

House Up-date: Doncaster

Where is 'the North'? If you live north of the Tyne, it's difficult to think of Yorkshire as being in 'the North'. Yet our 'Northern Area' extends from Holy Island to Doncaster and of course embraces Alnmouth. As we are a Franciscan family it's right that in that area are to be found presences not only in places of holy association, but also of poverty and need - not only places where Christ is present in the beauty of creation and in the joys of hospitality, but in his poor and in that ministry which brings his riches to giver and receiver (and who knows which is which?)



Malcolm, Bishop Jack Nicholls and Paul Anthony after the licensing of the brothers for ministry in Bentley parish. Malcolm, Bishop Jack Nicholls and Paul Anthony after the licensing of the brothers for ministry in Bentley parish.

The Northern Area reached its present shape about three years ago when Damian became vicar of Holy Island (see our centrefold) and with Robert Coombes, set up house in the vicarage there. In Sheffield Diocese (where formerly brothers lived a life primarily of prayer at Burghwallis), Malcolm and Paul Anthony, later to be joined by Nathanael, minister in the parish of St Peter, Bentley, just north (!) of Doncaster. Let them speak for themselves.

MALCOLM

By a strange coincidence I began writing this on 22 May, the third anniversary of our arrival and the beginning of our Society's ministry in Bentley. How quickly time has passed, how much has happened, how conscious we are of all the blessings we have received.

The 'village' of Bentley is a former mining village three miles north of Doncaster. The people have a strong sense of identity and are welcoming and accepting of newcomers. Always referred to as 'the Village', it is in fact very large with a population of almost 10,000. Unemployment is high and there are a lot of youngsters with very little to do, and of course the usual

range of problems. A lot of good caring work is done, much of it by volunteers.

From the very first day we were made welcome and soon felt at home. The vicarage had been well cared for by the parish and is a lovely place to live. There was a lot of curiosity and interest in who those 'brown brothers' were and what they would be doing. St Peter's Church had been in interregnum for almost two years and the faithful and loving congregation had worked hard to maintain the life and worship. They took us to their hearts from the very beginning and we are greatly blessed.

Parish ministry is interesting and varied, there is always plenty to do. Our first priority is our prayer and life together and we hope that the ministry flows from these things. Although churchgoing is not the most popular occupation in Bentley there is a tremendous amount of goodwill for the church. We receive a lot of requests for baptisms and weddings and try to use these occasions as opportunities for wider evangelism.

We are fully involved in the life of the deanery and I am on the Standing Committee. Sometimes we minister outside the parish, leading Quiet Days, preaching, and talking to groups.

As a community of brothers we feel very privileged to share in the life of the wider community. We seek through our Franciscan living to share the gospel and to be a witness to God's reconciling love.

PAUL ANTHONY

Last year I suffered a serious illness, consequently my life has had to change substantially.

At the moment I live the 'lesser rule' which means that I attend Morning and Evening Prayer, and the parish Mass on Sundays and Tuesdays. I help with sick communions, and hope that in the future I will be able to live a full and active life once more.

The garden at Bentley is vast - built on what was a tennis court. It takes a lot of my time. I also like cooking. Most of the cooking is shared, but I cook when no one else is available.

NATHANAEL

From Enlli to Bentley, from the Province of the Church in Wales to the Province of York in the Church of England. I experienced a culture shock!

However, after almost twelve months it's true to say, using a Bentleyite phrase, 'We're getting there.' *f*



Nathanael; this photo was taken on Bardsey Island