

Chester Diocesan News



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester

#EverydayFaith across the Diocese of Chester | January 2021

Answering God's call



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“Imagine how things might be different if each one of us grew closer to Jesus in 2021 in prayer and in daily life. I am confident that God would use us all in a remarkable way.”

The start of a New Year is often a time of fresh hope, and that's certainly something we all need, looking back on the challenges of 2020. It's also a time when people sometimes assess their priorities in life. New Year resolutions are an example of that, but it can sometimes go much deeper than a new diet or remembering to keep your desk tidy!

Over the last few months, I've been drawn to think again about my own personal priorities. And as I have done that, I have felt drawn back right to the centre of my Christian faith: my relationship with Jesus Christ. I have felt challenged in my prayer life and as I have read the scriptures day by day really to focus specifically on the person of Jesus himself. What does it really mean for me to be his follower? How does that really show in the way I behave towards others? Those are questions we should all ask ourselves, regardless of the role we play in the church, whether we are young or old, whether we are new to the following Jesus or have been trying to do that for many years.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul talks about his strict religious upbringing, and how he has come to see that what matters much more than that is simply his relationship with Jesus. He says that 'all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Paul wants to live in a way which is completely shaped by

his relationship with Jesus – following Jesus's example and knowing Jesus's love and power in his life each step of the way.

That is a calling we all have as Christians. Throughout this issue of Chester Diocesan News, you will find stories of how Christians across the diocese are seeking to put that into practice, and to discover more and more of what it is Jesus is calling them to do with their lives for his sake. On Tuesday evenings through January and February we are running an online course called Fruitfulness on the Frontline, which will help us to travel that journey together, finding out what Jesus calls us to do and to be in our particular situations, at home, in the workplace, in our neighbourhoods. The course has proven popular and the tickets have sold out already, but we hope to run it again later in the year.

Jesus is calling us all to a deeper relationship with him. The better we get to know him, the more wonderful it becomes, as Paul said. Imagine how things might be different if each one of us grew closer to Jesus in 2021 in prayer and in daily life. I am confident that God would use us all in a remarkable way.

So as you read this issue of CDN, may God bless you and inspire in his calling on your life. Each of us is unique. There are things Jesus is calling you to do and to be which are unique to you. No-one else can fulfil their Christian calling in exactly the same way as you. That's an adventure that awaits each of us this year.

Mike Gilbertson

Called to serve

Called to Serve is an invitation to explore God's call on your life. The flagship diocesan event will take place online. Whatever sense of call you are experiencing, we're here to help you.

23 January 2021



Answering God's Call

As 2021 unfolds and you reflect on the potential of the new 12 months that lie ahead, what is it that God is calling you to be and do? Perhaps you feel called to be a teacher or a vicar; or perhaps a lay chaplain or Christian songwriter? Maybe it's none of these things.

Whatever sense of call you are experiencing, there are people in the Diocese of Chester who can help you on your journey.

Director of Vocations, Sarah Fenby, says that answering the question of God's call is a continuing process of "discernment".

She says: "Accepting that we have a calling can often be easy

in comparison to the process of fully understanding the true nature of the role God is calling us to play, and the person God is calling us to be.

"The process of discernment can take years of prayer and reflection and for some, it results in a call to licensed ministry, but for many more, it releases us to be something different."

Back in August, the Revd Ailsa Whorton was a curate at St Michael's Newton, West Kirby, and about to embark on a big change in her life by joining the Army as a Chaplain. Her entrance into the Army was by no means assured as she had to pass an intensive training course at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

"It was really, really hard.

We had to work late, sometimes staying up until 1am and then having to get up at 5am; always on the go. I was pushed to my limits and there were times that I almost gave up," says Ailsa about the training course.

What is unusual about Ailsa's story is that she did all this at the age of 53, 17 years older than anyone else she was training with. When Ailsa signed up to the Army she was told she will be the oldest female to have ever been recruited as a Chaplain.

Ailsa says: "Only 9.8 per cent of the Army are female, so, if someone like me can do it, maybe more women

might be inclined to think that they can too.

"I now feel even more called to God than I did prior to joining the Army, as if I have arrived at the place that he intended me to be."

When Ailsa sensed God calling her to join the Army, she couldn't be certain of where the journey would lead, but if it was for her to be an inspiration to those who think they are the wrong gender, too old, or not fit enough to join, then she's off to a great start.

What is God asking you to be and do? If you want to explore your calling register here for [Called to Serve](#)



"I now feel even more called to God than I did prior to joining the Army"

The Revd Ailsa Whorton



Photo by Hunter Desportes

On January 13, it will be five years since the death of the enigmatic English singer-songwriter, David Bowie.

Not long after he died, a video went viral on social media showing him on stage at a Wembley Stadium tribute concert for the late Freddie Mercury. In front of a raucous 70,000-strong-crowd, Bowie announced that he wanted to share a moment of remembrance for Freddie. What he did next took everyone by surprise.

Bowie dropped to his knees and earnestly recited the Lord's prayer for Freddie and a friend watching at home who died two days later. It was

as brilliant as it was surprising. You could have heard a pin drop. You can still [Watch the Video](#) on YouTube, where the comments section is full of people in awe at the "bravery" of the man. It's a fantastic reminder of the power of prayer.

In an article just before Christmas, Emily Allen, Church Buildings Missioner in the Diocese of Chester, encouraged people to be bolder and braver in offering prayer to those we know and love, as well as those we don't.

She says: "Although our churches are all but closed and we find ourselves physically apart from one another... spiritually, through Jesus, we can be together in prayer.

"Opportunities to pray for someone abound; we just have to recognise them and be braver in asking someone, 'can I pray for you?'"

As the Bishop of Chester, Mark Tanner recently remarked when talking about prayer: "What higher responsibility do we have than to pray

for our neighbours, communities, and nation. The thing about prayer is that you don't have to be good at it, fired up for it, or go on about it... you just have to give it a go and God does the rest. Prayer makes a massive difference, and it is our privileged calling."

Everyday prayer in a pandemic

During the past few months, parishes have been devising creative and imaginative ways of sharing the gift of prayer.

Listen to Archdeacon Mike Gilbertson and Emily Allen, Church Buildings Missioner in the Diocese of Chester, discuss how churches have adapted their prayer life in the pandemic in our podcast. [Listen Here](#)



Contributors to this podcast include:

The Revd Louise Annison, Curate at Holy Trinity, Blacon

The Revd Beth Glover, St Mary's, Eastham

The Revd Dr Olive Igwe, St Andrew's, All Saints, and St Peter's, Crewe

Marta Jones, Churchwarden, St. Andrew's Crewe

You can subscribe to our podcast by searching for Chester Box using your favourite podcast player.

Events



Poetry Break

14 January 2021 - Online

An opportunity to share or just listen to poetry from others across the diocese. This will be a rather different Poetry Break, with a Q and A facilitated by John Lindley. [More...](#)



Being There: Bereavement

14 January 2021 - Online

We will consider theological and ethical issues relevant to bereavement, and also how ministers can access support for themselves. [More...](#)



Fundraising for building projects

19 January 2021 - Online

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



Bookbinding: British Gods by Steve Bruce

21 January 2021 - Online

Christopher Burkett, Director of Ministry, summarises the book 'British Gods' and helps us to explore the points made and their implications [More...](#)



Called to Serve

23 January 2021 - Online

Called to Serve is an invitation to explore God's call on your life. Whoever and wherever you are, we each have a unique calling to serve God in our everyday lives. [More...](#)