

Spotlight

Jan/Feb 2020

Money talks

Why is it so hard for us to talk about money?

A new resource has been launched to help churches to start conversations about cash with their congregations and community groups.

The Jesus Money card game has been developed as a partnership between the Just Finance Foundation, Transforming Churches Together and the Diocese of Lichfield.

David Primrose, the diocese's Transforming Church and Communities Enabler, said: "Jesus talked a lot about money, but in our parishes, the conversation is often skewed towards how we can meet parish costs. Yet money impacts all of our lives in so many other ways. Jesus Money is a way to start conversations about money so that we can all think through what really matters. And then whenever someone is struggling with money, it will be easier to ask for support."

Similar to the Grave Talk resource, Jesus Money contains cards with questions which are designed to be discussion starters for small groups. There are four different colour-coded subject matters – save, spend, borrow and give. Most of the questions are completely general with some extra which have more of a church-focus. All are designed to give the opportunity to talk about money in a completely non-threatening way.

Matt Adcock, Head of Communications for the Church Urban Fund of which Transforming Communities Together is a part, said: "We trialled a whole range of different questions before producing the pack, using a score card to work out which ones resulted in the best discussion starters. Some of the questions are quite challenging, but all give the opportunity to say things out loud in a safe space. When you start using the cards, you don't know where the discussion will take you – there are no right and wrong answers. If there's a topic that people don't want to talk about, you can just turn over to the next card."

The cards are recommended for use in small groups where everyone gets the chance to participate. They could be used in a church context, or in existing community groups organised by the church. Jesus Money cards can be ordered from emma.smith@lichfield.anglican.org costing £6 (£10 including postage). More information is available from www.justfinancefoundation.org.uk/jesusmoney.



DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD

The Church of England around Staffordshire,
northern Shropshire and the Black Country

Saying Yes to Life and Yes to

The diocesan Lent Book for 2020 is 'Saying Yes To Life' by Ruth Valerio.

Ruth, Tearfund's Global Advocacy and Influencing Director, explores what it means to be a follower of Jesus and make a difference for good in the light of Genesis 1. She relates the themes of the Creation story to matters of environmental, ethical and social concern to look at being human and, in particular, to be a follower of Jesus during Lent.

'Saying Yes To Life' was commended by the Bishop of Sheffield, Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox, when he gave the annual Selwyn Lecture at Lichfield Cathedral in November. Bishop Pete returned to the cathedral, where he used to be Canon Chancellor, to address "the biggest challenge of our age" - climate breakdown.

Recalling a Selwyn Lecture in Lichfield almost 20 years ago by the late Eugene Peterson on the same chapters, Bishop Pete spoke on 'Creatures in Time and Space: Genesis 1 & 2 and the challenge of climate change.' He outlined how

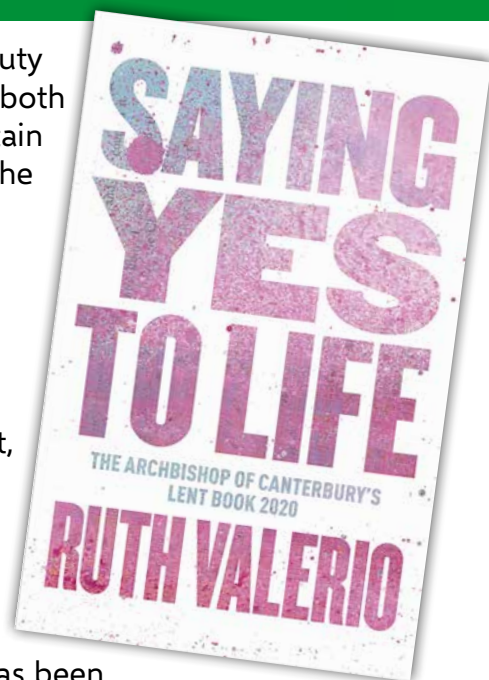
the Christian response to climate change should be characterised by hope and joy with a focus on the beauty around us. "The

enjoyment of beauty in creation might both motivate and sustain us in addressing the challenge."

The freedom to make choices did not mean we could consume without constraint, he added. "My generation has perhaps enjoyed the greatest freedom of any... but there has been a price for the lack of restraint and the planet has worn it. Maybe my granddaughters will be the generation who have to learn to live within limits again."

We are not called to try and return to Eden but to bring to fulfilment what had always been intended: the coming of God's kingdom. "Serving the world and protecting its sacred space are divine strategies for climate change," Bishop Pete concluded.

The Bishop of Lichfield, Bishop Michael, thanked Bishop Pete for "the passion, clarity and conviction" of his message. He also spoke of action across the diocese to tackle climate breakdown, including last September's Climate Action Day which involved thousands of people in churches and the cathedral, and the growing number of Eco Churches locally.



Churches can order copies of the book - also the Archbishop of Canterbury's 2020 Lent book - at a discounted price of £6 each by emailing helen.scheven@lichfield.anglican.org

This offer is available until Friday 24 January after which it will not be possible to order via the diocese. Books will be distributed in February. Additional study resources for adults, young people and children are available at www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/live-lent

Eco Pledge

A ten-year-old Rugeley school pupil has been mobilising classmates to make a global impact. Katie Hodges, a Year 6 student at Chancel School has started Children Against Climate Change.

“In starting this,” said Katie, “people have listened to the things I’m angry about and helped me do something about it. I’ve had help from, local councillors, St Augustine’s Church, Instaprint, charities and my parents. I’m only ten, I wasn’t sure people would listen.”

school at St Augustine’s to raise awareness of the need for action and launched a Schools Eco Pledge campaign to get schools to take the issues of climate change more seriously.

The Eco Pledge encourages schools to take action to recycle more waste, to teach on climate change and raise their game when it comes to taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint.

It identifies specific measures and allows schools to progress through bronze and silver levels to a gold standard in the areas of single-use plastic, heating and energy, recycling, food and healthy diets and helping wildlife. It also empowers pupils to hold their schools to account through a School Commits, Pupils Judge scheme. Katie said: “The existing eco award for schools is too easy for schools to get. It doesn’t include lots of the small things that schools can do themselves or encourage their pupils to do.”

Katie and her friends have also started a climate change club for young people which will be meeting over the coming months to explore the issues and monitor progress.

Together with friends, Katie organised a Children Against Climate Change event after



Welcome from us...

A new Place of Welcome at St James' Church in Clayton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, has proved popular with older people – including two men in their 90s who hadn't seen each other since they were 13! Coordinator Tony Shilkoff explains:

"St James' entered a period of change in 2018 when we undertook a Know Your Church Know Your Community review. We looked at what we were doing for - and could be doing - for the wider community. We identified there were church members and people in the community who were lonely and lacking social interaction.

"With limited resources, much was still achievable if we took small, steady steps. So we agreed to become a Place of Welcome. Starting

just over a year ago on Wednesday mornings we hold weekly sessions in the church hall. It started with a few church members talking with tea, coffee and a biscuit. Gradually, attendees contributed resources: dominos, scrabble, draughts, Jenga, jigsaws and a

giant Play Your Cards Right game. We had two unused table tennis tables, so just needed new nets, bats and balls to use these.

"The sessions are open to people of all faiths or none and the attendees' ages range from newly retired to late 90s. Regular attendance has grown to 20-25, 30 per cent who are non-church members. St James' has always been a loving, caring and welcoming congregation and the non-church members say they attend because of that welcome. The Place of Welcome has become its own small loving and caring community, with a big smile on its face, a vibrant buzz and its own heartbeat!

Some bake cakes and bring them. Keen gardeners have brought plants and advice.

"The four over 90s who play dominos have now stated that the under 90s can play! The table tennis players now play for over half an hour, instead of stopping red faced after ten minutes. The Place of Welcome has led to new friendships and seen old ones renewed. Domino players Alf and Dennis went to school together and hadn't seen each other since they left at 13, over 80 years ago!



"Members discussed creating a knitted poppy display in church for Remembrance Sunday. News spread and others church members and families and friends started knitting. Via growing links with Clayton Hall Academy School, pupils and parents started knitting! The school used the church for their Remembrance Service and the project became community-wide.

"We're excited to see how our Place of Welcome develops as we seek to further widen our reach to people in our community."



...and goodbye from them



"As a diocese we have a clear vision and our Direction of Travel is a journey that will take us much further as we focus on the key areas of discipleship, vocation and evangelism. Ann and I have enjoyed being part of this journey thus far but now believe it is right to step aside and allow a new Bishop to lead this episcopal area into the new decade."

Bishop Michael praised Bishop Geoff's "passion, wisdom and kindness" while the Lord-

The unsung work of local churches was lauded as Bishop Geoff and Ann Annas waved goodbye to the diocese. The couple left after almost a decade in which Bishop Geoff has overseen churches in an area including Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Burton-on-Trent and many rural communities across North Staffordshire as Area Bishop of Stafford.

He retired shortly before his 66th birthday and he and Ann have returned to live in Southampton, close to their family.

A packed Stoke Minster hosted an emotional and uplifting 'Good News from Staffordshire' service featuring first-hand stories of work including a school uniform project in Chell, a foodbank in rural Waterhouses, links between Barlaston Church and Kenya and the Night Church outreach to clubbers in Hanley. Ann, an ophthalmologist, also shared about developing work to care for clergy partners across the diocese.

Bishop Geoff said: "These Good News stories reminds us that most of our churches are vibrant worshipping communities that are confident in living out what Jesus has taught us and love the community they serve.

Lieutenant of Stafford Ian Dudson highlighted Bishop Geoff's contribution to "communities and civic structures" including his work to tackle the challenges and causes of poverty in Stoke as Chair of its Hardship Commission along with his commitment to Staffordshire's rural community.

Sarah Parker singled out "the depth of Ann's depth of care and support" for clergy families, alongside her job as a doctor.

Bishop Geoff added: "It was a wonderful day and we were overwhelmed by the number of people who filled Stoke Minster. We are also grateful for the many cards and emails we have received wishing us well for the future. The gifts from individuals, parishes and of course the wider diocese have made both Ann and I feel very humbled as it has been a pleasure to serve in this exciting diocese and we have already felt rewarded by the warmth and love that you have shown us."

Now the diocese has said goodbye to Bishop Geoff, the process has begun to nominate a person for HM the Queen to appoint as the next Bishop of Stafford.

More pictures from the occasion can be found at [flickr.com/photos/spotlight-dioceseoflichfield](https://www.flickr.com/photos/spotlight-dioceseoflichfield)

Stacked for the senses

People from parishes in the Uttoxeter Area engaged their senses when they got away for the afternoon together. Alison Hunt tells us more:

“Origami doves, making and trying out ‘mocktail’ recipes, playing Jenga. In the Uttoxeter Area we ran another of our creative faith half days. This time it was on the Beatitudes. We use activities as a basis for discussing questions of faith and those who come, love exploring and deepening their faith in this way.

“The afternoon was based on material from the Church of England’s Pilgrim Course: The Beatitudes. Usually each session in the main booklet is matched to an activity and the session material used to stimulate discussion. Our newest afternoon and earlier ones have been a great way for people around our multi-church area of parishes to come together to explore their Christian faith and socialise.



“We have previously also used the Pilgrim material booklet on The Creeds - we painted and sketched, used playdough, made jewellery, had a go at creative writing to explore ideas relating to God, Father, Son and Spirit. We also had a go at writing our own creeds. Last year we used the same technique to explore the story of Jesus calming the storm on Lake Galilee. For this half day we had chocolate dipping, making cargo boxes, creative writing, marbling and collage all based around a junk model boat to represent our journey with God.

“This is a multi-sensory approach to explore our faith. It is a fusion between a bible study group and Messy Church. Activities are adult focused and deep issues and personal experiences are discussed. Adults enjoy trying new things, making, doing as well as listening and talking as much as children do. And there are tangible reminders of the day. It appeals across the generations and many of our most enthusiastic advocates have been in their 70s. They enjoy the approach and are excited by the new ideas. The format is suitable for ages 14 plus - the discussion and eating age!”

To find out more about how you could run a multi-sensory day, email Alison Hunt at uttoxeterareaparish@outlook.com

Pilgrim materials are available from www.pilgrimcourse.org



“After a bring-and-share lunch, we start with worship and prayer to focus on God and always ends with prayer. This time we started as one large group and used relaxation techniques to explore ‘Living with Openness to God’. Then we split into smaller groups to take part in a rotation of activities - making origami doves - ‘Peacemaking’; playing Jenga - ‘Foundations’; making up mocktails - ‘Thirsting for What is Right’; and making suncatchers - ‘Living Transparently’. We ended back all together to look at ‘Living as Citizens of God’s Kingdom’.

Fresh Start in Forsbrook

People are being offered a fresh start at a church in North Staffordshire. St Peter's in Forsbrook has teamed up with national charity Christians Against Poverty (CAP) to help those who want to tackle their everyday dependencies.

Based on the tried-and-tested 12-steps format, the free Fresh Start course helps people let go of habits that may have a negative impact on their lives, such as gambling, worrying, comfort eating, smoking or catalogue shopping.

Fresh Start gives people of all backgrounds the skills to let go of these in a confidential setting through an eight-week course, one-to-one coaching sessions and group work.

Volunteer Ruth Durkin manages the programme at St Peter's with fellow Fresh Start coaches Louise Purnell and Annette Hill. "We know that many people would love to stop a habit that isn't doing them any good but it can be hard to know where to start," she said.

"There are many different habits which once might have brought us comfort, or were fun for a while, but then start to spoil our daily living. Fresh Start is for anyone who knows it is time to stop. It's hard to stop on your own, so we aim to help people in a small group setting where we can support and help each other."

Ruth, Louise and Annette ran their first Fresh Start course in autumn 2019 after being trained by CAP following approval from their PCC.

"Fresh start members do not need to discuss their habit with anyone except their individual coach," said Ruth. "The primary focus is to give

people the skills to change their lives but there are also opportunities to share our faith and the impact that knowing Jesus Christ has on our lives. It enables us to sit alongside people rather than simply teach and coach them."



From left to right): Louise Purnell, Annette Hill, Ruth Durkin – Fresh Start coaches at St Peter's Forsbrook.

One participant said: "Fresh Start has been like a lifeline to me." Another added: "Fresh Start was a brilliant vessel in me taking a further step forward in my Christian journey."

St Peter's has a Fresh Start information evening on 20 January, 7.30pm. Find out more by email ruthdurkin@capfreshstart.org or visiting www.capfreshstart.org



New signing for Germany

Christians from churches across the Midlands and Germany made a fresh commitment to work together for a 'peaceful and just' Europe during a recent visit. The annual Anticipating Advent experience has become a regular calendar fixture with our diocesan partners the Nordkirche Lutheran Church in Northern Germany.

Last year participants from both countries took part in a poignant service on Cannock Chase to remember those lost in both world wars and mark the centenary of the World War One Armistice. This year a small group from our diocese, led by Bishop Michael, spent five days at churches in Germany during which the long-standing Partnership Covenant with the Nordkirche was renewed for another five years.

Telford Vicar the Revd Debbie Loughran was visiting the Nordkirche for the first time. "I wasn't sure what to expect... but what I found were people eager to be partners in the Gospel whatever that meant in our individual contexts - some similar and some very different but there was much to learn and teach on both sides. Fun, laughter, love and a smile are some of the greatest gifts we can offer each other and they all transcend language barriers, cultural differences and the miles which separate us."

The partnership was more important than ever with Brexit looming, Debbie added. "We may

live in Britain, we may live in Germany but our citizenship is in heaven and our partnership begins here. I'm already looking forward to Anticipating Advent 2020 and all that lies between now and then."

The trip included an Anticipating Advent service at Gustrow Cathedral, where Bishop Michael preached, a storytelling workshop and learning about how the Church is reaching out to rural communities.

It followed the recent consecration of Bishop Tilman Jermias, Nordkirche's new bishop, who, along with Bishop Michael, signed the agreement which also included new commitments to working together for climate justice, in inter-faith dialogue and in shared prayer and pilgrimage.

Diocesan Director of World Mission Philip Swan said: "For half of the group it was their first visit to the Nordkirche. Our link with the Nordkirche goes from strength to strength and a whole range of shared activities are planned for 2020."

Trip organiser, the Revd Terry Bloor from Newcastle-under-Lyme, added: "I have been involved with this partnership now for about 17 years and have never known such a level of activity and desire for more. The increasing interest and engagement is very encouraging."



Building Bridges

People are being urged to “build bridges across difference” following the political turmoil of the past 12 months.

The Bishops of Lichfield, Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury have asked Christians to pray for their MPs who were elected in December.

They encouraged everyone to send a hand-written letter to their new, or re-elected, MP to “assure him or her of your prayers.”

The bishops wrote: “In our current political climate, serving in Parliament is a demanding responsibility, and can for some be personally costly or even dangerous. Whatever their or our political allegiance, we believe that those chosen to represent us need and deserve our prayers... It is our prayer that... we may together be able to point people towards signs of hope as we seek the common good, in our local communities and in the life of our nation.”



Bishop Michael added: “The divine image which we trace in one other takes endlessly different shapes. If we are to build together a society that reflects the richness of all our people, we need to learn how to build bridges across difference, to meet and greet one another in all this bewildering variety.

“That is a big challenge, particularly after a bruising and divisive election campaign. But it is vitally important for each of us to reach out to the people most different from us, to the people with whom we most passionately disagree, to the people whose lifestyles, viewpoints and cultures are most dramatically unlike our own, to spend time with them, and to see how together we can enrich one another’s lives and the lives of our society.”

People can send their letters to [Name] MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. Find out who your MP is at <https://members.parliament.uk/constituencies/>



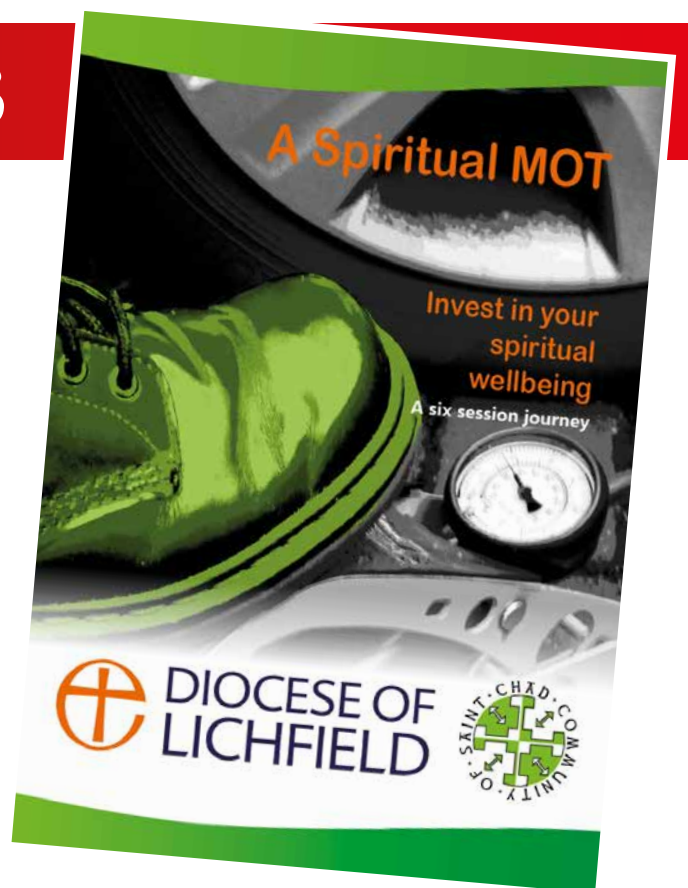
Photo: Parliamentary copyright images are reproduced with the permission of Parliament

Service times

Time for a Spiritual MOT as 2020 begins? Is your church looking for spiritual refreshment and for new rhythms of grace? This six-session journey provides opportunities to invest in spiritual wellbeing and has been designed with small groups in mind.

The booklets are free and are to be used in conjunction with the Community of Saint Chad Handbooks which are available at £1 per copy. Both are available from the diocesan offices in St Mary's House, Lichfield, WS13 7LD, or by emailing karen.baker@lichfield.anglican.org

Community of St Chad Co-leader the Revd Philip Swan said: "This material is being offered to resource our Diocesan Direction of Travel and to help us respond to the invitation to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Chad."



Art and soul

A roving art exhibition that sparks conversation about people's hopes, fears and dreams is now booking for 2020.

The Loving, Hurting, Dreaming artwork has proved popular in churches, schools and community venues across north Shropshire, Staffordshire and the Black Country since its



launch last year. It features three pieces of artwork by Birmingham-based artist Jake Lever developed in collaboration

with Shifnal author and vicar the Revd Preb Chris Thorpe and diocesan Spirituality Adviser Revd Charles Ruxton.

Designed to explore themes of wonder, the state of the world and the Christian gospel, it comes with ready-made materials, including school assembly and lesson plans; artefacts; an artist's sketchbook and guidance for use with adults or young people. One school said: "The impact goes beyond the art. Teachers repeatedly commented that children who don't usually speak or engage 'came alive' in these sessions."

The diocese has exclusive use of the materials this year and all that is charged is transport costs. Visit <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/lhd/>



From the Editor

As this new decade begins, the church's

Welcome to the first Spotlight of 2020.

role in local communities is as important as ever. We'd love to hear stories of hope from your area. Please keep us posted!

Pete Bate, Director of Communications

Star Qualities



When children go back to school and work places re-open after the celebrations of Christmas and New Year we are often keen to sort out the Christmas decorations, to clean the house and get on with the next chapter of life.

The Church calendar invites us to take the opportunity to catch our breath at the beginning of a new year, to rest in God's presence and continue to wonder at the gift of God's own son to the world.

always have at the forefront of our mind how we can support and care for others and enable them to flourish.

The season of the Epiphany, which starts on 6 January, particularly focuses our attention on one aspect of the story of Jesus' birth - the visit of 'wise men from the east', the 'three kings' or 'astrologers' who were led by a star. In the ancient Near East people spoke of a star brightening in the sky when someone was born and dimming again when they died. There were many stories of activity in the heavens associated with the birth of great rulers and kings. This star reminds us that Jesus' birth is an event of truly cosmic significance.

The wise men came to worship and to bring offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh - gifts often given to honour a king or a god in the ancient world. The Bible tells us that when they saw Jesus '...they bowed down and worshipped him.' They hadn't worshipped at the feet of King Herod when they had visited him, but they understand that now they are on holy ground - here is the kingdom of heaven, revealed to them in a child.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.' (John 3:16)

Jesus, God's greatest expression of love for the world. God shows us the way of love through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and we are called to follow in this way of love. So, how do we do this in our life day by day, in our world where there seems to be so much to challenge us and to lead us into behaviour that is not loving?

We are called to make a commitment to live in the most loving way possible, to always

have at the forefront of our mind how we can support and care for others and enable them to flourish. We are called to live in a way that puts the wellbeing of others before our own. This is not a wishy washy kind of love; it is a challenging, radical way of life, but by living the way of love we can transform our relationships, our communities and our world.

It might have been just someone else's story,
Some chosen people get a special king.
We leave them to their own peculiar glory,
We don't belong, it doesn't mean a thing.
But when these three arrive they bring us with them,
Gentiles like us, their wisdom might be ours;
A steady step that finds an inner rhythm,
A pilgrim's eye that sees beyond the stars.
They did not know his name but still they sought him,
They came from elsewhere but still they found;
In temples they found those who sold and bought him,
But in the filthy stable, hallowed ground.
Their courage gives our questing hearts a voice
To seek, to find, to worship, to rejoice.

Epiphany: Malcolm Guite

+Sarah
Bishop of Shrewsbury



Come follow Christ
in the footsteps of St Chad

DIARY



Mental Health First Aid

Continuing to pilot this course in the diocese, it will run again on 5 & 12 March, 9am-4.30pm (both sessions are necessary) Diocesan office, Three Spires House, Lichfield.

Contact emma.smith@lichfield.anglican.org for more details and bookings

Ethical Money Church and the Climate Emergency

How can our church communities use our spending and saving power to create good things in the world, to avoid harm to planet, wildlife and people?

Saturday 25 January, 10am-1pm Aldridge Parish Centre. Details and book at lichfield.anglican.org/EthicalMoneyChurch

Called to be me

Guided quiet days designed to help reflect on God's unique call to you.
Saturday 29 February, University of Wolverhampton Chaplaincy;
Saturday 9 May, St Chad's House, Leek
10am-4pm. £25 Booking and more details from cathy.hughes@lichfield.anglican.org / 01543 306220

For a full listing of events in the Diocese, visit lichfield.anglican.org/events Let us know about your events by email to comms@lichfield.anglican.org