

A season of waiting



Tim Stratford

As December unfolds, Christmas draws closer and the expectations of children and adults alike are awakened. The thinnest of these expectations are mere hopes that the right Christmas presents are bought. Many of us will hold out a hope at least, if not an expectation, that celebrating God's dawning in the midst of humanity will lead to the dawning of a more Godly world. Heaven knows this is a great expectation and a vital hope.

At Chester Cathedral over recent weeks we have accommodated the Knife Angel (*pictured right*). This is a sculpture that holds out the hope of a world in which fearful individuals and gangs will lay down their weapons. It is the young who are most at risk from knife crime and this angel speaks to them and into their futures more



The CheSTAR

than it may to many of us. I have been delighted that the Cathedral has been able to allow the angel to speak here in a season when we celebrate the words that angels speak, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

In these coming weeks before Christmas we also give space to a sculpture called the CheSTAR. This is a giant sparkling Christmas star standing 25ft high and 23ft wide that lights up Chester city centre.

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The show-stopping decoration features almost 19,000 twinkling lights and has been handcrafted especially for us through CH1 ChesterBID. The angels feature in St Luke's account of Jesus' birth and the star leads the Magi to Bethlehem in St Matthew's account. It speaks of a new light born in the heavens to enlighten the world.

These two symbols lead me more strongly to prayer and a way of life that is enlightened by the wisdom of God and that promotes peace.

In this season of waiting we pray too for the next bishop who will lead the people of God across this diocese. Doing so through Advent at the Cathedral

we are mindful too that we must not project our need of a Messiah onto the one whom God is calling to leadership and oversight here. The call of Jesus and responsibility to follow belongs to each and every one of us as much as it does to the next Bishop of Chester.

Eternal God,
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
so we wait for his coming in glory;
bring us through the birth pangs of this
present age
to see, with her, our great salvation
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Advent 4 Additional Collect)

Tim Stratford (Dean)



Knife Angel

The finale of Journey into Light

The Diocese of Chester has announced plans for the finale of Journey into Light, an exhibition of artwork produced by prisoners from Styal and Thorn Cross prisons.

The special final event and thanksgiving service will be held at St George's Church, Stockport, on 17 December from 6pm. It will be the final chance for members of the public to see the exhibition and to learn about the inspirational stories behind the pieces of art.

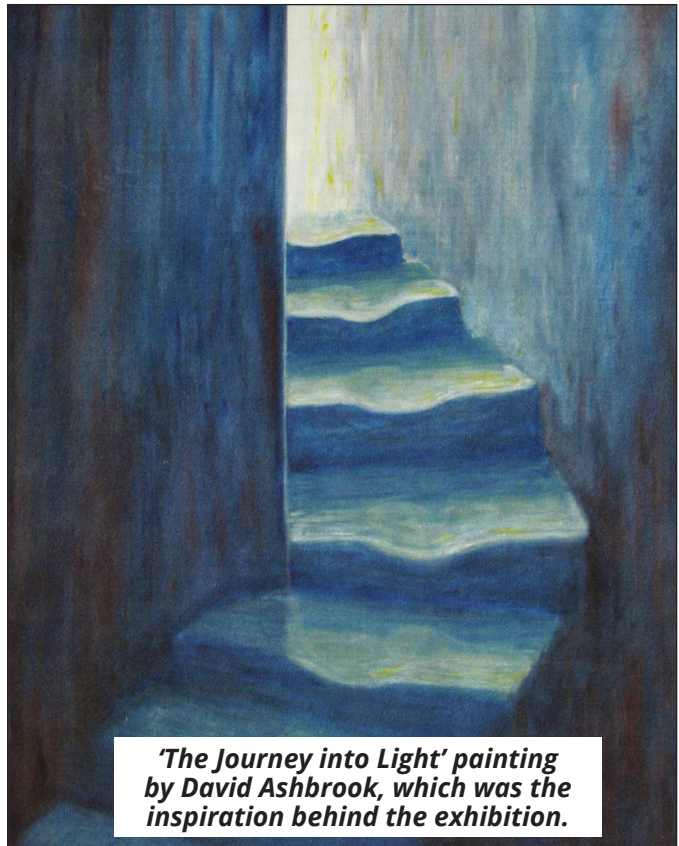
The Revd Debbie Dalby, Director of Social Responsibility in the Diocese of Chester, says the exhibition has been very well received: "When we launched Journey into Light in October 2018, we saw quite quickly just how powerful the exhibition would be. On the opening night at Chester Cathedral, as guests walked around the exhibition, I saw some of them moved to tears as they read the stories behind the artwork and let themselves be transformed in their understanding of what it means to be a prisoner. Since then, Journey into Light has exceeded all expectations. We're very excited about the final event."

As well as the exhibition, visitors to St George's Church, Stockport, will be treated to music, carols, and canapes at what is hoped will be a joyful and hopeful finale.

PCCs should have by now received information in the post inviting them to attend along with information about how they can give a gift to prisoners at HMP Styal and HMP Thorn Cross this Christmas.

Just under 40 parishes have hosted Journey into Light since it was launched at Chester Cathedral in October 2018. Around the diocese, an estimated 6000 people have viewed it.

Everyone is welcome to attend the event and thanksgiving service. Book your free ticket via the events page on the diocesan website.



'The Journey into Light' painting by David Ashbrook, which was the inspiration behind the exhibition.

Celebrating the commitment of our Readers



David and Christine Blackmore

Congratulations to David and Christine Blackmore who last month marked significant milestones in their ministry as lay Readers in the parish of Plas Newton. David was first licensed 40 years ago, in 1979, and Christine 30 years ago in 1989. The couple were thanked by the vicar, Pete Rugen, for their commitment and presented with a gift from the church. Following the morning service everyone enjoyed a cake, baked by a member of the congregation especially, to celebrate their years of service.

Over in the neighbouring archdeaconry of Macclesfield, the parish of Warmingham recently toasted Peter Noden in celebration of his 60 years as a Reader. He has served

numerous parishes in Cheshire over the years, particularly when living away in his role as a headteacher.

The Revd Dr Philip Goggin says: "His service as a Reader has been a convincing testimony to his faith and faithfulness over a lifetime as a Christian. In this most impressive record of ministerial service he has been loyally supported by his wife Frances. Peter has been a link between the Church and the community, and between a succession of incumbents and the people. He has resolved many a tricky situation over the years, using his interest in the village and its residents and his people skills. As a former school teacher and headteacher these skills have been well honed."

If you are sensing God's call on your own life, why not come along to Called to Serve on 25 January at Foxhill, a morning event for all those interested

in exploring a formal ministry in the Diocese of Chester. See the back page for more details.



Peter Norden (holding the flowers) celebrates 60 years as a reader

Your CDN is changing

Earlier this year, we asked you to tell us what you thought of the CDN. Thank you to everyone who responded. The good news is that the CDN is overwhelmingly wanted and enjoyed. However, you made some suggestions too.

Next month, we will be refreshing and updating the diocesan magazine to try and incorporate some of the comments we received.

The cost of producing and printing the new CDN will remain the same at just a fraction over 8p per copy. However, due to an increase in the cost of postage, set by the Royal Mail in October, the overall cost will be closer to 9p per copy.

Thank you for your feedback, we hope you will welcome the improved quality of the finish and the content within.

Please do keep telling us your news. Email stories to: comms@chester.anglican.org

Thank you.
Jim Butterworth



Appointing the next Bishop of Chester

The process for appointing the next Bishop of Chester is well underway. Here, we ask the Diocesan Secretary, and Secretary of the Vacancy in See Committee, George Colville, to answer a few questions about the process, and importantly, when we can expect the arrival of the next Bishop of Chester.



George Colville

You have now completed your consultation with the diocese, what did you learn?

"The diocesan consultation went extremely well. Over 430 individuals, groups and PCCs responded to our online survey which asked people to share their views on who the next bishop should be and the qualities they think they will need. It was particularly encouraging to see that a good number of younger people responded. Overall, it's fair to say that the responses were very wide ranging in terms of the skills and qualities they hoped the next bishop will bring to the role."

What happens next?

"We have recently published our Statement of Needs. This is a document that articulates the qualities we hope to see in the next Bishop of Chester. The document will be used by the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) to aid them in their interviews with candidates and will ultimately help them with their nomination."

When does the CNC meet?

"The CNC will meet for the first time on 03 February and again on the 16 and 17 March. Six people from the diocese have been elected to sit on the CNC alongside representatives from the Church of England. There will be a shortlist of candidates and the CNC will interview them individually as part of the appointment process before nominating someone for the role."

When will we know who the next bishop will be?

"Once the CNC has met and interviewed the shortlisted candidates, a name will be put forward to the Queen. We don't expect to know who the next bishop will be until Easter at the earliest. Downing Street will formally announce the name of the next Bishop of Chester via their website and only then is the information public."

When will the next bishop formally take up their role?

"If he or she is already a bishop, then they may join the diocese in the summer. But if they are not yet a bishop, there will need to be a consecration service, amongst other things, before they can formally take up their role as Bishop of Chester. So, the answer is, we don't really know until the appointment process is complete!"

What can we do in the meantime?

“Pray! I’m sure the CNC would welcome your prayers as they discern God’s will for us here in the Diocese of Chester. We will be publishing prayer materials

over the coming weeks for individuals, prayer groups and churches to use in their regular worship and as part of their daily prayer routine. Watch this space.”

The six diocesan representatives are:

The Ven Ian Bishop

Ian became the Archdeacon of Macclesfield in January 2011. He was brought up in Devizes and worked as a chartered surveyor before ordination.



Canon Dr John Mason

Canon Dr John Mason is Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee and Chair of the House of Laity at Diocesan Synod.



Revd Rob Munro

Rob is the Chair of the House of Clergy at Diocesan Synod and currently chairs the Diocesan Mission Committee and has served as an elected member of General Synod for over 14 years.



Canon Betty Renshaw MBE

Betty is an Elected Lay Member of the Church of England’s General Synod representing the Diocese of Chester.



Mrs Deborah Woods

Debbie is a churchwarden at St. John’s Knutsford, a trustee of Growing Young Disciples and an Associate Professor at the University of Law initially in Chester.



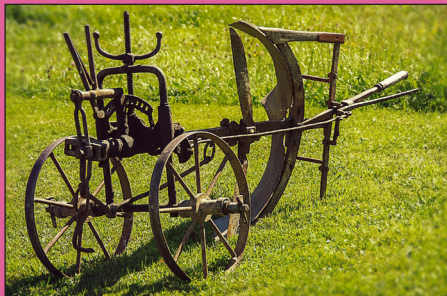
Revd Peter Froggatt

Revd Peter Froggatt, Vicar of Christ Church Barnston with St Michael’s Pensby, has been in ordained ministry in the diocese for 24 years. He is currently Rural Dean of Wirral North Deanery and a member of Diocesan Synod.



Events

To book and view other events, visit:
www.chester.anglican.org/events



Traditional Plough Service

12 January 2020 - Chester Cathedral

Plough services date back to Medieval times when the village church kept the plough for the community. We will bless a plough and pray for favourable weather upon the land in 2020 and thank our farmers and their staff for all that they do to work the land and produce the food we eat.



Safeguarding Training

25 January 2020 - Daresbury

Church of England's Safeguarding C1 and C2 Combined Course - Safeguarding Foundation and Leadership. The course objectives are to: Consider the challenges of safeguarding, clarify parish roles, responsibilities and accountability and identify the various types of abuse.



Called to Serve

25 January 2020 - Frodsham

An opportunity for all Christians in the Diocese of Chester to explore their potential future vocation. We will focus on four licensed ministries found in this diocese: Pastoral Worker, Reader, Priest and ministry with the Church Army.



Being There: Bereavement

28 January 2020 - Daresbury

This five session course (various dates from January to March) will look at caring for and supporting the bereaved; the grieving process; funeral practicalities, liturgy, and issues surrounding death and dying.