

Called Together – What you said and why this matters

A Message from Bishop James



'God has called you by name. God has called you.' Those are the words I use when I confirm somebody. They are important words for any of us that is a disciple of Christ; to know that we are called by God and that we belong to God. Derived from verses in Isaiah, they are words not addressed to an individual but to the whole of the people of God.

Within the Diocese in recent months, and across many settings, we have been seeking to discern Gods calling for us. You can see some of your responses on these pages.

We know the Church, indeed the world, faces many challenges but what we've heard as we've listened to you across Medway, Kent, and south-east London, is a desire for us to be confident in our faith, to be ready to proclaim it and live it out in our communities, and to steward the resources that God has given us in such ways as to serve that mission.

It is not possible to, 'bear the weight of this calling in our own strength, but only by the grace and power of God.' I ask you then to pray for our Diocesan family as we take these next steps together, and as we seek to share the strands of this calling with you - as expressed in Called Together - in the weeks and months ahead.



"Called Together has the potential to really liberate us from things that can distract, overwhelm or preoccupy the church; refocusing us instead on what I would call 'Kingdom of God priorities.' I am hopeful that it will bring about a culture where we have increased opportunity to experience what God is doing across our Diocese, on the ground, because there is already so much good work happening."

Archdeacon Julie Conalty, Archdeacon of Tonbridge



"Consider deeper and closer working partnerships with young people of all ages, youth on the streets, prisons, foster care, and other services, encouraging them to explore their full potential. Encourage people in church to explore ministry in the areas that best suits their gifts, talents and experience, and not to be defined by their background or culture. Be willing to learn from and listen to those younger and supporting their ideas, which come from their experience, and in turn be able to share wisdom with them."

Billy-Jo O'Leary - Licenced Lay Minister and Home for Good Kent Coordinator

"It's been a privilege taking part and I feel the process will engage all so that they are part of the whole church family"

Brian Rowley – Reader, St Paul, Crofton



"We need less religion and more hands-on activity; services should be lively and creative ('can we spend time drawing what God looks like?'); we don't like separate groups for children, we should be altogether as family... Overall it was a helpful discussion, and will shape how we take our group forward."

Spirit Squad (10 – 14 year olds), Parish of Holy Trinity South Chatham



"Don't dismiss the small encouragements and surprises - they are from God! Don't compromise the gospel message - be fruitful. Make time for people - really be present. Affirmation that strategic approach is good way forward."

Peter Callway, Rector of the United Benefice of Coxheath, East Farleigh, Hunton, Linton and West Farleigh.



"Don't get so sucked into 'doing' with no time for reflection/prayer. Encourage people to focus on their own gifts and encourage others to use theirs. Teach all Christians to believe they are called to serve God and develop their gifts."

Rose Robinson, Discipleship Development Advisor, Chatham

"We found the conversation quite difficult and challenging. But it has led to some good opportunities to develop the theme and keep talking, and also encouraged us to take some practical steps forward."

Anonymous

"We need to be more pioneering. Lean on God, listen to him, discern his will, be adventurous in spirit, be willing to take risks, be more sacrificial. We need to 'cast our nets on the other side of the boat' and 'get out of the boat'."

Kim Curle, Families Missioner, St George's Church, Bickley, in partnership with the Church of The Annunciation, Chislehurst

"We need to embrace change and be relevant to society today. We must realise that what was relevant years ago is not so today and we must be able to relate to people"

(Anonymous - East Peckham)

What do we need to do more?



"Be more outward looking, greater focus on people ... Greater social engagement. Greater working in partnership between parishes."

Sally Musson - Licensed Lay Minister St Peter & St Paul, Tonbridge

"We need to be aware of the culture we exist in, its need of good news and compassion...Any kind of discrimination or narrow Biblical interpretation will get in the way of the Gospel. We are called to worship - and however this is done it needs to be done well."

(Anonymous - St Mary the Virgin, Bexley)



"I think this initiative is providing us with some of the details that we need to take on if we are going to engage with community well and effectively. In the past the Church has tended to give people what it thinks they want, whereas this is providing us with an opportunity to respond effectively to what is out there, bringing the Kingdom values into that engagement."

Archdeacon Paul Wright, Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley

What might the Holy Spirit be saying to us?