

# TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 13 | May-July 2022

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COVER STORY: NEW BISHOP WITH A HEART FOR THE PARISHES ANNOUNCED PAGE 10



NEW BISHOP  
ANNOUNCED

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PILATES IN  
THE PEWS

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GET JUBILEE  
READY

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ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL PRESENTS

# Gaia



24 MAY -12 JUNE 2022

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Rochester  
CATHEDRAL

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Welcome to this Spring edition of Together.

We've finally had the news we've been waiting for, who will be the next Bishop of Rochester. Find out more our new Bishop, the Rt Rev Jonathan Gibbs, and his day out around the Diocese in Focus On (pg 10)

Our One to One interview also introduces you to a new member of the team, Magali, the Dioceses new Lead Community Engagement and Social Action adviser. With the rising cost of living and the war in Ukraine, she's had to hit the ground running. Discover what inspires her on pg 24

In our centrespread, we look ahead to the much-needed time of celebration and fun coming up in June, with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. How can you bring your faith to the party? (pg 16)

Finally, we have two opportunities to remember that all we do in life is important to God. In our Everyday Faith (pg 26) section, we meet the palliative care nurse who says we're never too small to make a difference. And we hear about the church who has brought Pilates to the pews (pg 14), just one of many churches exploring how to be a Godly presence in people's sporting lives.

Stay safe



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4 April 2022

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# SEVENOAKS CHURCH LAUNCHES REPAIR CAFE

It's a growing ethical and environmental dilemma: when your favourite small item breaks, do you buy a new one or try to repair it?

Now, the Repair Café at St Luke's Church in Sevenoaks might be able to help.

Co-founded with a local group of expert volunteer menders, who are passionate about sustainability and community, visitors can bring their items to be repaired and enjoy a piece of homemade cake and a hot drink while they wait.

The Rev Anne Bourne says: "We throw away many things with hardly anything wrong with them and that could easily be used after a simple repair. This is at the heart of the cafe. It is also about community

putting neighbours in touch with each other."

The new venture launched at the beginning of April and will run once a month (except August and December) in the church.

Among the 43 items brought to the first session, were a ceramic saucer from the first flight on Concorde, and a doll that needed restringing.

Anne says not only is it a great opportunity to bring people into contact with the church, but to potentially learn a new skill too:

"As users of the Repair Cafe can sit with their expert while the repair takes place, we hope they may also pick up a few skills to be able to repair their item next time."







## A CROCHETED LENT

Inspired by the vicar at All Saints, Orpington, to 'Make Lent count', Lisa and her mum set about creating over 200 crocheted flowers. She says she enjoyed the creative process, using the time to 'think more about where God leads us and us needing to be generous of heart'.



## NEW MUMS' GROUP CELEBRATES FIRST BIRTHDAY

In April Christ Church, Chislehurst, popped open the fizz and celebrated the first anniversary of their New Mums' group. Started in one of the lockdowns, the group aimed to support the needs of first-time mums and their families! Those involved say it has been wonderful to see how God has blessed this group.



## CHURCH TAKES ON EPIC BIBLE READ

Parishioners at St John's Church, Hildenborough took on the challenge of reading the entire Bible out loud in church throughout Holy Week. Beginning on Palm Sunday, their epic read took just over 80 hours with volunteers taking on different shifts. They finished just in time during their Easter morning service. Well done!



## MAUNDY MONEY

Congratulations to Heather Sinclair and Bose Johnson, members of the Cathedral Community who received the Royal Maundy Money this year. The tradition recognises older people who have shown service to their community throughout their life. Bose said: "I was really shocked - pleasantly! I have no idea about the process & didn't see it coming. I had just been loving the Lord."



## PLANS SUBMITTED FOR NEW CHURCH BUILDING ON KINGS HILL

After gathering in homes, schools and even the local pub for over twenty years, the congregation of St Gabriel's Church on Kings Hill hope their prayers will be answered as a planning application for a church building has been submitted to local Council.

If the plans are approved, it will be the first new Church of England church to be built in the Diocese for over 20 years.

Currently, the Church meets in The Discovery School on Sundays and uses venues across Kings Hill for activities including a Community Café and a food bank.

The Rev Mark Montgomery, Mission Leader of St Gabriel's Kings Hill, said:

"We are excited to be launching our building project, applying for planning permission and sharing our vision with the wider community. Until now we have been a nomadic group, popping up in different locations to serve the local community and gather to worship God."

The new single-storey structure will include a flexible space for worship and community events, along with a kitchen, toilets, and a small office.

Although initial funding for the project is in place, the church will be undertaking fundraising activities to support the building project and the future plans for its use.

Find out more at: [www.kingshillchurch.org.uk/building/](http://www.kingshillchurch.org.uk/building/)





## DARTFORD CHURCH HOLDS BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE EASTER SERVICE

The pandemic has brought questions about accessibility to worship to the forefront.

Now, one church in Dartford is drawing on the professional skills of their curate to better serve the Deaf community.

On Easter Sunday, twelve Deaf people came to celebrate Easter at St Alban's Church in Dartford, with

the entire worship, including the sermon, taking place in British Sign Language.

The Rev Esther Bevan, Curate at St Edmund's and St Alban's Churches, Dartford, who led the service, is a British Sign Language Interpreter.

"We're now exploring how we can make this a regular feature in our churches."

## CHAPLAINS CONVENE

Over 54 people gathered for a long-awaited event on chaplaincy in health, care and community settings in Kent and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley in April. Called Chaplaincy Now, it was a chance to share experiences of how the pandemic has altered chaplaincy in the many settings represented – individual homes, care homes, hospices, mental health services, general hospitals and the ambulance service.

A multi-faith panel of chaplains spoke about their own context, before responding to questions from the audience. Comments received after the event demonstrated how valuable it was for chaplains to gather and share their experience and to reflect on the rewarding but, at times,

demanding work of chaplaincy.

One of the conference organisers, Julia Burton-Jones, and Anna Chaplaincy lead for the Diocese of Rochester and Kent said: "It was clear participants valued the opportunity to tell their story. There was a need to be heard and much learning from one another and mutual encouragement."





## A LOVING RESPONSE TO UKRAINE

From prayer vigils and donation drops, to organising wraparound support for refugees in the community, churches across the Diocese have been responding to the situation in Ukraine.

As news of the invasion broke, churches immediately responded with prayer and space for reflection. The outpouring of concern was mirrored online with numerous posts of supportive messages, Ukrainian flags, prayers, and words of scripture.

For many, it became an opportunity to stand in solidarity and compassion with Ukrainians in their midst.

At Holy Trinity Church, Coxheath, they opened their church for the day and reached out to the Ukrainians who work on the local fruit farm.

As Curate, the Revd Lorna Faulkner, explains: "All the Ukrainians from the farm were given the day off and many of them arrived at 9am and stayed with us all day. We prayed a short prayer liturgy together every 2 hours - the last one of the day was led in Ukrainian by one of the workers."

Lorna adds: "It was a strange mix of heart-warming and utterly heart-breaking - the images the farm community shared with us that had been sent from home were really hard to see. But it was a very important day for the

community of Coxheath and for the farm community, as we stood together in solidarity and prayer with them."

Knowing how best to respond has been a challenge. Many individuals and churches have focused on donating financially to national funds, as well as more local initiatives, such as ChildAid (to Eastern Europe), of which the Bishop of Tonbridge is a patron.

ChildAid to Eastern Europe is an established Christian charity based in Bromley with a history of working with vulnerable children across Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.

"At ChildAid, we are focusing on supporting our partners on the ground in both Moldova and in Ukraine to help fund some of the desperately needed aid for those passing through their communities, many of whom have only the clothes on their back," says Stephen Barbor, a Commissioned Evangelist at St Stephen, Tonbridge, and a ChildAid staff team member.

"Financial aid is vital in helping fund food, water, nappies, personal hygiene items, housing, transport -



all items that are needed right now. Money can also help local economies and communities stay afloat.”

Elsewhere, churches have been working alongside local Ukrainians to support grassroots, practical initiatives.

In Bromley and Sidcup, the churches of St Andrew (Bromley) and St John (Sidcup) have become central sorting and distribution points for practical goods such as first aid equipment, blankets, and sanitary products which - thanks to special permissions being granted - have then been taken direct on vans to assist Ukrainians trapped in the country.

In Tunbridge Wells, local churches from across the denominations, community groups, and Ukrainians already living in the area, are working together to coordinate a welcome strategy for Ukrainian refugee families.

“The group recognised that one of the first things which needs to be offered to families are spaces where Ukrainians can meet each other in a social capacity,” explains the Rev Laurence Powell.

“As King Charles the Martyr’s church hall is right in the centre of the historic part of town and St James is at the other end of town, our halls are being used to facilitate this. St James is offering a more adult-directed social event on one evening a week, and King Charles a more family-focused drop in.”

The hope is this will grow over time to include music events, music lessons, craft activities for families, and even English lessons.

With the trajectory of the war remaining uncertain, Bishop Simon says that the nature of the ongoing response by churches and individuals will require prayerful discernment:

“Like the pandemic, this has been a shocking and unexpected return to the brutal and unsparing realities of the first half of the last century.

“I know there is a deep yearning in people to offer a generous welcome to the victims of war and it is wonderful to see and hear of such open-heartedness.

“The key to interpreting what we might do, personally and together, is in and through prayer for discernment.”





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NEW BISHOP WITH A  
HEART FOR THE PARISHES  
ANNOUNCED

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In March, we were delighted to announce that the new Bishop of Rochester will be the Rt Rev Jonathan Gibbs.

Jonathan is currently the Bishop of Huddersfield in the Diocese of Leeds and holds a national role in the Church of England as Lead Bishop for Safeguarding.

He succeeds Bishop James Langstaff, who retired in July last year.

Bishop Jonathan was revealed as the new Bishop of Rochester at Trinity Church of England School, Belvedere, one of five Church secondary schools within the Diocese.

Students from Year 7 up to Year 13 were present to hear the news and gave the new Bishop a very warm welcome. While there, Bishop Jonathan had the chance to answer some of the students' questions and engage with them in a time of prayer.

He was also shown the chapel and prayer garden, and there was even time for a few selfies.

Responding to his appointment Bishop Jonathan said:

"I am delighted to have been announced as the new Bishop of Rochester. My wife Toni and I are so excited about the prospect of moving to this wonderful Diocese.

"For us, Rochester will be a new place to discover and we're so looking forward to getting to know the people of our churches and our communities, and to working together with them as we encourage God's kingdom to grow in this wonderfully varied and rich place."

A parish priest for 25 years before being made a bishop, Bishop Jonathan says that he has a 'real heart' for the parishes, and that he sees a huge part of his role as being getting out and about, getting to know people, and getting to understand their situation and to support them in the work they are doing to make God's love known to the people in their communities:

"I am very conscious of the diversity of the communities that we serve, from urban and suburban to profoundly rural, and I am looking forward to the

opportunity of exploring all these different places and to sharing in the journey with the people here of growing God's Church, of serving the communities, and of proclaiming the good news of Christ to the people whom we seek to love and to serve in Jesus' name."

This was evident on the announcement day itself, where he took the opportunity to meet with some of the people and parishes of the Diocese, to learn more about the part churches and Christians are playing in transforming their communities for the better.

In Sidcup, he spent time with members of the local Ukrainian community with whom the church of St John – along with the wider community - has been standing alongside with compassion, prayer, and practical assistance.

Bishop Jonathan was particularly moved by the story of one woman who had recently returned from driving supplies to Lviv, just as the air raid sirens began.

As part of the church's developing offer of support and welcome, English for Ukrainian classes have started to run out of the church to help both existing and future members of the community.

Travelling to one of the most rural parts of the Diocese, Edenbridge, he visited the BRIDGES Community Centre. This multi-denominational church initiative has 'service to the community' at its heart.

It includes a Place of Welcome community hub, an initiative that offers local people a safe space to meet and connect with others, learn about local community services, and enjoy a good cup of tea.

"For us, Rochester will be a new place to discover and we're so looking forward to getting to know the people of our churches and our communities..."

## FOCUS ON: NEW BISHOP ANNOUNCED



ST JOHN, SIDCUP



BRIDGES COMMUNITY CAFE, EDENBRIDGE



ST JOHN, CHATHAM

In Chatham, Bishop Jonathan helped welcome new members of the ministry team to St John's Church, as part of their exciting journey of regeneration and new life. Having reopened in April 2021 after more than 20 years of closure, St John's Church is part of an ambitious commitment to mission, ministry, and partnerships in the town.

Projects there include Genesis Football, which uses sport to engage with isolated and vulnerable adults, and Medway Oaks, a Sunday afternoon congregation and drop-in for the homeless and marginalised, run in partnership with the Christian organisation, Church Army.

At the Medway Campus, lay chaplain Lynne Martin, accompanied by some of the students, took Bishop

Jonathan on a tour of the site which is home to three universities: Canterbury Christ Church University, Greenwich University, and Kent University. There, he heard about the difference the chaplaincy makes to the students' lives and about some of the issues they face as young people.

The day ended at Rochester Cathedral where Bishop Jonathan joined the congregation for Evensong.

Bishop Jonathan's installation as Bishop of Rochester is expected to take place sometime in the early autumn.

More details will be made available in due course

Listen to Bishop Jonathan on BBC Radio Kent's Sunday programme with Phil Harrison





### More about Bishop Jonathan

Jonathan Gibbs grew up in Cheshire and then studied at Jesus College, Oxford, for his MA in Philosophy and Politics and Jesus College, Cambridge, for a PhD on the Theology of Work.

He trained for ordained ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. He served his curacy in the Diocese of Chester at Stalybridge, Holy Trinity and Christ Church from 1989 - 92. He was Chaplain at Basle with Freiburg-im-Breisgau in the Diocese of Europe from 1992 - 98, and was Rector of Heswall in the Diocese of Chester from 1998 until 2014.

Jonathan was consecrated as Bishop of Huddersfield in York Minster on 17 October 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 was formerly a member of the Clergy Discipline Commission and is a member of the General Synod and of the Meissen Commission, linking the Church of England with the Evangelical Church in Germany.

He is married to his wife Toni, and they have three grown-up children. His interests include walking, usually accompanied by their Cocker Spaniel, Ludo, and rummaging in second-hand bookshops.





## GET ON YOUR MARKS FOR SPORTS SUNDAY

The 15 May is Sports Sunday, an opportunity for Christians to find out more about how the arena of sport is a place where they can be an expression of God's love and compassion.

From healthy walks and mobility exercise sessions to cycling groups and sports club chaplains, churches across the Diocese are exploring ways they can be a positive and encouraging presence in people's sporting lives.

The Benefice of St Lawrence Church, Seal Chart with St Margaret's, Underriver is one such example. Their Wellness Wednesdays proved incredibly popular, as the Rev Serena Willoughby explains

"We know people are busy and can't commit to a lot of activities, so we just wanted to provide something positive, manageable, and welcoming, particularly during the winter."



Their four wellness sessions offered a varied programme of activities, including sessions on mental wellbeing, Pilates, sour dough bread making, and singing song.

Serena says there was also a good dose of, “fantastic coffee, tea and some really nice biscuits”.

She adds: “Lots of people came who don’t normally come to church and people are always saying to me, when are you doing it again? It was absolutely brilliant.”

Bishop Simon says that, if we believe that everything we do in life matters to God, then sport must too: “Sport and well-being must be as big a deal to God as anything else, especially as we devote so much time to it: doing sport, watching it, talking about it, dreaming about it.

“Too often we haven’t connected our love for sport and well-being with our love for God or to see it as a wonderful divine gift for human expression.”

For Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones, running has become a central part of his life. He joined a Beginners to Runners group about five years ago, and the community has helped he go from running 5k – just – to running the London Marathon.

“Running for me has been really important in terms of my well-being, in the intensity of my role and of life. Getting out and running has been really good for my body for my soul and for my spirit.

Graham Wilkinson, Sports Ministry Ambassador in the Diocese, hopes that more and more churches will be inspired to explore incorporating a sport, wellbeing or fitness aspect into their local context:

“I would encourage those in leadership in a church, if they like sport themselves, to why not organize a run or a cycle, golf session or a cricket match? Alternatively, they could organize a walk or Pilates or a book club. There is so much that can be done, and it is a great way to connect with people in the communities who we are not seeing in church.”

Find out more at: [www.rochester.anglican.org/for-parishes/community-engagement/sport-and-wellbeing/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/for-parishes/community-engagement/sport-and-wellbeing/)





# GET READY FOR THE

It's time to get the bunting ready, as we prepare to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this year, with a 4-day Bank Holiday from 2 to 5 June.

Jubilee is an idea found in the Bible too; the year of Jubilee was a year to release people from their debts, release all enslaved people, to rest and be with loved ones.

As Christians, we can celebrate both of these things in the ways we mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Hope Together – a collaboration of Christian denominations and organisations – have come up with a whole range of ways Christians can mark the Jubilee.

Here are 5 of our favourites:

## 70 ACTS OF SERVICE

Jubilee in the Bible is about radical justice and inclusive community, so why not celebrate by serving others? HOPE Together has listed 70 ways to make a difference, from making a care package for someone in need, to bringing in your neighbours' bins for the week. You might have lots of other ideas. Find the full list [here](#).

## PRAY

Either before, during or after a Jubilee community event. Maybe you could say grace before eating, or pray for the people you will meet at the event. If part of a church group, you could offer a space somewhere for quiet time, reflection, listening and prayer. (Make sure the team are trained for this – it's important to do this in a way which is sensitive and safe.)







# QUEEN'S JUBILEE

## SHARE YOUR FAITH

The Queen is a wonderful example of someone who frequently refers to her faith in Jesus, for instance in her Christmas broadcasts. Use the Platinum Jubilee books "Our Faithful Queen", or "The Girl Who Grew Up To Be Queen" as gifts and to help start a conversation. Visit: [www.theplatinumjubilee.com](http://www.theplatinumjubilee.com)

## PLANT A TREE FOR THE JUBILEE

Everyone across the UK is invited to plant trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy\*\*. The aim is to create a network of individual trees, avenues, copses and whole woodlands in honour of the Queen's service and the legacy she has built. [www.queensgreencanopy.org](http://www.queensgreencanopy.org)

## INVITE YOUR COMMUNITY TO CHURCH

The final day of the four-day Platinum Jubilee celebration, is also Pentecost Sunday. Why not make a personal invitation to someone to come to church. It's the perfect way to make the connection between the Queen's 70 years of service, her Coronation anointing, and the Holy Spirit anointing available to everyone who follows Jesus.

For lots more ideas visit: [www.theplatinumjubilee.com](http://www.theplatinumjubilee.com) or for prayers and liturgy visit: [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org) and search for Platinum Jubilee.

Did you know? The national weekend of celebration ends on Pentecost Sunday – the day which marks the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

\*\*If you're planning to do this in church grounds, you may need special permission. Check with your local Archdeacon first.



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# DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD OR NOT?

The Rt Rev Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge, says that answering this question matters more deeply than any question we could pose.

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Each year we are primed for Easter Sunday by the events of Holy Week. We know how it starts and how it ends, like a favourite film we watch time and again where we can recite the dialogue as it happens. It enriches our understanding of God's saving work in Jesus every time, but it also makes it hard to stay with and grasp the shocking sense of defeat and bereavement his followers felt in those hours after Jesus expired.

As with all sudden bereavements, there was disbelief, numbness and horror.

Jesus had promised his friends he would rise from the dead, but there is no sense in the Gospels that they were holding on to this pledge, like people do with crumbs of comfort at the time of death. His words seem to have vanished into thin air, unregistered and unremarked on.

That Sunday morning they were talking about Jesus in the past tense, when he was about to come at them from the future. Unprepared and unable to make sense of it, the oral traditions of the resurrection couldn't even agree on the sequencing of events. There was no felt need to get the details straight when the headline was as big as this.

Over time, history and those who write it formalise and then interpret events. These histories often become stylised until revisionists come along and have another go at writing the story. But one thing we struggle with is to get inside the minds of people who lived a long time ago. It may be hard, but it's always worth the effort, and none more so than with spiritual history, where we share the same Holy Spirit the early followers of Jesus did.

In today's digital culture, there is so much immediate commentary on events that we may miss things that future generations will see more clearly. This will surely be true of the pandemic.

True to existing form, we have learned to suppress conversation over what happens next. Children are naturally spiritual, asking questions about God and life after death with no guile or embarrassment. They also learn eventually not to talk this way because grown ups don't, so that must be how to be a grown up.

For some, of course, there is nothing to talk about because nothing exists after death. But many others have questions and end up suppressing them because they don't want to feel silly or to embarrass themselves.

My generation has been highly critical of cancel culture on university campuses, but we have been responsible for our own cancel culture round death. And here's the thing. It matters more deeply than any question we could pose, whether Jesus rose from the dead or not.

St Paul saw this clearly and expressed it in his first letter to the Corinthians. If Christ has not been raised, he said, your faith is futile. End of. But answering this question for ourselves is not something we see clearly today as individuals.

Perhaps it all happened too long ago for people to think they need to make a judgment on the issue. Maybe we've blurred fact and fiction, truth and falsehood so much that we're not sure there are meaningful distinctions anymore. Truth becomes my view of an issue, rather than the facts surrounding the issue itself.

But if Jesus rose from the dead, it means he is who he said he was, that what he said matters more than anything you could ever hear, and that we need to make a personal response to Easter Day by giving our lives back to the one who gave his for ours.

In enabling people to think about this mystery, we help them by speaking clearly of its importance, both for them and for the world. If we collude with the cancel culture round spiritual matters, we deprive people of one of the deepest entitlements of life: to know about God and his everlasting love for us in Christ.

But speaking openly and plainly about this, we should reclaim something of the chaos and confusion of that first Easter Day. The fear, anxiety, and loss of that early Easter Day is the matrix in which Jesus meets with us and speaks his first and lasting words: 'peace be with you'. The sentence that closes the books on an old world and whispers for us to join Jesus at the threshold of the new.

*This is an edited version of Bishop Simon's Easter Day sermon first delivered at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday 17 April, 2022*

## TUNE INTO FAITH

There seems to be a podcast on almost every subject nowadays. Matters of religion and spirituality are no different. So, whether you're after insight into the 'hot' faith or moral issue of the day, robust discussion, or thought-provoking interviews, here are 3 suggestions for some faith-related listening. [www.religionmediacentre.org.uk/rmc-briefings/](http://www.religionmediacentre.org.uk/rmc-briefings/)



### UNBELIEVABLE PODCAST

In this weekly podcast from Premier Christian Radio, Christian broadcaster and writer Justin Brierley explores a variety of questions like: Is there evidence for God? Can we trust the Bible? Did Jesus rise from the dead? Justin tackles these and other issues, on a show that gets

often high-profile Christians and sceptics talking.

You can watch as well as listen at: [www.premierchristianradio.com/shows/saturday/unbelievable](http://www.premierchristianradio.com/shows/saturday/unbelievable)



### THE ARCHBISHOP INTERVIEWS

In this series on BBC Radio 4 the Archbishop of Canterbury, has deep conversations with people who have made a significant contribution to public life about what they believe. How have they navigated their inner life alongside their public profile? What has been their moral 'touchstone' through the good times and the bad? How do they engage with faith and spirituality?

Listen to all six episodes on the BBC Radio 4 website or via the BBC Sounds app



### RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE BRIEFINGS

Part news outlet, part broadcaster, the Religion Media Centre is a relative new-comer to the media landscape. However, staffed by experienced journalists with expertise in religion, their weekly online briefings offer much for a wider, as well as journalist, audience.

Offering deep and insightful dives into the religious and moral issues of the day, these panel-style broadcasts are open to all.

Watch and listen at: [www.religionmediacentre.org.uk/rmc-briefings/](http://www.religionmediacentre.org.uk/rmc-briefings/)



## PRAYING FOR THE COMING OF HOLY SPIRIT - THY KINGDOM COME

The time between Ascension (when Jesus returned to Heaven) and Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit came) has, for centuries, been a particular time for Christians to pray for the movement of the Holy Spirit within the Church and in people's lives.

The global prayer initiative, established by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thy Kingdom Come is providing materials again during this time to help encourage people in their prayers, particularly for others, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to come to know Christ.

Here is what is available this year.

### NOVENA

This Novena – nine days of prayer – is designed to support the reader as they wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit, by focusing on nine particular verses in the First letter of St Peter. Each day takes one of those verses and is accompanied by commentary and reflection from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and stunning imagery from Anna Heslop.

- Download a digital version from the Thy Kingdom Come website: [www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/new-2022](http://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/new-2022)
- Order hard copies from Church House publishing: [www.chpublishing.co.uk/thykingdomcome](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/thykingdomcome)

### PRAYER JOURNAL

The Prayer Journal aims to help a person focus their personal prayers throughout the period of Thy Kingdom Come. It includes short Bible verses, inspirational reflections, responses and prayers. There is also space to write, doodle, draw - however, the spirit moves you.

- Download a digital version from the Thy Kingdom Come website: [www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/new-2022](http://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/new-2022)
- Order hard copies from Church House publishing: [www.chpublishing.co.uk/thykingdomcome](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/thykingdomcome)

### CHEEKY PANDA'S PRAYER BOOK

For younger prayer-seekers comes the Cheeky Panda's Prayer Book. Full of colourful pictures, simple and engaging prayers, as well as Bible verses, this collection aims to help children discover more about God's love for everyone and to help them share God's love with others.

- Order hard copies from Church House publishing: [www.chpublishing.co.uk/thykingdomcome](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/thykingdomcome)

# UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



**ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL ORGAN SERIES**  
at Rochester Cathedral  
Recital from APRIL UNTIL SEPTEMBER at 7:30pm

The Rochester Cathedral Organ series gets off to a great start this Spring, with recitals from internationally renowned organists from cathedrals across the country.

Tickets are £10 on the door, with all under 18's going free. For more information visit Rochester Cathedral's [website](#).



**HOPE FOR A GAIA IN CRISIS - TOOLS FOR FAITH-FILLED RESILIENT LIVING**  
at Rochester Cathedral  
8 JUNE 2022, 7:30pm-9:00pm

Canon Dr Ruth Valerio, will be speaking on 'Hope for a Gaia in Crisis - Tools for faith-filled resilient living.' Dr Valerio is the Canon Theologian at Rochester Cathedral. This event will take place under Gaia. It is free to attend and all are welcome. Tickets must be booked in advance [here](#)



**A CREATIVE WRITING QUIET DAY**  
at 65 Maidstone Road, Chatham  
4 JUNE 2022, 10am-3pm

This quiet day offers the space to prayerfully experiment with words and to be renewed by the Holy Spirit as we listen to what God might be saying in us and through us. Leader: The Rev David Kichenside.

To book please email:  
[susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk)



**I WENT DOWN TO THE POTTER'S HOUSE**  
at St Benedict's Centre, West Malling  
16 JUNE 2022, 10am-3pm

A clay-based encounter day that includes Bible reflections, demonstration, opportunities for hands activity, and times for silent reflection, during which we will be open to experience ourselves being held, healed, formed, and re-formed in the loving hands of God. Led by the Rev Canon Gordon Oliver. Day costs £20. To book please email: [bookings@stbenedictscentre.org](mailto:bookings@stbenedictscentre.org)



## THE LEAVES OF THE TREES

at Rochester Cathedral  
24 APRIL - 22 MAY 2022

A touring artwork installation offering a reflective memorial to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. A simple but moving artwork creating a moment of connection and calm.

For more information visit Rochester Cathedral's [website](https://www.rochester.anglican.org).

Rochester  
CATHEDRAL







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## SEEKING TO BE GOD'S EYES, HANDS AND FEET

As Christians, we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves. One expression of that is how churches and individuals serve their communities. Licensed Lay Minister, Magali van der Merwe, is the new Lead Community Engagement and Social Action Adviser for the Diocese of Rochester. We caught up with her to find out a little bit more about the role and what drew her to it.

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### Can you tell us a bit about your role?

In a nutshell, it's about supporting parishes with the development and delivery of community engagement projects - in partnership with others where needed - for the common good of their local community. Such initiatives are vital key to helping tackle key local and national social issues such as poverty, homelessness, immigration, wellbeing (whether mental or physical), dementia, modern slavery and domestic abuse.

### What were you doing before you joined the Diocese?

Before joining the Diocese, I worked in the public sector for the London Borough of Bexley as a Programme Manager supporting its Place Directorate which amongst other services included Housing, Community Safety and Environment as well as Parks, Leisure and Libraries.

### Have you always been drawn to community work?

I have been passionate about community work since I was a little girl. Seeing others suffering, in particular from homelessness and poverty, always broke my heart and I hoped that one day, I would be able to help make a difference to other's lives - not only by providing them with what they needed but also by walking alongside them and being part of their journey.

### You're also a Licensed Lay Minister, how does that fit into the day job?

I would say that both my calling as Licenced Lay Minister (LLM) and my daily role as CESA work hand in hand and are both part of the same puzzle. Indeed, both of them enable me to seek to be God's eyes, hands and feet by sharing His Love with others, in particular those who are finding themselves in the margins of society and who are suffering from social injustice. Being able to link in my calling with my passion on a day-to-day basis is a dream that has come true as this enables me to spend my days sharing God Love.

### You have started at a time of huge challenge here in the UK, and across the world. What's that like?

It's meant hitting the ground running! However, I am in no way complaining as it is a privilege to be given the opportunity to try and tackle the massive issues

that are around. Seeing so many local churches, local communities and organisations link up and work alongside one another for the common good has been really uplifting. I think it is fair to say that it is in such difficult times that you see the solidarity and goodness of heart of humankind.

### Is there anyone who has particularly inspired you?

There are two people actually - both renounced their lives of luxury to help serve the poor. The first is Abbe Pierre, who was a French Priest and humanitarian who devoted his life to serving the poor, homeless people, and refugees. The ministry of St Francis of Assisi is also a great inspiration to me. He abandoned worldly goods and family ties to embrace a life of poverty.

### What are you reading at the moment?

A couple of books, Sanatorium, by Sarah Pearce and Simply Christian, by Tom Wright.

### On a day off, what are we most likely to find you doing?

Providing I have no chores to do around the house... you are likely to find me either outdoors surrounded by nature or in a coffee shop or doing a mix of both. I also love baking but haven't got as much time to do so lately.

### How well would you cope on a desert island?

I think I would cope rather well on a desert island actually. I adore being in the middle of nowhere amongst nature. I would probably need to watch a few more Bear Grills programmes though to develop some survival skills as I have none!

### What's your favourite food?

Seafood paella is both my favourite dish to cook and to eat as it is the type of food that is great to share with others whilst seating around a table in the summer months.

### Apart from Abbe Pierre and St Francis of Assisi, who would you most like to meet?

I would love to meet my two little nieces whom I haven't had the chance to meet yet due to them being in other parts of the world.





# NO TYPICAL DAY

Julia Downing is the Music Director at St. George's Church in Weald but, when she is not playing the organ or conducting the choir, she is a Professor in Palliative Care, and CEO of the International Children's Palliative Care Network (ICPCN). Her work involves teaching, mentoring, advocating, and supporting all Palliative Care Nurses around the world. She has recently been announced as a finalist in the Global Nursing Awards.

I always wanted to be a nurse. In fact, I got my first nurse's uniform for my fourth birthday. It might sound simple, but the reason I got into nursing is because I wanted to help others and to make a difference - to be there for people when they are going through difficult times.

Despite the fact that not many nurses undertook degrees at the time, I moved to Cardiff where I did a Bachelor of Nursing degree. I chose to do an elective at St Christopher's Hospice with Dame Cecily Saunders – who is seen as the founder of palliative care.

Working with her in palliative and holistic care, I got the sense that faith was a real driver for her, and so it has been the same for me.

In fact, God's hand has been in so much of my work, including my move to Uganda.

I had often spoken about working in Africa, but it always seemed something in the future. One day I was looking in the Nursing Times and saw a job in Uganda. Not soon after, I received a phone call from a friend from church, who said she had just seen a job that had my name all over it. It was the same job.

I applied with no expectations...and the rest is history. I didn't know anyone when I arrived in Uganda and really only had Jesus to rely on. There were tough

times, but it was really where I thought God wanted me to be.

Driving through the slums each day taught me a lot. I saw just how resourceful people could be with so little and it convinced me that, although we might often not have all we need, we can still be resourceful enough to provide care for others.

I don't have a typical day or even a typical week. My work is rewarding but it's also challenging. I spend time away from family and friends and I get exhausted. I spend lots of time trying to convince people - who don't want to listen - about the importance of palliative care and nursing, and trying to get funding for our work.

If I could only change one thing, it would be that everyone would realise the importance and value of palliative care and palliative care nurses

But I believe God has drawn me to this work for a purpose. There is a phrase of the Dalai Lama's that we used to say a lot in Uganda, 'If you think you're too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito in a tent.'

I believe God gives all of us different skills and we just have to try and live out our life and faith the best we can, in whatever role and place we find ourselves.



Diocese of Rochester  
called together

Gracious God, we give you thanks  
for the reign of your servant Elizabeth our Queen,  
and for the example of loving and faithful service  
which she has shown among us.  
Help us to follow her example of dedication  
and to commit our lives to you and to one another,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Prayer taken from Liturgical Resources for HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee