

Chester

Diocesan News

January 2018

News, features, jobs...
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Growing stronger parishes

Chester singer wins Young Chorister of the Year



Ischia Gooda and Raphael Bellamy Plaice, Young Choristers of the year

We are thrilled to announce that the winner of BBC Radio 2's Young Chorister of the Year is Ischia Gooda from St Peter's Prestbury.

The grand final of the competition took place recently in the BBC Philharmonic Studios in Salford, and was hosted by Songs of Praise presenter Josie d'Arby.

Radio 2 Young Choristers of the Year, now in its 31st year of broadcast, celebrates young talent singing for worship in churches, chapels, cathedrals and beyond. Eight contestants battled it out in the grand final, with youngsters from around the UK performing in front

of a panel of expert judges including world renowned soprano and Head of Vocal Studies and Opera at Royal Northern College of Music, Professor Lynne Dawson, organist Simon Lole and musician and comedian Vikki Stone.

From the eight finalists, one girl and one boy were selected to win the title BBC Radio 2 Young Chorister of the Year. The two winners each received a trophy and also have the opportunity to take part in a range of radio and television programmes over the year for BBC Religion and Ethics, in addition to wider BBC engagements.

Epiphany Hope



I have to work hard to enjoy the dazzle and hustle of contemporary Christmas observance. But, in the overlooked marking of Epiphany, and the season that follows, I find meaning and

hope. In this short season we move from the manger to the cross, and bring together Jesus' birth, life and death.

There is a church in one of the poorer parts of the diocese that has been giving support to a small number of the Syrian refugees who have arrived in the UK. One of them is a woman whom I recently confirmed. An Iraqi Christian married to a Syrian, she had lived in Syria and, prior to the troubles, she was abandoned by her husband who took her children and left her to fend for herself. Vulnerable to ethnic and religious 'cleansing', she was rescued by a United Nations mission, and taken to a camp in a neighbouring country before coming to the UK. She found deep wisdom and solace in the Lord's Prayer. Asked whether she hated her 'enemies', she said that her task is to forgive those who persecute her. It is for God to deliver her from evil. She sees her 'deliverance' by the UN mission, and by those who have given her support and shelter since her arrival in the north of England, as God at work in her life. Her story has brought salvation to her hosts.

This courageous woman's testimony connects her to another woman, the prophet Anna whose feast day concludes the church's season of epiphany. Anna, hidden in the shadows, slips briefly into history to bear witness to the child Jesus.

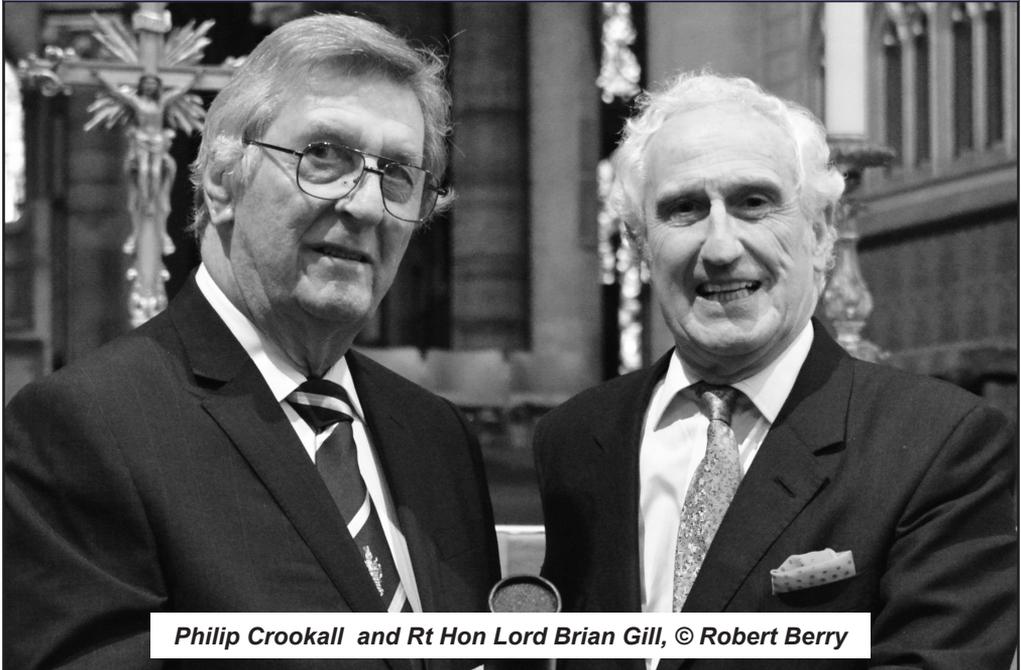
Anna was a woman of very great age who, we are told, never left the temple but worshipped there, fasting and praying, day and night. The day Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple for presentation, the Holy Spirit led an elderly man, Simeon, to come to the temple too. He had had his own Epiphany - the revelation that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Lord's Messiah. Simeon, in the power of the Spirit, identified the child Jesus as the bringer of that salvation.

Simeon's song is all about Epiphany - about revelation: Jesus is to be "light for revelation to the Gentiles." This is an astonishing claim to be made about Israel's promised Messiah, the restorer of Israel to its former pre-eminence, here also recognized as the one for those who are excluded. But it is given to a woman, the prophet Anna, to be the one who immediately shares this revelation with those who were gathered outside the inner sanctum: Anna "began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." (Luke 2.38)

Hospitality lies at the heart of Epiphany, I think, and therefore at the heart of the Gospel. I mean receiving hospitality rather than giving of it. In the stories and celebrations of Epiphany season we realise the transformative possibilities of giving up power and being dependent on others; of waiting rather than doing; of being on the edges rather than in the middle; of taking risk, going by unknown routes, stepping aside for others, living with weakness and failure; receiving rather than giving.

Anna, we may say, was the first evangelist, and the Syrian confirmand, in testifying to her 'deliverance' and practising forgiveness of those who have sinned against her, brings the Epiphany, to which Anna originally testified, right into our midst today.

Decades of musical service recognised



Philip Crookall and Rt Hon Lord Brian Gill, © Robert Berry

Philip Crookall, of Nantwich, was presented with the Certificate of Special Service in recognition of his contribution to church music through the work of the Royal School of Church Music. The presentation was made by Rt Hon Lord Brian Gill, Chairman of the School Council, at Canterbury Cathedral during the Royal School of Church Music's Celebration Day.

The certificate citation said: "Philip has been involved in church music since the 1950s. As Choirmaster and Organist of several churches in Cheshire he has recruited many choristers to courses and festivals and to the Cathedral Singers programme; promoted the Royal School of Church Music Choir Training Scheme and served as Treasurer of the Chester Area Committee. Thirty years ago he founded the St Christopher Chorale which

has visited over 100 churches to support worship."

Thirty one years and over 16,000 miles later, the St Christopher Chorale continues under Philip's direction. For further information see www.stchristopherchorale.co.uk

Chester Diocesan News

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Chester Mystery Plays

A rare and treasured part of Britain's cultural heritage, the Chester Mystery Plays are returning to the diocese this summer to be performed by a community cast of hundreds of actors, singers, musicians and children.

Produced once every five years, the tales of ambition, intrigue, betrayal and passion, drawn from iconic Bible stories, are guaranteed to enrapture, astound and delight.

Originally written by Benedictine monks at the Abbey of St Werburgh (now Chester Cathedral), a new script has been commissioned for 2018 from award-winning writer Deborah McAndrew, whose recent play *Dirty Laundry* for Claybody Theatre was given national acclaim.

Director Peter Leslie Wild, who directed the previous cycle in 2013 said: "The

Chester Mystery Plays are such an important part of the city's heritage and being part of them, whether as an actor, a musician, a props maker or helping out front of house, is an experience not to be missed."

The Chester Mystery Plays will be performed in the nave of Chester Cathedral from June 27 July 14 2018. Usually performed in and around the cathedral this is only the second time that they have been produced in the nave, following the success of 2013.

Performances are every evening at 7.30pm with a matinee at 1pm on each Saturday.

Ticket are available from £18. Visit chestermysteryplays.com or telephone 01244 500959. For every 10 tickets booked, the cheapest is free.





Rob Tolefree and Nicholas Fry as Noah and God



Francis Tucker as Lucifer



**Winnie Southgate as Mary and
Clare Vickers as Mary's Mother**

Called to Serve - by Jim Britcliffe

I have been feeling a call to ordination for a number of years. I kept on trying to ignore it because I wasn't active within the church, and I wasn't particularly interested in becoming involved with the church. Yet still I heard this nagging voice in my mind telling me that I should be ordained. Why me? I'm just an ordinary bloke from a working class background. I kept on trying to ignore the nagging voice.

In 2012 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. It made me sit up and take notice. I realised that life is something you only get one shot at. My wife was adamant that we start to go to our local parish church. So the cancer was dealt with and life moves on. Church life moved on and I was confirmed and elected churchwarden. Except that now, as well as the nagging voice in my head, I also had my vicar giving me several reasons why he thought I'd make a good vicar.

I enrolled on "Foundations for Ministry" with the diocese and found it a wonderful experience and a great opportunity to learn so much. I also began to think that maybe I could realistically look at the possibility of becoming ordained.

Then, last February, I attended the "Called to Serve" event at Foxhill. It was a wonderful opportunity to listen to all sorts of people and to ask questions. There were presentations by various people about ordination, reader training and pastoral worker training. There was the opportunity to talk to people at different stages along their journey towards these various goals.

At the present time I have no way of knowing how this next part of the journey is going to turn out. I don't know whether I will be accepted for ordination training or not. But the journey so far has been its own reward. In a way it is my own personal road to Emmaus. Whatever

happens as a result of my embarking on the discernment process my relationship with Jesus is deepening as a result.

Called to Serve is the annual event for those who want to explore the various licensed ministries of *Pastoral Worker, Reader, Church Army* and *ordained ministry*. It will take place on Saturday, 27 January 2018, 9am to 3pm at Foxhill House and Woodland in Frodsham. There will be input from representatives from the religious life as well as information about training. If you would like to come, please email peter.bacon@chester.anglican.org or phone 01928 718834 ext 237. Please make sure you book before Friday, 19 January 2018.



Archbishop's day for those feeling called



Step Forward is a day of reflection and fellowship for anyone aged 18 to 30 who is wondering whether God might be calling them to ordained ministry in the Church of England. You may have already taken some steps down this route – or you may never have thought about it until now! Either way, the day will help you think, talk and pray through this question.

The event takes place on SATURDAY 17th MARCH 2018, 11am to 4pm at the home of the Archbishop of York, Bishopthorpe Palace, just a few miles south of York city centre. It is easy to get to by train, or car (postcode YO23 2GE). To register please visit www.stepforwardanglican.org.uk



Foxhill

House and Woodlands



Stop, Look and Listen Days

'The blue remembered hills' a time of personal reflection and reminiscence. Led by the Revd Taffy Davies. Monday 12th Feb 9.00am - 3.30pm. £22 inc. lunch and refreshments.

Residential Retreats

Christian Mindfulness with the Revd Shaun Lambert. 1st - 3rd March £165 inc. en-suite rooms, meals and refreshments.

To book or for more information call 01928 733777 or visit our website www.foxhill@chester.anglican.org
Tarvin Road, Frodsham WA6 6XB

New Warden and Assistant Wardens of Readers licensed



Bishop Peter has licensed three new officers to support the ministry of readers in the diocese. Pictured are Vivien Gisby (Warden of Readers, centre), Fran Hiles (Assistant Warden of Readers for Macclesfield Archdeaconry, left) and Christine Broad (Assistant Warden of Readers for Chester Archdeaconry, right).

They will be responsible for supporting the ministry of readers across the diocese, including selection. In licensing Vivien, Fran and Christine to their new roles, Bishop Peter also paid tribute to the work of their predecessors, including John Knowles (Warden of Readers) and Cheryl Coverley and Mike Turnbull (Assistants in Chester and Macclesfield respectively).

Welcoming them to their new roles, Michael Gilbertson, the Archdeacon of Chester and Chair of the Committee for Ministry, said 'I am very pleased that Vivien, Fran and Christine have taken up these important roles in the diocese. Readers are a vital and thriving part of mission in our parishes and it is very encouraging to see the continuing high numbers of vocations to this important ministry.' Vivien, Fran and Christine will be working alongside the Readers' Council, the Committee for Ministry, the Deanery Sub Wardens of Readers, and Liz Shercliff, the Director of Studies for Readers, who oversees reader training.