

Spotlight

Mar/Apr 2017

Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad

The Bishop of Lichfield will invite people to 'Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad' when he launches the new Direction of Travel for the Diocese at a special celebration.

The event at Lichfield Cathedral on 20 May will lay out the Diocese's vision for the next five years, building on the existing five mission themes with a recommitment to discipleship, evangelism and vocation.

It will see a focus locally on parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies and the commissioning of four new mission initiatives – one in each episcopal area and one diocesan-wide.

Everyone is welcome on 20 May beginning at 11am and ending with a picnic lunch together.

Bishop Michael said: "Our new Direction of Travel is not an about-turn but will build on what already works well, bringing focus and coherence.

"We will be looking to the life of Chad as an inspiration as we follow Christ. This will be about building a culture where relationship is central, where we rejoice in each other, show hospitality, have an enthusiasm for learning and where everything is soaked in prayer and worship.



"I would love everyone to join us as we celebrate this, and commission our four new mission initiatives, in Chad's seat of Lichfield on 20 May."

Chief Executive Officer Julie Jones said: "We are focusing our energies on how as individuals, churches and a diocese we can be more committed disciples, confident evangelists and generous in acknowledging others' gifts and talents."

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Championing good funerals

Good funeral ministry is key to reaching communities and seeing churches flourish. Ministers in the Lichfield Diocese together take more funerals than in any other diocese in the country. But nationally, although the number of funerals continues to rise, the Church is losing its share.

Funeral ministry is much more than the funeral itself and can be an important step to family and friends becoming involved in their local church.

The Diocese is creating a network of Funeral Champions on the ground to act as a resource locally and share good practice.

Diocesan Director of Mission George Fisher explained: "We value funeral ministry and see it as an integral part of the ministry and mission of the local church. It's a vital part of us being the Church of England in serving members of our communities at a time of great need and bringing the love and comfort of God to them.



"In addition to this, as I speak to church groups I invariably find that a good proportion of new people who have joined do so through funeral ministry, so it's an important part of our mission and growth.

"We are making funeral ministry a key focus for the Diocese and are identifying Funeral Champions in each deanery to work with us in that. They will help us find out what the key issues and challenges are and share good practice and resources across the diocese.

"Across the country we are in danger of losing ground in funeral ministry and this vital contact and ministry of love and care. We hope that through this we will do what we do better and even increase the number of funerals we're asked to take."

One vicar who sees the value of funeral ministry is the Revd Andy Knight, Rector of St Giles in Shrewsbury (left).

"I could take you to people in our congregation who are regular members as a result of funeral ministry," he said. "It's not just about a single funeral service but about inviting people back six or seven times a year to memorial services or carol services. People begin to feel an affiliation with the church and we're able to nurture and encourage this."



Central to good funeral ministry is the relationship between vicars and their local funeral directors.

Andy said: "Investing time at the start of your ministry by getting to know your local funeral directors personally is really important. Good communication is also key. If you know you're not going to be available on particular days for funerals then inform your funeral director beforehand. If I'm not available I'll put the funeral director in touch with a retired colleague who could take the funeral instead. And I make sure they know the church is available and the heating will be switched on even if I'm not there!"

Andy works alongside Shrewsbury-based funeral director Aubrey Kirkham.

Aubrey (right) said: "We work closely together for funerals and I gave a talk at a church fund-raising social event in 2016. St Giles and St Eata's are both very special places of worship and Revd Andrew is very easy to work with. Everything we can do in support, we try and achieve."



Revd Maureen Tideswell, outgoing priest of St Mary's in Knutton (below), added: "We have only one attempt at making a funeral meaningful and memorable. This begins at the very first contact with the next of kin after the request from the funeral director for us to take the service, whether in church or at the crematorium."



"It's vital that there is a good working relationship between the funeral directors and the minister presiding at the funeral. They are all

professionals in their own right and there should be mutual respect for each other's work in building up a relationship with the deceased's family, and making everything as straightforward as possible in their individual circumstances.

"Each funeral will be unique to the one who has died, and it is crucial that we respect the family's wishes where possible in the way they would like the service conducted. We can be responsive and

creative in what we offer; there are so many resources now to help us be so. Yes, it takes time and energy, something we are often short of but if we genuinely have a passion for doing a good funeral then we are allowing a bereaved family to remember and grieve in a healthy way that honours the person who died."

Funeral ministry is part of work by the Diocese's Mission and Transforming Communities Departments to nurture 'death-confident congregations'.

David Primrose, Director of Transforming Communities, said: "The Diocese seeks to promote death-confident congregations, where the church engages with its local community through a wholesome understanding of death and dying, and through pastoral and sacramental support around end of life, funerals and bereavement."

Thy Kingdom Come

Exciting plans are afoot for the period from Ascension Day to Pentecost around the world as churches of many denominations join together to pray that others might know Jesus Christ.

While backed by senior leaders in the Church of England and other denominations, it is very much a success due to local Christians taking part in small or big ways in their locality.



is very much a grass-roots movement where we'll be encouraging people to take the initiative, using or building on prayer groups and events that already exist.

"This isn't about creating more work but praying as you can, wherever you can, when you can so that others might know Jesus Christ!"

"It happens during half-term and we'd invite local networks, such as churches together groups, to take the lead locally as prayer takes place across church denominations."



DISCOVERING
THE HEART OF GOD

Plans are beginning to form in various places. For example, there will be a cycle of meetings on major hilltops around Shropshire and a Beacon Event in Lichfield Cathedral on Pentecost Sunday afternoon (4-7pm) will have something for everyone with a time of joyous praise; a period for individual or group prayer and reflection with prayer stations around the cathedral; and finishing with a quiet service of Compline.

Bishop Mark said: "As well as hosting larger-scale Beacon events, which are currently being planned in the Diocese, this

There are many helpful resources available nationally including prayer booklets for churches and for families;

prayer activity kits, postcards to give out and more. Printed materials can be ordered, or downloaded for free: and locally more details about opportunities across the Diocese in the near future.

In the meantime, visit www.thykingdom.co.uk to find out more.



Confirmed events so far:

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| Thursday 25 May | Ascension Day Dawn service at St Modwens, Burton-on-Trent with +Michael |
| Saturday 27 May: | Family Prayer Picnic on the Wrekin |
| Tuesday 30 May: | Whitchurch Churches Together with +Mark |
| Sunday 4 June: | Pentecost Beacon Event, Lichfield Cathedral |

We'd love to hear about any events or initiatives that are planned in your area – please email Pauline Mack (pauline@yellowribbonuk.org.uk) with details.

Get involved - pray together that others may know Jesus

Commit to something happening in your deanery/town or plan your own event. See lichfield.anglican.org/tkc

I was a stranger

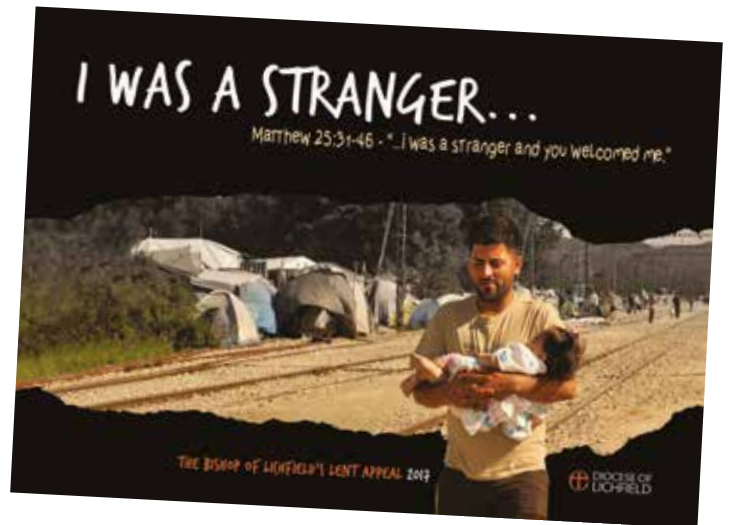
People across the Midlands can make a real difference to the lives of asylum seekers and refugees at home and abroad by contributing to this year's Bishop's Lent Appeal.

Churches, schools, Fresh Expressions and chaplaincies across the Diocese of Lichfield are being encouraged to give.

This year's Lent Appeal helps to tackle the urgent and the ongoing. Through the charity USPG (United Society Partners In The Gospel) it will support the immediate plight of refugees arriving in Greece, where around 62,000 are currently stranded. And, working with the Diocese's Transforming Communities Together joint venture with the Church Urban Fund, it will support projects working with asylum seekers in our own region.

"It is a great honour to select and promote my first Bishop's Lent Appeal in Lichfield Diocese," said Bishop Michael. "As I've learned about past Lent Appeals, I have become so aware that they are the result of thousands of people in parishes across the Diocese working together to contribute positively to the good of others, nearby and far away.

"And so I appeal to you again this year to open your hearts and wallets in generosity as we focus on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers;



strangers, aliens and even angels maybe; certainly all people made in the image of God."

Official figures show that at least 1,800 asylum seekers are housed in Government-contracted accommodation in the Lichfield Diocese area, focused on the urban centres of Stoke-on-Trent, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Bishop Michael said: "There are many encouraging examples of communities working together to welcome and help refugees and asylum seekers. But more must be done to ensure refugees and asylum seekers are treated with the dignity that every human being deserves."

Church projects like Sanctus St Mark's in Shelton are working with refugees and asylum seekers from countries including Iran and Syria, who have been housed locally.

Find out more about the Bishop's Lent Appeal along with details about how to give at lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal_2017/.

They've been a good friend

The Lent Appeal has enjoyed many years of efficient packing thanks to a team of volunteers from St Matthew's Church in Walsall led by Clifford Porter. After more than a decade, they have decided it is time to pass on this baton: could you be the next packing team extraordinaire? If so, contact the Bishop of Lichfield's office: email margaret.wilson@lichfield.anglican.org or phone 01543 306000.

Walk the chalk

Two teachers at a Church school in East Staffordshire led by example at a special Confirmation Service.

Children at All Saints primary in Rangemore recently began taking part in communion during their termly school service at nearby All Saints Church. Their latest service was significant because the Bishop of Stafford confirmed two teachers, reception teacher Alison Evans and Deputy Head Julie Smith, in front of pupils.



"As a leader of an Anglican school, growing in my faith, I felt that it was the right time to publicly declare my love of Jesus and also acknowledge the privilege of being able to share that love with the pupils, staff and parents within my daily work life," said Julie.



Friends and family of both teachers were there to share the celebrations.

Bishop Geoff said: "I was thrilled when I heard that Julie and Alison wished to share this very special moment on their spiritual journeys with the children and their colleagues. I'm sure the testimony they both



gave will have a real impact on those young minds. Revd Les Rees and his wife Wendy are amazing in the ministry they are offering and I'm personally grateful that they put so much thought and prayer into making this such a wonderful occasion.



"We're truly blessed to have so many schools in our Diocese. The guidelines that we have given for confirmation and communion before confirmation in schools are clearly yielding much fruit. I would encourage all parishes with schools to think about how they are working alongside staff in nurturing young people and the staff themselves in the Christian faith."

Wendy said: "There was a lot of hilarity when the Bishop sprinkled the children with the Baptism water and showed off his large cape like Batman! We were proud as a church to congratulate the candidates and rejoice at this response to the teaching on the Eucharist in school."

Libby Leech, Reaching New Generations' Schools Enabler, added: "This was extra special because we're unaware of any other Confirmation Service taking place as part of the regular school service."



Budget Basics

Churches in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire are being equipped to help people manage their money better.

Cash Smart: Credit Savvy is a simple and effective way of teaching anyone how to budget and improve their money skills. It's been used successfully by churches, food banks, charities, councils and schools across the Black Country.



"Training the trainer sessions empower people from churches, local charities and community groups to be able to teach other people how to budget. We give people the tools and resources for free so they can serve their own community."

CASH SMART CREDIT SAVVY

Now Transforming Communities Together (TCT), the Diocese's Joint Venture with Church Urban Fund, is taking part in a national evaluation funded by the Money Advice Service to build evidence about the best ways to help people manage their money.

The first Potteries session will be arranged by the Revd Nigel Evans at St Mary's in Bucknall. Nigel said: "In a community which struggles financially, and struggles to budget with the benefits they are given, Cash Smart: Credit Savvy is the ideal tool to help us assist those people. As a church we engage with our community in many ways and have explored



TCT will run CashSmart: CreditSavvy 'training the trainer' sessions for churches and others in Stoke-on-Trent area and other areas to help people talk about money and enable them to share their knowledge with others.



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

A Church Urban Fund Joint Venture in the Black Country

James Henderson, TCT Development Worker, helped create the course. "Money affects all parts of our lives and our choices, but there is little teaching about how we should use it.

Jesus spoke about money more than anything else, except the Kingdom," he said.

budgeting or debt management programmes in the past, all of which require too big a commitment from us as a church. We are looking forward to a course which will empower us as volunteers to assist those in real need, and in turn to empower them to assist others."



Cash Smart: Credit Savvy helps people navigate budgeting, benefit changes, spending, credit and loans and debt. To find out more, email james.henderson@tcttogether.org.uk

Page Leaven

Church culture is put under the microscope in a new book by a former Lay Assistant to the Bishop of Lichfield. David Brown uses the biblical metaphor of leaven to explore the battling cultures of love – or the Kingdom of Heaven – and lovelessness which drive institutions.

In a recent book launch at St Mary's House in Lichfield, David, who was assistant to Bishop Keith Sutton for 12 years, explained the thinking behind 'Leaven – The Hidden Power Of Culture In The Church'.



"Leaven speaks of an expanding yet hidden power. Jesus engaged in the battle of the cultures; promoting one, and exposing the other," he said. "Each power operates, not just within the individual, but within communities and institutions. One draws in the direction of coherence and wellbeing – and life; and the other presses towards fragmentation and distress – and death. Institutional lovelessness is seen when targets, statistics and economic indicators come to dominate its life, letting concerns for individual wellbeing recede into the mist.

"Each leaven power multiplies: love breeds more love and lovelessness a greater lovelessness. And each has the energy to spread laterally in communities, and generationally through families. Love's power is immeasurably greater."

The book examines how 'worldly' culture can infiltrate the church in areas of controlling power, enchantment with historic customs, individualism and dogmatism.

David quotes American author Timothy Keller who writes: "We tend to draw conservative, buttoned down, moralistic people. The licentiousness and liberated or the broken and marginal avoid church. This can only mean one thing. If the preaching of ministers and the practice of our parishioners do not have the same effect on people that Jesus had, then we must not be declaring the same message that Jesus did."

"The Church has its own vocation – to model God's quality of institutional life in a way that speaks of heaven," said David. "My whole argument presses for a Church doused in God's love, beyond our imagining."

Leaven, published by RoperPenberthy, is available now from the Cathedral Shop and other booksellers.



DISCOVERING
THE HEART OF GOD

Sleep safe and sound

Over 50 volunteers from Anglican churches in the Tamworth area pitched in to help out at a new Winter Night Shelter.

Seven churches across Tamworth — one for each night of the week — joined forces for the pilot project for rough sleepers, coordinated by local Christian charity Starfish.

Holy Trinity Wilnecote; St Peters Glascote Heath and St Barnabas Mile Oak hosted the shelter alongside Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist and Elim churches. Each opened its doors on the same night every week throughout February, so that each was used four times.

Homeless guests signed in at 8pm and were given a hot meal before lights out at 10pm. Breakfast was served at 7am and then guests got a packed lunch and provisions like socks and toiletries.

Other churches sent volunteers to staff one of the three shifts: evening, overnight or morning. The shelter was supplemented by long-running drop-in centres hosted by local churches.

The Rev Oliver Harrison, Vicar of Holy Trinity Wilnecote, said: "It's a very large project: coordinating the helpers from many different churches, the physical work of setting up beds and cooking meals, the practicalities

afterwards of doing the laundry and handing over to the next venue.



"The Church of England is uniquely blessed with a lot of buildings; using them for this purpose seems only right. One of the best things about Tamworth is the way churches work together, regardless of denomination, theology or style; our love for God, for each other, and for our town is stronger than our differences."

Revd Jonathan Iddon, Vicar of Fazeley, added: "One thing that struck me is the sheer number of people who volunteered. I thought we'd rustle up about 20 from the Peel Parishes but there have been at least 55 just from our four churches."



David Primrose, diocesan Director of Transforming Communities, said: "Part of the story is the



PRACTISING
GENEROSITY

way church leaders met to share and pray for each other. The initiative came from the Roman Catholic priest, and everyone joined in. National Christian charity Housing Justice has provided high-quality advice and leadership. We'll be drawing on such experience on 22 June in Walsall at a day-conference on homelessness. Further details are available on request."

Young scholar pipes up

A young organist from Child's Ercall near Market Drayton has won a coveted scholarship under a Royal School of Church Music scheme to develop a new generation of organists.

James Sale, 17, will receive monthly tuition with one of the RSCM's top organ teachers, Simon Russell (organist at St Mary Magdalene, Natwich and former pupil of Gillian Weir). In return, he has to make a commitment to practice consistently and support his local

parish by playing at least 36 services per year. On hearing the news, RSCM local coordinator Cathy Lamb (who is also co-director of music at



Lichfield Cathedral) invited him to Lichfield to try the huge 5,038-pipe organ with Cathedral Organist, Martyn Rawles. See a video clip from that encounter at lichfield.anglican.org/news.

'I love the grand sounds you can get and how you can vary them to display your emotion' said James. "It was our vicar who told me about the scholarship and encouraged me to apply."

"It's fabulous that the RSCM have the Pipeline Organ Scholarship scheme to encourage young players not just as recitalists but to commit to playing liturgically too," said Cathy. "It's one part of the varied work of the RSCM across the country which also includes working with choirs and worship bands."



Come follow Christ

"The celebration will be a springboard to a wider period of consultation where we will map out how 'Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad' will permeate every level of diocesan life" Julie said.

The 20 May event is free: pre-booking is not

required. Drinks will be provided and people are encouraged to bring their own lunch.

It will be followed by **Thy Kingdom Come** – a global prayer movement that Christians throughout the Diocese will be involved in from 25 May to 4 June (turn to page 3 to find out more).



In the footsteps of St Chad

The Bishop of Lichfield's pastoral letter for March

From the first fruits of the English nation who turned to Christ, you called your servant Chad to be an evangelist and bishop of his own people: give us grace so to follow his peaceable nature, humble spirit and prayerful life, that we may truly commend to others the faith which we ourselves profess ...



DISCOVERING
THE HEART OF GOD

So runs the prayer appointed for St Chad's Day, 2nd March, and it sums up so much about the first Bishop of Lichfield which I hope we can emulate in our own time. He was a lover of peace, as we need to be in a world – and sometimes a church – which is divided and contested. He was a person of great humility, and that unfashionable virtue is so welcome in an age obsessed with celebrity image. His strength lay in his commitment to a life of prayer – it is said that in the last week of his life his companions were amazed to find that the angels were singing alongside Chad in his cell – and unless all that we do is rooted and grounded in prayer it will get nowhere. And because of all these things he was able to act as an evangelist, one who commended to all whom he met the way of Jesus Christ, who drew many to a living faith in God.

Chad's legacy is threaded through the history and the geography of our diocese, but all its power derived from the simple-hearted commitment with which he himself followed his Lord, and the friendly openness with which he invited others to join him. It is with this in mind that I want our new diocesan motto to be: Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad. From St Chad's Day until 20th May, when we launch in Lichfield this new direction of our travel together, it would be wonderful if

you could use this collect every day to pray for grace for us all to be renewed in discipleship, evangelism and vocation as Chad was.

Yet, strangely, there is one phrase which rings oddly for me in this prayer: *to be a bishop of his own people*. The fact is, that Chad was a Northumbrian, educated in the great island monastery of Lindisfarne. But the people to whom he came as bishop in Lichfield in 669 were Mercians, just as his brother Cedd was an apostle to the people of Essex. That might seem like a minor point, but remember: Northumbria, Chad's native land, and Mercia, his adopted home, had for decades been engaged in a bitter struggle for supremacy. In 642, the fierce pagan king Penda of Mercia had defeated and killed Northumbria's Oswald and mutilated his body, in a battle fought probably near Oswestry in our diocese; Penda himself was in turn killed by a new Northumbrian king in 655; then in 658, only ten years before Chad's arrival, a Mercian revolt against Northumbrian domination re-established the independence of the Midlands from the North.

The point of all this is not to give a lesson in ancient history, but to underline the fact that in a very real sense Chad was coming not to his own people, but to enemy territory where he could have been suspected, possibly resented, even hated. It is a testimony to his courage and

“in a very real sense Chad was coming not to his own people, but to enemy territory”


to his faith that he crossed the barriers of enmity and otherness and won the pagan Mercians to the true faith; and that is a reminder to us of our vocation, as those who follow Christ in Chad's footsteps, to build bridges of trust, kindness and service across all the barriers which divide our own society and world.

+Michael Ipgrave

DIARY


Called to be Me
 Discover and reflect on God's unique call to you.
 Saturday 25 March or 29 April, 10.00-4.00,
 Shallowford House
 Booking via 01543 306220 or
 angela.bruno@lichfield.anglican.org

Stepping up to Lay Ministry
 28 March 7.30-9.30pm
 St John's Littleworth, Stafford
 Booking via 01543 306220 or
 julia.cunningham@lichfield.anglican.org


Encourage Festival
 One day mini music and arts festival celebrating God's call to us all.
 A range of talks, music, poetry, film and visual arts with speakers including revd Kate Botley and bands Longing For The Coast and the Born-Again Beates. More details coming soon at lichfield.anglican.org/encouragefestival/
 Saturday 23 July 13.00-evening
 Shallowford House

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

Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad
 A launch event to hear Bishop Michael on our shared past and future in the Diocese of Lichfield.
 20 May 11.00 at Lichfield Cathedral followed by bring-your-own picnic



Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad

