

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 7 | Autumn 2020

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COVER STORY: CHURCHES STEP UP DURING COVID-19 (PAGES 8-11)



CORONA
QUILT

LET'S GET
DIGITAL

WHAT
NOW?

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Welcome.

In this fully online edition of Together, we take a moment to reflect upon what has, and still is, an unprecedented season in our shared experienced.

Our stories highlight how churches and individuals have stepped up during lockdown, proving that, while our church buildings may have closed, the Church most definitely did not. (See **In Focus** p8 and **Everyday Faith** p26).

We explore the continuing way Digital forms of Church are enabling people to connect with their faith (p8), and the ongoing outreach to older people taking place – a group so affected by the pandemic (p12).

Where we might be heading next, is the **Big Question** (p18) for Bishop James, and we also meet the new face in a pioneering church-based journalist role, in our **One to One** interview.

If this time has shown us anything as a family of faith, it's how we can't close the door to people who previously may not have been able to access church – see our Ten Top Tips on how to be more inclusive (p14).

Stay safe.

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CORONA QUILT

As lockdown stretched on, and the statistics of those who had died were read out each day, for one member of the Rochester Cathedral community, they were struck by the lack of feeling this displayed for the loss many people were experiencing.

Out of this concern came the idea for the Corona Quilt, as the organiser explains: "I started this project at the beginning of lockdown when I saw a mother on TV wrap her daughter - a front line key worker - in a huge blanket in order to give her a hug. That's when I got the idea of the blanket as a means for support and to acknowledge their need for support in these difficult times."

People were invited to share the names of their loved ones so that they could be embroidered onto the quilt.

The quilt is now full, but organisers are still welcoming requests for names to be included in a Book of Remembrance which will always stay and be displayed alongside the Quilt.

Once the quilt is complete, it will be displayed in Rochester Cathedral for viewing and contemplation.

To get in touch with the organisers visit: www.corona-quilt-kent.com



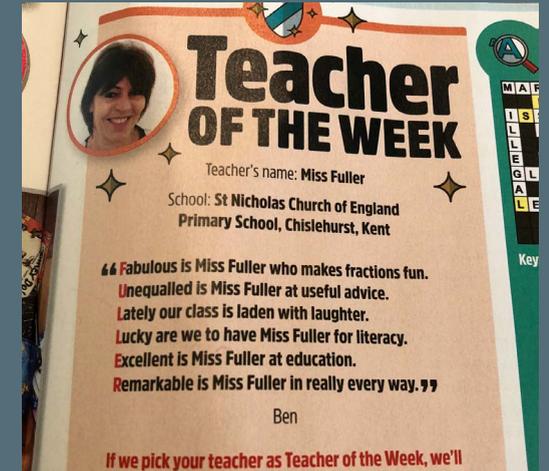
MAKING THE CENTURY

Bob Caudwell, organist and choirmaster at St Nicholas, Linton, celebrated his 100th birthday during lockdown. Very much loved by the community, Bob also assists, when required, at the other churches in the Benefice. Having served in the Army during the Second World War, he is most grateful for his 'incredible good fortune at reaching the age of 100'.



FANCY FUNDRAISING

Members of St George, Weald have been taking up 'The Ten Challenge'. Participants create their own challenge with the number 10 in it, to raise money to support the church's mission partners. Challenges have included parishioner Phil's 10 upcycled object challenge. So far over £3600 has been raised.



TEACHER OF THE WEEK

Congratulations to Miss Fuller from St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Chislehurst, who was nominated by one of her pupils as 'Teacher of The Week', in The Week Junior magazine. They even wrote a lovely poem all about her and how she makes fractions fun!



PILGRIMS ROUTE ON THE MAP

Churches in East and West Peckham are delighted that their new Pilgrimage Trail is now featured on the British Pilgrimage Trust website. The route takes pilgrims on a journey to the two ancient churches of West and East Peckham, and past a 14th-century Manor House which was used as a resting place for pilgrims.



CHURCH MAKES HEADLINES BY HIRING COMMUNITY JOURNALIST

Looking for a way to strengthen community life, St Margaret's Church in Rainham hit the headlines when it advertised for a full-time journalist to join its staff.

Seeking a 'multi-skilled qualified journalist' to produce a mix of community and church-based news, the position is thought to be unique.

Vicar Nathan Ward says he sees the move as revolutionary:

"For thousands of years it is stories which have kept communities together and sadly in recent years local journalism has been under increasing pressures which reduce the amount of truly local content.

"As a church we want to step into this gap and employ a Community Journalist – an appointment

which I believe is revolutionary. It comes as we respond to a community survey that we conducted which revealed that people wanted local news as a way of dealing with the lockdown."

He continued:

"We know that there are some fantastic things going on in Rainham which we need to celebrate and also some real challenges which people are facing and overcoming every day. The lockdown period has taught us a huge amount about our community and for us the importance of staying in touch with people is crucial."

Ava Forbes was appointed in June and has already begun sharing local stories on the church's Facebook page – meet her in our One to One interview on page 24.

NEW LAY MINISTERS LICENSED VIA ZOOM



With church buildings closed for public worship, the annual service to license new lay ministers to the Diocese, was unable to take place in the Cathedral as planned.

However, technology stepped in, and a new cohort of 12 Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) were licensed on 16 May via Zoom!

A Licensed Lay Minister is a distinctive role within the Diocese of Rochester. It is someone who has been called to serve the Church, but not to be ordained.

An LLM might take responsibility for a major area within the worshipping life of a church, such as youth work or music.

Hayley Usmar, one of those licensed online said: "Over the past three years, I have learned that I am enough – troubled and imperfect as I am. God hasn't called me subject to the elimination of my doubts and worries. He hasn't even called me in spite of them.

"God has called me because of who I am - and my hope is that, by sharing my experiences, other people will realise that they too are enough for God, just as they are."

People were invited to pray for all the LLMs, their families, and the parishes they will be serving, as they took this next step on their journey of faith.

Meet the new lay ministers [here](#)

PARISHES GIVE GENEROUSLY TO EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

A fund launched in April by the Diocese to offer support to parishes experiencing financial hardship during the Covid-19 pandemic is delighted to have received generous donations from a number of parishes in support of the fund.

These parishes have contributed an additional £26,000 to the £750,000 package of loans and grants, already made available by the Diocese through the [Diocese of Rochester Covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund](#).

The money will go to support some of the less well-off parishes in the Diocese. In a [video message](#), Nigel Pope, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance said:

"We live in challenging times but despite this, the Diocese, churches and individuals are being generous in times of hardship, responding to God's generosity to us. I am so thankful."

CHURCH BUILDINGS WERE CLOSED, BUT THE CHURCH WAS NOT DURING PANDEMIC



In good hands

Over 4,500 tubes of hand cream were gifted to Medway NHS Foundation Trust thanks to the generosity of churches of the South Gillingham Parish.

All masked up

Beth Lewis, Assistant Curate at St Mark, Bromley, took to her sewing machine to make face coverings for local key workers. Using material from our Overseas Companion Diocese of Kongoa, she spent a couple of hours a day cutting and ironing in the evening, sewing during the day: 'I'll be making liturgical colour ones in the expectation that we'll have to wear them when we return to public worship.'



United in praise

Worshippers at St Mark, Gillingham were brought together virtually to contribute to an original song created by Gospel Plant Leader, Mayowa Oyinloye – also known as MJ Praise. The song, 'United In Praise', was shared on social media and showed singers joining in from the comfort of their own homes.

Find it here: <https://youtu.be/R6gxwrKqzeo>

Outside church

As restrictions eased and the weather turned warmer, many churches took the opportunity to meet, socially distanced, outside.

At Capel United Church, Tudeley, a prayer by the tower session and prayer walk, brought people together.



On your bike

Anna Chaplain (a ministry dedicated to serving older people) Christine Seth-Smith in the benefice of St Peter with St Margaret, Rochester, took to her bike with a consignment of biscuits in her pack to visit those self-isolating during lockdown. "Although 'visiting by bicycle' is a new venture, everyone seems to be delighted with a visit, and also with their biscuits!"



Daily Doodle

Helen Baker, Youth Worker at St Augustine with St Luke, Bromley Common, went live each day to teach people a new 'tangle' - a method of drawing or doodling. "I have found it so rewarding to know that people have been helped to slow down, reflect on the strange situation we are finding ourselves in and achieve something beautiful in the process." Want to try?

Visit her [Facebook group](#)



Meal drops in Sevenoaks

St Mary's Church, Kippington in Sevenoaks, ensured the elderly, isolated and vulnerable in their congregation did not go without a hot meal during the pandemic. During lockdown over 700 meals were delivered by a dedicated team of volunteers. Organiser Wendy Pritchard said, "For those receiving the meals, it's not just about the food, but the fact that people know someone cares about them and is thinking of them."



Stay at home star

Congratulations to Nathan Dickin from South Gillingham Parish, who became Medway Youth's first #StayAtHomeStar - a campaign showcasing the amazing things young people in Medway were doing during the pandemic. Nathan dedicated hours of his time to help his local churches get online so they could share worship and continue serving their communities.



Phone worship

St Mary's Church in West Malling is one of a number of churches offering a 'Dial-a-Sermon' service. Church members can hear a recorded sermon or prayers, by calling a free local phone number set up by the church. Vicar David Green says, "We had a couple of messages on the answerphone from elderly folk to say that it had worked perfectly. They were delighted to be able to hear what others were hearing too."



Doctor's orders

Over four months, a team of nine people from Yalding with Laddingford and Collier Street Churches, delivered over 3000 prescriptions for the local doctor's surgery to those isolating in the area. They also started a foodbank at the same time, which has continued beyond lockdown. Church warden Rachel Curley, says, "Our mission statement is: 'The Church in the Community and the Community in the Church', and I think everything our Church is doing really does cover that mission well."

Beacons of Hope

Motivated by their Christian faith, the volunteers at The Princess Project support mums across Kent. Emma Tanner said the small interventions the charity had been able to make during this time of pandemic, thanks to the generosity of donors and partners like St Peter's Church, Ightham, had given her real hope. Emma shared her story as part of our Beacon of Hope series. Watch it [here](#)



Go gowns go

Volunteers from the Benefice of Seal Chart and Underriver, as well as from the local villages, have been part of a huge community effort to create much needed gowns for the staff at the Tonbridge Assessment Hub to wear whilst on duty. Well over 1,400 gowns have been created and sent further afield to out of hours doctors and nurses, nursing homes and a local Covid-19 testing hub.



Image: Dementia café at Christ Church, Chislehurst

CARING FOR CARE HOMES

A network of chaplains and volunteers is supporting some of the most vulnerable in our society, those living and working in care homes.

News coverage during the pandemic has shown the devastation coronavirus has brought to care homes.

Headlines reveal huge numbers of deaths: residents with dementia cut off from those closest to them feeling bewildered and isolated; family members worrying about people they cannot visit; and, staff stretched to the limit.

Into this neglected frontline – ravaged by years of underfunding and undervaluing of care work - hope is being brought by a pioneering ministry within the Diocese.

Anna Chaplaincy is a ministry dedicated to serving older people, their families and those coping with older life issues such as dementia.

For many this role includes offering chaplaincy in local care homes.

“Before the pandemic they were regular visitors,” explains Julia Burton-Jones, Anna Chaplaincy Lead and Dementia Specialist for the Diocese of Rochester, “leading services and offering one to one spiritual care.

“When lockdown arrived, like friends and family

they were barred from visiting, and there was real concern as to whether it would be possible for them to continue their links and provide spiritual and pastoral care in a different way.”

This concern grew as Anna Chaplains expressed to Julia some of the conditions they were discovering.

“One chaplain told me that the manager of their local care home had described the outbreak as ‘an explosion’ ”.

[Anna Chaplains](#) in Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses, and their churches, quickly sought ways to adapted to locked down care home ministry.

Parishes provided details of how residents could access virtual services via Smart TVs and tablets, with Anna chaplains even delivering pre-recorded services on DVDs.

Aware that some of the older people had no access to the internet, and with dementia sometimes making it difficult to equate what is happening on a screen with a church service, alternatives to digital spiritual support were also found.

“Many hours have been spent on the telephone to individuals in their own homes and in care homes, with relationships deepening and conversations about faith easier in this private context than in groups.”

Julia says that even mini services are being offered via the telephone:

“A five-minute call can include some singing, a short Bible reading, and prayers for the person. Even prayers for the dying have been provided by phone.”

Many cards of encouragement and letters have been delivered, with one Anna Chaplain also arranging for a local scout group to send notes to residents in one of the homes she supports.

Churches and chaplains have arranged for gifts to be delivered for staff – chocolates, biscuits, hand creams and thank you cards.

“We have heard from residents and staff alike, that these small gestures of loving support have meant a great deal to the care home community.”

A series of [five new booklets](#) has also been created to help care home staff provide spiritual support and comfort to residents in the absence of [Anna Chaplains](#), ministers and pastoral visitors.

Julia says that many of the innovations forced by Covid-19 have been positive and will be built upon. Priorities now including listening and learning from the stories of residents, families and staff, to support them as they make sense of a period of great stress and sadness.



Margaret Hollands, Anna Chplain at St Werburgh, Hoo, describes how her work has changed since restrictions were imposed because of coronavirus (courtesy of Church Times):

Now we’re all having to adapt and be creative in how we support people. Although it’s possible to use technology to keep in touch, by holding virtual coffee mornings using Zoom, and holding services using WhatsApp or YouTube, and we’re meeting regularly as a ministry team via WhatsApp, this isn’t always possible for some of those we’d normally visit.

We’ve delivered service leaflets for use on a Sunday, emailing those who can receive them that way, keeping in touch by phone

with people who can’t. We’re keeping in contact with our care homes; collecting prescriptions or getting shopping; and praying for everyone.

Taking funerals now is one of the hardest things, though I really try to make sure I’m giving the same standard of care. It’s also difficult for the families who can’t say goodbye to their loved ones properly; so I’ve put together a [funeral service](#) that I can email them that they can use at home.

When this is over, though, more people may appreciate the needs of our elderly community who live alone and are housebound because they’ll have experienced the feelings of isolation and not being able to see family and friends.

HOW TO BE A MORE INCLUSIVE CHURCH

TOP 10 TIPS

LOCKDOWN HAS SHOWN EVEN MORE ACUTELY HOW VITAL IT IS THAT EVERYONE CAN BE PART OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY. THE REV RACHEL WILSON, BISHOP'S ADVISER ON DISABILITY FOR THE DIOCESE, OFFERS HER TEN TIPS FOR INCLUSION.

1 Show – don't (just) tell - Showing that your church welcomes disabled people by how you behave and how you organise worship is much more effective than just saying "everyone welcome" and expecting disabled people to turn up. You could start by supporting [Ability Sunday](#) on 13 September.

2 Access is everything - Access makes a huge difference and is about more than getting in and out. Can people



with different types of impairments access the service? Think about the needs of visually impaired people, deaf people, those with learning difficulties, and mental health needs, as well as people with mobility needs.

3 Be committed - The right intention is the beginning of everything. A commitment to include disabled people and to seek to carry it through is a great start.

4 Assume that disabled people have gifts, too. Your attempts to include disabled people will be much more successful if you have an enthusiasm to discover what they have to offer.

5 Don't be afraid to say you don't know. You don't have to come up with all the answers on your own. Seek wisdom from people who know, people who have experience of disability. In Rochester Diocese, the [Rev Rachel Wilson](#), Bishop's Adviser on Disability, who is a wheelchair user, is happy to advise.

6 Ask and listen - Ask disabled people what they need and listen to the response. You might be surprised by it; disabled people know what they need!

7 Recognise the potential of online church - The movement of worship online has been transformative for many disabled people; think of your church family as widely as you can.

8 Be interested - Disabled people, like everyone, have stories to tell. Be interested in the stories of disabled people.



9 Don't marginalise - There is great value in online church and in particular services but remember too to make your building open and welcoming.

10 Treat disability as an opportunity, not a problem. If you treat disability as a problem, it will become one. If you treat it as an opportunity to learn, you will find answers and your church will become a welcoming and open place.

SEE OUR RESOURCE PAGE FOR MORE MATERIALS ON ACCESSIBILITY



WHAT NOW?

As we find ourselves at a point where life, for many if not all, is opening up, The Rt Rev James Langstaff, the Bishop of Rochester considers where our pandemic experience may lead us next.

I have lost count of the conversations in recent months in which people have tried to think how we will be living in 6 months' time, a year, five years.

Through these months, people have faced illness, death and grief; others have been living in isolation, and some have seen their livelihoods fall away. The issues around care homes are widely known as also around school exams.

At the same time, many communities have come together in new ways, neighbours have been cared for, new relationships established and new forms of communication discovered. Paradoxically, with this growth in community life, we have also seen growing polarisation of opinions and hardening of certain divisions.

So, how will we be living in 6 months' time, a year, five years?

An honest answer is that we don't know; but that doesn't mean that there is nothing we can say. There are things from this time which we should seek to keep.

For some, new patterns of working have been positive and better balanced and there will be a desire to maintain some of that. More time spent with families and close neighbours may not always have been easy, but a greater focus on our close relationships is a good thing.

Initiatives for care and neighbourliness in communities will hopefully have a lasting effect. And even some of the more challenging aspects may come to have good effects in the longer term.

We have become more aware of those who are vulnerable, those who are left out; and of some of the serious divisions in society and wider world. Continuing to address those issues will be a positive thing.

Within the life of the church, we have had a new focus around chaplaincy with care homes and with people who live with dementia. We are also resolved to address with determination the issues of race and justice which have come to the fore.

We are more conscious of the need for sustainable ways of living within our world. And we have had

to move rapidly into a world where worship and gathering have been online rather than in person.

Whatever we may wish for, it is clear that what we thought of as 'normal' will not return fully – certainly not yet. So how will we mark Remembrance Sunday if large numbers cannot gather in churches or at war memorials? How will we celebrate Christmas if corporate singing at carol services is still not possible, and if crowds of parents and grandparents cannot cram into the school hall to watch the nativity play or Christmas show?

What will working life look like if, for example, the 18.40 train from Victoria to Kent (usually packed out in the past) must still have restricted numbers?

My experience and my Christian faith tell me that, while things may be different, we will find ways forward for our personal and shared living. Our forebears in different settings have faced equivalent disruptions to established patterns and discovered that, whatever those disruptions, 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13.8).

However great our uncertainty about how life will be, that is one thing of which we can be absolutely certain. And later in the chapter, the writer prays that God will make us complete in everything good so that we may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight.

And I say 'Amen' to that.

“My experience and my Christian faith tell me that, while things may be different, we will find ways forward for our personal and shared living.”



LET'S GET DIGITAL – CONNECTING WITH CHURCH ONLINE

As restrictions ease, church teams face the new challenge of a mixed form of church - balancing communities still meeting online, while some worship in buildings returns.

While many things still remain uncertain, it is clear that there are now more ways for people to connect – and reconnect – with their local, or even not-so-local, church.

SERVICES BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Like many, St George's Church, Weald Sevenoaks, went online for the first-time during lockdown. It started with a thought for the day, just a few minutes on camera, to give hope and encouragement to people.

Vicar, the Rev Mandy Carr, says people really liked it and wanted more.

"We live in a rural area where connectivity isn't great, so we made a decision to do a pre-recorded Sunday service."

"It gave us the flexibility to put more items in and we've been able to share stories among ourselves in a way that perhaps we might not have been doing in the Sunday service in our building.

"It's given our creativity and connectivity a real boost - it's very exciting."

St Mark's Church in Gillingham has gone online with daily reflections from people across their leadership team, as well as worship via Zoom – and now live from their building.

Operations Manager, Rob Byrne, says that physical barriers no longer get in the way of people joining in.

"When our church buildings closed, we were unable to use our geographical proximity to welcome others into our parish. But by being online and using Facebook, our location doesn't need to hold us back any longer. Anyone, wherever they are in the world that wants to, can see that we have a presence and can see that we are sharing the Gospel."

SHARING JESUS WITH PEOPLE WHEREVER THEY ARE

The Rev Douglas Wren, Rector of Speldhurst with Groombridge and Ashurst would agree. He says they have been keen not just to have people 'view' worship, but really be part of it.

"What we try to do online is to foster worship for where they are: in their kitchens, in their camper vans, in their gardens, wherever they are.

"There are a number of things that we do to encourage this. At the beginning of our online worship we light a candle and invite other people to light candles. We have participatory prayers using our hands, or sometimes we have the Jesus prayer, which is a breathing prayer.

"What we are trying to do in much more of a magazine format is say, Jesus is where you are, engage with him there."

At St Katharine's Knockholt with St Margaret's Halstead, The Rev Tim Edwards, says they have found that people have really responded to online opportunities to explore faith too:

"We know of one person who has come to faith through watching Alpha online (he is now looking to get baptised) and a group of men through our Christianity Explored, which we did this time on Zoom. People have found that doing the sessions online has made it much easier for them to feel able to explore big issues."



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Just as in the physical world, churches are not just offering worship and services online, but building community.

At Christ Church in Erith, project worker Jacki Clement says they soon discovered that they could still reach out to the community.

"Our Kids Sunday Club had about 20 children and we used to meet most weeks. So I started putting that online and we got such good feedback that we have now put our Toddler



We will definitely continue with online worship

Once services can return to 'normal' we intend to maintain online content too. Just need to decide what and how!

Worship online. The children complete an activity and share pictures of their finished product with me.

"We were also in the process of setting up a memory support cafe, when obviously it had to stop. So, after a little while, we ran that on Zoom. Quite a lot of the older people can manage quite well on Zoom and anyone who can't quite often has carers or someone who can help."

While over at St John's Church Beckenham, they went on a virtual journey to build a sense of shared endeavour. They clocked up the miles they did during their daily exercise to see how far it would take them in the world over a seven-day period.

They were last seen heading to Spilt in Croatia.

STAYING DIGITAL

Even with public worship in buildings now possible, many churches will not be stopping offering online content any time soon.

As Rev Munna Mitra from the Parish of South Gillingham explains:

"We've come to realise that we will have to continue all our online services into the future, indefinitely, not just for the sake of our own church members too anxious about returning to church, but also for the sake of all the non-church people who have accessed our online material, which is really gratifying."

CHURCH HOLIDAY CLUBS GO VIRTUAL

This year, with many holiday clubs unable to meet in person, churches went online. In Welling, their annual family summer festival - Spark in the Park - transformed into Spark@Home!

It went live each morning giving access to crafts, songs, videos and stories. A treasure map took people to wonderful treasure sites (prayer stations) located all over the community to interact with safely.

Linzi Golding, Youth Worker at St John's, Welling said it went very well:

"Our theme this year was 'Mission: Deep Sea' and Spark Kids invited children on daily missions as S.E.A agents to explore water-related Bible stories.

"We were able to leave the material up for the entire summer to bless more people. We're excited for next year's possibilities."

At St. Peter's, Pembury, they provided activity packs every week in August on the theme of 'What does God do for Us?'. The pack included a booklet with puzzles, questions, a craft activity, a Bible story, a

prayer and links to relevant videos and songs.

Each week the activity pack was followed up with a fun Zoom session on Sunday afternoon.



Restrictions caused by the pandemic, mean that many people are still unable to pay their respects to someone who has died or remember a loved one, in the way they would usually want. Although it will never replace the comfort of being there personally, there are some things you can do at home.

If you were unable to see a person before they died it is particularly hard, and the best thing to do is to talk to someone about your feelings. The charity www.ataloss.org runs a 'Griefchat' service online and the charity [Cruse Bereavement Care](http://www.cruisebereavementcare.org) offers a wide range of support.



When you can't attend a funeral it is so difficult. This page from the [Church of England](http://www.churchofengland.org) suggests a few ways in which you can still connect with family and friends, and remember from home. It includes a reflection sheet [you can download](#) to use where you are.

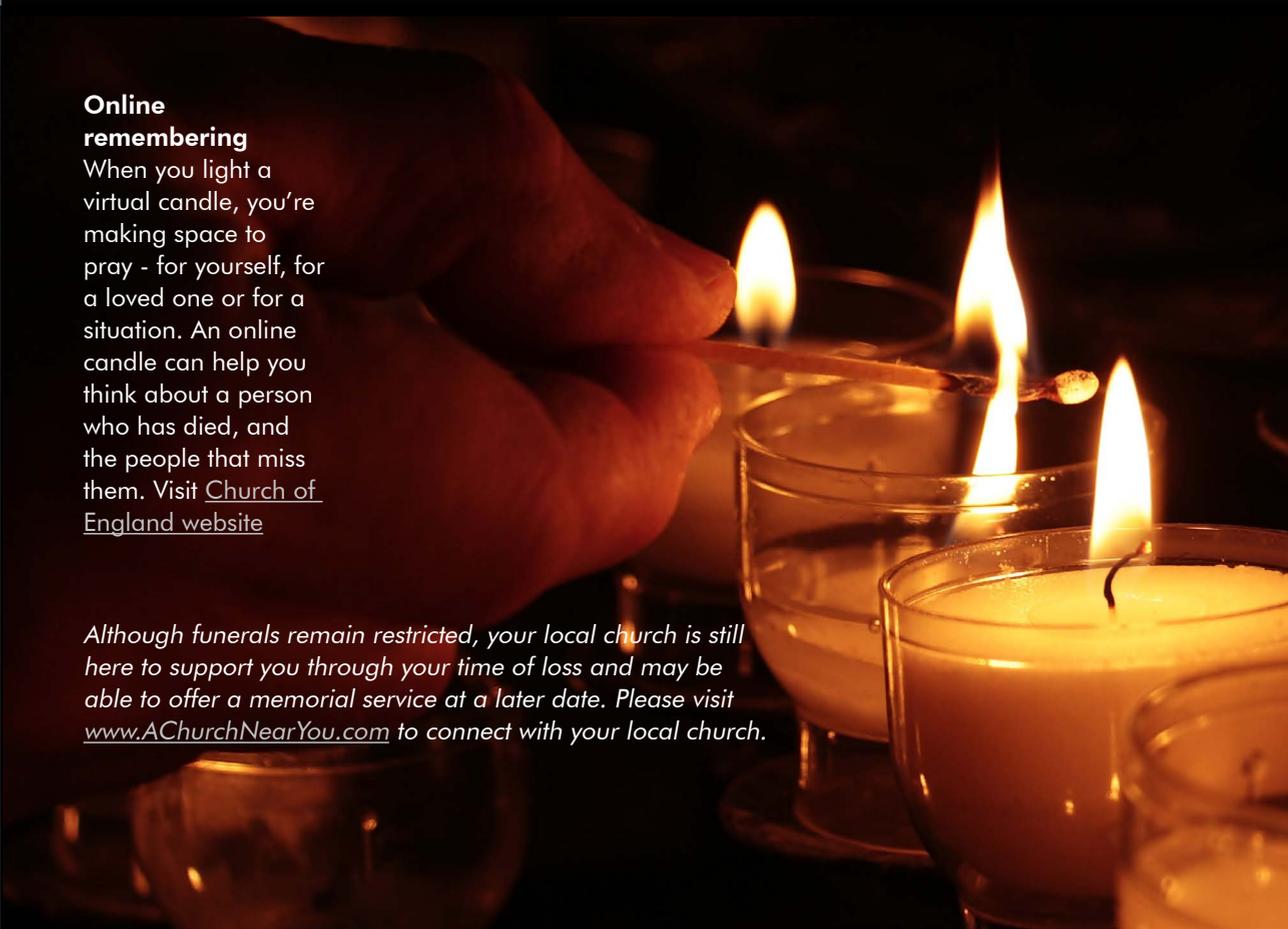


Online

remembering

When you light a virtual candle, you're making space to pray - for yourself, for a loved one or for a situation. An online candle can help you think about a person who has died, and the people that miss them. Visit [Church of England website](http://www.ChurchofEngland.org)

Although funerals remain restricted, your local church is still here to support you through your time of loss and may be able to offer a memorial service at a later date. Please visit www.AChurchNearYou.com to connect with your local church.



TOP EVENTS NOT TO BE MISSED



WHAT NOW? THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN TACKLING RACIAL INJUSTICE.
 16 September / 2pm to 4pm

St Margaret's Church in Rainham hosts this live streamed conference, chaired by Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, and with speakers Amelia Gentlemen and Professor Anthony Reddie. No need to register just tune in via the St Margaret Rainham [Facebook page](#).



RE-IMAGINING MINISTRY WITH OLDER PEOPLE
 23 September 2020 / 5pm-6:30pm

A joint event with Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses, exploring the spiritual challenges and opportunities that come with growing older. Learn about the initiatives we're using to develop our ministry to older people. To register [click here](#)



HOME FOR GOOD WITH ROCHESTER DIOCESE WEBINAR
 17 September 2020 / 7:30pm-9:00pm

With around 1600 children in care in Kent, and approximately 50 children waiting for an adoptive family across Kent and Medway, this online event will share stories of how people are already stepping up to care for these children and inspire you to consider the part that you could play to support vulnerable children. [Book here](#)



SEEING WHAT GOD IS DOING AND JOINING IN
 28 September 2020 / 2pm-3:30pm

A webinar exploring ministry on social housing estates in the Diocese. Andy Delmege, formerly Executive Director of the National Estate Churches Network, will reflect on the current context of estates ministry. [Book here](#)

reimagining

29th September to 1st October



REIMAGINING
 29 September to 1 October / 9.30am-1pm

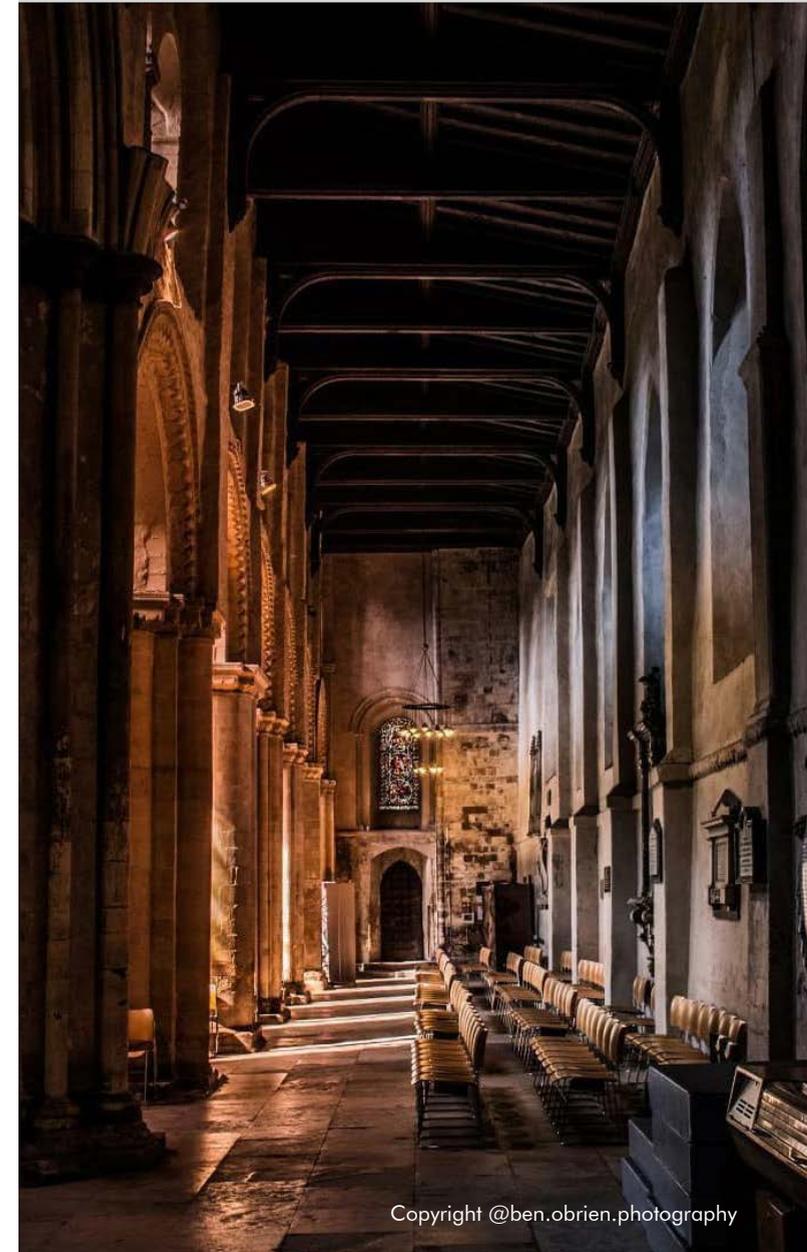
Tickets (£10) For details and booking [click here](#)

A conference organised by the Church of England Evangelism & Discipleship Team. Join the conversation as, together, we reimagine mission, evangelism, discipleship, remembering, and even Christmas, for this year. Speakers include the Most Reverend Justin Welby.



SIGHT LOSS FRIENDLY TASTER SESSION
 Tuesday 29 September 2pm (other dates through October available)

Join a [Sight Loss Friendly Church Taster session](#) to learn more about sight loss and how you and your church can help people with sight loss feel more involved in church life. To register interest, participants should email slfc@torchtrust.org



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ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL IS NOW OPEN

Rochester Cathedral is now offering public worship and is open for private prayer.

They are also planning to welcoming some exhibitions in the new year, including the stunning [Gaia - my earth](#) installation and The Leaves of Tree exhibition.

Visit their website for full details: www.rochestercathedral.org



AVA FORBES

We turned the tables on the new Community Journalist at St Margaret's Church, Rainham, Ava Forbes, by asking her a few questions about herself and to find out her hopes for this unique role.

So where are you from Ava?

I was born in Scotland, just outside of Glasgow and that's where I lived until I was five. My family and I then moved to Leicestershire and I grew up in Market Harborough. My family is made up of my mum and dad, my younger brother, our beautiful ginger cat Pharaoh, and me.

How did you first get interested in journalism?

My dad has always been very political and that had a big influence on me growing up. From there I sort of fell in love with the news and started wanting to be a journalist. I was really quite young when I decided I wanted to be a journalist, like 12 or 13. I'm 23 now so I really see it as a decade long ambition that I've finally achieved which feels wonderful.

What's been the story you have been most proud of so far?

The story that I'm most proud of is the documentary I made for my MA about my little brother. He was in the football academy system from the age of 6-16 until he developed a stress fracture in his spine. We are already very close as a family but it brought us much closer and although it isn't published (yet), I think it's had the most impact out of anything I've done.

Who has inspired you growing up?

It's difficult to answer this question without sounding really cheesy but I'm going to go ahead. I am fascinated by women in the workplace, particularly mothers. In a time where women can be seen at the highest levels in almost every sector of work, it's easy to forget that there is still a lot of work to be done.

What are you listening to at the moment?

I am a self-confessed music snob and I really love podcasts and audiobooks. Lately, I've been listening to a lot of Laura Marling's latest album, 'Song For Our Daughter' and was put onto a Radio 4 programme called 'The Patch' which uses a postcode generator to prompt a local story which I find really motivates me and my own work.

Have you ever been given a particularly good piece of advice?

A piece of advice that I keep coming back to since starting at St. Margaret's and that I received when I was just starting out is, "everyone has a story". In my experience, most people don't realise that they are incredibly interesting not just to me but to everyone.

How do you like to relax or let off steam?

Food. I've always loved cooking and it helps ground me. There is nothing I love more than cooking a huge meal for a crowd and getting to sit down and enjoy it with them. My partner is French and this time next year she will have moved down to Kent to join me here so I'm using the time apart to master my French cooking.

How do you think your friends would describe you?

I'm very loyal and have always been the "mum" friend. I'm always making sure my friends are well fed and watered and not doing anything too irresponsible.

What are you looking forward to most in your new role?

During lockdown, Rainham has really come together through its Facebook community page. There is such a sense of community and generosity between the people that I really don't want to go away when things can go back to 'normal'. I think that Rainham has been so desperate to express itself and be heard. There is so much going on and so many projects in the woodwork. It's a really exciting patch to cover.

Why do you think community journalism is so important at this time?

I think that it's really important that people see themselves reflected in the news and that is where I think community journalism comes into its own. Taking a huge story and bringing it down to a really small scale allows the diversity of an area to really shine through and that's what makes good stories and makes a stronger and more engaged community.

Read a full version of Ava's One to One interview [here](#)



Alice Greywood is a member of St Andrew, Bromley. She retired last year as a ward sister but returned to the front line as the virus took hold. She shares how her faith inspired her career and response to the pandemic.

After giving birth to my twins, it was there and then I decided to be a nurse. The nurses I had were so caring and compassionate: they made me feel that nothing I needed or asked for was too much trouble for them.

I was inspired to take up nursing to give the same care or even better than the care I received.

Once this terrible virus came, I knew I just had to return and play my part in caring for all God's people.

I have always known that there is someone up there looking out for me and I truly believe that Jesus wants us to call unto him when we are in

need and he will respond. It might take a long time but he eventually delivers, and it's worth waiting for.

I now tend to work nights and sleep in the daytime, but it's just an occupational hazard – and I will keep working for as long as I am needed.

I have always loved dressing up on Sundays to go to church, just to say thanks to him for all the wonderful things he has done in my life and my children's lives both seen and unseen.

So now I am looking forward to the church being open again soon and to seeing everyone again.

Until then we keep up the good work of the Lord.

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A masking Prayer

@RevCBeckett

*Lord as I put on my mask, let it be a filter
For my words to pass through as well as my breathing.
Let through only those words which are helpful breathings of love
and stop those things in my speech that will be harmful to others.
Protect me also, O Lord, from the harmful things others may say to me.
Help me to realise that I may be a carrier of bitterness,
thoughtlessness, judgement and prejudice without realising,
and that some people are more word-vulnerable than others.
Give me grace to love those who cannot or will not filter to protect others
and special grace to them, because they go through the world unprotected.
Help me to be prepared to adapt and be brave and transparent
so that all may have chance to hear.
Lord, be a mask to my mouth
and pin my ears forward for listening.
Amen.*

