

# Chester Diocesan News

#EverydayFaith across the Diocese of Chester | March 2020



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Chester

## Passion returns to Chester



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# How are you observing Lent this year?

**A**s Christians, Lent and the Easter story are at the heart of our faith. But the way in which we observe this important festival varies depending on your church tradition and orthodoxy.

For many, the six weeks (40 days not including Sundays) leading up to Easter, are a time to reflect and to pray.

The Bible describes how Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray

and that he was tempted by Satan but was able to resist.

It has long been a tradition for many Christians to follow Jesus' example and to give something up during Lent, to test one's self-discipline.

Perhaps a more positive approach is to use the season of Lent to *take something up*, to be more generous, to read the Bible everyday day, or to develop one's talents that have been left neglected or overlooked in the busyness of life.

How are you observing Lent this year?

## #LiveLent

The Church of England has launched its own app, inspired by the Archbishop of Canterbury's 2020 Lent book, *Saying Yes to Life*.

*#LiveLent: Care for God's Creation - A 40-Day Challenge*, is exactly as described. For forty days, you can follow along with short daily readings and reflections. You can even take part as a family and together focus on a daily challenge, with weekly readings and prayers.

Free digital access to the daily reflections are available via an app, social media, e-mail and on Alexa/Google Home. Even if you are reading this in the middle of Lent, it's not too late to participate and is well worth looking into.

Search for #LiveLent online for all the details.



# Around the Diocese of Chester

## **St George's, Stockport**

St George's will be leading weekly reflections every Monday throughout Lent using selected works of art as a basis for discussion. All are welcome to attend. On the four Saturdays in March they will also host a series of Lent Prayer Breakfasts on the theme of *Celebrating Difference - understanding and embracing others who may not be like ourselves*.

## **St Andrew's, All Saints' and St Peter's, Crewe**

Visitors can enjoy everything from pancake parties for toddlers, daily services at St Andrew's during Holy Week, to a Passover meal and Easter Triduum at All Saints'. Residents in Crewe will also be encouraged to have a go at the 40-Acts cam-

paign, an international generosity campaign and app, alongside which the parish will offer its own "suggested local generosity challenges" to encourage people in the community to "take something up" for Lent.

## **St Mary's, Lymm**

Join St Mary's for a Lent course titled *A Way Through the Wilderness - Experiencing God's Help in Times of Crisis*. The course is by Paula Goodier and will run

from 7pm every Tuesday evening in March. All are welcome.

## **St John's, Great Sutton**

Following on from a project they've been running called *Go Green for God*, which so far has prompted discussion and reflection about the fashion industry and the consumption of meat and the impact of food-miles, St John's will be encouraging parishioners to think about how and what they are eating during Lent.



*St John the Evangelist Church: Photo by Sue Adair*

# Passion returns

to Chester this Easter



*Chester City Passion is a Chester Mystery Plays Company production in association with Churches Together, Theatre in the Quarter, and Link Up.*

After a three-year break, the hugely successful performance of the Passion will return once more to the streets of Chester on Good Friday, 10 April 2020.

In 2017, the production used Chester's streets and rows as a theatre, telling the story from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (under the Eastgate Clock) to the Crucifixion outside the West Door of the Cathedral. The 100-strong community cast was joined by Roman Soldiers, community samba band Karamba Samba, and the Town Crier.

"So many people expressed a desire for this unique production to be seen again," commented Jonathan Philips, a Trustee of the Chester Mystery Plays Company, "we all felt we should make it happen despite the inevitable funding difficulties."

Matt Baker will return to direct the production and his music will once again be heard on the streets of Chester. "We want to contribute to the cultural life of our city with a production that tells an incredible story using the city centre of Chester as its stage!"



## Next Lent steps

Consider downloading the #LiveLent app from the Church of England or ask Google/Alexa for today's daily reflection.

Download the *40-Acts* app and see how generous you could be this Lent.

Journey to Chester on Good Friday to witness the Chester City Passion performed on the streets of Chester.

To find contact details for the events held at the churches listed above, go to: [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)



# The church on the edge or in the centre?

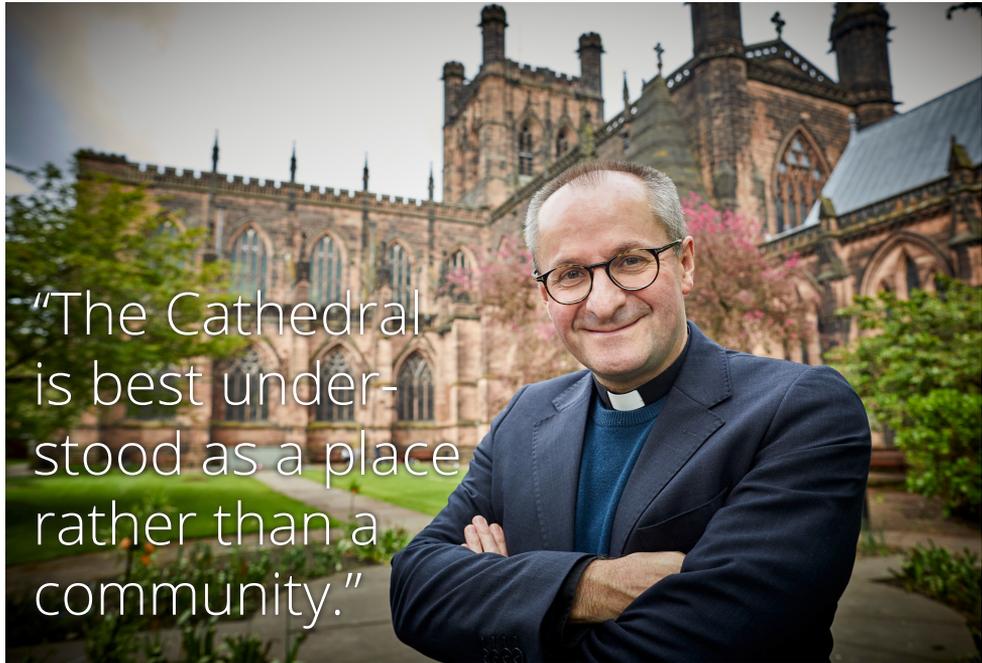
The Dean of Chester looks at how people interpret the Cathedral differently from a community church.

“Cathedral is a funny sort of church. In many ways it seems to be a church that is solidly a central part of the establishment. Cathedrals are, after all, the central place in a diocese where the bishop gathers with the wider church and all shades of parish life. This, though, is only the case for a few short moments in the course of the year. The daily norm for a Cathedral is as a place that large numbers of casual visitors enter who have very little to do with the church. Sometimes we are a church in the centre, but mostly we are very much at the ragged edge.

“We estimate that Chester Cathedral is visited by about a million

people a year. These are people from all over the diocese, the country and the world. The vast majority are unlikely to come here again. They come because of the place. Our presence is quite different to that of most churches that are fundamentally understood as gatherings, community or ekklesia. The Cathedral is best understood as a place rather than a community. For me, as a priest who has spent most of his ministry telling churches that they are people and not buildings this reverses my perspective.

“The regular flow of casual visitors who come for the building with little or no experience of church and faith is our strong missional responsibility. We are a doorway into the life of God’s kingdom and



“The Cathedral is best understood as a place rather than a community.”

*Tim Stratford, Dean of Chester*

your church will be this too of course. We all have a life and mission on this edge and in the centre to some extent. I describe Chester Cathedral like this merely to notice that it sits much more at the edge than may immediately be apparent.

“We are currently working hard to understand our missional responsibility and to fulfil it as best we can. It is not an easy call in a society where spiritual practice is shifting rapidly. I hope that we can be clear about the

revelation of God we have in the good news of Jesus Christ whilst at the same time allowing people to encounter this truth wherever they are in their spiritual journey. We have discerned the purpose of Chester Cathedral to be following Christ through DISCOVERY, ENCOUNTER and FAITH. Our recent partnership with Biblica to distribute a Chester Cathedral version of John’s Gospel is one small step

towards proclaiming the FAITH and we have more work to do developing this. But providing space in which people can DISCOVER a spiritual journey and ENCOUNTER kingdom truths may be where the million begin.

“I hope this helps you reflect on the dialogue between edge and centre in your own church too.”

**Tim Stratford**  
Dean of Chester

# Our events

Book via Eventbrite, or go to: [chester.anglican.org/events](https://chester.anglican.org/events)



## Praying for the diocese

12 March 2020 - St Michael's, Macclesfield

A meeting to pray for the diocese, the Crown Nominations Commission, and the person God is calling to be the next Bishop of Chester. Led by the Archdeacon of Macclesfield.



## Working with councils / organisations

19 March 2020 - Church House, Daresbury

The event will explore the practicalities, opportunities and pitfalls of the church working with various agencies to support the community.



## Making peace with conflict

02 April 2020 - Foxhill, Frodsham

Hosted by Steve Mansfield from the diocesan mediation service, this is a day for licensed ministers and others professionally engaged with conflict and its transformation.



## Outdoor adventure day

04 April 2020 - Congleton

Children, young people and families are invited to a fun filled outdoor activity adventure day which will include; canoeing, kayaking, orienteering and outdoor games.



## New approaches to Bible reading

30 April 2020 - Runcorn

Telling and retelling the story. This is a day to help those who would like to develop the skills to facilitate new approaches to reading the Bible with others. Led by Sue Richardson.

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