

archdeacons' visitation news

Spring 2019 - issue 14

Dear churchwardens

It has been an extraordinary year politically with the Brexit negotiations, and as we go to press we still don't know what will happen. By the time you read this the future may look more (or perhaps less) certain.

None of us cope well with uncertainty, we like to know what is happening and feel we have some control over our lives. The early Christian Church lived with huge uncertainty. They incurred the displeasure of the Jewish authorities for their insistence that Jesus was the Messiah, they were persecuted by Rome because they openly spoke of Jesus as King. They lived with Jesus' warnings to them that they would face many troubles and live life on the edge. It was in the context of uncertainty that they learned to trust in God and live out the call of Christ heroically.

As we travel across the parishes we hear wonderful stories of heroic hard work by so many people in the service of Christ, especially churchwardens, treasurers and PCC members. The extraordinary service of local people is one of the great miracles of the Church throughout the ages and we thank God for you and all you do. However, inevitably, we also regularly hear of uncertainty. Money is short, volunteers getting older, buildings crumbling and the future unknown. What next for the Church? It is perhaps in the uncertainty that we are left to rely on the grace, generosity and peace of God. Christ's call was always to faith. 'Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own' (Matt 6:34). That wasn't an invitation to down tools, put your feet up and

not care about money, volunteers or buildings, but rather to know that we are called to be faithful, not successful. We are called by God to the roles he has assigned to us and we must do them faithfully and diligently, the rest is down to his grace. As St Paul so beautifully put it 'The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it' (1 Thess 5:24).

In a season of anxiety perhaps we all need to learn to trust in God and rest in the knowledge that whatever anxieties, troubles and uncertainties we carry we know his peace that passes all understanding.



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Training events

Explorers of Church Buildings:
Sharing ecumenical space in a new church building in Oakhanger -
Thursday 23 May, 10 am to 12.30 pm

Health & Safety for Churches:
Tuesday 4 June afternoon, and repeated in the evening

Managing Events in Your Church:
Saturday 7 September, 10 am to 3.30 pm

Writing a Successful Grant Application:
Wednesday 2 October, repeated Saturday 12 October, both 10 am to 3.30 pm

Churchwarden training

20 July
Church House - New Churchwardens

2 November
St John's Church Hall, Lostock Gralam

Details of how to book will be on the Diocesan website and the e-bulletin nearer the time.

Booking is essential for catering purposes. Any questions please contact **Pat Pugh 01928 718834 ext 258**

Booking is essential for all. Please refer people to the Diocesan website events calendar for full details and to make a booking.

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The Diocesan Committee for Social Responsibility

The Diocesan Committee for Social Responsibility (CSR) is here to help parishes respond to God's call to loving service of our communities, to challenge unjust structures and care for creation.



CSR works through a small but dedicated staff team and a number of sub groups and forums made up of passionate volunteers who engage with some of the most important issues in our society. These include urban and rural issues, modern slavery, and mental health. The Department also embraces the Diocesan Counselling Service and the Diocesan Safeguarding team.

One of the major projects last year continues to make a significant contribution to understanding life in our prisons. The Criminal Justice Group launched 'Journey into Light', an exhibition of prisoner's art work. Starting in October 2018 the exhibition is on a 14-month touring programme around the diocese, visiting over 40 parishes. The astonishing work has raised the profile of

the chaplaincies within our two prisons, challenged perceptions and offered ways that people can support people before, during and after prison.

In the last year the Disability Forum and the Environment Forum have been established and they are both beginning to offer guidance and advice to help parishes really grasp these missional opportunities.

The Disability Forum hosted the 8 week certificated 'Enabling Church' course, encouraging churches to become more inclusive of disabled people and those with dementia. Vanessa Layfield, our Engagement and Inclusion Officer, has started to advise on completing a disability audit. A Dementia Conference was held to raise awareness of the disease and how to offer loving support in the church and wider community. The Forum are now looking forward to a celebration of different abilities service in the Cathedral on the 9th March 2019.

The Environment Forum was launched with an exciting 'Environment Day' supported by partners who highlighted the theological underpinning of 'Care of Creation', how to connect with and care for the environment directly around the church, energy saving initiatives and engaging with wider world issues. The Forum is encouraging parishes to become Eco Parishes with the eventual aim of becoming an Eco Diocese.

Look out for the new initiative this year, 'Event in Box', which will help your parish host your own event tackling all sorts of issues.

Debbie Dalby and the team are here to help you make a difference in your parish so do call if you need help.

Transforming Lives Together

Transforming Lives Together (TLT) is a joint venture between the Church Urban Fund and the Diocese of Chester. Now in its fourth year TLT is working hard to support churches in engaging with their communities, particularly around issues of poverty, inequality and loneliness. Kath Legh and Wendy Robertson have made an astonishing contribution to parish mission. Two of the major projects have been 'Filling the Gap' and 'Places of Welcome'.

For families the school holidays can be a challenging time financially. Research shows that in order to prioritize feeding their children some parents have had to go without food themselves and they simply can't afford to give safe, fun activities for their kids. 'Filling the Gap' is a network of churches delivering food and activities during the holidays, enabling children and families to eat and play together. There is now an army of volunteers around the Diocese who enable this to happen and who, in the process, create memories and experiences for the children to share with their friends when they return to school. There are 17 churches delivering 'Filling the Gap' across the Diocese and the dream is for more; please pray for their work.

Please let Kath or Wendy know if you are interested in finding out more, would like to volunteer, help with funding or receive the newsletter.

'Places of Welcome' is a network of churches and organisations that open their doors every week to welcome people in and provide free refreshments. In these days of increasing loneliness and isolation, this is a great, simple way to bring people together to build relationships and make friends. There are currently 23 'Places of Welcome' across the Diocese, which is fantastic, but there are still some areas which do not have anywhere offering a warm, safe place to meet and chat over a cup of tea. If you think your church could become a 'Place of Welcome', please get in touch with Kath or Wendy for more information.



Foxhill house and woodlands

Foxhill is the Diocese of Chester centre for prayer, study and mission, and celebrates fifty years of ministry in 2019.

As a place of refreshment, restoration and renewal our facilities are available to enable groups and individuals meet and retreat, and our varied programme of both residential and non-residential events offer the opportunity to reconnect with God and listen to what He may be saying and doing in our lives.

Whether you come on your own or with others, whether you are a frequent visitor or coming for the first time, whether you are joining one of our events or using our facilities for your own programme, we look forward to welcoming you to Foxhill.

The 2019 Programme of events is available at: <http://www.foxhillchester.co.uk/whats-on/> If you would like more information about our events or facilities, please contact the Foxhill team on **01928 733777** or foxhill@chester.anglican.org

A bursary fund is available to help prevent financial difficulties from being a barrier to visiting Foxhill. Please contact the Foxhill team for more information If you or someone you know would benefit from some assistance to spend some time on retreat.



Life in the Archdeacons' office

When I was offered the job of PA to the Archdeacon of Macclesfield I didn't really have any idea what an Archdeacon did, seven years later and now working for both Archdeacons I have a very good idea of what they do and am full of admiration for them both.

At the start of each year the "regular" meetings are input into the diary for the following year. These include Bishop's Staff Meetings, Suffragan Bishop meetings, Bishop's Council, Committees for Finance, Housing, DAC, HR, Pastoral and many more, between them they sit on 38 categories of meetings every year, many of these meeting monthly, some taking them to London or Birmingham on a regular basis! They oversee hospital chaplains, retired clergy, attend all Inductions and Licensings and Northern and National Archdeacon meetings.

Each Archdeacon is responsible for over-seeing the parishes in their Archdeaconries, approximately 140 on each side of the Diocese. Archdeacons are always involved in pastoral re-organisation, parish shares difficulties and financial problems, play mediator when there are parish fall outs, provide pastoral support to clergy and handle several vacancies each year. All require meetings with PCC's, SC's or the feuding parties and in addition they inspect 50 parishes each year.

Most Sundays they enjoy preaching and presiding at different parishes and

occasionally still have the joy of baptising babies. They particularly like to support parishes during vacancies.

In short they are very busy often working 5 days/ 4 evenings and Sundays.

So, if you want an Archdeacon to attend a meeting or preach at your service, please try and plan in advance. Clearly emergencies arise and they will always aim to offer immediate support but strangely they are only human!





James Butterworth Director of Communication

Greetings. Thank you for such a warm welcome to the Diocese. Since starting in June, it's been great to settle into the role and to meet many of you.

Prior to starting in the Diocese of Chester, I'd been living in Somerset and working as a Senior Communications Officer in the Diocese of Bath and Wells - a role I enjoyed, in a part of the world I loved. I also had stints in Bristol and Gloucester. But having grown up in Salford, taking up this role has been something of a happy homecoming.

The past few months have been predominantly about settling in and assessing where the communication priorities lie. I've made some changes to our processes and introduced some changes to our publications. In 2019, I hope to give some serious thought to a wider communications strategy that focuses on serving our parishes as well as possible.

Please do get in touch if you have any questions about parish communications or if you have a good news story to share. We're happy to help with media relations, press releases, social media, websites, design work, parish magazine and everything in between.

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Setting God's People Free

As Christians, we are all called to live for Jesus Christ in our daily lives. It's an exciting privilege and a wonderful opportunity.

'Setting God's People Free' is a national initiative to encourage all God's people, lay and ordained, to live as active Christian disciples. That means not just on Sunday, but Monday to Saturday in our homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods and schools. We are just as much the church when we are scattered in our daily lives as we are when we gather together for worship.

'Setting God's People Free' was launched in 2017, and since then, the Diocese of Chester has been in the forefront of the action, as a pilot diocese. At the moment, a core team in the diocese, resourced by the national church, is working with a group of some twenty pilot parishes. These parishes are very varied – urban and rural, large and small congregations, and of different church traditions. Since October, these parishes have been looking at different ways of encouraging congregations to live as whole-life disciples. They have encouraged people to share in church about their Monday to Saturday lives, so that others can pray for them. They have re-thought prayer and worship to relate what goes on in church more

closely to the challenges and opportunities of everyday life. Preaching and teaching has focused on the challenges we face as Christians through the week. They have accessed resources to help them re-imagine what church could be like. This pilot process finishes in the summer, and from the autumn, on the basis of what we have learned, we will be encouraging every congregation to live more actively as whole-life disciples of Jesus.

We are also working with networks of younger people to encourage them in their discipleship. We have re-designed our training courses in the diocese to reflect the emphasis of 'Setting God's People Free'. We have run special events, for example on whole-life worship, which have been very popular and thought provoking.

It is still early days and there is much, much more to come. But meanwhile, please do look at the 'Setting God's People Free' section of the Diocese of Chester website, or find out more about what is happening nationally at www.churchofengland.org/SGPF



Setting God's People Free
Helping each other live out our Christian faith in all of life.



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