

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 10 | August-October 2021

GROW | ENRICH | RESOURCE

COVER STORY: ECO CHURCH COUNT AT THE HOLY REDEEMER, LAMORBEY PAGE 7



CHURCHES
COUNT ON
NATURE

NEW
SEASON IN
CHATHAM

GETTING
THROUGH
TOGETHER



Poverty and Hope Appeal 2021



**'For we are
God's handiwork,
created in Christ
Jesus to do good
works, which God
prepared in advance
for us to do'**

(Ephesians 2:10)



For more information visit
www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/poverty-and-hope/

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It's certainly been a time of comings and goings in the Diocese. In July, we bid a fond farewell to Bishop James and his wife Bridget, as they retired after ten years of service and ministry with us. See how we said goodbye on pg10.

In another move, the Archdeacon of Tonbridge has been consecrated as the Bishop of Birkenhead – just some of the news you can catch-up on in our **Inside Track** (pg 4-7).

Elsewhere in our **Focus On** section, we carry on the theme of celebrating new beginnings, as we find out how life is returning to St John's Church in Chatham after a generation (pg 14). Plus, we share the story of *us* as a diocesan family – just how have we got through the last year? Well, together of course (pg14)!

In our **One to One** (pg24) interview, we meet the person available to listen as churches have the sensitive conversations required as part of the national Living in Love and Faith initiative which is exploring relationships and sexuality.

And if your faith has been tested in recent times, our Everyday Faith story shows that out of doubt can come stronger faith.

With all the usual great range of resources and events, it certainly feels like a bumper summer edition!

Continue to stay safe.

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Deadline for next edition:
7 October 2021

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ARCHDEACON JULIE BECOMES BISHOP OF BIRKENHEAD

There was delight as the Venerable Julie Conalty, became the new Bishop of Birkenhead in a consecration service held at York Minster in July.

Responding to her appointment, Julie expressed surprise, saying that she hadn't been expecting to leave her post as Archdeacon of Tonbridge so soon, but that 'God may have had other ideas.'

She also spoke of her gratitude to all those she had worked with in the Diocese, and of having a 'strong sense of call' to the Bishop of Birkenhead post, which had specifically asked for someone who would

'keep survivors central' to the Diocese of Chester's safeguarding work.

Advocating for a change in the culture around safeguarding in the Church has been a key concern for Julie during her time in Rochester, and so news of her appointment was welcomed by victim and survivor campaigners of Church-context abuse: "[Julie is] one of very few senior figures who recognises that corruption in the Church needs to be faced."

We wish Julie well and pray for her and her family as she embarks on this new ministry.



WORD PERFECT

John Musker, a Churchwarden at St Mary, West Malling, showed some serious memory power when he spent an afternoon reciting the whole of John's Gospel from memory for visitors to the church. He's been practising and learning for a decade. Impressive!



CHURCH FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

St John's Church, Sidcup is delighted to finally have running water, step-free access, toilets, and a servery, among a number of other improvements. Their Access4All building project began last year and was finally completed this year. Well done all involved!



MORE SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Anna Chaplaincy, a pioneering ministry providing spiritual support for older people, just got stronger in the Diocese, with a new Anna Chaplain for St Mary, Hadlow (Jenny Hopkins) and six new archdeaconry leads to help meet local needs. "This is a further sign of our ongoing commitment to nurturing the prophetic voice older people have to share with us." (Julia Burton-Jones, Anna Chaplaincy Lead)



CHURCH KITCHEN TO IMPROVE HEALTH

A brand-new community kitchen has been unveiled at St Augustine, Gillingham as part of the ASPIRE project in Medway to help local people to make healthier lifestyle choices. The kitchen will be used to deliver cookery demos and workshops, and is an extension of St Augustine's continued outreach into the community.



SCHOOL EXPLORES SPIRITUALITY THROUGH ART STUDIO

Children at West Kingsdown C of E Primary School are enjoying a new arty opportunity, thanks to help from the Diocese of Rochester's Children and Young People Fund.

The grant for nearly £5,000 has gone towards creating a Spiritual Art Studio in their school.

The Art Studio is run by Susan Salter, a published children's illustrator and committed Christian, and allows children from across the school to explore faith through the medium of art.

"We have worked on lots of different projects, from 'who God says I am' - so our identity in Christ - to looking at parables. I always try and read God's word to the children and to talk to them about how we can apply it to our work in the studio.

"It's a chance to be totally creative. I always say to them, you can't do anything wrong, just express yourself and I am here to help you."

Classes work on a 'big' piece of art per year and this art is then displayed around the school for the whole community to see.

Ben Hulme, Executive Headteacher at West Kingsdown and St Paul's Swanley Village, says the children love their time in the studio:

"We would not have been able to run this without the help of the grant, so it's been a wonderful gift for us and the children love it.

"The key is that it has a very different feel to the classroom, which can be very busy. When you come into the studio you have very small groups in here, you can be quiet, or you can talk. You really do have a chance to have your voice heard."

Future plans for the studio include opening it up to families and the local community as well as to continue to develop the school's strong links to St Edmund's church.

Find out more about the Children and Young People Fund [here](#).



CHURCHES MAKE THE MOST OF BEING OUTSIDE

Churches really have been taking up the call for 'hands, face, space, and fresh air', as well as honouring the Christian responsibility for taking care of God's creation, by jumping at every opportunity to get outside.

In Horsmonden, a new Community Garden, supported by the church, has already begun to flourish. The idea was initiated by a request from some of the village teenagers, who asked if there was a way they could connect better with the older generation in the village.

"As we pondered how to do this, the idea of having a garden was born. After all, biblically it stands for a place of relationship and connection", says Hilary Marshall, the church's Community Worker. "Now, we hope the space will not only promote wellbeing, but give everyone a greater love for God's incredible creation."

Protecting creation's life for future generations is a key priority for the Diocese, and so it is not surprising that so many churches also took part in the national 'Churches Count on Nature' scheme.

Over at The Holy Redeemer in Lamorbey, forty-seven different species of wildlife were recorded. St Mary, Bromley's garden church also got involved with the count, after a rousing chorus (outside) of 'All things bright and beautiful' of course!



THE HORSMONDEN COMMUNITY GARDEN



ECO CHURCH COUNT AT THE HOLY REDEEMER, LAMORBEY



NATURE COUNT AT ST MARY, BROMLEY



A NEW SEASON FOR ST JOHN, CHATHAM

THE REV LUKE BACON WITH CAPT STEPHEN RAMSHAW

“Welcome to the future friends. The future’s bright. The future comes with fresh coffee...and mugs.” So says a beaming Rev Martyn Saunders, Priest-in-Charge of St John Chatham, in an update video on the church’s Facebook page.

And well he might be pleased, because the newly installed facilities – toilet, kitchenette and hot water dispenser for that all important coffee – mark another milestone on the exciting road to returning worship and missional life at St John, Chatham.

The church, a large and striking building in the centre of Chatham, has stood empty for a generation. For the last two years, it has been a building site, as it has been prepared to serve a congregation once more.

It’s all part of the Diocese of Rochester and the Church of England’s long commitment to re-establishing a community at St John’s Church and complements Medway Council’s own regeneration plans for the town centre.

Despite some challenges along the way, on Easter Sunday this year, the church was able to open its doors for the first Easter

Service in the building in over a generation.

“It was very moving and very poignant” says Martyn, “particularly coming out of a time of lockdown but especially it being Easter Sunday when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. This felt like a resurrection moment for us as a church community too.”

“Since then, we’ve had the privilege of being able to open multiple times each week, giving the community the opportunity to reconnect with this beautiful building as well as with a significant part of the town’s story of faith.”

There is a strong partnership with the Church Army – a Christian organisation seeking to transform communities through faith inspired action - to host the Medway Centre of Mission.

This work is headed by Church Army evangelist, Capt Stephen Ramshaw, who has recently restarted ‘Medway Oaks’, a Sunday Afternoon congregation and drop-in for the homeless and marginalised.

Throughout lockdown Stephen has done a brilliant job at maintaining relationships with many of those who spend significant amounts of time in Chatham Town Centre and the St John’s team are delighted that the building is now able to welcome many of those who attend his group on Sundays and throughout the week. Stephen will soon move away but the work continues developing with volunteers and, soon replacement evangelists.

The church has also been able to host a clothing bank and has recently restarted its Conversation Café, which offers a friendly and informal atmosphere in which people can practice their English or help others practice theirs.

The reopening of the church building has provided a great opportunity to build on and maintain relationships with St John’s Infant School, with the church already establishing a pattern of welcoming the school for collective worship.

The last few months have also seen significant changes to the team as well. The arrival of the Rev Andrew Vaughan as Associate Minister at the nearby St Philip and St James, Chatham where Martyn is still vicar, has allowed Martyn to invest the time needed to help bring life back to the St John, Chatham.

They have also welcomed the Rev Luke Bacon and his family to help lead the growth of the church. Bringing significant enthusiasm, particularly in the areas of worship and creativity, Luke says it’s great to be joining at this time:

“I know it sounds cheesy, but I’ve never quite felt so at home as I do having moved into Medway. There is a real sense that

our gifts and experiences in life and ministry so far have been leading us to be involved in this exciting chapter of the life of St John, Chatham. We can’t wait to discover what God has in store.”

Martyn says that things seem to be coming together in an exciting and tangible way:

“It’s amazing to see how God is calling people into his church at St John, Chatham. Some are new to faith, others returning to faith, still others have recently moved into the area and through God’s grace we seem to have a viable base to reach out to the parish and the town centre.

He says they’re also grateful for the people who have helped this vision come to fruition over many years:

“We are hugely grateful for the tenacity and faithfulness of the small group who have persevered over the last few years, as well as for the prayer and support of the wider Diocese of Rochester family.

“We ask people to now pray that God will continue to draw people into this community and that we might increasingly play our part in seeing the Kingdom of God come in Chatham and across the wider area of Medway”

You can follow St John’s Church on Facebook and Instagram (@stjohnschatham) or visit their website www.stjohnschatham.co.uk

For information on the church’s 200 year birthday see www.stjohnschatham.co.uk/birthday



EMOTIONAL FAREWELL AS BISHOP JAMES RETIRES



There was joy and sadness as the diocesan family said ‘goodbye’ and ‘thank you’ to Bishop James and Bridget, as they retired after 10 years of ministry in the Diocese, at a special service held in Rochester Cathedral on Saturday 3 July

Due to ongoing Covid restrictions, attendance at the service had to be restricted, however, a livestream of the service, with full pre-service build-up, allowed people from across the Diocese and beyond to be part of the day.

In the weeks leading up to the farewell, parishes had sent in video messages of thanks which were compiled into a set of montages and given to Bishop James and Bridget before the service, and shared on social media.

During the service, which included music specially chosen by Bishop James, a series of reflections were offered on areas that have held particular significance for Bishop James over his 40 years of ministry and during his time as Bishop of Rochester.

These included: community engagement and chaplaincy, diversity, lay ministry, vocations, and the Diocese’s overseas links which included a video contribution from the Bishops of the Anglican Dioceses of Harare, Mpwapwa and Kondoa.

The Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lady Colgrain, also offered her own tribute, speaking of Bishop James’ commitment to building relationships between the Church and the community across the region, as well as other denominations and faiths.

Alongside this, the Vicar of St Mark, Gillingham, the Rev Saju Muthalaly, conducted an interview with Bishop James. When asked, what do you wish you had been told when you started off as a bishop, Bishop James said laughingly, “Don’t do it!”

But he continued: “I think what I would say is, treasure those occasions when you can be close to the ground with the people of God, and in our communities. And also, don’t take yourself too seriously.”

Then came the poignant moment when Bishop James removed his mitre and cope, and formally handed

over his crozier to the Bishop of Tonbridge, who placed it on the High Altar to await the next Bishop of Rochester.

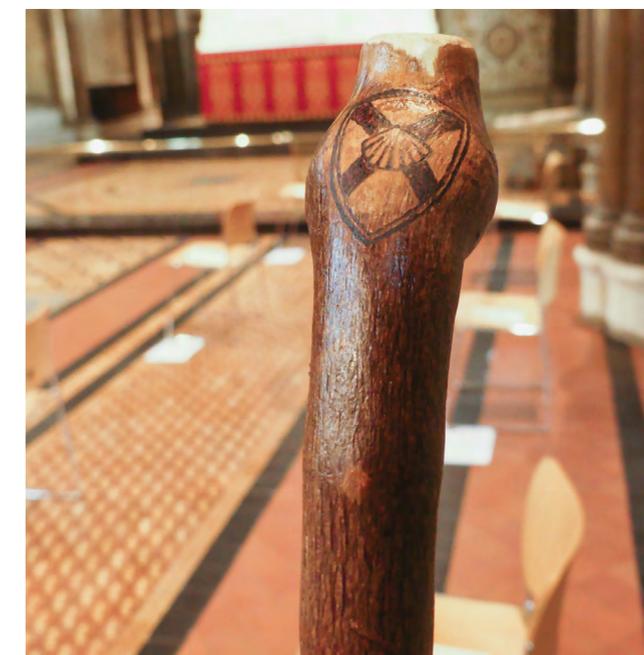
As a sign that his retirement is just a new phase of his journey of faith, the Dean of the Cathedral then presented Bishop James with a specially designed and crafted pilgrim’s staff.

The staff had been fashioned from a piece of rosewood, pruned from a rose near the Bishop’s Gate in the Cathedral’s Cloister Garth.

Following a presentation of a gift from the Diocese,

“Thanks to his vision and leadership the church in this diocese is better equipped to attract and train lay and ordained ministers to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse community.”

The Rev Belinda Beckhelling, Curate at Rochester Cathedral





BISHOP JAMES IS INTERVIEWED IN THE SERVICE



Bishop Simon gave a short tribute to Bishop James:

“Those who have been in ordained ministry for any length of time will know how energy sapping those

forty years must have been. And those who work around him will know how hard and often lonely the role of Diocesan Bishop must be. Yet throughout it all, he has shown great character. Lots of kindness and gentleness, heroic self-control, and a good sense of humour that ensured people stayed grounded.”

Giving his final blessing, the Bishop and Bridget then left the Cathedral

to rapturous applause - and the odd appreciative whistle - marking the end to Bishop James’ public ministry as the Bishop of Rochester.

Bishop James and Bridget are preparing to move to Birmingham where they will spend their retirement.

The search is now on to find the next Bishop of Rochester.

A process of engagement to find out the qualities the new bishop should have, as well as issues that should be their top priority, is currently underway. As well as surveying church leaders and members, children and young people, interviewers have hit the streets of locations around the Diocese to ask the wider public their views.

It is hoped that a new Bishop of Rochester will be appointed in 2022.

Use the prayer on the back page as we pray for the success of this search.

“Thank you for your gentle and approachable leadership and having a heart for chaplaincy.

We wish you and Bridget every blessing in Birmingham.”

*The Rev Ruth Bierbaum,
Kent and Medway
Partnership Trust
Chaplain (Mental Health)*



THE REV CANON JEREMY BLUNDEN, BISHOP’S ADVISER FOR BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC MATTERS PRESENTS BISHOP JAMES AND BRIDGET WITH A PRINT OF ‘A LAST SUPPER’ BY LORNA MAY WADSWORTH. A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF THE LAST SUPPER WHICH DEPICTS CHRIST AS A BLACK MAN.



GETTING THROUGH, TOGETHER

It is hard to believe that at the beginning of last year, we had little inkling of the upheaval, uncertainty, and sorrow that we were about to experience.

While much remains uncertain, what is clear is that as a community of faith here in the Diocese of Rochester, we have been and are seeing this time through, together.

That's the story at the heart of the Diocese's 2020 [Annual Report and Accounts](#) which have now been published.

Responding creatively to covid

Covid-19 restrictions brought the closure of church buildings for a time. As a result, churches learned fast how digital communications and social media could enhance their mission and ministry, as well as how to maintain their connections.



Lesley Birse, who leads the church's Facebook page at All Saints' Church in Orpington, says they began with nothing:

"I hit on the idea of a Bible Reading a Day - approximately two minutes of people's time to listen to a reading.

"When I tried later on to stop the readings, someone commented that they had been a life-line in the first lockdown and I was asked to keep them."

Once their new vicar joined, they were able to stream Morning Prayer and, armed with no more than an iPad and determination, Sunday and Wednesday services went out live too.

Lesley says: "We have no intention of stopping streaming - we have seen the benefits and so has our congregation during the lockdown."

Alongside this, churches offered offline ways to stay connected too, from dedicated home packs and outside meditative prayer walks to phone-sermons and prayer.

Showing the love of Christ

From community larders and prescription runs, to mental health walks and outreach to care homes, churches have walked alongside their communities as living beacons of hope throughout the pandemic.

Diocesan teams have been there to support, encourage and advise churches on how to serve their communities in the most Covid-safe ways as possible.

Many of these projects were developed in direct response to the social problems exacerbated by Covid-19: hunger, isolation, poverty, and abuse. Others were quickly adapted out of established outreach or as an escalation of response.

Sadly, the pandemic saw a rise in domestic abuse in all its forms.

A new church-backed project in Bromley was launched during the pandemic, in partnership with Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid, to offer support to women fleeing domestic abuse.

Called Journey to Freedom, this fund provides a basic starter pack to help bring some home comforts to women being rehoused out of a refuge:

"This is often accommodation which is without the barest of essentials - no fridge, no flooring, sometimes even no lightbulbs." (The Rev James Harratt, Vicar of Bromley Parish Church and Chair of Bromley Relief in Need).

Supporting people's journey of faith

Lockdown has seen a flourishing in people's desire to deepen their walk with Christ.

The Diocese's Spirituality Network, led by the Rev Canon Susanne Carlsson, moved its usual spiritual accompaniment programme online, including its Closer course.

For participants like Radi Doncheva, it met a real need during lockdown:

"For me, before the Closer course, prayer was a one-sided relationship with God. I knew Jesus loved me but it hadn't sunk from the head to the heart. The Closer course helped me make the journey of this knowledge from head to heart."

At the same time the training and bringing to fruition of people's call to lay and ordained ministry in all its forms also continued unabated.

Licensings of clergy and lay ministers to their parishes moved online, while the ordination of deacons and priests took place under strict Covid-19 compliant restrictions, in both Rochester Cathedral and in locations across the three archdeaconries.



Continuing to give parishes the support they need

Although normal office life came to a stop for diocesan staff based in Rochester, their dedication and commitment to serving the parishes did not.

To help limit the financial impact of the pandemic, a third of Diocesan Office staff were furloughed during 2020 (and some into 2021). It saw many teams and individuals take on additional work to maintain service levels to parishes.

The Diocese of Rochester Covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund was also launched in April 2020 to support parishes in immediate financial need.

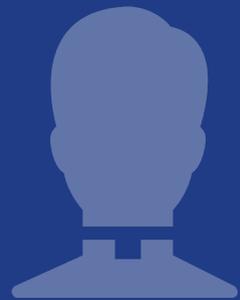
So far, 48 grants of £5,000 have been made and loans to five parishes totalling £58,700.

Assessing the last year, Matthew Girt, Diocesan Secretary says:

"As the year has progressed, and we have moved in to 2021, it has taken real courage and determination from parishes and staff to continue. I am indebted to the commitment of staff as they have worked tirelessly to support the front line of ministry, often with less resource than they were expecting."

See our year in numbers in our centrespread...

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS... 2020



20

PEOPLE ORDAINED AS DEACON OR PRIEST



35

PARTICIPANTS TO THE ONLINE 'CLOSER' DISCIPLESHIP COURSE



633

PEOPLE COMPLETED BASIC SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS TRAINING ONLINE

9 PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY A CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FUND GRANT TO A TOTAL OF

£19,827.75



92%

OF CHURCH SCHOOLS GRADED OUTSTANDING OR GOOD BY OFTSED



1557

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE REQUESTS PROCESSED



17

HUBS AND CAFÉS SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM

50

PEOPLE TOOK AN ONLINE RETREAT RUN BY THE DIOCESE'S SPIRITUALITY NETWORK



119

PEOPLE REGULARLY ATTENDED WEBINARS RELATED TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY



12

PEOPLE LICENSED AS LICENSED LAY MINISTERS



COMING HOME

Earlier this year, a new report published by the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community offered a Christian response to England's housing crisis. A crisis which, it says, sees around 8 million people living in overcrowded, unaffordable, or unsuitable homes. Homelessness is just one symptom of this housing crisis.

While the Commission has a vision to prevent homelessness by helping people to secure housing that is sustainable, safe, stable, sociable and satisfying, when faced with an immediate need, how can Christians and churches help?

Belinda Beckhelling is Curate at Rochester Cathedral, and also coordinates the Medway Winter Night Shelter.

Picture in your mind a man, huddled up near a crumpled duvet, neatly stretched across a sheltered doorway of a closed-down department store, asking quietly 'spare a little change?'. This is a scene that greets many of us as we go about our business in our towns and cities.

Do we, as in the story of the Good Samaritan, walk by and hope that someone else will deal with the situation or that it will just go away; or do we stop and try to help, may be offer some money, some food, a word?

On a personal level I know that at some point I have done each of these things, and sure enough at the time, I can assure you, I would have had what I thought was a really good reason for doing what I did. But then why did I feel like I was avoiding the issue?

Jesus said, 'Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers that you do unto me'. Would my actions have been enough were Jesus to be sitting in that doorway? How did my actions set me apart as a Christian? What witness was I offering?

About six years ago I attended a training course every Monday evening in a cosy warm church hall. Nothing unusual about that. One day we were told, 'really sorry but you will need to move into the church today.' The church was cold, the pews hard and I felt quite annoyed.

What could be so important to displace us?

This was the night that this church was set to host some of the local homeless population – those who would otherwise be huddled up in a shop doorway, desperately trying to keep warm and to

get some sleep while always watching over their shoulders for trouble.

Did you know that if you are homeless, you are 17 times more likely to be attacked? And that on average, homeless people die at just 47 years old?

Homelessness is devastating, dangerous and debilitating. That day was a turning point in my life and since then I have been involved in the running of the Medway Night Shelter, which looks after homeless people in the winter months.

Our aim initially was to prevent them from dying of hypothermia, from the extreme cold. But now we also try to help build them up as people, fellow brothers and sisters. In them we see our own humanity reflected back.

The work is addictive, the relationships deep as I get to know, for each of the guests, the personal harrowing story that had brought them to this place - homeless, destitute and vulnerable.

I recall a young man walking through the door, helpless and anxious. He had suffered a relationship breakdown and now found himself on the street. His first time of being homeless. He felt he could not go to his childhood home, as home was already overcrowded. He was worried about holding down a tentative volunteering opportunity that could lead to a job, if he appeared dirty and unkempt.

Each story made a profound impact, no one solution seemed enough and our own frailties and limitations began to emerge.

These people are no different to you or me. Some as young as 18, no longer welcome in their home; others in low paid jobs, unable to afford even a room in a house; still others who have lost high powered jobs due to addiction or had a relationship breakdown and find themselves homeless overnight. Homelessness is not just an affliction of the poor.

So how can we help?

First and foremost be open and welcoming to new people who walk through your church's doors, listen to their stories, be sensitive to the unspoken 'need' and help them to feel that they can be open, and they won't be judged.

If you wish to help the homeless specifically, as much as possible, join existing groups that are always crying out for more volunteers.

There are some new innovative projects in the diocese too, like Genesis Medway Football. This collaboration between local Christians and sporting organisations hopes to engage with the homeless and vulnerably housed through a weekly opportunity to play football, share a meal, and for those interested, explore faith.

Maybe you could help? To get involved email: sread@ambassadorsfootball.org

And don't forget the visible homeless in the street – that must be a matter for each of us too, a smile, a word, a coffee, a sandwich.

As Christians, we must be constantly on the look out for Christ in the face of others, and not just those who resemble ourselves or whom we like to surround ourselves with.

You can read the Coming Home [report here](#)

The work is addictive, the relationships deep as I get to know, for each of the guests, the personal harrowing story that had brought them to this place - homeless, destitute and vulnerable.

Look ahead to Creationtide

Each year from September 1 to October 4, Christians unite for a worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect the environment. Called Creationtide, as Christians, we share a common role as caretakers of God's creation.

Here are some ideas and resources to help you get involved this year.

1

GET TALKING

Download the Church of England's weekly Creationtide discussion guides. These can be used as part of a group or individually and will help you take a spiritual walk through our responsibility to take care of the environment.

Find them [here](#)

2

LEARN SOMETHING NEW ABOUT NATURE CROSS

Commit to learning something new each week about nature or the challenges facing the climate with the help of the A Rocha blog. A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world. Sign up to their monthly Wild Christian newsletter for the blog and other ideas to inspire you and your family to care for the environment.

More information [here](#)

3

WRITE A LETTER FOR CREATION

Christian Aid is inviting children and young people under 30 to write letters reflecting on what caring for creation means to them and how they want their voice to be heard in the climate justice conversation. All the 'letters' received will form a travelling exhibition, ahead of COP26 (the UN's climate change conference).

Find out more [here](#)

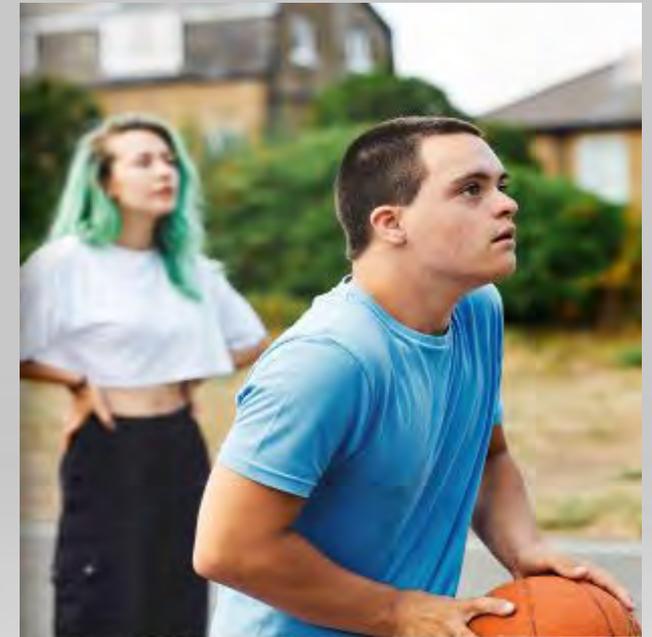
MENTAL HEALTH: FRIENDSHIPS AND THE WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people have a lot going on in their lives and the challenges around mental health for young people have been magnified because of the pandemic.

According to The Children's Society, five children in a classroom of 30 are likely to have a mental health problem. In recent years, their research has also helped them learn more about the important role that friendships can play in a young person's well-being.

To help friendships flourish, they've created a new resource packed full of activities to help children explore more about friendship. Find it [here](#)

There's also a [booklet](#) for teachers and leaders, perfect for a school or church setting.



**Let's think
about friendships:**

Notes for teachers

The
Children's
Society



UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



'PURE GOLD' – SUMMER SCHOOL

At St Benedict's Centre
9-13 AUGUST 2021, Daily sessions between 10am-12pm

Take the opportunity to increase your knowledge of the Bible at St Benedict's first summer school. Explore how it fits together and how it speaks to us today. Led by the Rev Caroline Glass, costs are £25 for the whole course or £10 per day.

To book please email: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE: CREATED TO CREATE

21 AUGUST 2021. 10am-3pm

Join Hayley Usmar for a relaxed session exploring what it means to be created in God's image through the medium of Bible Art Journaling. Experiment with different techniques and mediums and unleash your creativity. Spaces limited to 18 so do book early. Costs are £20. All materials and hot drinks will be provided, but please bring a packed lunch. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult.

To book please email: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



RIDE AND STRIDE

Saturday 21 September

Enjoy a day exploring Kent's churches and countryside, and raise money too, with the Friends of Kent Churches Sponsored Ride & Stride Plan your own route with the assistance of a printed list of churches and chapels that are open, and wherever you go you'll be assured of a warm welcome. Go individually, with friends or family, and walk or cycle your way round. To register and download a sponsorship form visit: www.kentrideandstride.co.uk

A SUMMER OF FAITH, HOPE & LOVE AT ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

August, 2021

This summer Rochester Cathedral invites you to rediscover 1400 years of rich history with a series of events and exhibits called 'Faith, Hope & Love'.

It focuses on the Cathedral's diverse history, architecture, community, and collections.

There's something for everyone to enjoy and find out something new about their local Cathedral.

FOR HISTORY LOVERS

History lovers will be spoiled for choice! Guided tours will run nearly every day in August (pre-booking recommended) and an exhibition called Medieval Perspectives will run throughout the summer. Visitors will also be given the opportunity to find out more about the books in our library with special 'Show and Tell' sessions with the Library Volunteers.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Families can choose from many different activities at the Cathedral, including special guided tours exploring the medieval monastery. Craft activities and brass rubbing will also be available at different times throughout the week. Families will also be able to pick up a family trail book when visiting.

DISCOVER THE CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY

Want to find out more about the community and what happens behind the scenes at the Cathedral? Several volunteer groups will be highlighting the specialist work they do. These include the Bell Ringers, Flower Arrangers, and Embroiders.

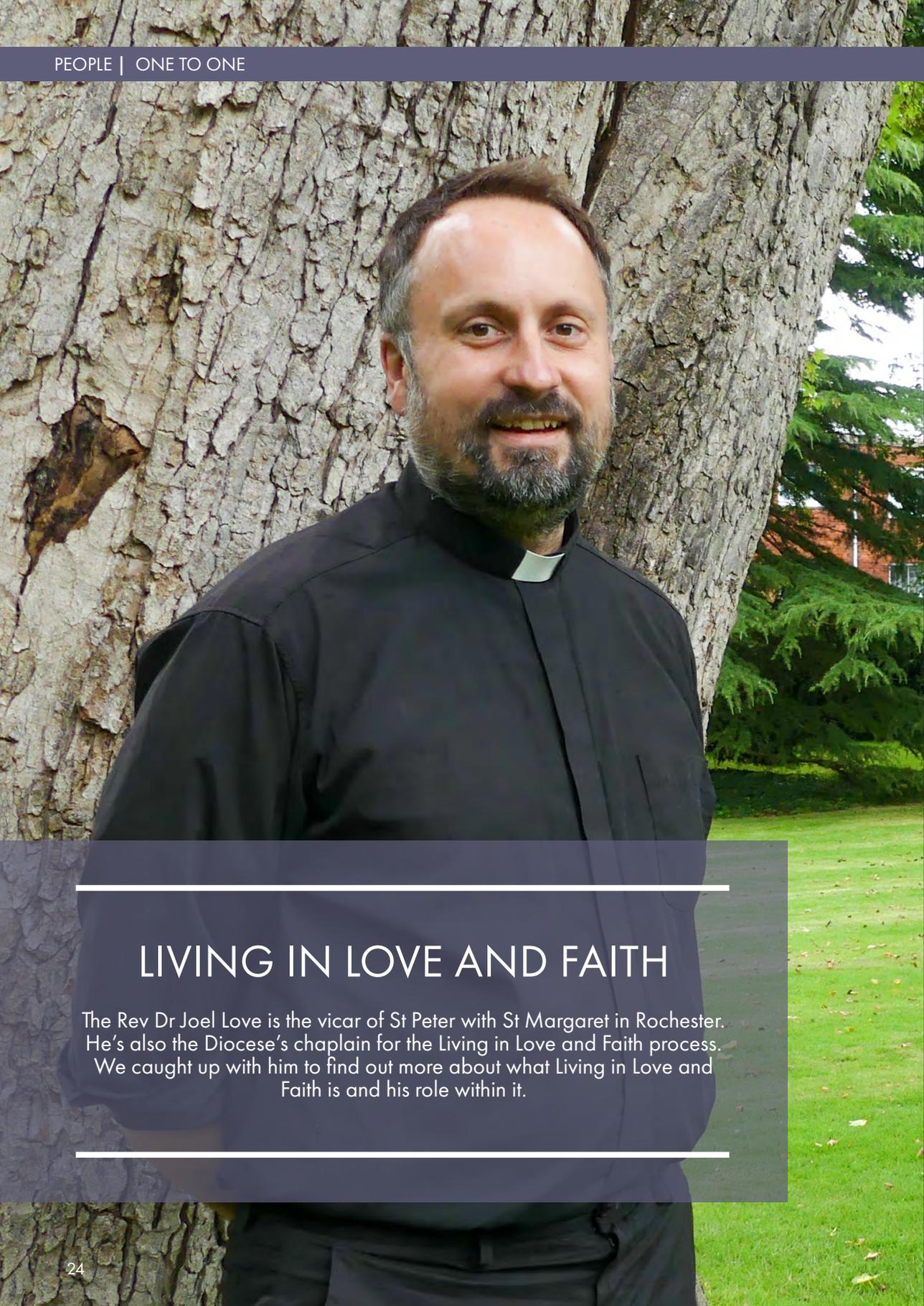
REFLECT

There will also be the opportunity for reflection with prayer stations around the Cathedral all summer. The Kent Corona Quilt will be on display. Created by local artist Amber Rose, the quilt contains the names of 88 people lost to Covid-19 in Kent. A new piece of art will be created, with the help of visitors, using the ribbons tied to the Cathedral railings earlier this year as part of the 'Ribbons for Remembrance' exhibition.

Find out more at: www.rochestercathedral.org

***Admission to the Cathedral is free, there is an admission fee for some of the events.*

Rochester
CATHEDRAL



LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

The Rev Dr Joel Love is the vicar of St Peter with St Margaret in Rochester. He's also the Diocese's chaplain for the Living in Love and Faith process. We caught up with him to find out more about what Living in Love and Faith is and his role within it.

Can you explain what Living in Love and Faith is?

Living in Love and Faith is a process of conversations and listening initiated last year in the Church of England. It's about sexuality, relationships and love, and how we as Anglicans, and as Christians, understand those and are able to support and encourage each other in our own relationships and love lives.

So how do people get involved?

The Church of England has published a set of resources to help individuals, parishes and dioceses to reflect on our shared humanity and sexual identity. There's a book, a series of films and podcasts, a course and a whole online resource hub. Here in this diocese, we've also run a taster day on the materials and a group has been tasked with helping facilitate sessions in parishes, as well as encouraging everyone, no matter what their perspective, to get involved.

Why is this happening now?

Issues around relationships and sexuality are not new within the Church. However, the life and work of the Church, and of many people among us, have been hugely affected by the deep, and sometimes painful, disagreements on these issues over the years. Living in Love and Faith is an appeal by the House of Bishops to the whole Church of England to participate in learning together, using the resources for open, honest and gracious discussion, listening and learning, so we can find a way forward.

How does your role as chaplain fit in?

For some people, this will be the first time that they've ever really had to think about lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual and other kinds of other forms of human sexuality and gender identity. Whereas for other people, these questions might reawaken painful memories from the past, or it might feel difficult or uncomfortable in some way. So, if anyone is having any kind of pastoral need, my role is to respond to them.

In what ways can you help?

Primarily by listening. I can also provide advice and sign posting, or I can refer you to somebody else who might be able to help you.

How have heard people have been responding to the process?

I've found that people have been really surprised by how gentle and supportive the course is of everyone and how it encourages us to really listen to each other. One of the key things about the Living in Love and Faith materials is that they're based on pastoral principles that are designed to help us to listen to each other in our differences.

Can you explain what you mean?

So, the pastoral principles invite us to think about the things that impair relationships or good listening to happen: prejudice, silence, ignorance, fear, hypocrisy and power. Recognising and thinking about these barriers is done so that we can make the whole Living in Love and Faith process as safe and straightforward and accessible as possible for everyone, no matter where they're coming from.

As well as being a parish priest and LLF chaplain, you're also a Spiritual Advisor. What does that involve?

Spiritual direction or accompaniment is also about listening. The people I accompany share thoughts and experiences from their lives and together we listen for what God might be trying to show them. It may be to do with their calling or vocation, or a new challenge or insight.

It doesn't sound like you have much spare time, but what do you like to do when you some time to relax?

I love to read poetry and talk about it with friends. Walking and cycling in nature, or browsing in a bookshop. I also drink a lot of coffee.

What's your go to meal you like to cook?

I don't eat much meat, but I do occasionally like to roast a chicken and then eat it in different things for the whole week.

What are you looking forward to be able to do again once we're freer from Covid-19 restrictions?

Going to the cinema and meeting friends for a drink afterwards. Without having to book.



LEARNING TO LEAN ON GOD

Seun Adigun is one of the Church Wardens at St Mark's Church in Gillingham. He's also an emergency room doctor at the local NHS hospital. He says that despite being raised in a devout Christian home, he's not been immune to questions of doubt.

I had the privilege of being raised in a priestly home. My dad is now a retired priest in the Church of Nigeria which is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, so I have the luxury of being raised by devout parents and I got to know about the love of Christ at a very young age.

But that does not mean I have not been immune to the questions and doubts that every young person faces at some point. In fact, my teenage years were a bit of a rough patch, where I was constantly asking questions. And I mean really asking questions about God, about the reality of faith. Is God real? Does he listen?

I was a young man who believed so much in my own abilities, I really struggled with the concept of relying totally on God and the idea of looking to God for everything. I struggled with it.

Then I had a life-changing experience. It was during the tropical rainy season of 2017 in Nigeria. I found myself trapped in stormy weather. There I was trapped in the flood, sitting on the roof of my car, just coasting away in the turbulent water.

For the first time in my life I felt completely helpless.

For the first time in my life, I understood what it meant to truly rely on God, to truly be out of one's own wisdom, because there was nothing I could do to save myself.

So, I prayed a simple prayer to God, and after about three hours of torrential rain, the rain stopped and I came out of the flood alive. From there onwards, I began to learn how to trust in God.

I began to learn daily to rely on him and not on my wisdom or on my ability. So even today, as I work in the local hospital with the Covid epidemic, that experience in the flood has helped me to be able to cope with the pressure of work. Even as I look after people who are so unwell, and in every day of my life, I rely solely on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe he's able to see me through. I believe he's able to provide for all my needs.

So I encourage every one of you to lean on God and not on your own understanding. He is more than able. He is sufficient. He is almighty. He will do more than you expect or imagine.



A PRAYER AS WE SEEK A NEW BISHOP

Father Eternal

Enlighten the minds of your faithful people
as we discern your will for a new Bishop of Rochester;
Give us ears listening to your promptings,
hearts open to the needs of our communities,
and spirits that seek the flourishing of your whole church.
Guide by your Holy Spirit those involved in this process;
and may we all continue to respond to the call to build your Kingdom
We ask this through him who is our king and our friend,
your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen