

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 15 | November 2022 - January 2023

GROW | ENRICH | RESOURCE

COVER STORY: BISHOP JONATHAN IS WELCOMED AS THE NEW BISHOP OF ROCHESTER PAGE 8



GREENING
FOR GOD

COST OF
LIVING HELP

CULTURE
CHANGE CALL

www.rochester.anglican.org



Diocese of Rochester
called together

MONEY MATTERS

Help address the cost of living crisis

- ✓ Do you know someone who needs support with **money issues**?
- ✓ Want to help, but not confident you have the knowledge to **support them**?

In November, join a two-session course to help equip you with the skills, confidence and resources to respond.

Run by the Diocesan Community Engagement and Social Action Team

MULTIPLE WAYS TO ATTEND:

- **Four** face-to-face courses (Bromley, Slade Green, Tonbridge, Rainham)
- **One** online course

Please note that pre-attendance requirements apply.



Scan the code for full details and booking or visit:
www.rochester.anglican.org/events-and-training/diocesan-events/

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It's been another incredibly busy time in the life of the Diocese. It has been particularly exciting to have officially welcomed Bishop Jonathan and his wife Toni to the diocesan family. Read all about his special service of welcome in **Focus On** (pg 8).

Welcome is also at the heart of two other features in this edition.

With rising energy and living costs, in **Inside Track** (pg 7) we highlight how many churches are getting ready to offer a warm welcome to anyone who needs it this winter. Meanwhile, turn to our centrespread for details of five Christian organisations which can offer help with the cost of living crisis.

Sadly, the Church has a damning record of failure when it comes to how it has responded to cases of abuse, and to victims and survivors. In our **One to One** interview (pg 24) we meet the independent chair of the diocesan safeguarding body, who says our culture around safeguarding and our response to those with a lived experience of abuse must change.

We also meet the co-founder of a community environmental group who sees her engagement with climate change as her calling from God (**Everyday Faith** pg 26).

Plus, as we head towards Christmas, we've got you covered for the materials you need to help you prepare spiritually for the season.

With hope for the season ahead,

Jennifer Ross
Communications Manager

Editor: Jennifer Ross
jennifer.ross@rochester.anglican.org

In-house design:
Katerina Gerhardt

Design: CPO

Print: Yeomans

FIND US:

@CofERochester

@SeeofRochester

Front cover by Katerina Gerhardt

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Get in touch :
communications@rochester.anglican.org



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JOYFUL ORDINATIONS TAKE PLACE

It was a weekend full of joy and emotion as the ordination of 18 men and women as deacons or priests to the Diocese, took place in September.

Among them was motorsports fan, the Rev Rachel Curley, who was ordained Deacon to St Nicholas, Chislehurst. At the age of 15, she used her passion for computers to start her own business; she's also a

trained Barista, so is sure to be added to the church coffee rota!

We all have unique gifts and talents that are valuable in God's sight. Anyone interested in exploring what God's plan might be for them should visit: www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith



DEMENTIA FRIENDLY HARVEST

'A lovely afternoon with friends' took place at St Justus, Rochester, with a Thanksgiving Harvest Service designed to be Dementia-friendly. A craft activity, making simple paper baskets filled with treats, helped share the message of gratitude for God's bounty – along with a few Bountybars!



COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

At St Paul, Beckenham, celebrations for the wider parish, as well as for the regular worshipping community, have been underway to mark their 150th anniversary. Events have included a community weekend, featuring a litter pick and exercise classes, and a night of Gospel music. New hangings for the altar with a design to reflect God's faithfulness yesterday, and today, will be revealed in November.



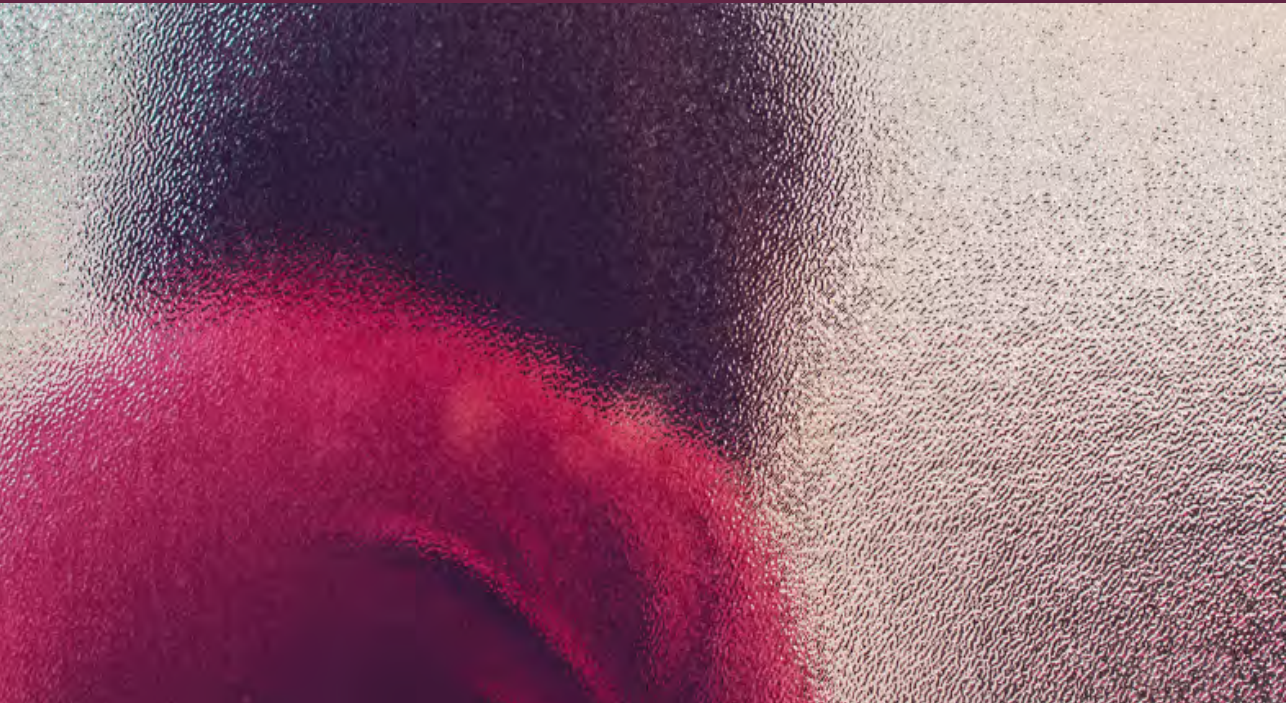
FAREWELL TO HER MAJESTY

Jean Sanders signs the book of condolence at St Margaret's Church, Rainham, just one of many churches across the Diocese that offered space for quiet reflection, prayer, and thanksgiving during the national period of mourning following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September. *Photo: Credit: Roger Vaughan*



COUNT YOUR FURRY BLESSINGS

A cute-ness alert went out at St Peter and St Paul, Seal as a good turnout, both animal and human, was had at their Animal Blessing service. The Rev Canon Anne Le Bas said, "No member of the congregation ate any other member of the congregation, which was my criterion for success! Thank you to all who came."



MAJOR SAFEGUARDING REVIEW PUBLISHED

A comprehensive Church of England report reviewing safeguarding information across the Church nationally has been published.

Called the Past Cases Review 2, its purpose was to identify both good practice and institutional failings in relation to how allegations of abuse have been handled within the Church.

It also sought to assess any identified risks and respond to these where appropriate, and to provide recommendations to the Church that will lead to improvements in its safeguarding work.

The national report has been informed by independent reviews undertaken in each of the 42 dioceses of the Church of England, including the Diocese of Rochester.

As part of the process in this Diocese, over 3,700 files, records, and pieces of information were examined, and an appeal for information on all previously

known safeguarding incidents was made to parishes and other organisations to ensure that a record of the incident was held by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and to check appropriate action had been taken.

The recommendations of both the national and local reviews will now be taken forward in the Diocese under the scrutiny of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP).

An overview of the Diocese's independent Past Cases Review 2 is available on the safeguarding pages of the Diocese of Rochester website at: www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding

Head to page 24 for our One to One interview with Dr Liza Thompson, the Independent Chair of DSAP

ANIMATION EXPLAINS DIOCESAN FUNDING

An animation has been created to explain how mission and ministry across the Diocese is funded, thanks to contributions from parishes.

The Diocese of Rochester is a wonderfully diverse and vibrant community of faith, with each parish facing different challenges and having different needs.

Our shared Called Together vision expresses our ambition to meet these challenges collectively, supporting each other through the pooling of our resources and sharing costs too.

The refreshed animation explains how this support is given through The Common Fund - the common pot of money paid into by congregations across the Diocese – what it is spent on, and why it is so vital.

For more information about The Common Fund and to watch the animation, visit: www.rochester.anglican.org/about-us/howwearefunded



OFFERING A WARM WELCOME THIS WINTER

Many churches across the Diocese are exploring a range of creative ways in which they can respond to the cost-of-living crisis and offer a warm welcome to anyone who might need it at this time.

Warm clothes, as well as food, drink and company, are now on offer at the Community Hub at St Peter and St Paul, Aylesford, and at St John, Sidcup (pictured) their Winter Welcome sees the church open every Tuesday and Saturday from 1 until 5pm, with access to board games, jigsaws, crafts, films, and knitting.

They have also started a Community Larder where anyone can “take what they need and give what they can”.

Visit our centrespread for details of other Christian organisations offering help this winter.





BISHOP JONATHAN IS WELCOMED AS THE NEW BISHOP OF ROCHESTER

The new Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Rev Dr Jonathan Gibbs, was officially welcomed at a special service of welcome at Rochester Cathedral on Saturday 24 September.

Bishop Jonathan now leads the Church of England Diocese of Rochester, which serves a population of around 1.3 million people and covers 212 parishes across Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

He is the 108th Bishop of Rochester.

The service, which was livestreamed on YouTube, was attended by civic dignitaries as well as representatives from across the Diocese. The service included several important and symbolic moments.

It began with Bishop Jonathan knocking on the closed doors of the Cathedral and waiting to be welcomed in. On the other side, he was met by young people from Bennett Memorial School, who questioned him about who he was and the purpose of his ministry.

The Archbishop's Mandate - a formal commission - was then presented and read aloud by the Chancellor - the legal judge for the Diocese - the Worshipful John Gallagher.

Bishop Jonathan then made oaths of allegiance and faithfulness to the Church and the Diocese as he placed his hand on the Coverdale Bible, one of the treasures of the Cathedral's library.

Representatives of the Diocese then welcomed and prayed for the different aspects of Bishop Jonathan's ministry through the presentation of a series of gifts. These included a cup and saucer to represent his ministry of hospitality and a fruit tree to represent the imperative to respond to the climate crisis.

Bishop Jonathan was then placed in the bishop's seat - the cathedra - by the Archdeacon of Canterbury who was representing the Archbishop of Canterbury.

After being anointed with oil to represent the blessing of the Holy Spirit, Bishop Jonathan then took up the diocesan crozier - a ceremonial staff - as the symbol of his authority and care in the Diocese.

Giving the sermon, Bishop Jonathan reflected on the 'unprecedented times' we are living in and

"The Church of Jesus Christ does not exist for its own sake, but for the sake of the kingdom of God - that is, for the sake of seeing God's reign of righteousness and peace prevail in our world."

Bishop Jonathan



GIFTS ARE GIVEN BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DIOCESAN FAMILY

how it is understandable to feel daunted by the challenges we face. He said, however, that we should be reassured that God will use whatever resources we have, and make it enough:

“The Church of Jesus Christ does not exist for its own sake, but for the sake of the kingdom of God – that is, for the sake of seeing God’s reign of righteousness and peace prevail in our world.

“Now that can seem a daunting task when we feel that we have few resources – maybe in a small rural church or in a deprived urban parish, or wherever we find ourselves – and certainly the disciples may well have felt daunted when Jesus said to them as they looked at the huge crowd, “You give them something to eat!”

“But, as on that day, Jesus takes what we have, blesses it and then asks us to share it out, to give of ourselves and our resources generously and liberally, trusting that he will use what we give to feed the hungry and refresh the thirsty.”

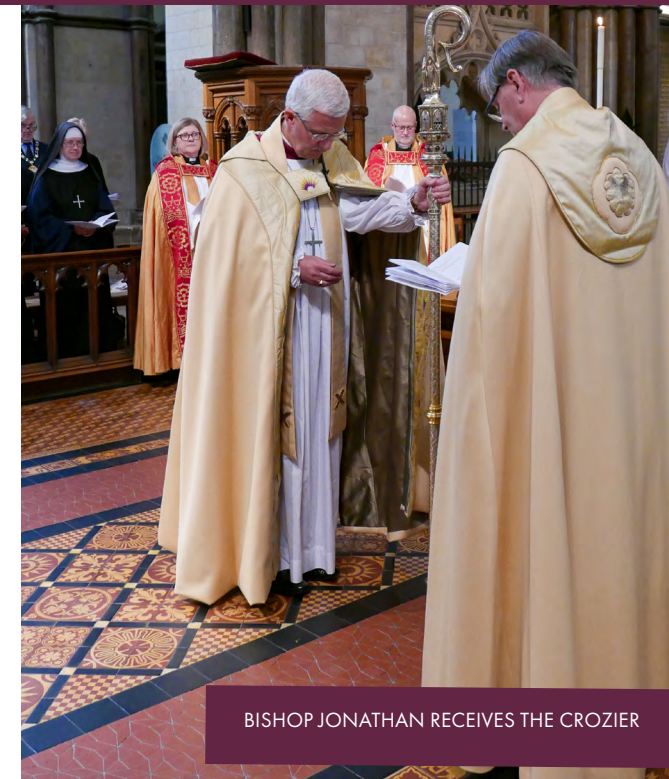
He continued:

“This is the calling of the Church in this Diocese, in all our parishes and communities: to put what we have in the hands of Jesus and to ask him to bless and multiply what we have given, so that the hungry may be fed in both body and soul, and discover more of the love of God for themselves.

“Precisely what that looks like and how we go about it will, of course, differ from place to place in this wonderfully diverse Diocese of ours but, whatever our situation, I believe we need to keep in mind the three priorities I outlined back in March and have re-stated in the order of service today: Grow – Change – Serve.”

The service ended with Bishop Jonathan going outside the Cathedral to bless the people and area of the Diocese.

Find out more about Bishop Jonathan over the page.



BISHOP JONATHAN RECEIVES THE CROZIER



THE ARCHDEACONS ANOINT BISHOP JONATHAN WITH OIL



MEETING OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS

GETTING TO KNOW BISHOP JONATHAN

Jonathan grew up in Cheshire in a Methodist chapel tradition. Like many young teenagers growing up, he got out of the habit of going to church but his faith was rekindled and came to life when he went to university.

Over the next two or three years at university, he was given the opportunity to learn a lot more about the Christian faith, and to take on leadership of one kind or another by the chaplain. By the time he was in his final year of university, he had a job at St Michael's Church in the centre of Paris, working with students and young people.

It was during that time that he went forward for selection to train for the ministry. It was also where he met his wife Toni.

Bishop Jonathan trained for ordained ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and served his curacy in the Diocese of Chester. He's been a Chaplain in Basle and was consecrated as Bishop of Huddersfield in 2014.

He currently holds the national Church portfolio of Lead Bishop for Safeguarding and will continue in that role until the end of March 2023, completing his three-year term.

He and Toni, have three grown-up children. Their interests include walking, usually accompanied by their Cocker Spaniel, Ludo, and rummaging in second-hand bookshops. They enjoy entertaining and making new friends.

Jonathan is a fluent French speaker with a love of France. He also speaks German and Swiss-German. He is a member of the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Campaign for Real Ale, and is committed to supporting village and community life.

Find out more about Bishop Jonathan in a series of filmed interviews. Visit the Diocese of Rochester YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/Roffensis1



BISHOP JONATHAN WITH HIS WIFE TONI





MICRO-IRRIGATION INITIATIVE IN LAIKALA



MASAI WELCOME AT NGUTUTO VILLAGE

STRONG BONDS OVERSEAS

Mpwapwa in Tanzania is one of three Anglican dioceses with which Rochester Diocese has a flourishing overseas link. These connections are a great blessing to each as they support and encourage each other in God's mission. They are also about being there in the good and bad times, as Sylvie and Stephen Barbor, Chairs of the Rochester Mpwapwa Group, discovered on a recent trip to Tanzania.

Mpwapwa and Rochester have been walking together for over 16 years now, and the friendships are deep.

It was therefore a huge privilege to be able to visit for two weeks this summer to represent Rochester Diocese at the retirement service of Bishop Jacob, the outgoing diocesan bishop, and to attend the consecration of their third bishop, the Rt Rev George Chiteto.

As well as the celebrations, the trip was an opportunity to see how work on projects supported by parishes in our Diocese had progressed since our last pre-covid visit in 2019, and to learn more about how the Church is growing and developing in Mpwapwa.

The Diocese of Mpwapwa is located in the central part of Tanzania - a challenging but beautiful environment of mountains and semi-arid plains, where most people are subsistence farmers.

It is also a place which is being affected by global warming and drought, and so initiatives which empower rural communities with water harvesting projects, irrigation systems, and safe drinking water are a priority.

It was therefore wonderful to officially open two such water projects which had been funded thanks to the efforts of parishes and individuals in Rochester Diocese.

These included one at Laikala, where a micro-irrigation initiative is now making a huge difference to the local community and the environment, as they are now able to plant and water crops without being dependent on unreliable rains.

At Mkwala village, Crockham Hill parish has generously funded restoration work to an existing water harvesting system at the link school, and a new borehole. One thousand children now have water during the day, and over 700 local families have water for personal use

and agriculture. The school plans to start a vegetable garden, income from which will be used to better equip the school.

We were also welcomed in style at the link parish of Ngututo, where a Tearfund programme, supported by St Stephen, Tonbridge, is helping to empower the people and blessing the whole community.

Meanwhile at St Philip's Theological College, it was a joy to see Neema, Mapenzi, and Jeremiah ordained as Deacons at the annual Ordination service. All three had received bursaries for their studies through parishes or individuals in Rochester. There are now seven ordained women in the Diocese of Mpwapwa.

It was then that tragedy struck, as six days after his consecration as bishop, Bishop George suddenly died of a heart attack after preaching at a friend's funeral.

Our bond as a companion link showed its strength, as Bishops Jonathan and Simon shared a message of condolence and support with the people of Mpwapwa Diocese, and a request for prayer for Bishop George, and his family was quickly responded to by parishes back home.

We know how much these were appreciated and how our brothers and sisters in Mpwapwa drew strength from knowing they were not, and are not, walking alone now or in the future.

Did you know?

1. The Anglican Communion is a community of Christians, including the Church of England, which is made up of tens of millions of Christians in more than 165 countries around the world.
2. Underpinning this vast Communion is a network of companion diocesan links, a set of friendships and connections which are nurtured in each Church of England diocese.
3. Rochester Diocese, has flourishing links with the Diocese of Harare in Zimbabwe, the Dioceses of Kondo and Mpwapwa in Tanzania, and an ecumenical link with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Estonia.
4. In July and August of this year, Anglican bishops from across the globe came to Canterbury for two weeks of shared conversation and learning. Called the Lambeth Conference, it traditionally happens every 10 years.

Find out more about our overseas links here www.rochester.anglican.org/overseaslinks

GET HELP WITH THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Crisis is a word that is used so much right now that we can run the risk of becoming desensitised to it. But the cost of living crisis is significant because it is affecting everyone in many different ways – practically, emotionally and mentally.

Here are five Christian charities responding to different areas of need and who may be able to help you, someone you know, or that you could support to help others.

CROSSLIGHT ADVICE

If you are feeling overwhelmed by debt or money worries, Crosslight Advice is here to help. Everyone's journey out of debt will be different. Crosslight's process seeks to understand an individual's situation, discuss options, and make a plan.

To make a free appointment visit: www.crosslightadvice.org

ACTS 435

Acts 435 is an online giving charity, directly connecting those who want to give with those who are in genuine need of their help, through a network of local churches and charities. They help people meet the basic demands of housing and associated needs such as heating bills, furniture, and clothing.

View current requests, or connect with a local partner if you need assistance, through the website: www.acts435.org.uk

WARM WELCOME UK

We all appreciate finding a place where we know we will receive a warm welcome; a place to meet and make friends, have fun taking part in an activity, or just enjoy a warm drink or bite to eat.

Churches are among the many community organisations looking to offer a warm welcoming space this winter. Warm Welcome UK is a network where you can search your local area to find a provision near you. Visit www.warmwelcome.uk

KINTSUGI HOPE

Kintsugi Hope is a UK charity striving to make a difference to peoples' mental wellbeing. A Kintsugi Hope Group is a safe and supportive space for people who feel or have felt overwhelmed, providing tools for self-management in a facilitated peer mentoring style setting.

To run a Group, a church first needs to apply to become a Partner to ensure safeguarding and for the group to be well-supported. Find out more at: www.kintsugihope.com or contact magali.vandermerwe@rochester.anglican.org

CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP)

CAP is on a mission to release thousands from grinding poverty. If you're looking for help, whether that's help to get out of debt, find a job or gain vital life skills, Christians Against Poverty provides a range of free professional services across the UK through local churches. Visit: www.capuk.org

Don't suffer alone.

If you need urgent help, whatever you are going through a Samaritan will face it with you. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123
Citizen's Advice also signposts to lots of organisations offering support across a range of issues.
Visit: www.citizensadvice.org.uk



WHERE DID ALL THE OPTIMISM GO?

We can probably all agree that times are tough and that it can be a struggle to have much optimism. But Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge suggests that that there is hope to be found and that Christians are uniquely placed to offer it.

Some of you will have seen the first Blade Runner film, starring Harrison Ford, which is set in a miserable future where it rains permanently. This holds no threat for me as I was brought up in Lancashire. But it set a trend in a portrayal of the future as a relentlessly dystopian place where all the promise and hope in life is snuffed out.

The idea that the future might be better than the past has been consigned to the bin, which is interesting because this century and the last one began in a surge of optimism.

Think back to 2000 and how optimistic everything looked then. The tech revolution was exploding; the Cold War had finished (or so we thought); countries were democratising across the world and especially eastern Europe; economies were doing so well a former Chancellor serenaded the end of boom and bust.

Since then, there have been western led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; a global financial crash that nearly shut the whole system down; a long period of austerity; the divisiveness of Brexit; the rise of populist politicians throwing their (usually male) weight around; the slow release poison of social media; the Covid pandemic; war in Europe; the effects of climate change; a cost of living crisis; the death of the Queen. All by 2022.

One thing we seem unable to cure is the belief that human beings become better as time goes on. Become better in a way that leads to perfectibility. The human condition just doesn't work like that. The Gospel is pretty clear about this.

This realism about human nature is part of our witness. We can't be optimistic about the human race because the evidence doesn't stack up. But as Christians we aren't called to be optimistic in the first place. Optimism is a vague feeling that things will turn out alright in the end. But it is little more than a personality trait: are you a glass half full or a glass half empty kind of person? And even if life does get better, there are always lots of people

for whom it does not get better. So, what are we saying to them?

This is where Christian hope comes in. Optimism is a projection from the present into the future. Christian hope comes at us the other way. It is the future advancing on the present. This is what we mean about the kingdom of God drawing near. If we hold the view that our souls escape this world to float on clouds somewhere, the idea of the kingdom of God drawing near is pretty meaningless. Jesus said we should pray: your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

His resurrection ensures the whole creation will be made new. This is our hope. We can't build the whole kingdom of God with our bare hands; only God can do this at the last day. But we can build signs to it in our lifetime. In ways that transform lives and communities now. This is what hope looks like.

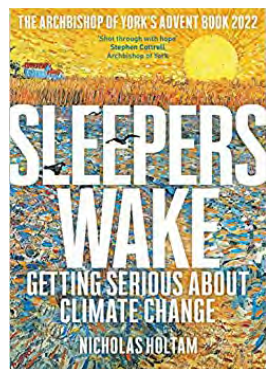
The acclaim "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" joins the dotted line between the past, the present and the future. The hope of a coming kingdom is like a pair of jump leads from the future, jolting the engine into life today.

Of all the things we could offer our nation right now, a sense of hope is top of the list. This calls for an active resistance to lies and injustice, not passive acceptance of what's wrong because that's another sign of hopelessness – that you just don't care anymore.

But the good news is that the kingdom of God continues to draw near, even when we're not thinking about it. And to help us grasp this, it is as if God is offering us a pair of varifocal lenses. Varifocal lenses enable us to see both what is in front of us and what lies at a distance, at the flick of an eye. This is how the people of God should see. Because what is coming at us from a distance is coming to us at speed, and it is going to transform everything in its path.

Resources – Looking ahead to Advent and Christmas

Prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus with resources and reflections for Advent - the four weeks of preparation before Christmas - and for Christmas.



Sleepers Wake – Nicholas Holtam

ISBN 9780281086849

“Advent is a time of preparation, a time of expectation, and a time of waiting. And yet, with regard to the climate crisis, we can wait no more” (Archbishop Stephen Cottrell).

The Archbishop of York’s chosen Advent book for 2022, ‘Sleepers Wake’ by Nicholas Holtam, former Lead Bishop on the Environment, argues that climate change and the environment is a spiritual crisis to which we have not yet fully woken up.

‘Sleepers Wake’ is divided into 4 weeks of daily reflections, which draw on science, politics, theology, poetry, art and Bible passages to explore climate change and the need for urgent action. At the end of each week, there are focused questions for reflection and action.

Archbishop Stephen says that ‘Sleepers Wake’ confronts us with the harsh realities of the climate crisis, offering bite-sized chunks that we can process through Advent.



The Real Advent Calendar

Meaningful Chocolate Company, £4.50

The Real Advent Calendar is the only one with Fairtrade chocolate, a copy of the Christmas story, and which supports charitable projects.

It is a fun way for parents, grandparents and Godparents to share the Christmas story. The 2022 design calendar comes with a free 24-page Christmas story activity book designed to be used every day in Advent. This year, the book is illustrated by award winning artist, Martina Peluso.



Follow The Star: The Great Invitation

Church House Publishing, www.chpublishing.co.uk/christmas

Starting on Christmas Eve and continuing daily (Monday to Saturday) until the Epiphany (6 January), a set of 12 reflections to help you make space this Christmas.

On each day, a different author shares a personal story inviting the reader to a new way of thinking, inspired by the Christmas story. Contributors include well-known figures from the world of sport, entertainment, and the church, writing on themes such as rest, joy, seeking light, and making a fresh start.

Each reflection is accompanied by a short Bible passage, an invitation to action, and a simple prayer. A great resource or gift for anyone looking for a little hope and encouragement for the year ahead.

See the page opposite for more ways to access the reflections.



YOU’RE INVITED TO FOLLOW THE STAR AS WE EXPLORE THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS TOGETHER

Explore 12 days of reflections, starting 24 December 2022

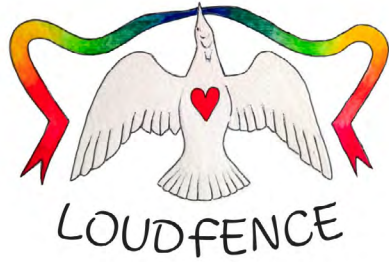
Each day, read or listen to a Bible passage, short reflection and prayer, in the way that suits you:

- ✦ Download the free Follow The Star app
- ✦ Sign up to get the reflections by email for free
- ✦ Tell your smart speaker to “Ask the Church of England for today’s Follow the Star reflection”
- ✦ Call the Daily Hope free phone line to listen each day: 0800 804 8044

To get the app or signup to emails, visit cofe.io/FollowTheStar, or scan the QR code.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



LOUDFENCE
railings of Rochester Cathedral
8 to 28 NOVEMBER

A visual installation hosted by Rochester Cathedral, inviting people to tie a ribbon or a message to railings around the Cathedral, to express support for those who have been subject to injury by child sexual abuse, and for those who are dealing with the consequences for themselves and others. Part of the Cathedral's marking of Safeguarding Sunday.



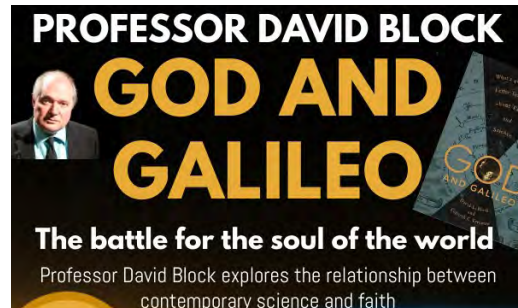
ADVENT QUIET DAY
at St Andrew's House, West Malling
10 DECEMBER 10am to 3.30pm

Amidst all the busyness of Christmas preparations take time out in this Advent season to be still and truly consider the one whose incarnation and presence is the centre of all our activity. Led by Margaret Wooding Jones, Licensed Lay Minister working with the Diocese's Spirituality Network. To book please email: susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk



ADVENT GIFTS QUIET DAY
at St Benedict's Centre, West Malling
14 DECEMBER, 9.30am to 3.30pm

Modern Advent calendars shower us with gifts of chocolate, gin or cosmetics. But what are the true gifts of Advent? A day to consider how the Advent season can enrich us in its own right. To book please email: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



GOD AND GALILEO
at All Saints' Church, Tudeley
8 JANUARY, 2.30pm

Professor David Block will be speaking about his book God and Galileo which explores the relationship between contemporary science and faith. The event is free, donations are invited towards covering costs. For information and to register your place please visit www.tudeley.org or email: chadmin@tudeley.org



SERVICES AND EVENTS 2022

Join us at Rochester Cathedral this Christmas. We've celebrated Christmas here for over 1400 years. We'd love for you to join us this year.

Services are subject to change, please check before attending www.rochester-cathedral.org

ADVENT PROCESSION
November 27, 18:30 – 19:30

DICKENS FESTIVAL CAROL SERVICES
December 3 and 4, 12:30pm and 3pm

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE
Dec 10, 12:30pm – 3:30pm

A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS & CAROLS
December 21 and 22, 7:30pm – 8:30pm

CHILDREN'S NATIVITY SERVICE
December 24, 3:00pm – 4:00pm

CHRISTMAS EVE CAROL SERVICE
December 24, 4:15pm – 5:15pm

THE EUCHARIST OF CHRISTMAS NIGHT
December 24– 25, 11:30pm

CHRISTMAS DAY HOLY COMMUNION
December 25, 8:00am – 8:30am

THE EUCHARIST OF CHRISTMAS MORNING
December 25, 10:30am – 11:30am



TIME TO CHANGE THE CULTURE

With Safeguarding Sunday coming up on 20 November, we meet with Dr Liza Thompson, the independent chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), who says that victims and survivors of abuse have been let down too many times by the Church and that action is needed now to change this.

Can you explain a bit more about the work of DSAP and your role within it?

The DSAP comprises a number of safeguarding professionals from statutory sector and community organisations – we provide oversight and challenge to the safeguarding work of the Diocese. As Chair my role is to lead the panel to identify priorities and, most importantly, work out with the rest of the panel how we will achieve them.

Have you always worked in the area of safeguarding?

I have always naturally gravitated towards roles which require empathy and courage to stand up for those who find themselves marginalised for whatever reason. The majority of my working life has been either directly supporting or working with vulnerable people.

What does safeguarding mean to you?

Safeguarding is everybody's business and it is multi-faceted – it's the day to day care for others to safeguard their needs, providing daily care and understanding. Far too often people assume other people's care and support needs are none of their business – I believe it is everyone's duty to look out for each other.

A recent national report on the review of safeguarding information across the Church of England (Past Cases Review 2), highlighted a culture of deference, victim blaming and protectionism within the Church. How do you react to that?

It saddens me that this has been the case within the Church. It is well documented about the Church's failings when it comes to safeguarding in the past – however I am positive that people within the Church are now pulling in the right direction, rather than turning a blind eye – which is leading to a culture of change.

From your experience, what part can we as individuals play in bringing about change?

The only way change can happen is for individuals to play their part. Churches, parishes and communities are made up of individuals – and once a few people start to ask the questions and raise the profile of safeguarding issues such as domestic violence and abuse, spiritual abuse, bullying and exploitation (all of which could, and are, happening in any parish) this can snowball and the next thing you know there is a cultural shift towards openness and a lack of tolerance of these behaviours.

What would you want to say to someone who has a lived experience of abuse within the Church?

I understand that you may have felt silenced, ignored, disbelieved, marginalised or even invisible. The systems haven't been in place to help you be heard – however we really want to change this. The change in culture could start with you – but we want to develop systems and processes with your input. We want to know what you want – we want to hear you. No-one can promise to always get it right – all survivors are different and want and need different things - however we can promise to try our best to put it right.

What would your advice be to someone concerned about something they may have seen or experienced in a church or elsewhere?

There are processes in place to report concerns – approach your parish Safeguarding Officer, email or call the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors – take a look at the safeguarding webpages which are full of advice and information. Do not keep it to yourself.

What do you do to relax?

I like to powerlift – deadlifts, squats and bench press being my favourite lifts – and when I get the chance I love to read. I have two Jack Russell dogs who need a daily walk and my teenage children keep me busy!

Has anyone particularly inspired you?

I am actually inspired by the singer Pink – she uses her platform for change and I feel like I have grown up with her. I also love Margaret Atwood's work. I am obsessed with the Handmaid's Tale and am in the process of recording a podcast with my sister about it.

SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT

If you are someone with a lived experience of abuse who would like to help drive change in our Diocese around how we respond to victims and survivors of abuse, please email in complete confidence to: DSAPchair@rochester.anglican.org Thank you.

If you are worried about something you or someone else has experienced in a church, online or elsewhere, please visit our dedicated the safeguarding pages to access a range of support www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding



CARING FOR CREATION CONNECTS ME TO GOD

For Kayleigh Ward, co-founder of the Rainham Eco Hub - a collective of people concerned for their local environment - her actions around climate care are a direct and powerful living out of her faith, and one which she feels directly called to, and encouraged in by God.

I think I have always been interested in nature and the environment, even before I was a Christian. Now I am, this is basically how I connect with God.

Whether it's through a walk, gardening, or swimming in the sea. When things get tough, or when God feels a million miles away, what brings me back is connecting with nature.

Speaking out about the climate crisis can be tough. Through the Eco Hub I've got my dream - a family, a little tribe of people who feel the same - and it feels really nice because it's really changed my mindset and my sense of how I live out my faith.

The Hub started during the first lockdown when me and another lady, Liz, got talking. I was so scared of what I was seeing happening to the environment and what I could see coming down the road, I just didn't know what to do with it all. She said she felt the same and so, after many cups of coffees, we decided to start a Facebook group.

We thought it would be just us and a couple of other people, but now we've got nearly 3,000 people online and around 150 people, that come together regularly to either share their worries and most importantly, share their dreams of what they want Rainham to be like as a town.

Since then, as a group, we've planted 2,700 trees, we talk in schools, and monitor the air quality around the town.

Even though lots of those who volunteer for the Hub or who are connected with it are not Christian, this engagement is very much how I connect with God.

It blows my mind that my strong connection with God has not been brought about by sitting in church, but I do a walk with somebody monitoring the air pollution and I'm hearing God say to me, 'Yeah, keep going, keep going'.

Sometimes it is really difficult to keep going and I'm like, 'What? Is this really what you want me to do?'. I'm not an evangelist. I wouldn't go out and go up to somebody and be like, 'Hey mate, how are you? I love Jesus', but I think, because I do some social media on the St Margaret's Church and Eco Hub social media pages, people naturally make that connection, and if they bring it up, I'm happy to have that conversation.

In fact, the non-church people often think it is quite cool that the Church is doing things around the environment but I am not sure the Church more widely always realises this. But for me, acting on climate change, well if that is not proclaiming the name of Jesus, I don't know what is.

My daughter, who is seven, has just got such a simple way of looking at this. She says, 'God's given us this earth Mummy, and we should look after it because it's such a special present'. And I think, yes, that makes so much sense. Doesn't it?



Heavenly Father,

We thank you that our times are in your hands
and you love us with an everlasting love.

We pray today for those who are afraid of what a change
of season will mean for their home;
those who simply will not be able to eat well and heat their
homes at the same time.

May there be wisdom, compassion and fairness in
responses made in the UK.

Give to your people the guidance they seek in how to help.
Lead us to make generous, open-hearted responses and
preserve us from guilt when we are inhibited by hard facts.
Watch over this nation in the cold and dark days ahead.

God of the loaves and fishes,
who multiplies the basics of life to meet sudden needs,
reach out in mercy we pray.

And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.