

SPOTLIGHT

The Diocese of Lichfield Magazine

Jan/Feb 2016

Christ Inspires Leek

“Synapse is the Leek and District Churches’ youth work project. We have three Youth Workers involved in a huge variety of ways with reaching out to and caring for the young people of our town,” says Barry Wilson of St Luke’s, Leek.

“They are involved in school assemblies, RE lessons, mentoring, self-worth sessions, lunch time clubs, puppets, working with special needs schools, acting as chaplains at the local FE College and much besides.

“We were shortlisted in the children and young people category for a national Inspire Award, run by Inspire magazine with Evangelical Alliance and CPO, so our Youth Workers attended a presentation event in November at the Houses of Parliament.”

“We were awarded the runners up spot”, says youth worker Paul Sherwin. “To have your work in Christ appreciated by the local Christian community and also recognised by national leaders from different Christian organisations is extremely encouraging.

“The other categories also had many inspiring people and stories to tell and it was great to see and hear what our God

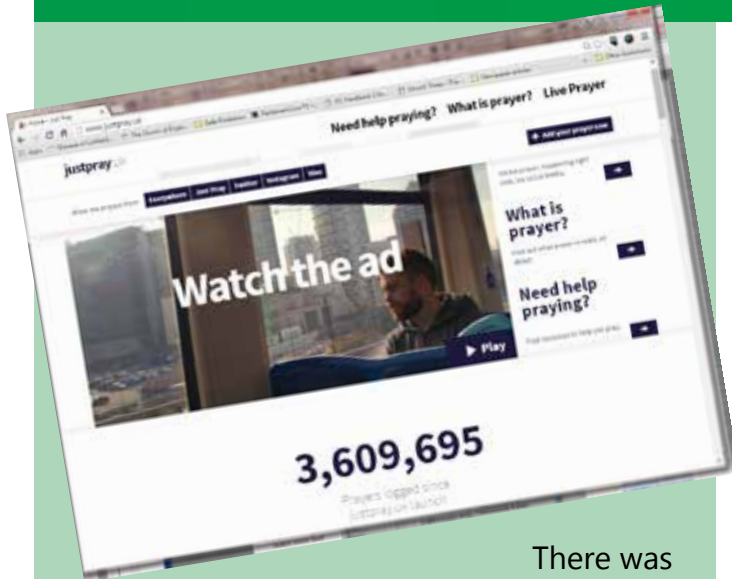


Paul Sherwin, Cate Hall and Jane Watson, youthworkers for Synapse which is supported by Leek & District Churches, together with Karen Bradley, MP for Staffordshire Moorlands



is doing in the nation through His church. They were great expressions of the love and care of God for people. What also struck me was that these projects and people were from a varied denominational background but the obvious devotion to Christ and desire to bless people in His name was clear.”

As our Saviour taught us...



There was much discussion in pubs, churches and the media in the autumn when the three largest cinema chains did a U-turn and refused to play one particular advert before screenings of the biggest release of the year. Not because of violence, not because it was inappropriate to be shown to children, nor because it contained graphic content or excessive materialism.

The advert simply contained a set of words repeated daily in homes, schools, council chambers, churches and Parliament:
The Lord's Prayer.

The advert was designed by the Church of England to promote a new website encouraging prayer. www.JustPray.org.uk provides a space for people to leave their prayers which others can pray. It also attempts to count the number of times prayers are made in various social media.

“Trypraying.org.uk is intended to be a hub for Christian praying people in Salop. Resources and ideas are shared so that more people get closer to God. There are resources to help you get praying, and we invite people to a conversation, to give help along the journey.”

The Revd Charles Ruxton is the Lichfield Diocesan Spirituality Advisor. His Spirituality Team created Trypraying last year, and also conducts workshops which encourage people in their prayer lives.

“In places like Stafford, Uttoxeter, Tettenhall, Market Drayton, Whitchurch and Great Wyrley, workshops have been run on topics like ‘What happens when we pray?’, ‘Personality and prayer’, ‘How can I pray in all of life?’, ‘How do we pray for healing?’, ‘Difficulties in prayer’ or ‘How to pray without words’.

“We have no monopoly on these subjects, nor do we want one, but we do consider it a huge privilege when we are invited to spend time



with people who are interested in prayer. It is particularly exciting when people are lifted out of a rut and find a new way forward.

“The aim is always to free people in their relationship with God. Some groups



In this first edition of 2016, we shine a Spotlight on a big theme in our diocese: **Discovering the Heart of God**. Sharing stories

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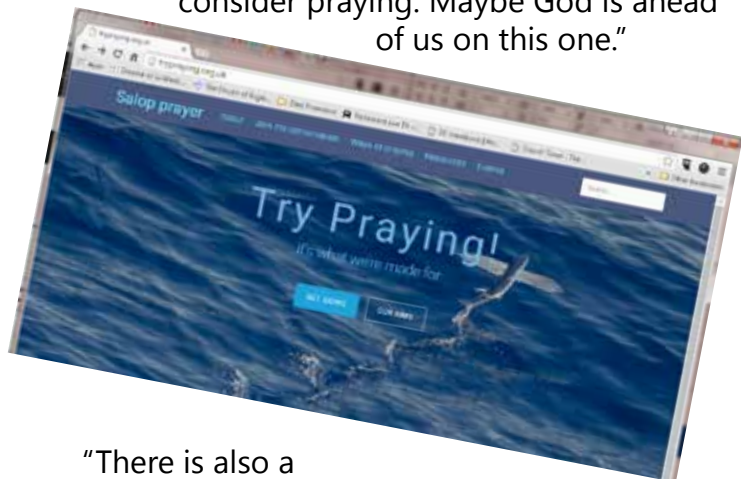
from across the area, we focus on prayer and discipleship which are at the heart of the lives of our local churches.



Lent Appeal

have wanted to take the secret of prayer outside of churches, encouraging people from all walks of life to simply try praying, and the Team are keen to support these initiatives.

“After all, there are many people who would never come to church, but who would consider praying. Maybe God is ahead of us on this one.”



“There is also a network of Spiritual Companions around the Diocese – people trained to accompany others on their journey of prayer, listening, gently sharing the question ‘Where is God in this?’ These one-to-one meetings, open to any that ask, are happening all over the Diocese.”

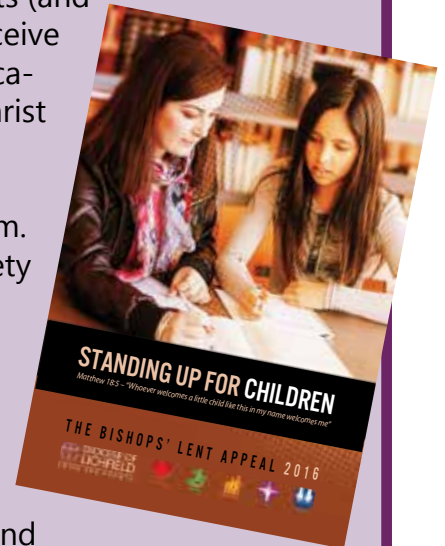
For more about the Spirituality Team look up www.lichfield.anglican.org/discovering-the-heart-of-god/spirituality-team and for a local website on ways of praying, see www.trypraying.org.uk.

Standing Up for Children is the theme of this year's Bishops' Lent Appeal, and will again support a local and a global cause.

In this diocese, for children in care who need reliable friends, The Children's Society provides volunteers - who provide an outlet and anchor for chaotic lives - and professional advocates - who speak for a child's needs and desires among the services who coordinate aspects of their care.

And in the holy land, where government policy is forcing church schools to raise the family contribution to the cost of education, the Appeal will support a number of the most needy students (and their families) to receive a good quality education at Episcopal Christ School in Nazareth which is run by the Diocese of Jerusalem. The Children's Society nationally already receives support from around this diocese with its three charity shops in Stone, Meir and Bloxwich, various fund raising events and regular financial donations from a quarter of our parishes, but our Bishops are keen, via this year's Lent Appeal, to highlight and support CS projects which specifically support and care for vulnerable children living in our parishes.

Our Lent Appeal always has an international focus as well as a local one. As many of us know from personal experience, the plight of our fellow-Christians in the Holy Land remains parlous, with many desperate needs. Supporting FHL through our Lent Appeal will make a real difference to the lives of many of our brothers and sisters and will signal our solidarity with them.



Learning to Dream Again

Samuel Wells' book, 'Learning to Dream Again' is the Diocese of Lichfield's Lent Book for 2016.



The Revd Preb Chris Thorpe

Chris Thorpe, Vicar of Shifnal & Sheriffhales, has written a booklet to help small groups study the book together and provide resources for taking time out in Holy Week. A copy is free with every paper edition of this Spotlight:

"I think Sam Wells has written a book of real clarity and insight, packed with practical and provoking examples that can take us into the heart of some of the most challenging questions for Christians today. It is written simply and with great wisdom.

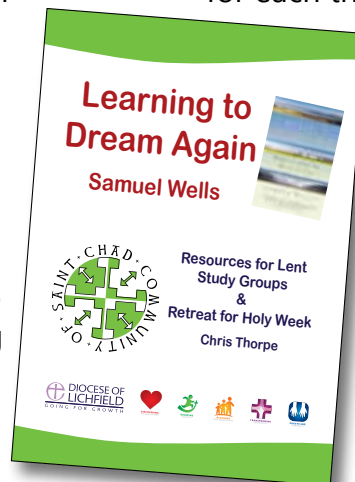
"As it says on the back cover, 'In this series of pithy and profound meditations, Samuel Wells demonstrates how we can remain grounded in the reality of being human in a suffering world, yet open to transformation by the life and joy of God.'

"This is not a book to attempt at one sitting, or to skim: there is too much in it for that! It has been chosen for these Lent reflections because it repays a slow reading,

with time to let the questions sink in, time to reflect on how it resonates in your own living.

"The book works well for Lent and Holy Week as it is divided into six weeks which work naturally for the six weeks of Lent. Each chapter is made up of five or six short sections, each of which can be used as a daily reflection. Why not make a commitment of time each day to read and reflect on one section?"

"Alongside the book there is a Study Guide that you can use in Lent or as a Holy Week Retreat. It provides a framework for use by individuals or in a small group, either week by week, over the six weeks of Lent, or day by day, to make a Holy Week Retreat. There is an act of worship, a bible passage for each day, a reflection and a prayer for each theme."



The author, the Revd Dr Sam Wells says "I'm thrilled that Lichfield Diocese will be reading Learning to Dream Again together. I hope and trust that Lent 2016 will be a time of learning and dreaming in holy ways for all who take part in the studies."

You can order your own copy of 'Learning to Dream Again' at a discounted price. Each parish can apply for up to ten copies at £5 each and any additional copies at £10 each. Please contact Lindsey Hall to order copies for your church at Lindsey.Hall@lichfield.anglican.org

The leaders of the Community of St Chad and diocesan officers have become so excited by this book that the Bishop's Staff have caught the enthusiasm - as seen in the video by the Ven Paul Thomas, Archdeacon of Salop on the diocesan website.

"This is a most readable and inspiring book" he says. "It leads the reader through various passages of scripture and enlightens. You'll end up saying 'I never realised that' time and again"

The Ven Paul Thomas, Archdeacon of Salop



Godly Rest, a Listening Ear



The Revd Preb Dr Jane Tillier

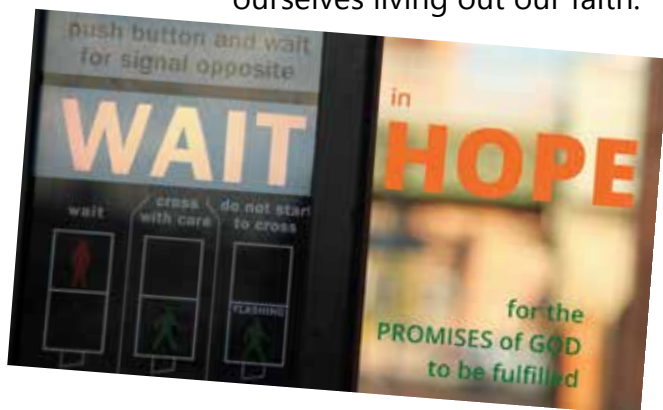
'Hi Jane, Thank you very much for your time and your wisdom last week. It feels like it was quite a watershed for me. Since we met I really feel a burden has been lifted.'

"Receiving thank you emails from clergy or diocesan employees is one of the delights of my role as Bishop's Adviser for Pastoral Care

and Wellbeing! I have the great privilege of prayerfully listening to and walking alongside people when they are struggling.

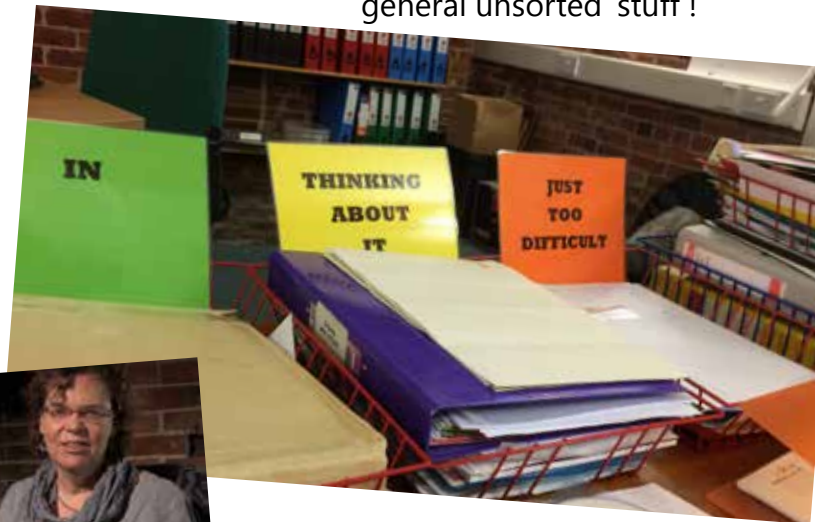
"Sometimes giving someone 'a good listening to' is enough. Sometimes I need to direct them to one of our network of counsellors who can offer more skilled listening and exploration.

"I've now started making Godly Rest videos as a way of reaching out to even more people. It's not just clergy and diocesan employees who can get a bit stressed! Taking just five minutes for quiet reflection in the midst of a busy day in God's service can really transform our lives for the better whoever we are and wherever we find ourselves living out our faith.



"I try to strike a balance in my work between responding to needs as they arise on the one hand and, on the other, working to promote wellbeing and good practice. The latter includes steady initiatives like visiting deanery chapter meetings and diocesan departments reminding people of the support that is available and also asking for suggestions for ways things can be improved.

"And then there are the more creative ideas like offering a 'Clear the decks' Quiet Day for people to tackle a backlog of paper or emails or general unsorted 'stuff'!



"One participant in such a day remarked: 'Thank you so much for yesterday. It was just what I needed. It provided a good opportunity to sort some of my admin backlog and to sort my head out a bit. I think I could probably do with such a day once a month!'

"Lifting burdens and sorting heads out certainly feels like the work of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. This is a joyful privilege and it really is one of the best ways of helping people to go on discovering the heart of God in their work and beyond!"

To watch Jane's 'Godly Rest' videos and find out more about Listening Ear, go to <http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/ourpeople/pastoral-care>

A Church Social

A week in the life of... your church?
Dr Ros Clarke, the Diocese's (and Church of England's!) first Online Pastor shows how social media can help Jesus be at the heart of everyday modern life, there on the frontline seven days a week.

Sunday - Church

Monday - You turn on your phone and the picture on your **Instagram** feed of the sidesman's smiling face, reminds you of the warm welcome you received yesterday. A little later there's a beautiful picture with a line from one of the hymns you sang, so that you have it in your head for the rest of the day.

Tuesday - While you're in the shower, you finally remember that question about the vicar's sermon from Sunday. No problem, though, because you know there will be other people already chatting about it on the church **Facebook** page. Maybe someone else has already asked your question!

Wednesday - You can't go to the church prayer meeting tonight, because you have to stay at home with the children. Instead you log on to the **WhatsApp** group where all the points for prayer will be shared, so you can pray along at home.

Thursday - This morning you visit Beryl in her care home. She tells you how wonderful it was to watch the church service live on Sunday morning, now that her grandson has set her up with an iPad and shown her how to use **Periscope**. It's almost as good as being there in person, she says.

Friday - Tonight is youth group and you want to remind them how great holiday club was last summer so that they all sign up this year. So you search online and find the highlights video on **YouTube**. They'll love watching that again.

Saturday - Some ladies from your church have gone to a Christian conference. You're following the hashtag on **Twitter** to get a glimpse of what they're learning. It sounds wonderful and you know you'll want to ask them about it at church tomorrow.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if your church used social media in some of these ways to help keep you connected from Monday to Saturday, not just on Sundays?

Why not start by asking if anyone already uses Facebook or Whatsapp and form a little group? If you love taking photographs, could you set up an Instagram account? Perhaps you haven't heard of some of the social media mentioned here? For more advice on how to get started on social media, contact Ros Clarke, the Online Pastor: ros.clarke@lichfield.anglican.org

Other links:

<https://digiproud.wordpress.com>
Run by the CofE's digital media officer, this site has a lot of very helpful advice for complete beginners!

<https://onlinepastor.org> This has links to all the Online Pastor social media accounts.



St John's, Stafford streamed one of their morning services live on Periscope as part of the C of E's @ChurchLive project

Renewal Group turns 15



What is the Diocesan Renewal Group? George Fisher, Director of Mission, spoke to Spotlight.

"In 2001, the then Archdeacon of Lichfield, the Ven George Frost, had a discussion with a group of Lichfield clergy about the possibility of staging an event in Lichfield Cathedral offering a more contemporary style of worship."

"Under the chairmanship of the Revd Kevin Roberts, a small planning group was set up resulting in the first diocesan renewal conference, 'The Heart of Worship' with speaker John Leach. Since then the annual event has gone from strength to strength attracting diverse



high profile speakers such as Bishop Graham Dow, Simon Ponsonby, Michelle Guinness and Mike Pilavachi."

"Each conference has explored the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, providing teaching for individuals and churches in the diocese looking to take the work of the Spirit seriously,

inspirational worship and prayer ministry.

"In 2012 the event transferred to Rising Brook Baptist to incorporate practical workshops into the programme, which have proved to be very popular. Over the years hundreds of church-goers from across the diocese have made it a priority in their diary, with newcomers being added to their numbers all the time."

Matthew Campbell, 28, from Wolverhampton attended his first renewal conference in 2015. "It was a very good experience, I liked the freedom of the event, and I would certainly like to attend future events."

Laurina Rushworth, a marketing and communications executive from Market Drayton found Martin Young's talk on 'God pointing' relevant to her personal life. "I am considering ordination at the moment and the talk was just right for me".

"The planning group now feel that the time is right for some fresh thinking" says George. "In the new year will be meeting together to seek God's guidance for the future. Just as churches can get stuck in a rut so can groups like ours. We have therefore decided to take time out to pray, listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, and consider new ways of supporting local churches and individuals with a desire to be more open to the Holy Spirit."

For up to date news about future events visit: www.lichfelddioceserenewal.org

RENEW@Lichfield Diocese

More of God... More for God

Isaac and Ishmael

“One of the biggest challenges to us as Christians is how we live as good neighbours.” says Bishop Geoff. “This account from Revd Mick Williams, senior chaplain at Staffs Uni not only highlights some valuable ministry in terms of the Christian/Muslim Interfaith discussion but I think also shows how those of differing understanding and opinions can work in harmony and with mutual respect.”

“Gen 25:8-9 says, ‘Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him.’

The Christian Union and the Islamic Society came together to perform a service for one they loved

“After the tragic murder of a young Muslim student it was my responsibility as the Senior Chaplain of the University to plan a suitable memorial event for the students and staff. The majority of young adults attending the service would not be familiar with the etiquette of Church or Mosque, however it was important for the Christian Union to provide spiritual readings and the Islamic Society to lead the traditional Islamic prayers for the dead. As a Chaplaincy we were able to call upon the expertise of close friends who were Muslim to provide appropriate care for the family, to ensure the food we provided was acceptable and that language and culture barriers could be overcome (the deceased’s mother flew in from Pakistan for the event). Many hundreds attended, candles were lit, memorial books signed and prayers made. The Christian Union and the Islamic Society came together to perform a service for one they loved. Two of the deceased’s housemates were Christian and two were Muslim, all of them, including the deceased, loved Jesus and knew themselves loved by him.

“The event had a huge impact on the many hundreds who attended who were not of any faith tradition and I believe that was because of the great testimony shown by the young Christians and Muslims who put their differences to one side to show love to another. The Christians did not pray the Muslim prayers and the Muslims did not pray the Christian prayers, there was no pretence that ‘we all believe the same stuff’ because we don’t. But there was a tangible atmosphere at the event that Love was at the heart of both Christianity and Islam and that love was bigger than our differences.

“Isaac and Ishmael put long standing division and suspicion to one side to

bury their father. Love was bigger than their divisions. Young Christians, Hindus and Muslims at Staffordshire University often come together to share in one another’s festivals and to raise funds for the poorest. Holding on firmly to their beliefs and orthodoxy they recognise the principle command of their respective faiths to love God and to love their Neighbours.”

“Back in the Autumn, a group of 26 of us from St. Peter’s Collegiate Church, SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church and Darlington Street Methodist Church made an ecumenical pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome.

“The pilgrimage was led by Mgr. Mark Crisp and myself.” says Revd Preb David Wright, Team Rector of Parish of Central Wolverhampton.

“Our time in Assisi focused very much on the lives and influences of St. Francis and St. Clare and included visits to the church of St. Damiano, where Francis received his calling and which he rebuilt, and the basilica where he is buried.

Helping Refugees



“It was fantastic to welcome over 115 people from churches across the Black Country and beyond to our day” says James Henderson, Transforming Communities Development Worker.

“People commented on how much energy there was in the room, how much compassion and most importantly how much desire there was to work together and make a difference!

“The day covered a range of talks and seminars. We learned about the pitfalls after being granted refugee status, when support suddenly ends. We explored how we might be a more inclusive and welcoming church. There was advice on the challenges of housing a destitute asylum seeker, and shared expertise on effective campaigning.

“We were delighted to have 15 different organisations represented throughout the day, who are doing vital work to welcome and support Asylum Seekers and Refugees, both locally and nationally.

“Our colleagues from Church Urban Fund are going to be writing a national report to help share the learning as part of the legacy of the day. We have had a few requests for a follow up event, so watch this space!”

For more on how your church can support refugees, for contact details, videos and downloads, visit www.cuf.org.uk/node/618648



A shared Pilgrimage

“Our time in Rome included visiting the Pantheon, attending a general Papal audience and a guided tour of the Vatican Museums.



“Whilst on pilgrimage, we shared together in a daily service of the word. Both Anglican and Catholic Eucharists were celebrated, with the hospitality offered at each respecting the disciplines of the different churches.

“In Assisi we joined the Sisters of the Atonement for worship. They are an order who started in the Anglican Church, were later received into the Roman Catholic Church, but offer warm hospitality and an altar to both.

“Some warm friendships were made during the pilgrimage and it certainly helped to develop the already strong ecumenical relationships which exist in Wolverhampton. We are now planning a joint service for Pentecost Sunday.”

Matlosane is 25



Over 2000 people gathered in the civic hall in Matlosana (Klerksdorp), South Africa to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Diocese of Matlosane. The Diocese of Lichfield was represented by the Revd Nita Edwards, who read the Gospel and the Revd Lesley Bentley, Director of Ministry, who preached at the invitation of Bishop Stephen.

“The Eucharist was celebrated according to the rite of the Anglican Church of South Africa – a rite which is in many ways similar to the ASB of the Church of England” says Lesley.



“The main differences come in the way that the worship happens. The service was 3.5 hours long. The sermon was 40 minutes long, not unheard of in the C of E. The collection took over 30 minutes and then it was run again when ‘a visual check showed that there was not enough in the plate’.

“The taking of the collection, along with the recessional procession, gave the opportunity for traditional, exuberant, African singing and dancing. The clergy were colourfully dressed for the celebration with specially commissioned stoles.

“The Diocese of Matlosane was formed with the division of the Diocese of Johannesburg into 4 dioceses in 1990. The Diocese has seen many changes in its short life, not least the freedom for the whole population, whatever their racial origin to travel and to worship where they will in their own country.”

The Diocese of Matlosane is a partner diocese of Lichfield. The current Bishop, Stephen Mopani Diseko, is the second Bishop of the Diocese.

A New Start

15 years ago we sat on the cusp of a new millennium. There was hope and passion for change that made a difference. Do you remember? Maybe like me, you sat up on New Year's Eve with a lit candle in the window praying for a new start with God, the family and the world's poor. We held services of hope and dedicated ourselves to reaching Millennium Development Goals.

15 years on we can take stock. There are some achievements but the overall picture is that we have fallen short of these goals. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General for the United Nations said in a report last year: 'The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history... yet for all the remarkable gains, inequalities persist and progress is uneven.'

Poverty and hunger has been halved, but due to the global economic and food crises in recent years there are still 836 million living in poverty today. The primary school enrolment rate in the developing regions has risen from 83% to 91% in the last fifteen years but 57 million children are still excluded from education (down from 100 million in 2000); 6 million children die before their fifth birthday from preventable causes (down from 12 million).

We are on course to meet targets on safe drinking water; new HIV infections and AIDS deaths have peaked, but 13 million are still living with HIV. Over 6.2 million malaria deaths have been averted between 2000-2015; economic aid from developed countries increased by 66% in this period, reaching \$135 billion. Despite these successes, however, the poorest and most vulnerable people are being left far behind.

In the face of such a challenge what are we to

do? The Gospel and example of Jesus compels us not to turn our backs on the poor and vulnerable. As part of that effort what about a new start with an old habit: Prayer? Many of us struggle to keep a daily discipline of prayer and quiet when we are open to God and the direction of the Holy Spirit. However, if individually and corporately our relationship with God is weak, what do we have to share with the world? I have a feeling that to be better pray-ers we need to learn to be more natural – to simply plonk ourselves down before God and be ourselves; to come as we are with the concerns of others on our heart and mind. Somehow we get the idea that to do it properly, we must screw ourselves up and be so neat like the first page in those books. And because we don't think we can really do it, we don't try!

God loves his world and his people and the bible tells us that he has a special place for the excluded in his affections. Part of our apathy may be that we feel useless when faced with so much need and our own weakness and lack of resources. The lesson of the feeding of the 5000 is that God can make a lot out of a little. He longs to work through us for his good. So, like the small boy with his picnic by the lake, let us offer what little we have to God and ask him to make a miracle of it.

This New Year let's start afresh with God and begin the change we long for in ourselves, our family and our local and global community. Let's do it together and start now.

+Mark





GOING FOR GROWTH



Please send details of your events to Spotlight on comms@lichfield.anglican.org

DIARY

Devoted

An annual conference for 15-25-yr-olds: national speakers, and broadcast on UCB

5-6 February
St George's Newcastle-under-Lyme
More info at stgnchurch.org.uk
or 01782 911240

Memory Boxes for Lent

Part of a project to create more dementia-friendly churches.

Saturday 27 February
St Mary's Parish Rooms,
Market Drayton
Contact 01543 306223.

Early Good Friday

A chance for Readers, Clergy and others to spend quality time reflecting on the Crucifixion. Led by The Very Revd Pete Wilcox, Dean of Liverpool (and formerly at Lichfield Cathedral).

Saturday 2 February 10.00-3.00
Oxon Church, Shrewsbury. Booking via 01902 372622

Healing Ministry Day

with Br David SSF /Divine Healing Ministries

22-24 April
St Michael's Penkridge
Contact Irene Nichols
01785 714686

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