

A message from Bishop Michael

I am delighted to introduce the 2019 Bishop's Lent Appeal in the Diocese of Lichfield. This year's topic is one which I feel should be central to our life together and ministry as Christians: mental health and wellbeing. I have been impressed by many projects supported by our churches which work in this area; this is something that touches all of us. I also know that all our churches offer care and support, often very quietly, to people who are struggling with particular mental health problems or concerns.

I very much hope that this Lent you will open your hearts and wallets to support those suffering from the aftermath of trauma and other serious mental health issues, particularly when caused by exposure to war and violence. I also invite you to pray with me for other good work that is happening in the Diocese in the area of mental health and wellbeing, as well as to consider ways that you might give of your time and energy to help.

+ Michael Lichfield



In the season of Lent we prepare to celebrate the work of Christ, who took to the Cross all our suffering, our problems, our lack of wellbeing, and who brings us into the hope of a resurrection in which all our pain is transformed into glory. I believe that as Christians our role is to participate as fully as we can in this dynamic of transformation by acknowledging the times and places where our own mental health is suffering, and to care for that in others. We have a great story of hope, togetherness, and accompaniment in community to share as we seek to remind one another of the fullness of life to which Christ calls us all.

more information at lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal_2019

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 local parish church, using the form below, online at lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal_2019. 

PRAY For all those locally facing mental health problems. For those struggling with traumas caused by war, abuse or violence. For those supporting people suffering mental health issues.

ACT Use this Bible Study resource in your church: <https://livability.org.uk/resource/lifting-the-lid/>.
• Attend the Diocese's training with Mental Health First Aid to learn how to respond to people who are struggling or in crisis. • Visit this website now, www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org, so that you are ready to refer to it should the need arise. • Become involved in www.time-to-change.org.uk and speak up to reduce stigma around mental illness. • Make contact with the mental health support groups for people in your area, and promote their resources through the local church.

For more information about what you can do, or to invite speakers to churches, house groups, or youth fellowships, 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_2019

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

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Please make your cheque payable to 'Bishop of Lichfield's Lent Appeal'

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Online: www.justgiving.com/lentappeal2019

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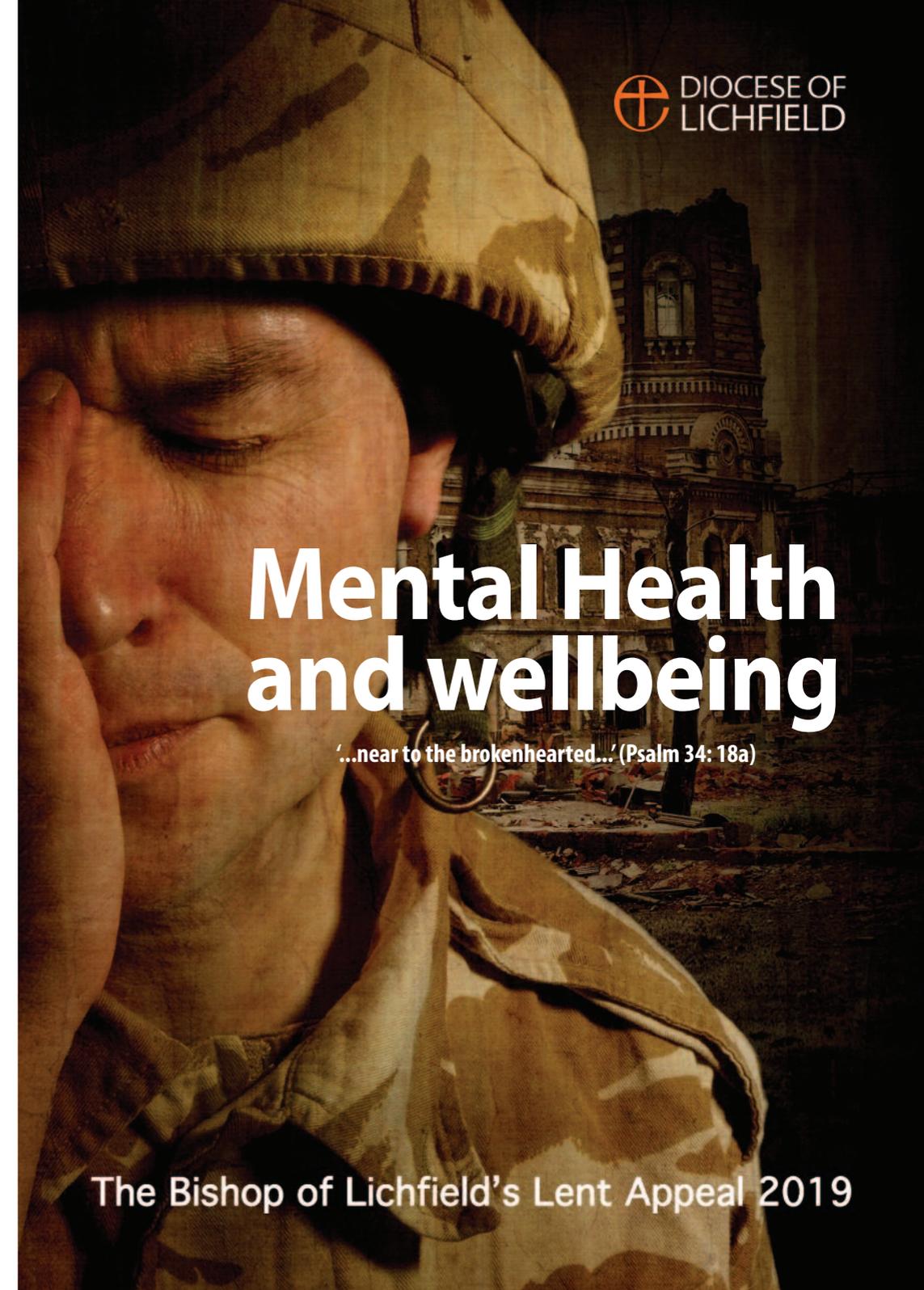
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Data Protection Act: We will not pass your details to any third party except for the purposes of processing your donation (for example, to HMRC if your donation is Gift Aided). We may store your details and use them to keep you informed about how the 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.



Mental Health and wellbeing

'...near to the brokenhearted...' (Psalm 34: 18a)

This year's Appeal concerns Mental Health & Wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing are issues which face all of us. Most of us have experience of mental ill health, either our own or that of loved ones, and there are many factors which can decrease our wellbeing and increase the risk of mental ill health. In this year's Lent Appeal we will particularly be supporting charities which help those suffering trauma and other effects of war and violence, but we will also be considering mental health more widely.

War and its effects have been prominent in our thoughts in the past few months. Remembrance Sunday 2018 saw vast numbers of people coming into our churches to remember and give thanks for those who gave their lives in the First World War and in conflicts since. Our Diocese contains several military bases and many service people, both serving and former, live here and contribute to our life together. In this year's Appeal we are seeking to raise money to support a charity, Combat Stress, which helps former servicemen and women deal with trauma-related mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since 1919, Combat Stress has helped former servicemen and women deal with trauma-related mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Today, the charity provides life-changing treatment and support to help veterans tackle the past and take on the future.

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In the last ten years, the number of veterans seeking the charity's help has almost doubled. As a Diocese we also have many international links, and we are looking to support the charity Embrace the Middle East. This is a Christian organisation with over 160 years' experience helping people of all faiths and none to free themselves from a life of poverty and injustice. Together with local Christian communities they are bringing lasting change to the Middle East through healthcare, education and community development projects. We are particularly looking to raise money for their work in providing psychological support to those who have experienced the trauma of war, abuse, violence and displacement.

But this year's Lent Appeal is not only about raising money for these excellent causes. There are also other organisations within the Diocese who are working to support people who are suffering from mental health problems, whether caused by exposure to the traumas of war and violence or otherwise. We are also looking to support these causes with prayer and action.

Here are some case studies from some of the projects we will be supporting this year:

Embrace the Middle East: Soteria Project

Embrace the Middle East supports the Soteria project, which provides residential courses at Anafora, a retreat centre run by the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of El-Qusiya, for rural Egyptian women who have experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse. The name Soteria comes from the Greek word for safety and deliverance, and the project aims to give 100 women per year the chance to rebuild their lives. Each week-long course offers trauma counselling and helps the participants to recognise their talents, develop their self-worth and understanding of their rights.

Sofia is a 26-year-old woman who participated in the Soteria programme last year. She lives in a large village in Upper (south) Egypt. It is home to around 16,000 Christians and 9,000 Muslims. "Everyone knows each other," she says, "and most people have very good relationships with their neighbours." Yet the community is not without its problems. Sofia did not want to go into detail about her personal experiences, but she described the inescapable environment of sexual harassment that begins when Egyptian girls are very young. Sexual harassment and abuse are issues for so many women in Upper Egypt and they often don't even have words to describe the shame they feel. Often a girl's house is open to neighbours and family and so they don't have a safe space away from the advances of men."

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Sahar Hanna

Sofia heard about Soteria through a member of her church. Sahar, a trainer for Soteria, invited Sofia and other local young women to spend a week at Anafora. In this peaceful and healing environment, the women shared their experiences and realised they were not alone. "By helping these girls and women feel like they have a voice," Sofia told us, "by helping them to discover who they are and how to love themselves, this project changes their lives." Sofia now aims to establish a group in her village to bring women together so they can support and inspire each other. "Because most women are relegated to home life, they don't feel a sense of deep purpose and belonging," Sofia said. "I want to help change this by creating an association that will empower girls to lead better lives."



Sofia and friends

Combat Stress

Craig served in the Army for 28 years, with tours to Belize, Bosnia and Iraq. An incident in Bosnia affected Craig deeply. "It changed me completely. I felt like I was reliving it every day – I wasn't me anymore. It wasn't long before I was diagnosed with PTSD."

After trying different talking therapies through the NHS, Craig was eventually referred to Combat Stress. Craig began attending the charity's peer support group meetings in his local community, where veterans can meet to talk about their experiences. "What first struck me was how helpful it was to be with like-minded people. We gave each other great support and did occupational therapy workshops together. I learnt practical ways of taking better care of my

mental health as well as how to use mindfulness to bypass bad thoughts. Things started to look up for me... I felt like I could start enjoying my life."

Craig now volunteers to help run his local Combat Stress peer support groups. "It makes me feel good to know that I'm putting something back into a charity that's done so much for me."



Craig