Let’s celebrate learning...!

Women Priests – Calling, Cost & Celebration Saturday 28 June 2014 A celebration of 20 years of women priests in the CofE
3.15pm Eucharist at Rochester Cathedral. The Bishop of Rochester will preside and preach. This celebration is open to everyone.

The Rev Pat Iveson and the Rev Jacqueline Littlewood

Photo by Graham Lacdao

PLEASE NOTE: Copy deadline for the July/August issue of Rochester Link is 13 June 2014 at 4pm.
Copy to linknews@rochester.anglican.org
### What's on

**June 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 7</td>
<td><strong>CHELSFIELD Summer Garden Party with a theme of HATST.</strong> Prize for the best one. St Martin of Tours, Cheilstfield from 12.00pm. Free entry with a ticket, which will be available at the church. The party will feature music, games, and refreshments. Entry is free.</td>
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<td><strong>GRIMBOROUGH Concert: Songs of Faith.</strong> The Baroque Singers at St John Groombridge. 3.30pm. Featuring the expressive Missa Brevis by the Renaissance composer Andrea Gabrieli; the Cantigas de Amigo by Martin Codax from medieval Spain, Europe’s oldest surviving song cycle; and praise songs from the 13th century followers of St Francis of Assisi in Florence. The Baroque Singers will be accompanied by the medieval instruments of the early music group Caniceros. Tickets: £10 for adults; £5 for under 16s. Available from <a href="http://www.barquesingers.ticketsource.co.uk">www.barquesingers.ticketsource.co.uk</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>STROOD Book Sale at St Nicholas Church, High Street, Strood. 10am-3pm.</strong> Books, plants, fire engine, and BBQ. Entrance fee 50p for adults. Children free. All welcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 8</td>
<td><strong>BECKENHAM Big Pentecost Picnic on the Green</strong> (by St George’s Church) from 12.30-3.30 pm. Picnic, church stalls and entertainment, plus bouncy castle!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 9</td>
<td><strong>ASH Church Fete on Church Meadow, opposite St Peter &amp; St Paul’s Church, Ash, nr New Ash Green, TN15 7HD.</strong> Lunch at 12.30pm. Free entry, with a £250 cash first prize. Ample car parking available. Entrance is by donation. <strong>BEXLEY</strong> St Mary’s Parish Church Summer Fair from 11.30. Usual stalls including live music, bouncy castle and BBQ. Entrance fee 50p for adults. Children free. All welcome. <strong>GRAVESEND</strong> Gravesham Choral Society Summer Concert at St George’s Church, Gravesend at 7.30pm. A tuneful miscellany of sacred pieces by Mendelssohn, Tchaikowsky, Ireland, Purcell, Finzi and our own conductor Alan Vincent. With organist Malcolm Riley. Tickets £12 (£5 fulltime students). Call 01474 816684 <a href="http://www.graveshams.co.uk">www.graveshams.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 14</td>
<td><strong>BEXLEY Summer Fair at St John the Evangelist, Park Hill Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 1JB from 11.00am-2.30pm.</strong> Children’s corner, Face Painting, BBQ, Candy Floss, Bouncy castle, Coconut Shy, Books, Plants, Fire Engine (subject to operational requirements) plus much more. Come along and see for yourself. <strong>BROMLEY</strong> Dementia conference from 9.30am – 1pm at St Peter and St Paul, Church Rd, Bromley, BR2 0EG. Conference is about understanding the condition, helping caregivers and making a dementia friendly church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 17</td>
<td><strong>WILMINGTON</strong> The Fellowship of Diocesan Prayer invites you to a Quiet Morning led by Bishop Brian at St Michael &amp; All Angels, High Street, Wilmington at 9.30am for 10am-1pm. This is for anyone with a heart for prayer. Please bring a packed lunch if you wish to stay for time of fellowship afterwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 21</td>
<td><strong>DARTFORD Church Fete at Christ Church, Dartford from 11am-3pm.</strong> Lots of stalls, flower demonstrations, fancy dress competition for all ages, BBQ, refreshments and much more. <strong>GRAVESEND Summer Fair at St George’s Church, Gravesend from 11am to 2pm.</strong> Free entry along with free children’s activities and face painting. BBQ, cakes, fun and games and much more. For more details contact Neil Fisher at <a href="mailto:pocahontas1733@sol.co.uk">pocahontas1733@sol.co.uk</a>. **HORTON KIRBY - Annual Summer Fete at St Mary the Virgin, Horton Road. Horton Kirby DA4 5BN opening **Lunchtime Recitals at St Luke’s Church, Eardley Road, Sevenoaks. Every Wednesday at 12.30pm Admission free. Lasting 30 minutes. Refreshments from 12 noon onwards. **Caroline and Richard Walsh – Soprano and Organ 11 Lily Blackmore – Flute 18 Chris Lawton – Organ 26 Hugh Ockendon – Piano This Recital is part of the Sevenoaks Festival.</td>
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**Women Priests - Calling, Cost & Celebration**

**Saturday 28 June 2014**

A celebration of 20 years of women priests in the Church of England.

**3.15pm** Eucharist at the Rochester Cathedral. The Bishop of Rochester will preside and preach. This celebration is open to everyone.
Are we celebrating enough?

By the Rt Rev Dr Brian Castle

Dancing in the Streets, a book written by journalist and historian Barbara Ehrenreich, tells the story of joy and celebration. The book focuses on Britain and the western world, but takes the reader back to the ancient roots of ecstasy and ranges widely by drawing insights from a variety of cultures.

In early and medieval times, people’s natural exuberance founds shape and expression through the festivals of the church. Certainly, dancing in churches was allowed and enjoyed in the late Middle Ages. This sometimes posed problems as there was the ever-present danger that celebrating, lubricated and fuelled by locally brewed ale, could spill over into unruly behaviour. When this happened, Church officials, wanting to balance piety with riotous behaviour, had to read the riot act and bring some order into the celebrations. Generally, however, church members and its clergy were out there dancing and celebrating with the best of them.

The party-poopers of the day tended to be the civil authorities and ruling classes who were anxious for two reasons. First, there was concern about social order. Secondly there was a deeper concern that celebrating was potentially anarchic because it lifted the people temporarily out of their humdrum, dreary existence brought about by long working hours and little reward, and gave them a glimpse of what relationships and socialising could be like. The people experienced social and political liberation while the rulers feared civil disobedience. The story of dancing and celebration took a turn for the worse when the Reformation and public celebration became less acceptable. Communal celebration did not come to an end, but it became increasingly frowned upon.

Apart from occasional events like the Olympics and royal occasions, when do we celebrate together? Urbanisation, the lure of the computer screen and the rise of a competitive market-based economy with its accompanying pressures have encouraged an environment where individualism gives momentum to a spiralling isolationism. When this is linked to a climate where festivities are discouraged there will be a negative effect on the mental and spiritual health of the people. In places, society has lost the art of corporate celebration and replaced it with over-indulgence: we, literally, are eating and drinking ourselves to death.

Depression, regarded as the second most disabling illness across the globe, becomes more prominent. There is no evidence to suggest that depression (or Melancholy, as it was known before the twentieth century) is a phenomenon of the modern era, but there is evidence to suggest that communal celebration and festivities help alleviate it.

Celebration is in the DNA of the Christian faith. Celebration moves our focus beyond ourselves and our needs. The roots of celebration for the Christian are in praise and thanksgiving. There is the praise of God and thanksgiving for what God has done through Christ because of his love for humanity. Celebrating this engendered other celebrations and parties. Celebrating in this way is a politically subversive act because it is rooted in God who is more powerful and influential than the rulers of this world. Therefore, the more we celebrate like this, the less this world has power over us and our allegiances.

Celebration is a form of mission. Are our churches places of real celebration? Are people attracted to our communities because they are places of joy? The point has already been made that celebrating is important from the perspective of individual and communal mental health and so the Christian faith has something to teach a society that swings between little celebration or over-indulgence.

When distinguishing Christian behaviour from that of their pagan counterparts the early Christian author Tertullian wrote, ‘See how these Christians celebrate another.’ It would be a tribute if somebody could say of twenty-first century Christians, ‘See how these Christians celebrate and enjoy themselves’.

Bishop James’ diary – June

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 June</td>
<td>All Day Bishop’s Staff meeting</td>
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<td>3 June</td>
<td>2000 Beckenham Deanery meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1100 Bishop’s Leadership Programme - London</td>
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<td>1930 Kent Workplace Mission Trustees - Larkfield</td>
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<td>4 June</td>
<td>1500 Housing Justice Trustees - London</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 June</td>
<td>All Day House of Lords</td>
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<td>6-5 June</td>
<td>All Day Senior Leadership Development Group - London</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 June</td>
<td>10.30 Diocesan Youth Council - Bishopscourt</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 June</td>
<td>10.30 Peach: 75th Anniversary Service - Orpington, Christ Church</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1800 Confirmation - Christchurch</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-17 June</td>
<td>Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 June</td>
<td>1300 House of Bishops Standing Committee - London</td>
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<td>1730 Bishop’s Council – Diocesan Office</td>
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<td>19 June</td>
<td>0800 Kent Church Leaders meeting – Maidstone</td>
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<td>Evening ‘For Everything a Season’ course – The Oasts</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 June</td>
<td>Morning ‘For Everything a Season’ course – The Oasts</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 June</td>
<td>All Day Healing ministry weekend - Crowhurst</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 June</td>
<td>Morning Healing ministry weekend - Crowhurst</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 June</td>
<td>1830 Confirmation – Green Street Green, St Mary</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 June</td>
<td>Evening Garden Party – Bishopscourt</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>1100 New Housing Areas Group – Churches Together in England</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 June</td>
<td>Evening Garden Party – Bishopscourt</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 June</td>
<td>Evening Garden Party – Bishopscourt</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 June</td>
<td>All Day 20th Anniversary of Ordination of Women as Priests – Diocesan events</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 June</td>
<td>Evening Cathedral Development Trust Garden Party - Bishopscourt</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>0930 Confirmation – East Peckham, Holy Trinity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1200 Ordinands’ Day lunch - Bishopscourt</td>
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<td>31 June</td>
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<td>1 June</td>
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MESSY MEET-UP

An opportunity to meet up with other Messy Church leaders and helpers and to share news, information and ideas.

Guest speaker Cheryl Trice, Diocesan Advisor for Youth Work will share ideas on how to engage teenagers in Messy Church

Monday 9 June 2014
Churchcrosst House, Church Lane, Barming, Kent ME16 9HA
Refreshments 7.30pm for 8pm start

Wednesday 11 June 2014
St Nicholas Church, Farnborough, Orpington BR6 9QB
Refreshments 7.30pm for 8pm start

Wednesday 18 June 2014
St Justus Church
The Fairway, ROCHESTER ME1 2OQ
Refreshments 7.30pm for 8pm start

Open to Messy leaders/team members and helpers and all those interested in Messy Church! To book contact Caroline Clarke 07703 103366 or Email: sarah.cabella@rochester.anglican.org
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Kidzpraise

By John Marley

There’s no better way to reach out to the local community than with a parent and toddler group. That’s what the vicar of Aylesford, the Rev Chris Van Straaten thought when applying for a £100 grant from the Bishop’s Fund for Mission, as part of the Hope 2014 programme.

Now St Peter & St Paul’s Church in the picturesque village of Aylesford runs Kidzpraise, a parent and toddler praise group, for an hour and a half every Wednesday.

Hope 2014 is a national programme of practical support, advice and finance to help bring churches together to transform their communities. The aim of Hope 2014 is to leave a legacy of lasting spiritual change, with churches at the heart of their communities. Help from Diocesan Missioners is on hand to help parishes make plans for mission initiatives that enable community engagement.

Hope 2014 runs alongside the Church’s Intentional Evangelism strategy to make new disciples, to place prayer and evangelism at the heart of every parish, and to make the Church a more relevant and influential part of people’s lives over the coming years. “We didn’t have any work with small children on weekdays, so we started a parent and toddler group,” Chris said. “We used the grant for a carpet for the children to sit on, and ribbon flags for them to wave during games and songs.”

“The children play games at the beginning of each session, followed by show-and-tell and birthdays and songs,” Chris explained. “Then we have a Bible story, and more songs - activity songs with flags and musical instruments.” The charge is only £1 per family, and the group meets, in the ancient church on top of the hill overlooking the village and the river Medway, but in the church’s Brassey Centre, which used to house the village school. “The group has a Christian flavour,” according to Chris. “We didn’t want it to be heavy at all, but lightly Christian throughout. The aim is for outreach.”

It’s still early days, as Kidzpraise has only been going for a month, but there are five regular families so far, and Chris plans to expand the group, advertising at local schools and at other parent and toddler groups held on different days of the week.

But Kidzpraise is only part of Aylesford church’s outreach, said Chris, who moved to the parish from Gillingham seven years ago.

“Hope 2014 and Intentional Evangelism coincided to give us fresh impetus to try new things,” Chris said. Among other activities, Aylesford church has started a youth group, runs a social group for younger women, hosts Friendship Afternoons for older parishioners, and recently converted a confirmation class into one of its traditional home groups. On top of that, Chris is looking at hooking up with the Diocese to provide financial services to those in need through a credit union. As Chris says, outreach is central to Aylesford church’s mission: “We’re always trying to be part of the community and to grow our Christian family.”

Military meeting at Sevenoaks

For many years the Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Scripture Readers’ Association (SASRA) has held an annual meeting in Sevenoaks, an event which has drawn an encouraging attendance and wholehearted singing.

The lead speaker at this year’s meeting on Monday 9 June at St Nicholas Church will be Colonel John Lewis who assumed the Chairmanship of the SASRA Council in August 2013. Colonel Lewis has had wide operational experience as a specialist in military logistics, including tours of duty in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. During an exchange tour in Australia he met his future wife. His commitment to the work of the Gospel throughout the Armed Services is also evident in his Trusteeship of the Naval, Military and Air Force Bible Society.

The second speaker will be Army Scripture Reader Roddy Macleod who works at the Army Training Regiment at Pirbright in Surrey. Having spent his early life in the Western Isles, he served in the Queen’s Own Highlanders, including the first Iraq War in 1991. On leaving the Army he admits to having been involved in a drug culture before being rescued by the Christian Gospel. In due course this decisive influence in his life led to his becoming an Army Scripture Reader with a significant ministry among recruits, who often face a cultural shock of joining the Army, as well as among soldiers at Headley Court who are recovering from serious wounds and amputations following military operations.

This meeting, which is open to all members of the public, will begin at 8pm, but light refreshments will be available from 7.30pm in the Undercroft of St Nicholas Church.

Colonel John Lewis

St Peter & St Paul, Aylesford
Let’s celebrate learning!

By Dr Sally Musson

Let’s celebrate learning...! and we did this with praise and thanksgiving at St Andrew’s Church, Paddock Wood on Sunday 11 May.

21 students with their families and friends gathered to receive certificates for the Foundation in Christian Ministry (Stage 1) and commendation by Bishop James for local ministry in their respective parishes. The Rev Dr Neil Evans, Director of Ministry, Diocese of London, and External Quality Adviser for the course, encouraged us in understanding ministry as developing the gifts people have, rather than ‘filling jobs that need doing’.

Our diverse group was excited and somewhat daunted to be ‘guinea pigs’ of this new course, the successor to Reader, Pastoral Assistant and Evangelist training. Those receiving certificates had completed 5 terms of training, before going on to various forms of ministry. 15 will continue for another 4 terms towards becoming Licensed Lay Ministers.

The start of the journey: September 2012 saw young, and ‘young at heart’, students at the start of a new stage in their Christian journey. Many did not have a clear vision of where God was leading but, if they did, this was soon challenged. One student giving her testimony at the service said:

“The course addresses many preconceived ideas; it extends your knowledge and confronts your current belief systems. This can be hard and hit more deeply than you can imagine.”

Another compared the course to a gap year and the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and embrace new experiences. The only trouble was that “usually for a gap year you leave things behind as you travel to new places. This was not the case for us. We were doing this course on top of our normal lives”. She provided an apt visual image of juggling a large number of plates simultaneously.

The journey itself: The course necessitates commitment and sacrifice from the students and asks no less of our tutors, learning advisers, and our course director, Alison Callway. Sincere thanks to them all, and to our families and our clergy who have supported us. The journey challenged us all in different ways, helping us see things from different perspectives. In the words of another student:

“The course has helped me to overcome my ‘judgemental’ attitudes, and become more inclusive of people who are different from me.”

We have, indeed, experienced a closer walk with God through our learning, our prayer, our fellowship, and through wrestling with our assignments!

The continuing journey: It is a continuing journey for us all. The Bishop, speaking on Acts 2: 42-47 and 1 Peter 2:19-25, emphasised the importance of local ministry but also stressed the challenges and suffering involved. But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is always there for us.

The Foundation in Christian Ministry might have turned many of our lives upside down, but this shared journey has been so rewarding thus far, and who knows what is around the corner? So let’s keep celebrating learning!
Water Aid Harvest Appeal

How Dementia Friendly Are We?

By Julia Burton-Jones

Having lived in many places over the course of my life I have made plenty of friends. I see most of my friends infrequently, but it is nice to know they are there. If I am diagnosed with dementia one day, I would like to think my friends will remain my friends. Sadly, all too often this is not the case. Friends don’t know what to say and stay away at the very moment you most need them. Statistics gathered for the Alzheimer’s Society report Dementia 2012 are alarming. 67% of people with dementia questioned do not always feel part of the community. 61% felt lonely always or some of the time. 44% felt they lost friends after being diagnosed.

Given that one in three people who reach retirement age will die with dementia, this concerns us all, which is why there is a national drive to increase awareness. Television adverts for the Dementia Friends campaign feature Gina, who is living with dementia, alongside celebrity supporters singing along to ‘I’ll get by with a little help from my friends’.

So how do churches in Rochester Diocese fit in? Are we joining forces with others in our local areas to make our towns and villages places where people with dementia feel valued? What about people with dementia in our congregations? Do they feel welcome and accepted?

As a Dementia Friends Champion, I have been asked by the Mission and Community Engagement team to work on a project in Rochester Archdeaconry. I am discovering wonderful ways Christians are showing friendship to their neighbours with dementia:

- Christ Church in Milton-Next-Gravesend welcomes people to Mustard Seed on a Thursday afternoon each month;
- St John Meopham provides a Tuesday morning support group finishing with lunch for people with dementia and their supporters, in partnership with the charity Alzheimer’s and Dementia Support Services;
- St Nicholas, Strood has a day centre for people with dementia;
- St Stephen, Chatham has a Dementia Care Group which meets on the fourth Thursday of the month;
- All Saints Chatham is hosting a Dementia Family Engagement Event on Monday 9 June (contact the Admiral Nursing Service on 01634 382080). I could go on.

I also hear sad stories, like the experience of the husband grieving over the growing invisibility of his wife with dementia who had been a central member of their church.

We are running six events in June and early July. Please come along to find out about dementia and explore the role of local churches. We would also like you to share what has worked well and ideas you have for creating dementia friendly churches, especially if you are a person living with dementia.

Dementia Friendly Church Events:
- St Edmund, Dartford, 2.00 – 5.00 on Monday 23 June;
- St Justa, Rochester, 9.30 – 12.30 on Tuesday 24 June;
- St John the Baptist, Meopham, 9.30 – 12.30 on Saturday 28 June;
- St Aidan, Gravesend, 9.30 – 12.30 on Monday 30 June;
- St Nicholas, Strood, 9.30 – 12.30 on Tuesday 1 July;
- St Matthew, Gillingham, 2.00 – 5.00 on Thursday 3 July.

For a booking form contact Carol at carol.evans@rochester.anglican.org.

To share ideas and experiences, contact Julia at jjburtonjo@aol.com.

Clean water arrives in Lahyte
There is none like you, O Lord, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

1Ch 17:20 (ESV)
Ann Blatcher retires

Ann has been associated with St Martin’s Church, Chelsfield for 60 years, much of this time she was actually on the PCC! In trying to list all the things she has done in this time the writer has struggled to find any stone that she has not turned.

From early days she became a bell ringer, read lessons, cleaned the church, and was a born organiser. It was not really until the Rev Canon Leslie Virgo became rector that she really took off. Greatly impressed by his intellect and imagination, and sound Christian principles, she was mentored, eventually becoming a Reader, the first woman to do so at St Martin. At the same time she had taken on numerous other roles, keeping registers up to date, creating a churchyard record that many churches would envy, and looking after our historic registers and archival material, server and assistant, and even Churchwarden (yet again the only woman to do so).

During Leslie’s long incumbency she not only helped him with the care of the rectory and himself, but looked after the vestments and linen at church. Her gifts of organising and dealing with people and worship, honest to perfection by Leslie, made her popular, and in her capacity as Reader she was allowed to take many funerals, often of cherished members of St Martin who had been there since before she came. She has been behind many a fete and special occasions, and, when not involved with “On Stage” at church, has been very much “On Stage” with the Chelsfield Players either acting, directing, prompt and props, and eventually Chair. Never afraid to be in front of an audience she has made an excellent preacher, and her other skill in art has often been put to good use. It is good to know that even though she has now properly retired from services, many of her other skills and roles will continue. Having been through three interregna she has really earned this rest from greater responsibility. However, like all self-driven people I cannot see her simply sitting in a chair and watching TV for the rest of her life.
Gilead Foundations is a Therapeutic Community,

offering a residential rehabilitation program, called KEY, for people with life-controlling addictions, such as drug or alcohol abuse, homelessness, gambling, eating disorders, self harm, and other addictive behaviours. Based on a 300 acre dairy farm in rural Devon, Gilead also offers the following training in addiction counselling:

- Restoration Ministry (11 courses) 150 hours
- Recovery Support Counselling (17 courses) 280 hours
- Addiction Studies (23 courses) 350 hours

Gilead Foundations is also offering
- Biblical Systematic theology
- The Holy Spirit
- The Person of Jesus Christ

At Gilead Foundations we use the Genesis Process Relapse Prevention programme with our clients. This training and the Genesis tools are used throughout the programme at Gilead. We also have a correspondence course on counselling by Jay Adams

www.gilead.org.uk
Praying the way

World
Troubled areas of the world, Ukraine, Africa and Syria. For the persecuted Church.

Diocese
The Festival of Pentecost and renewal. For our Bishops James and Brian, all clergy and lay workers. Quiet Morning 17 at Wilmington.

Bromley & Bexley
Beckenham Deanery
Beckenham, Christ Church: Eils Shipton, ordained in training.

Beckenham, St Paul
Those preparing for marriage.

Beckenham, St George
Junior Choir.

Penge, St John the Evangelist
Thanks growth of Big Fish for dads and children. Nigel Poole our associate minister.

Bromley Deanery
Hayes
Thanks for team of churchwardens and deputes.

Sidcup Deanery
Sidcup, St John Lark in the Park

Rochester
Cobham Deanery
Meopham with Nursted. Civic Service, giving thanks. For the installation of the Rev Alyson Davie.

Ash and Ridley
Our Pilgrim Groups.

Fawkham and Hartley
Weddings this month.

Istead Rise
Monthly Car Washing team will bless community.

Longfield
For the Longfield festival.

Dartford Deanery
Thanks for the Swale Valley Foodbank, for those who use it and help run it.

Crockenhill
Way forward for our Church room and for love in action.

Horton Kirby and Sutton at Home.
Those working in the grounds of Sutton Court and pray for their futures.

Darent
For the PCC members and newly elected churchwardens.

Dartford, Christ Church
For the Overflow weekend sharing with St Peter Hextable on 26-28

Gillingham Deanery
Bredhurst, St Peter
Thanks for the life of Marilyn Lewis.

Gillingham, St Luke the Evangelist
For new opportunities from our audit.

Gillingham, St Mary Magdalene
For the forthcoming vacancy here.

Holy Trinity, Gillingham
For our children and young people’s work.

Gillingham, St Barnabas
For the mission here and in our community.

Gaveshend Deanery
For those taking exams in schools, colleges and universities. For God’s guidance and presence in all our activities.

Tonbridge
Paddock Wood Deenery
Yalding with Collier Street
Those still living in temporary accommodation.

Sevenoaks Deanery
Brasted Messy Church starting on 29.

Kippington, St Mary, 8 Church Birthday and with reaching the community.

Sevenoaks, St Luke
Outreach activities; Sevenoaks Summer Festival.

Weald
17 Evening Special with the Rev Canon Jean Kerr, our future vision.

Sheringham Wells Deenery

Rusthall
Thanks for Messy Church.

Volunteers to be parish prayer representatives.

Tunbridge Wells, St James
End of our hardship month.

Reformation and young people’s work.

Holy Trinity, Gillingham
forthcoming vacancy here.

For the mission here and in our community.

For those preparing for marriage.

For village school.

For village school.

For village school.

For those taking exams in schools, colleges and universities. For God’s guidance and presence in all our activities.

Tunbridge Wells, King Charles the Martyr
Festival of Pentecost and renewal. For our Diocese.

For Troubled areas of the world, Ukraine, Africa and Syria. For the persecuted Church.

For village school.

For village school.

For village school.

For village school.

For village school.

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Making Sense of Research

By the Rev Trevor Gerhardt

As a youth worker for a Baptist church in South Africa in the late 1980’s, I decided to conduct a small scale survey in order to have a more informed view on which kind of youth programme would be the most relevant to the youth.

The survey questionnaire was anonymous and asked questions about likes, hobbies, fears and aspirations. I discovered that many of my assumptions about my young audience were misinformed. Quite a few of the youth programmes on offer at the time were therefore irrelevant and missing the mark. As a result of the short survey, I started an ‘ice-cream bar’ which basically was an hour-long panel discussion event (with free ice-cream) around a number of topics which the survey had revealed as relevant.

Research such as the survey example above can be an extremely useful tool in enabling one to get to grips with an issue or topic.

Working for the Brighton and Hove Methodist Circuit as a free-church chaplain on both university campuses in Brighton seeking to develop the student work for the Methodist circuit, I became aware of very damning statements being made about the future of Methodism. These statements were found in publications and often used in talks and conferences as well. One such statement predicted that the last Methodist candle would be snuffed out by 2037. It was communications like this which inspired me to do my MA degree on seeking to understand this apparent decline in Methodism. Whilst conducting my MA research I learned that these statements about Methodism were based on statistical evidence of Sunday attendance. In other words, the totals of people attending Sunday services gathered over a long period time which then indicated a constant decline. Based on the assumption that this decline would continue, the prediction was therefore that the last Methodist church would close in 2037. The local Methodist church where I attended however had 3 times the national average Methodist church Sunday attendance measured in 2005. This church was not declining and was not following the national trend of declining Sunday church attendance. I wanted to understand why this was the case and how this local church impacted upon the student population in Brighton? Again, I used research and tools such as statistics, surveys, interviews and a review of literature to help me shape my ministry. What I discovered was encouraging, insightful and helped to shape the strategy towards reaching out to local students by the Methodist churches.

The European Union sponsors a programme called the Erasmus Intensive Programme (EIP) to enhance the experience of doctoral studies across participating universities. I was successfully selected to participate in this programme as a doctoral student from Canterbury Christ Church University. Together with delegates from Universities from Italy, Lithuania and Turkey, we will live and learn together for 2 weeks in Joensuu, Finland. The 2 weeks will allow me, in my doctoral studies about the training of curates, to further explore how research will enable me to better understand and improve the training of curates. The EIP is about collaboration, cosmopolitanism and communities as we learn together to enhance our methodology in research.

The Annual Research Conference this year continues with this theme of research by having Mike Higton as the main speaker on the theme, ‘Research as a partner in the gospel’. Mike has been appointed by the University of Durham to head up the Church of England National Common Awards programme and curriculum. Bookings for this event will be open before the summer and any abstracts from those engaged in MA or PhD studies are welcome and can be sent to Trevor Gerhardt at the diocesan office. Please ring 01643560000 or email trevor.gerhardt@rochester.anglican.org

Bishop James visits St Mary’s Island C of E Primary School on 1 May

Headteacher Mrs Christine Euston said, “The staff, governors and pupils of St Mary’s Island School, Chatham were delighted to receive a visit from the Bishop to share in our celebrations of our good Ofsted rating. The staff and children enjoyed the visit very much, especially when Bishop James took part in mental maths with Year 6. We wish to thank the Bishop for fitting us to his very busy schedule.”