

# TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 25 | May - July 2025

CHANGE | SERVE | GROW

COVER STORY: GROWING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW PAGE 8



FUNDING BOOST  
FOR DIOCESAN  
VISION

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ECO LIVING  
THE BIBLE WAY

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CELEBRATING  
THE NICENE  
CREED

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Diocese of *Rochester*  
called together



# It's Your Calling



## CONTENTS

It's great to be able to share that the diocese's Called Together vision has received resounding support from the national church with additional funding of £11 million. (Read more on pg 6).

At the heart of the vision is a commitment to supporting and nurturing the fantastic work that is already taking place in parishes day in, day out.

The kind of ministry we highlight in **Focus On** (pg 12), as we learn how through simply loving their community, faith and growth is happening in two churches in Tonbridge Archdeaconry.

We also shine a spotlight on the churches empowering young people to be positive forces in their communities, thanks to a diocesan-wide initiative (pg 9).

And did you know, sustainable living is nothing new, just look to the Bible – visit our **Centrespread** to find out more.

Plus, we meet the new Archdeacon of Rochester as she shares her **Everyday faith** story.

I hope you enjoy reading and sharing this edition with others.

Go well.

*Jennifer*

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Head of Communications

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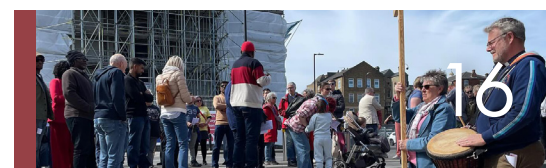
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### INSIDE TRACK

4-7 Latest news

### FOCUS ON

8 Empowering young people,  
transforming lives

12 Love thy neighbour

14 Rejoicing in creation

16 Holy Week and Easter marked

### BIG ISSUE

18 How do we seek God's Kingdom?

### HEAD SPACE

20 Resources: Celebrating the  
Nicene Creed

### DON'T MISS

22 Top upcoming events

### PEOPLE

24 One to One: Andrew Dunlop

26 Everyday Faith: Sandra McCalla

A day to explore how God may be calling you.

**4 OCTOBER** at St John's Centre, Meopham

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## ARCHDEACONS WELCOMED

The Ven Sandra McCalla, the new Archdeacon of Rochester, and the Ven Nick Cornell, the new Archdeacon of Tonbridge, were officially welcomed into their roles at a special service in Rochester Cathedral in February.

During the service, Sandra and Nick took their oaths of declaration and allegiance, received their Archdeacons' copes, and were installed into their seats in the Cathedral Quire.

Sandra joins the senior team from the Diocese of London, where she has been Chaplain to the Bishop of London.

In addition, she brings with her a wealth of legal expertise as a former barrister in the City of London for many years.

Nick grew up in the Diocese of Rochester and studied modern languages at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, before qualifying as a tax advisor for a large accountancy firm in London.

After serving his curacy in Chichester Diocese, he moved to Rochester in 2018 to become Rector at Christ Church, Southborough, where he has also served as Area Dean of Tunbridge Wells, and, more recently, as one of the Associate Archdeacons of Tonbridge.

During his sermon, Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Bishop of Rochester, welcomed Sandra and Nick to the "adventure into which God is calling us", as a diocesan family, as we embark on work to fulfil the diocesan vision.

*Head over to the Everyday Faith section to learn more about Sandra's journey to faith.*



### MARATHON VICAR

Congratulations to the Rev Mark Montgomery, Mission Leader of St Gabriel, Kings Hill, who completed the London Marathon in very hot conditions this year. He was raising money for his three chosen charities: St Gabriel's Church, SANDs – the baby-loss charity, and Space 2 Be Me – a local charity working with disabled children and their families.



### UKRAINIAN SOLIDARITY

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, St John, Sidcup has been offering support to the local Ukrainian community, as well as refugees. They were recently honoured with a visit from the Mayor of Bexley to their weekly English lessons for Ukrainians. The language group expressed their appreciation for the continuing support of the church and wider community.



### WELLBEING CAFÉ

Spring was in the air at the St Justus, Rochester, Well Being café, as regulars got stuck in tending to the plants and flower beds. The weekly café is designed to support the community, improve health and build relationships through community health walks, gardening, and time to talk and make friends.



### SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Fr Jim Horton, Armed Forces Champion for the Diocese and vicar of St Mary, Hadlow, swapped his bed for a sleeping bag to raise vital funds and awareness for veterans who are experiencing homelessness in the UK. He says, "Every penny raised means Royal British Legion Industries can ensure everyone has a fair opportunity to gain employment, regardless of health conditions or disability."





## DIOCESAN VISION GETS £11 MILLION BOOST FROM NATIONAL CHURCH

The national Church's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) has approved substantial funding for the Diocese's Called Together vision to build on the fantastic work already taking place on the frontline in parishes.

The nine-year plan will see every parish across Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley, have the opportunity to benefit from initiatives designed to grow the number of people attending church from a diverse range of backgrounds, including children, young people and families.

Focused around four workstreams - Missional leadership development, Children, Young People and Families, Investment in missionally healthy places, Revitalising fragile churches - each will be seen through the lens of growing safe and healthy cultures to ensure that all endeavours reflect the Kingdom values of righteousness, peace, wholeness, and fullness of life for all.

Some of the exciting work to be undertaken includes:

- An enhanced mission-orientated training programme for clergy and lay leaders

- Development of supportive missional networks for key church officers such as Church Wardens, Treasurers, Administrators, Parish Safeguarding Officers, and Children and Young People's workers - paid and voluntary
- A Wellbeing Programme for clergy, lay leaders and headteachers, delivered by St Benedict's Centre, West Malling, in partnership with other providers
- An apprenticeship scheme offering on-the-job experience of Children, Young People and Family work in churches
- Fifteen mission-focused parish projects across a range of locations in places where they will purposefully offer to share learning beyond their boundaries

Find out more about the Called Together vision at: [www.rochester.anglican.org/about-us/ourvision/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/about-us/ourvision/)

Head to our Big Issue section to read Bishop Simon's reflection on what it means to 'seek first the Kingdom of God'.

## NEW NET ZERO CARBON SUPPORT FOR PARISHES

With the Church of England setting the ambitious target to be net zero carbon by 2030, the Dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester are delighted to welcome Cat, Kayleigh and Alyne who will work in partnership to support parishes and other organisations within the Dioceses, to plan and implement measures to reduce their carbon emissions.

The nationally funded roles provide for a Net Zero Adviser in each diocese who will focus primarily on supporting parishes, and one Net Zero Project Manager to coordinate their work across the two diocese.

Funded for an initial period of two years, the advisers are available to offer advice, information, and sign posting to resources that will support environmental work, as well as guidance on fundraising and grant opportunities for energy reduction and eco initiatives, such as boiler replacements.

Each member of the new team brings with them a wide range of experience, knowledge, and passion for environmental issues.

If you have any questions please get in contact with the team: [netzero@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:netzero@rochester.anglican.org)



THE NEW NET ZERO CARBON TEAM



# EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

What if one opportunity could change the course of a young person's life? Thanks to a substantial grant from the Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust, that's exactly what's happening in collaboration with churches across the Diocese.

"Thank you for the workshop, for taking time to connect with us and for sharing your past experiences with us. You made me feel more confident" - a comment from one of the nearly 500 young people who have taken part in a series of workshops delivered by Loud Speaker, an organisation dedicated to equipping young people with not just with what to say but to how to say it.

Hosted at several church venues in Chatham and Dartford, as well as at Strood Academy, the workshops are part of a joint diocesan-wide initiative between the Diocese's Children and Young People Mission and Ministry Team, and Community Engagement and Social Action team, to transform lives and communities across Kent and Medway.

The workshops have been funded out of a successful bid to the Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust for £100,000 in support of partnership projects in churches to address some of society's biggest social issues.

A focus on young people is seen as key, says Cheryl Trice, Lead Adviser for Children, Young People and Families for the Diocese of Rochester, "One way we can see communities change for the better is by empowering those who will be leading them in the future. By funding these workshops, we want to give young people the confidence to step boldly into their futures."

The high-energy, interactive workshops are designed to build confidence in public speaking, storytelling, teamwork, and leadership—critical life skills that open doors to new opportunities.

For many of the young people, the sessions have been

a turning point: "I liked when Jonathan shared his story with us. It helped me realise that I don't have to be embarrassed about my struggles and should always be myself no matter what."

Indeed, a follow-up survey found that 81 per cent of the young people felt more confident about finding or creating opportunities for themselves, and 75 per cent felt more confident in overcoming challenges in their lives.

The Rev Adam Pyrke, Priest-in-Charge at St Francis, Church in Strood, and who played a pivotal role in enabling the event at Strood Academy to take place, says that by providing opportunities to listen to young people and respond to their needs, churches and expert organisations are hoping to build positive futures for them and their communities:

"The seeds of confidence planted at the session will grow into strong, fearless leaders—ready to change the world. Equipping young people with hope and vision is one of the most important things we can do as a church."

*"The seeds of confidence planted at the session will grow into strong, fearless leaders—ready to change the world."*





Cheryl agrees and says that some young people have already stepped up as young leaders in their churches and have joined the Diocesan Youth Council to help shape the future of the Church:

“This has been a powerful piece of missional outreach but also a meaningful investment in ministry—building up young people from both church and non-church backgrounds.”

She adds: “Importantly, this isn’t just about providing short-term support, it’s about giving young people the confidence and skills to shape their future. The journey is just beginning.”

Alongside the work with young people, the funding secured by the diocesan teams from the Colyer Fergusson Trust is also being used to support projects on issues such as addiction recovery, parenting support, mental health, and budgeting skills.

At Christ Church, Luton, the church is hosting The Recovery Course – a free 15-week course for adults, offering guided teaching, practical insights, and support for those seeking freedom from addiction of all kinds.

The Rev Andrea Leonard, Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church Luton, says the church is already seeing lives changed, with many of the group choosing to join the church’s Alpha course – a Christian discipleship course - as they do not want to stop meeting.

‘To me, this is the Gospel in glorious technicolour, offering freedom to the captives and recovery of sight for the blind. The Recovery Course has significantly changed the lives of at least four people already.’

For Magali van der Merwe, Lead Community Engagement and Social Action Adviser for the Diocese, the funding and the collaborations are all part of growing God’s Kingdom:

“The Kingdom of God comes to fruition as much through the care and attention given to people’s physical needs as their spiritual ones.

“Our vision is that, through this funding, and with ongoing support from myself and Cheryl, church leaders and partner organisations will be able to address some of the social and personal issues affecting people, thereby having a positive impact on their wider communities, now and for the future.”



LOUDSPEAKERLIVE EVENT AT CHRIST CHURCH, DARTFORD





ANASTASSIA WITH CHURCHWARDEN

## LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

The simple act of following Jesus' command to 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' is helping nurture faith and belonging in Seal Chart and Underriver.

When Anastassia arrived in Underriver as a Ukrainian refugee, she never imagined she would be running her own café.

However, thanks to the support of St Margaret's Church, Underriver near Sevenoaks, she now hosts the Heavenly Café every week, offering homemade cakes and coffee to a warm and welcoming crowd.

She was amazed at how people at the church came alongside and supported her, providing equipment and use of the space to get things started.

"It's been so amazing how much the church has supported me to pursue my dream of opening my café," she says, smiling as she serves another customer. "I feel so at home here."

It is this simple spirit of openness, welcome, and coming alongside people, that the Vicar, the Rev Serena

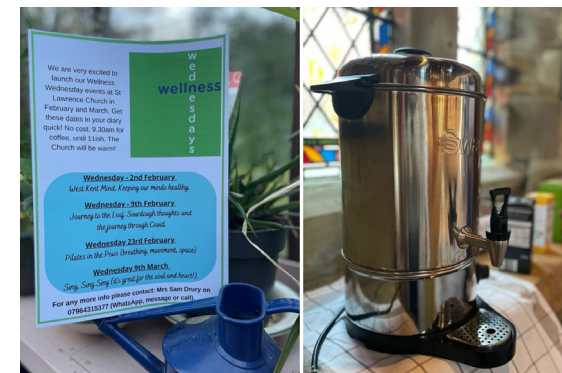
Willoughby, says is at the heart of life and mission for the churches of St Lawrence in Seal Chart and St Margaret in Underriver:

"It's just good to be available to everyone and to be seen as a neighbour. People respond to that, and these things grow organically."

### Serving the community

Indeed Serena and her congregations have worked hard to make the two churches vibrant hubs for the community in creative and sometimes unexpected ways.

The Soups and Puds initiative at St Margaret Church, for example, has become a cherished monthly tradition in the winter months, where members of the community gather over hot bowls of soup and comforting puddings, sharing laughter and conversation.



Meanwhile, Wellbeing Wednesdays at both churches have brought people together for activities such as Pilates and singing that energise and nourish both body and soul.

Over at St Lawrence, the Community Café has been a lovely haven during winter months, providing warmth in temperature and companionship.

And an annual quiz night, first launched after the village events to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, has continued as a much-anticipated event, proving that a little friendly competition is greatly enjoyed.

### A church that welcomes all

For Lay Minister Gretel, this sense of open heartedness is what makes the church so special:

"There's a real sense of being neighbourly to everyone,



PET SERVICE

whether they come to church or not," she says.

That sense of belonging has even led to the formation of a new village community association, an unexpected but wonderful offshoot of the church's outreach efforts.

For Serena, these initiatives are simply a reflection of what church is meant to be and what is being lived out in her community and elsewhere across the Diocese:

"We've focused on nurturing a true spirit of inclusivity that welcomes everyone—whether they attend church regularly or not."

She adds:

"For me, that's what my ministry has always been about, people's journeys – and joining the journey of faith with Jesus Christ."

Find a church near you [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)



# REJOICING IN CREATION:

## A Psalm-inspired guide

With spring in full bloom and summer on the way, many of us will be taking the opportunity to get outside to enjoy nature. However, against the backdrop of concern for the climate, how can we both care for and celebrate God's creation?

Kayleigh Ward and Alyne Godfrey, the new Net Zero advisers for the Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury, invite us to look to Scripture for some guidance.

'Psalm 104 portrays a vivid, poetic celebration of God as both Creator and Sustainer of the world, inviting us to look with fresh eyes at the beauty and interdependence of creation and recognise God's handiwork, from the roaring lion to the singing birds, the whispering wind and to the sunlit sky, and the plants that we cultivate!

'Meanwhile, Genesis chapter 1 gives us a wide-angle view of the world, with humanity given 'dominion' and responsibility. Together, both Scriptures call us to live differently and more sustainably.'



Here are some practical, Scripture-inspired tips you may like to try:

**Live with gratitude and simplicity** – consume less, waste less, and appreciate more. Choose sustainable options where possible.

**Reconnect spiritually with nature** – take time to walk in nature, garden, or simply sit under a tree and pray. Let creation deepen your awareness of God's presence and your wellbeing.

**Support local and ethical choices** – eat locally grown food, reduce meat consumption, and avoid harmful single-use products.

**Worship with the earth in mind** – include creation in your prayers, hymns, and sermons. Celebrate Creationtide (Sept 1– Oct 4) with your church community and renew your commitment to caring for the Earth.

**Join a creation care initiative** – get involved with your church's journey to sustainability by encouraging them to become an Eco Church and aim for bronze, silver, or gold award with A Rocha. Perhaps you could start-up or join in with your church's environmental group. Connect with those outside your church caring for creation through community gardens, litter picks, and environmental courses.

### SOME USEFUL WEBSITES TO GET YOU STARTED

-  Check your carbon footprint with WWF: [www.footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://www.footprint.wwf.org.uk)
-  Climate Change Food Calculator: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714)
-  Ideas to rethink how you get around: [www.wearepossible.org/getting-around](http://www.wearepossible.org/getting-around)

### SUGGESTED READING

-  **God Doesn't Do Waste** – Dave Bookless Free Delivery when you spend £10 at [Eden.co.uk](http://Eden.co.uk)
-  **Planet Protectors** - Paul Kerensa and Ruth Valerio | Eden (Childrens)
-  **Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home** – Pope Francis





THE HOLY REDEEMER, LAMORBEY



ST PETER & ST PAUL, SWANSCOMBE



ST THOMAS, SOUTHBOROUGH



HOLY TRINITY WITH ST JOHN, PENGE



ST EDMUND KING AND MARTYR, WEST KINGSOWN

From Lent lunches and donkeys on Palm Sunday, to sunrise services to welcome the risen Christ, the holy seasons of Lent and Easter were marked across the diocese.



CUDHAM AND DOWNE CHURCHES



ALL SAINTS, ORPINGTON



ST BARNABAS PARISH, TUNBRIDGE WELLS



ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL



ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL



ST HELEN, CLIFFE



# HOW DO WE SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM?

As we embark on our diocesan vision, Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge asks, what does it mean to 'seek first the kingdom of God'?



## If seeking the kingdom of God is our goal, how do we understand it?

It's located, of course, in the world shaping sermon on the mount. Though every era has drawn inspiration from it, some today feel that the pastoral scenes of first century Galilee are too far removed from our efficiently mechanised world.

What we will eat and what we will drink and what we will wear is, for most – if not all – of us, a matter of consumer choice, not existential need. But there is a timeless bass rhythm to this sermon.

The minds of the people were cluttered with things that caused them anxiety. Isn't that exactly our problem today?

To seek the kingdom suggests we have to give the task devoted attention, but we are now living in a tech world whose architecture is designed to ensure we can't give anything attention for more than a few minutes at best.

The whole point of the platforms that dominate our online lives is to distract us from doing anything other than scrolling for as long as possible.

The average daily time spent on social media per person is two hours and twenty minutes. That's two hours twenty minutes a day we were spending doing something else only twenty years ago. The shorter our attention span, the shallower our thinking and the narrower our vision. This is true literally, too. We begin to miss things at the margins of our eyeline, which is frequently where God is loitering.

To seek something requires sustained attention, but few people have this capacity now. So what is this attention grab doing to our ability to seek the kingdom of God?

Let me give you an impressionistic view of what it means to seek the kingdom of God, but one rooted in the Gospel of John. If the Gospel of Mark reads like a Radio 1 news bulletin – stripped back and full of punchy headline incidents – John's Gospel feels more like a chat show, where intimate space is open for all to listen to.

A series of one on one encounters between Jesus and people either seeking, avoiding or simply unaware of the kingdom of God drawing near.

Nicodemus came to Jesus when it was dark. There are people who seek the kingdom of God but are afraid to be seen talking about God because of what people will think of them. Our visibility, friendliness and confidentiality are vital for them. In front of Jesus at that moment was one of only two men who would dignify his body after crucifixion.

Jesus sat down with the Samaritan woman after a long morning, when his blood sugar was low and it was far more embarrassing to engage her in conversation than not to. She was weighed down with guilt, even if it was hard for her to admit it.

Casual meetings like the one at the well are never just individual encounters. The Samaritan woman went and told the marginalised community she was part of, and the collective response to the kingdom of God they made was felt by the early Church. Behind the person we talk with lie hundreds of other people who may be touched by that encounter.

The kingdom is found when we seek it and when we don't. God has a habit of appearing at the margins, just out of eyesight. He comes to us in mass gatherings, like the thousands he fed with bread and fish; or in big celebrations where others and not us are the centre of attention. But more often than not he comes to us in the one person standing in front of us, who we too easily write off in our transactional, time poor world.

It is especially hard to seek for the kingdom in a world that is cluttered with idols. And when those idols are beauty, strength, perfection and popularity, they obscure the ugly, the weak, the flawed and the lonely. The very people and places we should begin our search.

Find an extended version of this piece at: [www.simonburton-jones.com](http://www.simonburton-jones.com)



## RESOURCES – CELEBRATING THE NICENE CREED

2025 marks the 1700th anniversary of the original development of the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed is one of the most enduring statements of Christian faith, uniting Christians with believers down the centuries and around the world.

To celebrate the anniversary, the Church of England has produced a variety of materials for churches, groups, and individuals to use as a reminder of the common faith we share with others.



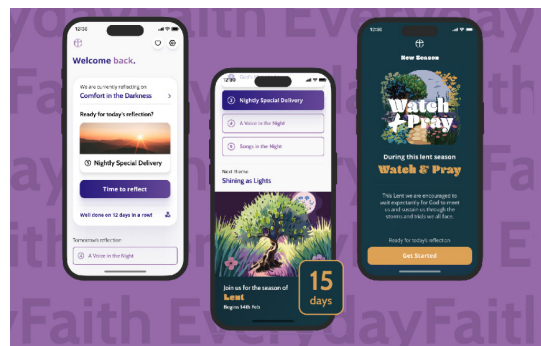
### WE BELIEVE: EXPLORING THE NICENE CREED

£3.99

This new, full-colour printed booklet, containing 24 short reflections, explores each line of the Creed in turn, drawing readers deeper into its meaning and significance for everyday life.

Each reflection explores a portion of the Creed through the lens of a short Bible passage and a simple reflection, accompanied by a treasury of prayers.

Available from Church House Publishing - [www.chpublishing.co.uk](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk)

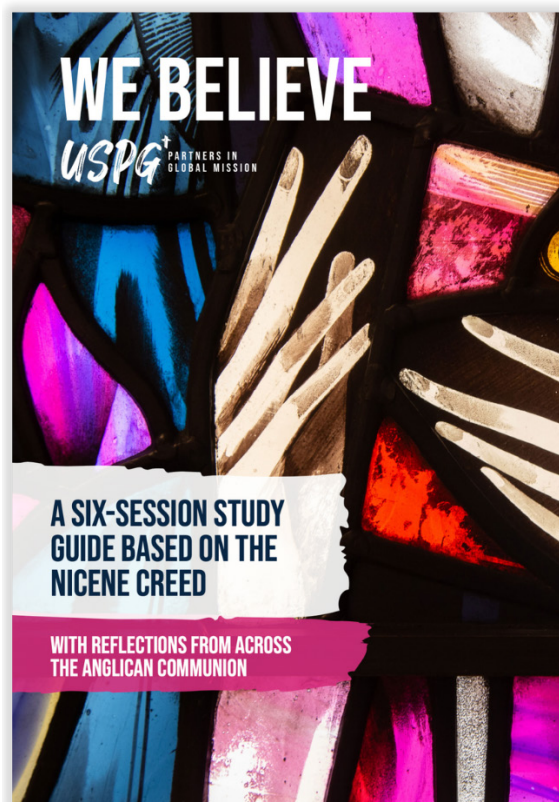


### EVERYDAY FAITH APP DAILY REFLECTIONS

Free

You can read and listen to all twenty-four daily We Believe reflections from 16 June (the day after Trinity Sunday) through the free Everyday Faith app, the daily devotional app from the Church of England.

The app is available to download from all the usual app stores.



### WE BELIEVE: REFLECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Free

If you are looking for a truly global perspective on the Creed, this free study guide from the Christian charity, USPG, is for you. Contributors from the Philippines to the Middle East track key elements of the creed including the nature of Jesus, His resurrection, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The questions and prayers encourage meaningful discussions around unity, diversity, and how we can live out Christ's message of love and justice today.

Visit: [www.uspg.org.uk/resource/we-believe](http://www.uspg.org.uk/resource/we-believe)

# THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son  
is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.  
Amen.

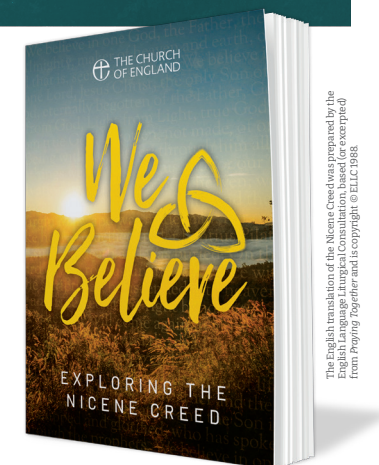
The Nicene Creed is one of the most enduring statements of faith,  
uniting us with believers down the centuries and around the world.



We Believe is a new, full-colour booklet containing 24 short reflections which explore each line of the Creed in turn, drawing us deeper into its meaning and significance for everyday life.

The booklet is accompanied by a range of downloadable resources and a series of **Everyday Faith** reflections starting on Trinity Sunday (16 June) to mark 1700 years since the Creed's original development.

Find out more and access all the resources via [cofe.io/NiceneCreed](http://cofe.io/NiceneCreed)



The English translation of the Nicene Creed was prepared by the English Language Liturgical Consultation, based (or excerpted) from *Praying Together* and is copyright © ELIC 1988.



## UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



**MESSY CATHEDRAL**  
Rochester Cathedral  
31 MAY 2025, 1PM-4PM

A space to meet Jesus through activities, prayer, games, and worship. Activities until 3pm, followed by worship. Finish with your own picnic from 3.45pm.

For more information contact Sarah Cabella – [sarah.cabella@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:sarah.cabella@rochester.anglican.org)



**THE HEART OF MISSION IS PRAYER: A PRAYER FESTIVAL**  
St Benedict's Centre, West Malling  
7 JUNE 2025, 10AM-4PM

This day will offer the opportunity to find out about the many different ways there are to open our hearts and mind to God; to explore and to experience some of these. Suggested donation £10-£20.

To book: [bookings@stbenedictscentre.org](mailto:bookings@stbenedictscentre.org)



**BIG CHURCH FESTIVAL**  
at Weston Estate, West Sussex  
22 - 24 AUGUST 2025

Join with over 35,000 people from across the UK and beyond to worship together in the jawdropping surroundings of the Wiston Estate, in the company of some of the best Christian artists in the world. This is the church; all tribes and all ages, campsites becoming communities, memories in the making, the happiest festival-goers on the planet. Visit [www.bigchurchfestival.com](http://www.bigchurchfestival.com)



**IT'S YOUR CALLING**  
St John Centre, Meopham  
4 OCTOBER 2025

*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](mailto:vocations@rochester.anglican.org)



## SHORTS FLOATPLANE LANDING

*at Rochester Cathedral this August*

Free Exhibition: 1-31 August 2025  
at Rochester Cathedral  
Family-friendly educational activities  
Daytime admission is FREE!

Evening events and extra activities may carry a small charge  
For more information visit: [www.rochestercathedral.org](http://www.rochestercathedral.org)





## RUNNING THE RACE OF FAITH AND MINISTRY

Andrew Dunlop is the recently appointed Director of Mission and Ministry Development, a team that covers (almost!) everything to do with training and supporting those in lay and ordained ministry. A keen parkrunner, we caught up with him long enough to find out more about his life, faith, and how he and his team can help people explore God's plan for their lives.

**You've joined the Diocese at an exciting time as we mobilise the vision.**

Yes, the team I lead has been recently reshaped to accentuate the missional element of what the diocese is trying to do and is key to implementing the vision to deliver training and support to parishes, clergy and lay people to enable God's Kingdom to grow. So, yes, it's very exciting to see what might happen over the next few years.

**Many people might think that to be involved in ministry in the church you have to be a vicar. What would you say to that?**

Can you imagine a church where there were only vicars? It would be very boring! We do need those people, but the Christian life is about becoming who we are called to be in Christ – the person that God is gradually transforming us into. And he equips us in every area of our lives - to be co-workers, sports team members, parents, friends. Each of us needs to follow the calling that God has given us, and to live out our lives for him in that place.

**How can your team help people discover that call?**

The first step would be to talk to your vicar. Our team hosts regular 'It's Your Calling' days around the diocese, designed for those exploring a calling to some form of ministry, whether that is part-time lay ministry, a call to work with children or young people, to offer your gifts missionally to the church, to become an Anna Chaplain to the elderly, or a call to lead or preach in church, just to name a few. Please get in touch!

**What did you do prior to this role?**

I was a lecturer at Ridley Hall in Cambridge, teaching ordinands and lay ministry students about pioneering, contextual mission, church planting, mixed ecology, and theological reflection. Before that I have been a Pioneer Minister on the edge of an estate in Northampton, served as a curate - trainee vicar - in the centre of Plymouth, and taught at a theological college in Durham.

**Have you always been a Christian?**

I was blessed to have grown up in a Christian family - my dad is ordained. I remember getting confirmed at 14 and believing what I was committing to. When a disappointment in life raised the question of faith, I came to the conclusion that if Christianity was true, which I believed it was, I should take it seriously. I guess you could say that over my time at university, my faith stopped being my parents' and became my own. It took quite a while

before I wanted to follow the niggling call to ordination, but that's a different story.

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

I remember reading the golfer Bernhard Langer's autobiography when I was a teenager and being impressed how he spoke about his faith both at the high points and low points of his career. An ordained pioneer minister working on a new-build development in Witney, Oxfordshire called Penny Joyce was definitely a key part of me becoming a new-build pioneer. And the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who has shaped my understanding of what it means to be 'church' with his mission and Christ-centred approach.

**Do you have any hobbies?**

Since moving, I've joined a running club in Maidstone and hope to add to the number of half marathons I've run. I also love a parkrun and hope to tick off as many around Kent as possible. I'm a keen supporter of Newcastle United and when no-one is around, I sit and play the piano which I find takes my mind off things.

**Do you have a favourite food?**

Being British-Mauritian, I love curry, and seafood, so if there is a seafood curry on the menu I'll go for that. Finish that off with a tiramisu as a dessert and I'm a very happy man. I do like to cook, and make curry more often than my kids appreciate. I'm still to perfect the tiramisu!

**Are you a tea or a coffee person?**

Usually tea before leaving the house in the morning (earl-grey decaf) and a coffee at 11am (also decaf, never instant!)

**What are you watching at the moment?**

I like box-sets and have just finished Paradise, about the murder of a US president (with a massive twist), and Adolescence, which is compelling viewing. I've now started watching Black Mirror from the beginning. Each episode is a standalone story and takes something from contemporary society), exaggerates it and adds a dark angle.

**What's your idea of a perfect day?**

Get up late-ish, go for a run (Parkrun!), have a hearty breakfast, mooch round a National Trust property or art gallery with my wife (and kids if they're not too bored), come home, watch football, and have a great curry in the evening!





## "IT'S NO USE TELLING GOD WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO"

The new Archdeacon of Rochester, the Ven Sandra McCalla, shares how a close family bereavement finally prompted her to respond to a long-felt sense of God's call in her life.

I always went to church as a child. I came from a very traditional church background so never in a thousand years did I ever imagine or believe that I'd have a dog collar around my neck!

However, as time went on, I felt a sense that God was calling me to serve him completely as his minister. At the time I thought, "Women don't become priests, that's impossible." So, I went off and pursued a completely different vocation as a barrister for many years in the City of London.

At the same time as this, we moved home and I joined and became actively involved in my local church where after a very short time I remember people at my new church saying to me, 'I think you've got a call to ministry' and I would laugh. This went on for six years. Then, unfortunately, my sister died.

She was quite young, and it was a really formational time for me. She was ill before she died, and one of the things she said to me was that I had many skills and there were many things I could do, but the main thing was that I needed to make my life count - "Do something that you really feel proud of".

It was the first time anyone very close to me had died and my first time experiencing grief. My church family and Rector were so wonderful and helped me so much. I took time off work to help work through

the trauma of what had happened, and it was during that time of reflection that I began to think about my life, about what I had been doing, and that sense of call.

I thought, well Lord, this is really of you. If you want this to be, you will make it happen.

I eventually went to see my rector and explained the sense of calling I had, and he said, "Oh we've been waiting for you." That was 2009 and it all then happened quite quickly, as by 2010

I was in theological college. That's how God works!

And my reflection is that it never tends to work telling God what you don't want to do. He's got a sense of humour and has a funny way of making it happen!

*"I felt a sense that God was calling me to serve him completely as his minister."*





Diocese of Rochester  
called together

We  
Believe

## A PRAYER

As we celebrate the risen Christ and remember our common belief shared with others across the world and down the centuries, so we pray:

God of glory, by the raising of your Son  
You have broken the chains of death and hell:  
Fill your Church with faith and hope;  
For a new day has dawned  
And the way to life stands open  
In our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen