

Chester Diocesan News

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Growing stronger parishes

Higher religious affiliation amongst hospital patients

A member of clergy in the Diocese of Chester has found that people are more likely to self-declare religious affiliation when receiving hospital treatment. This contrasts with reports that state that half of the country subscribes to no religion.



The Revd Professor Peter Selby, a consultant endocrinologist at Manchester Royal Infirmary and a Non-Stipendiary Minister at St Andrew's, Cheadle Hume, studied the religious affiliation of all patients treated at his NHS trust over the past five years: a total of 263,288 people.

Of the people that answered the question regarding religious belief, a total of 194,538 people (73.1%), of these, 15.1% stated that they had no religious belief; 65.5% described themselves as belonging to a Christian denomination; and 18.1% reported that they belonged to a non-Christian religion.

These proportions are significantly different from those gathered through the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey.

Data from the four years between 2013 and 2016 found that 50% reported no religious faith; 42% were Christian, and 7% had a non-Christian faith.

The age distribution of the two sets of data was not dissimilar, but the NHS data contained a greater proportion of patients aged 18 to 34. The BSA survey showed a progressively lower rate of "no religion" with advancing age: something much less marked in the other set. Even if those who declined to answer the religion question were included among the "Nones", the total (38.2%) would still be "significantly lower" than that reported by the BSA survey, Professor Selby writes in his paper.

Professor Selby undertook the study as part of his ordination training. Ordained in July at Chester Cathedral, he is currently serving his curacy at St Andrew's, Cheadle Hume.

The Revd Professor Peter Selby says: "I think when people are confronting health, illness, potentially even bad-news situations, an end of life situation, they begin to ask questions about fundamental things that matter to them."

The results, if repeated nationally, might point to a greater need for spiritual provision in hospitals, he argues. "If we are offering holistic care to people, we need to offer spiritual care."

This story is based on a Church Times article from the 14 September.

A hundred years on



The 'war to end all wars' was nothing of the kind. There has been another world war and countless smaller conflicts since. But the First World War continues to hold a particular place in our collective memory. Perhaps it is the sheer scale of the loss of life, or the sense of destructive stalemate of trench warfare. Perhaps it is the memory of small communities decimated as groups of young men signed up and died together, or the eloquent and haunting poetry we still read today.

This year, the one hundredth anniversary of the armistice of 11 November 1918 falls on a Sunday. Our churches will be at the centre of collective remembrance when our communities pause to reflect, a century on. In most places, the same parish church where those who served in World War 1 grew up still stands, and it is poignant to think of that silent connection.

Society more widely does recognize this. £40m of public funding has come to cathedrals to help with upkeep ahead of the anniversary. Many churches

have taken part in the moving 'There but Not There' initiative, installing the transparent outline of a First World War soldier. War memorials have been refurbished and signs have been provided indicating the presence of war graves in churchyards.

But beyond this, the Church has a real opportunity and responsibility this autumn to speak again to our communities. To speak of the love and grace of our creator God, who is faithful whatever the depths to which humanity sinks. To give space for thanksgiving for the sacrifices made for our freedom by earlier generations. To remember the suffering of Jesus, who stands with the victims of war. To proclaim the hope we have in the resurrection and the work of God in bringing healing, reconciliation and peace.

Let us help our communities reflect with dignity on the past, but let us also encourage them with hope for the future.

The Ven Dr Michael Gilbertson

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Rector runs in support of five-year-old



This harvest time, one church and its Rector in Lymm has not only been giving thanks for food but raising awareness of a rare genetic disorder at the same time.

Five-year-old Florence Barham is a member of St. Mary's Church, Lymm and suffers from the rare genetic disorder Phenylketonuria (PKU), which left untreated causes severe brain damage. Thankfully, the illness can be managed through a very restricted low protein diet.

The PKU diet is low in protein meaning Florence cannot eat meat, fish, eggs, nuts, pulses, or flour-based foods. She can eat most fruit and vegetables but must supplement this with prescription foods.

On Sunday 30th September, Rector at St. Mary's, Lymm, the Revd Bev Jameson, ran around Lymm Dam five times to raise money for the organisation that supports five-year-old Florence.

The Revd Bev said: "Florence is a delightful, happy, bright little girl, but without a special diet, it could have been so very different for her. We give thanks to God at harvest for our food and this year we thank God for the work of all those at The National Society for Phenylketonuria (NSPKU) who provide support to those with PKU and their families. Thank you to all those that gave so generously to NSPKU and supported the Harvest Run."

Florence's parents, Emma and James, said: "This small charity is a lifeline for people with PKU and their families. The charity helps people through the provision of dietary guides and resources, sending new foods for protein analysis and arranging events including the popular annual family conference. The NSPKU is often a lifeline in what, at times, can be a very socially isolating condition. We are so pleased our Rector has supported us in this way."

The Diocese of Chester remembers

In the centenary year since the end of WW1, Remembrance Sunday by a stroke of historic fortune falls on Remembrance Day, 11 November. Through the autumn and in the run up to the day, churches have been marking and remembering the people who have died in wars.

Earlier this year the parish of Wettenhall remembered Corporal John George Rathbone in a special church service, held 100 years to the day after he lost his life in the First World War.

In September, St. Wilfrid's Church, Mobberley held a special service to remember all from the village who served their country in WW1.

During the service the parish Roll of Honour was read by civic and

ecumenical church leaders. Whilst the Roll of Honour was being read children from Mobberley Primary School took large poppies into the graveyard to mark the 72 graves of those men who returned from war and are buried here.

The poppies will remain in the graveyard until Remembrance Sunday and the families of the men will be given one of the poppies in recognition of their forebear's faithfulness and courage.

In Macclesfield, four churches have planned a varied programme of events in addition to the traditional services of remembrance to reflect the three themes of remembering, building peace, and finding hope.

For Remembrance Sunday itself,



churches in the Diocese of Chester will become the focal point of countless communities as the public at large remember all those who have died in wars.

Many of our churches applied for grant funding to purchase the acrylic silhouettes as part of There but Not There, a national programme that aims to be the defining centenary commemoration of the end of the 1914-1918 war.

St. John's, Walton, is one such church. It was awarded money for 10 silhouettes funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Priest-in-Charge, the Revd Anita Raggett, said: "This is a wonderful award for St John's, and a great opportunity for us as a community to remember with thanksgiving those who gave their lives in war. This year we remember particularly those who died in the First World War as we commemorate

the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. This award will bring the church congregation, the parish council, and other members of the community, in a communal act of remembrance which will highlight the sacrifices made by members of the local community."

In Lymm, members of the community, organisations, homes and schools have been asked to create handmade poppies. They will be displayed in a cascade of poppies at St Mary's church during their Remembrance Service.

On Remembrance Sunday, the Bishop of Chester will be attending a church service in Stoak; the Bishop of Birkenhead will be leading a service at Hamilton Square, Birkenhead; and the Bishop of Stockport will be attending Stockport Council's, Act of Remembrance in the morning, followed by its Service of Remembrance in the evening.



Lee Reece celebrates 25th year

As Foxhill House and Woodlands prepares to celebrate its 50th year, this autumn one member of Foxhill staff has been celebrating his 25th year working for the Christian retreat house.

Lee Reece joined Foxhill, based in Frodsham, in 1993 at a time when he listened to Iron Maiden and Metallica; these days he's more likely to be found listening to BBC Merseyside from the kitchens whilst preparing meals for the guests.

Prior to joining Foxhill, he'd been in the army, but his army career was cut short. Out of work and living in Runcorn, Lee saw a job working at Foxhill advertised in the local job centre. He was offered the role and although he says he was quite nervous on his first day he was soon made to feel welcome.

Over the years the job has developed as the dietary requirements of the guests have changed: "When I was training at college, vegetarianism was about the only thing we had to consider, but now as part of my job I'm expected to know about a number of different dietary requirements and how

they impact on people's health. These days it can be a challenge; we might have people that are diabetic, vegan, vegetarian or gluten-free, all within one group of guests."

Whilst the dietary requirements made of the kitchen have become more complex, it is this level of flexibility which is part of the welcome and hospitality that Foxhill offers and upon which it is building a solid reputation.

Lee says the beauty and the peacefulness of Foxhill House and the woodlands that surround it have helped him deal with life's challenges.

He says: "When the pressure has been on, either here or at home, I like to have a quiet moment and occasionally ask God for help. Foxhill is a good place to come and get away from everything; even on my days off I'll take a ride up here and sit in the grounds for a bit and get out of the way. It's peaceful."

In 2019 Foxhill will celebrate its 50th year with a special programme of events.

Visit www.foxhillchester.co.uk for more information.



Celebrating 20 years of FfM



Around 300 people gathered at Chester Cathedral on Sunday the 23 September to give thanks and celebrate 25 years of the Foundations for Ministry (FfM) course.

Run annually by the Diocese of Chester, over 1100 people have completed the course.

Students past and present were at the service, along with current course director and Director of Ministry at the Diocese of Chester, the Revd Dr Christopher Burkett.

Speaking after the service, the Revd Christopher said: "We've celebrated 20 years of the FfM in which more than 1100 people have taken the course to find out what God is asking of them in their own particular circumstances. It's a foundation for ministry in the widest possible sense; the ministry of Christ's people in every place and every circumstance."

Barbara Williams has been a cleaner at a church in Wallasey for 40 years, she completed the course and is now

training to be a Reader. She says: "I could see that in our church things needed changing, but if you are the cleaner you are powerless: nobody listens to you; you don't have a voice. I did the first year and absolutely loved it, I found all sorts of friends, guidance and people helping me. I found it difficult writing the essays... but I kept going and I've got through the course and now I'm on the Reader's course and people listen to me now. I've got a voice, I know what to say, and being on the course has given me the authority to say it."

The course is designed for people who want to serve God in the church and in the world. People study FfM to support many kinds of Christian ministry. People have gone to serve God in their workplace, family and community; others have gone on to roles within the church including children's work, youth work and PCC members; and for some, it has been a step towards licensed lay ministry or ordained ministry.

Course to help you help your community

Christian entrepreneur Jerry Marshall is convinced that business is the sustainable solution to poverty and a way for churches to reach out and bless their community. Having recently moved into the diocese, he is running a "Germinate Enterprise" programme in Weaverham from 13 November.

The subsidised programme is supported by the Prince's Countryside Fund and is recognised by the Cinnamon Network. Currently, there are micro grants of £2000 available to churches in the Diocese of Chester to run this or other Cinnamon projects (see www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/projects for details including a short

film on Germinate Enterprise).

Jerry Marshall says: "The Weaverham programme is for anyone interested in starting a small business or social enterprise and for any church members interested in delivering the programme in their area, creating real jobs and practical skills. The first of six evening sessions help participants find the right business idea for them and the remaining sessions establish whether the business will be viable. Follow up materials and a mentoring programme are also available."

For more information, visit <https://enterprise-cheshire.eventbrite.co.uk>

CARE in the North West

Christian charity CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) has recently appointed Mike Chesterton to the role of Churches and Development Manager based in Manchester.

CARE encourages Christians to be informed and to engage positively in public life; addressing issues relating to the sanctity of life, human exploitation, marriage, family, and many other areas of advocacy.

"For more than 35 years, CARE has engaged with churches and politicians to keep these issues at the forefront of public debate," says Mike, "My role is to help churches and Christians in the region continue to engage with, and be a Christian voice of truth within those debates - being the Salt and Light that we are called to be, both in the local community, and nationally".

You can come and meet Mike, along with some of his colleagues, at two special events in Greater Manchester

on 6th and 7th November. For more details about these events, or if you would like to arrange for Mike to speak at your church, email mike.chesterton@care.org or call him on 07384 467 819.

For more information about CARE visit www.care.org.uk

