Hello and welcome to this latest edition of SR News! Hopefully, you found the first issue helpful. We were aiming to introduce you to every panel member, telling you a little bit about the area they cover and give you the best way to contact them. The hope is that, as and when a situation presents itself within your context, you can quickly and easily see who to contact and how!

In this latest issue, we’ve collated some thought-provoking pieces about areas of work here in our Diocese that you might not be aware of or have thought about before. You’ll find out about the fantastic vision behind the new No:7 Café; learn a bit about hidden poverty and the work of Together Leicester; hear what life is like in the world of Leicester Prison Chaplaincy; and find out a bit about the Racial Equity Strategy! So, why not make yourself a brew, grab a snack, perhaps light a candle if that helps you to connect, and pray as you read. Pray for the people and projects mentioned, and listen for how God might be speaking to you today.

Rethinking Our City

by Kat Gibson and Emily Williams
What if your daily coffee could change a life? That's exactly what Café No.7 is doing!

You may have noticed that the White Rose Café no longer exists - the café in St Martin's House is now Café No:7, having reimagined not only the physical space but also how they operate as a café... We had the immense privilege of interviewing Nigel Jobson, the business manager, about the café. A big part of our conversation was around their partnership with Change Please and their desire to use ethically sourced products. If the following short interview doesn't inspire you to get up and go for a drink there, then I don't know what will!

Where does the name for the Café come from?
Quite simply, we're at number 7 Peacock Lane! A name change felt right, to mark the re-launch. We wanted to make the physical space more of a contemporary and welcoming environment for people.

Tell us about Change Please and their work with people experiencing homelessness. Why is ethical sourcing and supporting those experiencing homelessness important to No.7 Café?
We need to have a strong social responsibility credential behind all we do. We've always aimed to use as many Fairtrade products as possible - but I felt we need something else as well. I got in touch with Change Please just before Lockdown about doing something in Leicester. Their mission is to reduce homelessness; we're really promoting that in the café. The simple act of buying a coffee - a very small thing to do - helps to reduce homelessness. It's a fantastic coffee, with ethically sourced Fairtrade coffee beans. The hot chocolate is Fairtrade too, of course. The proceeds go into the central foundation to reduce homelessness. We'd like to do something further with Change Please at some stage. We'd like to support people who are experiencing homelessness in Leicester and offer them employment within the café. Change please do so much more than just sell coffee. They've been quite London-centric but in recent years have started doing this in other cities across the UK, and they're keen to work with us here in Leicester. We're in a great position to do something here, particularly with our involvement in the homelessness charter.

What steps are you taking to be an eco friendly café?
We're passionate about sustainability and thinking about the part that our café can play in the Diocese working towards becoming an ‘Eco Diocese’. In the café, all our takeaway cups are fully compostable, and our sandwiches (which are from a Leicester-based sandwich supplier) are all in biodegradable packaging. Used coffee grounds will also be available for people to take home for their compost!

Be sure to pop in to Café No.7 and see it all for yourselves!
Hidden Poverty

Last month some of you may have been shocked to see on East Midlands Today the news, based on new research from Loughborough University, that in parts of our city 40% of children are growing up in poverty, and that poverty in the city increased by 7.9% between 2014/15 and 2019/20.

The reality is that this data is from before the Covid pandemic - and we all know how hard our city has been hit by lockdowns and additional restrictions - which are themselves made more likely due to the nature of the poverty in our city. Many of the people in poverty in our city do not claim benefits- rather, they work multiple jobs to make ends meet, which means they fall through the net for support and make it more likely for Covid and other infections to spread quickly. As Christians, we are called to reach out and serve those in need.

Together Leicester is helping churches do just that, supporting churches all over the Diocese to respond to the specific needs in their local community. At the moment we are working to open 3 to 5 food pantries across Leicester to respond to the particular need of food poverty. One of these pantries will be at All Saints in Belgrave, to the right you can see a picture of the space we hope to use and what we hope to do to turn it into a food pantry!

We have just passed Pentecost and, whilst the lectionary now moves away from the story of the early Church to the principles of faith, shortly after Pentecost we hear how the early Church cared for the poor and needy amongst them (Acts 4:33-35). How might you care for those in material need around you? How might your church do the same? Many parts of our Diocese have that "hidden poverty" - it's not necessarily obvious to friends or neighbours, or even to officials and local authorities, but people are in need.

Please do pray for Together Leicester and the churches and organisations involved in the food pantry project in the coming weeks and months. Do get in touch with Sian if you’d like to chat more about this sort of thing!

A news article surrounding the hidden poverty is available [here](#).

To find out more about Together Leicester then visit [their website](#).

For all the latest updates, follow Together Leicester on [Facebook](#).
A Day in The Life of a Prison Chaplain

I don't know about you, but I don't think I'd thought about the possibility of there being prison chaplains. It's just not something I'd ever considered. The prison chaplain on the SR panel has written an account of her 'average' day to give us a better look at what being a prison chaplain entails:

Helen: Never for one moment did I imagine that prison ministry would be for me. After 30 years as a therapist in the mental health service, I thought that was it until I retired. God had other ideas! 5 years on from my appointment at HMP Leicester I can honestly say that prison ministry is some of the most rewarding, challenging, frustrating, at times heart-breaking, work I have ever done.

What does my day look like? No two days are the same, although there are tasks that chaplains must undertake daily. These are laid down in the Prison Service Instructions & are called statutory duties. Every new prisoner is seen by a chaplain the day after they are admitted, even when they have been in custody before. We also visit all men who are segregated, & those due to be released in a couple of weeks’ time. For good security reasons we cannot follow up on those who have left custody, but if someone would like to be connected to a faith community we can put them in touch, with appropriate safeguards, & our Resettlement team can signpost to support agencies.

We are a multi-faith team & share these duties between us. With newly arrived prisoners we ask about their general welfare, offer pastoral support where needed, especially if this is someone's first time in custody when we also explain the role of chaplaincy. We are there to support all prisoners, of all faiths and none. If someone is registered in a particular faith we can enable them to practice their religion while they are with us. It's important to remember that we are also there to support staff.

In normal circumstances, we organise worship for our faith groups and run study groups. We have volunteers who support us with these. During the pandemic, each chaplain delivered a weekly prayer sheet/newsletter to their faith group. Although we all missed corporate worship, these visits offered opportunities for individual pastoral conversations & prayer which may not have arisen during a busy Sunday morning in chapel.

Chaplains support prisoners who have had a bereavement. Family members sometimes ask us to break the news of a death or serious illness to their relative. This is an immensely difficult time for people, & we offer all the support we can. Prisoners of all faiths may ask to visit the faith room to light a candle, to pray, to weep, and it is a huge privilege to be able to offer this. Chaplains liaise with family in order to contribute to the paperwork needed for a prisoner to attend a funeral or visit a relative who is terminally ill.

So the days are busy, and never dull. My learning curve has been vertical, & I still learn something new most weeks. It’s a joy to work in a multi-faith team & there is enormous respect between us all. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to all prison staff. They do a difficult job in challenging circumstances and are indeed hidden heroes.
Am I my brother’s keeper?
In other words, is the wellbeing of the other my responsibility?

In wrestling with these questions we are, in some ways, attempting to answer Cain’s question. The assumption from the bible is that we have a responsibility towards our sisters and brothers, and failing to recognise it could lead to the ultimate fracture. The Diocesan ‘Racial Equity Strategy’ as well as the recently published report of the Archbishops Anti-racism Taskforce ‘From Lament to Action’, are two attempts to address and redress the legacy of injustice, marginalisation, and exclusion of too many of our sisters and brothers on the account of ethnic and cultural difference. Both these documents do so from a biblical imperative that opens the possibility for all to be encountered by the other as a neighbour. It is also informed by a missional imperative as it compels us to embody a Church that recognises that Christ has broken the wall of hostility that separates us from one another.

Reflecting on the need for the Racial Equity Strategy

In recent months, the debate about race and racial justice invited itself to many of our conversation tables with an unprecedented level of urgency. Many have questioned why should the Church concern itself with conversations about race. Isn’t it a distraction from attending to the heart of the Gospel? Wouldn’t we be better off teaching people about God and the bible? The questions are definitely worth asking and attending to. More so, the way we go about answering these questions is probably as important as the answer that we come to. The very first question explicitly asked to God by a human being in the Bible is the one from Cain, after he’d executed his murderous intentions towards his brother:

"Am I my brother’s keeper?"
Close Enough to Call

Emily Owen is an author and speaker who was deafened as a young adult. She knows what it is to be broken. She knows what it is to have life turned upside down and learn to find God in the mess. Emily has experienced illness, disability, and not being healed.

From the 6th - 9th September Emily is running a retreat at Launde Abbey. This retreat will be structured around times in the Bible when God draws close to people and calls to them. It will offer space to spend time with God, inviting His still, small voice into our joys and struggles, and catching hold of his call.

Emily is a warm and compassionate communicator, her speaking and writing often reference personal testimony alongside revealing ‘hidden treasure’ from God. Her heart’s longing is to make the Bible accessible for all and to affirm individual validity within the Body of Christ.

For more information about this retreat and to book on, visit: https://www.laundeabbey.org.uk/event/close-enough-to-call/

For more about Emily and her books, please visit her website: www.emily-owen.co.uk

Keep a look out for our next issue coming in the new academic year.

What sparks your interest from these updates of our ‘loving service of the world’? Do feel free to get in touch with someone on here who shares your passion - it would be great to connect with you and make use of your God-given gifts! Please also pray for the different areas of work, and for the many people involved in each of them. We look forward to sharing more with you in the next issue!