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Address to Her Majesty to congratulate her on Elizabeth II.
The Throne of Her Majesty Queen

60th anniversary of the Accession to

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In a form approved by the House of Bishops only come before the Synod for final approval

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Women Bishops legislation, including one on a Draft Illustrative Code of Practice. In a major debate, the Manchester Diocesan Synod proposed a motion looking for improved “provision” for those with difficulties about the episcopal or priestly ministry of women. The Synod welcomed the Archbishops’ Submission on the draft bill on House of Lords Reform.

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ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

By the Rev Martin Henwood

Ubuntu4schools

By the Rev Martin Henwood

Schools are formally judged on the knowledge and skills they impart to students. Informally, as I meet head teachers in both primary and secondary contexts, they are just as concerned, however, as to what kind of student leaves school: Will they be courageous, responsible, compassionate?

Some educationalists fear that, amongst previous generations, what students actually learnt was how to

duck and dive and get away with things, which meant that when they became adults, this learnt behaviour continued when they rose to positions of responsibility in their organisation.

So what kind of adult or leader is our society calling forth and needing to face the new challenges that we are seeing around us? Someone who is collaborative,
globally committed and culturally aware? Someone who has the wider concerns of his or her community at heart? And what is our responsibility and role as adults in the co-creation with young people of the leadership we will have in the future?

If we do see it as our joint responsibility as adults to co-create with young people the leadership we need for the future, then some head teachers in north Kent can be seen to be truly taking up this challenge and responsibility, through the adoption of the Ubuntu4schools programme, an initiative that links their school with a school in South Africa, through which the spirit of Ubuntu and Ubuntu leadership is explored.

What is Ubuntu? Desmond Tutu explains it as an

spirit of Ubuntu and Ubuntu leadership is explored. Something shifts and the nature of that shifting force is

explored with their link schools in South Africa. Ubuntu is

Ubuntu leadership with Ubuntu as a guiding framework.

member of the wider school community, can be taking up

outside schools. And all think about how they, as a

exchange resources with the wider community inside and outside schools. Teachers, classes and students all explore the spirit of Ubuntu with their wider community.

Pupils interview adults that they admire and ask what their motivation in life is. Classes learn to delight in their differences. Teachers

Wider Community a clip: www.grubb.org.uk/ubuntu-education.html

belonging to a part of a wider social phenomenon. You can hear him speak directly about Ubuntu in this video clip: www.grubb.org.uk/ubuntu-education.html

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The Synod considered the latest versions of draft Eucharistic Prayers for use when a significant number of children are present (eg at a school’s Eucharist). Other matters included legislation for the Diocese of Europe (a growing Diocese of the Church of England), the new draft Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure, presentations on Higher Education funding changes (which will affect the training of clergy and certain lay ministers) and on the work of the Anglican Alliance for Relief, Development and Advocacy across the world.

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Mindful of the debate, of the voting figures above (and the need for a two-thirds majority in all three Houses at final approval) and of all that they have heard, the Bishops will now look to see whether the draft legislation should go forward in an unamended form or with some adjustments.

The Queen, women bishops, parochial fees and much more

By the Ven Clive Mansell

The Synod began on 6 February, the 60th anniversary of the Accession to the Throne of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

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Impressions of a study tour of the Holy Land 2012 by the Rev Canon Tony Powell

Please note: Copy deadline for the April issue of The Link is 15 March at 4pm
What's on

March

Friday 2 March
GRAVESEND – St Aidan’s Church will be hosting a Women’s World Day of Prayer Service at 10am. The speaker will be Angela Henderson from Hartley Reforming Church. All welcome – gentlemen included.

Saturday 3 March
AYLESFORD – Day of Prayer for Africa at St Peter and St Paul’s Church 10am-4:30pm. In the morning we will look at general topics and in the afternoon we will be looking at particular countries. Contact Iris Neel 01622 710634.

Sunday 4 March
BROMLEY – A Song in my Heart recital by Anne Gardener (Soprano) and Carol Anne Wells (Piano) at St Mary’s Church at 7pm, free admission. Followed by tea and cakes. Contact 020 8464 1239.

Monday 5 March
MAIDSTONE – Guild of Church Flower Arrangers meeting at St Nicholas Church Allington at 7:45pm. Demonstration of ‘New ideas for St Nicholas’ by Jill Griffin.

Saturday 10 March
GREENHITHE – Leading for growth - Supporting full time and voluntary leaders by providing dynamic leadership teaching from some of today’s great leaders at Greenhithe Church Hall at 7pm. Visit www.greenhithe.com.

ROCHESTER – Safeguarding seminar ‘Facing the Unthinkable: Child Abuse and the Church’ at St Justus, 9am – 1:30pm. Attendance is free to all those with a relevant parish responsibility. Contact 01634 560000.

BROMLEY – Bromley Philharmonic Choir will perform Pergolesi’s Stabat Mater and Vivaldi’s Gloria at 7:30pm at St Augustine’s Church. Tickets £8 in advance or £10 on the door. Contact 01689 810254.

STROUD – Book Sale 10am-12pm at St Nicholas Church. Books 40p. Contact Mr D Acott 01634 722661.

BEXLEYHEATH – Fair Trade coffee and tea at Christ Church. Books 40p. Contact Mr D Acott 01634 722661.

SUNDAY 11 March
BROMLEY – Piano and Organ Concert by Sevenoaks School at St Mary’s Church at 3pm. Tavo Wey presents the free concert followed by tea and cakes. Contact 020 8464 1239.

Saturday 17 March
GRAVESEND – Indoor boot fair at St Aidan’s Church and Community Hall 10am-1pm. Admission before 11am 50p, after 11am 20p.

SIDCUP – Keep Calm and Carry on with a Wartime Boogie: An Evening of entertainment with a 1940s theme at St John’s Church Hall at 7:30pm. Music of the 40s, food rations and black market extras, 1940s dress included. Tickets £8 from 020 8309 0866.

Saturday 24 March
LAMBERHURST – The Royal College of Strings from the Royal College of Music at St Mary’s Church at 7:30pm. Tickets £15 in aid of St Mary’s Church. Contact 890582.

BROMLEY – Orpington Band play music from Abba to Britten and Handel at 7:30pm at Holy Cross Church. Tickets £8, students £4 from 01634 666730 or email info@rctc.co.uk.

BANBURY – ‘A Song in my Heart’ recital by Anne Gardener (Soprano) and Carol Anne Wells (Piano) at St Mary’s Church on 27 March at 8pm. Free admission. Followed by tea and cakes. Contact 020 8464 1239.

Saturday 31 March
MAIDSTONE – Mozart Requiem, Sacred Pieces and Concert Arias with Maidstone Choral Union at All Saints’ Church at 7:30pm. Tickets £10.

DARTFORD – Dartford Choral Society Concert at Christ Church at 7:30pm. They will perform Vivaldi ‘Gloria’, Gounod ‘Messe Solennelle de Sainte Cecile’ and Ave Maria’ and Tavener ‘The Lamb’. Tickets £9, concessions £7 available on the door.

BEARSTED – Bearsted Choral Society presents an Easter concert featuring Stainers Crucifixion with music by Britten and Handel at 7:30pm at Holy Cross Church. Tickets £8, students £4 from 01634 666730.

NORTHFLEET – Table Top Sale at All Saints Church Hall 10am-1pm. Free admission.

Various
SEVENOAKS – Lunchtime Recitals at St Luke’s Church at 12.30pm - retiring collection.
7 Holly Bingham - Soprano & Dagmar Zeromska - Mezzo Soprano
14 Marjorie Owen – Contralto, Suzanne Walker, Soprano, Alice Turner - Piano
21 Pups from Granville School
28 Sophie Kochanowska & Kamilla Dunstan Mezzo Sopranos


WATERINGBURY – Lunches for Lent at the Church of St John the Baptist on 7, 14, 21, 28 March 12:30pm-2pm. Soup, sandwiches and drinks available. Contact 01622 813032 for more details.

ROCHESTER – Dido and Aeneas: An Opera by Henry Purcell at King’s School at 7:30pm on 15 and 16 March. Contact Lynne Davies on 01634 888590 or email admissions@kings-rochester.co.uk

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In just over 2 years my wife, Jane, and I have experienced the deaths of our three remaining parents - all of good ages - 91, 84 and 88. The landscape of our lives changed. Suddenly, we are the senior generation in the family tree.

Sitting beside my father for the last 3 days and nights of his life, holding his hand, talking to him, praying beside him, ministering to him in practical ways — this was a profound personal experience. My mother died suddenly, and we arrived moments after her death. My mother-in-law’s health deteriorated suddenly before Christmas and she died in mid January, but we were able to spend time with her during that period. For each parent we give thanks.

Through this period I have reflected on how our parents’ own respective lives have given us a background landscape through which we interpret something of our own place in life too. We have been caught up in their background stories, even though most of them occurred in the years before we were born. We owe to our parents not just the experiences (hopefully) of being loved and of wellbeing but also a setting which enables us to find our way into a wider world and landscape of life.

March 18th sees the occasion of Mothering Sunday, in some places and for some people a significant and well-supported event in churches, in family homes and, indeed, in local restaurants! It gives us a chance to reflect on how our understanding of life is, indeed, seen through the prism of our parents’ experiences. To what extent does our being part of their story help us to find a place in the larger story of life and, indeed, of our existence?

One of the themes of Mothering Sunday has also been that of “Mother Church” and, reportedly, at times in past generations people have returned to their home church on such a Sunday. If we can parallel the experience of “Mother Church” with that of our mothers and fathers, we might then ask to what extent does our experience of “Church” - and to what extent does our experience of people of the “Church” - in the first part of our lives give us a landscape and help us to understand our place in the wider setting of things eternal, the wider setting of the worldwide Church (and not just, perhaps, of the church of our childhood) and the wider setting of life in which things spiritual are to find their outworking.

Do we give people an experience of “Church” in their early period of contact with our churches - whether as children or young people or, indeed, as adults coming into faith and into church life - in a way which is sufficiently deep and influential that it helps them to navigate their way forward when they move from that original setting of their original “Mother Church”? Do we take steps to help people make that sort of transition? For example, do we seek to assist them to make contact with a new local church when they move house? Do we strive to sustain contacts with those in our secondary schools who were once close to church life in their primary school days? Do we take steps to re-connect with our young adults who have gone off to university and college, but who return to us in the college vacations? As medical advances overcome many impacts of ill-health, most people will live vacations with as many years as those of my parents. Are we able to offer them as younger people an experience within the context of “Mother Church” which might parallel their experience growing up within their relationships with earthly mothers and fathers?

I hope that, on this Mothering Sunday, many will be able to give thanks to God for mothers (and fathers), living or departed. I hope too that we will be able to give thanks for our experience of “Mother Church” and for those who, at earlier points in our lives, have helped us find a secure place in Christian faith.

**Bishop James’ Diary - March**

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Impressions of a Study Tour, Holy Land 2012

By the Rev Canon Tony Powell, Borough Green

It began with a view of gold. Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, then we walk in places whose names excite our faith; a gnarled garden that heard whispers of betrayal, an ancient gate with sung Hosannas.

The Via Dolorosa crushes and exacts far more than any tired ecumenical gesture, for here you have to shout to pray, pestered by Arab tradesmen and watched by young Jewish soldiers, lazily sling a rifle. But wherever we tread there is always music; a solo, our choir, voices echoing in such acoustic they still linger. The thump of the drum from the children’s SOS village beating out a new life. The alien tones of the muezzin from the minaret, and listen, yes a cock crows! It really does.

And always Nigerian pilgrims quietly saying Shalom, ever mindful of their brothers and sisters being slaughtered at home.

It is a land of stone: crusader crenulations, and that wall of our time that strangles Bethlehem, like a snake with a coloured skin of graffiti. Bankej was here!

The star of Bethlehem fell to earth for now it shines in a grotto.

Soon, throughout the Diocese, we will pray that what happened there then is why we celebrate Easter here now. If you have never been, you must. If you have, you will return, because it is such a precious privilege of experience, thankful to those who made this possible, who allowed us to earth, that what happened there then is why we celebrate Easter here now.

And always Nigerian pilgrims quietly saying sleep, and always laughter, and on the bus and off the bus, but do not rest for they will build a church over you! And it ends as it began, with gold. Sun shining on sand and sea as we shared the Peace, and turned homeward.

It really does.
By the Rev George Davies

In January, Bishop James; Bishop David Hamid (Bishop in Europe and Former Assistant Bishop in our Diocese), with three of our parish Clergy took part in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELK) annual Clergy Conference at the north western Baltic frozen coastal resort at Roosta, near Haapsalu. It was an occasion to renew our link which has developed over the past 15 years.

We arrived to a 'chilly' (-6°C) snow covered Tallinn and were met by the Revd Gustav Piir, who on behalf of the EELK, had made arrangements for our hospitality in Tallinn at the Puha Vaimu (Holy Spirit Church, Hostel in the Old Town) and for the Rev Alan Smith and the Rev Canon David Kitley at the Mary Church (Maari Kirik) in Tartu.

On Sunday, the Rev Canon Gordon Oliver preached at the Rahu Kirik (Peace Church at Nõmme – a suburb of Tallinn). Alan Smith preached at the Maari Kirik (Mary Church) Tartu; George Davies visited St John Church (Jaani Kirik) in central Tallinn. David did not attend the Conference and returned to the UK after his Tartu visit. On Tuesday, we celebrated the Eucharist led by the clergy of the West Harju deanery at the Roostla Chapel before the Conference formally opened.

This year’s conference was held at the Roosta (Puhkula) holiday resort set in an extensive pine and silver birch forest amid a snow scaped Baltic shoreline.

Each day began with a celebration of the Eucharist, after which the keynote plenary ‘academic’ presentations followed by Q & A from the floor. Throughout the visit, our long established Estonian friend, the Rev Gustav Pir acted as our translator. The afternoons were set aside for wide ranging workshops.

Bishop James gave a power-point presentation about the Diocese of Rochester, commending the development of our link within the Porvoo Communion. Bishop David gave overview of the work of the Diocese in Europe.

The Workshops: Prayers & homilies for radio; techniques in speech; religious articles for the press; Preaching in the Anglican tradition (led by Bishops James and David); homilies at weddings, at funerals, at baptisms; sermons for children/youth; short sermons; sermons without words

On our last evening the annual Presentation Dinner took place - an occasion to mark anniversaries of ordinations, and the announcement of the winning vote for the clergyperson of the year!

There were musical interludes and a valedictory speech by a long serving member of the clergy on the state of the work of the Church in Estonia. On our return to Tallinn we had a guided tour of the Cathedral, met with the Archbishop at the HQ of the Estonian Church, and Bishop James led an informal meeting at the Theological Institute, with the Archbishop’s Advisors as we shared our hopes and reflections for developing a sustainable Rochester/Estonia partnership.

Above: The mass grave where Aksel Vooremaa is buried
By the Rev Canon David Kitley

Why do we as a Diocese have a link with the Church in Estonia? Surely they do not need us in the way that the Church in Tanzania and Harare does? Well - it is true, theirs is a very different situation. But they value their relations with us more than we might realise.

With their long memories they look back with gratitude to 1919 when our Royal Navy fought off the Russian Navy, enabling Estonia to gain independence for the very first time as a nation. Unfortunately this was only to last 20 years. In 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, by which they shared out Eastern Europe like slices of cake. The Soviets occupied Estonia, deporting over 10,000 men, women and children in cattle trucks to Siberia; many perished there.

In 1941 Hitler threw away his agreement with Stalin, the Nazis invaded from the West. As the Soviets retreated, they set fire to factories, railways, farms, and historic buildings. Aksel Vooremaa, the priest of St Mary’s Church, Tartu was tortured and murdered, his church, like many others, was left to burn. Life did not improve under the Nazis; as elsewhere, Jews and gipsies were exterminated.

The war began to turn against Hitler, whose forces began to retreat. The Soviets gradually returned during 1944 – and stayed for nearly 50 years. Russian was taught in schools, Estonian culture repressed. Over 20,000 more citizens were deported to Eastern Siberia. St Mary, Tartu, was turned into a basket ball court. Independence gradually returned after 1990, though Soviet troops stayed till 1993. Estonia has joined the European Union, and looks to the West. But memories of so many years of Soviet occupation are very raw, and they fear still that the Russians could easily cross their Eastern frontier and return.

The Church is now free to worship and to propagate their faith. Many buildings have been restored. St Mary, Tartu has been returned to the church, but needs massive repairs. There is a strong desire to see this come about in memory of their beloved martyr priest – who is commemorated in Rochester Cathedral by having a Canon’s stall dedicated to him.

The younger generation are now learning English, and churches are keen to link with new friends – and especially in line with our Diocesan Link. Would you – or your congregation or deanery – consider reaching out with the hand of friendship? Friendship is the foundation and essence of all our overseas links. You will receive much more than you give! It will mainly involve mutual visits.

For further information please contact Canon David Kitley on kitley@clara.net or 01732 452112 – or any other clergy who visited in January.
Deputy Manager in Tunbridge Wells

The home in Tunbridge Wells has 26 care and nursing places. You will be joining an experienced and supportive management team. All our homes are renowned for their family atmosphere and Christian ethos, and if God is leading you to apply for this Deputy Manager role you will be a registered nurse and a committed Christian, able to lead devotions and empathise with residents’ spiritual needs.

Does this chime with you?
To know more contact us through our website - www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk or email hr@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk or telephone 0300 303 1900, or write to our London Office at 175 Toller Bridge Road, London SE2 2AL.
Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Beacons 2012

Kent Fire & Rescue Service is in full support of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Beacons celebration. We look forward to seeing people enjoying themselves safely at events throughout Kent and offer the following guidance for those who are planning any event to mark the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

The Diamond Jubilee Beacons celebration is being co-ordinated by the Government. Further information is available from: www.diamondjubileebeacons.co.uk If you are organising a public event you should:
• Contact your council to see if a licence is required and get advice about this.
• Make sure that the event is planned to run safely, without the need for a fire engine at the site.
• Complete a risk assessment before the event and reduce any risks you identify. If you are planning a bonfire, follow these safety tips:
  • Never use flammable liquids to start a bonfire or burn items such as aerosol cans, paint tins, foam furniture or batteries.
  • Keep a bucket of water or hosepipe nearby in case of emergency.
  • An adult should supervise the bonfire until it has burnt out. If it has to be left, damp it down with water.
  • Keep a fire extinguisher at hand in case of emergency.
  • Contact your council to see if a licence is required and get advice about this.
  • Bonfires should be lit after the firework display unless positioned sufficiently far away to ensure stray sparks from the bonfire cannot fall into the firework area.
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• Keep a bucket of water or hosepipe nearby in case of emergency.

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North Kent Group Office – (covers Medway, Strood, Sheppey and Swale) Watling Street Chatham Kent ME5 7HQ, 01634 283500
South Kent Group Office – (covers Ashford, Folkestone, Dover, Romney Marsh and the Weald) Park Farm Road Folkestone Kent CT19 5LT, 01227 825500

Bishop dedicates heating

The Bishop of Tonbridge, the Rt Rev Dr Brian Cant, attended the newly decorated Christ Church, Snodland, at a service of dedication for the new heating system and chairs which have replaced the old pews.

“As you enter this building it wants to say ‘welcome, it is good to have you with us’,” he said.

He praised a great team effort in raising £57,000 at a time when finances are tight.

“It makes Christ Church physically more welcoming with the heating, decoration, kitchen area, boiler and chairs,” he added. “I thank God for what you have done. Congratulations and well done.”

The church used to have a hot air blower for heating which was considered inadequate. It is hoped that now the building is more comfortable and warm, with better access for wheelchairs and pushchairs, it will be used by more community organisations.

Calling young Organists

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) is offering organ scholarships to two young organists at the 2012 Summer Course for Young People at Bath.

The successful candidates will play the four-manual Klais organ in the city’s splendid Abbey church; the setting for some of the choral services. They will assist the Course Organist in playing for rehearsals and services during the popular week-long event at Kingswood School; this year’s course runs from 20 – 26 August.

The Bath Summer Course for Young People, directed by international church musician Geoff Weaver, draws over one hundred young singers from RSCM-affiliated choirs around the UK who return each year for its mix of specialist teaching, the chance to sing services and concerts in some lovely venues, and plenty of fun and friendship. The music-making reaches a high standard accommodated by experienced tutor and Course Organist Steven Grahl. Steven is Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church in London, and Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford. The two scholarships will be awarded to young organists aged between 16 and 21 and at Grade 8 standard or thereabouts. Speaking in an RSCM podcast about the course last year’s organ scholars are enthusiastic about the invaluable experience they gained for attempting organ awards at college chapels such as King’s Cambridge or Magdalen, Oxford. “Unlike other organ courses, there are just two of us, so we’ve been able to focus on the organ playing aspect and the choral accompaniment which is exactly the sort of thing you need to be doing for Oxbridge,” says Peter Shepherd from Malvern in Worcestershire. Richard Parkinson from Goring-on-Thames agrees. “Being able to play organ voluntaries is the nice part of it but everyone’s doing that. This course helps to develop the extra skills and make you stand out.” Richard has subsequently been awarded an organ scholarship by a Cambridge college chapel. Full details of the course and scholarships can be found on the RSCM website www.rscm.com/courses or by calling 01722 424843. The course runs at Kingswood School, Bath, from 20-26 August 2012 and the closing date for scholarship applications is Friday 20 April 2012.
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Praying the way

Diocese
Please pray for Strood, Gravesend, Cobham and Dartford Deaneries organising prayer this month - part of the Diocesan Olympic Prayer relay.

Bromley and Bexley
Bromley Deanery
St Augustine, Bromley Common: Thanks that over three quarters of the sum required for the refurbishment of our church has been raised.
St John, Bromley: “God and Science” Lent lecture, Lent Group studies on the Creed
St Mark, Bromley: Lent course on the Passion of Christ

Erith Deanery
Northumberland Heath: A parenting course for parents with disabled children.

Sidcup Deanery
Holy Redeemer, Lamorbey: Thanks for the appointment of the Rev Colin Terry
St John, Sidcup: People living or working in the High Street

Rochester
Rochester Deanery
Rochester Cluster: New Incumbents to Borstal and St Justus
Chatham Cluster: Our joint Lent Course, clarity over future plans for buildings
Waldergrave Cluster: Filling a forthcoming vacancy. For attendance at Lent Meetings

Cobham Deanery
Meopham and Nurstead: The appointment of new churchwardens. The right people to be elected to both PCCs

Snodland: Confirmation group Twinning visit to France during this month

Dartford Deanery
St Alban, Dartford: Sustained ministry and mission during the interregnum
St Edmund, Dartford: The staff, doctors, and all who use the Living Well.
Darent: Those feeling isolated

Gravesend Deanery
Deanery “Prayer and Praise” afternoon
St Aidan, Gravesend: The right person to serve here
Holy Family with life: A person of God’s choice to serve here
St Mary, Gravesend: Churches considering working together for a club for 6-11 year-olds
Southfleet: Sick and bereaved members
St Peter & St Paul Milton: “Gossip the Good News” course

Strood Deanery
Sevenoaks Deanery
Bishop James visit to the Deanery
Knockholt with Halstead: New churchwardens; Leaders for youth and children’s work

ST Luke, Sevenoaks: Thanks for completion of building project

St Nicholas, Sevenoaks: Marriage Course.
Quiz Night with Christians in Sport
Shoreham Deanery
Ightham: Pop-in centre
Oxford: 12 adults recently confirmed
Kensing with Woodlands: Young families.
New worship times
Shoreham: Those mourning
Wrotham: Funds for new church boiler
Tunbridge Wells Deanery
Bennett Memorial School: Partnership with link schools in Tanzania and Ghana and preparations for visits in July. Teacher from Ghana visiting us this month. Students preparing for confirmation

Burswood: For staff; for patients to find healing

Christ Church, Southborough: Prayer teams visiting streets and for contacts made
St Luke, Tunbridge Wells: Those exploring faith through courses
St Mark, Tunbridge Wells: Re-opening of the café at Number One Community Centre on Showfields. Volunteers to pray for Street Pastors.
Rusthall: Four separate Lent House Groups in the parish

Intercession during March

1 March: Erith Deanery
2 March: Bamberghst
3 March: Belvedere All Saints
4 March: Belvedere St Augustine of Canterbury
5 March: Diocesan Education Team
6 March: The Diocesan Schools Committee and church schools in the diocese
7 March: Trinity School, Belvedere
8 March: Bexleyheath Christ Church
9 March: Bexleyheath St Peter
10 March: Bostall Heath
11 March: Crayford
12 March: Erith Christ Church
13 March: Bishop Justus School, Bromley
14 March: Bishop of Rochester Academy, Chatham
15 March: St Michael’s School, Otford
16 March: Erith St John
17 March: Falconwood
18 March: Northumberland Heath
19 March: Slade Green
20 March: St Olave School, Orpington
21 March: Kings School, Rochester
22 March: Tunbridge School
23 March: Bennett Memorial School,

The Cathedral Quire Stalls

The Stalls in the Cathedral Quire, mostly occupied by the Honorary Canons of the Cathedral, are each named after significant characters in Rochester’s long history.

Zachary Pearce: Born in Ealing on 8 September 1890, Zachary Pearce was a distiller’s son, educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge; one-time Vicar at St Martin’s in the Fields (1724), Dean of Winchester (1739), and Bishop of Bangor (1748). He was installed as Dean of Westminster on 4 May 1756 and a month later enthroned as Bishop of Rochester. Declining translation to the See of London in 1761, he held the Deanship of Westminster until 1768 when he resigned from it as he felt ‘that through old age he could not satisfactorily perform both duties’. It is said to be the first time Dean had retired from office rather than died in it! He is recorded as being a zealous defender of orthodox theology and yet a thorough and consistent liberal, ‘properly a wise man, a philosopher or lover of wisdom who disdains to submit his reason to the prejudices of custom, education, authority, interest or passion.’ Dr Johnson calls him ‘that excellent prelate’, and Bishop Newton refers to him as ‘a wise and religious man who had long deserved his Bishopric’. He published editions of classical authors, sermons and biblical commentaries, held public days in his palace in Bromley, died at the family house in Ealing in 1774, aged 84, and is buried in Bromley Parish Church.

The current Canon to occupy this stall is the Rev Canon Alan Vousden.

St Nicholas, Sevenoaks: Marriage Course.
Quiz Night with Christians in Sport
Shoreham Deanery
Ightham: Pop-in centre
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That Loving Feeling...

By the Rev Mandy Carr

There was no shortage of that loving feeling as thousands poured into Bluewater shopping centre for the Wedding Fair on 9 - 12 February.

Alongside the wedding dresses, reception venue providers, photographers and cake makers, the Church of England opened up its doors to the public in the market place, not only as a ceremony provider but as a place for pastoral engagement and all things before, during and beyond the 'Big Day'.

The Rev Canon Jean Kerr was in permanent residence each day and Bishop James came to join the fray on Saturday afternoon, with a rota of clergy covering the entire four-day period. Armed with Love Hearts sweets to give out, we were there to take an interest in, and applaud the couples who were making in any way they were choosing to celebrate it. 1500 Love Hearts were given out over that period (although the sweets with 'BYE BYE' written on it, were tactfully consumed by those working on the stand). Each sweet represented a contact; a conversation; some reason and was offered a cold cap treatment that felt like that was a real answer to prayer."

One of the best things about a wedding fair of this type is there is an opportunity to meet a real-life vicar in a non-threatening place and to ask all those questions that it might be difficult, or seem silly, to ask at the vicarage door. It's a chance to break down some of the stereotypes that exist about the Church and clergy. It's also an opportunity to encourage into the light that which can't easily be articulated, that sense of wanting something 'special', 'proper', 'traditional', even 'sacred'. The Church has a fantastic ministry in this area and being confident of what we have to offer and being visible and accessible will do much to overturn many of the negative views held in our culture today.

Although exhausting, the Wedding Fair at Bluewater was a great opportunity to engage with literally thousands of people. A good number of them will not have considered getting married in church before and this may even be the start of a journey of faith for them. Seeds are sown and even be the start of a journey of faith for them. Seeds are sown and even be the start of a journey of faith for them.

The kindness of strangers

By Louise Whiffin

The Rev Gwyneth Williams was ordained deacon in 2010 and just after the ordinations she discovered some lumps in her breast.

Gwyneth said, "After going to the doctors my feet didn’t touch the ground and I saw a consultant very quickly. Three weeks after the ordination I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a bit of a surprise because I’d had a normal mammogram a few months previously and it was clear, so I was quite concerned. My mother had breast cancer, so I regularly attended mammograms. When I saw the consultant she said not all cancers show up on the test, which I think women need to be aware of."

It became apparent after tests, including an MRI, that treatment would require a mastectomy followed by chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Gwyneth said, "It was an enormous shock. I think my initial reaction was complete disbelief. The consultants said they wanted to start treatment fairly quickly. I am not underestimating what happened, but I think overall I felt the presence of God. I don’t want to make out I am terribly holy and don’t feel things in the same way because I trust in God, but certainly my trust in God increased enormously. After the initial shock of knowing what was going to happen I did feel that it was in God’s hands and it was going to be okay. I was also upheld with love feelings as thousands poured into Bluewater shopping centre for the Wedding Fair on 9 - 12 February.

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