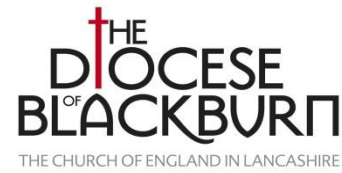


WEEKLY SERMON

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The keys to the flourishing of Lancashire

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." (1 Timothy 2.1-4).

Did you spot it was Lancashire Day last Monday? This commemorates the day in 1295 when representatives were sent to Parliament from Lancashire for the first time.

Time moves on and since its inception in 1996, it's now an annual excuse to celebrate all that is good about our county. In my view, the prize goes to The Lancashire Hot Pots for putting our awesome attributes to folk music, with their cheeky-chappie lyrics:

"Lancashire's for me / It's the friendliest of counties / Lancashire's for me / There's no place I'd rather be / You make me smile with your red rose / It's really, really great tha 'knows / Yes Lancashire, yes Lancashire's for me."

It's a lovely accolade to be the friendliest of counties. Although I grew up in Lancashire, at age 18 I moved down South for the first 13 years of my adult life. When I moved back, I realised I had forgotten how friendly people could be! Strangers would speak to you on the bus, in the street, around town. There's no place I'd rather be!

One of my Lancashire heroines is Lady Margaret Beaufort from the House of Lancaster (1443-1509). She has a remarkable story and what I find most inspirational about her is that she prayed for peace with tenacity for 25 years to see a prospering of our nation.

At that time it was the nation in turmoil; racked by the Hundred Years War with France and then, closer to home, the civil War of the Roses with the House of York. Her two touchstones for the flourishing of the nation were good leadership and sustained prayer.

So, it was such a joy to discover a hidden treasure of Lancashire last week, tucked away in Clitheroe: Turret House.

It's a 24/7 House of Prayer. I visited the team, some of whom had relocated across the country to make their home in Clitheroe. The house was sensitively decorated with prayer stations and art installations to aid prayer. It was full of the tender presence of God. It brought joy to my heart!

Prayer and good leadership. I believe these are key to the flourishing of Lancashire. Key to powering up our Northern Powerhouse.

Many blessings this week of Lancashire Day!

Rt Rev Dr Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES