

FAN THE FLAME



CME NEWSLETTER

Welcome to your CME newsletter where each quarter we'll provide you with loads of details of upcoming courses, book recommendations, a wellbeing update, handy contacts and much more. Our hope is that it will help *'fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands'* (2 Tim. 1:6) and flourish in the role to which you have been called.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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HANDY CONTACT - CLAUDIA ASPEY

I have lived in Leyland all 22 years of my life, soon to be 23. I attended Balshaw's CofE High School before moving on to Cardinal Newman College. While university wasn't a part of my journey, I jumped straight into the world of work, which eventually led me to joining the Safeguarding Team at the Diocese in October 2022. Outside of work I am probably one of the laziest people you will ever meet! The main thing that gets me outside is my dogs (Cocker Spaniel and Dachshund/Jack Russell). I am excited to see safeguarding awareness further embed itself in church culture, and help to support this as much as I can. If you have any safeguarding questions (DBS, Training, Dashboard/Hub, Concerns/Referrals...and so on), I am always around to help, and if you're visiting Clayton House, come and say hello... we're tucked away in the corner! (claudia.aspey@blackburn.anglican.org)

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EXERCISE FOR WELLBEING: PARKRUN FOR EVERYONE



The Revd Matt Guilder writes:

Wellbeing is so important in everyone's life and I think *parkrun* might help in that department too!

Let's start with the basics *parkrun* is a free event, where you can **walk/jog** or run 5k or volunteer. They happen all over the world! It started in 2004 with a group of mates in a park in London and recently *parkrun* celebrated over 1 000 000 events globally.

So when and where? Every Saturday morning starting at 9am *parkrun* is on! It has 12 different events (and growing) across our Diocese of Blackburn and many more across the UK and beyond. *parkrun* is free and you only need to register once, regardless of how many different events you visit and whether you intend to walk, jog, run, volunteer or do a combination. Once you register online you turn up, walk jog run with the rest of us, scan your barcode afterwards (makes sense once you register) and that's it! But even better at every *parkrun* there is a first timers briefing about 8:45am to explain the course and also how to *parkrun* if you are still a bit unsure. Like I said you don't need to run or even walk to take part you can volunteer in a variety of different roles. It also has a Sunday morning 9am *parkrun* JNR under 14's (adults you can run alongside) / volunteer, *parkrun* JNR has 11 different events (and growing) across our Diocese.

The JNR is 2k and often all done and dusted by 9:30am. If you are happy to read on?

Let me tell you how I got into *parkrun* and then how you can too. If we have met you probably know I am a simple person I love Jesus, my family and running. When it comes to wellbeing, running has been a real game-changer for me. I often describe myself as a professional extrovert, when I am with people I work hard to build community, encourage others and share life and faith in Jesus. But I also need time to be alone and recover. I found that running was a good way to recover, I liked the time alone, I liked the physical challenge of improving. When I first started out, I walked and ran and slowly made my way to 5k, then 10k.

Having played team sports all my life, I did enjoy the head space and solitude of running but I also missed the competitive nature and community. Worshiping on Sundays made it hard to find local races to compete in and working evenings I struggled to make it to a local club. I was on the phone to my brother in law and he told me about *parkrun* UK. There was one in York near him. I went online and found there was one 45 mins away from us.

So, one Saturday morning I woke up travelled to *parkrun* and I was in! The welcome was amazing, the community was encouraging and everyone was able to compete against the clock. I knew from that moment that *parkrun* was going to be a big part of my life, I thought would just enjoy the running. But actually I loved the volunteering, the community and the traveling to different *parkruns* too. I also loved getting all my friends and family involved and yes I am that loser that books holidays based on proximity to a *parkrun* or makes sure I am back before *parkrun* on a Saturday.[Continues over page...]

EXERCISE FOR WELLBEING: CONTINUED...

Wherever we have lived, *parkrun* has been a community we have invested in, making friends, encouraging others to join in and secretly hoping that one week everyone is away so I can come first...! It has changed my life, helped me make friends, been a place where I have helped others, it has given me a place to run hard and push myself. It gives me a space to be slightly nerdy and competitive with myself where nobody else will even notice or mind, to tick off challenges whilst having fun. I have helped many people from *couch-to-5k* and one of my greatest joys is seeing family members taking part in *parkrun* together!

I also love that it is on in almost any weather... so you can wake up, think this weather looks a bit naff but still head out the door and enjoy! There is a buzz afterwards as the endorphins hit and the shouts on the start line 'we must be mad', we would complain if it was hot, or 'my favourite skin is waterproof'.... Morecambe we have had glorious calm, driving winds and rains and even sleet and snow. I wouldn't change it for the world!

I have learnt so many lessons about how to build community, communicate vision and growth, how to treat volunteers, how to be empowering and encouraging others, I have seen many who are desperate for the community find one but also those who needed that fitness boost find it. I have seen people not think they could make it round once complete over 100! With a priest hat on it is also really good for logistics and help you learn and see different logistics for events and groups of people.

So I *parkrun* and if you were thinking about participating in *parkrun* then I would encourage you to have a go! Volunteering, or perhaps to walk, jog, even run! Some of the benefits of running or walking the, health and wellbeing are massive but also...



join in with something community focused.

I have been lucky enough to run all over the world, including *parkrun*, I have visited lots of different ones, my favourite is Morecambe!

The cool thing about *parkrun* is because of its franchise nature, it has a similar feel at each event and venue, meaning you know sort of what your going to get from week to week. It has been compared to the liturgy of a church community! It also means when you go around the world you can still sort of understand what's happening if your understanding of the local language is limited.

Apart from faith and family, there is no better feeling than after *parkrun*, when you have volunteered and enabled others to enjoy, or you have joined the runners and got round in one piece!

Now I can talk about *parkrun* and running until He returns or calls us home... but I do mean this if you are thinking about starting running, walking or *parkrun* in general I am very willing to have a conversation about how to get going. I am so passionate I believe it will change your life for the better...

So if you are looking for community in a new way or perhaps a boost to your fitness level. Then why not give it a try.

THE REVD CANON NEIL KELLEY
ASSISTANT ARCHDEACON (CLERGY WELLBEING)



Dear sisters and brothers in ministry,

As we enter the summer weeks, I hope this might be an opportunity for us to make the most of this season by allowing ourselves, and those we serve, to rediscover the gift of rest in Christ. In a culture that prizes constant activity and visible productivity, the quiet, faithful witness of stepping back can itself be a profound act of discipleship.

Jesus himself shows us this rhythm. Again and again in the Gospels, he withdraws to lonely places to pray, steps away from the pressing needs of the crowds, and invites his disciples, “Come away... and rest a while.” In following him, we are not called to unceasing activity, but to a life shaped by both service and stillness, presence and withdrawal.

When we intentionally scale down where we can—simplifying diaries, reducing non-essential commitments, embracing a slower pace—we model trust in the Lord we serve. We declare, by our actions, that the Church is sustained not by our constant effort,

but by Christ who is its head, and who continues his work even when we cease.

Our communities are watching us, often more closely than we realise! When clergy demonstrate healthy, Jesus-shaped patterns of rest, take proper leave, and resist the pressure to fill every moment, we give permission for others to do the same. We offer a living testimony that life in Jesus holds space for restoration as well as service, for stillness as well as action.

This does not mean neglecting our calling, but holding it in trust before God. Consider what may be paused, what can be shared, and what truly needs to continue.

May this summer be a season in which we draw close to Jesus, find renewal in him, and quietly witness to his gracious sufficiency.

God of gentleness and rest, watch over your clergy in these summer weeks. Grant them space to breathe, time to be renewed, and grace to return refreshed in body, mind, and spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Email: Canon Neil Kelley:
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Visit the Diocesan website for more:
www.blackburn.anglican.org/clergy-wellbeing



JUST 90

Just 90: is a new programme of clergy-only discussions centred around topics which affect those who are ordained in particular ways. There will be some input from a speaker, chance for discussion and networking, all with tea, coffee, and a smile... crucially all served within 90 minutes or less. Dates for the diary:

8th September, 1-2.30pm - 'Thinking through Finances' - Melaine Wray at Clayton House.

20th October, 1-2.30pm - 'Personal Spirituality' - The Revd Nicholas Heale at Clayton House.

Topics being planning:

Creating healthy boundaries;
Heathly Lifestyle;
Clergy Couples;
Parenting in a Vicarage;
Singleness & Celibacy.

What topics would you like to see discussed? Email the CME Officer.

Blackburn Cathedral

Loads of great events taking place at our cathedral in our centenary year. Click here for more: [Events Guide](#)

EMMANUEL CLERGY STUDY DAYS

We're now able to let you know about the exciting new voluntary study days you're welcome to book on to:

CME Session - **Preaching Mark**, by The Revd Peter Whittington.

Format - **Online**; When - **15 October 2026**, 10:00am to 1:00pm.

CME Session - **Ethics and Leadership**, by Revd Claire Cooke.

Format - **Online**; When - **12 November 2026**, 10:00am to 1:00pm

To book 'Just 90' or an Emmanuel Clergy Study days go to the CME page on the diocesan website [here](#).

Courses by external providers:

College of Preachers

www.collegeofpreachers.co.uk/events

St George's House

www.stgeorghouse.org

CPAS

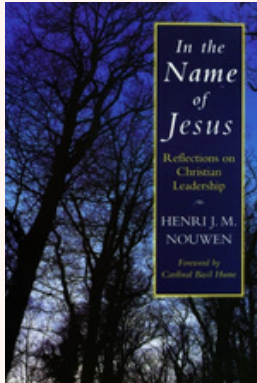
<https://www.cpas.org.uk/event>

Pusey House

[Conferences](#)

Pilgrim Places Conference

[Walking Together 2026](#)



The Revd Sarah O'Donoghue writes:

IN THE NAME OF JESUS - NOUWEN

In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership is a short, influential spiritual book written by Henri Nouwen (a Dutch Roman Catholic priest) in 1989. The book outlines a radical vision for Christian leadership based on his transition from a high-status academic career at Harvard to serving as a pastor for people with intellectual disabilities at the L'Arche Daybreak community.

I first came across this book in 2013 whilst writing my MA thesis on the importance of prayer for anchoring leadership. Recently in my role as Diocesan Renewal Officer, I have found myself drawn to read the book again through the lens of parish growth and renewal. Whilst the book does not offer practical tips for parish growth, it offers something more important: an invitation to find our primary identity not in our pastoral output, but in being God's beloved. In his writing Nouwen gently reminds that our efficacy as leaders flows entirely from our willingness to be vulnerable, broken, and deeply dependent on Jesus.

Nouwen structures this short book around the three temptations of Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11) and Jesus' three commands to Peter (John 21:15-17). He argues that modern leaders must move away from worldly desires for power and relevance, and instead embrace vulnerability, powerlessness, and deep spiritual community.

Nouwen's first point is about the temptation to be relevant. In a secular culture, we desperately want our communities to see us as useful, efficient, and productive. But Nouwen argues that our obsession with relevance is exactly what destroys our prayer lives. He challenges leaders to stop trying to be clever or useful and instead dare to stand before congregations rooted entirely in contemplative prayer—offering nothing but the vulnerable love of God.

Secondly, he tackles our temptation to be spectacular and the temptation to have power and control disguising our need to manage outcomes as "good leadership". Instead, Nouwen calls us to a radical powerlessness, reminding us that true Christian leadership means being willing to be led by the Spirit, even when it feels inconvenient.

For those of us navigating the unique pressures of Christian leadership, this book is a gentle, soul-mending reality check. It won't give you a five-step plan to grow your Sunday attendance or fix your parish financial pressures. Instead, it offers something much more urgent: permission to stop running, a call to pray, and a beautiful reminder that our real identity is found simply in being God's beloved. What I love most about this book is that it reminds us that our plans are futile without a culture of deep intentional prayer, and that we cannot lead others until we allow ourselves to be led by God.

And so as we move to the summer may we be encouraged to leave our emails and administration for an hour, spend time in prayer remembering our 'first love', and the reason we were called.

DLT, 96 pages, £8.99

**Read anything good lately you'd like to review for your clergy colleagues?
Contact the CME Officer.**

THE REVD CANON DAMIAN PLATT DIOCESAN CONFERENCE REFLECTION



The Editor spoke to the Chair of the Conference Organising Committee:

MP: Can you tell us what's the point of a diocese conference? Why do we have diocese conferences?

DP: There were three keywords that Bishop Gill was quite keen to stress: renewal, refreshment and relaxation. I know for some diocese, their conferences can be about training, about upskilling or about launching a particular agenda. For our diocesan conference what really shone through is that it was all about refreshment. There was absolutely no agenda. For example there was no desire for it to be about the previous vision, or about the incoming vision, or about putting ourselves on the back or the latest projects. All of those things could have been justified. However this centenary conference was all about refreshment and having good food amidst great company and comfortable accommodation.

MP: What had you learned from previous conferences? What did you try to do better or differently?

DP: When I came on to the planning team, the feedback that they'd already taken on from previous conferences was to do with how engaging or not the keynote speakers were. Bringing in a high profile speaker can be a draw. However such speakers may well be gifted in authorship or academia but might not be the most engaging at a diocesan conference. And that's fair enough because if they are an expert in a particular subject they are most likely comfortable speaking on that subject in a setting that lends itself well to a lecture format. Our challenge therefore is how do we find experts in their subject field you are also engaging to a wide range of people. It will no doubt be an ongoing challenge for every conference planning team. Once we knew what our theme was for this centenary conference, we started to explore you might be keynote speakers. We watched videos listen to audio and started to approach people we thought might be a good fit. This time around we had a mixture of internal and external keynote speakers. [...] Even with the best of intentions to find that balance between knowledgeable speakers but also engaging speakers, it's a high bar to meet. Therefore we also work hard to bring in some creative elements. Main sessions have the potential to be dry, wordy and academic. We wanted to engage all the senses, the whole mind, and introduce some creative stimulation. Though across those five main sessions we had a live painter, an actor delivering dramatised Bible readings, and a live musician performing songs relevant to the theme of the conference. I trust this...

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE REFLECTION CONTINUED...

helped people engage, feel stimulated, and inspire creativity [...] those three elements I hope helped the main session from feeling dry. They provided something for our eyes to feast on, our ears to feast on, as well as feeding the heart, mind, and soul.



MP: Was there also some kind of learning around the culture in terms of previous conferences where I felt a kind of expectation to go to absolutely everything. And this time it felt much more go to what's going to feed you and don't feel pressured to go everything if you just need to sit in the sun or have a chat with somebody, you can do that. Was there some kind of learning around that?

DP: Yeah, definitely. We've had a great planning team and whenever one of brought different ideas to the table, they were explored and valued and thought-through. One of the ideas was to create a festival feel – a festival vibe. Part of the way to do that was to recognise that people can make their own decisions about what to come to or not. For some people a conversation over coffee whilst the main session is taking place is just as valuable as being in the main session – a long-awaited catch up, the sharing of a burden, a conversation to encouraged – all really valuable. That organic pastoral care it's really important. We wanted people to...

leave the conference feeling refreshed and creating not exhausted and so part of the way to do that was for people to know they can come and go to whatever they want without feeling any expectation to be at everything. Even if somebody was super keen and wanted to go to everything they couldn't! Because sometimes two things are taking place at once. I think that really feels like a festival. So it was about a culture which didn't burden people, which treated people like adults who can make their own informed decisions, and which placed a high value on fellowship.

MP: We've talked about academic and non-academic and people – people who like something a bit more artistic and people who like some sort of spoken word. But more than that, in a diocese where we've got a wide spread of various theological traditions, was there some thinking around providing for different traditions?

DP: It's one of those things where you can't get it perfect. Which strove really hard to foster mutual flourishing and maximum accommodation. What did that look like? A mixture of male and female involvement-on the Tuesday a Book of Common Prayer Communion service led by Jane Atkinson and on Wednesday a Common Worship Eucharist led by David Picken. In the corporate worship there was a mixture of Taizé chants, traditional hymns, and contemporary worship songs. Now, not everyone will have found it to be the perfect balance. But we tried. Just by having a band with drums, guitar, bass, keyboard, and saxophone, that in itself already looks like a contemporary style of worship. To ...

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE REFLECTION CONTINUED...

counterbalance that we tried hard to be careful not to seem like we were favouring any one tradition. That meant going from a Taizé chant, into a traditional hymn, into some liturgy, into some intercultural worship, into a contemporary worship song. A real mixture! We also had the beautiful service of choral evensong, a sung service of Compline, said Morning Prayer and Night Prayer, as well as contemporary worship. Therefore, alongside the creative elements in the main sessions, the various flavours of worship and the stand alone worship options, there really was something many people to enjoy [...] we worked hard to cater for many preferences.

The timing of where the corporate worship was placed in the main sessions was deeply considered. This enabled some people, who for reasons of conscience felt they could not be present during corporate worship, could join in the main session, listen to the keynote, without any surprises coming of further corporate worship taking place. Like I said this can never be worked out perfectly but our intention was fuelled by love of our neighbour, to be respectful of and accommodate consciences, traditions, preferences, and learning styles.

From a practical point of view it was also for important to have a culture where people could come and go. For some people music being loud may cause audio sensory discomfort. For some a warm chapel is problematic (and boy was it warm!). So creative a festival culture of freedom to come and go as needed was important. All the while trusting people to make wise and informed choices.

MP: Different location. Was there some particular thought about that...

How did you feel that location worked? What were the benefits? Tell us about that.



DP: Yeah, I came onto the planning team at a point where the venue had already been decided by others – and what a decision it was. I think it was partly because Bishop Jill had been to Liverpool a couple of years earlier for a conference for bishops and it was felt it could be a great place for our conference. It wasn't far to walk from one part of the campus to another. If you had accommodation in one of the halls it wasn't a long walk to get to the chapel, or a workshop. Everywhere was comfortable, with good and ample food alongside friendly service from the Liverpool Hope staff. The Rector's Lawn was great for the Centenary Anniversary Party. Our main contact at Liverpool Hope was there conference coordinator Suzanne Jamieson – who I must point out was so helpful and critical to things running as smoothly as they did. Nothing was too much trouble for her. The community of Liverpool Hope were clearly pleased to have us. They went above and beyond. The Chapel was brilliant for the main sessions too! For most people in our diocese, it was easy to get to, probably about an hour max for most people but with some people having a shorter journey than that. [Continued over the page...]

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE REFLECTION CONTINUED...

MP: Absolutely. What did you think worked particularly well? And did you did you have any highlights?

DP: Yeah. [...] I loved the fact if someone was there was a lay leader who didn't know many people beforehand, they would not have straightaway had a sense of who are the clergy and who are the laity. There wasn't any divide. So that was a great decision by Bishop Jill to ask people not to attend in clerical gear. I also didn't spot any churchmanship divides or cliques either. If they were happening, they weren't very obvious, which is good. I think overall the atmosphere was brilliant too.



One of my personal highlights was the launch of the diocesan centenary hymn. We commissioned Gareth Davis-Jones to come up with a ... centenary hymn that incorporated the centenary theme of being 'All for Jesus', as well as that it needed to be something which represents Lancashire, something which tells the story of Lancashire, that has meaning to local people in Lancashire, that speaks of God's faithfulness over the last 100 years of the Diocese of Blackburn. Something which can translate across settings too. So, can it be sung by a choir, played on an organ, or just one person on a guitar,

or by a music group. Gareth smashed that brief. He did great. We even proved that in the conference during the main sessions when on occasion it was played on the organ and at other times led by the band. [...] It could have fallen flat – people could have become fed up of singing it. But instead, people warmed to it more and more each day. By the end of the conference many people were asking "when can we have the music to take it back to our church so we can start singing it." That's exactly what we'd hoped, for the hymn to be a resource, to be taken back for parishes and sung for years and generations to come in churches, minsters, cathedrals and chaplaincies. How wonderful if at the next centenary people are still singing the hymn! The hymn captures what we're about as a diocese – being all for Jesus.

MP: Final question, what do you hope that people, clergy, and lay leaders have gone home with?

DP: I think the joy of Jesus. So I know the incoming vision is going to be all about being joyful followers of Jesus. But when I was chatting to people, what kept coming through was there was great joy. So a lovely sense in which the new vision has been brought forward that actually we're already joyful followers of Jesus! The conference was full of joyful learners – joy in worship, joy in fellowship, joy in positivity. Huge joy. And the bishops clearly set that tone in their joy. But I think for me, just that joy that was brought to the conference and then filled up and taken back again. But it's a joy that has its focus on Jesus. It's his joy that we have. It's very much his joy that we have. That was just so good.