

An Explanation and Celebration of the Three Cathedrals of the Anglican Diocese of Leeds

The first eight years



Introduction

In April 2014 the Diocese of Leeds, the youngest diocese in the Church of England came into being after the dissolution of the previous dioceses of Ripon and Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford.

Happily, it brings together most of the three areas which were once united in one diocese, the original Diocese of Ripon.

Though a major move at the time, this was just the latest in many changes that have been made to diocesan boundaries over the centuries.



2 St Pauls, Nicosia - one of the two cathedrals in the current diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

As a result of this reorganisation, there is now, in the Church in England, a diocese with three cathedrals – Ripon, Wakefield and Bradford.

There is, in fact, much historical precedent for this model, both within the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic church; from the medieval dioceses of Coventry and Lichfield, with a cathedral in each location, through the Bishop of Bath and Wells having seats in both Bath Abbey and Wells Cathedral, to the current Middle East where the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf has two cathedrals.

Each of our three cathedrals is still a separate legal entity with its own statutes, constitutions and governance; it is the diocesan construct which has changed in size, shape and structure.

But all three cathedrals have spent the last eight years working together, connecting together and collaborating together very effectively which magnifies the 'cathedral effect' that all

cathedrals are currently experiencing.

However, it is recognised that the model of three cathedrals in one diocese is not the familiar pattern in the Church of England.

So, the deans and council chairs of the three cathedrals have produced this explanation to celebrate and commend the model as one that has wider potential for the mission of the Church of England.



St Christophers, Bahrain - one of the two cathedrals in the current diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

A Message from the Three Deans of the Three Cathedrals



Paul Maybury
The Reverend Canon
Paul Maybury
Acting Dean of
Bradford

“On Easter Day 2014 the cathedrals at Bradford, Ripon and Wakefield became the three cathedrals of the newly-created Diocese of Leeds.

“Since then, we have worked together, confident in our partnership and united in our primary calling to serve the mission of the bishop.

“As we have journeyed together, we have been able both to celebrate our individual strengths, and to work creatively and collaboratively to ensure that the sum of our ministries is more than the aggregate of the parts.

“Because of the contrasting but complementary nature of our contexts we are able to respond to the remarkable diversity of this young and flourishing diocese in a way that allows cathedral ministry to be owned and valued by parishes in urban, suburban, estate, rural and market town settings.

“This, along with established links with our existing stakeholders and hinterlands, amplifies our convening power and enables our voice to be widely heard, particularly in the public square.

“Our spread of geographical location has also enabled the three cathedrals to play a major part in enabling and sustaining the momentum and enthusiasm for mission that has characterised the Diocese of Leeds since its creation.

“As deans, we are proud of what we have accomplished and feel privileged to be part of this new model.

“In this Explanation and Celebration, we have sought to explain the strengths of our new model in the hope that we can provide insights for the wider Church of England as it seeks to re-imagine its approach to mission.”



The Very Reverend
John Dobson
Dean of Ripon



Simon Cowling
The Very Reverend
Simon Cowling
Dean of Wakefield

'Three Cathedrals in One' Explained

Three Cathedrals

- The diocesan bishop has a seat in all three cathedrals
- The three deans support the bishop's ministry and serve on the bishop's Staff Meeting
- The three deans meet together regularly to further co-ordinate mission
- The residentiary canons and heads of department are also regularly in touch with one another
- The three deans and three council chairs meet together regularly
- The three council chairs meet regularly
- The three council chairs are members of the College of Canons
- The three cathedrals support the entire diocese... they are not geographically allocated – each acts as a 'mother church'

One bishop
Three cathedrals of equal status
Three deans
Three chapters
Three cathedral councils
One College of Canons

- The three cathedrals offer the daily office morning and evening, and at least one daily Eucharist seven days a week, creating a 'golden thread' of prayer encircling the entire diocese
- The three cathedrals operated jointly during the pandemic, with combined services for Pentecost and National Holocaust Day, as well as separate, streamed, parallel ones and, in 2020, a combined Remembrance Sunday streamed service
- The three cathedrals have supported the mission and teaching of the diocese through initiatives such as *Living in Love & Faith*, *Rhythm of Life* and *Youth Pilgrimage*



- The three cathedrals are working together to create strategies for each cathedral to reach carbon net zero by 2030
- The three cathedrals together attract a worshipping congregation of more than 650 regularly
- The three cathedrals resource and train more than 750 volunteers from all over the diocese to help deliver the cathedrals' ministry and mission

Three Cathedrals in One Diocese

- Each cathedral is a focus for local relationships as well as playing a diocese-wide role
- Each cathedral has its own particular relationship with its local authorities and other bodies
- Each cathedral has a direct relationship with the lieutenancy of its ceremonial county
- Each cathedral has a direct relationship with the high sheriff of its ceremonial county
- Each cathedral serves and celebrates its own city and region
- Each cathedral plays an active part in the life of its own city and region

The Diocese

The Diocese of Leeds is both geographically large and highly populated. It covers:

- 598 churches	- Four cities
- 447 parishes	- 15 towns
- 267 benefices	- 600+ villages

That is very different from, say, the Dioceses of York and Lincoln which are larger in square miles, or the Dioceses of London, Chelmsford and Southwark which have greater populations. Leeds has both square miles (2,425 of them) and people (2,614,000).

Furthermore, like other dioceses, such as Ely, Southwell & Nottingham, Exeter, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, and Bath & Wells, there is no Anglican cathedral located in the major city, Leeds. In the case of West Yorkshire, the larger communities do not have a history of engaging with each other. It would be a struggle to serve such a diocese with only one cathedral. Instead, what the Leeds diocesan model illustrates is that the existence of already well-established

cathedrals, with supportive and engaged hinterlands, proves the benefits of a multi-cathedral model very quickly.

If these cathedrals had been any way reorganised or 'demoted' it would have broken the relationship, the values and the emotional attachment that their communities already felt they had. This multi-cathedral model commends itself to contemporary mission. The three cathedrals support all the parishes in a variety of ways, from preaching and mission through resource-sharing to pilgrimage and music development.

At the same time one larger diocese supports the costs of a larger, professional administrative centre in Leeds which contributes to capability of mission.

One diocese = scale: scope:
capacity: capability

Three cathedrals = resource:
support: partnership: localism

The Three Cathedrals, 399 Years Separately, Eight Years Together

We celebrate and benefit from all that each cathedral offers and we all benefit from what each cathedral contributes.

Bradford Cathedral

- Became a cathedral in 1919
- Oldest building in Bradford - 1458
- Attacked by Royalist artillery during the siege of Bradford in 1641 and 1642, defended by hanging wool sacks over the side of the tower
- Major architectural extension completed in 1963
- The only Anglican church inside the inner city ring road and has developed strong interfaith relationships
- Specialism in partnerships with the wider community and is a very active parish church
- Developed an expertise in arts and education
- Provides a recognised 'safe space' for difficult conversations
- Extensive young persons' programme including access to specialist music opportunities
- Very strong civic connectivity with annual civic and legal services

- Key partner in Bradford's City of Culture bid 2025
- Nationally recognised for its eco-work



Ripon Cathedral

- Consecrated in 672 AD with the original Anglo-Saxon crypt still intact, the oldest built fabric of all England's cathedrals and the first place in these islands where the Benedictine rule was lived out
- Founded by St Wilfrid who played a major role in the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD; he also trained St Willibrord who went on to become the patron saint of all the Low Countries
- Became the cathedral of the first new diocese after the Reformation in 1836. First bishop went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury
- Strong literary connections through Lewis Carroll and Wilfred Owen
- Regarded as 'our cathedral' by North Yorkshire County Council
- Dean of Ripon was chair of the NYCC Rural Commission 2019-2021 and chairs the Cathedrals' Rural Forum, as well as the Ripon City Partnership, Ripon Together

- Strong and close relationships with the military, particularly with Catterick, which is the largest military establishment in Western Europe
- More than 100,000 visitors a year, plus pilgrims and worshippers



Wakefield Cathedral

- Church on site since Saxon times- current building started in 1329
- Major restoration in 1860s by Sir George Gilbert Scott
- Most complete collection of stained glass by Charles Kempe in the world
- Distinctive missional Catholic identity as a cathedral
- Rooted in a post-industrial city context
- Majority of visitors engage as a centre of spirituality
- Recently re-ordered building brings creative, civic and cultural aggregate alongside creative worship
- Dean of Wakefield sits on the board of Wakefield Future High Street Trust
- Hosted the launch of the Church of England's Persian language Holy Communion service in 2019
- Tallest spire of any church in the whole of Yorkshire

- Is recognised as an important regional venue for the arts, working regularly with the Hepworth Gallery and Yorkshire Sculpture Park



A Message from the Bishop of Leeds the Right Reverend Nicholas Baines

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF LEEDS
THREE CATHEDRALS
SUPPORTING THE BISHOP IN MISSION
Separately and Together
Sharing and Serving



“ I am privileged to be the first diocesan bishop of this young Diocese of Leeds.

It has been a challenging journey from tough beginnings in 2014, creating a steep learning curve for everyone, including me.

The unqualified support of the three cathedrals, their deans and teams has been essential in getting us to the confident place we now enjoy.

They didn't only believe in the principle of three in one, they chose to live it practically in many of their joint endeavours.

Cathedrals are places that people still understand as having local and regional significance without necessarily relating them to a diocese.

Having three cathedrals whose locations are complementary gives a wider range of people access to the many aspects of cathedral ministry than might otherwise be the case in a diocese the size of Leeds.

I have particularly benefitted from having the wisdom of all three deans on my Bishop's Staff Meeting.

Eight years is an appropriate moment to look back and celebrate and to look forward to continue to grow God's Kingdom.

I commend the deans and the council chairs for their initiative in producing this paper, trusting that it might encourage others to learn from our unique experience.”



+ Nick
The Right Reverend
Nicholas Baines
The Bishop of
Leeds

www.bradfordcathedral.org
e: info@bradfordcathedral.org

www.riponcathedral.org.uk
e: admin@riponcathedral.org.uk

www.wakefieldcathedral.org.uk
e: admin@wakefield-cathedral.org.uk

Produced by the three deans and three cathedral council chairs
of Bradford, Ripon and Wakefield Cathedrals