



# **October 2021 Lay Ministry Matters**

The photograph above was a perfect harvest scene, taken last month when I was with a group of Lay Ministers on a several-times-postponed weekend at Worth Abbey. It already seems distant, and by the time you read this letter the clocks will be about to go back, it will be dark at 5pm, and in church we have almost reached the next season – All Souls and All Saints.

If you have been to one of the evenings that Chris Dench and I run twice yearly for Lay Ministers and Churchwardens in vacancies, you will remember that one of the questions we ask is “what season would you describe your church being in?”.

It may be good to sometimes stop and consider what season you would describe your ministry as being in? The LLMs who were licensed in 2020 and 2021 may feel like they are still in very early Spring, waiting for the conditions to be right to exercise ministry in the way they had hoped when they began training. Others of you may be wondering if your ministry has reached the period of Autumn, and perhaps even pondering whether or not to continue.

At Bishop James’ retirement service, I was sitting in the Quire, and had a good view of the very moving moment when he laid down his Episcopal staff on the High Altar, symbolising the end of his ministry among us, and at some point, next year, the next Bishop of Rochester will be given that staff to signify the beginning of his/her ministry among us. Lay Ministers don’t have symbolic items like croziers to hand on but there is a sense that we follow those who have gone before us, and we have a special opportunity to encourage others who might not even realise God may be calling them, or who can’t yet believe he could use them in ministry

I recently emailed the Readers among us to tell them about the deaths of 2 retired Readers this month, and had this lovely response from Karol Leeves from Speldhurst, where Steve Shipley had just died:

*We will all miss Steve. He was such a lovely prayerful man and was a part of my life from 1979 when we started going to St Mary's. He and Joan, his lovely wife, had a big part to play in my becoming a PA in 1997 and Reader in 2007. Steve was in church on the Sunday...usual place right in the front row, a smile on his face, worshipping in prayer and song and just the next day he had a heart attack then he died soon after. His boots were BIG and we couldn't fill them but he leaves us all better Christians for having known him.*

Whatever our particular role in our particular setting, it would be good to think our lives leave others inspired and encouraged to find out what is God's plan for them. The new diocesan website\* has a page about this which might be useful when you are talking to others in your church:  
<https://www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith/gods-plan-for-you/>

\*If you haven't explored the new website yet – do have a look - it has a completely new look and is hopefully far more accessible to those of us familiar with the diocese as well as for those making first enquiries.



**The Lay Ministry Conference** went ahead this year and Bishop Simon was with us for the day. Numbers were down on pre-pandemic attendances, and it was frustrating that the event clashed with the worst of the petrol shortage and a severe weather warning that day, but for the 60+ who were able to be there it was great to catch up. The first 40 minutes of the conference were recorded and can be seen on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdGr4BmdQgA> Bishop Simon is 14 minutes in, and his talk on "The Lost Art of Listening" is well worth catching up on if you missed it – whatever shape your ministry takes.

Margaret Wooding-Jones (LLM in the Spirituality Network) spoke about how we could maintain the good prayer habits we created in lockdown as life gets busier again.



In the afternoon, Growth Enablers Abi and Graham talked about their work and gave some interesting perspectives of how parishes are emerging from Lockdown - there are many encouragements among the challenges. When Abi asked, "Who among us is familiar with speed dating?" I wasn't surprised no hands were raised, but undeterred Abi organised us in Speed Affiliating ..... which was actually related to mission not dating:

### **Speed Affiliating**

1. Person A explains to their partner (person B) their personal or church's mission bucket-list item. [1 minute]
2. Person A explains to their partner the main barrier to launching that mission bucket-list item. [1 minute]
3. Person B explains to person A how they/ their church might be able to help overcome that barrier/ or be present to support person A. [1 minute]
4. Decide if you want to continue the conversation. Keep a tally! [3 seconds yes/ no + share contact info]
5. Swap partners as instructed.

### **Called to Grow**

**If your church needs support please contact your Growth Enabler for support at any time.**

- Bromley & Bexley Archdeaconry – Abi Hiscock LLM  
[abi.hiscock@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:abi.hiscock@rochester.anglican.org)
- Rochester Archdeaconry – Revd Dylan Turner,  
[dylan.turner@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:dylan.turner@rochester.anglican.org)
- Tonbridge Archdeaconry – Graham Wilkinson LLM  
[graham.wilkinson@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:graham.wilkinson@rochester.anglican.org)

There were a number of rounds of these conversations, and a lively buzz in the building as people got into the swing of this.

Abi has set up a subsequent survey for people to complete, and a few people have continued the process. It's not too late – and the link is: <https://forms.gle/xKavSj4nYkVJwfc6>

### **Rochester Archdeaconry Celebration of Lay Ministry**

Back in May it was 5 years since the first ever Archdeaconry Celebration of Lay Ministry, which meant that all the Rochester Archdeaconry licences, commissions and authorisations were due for renewal. Because restrictions were still in place in May, the renewals were done over a number of weeks, but the Celebration finally took place on 7<sup>th</sup> August, and despite holidays and postponed family gatherings we had over 40 Lay Ministers gathered – there was a great buzz.

We began with an excellent presentation from Pat Dickin, Team Vicar in South Gillingham Team, who gave an excellent presentation on Mental Health and wellbeing – thinking both of ourselves and of those to whom we minister.

Later in the morning we heard from a number of the Lay Ministers present who spoke about their ministry, including University Chaplaincy, Ministry to the homeless community in Chatham Town Centre, this year's Poverty and Hope Appeal, Anna Chaplaincy in the Archdeaconry, and focal ministry among a congregation in a team. Massive thanks were due to Fiona Porter (Archdeacons' PA) for organising lunch, even though my plans for a covid safe lunch in the open air were rained off!



Archdeacon Andy was with us all day, and in the afternoon, we re-committed ourselves to our callings to ministry and mission in the church, and everyone went home feeling encouraged and inspired.

### **Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry Celebration of Lay Ministry**

If you are in Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry, and have a licence, a PA authorisation or an Evangelist commission it expires at Pentecost 2022, but by then Paul Wright will have retired, so (again - thanks to Fiona, for the idea) we will bring the Celebration of Lay Ministry forward to February 19<sup>th</sup>.

We have booked Christ Church Orpington again, and will circulate more detailed plans after Christmas; but for now please mark the date in your diary as an opportunity to gather as Lay Ministers, and a chance to say farewell to Paul and wish him well for retirement.



### **Tonbridge Archdeaconry – welcome the new Archdeacon!**

If you are reading this, I can't imagine that you haven't heard the announcement of the new Archdeacon of Tonbridge?

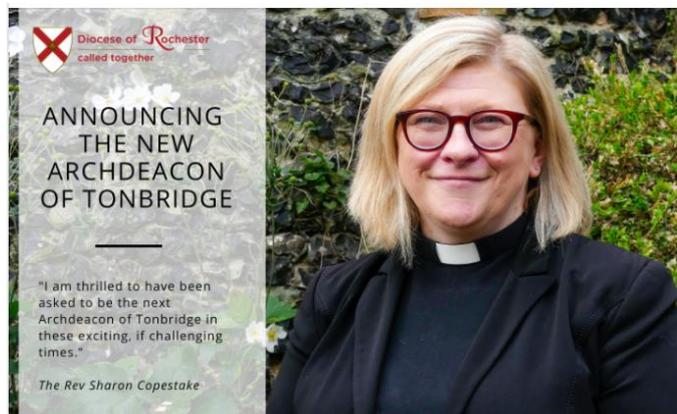
When I first became Warden of Readers, Sharon was among the younger readers on our list, and was in the discernment process for ordination.

When the role was advertised the wording included "We are

looking for someone who ***truly gets the meaning of collaborative ministry***" so I asked Iain Ambler, Licensed Reader at St Francis Strood, how he would describe working with Sharon in a couple of sentences and he replied:

*"Sharon has been a real support and encouragement to my own ministry and its continual development. She has empowered all of us in the ministry team at St Francis to share with her in the living out of the gospel in all we say and do."*

Sharon will be looking forward to getting to know the clergy and lay ministers in her Archdeaconry – please pray for her and her family as they prepare to move.



## **The Evangelism Network**

Many of you will know Stephen Ramshaw, the Church Army Missioner, who moved South to Chatham in February 2018. Stephen and Lynn left Medway this month as he has been appointed to a new post in Sheffield, and he will be much missed.



BUT - Helen Kiralfy – pictured here with Stephen, is a trainee Church Army Evangelist who has been working with Stephen for over a year now, and she has taken on the Evangelism Network.

Helen and I hope to meet soon with Church Army's regional Community and Vocations Advisers Team leader, to talk about how Church Army can best support Evangelism in the Diocese – and that includes those who trained and were commissioned as Evangelists, as well as any others (lay or ordained) with a passion for Evangelism. Watch this space!

## **Learning Opportunities**



The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion is a Cambridge-based interdisciplinary research institute improving public understanding of science and religion. Its main focus is on the relationship between science and the Christian faith, but it also engages with those of any faith or none.

The material from their **Summer Course**, Interaction of Science and Faith in a Challenging World, is now available for any-time **online access**, for individual study, or for in-person group screenings and discussion events. See [faraday.institute/interaction](http://faraday.institute/interaction)

There are online seminars next month (all at 1pm) which are free and open to all. See [faraday.institute/seminars](http://faraday.institute/seminars)

Tues 9th November – Professor Jeff Hardin (University of Wisconsin, USA) – **Self-Made People: The Emerging Embryo, Biology, and Belief**

Tues 23rd November – Professor Stephen Williams (Queen's University, Belfast) – **Thinking Machines? A Christian Perspective**



## **Online Gathering**

If you missed the October conference – or even if you attended – next month there is an online gathering of Lay Ministers nationally, and although it is organised by the Central Readers' Council it is NOT limited to Readers, in fact it is open to **anyone with an interest in Lay Ministry**. And it's free, you simply need to book in before 10<sup>th</sup> November.



**Central Readers' Council**  
TRANSFORMING MINISTRY

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Saturday 13 November 2021 10am – 1pm  
CRC Annual Gathering, open to anyone with an interest in lay ministry

# **ONLINE GATHERING**

## Lay Ministry: the theology of our calling

**Speakers to include:**  
Canon Dr Christina Baxter, CBE  
Andrew Graystone *author of Faith Hope and Mischief*  
Matthew Frost *former CEO of Tear Fund*  
Jo Henderson-Merrygold *Warden of Readers, Derby Diocese*

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Log in via CRC website: <https://transformingministry.co.uk/about-us/#conferencing-events>  
There is no charge for the event

**The Diocesan Board of Education** are running an online conference about serving Community schools.

We have a ready-made link with Church schools in parishes, but this is about how to connect with and serve the community schools. Don't just assume that because a school wasn't interested in connecting with church before the Pandemic that they still aren't interested – this might have changed.



THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION IS HOLDING A WEBINAR

## **SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:**

A conference on how to put the best into ministry to the schools in your parish.

10 NOVEMBER 2021 / AT 3:30-5:00PM  
To book visit [www.rochester.anglican.org/webinars](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/webinars)

Listed below are some of the LLM training modules and the dates of sessions. There are currently a few places on each of these modules which are open to existing lay ministers (LLMs, Readers, Evangelists, & PAs) and clergy. If you want to know more, please contact Jane Winter who can tell you more about each course and its aims:  
[jane.winter@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:jane.winter@rochester.anglican.org)

Chaplaincy St Benedict's	10 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> February 19 <sup>th</sup> & 24 <sup>th</sup> March
Leading Public Worship Venue to be confirmed Note: this module runs over two long Saturday's: 9.30am – 5.30pm	January 29 <sup>th</sup> including Evensong at Rochester Cathedral Another date to be confirmed
Preaching St Benedict's	January 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 8 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> March 1 <sup>st</sup>
Healing Holy Trinity Lamorbey Sidcup	April 27 <sup>th</sup> May 7 <sup>th</sup> June 8 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup>
Spirituality (Note 5 sessions) Companions of Christ Maidstone Road Chatham	May 12 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> & 16 <sup>th</sup> June 23 <sup>rd</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup>

Anna Chaplaincy St Benedict's	January 25 <sup>th</sup> February 12 <sup>th</sup> March 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Creation St Benedict's Centre	April 26 <sup>th</sup> May 7 <sup>th</sup> & 24 <sup>th</sup> June 11 <sup>th</sup>
St Stephen's Tonbridge	7 <sup>th</sup> May

### **Correction**

My previous newsletter in July listed the LLMs who were licensed in July, and I missed out George Johnson, LLM at Christ Church Bexleyheath. (I did contact George once this was brought to my attention, and he was very gracious about the error)



## **Vounteers wanted**

The new Lay Chaplain at the Hospice in the Weald at Pembury has asked if I would mention to you all that they are currently recruiting for chaplaincy volunteers.



Lay Ministers with pastoral experience would be just the sort of applicants they welcome – and brilliant training is offered. For more information click: <https://hospiceintheweald.ciphr-irecruit.com/Applicants/vacancy/178/Chaplaincy-Volunteer>

## **Comings and goings, and people news.**

Steve Shipley – mentioned above – died on 13<sup>th</sup> October – he was first licensed to St Mary's Speldhurst w St Martin's Ashurst in 1992. When he retired from active ministry and was made Reader Emeritus in 2016, Douglas Wren, Rector of Speldhurst affirmed "Steve's quiet, gentle and dedicated faith that was and is a shining and consistent example of wisdom, spiritual broadmindedness and discipleship."

Kenneth Gill was licensed by Bishop David Say to St Augustine's Bromley Common in 1976 and continued to serve St Augustine's right up to 2016 after completing 40 years as a Reader. He died on 7<sup>th</sup> October, and it was the newest member of the ministry team at St Augustine's – Verity who was licensed in May – who let me know – his ministry will be remembered with gratitude and appreciation among the congregation.

Di Welch, Reader at High Halstow died back in August. Having lived in the community for 30 years she was well known and respected locally as a Christian who people beyond the church could relate to. Di was a humble minister who never realised the number of people whose lives were touched by her kindness and prayers, and Margaret Hollands who was a close friend said that even in the hospice when Margaret visited her, Di prayed for her before she left.



On a positive note, in August Bishop Simon was in Edenbridge as two new Lay Ministers officially joined the ministry team there. Val Bantin was commissioned as an Anna Chaplain, and Anthea Staples was licensed as a Reader in the parish, joining the ministry team pictured here. Anthea moved South from Lichfield Diocese – and after saying goodbye to a number of Rochester Lay Ministers leaving the diocese it was good to welcome Anthea as she has joined us.

## **General Synod Reps**

Rochester Lay Ministers are well represented on the newly elected General Synod. Congratulations to Martin Sewell who was the only candidate from the previous synod re-elected for another term. Martin has worked tirelessly along with Julie Conalty and survivors of abuse, to keep safeguarding and accountability and justice for survivors/victims on the Synod's agenda. Congratulations too to Billie-Jo O'Leary (LLM) and Jane Rosam (LLM in training) who were also voted onto the new synod.

## **Safeguarding Training**

The diocesan safeguarding team are finally up to capacity, including the appointment of Sophie Allen as trainer, which means we no longer need to depend on external trainers. If you are booked for the Leadership Module soon you are likely to meet Sophie.

The last year we offered C3 was in 2019, so if you haven't done the Leadership Pathway module yet, you are either already due to do it, or you will need to do it next year. Apologies to those who we have pestered when they have already done the Leadership module – this has partly been due to the module being outsourced and should be easier now Sophie is in post.



There are currently no more courses this year taking bookings, so if you were to book for January now, that would mean you would be on the waiting list for 2 months, have your Zoom sessions 2 weeks apart in January, and then need to submit your post training reflection – it could easily be February before your completed training is logged on CMS (the diocesan database) If you can't find your certificate and can't remember when you did C3 Tricia can check that for you, and if your C3 expires early in 2022 please will you book for the Leadership Pathway now on:

<https://www.rochester.anglican.org/events-and-training/safeguarding-training/>

Some of you have been waiting patiently for information about the PTO pathway and I will be in touch next week with those of you who have told me you hope to do this.

## **Lay Ministry Development Reviews**

If you haven't done one of these recently feel free to email me and ask for the paperwork, if you have the paperwork but haven't completed it yet – please do it before Advent begins.

## **Permission To Officiate**

I became Warden of Readers 14 years ago now, and I recall then that the automatic transfer to PTO at the age of 70 was often described as age-ist. Now we have a POTUS who is 78 and a head of the Church of England who is 95, and some dioceses are re-thinking automatic age-based PTO.

I spoke about this at Bishop's Leadership Team earlier this year, before Bishop James retired, and the conversations have continued, and we now have an amended policy.



Those Readers and LLMs who are 70 this year should have heard from me and been given the opportunity to discuss with their incumbent/PiC whether to ask for a 3 year extension on their license, or to transfer to PTO.

In the same way that parishes don't make big policy changes when they are without a vicar, there won't be any retrospective transferring back to being licensed for those who have already got PTO, and the new Bishop, when he or she is settled here, might have different views either way.

Current PTO will expire next Pentecost and renewals this year will be done with incumbents and PiCs unless the Reader or LLM has a specifically deanery wide ministry. More about that in 2022.

### **How to get in touch**

Tricia and I are – for now – mostly working back in the Diocesan office – Tuesdays Wednesdays and Thursdays. I am usually in all day and Tricia is in on Tuesday and Thursday 1.30 pm – 3.30 pm and Wednesday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm. There will be some days when it is easier to work from home, but Gill on the office reception will be able to advise you if I am not in when you call.

**Thank you all** for all you do across the Diocese. The combinations of groups and activities cautiously opening up, whilst some restrictions remain recommended but not mandatory, and infection rates increasing since the Summer, has led to weariness.

Some of you are unwell or having treatment. I am aware of at least 6 lay Ministers undergoing breast cancer treatment, and others with different health issues. Others are still adjusting to bereavement.

Be gentle with yourself, and remember that we are called to be those who promote unity, peace and love in the Church and in the world, and especially among those whom we serve. Let us be gentle with them too.

With my prayers and best wishes for you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kare". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.