

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 5 | Winter 2019-2020

GROW | ENRICH | RESOURCE

COVER STORY: DOING TIME: CHURCH IN PRISON | PAGES 8-11



LIFE
TOGETHER

A GREENER
NEW YEAR

BLUEPRINT FOR
SUCCESS

www.rochester.anglican.org



NEW REVS

A former barrister, founder of a charity, bonsai tree grower and doctor are just some of those who made up the 15 priests and deacons who will now serve in parishes across Medway, north west Kent and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley, which make up the Diocese of Rochester.

This year both services for those being ordained priest and deacon were live streamed on Facebook.

Anyone interested in exploring their own sense of calling, whether that be to ordained or non-ordained ministry, can find more information at: www.rochester.anglican.org/ministry/vocations/



INSIDE OUT CHURCH

With the help of a gazebo and refreshments, members of St Paul's Parkwood, South Gillingham are taking church outside each month. Chatting to passers-by and offering prayers, Dawn, one of the regulars, says: "It sums up the way we think the church should go - being out in the community and not confined to a building."



NEW FACILITIES BOOST MISSION

St Francis, Petts Wood is celebrating having a new accessible toilet and kitchen servery area at the West end of church. Fr Stephen Niechcial, says: "As well as being for the use of our usual congregation, it is a great boost to our local mission and ministry for us to be able to offer our church facilities to community groups and organisations."



BLACK HISTORY MONTH MARKED

Ministers from churches in Gravesham have taken part in an interdenominational service for Black History Month. Licensed Lay Minister, Ethlyn Roy-Johnson, who led the service, said: "This has been an opportunity for us to share in a renewed hope for the future around issues such as inclusion and denouncing racism."



BUDDING FILM MAKERS GET BIG BREAK

A new film club for young animators and film makers at St George, Weald Sevenoaks is revitalising the youth club. Vicar and amateur film maker, the Rev Mandy Carr, offered a taster session on stop-motion animation. "We premiered the children's films on the big screen in church. We're now working on an exciting film project retelling the Nativity in a modern way!"

DELIGHT AS NEW COMMUNITY HUB OPENS



COMMUNITY CENTRE OPENING AT HOLY REDEEMER, LAMORBEY



A new and accessible hall facility has been opened at Holy Redeemer Church in Lamorbey.

The bright and airy facilities now include a new kitchen, accessible toilets, and children's play area.

It has been funded through a generous contribution of £150,000 from the London Marathon Charitable Trust, parish donations, and a grant from the Diocese of Rochester's Missional Property Fund, supported by Marshall's Charity.

Brian Ayto, a member of the Holy Redeemer Development Team, says that the aim is to provide an inclusive and welcoming place with events for wellbeing to help tackle social isolation.

"We want to encourage physical activities to assist in improving the health of the local community, as well as provide a venue for those who might usually be limited by the availability of suitable spaces and activities for their needs, such as the blind and partially sighted."

The Rev Mell Jemmett, Vicar of Holy Redeemer, said: "We're very excited for the future, as we work out how we will be a vibrant and welcoming place of Christian life and worship, but also an inclusive centre for the community with an identity and purpose."

SOUP-ER SUCCESS AS COMMUNITY LUNCH TACKLES LONELINESS



A new community lunch at All Saints, Langton Green is proving a soup-er success.

As in many towns and villages, isolation and loneliness are big problems.

Although the church is already running several activities to reach out into the community, Emma Stevens, Church Warden, says, isolation is still an issue:

"We try hard to get to know, and say 'hello' to, all the new families and newbies into the village, but that relies on referrals and being given the heads up."

When the owner of a local cafe took the initiative to set up a community lunch, the church came alongside to help. Volunteers came forward, local businesses offered discounts, and the first community lunch was held in November.

"It's been wonderful to see the community working together to bring delicious home cooking to those who may need support, friendship and an opportunity to feel loved, wanted and part of something much bigger."

GROWTH ENABLERS

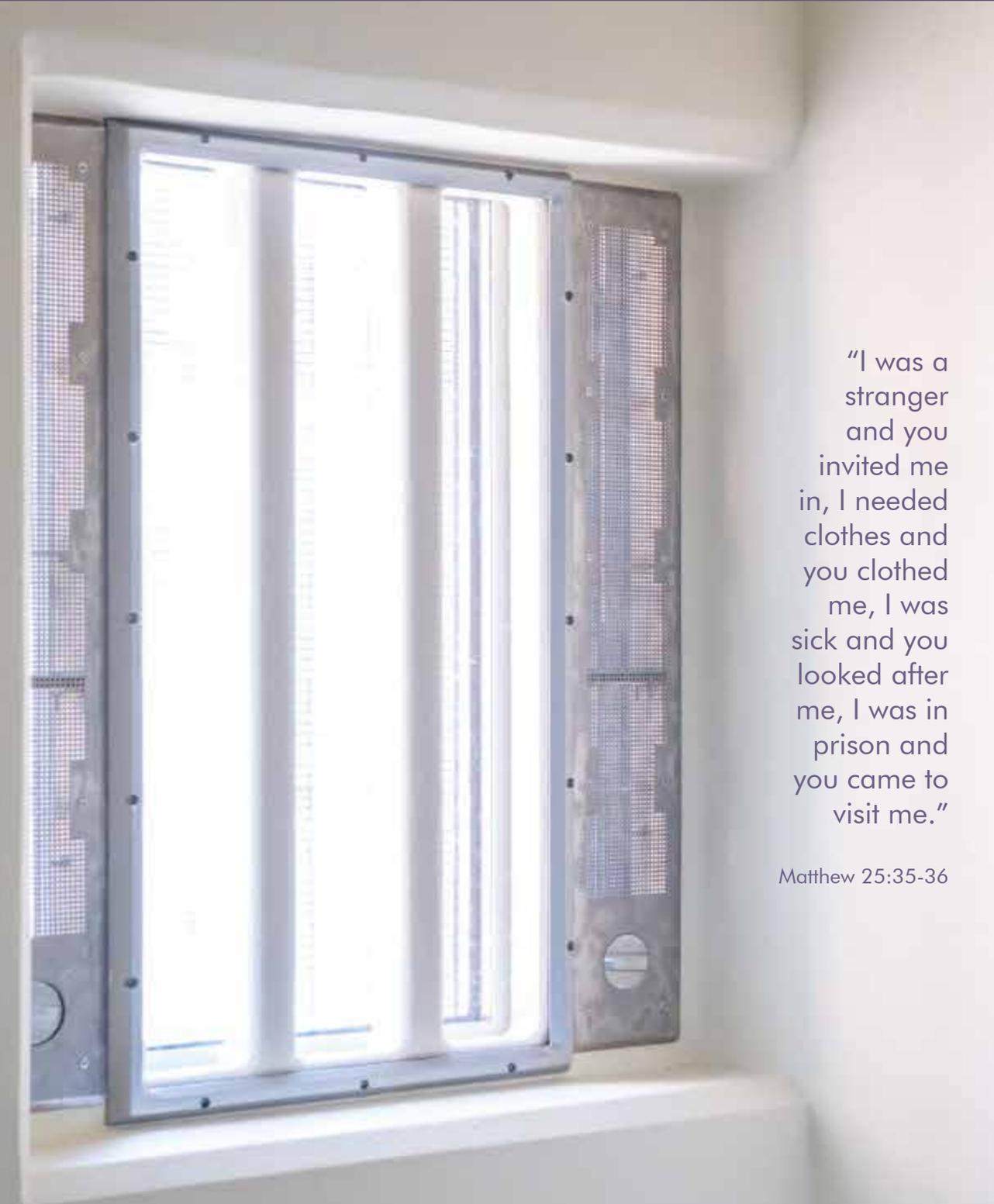


Three people tasked with helping support growth across the parishes have now begun their work within the Diocese.

Growth Enablers, Abi Hiscock, Graham Wilkinson and the Rev Dylan Turner, will support the five-step process, 'Called To Grow', which is being used to encourage and equip churches to reflect, plan and review what God may be asking of them.

Speaking about the task ahead Graham said: "I am very excited about this opportunity. I feel passionately that to grow God's church, we must intentionally reach out to our local community to show God's love, build relationships and share our faith."

Visit www.rochester.anglican.org/resources/called-to-grow/growthenablers/ to find out more.



“I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Matthew 25:35-36

DOING TIME:

The prison-based Church project easing the pain of separation

Prison separates families. Husbands and wives, parents and children. The burden on those relationships can be very great and it can sometimes take many hours to get to the prison for visiting hours.

Now, a pioneering Church-supported project at HMP Rochester - a male Category C prison - has begun to reach into that moment when families are reunited.

“One of the women told me she had travelled 4 hours on public transport with her little girl to do the visit,” says Jan Knight, a volunteer with Messy Church @HMP Rochester:

“Another said to me, ‘My children are usually climbing the walls waiting, but they won’t be now, because you have entertained them and given them some attention.’”

Through the simple offer of some refreshments, the telling of a Bible story, and the chance to take part in some fun crafts, the monthly Messy Church @HMP Rochester session aims to bring a little humanity into the prison’s Visitors’ Centre; a small team of Messy Church leaders from around the Diocese take turns to run each session using volunteers from their local groups.

“It’s so important to be able to take God outside of the church building,” says Jan, “and, if nothing else, what we are doing offers some respite to those families coming to visit their family member.”

This family and food orientated style of worship is well known within Church circles across the country as Messy Church (part of The Bible Reading Fellowship). It embraces all ages and is based on hospitality, creativity and celebration, with around 3,800 Messy Churches across the world.

But bringing it into a prison setting is pioneering.

There are over 83,000 people in prison in England and Wales.

Of those adults:

24% were in foster care as a child.

29% experienced abuse as a child.

47% have no qualifications.

68% were unemployed on arrest.

15% were homeless on arrest.

21% of men and 46% of women have attempted suicide.

Figures correct as of September 2019. Source: The Bromley Briefings.



GILL BETTS AND JAN KNIGHT AT MESSY CHURCH

Karen Laister, from The Bible Reading Fellowship (who run Messy Church), says there is a clear need for the project:

“Waiting to see a father or husband can be a stressful time for families, and Messy Church provides a positive experience.”

Gill Betts, is the co-ordinator of Messy Church @HMP Rochester and a Licensed Lay Minister at St Peter, Pembury and Rochester Prison Chaplaincy:

“At first we were asked not to call it ‘Messy Prison’ because some of the children are not aware that they are visiting a prison, they think that it’s where their dad works.

“We gave talks at the prison church services to explain the idea to the residents. It went down well and now some of the men encourage their visitors to come specifically when the Messy Church is on.”

Now marking its first anniversary, volunteer Jan Knight says visitor feedback has certainly always been positive:

“One lady didn’t understand why this didn’t happen

in every prison. For me, if people are coming into visit their loved ones in a happier state of mind, that has surely got to be a good thing.”

Gill agrees and says that many of the visitors are delighted that, during the sessions, they can make something that can be given to their family member in the prison itself:

“We’ve made prayer hands, little fish. We’ve taken a lot of advice about what materials can be used in a prison context – no white powders in the science activities, no blue tac or plasticine. Wet wipes are invaluable too, as some of the children come in their best clothes to visit so need to be kept clean.”

This Christmas, the team will also be supporting Prison Fellowship’s Angel Tree initiative, which works to ensure that every child can receive a present from their family member in prison.

Jan, who has now also become involved in the prison’s Restorative Justice programme, says that working in the prison is a very humbling experience:

“Some people have been quite shocked that I am

involved in such work, but I absolutely love it and believe that this is really what God wants me to do.

“There are men that have come from very sad, very depressing starts in life. Others are privileged and well-educated and others are just from ordinary families like mine and yours. It could be your son, your daughter. You just never know.

“Anything we can do through this project to show people some humanity must be a good thing.”

For Messy Church founder and team leader, Lucy Moore, they are watching the project with interest: “We’re very excited about Messy Church being in prison visitor centres and look forward to seeing this ministry developing more widely.”

If you would like to get involved with Messy Church @HMP Rochester, or contribute to their Angel Tree appeal, please contact Gill Betts at Gill.Betts@outlook.com

My child was extremely happy when she received the gift and I think it was a lovely idea and amazing that you are doing this for people. I still can't get over the beautiful reaction on my child's face. Keep up the good work and I can't thank you enough!

Thank you so much my daughter couldn't believe that the prison elves could send presents

All 3 of my boys (aged 10, 11 & 12) were so happy to receive their presents. Thank you so much for the work that you are doing over Christmas and Restorative Justice.

“Some of the children are not aware that they are visiting a prison, they think that it’s where their dad works.”

Gill Betts



LIFE TOGETHER: an opportunity to deepen your relationship with God

An initiative to encourage a rhythm of listening, commitment and regular prayer among small groups across the people and parishes of the Diocese has officially launched.

Called 'Life Together', its aim is to help people grow in their relationship with God and to become more fruitful and active followers of Jesus.

The Rev Jane Winter, the Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry, who has helped shape 'Life Together', says the idea grew out of the conversations that took

place among local churches and groups around the development of 'Called Together', the Diocese's shared vision:

"We learnt from these conversations that there is a real desire among people to be better followers, or disciples, of Jesus."

The question then followed of how best to achieve this.

"'Life Together' is deliberately not about setting rigid structures or rules," she says, "but rather, following guiding principles - pulse points - to help sustain a relationship with God and one another."

These principles, which include abiding, commitment, and change, are inspired by Benedictine spirituality.

So how does it work and who is it for?

'Life Together' encourages people to form small groups to which they commit to a regular pattern of prayer and engagement.

It's inspired by the example of Jesus' disciples and the earliest Christian communities, who often met together and by this became more fruitful and Christ-like.

As Jane explains: "You might be a church group, or a home group. Perhaps you could be based in a school or office. A 'Life Together' group could be a dispersed community who meet mainly on-line, for example, a group of commuters."

A dedicated webpage and pocket-sized booklet have been made available to help guide people through how they might want to form a group.

The Diocese of Rochester Youth Council has already piloted the scheme.

Made up of 14 to 19-year olds, the Youth Council has used Facebook Messenger to create a Life Together group.

Having put all the appropriate safeguards and consents in place, with the support of the

Diocese of Rochester's Children and Young People's team, the group commits to meet and pray online each Wednesday evening.

"The reason I value the 'Life Together' group chat so much is its ability to connect us no matter how far away we go," says one member.

Another says: "We use prayer points to help us focus, which has been great for me. It has really helped me deepen my connection with Jesus and others in the group."

Another one church-based group uses a combination of phone contact and one-to-one meetings to structure their commitment. While elsewhere, they have used outward signs to show their commitment:

"We meet as a group to pray

and decided that, as a dedicated group, we would supply the candle for our church's sanctuary lamp, as a sign of our praying."

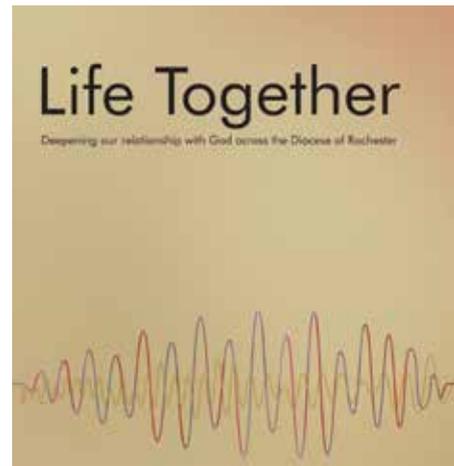
Endorsing the initiative Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge, says:

"I am very excited by the possibilities raised by the creation of small groups of followers of Jesus who are willing to be accountable to others in the group as they make this journey. It is a striking counter to the idea that we must make our own way in life.

"It's both radical and conservative. Radical because small cells of accountable Christians are counter-cultural, and conservative because it is drawing on historic streams of wisdom and practice."

For Jane Winter, whoever is within it, or however it expresses itself, a 'Life Together' group is about Christians joining together to support each other, and being committed to the activities of the community or group.

Visit www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/lifetogether/



MAKING SURE OUR CHURCHES ARE SAFE – reviewing past cases of abuse

Independent reviewers are currently carrying out a comprehensive safeguarding review of churches and key institutions within the Diocese of Rochester, called the Past Cases Review.

Its purpose is to help establish whether all known cases of church-related abuse have been considered and dealt with appropriately. It's also an opportunity to learn about concerns that may not have previously been known about.

"We appreciate that this process will only be meaningful if those who have a concern about something they have experienced in a church, now or in the past, feel able, if they wish, to contribute and have their voice heard." Says the Ven Julie Conalty, Archdeacon of Tonbridge and

Bishop's Lead for Safeguarding.

She continues: "We therefore want to encourage anyone who may have information about church-related abuse to know that there are people you can talk to and you will be taken seriously." Whether your experience is in the past, or you are concerned about a person now – perhaps a child of vulnerable adult – please contact the **Diocese of Rochester's Safeguarding team on: 01634 560000.**

Understanding that this may not feel safe for those with a lived experience of abuse, a dedicated telephone helpline operated independently by the NSPCC is available on: **0800 80 20 20**

Find out more at: www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding/past-cases-review/

"IT HAS REALLY HELPED ME DEEPEN MY CONNECTION WITH JESUS AND OTHERS IN THE GROUP."

10 TIPS FOR A GREENER NEW YEAR

As we look ahead to a new year, could 2020 be the start of a 'greener', more sustainable, you? Every journey begins with a single step, so we've put together some practical ideas to get you started. Choose what is most appropriate for your situation.

"It's absolutely clear that following Jesus must include standing alongside those who are on the frontline of this unfolding climate catastrophe."

Archbishop Justin Welby

1

GIVE PURPOSEFULLY – whether it's at Christmas or for a birthday, don't buy for the sake of it. Perhaps contribute to one big gift or make or bake a present. Could you give an experience, or your time and talent, rather than a product?



2

WRAP IT UP – while we're talking gifts try the 'Scrunch Test' before you wrap. Scrunch some of the paper into a ball - if it unfurls - it is made with plastic. Why not use brown paper instead? Paint patterns or draw a design on it. Even reusing newspaper could look stylish!



3

TALK ABOUT IT – Getting informed about climate change is important. Discuss what you find out with your friends, family, colleagues and church. Share your questions and concerns. How could you support each other to take action or make changes? Talk about the environment in your worship and prayers.



4

REDUCE THE POWER – Try and cut down on your energy use - it will save you money too! Switch to LED lightbulbs where possible and remember to switch off standby appliances and lights when not in use: a little reminder note might be all it needs. Reduce your use of tumbler dryers and dishwashers or knock your heating down a notch.



5

BUY LESS, THROW AWAY LESS – especially single use or disposable plastic items. Take your own cup with you, try a bamboo toothbrush. Do you need a plastic bag for your fruit and veg? Remember the 6 R's - Rethink, Refuse (to buy/consume), Reduce, Reuse, Repair, (and lastly) Recycle. Take a look at www.theplasticfreeshop.co.uk/ for some ideas.



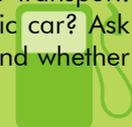
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MIX UP THE MENU – What we eat and how it is produced has a big impact on the environment. Experiment with new eating ideas such as consuming less red meat or more vegetarian or vegan dishes. If you can, seek out more local and seasonal produce and use up your leftovers.



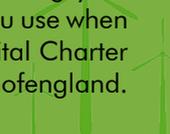
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TRAVEL LIGHT - Think about how you get from A to B. Encourage car-sharing to meetings or events. Take the opportunity to walk, cycle, or use public transport. Know someone with an electric car? Ask them about their experience and whether it could work for you.



8

TELL POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSES YOU CARE – Write your own email or letter to those in positions of influence or join in a campaign to make change happen. Remember, if taking your thoughts online, think about the language and tone you use when joining in debates – see the Church of England's Digital Charter for guidance. For more information visit www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-digital-charter



9

THINK WILDLIFE – Explore how you could make your outdoor spaces more friendly for wildlife and pollinators. Support tree planting and other carbon reduction projects such as Woodland Trust (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or Climate Stewards (www.climatestewards.org).



10

GET INVOLVED – Maybe your church could sign up to become an EcoChurch and work towards an award using their free online survey www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/eco-survey/





SCHOOL'S BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS:

how a Church of England school in Longfield is inspiring achievement across the country

Six years ago, Langafel CE Primary School had been graded as "requires improvement" by OFSTED. But thanks to the dedication and hard work of teachers and pupils alike, inspired by their Christian values, the school has turned its fortunes around. So much so, it is now being used as an example of best practice by government.

With results that were hovering just above the government's floor targets, expectations at Langafel CE Primary were low and children were not achieving well.

At the time, incoming new headteacher, Katie Maynard, recognised that while results were poor, staff and children were working hard, and she set about assembling a new leadership team with the determination to turn fortunes around.

"At Langafel CE Primary school we believe in the potential of every child regardless of background or individual needs.

"However, previously, there had been a tendency to justify poor results by reference to the school's large intake of children with special needs, as well as ADHD and behavioural problems."

Now, Katie says that this has all changed and the school's Christian values have guided that transformation:

"Our Christian vision was instrumental to our development. For example, we often use the parable of the Lost sheep found in Luke 15 to help the children understand that, when they feel like the lost sheep in the story, someone from school will help them.

"It means we now have a 'no excuses' culture, where we just don't expect anything but the best for our children, no matter what their background or individual needs."

Six years ago, this change of attitude meant looking at the individual areas of English and maths that children had not yet grasped and teaching those to small groups of children in intensive sessions, targeting teaching and approach.

Katie says they also recognised that improving standards in English and maths didn't just mean teaching more of those subjects:

"Now, we have a 'no excuses' culture, where we just don't expect anything but the best for our children, no matter what their background or individual needs."

"Our children needed and deserved more than that.

"They needed to be excited about school as a place where memories could be created, links made, and where children had ownership of the learning whenever possible."

A topic curriculum was introduced, linking good-quality texts with other subjects.

"That year, our end of Key Stage 2 results rose by 20 per cent and it transformed our outlook on what children could achieve."

At the same time, the school also began to attract a number of children who had been excluded or who were at risk of exclusion from other schools.

Katie says that, therefore, wellbeing was put first:

"This was partly to ensure that these children were in school. During this time, my senior leaders and I spent many hours walking around the corridors and talking children back into class."

Teachers now had high expectations of academic achievement, a host of strategies to help them with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and a curriculum that inspired.

Ofsted came in March 2015 and Langafel was rated 'good' in all areas.

Katie says a huge weight had been lifted: "After eight years Langafel was a 'good' school!"

However, they knew their journey was not over and it became apparent that a whole-school approach to support wellbeing was required:

"We underwent another transformation and became a Thrive school.

"Thrive is a specific way of working with all children that helps to develop their social and emotional wellbeing, enabling them to engage with life and learning. It sits very well with our being a Church of England school, and supports them in becoming more self-assured, capable and adaptable."

This ambition has meant the successful trend has continued, with the school being rated 'good' in all subsequent inspections.

To top it all, this year the school has been highlighted



in the South of England Primary Education edition of The Parliamentary Review, a prestigious industry guide to best practice backed by senior politicians.

"We are very proud of our results," says Katie, "as they show how we live out our Christian values and vision, that every child needs to be able to do well, not just pushing up performance from the top."

She adds: "We know we will have to change regularly but, by focusing on what will have the most impact and by staying true to our vision, children at Langafel will continue to thrive, flourish and achieve."



DIVISION

It's said that UK society is more divided now than ever before. But does the Church have any place in healing such rifts? **Gavin Drake, Director of Communications for the Anglican Communion** – the worldwide family of Anglican churches of which the Church of England is part - says we might do well to look at the Church's role in reconciliation around the world.

On 31 October 1517, a German priest and academic theologian, Martin Luther, posted a provocative status update.

He didn't have the benefit of Twitter or Facebook, so he did the next best thing: he posted a paper on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg (if you believe that version of history).

His actions sparked the period of Church history we call the Reformation and unleashed a brutal and violent season of bloodletting between Catholics and Protestants.

Fifty-three years ago, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, paid an official visit to Pope Paul VI. It was the first official meeting between an Archbishop of Canterbury and a

Bishop of Rome since the Reformation.

It made headlines around the world – and that was before Pope Paul presented his episcopal ring as a gift to Archbishop Michael.

Five decades on, I've lost count of the times Archbishop Justin and Pope Francis have met.

But how did this come about? It didn't happen by accident. Nor by chance.

You don't deal with the lasting hurt of millions of deaths by simply meeting. You need to address the issue at the heart of the dispute.

South Sudan is the world's newest country – it gained independence in 2011 – and has been in a state of civil war for most of its existence.

Various attempts have been made to reconcile President Salva Kiir and his factions with various opposition groups.

The UN was unsuccessful. The African Union was unsuccessful.

Then, it was suggested that the South Sudanese Council of Churches should try led by Archbishop Justin Badi Arama – the newly installed Primate of the Episcopal Church in South Sudan.

So, in May 2018 he led five days of mediated peace talks between the warring parties.

It didn't bring peace. But it did lead to agreement on three of the 11 demands made by opposition groups.

Archbishop Justin Badi Arama's approach isn't to preach platitudes. He challenges his country's leaders and its people, more than 90 per cent of whom are said to be Christian.

If they are Christian, he asks, how can there be civil war?

In Zambia, increased tensions during their elections in 2016 risked changing their proud history of peaceful elections, as pockets of violence sprang up.

The three main Christian bodies – the Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Evangelical Alliance, and the Council of Churches – united to create a powerful lobby. They called all 23 political parties to talks at the Lusaka Cathedral to secure fair and non-violent peaceful elections.

The meeting began at 3pm and is said to have continued until 10pm, when the parties had exhausted everything they wanted to say.

The Dean of Lusaka, Charlie Thomas, told me later that a change of mood in the political discourse was noticeable "immediately" after the talks had taken place.

"Cathedrals exist for that purpose," said Dean Thomas, "as a centre for people to come and meet at times of mourning, pain, rejoicing, [and] when we have conflict."

So, what can we in England learn from these examples from elsewhere in the world in helping

to heal a nation?

Firstly, we need to recognise that the Church has power. It is 'soft power', but it is still power. We can ignore it, or we can use it for good.

We are not a private pressure group or insignificant membership organisation. We are present in every community: every house in every street in every village, town or city is part of a Church of England parish.

In the developing world, the UN and major NGOs recognise this power of the Church to reach what they call 'the last mile' in the delivery of health essentials, vaccinations, treatments, and so on.

Secondly, we need to recognise that we do not act alone. In most of the examples I have given, there is either an ecumenical involvement, or a cross-Anglican Communion involvement, or both.

We are stronger when we work together.

Thirdly, we need to recognise that we have a duty to work for reconciliation.

The Church exists because God sought to reconcile us to himself; and so, the Church must be reconcilers in the world.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York were mocked recently when they suggested that churches hold tea parties to mark Brexit.

But what better way – in England of all places – to bring people together than over a cup of tea?

As a Church we have a role to play to work towards reconciliation: whether that be through tea parties in parishes or a Citizens' Assembly chaired by our Archbishop.

The key is relationship. And building relationship is what we must all seek to do.

"... we need to recognise that the Church has power. It is 'soft power', but it is still power. We can ignore it, or we can use it for good."

Over time a cycle of worship and observance - known as Seasons - has developed in the Church. They allow us to remember, celebrate and recall our Christian faith. Here are some of the new reflective offerings available from the Church of England, to support you and your family's spiritual journeys over the next few months.

CHRISTMAS: 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS WONDER



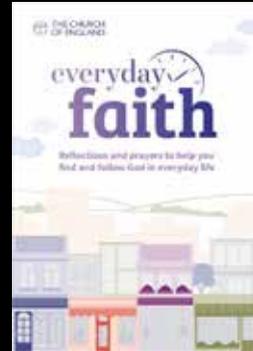
Inspired by the journey of the wise men (or Magi) as they follow the star to discover Jesus, these daily reflections invite us to go on a similar journey of wonder and discovery throughout the 12 days of Christmas. Using themes suggested by the chorus of the well-known carol, 'We three Kings', each day you'll find a short Bible passage, a simple prayer and a challenge to reflect or act differently.

Additional free digital materials, including activities for families are also available.

Single copies (£1.50) and bulk orders also available.

Visit: www.chpublishing.co.uk/followthestar

ORDINARY TIME: #EVERYDAYFAITH

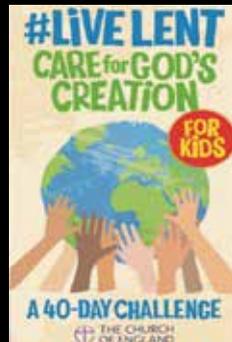


A series of reflections and prayers to help you find and follow God in everyday life - an ideal follow up to your Christmas journey. Our daily lives are often full of things to do, places to be and people to meet. But how do we find God in the fullness of life? Everyday Faith includes 21 daily Bible reflections to help inspire you, as well as real life stories of how others have found God at work in their lives, and a simple pattern of prayer to help you pause and be aware of God.

Single copies (£2.99) and packs of 10 (£25.00) available

Visit: www.churchofengland.org/everydayfaith

LENT: LIVELENT - CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION



Join millions of Christians worldwide in marking the 40 days before Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday which falls on 26 February 2020. This 40-day challenge focuses on the environment and includes daily 'bite-size' readings, reflections and actions to challenge us to live in a more just and sustainable way. A complement to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book in 2020, written by environmentalist, Dr Ruth Valerio, called, 'Saying Yes to Life'.

A version aimed specifically at children and young people is also available.

Single copies (£1.99/Kids: £1.50) and bulk orders also available.

Visit: www.churchofengland.org/livellent



We appear to be a nation of podcast-lovers, with around 7.1 million of us in the UK now listening to podcasts each week. There's a dizzying array to choose from too, catering to all sorts of interests, from entertainment and politics, to family life and faith. Whether you're a podcast veteran or a total newbie, Brad Cook, Licensed Lay Minister at Christ Church, Luton gives us his pick of his top faith podcasts.



TALKING THEOLOGY

Produced by Cranmer Hall – a theological college in Durham - each fortnightly episode features Philip Plyming (the Warden of Cranmer Hall) interviewing a guest about a particular topic.

Previous episodes have featured Miriam Swaffield (from the student ministry "Fusion") talking about how young people are coming to faith, Libby Lane (the Bishop of Derby) on God and suffering, and Jessica Martin (Residentiary Canon at Ely Cathedral) exploring different forms of prayer from the Church's history.

Don't be put off by the title including the "T" word or by the podcast emerging from a 'Vicar Factory'! The series is an accessible resource for anyone who is interested in exploring key issues facing the Church and world today from a Christian perspective.

www.podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/talking-theology/id1449756129



WORSHIP CENTRAL PODCAST

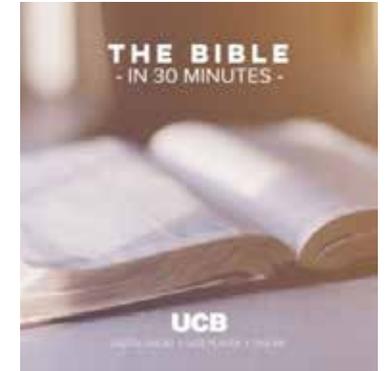
Originating some years ago from Holy Trinity Brompton, the Worship Central Podcast has recently relaunched from its new home at Gas Street Church in Birmingham.

Each episode is a magazine-style programme of about 40 minutes talking all things worship.

Topics have included liturgy vs spontaneity in worship, the relationship between worship and mission, while guests featured have been Guvna B, Brenton Brown, and Amy Orr-Ewing.

Although the target audience is probably those involved in leading contemporary sung worship, there is something for all worshippers here to help us think about how we worship.

www.podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/worship-central/id163031572



THE BIBLE IN 30 MINUTES

This podcast is a series of 17 half-hour episodes featuring David Taviner, the Head of United Christian Broadcaster radio in America, in conversation with Phil Moore (leader of Everyday Church, London).

The first episode helps us to understand the significance of the Bible and the impact it has had on society and our culture. The next 15 episodes then explore a section of the Bible in (almost) chronological order, drawing out the key themes and over-arching narrative.

There are tips on how to go deeper in exploring the scriptures as well as how to choose which translation to read.

Whether you've never opened a Bible before or have read it from cover to cover, you are sure to gain new insights and understanding.

www.podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-bible-in-30-minutes/id1465888071

TOP 10 EVENTS NOT TO BE MISSED



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT CHURCH

Whether you have not been to church for a while, or never been before, maybe this Christmas could be different? Visit the 'A Church Near You' website, and discover a church local to you where you can receive a warm welcome this Christmas. www.achurchnearyou.com



'THE INFANT: A JAZZ SUITE FOR CHRISTMAS'

7 December, 7:00pm for 7.30pm start
St Stephen, Tonbridge

Jazz multi-instrumentalist, composer and theologian, the Rev Dr Tim Boniface performs his latest jazz work, based on words from the speaking characters in Luke's Christmas stories. Tickets cost £12.50 (incl. wine during the intermission) Book at: www.ststephens.org.uk/christmasjazz/



PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR CHRISTMAS

2, 9 and 16 December
Stable Chapel, The Rectory, Plaxtol

Experience quiet time in the Stable Chapel, part of The Nativity Garden – a registered member of the Quiet Garden Movement. At 11am silent reflection and 12noon – Eucharist. Individual or parish visits to the garden can be made by arrangement: donnahayler64@gmail.com



ADVENT QUIET DAY

12 December, 10am to 4pm
Companions of Christ, Chatham, ME4 6DP

A day exploring the Advent theme of searching for, and looking forward to, the coming of Christ. With short times for personal quiet reflection and study. Bring your own lunch, drinks will be provided. Donations are welcome. For more details and booking email: susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk



CHRISTMAS CRAFTS AND CAROLS

14 December, 9.30am - 4pm
St Benedict's Centre, West Malling

Join us for a day of festive gift making and crafts, ending with carol singing in the Pilgrim Chapel, and traditional mince pies. £25 incl. refreshments and craft materials. To book bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



CHRISTMAS EVE CAROL SERVICE

24 December, 4.15pm
Rochester Cathedral

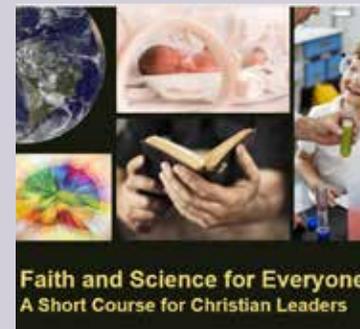
A wonderful opportunity to hear the choristers of Rochester Cathedral sing in perfect harmony. All Christmas services at the Cathedral are un-ticketed and open to everybody - arrive in good time to get a good seat and view. Visit: www.rochestercathedral.org



SIDCUP SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA NEW YEAR'S CONCERT

4 January 2020, 7.30pm
St John's Church, Sidcup.

An evening of music by Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov, Borodin, Britten, Delius, Verdi and Johann Strauss, conducted by James Ross. Tickets £12/£14 or £6/£7 students/u18s. Book at www.sidcupsymphonyorchestra.org/book-tickets.html



FAITH AND SCIENCE FOR EVERYONE: A SHORT COURSE FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

10-11 January 2020, Cambridge

A workshop covering contemporary hot topics in the dialogue between Science and Religion, as well as how to engage with Science and Faith in the local Church. Tickets: £30 for one day, £50 for both, including lunch. Visit: www.faraday.cam.ac.uk



BAME VOCATIONS CONFERENCE

22 February 2020, 1-5.30pm
St George, Beckenham.

An event for people of BAME heritage from the local church to talk about vocation in the Church of England. Be inspired in your vocational journey, be equipped with knowledge about the various ministries in the Church. Book your place at www.bit.ly/2NpZonv



FESTIVAL OF FAITH AND LITERATURE

21-22 February 2020, Bloxham School, Oxfordshire

A literature festival with a theological slant. Delve into the love poetry of George Herbert and RS Thomas with Mark Oakley, or discover forgotten stories of 16th love and marriage with Suzannah Lipscomb. www.bloxhamfaithandliterature.hymnsam.co.uk/

NEW DIOCESAN SECRETARY

Following a thorough national search and appointment process, Matthew Girt has recently been announced as the new Diocesan Secretary for the Diocese. As the chief operating officer for the Diocese, his background in local government, town planning, and major regeneration projects, will certainly come in handy, but will a love of singing help too?

You're not new to the Diocese - how have you been involved up until now?

"I grew up not far from Rochester, and one of my happiest memories was being a chorister at Barming, St Margaret. I remember very clearly the opportunities that gave me to build my confidence, try something I didn't think I could do, and succeed, as well as how sometimes it didn't always work out as you'd expect! I owe my choir mistress a lot. I also worked with the Diocese whilst I was in the Diocese of London, so it's been a big part of my life."

What are you looking forward to in this role?

"Making a positive difference. I was very proud to support Bishop James and the team in my previous role when planning for and then launching Called Together, and that's hugely important for all of us to take forward. We're here for a purpose, all of us. Being part of my own parish's life, I see the challenges of where we are, but it is what is set out for us and where God is calling. Philippians 3:13, a daily call."

Are there any challenges ahead that you see?

"Ensuring we are fit for the future. It's not just about living our faith and dealing with the challenges of today. It's our job to ensure future generations can do the same."

What do you like to do to relax?

"I'm blessed to have part of the Pilgrim's Way near our home so plenty of walks with my family. I sing in a choir and listen to music of all kinds."

Who have you been particularly inspired by?

William Morris. He had a sense of community as well as an appreciation for history and the environment. He thought on many levels.

What are you reading at the moment?

"I've always got an Alistair Cooke memoir somewhere to hand. He wrote beautifully about a fascinating country. He challenges us to view things from another's viewpoint and not to assume you know the other party's narrative."

Are you musical at all?

"I don't play an instrument, if you ignore my poor attempts to learn electric guitar with my youngest son, but I've always sung in choirs. My favourite diary date is the Stour Music Festival, and '80's rock music is my secret pleasure!"

Anything you've been particularly proud to achieve?

"Getting the first Church of England church built in London for two generations, and the community projects I got off the ground across the Thames Gateway. Neither were easy, or quick, but that makes them all the more worthwhile."

What's your favourite food?

"Any game as a stew, perfect by an open fire on a winter's night."

Any traditions you and your family have at Christmas or New Year?

"This could get a bit serious, so I'm going with... watching Muppet's Christmas Carol. It's not Christmas until Kermit sings about there being 'magic in the air'."

Any hopes or New Year's resolutions for 2020?

"The next year is full of uncertainty, so giving some surety to our parishes and communities is something I hope we can achieve."

My new year's resolution... catch up on the TV series that I've missed this year. The Crown is something I keep meaning to watch, along of course with any re-runs of the Simpsons, but that will require me to sit down more, so I think turning off more has to be number one."

WHAT IS A DIOCESAN SECRETARY?

The Diocesan Secretary is the chief operating officer of the Diocese – it is the most senior administrative role within the Diocese.

Their job is to help ensure that the mission, financial sustainability and strategy of the Diocese - as determined by the Bishop, their staff and governing bodies - are served, through exemplary financial management, administration and effective governance.



EVERYDAY FAITH: university chaplain

Lynne Martin is the Chaplain at the Medway Campus which is home to ten thousand students from three universities – University of Greenwich, Christ Church Canterbury, and the University of Kent. It’s a role which she relishes despite all the pressures it brings.

“Reaching out to students is at the heart of what I do. My heart is in prevention, looking out for signs of loneliness, anxiety, depression, the signs of someone struggling in whatever way. I want to let them know that we can help them avoid a crisis.

With help from local churches, some of the activities I organise include the World Café each Wednesday where, for two hours, students can make friends and relax. There’s also TABLEtalk, which is a guided discussion evening, particularly helpful to international students wanting to develop their English language and cross-cultural skills.

I organise special services for times such as Remembrance Day and in the run-up to Christmas, but there is no regular Sunday time of worship on campus. I want to see students engaging with their local communities and attending local churches.

Many of the students I meet are from other countries, and from different faiths or none. To me, this doesn’t matter. All of them are made in the image of God and, as Christians, we’re called

to welcome the stranger and come alongside others. My own experience includes some time overseas and having that kind of welcome was so important.

I’m often asked about my relationship with people of other faiths. Well, they know I am a Christian, but I respect where people come from. I don’t have to agree with people to offer a welcome and a respectful listening ear.

The greatest joy I have is if I can come alongside a student when they need someone there, then I’ve done something positive.”

“I want to see students engaging with their local communities and attending local churches.”

Are you thinking about changing the boilers in your church or school?

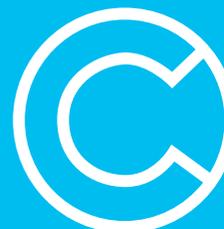
Well, now is your opportunity to think about improving the efficiency of your boiler plant by replacing!



- Is your boiler costing more to run than it should?
- Is your boiler safe?
- Is your boiler harming the environment?
- Is your heating safe for children?
- Is there a better way to heat your building?

We can help you find the answer. Call now to arrange a free visit.

remeha
energy solutions



Cowley Group

Contact your specialist boiler engineers and church heating advisors on the number below:

01737 761397
www.cowleygroup.co.uk

sales@cowleygroup.co.uk



Advent & Christmas services

Celebrate this Christmas at Rochester Cathedral

Advent Procession

1 December 6pm

Rochester Cathedral's Annual Christmas Concert

Friday 6 December, 7.30pm

Tickets £18 (£16 and £10)

Dickens Carol Services

7 and 8 December, 12.30pm and 3pm

Experience Benjamin Britten's: A Ceremony of Carols

Saturday 14 December, 7pm

Tickets £20

A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

21 and 22 December, 7.30pm

Children's Nativity Service

24 December, 3pm

Christmas Eve Carol Service

24 December, 4.15pm

The Eucharist of Christmas Morning

25 December, 10.30am

For more details visit www.rochestercathedral.org