More than 100 churches attended the first Labs Learning Roadshow in Leeds, part of the Church of England's programme to help dioceses and parishes spread the Christian message in the digital sphere.

Our *Labs Learning Roadshows* include training, practical tips and advice from experts to help equip churches for mission on social media and online.

Dedicated volunteers, clergy and digital gurus descended on St George's Church in the city centre of Leeds. Morning sessions were followed by workshops led by digital experts who spoke on a variety of projects. From using a coffee cup as a makeshift tripod to keywords to include on your A Church Near You website, the sessions highlighted simple ways in which churches can transform their reach online.

Speakers included the Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, Hayley Matthews, the Diocese of Leeds' Director of Lay Training and former chaplain to MediaCityUK and the Church of England's Head of Digital, Adrian Harris.

Bishop Nick and others talked about best practice, giving practical advice for using social media and websites and providing information on using digital platforms to welcome more people into our worshipping communities.

Adrian Harris updated churches on national campaigns and plans for Christmas with *#FollowTheStar* 2019. The Digital Engagement Lead for Christian Aid, Chris Morris, talked about the transformation of the charity's digital presence and discussed the successes of the project to date.

One attendee stood up at the end of the day and commented on the new A Church Near You website functionality, saying: "More people need to know about how fantastic this is, I thought it was for churches who didn't have a website, but I can see it's for all of us."

Since the creation of the Digital Team for the Church of England three years ago, the training of churches has been a priority with so far more than 2,000 churches trained so far.

Adrian Harris, Head of Digital at the Church of England, said: "We were thrilled with the really positive outcome of the day and high levels of engagement. There was a fantastic atmosphere and delegates asked lots of questions in the main hall and the workshops. We're looking forward to our next events in London and Oxford."

Labs Learning Roadshow is now an online conference, Digital Labs.

Find out more here

Key areas discussed

A Church Near You (ACNY): a church finder website which millions of people use to find a church service each year. More than 80% of those accessing the site are doing so for the first time. The site also offers churches a free church website saving churches the expense of website hosting. *Labs Learning* will be helping churches to take advantage of this free resource which some churches. Churches receive more than 10,000 messages from the public through ACNY each quarter.

Discoverability: just one of the key words of the day – where attendees were shown an example of a church utilising free tools available from Google to better engage with the community.

Life Events Diary: a way for churches to log all their life events services and record all the necessary information.

Video Production – how to create high-quality videos using a smartphone.

Training – a key area for the digital team is training for churches. Churches were able to choose between a website masterclass and a session on filming with a smartphone and limited resources.

Virtual Reality (VR) – a session looking into the use of technology with different age groups and the ability of VR to open churches to being more accessible for all.

Attend the Digital Labs conference online

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