

Chester Diocesan News



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester

#EverydayFaith across the Diocese of Chester | November 2020

“Light shines in the darkness”



Bishop Keith to retire Pg 2

Children lost to miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion Pg 6



“Dear Friends,
May I begin with thanks for all the kind words and prayers that have come my way since announcing my retirement next March. I am especially grateful to +Mark for suggesting the short video interview we did ([view here](#)). More than one friend from outside the diocese has commented on how young bishops are looking these days (and they were not referring to me!).

As you can imagine there are a whole range of emotions going on in what has been an extraordinarily challenging few weeks. Loss and liberation, I am told, characterise retirement, and loss there will certainly be, of our home as we move to Manchester, our fellowship both local and diocesan with so very many, and much more.

What has struck me so powerfully has been that the one person we do not lose is the Lord! In fact, it is in facing the challenges of change and moving on that the Lord has made himself more powerfully known. Speaking to me, “will you go on trusting me with this?”, asking me, “do you think I will still be with you?” I am finding that I am being taken back to spiritual truths which I first encountered at conversion in my early teens.

And I thought retirement might mean a spiritual easing up! But no, apparently the call to go on laying down your life continues – with the promise, those who lose their lives for my sake will find it! Thank you for your prayers.

Pray, care, trust were my three words on another video ([view here](#)) recently about how we might respond to the new rise of the pandemic and increasing restrictions on movement. As with many in the diocese, we are in Tier 3 in Birkenhead. Many are experiencing loss of different kinds: loss of jobs and income, loss of freedom to meet with family and friends, maybe the especial loss of someone close to you in death. Never in my lifetime has the season of All Souls and All Saints had more to say to a culture facing the nearness of death for so many. This season, following on from Easter, declares the hope of trust in God when we are faced with the ultimate loss, of life itself. Our worship and readings will not only focus on the reality of eternal life but will bring to our minds those we have known, perhaps those who first brought us to Christ, who now enjoy that eternal life in the immediate presence of God.

For all of us, whatever loss we are now experiencing, or whatever kind of loss continues to shape and hold us, may these truths given to us in the Lord Jesus be heard by us again. The light, his light, shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

With love in Christ

+Keith



Children lost to miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion

An ordained couple in Altrincham have unveiled a permanent memorial stone to help people to remember children lost to miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion. The Revd Jenny Bridgman, Associate Vicar of Timperley, and her husband Jim, who lost a child of their own to miscarriage, have also recorded a short service for people to watch via the [Timperley Parish Facebook page](#). During the service, which went live to coincide with Baby Loss Awareness Week, Jenny invites all those watching to take part in some suggested “symbolic activities”, including planting a snowdrop bulb at the site of the memorial stone, lighting a candle at home, and addressing a letter to the child they lost. Viewers are also asked to bring a stone to the memorial

ahead of All Souls’ Day on 02 November.

Jenny says: “We have produced this pre-recorded memorial service for you to watch in your own time. You may like to watch this at home before visiting the memorial stone, or to watch it on a mobile device as you visit the churchyard. If you are a long way from Timperley, please know that this memorial is as much for you as anyone local.

“As part of your grieving, you may like to go and lay the stone at the memorial. The stones laid there will be incorporated into our memorial for All Soul’s Day at the start of November.”

Jenny and her husband Jim experienced the loss of their child in 2014. Jenny says: “It was a Sunday when I found out I’d lost the baby. We weren’t sure that there was a problem with the pregnancy, so we decided to keep the morning as normal as possible: I went to hospital whilst Jim went to church to lead services.

“It was a very difficult experience as we came to terms with the loss of a future we never got to live and the fact that so much potential had vanished.”

Listen to their story and how their experience opened up conversations with others in the parish on our Podcast below.

Five All Souls’ and All Saints’ Day resources

[Church of England](#)

The CofE is really getting behind All Saints’ Day, All Souls’ Day and Remembrance in 2020 and has developed some great ideas to share, including downloadable posters, cards, liturgies, prayers, and more.

[Homegrown Faith.net](#)

They offer an all ages approach to All Saints Day, encouraging families across the generations to remember and celebrate the saints.

[Church Support Hub](#)

Among their various resources is an e-mailable Information Card, letting people know what is happening for All Souls’ in your parish this year.

[Going for growth](#)

Help children remember the saints who went before us and to put their trust in God in the face of Halloween fears.

[Roots](#)

Here you will find a themed service about saints and light focused on Acts 9.1-9, plus lots of activities perfect for children.



[Listen now](#)

Filling the hunger gap



See what the parish of Eastham have been doing via the video above.

High up the news agenda in recent weeks has been the issue of food poverty and school holidays.

Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford ran a high-profile campaign on the issue, persuading the Government to extend free school meals to eligible children over the summer holidays. However, the UK Government refused to do so again this autumn saying

it had already given money to councils in England to support families.

As the half term break comes to an end, for many poorer families it will be a welcome relief that their children are back in school again and eating well. But for how long?

Wendy Robertson spearheads Transforming Lives Together, a joint initiative between CUF and the Diocese of Chester. She says that food poverty is a long-term problem.

“The issue is unfortunately a long term one as parents on free school meals currently receive no financial support during school holidays and have to find an additional £40 a week to feed their children when they’re not at school. It’s also an issue for families who don’t quite meet the criteria for free school meals but who still struggle financially.”

For some time now, Transforming Lives Together has been helping churches to meet this need in their communities through Filling the Gap. It’s an initiative that gives parishes the resources, support, and ideas to offer food and fun to all families.

How can I help?

While the arguments over funding meals to poorer families rumble on, thankfully parishes across our diocese are rolling up their sleeves and taking action. If you want to start your own Filling the Gap initiative, you can! Download a “[Getting Started](#)” guide .

For more information or a friendly chat about how you can respond to the need, contact Wendy Robertson on **T:07956044573** or by email wendy.robertson@tltogether.org.uk



Volunteers on the Wirral helping to fill the gap

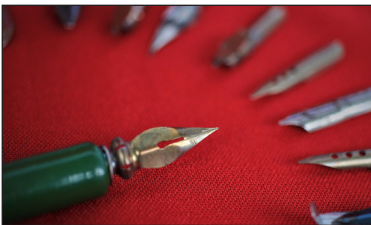
Events



Receiving online donations

05 November 2020 - Online

Organised by the national church, this will cover setting up and receiving online donations, as well as providing an opportunity to ask questions. [More...](#)



Poetry Break

12 November 2020 - Online

Poetry Break is a monthly coffee break for poetry lovers to gather. This will be an opportunity to hear poetry from others across the diocese. [More...](#)



New Eyes for Reading

18 November 2020 - Online

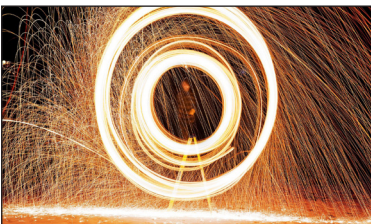
Looking at the Bible in a time of uncertainty and promise. This is one event with three dates: Those joining will join for the three sessions. [More...](#)



Fundraising for building projects

25 November 2020 - Online

An informal space to begin thinking about how to fundraise for essential repairs or improvements to church buildings or halls. [More...](#)



The Strength of the Circle

26 November 2020 - Online

How to use Circle Process to build relationships and resilience. This session helps anyone who facilitates group conversations to develop their skills. [More...](#)