

Spotlight

Mar/Apr 2020

Some of the most vulnerable families in the Midlands and abroad will be supported through this year's Bishop's Lent Appeal.

Bishop Michael has launched the 'Precious in my sight' appeal which will raise funds for Acorns Children's Hospice in Walsall and families under stress in South Africa.

The Bishop's Lent Appeal is an annual opportunity for churches and others across the diocese to offer generous support to worthwhile causes.



Precious in my sight



Acorns Children's Hospice provides specialist nursing care and support to babies, children and young people who have life-limiting or life-threatening conditions and associated complex needs. It helps families cope at every stage of their child's life and beyond, wherever and whenever they need it. Based next to St Gabriel's Church in Walsall, the hospice is currently at the centre of an urgent £2m appeal to secure its long-term future.

Clergy families in our link Diocese of Matlosane - South Africa's only diocese with a cathedral in a township - are under significant stress as they minister to large numbers of people, covering huge distances, with widespread social problems facing many in their congregations including extreme poverty. Funding is needed for a proposed clergy wellbeing event and other support to strengthen families and prevent breakdown.

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**DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD**

**The Church of England around Staffordshire,
northern Shropshire and the Black Country**

Bishop's Lent Appeal 2020



Clergy and choristers with Bishop Michael in Matlosane in 2018

<- continued from p1 "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," Bishop Michael said.

"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. 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.

Volunteers packing Lent Appeal leaflets and posters ready to send to parishes in February



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 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."

*A big thank you to our Lent Appeal team of volunteers from across the Diocese, pictured with Bishop Michael, who sent out thousands of leaflets and posters to churches in the run-up to Lent.

Give online at www.justgiving.com/lentappeal2020

Wheels of change

An historic North Shropshire church has made space for wheelchair-using worshippers after change was prompted by a child's enthusiasm.

Picturesque All Saints Church in Clive dates back to the 6th Century and is seen for miles around thanks to its stately spire. But its wooden pews meant that wheelchair users were forced to sit at the back of the building.

During a service for local schools, vicar the Revd Paul Cawthorne noticed a pupil in a wheelchair. "He was sat right at the back of church and it played on my mind throughout the service," Paul recalls. "Afterwards, I asked him, 'What do you think about making space nearer the front of church?'. He gave me a double thumbs-up and had a big grin on his face."

Paul set to work to swap a pew that was two-thirds the normal length at the building's rear with a full-length pew nearer the front. He received a temporary Archdeacon's faculty to do this, and enlisted the help of members from the local Shed group, which brings men together to share their practical skills.

Paul said: "The bespoke pew space proved an immediate hit - it was used three times in the first fortnight. There have been some lovely comments about how affirming it is for those



who previously had to sit right at the back and it looks very fitting in the old-fashioned building. Visitors to church events have also commented on it – so it's a witness to the community as well. It was such a low-tech thing; we have done it ourselves at no cost and the Shed group and a parishioner helped me. It's two-thirds towards the front of the church, rather than right at the front, so users don't feel self-conscious. We are now looking at making this permanent, and other ways to improve access."

The switch was supported by the diocese's Enabling Church Adviser, the Revd Zoe Heming, after Paul asked her to help with an access survey of All Saints.



Zoe said: "More and more churches are making small changes which have a huge impact. As a wheelchair user, I have been deeply moved to be able to participate in worship from among the congregation rather than feeling awkward at the back or front. It's an incredibly powerful way to share the Good News that God's love and God's church is for everyone.

"If you'd like to explore changes you can make in your church, please look at the many ideas and resources on lichfield.anglican.org/enablingchurch/"

Re:Dress in Heath Hayes

A Heath Hayes church was transformed into a charity catwalk to highlight 'fast fashion'.

Over 40 people – representing seven local churches – attended the Re:Dress fashion show at St John's Church in Heath Hayes.



Beverley, store manager at Barnados, with a necklace that she made

The church partnered with Barnados charity shop in Hednesford with the store's staff and church members parading down the aisle in second-hand clothes.

As well as buying and swapping pre-loved garments, people were invited to make pledges to not send more items to landfill or to make their next clothes' purchase second-hand.

The event was organised by Linda Hughes and Sheila Green of the church's Green Team. They were helped by Mick Hughes who said: "We were able to show that recycling clothing helps save natural resources and stops clothing going to landfill. The staff from the store and church members became models for the evening. I went down the cat walk myself in a shirt, trousers and a fetching cardigan, all for £12!

"We got over our message about how harmful the fashion industries process can be to our planet, and people should recycle as their priority action. We had donated for our clothes swap approximately 100 kilos of clothing and accessories which covered quite a lot of style

and sizes. People took advantage of what was on offer and either swapped clothes or purchased clothing. Clothes sold raised money for Barnados' work with children and young people and leftover clothing at the end of the evening was split between Barnados and a refugee project in Walsall."

Mick added: "If there are any other churches interested in this type of event we would be happy to share our experiences which might help their planning."

The event was part of a wider Re:Dress project in the diocese to raise awareness of the human and environmental cost of the fast fashion and textile industry.

The diocese has signed up to the Clewer Initiative which is helping churches to support victims of modern slavery and identify signs of exploitation in their communities. Over 40 million people are victims of modern slavery globally, including many linked to the fashion industry. It is estimated that G20 countries import almost 100 billion worth of garments at risk of including modern slavery in their supply chain every year and UK imports of apparel possibly tainted by slave labour are worth over 7 billion annually.



Changing Room to think

Two years ago, The Changing Room Counselling Service began operating at St Augustine's Church in Rugeley. Working with local professional therapist and counsellor Carla Thompson, Team Rector the Revd David Evans and a group of volunteers began welcoming clients with a cup of tea and hour-long free counselling sessions for as long as they're needed.

Today, The Changing Room has a team of six counsellors and has worked with 100 clients. "We now have capacity to offer up to 18 appointments every week. Our main areas of focus are bereavement, anxiety and depression," says Carla.

The service is free. Clients take as many sessions as necessary. The average number of sessions a client has is ten. There is no waiting list. There are referrals from GPs, local agencies as well as many self-referrals.

Back in September 2017 Carla was invited to speak to the Parish Church Council (PCC) about her work. The issue of mental health locally had surfaced as a key issue during a series of workshops the parish ran in 2017, exploring the challenges people in the area face.

"We discovered that the closest NHS provision was in Cannock, a half hour's bus ride away. Waiting lists were long and provision was reducing. I had conversations with local people who said that they were often not well enough to travel to Cannock on public transport," recalls David. "Carla's appeal was 'give me a room and we can do something about this.' And that is what we did. To have someone with Carla's experience and skills is a wonderful gift. We offered her one of the vestries in the church and in February 2018, sessions began. We appealed for volunteers to welcome clients and quickly a small dedicated team developed."



From left to right: Revd David Evans, Tesco Rugeley Community Champion Jocelyn Broadhurst, Attridge Scaffolding's Tracey McGurkin and Rugeley Leisure Centre's Karla Padua fundraising in 2018

Final year counselling students and graduates, along with experienced counsellors, also joined the team. Some of the stories that emerged are inspiring and deeply moving.

"The budget for the service is modest because the counsellors give their time for free," explains David. "We raise funds through local events like the Cycle Challenge for Mental Health which works with our local Tesco, local commercial sponsors and Rugeley Leisure Centre who have lent their spinning bikes. It is as much about raising awareness and encouraging people to talk about their mental health as anything else."

A peer-support follow on group is starting for former clients as The Changing Room develops.

"We have discovered through chatting to people locally that it is people born since 1990 who are suffering badly with anxiety and this has, on a worrying number of occasions, resulted in suicide. I have taken funerals for four people who have taken their own lives since arriving in the parish and it is devastating, but at least we have something tangible to offer through The Changing Room," says David.

To access The Changing Room Counselling Service call or text to 07591 257737

Bringing joy to heaven

Tributes have been paid to Sue Egerton, Diocesan Mothers' Union President, following her death aged 64.

Sue took over as president in 2016 after serving as an active branch member in Cheddleton, North Staffordshire, for many years. She died on 13 February after battling a long illness. Sue's funeral was on 3 March at St Edward the Confessor in Cheddleton.

Mothers' Union is a Christian charity that has been supporting families worldwide for over 140 years and aims to demonstrate faith in action through the transformation of communities. There are over 80 Mothers' Union branches, and 1,200 members, across Lichfield Diocese

Bishop Michael said: "Sue was an inspirational Christian, who witnessed to her Lord both in the energy and passion with which she lived her life in the service of others, and in the courage and faith with which she faced her death trusting in God's love. I join with the members of the Mothers' Union in the diocese in paying tribute to all that she gave us through her encouragement of the many projects and areas to which that wonderful organisation is committed."

Sue married Tom on 28 April 1979 and had two children, Mark and Gemma, and four grandchildren, Skye, Eleanor, Harry and Jade.



There was a strong family tradition of Mothers' Union involvement and Sue carried this on wholeheartedly.

She was a Cheddleton branch member for over 30 years and during this time filled many positions: Cheddleton branch leader, Leek Deanery Young Families Representative and she also ran the Cheddleton Young Families Group. On a diocesan level, Sue held the posts of General Trustee, Action & Outreach Coordinator, Market & Fundraising Coordinator and Diocesan President.

Adie Harris, Diocesan Administrator for Mothers' Union, said: "Sue's faith shone through everything that she did and we often joked that she was like a stick of rock - if you cut her in half it would say Mothers' Union all the way through!"

Sue Egerton - commissioned as Lichfield MU President by Bishop Geoff in 2016 (right) and with colleagues from the Mothers Union (below)



"She was passionate about supporting and showing the love of God to all and recent projects she has been instrumental in included 'MUMBags' for teenage mum's, 'life sucks without socks' supporting the homeless over winter and supporting the funding of a modern slavery campaigner in partnership with The Clewer Initiative and Transforming Communities Together (see page 9).

"Sue was an amazing, courageous, loving, Christian and the world is a poorer place for her passing - but what joy she must be bringing to heaven."

Twin it to win it

The diocese is pursuing a new link with the Anglican Church in Ireland which will foster close relations following Brexit.

Bishop Michael visited Ireland in November to further links with the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. In a joint statement after Britain left the EU on 31 January, Bishop Michael and the Bishop of Cork, the Rt Revd Dr Paul Colton, said: "Our two dioceses are actively exploring the possibilities of exchange and a deepening of relationships not only in the context of our common membership of the Anglican Communion of Churches, but also against the backdrop of Brexit.

"In these days following Brexit and as the relationships between peoples on these islands unfolds anew, we believe it is important to think not only of commerce and trade, but also of what it means, in the broadest sense, to be good neighbours in this part of the world.

"Brexit was not a vote to leave Europe; it is about leaving the European Union. We are part of a larger family of Christians and we can encourage one other by learning from each

English and Irish meeting in the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross including Bishop Michael and Bishop Paul Colton



other and enriching one another's life. We will look at specific and tangible ways we can do this across our two dioceses in the coming months as our link develops."

Meanwhile, as part of the link, The Church At Perton, in South Staffordshire, is piloting friendship twinning with St Mary's in Carrigaline, County Cork. A live online link brought the two congregations together for a special Sunday celebration.

Perton Vicar, the Revd Julia Cody, explained: "It was fantastic to be able to see each other as we launched our friendship twinning link. The Revd Elaine Murray, from Carrigaline, and myself fielded questions, helping us begin this journey of the church families getting to know each other.

"We have some clear points of connection, including both being Eco Churches, the Mothers' Union, and schools' work. We hope to build friendships, visit, learn from each other and support in prayer.

"We hope other parishes, as well as perhaps church primary schools, the cathedrals, and chaplaincies may be interested in forging links with our brothers and sisters who are so close, geographically; and who, particularly in the light of Brexit, long for deeper friendships.

"I'm setting up a Diocesan Working Party as we begin to develop these links, and arrange a visit from representatives of the Irish diocese. In addition, this summer, as part of my sabbatical, I plan to spend time in Ireland, embedding our parish link, and exploring the wider possibilities. Please do get in touch if you'd like to know more at revjulia.perton@gmail.com"

Pioneering posts and returning home

Bishop Jan McFarlane, suffragan bishop in Derby Diocese is about to actually follow in the footsteps of St Chad, moving from being Bishop of Repton to Lichfield 1,351 years after St Chad moved his base as Bishop of Mercia from Repton to Lichfield in 669AD.

The Rt Revd Jan McFarlane will move to Lichfield with her husband Andrew in April, to become Residentiary Canon (House for Duty) at Lichfield Cathedral and Honorary Assistant Bishop in Lichfield Diocese after almost four years as Bishop of Repton.

It will be a return to our diocese for Bishop Jan who was born in Stoke-on-Trent and began parish ministry in Stafford following her ordination as a priest in 1994. From there she served in Ely and Norwich dioceses before becoming the Bishop of Repton in 2016.

Bishop Jan said: "I came to the Diocese of Derby knowing there would be a vacancy-in-see to cover. The completion of that task has coincided with the silver anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood, and much reflection during my recent sabbatical on the past 26 years since I was ordained at Lichfield Cathedral.

"In addition, following five years of hospital visits I have been formally declared in remission



from cancer. All of this together has led to a desire to live life at a different pace. I look forward to being able to carve out time for writing and to return to the rhythm of preaching, praying, presiding and pastoring for which I was first ordained. I'm much looking forward to returning to my home county and diocese, journeying from Repton to Lichfield quite literally in the footsteps of St Chad."

Bishop Jan will be installed as Residentiary Canon at Lichfield Cathedral on Friday 3 April during Choral Evensong. She will be welcomed as Honorary Assistant Bishop in the diocese at Christ Eucharist at the cathedral on Maundy Thursday, 9 April.

A ground-breaking post will help churches across the diocese recognise and tackle modern slavery in their communities.

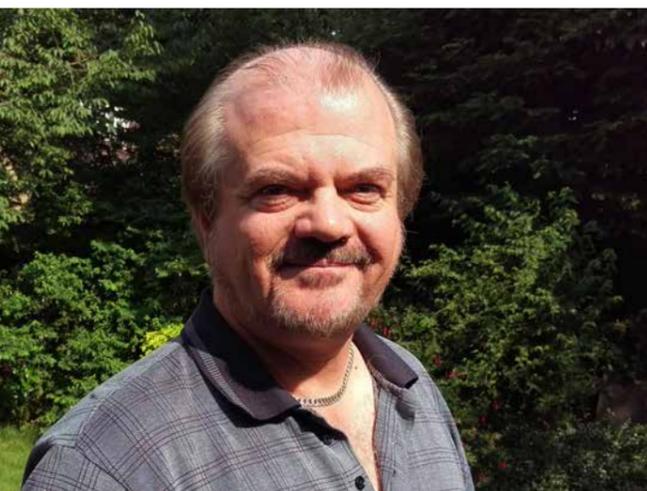
Mothers' Union is partnering with Transforming Communities Together and the Clewer Initiative to end modern slavery. A new Modern Slavery Campaigner, Debbie Huxton, has been funded by the Mothers' Union to work with churches to detect modern slavery and support victims. Debbie will work with around 80 Mothers' Union groups and other partners, using a range of resources and training materials to equip parishioners to combat modern slavery.

Modern slavery is an umbrella term for all forms of slavery, trafficking and exploitation. It often leads to the movement of a person from one place to another into conditions of exploitation, using deception, coercion, abuse of power or the abuse of the person's vulnerability. It can involve forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and child abuse and affects women and men, girls and boys, UK nationals and people trafficked from overseas. Victims are forced to work in businesses such as nail bars, car washes or as agricultural workers.

The post is the first of its kind in the country. Debbie, who lives in Walsall, has worked as a nurse and is a part of the City Pastors Project

in Birmingham. Her aim is to build links with local churches, schools and businesses and raise awareness of modern slavery and how to identify it. She will use the existing network of Mothers' Union branches to connect with as many people as possible.

Debbie said: "Modern slavery is something that is often 'hidden in plain sight' in our communities – whether in rural areas or city centres. I am really looking forward to working closely with the Mothers' Union and Transforming Communities Together to help churches across the diocese to spot signs of modern slavery in their neighbourhoods and equip them to fight back."



The Revd Steve Hollinghurst has been appointed to the new diocesan role of Evangelism Enabler with an Environmental Focus.

Steve joined the Mission Team, as part of the wider Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism (DVE) Department, in February. The new post, believed to be the first of its kind, seeks both to respond to the challenge of the environment crisis and the Good News of a creator God.

Steve, who lives in Sutton Coldfield, is well known in the Fresh Expressions and pioneering

world and has extensive experience in training and researching on contemporary culture, evangelism and new Christian communities. He was part of the team that developed the Forest Church movement.

Mission Team leader Simon Foster said: "This is an innovative post which takes seriously our diocesan priority of evangelism and our belief that the Church has something distinctive to bring to our response to the environment. We are delighted to welcome Steve to the diocese, and to the mission team and look forward to

the passion, energy and vision he is bringing to this role."

As part of his role, Steve will be identifying and developing a new flagship project.

Steve said: "The vision for the new role, which sees the link between evangelism and Christian commitment to creation care and climate justice, is really innovative. It is a vision I am passionate about. I am looking forward to taking up this exciting new post and sharing in that vision in the diocese."

Embracing a new road

Three years ago Peter Phillips set off on a 412-mile charity pilgrimage from Lichfield Cathedral to Iona Abbey. Now he's travelling a different journey with motor neurone disease. He tells us more:

"I vividly remember standing before the Bishop of Lichfield as he sprinkled holy water over me. 'Go in the name of Christ, and may He walk beside you at every step.'

"Miles and miles of pavement, grass verges, open road, footpaths, towpaths and lanes leading to hamlets, towns and cities, where I was welcomed – night after solitary night. I remember hearing the cry of curlews, cuckoos and seeing foxes and roe deer. These were kindly reminders to me that Jesus Christ was indeed walking beside me every step. But little did I know then that, within months, I would be on a different journey, where I would need Jesus by my side again...

"I lay on the couch. My Consultant Neurologist lifted up my right leg, then my left. It was obvious to him that I had lost a considerable amount of muscle around the thigh. I had undergone respiratory tests just a few days before.

"'Get dressed please,' he said quietly. Then: 'I have to tell you that you have motor neurone disease...I am very, very sorry.'

"Was this my pilgrimage to Calvary? Is this what I had lived 67 years to hear? What now lie ahead? Undeniable humiliation? Not to mention gut-wrenching pain? Since my diagnosis, I have thought a great deal about it... often at 3am. Apparently, it is a rare condition – only 5,000 sufferers of MND in the UK at any point – and it bears no connection to my walk to Iona.

"MND has a general prognosis of two to four years. I have truly come up with the notion



that my diagnosis is 'a gift from God.' If we modern-day Christians are to take our faith at all seriously, we must recognise, and be prepared to take, the rough with the smooth, the harshness with the compassion, the pain with the joy.

"So, 18 months after my diagnosis, people ask: 'How am I now?' Well, MND is a little bit like an old car! You find you are travelling along quite nicely, when suddenly - you hear a crack - and your bumper has dropped off. Never mind, the car is still going. Then, a window-wiper packs up. Never mind, you still have the other one. Then half the exhaust drops off. OK, well the car is still motoring. Then one day, you jump in the old banger, and go off into the countryside. Suddenly, in a remote lane, far from home, you hear another loud crack, from the engine this time. The banger has breathed its last. Ahhhhhh. It has finally come to the end of its life.

"Thank you for asking....my exhaust has just dropped off...but I am still going. Yes. Jesus did walk beside me on my pilgrimage to Iona. But I know, beyond doubt, that He is still beside me... as I walk the road to Calvary."

***Read some of Peter's poetry on our website at lichfield.anglican.org/embracing-new-road Watch a video interview with Peter about the church's need to talk about dying on our Ex-cluded Facebook page**

Toothache for Lent

What are you doing to mark Lent? Maybe you will be focusing on a bit of extra study, to challenge yourself into learning more of the riches of the Christian faith and the difference it makes to our world and our lives.

This year, as a diocese we are particularly commending Ruth Valerio's *Saying Yes to Life* – and so, as it happens, is the Archbishop of Canterbury, so you will be in good company if you read that. Maybe you will be giving up something as a mark of discipline and abstinence – like meat (me), chocolate (not me), alcohol (me), watching soaps (not applicable to me), or whatever. Maybe you will be taking on something new for these forty days – visiting somebody lonely, picking up litter, smiling at strangers (I advise caution). Maybe you will be doing some combination of the above, or something completely different.

'The awareness of God shall be with you as clearly as a toothache'

However, it is unlikely that you will be trying to get a toothache as part of your keeping of Lent. But I have been very struck by these words of the Russian bishop, Theophan the Recluse: "The awareness of God shall be with you as clearly as a toothache." It is an extraordinary image, but its meaning is clear: we should be longing for him like a toothache which no dentist can remove and no anaesthetic can numb. Lent is a good time to start thinking in that way: just as Jesus went out into the wilderness for 40 days to be alone with his Father, so in this season we should make the effort to carve out time to be with God.

Last year, I led a group of pilgrims from Lichfield

to Russia, to learn more about the riches of the Orthodox tradition of spirituality. Among those we met were disciples of the late great Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, a Russian emigré monk and bishop whose influence was strong in this country in particular. One of his best books is called *School for Prayer*, and that title sums up the whole purpose of trying to cultivate the awareness of God: so that we can come closer to him in Christ and grow more like him. It was Metropolitan Anthony who introduced me to the Theophan-toothache analogy. And it was Metropolitan Anthony who said of himself: "I met Christ as a Person at a moment when I needed him in order to live, and at a moment when I was not in search of him. I was found; I did not find him."

At several points in my life, I have found that to be the case: that Jesus Christ found me when I needed him most, and was not particularly looking for him. And those are the points at which I realise how much I have to learn in the school of prayer which is my life on earth. I have been much helped recently by a short book on prayer by my brother West Midlands bishop John Stroyan, the Bishop of Warwick. Entitled *Turned By Divine Love: Starting Again With God And With Others*, it presents a rich wisdom drawn from the centuries of the Church's experience of prayer, particularly in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. There is so much for us to learn from here; but, as Bishop John says, we know that we have to keep on starting all over again, learning afresh every morning how to pray. May God find you this Lent, and give you that toothache which will not go away as the sign of his presence.

+Michael



Bishop Michael with fellow pilgrims (including a dentist) outside St Andrew's Church, Moscow, last year





Come follow Christ
in the footsteps of St Chad

DIARY



Pray for Schools

Alex Wovers (Lead Christian Distinctiveness Adviser) takes a look at churches' engaging schools in mission with practical ideas to build links
Monday 30 March 1.30-4pm, Lichfield. Email jodie.galley@lichfield.anglican.org for details

PCC Tonight

Resources to help PCCs function well and a dozen dysfunctions to avoid.
Presented by CPAS. Thursday 18 June, 7.30pm, Christ Church, Bayston Hill
Book via <https://bit.ly/2T0JlDI>

Hate Crime Awareness Training

Would you know how to recognise and report a hate crime? Do you know your rights?
A half-day seminar
Monday 30 March: sessions start at 9.30am or 12.30pm, Wolverhampton Civic Hall Co-organised by our Transforming Communities Together team. Book in at <http://bit.ly/hate-awareness>

I am H.A.P.P.Y

Being a happy child in the 21st Century - Children's Society Head of Youth Engagement leads a seminar drawing on research into children's wellbeing and mental health.

Wednesday 25 March, 10.30am-1pm
College Hall, The Close, Lichfield.
To book, email theresa.willmore@lichfield-cathedral.org

For a full listing of events in the Diocese, visit lichfield.anglican.org/events
Let us know about your events by email to comms@lichfield.anglican.org