfedale, asked a question about the immergence of new words and language, particularly in relation to LLF and how do we keep that sense of generous language towards each other so that we are united even though we might have difference?** The Bishop replied that language is always the give-away. Language is not what we say, it is what is heard by others.

### Christmas and Santa Jokes

- 1) A little boy goes to his room and writes a letter to Santa,  
'Dear Santa, please can I have a bike for Christmas?  
Then he realises that isn't going to work, so he screws up the letter and throws it in the bin. And tries again...  
'Dear Santa, I've tried really hard this year, and it would be great to have a bike this Christmas.'  
He thinks, 'That's pushing it a bit', so he screws up the letter, throws it in the bin and tries again...  
'Dear Santa, I know I've messed it up, but I've really tried hard, so can I have a bike for Christmas?'  
He thinks, 'Oh this is terrible', so he screws up this letter, throws in the bin and goes out for a walk. As he goes round the block he looks past a hedge and sees a big Nativity scene. He looks around, runs in and grabs Mary, sticks her under his coat and legs it back home. He goes back into his bedroom and writes,  
'If you want to see your Mother again, give me a bike!'
- 2) Santa is having a terrible day. The toy factory is broken. The elves have disappeared. Santa has run out of Sellotape and wrapping paper and still has lots of present to wrap. So, he grabs some newspaper, hastily wraps the presents and shoves them in his sack. He goes out to his sleigh thinking, 'It can't get any worse than this'. He puts his foot on the sleigh's running board, and his foot goes straight through. Santa falls off. The sack splits open. Presents go everywhere. He thinks, 'It can't get any worse than this.' At which point he looks up and there are no reindeer; one is pregnant, two are drunk and one is still sound asleep. He thinks, 'It can't get any worse

than this, I need a drink.' So, he goes in, only to find his whisky decanter is empty. He goes into the storeroom and finds the elves lying on their backs with their legs in the air – drunk! He thinks, 'It can't get any worse than this.' At which point Mrs Claus comes in and says, 'Oh Santa dear, I forgot to tell you, my mother is coming for Christmas and is staying for 6 weeks'. Santa goes, 'I just don't believe it!' At that moment there is a knock on the door. He opens the door to find an angel standing on the doormat holding a Christmas tree. She looks up at him and say, 'Hello Santa. Happy Christmas! Isn't it good to be alive? Now, where shall I put this tree?' And that's the story of how the angel came to be stuffed on top of the Christmas tree!