

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 20 | February - April 2024

CHANGE | SERVE | GROW

COVER STORY: HELPING TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE PAGE 8



OUR FAITH
IN FARMING

LENT:
WATCH AND
PRAY

JOIN THE
YOUTH
COUNCIL





CONTENTS

Welcome to this latest edition of Together magazine.

Can you believe Spring is on the way? This year Easter is early, so head over to our **Centrespread** to learn more about the National Church's Lent campaign, which draws on the practice in Black Spirituality of tarrying or 'waiting on the Lord'.

We also have some great Easter resources (pg 20) to help you celebrate the season with the story of Jesus' death and resurrection firmly at the centre.

Across the churches of the Diocese, many are working hard to keep people safe. In **Focus On** (pg 8), we report on how churches have responded to the opportunity to keep safeguarding on everyone's agenda by marking Safeguarding Sunday.

We also learn about the Diocesan Youth Council (pg 12), whose leaders want to encourage new members as it seeks to ensure the voice of children and young people is heard at every level of diocesan-life.

In our **One to One** (pg 24) interview we meet Gemma, the new Deputy Director of the Diocesan Board of Education, who is not only committed to supporting our church schools but is also a dab hand on the potter's wheel.

And finally, social worker, Antoinetta shares how she lives out her faith in the day to day, and why she wants to encourage others to explore the gifts and talents God has given them.

Go well.

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SUPPORT THE
POVERTY AND HOPE
APPEAL 2023

Help tackle the causes and effects of poverty in different parts of the world.



For more information visit:
www.rochester.anglican.org and search for Poverty and Hope



OUR FRIENDS IN ESTONIA

As part of our flourishing ecumenical friendship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia, four representatives of the Diocese recently attended the annual Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Conference at Tartu University.

After a night spent in Latvia after their plane was diverted, the Rev Laurence Powell, Vicar of King Charles the Martyr Church, Tunbridge Wells, the Rev Jess Heeb, curate in Snodland w Lower Birting - who both lead the Estonian diocesan link - Bishop Simon Burton Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge, and Julia Burton-Jones, Anna Chaplaincy Lead and Dementia Specialist, all arrived safely at the conference for a

time of friendship, networking, and shared learning.

As well as enjoying many of the interesting talks, Julia gave a workshop on pastoral care for people with dementia, which the senior clergy present felt the Estonian Lutheran Church needs to develop.

The Rochester representatives say they received a customary warm Estonian welcome and enjoyed the festival dinner at a local restaurant which included announcing the result of the Priest of the Year award!

Find out more about our Overseas Links here: www.rochester.anglican.org/about-us/overseas-links/



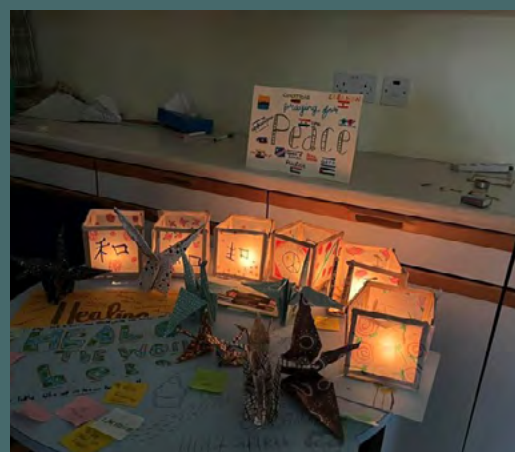
NEW YEAR HONOUR

Congratulations to Bob Taylor, congregation member at St Giles, Shipbourne who received a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List for services to the community. Bob leads the Shipbourne Farmers' Market which takes place every Thursday in the church and has done so for twenty years. He is also involved with the wider Farmers' Market movement, and is a bellringer too.



STEPPING UP AT CHISLEHURST

Removing a worn carpet at St Nicholas Church, Chislehurst, has revealed a stunning red and cream Italian marble 'pavement' dating back to 1896. Pavements are designed to serve as a physical reminder of the sacredness of the space and to create a sense of awe, reverence, and beauty. The Rev Rachel Curley became the first minister to officiate on the marble in around 50 years.



PEACE, PERFECT PEACE

Peace, was the focus of one of the weekly Wonderfull Zone sessions, which takes place at St Justus Church, Rochester each Thursday. Aimed at secondary school aged young people, they spent time together creating prayers, peace cranes and peace lanterns.



ENGLISH FOR UKRANIANS

Members of the St John's Church, Sidcup, 'English for Ukrainians' language group were welcomed to the Civic Offices by the Mayor of Bexley and treated to an insignia presentation. The language group was set up as part of the church's response and welcome to Ukrainians arriving in the UK to flee the war back home.



FUNDING TO BRING MORE SUPPORT TO PARISHES

Diocesan support colleagues are working hard to secure external funding to put in place the resources needed to back mission and ministry in parishes across the Diocese.

Support for church buildings has been a particular priority, says Matthew Girt, Diocesan Secretary. "Through our engagement with churches, they tell us that the care and maintenance of their buildings, while a privilege, is also a real drain on their resources, both in terms of time and finances."

He says a number of recent successful funding bids are therefore fantastic news for parishes and their communities.

These include another year of funding from Marshalls Charity, for the Diocesan Missional Property Fund, a grant scheme that supports parish projects that will allow their church buildings to better provide welcome, hospitality, and outreach within their communities.

In addition, the Church Commissioners have awarded £96,000 over 2 years to fund minor repairs and improvements for church buildings.

There has also been a recent award of just over £186,000 from the Church of England's Buildings for

Mission fund to finance a two-year Church Buildings Support Officer (CBSO), who will give specialist advice on church buildings to parishes across the Diocese.

Matthew, says, "Sitting alongside our existing dedicated but small church buildings support team, this additional officer and grant capacity will make a real difference in helping churches manage this responsibility."

Other recent external funding successes include:

- **Additional funding for HR, Communications and Fundraising capacity.**
- **A successful joint bid with Canterbury Diocese to the Church Commissioners' Net Zero Carbon fund, part of which will be used to finance a part-time role and a full-time role in each diocese to support and provide advice to parishes in their net zero work.**

All these funds will bring direct benefits to parishes and therefore the people and local areas they serve.

NEW PROPERTY DIRECTOR

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Stephanie Shea as the new Property Director for the Diocese.

This is a key role managing the substantial property portfolio of the Diocese that comprises clergy housing, investment property (including land), and redundant churches.

Announcing her appointment, Matthew Girt, Diocesan Secretary, said:

"Stephanie's background, most recently in the Head of Property role at Southern Water, provides her with an understanding of the need to work with those on the front line to achieve the best results at community level. In our case, supporting both clergy and laity in their work of seeking to build the Kingdom of God.

"She joins a small but dedicated team, and we very much look forward to her contribution as we look at how we serve better."



PURPLE HEARTS RAISE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Colleagues in the Diocesan Office marked the Global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, by supporting the Mothers' Union RISE Up campaign to say that domestic abuse in any form is not ok.

A crafty bunch from the Diocesan Support Teams met over a lunch break to crochet purple hearts, which were then hung in reception as a visual sign to office staff and visitors, of the diocesan team's commitment to:

- Raising awareness of the issue of domestic abuse
- Learning how to spot the signs of domestic abuse
- Knowing where to signpost people to support

Find out more about the campaign at:

www.mothersunion.org/riseup





ROARRY THE SAFEGUARDING LION CAME TO TO THE CATHEDRAL

HELPING TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

Right now, within churches and other diocesan teams, people are working hard to help keep everyone safe. They are doing things like being careful about who undertakes a role in a church or at a church activity, learning how to work in the safest way possible, or stepping up to be Parish Safeguarding Officer.

For these things to work, however, there needs to be a good culture - a safe and healthy culture - to which each and every person can make a difference.

Safeguarding Sunday, organised by the Christian safeguarding charity Thirtyone:eight, is a now annual event offering an opportunity for churches to highlight and give thanks for all the safeguarding work being undertaken in their parish, and to remind people about the part we all play in creating healthy, safer cultures

Safeguarding Sunday in November saw even more churches than ever within the Diocese engage creatively with the day, from drama sketches, puppets, talks to prayers and videos.

Many churches, like St Edmund King and Martyr in West Kingsdown, and the parish of Holy Trinity, South Chatham, used the comprehensive resources provided by Thirtyone:eight to help shape and guide their activities.

While at, St Martin's Church, Ryarsh, they performed a short sketch within their All Age Family Service service, followed by prayers led by the children from Stepping Stones Youth Group.

At St Nicholas Church, Sevenoaks, there was a child-friendly talk on 'speaking up' and 'raising your voice' about any worries or concerns.

They also created a video which was played to the congregation explaining what actions the church is taking around safeguarding, who the safeguarding officer is, and what someone should do if they have a concern.

Many Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO) took the opportunity to talk to their church congregations about their roles and how people could support them.

Irene Dancer, PSO at St Giles' Church, Farnborough, wrote a piece for her church's magazine, website, and pew sheet. This was followed up on the day with a lesson during the Senior Sunday School focussing on all the things that come under the umbrella of safeguarding, with the young people going on to make a poster to talk about and display in church.

During the service at St Paul's Beckenham, pieces of

"There are many challenges but my faith and the belief that this is the role God wants for me supports and sustains me. After all, what could be more important than the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults? What is more important to God than our churches being places of safety and refuge? Only then can we truly be free to follow Him."

Irene Dancer



DIOCESAN LEAD SAFEGUARDING ADVISER, GREG BARRY AT ST PETER, BEXLEYHEATH

a photo of the PSO were hidden around the church for the children to find and make into a complete picture. They then had to go and find her in the congregation.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team was also busy, with Greg Barry, Lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, invited to St Peter, Bexleyheath, to talk about his role and the importance of safeguarding.

The church is now in the process of refreshing all of their display materials and resources to include child friendly support and guidance for adult support locally and nationally.

Meanwhile, at Rochester Cathedral, Roarry the Thirtyone:eight Safeguarding Sunday lion, made a special visit to the Sunday Club for a time of singing, and to raise awareness of safeguarding in a fun and child-friendly way.

Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones, Bishop's Lead

for Safeguarding, says:

"It is of course vital that we keep alert to our safeguarding responsibilities throughout the year. However, I am delighted to see not just the level of response but also the many different and creative ways churches within the Diocese have engaged with Safeguarding Sunday this year.

"This can only be a positive sign of how awareness and culture around safeguarding is changing across the Church."

He continued:

"While we all have a part to play in creating safer spaces, I want to say a huge 'thank you' to all those who take on a particular responsibility for safeguarding in our churches, and who work so hard to keep our worship and activities safe for all. Your dedication is so important and very much appreciated."

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF CHURCH-RELATED ABUSE

If you have been affected by abuse, however long ago, or if you are concerned that someone else is experiencing or has experienced abuse in a church setting, we want to help.

SCAN the code to visit our Support for Victims and Survivors of Abuse page where you will find more information about:

- The support available from the Church
- How to raise a complaint or concern about our safeguarding practice
- Signposts to external organisations that can offer support
- Links to victim/survivor-led websites

As well as key contacts for our Safeguarding Team.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 999.





PLOUGHING ON

These fantastic pictures are from the Plough Sunday Service that took place in Rochester Cathedral in January, which saw Kent's farming and agricultural community warmly welcomed.

Originating in Victorian times but rooted in an ancient custom after the twelve days of Christmas, this observance involved bringing the communal plough to the church for divine blessings.

Farmers contributing to the plough's upkeep also supported the church, fostering a sense of community

and emphasising God's providence in daily work and lives.

Though village ploughs and January ploughing are rare due to changes in agricultural practices, Plough Sunday remains a testament to the importance of community, cooperation, and acknowledging God's centrality in our daily endeavour and worship.

Head over to our Big Issue where Bishop Simon Burton-Jones reflects on our link with the land.



BISHOP OF TONBRIDGE AND DEAN OF THE CATHEDRAL BLESSING THE PLOUGH



Watch + Pray

Watch and Pray is a national Church of England campaign inviting us all to wait expectantly for God this Lent, and to draw on Black Spirituality in search of new wisdom.

The spiritual practice known as 'tarrying' is a prominent aspect of many Black – especially Pentecostal – congregations.

Tarrying is a time of waiting on God which encourages us to:

- Wait and pray for our needs and those of others, and to
- Watch and pay attention to matters we might otherwise push away to deal with another time.

Sign up for daily reflections and challenges direct to your inbox or buy a printed booklet. SCAN the QR code:



HERE ARE TOP FIVE THINGS YOU CAN WATCH AND PRAY FOR THIS LENT.

1. **Notice any worries** or feelings you might be afraid to deal with this Lent. Set aside time to hold these before God – and wait.
2. **Take note** of moments when you were surprised by life's outcomes. Pray for greater openness to God's surprises in life.
3. **Watch the news.** Notice any stories of people divided from each other. Notice too, any stories of people coming together to make things better.
4. **Pray on the move.** Wherever you are travelling to and from, notice the places around you. Say a prayer for the people who live and work there.
5. **Read or listen** to Psalm 46 "Be still...and know that I am God (Ps46.10). These are good words to say – or sing – to help us remember God is always there, no matter what.

NEXT STEPS: If you want to journey deeper beyond Lent why not...

- Join with others in worship at a service near you, Visit AChurchNearYou.com
- Explore God in everyday life with the Everyday Faith portal, Visit: www.churchofengland.org/everyday-faith
- Find out more about the work of the Church of England's Racial Justice Unit as they work to address racial injustice across the Church. Visit: www.churchofengland.org/racial-justice

YOUR DIOCESAN YOUTH COUNCIL NEEDS YOU!

Doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030 is the first stated bold outcome of the Vision and Strategy for the Church nationally.



Of course, this isn't just about numbers – it's about young lives being shaped and allowed to flourish through their having opportunity to encounter the love and goodness of Jesus Christ. This is certainly the intention here in Rochester Diocese, as we focus on growing younger missional leaders in our communities.

A key part of achieving this is ensuring the voice of children and young people is heard at every level and to ensure they are equal partners within the life and governance of the diocesan family.

The Diocesan Youth Council is one such activity underway to allow this to happen, and it is always looking for new members.

Zachary, 17, has been a member for over 5 years and has been committed to youth ministry locally and bringing a young person's perspective to many conversations and decisions over the years.

"I started joining the Youth Council when I went to secondary school. I like it because I get to meet loads of different people, older and wiser people at the church and I get to have a say in their work, which makes me feel like I've made a difference.

"I've also made a very nice group of friends over the years, which has made me come out of my shell and open up more about my faith and we have a brilliant time at all the events. I would really encourage anyone who wants to make a difference and loves Jesus and the word of God to join the Youth Council."

Each of the three archdeaconries in the Diocese is represented by at least one group of young people and in some cases two or three localised network hubs.

Local groups meet termly, and the whole Council meets at least twice a year as a group, and also enjoys an annual three-day residential.

Cheryl Trice, Children and Young People and Family Lead Adviser, says that, while members of the Youth Council represent the wider diocesan young people, the goal is also to nurture them to become Christian ambassadors within their own local communities and churches:

"The Diocesan Youth Council is an excellent way to be part of something local but also to be influential in decision making, growing missional leaders, and in our churches becoming younger and more diverse.



YOUTH COUNCIL RESIDENTIAL

"Over the last few years, we have journeyed together with our Youth Council members exploring, identities in Christ, vocation and calling to be a disciple, young leaders training, and serving and equipping peers."

She adds that involving young people in this way can only be good for the Church as a whole: "Providing opportunities for our young people to be participative members of the body of Christ, where they can thrive and flourish, embeds a lifelong faith and commitment, encourages leadership skills, and enables our churches to be the full body of Christ."

If you are, or know someone, aged between 13-18 (minimum school year 8), who would be interested in being part of this fun, Jesus loving, active Youth Council, then the CYP team would love to hear from you (email sarah.cabella@rochester.anglican.org)

If you would like to join the local groups, forthcoming opportunities include:

Sunday 17 March for Bromley & Bexley Young People at Christ Church Bexleyheath @ 3pm-5pm

Sunday 17 March for Tonbridge and Rochester Archdeaconry Young People at St Francis, Strood @ 6pm-7.30pm

FARMING AND US

Surrounded by agricultural work, Jesus drew heavily on its imagery to stimulate how we think about God. With food security high on the agenda due to war and climate change, Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge, reflects on the world of agriculture and what it says to us about God and how it speaks into the collective anxiety we are experiencing today.

It was said years ago that we live in an era of anxiety. This was before the decade began on day one with a pandemic which morphed into a cost of living crisis.

The 2020s are already notorious and may become more so. But not everyone is equally damaged by the decade. Some suffer more than most and one of those hidden cohorts is the farming community.

Labour shortages generated by Covid and Brexit have cut deeply, as have the loss of EU subsidies. There is an expectation that food production will increase without degrading the environment and that this food will be of an ever-higher quality.

High inflation hits margins and farmers are squeezed ever more tightly by the big supermarkets. There is poverty among agricultural workers. And then there is climate change, where seasonally unusual conditions and extreme weather events wreak havoc with some harvests.

Anxiety is especially hard to deal with when you can't control your environment or the outcomes, leaving you feeling exposed to random and capricious sources.

This is compounded when people do not understand your circumstances and, for years now, there has been a widening divide between urban and rural - a division which could be lessened with some sympathetic listening and a recognition of our mutual responsibilities and our shared destiny on the island of Britain.

For years, those with less understanding of agriculture have assumed their food security. The fragility of supply chains exposed by the pandemic and the accelerating pace of climate change is probing this false sense of security.

It is a new and unwelcome experience, but one long understood by agriculture and one experienced on an annual basis in some parts of the world where a warming planet is tearing apart the social fabric.

It is fascinating to see the way the whole idea of security has taken hold of our national life. Politicians on each side of the political divide talk frequently

now of security as a deliverable. Not just freedom from war and terrorism, but the security that comes from having a house to live in, money to pay bills, goods to buy that keep us alive and healthy. It is a sign of how precarious life has become that what we took for granted two decades ago is no longer assumed.

But we can't leave it to political platforms to talk about security. It lies at the heart of the Gospel. God is a very present help in time of trouble, the Psalmist tells us.

He holds each of us by the right hand. He knows our needs because he has lived them personally and he invites us into a healthy dependency where we trust him for the things we don't control in life, as well as the things we do. This is the message he wants us to share.

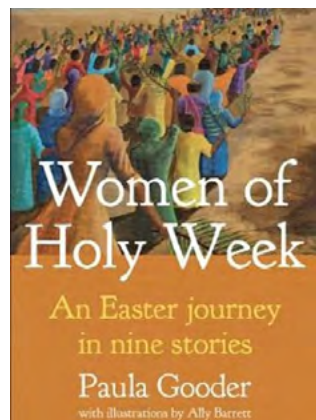
Rural life is less understood today, as more people are born and brought up in towns and cities. This can lead two ways: to a romanticised view of rural life which is untrue and does no-one any favours; or to a dismissive view of rural life which sees it as only as the pitiless venue for environmentally damaging practices. This polarity cannot be allowed to deepen.

We are one people, living in one land, dependent on one another and on one God. A dependency we must not forget.

"Anxiety is especially hard to deal with when you can't control your environment or the outcomes, leaving you feeling exposed to random and capricious sources."

RESOURCES – LENT AND EASTER

Journey through the reflective season of Lent and prepare for Jesus’s death and resurrection, with this Lent and Easter inspired selection of resources.

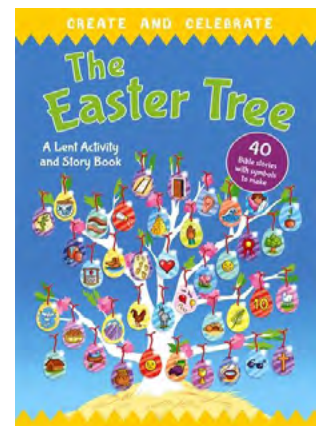


WOMEN OF HOLY WEEK

An Easter Journey in Nine Stories by Dr Paula Gooder
£9.99

Paula Gooder uses her extensive biblical expertise to retell the events of the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension through the eyes of nine female characters she imagines accompanying Jesus during these momentous days. Accompanied by nine colour illustrations, each story brings to life the tension, drama and shock of the events of Holy Week, banishing any over-familiarity and helping readers enter into the Passion narrative in a deeper, more meaningful way. These nine stories are for all who long to encounter Jesus afresh through the Easter Story.

Dr Paula Gooder is a writer and lecturer in Biblical Studies.



CREATE AND CELEBRATE: THE EASTER TREE

A Lent Activity and Story Book by Richard Littledale, Deb Lock
£7.50

An activity and storybook combine for an interactive and reflective way to count the days through Lent to Easter.

Decorate a budding tree branch with 40 easy-to-make symbols and read short stories about Jesus’ life and teachings that each symbol represents.

Templates for the symbols and Bible references are provided along with a reflection and simple Lent challenge.



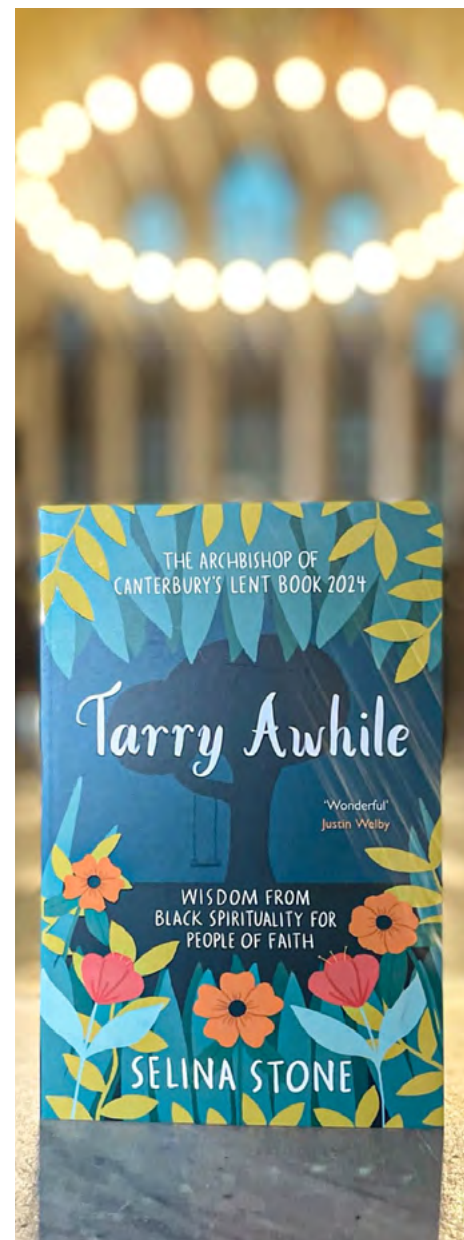
THE REAL EASTER EGG

Meaningful Chocolate Company
£4.90

The 2024 Original Real Easter Egg is the only Easter Egg to include a 24-page Easter story activity book.

Illustrated by award winning artist Martina Peluso, it details the story of the first Easter along with some fun activities. The book also contains a prize competition worth £200. The eggs are Fairtrade, palm oil free and plastic free.

Explore this and other items in the range at:
www.meaningfulchocolate.co.uk



TARRY AWHILE: WISDOM FROM BLACK SPIRITUALITY FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH

The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2024 by Dr Selina Stone, foreword by Justin Welby
£11.99

Tarrying is a Black Christian spiritual practice in which believers actively wait to experience the manifestation of God’s presence. It answers ‘yes’ to the question Jesus once asked his disciples: Will you tarry here and watch with me?

Whether in the vibrancy of music and singing, or in the hushed silence of the congregation, people of all ages anticipate an encounter with God that will transform what they know, feel, and experience day to day.

This book makes the wisdom of Black spiritualities and faith available for all people.

It focuses on seven themes: darkness as a place of encounter with the divine; the unity of all things; movement, belonging, and migration; the Spirit as one who moves in unexpected ways; quiet contemplation as essential to spiritual growth; healing in community; and weeping that turns to joy.

Tarry Awhile centres the stories of often overlooked people and communities, offering wisdom for all people who hope to encounter God in the midst of wearying times.

It provides fresh reflections on familiar biblical passages, and draws on personal stories, theology, and the spiritual wisdom of ancestors who have gone before us.

At a time which increasingly feels dark and challenging, these stories offer light and hope reflecting on the lived experience of faith, its inspiring nature and the love of neighbour and of God which underpins each of these stories.

Dr Selina Stone is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Theological Education at Durham.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



LENT COURSE 2024
at St Benedict's Centre, West Malling
19 FEBRUARY - 25 MARCH, 10:15- 11:45AM

This Lent Course is for anyone who wants to think more deeply about a Christian response to environmental issues. Led by Bishop Adrian Newman, Acting Chair of St Benedict's Centre, the six Monday morning sessions are based on Ruth Valerio's stunning 2020 Lent Book 'Saying Yes to Life'. To book, please email the centre bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



THE BEST OF HANS ZIMMER & FILM FAVOURITES ILLUMINATED
at Rochester Cathedral
17 APRIL & 18 APRIL, 7:15PM & 9:30PM

An immersive tribute to Hans Zimmer and cinema's most iconic music with a live chamber orchestra illuminated by light! The advised lower age limit for this event is 8+. Book your tickets online at www.rochestercathedral.org. Ticket prices start from £35.90.



MESSY CATHEDRAL
at Rochester Cathedral
20 APRIL, 1.30 - 3.30PM

This event is FREE and is for any children and families who would like to attend. There will be activities to include craft, food, and prayer spaces, followed by a communion led by the Bishop of Tonbridge. Weather permitting there will be games out in the Garth garden area and a picnic after the event - please bring your own. No need to register, just turn up.



IT'S YOUR CALLING
at Christ Church, Orpington
18 MAY, 9:30am-3:30pm

It's Your Calling is aimed at those exploring where God may be calling them. It looks at the gifts that God has given us all and at the Biblical understanding of vocation. The day offers an opportunity to meet others on a similar quest and to take time to think what God's plan for you might be. For more information contact vocations@rochester.anglican.org



LENT AND EASTER SERVICES

Palm Sunday: 24 March
08:00 Holy Communion
10:30 The Liturgy of Palm Sunday (procession from La Providence)
15:15 Choral Evensong

Monday to Wednesday
Holy Week: 25 – 27 March
17:30 Services of Readings and Music for Holy Week

Maundy Thursday 28 March
10:30 The Chrism Eucharist
20:00 The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday

Good Friday 29 March
09:30 Choral Mattins
Three Hours' Devotion:
12:00 Preaching the Cross
13:45 The Liturgy of Good Friday

Easter Day 31 March
05:30 The Easter Liturgy with baptisms and confirmation
08:00 Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 The Eucharist of Easter Day
15:15 Solemn Evensong, Procession and Blessing of the Easter Garden

Visitors are encouraged to check the Cathedral website for opening times and any changes in the events schedule www.rochestercathedral.org/easter



PASSION FOR EDUCATION

Gemma Hitch is the new Deputy Director of Education for the Diocese of Rochester. As a former headteacher she is well placed to support the 89 church schools within our care across Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Can you tell us a little about your role and what it involves?

I provide support to the leaders of Church Schools within the diocese with a range of issues. In particular, I support them in developing their Theologically Rooted Christian Vision, and preparing for their SIAMs inspection.

Like what?

Like engaging with curates in their school placements – things that are brand new to me and so interesting. I plan and run training for school leaders too and I'm really excited about the schools festival at the Cathedral in the summer. I deeply value the role that Church Schools play and so working in this role for the Diocese is a real honour and a responsibility I take very seriously.

What's a typical day for you like?

Each day of the week can be totally different! We're here to serve our schools and that can look different each day depending on what they need. In the last week I have visited 6 schools, attended inspection feedback, met with some really interesting people about upcoming projects, had online meetings with academy trusts and local authorities, and run a conference on collective worship with our brilliant colleagues at Canterbury Diocese!

You were a headteacher before you took on this role. Has that been helpful in this new role?

It has definitely helped because I think I have a good understanding of the pressures that headteachers are facing and all the things that they are juggling. Also, I came to faith as an adult, and I attribute much of that to working in Church Schools – they held the door open for faith to enter.

Is there anything you miss?

I miss my team, I have wonderful colleagues in the Diocesan Office, and I love visiting so many schools, but it's different as we all work quite independently. I was a small school head, deeply invested in my children, staff and community and I miss them!

Did you always want to be a teacher?

I think I always wanted to be a teacher. I didn't find school particularly easy but I had a few wonderful teachers who made a real impression on me, and I think I just wanted to be like them! I have always found, and still do find, watching children learn to be absolutely fascinating and a wonderful privilege.

How did being a headteacher impact on that?

Through headship what I realised is that I love to help people to grow and develop - adults as well as children. So, I am excited to be working now with our Church School leaders and doing anything I can to serve them, and to help facilitate them be the best they can be for their children and communities.

What are you listening to at the moment?

I spend a lot of time in my car now, driving between schools so I've definitely got more into podcasts. My favourite at the moment is, 'We Can Do Hard Things', I also like the BBC history podcast 'You're dead to me' and I'm just getting into 'Off Menu'.

Is there anyone who has particularly inspired you?

This is tricky! Lots of people at different times but I think I have some good strong female role models in my family, and they have always inspired me to try and go out and make a difference in the world.

How good do you think you would be on a desert island?

Hopeless – I'm an indoor cat!

Do you have any hobbies?

I am a craft addict and I have done lots of crafts over the years but right now I am obsessed with all things ceramics. I am very lucky to have a small pottery studio at home and it brings me so much joy. There's something about clay that is incredibly grounding, I love that potters are mentioned in the bible and here I am still working with clay thousands of years later – it's such an ancient craft.

So you have any pets?

I have two labradors – Jasper and Freddie.

Is there anything about you that people might find surprising?

As a child of the 90's, I love a boyband. Boybands in general and Boyzone in particular! My musical tastes are not very grown up!

What's your idea of a perfect day?

I love being at home with my husband and the dogs, making something in my pottery studio, cooking nice food and just generally feeling relaxed and cosy!



MINING FOR THE TALENTS GOD HAS GIVEN US

Antonietta Ogundimu is a mental health social worker and an active member of her local church. She believes we all have gifts and talents that God has given us, however, sometimes we can only discover what they are by opening ourselves up to service.

I didn't start out in social work. At first, I worked in a bank, but it was a pretty miserable existence. It was all about selling new products to people. However, I was a natural listener, so I knew when someone was getting a divorce, or if they were for caring for someone who was ill at home, and I didn't want to sell them things they didn't need.

So, I thought carefully about what I was good at. What skills had God given me?

I was good at talking to people, listening, asking questions, and wanting to solve their problems, and I became drawn to social work.

As a social worker, my faith has been a huge support. Sometimes the decisions I have to make are very difficult and I know the person won't like them, so I often pray to God to help me, and for the Spirit to guide me on the right path.

It has made my faith stronger as, even in some of the most challenging situations, I see God at work.

For instance, there have been times when I have gone to bed, woken up, and God has placed a person's name in my mind. I have then rung them and it happens to be right at the moment when they are in crisis. For whatever reason, God has placed me there with them, and I can see I am the right person to be with them at that time.

I believe we are all sitting on a goldmine, and until

we mine into it, we don't know what gifts we have been given. This only comes through being open to service.

At church I have carried out all sorts of acts of service, from cleaning, to helping with intercessions. It was my vicar, who having heard a talk I gave about my favourite hymn at a church event, spotted I may have a gift to explore.

I was encouraged to do the Bishop's Certificate which equips you with a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and the Bible. I am now able to preach in the church once every two months and up to six times a year.

I would encourage anyone reading this to just take the opportunity to serve where you are, be it on the bus, in a café, in your day-to-day commitments with friends and family.

Be gentle, be diligent, be prayerful, and have sensitivity to those around you and you may just have the very God-given gift that someone needs that day.

"As a social worker, my faith has been a huge support."



Diocese of *Rochester*
called together

A PRAYER FOR LENT

Lord, grant us the faith to wait together in darkness and uncertainty – for it is there we will find you. May we come to know you this Lent in ways we have not yet discovered or even imagined.

Amen

Taken from, Watch and Pray - Wisdom and hope for Lent and life, by Carlton Turner
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