

Spotlight

Nov/Dec 2017

Partnership Borneo Again

The Diocese has formally renewed an historic partnership with the Diocese of Sabah on the island of Borneo. The Bishops of Sabah and Lichfield signed the accord earlier this month while a group from Lichfield were visiting the Malaysian states (see pages 5 & 6).

"Personally and as a Diocese, this visit is very helpful because it helps us to re-establish our friendship and fellowship with the Diocese of Lichfield," said Rt Revd Melter Tais who became bishop of Sabah in 2015. Later in the day, Bishop Michael was the guest preacher at a service of Confirmation at St Andrew's Cathedral in the capital of Sabah, Kota Kinabalu.

"We used to have this link before and I really thank God for this opportunity to have Bishop Michael speak to our people from the word of God," he continued.

"This is my first time to visit Sabah and indeed Malaysia," Bishop Michael told the congregation, "and we rejoice in the bonds of friendship, companionship and prayer that unite us."

Bishop Melter expressed his hope that the dioceses will work together in mission, education and post-theological training for clergy.

"I've been really enthused by the commitment, zeal and the joy in the Gospel of our Anglican brothers and sisters in this part of the world. The excitement has been tangible," said Bishop Michael.

Lichfield Diocese already enjoys missionary partnerships with the Dioceses of Kuching, West Malaysia and Singapore in the same region.

The next formal expression of the partnership is anticipated in July 2018 when, along with other dioceses from South East Asia, representatives from Sabah will be joining a week-long series of events in Lichfield Diocese joining with parishes to focus on discipleship.

A video about the partnership can be viewed at www.lichfield.anglican.org/companion_links



Bishop Michael presented the Bishop of Sabah, Rt Revd Melter Tais, with a plate from the Staffordshire potteries to commemorate their meeting.



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LICHFIELD



God With Us

Churches and congregations are being encouraged to get involved with this year's #GodWithUs Christmas campaign.

#GodWithUs follows the success of 2016's #JoyToTheWorld national Church of England initiative which included information on over 1,300 Christmas services in Lichfield Diocese.

Local churches can join in this year by uploading their Christmas events to www.achurchnearyou.com which is about to be relaunched with many new features.

They can also take advantage of Your Christmas Journey, a series of 13 short reflections



throughout December and January. Written by soul [food] for people who are new to faith and to help us grow in our love of God, the messages can be received as texts, emails, on social media and through a new booklet. Sign up by texting GodWithUs to 88802 (Standard network rates apply).

Three videos that tell the story of the joy of going to church at Christmas will be also released throughout December on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Archbishop Justin Welby said: "The constant refrain of Christmas, in carols and readings, is that God is with us. In whatever situations you find yourselves this Christmas, God is with you – you only need to turn to him and ask to know his presence."

Meanwhile, Cathedral Illuminated returns to Lichfield Cathedral from Monday 18 December to Saturday 23 December (excluding Thursday 21st) for 'Star Of Wonder, Star Of Light'.

Presenting the nativity story in mesmerising images and sounds, the projections will move visitors on a journey around Cathedral Close and into the building itself where there will also be readings at the crib, the annual Christmas Tree Festival and a Star installation.

Tickets can be purchased from The Shop at No.9 or at www.lichfield-cathedral.org

More information and resources for churches, including posters, to share your Christmas services are available at www.churchofengland.org/christmas



Wowing with worship

Primary school pupils were plunged into the beauty of the Peak District at the start of one of the Diocese's new mission initiatives.



The 24-hour residential retreat at Dovedale House was the first in a series for those in Church schools in the Stafford Episcopal Area aimed to put the 'Wow!' factor into worship.

Twenty-five children from four primary schools descended on Dovedale for a packed programme which included high-energy

games, craft activities, science experiments, prayer stations, a midnight walk (at 7.30pm!), a prayer labyrinth and a candlelight Taize service at Ilam Church. Youngsters were encouraged to prepare creative worship using art, music, poetry, and drama.

The retreats aim to provide a positive experience for pupils and school staff and to mix schools from rural, town and inner city settings. Local clergy and lay teams who have links with the schools are invited to take part. Nine retreats are planned over the next three years involving primary, middle and secondary schools.

Alison Evans, a teacher at All Saints School in Rangemore, said: "Thank you for this amazing opportunity. Not only have the children been spiritually uplifted, but also staff have been renewed and inspired to rejuvenate our

worship within our schools. In a world of change and fast pace this 'grounding' opportunity for our next generation is inspiring and essential."

The Bishop of Stafford Geoff Annas, who also took part, said: "The programme encourages children to experience things they may not normally come across - such as the beautiful vastness of Dovedale and a candlelit service - as well as fulfilling curriculum requirements. Local clergy and lay teams come along and can then work with

young people from the retreat in the planning of school assemblies and worship."

The Lighthouse Project in Bucknall, a community programme between church and school, and the Connect2 missional community at Brown Edge School are also part of the mission initiative - one of four across the Diocese launched last May at the Come Follow Christ: First Steps event.



Heart-level connections

“Do we want people with dementia in our services? It may mean doing things differently,” says Dementia-Enabler Sarah Thorpe.

“For people affected by dementia, patterns change and church families need to be flexible. A day-conference on dementia-friendly worship looked at simple steps churches can take.

“Pat Jones talked about going to a village church near Telford with her sister who has dementia. A friendly greeting and clear communication of hymn numbers or instructions to stand, sit or kneel are welcomed. A little slower can be enormously helpful; Pat’s sister joins in the Lord’s Prayer but is often only half-way through when everyone has finished. Communion can be a challenge. When she receives a blessing from the priest, Pat’s sister treats it as a personal gift, tries to hold his hand and says ‘thank you’. The running commentary can be difficult: ‘Why’s he doing that? What’s

he saying?’ It’s important that people recognise dementia as a progressive disease of the brain, so Pat’s sister can be included as she is.

“Our conference explored lots of possibilities. Singing touches the soul when words connect less – including in residential homes. And we are excited to see how Godly Play can be used effectively with older generations. As to the spirituality of dementia, the move from independence to dependence is a move into relationship and community, into the dance of the Trinity.

“It’s a journey from the head to the heart that moves us from believing to belonging. When we can’t reliably remember information, a heart-level connection comes from being valued. Maya Angelou says: ‘People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’

“We’re encouraging churches to identify three steps over the next year to become more dementia-friendly. Let’s find things that are a real fit for your church and that enable you to have the nationally-recognised ‘working to become dementia friendly’ logo.”



For more information and support contact your Dementia Enabler:
BLACK COUNTRY Revd Dr David Primrose david.primrose@lichfield.anglican.org 07975 644044
NORTHERN SHROPSHIRE Sarah Thorpe sarah.thorpe@lichfield.anglican.org 07982 248949
STAFFORDSHIRE Revd Mike Bridgewater mike.bridgewater@lichfield.anglican.org 07531 105853

Enabling Advice

A new Enabling Church Advisor will help parishes across the Diocese remove barriers to people with impairments or disabilities fully entering into local church life.

The Revd Zoe Heming was licensed in the half-time role by the Bishop of Lichfield at a special service at St Andrews Church in Aston, in Newport, Shropshire, where Zoe will spend the other half of her time serving as vicar.

Zoe, who often uses a wheelchair due to chronic pain, was previously the Curate of Hodnet Deanery in north Shropshire. As well as being a regular panellist on the Diocese’s weekly TGI Monday online chat show, she is a member of General Synod and has spoken and written extensively on how the Church urgently needs to notice who we exclude from church life and how this ‘disables’ our churches from being a healthy ‘Body of Christ’.

Zoe’s appointment follows the commissioning of new Diocesan Advisor to the Deaf Church, the Revd Susan Myatt, as reported in the last edition of Spotlight



Zoe said: “When I became ill, I didn’t know



how to practice my faith without causing more pain. Like many in all our parishes, I would stay home rather than seem ‘irreverent’ during worship which had a huge impact on my faith. The Bible is full of stories of God ‘enabling’ people to understand and embrace their own weakness. There are so many simple, inexpensive ways to worship together and embrace one another’s gifts to make sure that no-one is isolated from church life or left feeling like a ‘bad Christian’.”

Bishop Michael added: “Everybody has a place at the table of God and we need to do what is best to ensure our church buildings and the way we organise our worship are open to all. This may lead us to change some of the ways that we think and behave.

“These are our brothers and sisters, faithful Christians, and we need to make sure they are part of who we are. Any of us may have the experience of being disabled in different ways at different times in our lives and Zoe’s appointment is one way of enriching and supporting each other as part of our discipleship together.”

All at SE Asia



A team from across the Diocese spent a fortnight in SE Asia in October supporting Bishop Michael in strengthening the links with our companion dioceses there.

The visit included time in all the dioceses of the Province of SE Asia - Singapore, West Malaysia, Kuching and Sabah. Here are some reflections.

"The most interesting thing is talking to Christians in Malaysia, living in an Islamic country and relating that to Christians in the UK living in a secular society. Those in Malaysia feel somewhat pressurised by the state and I think, to a certain extent Christians do in the UK, we feel we can't express our Christianity as openly as we'd like. The difference is that in Malaysia if you do evangelise, you get arrested."
Steve Deall - curate, Great Haywood



Steve & Gill meeting students in Terengganu.

"The sense was of a Chinese community in an enclave and they'd feel frightened if they lived anywhere but those two streets. But the ministry they're doing with university students was inspiring - they find ways round so many restrictions to reach out and share the gospel. It's quite sobering how luke-warm we can be and yet how they still reach out to Chinese students. The fervour of some of those young people is so encouraging. The challenges are very different between the two countries."

Gill Carding - Reader, St Giles' Shrewsbury

A gathering of St Chad's Volunteers past and future in Petaling Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, along with Bishop Michael and the archbishop of SE Asia, Most Revd Ng Moon Hing.



"It's been an amazing experience. I was so enthusiastic about going partly because I'd been to other parts of Malaysia but never to the east coast myself."

"The communities were very different there. In Terengganau they felt to us as though they'd got their backs to the wall. It was tough being Christians in a very hostile environment because of the political, social and legal pressure on them from a Muslim community of about 98%."

Michael Carding - St Chad's Volunteer Programme coordinator



An Orang Asli house church meeting (above). Former St Chads Volunteers Christopher Soe and Andrew Soon guiding the team through a street breakfast in Penang (right).

"One of the best things I experienced is visiting the Orang Asli people in their home. Unlike most of the people we've met, we had no shared culture other than the language of smiling but knowing we had a shared experience of our faith. That's been really poignant for me - just being as far culturally as we can get from home and yet having that shared faith in Jesus."

"In talking to the young people and experiencing a bit of the youth culture here, I've noticed one similarity and one difference. I've been really aware of the privilege we have in the UK - I can go into a school assembly and speak to 2-300 young people. I think I may have taken it a little bit for granted - you just can't do that here. The similarity is that I've seen different churches prioritise young people differently: some where young people are front and centre of ministry and others where they're just little people who will one day grow up to be responsible members of church."

Hannah Moore - leader, Shrewsbury Youth for Christ



A new school being built by the Anglican church in Batam (just south of Singapore) with the overseeing pastor, Revd Henok Hariyanto.



"It was mind-blowing to realise how vast the Province of South East Asia is: three dioceses cover Malaysia and then the Bishop of Singapore said it'll take 12 hours to fly from one tip of his diocese to the other as it comprise seven deaneries, each one a country - Nepal, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia! Equally impressive is the missionary enthusiasm and the intense energy going into reaching people in countries where authorities are hostile to Christian faith. They are asking in Sabah and Indonesia for English-speaking teachers to work in church schools and gently show the love of God through not words but actions."

"The other thing that was fantastic was flying up to Penang and meeting people from St Paul's Church. Just two weeks before we welcomed Peter Ooi, a St Chad's Volunteer from there to my home church. To meet the pastor, Ven Stephen Soe and some of Peter's friends was fabulous - making friends, meeting again past Volunteers who know the places I know and hopefully making and building a connection between those two churches - I'm really looking forward to see that link grow."

Simon Jones - Diocesan Communications Team



James Chee demonstrating physio equipment at St Mark's Cozy Home (above). Carl on the receiving end of a trainee massage (below).

"I found Cozy Home very interesting. James Chee had a passion for older people and where they would live after retirement - somewhere of a certain standard. He was very direct and said, 'This place will not smell, must be clean...' and he was right. He made sure people are well cared for, food of a high standard, prepared fresh. Bits of that we could take back to my own parish."

"What struck me about St Nicholas Home was also the respect, caring for the blind of all ages. It was wonderful to see how the carers treated the children in the kindergarten - it was like they were their own parents. Adults were learning skills to enable them to live and work - making them computer literate, able to cook, to cook and to do massage. I'm up for anything and they wanted to practice on me - that was wonderful! We saw hosts of bikes, tandems, so they could have the experience and feel of the whole thing."

"When we had lunch at St Paul's church in Petaling Jaya, we were served by people with learning difficulties being helped to become independent. Then they sang for us and I couldn't keep back the emotions - they were so joyous and thankful. For me what undergirded all of that was the respect given to the people in all three cases. It'll really stay with me for life, it really was the Gospel on legs."

Revd Preb Carl Ramsey, vicar of Pelsall

Read and watch more online
More at lichfield.anglican.org/companion_links/

Next Steps

People across the Diocese have been having their say on the Next Steps of our journey together.



After the launch of the Diocese's new direction of travel to 'Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad' in May, a conversation started about how we can focus on the key areas of discipleship, vocation and evangelism over the next five years.

Letters were sent to parishes, chaplaincies and youth workers asking them to share stories, hopes and plans about discipleship, vocation and evangelism. Here are some examples of the feedback so far.

How people in our Diocese are responding to God's call on their lives:

"We are considering a gifts audit as we continue to encourage each other to engage with the contexts God has placed us in and the gifts God has given us."
All Saints, Wellington, with St Catherine's Eyton.

"Forget Me Not - responding to people with dementia and their carers."
St Andrew's, Shifnal.

"We have made encouraging vocation a priority on the church's mission action plan for this year."
St Bartholemew's, Penn.

How people in our Diocese are seeking to share the Good News of Christ with others:

"Pop Up Coffee sessions have been successful with support from members of the congregation which has enabled us to welcome people from the local community into the church building."
St Stephen, Wolverhampton.

"Open The Book, Messy Church, Carols by Candlelight, invites to all local farmers at harvest with the opportunity to request prayer for their livelihoods."
St Thomas, Mow Cop.

"We pray regularly for the streets around our church. Our vision is to see St Paul's buzzing with life - and opportunities to naturally share our faith coming from that."
St Paul's, Burslem.

"We have just developed a new mission statement based on the Diocesan direction of travel - so every-member ministry is on our agenda."
Wrockwardine Deanery Team Ministry.

"Building on our links with local schools and starting to build a team for this... Serving the community and demonstrating the love of God in practical ways such as litter picks, collecting school uniforms to pass to struggling families, toy library and visiting team."
St Matthews, Wolverhampton.

"A new housing estate is very likely to be built in the next five years. We are exploring what that might mean as the church will geographically change from being on the edge of the community to becoming central."
Burntwood Chase Team.

Representatives of the 'Church and Church School Together in Worship Mission' missional project in the Stafford Episcopal Area being introduced and commissioned at the First Steps event in May.



How people in our Diocese are seeking to follow Christ as disciples:

"Working with a group of younger parents on the fringe of church to develop faith and commitment."
St Mary's, Sheriffhales.

"Two 'discipleship huddles' offering intensive discipleship to potential leaders, equipping them to be disciples who make disciples."
St Matthews, Wolverhampton.

"We are going to be putting into place follow-up from doing the LICC 'Whole Life Worship' course for all of use on our frontlines."
Christ Church, Bayston Hill.

"Members of the church have visited and worked on teams with New Beginnings in Uganda, and the church financially supports and prayers for this ministry."
The Church At Perton.

The day after St Chad's Day, on Saturday 3 March 2018 at 11am, Bishop Michael invites everyone to a Next Steps Celebration service at Lichfield Cathedral. It will feature the

Community of St Chad and include an update on our journey of discipleship, vocation and evangelism including the four mission projects that were commissioned last May.

Have your say by filling out a simple survey before 30 November at www.lichfield.anglican.org/next_steps/ where there are also liturgies, postcards and other resources to help you consider discipleship, vocation and evangelism in your local context.

Peddalling music for 75 years

A Stoke-on-Trent church organist has been pulling out the stops for an incredible 75 years.

Philip Harrison's first service as an organist was in 1947 at St Luke's Church in Hanley as a "petrified" 14-year-old. Since then, the 90-year-old has played at thousands of weddings, funerals and other services across the diocese.

Philip worked as an accountant at the former Shelton, Iron Steel and Coal Company and then as a music teacher. He moved to St Mary and All Saints in Trentham in 1958 where he remains the organist today. BBC Radio Stoke broadcast a special event to mark the 75-year milestone from the church earlier this year.

Philip played at the wedding of his daughter and had to, temporarily, leave his console to give her away before resuming his position behind the keys.

"I love playing the organ," he said. "Whenever I go on holiday with my wife Dorothy I always contact the local cathedral in advance to make an appointment for ten minutes or so to play their organ."

"My favourite service is the Wednesday morning communion in Trentham as there is a 15-minute break

that allows me to go and sit in the congregation during the worship with Dorothy before I get back up to play again."

Keen on football, cricket and golf, Philip has been a season ticket holder at Stoke City for four decades and won the club's Supporter of the Year trophy last year.

Vicar of Trentham, the Revd Adrian Stone, said: "Philip is a great musician and loves to encourage everyone to sing. He has a deep love of church music and a heart to serve the Lord. Recently, I took a funeral for a local family and a couple of the visitors came to tell me that they were married here 40 years ago. I pointed to Philip and explained: 'There is the organist who played at your wedding!'"



Photo courtesy Stoke Sentinel

From the Editor

Welcome to the last edition of Spotlight for 2017. Advent is a busy time for parishes, schools, fresh expressions and chaplaincies the length and breadth of the

Diocese as thousands of people hear afresh the good news that God is with us. There are plenty of resources available to help you in this (see p2). Have a wonder-filled Christmas and a fantastic New Year!

Pete Bate, Director of Communications

God is now here

An atheist was writing an article for Christmas to prove that God did not exist. He wanted to finish his article with the sentence: 'God is nowhere!' Unfortunately, the sub editors made a mistake with his copy and so the final sentence of his article stated: 'God is now here!'

This is the heart of the Christmas good news. We celebrate that God came to us in human form, as a vulnerable baby to a young woman called Mary. In very ordinary circumstances, Jesus was born in a particular place – the small town of Bethlehem on the edge of the Roman Empire and at a specific time – when Augustus was Emperor. St John says: 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us'. St Matthew retells the words of the prophet: 'the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel' which means 'God is with us'. God is now here.



For many this is unbelievable. Surely if God was to reveal himself to us he would just rend the heavens and come down. Indeed, a philosopher said: 'some people seem to think that it would help if one day there was a large banner displayed in the sky saying, 'I'm up here, you idiots.'

However, God seems to work not by breaking into the world but by embracing the world

from within. In Charles Wesley's carol, 'Hark the herald Angels sing', we sing the lines: 'Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel'. Take away the traditional 'man' language and we see that God delights to be human alongside human beings. This carol tells of a God who does not have to be lured down from heaven by us being very polite to him or behaving extra well. We are dealing with a God who can't help pouring himself out for the world that he has made. This is a God who doesn't have to be persuaded to be interested in us.

Perhaps a first practical exercise in prayer is to approach God with this in mind:

This is a God who doesn't have to be persuaded to be interested in us

he is interested in us. Christmas teaches us to dispel the idea that God is essentially bored with us, rather removed from us and always in need of being kept sweet. He does not have to be persuaded to be on our side. As a former Archbishop of Canterbury said, 'You might as well try to persuade a waterfall to be wet.'

In Bethlehem, God comes to us in the weakness of a baby. A lifetime later, at Calvary, he appeals to us in the helplessness of a man nailed to a cross. In Jesus, God beckons to us not by force or command but in solidarity and by identifying with us. He longs for us to recognise him and go to him.

God is now here. He values our humanity beyond all imagining. He shares our struggles as well as our joys. 'Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.' God is with us. God is for us. May you know the blessing of his presence this Christmas.

*+Mark
December 2017*

Advent Quiet Days @ Shallowford House
 'Between the times' - Friday 1 December
 Led by Revd Stephanie Couvela, chaplain at Keele University
 'Knowledge Speaks, Wisdom listens' - Monday 4 December
 Led by Revd Mark Rodel, parish priest and faith coach.
 Each runs 10am-4pm, includes a 2-course lunch. Costs £21.50:
 booking via shallowfordhouse.org / 01785 760233

DIARY

Developing Sustainable Youth, Children's and Families Ministry: An RNG Lab
 An opportunity for all to begin to explore the issues faced by parishes.

10am-4pm, Thursday 25 January
 Stafford
lichfield.anglican.org/rng-labs

For a full listing of events in the Diocese, visit lichfield.anglican.org/events
 Let us know about your events by email to comms@lichfield.anglican.org

Dementia-friendly Carol Concert
 Carols, festive treats and celebrity guests in support of Alzheimer's Society

Thursday 14 December 6.30-8.30pm -
 St John's in the Square, Wolverhampton

Star of Wonder, Star of Light
 The award-winning Cathedral Illuminate will present the nativity story in mesmerising images and sounds outside and inside the Cathedral.

Monday 18 - Saturday 23
 December (excluding 21st), from 7pm. Tickets from the Cathedral Shop or lichfield-cathedral.org