Contactless giving has arrived across the Diocese as new devices are trialled. The small terminals can be set up at the back of church buildings or passed around the pews. They are being tested in 18 parishes during a free trial period and the results so far are promising.

As we move increasingly to a cashless society, churches can offer contactless for weekly offerings or one-off donations at weddings, baptisms or funerals. Donations of up to £20 can be made via debit card or Apple and Android pay and included in Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme claims.

Diocesan Deputy Finance Director Jess Dace said: “Contactless is all around us, why not in our churches! It’s a great way for parishes to give people another option when donating and help ease administrative burdens.

“The devices have eight-hours of rechargeable battery life so can be left securely on a table. Donations are sent via mobile phone signal so there is no need to worry about Wi-Fi - if there is no signal the data is saved until a signal is found.”

Contactless had its first outing at St Mary’s Leighton, near Shrewsbury, at a baptism service. Treasurer Alison Sloan reported: “Most of the congregation had come armed with cash but one brave gentleman gave it a go and it worked as expected with no

continues on p2 ->
Card-carrying congregations

hitches. That’s a pretty good outcome for new technology!"

The Revd Jim Trood, Rector at St Matthews’ Walsall which is also trialling a device, said: “One of the older members at our church said he thought it was great, commenting, ‘It’s so much easier than having to find the right money to put on the collection plate’.

Jess added: “The potential for larger services and occasional visitors is tremendous. We hope this will not only raise much needed funds but also encourage people to give more freely to furthering the Kingdom of God in our journey of discipleship together. We would love to have a device in every church over the next five years.”

Time to pray

Churches and individuals are being encouraged to take advantage of the new-look Lichfield Diocese Prayer Diary.

The diary has been reshaped to encourage wider use as we seek to be a Diocese where we regularly pray for each other and our communities. It reflects the Diocesan focus on discipleship, vocation and evangelism with prayers for parishes, fresh expressions, chaplaincy and schools in the Diocese along with slots for the national and international church.

Director of World Mission Philip Swan said: “We hope that this new look Prayer Diary will attract new users and expand and deepen the base of prayer which undergirds our Diocesan life.”

You can download the Prayer Diary at https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/prayer_diary/ Feedback on and suggestions for the new Prayer Diary can be emailed to comms@lichfield.anglican.org

Black History Month

The Diocese is celebrating Black History Month and the enrichment that Asian, African, Caribbean and minority ethnic (BAME) people bring to the churches and communities of our own Diocese at Lichfield Cathedral in October.

Walking Together marks the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the ship Empire Windrush and the centenary of Nelson Mandela’s birth.

The afternoon will be lively and interactive and include activities suitable for children with the focus on aspects of BAME experience in the Diocese through stories and testimony from lay and ordained members of local parishes as well as from well known names such as the late West Bromwich Albion player, Cyrille Regis.

Other elements will explore pilgrimage and African, Asian and Caribbean History

“I’m really looking forward to it,” says Revd Preb Carl Ramsey, part of the organising team. “Not just the historic cultural context for those of us who are black or another minority ethnicity, but because it will be a chance for all of us to build up our own diocese-wide networks for peace and justice, think about how we all stand up to racism in our communities and pray and worship together.”

To bring a group or book a place for yourself, sign up at www.lichfield.anglican.org/walking_together/

[Images of people and events related to Black History Month]
A Stafford project that welcomes and supports homeless people moved its monthly church service into the backyard for a talk by a local priest. The Revd Alison Thomas was the guest speaker at the Sunday afternoon House of Bread Church event at CAFE43 in Browning Street.

House of Bread was established in 2010 and provides a home-cooked meal twice a week, fresh clothing, food bags and toiletries to anyone in need in Stafford. Its volunteers run a food bank, drop-in sessions, a café, a weekly gathering where people come together to make bread to share with others, and a community garden.

HoB Church started two years ago and runs once a month with a focus on people who are new to, or outside of, the faith. Over the summer it met in the back garden of CAFE43.

Alison, who is curate at Stafford’s town centre churches, St Mary’s and St Chad’s, has been volunteering with House of Bread for three years.

She spoke about faith and certainty in the context of John the Baptist’s question “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

She said: “In Jesus, John saw the culmination of all God’s promises to Israel. Now, he’s sitting alone in a prison and wondering: is anything really happening, is anything changing?

“We have our doubts and our fears. And it’s important to remember that the opposite of faith isn’t doubt. The opposite of faith is certainty. We can’t be rock-solid certain. We have to summon up the courage in the dark times to take that leap of faith, to trust in God and God’s purposes.

“I think people can relate to that, at any stage in their journey of faith. And it is a real privilege to be sharing in that journey at House of Bread.”

House of Bread Director Will Morris said: “HoB Church is what church needs to be like when facing those at the very beginning of their Christian journey. There is nothing quite like praising God in the sun whilst hearing the birds sing in his creation.”

The Bishop of Stafford Geoff Annas is also a regular visitor to House of Bread’s weekly Bible study Toast. "Toast has a bit more colourful language than most Bible study groups!” said Will. “But Bishop Geoff is amazing and really does make a difference.”

Find out more about at www.hobstafford.co.uk
Pilgrims from the East

Revd Joshua Ong and his wife Deaconess Ying Peng recently came to Lichfield as part of a three month sabbatical from the Diocese of West Malaysia where Joshua is the vicar of a large church, St Paul’s Petalan Jaya in Kuala Lumpur, with an Electoral Roll of over 600 people.

Joshua said: “Our sabbatical began with the Diocesan Clergy Conference at Swanwick and led up to the ‘Intentional Discipleship: East meets West’. It was exciting to have representatives from South East Asia to share in dialogue and learning together about this important topic.”

“This whole Sabbatical experience is for me like a pilgrimage. We looked forward to going to Lindisfarne for a week before going on to All Saints Streetly. I have found the experience here in a rural context in the Abotts Bromley Team very interesting. For instance it was amazing to see Revd Steve Deall going into the local church schools and being able to share his faith. This is impossible in a Malaysian context.”

“In fact many of the issues you face here are similar to those we face – such as how we can get children and young people to participate more in church life. I have been impressed by Messy Church and ‘Prayer and Play’ and the different kinds of services to cater for different needs. Our link and partnership enables a two way communication to see how we can share our resources. You face an increasingly unbelieving society whilst in Malaysia we are surrounded by people who do believe but are of different faiths.”

“In the UK Christianity is so much part of your society and culture and has been here for so many centuries whereas in Malaysia it is much more recent - 200 years or so. We will soon after the third or fourth generation be facing similar challenges. In Malaysia we have to make a conscious choice to follow Christ, or to marry in church or to have a child baptised. The key issues are the same: how can we be true to our faith and walking in discipleship? We need to dialogue and journey together.”

Ying Peng said: “Besides enjoying the opportunity to understand more about the Church of England, I am interested in how the Church has gone through the whole issue around the ordination of women and have valued speaking particularly to female clergy and some male clergy.”

East met West

People across Lichfield Diocese welcomed a team of over 20 visitors from West Malaysia and Kuching for the five-day ‘Intentional Discipleship: East Meets West’ event.

The varied programme included a day in each episcopal area, seeing projects run by parishes, schools, fresh expressions and chaplaincies, and sharing worship and teaching with local congregations.

The Primate of South East Asia and Bishop of West Malaysia Archbishop Moon Hing Ng and the Bishop of Kuching Danald Jute led the delegation from the East.

At an opening breakfast event at Bishop Michael’s house in Lichfield, Bishop Danald said: “We are here as we journey together, walk together and learn and be a blessing, one to the other.”

Bishop Michael said he was keen that such parish links were supported and continue to grow. “Our call to discipleship is about learning to walk in the newness of life that Jesus promises to us and about learning how to invite others to share that journey with us,” he explained.

Visitors and hosts returning from St Chad’s Well to the cathedral

Archbishop Moon Hing led a day seminar at Shallowford House on Advanced Intentional Discipleship after which delegates went throughout the diocese to take part in Sunday services in parishes with existing or new links with South East Asia.

Bishop Danald, who hosted one of the events in Stoke-on-Trent, added: “It was immensely encouraging to be involved and to meet various guests - including Canon Jacob Bau who came and spoke at St Andrew’s.”

“Over 600 people participated in the different events during these five days. We were greatly blessed and inspired through the warmth of friendship and fellowship with our visitors. They shared with us key insights into discipleship from their increasingly challenging contexts. We give thanks for the past 30 years of formal partnership with the Dioceses of West Malaysia and Kuching. We pray for wisdom and grace as together we look at new ways of sustaining and developing friendship, prayer, mission and parish links,” he said.

More photos at www.flickr.com/photos/spotlight-dioceseoflichfield/albums/72157698671670434
Host of talents

There’s an art to church life, quite literally in the case of South Staffordshire vicar Charmain Host who shares about her new student experience:

“It was a slow August day three years ago. I had been in my new post as 0.5 Vicar of Swindon and Himley for six months, long enough to realise that working part-time would only be sustainable if I did something with the other 0.5 of my life.

“I knew that it needed to be something that would stimulate and challenge me as well as take me outside of the parishes. A Google search for local Art courses led me to the Wolverhampton Adult Education Service – and a part-time course in Art and Design. One tutor there clearly had bigger ambitions for me than I did, and thanks to him, I have just completed the first year of a BA in Fine Art at Wolverhampton Art School.

“The experience of starting art school as a mature student was daunting. The thing that kept me going was the potential for shame at being a university drop-out after only three years! Thankfully, there are quite a few of us at art school beyond the first flush of youth.

“The surprising discovery about art school is the emphasis on ideas and influences that contribute to art-making and that skill grows with practice and, much like faith, doesn’t all rest on talent.

“As a student of art I am encouraged to think about what I want to communicate to the world. What moves me, inspires me, outrages me and what am I going to respond to?

“One day I showed a student colleague around my churches. I commented that it was so familiar to me because it was my work place. He pulled me up short: ‘How can you not be inspired by this? You don’t realise you have access to spaces that most people don’t.’

“My friend was seeing things I had lost sight of.

“So, the question was, could church be revealed to others with an artist’s eye? My answer was an art project I called ‘The Cure of Souls’. I’m still a beginner, learning and seeing new things.

“Inhabiting this new art world alongside the more familiar world of church I continue to be surprised by grace whilst exploring how each might give vision to the other.”

Charmain is available for talks at charmainehost@btinternet.com

From the Editor

Welcome to the new edition of Spotlight which is, as usual, packed with stories from our Diocese and further afield.

‘walk’ so I’m delighted that we’ve just relaunched our diocesan Prayer Diary. Read more about it on page 2 and join us in praying for churches, schools, fresh expressions and chaplaincies across our rich and varied region.

Prayer is a key part of our Christian life but what is the attraction?

Pete Bate, Director of Communications

Café Church

Café Church is church with a difference. It is a fresh expression of church that responds to our cafe culture of today where many of us enjoy good coffee and meeting up with friends.

A Sunday in June marked a special day for two churches in the Diocese. For one, St Paul’s in Fazeley, Tamworth, the day marked the second anniversary of café church which began as a pilot in 2016. Café Church has grown to become the best attended service in the month with many new families and members of the community attending.

Vicar of St Paul’s, the Revd Jonathan Iddon, said “We were finding our existing monthly all age service was poorly attended and not effectively meeting the needs of the church family nor reaching out to the wider community. It was time to try something different and innovative. Aware that people with little or no experience of church and worship can find coming to church a daunting experience we wanted to do creative all age worship in a more culturally familiar context of a café. Although it’s not everyone’s ‘cup of tea’(!) we are finding it is engaging all ages (including seniors, not just families) and is more accessible to newcomers. It is experimental and evolving. We have discovered many things that don’t work but it is an exciting journey to be on.”

Seated around tables, instead of rows, there is coffee, croissants, cakes and an opportunity to get to know each other. It is still a service, based around a theme with a few songs, a talk, discussions and a chance to respond. It is for all ages and everyone regardless of where they are on their faith journey. Café Church is loved by new families who are just finding out about Jesus as well as mature Christians.

On the same day St Mary’s Church in Market Drayton held their very first café church. Vicar, the Revd Catherine McBride says “Café Worship at St Mary’s evolved out of our Messy Church gatherings. We wanted to have somewhere where those who felt comfortable at Messy Church could perhaps go a bit deeper. We have had two Café Worship services so far and, thanks to a great team, they have both gone really well. We have had around 40 people at both services; some were church regulars, but at both services we had people we had never seen before.

“The services are very interactive and the mix of discussions, activities, personal stories, music and input seems to work well and helps people engage at different levels. One highlight was when we invited each table to create a collage to illustrate one of the ‘I AM’ sayings of Jesus. I was amazed and humbled as each table explained what Jesus meant to them. It was very moving.”
Mark and Mandy Rylands have said a big ‘thankyou’ to people from across the Diocese who generously donated towards their leaving gift.

The couple bid farewell in July at a packed service in Shrewsbury Abbey after Mark had served for nine years as Bishop of Shrewsbury and decided to return to parish ministry in the south-west where the couple previously served and have family.

“Thank you”

My Cup Overrunneth

Team spirit and episcopal ambition.
As summer draws to a close, so does another cricket season, and especially poignantly for the members of the Diocesan Cricket team. For we have come to the end of an era, one filled with unprecedented success and golden memories.

On the day of my announcement as Bishop of Wolverhampton, back in 2007, I was asked by our then Director of Communications, Gavin Drake, what I most wanted to achieve in my new role. I unaccountably went off message and failed to speak of doubling the size of every congregation by 2020. What I actually said was that I wanted to win the Church Times Cup with Lichfield!

Four years later the dream became a reality as we held the trophy aloft, triumphing over Bath and Wells in our first ever appearance in the 60 year history of the competition. Joy unbounded! And joy shared with the large number of supporters from different parts of the Diocese who had got up ridiculously early to make the journey to London.

That has been our only victory, though we have made the final on four subsequent occasions. We have often made the final on such occasions, good disagreement. A place where theological differences can be aired and respected, without bats disappearing though windows. On a good day, in the aftermath of mighty blows have scattered both sheep and spectators over the years, and Phil Searle, the narrowboat dweller with a thunderous laugh.

Our dressing room has been a place where we have tried, not always successfully, to treat triumph and disaster just the same. It has been a place of support, encouragement and friendship, and on occasions, good disagreement. A place where theologically differences can be aired and respected, without bats disappearing though windows. On a good day, in the aftermath of a good win, where everyone has been able to contribute, it has felt a special privilege to be part of that Body, diverse but unified, joyful, if rather sweaty. As one in our sense of purpose, but fully aware that for each of us, there is a greater goal, a higher purpose, even than winning the Church Times Cup. How special it is to share that bond with one another, and with all those who have faithfully supported us over the years.

+Clive Gregory
Innovate Mission
Innovate Mission, devised by a team in the Diocese, is aimed at 14-18s with the potential to be leaders in their local church and community, who will be accompanied by their youth leaders.

Three sessions beginning Saturday 22 September at St Matthews Walsall.

Full details: www.lichfield.anglican.org/innovate

REVs + BBC Songs of Praise
REVs is a regular Sunday car meet sharing cars, food and life. People are welcome to join with or without their classic cars for coffee, bacon and chat.

Sunday 16 September
0900-1200
Montford Bridge Cafe

Let us know about your events by email to comms@lichfield.anglican.org.

Closing Together
A celebration for Black History Month, welcoming the enrichment that Asian, African and Caribbean Christians bring to the churches and communities of our own diocese.

Saturday 13 October
2-5pm
Lichfield Cathedral

To bring a group or book a place or yourself, phone 07946 771495 or sign up at lichfield.anglican.org/WalkingTogether