

# Chester

## Diocesan News

December 2017

News, features, jobs...  
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Growing stronger parishes



### Readers take up the challenge

Eleven new Readers were licensed by Bishop Peter at Chester Cathedral on 21st October, along with five Readers moving into the diocese from elsewhere. Many from across the diocese came to support them, and a number of serving Readers were also present, to renew their commitment to this important ministry.

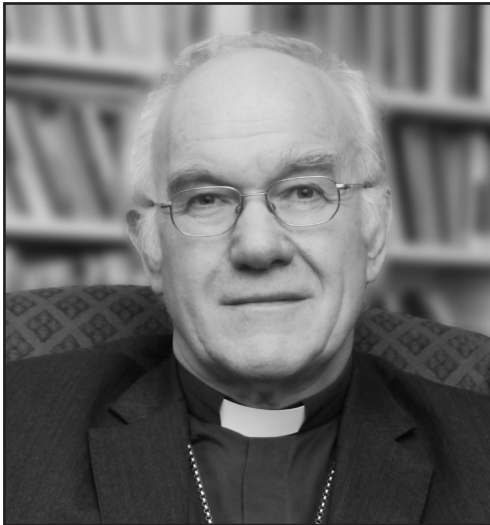
*Pictured with Bishop Peter from left to right: Paul Stevenson (Sandiway), Peter Ham (Hoylake), Christina Theobald (Wilmslow), Terence Hawes (Weston, St John), Deborah Rowlands (Wrenbury), Lynne Raphael (Ashton upon Mersey), Andrew Bradley-Gibbons (Eastham), Janet Malpas (Hollingworth), Malcolm Haigh (St Mary, Upton), Sue Hadden (Sandiway), Jeff Turnbull (Hoole).*



The Church of England is inviting you to join in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ with tens of thousands of Christmas services and events taking place in churches over the country this December.

Look out for the #GodwithUs logo (left) or your local church noticeboard for details of special events. To help share the special joy of Christmas services three videos will be released throughout December on social media. You can also join the journey at [www.churchofengland.org/Christmas](http://www.churchofengland.org/Christmas) or by texting GODWITHUS to 88802.

# Mystery at the heart of all



Think back to the best Christmas present which you ever received. It was probably a surprise: mine was a Hornby 00 train set when I was about 7. I had no idea it was coming.

To devout Jews 2,000 years ago, their Messiah came as a surprise - a baby, 'born in a stable so bare'. That he would go on to be publicly crucified was not so much of a surprise as a deep shock. To the educated gentile mind, it was just

foolish to believe that God would appear on earth as a human being. To the Jewish mind, it was blasphemous.

Yet it is the heart of the Christian Faith, the centre from which everything else radiates. The Creator who has become the re-Creator, or Redeemer. It will always remain something of a mystery – 'Tis mystery all, the immortal dies, who can explain his strange design?', as Charles Wesley put it, when in poetry, he 'sounded the depths of love divine'.

But the mystery also makes sense of everything, in the beauty of holiness which only a child-like wonder can appreciate. And the story begins at Christmas:

Lo within a manger lies  
He who built the starry skies

Many modern cynics reject the Christian Faith with a thinly disguised contempt – in some cases with a brazen and aggressive contempt. But for those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, the magic of Christmas reveals the mystery at the heart of all our lives.

**Bishop Peter Forster**



## Foxhill

House and Woodlands

A Christian space for retreats, conferences and training. Programme speakers for 2018 include: Malcolm Guite; Claire Henderson-Davis; Adrian and Bridget Plass; Trevor Dennis; Christopher Perrins; Roy Searle; Wendy and Andrew Rudd. Tel: 01928 733777

[www.foxhillchester.co.uk](http://www.foxhillchester.co.uk)



## Transforming lives

Representatives of fourteen churches gathered for 'Filling the Gap 2', an event for churches who are providing or planning to provide fun and food in the school holidays.

Many families are already benefitting from this provision of activities and food at a time when they are struggling to

cope financially but there are many other benefits too. Children had 'holiday stories' to tell on their return to school and parents enjoyed the opportunity to see their children playing and making new friends. One participant in the group said: "This was encouraging, just seeing and hearing about what others are doing. There are loads of ideas and just knowing that it can be done is helpful". For more information see [www.tltogether.org.uk](http://www.tltogether.org.uk)



## Holy Land pilgrimage

Bishop John Hayden will be leading this pilgrimage in November 2018. It is a comprehensive visit from Beersheba to Dan and includes many places not on the standard route like Acre, Hebron and Hezekiah's tunnel. Email: [johndhayden@gmail.com](mailto:johndhayden@gmail.com) for details.

## 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).

# The churches' response to modern slavery

IN late September people from across Cheshire joined together at Chester Cathedral to sign a pledge statement and pray for those caught up in the tragedy of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

The mayors of Cheshire East and Cheshire West, local councillors, the High Sheriff and the Bishop of Chester were present. The congregation heard from groups working against slavery including the preacher, Major Kathryn Taylor from the Salvation Army, local hubs, Ethical Supply chains and Cheshire Anti-Slavery Network.

Bishop Peter Forster, along with other church leaders, signed the pledge statement below:

**The Church leaders of Cheshire welcome this strategy to fight this evil in our midst and commend those within the churches of Cheshire:**

- To use all appropriate opportunities to promote amongst their congregations and denominations awareness of the signs of modern slavery;
- To understand the ways in which concerns can be reported to the relevant statutory bodies;
- To ensure that safeguarding guidelines, procedures and training take account of concerns in respect of modern slavery;
- To explore the development of 'Hubs of Concern' around Cheshire to promote awareness within their local communities;
- To explore how the facilities and people of the churches might be offered and used to support those in the process of recovery;
- To be mindful of the possibilities of modern slavery at play within the services and goods they buy and to use their decisions and purchasing power to combat this.

**Please pray for all who are victims of modern slavery and the work those raising awareness across the church.**







**Bishop Peter standing with the Mayors and supporters of the campaign**



**Contributions were made by groups working against slavery**

# #GodwithUs

We hope our readers are enjoying Advent and we wish you all a happy Christmas, and a peaceful and Christ-filled New Year.

As the festival of Christmas draws closer churches across the diocese will welcome tens of thousands of people to special services and witness by taking part in community events. In addition to the highlighted events below, details of local church services can be seen at [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)

## **Lymm - Dickensian Festival**

The Festival takes place on Saturday 9th Dec with street entertainment from 11am. The village is decorated beautifully for the occasion. There will be street entertainers, local schools providing music, Choirs, stalls providing an array of food, drinks, and gifts. Lymm is at postcode WA13 0LP.

**Knutsford - St Cross** – Salvation Army Christmas Concert with the Brass Band and Songsters. Saturday 9th Dec at St Cross Church, Knutsford, WA16 8EL 7pm to 9pm. Tickets £7.50, free for under 18's. Refreshments included. Email: [stcross.knutsford@gmail.com](mailto:stcross.knutsford@gmail.com)

**St Barnabas, Bromborough** are hosting their biggest and best Christmas Tree Festival from 29 Nov until 4 Dec. Festival open 10am until 4pm during the day. Mulled wine, mince pies and carols on Friday 1st Dec 6.30pm until 8pm. 4pm Sunday 3 Dec. Candlelit Advent Carol Service at St Barnabas. All are welcome.

## **Marple – Winter Wonderland:**

This Year's Marple Bridge Association Winter Wonderland Event will take place on Saturday 2 Dec from 1pm till 4pm on Town Street in Marple Bridge. There will be 35 stalls selling various gifts. St Sebastian's Nursery will be running

a Children's craft stall. The event will culminate in Carols by the tree and the Christmas tree lights switch on by Santa at around 3.50pm.

## **Macclesfield – Treacle Market**

Macclesfield Treacle market brings the town to life with over 150 stalls sporting handmade crafts, unusual gifts and rare vintage finds. Stock up on festive pies, organic treats and food from local producers. Listen to carolers and gather round the brass band while you dig in to roasted chestnuts. 17 Dec

**St Hildeburgh's Church, Hoylake tree festival, on 8 Dec at 6pm.** The event started with eight trees eight years ago but now has 50 trees every year and is a firm fixture with hundreds of Wirral families. 9 Dec there will be children's craft sessions, face-painting and other activities as well as the bustling Christmas market. Santa Claus from 11am-1pm. On 10 Dec from 3-4pm and again from 5-6pm, after the traditional candlelit Christingle service, which starts at 4pm.

## **Sandbach - Christmas market**

Whatever the weather, on Christmas market day, the town glows brightly with choirs singing carols, Santa in his Grotto, Brass Bands playing, Christmas lights twinkling, chestnuts roasting and the aroma of mulled wine. The market runs from 3pm until 8pm on the first Friday in December and features handmade goods and home grown, produce.

## **Farndon - Christmas Tree Festival**

2017: Friday 1st to Sunday Dec 10th at St. Chad's Church, Farndon. On 1st December at 7pm, there will be an opening ceremony, followed by sponsors introducing their trees and switching on the lights. More details on the church website and social media.

### **Poynton - Christmas fest.**

The annual festive event will be held in the evening on Park Lane, Poynton with live entertainment, street performers, community carol singing and many local charities and other stallholders. 5 Dec.

### **Stockport – St George's Tree Festival**

29th Nov – 3rd December One of the highlights of the Stockport festival calendar with 70 trees sponsored by businesses and charities. This year regiment associations connected to the men who served during the First World War will also display trees. See [www.stgeorgestockport.org.uk](http://www.stgeorgestockport.org.uk).



## **Chester – The Cathedral**

Chester is transformed into a rustic festive town by the Christmas Market as stall holders cascade around a dazzling 40ft Christmas tree. The Cathedral offers a warm welcome and spiritual refreshment across the Advent and Christmas periods.

### **Christmas tree festival**

**25 Nov – 6 Jan**

Back for a fifth year – and bigger & better than ever before! With more than 50 majestic Christmas trees. Open daily: Mon – Sat 9am – 6pm, Sun 1pm – 4pm.

### **Chester Cathedral Choir presents Joyeux Noel – 9 Dec 7.30 – 9pm**

Chester Cathedral Choir sing carols for all to enjoy. Seasonal readings and a chance for all to join in and sing. Pre-concert dining available in the monk's. To book call: 01244 324756

### **Christmas Crackers: 20 - 21 Dec**

Join the CMS Choir and Chester Philharmonic Orchestra for a joyous celebration of Christmas. With readings and introductions by Rev Richard Coles, BBC Radio 4 "Saturday Live". Tickets: £8, £16. Concessions available. Booking : 01244 500 959.

### **Service of Nine Lessons and Carols**

Saturday 23rd December, 6.30pm

### **Christmas Eve**

3pm, Service of Nine Lessons and Carols: 5.30pm-Crib Service-A service for families and children of all ages; 11.30pm-Midnight Mass.

### **Christmas Day**

8am, Holy Communion with carols: 10am-Festival Eucharist;  
11.45am-Sung Eucharist

### **Epiphany Festival**

7 Jan 2018: service and carols 5pm.



# Pastoral Workers welcomed

Jo Whittall, Katy Jones and Wendy Luxon were licensed and admitted as Pastoral Workers by Bishop Libby at Chester Cathedral on September 23rd.

The service was held in the Quire which was a first for this service. It's a smaller space than the nave and it resulted in an extraordinary blend of intimacy and closeness which, mixed as it was with the grandeur of the whole (and enhanced by the beautiful singing of the St Cecilia's

choir) made for a really special service. Vivien Gisby, Warden of Pastoral Workers and Readers, said; "I know that those becoming Emeritus (Ray Hepworth, Jan Lupton and Carol Jordan) felt really blessed too. We pray for all six Pastoral Workers at whatever stage they are in their ministerial journey, and thank them for being prepared to offer their time and gifts in Christ's service and for His glory."



## Pastoral Work Training

I have found pastoral work training to be a journey with both challenges and opportunities. The course has enabled me to explore and grow in faith whilst gaining knowledge and experiences.

As well as the six modules, which are assessed by written and verbal assessments, there are several ministry days on a wide variety of topics. The parish project is ongoing throughout the course and the final piece of work is a reflection on learning. Although this may sound daunting, pastoral work training is not a solitary journey. I have appreciated the support from group members, tutors and my mentor.

The course also gave me the courage to explore further training days. As I have grown in confidence I have started to share my love of faith art journaling with others.

I have made many friendships and feel blessed that I am fully involved in church life where I am encouraged and supported to use all the skills and knowledge which I have gained.

Where my faith is leading me and how I use my gifts has been a far more complex soul searching decision making process than I first anticipated. It still is and will remain a work in progress!

Jo Whittall, St John the Evangelist, Sandiway.