

# TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 18 | August - October 2023

GROW | ENRICH | RESOURCE

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SEEING  
JESUS IN THE  
REFUGEE

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A CALL TO  
TACKLE MODERN  
SLAVERY

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REVIEWING THE  
YEAR - ANNUAL  
REPORT

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In this edition of Together, several of our stories shine a spotlight on the activity taking place across the Diocese to value and nurture the young people in our communities, schools and churches.

In **Focus On** (pg8), we find out about the church-hosted Galaxy Club, championing inclusivity in its broadest sense by providing a space for young people with additional needs to be themselves.

Letting young people know that God has a plan for them is the daily joy of our **One to One** (pg 24) interviewee, Trudi Oliver, the Diocese's Young Vocations Champion. It is something we all have a part to play in so if you have a young person in your life, check out our **Resources** (pg20) for ideas to support their spiritual growth.

Meanwhile, in Everyday Faith (pg 26) get inspired by our colleague Paul in the Finance Team who sees everyday as a chance to be an expression of Christ's love.

Finally, ahead of Anti-Slavery Day in October, we share ideas from the Clewer Initiative on how we can help tackle modern slavery (pg14), plus we reflect on the story of our diocesan family with highlights from our 2022 Annual Report and Accounts (pg12).

Go well,



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# SUPPORT THE POVERTY AND HOPE APPEAL 2023

Help tackle the causes and effects of poverty in different parts of the world.



For more information visit:  
[www.rochester.anglican.org](http://www.rochester.anglican.org) and search for Poverty and Hope



## SCHOOL CELEBRATION DAYS

The Diocesan Board of Education welcomed just over 1,000 Year 6 pupils from across the Diocese to Rochester Cathedral for one of their Church Schools' Celebration Days in July.

Thirty-one schools took part over three days, with a range of activities on offer and a chance for the young people to reflect on their life's journey so far.

Both Bishop Jonathan and Bishop Simon attended one of the days and participated in an act of worship with the children. Debby Brown, a Teaching Assistant from Peshurst, said their pupils had a great time.

"What a fantastic day...The children (and staff) really enjoyed it and it was a great opportunity for them to reflect on their time at primary school and our Christian values."

Over in Bromley, over 200 Year 5 pupils enjoyed a day at Bromley Parish Church, with the new Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley, the Venerable Allie Kerr (pictured), joining in with one of the many varied workshops, that included drumming, dance, drama, cooking, tower tours and bell ringing.



### GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to the Rev Canon Alan Vousden who has celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Alan has served his whole ministry in the Diocese of Rochester. A special service took place at St Mary, West Malling, at which people from each parish Alan has served in were present.



### COUNTING NATURE IN FOOTSCRAY

A great afternoon was had at All Saints' Church, Footscray, as they took part in the national Count on Nature, Love your Churchyard initiative. This annual event is a chance for churches and communities to celebrate the biodiversity found in churchyards and burial grounds. The fun at Footscray included a wildlife count, quiz and crafts.



### VOLUNTEER VOTE OF THANKS

Many churches rely on an often small but committed group of volunteers to help make things happen. St Francis, Strood, was just one of a number of churches that took the opportunity during Volunteers' Week to say 'thank you', by holding a Volunteer Appreciation Day!



### STALKING AWARENESS

Bishop Simon met the dedicated team of volunteers and employed staff at the Tonbridge-based charity Protection Against Stalking. While there, he learned more about the extent of the problem, and the importance of early intervention to save lives. Find out more at: [www.protectionagainststalking.org](http://www.protectionagainststalking.org)



## CHURCH COMMUNITY GARDEN FIT FOR A KING

A new wildlife garden at St George's Church, Sevenoaks Weald, has come to fruition thanks to the energy and vision of volunteers from across the church and wider community.

Opened on the Coronation weekend, The King's Garden, not only relates to King Charles III, but aims to showcase God's creation too.

"We have joined the A Rocha Eco Church scheme and so were looking for ways we could steward our churchyard and just go greener," explains vicar, the Rev Canon Mandy Carr, "Now, with the help of volunteers, we've been able to do just that by redesigning and repurposing this area of church land."

A small volunteer design team from across the village met to discuss plans, with ideas including bird baths, bug hotels, and a small wildlife pond, plus various planting options.

Thanks to a small community grant of £1000 from the Better Together Community Mobilisation Fund from Sevenoaks District Council, it was possible to buy extra seating and some additional shrubs, with some funds remaining to support ideas as the garden develops.

The volunteering spirit is set to continue, with people already signed up to join an Autumn bulb planting team.

## CELEBRATING LAY MINISTRY

It has been a wonderful few months for lay ministry in the Diocese with many licensings and commissionings taking place, highlighting the diverse ways God is calling people across the Diocese.

Rochester Cathedral was the setting for the licensing of 12 people as Licensed Lay Ministers in June - a distinctive role in the Diocese for someone called to serve their Church and their community in a leadership role but not to be ordained - and also for the licensing or commissioning of 12 Children, Young People, and Family Workers.

In addition, five new Anna Chaplains were commissioned by Bishop Jonathan, a pioneering ministry in the Diocese to ensure the pastoral and spiritual needs

of older people, and those with dementia, are met.

Nine students have also received their Bishop's Certificate. This qualification is open to anyone who has an active involvement in their local church and who wishes to gain knowledge and skills to give a firm foundation to their Christian life and service. It can be the start of a journey towards lay ministry.

We now look forward to the ordinations of Deacons and Priests in September.

Find out more about the ways you can deepen your relationship with God, and explore God's plan for you, via our Everyday Faith pages [www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith/](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith/)



STUDENTS RECEIVED BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE



LICENSING OF LICENSED LAY MINISTERS



LICENSING OR COMMISSIONING OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND FAMILY WORKERS



COMMISSIONING OF ANNA CHAPLAINS



## A PLACE TO BE YOURSELF

*Together Editor, Jennifer Ross, meets the church-hosted afterschool club offering a safe and fun space for young people with additional needs.*

**“We need to start outside”, says Trystan, 9, my articulate and chatty guide who’s giving me a tour of the Galaxy Club - an inclusive set of clubs hosted by Christ Church, Bexleyheath, that offers kids, teens, and adults with additional needs, a safe place to interact, play games, be creative with arts and crafts, and much more.**

Right now, we’re by the entrance to the church hall and he’s describing the club’s purple banner and what I can expect from the evening.

“Everyone here is either dyslexic, dyspraxic or has another need,” he explains, “but it doesn’t matter once you are here as we are all just ourselves and we understand each other.”

Inside he takes me on a tour of the different activities on offer that are laid out on tables. There’s some music on in the background and several kids are enjoying lounging on a set of bean bags in the corner or playing pool.

“I really like coming here” Trystan says, “because I can meet up with friends.”

And that is the whole purpose of Galaxy Club.

Run by a small and passionate group of volunteers, most are connected to the church and have children with additional needs.

“It all came out of a conversation on the playground”,

says Vicky, one of the Galaxy Club founders and also the Parish Administrator for the church. “A number of us, all with kids who have additional needs, realised that there was no out-of-school provision designed for neurodiverse kids, where they could just get together and have fun.”

According to Health Education England NHS, around 1 in 7 of the UK population is neurodivergent. Neurodiversity refers to the different ways the brain can work and interpret information.

Neurodivergence includes a range of conditions including Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.

“This is ‘Action God’ as I call it!” says Vicky, who along with Stacey, another

*“Everyone here is either dyslexic, dyspraxic or has another need, but it doesn’t matter once you are here as we are all just ourselves and we understand each other.”*



GALAXY CLUB TEAM



A GAME OF BINGO IS UNDERWAY

founder and church member, both recognise God's presence in the club even though it is not a faith-based group.

"We describe it to people as a community group supported by the church," says Stacey, "which people seem to really get as an idea."

The church provided an initial seed corn grant and offers the hall for the club's use. There is even a termly visit by the vicar.

church as attendees are always invited to attend Messy Church, which is an environment that seems to suit the club's young people well. However, Vicky has broader ambitions.

"This is about our church taking a leap of faith and being inclusive in its fullest sense.

She continues: "It's not just about what the church offers these young people but how can we educate our church members as to how those who are neurodiverse can enrich our church community just by their presence."

It's clear the club makes a huge difference to those who attend.

The evening's session is punctuated with moments when a member of the team or a parent notices a small step their child has taken that marks a significant development for them – perhaps it is the first time since attending the club that they have

spoken to another child or taken part in a kick about with the football.

It may have been the first time they have been comfortable staying for the whole session.

As one mum explains, her son likes the variety of activities on offer and it's good to be in a place where you don't have to worry about whether your child's particular needs will be accepted.

It's also the closest provision to her, which as a sole carer, makes it easier for her to get out and meet others.

It's moments like these that, for Vicky and Stacey, make it all worth it.

And for any church interested in meeting a similar or even a different need in their area, Vicky says, "Don't try to run before you can walk, but definitely take that leap of faith."



*"This is about our church taking a leap of faith and being inclusive in its fullest sense."*

There is a definite flow between the club and the

# FORWARD IN HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

Looking back over the last year, the Diocese's Annual Report and Accounts offer a snapshot of how we as a diocesan family are moving forward with hope and confidence around our Called Together vision and priorities despite the challenges.

'I am confident that God has great things in store for us and for his Church!' says Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Bishop of Rochester, as part of his opening message in the Annual Report and Accounts for 2022.

Available online in an interactive digital form, the Report takes the opportunity to highlight some of the key moments of the year, such as welcoming a new Diocesan Bishop, the licensing of lay ministers, ordinations, and the marking of the death of the Queen.

It also notes some of the challenges being faced

by the diocesan family, including around financial resources and capacity.

Diocesan Secretary, Matthew Girt, describes 2022 as a 'transitional year', one in which we moved from the last of the lockdowns to the ability to plan ahead, even if there seems less to plan with in some places.

Part of this planning has involved adopting a Total Return approach to investments - a way for a charity to benefit from the increased value over time of a permanent endowment such as a gift of money or a legacy - as a way to unlock funding to invest in ministry locally, and that works alongside the important and generous contributions through Parish Offers.

Much of the Report is grouped around the Diocese's five priorities and sharing the stories of the individuals, churches, projects, and diocesan support effort, that demonstrate the progress being made.

## • Enabling each church to be mission minded

An accessible entrance was the outcome of work undertaken at St Peter and St Paul, Edenbridge, which included the creation of a new external porch and a level entrance. A new wooden framed door with an automatic opening was inserted in the porch to improve views into the church and reduce heat loss.

## • Helping children, young people, and adults live out everyday faith in Jesus

Sport is a big part of many people's everyday lives, and work has continued in the Diocese to encourage churches to explore how they can use sport and wellness to help people of all ages to live out their everyday faith in Jesus. In the lead up to Sports Sunday in May, a new video was created highlighting some of the ways local churches are becoming a Godly presence in people's sporting lives, so as to encourage others to consider doing the same.

## • Supporting loving service in the community

Local churches have been keen to support those suffering from mental ill health, either by themselves or with partner agencies. From offering courses such as Kingsugi Hope, and The Recovery Course, or putting on activities that promote mental wellbeing, such as The Gardening Club which runs as part of Thrive Thursdays at St Augustine, Gillingham.

## • Listening and responding to the prophetic voice of justice

As a Diocese we take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and we are committed to ensuring that our churches and buildings are safe places for all.

Alongside delivering a full and demanding programme of required safeguarding training, the Safeguarding Team has continued to handle an increasing workload of enquiries and case management, as well as carrying out clergy inductions, Parish Safeguarding Officer meetings, and DBS checks.

## • Protecting Creation's life for future generations

Earlier this year, as part of our journey towards Net Zero, the Diocese began a review of all properties. Alongside energy surveys, an insulation pilot scheme has been undertaken with 16 identified properties which will benefit from improved insulation during the winter months, aiming to mitigate against rising energy costs. 'We had new insulation installed the other week and we are already noticing the difference it has made,' said the Rev Roger Bristow, Holy Trinity, Bromley Common.



ST PETER AND ST PAUL, EDENBRIDGE



PILATES AT CHRIST CHURCH, CHISLEHURST



THRIVE THURSDAY GARDEN CLUB

Diocese of Rochester  
called together

## OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS...

<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">1</p> <p>NEW CHURCH BUILDING APPROVED</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">6</p> <p>NEW ANNA CHAPLAINS WORKING WITH OLDER PEOPLE</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">11</p> <p>NEW LICENSED LAY MINISTERS</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">18</p> <p>CLERGY ORDAINED</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">44</p> <p>FACILITIES GRANTED</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">121</p> <p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FUND SUPPORTED PROJECTS</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">199</p> <p>CLERGY HARDSHIP GRANTS</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">£144 000</p> <p>IN ENERGY SUPPORT GRANTS</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">3285</p> <p>PEOPLE TRAINED IN BASIC AND FOUNDATION SAFEGUARDING</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">£118,500</p> <p>ALLOCATED FROM THE MISSION PROPERTY FUND FOR CHURCH PROJECTS</p>		

To view our full interactive Annual Report SCAN the code



# TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Modern slavery is present in every single community in the UK. It can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic servitude and exploitation in criminal activity, such as county lines drug supply and cannabis cultivation.

The victims we know about are just the tip of the iceberg - many never come forward and continue to live miserable lives with no freedom or dignity.

As the church is present in all communities, we have a responsibility to know how to spot the signs of slavery and know what to do if we have concerns. What's more, we have an incredible opportunity to be a catalyst, bringing different organisations together to build communities where modern slavery cannot get a foothold.

Christians and the Church have always been at the forefront of social justice movements and our efforts continue to be needed in this present age as we fight modern slavery.

The Clewer Initiative is the Church of England's response in the fight against modern slavery. Here are its top ideas for how you can play your part in making our communities slavery free. To find out more about its work and to explore its resources, scan the QR code below.



Learn to spot the signs.



Know who to contact with concerns.

Raise awareness – attend the Diocese of Rochester's upcoming modern slavery event in Autumn 2023.



Download the Safe Car Wash App.

Get the right safeguarding processes in place in your social action projects.



Understand more about modern slavery. What One Thing could you do to help? Consider using our bespoke resources for Food Banks, refugees, rural communities.

Sign up for online training.



Start noticing and caring about the people around you!

[theclerinitiative.org](http://theclerinitiative.org)

THE CLEWER INITIATIVE



HELPING MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN BANGLADESH



AMOS TRUST IN BETHLEHEM

## SHARING BLESSINGS, BRINGING HOPE

For four decades, the Diocese’s Poverty and Hope Appeal has allowed us to play our part in tackling the causes and effects of poverty in different parts of the world. Poverty and Hope Coordinator, Peter Kettle, explains how the projects supported this year seek to bring security and dignity to those involved.

There is so much darkness and bad news in the world today – war, climate change, poverty and injustice – but as Christians we must do what we can to bring light into the darkness, to create little outposts of God’s Kingdom on earth.

For the last 46 years, the Poverty and Hope Appeal has offered a way to do just that.

Two key words come to mind when describing what the Appeal tries to help provide: Security and Dignity.

Security means that someone can be confident that they will have their daily bread and have somewhere safe and dry to sleep. Dignity is so hard to achieve if you are despised and discriminated against or locked away in prison.

Since 1977 Poverty and Hope has generated funding for three leading Christian charities active in poor countries.

In Bangladesh, Poverty and Hope supports a substantial Christian Aid project helping lower caste

and other outcast minority groups. Our CMS partners offer help and encouragement to slum dwellers and prisoners in Brazil, while a USPG project with which we are linked supports children’s education in rural communities in Myanmar.

Apart from these founding partners we have since 2022 also supported Rochester Diocese’s three companion dioceses in Africa: Kondoa and Mpwapwa in Tanzania and Harare, Zimbabwe.

The recent highlight of our activity in these areas has been the successful launch of pilot irrigation and bee-rearing schemes in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, in which tremendous enthusiasm and skills on the ground has been matched with funding by Poverty and Hope and additional donors inspired by the first stage work.

The other exciting addition to the Appeal’s activity, starting this year, is a new partnership with Amos Trust, which has been working for over 30 years with four grass-roots organisations in the Bethlehem area, who use arts, education, and dialogue to provide

hope and promote reconciliation.

Over £23,000 was raised during the Appeal last year which is fantastic. More than 50 parishes made donations and many of these were part of a regular yearly pattern of generous giving. Administration and communications are handled by volunteers and diocesan staff, so every penny donated (plus Gift Aid!) is well spent.

Remembering the words of Psalm 8, all human beings were made a little lower than the angels, to be crowned with glory and honour. All God’s children deserve security and dignity.

Let’s do what we can to help provide that.

For more information about Poverty and Hope, including detailed project descriptions, visit the diocesan website at [www.rochester.anglican.org/poverty-and-hope-appeal.php](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/poverty-and-hope-appeal.php)

To donate SCAN the QR code.



## SEEING JESUS IN THE REFUGEE

The issue of immigration is never far away from the headlines. Reports of boats crossing the Channel, and the passage of the Illegal Migration Bill through Parliament in recent months, have meant the issue has continued to be at the centre of often heated and polarised debate. How then, asks Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge, does a developed nation approach the ongoing issue of global migration?

In the UK, the symbolism of migrants crossing the Channel from France has had a powerful effect on the imagination. The numbers crossing this way are growing but it is only a small part of the bigger story of migration to the UK while other people find legal and safer means of arriving.

The boats, nevertheless, produce a particular kind of response in some.

Careless language round 'swarms' and 'invasion' have been used. Outlandish solutions like housing people on disused oil platforms or creating a giant wave machine off the UK coast (yes, really) have been proposed. Presently, the plan is to send a number of asylum seekers to Rwanda; this is subject to legal challenges.

Terminology is important, but difficult. An asylum seeker is someone seeking refuge. A refugee is someone who has left their country because of war, violence, or persecution. Migrants are people who are on the move, usually for economic reasons, who may or may not claim asylum.

These distinct legal categories overlap and economic reasons can be a sanitised way of speaking of many who may have fled desperate poverty caused by unjust systems, nationally and internationally, conflict, and the outcomes from a rapidly warming planet.

Any responsible developed nation has to address asylum properly, balancing the needs of some of the world's most vulnerable people with its capacity as a host nation to absorb them manageably with the infrastructure it possesses; structures needed to support its own citizens.

However, responses tend to polarise people in the developed world and this does not help governments to arrive at humane and responsible answers.

A good place to start is with the re-humanisation of those seeking sanctuary. The Irish freelance journalist Sally Hayden has given us a rational and compassionate place to start in her acclaimed book *My Fourth Time, We Drowned* (4th Estate, 2023), the winner of the Orwell Prize for Political Writing. The refugee trail she looks at starts in east African and west Africa, arriving in Libya to cross the Mediterranean Sea and it is a shocking story.

Hayden's reportage reveals the humanity of the people involved, their names and stories, with aspirations that are easily understood. It rebukes the tendency to see refugees as an undifferentiated mass of chancers that leads only to stigmatisation. She also lays bare the appalling physical, sexual, and emotional abuse suffered by those who end up in the detention centres round Tripoli.

Sadistic guards and traffickers have subjected refugees to torture and rape in a bid to extract ransoms from desperate families and confine them in conditions that would be cruel to animals. The trauma and memory of war and violence in their own country is compounded, over again.

From this place, the extraordinary risks taken on unseaworthy vessels across a huge expanse of sea make sense. Many refugees have already died inside and are not afraid for what may happen to them at sea.

Asylum seekers whose claims are upheld often face great challenges on arrival in Europe. They are deeply traumatised, hypervigilant, and sleepless and also profoundly lonely – a loneliness made worse by a more individualistic culture, where neighbours do not gather together and households keep to themselves. It takes time to integrate and they are frequently made to feel unwelcome.

The Christian faith is devoted to what the Bible calls the 'alien'. It begins with Israel's experience of slavery and the population migration that follows. In the promised land, God commands that strangers should be accommodated with generosity and hospitality. Hosts should never take advantage of others' vulnerability.

There are no simple answers to today's migration surge – the biggest since the dislocation of World War Two. But this is no excuse for abandoning principles in tackling it.

A Christian voice should be informed and not naïve; prayerful and not abusive; able to see Jesus in the refugee and in the citizens of the host nation. Losing this perspective may lead us to a place of darkness and division, where populist, opportunist politicians who are unknown today come to prominence in the time ahead. The kind who offer easy solutions that ultimately poison us all.

**RESOURCES – YOUNG PEOPLE**

A selection of a materials and ideas to help you support and encourage the faith of a young person in your life.

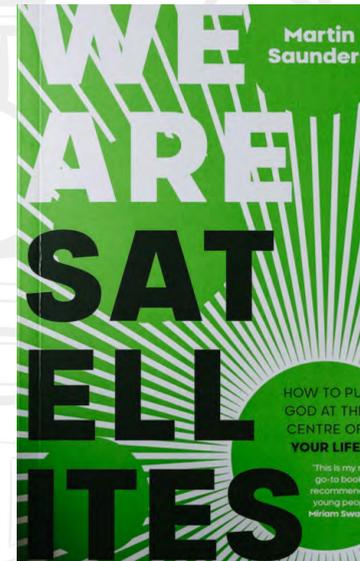


**BIBLE CHAT MATS**

These printable sheets are a great way to do God as a family. Usable around a meal table, sitting on the sofa, in the garden or wherever works best. This activity can be carried out as a household, with friends together, or as part of a Sunday group. Colour and doodle away and respond to the Bible in your own unique way.

Created by the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Visit: [www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/youth-children/resources/bible-chat-mat/](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/youth-children/resources/bible-chat-mat/)

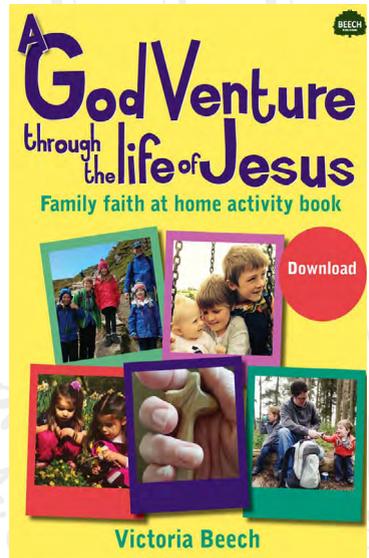


**WE ARE SATELLITES (YOUTHSCAPE)**

When we're so focused on our own lives and concerns, it's easy to forget that the world doesn't revolve around us. Offering a new vision of the Christian faith for today's generation, this lively, engaging look at discipleship is full of warmth and practical advice, making it the perfect introduction for young people looking to follow Jesus.

£9.99

Visit: [www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/we-are-satellites](http://www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/we-are-satellites)



**GOD VENTURE**

GodVenture was created by Victoria Beech to give busy parents fun, easy ways to do faith at home together.

Victoria is passionate about families finding ways to do 'God-stuff' at home in a way which works for their unique setting and does not make them worry about it looking perfect.

Choose from a range of materials, including books, stickers and much more.

Visit: [www.godventure.co.uk](http://www.godventure.co.uk)



**THE WAY**

Videos and social media content aimed at teenagers that is designed to break assumptions and talk about things that matter. A partnership with the Church of England's Digital Projects team.

Find content on:

Instagram - @thewayuk

TikTok- @thewaytv

YouTube - /TheWayChannel

## UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



PORTRAIT BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS  
at Rochester Cathedral, Quire  
16 JULY - JANUARY 2024

A rarely-seen portrait of a former Bishop of Rochester painted by renowned artist, Sir Joshua Reynolds, has been loaned to Rochester Cathedral to mark 300 years since his birth. The portrait depicts former Bishop of Rochester, Dr John Thomas and was painted in 1781. Admission is free. Please check the Cathedral website for opening times.



DIOCESAN OVERSEAS PARTNERSHIPS  
CELEBRATION: ESTONIA  
at All Saints' Church, Snodland  
24 SEPTEMBER, 6:00pm

A service to celebrate the friendships our Diocese has with partner dioceses and Churches overseas, with a particular focus this year on Estonia. The Very Rev Urmas Viilma, Archbishop of Estonia will be the guest preacher. All are welcome. For more details email: [kitley@clara.net](mailto:kitley@clara.net)



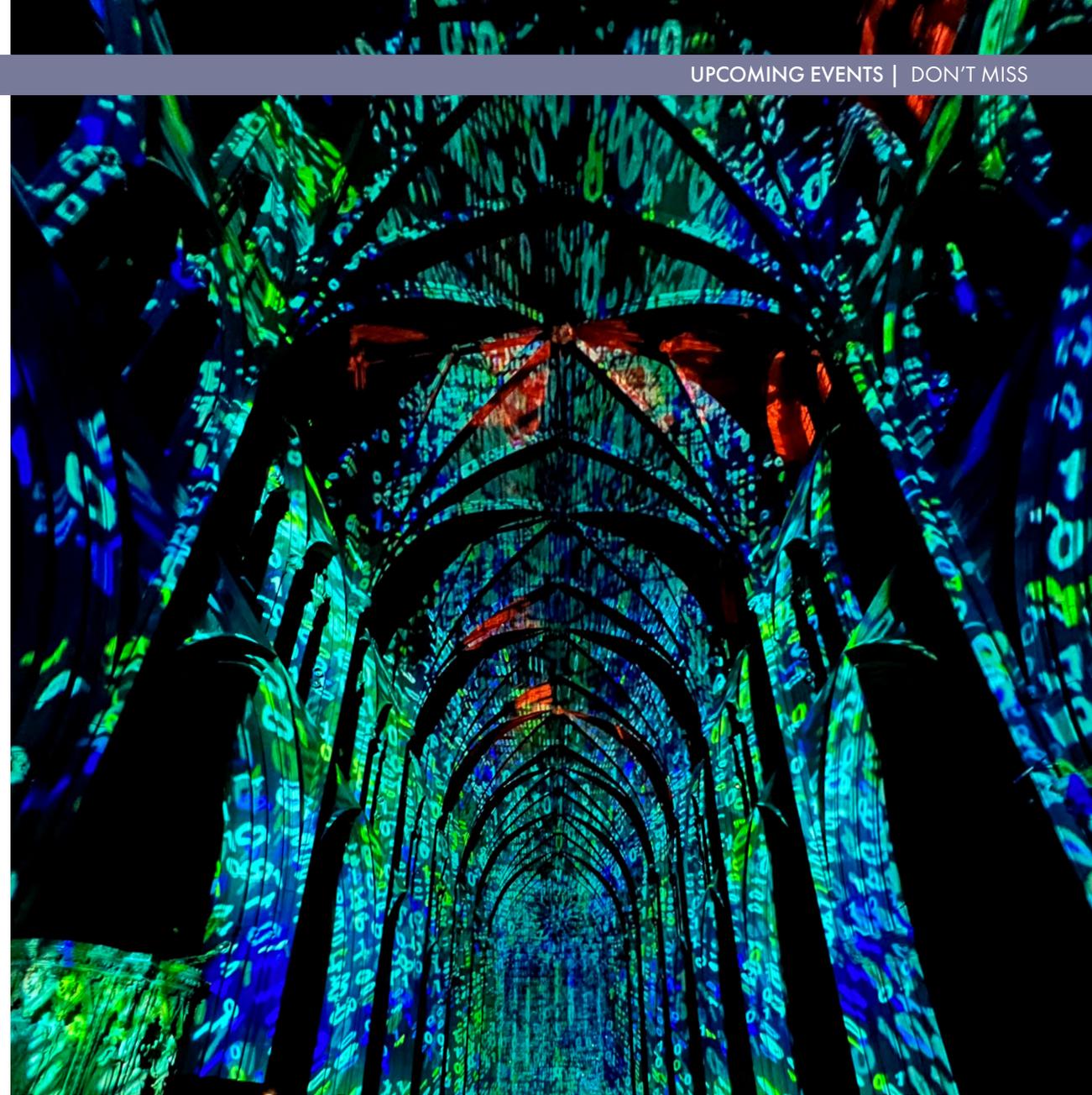
FUSE  
at St Margaret's Church, Rainham  
15 SEPTEMBER, 7:00pm

Fuse is an evening of worship and affirmation for young people in the Dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester. A tuck shop will be available during the event. To book your free ticket, please visit [www.rainhamchurch.co.uk/fuse](http://www.rainhamchurch.co.uk/fuse)



THE AGE OF STARS ART EXHIBITION, by Nicola Rose  
at St Benedict's Centre, West Malling  
13-27 OCTOBER, 7:00pm

Two-week art exhibition including an interactive day (21 October) with the artist Nicola Rose, focusing on the biblical references to constellations. To book your place for our event please contact [bookings@stbenedictscentre.org](mailto:bookings@stbenedictscentre.org)



### A SPECTACULAR SON-ET-LUMIERE EXPERIENCE

3 – 7 October 2023

Explore and contemplate the contributions of science and human understanding of the physical world around us. 'Science' is an incredible lightshow by @Luxmuralis coming to Rochester Cathedral this October.

Book tickets online at [www.rochestercathedral.org/lightshow](http://www.rochestercathedral.org/lightshow)

Sponsored by ArcelorMittal Kent Wire





## CALLED TO CHAMPION YOUNG VOCATIONS

The Church of England has a bold goal to double the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030. In our One to One interview, the Rev Trudi Oliver, school chaplain and Youth Vocations Champion for the Diocese, says that encouraging young people to recognise that God has a role for them is something she gets to do every day.

**You are the Diocese's Youth Vocations Champion. For someone who is not sure, how would you describe a vocation?**

Vocation can be anything, it's not just about the collar! I would describe it as an area in which God would like you to serve him using the gifts that he has given you.

**Can you tell us a bit about your role as Diocesan Youth Vocations champion?**

I see my role as enabling others to talk about vocation with young people and to think about where they meet young people. We tend to forget that if we don't have them in our churches, we certainly have them in our families and parishes, so how are we engaging with them?

**Why do we need a champion?**

Because young people have a voice and a calling from God, but often that voice isn't heard or taken seriously. I'm here to remind the Diocese that God calls the youngest of us to serve him from early on in their lives, and that calling will change as they grow as young disciples.

**What would you say to a young person who thinks God couldn't possibly have a plan for them?**

Oh yes he does!!! If God could call David as a young boy and use him, and let's face it he failed epically at times, then He most definitely can use anyone of us to fulfil his plans and purposes. Let's talk about it.

**What are some of the ways you could suggest a young person could start to explore what God's plan for them might be?**

Pray. Start a conversation with God. Don't forget that what you want to do, might very well be what God wants for you. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Talk to a trusted adult about what your gifts are and how you might use them. Contact me, I'm happy to talk this through with you.

**When did you first feel a sense of calling by God?**

I wasn't young, although having said that, even though I didn't come from a church family, I did always have a sense of God and a belief in him. I used to think the sun rays beaming through the clouds was God talking to someone.

I was in my forties when I became a Christian and it took me sometime to hear and accept that God was calling me to be ordained. Other people saw it before I did, I thought God was calling me to be a teacher.

**You are also a school chaplain. What do you enjoy most about it?**

I get the opportunity every single day to tell over 200 students in church how loved and valued they are by God. It doesn't really get much better than that.

When we live in a world where teenage mental health is in crisis, letting young people know that they have purpose, that what they do and say will make a difference, is an enormous privilege and joy.

**What are you watching at the moment?**

Queen Charlotte (love Bridgeton) and can't wait for the final series of Stranger Things, so good!

**Are you a tea or a coffee person?**

Coffee all the way!

**Are you musical at all?**

Ha ha ha ha - depends on who you ask!

**How well might you cope on a desert island?**

I'd survive but not thrive, I need people!!!- Also I'm ginger so I would need someone to rub sunscreen on my back!

*We have a team of people across the Diocese who are able to help you explore your calling. If you would like a conversation, email [vocations@rochester.anglican.org](mailto:vocations@rochester.anglican.org).*



## IF YOUR WORK GLADDENS YOU, IT GLADDENS GOD

A chance email brought Paul Ogunlade to his new role as Financial Accountant in the Diocesan Office. It's just another example for Paul of a God who is directly involved in his daily life, and how for Christians, each day brings an opportunity to be an example of Christ's love and peace to others.

If you are a person of faith, I think the Holy Spirit is always opening up opportunities for us to live out our faith.

Even getting this role I believe was guided by God. I received an email from an agency I had never engaged with before, and they sent me the job description. I ignored it at first but, when I came across it again, I thought working for the Church could just be right for me as it fits in with my faith, and I went for it.

This was faith in action.

For me, my faith gives me a great sense of peace and calm because I know there is a higher power in control, and I have a template by which to live my life. Jesus told us to love others as we love ourselves and if we do that, we can only treat people well because that is how we would want ourselves to be treated.

I've been involved in finance since I left school and one of the things I have always enjoyed about it is working with clients; helping them file good returns and listening to them and their troubles. I don't always have the answers, but in my private time, I can take the needs I have heard during the day and place them in front of God.

I believe this is why God has brought me to this role, because I believe we have a duty to let the parishes

know that we care. Part of that is about me not just providing practical assistance but, along with others, standing in the gap between the parishes and God and praying for them. Praying that they will grow and flourish, and praying that God will open peoples' minds, hearts and hands to give, because when a parish grows and flourishes, so does the whole Diocese.

I think if you care about your work then God rejoices in that. If it gladdens you, it gladdens God too and amazing things can happen.

There was a time in a previous place of work where a colleague came up to me and said that she had noticed that I was always happy and smiling, and that I always seem focused on my work. She wanted to know what drove me.

I explained that I had a source from where my happiness was derived, and that was Christ. That because of Christ, I knew that whatever was thrown at me, I could overcome it.

I wasn't looking to evangelise I was just minding my own business, but in that moment, she gave her life to Christ.

I don't think we as Christians always realise the impact we can have on the people around us, but we actually have chances every day to be an expression of God's love.



# A PRAYER FOR YOUNG DISCIPLES

Loving God,

We bring to you the children, young people and families of our nation.

We pray for those who already know they are your children.

Please protect them, bless them and keep them firm in their faith.

We pray for those who would like to find out more about you.

Please provide ways for them to do that and help us all to play our part.

We pray for those who know little or nothing about the Christian faith.

Please stir up curiosity in them to find out more and in your mercy give them encounters with you that transform their lives.

We pray that the goal of doubling the number of children and active young disciples across the Church of England by 2030 will be reached with joy.

Please give us courage, faith and hope as we continue to pray.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen