

Spotlight

Jan/Feb 2018

Home-grown study for Lent

A new home-grown resource for Lent is now available free of charge for people across the Diocese. 'Steps In Discipleship' is a 44-page colour booklet suitable for use by individuals or groups in parishes, schools, chaplaincies, and fresh expressions.

The aim of each of the five sessions is to connect with an aspect of St Chad's life and explore what relevance it has for Christian people in today's world.

The first session looks at Chad's cross and the challenges he faced when he became Bishop of the Mercians. The next three sessions focus on Chad's vocation, discipleship and evangelistic fervour while the final session looks at Chad in community. Each section includes biblical reflection, quotes from well-known authors, questions for discussion and suggested actions for the week ahead.

The material has been written by Archdeacon Paul Thomas and the Dean of Lichfield Adrian Dorber, with a preface by Bishop Michael.

Bishop Michael said: "It is a joy to commend this booklet for study, reflection and prayer in Lent and beyond. Chad of Lichfield was a man whose humility, energy and holiness inspire us today, and his story is threaded through the geography and history of this precious part of England. As we seek today to answer Christ's

call to follow Him in our own time, there is so much that we can learn from our first bishop's lifelong response, made at a time when Anglo-Saxon Mercia was as diverse, conflicted and yet full of opportunity as modern Mercia is today.

"My hope and prayer is that the resources in these pages will be opened up

by individuals and by groups as a way of renewing discipleship, multiplying vocations, and strengthening evangelism."

The booklet is available to view and download on the diocesan website now at lichfield.anglican.org/2018_lent_booklet/. Hard copies can be ordered until the end of January by email from sally.churchill@lichfield.anglican.org



DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD



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

Footprints in the Diocese

More than 100 churches and other groups across the Diocese have had their say as part of an ongoing conversation about our Next Steps together.

Bishop Michael and Diocesan Chief Executive Julie Jones praised the "very encouraging" response to the survey which came in the wake of the Diocese's new direction of travel to 'Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad.'

Some of the 108 responses came at a parish or deanery level – representing several churches – while others came from Messy Churches, prison chaplaincy and one of the Diocese's overseas partnerships. Responses were rich and varied – see www.lichfield.anglican.org/next_steps/



The survey asked people to share their stories, hopes and plans about the key areas of discipleship, vocation and evangelism. Over the coming months, resources will be made available on

the Diocesan website to support parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies to develop their focus in these areas.

Bishop Michael said: "To have so many people participate in the joint conversation about our Next Steps together is very encouraging. I hope that speaking about discipleship, vocation and evangelism will help release energy and ideas across the Diocese, with the richest initiatives coming from the grass roots."

Julie Jones said: "It is great that the survey results have come from such a wide cross-section of churches and groups across the Diocese."

"These stories will inform the focus of our central Diocesan officer team so that we can develop thematic work using their expertise that will unfold during 2018."

"Our vision as a Diocese will be rooted in the vision of the God we worship, the God who invites us to follow Christ and calls us to abundant life."

"We will ensure that the Direction of Travel enriches the grass roots and that impact is felt not primarily in 'flagship projects' or



Our Direction Of Travel

The Invitation:

Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad

We are responding to this invitation by:

- developing discipleship
- nurturing vocations
- inspiring evangelism

discipleship vocation evangelism

To become parishes, school, chaplaincies and fresh expressions that are:

- discovering the heart of God
- growing disciples
- Reaching new generations
- transforming communities
- practising generosity



Chad living

To kick off 2018, the Diocese has released a set of short videos in a new series called CHAD Living: Choices, Habits, Actions and Decisions. The videos explore what it means to follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad in our modern world.



They include James Henderson talking about single-use plastics, Lindsey Hall on 'fast fashion', Tamar Willoughby on becoming vegan, Richard Clarkson on conscious consumerism, Tilly and Dan Stubbs explaining the benefits of growing food at home and David Primrose on making the most of all our moments.



You can get involved in the Chad Living conversation – and suggest your ideas – on our Diocesan Twitter and Facebook pages.



Searching for 'Chad Living' on Youtube or at www.lichfield.anglican.org/chad-living/

directives from above, but in the diversity of the Christian life found in our parishes, schools, chaplaincies and fresh expressions. We will ensure that our focus is 'outward-facing' as we follow Chad's example in crossing boundaries and reaching people beyond the institutional Church.

"We are drawing Diocesan officers into a new relationship with each other based around discipleship, vocation and evangelism as they work to support and resource parishes, schools, fresh expressions and chaplaincies effectively."

"We are also committed to careful reflection that enables us to find ways in which the Direction of Travel can be shaped in the light of experience and changing circumstances."

The day after St Chad's Day, on Saturday 3 March 2018 at 11am, Bishop Michael invites everyone to a Next Steps celebration service at Lichfield Cathedral. It will feature the Community of St Chad and include an update on our journey of discipleship, vocation and evangelism including the four mission projects that were commissioned last May.

Bishop's Lent Appeal 2018

This year's Bishop's Lent Appeal will focus on supporting families in need – both at home and abroad.

Times are hard for many. In our Diocese there are families who are struggling because of financial pressures, especially with the stagnation in wages and the introduction of Universal Credit. Other families need to escape violence or abuse. Still others need support in building strong relationships and improving parenting skills, often in adverse circumstances. We will be looking to support families in difficulty in the Diocese and, through Let The Children Live!, in South America.

Bishop Michael says: "Families come in all shapes and sizes, from the simple unit of mother and child to complex networks of kinship and relation. They are the places where we find support and nurture but can also be places of struggle, pain, and brokenness. All relationships of love help bring us closer to the love that is God in Trinity. I believe that we need to support families as a way of helping others into that love that we as Christians have found for ourselves. Please do open your hearts and wallets this Lent to support families in need in this Diocese and beyond."

Let The Children Live! (www.letthechildrenlive.org/) works with street children in Columbia's second-largest city, Medellin. It is a charity of last resort for children living and working in the street and shanty towns, children with special needs and young mothers. The charity runs Casa Walsingham where children receive food, advice, support and, if they want it, Christian spiritual formation. A grant from Duncan Bannatyne enabled the opening of a residential centre where children participate in activities and stay in safety. Projects include school facilities for adolescent mothers and their babies and a choir which helps children therapeutically. These have enabled many children to escape the street and provided others with food, accommodation and support for their families.

We also intend to give small grants to a variety of local projects supporting families in need. These include the Pathway Project in Lichfield which offers help to those escaping domestic abuse. This story illustrates the difference they make:

"A young man contacted us 16 years after being in our refuge as a child with his

No doubt of the benefit

The THOMAS Project in Aldridge was one of several initiatives to benefit from 2017's Bishop's Lent Appeal, which focused on supporting asylum seekers and refugees.

It has worked with asylum seeking women and children housed at a nearby hostel for over 12 months, providing food, clothing and toys and advice on housing and IT, and more recently holding weekly worship sessions there.



This is just one part of the community charity's work which provides practical support – including food, training, counselling and

prayer – from its shopfront on the Leighswood estate. It works closely with organisations including Places of Welcome, Black Country Foodbank and Workstations In Walsall. The project offers its broad range of activities around the acronym THOMAS – Training and education, Healthcare information,



Opportunities for life, Ministry and Mission, Achieving Changes and Supporting those in need.

It features in a special video in the new Church of England website (watch it at www.churchofengland.org/helping-people-find-work) that follows the story of Patricia Stares who had been out of work until she came across the project. She realised it was a place that wanted to build a community and look after one another. It was there she got help to find a job, joined a prayer group and became a regular. Patricia said: "I've never seen a shop like it before... It makes me feel a lot happier, and closer to God. I feel closer to Him than I have for a long time since I've been coming to the project. St Thomas is my church."



Project manager Nicky Thomas said: "In the film, Pat comes to The THOMAS Project looking for a job and finds her church.

In the last 12 months, God has taken us on a wonderful journey. Alongside our continuing community work we have introduced worship to our weekly prayer sessions, hosted two 'Good News for You' courses, taken part in ecumenical outreaches in Walsall and Aldridge, introduced Holy Communion into our Love Leighswood events, and changed our shop to sell Christian and Traidcraft resources. We are very excited to see what God has us involved in next!"



Above: Some of the teenage mothers studying in the little school. Left: Some of the children at Casa Walsingham

mother and siblings. He wanted to thank us for looking after them all and said that thanks to our care and support he was a stronger more confident person, and that he now had a young son and wanted to make sure that he was a better father than his had been and was going to make sure that the mistakes of the past would never repeat themselves."

More details on this year's Lent Appeal are at www.lichfield.anglican.org/lent_appeal_2018/.

A New Hope in Walsall

A pioneering initiative focusing on growing Christian community is bringing 'A New Hope' to urban Walsall.

The Walsall Heathlands Mission is a partnership between the Diocese, Latimer Minster (a large, mission-focussed church in Buckinghamshire) and local churches in the parish of Blakenall Heath. It is one of four mission initiatives launched as part of the outworking of the Diocese's new direction of travel to 'Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad.'

In November, the project welcomed a team of over 20 from the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics for a week of focussed mission called 'A New Hope', with a Star Wars theme. The week opened and closed with celebrations in Christ Church Blakenall Heath. The team worked in five local schools, taking assemblies and lessons and running an after-school Messy Church. They also hosted two lively fun days which ended with light parades and a spaceship!

Ian, one of the leaders, said: "The week was a wonderful success. It was lovely to see the excitement on children's faces as R2D2 was wheeled into classrooms to receive their questions about faith. All of the schools were very positive, and it's opened the door for us to return to run assemblies and establish an ongoing after-school church."



A New Hope: worship at Christ Church (top left); Revd Frog Orr-Ewing, Latimer Minster (top right); Wheeling the space rocket to school (above); posters in keeping with the theme (left); for some OCCA students from abroad, snow was a new experience (below)



Find out more at www.facebook.com/HeathlandsMission

"We had lots of positive comments about the fun days. Several people said: 'We've never had anything like this before on this estate,' and one lady told us her kids had not stopped talking about it over a week later."

"It was also lovely to see local church members engaging in the mission, over meals, praying in the prayer room and joining in the celebrations. The week generated a lot of goodwill in the community and our prayer is that it will continue to open doors to share the gospel."

Frog Orr-Ewing, from Latimer Minster, said the partnership was about "reimagining" mission in an urban area, rooted in monastic rhythms of prayer, hospitality and renewal.



"We're in the very early stages of this mission project," he said.

"It's about using the people and resources in a way that can serve the community while meeting the needs of the existing congregation and building relationships to grow new Christian communities here."

Ray of hope between faiths

It's been a busy first year as Inter Faith Enabler in the Wolverhampton Episcopal Area for the Revd Ray Gaston, a half-time post that he combines with being a Vicar of St Chad with St Mark in the Parish of Central Wolverhampton.



"My focus has been on developing Christian discipleship in a multi faith world and encouraging new forms of inter faith engagement particularly amongst children and young people," Ray reflects. "We are all called to be involved in the multi faith reality of our contemporary world. My role is not to be 'the specialist' but rather as my title suggests encouraging all Christians to engage positively and with theological integrity."

To this end the last year has seen Ray involved in working with others on several projects. Firstly, the Christian Muslim Partnership initiative which has seen churches and mosques enter into twinning arrangements. Christians from Evangelical, Anglo-Catholic and Liberal traditions have all become involved. Secondly, piloting a three-day training course on inter faith engagement for Christians.

But the highlight of the year for Ray has been his work with primary schools. "I was asked by Interfaith Wolverhampton to take over the organising of their annual 'Prayers for Peace' service. We moved the event to Inter Faith Week, changed the venue and worked with three faith schools: Christian, Muslim and Sikh. The children were involved in dialogue workshops in the autumn term and together presented their work at the renamed 'Peace for All' event at Molineux Stadium where they outlined their visions for the city in 2020."

Ray has also been involved in developing 'The Bishop and the Imam' assemblies with Bishop Clive and Imam Rashid Raja for local schools that featured in the Wolverhampton Express and Star. This has caught the imagination of primary schools in the area with assemblies booked until the end of the next summer term.

In addition, Ray has found time to complete his latest book published by SCM Press in October: 'Faith, Hope & Love – Inter Faith Engagement as Practical Theology'. It's a work recommended by Bishop Michael as "a great encouragement" for Christian inter faith work.

Ray can be called on 077511 55124, tweet @RevdRay or email ray.gaston@lichfield.anglican.org



Caring for God's family

The Bishop of Lichfield has appointed the Revd Preb Sarah Schofield as his new Adviser For Women In Ministry.

The adviser plays an important role as an advocate for women's ordained ministry in the Diocese and advises Bishop Michael and the area bishops on issues facing female clergy.

Sarah has been the Vicar of All Saints in Wolverhampton since 2006 where she has developed the Warm Welcome project – a multi-agency initiative which offers a safe space to local sex workers. She is a member of General Synod and the Archbishop's Council of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Commission.

Sarah is also a doctoral student at the University of Birmingham exploring how young female ordinands grow into confident, creative, mature clergy in a way that can sustain them for decades. In May 2018 she will be leaving her current parish role to create space to focus on her research.

Sarah said: "I am grateful to Bishop Michael for allowing me to bring together disparate passions into one role. I am unashamedly a Christian and equally unashamedly a feminist. My faith calls me to care for God's people through practical acts of service and academically rigorous research, both can change the world and the church for the better.

"As a researcher I look forward to identifying the barriers in this diocese to female clergy ministering in every area of the

church's life. As a fellow priest I look forward to supporting women, as together we explore the fullness of our calling. I see my role as one specialist element within Bishop Michael's wider vision for our diocese as family of God in which all God's people are represented in leadership."

Bishop Michael said: "Sarah brings a depth of experience at both local parish and national level and I know she will work effectively to promote the flourishing of female clergy across the Diocese. Sarah takes over from the Revd Preb Jane Tillier who I would like to thank for her commitment to seeing women develop in ministry as Bishop's Adviser over the past six years."

The Bishop's Adviser is also available as a link between the female clergy of the Diocese and the Bishops of Ebbsfleet and Maidstone. The Bishop of Maidstone offers extended pastoral and sacramental care to those who stand in the conservative evangelical tradition while the Bishop of Ebbsfleet offers extended care to traditional Catholics in the Church of England. Email: revsarah@hotmail.com



Building on Nordkirche link

A group of 11 people from across the Diocese strengthened links with fellow Christians in northern Germany during a recent visit.

They participated in the annual Anticipating Advent experience which has become a regular calendar fixture with our partner diocese, the Nordkirche Lutheran Church.

The trip included a visit to a church-linked soup kitchen project near Rostock and time looking at the differences in the Reformation in Germany and England as part of its 500th anniversary celebrations.



Members of the group from Lichfield with their hosts (left). The Soup kitchen van outside St Mary's Church in Bad Doberan (below).

One of the visitors, Chrissi Thompson, Young People's Worker at St Peters Forsbrook, said: "It's important that we link with people who are similar but also a bit different from us. It's been really good to experience worship in different styles, to renew friendships and to share food together."

The Revd Patrick Griffin, Curate at St Marks Basford, added: "It's helped to broaden

my appreciation of church tradition and to delve deeper into my Anglican identity. The partnership has become so much more important in post-Brexit Britain."

Anne Lange, responsible for Global Partnerships and Ecumenical Relationships in Rostock, explained: "These links matter because they open up our views of our churches and our countries. We have so much in common and face so many of the same challenges. We are enriched by this sharing of experiences and being able to ask questions together."

The trip followed a visit by Bishop Michael and his wife Dr Julia Ipgrave in February 2017 where they witnessed first-hand church projects at work with refugees and the jobless.

The Revd Sally Smith, founder of Sanctus St Mark's in Shelton which supports refugees and asylum seekers, was part of the latest delegation. "A visit to the soup kitchen near Rostock was particularly interesting. No-one is turned away from this project which provided good quality food to any who want it," she said.



"It's been good to re-connect with the work being done with asylum seekers and refugees. St Peters Church in Schwerin is actually providing sanctuary for 15 asylum seekers who would otherwise be deported."



From the Editor

Welcome to the first Spotlight of 2018 in which we look at ways to help us grow in faith as we in our everyday lives. Please take advantage of our free Lent resource (see p1) and explore innovative ways to follow Jesus through our new CHAD Living channel (p3). Your feedback – as always – is welcome!

*Pete Bate,
Director of Communications*

More Encourage-ment

July 2018 will see the second Encourage Festival, the one-day music and arts event that is designed to celebrate God's call to all people.

Last year's debut festival included talks from Rev Kate Bottley, our own Neil Baldwin and a whole range of music, poetry, food, arts and crafts.

This year's festival will be at Shallowford House on Saturday 7 July and feature actress and comedian Sally Phillips (from Miranda, Bridget Jones and Smack The Pony), music from Goat Roper Rodeo Band with many more acts and activities still to be announced.

Tickets will be on sale from 1 March, with discounts for those who book before Easter, at www.encouragefestival.co.uk



Feedback from last year's festival included "a great day out" and "a real celebration of vocation of all kinds, not just church ministry" plus much appreciation of the range of acts, food and activities available.



Highlights from the 2017 Encourage Festival included TV vicar Kate Bottley joining the TGI Monday panel: food and drink galore, crafts, talks, poetry and film as well as many musicians



Director of Vocations Lindsey Hall said: "We are really looking forward to the next Encourage Festival and to hearing people express their different callings through music, art, talks, poetry and a whole range of other things. We are all passionate about something and it is inspiring to see others living out their call in all sorts of ways."



Variety enables enrichment

I have over the last months been watching the quite sudden physical decline of somebody I have known well for many years. From being a very active and agile 83.6 year old, she has become an 83.9 year old who finds mobility difficult, who experiences almost constant pain, and who needs daily help to perform quite ordinary daily actions. It has been an awkward and testing period for her and for those who know and love her, and uncertainty about the future has compounded the difficulty. Probably you may know somebody going through a similar experience, or possibly this is where you yourself are in your own life now.

My friend has been remarkable for the cheerfulness and resilience with which she has mostly greeted this, and she has been well supported. Sometimes, though, the realisation of what she has lost and is losing must make her want to cry, and I think that things have been made all the harder for her as for most of her life she has regarded it as an ethically good thing to be active and busy, a clear duty to walk and exercise hard, and even a conscientious obligation to go swimming before breakfast each day.

Certainly this is no bad set of values, and it has kept her well for decades. But now that her body will no longer allow her to do the things she once did so easily, there is the danger that she will think of herself as a moral failure, a burden on others, and generally useless. In fact, her strong Christian faith has helped her to get to the point where she can see through the temptation of worthlessness to realise that she still has worth and value in her new condition, but it has not been easy for her to get there.

The kind of physical disabling is something any of us could experience at any point in our lives, whether for a while or indefinitely. And for some people it is, in one way or another, a condition which marks the whole of their lives. We label these people as 'the disabled', but the deeper

reality is that they are women, men and children like ourselves, differing from us only in that they are encountering constraint and limitation in a more comprehensive or permanent way. Because they have lived for years in this way, there may well be truths which we can learn from them about the living of our lives; in any case, whatever our differing abilities, we can be mutually enriched through our companionship, mutual service and prayer within the church. Nor we should we forget that the church itself is the Body of Christ, the fellowship of One who won our healing through his physical wounds.

In the autumn, I licensed The Revd Zoe Heming as Enabling Church Adviser for our diocese. Herself needing to use a



wheelchair for much of her daily life and work because of chronic pain, Zoe not only knows the reality of disability in practice, but has also reflected and prayed about its meaning for Christian discipleship. She has written: 'God walks with us and can help us be less afraid of not being who we were aged 20 - faith and gifts can still grow even as our bodies decline. There are so many simple, inexpensive ways to worship together and embrace one another's gifts to make sure that no one is isolated from church life or left feeling like a "bad Christian".'

All of us want our churches to be places of welcome for people of differing abilities, but there are many practical issues which we need to look at to make that welcome a reality. Zoe will be available to work with all of us through the coming years, and she would be glad to hear from you. She can be contacted by email - enabling.church@lichfield.anglican.org - and by phone - 01952 810942.

+Michael
January 2018

The Spirituality of Children and Young People: An RNG Lab with Breakfast This day, led by Dr. Rebecca Nye, spirituality researcher and Godly Play practitioner, will help you to understand more the spiritual world of children and young people

Saturday 24 March 4 December 0915-16.00

Details of this and other RNG Labs and booking via
www.lichfield.anglican.org/labs-training-and-events/

DIARY

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

Diocesan Book Group

Discuss 'The Wild Gospel –
Bringing Truth to Life' by Alison
Morgan.

Wednesday 31 January 12.30-
14.00. St Thomas', Doxey, Stafford,
ST16 1EQ. Coffee is provided –
please bring your own lunch.

Could you spot a Loan Shark?

Transforming Communities Together will show you how
and the impact victims and communities.

Monday 29 January from 10.00 to 12.30. St Martin's
Church, Walsall. Book a place via www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-spot-a-loan-shark-workshop-walsall-rescheduled-date-tickets-41273477081

Next Steps

The award-winning Cathedral
Illuminate will present the
nativity story in mesmerising
images and sounds outside and
inside the Cathedral.

Saturday 3 March 1100-
No booking required