

Chester

Diocesan News

February 2018

News, features, jobs...
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Growing stronger parishes

125 years marked with party and parade

Noctorum Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade have celebrated 125 years since their founding with a celebratory weekend at Kingswood in Doncaster. Ten members from the company joined with 120 members from all over the country on a fun filled weekend taking part in lots

of outdoor activities. It was non-stop the whole weekend. Shortly after, there was a parade through York ending with a service in York Minster. There was a band of 80 and 500 members took part with 44 members from the Wirral attending. A great way to celebrate.



The migratory birds are a sign



I am a country boy at heart, from a young age, taught to observe the changing seasons, but you don't need to be a close observer to see that changes are happening. From the flowering of plants to the arrival of migrating birds, spring is coming earlier. Shifts in the seasons show that Europe's climate along with the rest of the world is changing—with potentially wide-ranging impacts on land ecosystems and potentially catastrophic effects in some parts – not least on our friends from Melanesia.

Warmer temperatures correlate with earlier arrivals of migratory birds and apparently flowering and leaf unfolding has occurred, on average, 1.6 days earlier each decade in the second half of the twentieth century. Spring is about 11 days earlier this year than it was in 1950.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote :-

'Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration.' (Jer 8:7a NIV)

The prophet used the intuitive predictability and understanding of migration patterns to contrast the lack of awareness in human nature to God's way.

'but my people? My people know nothing. Not the first thing of God and his rule' (Jer 8:7b The Message)

I'm sorry that the environmental crisis seems to slipped from the political agenda in the wake of Brexit, but the fragility of the planet, that God has so generously given, is still the biggest issue around and

perhaps the hardest to tackle.

Ellen Davis' book 'Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An agrarian reading of the Bible' has at its heart – like the Bible's – the recognition that land is not a commodity but a community, of which we are all part. The world is one linked up living system, and so the way we live, what we buy, how we eat and steward the gift is always a theological issue. It matters what happens to our waste, what energy we use, how we treat land, sea and air, and the animals and plants. We all need to be educated and taxed to do it better.

The migratory birds are a sign. The regularity of their patterns is changing and it points to the wider environmental crisis that we're not really grasping. I'm delighted that CSR are planning an Environment Day Conference in April and looking to gather a Forum to help Christians and Churches respond to the challenges and making sure the issues do not slip off the theological or political agenda. The Swallows usually arrive around 31st March, a reminder to try and live sustainably – God's way.

The Venerable Ian Bishop

Chester Diocesan News

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DISTRIBUTION: phone **Inprint Colour** on **01270 251589** and ask for Mark Heywood.

Chester Diocesan Board of Finance is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England (no. 7826) and a registered charity (no. 248968).

Café Church course

St Bart's church, Minshull recently held a Café Church course in Nantwich. Over the past two years the church has attracted more than 10% of the village to its Café Church. Café Church at St Bart's has a café atmosphere, look and feel, is open to all people, has a mix of music and contemporary hymns, is Bible based and includes interaction, discussion on wide ranging subjects and has activities for children.

Tim Hough, St Bart's Café Church Team and PCC Secretary, said; "We wanted to share what we do with other churches in the Diocese who may be struggling with

decreasing congregations or looking at 'Fresh Expressions of Worship'. Every church in the Diocese was invited and we were pleased to welcome 17 delegates representing 10 churches from as far away as Meols on the Wirral and Macclesfield, plus more closer to home from Crewe and Sandbach. We also had the Diocesan Mission Officer Jonathan Masters in attendance. It was also the first use of our new projector which worked brilliantly!"

The course programme included details on Café churches, how to get started, dos and don'ts, ideas for format, content, music & presentation. There were also lots of delicious cake and coffee plus, a hot pot lunch followed by apple crumble and custard. For more information see stbartschurchminshull.org.uk

Rev Liz Shercliff visits A level group

Rev Liz Shercliff, Director of Studies for Readers, temporarily took on a new teaching role at the University Church of England Academy in Ellesmere Port recently. She was invited by Subject Leader for Religious Studies, Tim Shelton, to talk to an A level RS group about the ordination of women, and feminist theology. Students found the time 'useful' and 'interesting'. Liz said; 'It was a real privilege to meet the students. I was particularly impressed when they told me they had chosen Religious Studies, because it helps them think.' Liz is pictured with one of the students.



University recognises Ruth



After three years of study and having been licensed as a Reader for a year, Ruth Calcott, from St Hildeburgh's church in Hoylake, was presented with a very special degree certificate. Due to ill health, Ruth was unable to complete the required study, but the University of Chester awarded her an aegrotat Foundation degree in Mission and Ministry in recognition of her work.

Bishop Keith presented the degree to Ruth at a special service organized by Revd Paul Rossiter, vicar of the parish, and Revd Liz Shercliff, Director of Studies for Readers. The service was attended by members of the parish and some of Ruth's fellow students. Pictured are (left to right) John Grainger, Bishop Keith, Ruth Calcott, Liz Shercliff, Sarah Dutton, and Rob Croft.

New Ferry Explosion



Next month it will be a year since the explosion at New Ferry. At 9.15pm on March 25th 2017, an explosion, caused by a gas-leak in a shop, destroyed all the shops in a parade along with many homes. Over thirty people were injured, two critically.

The Archbishop of York saw the devastation caused by the blast during a brief visit while he was on the Birkenhead Mission last September. He met residents and business owners and praised the community spirit. Urging the Government to provide financial help for those affected by the New Ferry explosion, he said; "People here are determined not to be defeated by the hazardous thing that happened here. I just hope that the town gets all the support it needs for the rebuilding of the community. Central government may be far away, but New Ferry is a very important community enterprise that must be supported."

Demolition began on the worst affected buildings at the explosion site last October. Houses on Bebington Road, which took the brunt of the blast, have

been demolished. But progress for many has been slow. Christopher Power and his family have not been able to live in their home since the blast. Like other local residents, they have had to wait for it to be made structurally sound again. Christopher said; "As police investigate the incident and make arrests, those affected feel abandoned by the authorities. For those who lost their homes and their livelihoods, I'm determined to speak out so that we don't get forgotten."

Over the past few months there have been discussions and ideas put forward for the future of the town at regular community meetings. More detailed plans are expected to come forward in 2018 from Wirral Council's recovery operation team.

St Mark's Church on New Chester Road has been supportive of the community. After the explosion the church opened its doors offering a place to sleep, a warm drink and pastoral support. The church has also hosted three consultation events on the future of the town.



A personal story

Christopher Power, a professional actor, was at home sitting on the sofa in his pyjamas unaware of the drama which was about to unfold. His wife and son were out and, unusually, he wasn't anywhere near the front room window.

"Suddenly, there was a large explosion and all the windows were blown in. I jumped up and thought, 'That's a bomb - that's a car bomb! I didn't have time to go to the window or front-door. I ran through the kitchen, through the conservatory and out into our backyard, into a carpark behind and away from the blast.

I could hear people screaming and crying and pointing in the direction of the furniture store, which I knew had a dance studio on the floor above it. It was a miracle that nobody died that night, not least because a young person's dance class had finished only an hour earlier.

There were people knocking at my door to see if was ok. I was totally in shock. I was panicking but managed to phone our vicar from church. I was then told to grab what I could which was my coat and phone. I walked out of the front

door to something out of a disaster film. It reminded me of a terrorist attack. I was shaking and in shock. I then slumped on the floor next to a lamp post.

I immediately sensed that people were praying for us, following the blast. Then, I learned that the social clubs and the two churches, St. Marks and Life Church, had opened their doors to anyone who needed somewhere to sleep that night or just to talk, or be fed. We were to use the Life Church's services the second night, but that Saturday, once I had been re-united with Pauline and my son, we went to my mum's in Birkenhead. We arrived late of course. At 4 am my wife received a call on her mobile. It



was a friend from church, out in Pakistan. They'd heard about the blast on the news! She offered us her empty house, and we lived there, whilst she was abroad."

The Big Church Day Out is back



We are delighted that The Big Church Day Out is coming back to the Diocese of Chester this summer. Building on last year's success, tens of thousands of Christians will gather to worship and celebrate between 1st and 2nd of June 2018, at Capesthorpe Hall.

The Big Church Day Out draws together tens of thousands of Christians from all over the UK and Europe to worship and celebrate all that is good. It's a unique expression of church unity that's as vibrant and varied as its wonderful guests. Whatever your age, church tradition or musical taste, you are welcome to join us for two days of discovery and enjoyment you'll never forget. We will be camping together in a Diocesan 'space' especially allocated for us.

The Big Church Day Out is like one huge playground, bursting with activities

and fun for all ages. From the Big Church Kids' tent and funfilled fête to the relaxing Tea Tent nestled in the beautiful gardens, you're sure to find your favourite spot and make memories that will last a lifetime. For more information visit the Diocesan website at www.goo.gl/oX2hvb

Discount offer - more than 50% off

We have again secured a large discount from the Big Church Day Out team for this fabulous event.

The Diocese of Chester ticket prices are less than half price at £28 per adult and £22 for 5-16 year olds for a full weekend ticket. Under 4s are £4 each. One day tickets for either Friday or Saturday are £23 per adult and £17 for 5-16 year olds. Under 4s are £4 each. Camping tickets are in addition to the above at £20 per adult and £10 for 5-16 year olds. Under 4s are £4 each.

Conversations about mental health

One in four people will have some experience of a mental health problem. This means there will be many people in our communities who are affected but prefer not to talk about it.

This means we will all know someone who has a mental health problem but they may not know how to tell us. Most people prefer not to talk about it for fear of rejection or of being judged.

A recent training event at St John's in Hartford gathered 75 people from across the Diocese to talk about Mental Health.

The aim was to offer further opportunities to talk about mental health, to raise awareness, increase understanding and consider how this might influence work in our communities. Conversations took place on aspects of mental health

including Depression, Addictions and Dementia and many powerful, personal stories and experiences were heard and explored.

You can read more about these issues at goo.gl/U4AdEE World Mental Health Day takes place in October.

Chester Diocese offers a number of services which include: therapeutic counselling, consultative support for clergy and licensed workers, mediation, and training through the IME/CME training programmes for clergy and pastoral workers. Jane Knight, Head of Counselling Services, can be contacted at jane.knight@chester.anglican.org by telephoning one of her dedicated, confidential numbers: 01270 652034 or 07918 732 806.



Delegates demonstrate how one in four people will have mental health problems by holding paper in front of their faces.

Pastoral Workers' Training Day – The Cup of Compassion

Margaret Kitchen, Pastoral Worker at St John's, High Legh, shares her experience of a training day at Foxhill.

Pastoral Workers are given the opportunity each year to meet together, to learn more about our faith and to be with each other. Like all ministry, we are very busy with church activities and pastoral needs which can be exhausting and fulfilling at the same time!

On this occasion we were meeting at Foxhill House and Woodlands for a day titled "The Cup of Compassion" led by Jo Mackriell and Jo Whittall. 20 of us gathered to be inspired and reflect on our work. Our day was so much more than anything I have attended before. We had been told that theme of "The Cup of Compassion" would be explored by focussing on expressing emotions through journaling. This led me to believe we would be using words with some art.

The colours, reflections, words and

encouragement that came out of our time together was special and I would encourage you all to experience expressing your emotions through art.

The two Jos leading the session prepared well with resources and prayerful consideration and, for the first time in a very long time, I not only felt close to God, but experienced that overwhelming peace in my heart we all seek.

I don't want to give too much away because I know the session will be repeated this year. The Lord never ceases to care for us, amaze us, and teach us how to be close to him. We listen and open our lives to others who seek his face, need compassion and care, and we are all called to "Let Go and Let God" be with us. Please contact Peter Bacon on 01928 718834 ext 237 or peter.bacon@chester.anglican.org if you want to learn more.

