

Everyone is Welcome

I really want the students to be known, to feel loved and feel like they belong. This way, life is more meaningful and we can create more community for everyone else to share and enjoy. It's all about inclusivity.

Effervescent Australian deacon Sally Apokis is a Church of England University Chaplain based in Kent. Sporting a black tee shirt with Medway Campus Chaplain emblazoned across the chest in fluorescent pink, she's hard to miss. Add that to her cheery fuchsia bandana with matching ear-rings and welcoming smile and you are on to a winning formula. Sally is approachable, sincere and fun – a listening ear with a heart; just what most parents would want for their children away at university, and what most students need when they want some extra support.

Sally said, "I'm all about the Good News. This job is all about communication. People need to be empowered and to be treated as an equal."

"What I really like about Christianity is that Jesus came to liberate us from all the rules."

Married to Kon (who works in the Diocese of Canterbury) with three children all living back in Australia, Sally does miss her extended family, but feels very welcome in the UK. She said, "I have had an incredible welcome from the Church of England. I also love traditional letter-writing (Sally uses sealing wax stamping a big S on the back of her

sharing good food and decent coffee is important (the first time she met the Bishop of Rochester, she was wearing an apron!) Chaplaincy is about nourishment for the soul. People can be malnourished in a spiritual sense, so I seek to provide food, friendship and soulful nourishment. I asked an English friend in Australia what he thought I should bring to England with me. He said,

"Bring inspiration and a sense of feeling good' and that's what I try to do here. Everyone is welcome; there are no boundaries or borders."

Life as a university chaplain is busy and demanding. Offering what people need is vital. Some students seek



envelopes) making cards, texting, blogging and using Facebook – so staying in touch with my family and friends is easy really."

Sally's obvious enthusiasm for communicating with people shows itself both in her flamboyant and creative approach to ministry and her photo-journalistic endeavours. You can find her on Twitter,

a more traditional way of worship, and Sally has helped them by creating a regular chapel service. She said, "It's inclusive, eclectic, simple and beautiful. This small service brings people together and allows us to pray for each other. It's not big or grand but it is meaningful and I hope I help people grow in their spirituality."

For those looking for fellowship in a different way, Sally created Craftivists and so far, students have come together in activities like origami and sewing groups, making beautiful things for their homes. This way, they get to know each other in a social setting. Morphed into the Get Crafty Society, this student body has won a prize for best new Society. But Sally

YouTube and other social media, and students seeking solace can also find her in her office on the campus!

A nurturing, hospitality-based ministry suits Sally's genuine style of ministry. She said, "Friendship is incredibly important."

"Being friends with people and

isn't looking for accolades. She said, "I feel I am here to build a community. I really want the students to be known, to feel loved and feel like they belong. This way, life is more meaningful and we can create more community for everyone else to share and enjoy."

"These are micro-activities with a macro goal. It's all about inclusivity."

Students may see Sally out and about in her customised tee shirts, or zipping around campus on her Dutch bicycle. If you need to speak with Sally, you can contact her at Room 222 in Pembroke North at the Greenwich end of the campus. Just follow the origami butterflies...