

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 11 | November 2021 - January 2022

GROW | ENRICH | RESOURCE

COVER STORY: CHURCH BIKE PROJECT GETS SET TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE PAGE 8




CHANGING OUR
SAFEGUARDING
CULTURE

LOVE SPORT,
LOVE JESUS

PREPARING
FOR
CHRISTMAS

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 Diocese of Rochester
called together

Gaia



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Welcome to this winter edition of iTogether magazine.

I'm sure the Christmas adverts started even earlier this year. It's as though, given all the sacrifices and losses we have experienced over the last 18 months, the need to tap into the 'magic' of Christmas has come even earlier.

We know of course that we don't live in the dewy-eyed world of the Christmas adverts, and so the national Church's simple invitation to reflect on what really is at the heart of Christmas for each of us this year holds a particular appeal (**Focus On** pg 16).

You can also check out some of our book recommendations for Advent and beyond (pg 20).

Elsewhere you can read about the journey started to create a more positive culture around safeguarding in the Diocese, including some powerful testimonies about why safeguarding needs to be all our concern (**Focus On** pg 10). We also have a challenging message for men to take a stand against abuse and violence towards women (**Big Issue** pg 18).

In our Everyday Faith section, meet newly ordained deacon Esther, who, like our **One to One** interviewee (the recently appointed Overseas Link coordinator), is relishing the opportunities for conversation her new ministry is bringing.

Whatever these next few months bring, I wish you peace this Christmas.

Jennifer Ross
Communications Manager

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

In-house design:
Katerina Gerhardt

Design: CPO

Print: CPO

FIND US:

@CoFERochester

@SeeofRochester

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Get in touch :
communications@rochester.anglican.org



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NEW DEACONS AND PRIESTS WELCOMED INTO THE DIOCESAN FAMILY

A nurse, a British Sign Language Interpreter, a flying enthusiast and a biochemist were among the 23 men and women ordained as deacons and priests into the Diocese of Rochester in September.

A person is ordained a deacon once they have completed their initial ordination training. After a year of curacy, some continue in ministry as distinctive deacons, while for most the next step is ordination as a priest.

Deacon, the Rev Eucharua Asiegbu, who now serves at St John, Sidcup with Footscray said: "I

am immensely grateful to God for calling me to serve God and humanity. Although ministry could sometimes come with challenges, I trust God to see me through every step of the way because God is limitless in my limitations."

Meet one of our new deacons, Esther Bevan, in our Everyday Faith section on page 27.

Anyone interested in exploring what God's plan might be for them can find out more at www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith/gods-plan-for-you/



KNIT AND NATTER

Dozens of knitted items were donated to the Medway NHS Foundation Trust by the Knit and Natter group from St Matthew's Church Wigmore, Gillingham to be sold at the Volunteer's Desk of Medway Hospital. Thank you Knit and Natter, your creations will cheer up and support a lot of people.



PAWS FOR THOUGHT

A woof-able time was had at St Peter's Church, Ightham, as they held their first pet service. A few unexpected showers did not deter the human and animal congregation, which included lots of dogs, 1 cat, 2 guinea pigs, 1 parrot and even a spider! The animals (and the people) all behaved themselves and everyone seemed to like their rosettes.



NEW LEAD NHS CHAPLAIN

In November, the Rev Ruth Bierbaum was licensed and commissioned as Lead Chaplain for Medway Maritime Hospital. Her role will be about reminding the organisation to remember the individual in their care, both staff and patients, and to see them holistically. She says, "Chaplaincy is about remembering who the person is and as a Christian, believing that each and every individual is precious to God."



YARNING FOR REMEMBRANCE

Remembrance was marked again across the Diocese with dignity, reverence and, in many places, a touch of creativity. This stunning knitted display formed part of the commemorations at All Saints' Church, Langton Green. Well done to everyone who contributed their time and talents.



UMBRELLAS MARK BABY LOSS

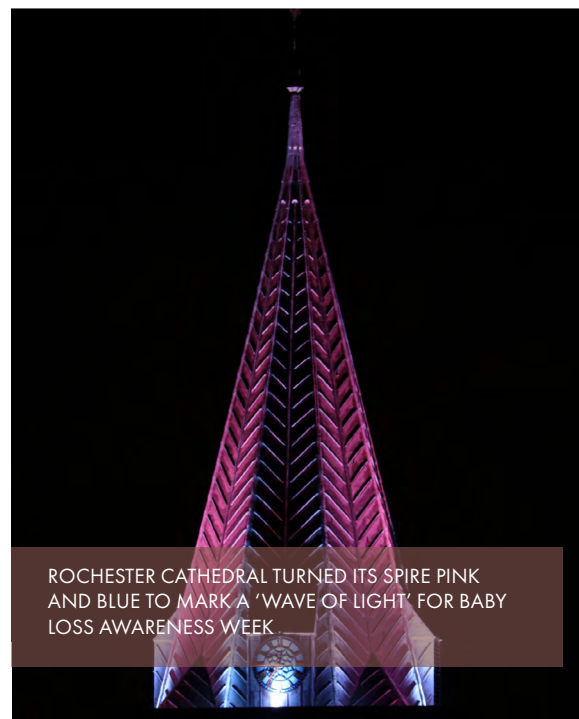
St Margaret's Church in Rainham turned its ancient church roof space into a memorial to mark Baby Loss Awareness Week in October.

A staggering four hundred pink and blue umbrellas were hung from the 12th century beams inside St Margaret's church in support of the baby loss charity Making Miracles. Some parents hung a heart underneath the umbrellas to remember the baby they had lost.

The Rev Nathan Ward, Vicar of St Margaret, says the charity's work is incredibly important:

"It's estimated that one in four pregnancies will end in miscarriage with some experiencing consecutive miscarriages; the trauma and grief is more than often invisible and it can be incredibly difficult to come to terms with it.

"Lost babies are never forgotten, even decades later families still feel the pain. Some of the dates on the hearts in church go back to the 1950s."



ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL TURNED ITS SPIRE PINK AND BLUE TO MARK A 'WAVE OF LIGHT' FOR BABY LOSS AWARENESS WEEK

HELLOS AND GOODBYES

In October, the Rev Sharon Copestake was announced as the next Archdeacon of Tonbridge. Sharon is currently the Vicar of St Francis, Strood and Area Dean of Strood and replaces Julie Conalty who was appointed Bishop of Birkenhead in July.

Reacting to her appointment Sharon said, "I am thrilled to have been asked to be the next Archdeacon of Tonbridge in these exciting, if challenging, times.

"I am very much looking forward to getting to know the people and clergy of the Archdeaconry, and hopeful that we can build good and strong working relationships that honour the mission of God and the ministry of his people.

Then, in November, the Queen approved the nomination of the Rev Saju Muthalaly, Vicar of St Mark, Gillingham and St Mary's Island Chatham, as the next Suffragan Bishop of Loughborough, in the Diocese of Leicester.

It is believed he will be the youngest bishop in the Church of England at the age of 42, when he takes up his post in spring 2022.

Bishop Simon shared the news by saying,

"I am thrilled to hear of Saju's appointment. What a choice! His restless energy and innate desire for the Gospel are so evident, and they are coupled with an astute and reflective mind. And that gregarious, occasionally mischievous, personality will make instant connections wherever he goes.

"Though we'll ache as friends to lose his company locally, this is great news for Leicester and for the kingdom of God."



THE BRAKES ARE OFF AS YOUTH BIKE PROJECT GETS SET TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Everyone's getting wheelie excited at St Barnabas Cray about the new St Barnabas Bike Project.

Growing out of the flourishing weekly church youth night, the bike project will offer a chance for young people to learn new skills such as how to fix, maintain, and refurbish bikes.

Children and Youth Worker, Jen Coleman, says they wanted particularly to meet the needs of those young people who were more practically minded and who found school difficult:

"I felt it was important to find a way of encouraging, mentoring and sharing the gospel with these kids, in a style that suited them."

She explains that the project has been made possible through some fantastic local partnerships:

"We have been amazed at God's provision and his love for these young people. We have now received a 20ft container from local housing association Clarion Housing and Travis Perkins, we've secured an ongoing supply of bikes from the Police, (Crystal) Palace for Life Foundation are sending volunteers, Chislehurst Youth For Christ donated tools and a storage shed and, just

when we needed it, a local company Limegate Solutions offered to lay the concrete foundations."

A £5,000 funding boost from the Diocese's Children and Young People's Fund will enable the church to buy bike parts, an outdoor shelter and much more. Jen says twenty-five young people have signed up so far to take part and everyone is very excited to see how the project develops: "We are a small congregation with a big God! We are so grateful to God for enabling us to care for his children in this place."

The Children and Young People (CYP) Fund aims to support ideas that will give children and young people lifelong encounters with Jesus, and has been made possible through the significant financial support of Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust.

As well as the St Barnabas Bike Project, the Fund has already supported a diverse array of projects, both large and small across the Diocese, from puppets, audio and film equipment, to Christmas crafts and trips to Christian youth events.

Find out more about the fund at: www.rochester.anglican.org/for-parishes/children-young-people-and-families/children-and-young-people-fund/



SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

A recent initiative to raise awareness of everyone's role in creating safer spaces has seen the Diocese and Cathedral work together to start a positive conversation around safeguarding.



It's early October, and a small group gathers by the Tudor Gate at Rochester Cathedral. Present, are representatives of Rochester Cathedral, the Diocese of Rochester, and the victim/survivor support group, Survivors Voices. They've met for a time of reflection, and to tie ribbons to the railings as part as part of an installation to show solidarity with those affected by child sexual abuse.

Called LOUDfence, the installation was part of a joint Season of Safeguarding between the Cathedral and the Diocese. Its aim was to raise awareness of a number of safeguarding issues that have implications for everyone, and where people can access support, but also to start a conversation.

"We know that safeguarding is something that everyone needs to be alert to all of the time and is not something that can be confined to a single day or a designated season," says Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones, Bishop's Lead for Safeguarding in the Diocese. "However, our hope is that this Safeguarding Season will have started an ongoing conversation around changing the culture around safeguarding, particularly within the Church."

Speaking at the simple ceremony to launch the LOUDfence, Jane Chevous, Co-founder of Survivors Voices, who worked with the Cathedral and Diocese on the Season, shared her experience and hope:

"I am a survivor of child abuse and, as I was growing up, church was my safe space. And then as an adult, I was raped and repeatedly abused by two Anglican priests, and that trust was broken - my trust in the Church and trust in God.

"It is right that we are outraged and distressed about abuse. But broken relationships can be repaired. Trust can be restored, and trauma can be healed. The important thing is that we have the courage to speak and to meet survivors with compassion, generosity, and support."

Many churches engaged with the Season and particularly with Safeguarding Sunday itself, which is an initiative of the Christian safeguarding charity, Thirtyone:eight.

At St James' Church, Tunbridge Wells, the vicar

talked about safeguarding during the morning service, explaining what safeguarding is and introducing the Parish Safeguarding Officer. They also took the opportunity to refresh their noticeboard with safeguarding information, and each youth group leader spoke to their group about what safeguarding might look like for them.

"It is right that we are outraged and distressed about abuse. But broken relationships can be repaired."

Jane Chevous,
Co-founder of Survivors Voices

In Gravesend, St Mary Church was inspired to create its own LOUDfence for those who may not be able to visit the Cathedral. Ribbons and hand





LOUD FENCE AT ST MARY, GRAVESEND

shaped cards for people to write prayers or messages on were prepared, and during the service, everyone was invited to add their message a tie them with a ribbon to the line on their way out.

As part of the Season, a set of films exploring what safeguarding means to individuals from a range of organisations and church roles, was created. The films are now available as a permanent resource to be used at any time by churches and individuals as conversation starters, around the importance of creating safe environments.

Bishop Simon says the impetus created must not be lost:

“To be safe asks of others that they keep you safe. The Church has a long and shameful history of failure when it comes to protecting the vulnerable in its midst.

“This Safeguarding Season is a small but important step we have taken towards changing the view that safeguarding is something to be relegated to a tick box exercise.

“Rather it is something we should do joyfully as a sign of mutual care and concern for one another, and as a demonstration of our understanding that everyone is valued in the sight of God.”

Where to get support

If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this article, there is help available. Please be encouraged to contact the Diocese’s Safeguarding Team. Visit: www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding

In addition, Safe Spaces is an independent service supporting survivors of church-related abuse. It is free to access via telephone - 0300 303 1056 (answerphone available outside of opening times), email - safespaces@victimsupport.org, or web-chat via www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk

A list of helplines offering support on a range of issues can be found on the Church of England’s website at: www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/reporting-abuse-and-finding-support

Here we share a few extracts from the ‘What safeguarding means to me’ series of films, created for the Safeguarding Season. Watch them in full here

Roz Doug
Little Ro

Safeguarding evokes both pain and joy for me. It’s painful that our society lacks the humanity that we were all born with but somehow gets buried along the way. So, we have to bring in measures to keep people safe from harm, sexual assault, abuse and neglect. We are all vulnerable sometimes in our life. We are all responsible for safeguarding. And there’s my joy, that safeguarding is now being exercised. So, safeguarding means keeping people safe to live without being prey. But it’s more. It’s bringing together society’s collective conscious awareness that predators exist in all walks of life and predatory behaviour will no longer be tolerated. And in raising the social conscience, we are empowering people to report the issues too. There are six principles to safeguarding: empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability. But I think there is just one principle, and that’s what safeguarding means ultimately to me – love.

Jane Chevous
Survivors Voices

Safeguarding means to me that we ensure survivors are safe, seen and supported. That we do everything we can to make sure every child, young person and adult is safe from abuse. Not just through safeguarding policies and training, important though they are, but through talking about safe families and safe relationships, so we all know how to recognise abuse and have the courage to challenge abuse wherever and whenever we see it.

As a Christian, the men who abused me used spiritual authority to justify their abuse, breaking my relationship with God and my faith community as well as with them. And yet as a Christian it was my belief in a God of justice and healing that enabled me to journey to through to recovery. So ultimately for me safeguarding is about us ensuring that justice, love, and healing are available for every survivor.



What safeguarding means to *me*....

#SafeguardingSeason

Dr Liza Thompson
Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor Panel

I’ve worked in a variety of roles throughout the years directly supporting vulnerable or potentially vulnerable people and in the past 10 years, I have led organisations and forums that provide strategic oversight for victims of domestic abuse. What I’ve learned in this time is that whilst children are vulnerable due to their age and lack of autonomy, and some adults are vulnerable due to their protected characteristics, others may be vulnerable for periods of time due to specific circumstances. Therefore, it is vital that everybody and especially those of us with any level of power or privilege, keep our eyes open for abuse of any adult or child.

So, in short, safeguarding is everybody’s business. What safeguarding means to me is a duty to be vigilant, to never think that somebody else will deal with it, and to exercise the power that I hold to protect everybody in and around my community.

Jules Taylor
Children and Young Persons’ Advocate, Rochester Cathedral

I think initially when you hear the word safeguarding, it can seem quite dry and something on a tick list that just needs to be done. I see it more as a warm blanket that surrounds me and keeps me safe. It surrounds the people that I work with and keeps them safe.



SPORTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH GOD

If your new year resolution this year is in some way linked to getting fitter, you won't be alone. As we recover from the pandemic, people are increasingly wanting to be more physically active together as well. You might be surprised to find though that it is your local your church providing the opportunity.

From walking and running clubs, to having a presence in a gym or sports group, more and more churches are getting involved with sport and wellbeing initiatives across the country.

"Through sports, a church can build bridges with various local communities, community care and service can be developed and fostered," says the Rev John K Boyers, former Chaplain of Manchester United Football Club and now part of Sports Chaplaincy UK, an organisation with which the Diocese of Rochester is partnering.

"Through sports, the essential Christian message can be explained; and through sport an open door can be established for contact with people who from time to time may value genuine Christian friendship, help and support."

For the Rev Lorraine Turner, Vicar of St Mary, Platt in Sevenoaks, and who runs a weekly health walk, it's not just about physical fitness, but mental and spiritual well-being too:

"We walk about 4km in an hour and a quarter, which if you are returning to exercise can be challenging, especially with our hill. However, our health walk is strongest in the areas of social and psychological health.

Lorraine launched the health walk as part of an NHS social prescribing initiative, which has brought the church into partnership with the Borough Green Surgery social prescriber and the OneYou project (Tonbridge and Malling Council) which seeks to make health walks accessible to everybody.

"As we were a church adjacent to woods, with a strong feel for community outreach, everything came together. Because although people benefit from walking alone, I see a great deal of good in the conversations the group has on our journey."

Walkers set out on Mondays at 10am for a 90-minute health walk. Lorraine says they get all sorts of people

joining them - those looking to return to health after a time of illness, the recently bereaved, as well as wider members of the church and local community.

Lorraine says churches are well placed to support sport and wellbeing projects like this, which increase well-being, as part of their ministry of care and hospitality. It has been more fruitful than she ever thought it would be.

"People just enjoy catching up with each other; conversations on how the week has gone and what is coming up in the future. There are also conversations relating to the everyday, for instance, coping with the new tasks that come along when a partner has died. As a backstop with a clergy collar sometimes people tell me about how they find God in the natural world or what went wrong for them with church in the past.

For football and general sports fan, the Rev Mark Montgomery, Mission Leader of St Gabriel, Kings Hills, sports ministry can be done without kicking or throwing a ball, but being present where people are:

Instead, the church sponsors the local football club and is part of their business partnership. He also works with the cricket club, providing Chaplaincy and using the pavilion for community cafes and stay and play groups.

'Many of our congregation are into sport, and play on a Sunday, but are committed members of the church. By sponsoring and working with the clubs, we are telling our members we support you in that area of your life too', Mark states.

However, he goes on to say 'all our work is true



partnership work, not one sided, and we give and receive equally from the clubs'.

Even if a church doesn't have a particularly sporty congregation, he thinks there is no harm in approaching the local sports clubs and asking, 'How can we support you? You never know where Jesus will take it!'

DID YOU KNOW?

- 16 million adults play sport weekly
- Nearly four in ten in UKME communities play sport weekly
- 1.6 million disabled people play sport weekly
- 88% of children aged 5-15 play sport regularly

At the heart of Christmas



Last year, many of us experienced a Christmas when so many of the ways we traditionally mark the season were suddenly denied to us. This year, of course, we hope and pray that many of the familiar experiences that help Christmas come alive return to our homes, our churches and communities.

The Church of England's Christmas theme this year invites us to explore and share with others what is 'At the heart of Christmas'.

Reflecting on this and the four weeks of Advent expectation and preparation that come first, Bishop Simons writes:

"We are learning many things through this global crisis, but one enduring truth is there is nothing more

valuable in life than the relationships we make. We get enough of stuff eventually, but never of people, and not just those we are close to. It should not surprise us, since Jesus told us these relationships are, ahem, the whole point of life:

"Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

"Making space for each of these relationships should be the heart of our preparations for Christmas 2021. Communities have been separated, afraid, deprived. There is a different witness to be made, a welcome to be offered, and an everlasting God to be craved."

So here are some ways you can explore what is 'at the heart of Christmas for you' this year.

GET THE FAMILY INVOLVED in preparing for Christmas with the Family Activities Advent calendar. From 1 December reveal a family activity each day to help you journey together through the season to Christmas.

Find it at: www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/family-activities-advent-calendar

SIGN UP to receive the At the heart of Christmas: 12 Days of stories and meditations for Christmas to help you make space for reflection and exploration. Beginning on Christmas Eve, on each of the twelve days following, a different contributor will share something that lies close to the heart of Christmas for them, bringing the theme to life through a mixture of personal story, Bible reading, reflection and questions to ponder.

The reflections are available on audio, via an app with accompanying resources for children and families, and in book form from the [Church House Publishing](http://ChurchHousePublishing.com).

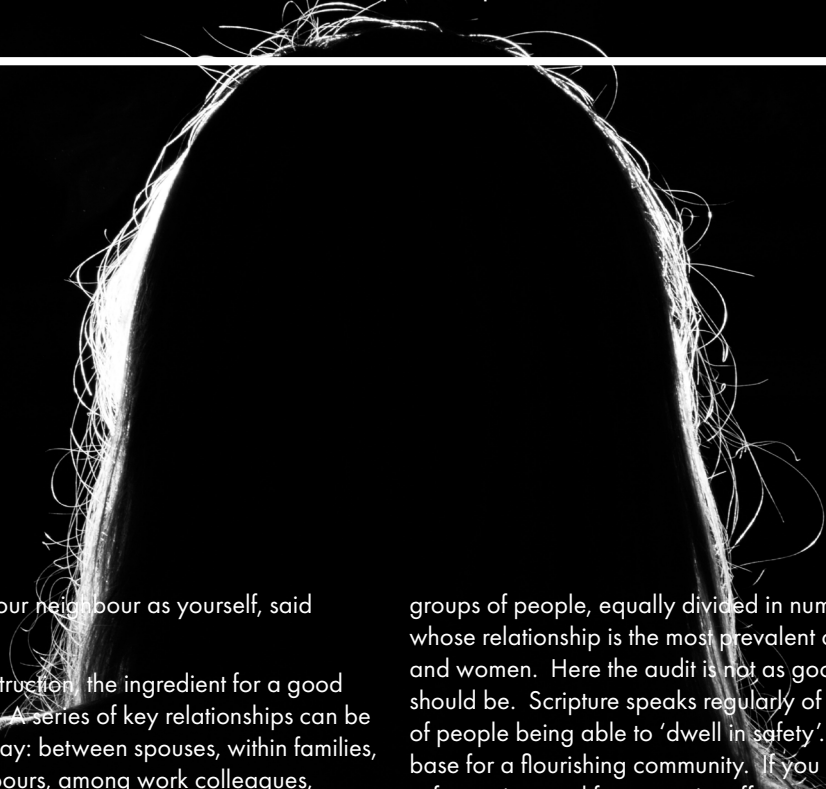
CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL CHURCH.

Maybe it's been a while since you have been to church, or perhaps you are exploring it for the first time this year, visit the AChurchNearYou.com website to search for churches near you. From carol services and family focused activities, find out what church services and activities are on offer to welcome you this Advent and Christmas.

GET SUPPORT Christmas can be a difficult time for those who have lost a loved one, or who are lonely, or struggling with any kind of pain or loss. This year may be more difficult than ever. If you, or someone you know needs help, the AtaLoss.org website can signpost you to those who can help. In conjunction with the Church of England, they have also created some advice on how we can support someone who has been bereaved. Watch the film [here](#)

THE THREE SPACES OF SAFETY

Tragically, an average of two women a week are murdered by a current or former partner in England and Wales. As a Diocese, we are standing up to gender-based violence and domestic abuse by supporting the White Ribbon UK Campaign - a global movement to end male violence against women. White Ribbon Day took place on 25 November and Bishop Simon Burton-Jones says it is time for men to take ownership of the problem.



You shall love your neighbour as yourself, said Jesus...

In this simple instruction, the ingredient for a good society is given. A series of key relationships can be measured this way: between spouses, within families, between neighbours, among work colleagues, between majorities and minorities, among strangers. It only feels odd to talk about love between these different groups because we have defined love as a romantic or fuzzy feeling towards someone. Love is, in fact, doing the right thing by someone else.

Which brings us to the relationship between two

groups of people, equally divided in number and whose relationship is the most prevalent of all: men and women. Here the audit is not as good as it should be. Scripture speaks regularly of the blessing of people being able to 'dwell in safety'. It is first base for a flourishing community. If you don't feel safe, anxiety and fear seep in, affecting the way you think and act. And too many women live this way.

I don't find this an easy thing, talking about the safety of women, because I am not a woman and only experience this anxiety second hand through the women I know. But I want to do this because

for too long the safety of women has been left for women to deal with and to lobby over. It is time to re-frame the security of women as an issue for men. But let's look at the scene to start with.

For years there have been two spaces in which we exist and therefore in which women's safety is at stake: the public and the private. The two recent terrible and high profile murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa are evidence of a lack of public safety. They were not the first female victims of murder by a male stranger and they will sadly not be the last, but they enlarged public debate and called for a re-framing of the issue of female safety away from something that women must sort out to one that men must take responsibility for.

To criticise women for being out alone after dark or walking in deserted places, for wearing short skirts or low tops is a judgment that protects men, as if they have no agency in the matter. Men who attack women are entirely responsible for doing so. This is where the debate should start and where it should end.

The second place of existence is private, the life lived when the door closes on your home. And it is here that women are most at risk. Two women in the UK are murdered every week by a man they know. If two people were murdered in terrorist incidents every week, there would be a huge public debate about security and solutions found to stem the problem. But somehow, the murder of anonymous women, away from public gaze, has not registered as it should. It is not simply a lack of public resources to deal with the problem, it is a way of looking at the issue that downplays its importance.

But there is a third space to live in now: the digital world. A host of digital platforms are already in play that objectify, demean and intimidate women. It isn't easy to estimate the number of men involved in misogynistic online culture, but the Institute for Strategic Dialogue has put the figure at ten thousand men in the UK alone. And they have a disproportionate effect on the well-being of women.

But there is good news, and this is found in two

places. The first is the sheer number of men and women who enjoy good relationships, founded on trust, respect, on mutuality and equality. I hope and pray this is your experience, because it adds such joy and contentment to life, giving a richness and depth to the community that cannot be found when mixing does not happen. The second is the increasing number of men since the Sarah Everard murder who have signed up to charities and agencies where men take responsibility for their actions.

In the Diocese of Rochester we partnered with the White Ribbon campaign several years ago. This asks of men to make a specific pledge. The first should be easy: not to commit violence against women. The second asks a bit more: never to excuse or remain silent over violence or threats of violence against women.

Violence against women usually starts small, with language, attitudes and actions that show disrespect to women, that make them feel uncomfortable in company. That's where other men sometimes keep silence or turn a blind eye to avoid upsetting other men. In this small way, we begin to privilege perpetrators over victims. This is, I suspect, where men need to begin.

I have taken this pledge and I ask all the men reading this to think about doing the same. We can change culture through the individual actions of thousands of people, and after recent events, like the #metoo movement, we are at a special moment where momentum can be created.

At the start of his ministry, Jesus said the kingdom of God has come near. Every day, we should look for the signs of this. And we should be people in which the kingdom draws near for others. For men, one way is to help re-shape our private, public and digital worlds in the character of God. To create environments in which women are cherished, respected and safe. To be a follower of Christ by treating others the way we want to be treated, with dignity and love.

Need help? Visit www.rochester.anglican.org/for-parishes/community-engagement/domestic-abuse

Journeying through Advent and Christmas

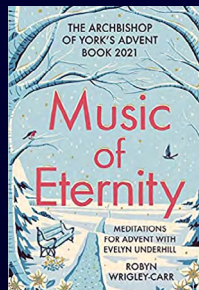
With this selection of books and resources, explore what is at the heart of Advent and Christmas for you and others this year.



THE PROMISE AND THE LIGHT

Written as a series of vivid and dramatic first-person accounts, *The Promise and The Light* tells the stories of Mary, Joseph and Zechariah as they experience the events of the first Christmas. Written in a lively and engaging style, this imaginative yet biblically faithful book will captivate children aged 8-12.

From £6.99



MUSIC OF ETERNITY

In *Music of Eternity*, the Archbishop of York's Advent Book 2021, Robyn Wrigley-Carr shares a series of meditations exploring the nature God's comings. Skillfully weaving together Underhill's writings with the psalms and short prayers, she shows how, as Christians, we can embrace God's coming and be transformed by them in order to better love others.

From £10.99



THE CHRISTMAS STAR

Children will love the story of the small, plucky star that becomes the Christmas star, and will learn that everyone can play a part in God's story, no matter how small they are, and that everyone should be given a chance to shine.

From £6.99



CHRISTMAS VOICES FROM THE HOLY LAND

Taking you through Advent and Christmas, this book features poems and reflections by Fr Richard Nesbitt, and follows the route of the Holy Family from Nazareth to Bethlehem, on to Jerusalem, where Jesus was sanctified in the Temple, and then Gaza, where the Holy Family rested on their flight to Egypt.

Each is matched with contributions from the Holy Land, connecting the experiences of Mary and Joseph with those of the Christian minority still witnessing to Christ today. All giving voice to the Christian communities that live in these towns – more than two millennia since the birth of Christ.

£9.99

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



THE ART OF WATCHING AND WAITING
at St Benedict's Centre
7 DECEMBER 2021, 10am-3pm

A quiet day for Advent. Led by the Rev David Guest Vicar of St Bartholomew, Otford. The art of watching and waiting offers us a day to be still and prepare ourselves anew for Christmas. Paintings will be used as a springboard for our reflections.

Cost: £20 including hot drinks , Please bring your own lunch

To book please email: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



CHRISTINGLE SERVICE
at Rochester Cathedral
11 DECEMBER 2021. 12:30pm

Service in aid of Children's Society. Christingle is a candle-lit celebration which brings communities together. Come along and enjoy a short service to celebrate the work of Children's Society and receive a Christingle.

No need to book, everyone is welcome.



WALKING WITH JESUS
at St Benedict's Centre
21 DECEMBER 2021, 10am - 3:30pm

Walking with Jesus: a new monthly walk from St Benedict's Centre helping us to focus on aspect of Jesus' ministry, so we can deepen our relationship with him and step out in ministry ourselves.

Cost £20 (includes hot drinks please bring your own lunch and wear suitable clothing for a potentially muddy walk.

To book please email: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

November - December, 2021

Sunday 28th, 18.30 Advent Procession

Saturday 4th 12.30/3pm Dickensian Christmas Carol Service

Sunday 5th 12.30/3pm Dickens Christmas Carol Service

Saturday 11th 12.30, Christingle Service

Saturday 18th, 19.30 Christmas Carol Concert (tickets not yet on sale)

Tuesday 21st, 19.30 A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 22nd 19.30 A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Friday 24th

15.00 Children's Nativity Service

16.15 - Christmas Eve Carol Service sung by the choristers

23.30 The Eucharist of Christmas Night

Saturday 25th

08:00 – Holy Communion

10.30 – The Eucharist of Christmas Morning

Sunday 26th

08:00 – Holy Communion

10.30 Cathedral Eucharist (St Stephen's Day)

Find out more at: www.rochestercathedral.org

*** Admission to the Cathedral is free, there is an admission fee for some of the events.*

Rochester
CATHEDRAL





NURTURING OUR OVERSEAS FRIENDSHIPS

Every Diocese in the Church of England has one or more links with a diocese in another part of the Anglican Communion – the international family of Anglican churches of which the Church of England is a part. The Rev Christine Allen has been appointed as the new Overseas Links Coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester and she can't wait to help spread the word about the benefits these links can bring.

You're the new Overseas Companion Links Coordinator, can you explain what the overseas links are?

The Diocese of Rochester has official links with dioceses in three countries: Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Estonia. In Tanzania we are linked with the diocese of Kondo, in Zimbabwe the Dioceses of Harare and Mpwapwa, and in Estonia with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia, whose practices are in many ways similar to ours. These links are expressed through many flourishing partnerships and friendships with parishes and individuals across the Diocese.

What got you interested in overseas links?

My enthusiasm and love for this work came from my visit to Kondo Diocese in 2019. I was invited to a meeting about Tanzania by my incumbent at the time. At the meeting I was asked if I would go. I was worried and didn't think I wanted to. But God had different plans and as the following weeks passed it became obvious God was calling me to go. It was one of the most memorable trips I have ever had or probably will ever experience again.

What was so special about it?

So many things. Baptising a little girl, blessing the goats and cattle, eating parts of an animal I couldn't recognise, being with the people worshipping our God and taking an active part in the Holy Communion Service at the ordinations with over 400 people attending. It was fantastic!

What's been your personal experience of being involved in an overseas link?

I was really touched when our link parish made me a spiritual ward when I was ill. The whole congregation all those thousands of miles away prayed for me to get well and kept praying. These links are really all about developing new friendships and partnerships and making a difference to support and empower God's people.

So why would you encourage a church or an individual to develop an overseas link?

Not having one means missing out on being blessed by having friendships with people who are deep

in their spiritual faith. They really allow us to gain a good understanding of how our fellow Christians live and how their faith gives them the strength to face very difficult challenges. We can help and support them too with the gifts we have been given by God. Sometimes we can support them financially in the development of projects, or fundraise for a specific need, such as paying for school uniforms which has allowed girls to attend school. It is a wonderful blessing when we know we are using the gifts God has given us.

When you're not busy ministering in parish or raising awareness of overseas links, do you time for any hobbies?

I have lots of hobbies: We have two boats so sailing, motor cruising, swimming, fishing, painting, visiting art galleries in London, collecting antiques, cooking, watching Marvel films, driving and travelling. We belong to two sailing clubs and join in with the activities.

Is there anyone who has particularly inspired you?

I just love Mother Theresa and the sayings she had. A particular favourite is "Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier".

What are you listening to at the moment?

At the moment, I am listening to the St Augustine's College of Theology reflections which are great. I enjoy politics so if I can I often listen to Prime Ministers Question Time.

What's your favourite food?

I do love cooking and, when lockdown came, I took time to make all the dishes I ever wanted to bake e.g. Gypsy tart, making a curry from scratch, a soufflé and many more.

Who would you most like to meet?

I would like to meet the Pope. I would like to have a conversation with him about women priests.

For more information about the Overseas Links visit: www.rochester.anglican.org/about-us/overseas-links



CHOSEN TO BE ME

The Rev Esther Bevan is a newly ordained deacon in the Diocese and is serving her training year – known as a curacy – in the churches of St Edmund and St Alban, Dartford. She is a professional interpreter for deaf people, which she will continue during her training. Despite now being an official reverend, she knows she doesn't have all the answers, but she's fine with that.

So, I am now a deacon and working as a curate in the Church of England! It took seven years of discernment, waiting, and studying and now I wear an amazing piece of plastic around my neck. It is amazing to me because people have stopped me on the street to ask me questions. That never happened before!

Do you remember those Herbalife badges people wore in the 80's? "Lose Weight Now, Ask Me How!" My collar feels like that. The collar is an invitation to ask me stuff about Jesus or God. I don't know all the answers but I'm happy to listen and pray and whatever people find helpful.

I sometimes think I don't really know what good I really bring when I visit someone or chat in a café, but God is the one doing the work. He chose me to be me, so I don't need to be a little miss know it all and have all the solutions, because I don't.

Psalms 121 reflects some of my thoughts about where my strength and wisdom comes from, for me to be a deacon. It says that my strength doesn't come from mountains, (mountains of essays, mountains of studies, mountains of personal wisdom!), no, it comes from God. He is in charge of this gig, not me.

When I feel anxious about my finances and how I will

PSALM 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

make this work, I remember that God is my provider. All that I need I will receive, and he won't leave me to stumble (v3-4). I can walk confidently trusting him that what I need I will have. He is my guardian, who watches over me, protects me, and loves me like a good father cherishes his little girl.

This is how God feels about you too. Nothing (actually nothing) can keep him away from you, because he guards you too, now and always

Esther has her own blog at www.notquitethereyetbevan.wordpress.com/

Jesus, born among us,
May your life-changing love be at
the heart of our lives
this Christmas and always,
Amen

#AtTheHeartOfChristmas is the Church of
England's theme for Advent and Christmas 2021

Find out more and explore services and events
near you, reflections and other resources at
churchofengland.org/AtTheHeartOfChristmas

