

Stepping out—Harry Pearson’s volunteer week...

“Why on earth did I volunteer for this?”, repeated in my head as I made my way to a July evening meeting at St Mary’s, Boston Spa for volunteers about the children’s holiday club week at the end of the month.

“Working with children is NOT your thing”, I told myself as I parked. “You could just go home and give it up as a bad idea...”

It’s not that I don’t like children; it’s just that I’ve always felt I don’t relate to them well, and I don’t have the ‘knack’ of communicating effectively with them. I’ve avoided children’s work throughout my ‘church’ life, and although I have been involved in many summer youth camps, it has usually been on the practical side, e.g. in the kitchen or driving a minibus.

So why step outside my comfort zone by volunteering for five days of holiday club? The most important factor was a challenge to everyone in my church to get out of their ‘comfort zone’ in God’s service. Our ‘Stepping Out’ theme has encouraged us to do something different, to take a ‘step of faith’ (Matthew 14:28-33), so when the call went out I found myself volunteering in the most involuntary manner!

I was welcomed by Kate and Phil who organise the event, and was reassured by some familiar faces, as well as some lovely new people. Kate explained everything very thoroughly, and there was an opportunity to chat afterwards and ask further questions. The meeting

gave me confidence regarding organisation of the club, although I still nursed a few doubts about my own capability.

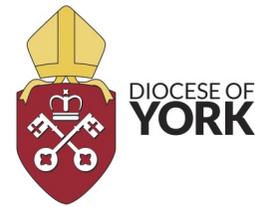
I still felt apprehensive when I rocked up for the fateful opening Monday of the club. I was pleased to be part of a team of three looking after our group, with Judith (a veteran of many holiday clubs), and Juliet (an experienced Sunday school teacher). We had about ten children in our group of primary age, and a couple of young teenagers as assistants, so there was plenty of support, and Kate and Phil were on hand.

Travel theme

The theme was travel, with the kids ‘visiting’ a different country as we crossed Europe. There were games, activities, quizzes, singing, bible study, and more games! My colleagues were very supportive, and before I knew it the first day was over – I had survived!

I can truthfully say that it got better day by day, and I was disappointed when it came to an end on Friday.

It was so good to see children having fun and learning about Jesus. I learned a great deal about myself, not least that I CAN relate well to children and engage with them. It is rewarding to ‘step out’ and stretch oneself beyond our norms. Above all, I discovered what a blessing it is to work with Christians from different traditions in true unity. I think Jesus would approve – does approve!



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...and there’s more!

To the Saints of the Diocese of York

Diocesan Director of Making & Nurturing Disciples, Richard White, writes:

We have focused our strategy on reaching children and youth, younger adults, and people living in poverty. As we do so, are we called to be realists or idealists?

Paul writes in Romans about Abraham who "faced the fact that his body was as good as dead", since he was very old, "yet believed the promise of God that he would be the father of many nations... being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised".

We too are called to face facts with unflinching courage. Truth, however gloomy is always our friend. But we must not stop there. We must then believe the glorious promises of God, which energise our prayer and action.

Like Abraham, our body may seem as good as dead. February's General Synod is discussing sobering findings; 38% of churches have no children and two-thirds have five or fewer. Just 0.7% of people on estates attend church and this number is declining nearly four times faster than in the rest of the country. There is a "serious threat to the future of the C of E's presence in many large and poor urban and rural areas".

There are exceptions of course, glorious stories of places showing a very different story, but let us not kid

ourselves that these are anything but the exceptions which tend to prove the rule.

Yet, we are people of hope and of faith, commissioned to make disciples of all, including all ages and classes. Like Abraham, having faced the facts we too must believe God's promise. Stories of emerging life are not just exceptions that prove the rule. They are green shoots emerging from winter ground. Signs of the unstoppable life of the Spirit of Jesus who promised to build his church.

Heather Black is newly in post leading our Mustard Seed initiative, supporting churches and individuals in making disciples and growing worshipping communities in places where life is tough. Multiply, our work to reach those in their 20s, 30s and 40s is seeing beautifully diverse green shoots across our diocese (click on the map at multiplyreach.org to learn more). And for all of us, the Come and See weekend offers a simple, practical opportunity to act on our faith that God has power to work beyond all we could imagine amongst our own communities.



Richard White

Anonymous Donor gives up to £5.9m to help Belfrey's building project

An anonymous gift of up to £5.9 million has been given to St Michael le Belfrey, York, to fund a major repair and reordering project currently estimated between £5-7m.

This gift will help the Belfrey expand its mission to share the Christian faith, serve young people, support the vulnerable in the city, develop future church leaders who can move on to plant new churches in the north, undertake a comprehensive programme of repairs to preserve a nationally significant building for future generations, and to restore and reorder a building which will create a stunning city centre venue that not only benefits visitors but York's residents and businesses.

"When I received the news, it is fair to say that I was astounded by the generosity of this gift and the phenomenal provision of God," explains Matthew Porter, Vicar of The Belfrey. "To know that we can go ahead with the building restoration in the knowledge that most, if not all, of the funding is in place is both a privilege and a re-

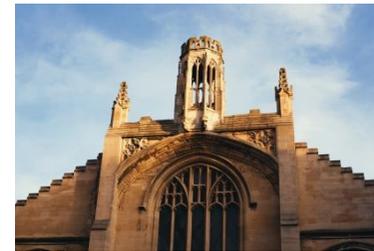
sponsibility. It's important that we create a space which will benefit many people and supports our vision. It's wonderful to know that this releases us as a church to consider other priorities which require our finances."

The building project includes substantial repairs to the fabric including stonework, stained glass and a new roof, alongside a significant reordering particularly to the interior, to make it more flexible for the worship and mission of a 21st Century Church.

St Michael le Belfrey is a resource church for York Diocese which

means it will help train and develop new leaders, help revitalise old churches and plant new ones in York and further afield.

The benefactor approached Matthew in summer 2019 to share their support of the vision to reorder the church building and plant new churches. The Vicar and Church Council have appointed a Project board to make sure the project and its finance are managed wisely.



Returning the Kirk to Kirkleatham

“It was fantastic to experience lots of people gathered together, praying for what the future holds and wishing the whole project well,” said Bishop of Whitby Paul Ferguson after cutting the first turf for the new St Hilda’s Church and Community Centre on the corner of Mersey Road and Roseberry Road, Kirkleatham, Redcar, on the 11th February.

The new building will replace the 1970 church that had to be demolished due to serious structural issues; despite this setback, the church will be back with a new and flexible building to help its outreach and involvement in its community.

“People here in Kirkleatham have done great work getting this off the ground,” added Bishop Paul.

“There is fantastic potential here for people to use this new centre for worship and for community events and so on.”

Funded in part by proceeds from the development of part of the old church site, by a grant of £80,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund and by £100,000 from The Mercers’ Company, the new St Hilda’s will host a café, drop-in centre, social activities, healthy issues clinic, foodbank, benefits advice and signposting, parent and toddler group, youth group and charity shop, as well as facilities

available for hire and for use by other local groups.

Vicar of Kirkleatham the Revd Matt Strand said, “The new church will make it clear that we’re part of the community and not hidden away in the corner!

“It will be a community centre with a church as part of it – we believe as Christians that we’re not here to separate worship from the rest of life.

“We hope that Bishop Paul will be back to open the new church later this year, and that we can then get on serving our community.”

Kirkleatham continues to be served by its historic Parish Church of St Cuthbert, but in recent months the community of St Hilda’s has been meeting for worship at The Dunes on Low Farm Drive.

The new building will be constructed by Wharton Construction of Darlington, and is expected to be ready by early November 2020.

www.kirkleathamparish.org



Yvonne helps build a bridge

The Bishop of Whitby, Paul Ferguson, recognised Yvonne Bowling as a Chaplaincy Assistant at the Thirsk Rural Business Centre on Thursday 13th February.

Yvonne will be working closely with the Revd Dianne Gamble, Chaplain to the farming community, around Thirsk and nearby parts of North Yorkshire.

Yvonne has become an active member of St Oswald’s Church, Sowerby, in her seven years living in Yorkshire, and is excited to begin the next stage of her new role, after already having volunteered with the chaplaincy at the Rural Business Centre with Yorkshire Churches.

“We’re talking to them all the time, but sometimes we feel that they just want to have a space... we all talk about numbers of who we have in the church, but the numbers are here as well,” Yvonne explains, as she de-



scribes the need for a space for the farmers to worship within the bounds of what they can get to.

“They’re here, and some of them want to know what’s going on: what did you do this Sunday at Church? What did the Vicar say? They’re asking the questions.”

Her role as Chaplaincy Assistant is to serve as a sort of bridge between the farmers and the church, bringing the church to them and offering a spiritual space in which the farmers can come and relax and talk to people like Yvonne

and escape the stresses of farm life.

And the stresses of farm life are many. From working all days of the year, often with little to no support, as well as upcoming uncertainties on Brexit and the recent floods in the area, it is more important than ever for farmers to have this sort of outreach to come to.

“They don’t know what’s happening from one day to the next... I have to be their voice and say we need to stop and look at what we are doing,” says Yvonne.

Yvonne comes from London, where she worked for the police force as support staff, helping those who had been victims of crime and victims of domestic violence.

“All through the work that I’ve done,” Yvonne said, “God was always in my life. He was always pushing me to help people and to do more.”



ARE YOU READY?

Outreach and community are to the fore as nearly six hundred church families across the Diocese of York get ready for **Come and See**, the weekend of mission in the middle of March.

Nearly thirty bishops, many accompanied by teams of ordained and lay ministers from their own dioceses, will join us over the four days, to share their experience with us—and ours with their own sisters and brothers when they go home.

This is the last of the Northern Bishops' Missions inspired by Dr John Sentamu during his time as Archbishop of York—in the last five years they've swept across the dioceses of the Church of England's Northern Province leaving a legacy of joy and encouragement for all those, like us, who long to see our church reach those we currently don't, move to growth and establish a sustainable future.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

You'll know by now what's happening in your own parish or deanery—but you can see a whole lot more at comeandsee.uk/events—you can search by day, location and deanery. And do please make sure **your** events are there—follow instructions on the screen for how to upload them.

HOW CAN WE JOIN IN?

- It's never too late to plan your social, outreach or evangelistic event to be part of the Come and See weekend—talk to your Deanery Co-Ordinator, Area Dean or Lay Dean to find out what else is going on nearby.
- On the website at comeandsee.uk you can find ideas and resources, prayer guidelines, training materials and contacts, to help you contribute, support, join in and make the most of the four days—and think about how to follow it up too.

WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR?

Archbishop Sentamu invites us to use his Pilgrimage Prayer as our prayer for Come and See:

Father in Heaven, mould me into Christlikeness; and stir up in me the fire of your love.

Holy Spirit, fill me with your power; and help me to tell of the love and salvation in Jesus of Nazareth.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, renew my friendship in you; and help me to serve you with a quiet mind and a burning spirit.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, please keep me in the joy, simplicity, and compassion of your holy Gospel. Amen.