

A message from Bishop Michael

I am delighted to introduce the 2020 Bishop's Lent Appeal in the Diocese of Lichfield. This year we are looking to support some of the most vulnerable people with whom we come into contact, knowing that all people are precious in God's sight and that he has a particular care for the needy. Acorns Hospice in the Black Country has been quietly working to support children with life-changing and life-threatening illnesses, and their families, for many years. Their work honours all lives, no matter how short, and provides essential care and respite to families facing serious illness and disability in their children. They are based next door to one of our churches, St Gabriel's Walsall, and value support from St Gabriel's. The Revd Preb Mark McIntyre, the parish priest, has been very active in helping to publicize the appeal to save Acorns hospice, and I am grateful to him for first drawing the Appeal to my attention. I would be very sorry indeed to see the hospice forced to close, but with your support and the hard work of the hospice and local people I am optimistic that its future can be safeguarded and its vital work with children and their families can continue.

A very different project which I have chosen to support comes from the Diocese of Matlosane, our link diocese in South Africa. Those of you who have been to Matlosane or met anyone from the diocese will know that it is a wonderful place full of Christians with a deep and lively faith. It is also a place that faces many challenges, notably the toll taken by extremes of poverty, by climate change, and by other serious social issues faced in

South Africa. The clergy of the diocese are on the frontline of helping people work out their faith and their lives against this backdrop, and sometimes this can take a real toll on them and their families. I hope to give some support from the appeal to the Bishop of Matlosane for him to run a clergy wellbeing event and to offer other support to clergy families, to help prevent family breakdown and to support those who are quietly working away every day to help others live out the Gospel in that beautiful part of the world.

I do hope that you will feel able to give generously to this year's Appeal, and I pray for God's blessing on your own lives, families, and work.

+Michael Leech:



How can you support the Appeal:

GIVE by Gift Aid if you can to increase the value of your donation at no cost to yourself. You can donate through your parish church, using the form below, online at: lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal-2020.

PRAY For the Appeal to save Acorns hospice in the Black Country, and for all who use the service, and all who work or volunteer there. For all children with life-changing and life-threatening illnesses, and their families. For all those under stress, and for families at risk of breakdown. For our links with the Diocese of Matlosane and for church life there.

ACT Look at the website for the Acorns Appeal under 'getting involved' and consider some of the suggestions there: acorns.org.uk/get-involved/. Raise awareness of the appeal. Consider how you, and how your church, notices the smallest and most vulnerable around you. Is there more you could do to reach out?

For more information about what you can do or to invite speakers to churches, house groups, or youth groups, contact:

The Revd Dr Rebecca Lloyd,
Chaplain to the Bishop of Lichfield.
T: 01543 306002
E: rebecca.lloyd@lichfield.anglican.org

lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal-2020

Please return this form with your donation to:
The Bishop's Lent Appeal, Bishop's House, 22 The Close, Lichfield, WS13 7LG.

WAYS TO GIVE

Via cheque...
Please make your cheque payable to 'Bishop of Lichfield's Lent Appeal'
Via just giving...
www.justgiving.com/lentappeal2020

MAKE YOUR GIFTS GO FUTHER...

I want the Diocese to treat the enclosed donation of as Gift Aid

Title: Forename(s):

Surname:

Home Address:

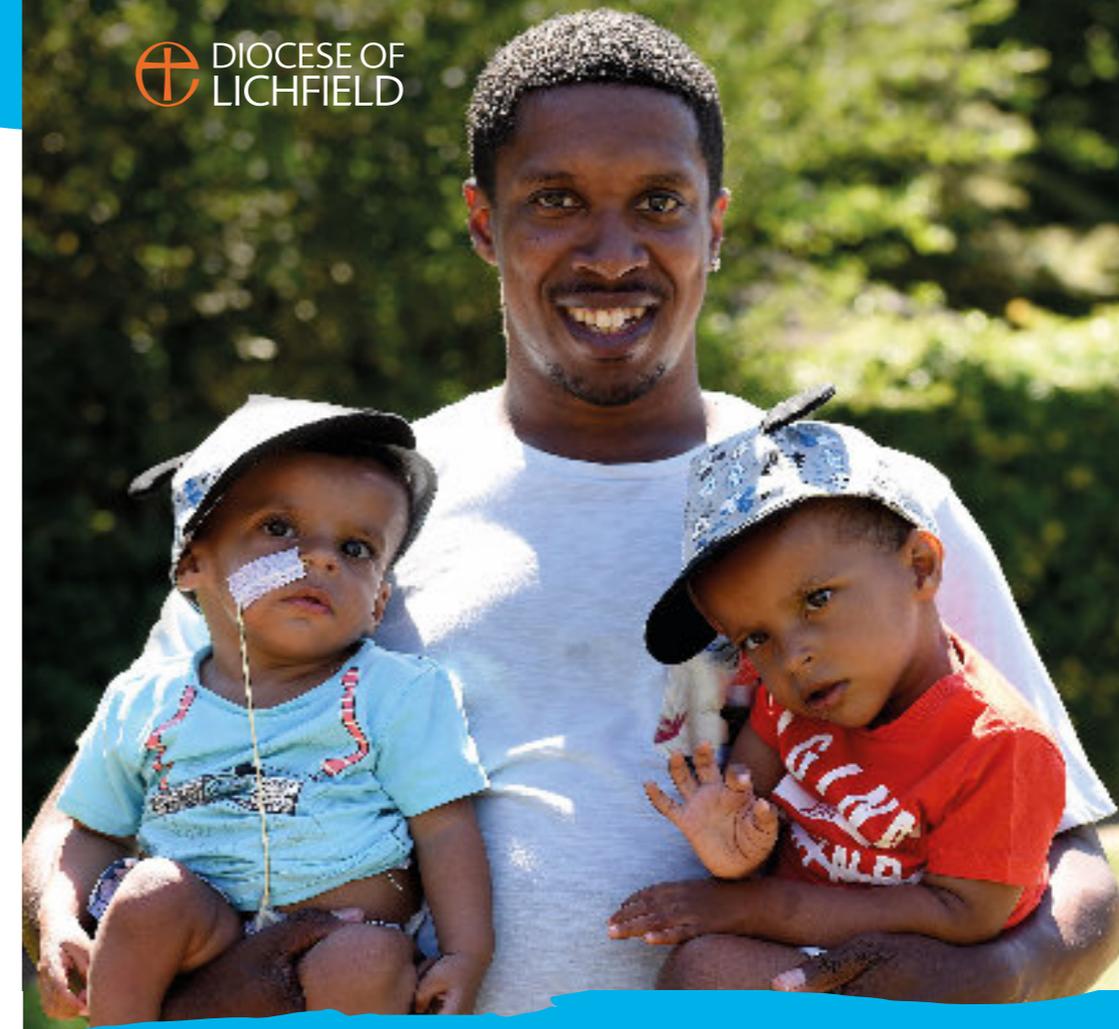
..... Postcode:

I wish Gift Aid to apply to my donation. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay the difference.

Signature..... Date

Data Protection Act: We will not pass your details to any third party except for the purposes of processing your donation (for example, to HMRC if your donation is Gift Aided). We may store your details and use them to keep you informed about how the funds raised by the Lent Appeal have been spent and to update you about future Lent Appeals and the work of the Bishop and Diocese of Lichfield. If you do not wish to receive such details please tick this box To reduce administrative costs and ensure more of your donation is used to help the important work being supported by the Lent Appeal, receipts will not normally be issued. If you would like a receipt please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope. The Bishop of Lichfield's Lent Appeal is administered by the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance Inc (registered charity 1107827). If the Bishop of Lichfield's Lent Appeal is unable to make a donation to the charities specified, for example if they cease to operate, the monies raised by this appeal may be donated to other charities at the discretion of the Bishop of Lichfield.

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...Precious in my sight

'...Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you...' (Isaiah 43:4)

more information at lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal-2020

The Bishop of Lichfield's Lent Appeal 2020

Introduction

This year's Bishop's Lent Appeal supports some of the most vulnerable members of our society. We are supporting the appeal to keep **Acorns Children's Hospice** in Walsall open in order for them to continue their vital work with children and families, and we are supporting clergy families under pressure in our Link Diocese of **Matlosane, South Africa**.

Acorns

A parent never imagines their child will be diagnosed with a life changing or life threatening condition. When it happens, their family's world changes forever; the future becomes unknown and frightening and every moment together is even more precious.

Acorns helps families cope at every stage of their child's life and beyond, wherever and whenever they need it.

The charity's dedicated teams provide specialist palliative care for life limited and life threatened babies, children and young people, and support for their families.

Acorns in the Black Country, based in Walsall, cares for more than 230 children and their families across the Black Country, South Staffordshire and Shropshire.

The hospice is at the centre of an urgent £2 million Appeal to secure its long term future for every child that relies on its vital care.

The urgent call for donations has seen the local community mobilise into action, with numerous individuals, celebrities,

businesses and sports teams all stepping-up to support the Appeal.

The Appeal reached an impressive £500,000 in just five months but there is still a long way to go.

Matlosane

A different way of supporting families under stress has been proposed in our Link Diocese of Matlosane, South Africa. There the Bishop of Matlosane is working to support his clergy and their families where family dysfunction and breakdown has arisen due to the pressures of their role. We are looking to raise money to help him do this.



Case Studies

Acorns: Jacob's story

Jacob Leese is a big ball of energy. He loves running around, playing football and speeding up and down corridors in his favourite electric car.

It's the kind of active behaviour you'd expect from a two-year-old. But for little Jacob, who has hypoplastic left heart syndrome, this kind of exertion can be life-threatening.

HLH is a complex condition meaning Jacob was born with half a heart. At just five days old, newborn Jacob had the first of three open heart surgeries he will need to manage the condition.

Mum Melanie Cresswell said: "It's a three-stage operation for his condition. After that it's a case of waiting until his heart stops working, which is when he will go on the transplant list"

Knowing her son will only go on the transplant list if his heart fails is a frightening prospect for Melanie and Jacob's dad, Dan.

For now, all Melanie can do is limit Jacob's physical activity to help manage his condition because exerting himself too much or too quickly can lead to a serious drop in his oxygen levels.

"The hard part is getting Jacob to slow down because he's too young to understand and he fights against it. He slowly loses energy throughout the day, so you have to force him to have a nap or sit down when he's tired"

But mum Melanie and dad Dan make sure Jacob gets to play like every other youngster, with a little help from Acorns Children's Hospice.

"Acorns is our safe place. There are nurses everywhere so if Jacob does have a turn, where he can go quite blue, there's always somebody here who knows Jacob."

"Acorns makes you feel like you're not alone, there are other people who know how you're feeling and know what you're going through. It's an escape. I can sit and chat with the nurses and other parents about everyday life and not just focus Jacob's condition."

Acorns: Theo and LeBron's story

Everyone has chromosome pairs that are identical to each other but for LeBron and Theo, chromosomes 10 and 16 are unbalanced. It's hard to say how much this will affect them until they grow up.

"So far we've noticed that our boys are behind in their development. LeBron is 3 and he's still not walking but he is trying. Fingers crossed he'll get there. He's not talking yet either but it doesn't mean he will never talk. It's just seeing how it goes."

"I'm looking at it with a positive spin though; as an adventure because as they're growing up we're learning new things and discovering what they can and can't do."

"It was a situation we were thrown into but luckily we've been given help and support from Acorns"

Case Studies

"The hospice has got everything a child needs: bedrooms, arts and crafts, beautiful gardens. But it's not just that, it's the people at the hospice too. They offer a huge service and actually care for the children and are passionate about doing anything for that child to make sure that they have a beautiful and happy stay."

"When Theo and LeBron stay at Acorns I feel at ease straight away. We feel welcome and I know that they are safe. I can walk away and go back in three days knowing that my boys have had the best care and the best service because it's from people who actually love their job. You can see it in the staff's faces; they enjoy spending time with the children. When I pick LeBron and Theo up the staff tell me everything the boys have been up to."

"Theo and LeBron really benefit from coming to Acorns. Every time they come they have a smile on their face; they are always happy and enjoy everything they do. Their needs and development goals are met too. I can't really ask for more than that."

Clergy families in Matlosane

The Diocese of Matlosane covers over half the North West Province of South Africa, an area of 24,432 square miles, and is 165 miles from north to south and 145 miles from west to east. Its Cathedral is the Cathedral of the Resurrection at Ikageng, the only Cathedral in South Africa located in a township. The Diocese is led by Bishop Steven Diseko, and in 2018 had 61 clergy serving 80,000 communicants. There are 20 parish churches but most have a large number of outpost churches.

The Diocese has had an informal link with the Diocese of Lichfield for many years and a formal Covenant was signed in 2008.

Given the large numbers of people, and huge distances, not to mention the social problems faced by many in their congregations, stress for the clergy can be intense. Bishop Steve believes that this level of stress has become a real problem, and has led to some cases of family dysfunction and breakdown. In response, he has recently started an initiative looking at clergy wellbeing. He has brought in a professional to talk to clergy families under stress and would like to be able to contract them to do some more work.

The Lent Appeal will give a grant to Bishop Steve to enable him to run a multi-day clergy conference focussed on the wellbeing of clergy and their families, and with any remaining money, to look at other ways to support clergy and their families as they go about the quiet work of serving God's people in the Diocese.



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