

Vacancy in the Fountains Benefice – Bishop of Ripon's Letter – December 2025

Thank you for your interest in the post of Rector of the Fountains Benefice, North Yorkshire. This is a creative and hopeful time in the life of these seven churches (four parishes), with a combined population of over 3000 people including three Church of England primary schools. At the gateway to the Yorkshire Dales, West of Ripon, the communities in this Benefice are blessed with stunning countryside, historic sites such as Fountains Abbey, other beautiful visitor attractions such as Studley Deer park and the Himalayan Gardens, all within easy reach of the ancient cathedral city of Ripon with boutique shops, markets and leisure attractions.

The Diocese of Leeds is the newest diocese in the Church of England, formally created at Easter, 2014 from the former dioceses of Ripon and Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield. 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. We have also embarked on the Barnabas programme, supported by central funding, to encourage and enable clergy and lay together be confident Christians, growing churches and transforming communities. There is much more to be found on the diocesan website at [Barnabas](#).

If you are reading this and live in the South of England, I encourage you to seriously consider a move Northwards! I have not looked back since moving here from 'the South' and if you're already living in 'the North' you'll know already local friendliness and kindness and the value placed on the good things of life such as time in the beautiful outdoors and local food. In the Diocese of Leeds you'll find, as I did, a warm welcome, supportive colleagues and an enabling culture. There is a sense of 'youthfulness' in the structures which encourages creativity and innovation and is not hampered by deep seated tradition which can limit openness to change. In the Ripon Episcopal Area, as is the case across the Diocese, 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. 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).

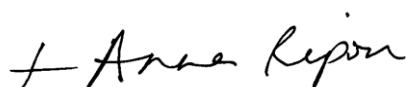
In the Fountains Benefice we hope the new Rector, with understanding of the joys and particular challenges of rural ministry, will work with committed clergy and lay people to further grow and develop a number of exciting initiatives including well established ecumenical relationships, the monthly G-club for school children, house-groups and the recently launched 'Ancient Paths for Modern Pilgrims'. There are also a number of emerging priorities such as working more closely together as a benefice to reduce unnecessary duplication, while retaining the distinct charisms of each church; the mission opportunity of a restorative building project (Grewelthorpe) led by a strong team; and a desire to spiritually nurture faith and vocations in all ages. Following a very positive visioning retreat, there is also good momentum and energy in the local deanery where clergy and lay people support one another and work well together.

Members of the congregations are in good heart, committed and hopeful about the future. They have worked hard in the vacancy and look forward to welcoming a new Rector who will care for them, pray with them and lead them in a shared mission of welcome, prayer, pastoral care, family and children's work and making and nurturing disciples.

I hope that you will find in this brochure and other papers prepared by the parishes a sense of the opportunities for growth in your ministry and your own discipleship, and that you will be able to perceive whether you are being called to take further this process of discernment. If you wish to have an informal conversation with the archdeacon (details in the papers attached), or myself, we would be glad to hear from you.

With all good wishes in your discernment. Please pray for us in ours too.

With grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Anne Ripon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.