

Spotlight

Mar/Apr 2019

Church with fashion sense

Robes of righteousness were on display when an historic Wolverhampton church was transformed into a catwalk to highlight the issue of 'fast fashion'.

St Peter's Collegiate Church hosted a catwalk show where volunteers modelled clothes from local charity shops along with a marketplace and a clothes swap. It 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.

Local fashion designers brought their ethically-aware products, prayer stations gave ideas for how to engage with the issues raised and charities explained their work.



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.

The prevalence of slavery in the fashion and textile industries - both abroad and to a shocking extent in the UK - was highlighted.

'Hope at Home' is a hosting scheme for survivors of slavery. "We train and support hosts to welcome people into

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Bags of memories

Fourteen churches in Shropshire are working together to put those affected by dementia at the heart of their communities. Ellesmere Deanery has become the first in the country to have a full house of dementia-friendly churches.

In Ellesmere – a rural area surrounding a market town – discussions at a Deanery Chapter meeting in 2017 began the dementia-friendly journey. Since then, its churches have taken a range of actions including improving signs, making service booklets accessible, hosting monthly coffee mornings for those living with dementia and their carers, holding Dementia Friends Sunday services and displaying information on noticeboards.

was to see their relation smile, laugh and join in. They will become annual events.”

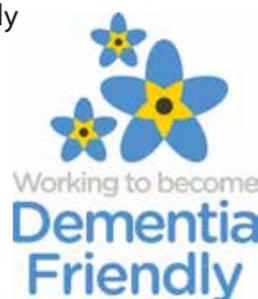


Strength For The Journey memory bag

The initiatives have spilt out into the wider community. In Baschurch, All Saints Church is working with the local library to create a Strength For The Journey memory bag which includes a holding cross, hymn book and rosary to help stir memories.

“Many of us today know people living with dementia, either in our own families or in our communities or congregations,” Rural Dean the Revd Linda Cox said. “It is so important to be able to continue to live and enjoy the things that connect us. Our churches need to be accessible to all, so any changes we can make to help this are indeed good news.”

The Diocese is recognised by the Alzheimer’s Society as a dementia-friendly community which allows it to award the nationally-recognised ‘Working to become dementia friendly’ logo to churches who commit to taking three actions in the year ahead.



Find out more at lichfield.anglican.org/dementia-friendly_church/

At the library in Harlescott, from left: The Revd Linda Cox, Team Librarian Heather Rodenhurst, Dementia Enabler for northern Shropshire Sarah Thorpe and retired clergyman the Revd Preb Rob Haarhoff who helped produce the material in the memory bag.



The Revd Maureen Read, Vicar of the Benefice of the Meres & Meadows, explains: “Two of my churches held Community Carols with an aim to reach those living with dementia and their carers, whether regular church attenders or not. Both went very well with positive comments particularly from carers who said how lovely it

Faith in the young

Young adults - those age 18-35 - are relatively rare in the Church of England today. The reasons are complex and varied, including the lack of affordable housing in villages and changes in wider society. But a recent gathering shared experiences from a number of churches that are experiencing fruitful ministries. Four case-studies highlighted different challenges and approaches:

Gareth and Gemma Manser and three others began a midweek group at **St Philip’s Pennfields** that sees great value in engaging with people at the same life-stage. Providing a meal enables people to arrive straight from work and now around 20 are a regular part of the community. Bible study is part of their fellowship and they make leading it less onerous by adapting off-the-shelf resources to the needs and experiences of their own group.



St Matthew’s Walsall has had a thriving young adults ministry for over 25 years, with leadership from within the peers being regularly passed to the next generation. The

church has a weekly service with worship that is attractive to this age-group as well as small groups for students and others. They greatly value celebrations of people’s achievements and support each other through life’s changes.



Wolverhampton Pioneer Ministries was established over ten years ago as an ecumenical fresh expression, encouraging participation and empowering people to use their skills and gifts. Successive staff have found developing chaplaincy to be key in forming community among the non-university young adults in the city, and activities are planned with consideration of those who can’t commit to regular set times due to shift-working and zero-hour contracts.



St John’s Chase Terrace has an unusually large proportion of young adults in its congregation. Vicar Matt Wallace puts that down to whole-hearted engagement in wider community events, encouragement of under-30s in church leadership and prioritising teaching and making disciples. Their midweek groups include transitioning teens to young adults with a 16-21 group and a housegroup aimed at 18-30s. Good quality children’s work engages young parents too.



The event was led by Diocesan Director of Fresh Expressions The Revd David Cundill who is always keen to support ministry with Young Adult and Fresh Expressions. Contact him at david.cundill@lichfield.anglican.org or 07540 841403.

Near to the brokenhearted

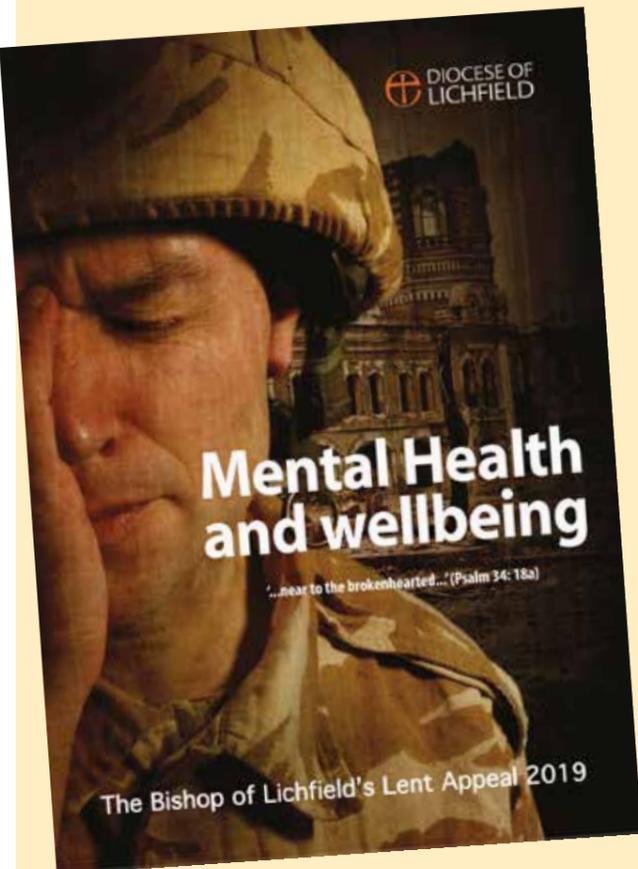
Mental health and wellbeing are issues which face all of us, whether through personal experience or the experiences of our loved ones, colleagues or friends.

of transformation by acknowledging the times and places where our own mental health is suffering, and care for that in others."

The appeal will raise money to support the 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. In the last ten years, the number of veterans seeking the charity's help has almost doubled.

Craig served in the Army for 28 years but an incident in Bosnia affected him deeply. "It changed me completely," Craig said. "I felt like I was reliving it every day – I wasn't me anymore. It wasn't long before I was diagnosed with PTSD."

Embrace the Middle East will also be supported by the Lent Appeal. The Christian charity has over 160 years' experience helping people of all faiths and none free themselves from a life of poverty and injustice. Together with local Christian communities they bring lasting change through healthcare, education and community development. The appeal will raise money to provide psychological support



This year's Lent Appeal will support charities which help those suffering trauma both at home and abroad - as well as 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 and our Diocese contains several military bases and many service people live here and contribute to our life together.

Bishop Michael said: "As Christians our role is to participate as fully as we can in this dynamic



New church built

A church which has been housed in a 'temporary' building for 50 years finally has a permanent home.

Nearly 500 people passed through the doors of the new Holy Ascension Church in Lower Farm, Bloxwich, during a special weekend to celebrate its launch.

The new building – which was rededicated in a special service by Bishop Clive - will become a hub for the community as well as a centre for worship.

Margaret Wootton, Reader in the Parish, explained: "My husband owned a local building firm and was refurbishing the Midland Bank in



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

to those living with the trauma of war, abuse, violence and displacement.

Embrace supports a project which provides residential courses for rural Egyptian women who have experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse. One participant, Sofia, 26, said: "By helping these girls and women feel like they have a voice, by helping them to discover who they are and how to love themselves, this project changes their lives."



Bloxwich. While the work was ongoing, the bank operated from a temporary wooden building erected nearby and afterwards my husband was offered this temporary building to make good use of. A conversation with the then Vicar of All Saints led to it becoming a church plant on the Lower Farm estate. It was only supposed to ever be temporary!"

New Team Vicar Chris Davies said: "Praise should go to the many people through the years who dreamt and toiled to make this a reality. Bishop Clive spoke about Holy Ascension being a place where there is a living fellowship, with living worship and living relationships with the local community.

"These words speak into the heart of our mission and vision; to create a hub where the whole of life can be supported and celebrated and a daily basis."



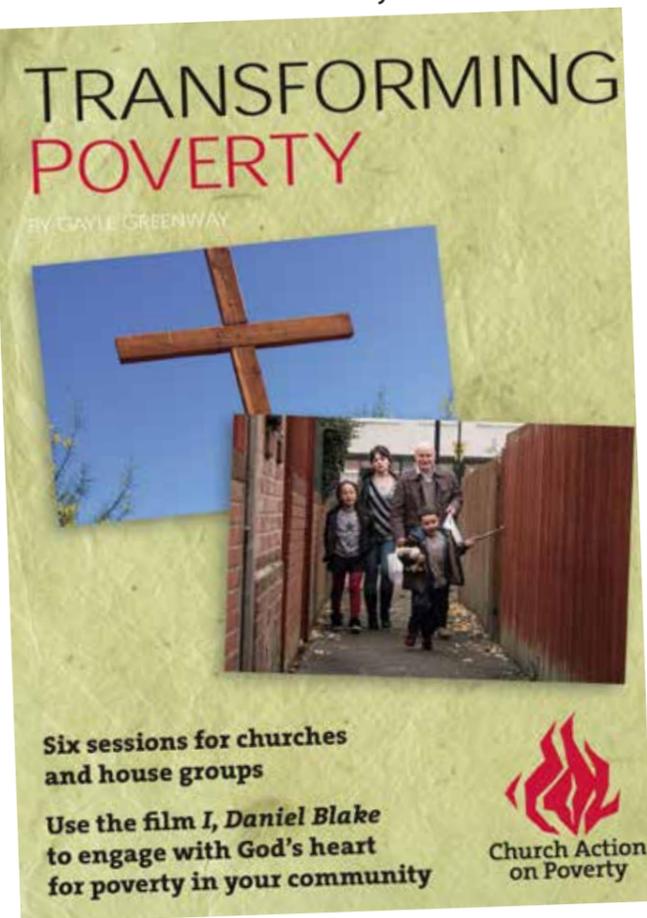
The Lent Appeal is also looking to support other organisations in the Diocese, who are working with people suffering from mental health problems, with prayer and action. Find out more at lichfield.anglican.org/lentappeal_2019

Tackling grassroots poverty using film and faith

The silver screen has inspired Wolverhampton curate the Revd Gayle Greenway to create a new national church resource to engage with issues of poverty in our communities.

Transforming Poverty sees Gayle place the Bible in relationship with the Ken Loach and Paul Laverty film *I, Daniel Blake*. The six-session course, published by national charity Church Action on Poverty, was written by Gayle while studying at St John's College, Nottingham, before starting curacy.

It aims to help church groups and congregations talk and pray about local poverty and its impact on their own and other's lives, and in the process be moved to make personal and collective steps towards bringing about change in Jesus' name for those in their community.



"My prayer is that each group that goes on the Transforming Poverty journey will find their hearts motivated to notice anyone in need and practically draw alongside them," said Gayle. "Also, that participants will have the courage to seek God's leading in working for change wherever it needs to happen: that through loving service more will see the realness of Jesus' radical love."



Some of those who've tested the Transforming Poverty course at St Matthew's church in Wolverhampton: (l-r) Lynne Lawrence, Tim Summers and Jane Norton.

Martin Beavon, who participated in Transforming Poverty at St Matthew's, says it helped him to "reflect on how Jesus encourages us to show love and compassion to those in need. We discussed what practical ways we can support and encourage those who feel they have nowhere to turn. I realise that I wanted to turn my anger about injustice into positive action and following much prayer felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to volunteer for Wolverhampton's church shelter."

Another course participant, Lynne Lawrence, added: "Through our viewing of the film and subsequent debates on how Christians respond, I realised it was a wake-up call to be more aware of marginalised people."

The course prompted the group at St Matthew's to join the national Places of Welcome

network, offering an open door and warm welcome to people in the community.

The Revd Kate Watson, Curate at St Matthew with St Martin and St Paul, Tipton, has also run Transforming Poverty. "My small group is loving this resource, which speaks pertinently – and sometimes painfully – into our lives and experiences," she said. "The film, the questions, and the biblical reflections are leading to stimulating discussions on issues of poverty in the UK and in our local context, which are enriching our own responses and understanding as Christians."

Canon Dr Christina Baxter, Gayle's supervisor at St John's College, said: "We know that in most parishes there are people whose low income makes choices between heat, light, food and health a daily challenge. This course will help



Revd Gayle Greenway and the film which, along with her own experiences, inspired a college assignment that has become a nationally-published resource.

people to talk together about these things, and hopefully to move beyond talk to prayer, and to action and loving sharing."

Transforming Poverty can be downloaded free from church-poverty.org.uk/transform/

Diocese Reports

A new-look annual report – outlining the work of Diocesan departments – is now available to read online.

The structure of the 2018 report is based around our vision statement and priorities of discipleship, vocation and evangelism, with each department setting objectives focused on these.

Diocesan Chief Executive Officer Julie Jones said: "We have re-structured our central sector departments to ensure closer working relationships that generate projects to help our parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies consider their response to our vision and priorities.

"Many of our administrative functions have statutory objectives but nonetheless we believe all our departments share equally the responsibility of supporting discipleship, vocation and evangelism throughout the Diocese and we hope this is reflected in this shortened report."

The report is available at lichfield.anglican.org/documents/2018-diocesan-annual-report/.

Meanwhile, Transforming Communities Together – the Diocese's joint venture with Church Urban Fund – has produced its 2018 review at lichfield.anglican.org/tct/

Cool community

A popular project in Telford that redistributes unwanted food is all about give and take. People in Brookside can add or remove food to the Community Fridge which is open five days a week from 9am to 4.30pm.

Bishop Michael experienced the initiative, which has been running for 18 months, first-hand on a recent visit to Central Telford Parish.

recipe cards to create tasty meals from the food in the fridge."

The Co-op's new Food Share distribution scheme, which aims to reduce food waste from stores across the nation, provides items to be shared. Local Residents also add food to the fridge which includes seasonal home grown fruit and vegetables.



The Fridge was launched as part of Brookside Big Local – a Lottery funded scheme – with support from the parish council, Brookside Central Charitable Interest Organisation and the Co-op. The Revd Janet Holmes, Community Minister in Stirchley and Brookside, has also been heavily involved.

Pictured from left: Revd Tim Storey, Area Dean for Telford; Revd Janet Holmes, Brookside Big Local Community Worker Jackie Plant, Bishop Michael and Eli Wilkinson, Manager Brookside Central CIO.

The fridge – which is monitored and cleaned daily by trained volunteers – is helping to combat waste which sees the average UK household discarding £470 worth of food a year.

Janet added: "Although it's a community project, and not specifically a church project, members of the various churches add and take food from the fridge in the same way as everyone else."

Find out more on Facebook @brooksidecommunityfridge

"It is a fridge from which everyone can add or take produce," she explained. "The project is a community response and is about reducing waste, caring for the environment and sharing what we have with one another. At Harvest time the fruit and vegetables from the Harvest Festival display in the Church are taken to the fridge as soon as possible. We have also created

Faith in fashion



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their homes once they come out of the safe house," said Helen Hodgson, a co-founder of the



positive choices that we can all make to become more responsible consumers as we seek to love our neighbour and the world around us."

Midlands-based charity. "Often they are destitute as they can't work, they can't claim benefits and then they might be trafficked again, so we step in to prevent re-trafficking."



At the end of the evening, those attending were invited to make pledges including not buying new clothes during Lent and making sure their next garment purchase was second-hand.



The Revd Abbie Walsh, curate at St Peter's, said: "It was fantastic to see so much interest in an issue that impacts so many of us on a daily basis. There are simple,



through everyday choices, habits, actions and decisions.



Re:Dress is linked to the CHAD Living initiative which is exploring what it means to follow Christ in the modern world,

A video from the event can be found at lichfield.anglican.org/redress/
For info on the Chad Living project, see lichfield.anglican.org/chad-living/
The Clewer Initiative have a website at www.theclewerinitiative.org/
Hope at Home: www.hopeathome.org.uk/



From the Editor

Taking care of our mental health is an issue that's increasingly coming to the fore. In this month's Spotlight we hear about excellent work by churches in

Ellesmere to become more dementia-friendly.

We also learn about this year's Bishop's Lent Appeal to support people who've suffered mental trauma at home and abroad. As always, please get in touch with your stories.



Walsall For All



engage marginalised women in faith communities.

“It was a positive discussion by also a chance to highlight where there are opportunities for better partnership working and areas that need more attention,” said Ruth.

Lord Bourne officially launched the ‘forward-thinking’ strategy from Forest Arts Centre in front of local communities and partners, and visited local community projects.

Churches and other faith groups are at the heart of a new strategy to bring people together in Walsall.

Faith Minister Lord Bourne spent a day in the town to launch Walsall For All and hear about how it will build greater integration and create opportunities to engage, empower and enable communities.

A key feature was an Interfaith Roundtable held at St Paul’s in Walsall town centre during which showcase the way faith groups are supporting community cohesion. The roundtable was supported by Transforming Communities Together, the Diocese’s joint venture with Church Urban Fund, and chaired by Ruth Burgess, from Black Country Near Neighbours.

Lord Bourne tweeted: “Faith groups are essential partners in promoting and supporting social integration. The Interfaith Roundtable shared some fantastic ideas on how to build stronger, more integrated communities.”

People from churches in the Diocese talked about the success of the Church Mosque Twinning Programme, work to support the homeless, the nature of hate crime and areas for development including the need to further

Introducing the day, Diocesan Transforming Communities Director and chair of the Walsall for All board, Revd Dr David Primrose said: “Walsall For All will help train support and equip our people, organisations and groups to improve the quality of lives.

“Time spent with those who are like us gives us confidence in who we are. Time spent with



people who are different from us increases our understanding of who we might become. For what we become today Walsall becomes tomorrow, a place where we want to be, a place where others want to come to and be inspired by.”

Find out more at www.walsallforall.co.uk/

Deservedly Famous

Q: ‘What are you famous for?’
A: ‘I’m famous for being famous’.

‘Famous for being famous’ is a phrase which sums up one of the more empty dimensions of our contemporary culture rather well. It refers to somebody who is well-known not because of any particular talent, achievement or position, but simply because she or he is well-known. So pervasive is this celebration of celebrity culture for its own sake that we could all think of people in that category, much as we might to pretend that we cannot. Oddly enough, many such celebrities first appearances were on what is called ‘reality TV’ – which is in fact a depiction of events about as far removed from normal reality as it is possible to get. And another word which is pressed into the distorted service of fame for fame’s sake is ‘icon’, meaning a representative symbol of some enthusiasm or aspiration: ‘icon of empowerment’, ‘icon of style’, ‘icon of youth’, ‘icon of and so on’ – Wikipedia will give you plenty of answers as to which famous celebrity belongs where.

If all that is part of popular contemporary culture, then our faith asks us to be profoundly counter-cultural, and we can see that in the way we as Christians use words like ‘reality’, ‘icon’, ‘celebrity’. The reality in which we are called to live is one in which our extraordinary God inhabits, blesses and transforms the very ordinary, everyday things of life. It is a reality of repeated acts of kindness and care, constant glimpses of the holy breaking through into the secular, unremarkable men and women becoming temples of the Holy Spirit. I come across this down-to-earth-lifted-to-



and communities across our diocese, and it is far more absorbing and interesting than any TV show.

And what are icons in this reality? They are pictures of those in whom the light of God shines, images of what our humanity looks like when it is restored to the likeness of the One who created us. I have many icons in my house. A few are representations of canonised saints, and they remind me of the great communion of holy ones across time and space who pray with me and for me. But most are photographs of family, friends, colleagues, and they too hold before my eyes the networks of love and care that accompany and encourage me on my journey. Well-known or obscure, all these icons are of people whose life is hid with Christ in God, and they mean more to me than anybody posing as a symbol of any fashion.



And who are our celebrities? They are people whose contributions are often hidden from public notice, who commit themselves to serving their neighbours, loving their God, and showing the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. You will know many such people in your own churches, and you will know that these are the people who really do deserve to be famous – but, of course, they would not be the people they are if they wanted to be known for being famous. They are the people Jesus described as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and without them the world would be a dark and unsavoury place. They are people who, like our first bishop St Chad, ‘act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God’. And at our St Chad’s celebration this year, on 4 March at our Cathedral, I will be presenting seven of them with the first awards of our new St Chad’s Medal, given to recognise devoted service of God and neighbour by people in our diocese. These are our celebrities indeed.

+Michael Igrave
 Bishop of Lichfield



Come follow Christ
in the footsteps of St Chad

DIARY

Urban Estates Conference

With Canon Gordon Dey, author of the 'Jesus Shaped People' discipleship programme.

Wednesday 20 March 12pm-3.30pm inc lunch: Doxey Parish Church
Book your place via richard.barrett@lichfield.anglican.org or 01543 622592

Faithful Fundraising

A one-day workshop led by our colleagues from Near Neighbours exploring the application process for statutory, voluntary & private grant makers.

Saturday 16 March 10am-4pm, Aldridge
Booking: lichfield.anglican.org/rng-labs/

Rural Churches: Conversation and Consultation

A conversation and consultation with Lindsey Hall, George Fisher, and Gordon Banks, for clergy and lay leaders.

Wednesday 13 March 10am - 12.30pm, with free lunch until 1.30pm: Gayton Village Hall, Gayton, Staffs, ST18 0HL. **OR** Wednesday 20 March 6.30 - 9pm, starting with free supper from 5.30pm: High Ercall Village Hall, Park Lane, High Ercall, Telford, TF6 6BE.

Booking essential: richard.barrett@lichfield.anglican.org / 01543 622592



A conference exploring new worshipping communities
Keynote speakers: Revd Dr Michael Moynagh | Andy Milne
Saturday 9 March 2019 - Aldridge Parish Church
lichfield.anglican.org/refresh/01543_622592

