

CHILDREN of LIGHT FESTIVAL



DIOCESE OF
YORK

INTRODUCTION

Working alongside the Archbishop of York and his team, the Diocesan Children, Youth and Schools team, in line with the diocesan vision for churches, households and schools, is resourcing a variety of diocesan wide events and activities designed to support churches and deaneries in their engagement with children and young people in the lead up to Easter 2021.

The 'Festival' itself begins with a celebratory commissioning worship service at York Minster where the Archbishop will 'send' the children and young people back to their parishes and deaneries as beacons of Jesus the Light of the World.

Our plan is for an element of pilgrimage from York Minster and welcome events in deaneries and/or parishes as the children and young people return. To facilitate the churches' engagement with children and young people leading up to and during the festival we have produced this booklet. We hope this inspires and encourages deaneries to consider the place of children and young people in our churches, and explore how we can deepen our engagement with them in churches, in households and in schools.

This booklet provides further information about the festival and ways that deaneries can get involved and put children and young people at the heart of what the church does.

We don't know what government restrictions will be in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our plans will be flexible so that they comply with guidelines and legislation current at the time.



Children of Light York Minster Service – Saturday 20th March

The special service will take place at 10.30am on Saturday 20th March at York Minster. Representatives from deaneries, (including deanery champions) and children and young people will be commissioned by the Archbishop of York as beacons of the light of Jesus Christ across the Diocese. Much of the service will be created and presented by children and young people; it is, in part, their opportunity to welcome the Archbishop.

After the service, groups will 'pilgrimage' back to their deanery and parishes and share their experience as part of the usual services on Sunday 21st March. We expect to produce resources, including a short video, to enable this.



Championing Children and Young People in your Deanery

Deanery Champions

We are looking for 'deanery champions' who are passionate about seeing children and young people fully involved in the life of their churches. They will work with local churches to create opportunities to engage with schools and families. Deanery champions will be fully supported by the Children, Youth and Schools' team, firstly with the Children of Light Festival and then with any future developments inspired by this.

The place of children and young people in our diocese, our deaneries, our churches.

We will be providing resources to help deaneries, benefices and parishes think about the place of children and young people in their activities and how to facilitate effective engagement with them in their schools and households.

This could involve:

- a deanery synod focusing solely on children and young people and how they fit into the deanery plan
- Promotion of children and youth advocates in each parish or benefice equipped with ideas and statistics from the latest research
- Presentations on research like 'Faith in the Nexus', and the work of the Child Theology Movement, that demonstrate the importance of paying attention to children and young people as people of faith.
- Resources for theological reflection with children and young people
- Resources to support empowerment and advocacy of children and young people in the governance of churches and deaneries

Opportunities and resources for engaging with children and young people

Welcoming services and events

As the representatives – beacons of the light of Jesus – return to their parish or deanery, there are opportunities for a range of events

- The representatives could be joined by more children, young people, their families and congregation members at the edge of the Deanery and ‘pilgrim’ together to its centre
- Churches across the Deanery could hold a special service on the 21st March led by children and young people. This could include a live report or video from the commissioning service. Resources will be provided by the Children, Youth and Schools team to support this.
- Parishes or benefices could hold a special ‘Messy’, ‘Muddy’ or ‘Sweaty’ Church focusing on Children as beacons of Jesus’ Light and invite local families to join in the fun
- A youth event could be held that brings young people together from across the Deanery to share their hopes and dreams as Children of Light



Creative opportunities

Art competition

Churches could work with local schools, children’s groups and youth groups to hold an art competition, where children and young people are encouraged to explore the theme of ‘being light in difficult times’ through photography, drawing, sculpture, etc. This is an opportunity to strengthen relationships between the church, school and community as the church building becomes a ‘gallery’ of the work. Winning entries could join Deanery or Archdeaconry competitions, or be displayed in exhibitions at focal points around the Diocese in the months following the festival.

Mothers’ Union Banner making

We are working with the Mothers’ Union to explore how some of the artwork can be made into banners to be used in the York Minster service and subsequent pilgrimages back to deaneries.

Children of Light activity bags

Many churches around the Diocese have built relationships with families in their neighbourhood during the pandemic through the provision of bags containing Bible stories and craft activities. To support whatever gathered activities are allowed, the Children, Youth and Schools team will provide a range of downloadable resources for churches to help families explore what it means to be ‘Children of Light’ at home with similar ‘take home bags’.

Engaging with the church year

The Festival is designed to start during Lent and finish on Easter Day as we celebrate together the resurrection of Jesus, the Light of the World.

We will be providing a range of resources to support churches in engaging with children and young people in home, church and school. They will include:

- All Age Worship outlines for Ash Wednesday, each Sunday of Lent, Palm Sunday and Easter Day
- Holy week @ home resource – daily reflective resources that help families creatively engage with Holy Week and Easter through building an Easter garden.
- Lent resources produced for the Archbishop of York Youth Trust's Young Leaders Award which focus on pilgrimage and letting your light shine.

Experience Easter

Resources will be created that enable churches to engage school groups, children and youth groups in an exploration of Easter and the Stations of the Cross either in the church building, the church grounds, or in bags and via videos.

"We often hear people say that our young people are the future of our churches, they are not. They are the church now, along with the whole Body of Christ and these parts we cannot do without!"

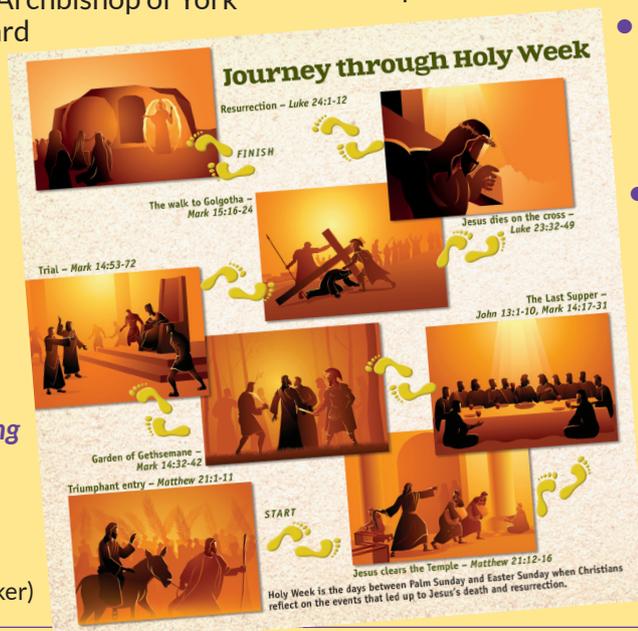
(Donneta – Children and Family Worker)

Celebrating being part of the Diocesan family

Support and resources will be provided to enable individuals and families to learn more about our Diocese and engage in its rich history, places and people

For instance:

- Opportunities for churches and schools to work together to find out more about the saint the school or church is named after.
- Families could be encouraged to use the resources for children provided by the Diocese to accompany Gavin Wakefield's book 'Saints and Holy Places of Yorkshire' to make 'mini pilgrimages' during the Easter holidays and report back to the congregation or school.



- Resources provided for a trail which enables families to discover more about significant crosses around the Diocese.
- Provision for churches and schools to find out more about our link Dioceses in South Africa.

"Church is like the delicate balance of a pair of scales. It's so easy to rock the balance which is why we need to value each person no matter what their age."

(Lenisha – 10 years – Northallerton)

Next Steps

- We would love to encourage you to start conversations in your deaneries about the place of children and young people and the Children of Light Festival.
- Get in touch with us for support and / or help in shaping ideas or facilitating conversations in your deanery or parish.
- Look out for more information in January including further resources.
- Sign up to the Children and Youth mailing to get regular updates about the festival (<https://mailchi.mp/082fafda765c/cysignup>)



Carolyn Edwards
Children and Youth Adviser
Carolyn.Edwards@yorkdiocese.org



Olivia Seymour
Assistant Director of Education
Olivia.Seymour@yorkdiocese.org

Message from Bishop Paul

I'm looking forward to the Children of Light festival as a time when young people can come together (in whatever way is possible!) to celebrate the fact that it's God who's calling, equipping and sending them.

Remember that many young Christians are few in number in their own locality, so this is a great opportunity for them to be encouraged, show one another that they aren't isolated, and know that they have a full part in the most wonderful movement the world has ever seen. Don't forget though that Children of Light is about people of all ages in the Diocese re-focusing our thinking, and it's much more than a one-day event. Please engage with Children of Light and think how it can make a difference where you are.



We don't know what government restrictions will be in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our plans will be flexible so that they comply with guidelines and legislation current at the time.

"I am so looking forward to being able to commission the children and young people of this Diocese to be Children of Light! Children are precious to Jesus, children are invited to be followers of Jesus, and children so often show us wonderful things about Jesus that we'd forgotten, or never noticed. My prayer is that through this event all of those things would be more clearly seen." Archbishop Stephen