

Spotlight

Nov/Dec 2018

Christmas Presence

Fresh inspiration to make Christmas meaningful was served up at a special event in Stafford.

Christmas Unwrapped saw over 60 people from across the Diocese come together to talk about how they can make the most of the festive season in their churches and communities.

After an opening talk on Unwrapping Incarnation by Archdeacon Paul Thomas and Dr Lindsey Hall, participants took part in a range of workshops.

These included sessions on how churches can engage with and love their communities over Christmas, ideas for Christingle Services and Midnight Mass, Christmas

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Revd Cassius Francis, Dr Lindsey Hall, Helen Scheven and James Henderon at the Christmas Unwrapped workshop.



DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD



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

#FollowTheStar

<- continued from p1 stories from around the world and exploring Christmas with under 5's and their families.

Lindsey Hall, Diocesan Director of Vocations, said: "Christmas is a time when more and more people are coming to church. We want to hear and share the life-changing Good News of God becoming human and making his home with us afresh, to experience the difference the birth of Jesus makes in our lives and in the world."

"Christmas can also bring its own pressures and stresses, both for church leaders and for people who struggle to meet society's unrealistic expectations. It was great to spend some time looking at how we can celebrate Christmas in meaningful, creative and life-giving ways at Christmas Unwrapped."

One of the workshops, called The Only Way Is Ethics, considered ways to celebrate Christmas that are joyful but not costly financially or for the environment.

A series of CHAD Living videos will be released in the run up to Christmas to focus on making good choices, habits, actions and decisions at Christmas time.



A range of digital and print resources are also on offer from the national Church of England during Advent with this year's theme being #FollowTheStar.

Churches will be encouraged to take part in a 'Night Of Stars' on Friday 21 December

by displaying prominent lit-up stars on their buildings and then sharing them on social media. They are also being encouraged to get their Christmas services on A Church Near You (achurchnearyou.org).

More details at churchofengland.org/Christmas

A taste for Africa

A church school and their local parish church have teamed up for an exciting project to make a difference to the lives of Kenyan children.



Barlaston CE (VC) First School and the Church of St John the Baptist Church in Barlaston are working together alongside the charity Feed The Hungry.

They have linked with a community in Kibera where Feed the Hungry are active. Every day, children walk to school and receive a meal, possibly their only one of the day, provided by the charity. The aim of the project is to support the community in Kibera, whilst working alongside the charity.

The school and church launched their project in September and shared the needs of the children and their families with others. In January, staff from the school and church members will travel to Kenya to visit both the church and school with hygiene products and stationery as requested by the community.

The school held their Harvest Festival in the church, led by its vicar the Revd Stewart Jones who will be among the party visiting Africa. A

talk was given by Rachel Bird, a representative from Feed the Hungry, which included a video showing the conditions the children live in, their classrooms and how dangerous their journey to school can be. Bishop Geoff also attended and gave a blessing at the end of the service.

Mandy Clarey, the school's headteacher, said: "This is a very exciting project and we are looking forward to visiting the community. The children at Barlaston First School are delighted to be twinned with a school in Kenya, and will see their Christian values making a difference in the lives of others. It will be an exciting journey and brilliant to work as one with the church."

Stewart added: "This project continues an excellent relationship St John's has with our local school. I am sure it will not only deepen and strengthen that relationship but will give us a mission opportunity to see the Gospel in action both here and in Kibera. It's early days but it is already making an impact in the church, the school and the wider community."

LeSEA Global
FEED THE HUNGRY For more information contact the school on 01782 372543.
A full life feels good.™



Blooming recycling



A Messy Tots garden has brought new life to a disused plot outside St John the Evangelist, Essington, winning the national Cultivation Street Small Spaces award. Children, Youth and Families Worker Janette Thomas tells us more.

"Messy Tots, a child and parent/carer group, meets every Friday in church and concentrates on pre-school children aged between six months and three, following the Messy Church format.

"When St John's was approached to help Essington enter Britain in Bloom I asked for a small plot of disused ground running the length of the church which became known as the Tots Garden. Fly tipping is a constant blight and we sought to show how reclaimed, recovered and unwanted items could be used creatively. We cleaned and painted over 40 discarded car tyres, some of which were turned into 4ft snails, a giant frog, a wishing well and a hobby horse.



"Two tyres high is the ideal height for small children to dig and plant out. Who knew?!"

"We used empty coffee cans, potato sacks, a magazine rack and a small table recovered from a dumper and an old chair from the vicar's garden. We appealed for unwanted wellies - that take up to 50 years to break down in land fill - which the children painted and planted up. The hoarding surrounding the church's extension was decorated; each child was measured against it and painted a sunflower in accordance with their height. They painted poppies for remembrance, forget-me-nots and a huge rainbow to remind us of God's Promise to Noah.

"Four months on, the garden is looking lovely, eclectic, and a little eccentric, but it has bloomed magnificently. The children learnt about protecting our earth by reusing things we don't want. But the most rewarding thing is the conversations it has evoked. So many people came through the gates to admire our progress and we continue to see a steady stream of comments on Facebook. We've put our church on the map and created a little oasis of joy for the whole community. The garden was shortlisted and then won the overall award in September! The children may be too young to understand the judging concept - for them it was all about tremendous fun and fellowship."



A Diocesan Vision

The Diocese has unveiled its new vision statement based on developing discipleship, encouraging vocation and inspiring evangelism.

It focuses on reaching the two million people of Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country through a 'confident' church that reflects the 'richness and variety' of its communities.

Diocesan Chief Executive Officer Julie Jones said: "Our aim is to support parishes, fresh expressions of church, schools and chaplaincies to know and love their communities and to share the Good News of Jesus." About bringing the DVE teams together in Three Spires she explained: "This fresh focus of resources is to enable all of us to fulfil our vision and to be equipped as the people of God."

"As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God at work already in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities and partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as people of hope."

The Diocese's Central Administrative Support Teams - Finance, Property, Safeguarding, Communications, the Diocesan Secretariat (including Governance and HR) and the Diocesan Advisory Committee - will work closely with the DVE teams to help equip people in discipleship, vocation and evangelism.

A number of DVE projects, each of which seeks to take forward one or more of the three priorities, will also see people

Bishop Michael said: "Our vision is that the church will become a real blessing for the people of this region. As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we are seeking to develop discipleship, encourage vocations and inspire evangelism so that the two million people of this region can have an encounter with the love of God in Jesus Christ."

working across teams. They include projects to encourage people to engage with the Bible, practise generosity, talk about Jesus, challenge the fast fashion industry and help Year 9 pupils make good choices. Find out more at www.lichfield.anglican.org/DVE_projects/

To support the core priorities of discipleship, vocation and evangelism (DVE), teams tasked with focusing on these have been brought together in one DVE department. These Diocesan staff from Mission, Transforming Communities, Vocations and Training, Ministry Support, and Education are based at recently opened offices in Three Spires House, Lichfield.



Fresh fishers

People starting, supporting or sustaining fresh expressions of church are being invited to a special day conference next spring.

Fresh expressions are forms of church that listen to people and enter their culture, serve those outside the reach of the existing church, make discipleship a priority and intentionally form new Christian community. Over 3,000 people regularly attend fresh expressions across the Diocese.

Keynote speakers at the Refresh conference on Saturday 9 March at Aldridge Parish Centre will be the Revd Dr Michael Moynagh and Andy Milne, authors of 'The DNA of Pioneer Ministry'.

"It will be ideal for those seeking inspiration to start something new, those looking to make an incremental change to an existing group, outreach activity or church service for people outside of church and for those already engaged in fresh expressions who want to pick up tips on how to improve. Refresh will also help existing churches grow something new from a maturing fresh expression, such as young people and their parents who have graduated from messy church. It's also for those exploring or engaged in pioneer ministry as a vocation."

Michael Moynagh is based at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and works for Fresh Expressions



There will also be stories from local pioneers and fresh expressions, seminars from experienced practitioners and space to meet and mingle with others engaged in fresh expressions.

as Director of Network Development and Consultant on Theology and Practice. Andy Milne is a Church Army Evangelist and founder of Sorted, a successful youth and young adult focussed fresh expression in Bradford.

Organiser David Cundill (pictured right), the Diocese's Deputy Director of Mission, said: "Refresh is a day for anyone involved in starting, supporting and sustaining fresh expressions, messy churches and new worshipping communities.



The free conference runs from 10am-4pm. Booking is required. More details can be found at lichfield.anglican.org/refresh or email richard.barrett@lichfield.anglican.org. Refreshments will be provided but bring your own packed lunch.

Gathering pace

Lichfield Cathedral reverberated to the sound of African drums and gospel songs in a celebration of Black History Month. 300 people from across the region came to the Walking Together event which marked the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the ship Empire Windrush and the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth.



A pilgrimage around the cathedral featured music, children's activities and specially-commissioned videos about the experience of black people in communities throughout the Diocese in the decades following Windrush.



Addressing the event, Bishop Michael spoke from Isaiah 61 about taking on a "garment of praise" as Christians together. He outlined how the Windrush generation came to a 'damaged' Britain after World War Two and helped rebuild society.

"They filled so many roles and revitalised so many neighbourhoods. Together we celebrate this great contribution and pledge to again seek the human good in the house we build together. The forces of division in our society are powerful but the Kingdom of God is more powerful still," he said.

"Now it is time for us all to say to black, Asian and minority ethnic people it is time to say 'this is your church, this is our church together'. Let us bless one another as we cast away a faint spirit to be cloaked in a mantle of praise. Now is the time to make this visible – not as



political correctness but to show the world what the body of Jesus really looks like. This is what our fractured world needs to see – a revelation of the humanity of the future."

One of the organisers, the Revd Dr Cathy Mark, said: "Walking Together was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the beauty, diversity and creativity across our diocese. In these vulnerable times where discrimination and

prejudice persist at every level of society, the Church of England is poised to respond to God's call to model a radical and transformational welcome to all people. As a diocese, we have much to praise God for, as we engage more

Revd Preb Carl Ramsay with co-organiser Revd Dr Cathy Mark



fully and generously with our increasingly diverse communities."



To see the videos, photos and information about BAME support in the Diocese and future events, see lichfield.anglican.org/bame

Lighthouse begins to shine



A pioneering project that brings a school, a church and its community together has officially opened.

The Lighthouse Project is a partnership between Kingsland CE Academy and St Mary's Church in Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent. It is based in the primary school's former Children's Centre which has been developed to provide a range of services in a deprived area with few local resources.

Bishop Michael joined pupils and partner organisations to open the project including its new community cafe called The Lantern.

Parenting support, family partnerships where new skills are taught plus medical advice and counseling will all be on offer to local people at the base.

Academy Principal Sara Goddard said: "We feel that our engagement with parents is going to be the key to success for children in future generations. That's why we've invested in the Lighthouse Centre as a project.



Kingsland Academy principal, Sara Goddard, cuts the official cake with Bishop Michael

"We've got lots of things planned. We want to be like a lighthouse - guiding people,

helping and supporting them. We want our parents and community to know this is a place they can come to for support and help."



Bishop Michael added: "I hope that the Lighthouse Project can be an example we can all learn from across the Diocese. It is a great partnership between school, church and local community."

It is part of a wider mission project to encourage engagement between churches and schools in the Stafford Episcopal Area of the Diocese. Find out more about this and the Diocese's three other mission projects on the home page of our website (or www.lichfield.anglican.org/mission_projects/).



Graft reaps rewards

In 2012, an unusual church plant took place - not into a community without a church, but into a church that was praying for revitalisation.

"It's called a church plant, but some people like to think of it as a graft to recognise there was already something there," says the vicar, Revd Gavin Burnage. "A 'church plant' is a generic term for helping some thing to grow that wasn't growing before".

The graft took place when a group of about 40 people from Aldridge Parish Church, where Gavin had just finished his curacy, agreed to move and unite with the congregation of St Peter's in Walsall, an aging and dwindling congregation of around 25 people in a heavily deprived part of the city.



"The biggest thing that happened since we planted was getting an Eden Team [which comes to live in and serve the parish for the long term]. We always envisaged community involvement and they've got to know people in the streets and done detached youth work. That's opened the way for people to come in. And now a very large portion of the Sunday morning congregation is people under 16."

Five years on, it seemed a good time to stand back and see what lessons could be learned here and from other plants, and so a one-day

conference was arranged at St Peter's. The headline speaker was Bishop Ric Thorpe who has overseen a significant and successful programme of church planting in London and elsewhere, and so around 60 people from this Diocese and beyond gathered to hear about lessons learnt by Bishop Ric, St Peter's and other plants in the Diocese.

"This was an inspiring and encouraging day, providing experience and stories of how churches of all traditions can grow intentionally, plant inside their own parish, be revitalised or become a resource to others," said Revd David Cundill, Diocesan officer with responsibility for supporting fresh expressions and church



Revd Gavin Burnage with Bishop Ric Thorpe and David Cundill, Diocesan Deputy Director of Mission at the door of St Peter's.

planting. "There was much for leaders to take away, unpack and consider in terms of their involvement with this to proclaim the gospel afresh in each new generation."

Watch the in-depth stories of the St Peter's experience as told by the vicar, wardens from the old and incoming congregations and Eden team at lichfield.anglican.org/church-planting



From the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of Spotlight in which Christmas comes early on page 1 (and 2). Advent presents a wonderful opportunity

to welcome people into church to a potentially life-changing experience of peace and joy amidst the seasonal hustle and bustle. Check out A Church Near You online to find out what services are happening in your area.

Pete Bate, Director of Communications



250th Place of Welcome

A Chase Terrace church has become the 250th Place of Welcome for local people in the country.

Places of Welcome is a network run by community groups that focuses on offering a friendly face at least once a week. Spreading across the country, Places of Welcome venues offer neighbourhoods and communities a space for people to sit, have a chat and a free cup of tea or coffee.

St John's Community Church in Chase Terrace, Staffordshire, has been running a drop-in on Mondays for many years. They joined the Places of Welcome movement because of the values which hold it together and the element of peer support between venues.

"Joining the Places of Welcome initiative therefore seemed a natural next step, both in terms of the support and advice we've already received, but also the network of other similar groups from which we can learn and be inspired by. There seems to be real momentum with the Places of Welcome programme and it's exciting to see the way in which it's catching on as an initiative across the country."

Angie Thomas and Ange Miles-Dalton at the Place of Welcome



Team Vicar the Revd Matt Wallace said: "The Drop Inn at St John's Community Church has been running since 2011. It's proved to be a great way for people from our community to become more connected to the life of the church and ultimately to the love of God. While the number of folks attending has steadily risen year on year, we're keen to see this growth continue.

initiative and that it is growing nationally. I always enjoy visiting Places of Welcome. In a world where isolation can become the norm, they are a simple and practical way to offer a familiar place of connection and companionship."

Find out more at www.placesofwelcome.org.uk

Places of Welcome vary from place to place, with churches, community centres, libraries, mosques, and high street shop fronts all playing host. The network was created in Birmingham to allow individuals to get to know their community better.

Bishop Michael said: "It is fantastic that so many churches in Lichfield Diocese and across the Midlands region are involved in this wonderful

Faith in humanity?



As the nation's attention turns to commemorating the centenary of the Armistice, the Archdeacon of Salop is constricted to replace the vacant Bishop of Shrewsbury to bring this month's Pastoral Letter.

In 'Furthering Humanity' Tim Gorringer argues that Christianity makes a threefold response to human history. It **identifies** with it, **judges** it and **transcends** it. This arises from its belief that in Jesus God took human flesh and identified with all humanity; that in Jesus' death on the cross God judged the evil that mars human existence; and that in Jesus' resurrection God transcends the limits of human history. So how does this apply when thinking about war?

Identifying with our humanity means being aware of the terrible costliness of war. About 187 million people died in warfare in the twentieth century and this included not just combatants but civilians. Cities and countryside were obliterated and millions became immigrants. Drone and cyber warfare make populations even more vulnerable. The cost is psychological as well as physical. The decade after the 1914-18 War was mostly marked by silence. Literature and art remained mute sharing the deep shock of the nation. Christians seek to identify with all this pain and like Christ bring light into this terrible darkness.

Judging humanity means being willing to question the rightness of war. The story of Jesus cannot be retold without the Cross. There an innocent man endured a brutal execution at the hands of people who were misusing their power, following false ideologies, and



demonstrating cold indifference. It was an ugly spectacle but it has been repeated endlessly through history as millions have been herded towards battlefields, or into gas chambers and mass graves. The Church's Just War theory is often criticised as inadequate but at least it asserts that moral criteria must be applied to war as to any other human action. Pacifists insist on a total ban on war not least in regard to nuclear weapons. As we honour the war dead and share the remembrance of them we cannot allow our conscience to be stifled; the perpetration of violence is never without serious flaw and even folly and where required (or just possible) that needs to be judged and punished.

Transcending humanity means that ultimately hope lies beyond history. The resurrection of Jesus points to a dimension of existence in which God 'makes all things new' and which is marked by freedom from all that divides and disfigures human life. But also one in which there are 'no more tears, nor mourning, nor pain' (Revelation 21 v 4), suggesting a healing of the wounds and tragedies of human history. Stephen Pinker argues that human violence is in decline and might disappear. But historians like Yuval Harari or Margaret McMillan (Reith Lectures 2018) say it is far too soon to tell. Hoping for heaven motivates us to change the world: 'the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present.' (Moltmann). We become peace-makers inspired by the Biblical concept of 'shalom' which means wholeness and harmony at every level of our existence – spiritual, emotional, physical, social, international and environmental.

As we consider this threefold response we can ask: what part does God wants us to play in making this a better world?

*The Ven Paul Thomas
Archdeacon of Salop*



Come follow Christ
in the footsteps of St Chad

DIARY

Shallowford House in Advent

Christmas Craft Day 'Filled With Joy'

Friday 23 Nov: £30 including lunch, refreshments and craft materials.

Advent Quiet Day 'Plaining the Rough Places'

Friday 30 Nov: .£25 including lunch and refreshments. Led by the Revd Catherine Williams.

Advent Quiet Day 'Rediscovering the Inclusive Love of God at Christmas'

Wednesday 5 Dec: £25 inclusive of 2 course lunch and refreshments.

For more details, visit www.shallowfordhouse.org or call 01785 760233.

The Cathedral illuminated

The multi-award winning Cathedral Illuminated is back.

Each year the team at Luxmuralis create a bespoke stunning set of illuminations all around the Cathedral including both outside and inside.

In-keeping with the Cathedral's year long theme of 'Imagine Peace', this Christmas Luxmuralis presents 'Peace on Earth'.

Lichfield Cathedral, 17-22 December
www.lichfield-cathedral.org/what-s-on

The God Particle

A quantum scientist and a vicar walk into a bar... A romantic comedy sci-fi play from James Cary (Miranda, Bluestone 42, Milton Jones and General Synod member)! Now in its third tour of the country and coming to Shrewsbury. Discover the real meaning of faith, knowledge, love and the importance of keeping an open mind.

St George's Church, Frankwell, Shrewsbury.
Thursday 8 November, 7.30pm. For tickets visit www.stgeorgesshrewsbury.church/godparticle

Dementia-friends' Celebration

Discover the path to becoming dementia-friendly: The Church at Perton, 21 November 7.45pm. mike.bridgewater@lichfield.anglican.org | 07531 105853