

Chester Diocesan News



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester

#EverydayFaith across the Diocese of Chester | February 2021

The relentless lockdown



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The Archdeacon of Macclesfield - The Venerable Ian Bishop

“ Instead of giving something up for Lent, why not try taking something up instead?”

The world does seem to be waking up to the damage caused to our earth. The planet is heating up, bio-diversity is under threat and pollution is destroying our oceans, but the political wind is changing. Recent elections signal a huge change in emphasis; Governments are talking about a ‘Green industrial revolution’ to lead us out of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic; policies such as all electric car sales by 2030 are really focusing minds; renewable energy is making a significant contribution to the National Grid and the goal of carbon neutral no longer looks the impossibility it once did.

In November the world will gather in Glasgow at the COP26 Global conference on Climate Change and hopes are high for progress in tackling the climate crisis. But all of us can make a small difference and Christians who see life itself as a gift of God must be in the forefront of change.

Our diocesan Environment Forum is planning a significant year ahead and it starts as we go into Lent. 40 reflections have been gathered from individuals around the Diocese. They

are people who are trying in small ways to be the difference. They ask you to draw close to the Bible again and get deeper into a text that is grounded in the gift of life. You will find a new post every day from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday posted on the website and social media. Join in with the journey and rediscover the gift of God this Lent.

Along with the readings and reflections there are actions. Instead of giving something up for Lent – why not try taking something up instead? There are 7 challenges on the website – each intended to make you think, each intended to make you pray, each intended to give you new insight into the God who told us in the first chapter of Genesis to ‘Prosper, Reproduce, Fill the earth and Take Charge.’ (Gen 1:28 The Message) This Lent I’m asking you to take your stewardship seriously.

If you want to join in with the 40 Lent reflections and 7 mini challenges, go to chester.anglican.org/Lent

As the year progresses there will be more. Because as we emerge from the pandemic, we have such an opportunity to do things differently, and better. To celebrate a God who gives so generously to a people who so easily miss his gift. Against a backdrop of sorrow step into a new season with hope and celebrate the gift of life in all its fullness.

Ian Bishop



Revd Jenny Bridgman homeschooling with her middle child

The relentless lockdown

The first lockdown came with a sense of novelty, but as we battle through the third lockdown our resilience is being tested.

The short days, the cold weather, and the sense of malaise is taking its toll on the mental wellbeing of many.

As Christians, how can we respond? How can we model Godly character in the face of such adversity?

The Revd Jenny Bridgman has written about the lockdown and the affect it is having on her and her family. She de-

scribes the demands of childcare and work as “relentless”.

She says: “The pressure to be a good priest (or colleague) and a good parent is ever present, and something I have spoken and written about for years. That pressure through these days has intensified and grown.”

Jenny urges us to be aware of the difficulties facing others and to allow that awareness to lead us into prayer and to living out our faith in small everyday ways.

“The strain and stress on families right now is significant, and our awareness of this



Revd Jenny Bridgman

must lead us to prayer and practical support through these painful days.

“If you know someone in this situation, please make contact. Ask them about it. Tell them you can see how impossible it is. Be the calming presence at the end of a text message.”

Jenny says she tries not to put herself under too much pressure and has been holding on to a prayer from the

[New Zealand Prayer Book:](#)

*It is night after a long day,
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.*

You can read more about Jenny's '[reality of home schooling](#)' on our website.

The effects of the lockdown on mental health are huge and it's more important than ever that we take steps to support good mental wellbeing.

The diocesan Wellbeing Group has collated some [helpful resources](#) which you can find on the diocesan website. They include tips for dealing with isolation and loneliness, and 13 reflections from the Church of England to support good mental health.

Dealing with loneliness and Isolation: FIVE TOP TIPS



1: Pray - Pray for hope, faith and strength to keep loving and caring for each other during this time of struggle.



2: Talk about how you feel - If you need a counsellor, this can be arranged by your GP. Samaritans are free to call on 116123.



3: Focus on the things you can change - not on the things you can't.



4: Look after yourself - Plan things that you enjoy at regular intervals during the day - a TV programme, a book, a game.



5: Look after others - even if only in small ways, but do what you can, a smile, a kind word, writing a letter or an email.

Request for prayers

Over the past months the Fox-hill prayer team has continued to pray for individuals, parishes and the wider diocese. If you know of a situation that they can pray for, get in touch by text or email.

T: 07513 170210

E: foxhill@chester.anglican.org

Not quite yourself?

The diocesan counselling service is open to clergy, their families and church members within the Anglican churches of the Diocese of Chester. If you would like a confidential conversation, contact the Revd Peter Mackriell, diocesan Head of Counselling Services.

T: 07918 732 806

E: peter.mackriell@chester.anglican.org

The Revd Steve Sheridan is a registered psychiatric nurse as well as a priest in the Church of England. He is currently the Priest-in-Charge of Chester St Oswald and St Thomas of Canterbury.

Writing on Facebook to his parishioners recently, he said: "It will come. That's the nature of hope. It may not come tomorrow, or even the day after that, but it will come. Each day renew your hope, or ask another to give you that hope, or pray that it may be realised or if that's too hard, then ask another to pray that it maybe realised. First one day, then the next, and then the next after that – and keep on. Whatever it is you are hoping for, it will come. It may look different to how you now imagine it will look but it will come. Keep on each day, keep on."

Hope

time to change
time to
talk day

04/02/21



Linda Buckley reads a poem in the video service created by the Mental Health Forum

The Diocese of Chester has produced a pre-recorded service to support people struggling with their mental health. The service, presented by members of the diocesan mental health forum, has been released to coincide with Time to Talk Day, a national awareness day campaign to encourage people to support one another through conversations.

Time to Talk Day is on February 4th and focusses on the way in which a small conversation about mental health can make a big difference.

Time to Talk Day aims to be the day that the nation gets talking about mental health and breaks down barriers and helps to end isolation and the sense of shame and worthlessness that people with mental health problems can feel.

The Head of Counselling Services in the Diocese of Chester, the Revd Peter Mackirell, says: "In the early days of

2021 we are aware that many people are struggling with their mental health, and this service is offered for you to use at home as we continue in lockdown and to coincide with the national Time To Talk Day. Whether online or on the phone, in person or in prayer, we hope that you find time to talk and also to discover that you are listened to."

The diocesan Mental Health Forum stands alongside people who face the challenges of anxiety or depression, and those who feel overwhelmed by stress.

See more about [Wellbeing](#) and the [Mental Health Forum](#).

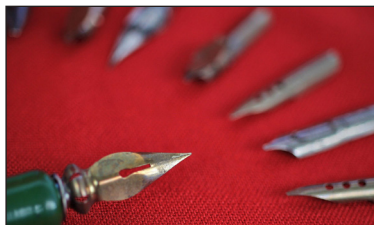
For further support contact the Head of Counselling Services, the Revd Peter Mackriell

E: counselling@chester.anglican.org

T: 07918 732806

[Watch the pre-recorded service](#)

Events



Poetry Break

11 February 2021 - Online

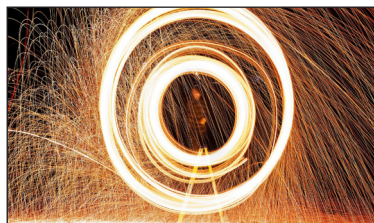
Poetry Break is a monthly coffee break for poetry lovers to gather. This will be an opportunity to hear poetry from others across the diocese. [More...](#)



Being inclusive: Additional Needs

11 February 2021 - Online

The first of three sessions for those who would like to know more about ministering with children and young people with additional needs. [More...](#)



The Circle as Process for Peace

04 March 2021 - Online

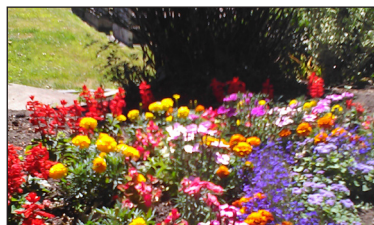
How to use Circle Process to build relationships and resilience - anyone who facilitates group conversations, to develop their skills [More...](#)



Being inclusive

12 March 2021 - Online

Welcoming children and young people with autism - for those who would like to know more about ministering with children and young people with additional needs. [More...](#)



Explorers of Church Building Projects

16 March 2021 - Online

Discover how part of an urban churchyard was transformed to create an award-winning spiritual garden. [More...](#)