

HISTORIC HEAT HACKS • VOCATIONS FAIR

network

ISSUE 23 / WINTER 2023

**FOREST
CHURCH**

**SMALL SPARKS
GRANTS**

**YOUR GUIDE TO
KEEPING WARM AT CHRISTMAS**

FROM THE EDITORS



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Welcome to the Winter edition of Network magazine ahead of a busy festive season in the Diocese of Sheffield.

Another year has gone by so quickly! 2023 has seen lots of things to celebrate in the Diocese, from new congregations and local events marking the Coronation of King Charles III to Petertide Ordinations, new Focal Ministers, our new Eco Diocese award, faith stories, Wear Your Faith Fortnight and a visit from an Archbishop!

We also recognise Christmas can be a very difficult time for people, whether it's the cost of living crisis, struggling with mental health or painful memories from previous years. It's our hope that the light of Christ will shine on people's hearts this Christmas, and lift up those who need help.

The Communications and Learning Team, along with everyone at Church House in Rotherham, have been busy getting into the Christmas spirit. We're always keen to hear and share faith stories from across the Diocese of Sheffield, and to promote any festive events taking place this December. The Church of England's Advent and Christmas campaign for 2023 is 'Follow the Star: Join the Song'. There are [plenty of resources available](#) for churches to get involved.

Don't forget we've got our brilliant annual youth event at Sheffield Cathedral, Breathe Deep, coming up in January. It's taking place on Saturday 27th January and tickets are on sale now. You can read more about the day in this edition.

This magazine is for everyone from all walks of life. Enjoy!

*Ben Fearn and Kellianne Montgomery
Communications and Learning team*

Credit to Giles Morrison for the cover photo.

WELCOME

In my travels around the Diocese in recent weeks, it has been a real privilege to witness the care for those most in need. I think of John (not his real name) in one of the Doncaster prisons, reflecting on the care he has received from the Chaplaincy team during one of the darkest seasons of his life. I think of an asylum seeker in Rotherham who told me that without the Social Supermarket, he would have been completely alone. I think of a little girl from a church school who has found support and care during a family crisis. I am so grateful for the ways in which the people of God shine as Lights for Christ in these ways and so many more. Care is not just for Christmas, it happens week in, week out in our parishes, mission areas, chaplaincies, schools and everywhere where God's people are.

One inspirational contribution comes from St Mary's Bramall Lane Youth Group. (You can read about their workshop at Development day [here](#)). I was so impressed that I invited them to come and help lead the Bishops Badge celebration during Wear Your Faith Fortnight. Not only did they lower the 'up front' age significantly, they brought energy and enthusiasm reminding the children that children and young people have a leadership role to play in the church and wider community.

I hope you are encouraged by all that you read here. I hope it reminds you of the care that God has for each one of us and all those we support and care for this Christmas and the whole year through.

With every blessing as ever

+ Sophie

+Sophie



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CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH DINNINGTON

St Leonard's Churchwarden Irene Madeley shares the process that goes into organising the popular festival event



Our first Christmas Tree Festival took place in 2014. A small group, consisting of members of the congregation and the PCC had been formed and were given the task of exploring ways of raising funds for church while also establishing closer links with the wider community. The Christmas Tree Festival was an idea that arose from discussions between members of the group and taken forward following PCC approval.

The plan was to engage with businesses in the town by offering them the opportunity to display a decorated tree

that made a statement about their business. Letters were sent to all the businesses in Dinnington. Some responded readily, but generally the uptake was disappointing. It was felt that the reason for this may have had something to do with an attitudinal change regarding the relevance of the church by the wider community, a feeling that manifested itself in other community-based events that had been attempted. This analysis emphasised the need to engage more readily with those around us because a closer relationship with our community was clearly what

God required of us, as his church in Dinnington.

In addition to the sponsored trees, all aspects of church life and the charities that were supported were represented by a tree. A team of people, committed to this project, worked hard over three days to decorate and position them. It must be said, however, that this was not an easy task because at that time the Nave was full of pews, the only floor space consisted of the North Aisle and the central Nave Aisle. So, to overcome this problem the windowsills were utilised and shelving was built to fit on top of the pews, next to the walls, to create a greater surface area. The flower team worked their magic producing superb flower arrangements to enhance the overall effect. The church was filled with beautiful trees and flowers that looked stunning; the congregation and all those who came into church to look were completely overwhelmed by how beautiful it was.

It had been hoped that the festival would be launched with a short act of worship, but this was considered to be inappropriate as it, apparently, did not have any spiritual relevance. Instead, Kevin, one of the original group, told the story of 'The Three Trees' - a lovely spiritually themed story that, as a former primary school headteacher, he had shared with his children. That, together with some traditional carol singing was a lovely way to get the festival underway and enjoyed by those who were present.

The Christmas Tree Festival has continued in much the same way, ever since. The only time that it was not held was during the church closures that took place as a result of the pandemic. At that time we did not decorate the inside of the church, so we brought Christmas out into the churchyard and decorated there instead, allowing our community to enjoy Christmas at St Leonard's in a different way. It is very much a community event

now, as a result of the development of a closer relationship with the church. The number of contributors from the community has increased slightly over time, but generally it is the same businesses that take part. In addition, we now invite local schools and nurseries to contribute a tree which has added a whole new dimension to our festival.

Building the displays is much easier now because since 2020 the church no longer has pews. This has meant that the trees can be arranged in many different ways, creating an even more beautiful effect.

This year, the festival will include an act of worship. Celebrating the approaching birth of our Lord while recognising the gifts of those who work collaboratively to create a beautiful setting for that to take place. It is perhaps, also timely to remember the group who originally had the vision that brought about St Leonard's Christmas Tree Festival and who still contribute their skills to it year on year. Sadly, Kevin, one of the members who managed the original planning of it, died in 2017. He would have been delighted with the way in which it has developed and there are those who see its continuation as a way of keeping his memory alive.

The trees on display are sponsored, in part, by local businesses with others representing various groups within the church, for example: Christian Aid, Flower Team, Messy Church, Lenny's Baby and Toddler Group, Eco Church, Open the Book...

The trees remain in church throughout the Christmas Season when they can be viewed at other times such as after our outdoor Carol Service on Sunday the 17th December at 4.30 and at all the other Christmas Services.

BOOST FOR ROTHERHAM MINSTER CONNECTIONS

Outreach work for the most vulnerable in Rotherham is getting a lift following new funding

New funding for Rotherham Minster Connections has been announced, with the hope it will make a big difference to those in need this Christmas. It follows a £52,000 National Lottery grant awarded to the team in October, enabling the funds to pay for a Project Worker post for two years.

Originally called the Social Supermarket, the project began during the pandemic and has grown in response to changing needs and opportunities. Those in financial need are referred by local agencies and become members; visiting the shop every week for 3-4 months and paying a small membership fee (£3). As well as supplying much needed food, Connections also provides opportunities to attend their café; join a toddler group; chat at the men's group; receive 1:1 coaching or dig in the allotment.

The news was announced first to volunteers during a training session, ahead of the unveiling of the cheque for the grant. The new money also helps to cover some overheads with Connections, such as electricity and supplies, whilst also providing training and voluntary expenses.

Christine Batchford is the Connections Manager at Rotherham Minster:

"We're delighted with this news. We don't have a big bank balance and often exist from small grant to small grant, so knowing this money is there takes a lot

of pressure off. It means we can focus on what we're doing to help others.

"Our volunteers are our beating heart, and we currently have around 50 on our register. They tell us how much they benefit from volunteering - how it gives them a sense of belonging, a place to learn new skills and a sense of purpose. We provide opportunities for them to take on new challenges and have had lots of positive feedback from people about the difference that's been made to their lives.

"The funding gets you to think when you're applying about what you're trying to achieve and how you measure it, which can be a bit of a pain, but it's also really helpful because it makes you think it through."

This comes as a timely boost ahead of the Christmas period, with an increase in demand for help expected due to pressures with the cost of living. To help those who are struggling this Christmas, Connections is hoping to be able to give all of their members a Christmas hamper, including food and toys for children.

Connections also helps to boost the confidence of its members, with many who attend struggling with poor mental and/or physical health. With visits to Connections possibly one of the only times some members leave the house during the week, wellbeing is prioritised and people treated as being part of one

big family. A Christmas fundraiser is being launched as a drive to get money for food, to go alongside funding from the Council for hampers.

Christine says she's hopeful the need will be met thanks to the success of last year's campaign:

"People were really generous during Christmas 2022, which was just amazing. It's just mind blowing really. We're going to be doing a Christmas meal as well, so volunteers are always needed and funds are always needed. But we're thankful and hopeful for the future."

Becky is a volunteer at Rotherham Minster Connections, and says the funding will help to free people up to work with others:

"In my role I help with the supermarket, mostly on the front desk to welcome people in, plus I also work part-time just to help a little bit with the admin side of things. It's fantastic to know we've got a bit of stability thanks to these funding, so we can keep doing what we're doing and helping so many people.
"It gives us bit of breathing room to keep

doing what we're doing, because I do know people have found it really helpful. This was originally set up to help with that long-term support, enabling networks to introduce people to each other rather than solely relying on crisis intervention."

It is anticipated that by the end of the project, Rotherham Minster Connections will:

- have supported 500 households who are experiencing financial hardship.
- process 125 households to have completed their 3-month membership and graduated.
- have enabled 125 households to have accessed support with finances (joined the savings scheme, accessed budgeting support, paid off debts, accessed debt advice)
- have supported 75 people in joining a group or volunteering

Find out more on how you can help at:

<https://rotherhamminster.co.uk/social-supermarket>

Rotherham Minster



WARM SPACE FORGING NEW FELLOWSHIP IN SHEFFIELD

Weekly sessions at St Peter and St Oswald's Church are having a positive impact among people in Abbeydale, Bannerdale and Nether Edge

A welcoming space dedicated to developing friendships and combating loneliness is helping to bring people together.

Taking place every Friday from 10.30am-12.30pm, the idea first started in March of this year following funding from Sheffield City Council. The initial sessions were for three hours a week to include a warm space for anyone needing it, and since then the idea has taken off in popularity.

As well as providing a friendly environment for people to gather together, exercise classes also take place for anyone wanting to take part.

Hear the testimonies of people involved with the group:

STEPHEN WILLIAMS – VOLUNTEER

'I've seen people walk in here with their heads down who now have their heads lifted high. They are proud of this group. As a Christian, it just feels like the presence of God is here. The project is growing from strength to strength.'

'People who live alone are feeling included here. They feel part of this group and they see people who love them, who care for them and want the best for them. People need to feel the church is here as a place of worship, but also as a place of service. We're here to serve Christ in this way. If Jesus was walking by here right now, he would be in this place with these people.'

'We'd like 20 to turn to 50 and maybe more, just to get people out of their houses and into somewhere welcoming. It can save lives.'

DIANE - MEMBER

'It's a wonderful space for us to socialise, exercise and have a bit of fun. Lots of people who attended the very first session have stayed with us. I'm a new member and I love it.'

'It's definitely seen as a fun thing and Shona (Chair Instructor) is part of that fun. She might put herself down but she should really raise herself up, because she looks after us and makes sure that everybody is comfortable. She encourages us and helps everybody to feel part of the group.'

'I think some friendships have been made stronger. I came along and I didn't know anybody here, but I discovered one of the ladies here was in the year below me at school and we've got some mutual friends. So that was wonderful. That's God at work again, making sure we are safe without us even knowing it.'

'He just provides anything and everything, and we've got so much to be thankful for. It's wonderful. I am local and attend another church, but this is a wonderful space and I wanted to be part of it - and I am!'



SHONA – CHAIR INSTRUCTOR

'I'm really happy that it's carried on. I don't know if I bring the fun to the group – it's just happened! We've all done well together. We've also applied for another fund to try and get the warm space up from an hour and a half back to three hours.'

ANONYMOUS – HAS ATTENDED FROM THE BEGINNING

'I saw this advertised in the local paper and was getting a bit fed up and low, so I wanted to try and get out as much as I could. I wanted to do my own thing and try and be independent.'

'I've really enjoyed it right from the start. When I get up in the morning, I know that

I've got somewhere nice to come. I've made some nice friends here and the exercise classes really keep you going. It's lovely there are volunteers and people helping out and putting a smile on our faces.'

ANONYMOUS – ATTENDS WITH MOTHER

'I come here with my mum who lives locally. It's a chance for her to get out of the house and to meet others in a group. It's a lovely sociable group. My mum has arthritis, so the exercise helps her to stay active. She always looks forward to these sessions every week.'



"Friendships have been made stronger here"

UV PARTY IN DONCASTER

Doncaster Youth Hub Co-ordinator Rachel Ridler looks back at a weekend of fun which it's hoped will be a springboard to other youth groups in the Diocese

Doncaster Youth Hub aims to bring together church-based youth groups from across the city of Doncaster to encourage relationships between young Christians, offer space to socialise and a chance to hear from the Bible and to worship God together. They do this through half-termly events at different venues across the city. On 27th October they met at Powerhouse Christ Church for a UV Party with tribal games, attended by representatives from 5 different youth groups: St Lawrence Church, St Paul's Church, Boys Brigade, Powerhouse Church and YFC.

Here is a quick rundown of the evening:

- Started out with getting tribe ready – each team was given headbands and their tribe colour UV paint to decorate themselves with. Team photos were taken for the interactive scoreboard.
- First round of tribal games underway – from snowball fights to mummy wrapping, the first set of games showed just how competitive our young people are!
- Hot dog break – quick pit stop for hot dogs and hot chocolate was a must after all that energy put into trying to win.
- Talk from Aimee – the local Boys Brigade leader and Methodist Circuit worker, Aimee, shared a message about Jesus being the light of the world, and that he tasks us with being a light to the world too.
- Worship – in response to the talk, we praised God by learning a new song called “Praise”, Mexican wave-style dancing included....
- Second round of tribal games commences – trying to balance the heaviest item on toilet roll and a quick game of ladders saw the winning team crowned.
- Prize ceremony, notice and closing disco – the winning team was awarded flashing glasses and headbands, and an impromptu UV dance party broke out. We also shared details on how to sign up to perform at the Christmas Live Lounge event in December.

Our prayers as a team before the event were that “cross-pollination” of groups would occur and young people would get to know each other better. This was certainly true by the end of the night, with tribes really getting to know each other better regardless of which groups they came in. Our continuing prayer is that the young people left inspired to share the light of Jesus in their worlds.

These events are ideal for churches just starting up with youth work who maybe only have one or two young people. It gives them a chance to come along to bigger events and activities, or even to use this as the start of their youth group once a half term. If you would like to speak to us more about how to attend the events, the upcoming dates, what they are like and consent needed to bring them, please contact:

hubs@centenaryproject.org.uk



MORNING AND NIGHT PRAYER

Vicar, Priest in Charge and Oversight Minister, Revd Fiona Kouble, shares how a prayer group developed out of necessity has grown and encouraged others

COVID-19 FORCED US TO TRY NEW THINGS

Morning and night prayer (Compline) are nothing new; that's part of the Christian tradition. But in this particular context, it started right at the beginning of the very first lockdown. I had never gone live on Facebook before, but did so at Ardsley Church.

To begin with, it was more of a simple prayer I would offer, but following that I decided to do Compline. It took place every Monday to Saturday with prayer sessions initially at 9am and now at 8.30am in the morning and 9pm in the evening. The prayers were offered on the parish Facebook pages for Christ Church Ardsley and St Helen's Thurnscoe.

WE HAD REGULARS AND NEW PEOPLE GETTING INVOLVED

People in the community commented on the thread to ask for prayer about something in particular, or just to say they were finding it comforting. I thought this would initially run until the end of Easter, but I kept doing it as lockdown continued. I wanted to offer a place of comfort and connection for people suddenly shut in their own homes, a place to be reminded that God was still with them.

It was fascinating to see the number of people who were joining in and the messages I got from people, just saying how they felt it was helping them to connect with one another, as well as connecting with God. It helped some

people to develop a personal rule of life, with prayer now becoming part of their daily routine. People stepped up as well to help run the group when I went back to taking Fridays off for rest.

IT'S OPEN TO EVERYBODY

We now share the group across the Darfield Parish, and we've got somebody from Cheshire who joins us every day who grew up in Ardsley. We've also got somebody who regularly joins us from Birmingham who just came across this on her Facebook feed. She even turned up at a service we were doing last month, just so she could come and worship with some of us in person. There's also someone who joins us every night from Huddersfield, alongside her dog!

It's just amazing, this sort of community of people who are joining in from across the Diocese and from outside the Diocese. On All Saints Day (1st November) we relaunched a new Facebook page. It will still very much be stemming from the core parishes of Ardsley, Darfield and Thurnscoe, and utterly based from the Diocese of Sheffield – using the Diocesan Prayer Community Reflections during the week and the Diocesan Prayer Calendar and Vision Prayer. The new page is called 'Companions in Daily Prayer.'

WE WANT TO BE CONNECTED TO THE LIGHTS FOR CHRIST THEME OVER CHRISTMAS

We are using the Church of England

Daily Prayer materials along with a book called Reflections in Daily Prayer. In the evening we use the Diocese and prayer community reflections three times a week.

Christmas will very much be part of the theme because we'll be using the lectionary for prayer materials alongside this. We continue to seek to grow new prayer leaders, but our goal is simply to offer a regular gathered space for prayer and to enrich the opportunities for our daily connection with the Light of the World.

THE TESTIMONIES FROM PEOPLE GETTING INVOLVED HAVE BEEN WONDERFUL

The lady I mentioned earlier from Birmingham got in touch recently to thank the group, saying "all of you are coming to us, taking nothing extra but bringing so much, bringing prayers and peace and so much more, being with us in our own homes when some of us can't always come to you. This means so much to me."

We've also had some highlights flagged from the team members:

"Being used by God in a new way."

"God speaks to me when I am leading."

"Just being able to lead something is so important to me, and hearing how it has helped people."

"God is equipping me and using me to bring His word to people far and wide"

I never expected this online ministry of Daily Prayer would continue past the first lockdown in 2020, and have at times wondered about the future, but each time we have people who join us, who share how thankful they have been for

the connection and the prayer community. God is one of surprises and sometimes we discover His Light in the most unexpected spaces – even on Facebook! You are very welcome to join us in Morning or Night Prayer – no one ever has to know you were there – or you can write a comment in the thread below the streamed recording – But God knows and may His Peace bless you as you pray with Him and with us.

You can take part in Companions in Daily Prayer through the [Companions in Daily Prayer Facebook page](#).

KEEPING WARM AT CHRISTMAS

A rough guide by Josh Hunter from the Church Buildings Team

Christmas is around the corner again! It's an exciting time of year full of celebration and community in our churches and it always brings familiar themes. For me it is that I'm eating a worrying amount of mince pies and my mother is into the 8th week of asking for my Christmas list. But for churches there is a more worrying familiarity: keeping people warm.

Every year, keeping people warm through winter is a big concern for all the churches across our Diocese from Norton to Hook, especially at Christmas when our churches are visited by more people than usual. There are some small things you can do almost instantly to warm people up, but there are some heating problems that can't be fixed overnight. Here are a few pointers on how to keep people warm in your church this Christmas.

HEATED CUSHIONS, PADS AND BLANKETS

If you are having trouble heating the building going into this winter, this won't be a problem that can be fixed overnight, so if we can't heat the space, we need to heat the people. Heated cushions, pads, and blankets can provide that warm respite from cold churches this winter and can be an instant overnight fix for those who feel the cold in church. A heated cushion costs between £30-40, a heated pad is £20 and a heated blanket is around £30-£40. Heated blankets and pads placed on pews may provide the most heat to everyone on a pew and cover a larger area than cushions for the same price.

ELECTRIC AND INFRA-RED PLUG-IN HEATERS

If your boiler is insufficient to heat people effectively and radiators don't do the job, it could be worth looking at similar solutions that can heat targeted areas of space that can benefit people in the church. Plug-in heaters can provide a wider but still targeted area of heat to a number of people as opposed to the acute targeting of heat by cushions and blankets to 1-3 people. Plug-in heaters do use mains electricity that is more expensive than gas for churches. However, due to the efficiency of plug-in heaters compared to a boiler system (for example boilers can take a few hours to heat up) a plug-in heater will almost instantly emit heat. Therefore, much less energy will be used by plug-in heaters making them substantially cheaper to run. On the cheaper end of the scale a standard electric plug-in heater will cost £20-35, at the upper end of the scale an infrared plug-in heater can cost £200. While more expensive infrared plug-ins will perform better, any plug-in heaters you introduce will make a big difference to temperature in your church!

WRAPPING UP WARM

The majority of church buildings were never designed to be heated and it is only in the last 100-150 years that we have heated our churches. There is an expectation that buildings can be warm enough in the depths of winter so that people don't have to wear coats inside; this may be true of many buildings but is important to remember that churches are big open spaces with high ceilings

and therefore quite difficult to heat. As much as we can make a building comfortable for our visitors, we should also encourage reasonable expectations and a new approach to comfort in buildings. This method should be employed alongside one of the other methods mentioned above, just as visitors should have reasonable expectations of a church building, we should have reasonable expectations of our visitors, and some degree of comfort should be afforded through plug-in heaters or heated blankets!

THINKING LONG TERM: DOES YOUR HEATING SYSTEM WORK? AND REGULAR MAINTENANCE!

With Christmas being in the short term, long term solutions are not viable right now, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't think about them. While they may not help right now they will help next Christmas and beyond. Firstly, check your heating works in the late spring/early summer. If it doesn't work in the late spring/early summer, you have ample time to get it replaced in time for winter. A replacement boiler requires a faculty, as does changing to a new heating system, so you need to allow at least 4 months for a faculty to pass through the system. If you turn your heating on and it doesn't work in October, it will not be fixed by December for Christmas. Ideally, if you know your boiler is coming to the end of its life in the next couple of years, contact the church buildings team to start exploring ideas for alternative heating options in line with our 2030 Net Zero target. In short, when it's warm outside think about when it will be cold outside. Secondly, regular maintenance will increase the thermal performance of your building. If your gutters are blocked and your roof is missing tiles, you will be letting water into the church. If the building is damp, it will be colder. Keeping your building well maintained

and dry all year round will improve the thermal performance of your church.

I'd like to finish by saying the Church Buildings team are aware of how difficult it can be to keep a church comfortably warm at this time of year. If you are struggling please do contact the Church Buildings team at:

cbo@sheffield.anglican.org

On a brighter note, the church buildings team wishes you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year in your (now) warm churches!

A YEAR IN CHARGE AT THURNSCOE: REVD SARAH MAUGHAN

'There are thousands of people to reach and share the good news of Jesus with. God is good'

The Rector of Thurnscoe and Oversight Minister for the Wath 2 Mission Area has been looking back at her year in the role, and there's excitement for what lies ahead.

Revd Sarah Maughan praised the missional opportunities ahead of her and St Helen's when she first took on the role. St Helen's is where the main focus of her work takes place, whilst also linking up with Revd Fiona Kouble in Ardsley.



Having arrived at St Helen's with the existing 9am service in place, Sarah was keen to add an additional 11am service to try and reach out to people who aren't familiar with church:

'We did a lot of thinking about how that would look and who we could reach. To me there's just thousands of people to reach! It's going fantastically well and better than I could have ever imagined: God is so good. I've a really good team of people with me that love seeing the growth of the church.'

'People's growth in faith has been amazing. We've had nine candidates for confirmation this year, plus I've baptised lots of adults. It's thriving, and it's been good to see the congregation that were there before I came

staying faithful to the church.'

The focus on putting together the 11am services was to make them as engaging as possible to enable people to have a relationship with Jesus. PowerPoint slides are used as opposed to service sheets, with a breadth of worship songs included.

Café church has also started up in Thurnscoe, taking place once a month on a Saturday. Taking place in the church hall, the sessions help as a stepping stone for people who may initially be hesitant to walk through the church door.

Sarah says:

'We really wanted to make sure everybody felt they could contribute and engage in the worship. It's important people have some real time and space to reflect. The biggest thing for me, both in café church and in any service I do in

church, is that initial welcome for people. It's finding that balance really wherever you are to know how people will respond.

'I'm really fortunate to have had the opportunity to help gather this team of people together; some of them new to one another, and some of them have worked with each other before. There is no end to our plans - we will just keep going and going!

'I think I'd like to start something on an afternoon more regularly and through the week, so we're looking at that as well. There's lots of talk from other gifted people about what can we do to use their gifts to help others. I don't want to tire people out, so we'll start one thing and get that well established before looking at what's next. But we've got lots of plans and people have got lots of ideas!'

An 11am service has been added at Thurnscoe



DEVELOPING OUR CHURCHES AS PLACES OF WELCOME, HEALING AND WHOLENESS

Reflections by Dr Revd Louise Castle on the Healing and Wholeness journey so far

'I feel so hopeful that Healing & Wholeness is creeping onto the scene and life in our churches. It is so much needed. I often wonder how many broken souls sit in our pews each week...'

- Training day attendee

The events have been well received in the Diocese



What an encouraging year for the Diocesan Healing and Wholeness team! Just over 12 months ago we launched our first event, running a well-attended workshop at the Diocesan Development Day. There we set out our holistic, broad model for healing ministry and explained how we felt healing was such a core part of all our ministry that we should not

neglect it. Jesus spent 70% of his time healing and we are called to do likewise...

The team set out to respond to requests for mental health signposting, listening skills and resources for helping church teams develop sustainable places of welcome for all, where we can share wellbeing and model how our faith and



intentional prayer rhythms keep us healthy. Healing is a missional activity!

We partnered with Andy Freeman from Sheffield's Space to Breathe and Ruth Rice from Renew Wellbeing and have run three training events this year, spread throughout the Diocese, seeking to equip church teams with the skills to walk alongside and make healthy community. Places where 'it is ok not to be ok', with those struggling with mental health problems or loneliness, which includes so very many of us.

We have learnt so many things from Ruth and Andy. The importance of 'being with' and learning from each other rather than 'trying to fix'. The importance of knowing our limits and how to partner with and work across boundaries with social prescribers, health care professionals and voluntary organisations. Above all, the importance of having intentional prayer rhythms alongside everything we do.

We have learnt to model the five ways of wellbeing, the five things that people consistently said helped with their wellbeing in recent government research: to connect; be active; take notice; learn; and give. These are all deeply spiritual things that can feed our soul and make sense of our lives...

Alongside training we have modelled healing services, which the team have led in several churches and in the Cathedral Crypt, where we have started a monthly Healing service at 3.30pm on the first Saturday of each month, to provide a central healing service for healing teams.

We have sought to create a Healing and Wholeness community with the aim of sharing ideas and resources across the Diocese. 106 people have attended our training courses this year and receive our quarterly newsletter, and there are currently 40 members of our Facebook group.

Here are some comments from attendees of our training:

'A beautiful thought-provoking, informative training day, provided with excitement and enthusiasm, I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it.'

'I am excited about getting ours [Renew Wellbeing space] off the ground. There is a team already in place, we are preparing the prayer cards you mentioned, and we have chosen our spot.'

'The healing and wellbeing learning events this year have helped us to feel inspired in the formation of a vision for our Thursday community drop in. We have come together as a team around the Renew Wellbeing framework and have found Ruth Rice's book and talks, both practical and motivational...the service this morning added to our awareness as a congregation of the importance of personal and congregational wholeness and healing.'

Watch this space! As a team we are now considering 'what next', with an away-morning to prayerfully plan ahead. Please pray that God will show us what to prioritise and get in touch if you have any ideas! Let us know what your healing ministry looks like and how we can help and resource you.

Visit our H&W Page on the Diocesan website to find out more about the resources shared there:

<https://sheffdio.org/healingandwholeness>

If you would like to receive our quarterly newsletter, or if you hold healing and wholeness services which you would like us to share details of on the Diocesan Healing and Wholeness webpage, please email me at:

healing.ministry@sheffield.anglican.org

REFORGING COMMUNITY LINKS IN EDLINGTON AND HEXTHORPE

It's hoped the appointment of a new Focal Minister will boost fellowship and outreach in Edlington and Hexthorpe

It's clear from speaking to Richard Hulme that there's a strong desire to reconnect with people in the parishes following a difficult time for many. Richard is the Vicar and Oversight Minister of St Jude's Hexthorpe and St John the Baptist in Edlington, and has been speaking during the recent appointment of a Focal Minister to the area.

Keen from the beginning to get someone in place, Richard has spoken candidly about having a key contact on the ground as an additional person for

the wider congregations to be in touch with:

'You get a fuller picture and perhaps even a little bit more honesty about the things that you do. In some situations, wearing a dog collar can open doors but sometimes it can close them. Often somebody who is known locally sometimes can have inroads.

'The other thing I'm hoping that will benefit us is recognising there are some things other people are better at, so it's

The authorisation and commissioning of Andy Unsworth



important we are able to resourcefully use those talents. A Focal Minister will be good for me and for the parishes.'

Andy Unsworth was authorised and commissioned in October as Focal Minister for the churches in Edlington and Hexthorpe, having previously served in the same role for St John the Evangelist in Balby.

He had already attended worship on Sunday mornings in the leadup to the appointment, and Richard is hopeful he'll make a big impact:

'We've sat down and had positive discussions as part of a Focal Ministry agreement, and he was already getting a feel for the place before he started. We've brainstormed lots of ideas and it's very much our hope Andy and others can help us to re-forge those links in the local community.'

Focal Minister Andy Unsworth said:

'I am privileged to be able to serve these churches and the communities where I have been placed by God. I will encourage people to grow in their faith and help all to live out the Gospel of the Lord in their everyday lives at home, work and in their community.'

'For those who've not found their faith I will walk alongside them to find God and show them the love and affection He shows his children. A Bible passage which I was drawn to during my discernment is from Isaiah 6:8:

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

'I am looking forward to being out in the community being the face of the church and being a light of Christ everywhere I go and for everyone I encounter with.'



Director of Focal Ministry Sally Myers said:

'There is clearly a great match between Andy's calling and gifts and the needs of his home parish. He spoke some beautiful words during his authorisation service as he promised to work with Fr Richard for the benefit of the whole people of God there. I am excited to see how things develop.'

FOREST CHURCH AT CHRIST CHURCH STANNINGTON

Peggy Cook, leader of the Forest Church project at Christ Church Stannington, shares with us how the care for God's creation is encouraged





and some kind of song, and usually I'll ask different members of the group to bring something and help to contribute a song fitting into the month's theme. Sometimes people bring the guitar and play, whilst at other times we sing along to recordings; whatever works best for what people have got. We then finish with a reasonably open-ended outdoor activity, whether it's drawing a picture in chalk on the paving stones, planting acorns or going to collect things.

ARE THERE ANY CHRISTMAS

THEMES PLANNED WITH FOREST CHURCH?

At Christ Church Stannington on the Monday before Christmas we have Christmas Live, where we have an outdoor nativity performance. On Christmas Eve, we've got kids doing a Nativity where one adult will tell the story and the kids will all dress up and act. We tend not to do a Christmas Forest Church, but our event at the end of November is usually the first Sunday in Advent, so this year we've talked about Christmas plans and decorated spruces that grow in the churchyard.

We also make decorations that birds can eat, so using things like dried oranges or carrots on strings.

WHY ARE THE SESSIONS IMPORTANT?

It fits alongside the Eco Church stuff that we do and gives people that ability to spend some time outside. It also helps people to think about how God cares about the Earth.

We don't always do Bible stories linked to the environment, but pulling all these elements together it helps to think about eco-Bible stories or outdoors-Bible stories. Because you're sat outside experiencing this, it gives that extra kind of dimension to the things in the Bible – and what God has done for creation.

You can find out more about Forest Church over on their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/489530729022640/>

VOCATIONS FAIR AND CELEBRATION OF LAY MINISTRIES SERVICE

'There are thousands of people to reach and share the good news of Jesus with. God is good'

On Saturday 23rd September, many people from around the Diocese of Sheffield came to Sheffield Cathedral for the Celebration of Lay Ministry Service and a Vocations Fair. Bishop Sophie spoke to us at the service, reminding us that we are all called to follow Christ and to share in the ministry of the church. At the service, we were privileged to hear how God was using focal ministers, lay readers, children's and youth ministers as well as those who were connecting with our Lights for Christ project. We heard how different churches in the Diocese were blessing the people of South Yorkshire in Christ's name and sharing the good news of the Christian faith. Alongside this, we were able to celebrate with those who have completed the foundations course in the Diocese as well as commission youth and children's ministers to Goole, Dore and Crosspool.

The Celebration of Lay Ministry service is an important mark in our year as we celebrate the many ways people offer

ministry in our churches. It also reminds us that when we talk about vocation and calling, we do not just mean ordained ministry. We are all called and we can celebrate the diverse ways that people serve in our churches and communities.

Before the service, there was a Vocations Fair where there were stalls from people in the Diocese and beyond who were able to talk with anyone about how God might be calling them in the future. We are all called by God, God knows us by name and as disciples of Christ we share in the mission of God together. It may be that you are wondering in what ways God might be calling you and if that is you then the vocations team would love to help you to listen. If you would like to talk with a vocations advisor please do contact our Director of Vocations, Dan Christian who would love to speak with you:

dan.christian@sheffield.anglican.org

The Celebration of Lay Ministry service at Sheffield Cathedral



SMALL SPARKS GRANTS

Mission Development Adviser John Marsh shares encouraging stories of how Small Sparks Grants are making a difference in the Diocese

The Diocesan vision is to grow lively and diverse Christian communities that are effective in making disciples. You, as a church, may well be considering an ongoing activity or series of events to help you do this. If so, we have some good news in the form of the Small Sparks Grant (sheffdio.org/smallsparksgrant).

Coming to faith and engaging in Christian discipleship is a journey. Sometimes that journey is short and sometimes it's a longer process. In either case our role, as church communities, is to help people along it. The Small Sparks Grant is there to help you to develop a missional pathway for people to travel along with you, so they can find Jesus and walk with him as well. We find that people often move from one kind of

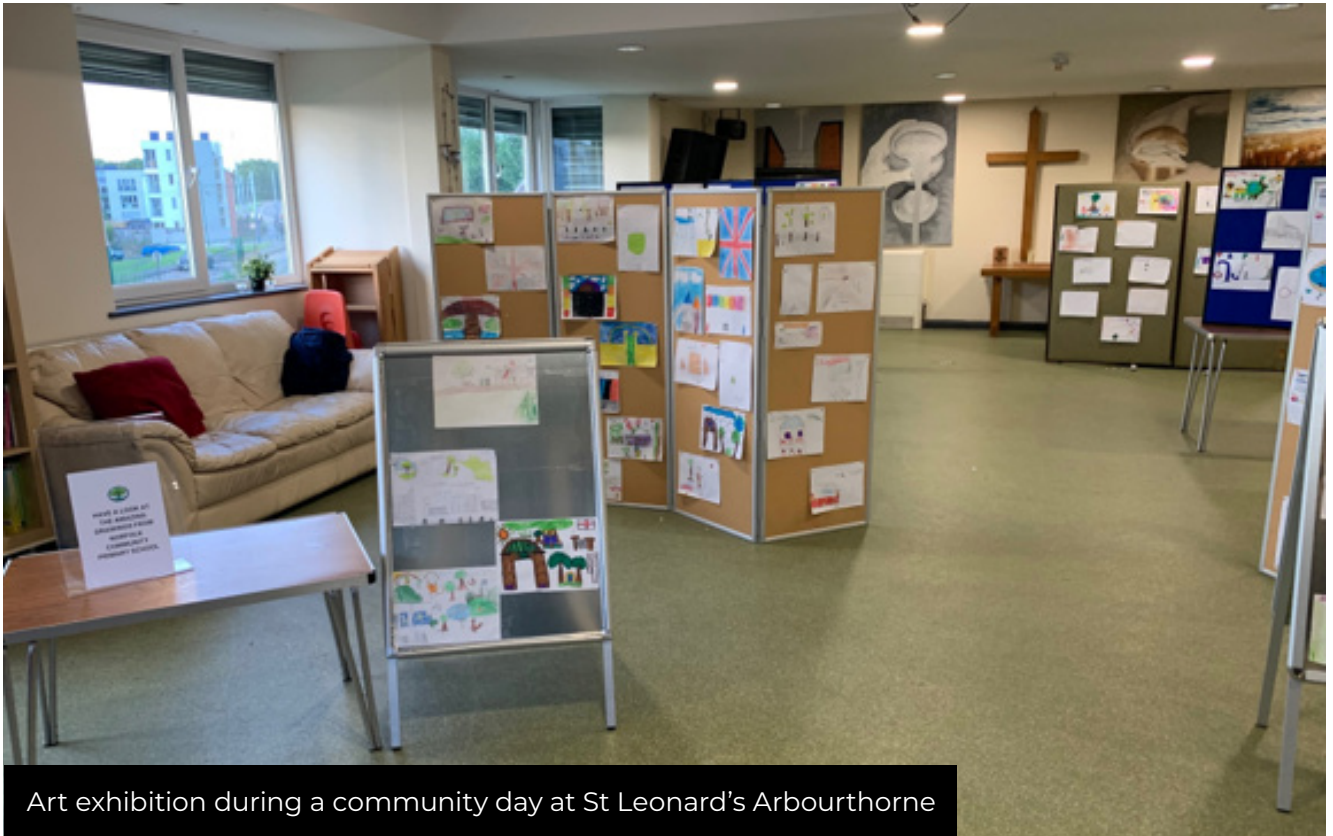
relationship to another and therefore the missional pathway has steps along it that help those relationships to develop.

The first step is that strangers become friends. We have events and activities that help people discover us and our faith without having to share it; coffee mornings, walking groups, parent and toddlers, food banks etc. These activities are good in their own right because they build and serve communities but we also want to be intentional about sharing our faith.

The second step is that friends become believers. We have events and activities that help people learn about Jesus and the Christian faith and consider it for themselves; Alpha, Start, Pilgrim, seeker services, café church, nurture groups,



Holiday club at St Leonard's



Art exhibition during a community day at St Leonard's Arbourthorne

confirmation preparation, catechism etc. These activities are respectful and considerate and honest about their purpose, people are invited to them to hear for themselves.

The third step is that believers become disciples. We have events and activities that help people go deeper with Jesus and put their faith into action in all sorts of ways; Home groups, Bible studies, Prayer groups, helping with the other activities in step one and two to help people move along. These activities help each believer to fulfil their baptismal calling as disciples, as Lights for Christ. The predecessor to the Small Sparks Grant was the Missional Activity Grant which we launched with the help of the Diocesan Grants Committee in February this year. The aim of the grant was to fund part or all of the Mission pathways that the churches had begun. The first churches to receive the grant have begun to report back and excerpts from their stories follow.

St John's Park used their grant to invest

in their Monday club, a lunchtime drop-in. The Monday club attendance is very variable, between 5 and 20 people but there is a steady core of three to five mums with their children from the toddler group and they are building good relationships with them. Another person who comes regularly to the group has come to faith and become one of the main helpers. Food parcels are always offered and there are always invites to other church activities e.g. Messy Church which are starting to be taken up. David, the Oversight Minister, says that they are really pleased with the way people are connecting in to the church family.

St Leonard's Arbourthorne used their grant to fund a community art activity. Their church is a modern building with steel shutters and they invited two local primary schools to submit entries to show how these shutters might be decorated. They were overwhelmed by an amazingly positive reaction of over 200 entries. On the day itself,

unfortunately it rained, but the community came into the church and had an arts and crafts day creating their own art gallery. Subsequently the holiday club had lots of the children come back to explore the theme 'Joseph and his coat'. Local parents and children felt they had ownership of the church because of the links from the community day. Stronger ties with the local schools are also emerging and a nativity craft with parents and children and a Christingle service are planned. Lynne, the Children and Family worker says she is amazed and God has exceeded all her expectations.

St Matthew's Carver Street used their grant to help with a soft relaunch of their student work for the new university term. They have doubled the numbers at the games night by serving food and are halfway through an Alpha course. One person has come to faith and is getting baptised soon. There are more people also getting involved in leading the group now. Richard, the student leader,

felt that developing the group with food and running Alpha had worked really well.

The Small Sparks Grant aims to continue the work of the Missional Activity Grant and we believe that the Holy Spirit will continue to use these opportunities to draw people to Jesus in the same way. If you are not certain how a Missional Pathway works or how to establish them in your church then don't worry because the grant comes with lots of opportunities for support. In the first instance email:

john.marsh@sheffield.anglican.org or check out the website sheffdio.org/smallsparksgrant

We are very grateful that this initiative is supported by the Church Commissioners through the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB).



HISTORIC HEAT HACKS: INCREASE COMFORT AND CUT CARBON

The Diocese of Sheffield has teamed up with local company, Cheribim to help Churches on their paths to Net Zero

To reach Net Zero by 2030, we need to reduce carbon and energy use at our church buildings, move to renewable sources for energy we need, and where necessary offset our emissions. But historic church buildings represent particular challenges to achieving this - from huge spaces which take days to heat, to draughts, deteriorating downpipes and damp.

The new Historic Heat Hacks project will support Churches to understand their buildings better and inform decisions to lower energy consumption, increase comfort and undertake adaptations. Participation is free and churches can choose to engage as much or as little with the project as they are able over the next 18 months.

CUT ENERGY COSTS USING TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY SENSORS

The project is offering free temperature and humidity sensors to churches across the Diocese on a first come first served basis. To qualify, your building must be solid wall (typically representing all buildings built pre-1919), and neither wifi nor fixings are required.

Possible to set up in just 10 minutes, once positioned, temperature and humidity readings are automatically stored every 5-10 minutes from 2-3



Sensor device at Rotherham Minster

places in your building, as well as outside. The readings are instantly available to view via a weblink, which you can access any time, anywhere with an internet connection.

Pilot tests at Rotherham Minster, Chapel on the Bridge and St. John the Evangelist, Goole, have already shown the potential of the sensors to help decrease heating and lower energy bills, as well as monitor drying following repairs to address water ingress, or even after flooding!

IMPROVE THERMAL COMFORT

The project has been designed to help you understand why your building 'behaves' the way it does, whether that's finding you always feel cold ten minutes before the end of a service, or working out why that damp patch appears above the south door - but not every time it



Sensor device at St Mary's Worsbrough

rains...

In addition to your sensor readings, you are therefore also invited to join a series of optional workshops focusing on ways to reduce discomfort in historic buildings which don't involve just increasing the thermostat!

Collaborating with you to understand what's "normal" for your building, and working to identify options at a scale that avoids costly, disruptive and high-carbon alterations to your building's systems or fabric, the workshops will demonstrate how sensors can be placed anywhere in the building to investigate whatever is most helpful to you, from measuring your current heating system's impact on comfort in the nave to repositioning to measure the impact of temporary draught excluders, shades to prevent overheating in summer, or even compare comfort levels at similar air temperatures both with and without heated pew cushions.

EXTRA SUPPORT FOR YOUR BUILDING CHALLENGES

Sensor readings and learnings from workshop activities can be shared with your Quinquennial Inspector and Support Officers from Church House.

Additionally, Cheribim's dedicated Project Officer, Jack, is always at the end of the phone, or available to visit you in person. And Dr Robyn Pender - a building physicist with over thirty years experience with Historic England, will be leading the workshops, offering advice and demonstrations.



GET INVOLVED

Collect readings through both winter 2023, and winter 2024 to compare between years, and measure the impact of any changes you make:

Sign up online at cheribimapp.com/participate

Or to contact Jack on jack@cheribimapp.com or 07945 193247 for a chat or to sign up by phone.



The sensors are already showing signs of reducing energy bills

5 TOP TIPS FOR YOUR COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

A CHURCH NEAR YOU

In December, [AChurchNearYou.com](https://achurchnearyou.com) expects millions to seek churches, with 80% first-time visitors, presenting a significant evangelism chance. Churches can prepare for Christmas using free resources like music, graphics, and posters on the A Church Near You Resource Hub. Visit achurchnearyou.com/GetReadyForChristmas for guidance on getting online ready for the season.

CONTACTLESS GIVING

During the generous Christmas season, welcoming visitors to your church is crucial. Facilitate easy generosity with free rental of contactless donation machines and payment devices. Receive support for digital giving on your church website, along with attractive templates. Connect with Luke and Paul at generosity@sheffield.anglican.org for the next steps.

LIGHTS FOR CHRIST

Advent, a time of anticipation, welcomes many visitors to celebrate Christ's coming. Enhance your Advent season with resources like the Travelling Light course, group plans, Christingle service prayers, and discipleship calendars. Explore the Lights for Christ page on the Diocese of Sheffield website. Reach out to Hannah Sandoval at hannah.sandoval@sheffield.anglican.org for more.

CHURCH BUILDINGS

Christmas is an ideal time for church visits. Special services abound, but creating a warm, welcoming space is key for return visits. Resources from the Buildings team aid in this, along with Street to Seat videos for memorable experiences. Connect with the Church Buildings team at cbo@sheffield.anglican.org or explore the Diocese website for guidance.

AN INVITATION TO...

With a stellar A Church Near You page, contactless machine, festive setup, and warm church, ensure visitors return (20% on average). Resources offer guidance on inviting them back through courses (e.g., Alpha), festival events (e.g., Easter), church activities, and community events. Reach out to the Resourcing Mission and Ministry team at RMM@sheffield.anglican.org for assistance.

For more information, please visit our webpage at <https://sheffdio.org/countdowntochristmas> or simply scan the QR code below!



BREATHE DEEP IS MOVING ... NOT VENUE, BUT DIRECTION!



A long-held vision of mine, is to see young people leading young people. In my days as a children's and youth worker in York, we regularly released children and young people into positions of leadership and trust. We saw confidence, faith and character grow with every step they took. We did ministry **WITH** them, not to them or for them.

As a Breathe Deep team, we have worked towards this for many years, seeing glimpses of what could be. In January 2023, we saw young people leading a workshop for the first time... and it was beautifully and creatively put together and delivered. I invited the same young people to lead a workshop at the Diocesan Development Day in October, and again they stepped up to the challenge and delivered what I might

argue was one of the best Development Day workshops I had ever been to on welcoming difference, receiving a standing ovation from many including the Archdeacon of Sheffield and the Bishop of Doncaster!

SO, WHERE IS BREATHE DEEP GOING FROM HERE?

[On Saturday 27th January, 2024](#), at 9:30am, the doors of the cathedral will open for the tenth Breathe Deep youth event for the diocese!

Our worship will be led by young people, and most of our workshops too! As adults in the church, the temptation is to keep control of our events and services,

but God is drawing us into greater trust and acceptance that He delights to speak in and through our children and young people... in fact, he even hides some of his secrets from the wise and learned and reveals them to little children (Matt 11:25). By keeping children and young people at arms distance, we miss God's best for us. By keeping children and young people quiet and not allowing them to grow, learn, practice and set an example for us, we go against God's very Kingdom, where the greatest among us is the least, the small can do great things, and the weak shame the proud.

If there are young people aged between 11-18 years old in your church, could you invite them to come with a youth leader or parent to join us for the day? Maybe there are other young people in your community with an interest in faith, life and love who would like to come?

To see what the day is like, head to www.breathedeepday.info and click back through the years for videos and pictures. The day is made up of lively worship, fun, learning, workshops, a Subway lunch, outdoor cavepods, dress up photobooth, Breathe Deep TV studio, crafts, circus

skills, games and an enormous inflatable assault course! Young people must be accompanied by a leader/parent with the relevant consent forms, safeguarding and risk assessments complete. Young people come away encouraged, inspired and built up in faith and love for the world. Our prayer is that more and more step up to take leadership positions and help shape not only the future Breathe Deep events, but our whole life as a diocese.

I encourage you to listen and take note of what our children and young people are saying and doing. Ask yourself, how is God working through these young ones? What is God saying to me through them? What can I learn from their example?

Breathe Deep is a place of welcome for all young people, to share a holy space together, to hear God speaking through each other, to grow in relationship and love with each other. This builds up the body of Christ and the church in our diocese. We're looking forward to gathering our young people together to be church, do church and show church to the rest of us!



*“The Diocese of Sheffield
is called to grow a
sustainable network
of Christ-like, lively
and diverse Christian
communities in every
place which are
effective in making
disciples and in seeking
to transform our society
and God’s world.”*



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SHEFFIELD

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