

St Mark’s Church, Broomhill hosted a glorious celebration of holy Communion on the evening of Ascension Day, during which ten adults were confirmed.





It was the first Confirmation Service in the Diocese of Sheffield by the Diocesan or Suffragan Bishop for 18 months and felt like a hugely liberating occasion.

At least two of the candidates had been waiting months and months for the opportunity.

The candidates were six men and four women, all between 20 and 50 years of age. Five were Farsi-speaking refugees and asylum seekers (four of whom already have leave to remain), so the reading from Acts 1.1-11 was read in Farsi as well as in English.

Three of the candidates are longstanding Christian disciples, regularising their belonging to the Church of England; but for the other seven candidates the step marked a first formal public commitment to Christ.

The ten candidates were drawn from five churches in the Hallam and Ecclesall Deaneries.

The atmosphere was full of joy, despite the ongoing restrictions on account of the pandemic.

A small, socially distanced, choir sang lustily on behalf of the congregation of about 50 people in all (the church is spacious and airy).

Anointing with oil involved the use of cotton buds, to avoid skin to skin contact; and the laying on of hands, with the candidates masked, involved liberal use of hand sanitizer by the Bishop of Sheffield.

The Bishop preached about the vocation of every baptised and confirmed Christian, to bear witness to what God has done for the world in the life and death, the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

At one point he asked members of the congregation to indicate by raising a hand if they had received at least one dose of a vaccine – the hand of almost every adult present was raised.

He then asked people to keep their hands raised if in the following days they had spoken about that experience to someone else: just about every hand remained raised.

'You bore witness', he observed. 'Why need it be more complicated or awkward when it comes to our experience of faith in Christ?'

In spite of all the constraints involved in the arrangements, or perhaps partly on account of them, the sense of the presence of God was palpable.

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