THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Leeds

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Vacancy: Priest in Charge, Benefice of Upper Wensleydale

Bishop of Ripon's Letter – November 2026

Thank you for your interest in the above post and what a wonderful opportunity lies before you! Here are four parishes at the heart of the stunning Yorkshire Dales, serving local communities, visitors and regular returners. Each parish has a distinct character and identity but as the vacancy gets underway their people are in good heart and realise how much they have grown together as one benefice in united purpose, shared ministry and mutual encouragement. They are eager to keep growing in faith and welcome and are praying for a new priest with a genuine heart for the Gospel of Hope in Jesus who can minister with warmth, resilience and imagination that the church may flourish in this beautiful rural location.

You should find everything you need to know in the lovingly produced brochure - but it is worth noting some opportunities. Hawes, the main market town in the benefice is on the Pennine way, home to the Wensleydale Creamery and other visitor attractions, waterfalls and walks and thriving Livestock Auction Mart with opportunities for Mart Chaplaincy. Askrigg is another well known centre with a primary school like Hawes, and a newly re-rendered church tower which has won national acclaim and become a wonderful way to draw local people and visitors into church life. Hardraw and Stalling Busk are smaller communities but no less distinct with the highest single drop waterfall in England in the former and St Matthew's small arts and crafts church in the latter which offers much welcomed sanctuary and community to tiny gatherings of isolated farmers. Finally, Semerwater - one of only two natural lakes in the Dales and located in the benefice - has become a glorious resource as a natural baptistry!

The Diocese of Leeds is the newest diocese in the Church of England, formally created in 2014. There is a growing appreciation of the ways in which the breadth of vision and depth of resources of a large diocese can support the ministry of parishes in our various contexts. The Barnabas programme, supported by central funding encourages and enables clergy and lay together be confident Christians, growing churches and transforming communities. For more information visit Barnabas.

In the Diocese of Leeds you'll find a warm welcome, supportive colleagues and an enabling culture. There is a sense of 'youthfulness' in the structures which

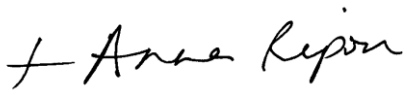
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encourages creativity and innovation and is not hampered by deep seated tradition which can limit openness to change. In the Ripon Episcopal Area and in the Deanery of Wensley, clergy and ministers are deeply committed to mission and ministry and appreciate the collegiality they enjoy with one another, working together to overcome challenges, develop vision and implement plans. This culture is currently being strengthened by our recently developed Resourcing Deanery approach. In my opinion, and based on my experience, this is a very positive and hopeful time for someone to consider joining the Diocese of Leeds (or moving within it).

I encourage you to take time to read the attractive brochure and accompanying profiles prayerfully noticing and savouring enticing details and signs of God's Spirit at work. You will I'm sure be struck by the attention and care given to ministers and clergy and the great team of hopeful lay people that will support you; the very active ministry with children, young people and families; the excitement and hope each church community has for the future following a recent away day; the realism about challenges which are named but the determination to work through them with a new priest; a desire to amplify a culture of working together to support near neighbours in the deanery and the wider Resourcing Deanery approach; and finally a tangible sense of shared passion for the Gospel and longing to love the lost into God's Kingdom.

As you explore the parish publicity I hope and pray you might glimpse the next chapter of growth and learning in your own discipleship and ministry and sense if the Spirit is stirring in you and calling you to take this process further. If you wish to have an informal conversation with the Archdeacon or myself, we would be glad to hear from you. Thank you for taking the time to consider this brilliant opportunity and good wishes and prayers for you in your discernment. Please pray for us in ours too.

With grace and peace,



Rt Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon

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