

Chester Diocesan News

#EverydayFaith across the Diocese of Chester | April 2021



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester

Bishop Mark digs St. Andrew's



A reflection from the Dean of Chester Cathedral Pg 2

Spring has sprung Pg 4

Glimpses of resurrection

Spring is a hopeful time. It cannot be a coincidence that the Son of God's death and resurrection took place in Jerusalem as the whole earth (or at least the northern hemisphere) bursts forth with the promise of new life. God's creation speaks to us about divine nature betraying the self-same truths as the Gospels, the good news of Jesus Christ, make clear.

The covid pandemic has felt like a very long winter. Maybe this Easter we can begin to look forward again to society opening up once more and our lives resuming. These have been tough months of social distancing and lockdown but the time to rebuild community is surely just around the corner. In our earthly existence I see here another picture of God's creative nature.

Of course, scientific human learning has engineered the vaccines that offer us a way forward. The Christian Church has sometimes acted as if science is opposed to faith. The reverse is in fact true. If science is an honest and unprejudiced inquiry into the nature of our universe then surely it is a means of faithful discovery. Provid-

ing we remain open to the possibility of our world being part of God's handiwork then science can provide a means by which we gain insight into the ways of the Most High.

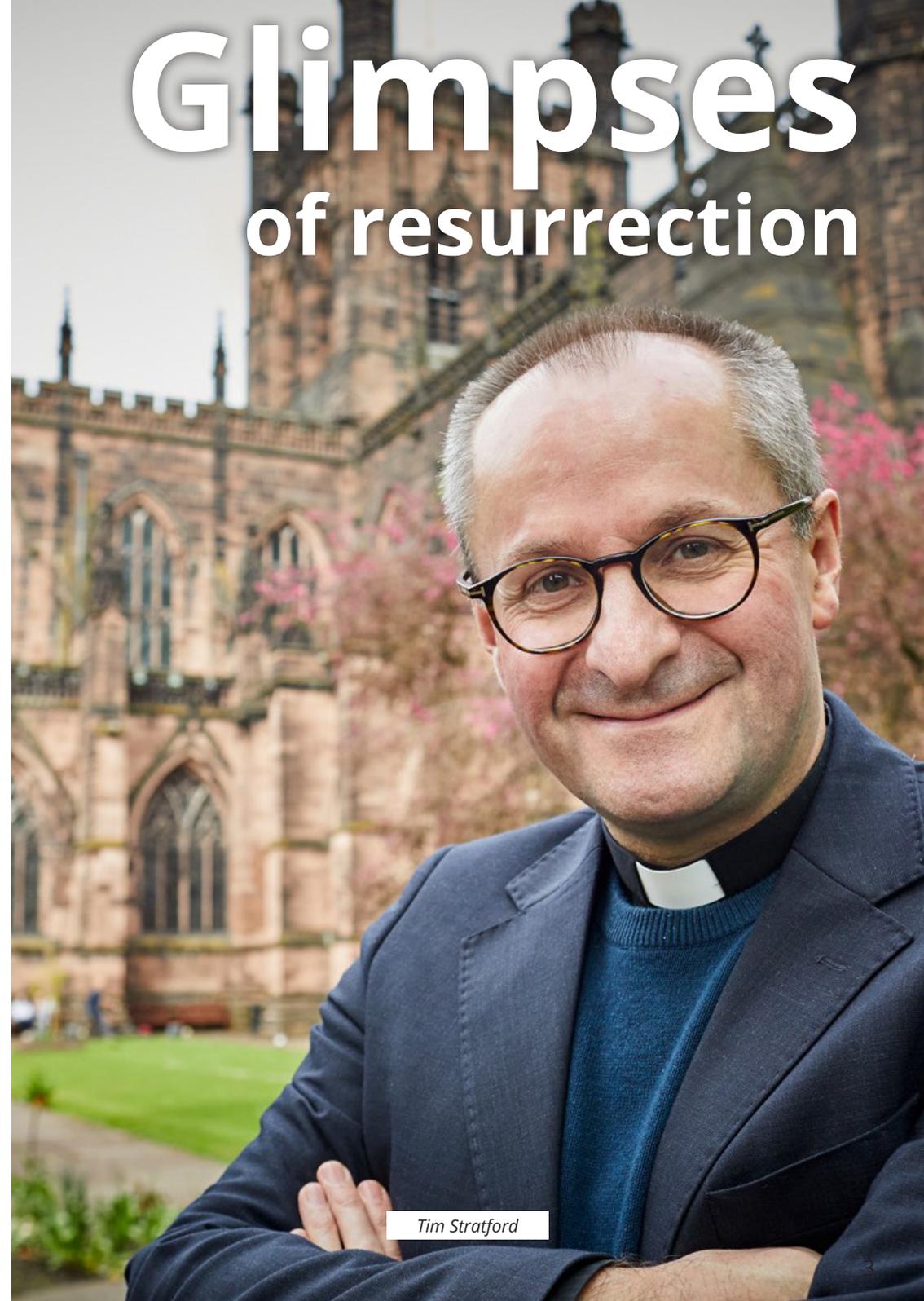
Early Celtic inhabitant of our British Isles broke open rocks to find shell-like fossils of ammonites and other prehistoric creatures. To their minds these seemed as if they must be the finger-prints of God. Today science teaches us that many of the lights in the sky we call stars are in fact distant remote galaxies, themselves a complex spiral of stars. Scientific learning from our day makes Celtic thinking seem primitive and in eternity our own thinking will seem limited too.

We have installed at the West End of the Cathedral a large stone spiral as an object to inspire prayer and reflection for our visitors. Those who come and stand in front of it may find themselves immersed in a range of thoughts. We hope this will include wonder in the greatness of God as well as the human experience of spiralling in and out of restriction over past months.

Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford
Dean of Chester

A prayer written for use in the Church of England during this time of pandemic:

O God,
help us to trust you,
help us to know that you are with us,
help us to believe that nothing can separate us
from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Tim Stratford

Spring...

...has sprung



As the natural world springs into being and we reflect on the Easter message and God's promise of new life, we observe with awe and wonder the beauty of God's creation.

For many, care of God's creation is seen as a Christian imperative, and this year through the season of Lent, the Diocese of Chester has been reflecting on this and celebrating the environment and the natural world.

Forty individuals from around our diocese took turns to delve into scripture and share inspiring personal stories about the small ways in which they are moved to cherish the gift of life. You can read all forty reflections and prayers [here](#).

On Good Friday, it was the turn of the Bishop of Chester, Mark Tanner. He referenced Luke 23, verses 30 and 31 which say:

"Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the

wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Bishop Mark goes on to reflect on this Bible verse and the environment and says: "Jesus is talking here about what happens if we reject him, but there is an interesting ecological echo. This starts with an invitation to accept His offer of love and life and then works into every part of life... including the environment. In the beginning, God commissioned human beings to be good stewards of creation. When we ignore our God-given responsibilities in terms of caring for creation, we will face consequences that are not the ones God desires for us. And so He challenges us. He invites us. He warns us. He loves us, and helps us..."

"... and that last bit is vital, for we are not alone in this. Like you, I am just a beginner here, but in Christ, it's all about grace, so let's carry on in Him. Hear the cry of His heart, and let us love afresh as we care for all that He has given."

Diocese of Chester and the environment

In February 2021, the diocese [confirmed that it will aim to become an Eco-Diocese](#) following a unanimous decision by Bishop's Council and subsequent backing of Diocese Synod to agree to work towards this target. Find out more about Eco-Diocese and Eco-Church [here](#).

How climate change affects our linked diocese

The Diocese of Chester has strong links with the Diocese of Melanesia, which is in the Solomon Islands. The islands are [significantly affected by climate change](#), a tragic irony not lost on the inhabitants who lead eco-friendly lifestyles. Find out about our link diocese.

Transforming your churchyard

In the parish of Partington on the outskirts of Manchester, a team of volunteers has transformed the church yard into a beautiful garden. They hosted a webinar in March to talk about what they did and why. They were joined by officers from Church House and representatives from national charity Caring for God's Acre who help churches transform their churchyards. [Watch the webinar here](#).

Environment Forum

If you and your church want to do more for the environment and God's creation but don't know where to start, help is on hand. Contact the diocesan Environment Forum ([Revd Mike Loach](#)) for advice and support.



Greening Grange

[Watch the Bishop of Chester](#), Mark Tanner, "break the ground" of a new community garden at St. Andrew's, Grange. The garden will be planted on the site of the old church hall and will be designed to help increase biodiversity.

Online services and more from the Church of England



The Church of England's national online services alone have attracted more than 3.7 million views since the first restrictions on gatherings for public worship to limit the spread of Covid-19 were introduced almost a year ago.

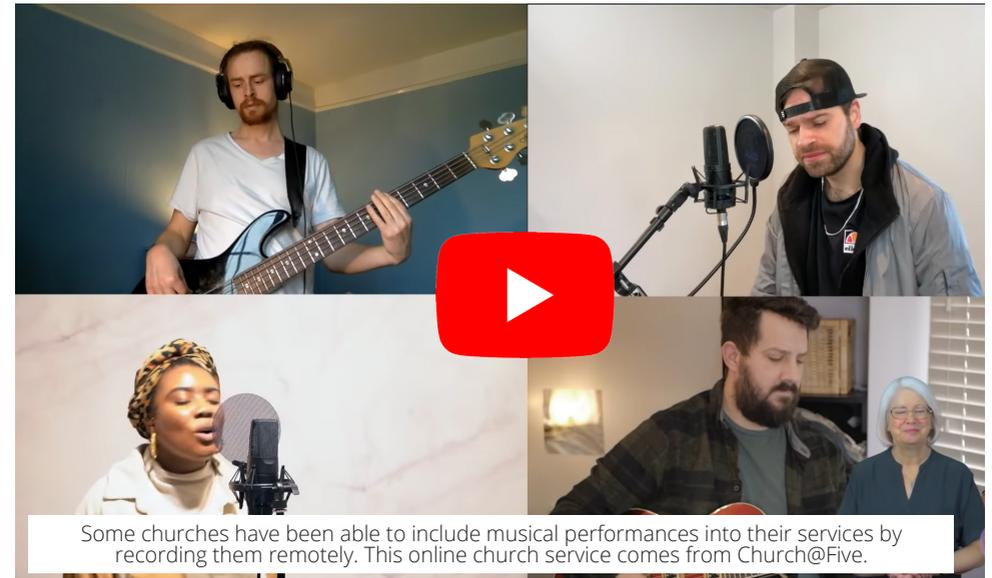
Clips and content from the services have been seen 40 million times on social media channels.

The Church of England's prayer

and discipleship apps – through which people can join in ancient services of morning and evening prayer from wherever they are – have been accessed eight million times, up 50 per cent on the previous year.

Comment from the Revd Peter Froggatt, Director of Outreach

"I think these figures tell us a couple of important things. Firstly, they remind us of all that churches have done over the past year. The pan-



demic is the biggest disruption to conventional worship that we have ever faced, and churches across the diocese have responded with amazing energy, creativity and perseverance. We should be hugely encouraged by what we can do.

"Secondly, they reveal an appetite for worship, a desire to connect with the church and so with God. Most of these viewers were already attending church, but many new people have connected as well. In a time of fear and uncertainty, people have needed reassurance and hope, and they have found these in online services.

"The ways we worship will no doubt change again as restrictions ease, but people will still need reassurance and hope. It would be good to pray that, despite tiredness, churches will continue to be creative and persevering as they hold out the hope we have in Jesus Christ."

DailyHOPE:

0800 804 8044

The Church of England's free-to-call DailyHOPE telephone line continues? In the last year, 50,000 people have spent over 5 million minutes using the service. As the roadmap out of Government restrictions comes into place, we know that many will experience heightened social anxiety and feelings of vulnerability. This is why DailyHOPE will continue with its reflections, hymns and daily services as well as specialist content which seeks to bring the comfort and encouragement of Christ's presence.

Events



Fundraising in a Box – Walk Through

20 April 2021 - Online

Find out about the new fundraising resource for Ecclesiastical customers – Fundraising in a Box. A simple step by step guide, printed in five easy to navigate booklets [More...](#)



Instagram for beginners

20 April 2021 - Online

Organised by the National Church, this webinar will guide you through how to set up an account for your church and advise on what kind of content to post. [More...](#)



Being inclusive

22 April 2021 - Online

We will explore how we support parents and carers of children and young people with additional needs, ensuring our communication is clear and effective. [More...](#)



Myers-Briggs Workshop

14 October 2021 - Church House, Daresbury

Julia McGuinness will help you to identify your personality type to work and worship together with greater understanding. [More...](#)



24 Hours with Paul led by Robert Evans

10 November 2021 - Foxhill, Frodsham

This residential at Foxhill is a resource for licensed ministers in the Diocese of Chester and is part of a series of other 24-hour sessions with leading theologians. [More...](#)