

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 21 | May - July 2024

CHANGE | SERVE | GROW

COVER STORY: BISHOP OPENS NEW SCHOOL IN ROCHESTER PAGE 8



CELEBRATING
WOMEN'S
MINISTRY

WAYS TO HELP
YOU PRAY

CHURCH
WORK
EXPERIENCE





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**SUNDAY
19TH MAY
2024**

5-7PM

**LOCATION:
ST MARGARET'S
CHURCH, HIGH STREET,
RAINHAM, KENT.
ME8 7JH**



**AN EVENING OF WORSHIP AND
PRAYER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
ACROSS THE COUNTRY LED BY
ARCHBISHOP JUSTIN WELBY**



**Speaker
Archbishop
Justin
Welby**

**Worship
lead by
Nicky
Brown**



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Welcome to this latest edition of Together magazine.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate women's ministry in the Church in all its forms, so head over to our **Centre-spread** (pg 14) where we hear from four women about what they love about what they do in service of God and the Church here in Rochester Diocese.

In our **One to One** interview (pg 24) we also meet one of the first women to be ordained a priest in our Diocese – how does she reflect on that time?

What of the next generation of young disciples and church leaders? In **Focus On** (pg 12), you'll discover there is much to be positive about as we learn of some of the creative ways young people are being encouraged to explore their place and calling in their local church.

There's never a bad time to try and deepen our relationship with God, and developing a prayer-life can be a key part of that of that. Our **Resources** (pg 20) section, this time, is dedicated to helping you find new and refreshing ways to start a conversation with God.

And finally, in our **Everyday Faith** (pg 26) section, we meet the composer and musician, Dr Deborah Pritchard, who finds music is her pathway to God.

With the usual great mix of news and events, I hope you enjoy this latest edition of Together.

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Front cover: Rochester Riverside Primary School opening by Katerina Gerhardt

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CONTACTLESS CARD READERS TO HELP BOOST PARISH GIVING

People don't carry cash as they used to, and card readers are a great way to boost parish income. Parishes recently came into the Diocesan Office to collect their devices and to learn how to use them with support from members of the Finance Team.

BROMLEY HOMELESS STARTER PACKS

This is just a snapshot of some of the Starter Packs put together by Bromley Parish Church - a scheme providing some of the basics needed for those settling into permanent accommodation. Those who receive them are often victims of domestic abuse or have previously been street homeless. This collection is just for one week, as the church sees a growing need for the packs.

BISHOP'S VISIT AFFIRMS DIOCESAN LINKS WITH ESTONIA

Fresh snow lay thick on the ground as Bishop Jonathan gathered with bishops from churches in Estonia and elsewhere for the historic consecration of three new bishops in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church at St Mary's Cathedral in Tallinn.

Bishop Jonathan attended to affirm the long-standing ecumenical friendship between the Diocese of Rochester and the Estonian Church, which forms part of our flourishing diocesan overseas links.

Also present were the Rev Jess Heeb, Co-chair of the Diocese of Rochester's Estonian Group, as well as a number of others from the Diocese, who have been closely involved in the link for many years.

The service had added significance given the war in Ukraine, and representatives from churches in both Ukraine and Russia took part, affirming their common commitment to one another as members of the Body of Christ.



SILVER ECO AWARD

Congratulations to Holy Trinity, Gillingham which has achieved Silver Award Eco Church status. Among their initiatives are litter picks, regular information-sharing about environmental issues, as well as a recycling area with lots of information to help guide people with their recycling. Well done to all involved!



PRISON MINISTRY EXPLAINED

'Inspirational' was the word used to describe a talk on prison ministry at St James, Tunbridge Wells. Given by the Christian charity, *Imago Dei*, they are committed to equipping women in prison to unlock and live in their God-given potential, set free from their past and knowing their true value and identity in Christ.



Photo courtesy of Worcester Cathedral/James Atkinson

MAUNDY MONEY HONOURS

Many congratulations to the Rev Canon Gordon Oliver and Mrs Ursula Melhuish, who are the recipients of this year's Maundy Money.

This special honour from the Monarch, is reserved for longstanding members of the Church and is given in recognition of the Christian service each has given to the Church and their communities over many years. The annual ceremony is inspired by the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples.

Both of the recipients nominated from the Diocese of Rochester this year have shown longevity of service

and dedication to their Christian calling.

The Rev Canon Gordon Oliver (pictured first left) is a retired member of clergy, who has served in a diverse range of parish settings. He has taught practical theology in seminaries and has previously led the ministry and training department in the Diocese of Rochester.

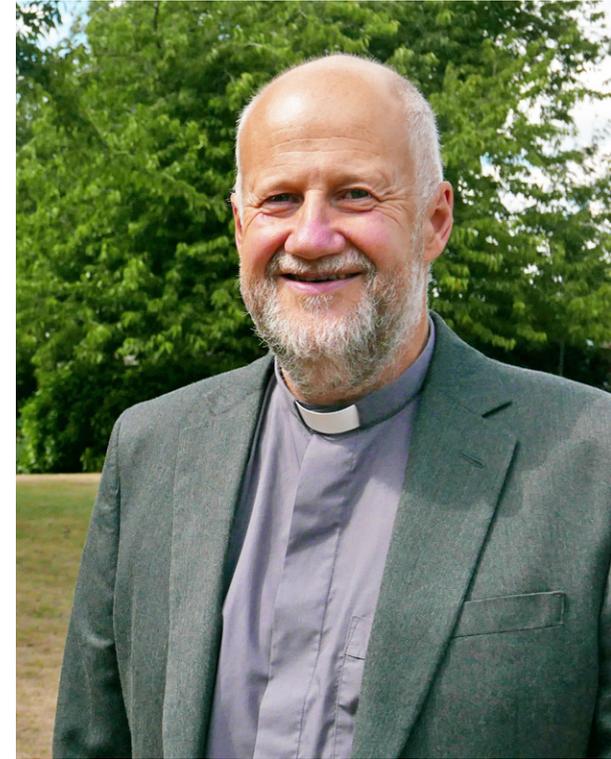
Mrs Melhuish – now in her 90s - has been a steward and a welcomer/volunteer in Rochester Cathedral for decades and is involved in local charities and the King's School Rochester.

NEW CHAPTER FOR ARCHDEACON OF ROCHESTER

After much thought and prayerful consideration, The Ven Andy Wooding Jones has decided to move on from his role as Archdeacon of Rochester later this year to explore new opportunities.

Andy and his wife Margaret will be moving to Sheffield, where they ministered previously and where their daughter and her family live. Andy will be taking a break from ministry for a time before deciding what opportunities he may wish to explore in Sheffield and beyond.

Reflecting on his decision, Andy said: "This decision has been both an exciting and unnerving one to make, however, it truly feels that Margaret and I are being called to explore what other new possibilities God has in store for us."



MESSY CATHEDRAL

Over 75 children and their families gathered in Rochester Cathedral to focus on the theme of Jesus eating breakfast on the beach with the disciples.

Organised by the Diocese's Children and Young People Team, activities led by 22 different church teams included games in the Garth, Godly Play, fish kites, decorating various fishy-themed objects, and many more interactive activities to explore, learn and chat over Jesus wanting to be our friend, fellowship with one another and the forgiveness that Jesus brings.

Sensory trays, prayer trees, a prayer tent, and finger labyrinths also gave the opportunity for a more contemplative response to the theme, alongside an opportunity to speak to Bible Society, BRF, Scripture Union, and Alma Autism in their various specialisms.

The gathering concluded with a Messy Eucharist officiated by Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge.



BISHOP SIMON AT MESSY CATHEDRAL



BISHOP JONATHAN WITH CHILDREN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF PILGRIM MULTI ACADEMY TRUST, JANET TAYLOR

A NEW CHURCH SCHOOL FOR ROCHESTER

There was joy and delight at the official opening of Rochester Riverside Church of England Primary School in March.

Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Bishop of Rochester, was joined by two pupils as he blessed the school and cut a ribbon to declare the new building officially open.

The new Church of England primary school has been built as part of a new housing development in the city. Staff and pupils moved into the new school building, which was completed by Countryside Homes and Hyde, in September 2023.

The event was attended by around 250 people, including pupils and teachers, the Deputy Mayor of Medway Cllr Marian Nestorov, Rochester and Strood MP Kelly Tolhurst, Medway Council Portfolio Holder for Education Cllr Tracy Coombs, and representatives from the developers.

Speaking about the occasion, Bishop Jonathan said:

“I am delighted to have opened Rochester Riverside Church of England Primary School. It has been fabulous to see the school’s wonderful facilities and to meet some of the staff, parents and children who are beginning to create a whole new community of learning right in the heart of this historic city, and in an area that used to be a busy commercial district.

“The opening of this new school is a story of transformation and new life in this part of Rochester, and it is marvellous that the Church of England is at the heart of this as part of our commitment to the flourishing of children and young people, and communities right across Medway, Kent, Bromley and Bexley.”

The celebratory event also included the unveiling of a plaque by Bishop Jonathan, and a medal presentation to children by the Deputy Mayor of Medway.

“The opening of this new school is a story of transformation and new life in this part of Rochester, and it is marvellous that the Church of England is at the heart of this as part of our commitment to the flourishing of children and young people, and communities right across Medway, Kent, Bromley and Bexley.”

Bishop Jonathan Gibbs



CIVIC DIGNITARIES, REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PILGRIM MULTI ACADEMY TRUST, AND THE DEVELOPERS JOIN MEDAL-WINNING PUPILS

There was also worship, including prayers and songs asking for God's blessing for the school to be a place full of 'health, holiness, humility, goodness, meekness, gentleness, respect, obedience and gratitude to God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'

As the fourth Church school to be opened by the Pilgrim Multi Academy Trust - which runs Rochester Riverside C of E Primary School - Chief Executive Officer, Janet Taylor, said it was a special occasion:

"The new building is a beautiful and unique place for the children of Rochester to learn. A place that is surrounded by the heart of historic Rochester's inspiring buildings; with the cathedral and castle so close by; we even have a Roman wall running through the site itself.

"Situated on the banks of the River Medway but part of a brand new development, the new school and the children attending it can look forward to and be part of, the exciting future in Rochester – a new community, building a bridge from the past into the future."

Speaking on behalf of the Diocese of Rochester's Board of Education, Director John Constanti, said:

"We are delighted that this new Church of England school serving this new community joins the family of schools within the Pilgrim Multi Academy Trust.

We pay tribute and give thanks for all staff, members, Trustees, and governors who strive to provide the very best for the pupils which they serve".



PLAQUE UNVEILING BY BISHOP JONATHAN

ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE SCHOOL

The new school is located on Gas House Road within the new Rochester Riverside neighbourhood, which is being built by a joint venture between Countryside Homes and affordable homes provider Hyde, in partnership with Medway Council and Homes England.

Cllr Tracy Coombs, Medway Council Portfolio Holder for Education, said:

"It's great to see the official opening of this fantastic new primary school building.

"Rochester Riverside is our flagship housing development and it is brilliant to see the school come to life from the original plans. We wish all the children who go here the best for the future."

The Rochester Riverside Regeneration project is planned to ultimately bring 1,400 properties to the 50-acre site. And as well as the new school, there's a plaza with shops and a hotel and public open space including a river walkway.





LEARNING ON THE JOB

With the Church of England committed to the bold aim of doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030, parishes are being innovative and creative when it comes to engaging and involving the young people among them.

For churches like St Francis in Strood, growth isn't just about numbers but about young lives being won and shaped by the truth, beauty, and goodness of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, having children worshipping and learning alongside adults in church is seen as very important, as it is understood that everyone is a part of the body of Christ.

Now a recent initiative is embodying that more than ever. Alongside establishing a Messy Church, their SFS Kids group, and a regular Sunday intergenerational worship service, the church is running an apprenticeships programme.

This novel scheme sees an adult allocated as an 'overseer' for the different ministry roles for which the children are apprentices.

From doing a reading, offering round the collection plate, working the mixing desk, to singing in the worship band, children and young people commit to four sessions in each area of service in the church.

They then journal their experience and both apprentice and overseer complete a report to reflect on what has been learnt, and to consider what God has said and done in and through the apprentice during that time.

Their achievement is then celebrated by the whole church family with award certificates given to the apprentices.

The Rev Adam Pyrke said, "We are seeing children becoming committed to learning and serving in church, whilst adults in church are recognising the way in which God works through all ages.

"It is a joy to witness adults and children learning

each other's names and working alongside each other and serving."

He adds:

"Our efforts appear to be making a difference as we continue to see an increase in the number of families being welcomed into our St Francis family, and we give God thanks for how we see Him working in and through all members of the body, equally valued and equally used by God to extend His Kingdom."

Continue reading on page 16

"One of my key priorities is to see more children and young people come to faith and to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, and churches are at the forefront of this mission and ministry of the Church in this Diocese."

Bishop Jonathan Gibbs



CELEBRATING WOMEN'S MINISTRY



This year marks the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. We give thanks for all the women who offer their gifts and talents in so many diverse ways across the area of the Diocese.

In honour of this, we asked a few of those women who hold a particular role in the Diocese to share a little something of what they love about what they do.

Head over to our *One to One* interview (pg 24) to hear from the Rev Jacqueline Littlewood, one of the first women to be ordained a priest in the Diocese of Rochester in 1994.



"I love my ministry as a licensed lay minister because it provides me with unique opportunities to be one of God's instruments for reassuring people, in every situation, of God's steadfast love."

Sallyanne Decker



"I love my ministry as a deacon because the people I've been called to serve with are joyful and generous, prayerful and honest - they show me God's love and grace when I've forgotten how to see it."

Rev Anna Drew



"I love my ministry as a church administrator and Area Network Leader, because I have the privilege of supporting and facilitating others in their ministry and being an enabler for things to happen, as well as making All Saints, Tudeley, a welcoming place for the many visitors and groups who come to see our 12 stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall."

Liz Wood



"I love my ministry as Priest in Charge because I love being among the people, engaging with and getting to know my community's needs and the challenges parishioners face every day. What I never envisaged as a priest is the number of women, especially black women, who have stopped me on the streets of Erith to have a chat about my ministry."

Rev Anthea Harris-Faulkner



DIME VISITED A LOCAL FOOD BANK

Continued from pg 13

Meanwhile, using ‘on the job training’ to help inspire the next generation has been taking place at St Philip and St James Church, in Walderslade too.

When Dime Sohail, a young member of St Philip and St James Church in Walderslade, asked the Associate Vicar if he could do his work experience placement at the church, the Rev Andrew Vaughan said, yes!

“I wondered how many clergy had been asked to do this before, but I thought it was a great idea, as we need to encourage as many potential vocations to

leadership in the Church of England as we can.”

After Andrew went through all the school’s processes to ensure a safe placement, Dime threw himself into all the activities and meetings he and Andrew attended, and even gave him inspiration and help in the delivery of the sermon on Sunday.

“It really was an honour and privilege. Dime is a real credit to all those who have invested in him over the years, including his parents, youth and children’s leaders, and his school.”



DIME HELPING THE CHURCH GROUP



DIME WITH THE REV ANDREW VAUGHAN

HERE’S WHAT DIME MADE OF HIS WEEK FOLLOWING THE VICAR

Why did you want to carry out your work placement at this church?

I wanted to carry out my work placement here because it is my hope to become a vicar in the future and to explore more about the Anglican Church. I also thought it would be beneficial for me if I did my work placement at a church where the vicar knows that I am passionate about getting the best outcome and experience possible.

What did you experience during the week?

I experienced a real taste of how a vicar is actually involved in the church and the different challenges they face in the ministry. Also, I experienced how a vicar approaches people and listens to them with empathy and that a vicar has a lot of responsibilities and a lot of duties behind the scenes.

Did anything surprise you?

I was surprised by the fact that a vicar is not only busy in meetings, preparing sermons and operating emails but is involved in a lot of the church events. I was surprised by the fact that not only is a vicar meant to be fully trained in the knowledge of the Word of God but is meant to multi-task and have every life skill in them.

Are you still interested in exploring the vocation to ordained ministry?

Yes, I am still interested in exploring the vocation to ordained ministry. I realise that my calling still needs to be tested by my local church and those who support me but I would like to continue the journey and be ordained as a minister.

HOW ON EARTH DO WE PRAY FOR THE WORLD?

We live in an anxious and fractious world, with it seemingly impossible to think we can make a difference. Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge offers his thoughts on how we might intercede for the bigger picture.

DAILY NEWS

The idea of global citizenship may be overstated today – most people don't travel the world or express great interest in every corner of it – but a sense of global duty is one of the marks of our faith.

It would be the most fascinating audit we could ever make, to analyse the shape of intercessions being made for the salvation and welfare of this world each day, but this is a matter for God to sift, and perhaps we should be grateful, lest we look like Bruce Almighty pulling out the filing cabinet on prayer, if you've seen the film.

So, what is the world coming to? Usually a resigned sigh accompanies this observation; the sense that things only get worse and there isn't much we can do about it. However, the picture we get of the world today is nevertheless a partial and distorted one.

There are countless sources from which to consume news, but if anything, less foreign news gets reported today than a generation ago; the recent conflicts are an exception to the rule on the main news outlets, which remain dominated by domestic news.

There are ways round this, and one of the most instructive is to switch to one of the digital news channels beyond BBC and Sky. Some of these are little more than mouthpieces for authoritarian regimes, but others, like France 24 and Euronews provide a different perspective on global events which can illuminate an issue.

But how do we pray for this teeming world?

First, we need to believe that God is already in the place and among the people we are praying for at a distance. This may seem unexceptional, but it is surprising how easily we sustain an imperial mentality around global mission; the idea that our prayers bring the Holy Spirit to people rather than the Holy Spirit bringing our prayers to the people he is working among. This is about thinking, what is God doing already?

Secondly, to know as much as we can about the places we are praying for – to take us deeper into prayer than a routine: 'Lord, bless Nigeria / Belarus / Indonesia / Chile'. However valid that simple prayer may prove in the providence of God, being

acquainted with the needs and aspirations of a community pay dividends in prayer.

In praying for a place, we should always aim to take a step back and survey the wider scene, asking God for gifts of knowledge and spiritual wisdom to fire our prayers. Sometimes it is just one tiny, apparently inconsequential prayer which achieves lasting goals.

Intercession takes on the strongholds which oppress people and try to turn them away from God. Often it takes years to demolish these strongholds, but occasionally one prayer can be like taking a tin of beans from a huge triangle of carefully built cans in a supermarket – it doesn't just puncture a hole, it brings the whole edifice crashing to the ground like the walls of Jericho.

Finally, to stay with the issue we are praying about and not to desert it like a channel hopper with a remote control. This is usually exhausting and counter intuitive. The culture surrounding us makes the assumption that problems that won't budge should be avoided. We are not supposed to spend our time on situations that can't be changed; life is too short.

Yet it is precisely because life is so short that we should spend our time in places that will not yield. Too many people leave this world without knowing about Jesus or experiencing some of the tangible blessings of freedom, health, justice and wealth.

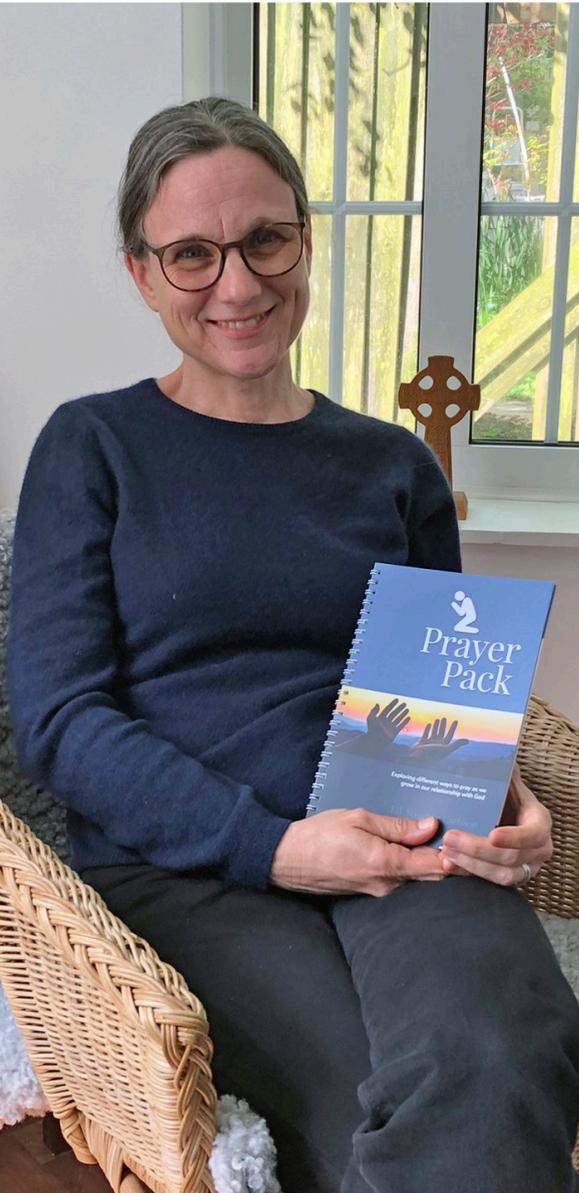
Thank God his kingdom is growing as I write, and in the secret places inspired by the secret prayers of faithful people. Sometimes we see the outcome of our prayers; many times we don't. There are results, but these may only be released at the end of time. Prepare for some wonderful surprises.

"We need to believe that God is already in the place and among the people we are praying for at a distance."

RESOURCES – PRAYER PACK

All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God.

Now a new diocesan book is on hand to help you to pray as you can, not as you can't.



PRAYER PACK BOOK

Edited by the Rev Canon Susanne Carlsson
Price: £10.

To order email: ethlyn.roy-johnson@rochester.anglican.org

The *Prayer Pack* book offers a simple tool to help you deepen your personal prayer life.

Originally developed eight years ago as an online resource, the Pack has already been successfully used by many different people to help them explore new ways of praying at home or in the church community.

Now available in a smart, spiral bound book, the *Prayer Pack* offers twelve different ways of praying.

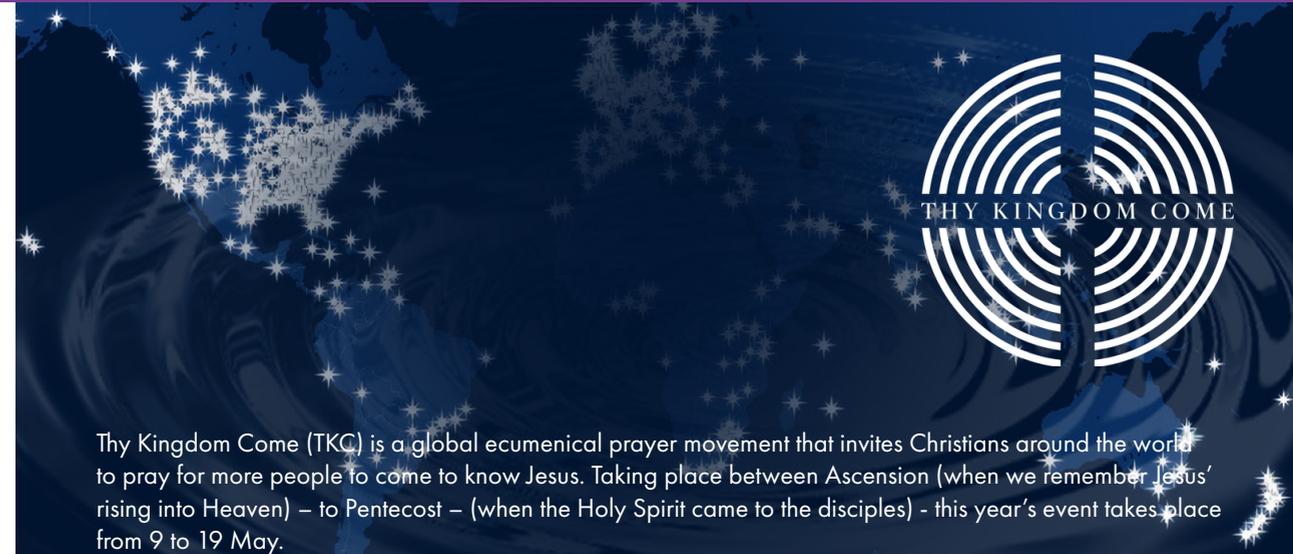
Each one is briefly explained in a separate chapter, outlining in simple steps the way to enter into the experience. There is also a page at the end of each chapter for you to write any notes or thoughts you want to record.

At the very end of the book is a 'Review of Prayer' section. This is to encourage users - having taken time to reflect on their prayer experience - towards further spiritual growth.

The editor of the *Prayer Pack*, the Rev Canon Susanne Carlsson, Coordinator of Spirituality for the Diocese of Rochester, says:

'My hope for the *Prayer Pack* is that it will be an accessible resource and guide to help a person deepen their personal prayer life.

'Praying often takes practice before it becomes a natural part of a prayerful life – and while a little patience and perseverance may be required - 'waiting on God' is also a part of the 'spiritual' experience in itself and so very much to be embraced as well,'



Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. Taking place between Ascension (when we remember Jesus' rising into Heaven) – to Pentecost – (when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples) - this year's event takes place from 9 to 19 May.

During these 11 days, every person, household and church are encouraged to pray in their own way.

SCAN the QR code for more details:



HERE ARE FIVE WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

- **AS A FAMILY** - Commit to pray as a family during the 11 days, on the way to school, or by lighting a candle at a mealtime. For young children, why not watch the five new animated episodes of the *Cheeky Pandas Jesus Story Book Bible*, voiced by influential Christians such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bear Grylls and Gemma Hunt.
- **IN THE WORKPLACE** - Designed by *Transform Work*, the workplace prayer journal offers reflections and Bible readings specifically with a focus on praying for colleagues and your own day-to-day work, each linked to daily Thy Kingdom Come themes. There are pre-recorded prayers available too, sharing prayer for different industries and sectors.
- **AT HOME**: Explore different styles of prayer from across different denominations and traditions with the pocket-sized *Prayer Journal*, featuring stunning artwork by the Rev Chris Duffett, to help you journey through the 11 days.
- **ON THE MOVE**: Take a piece of leather and tie five knots in it to represent each of the five people you have committed to pray for. You could carry the knotted string in your pocket, tie it round your wrist or place it somewhere that you'll see it regularly. Use the knots to remind you to pray for each person on your list of five.

Find out more in our Events section about a special Youth event for Thy Kingdom Come being held in the Diocese.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



IT'S YOUR CALLING
at Christ Church, Orpington
18 MAY, 9:30am-3:30pm

It's Your Calling is aimed at those exploring where God may be calling them. It looks at the gifts that God has given us all and at the Biblical understanding of vocation. The day offers an opportunity to meet others on a similar quest and to take time to think what God's plan for you might be. For more information contact vocations@rochester.anglican.org



DRACO ROFFENSIS: THE ROCHESTER DRAGON
at Rochester Cathedral
1 JUNE – 21 SEPTEMBER

To commemorate 900 years of the Textus Roffensis, *Draco Roffensis: The Rochester Dragon* will take flight in the Cathedral this summer. Designed by artist Wendy Daws, the dragon, made of coloured foil on wire panels, will be suspended above the Nave. Textus Roffensis is one of the most important Medieval manuscripts in England.

Speaker Archbishop Justin Welby

Worship lead by Nicky Brown

TO BOOK YOUR FREE TICKETS VISIT: RAINHAMCHURCH.CO.UK/FUSE

PLEASE NOTE THIS SERVICE WILL BE LIVE STREAMED - NON STREAMED AREAS WILL BE AVAILABLE

FUSE
at St Margaret, Rainham
19 MAY, 5:00-7:00PM

This Pentecost, FUSE - the joint youth initiative between the Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury - has teamed up with the global prayer event, Thy Kingdom Come, for an evening of prayer and worship. The guest speaker will be Archbishop Justin Welby. For more information and to book, please visit www.rainhamchurch.co.uk/fuse



QUIET DAY - CHRIST WITH US
at St Benedict's Centre, West Malling
20 JUNE

Fr Peter Allan, an Anglican priest and a monk with the Community of the Resurrection, leads a quiet day reflecting on the presence of Christ in our midst. Come and explore this understanding of the Christ who walks with us as we look at themes in the Rule of St Benedict and think about the worship of the church. For more information, please email the centre bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL ORGAN FESTIVAL

Tickets £12 (18 or under, free) | *Selected events FREE

24 April | 19:30
Jeremy Lloyd
Rochester Cathedral

***5 May** | 13:00
***6 May** | 12:00
Jeremy Lloyd
Rochester Cathedral

29 May | 19:30
Markus Eichenlaub
Germany

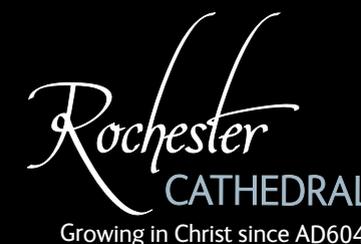
26 June | 19:30
Jamie Rogers
Canterbury Cathedral

31 July | 19:30
Charles Francis
USA

***26 August** | 12:00
Adrian Bawtree
Rochester Cathedral

25 September | 19:30
Katherine Dienes-Williams
Guildford Cathedral

Photo by Aerial Imaging South East



rochestercathedral.org/organ-festival



A PIONEER OF WOMEN'S MINISTRY

This year marks the 30th anniversary of women being admitted to the priesthood in the Church of England. In 1994, the Rev Jacqueline Littlewood was one of the first women in the Diocese of Rochester to be ordained a priest. In this anniversary year, we asked her about her reflections on her ministry and of that historic occasion.

When did you start to sense a calling to the ministry?

In 1970 I had a conversation about the possibility of training for licensed lay ministry in the Church Army - A Christian organisation seeking to transform society through faith - but the thought of a vocation and full-time training at theological college did not fully germinate until later on in the 1970s.

What happened?

Well, I really think the Holy Spirit was moving during 1970-77, waiting for me to answer the call and not letting me go. In January 1977 I attended an ACCM three-day residential conference where the selection panel conducted interviews. This appraised the different forms of ministry available to the laity, along with call and experience. It was recommended that I should train to become a licensed Parish Worker.

Your vocation journey continued and you went on to become a Deacon. What is a Deacon?

A Deacon is the foundation of all ordained ministry. For most clergy, after a year, they will be ordained as priest. For me as a woman at the time, it was as far as I was able to go.

Was it still pretty rare for a woman to be a Deacon?

Yes. I remember getting robed for the service. It was the first time that women were allowed to wear a dog collar. We no longer had to wear the blue cassock and Deaconess (a lay role in the church) cross and chain. We would now be called Reverend. There was a real feeling of the power of the Holy Spirit moving within the service, and there was tremendous prayerful support from the congregation.

What was it like for you to be a Deacon then?

There were people who were point blank in their opposition to women's ministry. This included refusing to receive the chalice I was administering which they also did when women chalice assistants were administering. It was a different type of rejection and exclusion to that I had experienced in previous years. It was not easy. But that was my calling. My cross so to speak.

Then, in 1992, General Synod - the decision-making body of the Church of England - voted for women to be admitted to the priesthood.

Yes. It followed years of countless debate and votes on whether women should be ordained as Priests, but the vote felt spirit-led to me.

You were one of the first women to be ordained a priest in Rochester Cathedral in 1994. What was that like?

Being ordained a priest was such an affirming experience and full of joy. At the end of the service we could see people with banners and I and others in the procession wondered if they were protestors - we were greatly relieved to find they were members of the Catholic Women's Ordination Group who had come to support us. On reflection it was a day which heralded new challenges particularly if someone refused my ministry when I was presiding at the Eucharist and other sacraments of the church.

How did that affect you?

It hurt but I had to carry on. I suppose it was breaking new ground, so to speak, and some people just needed more time to acclimatise to change than others. There still continues to be difference of opinion on women's ministry and their holding positions of authority.

You have received a number of honours in recognition of your ministry.

Yes, and these include when I was kindly invited to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party in 2016 in recognition of my chaplaincy ministry and service. Then last year, I was presented with the Royal Maundy Money by King Charles III in York Minster in recognition of my Christian service. Both events were so unexpected but so joyful and such amazing privileges.

What has sustained you?

Making time for spiritual reading, private prayer, visiting places and doing things that will be enjoyed. Jesus has been my focus and strength. My rock along with dear family and friends, many who have sadly died, who have accompanied me along the way. I might also have been assisted with, as my friends might say, a distinct blast of stubbornness..... grim determination.....and being an indomitable spirit!!!!

A MUSICAL LIFE INSPIRED BY FAITH

Dr Deborah Pritchard, originally from Kent, is a composer whose music has been performed by renowned ensembles such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and the Choir of New College, Oxford. She was Visiting Fellow at Keble College, Oxford in 2022 and is currently Director of Music at St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch (SAINT). Her faith is the foundation to her work, with a recent commission inspired by the Marc Chagall windows at All Saints, Tudeley.

I have been aware of my faith ever since my childhood, sensing a beauty in the world around me that lead me to paint and draw as soon as I could hold a paintbrush!

To me, the creative process is like a search for sacred wonder: to unlock an outpouring that can illuminate hope. Consequently as a composer, there is no distinction between my work and faith. This is further enriched by my synaesthesia, where one or more of the senses have an involuntary link. In my case it's a connection between colour and harmony, meaning my music is often created in response to visual artworks.

Last year, I was commissioned by the Music@Malling Festival to write a new piece for the violinist Greta Mutlu inspired by the Marc Chagall stained glass windows at All Saints, Tudeley, where colour and light cascade into the building like a sublime embrace.

Chagall said 'In our life there is a single colour, as on an artist palette which provides the meaning of life and art. It is the colour of love,' words that encapsulate what it means to have hope through creativity: a light in the darkness that leads the heart to the truth of the Spirit.

I subsequently returned to Tudeley with Greta, cellist Richard Harwood, harpist Gabriella Jones, film maker Theresa Thomas and sound engineer Adaq

Khan to make a series of four films, *Chagall's Light* that combine my music with the windows. Created to elevate Chagall's message of hope in these times of conflict, this sentiment can be felt most poignantly in *Memorial*, where a mysterious dialogue between violin and cello resolves upwards to the light.

This leads to *Golden*: a celebration of Chagall's sacred light and symbolic of salvation through luminous harp and ethereal violin. Music to resonate with Chagall's words, 'A stained glass window is a transparent partition between my heart and the heart of the world.'

Music is a vessel that allows me to explore what it means to be human and engage with spirituality in a way that I hope will inspire others. I would encourage anybody reading this article to freely explore their gifts and talents to help build a movement of hope through creativity.

The film series *Chagall's Light* was premiered at the 2023 SAINT Renaissance Conference. Watch Deborah's composition, *Chagall's Light* on YouTube at www.youtube.com/@deborahpritchard4277 or SCAN the code





Diocese of **Rochester**
called together

A PRAYER TO HELP US 'HEAR' GOD

Silence has been used throughout the history of the Church as a way to deepen one's relationship with God. It is in silence and stillness that we may 'hear' God. In the busyness of our lives and the modern world let us pray:

God of stillness and creative action,
help me to find space for quietness today
that I may discover the inner meaning of silence and
hear your still, small voice through Christ,
in the love of the Spirit.

Amen

Prayer taken from, *The Prayer Pack*.