

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 24 | February - April 2025

CHANGE | SERVE | GROW

COVER STORY: HIDDEN TREASURES AT ST MARY, BROMLEY PAGE 16



A TIME FOR
SPIRITUAL
RENEWAL?

LENT AND
EASTER LOOK
AHEAD

A PLAN TO
GROW GOD'S
KINGDOM

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The Lent and Easter themes of new life and fresh beginnings run throughout this edition of Together.

In **Focus On**, find out about the recently approved and refreshed diocesan vision, which sets us all within the diocesan family on a journey to seek first the Kingdom of God in all that we do (pg 8).

Meanwhile on pg 16, there is a piece on the new life that has been breathed into a set of murals left damaged by water in a Bromley church, plus, we celebrate the new connections being made in two churches in Erith as they live out their mission to 'love their community' (pg 12).

In **Everyday Faith** (pg 26) we discover the faith journey of Ellen, an ambulance chaplain in Medway.

Finally, in the **centre-spread**, you'll find details of the national church's Lent campaign, Living Hope, with lots of ways for you to take part.

While in the **Big Issue** (pg 18), Bishop Jonathan reflects on whether the turmoil facing the Church of England, following revelations of numerous safeguarding failures, can become a moment of spiritual renewal.

I hope you enjoy reading and sharing this edition with others. Go well.

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OVERSEAS FRIENDSHIPS CELEBRATED

Two bishops from our overseas link diocese of Tanzania enjoyed hospitality and friendship as part of their visit to the Diocese at the end of last year.

From services to coffee mornings, Bishop Given, the Bishop of Kondo, and Bishop Luzineth, the Bishop of Mpwapwa, attended several of the churches that have links with their parishes in Tanzania. While here,

they updated churches on some of the projects and issues facing their communities back home.

The Rev Christine Allen, Overseas Link Coordinator said: "It has been a very uplifting time for all of us. These links are a true blessing and bring so much shared richness and fulfilment to all those involved."

Photo: Bishop Luzineth with the Rev Christine Allen



WARM SPACE

Ahead of Warm Welcome Week, the Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr, Vicar of St Nicholas Church, Strood, spoke to BBC Radio Kent about the church's Warm Space, which takes place each Monday. Visitors can enjoy free wifi, hot drinks, food, and company, all at no cost to them. 'We're just looking for ways to support people and we're now considering running the space beyond March' says Sue.



BIG BIRD COUNT

Members of 'Young Saints' got stuck in – quite literally - at All Saints, Orpington, as they prepared to take part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch. To encourage more birds, the young people made sticky bird cakes using fat, nuts, seeds, raisins and cheese and hung the feeders in the churchyard. Happy twitching!



CHAPLAIN IN THE HOUSE

The residents of The Bridge Care Home, Dartford, were delighted to receive a visit from the Rev Canon Mandy Brown, part of the East Dartford Benefice. Mandy is one of 60 Anna Chaplains in Kent - a dedicated ministry in this Diocese for older people to ensure their spiritual needs are met. Care home staff say Mandy's visits bring comfort to residents, especially for those who find it difficult to now attend church services outside of the home.



FASHION SHOW UNLOCKS POTENTIAL

The catwalk came to St James' Church, Tunbridge Wells, as they hosted a fashion show and pre-loved clothing sale in aid of Imago Dei. This Christian organisation equips women in prison to unlock their God-given potential and identity, and to help them live their preferred futures.



DIOCESAN SYNOD SENDS STRONG MESSAGE ON SAFEGUARDING

At its most recent meeting, Diocesan Synod, the decision-making body for the Diocese, backed a motion of ‘no confidence’ in the Archbishops’ Council’s oversight of safeguarding.

The Archbishops’ Council provides leadership and holds executive responsibility for the national institutions of the Church of England.

The late-tabled motion followed the publication of the Makin Review into the abuse of John Smyth, and led to the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

Brought by Diocesan Synod member, Rev Nathan Ward, Vicar of St Margaret’s Rainham, the motion urged ‘the necessary reforms to be taken to restore trust, safeguard the vulnerable, and uphold the Church’s moral and legal responsibilities’.

Following the passing of the motion, the trustees of the Archbishops’ Council published a letter of response, in which they acknowledged the profound hurt caused to survivors of abuse by the actions of John Smyth and the Church’s failings in its response.

They also emphasised their commitment to addressing the issues raised by the motion and invited further dialogue with Rochester’s Synod to better understand its concerns.

Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Bishop of Rochester, and the Lay and Clergy Chairs of Diocesan Synod each responded to the Archbishops’ Council letter to further explain the reasons for the motion, the scope and range of debate that had taken place, and welcoming the Council’s invitation for further dialogue.

To read about this in full SCAN the code



FIND SUPPORT

If you or anyone you are in contact with has been affected by the publication of the Makin Review or anything related to church-context abuse, and wants to talk to someone independently, please call the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056 or visit www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Rochester Diocesan Safeguarding Team www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding/ or the National Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@churchofengland.org.

Go to our Big Issue to read Bishop Jonathan’s reflection on the current safeguarding crisis facing the Church of England.

NEW ARCHDEACONS ANNOUNCED

Bishop Jonathan is delighted to have announced the appointment of two new archdeacons to the Diocese.

They are the Rev Prebendary Sandra McCalla to be the next Archdeacon of Rochester, and the the Rev Nick Cornell to be the next Archdeacon of Tonbridge.

Sandra brings to her role a wealth of legal expertise as a former barrister, as well as substantial parish experience in the Diocese of London. As Chaplain to the Bishop of London, she has had first-hand knowledge of the complexities of running a large and diverse diocese.

Her involvement in setting up and developing the Wilfred Wood leadership programme for Global Majority Heritage clergy has been hugely significant, and she will be well-placed to help fulfil the Diocese’s commitment to promoting diversity in ministry and leadership locally and nationally.

Nick is no stranger to the Archdeaconry of Tonbridge, having served as Incumbent in Southborough and more recently also as Associate Archdeacon of Tonbridge.

While ministering in the Diocese of Chichester, he had previously served as Acting Archdeacon. Nick has a strong financial background, having worked for a major accountancy firm.

He brings a heart for mission and evangelism, as well as being deeply committed to supporting the ministry of clergy and lay people in the parishes of the Diocese. His knowledge of the Diocese and passion for the gospel will be of great assistance with the development and implementation of the diocesan vision and strategy.

Both Sandra and Nick are due to be officially welcomed into their roles in February.





A SHARED VISION TO CHANGE, SERVE AND GROW

When Bishop Jonathan came to the Diocese in 2022, he arrived with the words change, serve, grow – three words he felt had been placed on his heart as Diocesan Bishop.

Much work has taken place since then to understand what these three themes mean for the life and work of the diocesan family, what its priorities should be, and what and where resources need to be allocated to deliver on them.

This work has included:

- understanding the challenges facing the Diocese
- learning from what is going well
- listening to church leaders and to church teams
- listening to the call of the Holy Spirit

What has been heard and understood is that *growth is happening and can happen, decline is not inevitable, and there is much to be hopeful about.*

Out of this listening and learning, an exciting and integrated diocesan-wide vision has been developed which understands that:

Seeking first the Kingdom of God, we are called together by God to change, serve and grow with compassion, courage, and creativity.

At the heart of the vision and strategy is a commitment to creating and supporting a **flourishing and well-resourced parish structure to grow God's Kingdom** across north and west Kent, Medway, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Three objectives have been identified to help guide and focus work over the coming years.



They are to grow missional churches, with missional leaders and missional disciples, which are:

- Growing a safe and healthy culture for all
- Growing younger and more diverse
- Growing spiritually and numerically
- Impacting their communities
- Planting and growing new missional churches
- Releasing financial resources for mission

As the Diocesan Secretary, Matthew Girt, explains: "These three objectives represent a 'virtuous circle' in which missional churches encourage and develop missional leaders and disciples, missional leaders inspire and lead their missional churches and disciples, and missional disciples grow into missional leaders and churches.

"Each connects with and nurtures the other."



Making it happen

Four workstreams have been identified to help focus work to grow God's Kingdom.

"All are seen through the lens of growing safe and healthy cultures," says Bishop Jonathan. "This is because, if we are truly seeking God's Kingdom, then we must reflect its values of righteousness, peace, wholeness, and fullness of life for all."

Matthew Girt agrees, and says it is an exciting moment for the Diocese because the plan puts forward something quite different from the general narrative found in the Church of England.

"This is an ambitious, hope-filled, and refreshed

Called Together vision, which seeks to support what is happening at the grassroots in parishes.

"It's not a 'points of light' plan where only a few benefit. Rather, it is an integrated vision for operational and cultural change across a broad range of areas and work to respond to the Spirit's call for our Diocese.

He adds, "It is counter cultural to the general Church of England narrative of 'how much do we have, so what can we do?'. Rather this plan says, 'What are we being called to? Let's make it happen!'"

Next steps

The vision can't be realised all at once, and so it will be phased over several years.

Financial support will also be needed from elsewhere to see it carried out in full, which includes a substantial bid to the Church Commissioners in February 2025.

However, the diocesan budget for 2025 has been planned to support as much of the work as possible.

Bishop Jonathan has now begun a series of deanery synod visits to raise awareness of the vision.

"What is clear", he says, "is that every person has a part to play in the fulfilment of the vision and to bring about God's Kingdom – whether they are lay or ordained.

"Being committed to changing, serving and growing is all about enabling our local churches to take their full and rightful place at the heart of their communities: serving God and serving the people, loving God and showing his love in and to our communities.

"Like those post-war pilgrims of the Diocese of Rochester who have gone before us, we believe this is our generational opportunity to work together to respond to the Holy Spirit's call for this Diocese.

"As they were pilgrims on a journey building the Kingdom, so are we, and I would encourage everyone to join us."



BISHOP JONATHAN TALKING ABOUT DIOCESAN VISION AND STRATEGY AT ORPINGTON DEANERY SYNOD



VOLUNTEERS FROM CHRIST CHURCH, ERITH WITH THE REV ANTHEA HARRIS-FAULKNER

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN ERITH

"I want our churches to be places where everyone feels they belong, no matter their background or stage of life," says the Rev Anthea Harris-Faulkner, Vicar of the churches of Christ Church and St John the Baptist in Erith.

"Our mission is about connection - both with each other and with the love of God."

She's speaking as part of a new film series that has been launched to share stories of transformation, faith, and community impact by the churches and people of faith across the Diocese of Rochester.

Called 'Growing the Kingdom', each month a new story will bring to life the shared mission underway to grow God's Kingdom across Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Through personal testimonies, community initiatives, and inspiring acts of faith and kindness, the films highlight how the people, parishes, and places of the Diocese are making a tangible difference - spiritually and socially - within their communities.

The Ven Allie Kerr, Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley, says there is so much good work going on day in and day out within parishes across the Diocese that it is good to have a way to share this good news:

"From churches rallying to support families or individuals in need, or paying care and attention to how events are run in order to keep people safe, to nurturing people at significant points in their life or journeys of faith, I think these films are so important in showing the reality of the impact churches are having."

Allie continues, "These stories also show how God is at work, transforming lives and empowering churches to be inspirations of hope and love in their communities, often in the simple and unnoticed ways - and I think we need this hope now more than ever."

Back in Erith, a new afterschool bible-study club, a games night, and regular lunch club, are just some of those simple but intentional pieces of outreach underway to grow fruitful encounters with the church and with God across the community.

"There are two churches," says Anthea, "but with one purpose and that purpose is to share the gospel message and to share the love of God. The way we try to show the love of God with our community is to be part of that community. We're simply doing what we're called to do."

At Christ Church this is apparent in the joy of children that fills the hall every Tuesday morning during the Toddler Church, as parents and little ones, aged 0 to 5, gather for playtime, storytelling, and community.

"It's such a lovely way to support families," says Funmi, the church's Children's and Families Worker. "We get to see relationships flourish - not just among the children but also between the caregivers."

"People chat, different families meet here, they make connections even with people from very different backgrounds. And we've seen it grow steadily, and it's been really amazing."

She continues, "The team that I work with are so positive, they're so helpful, it's really helped people to stay. People feel and know that we genuinely love them and so they tell the next person, they tell their neighbours, 'Come on, come along with me'. The atmosphere is amazing."

Meanwhile, at St John's Church, older residents are finding friendship and joy through the Silver Birch

Club, which serves both Erith and Bexley communities.

Run in partnership with care professionals, Home Instead, St John's Church offers a meal for attendees, while Home Instead brings in entertainment, offering a lively social experience that brings joy to members and fosters friendship

"Our older community members deserve to feel valued," Anthea says. "The Silver Birch Club creates a sense of belonging and gives people something to look forward to. It's been incredible to see the impact it's had."

She adds that, by hosting regular meetups, the church is aiming to create opportunities for community members to connect beyond traditional worship settings.

"When we take the time to care for each other, we reflect God's love in the most tangible way," she says. "I'm so proud of how our congregations are stepping up to make a difference. Together, we're creating something truly beautiful for this community."

To find out more about the Growing the Kingdom series SCAN the code:



LIVING HOPE

In a world where it can sometimes feel hard to be optimistic, God offers us something deeper – hope.

This Lent, the Church of England's theme is Living Hope. In Lent we journey with Jesus on the difficult and thorny road that leads all the way to the cross on Good Friday – and beyond to the transformation of Easter Day.

Through a set of readings, reflections and simple suggested activities, Living Hope invites us to explore how we can have hope in times of frustration or uncertainty; experience the hope found in joining with others; and the courage to face reality and pursue a hopeful future.

God invites us to bring to him our own journey through everyday life. In the disappointment of daily setbacks and the pain of deeper hurts, we discover that God is present with us. And God promises a future where all things are healed and made new.

Here are five ways you can engage with Living Hope:

1

Download the Everyday Faith app

Read and listen to daily Lent reflections from 5 March through the Everyday Faith app, the daily devotional app from the Church of England. Available through your usual app store.

2

Order a printed booklet

With versions available for adults and children, the booklet explores the theme of hope from a different angle each week, with daily readings, reflections and activities. Available through www.chpublishing.co.uk

3

Get creative

Start your Lent journey by making or decorating a cross to focus on during Lent. The cross is a symbol of hope, reminding us that Jesus died and rose again to bring us new life.

4

Join with others

Explore the Living Hope materials with a friend, minister or family member. You would also be welcome at a church near you this Lent and Easter – visit www.achurchnearyou.com.

Don't worry if you can't make it in person, as some churches offer livestreams of services, or you can join the national Church's weekly online service.

Visit www.churchofengland.org and search 'weekly online services'.

5

Plant some to seeds grow during Lent

As we try to grow in hope this Lent, can you plant some flowers and watch them (hopefully) growing, too?

Find out more about Living Hope SCAN the code:





HIDDEN TREASURES RESTORED

Murals at St Mary's Church, Bromley have been restored to their original glory, after they were left severely damaged by water seeping into the wall from faulty guttering.

The wall and ceiling paintings date from the 1870s and 1880s and depict various themes, including Old Testament scenes, images of prophets and saints, to Christ's crucifixion.

The restoration work, which took around three months, was made possible thanks to a four-year fundraising campaign, which included generous donations from the congregation, as well as grants from three organisations: the Church Building Council, the Friends

of Kent Churches, and the Society of Antiquaries.

John Beale, PCC Member and Assistant Church Warden says, "We are absolutely delighted with the final result and are so grateful to everyone who has made this possible.

"Many people in the wider community are unaware of the hidden treasure within the church, however, with the murals restored, we plan to use them as a source of outreach with the community, through tours and other events."

A thanksgiving service will take place on 2 March with a display about the project and activities after the service.



A TIME OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL?

The Church of England continues to be rocked by revelations of the failure of those in leadership to respond to abuse and protect people from harm. As we prepare to journey through Lent towards the hope of Jesus' resurrection at Easter, Bishop Jonathan reflects on whether this time of crisis and lament could become a time of spiritual renewal.



"When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:6)

Like so many, I was shocked and appalled to read the findings of the Makin Review published in November last year.

This report brought into the light the full extent of the horrendous abuse perpetrated by John Smyth, as well as the failure by so many to stop his abhorrent crimes, allowing further abuse to take place, particularly in Africa.

My thoughts and prayers remain with all the victims and survivors who so bravely came forward and who have been so badly let down, as well as with their families, friends, and those who advocated on their behalf.

The Makin review, along with the other reports published in recent years, has revealed both personal and systemic failure in the life of the Church at every level.

Evil has been covered up, the plight of victims and survivors has been played down or ignored, and this has felt like a betrayal, not only of the victims of abuse but also of those countless people, clergy and laity alike, who have been working so hard at diocesan and parish level to improve the quality of safeguarding in the life of our Church.

I am so grateful for all that the clergy and lay people across this diocese are doing as part of that. Thank you for your commitment to making our churches safe and healthy places of welcome for all.

However, as recent events have shown, there is still a profound need for a change of culture across the Church as a whole, moving towards greater transparency and accountability at all levels.

It is perhaps not surprising that many of us may feel harassed and helpless like the sheep without a shepherd as described in the Gospel of Matthew.

This is the reality of the situation we are facing, and we need to be honest about that, because living in denial and burying our heads in the sand just results in paralysis. But simply reacting hastily to what we are facing can also make things worse.

This has to be a watershed moment in the life of the Church of England in which we send a strong signal

that we must and will put victims and survivors first.

It is also an opportunity for us to commit afresh to growing safe and healthy cultures across the national church and within our own diocese; to being the kind of Church that truly reflects God's righteousness, justice and peace.

A Church where people feel safe and supported to speak out when something does not seem right; a Church where those in leadership always act for the sake of truth and justice not for reputation or self-protection; a Church where everyone can flourish and enjoy life in all its fulness as God intends.

The first thing we need to do in response to the current crisis is to look to Jesus and to listen to him, because he is the Good Shepherd who alone can lead us through these turbulent times and guide us to find the spiritual food and drink that we need.

In him and through him we have hope, because he has promised to be with us always, to the end of the age. It is in him that we trust ultimately, not any leader, not any human being, and it is on Jesus' call to follow him that we must remain focused whatever storms may come our way.

This time of crisis could yet become a moment of spiritual opportunity, if we will seize it and allow God to do his work of renewal in us and through us.

This is after all why Jesus came into the world – to save us from our sins and to offer us a whole new way of life as children of God and citizens of the kingdom of heaven. That is his invitation to us now, to renew our relationship with him and to rededicate ourselves to him as our Saviour and Lord.

The forgiveness and healing that Jesus offers are indeed good news of hope for us and for all people. And it is this good news that is at the heart of the wonderful work that goes on in our churches and communities every week of the year.

As we prepare during Lent to journey with Jesus to the Cross and to celebrate his resurrection on Easter Sunday, may we come seeking his forgiveness and his healing for our Church. May we come also giving thanks for all that God is doing amongst us and praying that he will enable us to become more and more a Church that truly reflects his glory and his compassion to the world he came to save.

RESOURCES – EASTER

At Easter we celebrate Jesus’ triumph over death, with his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Explore this selection of resources to mark the season and to help grow your relationship with Jesus.



THE REAL EASTER EGG - MEANINGFUL CHOCOLATE COMPANY

Available online and in some church shops

The Real Easter Egg was launched in 2010 as a way for churches, groups and individuals to share the Easter story while supporting Fairtrade and charitable projects.

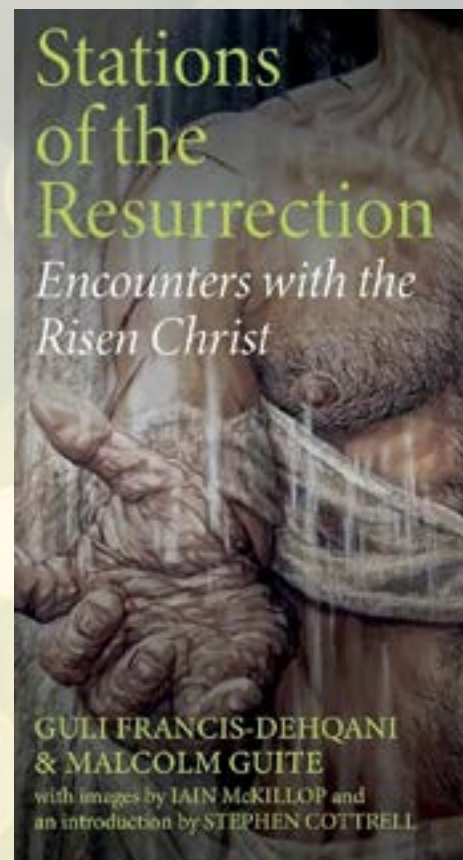
Out of the 80 million Easter eggs sold in the UK each year, The Real Easter Egg is still the only one which does this.

All Real Easter Eggs come with an Easter story in the box.

The stories range from simple guides to 24-page activity book versions with a prize competition worth £200.

The eggs are Fairtrade, palm oil free and plastic free.

www.meaningfulchocolate.co.uk/collections/real-easter-egg



STATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION - ENCOUNTERS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST

Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani, Malcolm Guite
£13.90

The New Testament gospel writers record nineteen resurrection appearances, from the first encounter with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning to Paul’s life-changing experience on the Damascus road.

Stations of the Resurrection offers reflections on each of these episodes from the bestselling poet Malcolm Guite and the much-admired writer Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford, accompanied by colour illustrations from the priest-artist Iain McKillop.

Bishop Guli draws on her first-hand knowledge of Middle Eastern culture to explore these stories, and Malcolm Guite offers a sonnet in response to each of them – many published here for the first time - with reflections on the texts that inspired them.

This imaginative and inspirational resource also includes the complete Stations of the Resurrection liturgies from Common Worship Times and Seasons that commemorate each of the nineteen events, allowing the book to be used for both personal devotional use and liturgical celebration.

For this and more seasonal books visit:

www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/holy-week-and-easter



SEEN AND UNSEEN

From opinion pieces, stories, podcasts, as well as book, music, arts and film reviews, the Seen & Unseen site is an invitation to see the world differently.

In a world often fixated on the seen, but blind to unseen realities, it brings fresh Christian perspectives to the issues we are all talking about.

Seen & Unseen brings together voices from many mainstream Christian traditions to give new insights on culture, politics, history, spirituality, freedom of belief, philosophy and theology, including from our very own Bishop of Tonbridge.

At this season of new beginnings, why not add this site to your list of go to reading and listening?

Visit: www.seenandunseen.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



LENT QUIET DAY
at St Benedict's Centre, West Malling
29 MARCH, 10AM-3PM

Through the use of poetry, prayer, music, scripture and nature, the day will be an opportunity for quiet contemplation of Gospel stories of the Passion of Jesus in preparation for Easter and how these stories resonate for us today. Led by Gilly Fenner. A suggested donation of £5-£25. To book contact bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



MUSIC@MALLING, THE SOUND OF DREAMS
Various venues
25-27 APRIL 2025

Music@Malling brings outstanding musicians into the heart of the community through concerts and outreach held in historic venues in and around West Malling, Kent. Works by contemporary composers are illuminated by classical music and jazz. For more information visit www.musicatmalling.com



IT'S YOUR CALLING
At Christ Church, Orpington
17 MAY 2025

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



MESSY CATHEDRAL
at Rochester Cathedral
31 MAY 2025, 1PM-4PM

A space to meet Jesus through activities, prayer, games and worship. Activities until 3pm, followed by worship. Finish with your own picnic from 3.45pm.

For more information contact Sarah Cabella – sarah.cabella@rochester.anglican.org



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES



MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

07:30 Silent Prayer
07:45 Morning Prayer
08:00 The Eucharist
17:30 Service of Poems, Prayers, Paintings and Music looking at 'Women in Scripture', led by The Rt Rev Graham Kings

MAUNDY THURSDAY

07:30 Silent Prayer
07:45 Morning Prayer
08:00 No Eucharist
10:30 The Chrism Eucharist President & Preacher, The Bishop of Rochester
17:30 Evening Prayer (Said)
20:00 The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday Preacher The Rt Rev Graham Kings

GOOD FRIDAY

09:30 Choral Mattins
12:00 Service of Poems, Prayers, Paintings and Music looking at 'Women in Scripture', led by The Rt Rev Graham Kings
13:45 The Liturgy of Good Friday

HOLY SATURDAY

08:30 Silent Prayer
08:45 Morning Prayer
15:15 Evening Prayer (Said)

EASTER DAY SERVICES

05:30 The Easter Liturgy with Baptism and Confirmation, President & Preacher, The Bishop of Rochester
08:00 Holy Communion (BCP Lady Chapel)
10:30 The Eucharist of Easter Day, President & Preacher, The Bishop of Rochester
10:30 Sunday Club meet in the Ithamar Chapel
15:15 Solemn Evensong, Procession and Blessing of the Easter Garden

Visitors are encouraged to check the Cathedral website for opening times and any changes in the events schedule www.rochester.cathedral.org



A CHAMPION FOR LAY MINISTRY

Mandy Holloway is the recently appointed Warden for Lay Ministry in the Diocese. A Licensed Lay Minister (LLM), she's also worked in banking, child-minding, and supported one of her churches as a parish administrator. We caught up with Mandy to find out more about her role and the range of lay ministry in the Diocese.

For someone who is not sure, what is lay ministry?

All Christians are called to serve God by living out their faith in the places where they spend their time. There are a whole range of authorised lay ministry roles recognised in this Diocese. Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM) is a particularly distinct role here. It is someone who exercises ministry within the Church under the authority of the Bishop, is an ordinary Christian with gifts of leadership, and theologically educated with a developing calling from God.

Do they have a title like Reverend?

No, they are not ordained like a vicar. However, they do hold a position of leadership in the church and can preach.

What kind of things can Licensed Lay Ministers do?

Many things. They might take on responsibility for a major area of work or mission within their church such as a community outreach project. They might have a particular calling to working with older people, or in youth work, or maybe with music. It all depends on their individual gifts and abilities and the needs of their parish or ministry setting.

So, must you be licensed to support your church as a lay person?

Not at all. Many lay people take on volunteer roles within their churches, from being church wardens and parish safeguarding officers, to those who help with flower arranging, or assisting with teas and coffees. Churches very often would not run without them! It's best to talk to someone at your church to find out what opportunities are available and any processes you might need to undertake first.

How do you support lay ministry in your role?

The role of Warden of Lay Ministry involves having particular oversight for all authorised, commissioned, and licensed lay ministers. I make sure they are up to date with safeguarding training and DBS, I support the movement of lay ministers around the Diocese. I help with the ongoing development of a lay minister and answer any questions and queries they may have.

How many people exercising some sort of lay ministry do we have in the Diocese?

It's constantly growing but right now we have over 300 people in some sort of recognised lay ministry role.

You are Licensed Lay Minister yourself?

Yes, I was licensed as an LLM in 2018 and was jointly leading our church through interregnum – a time when we were without a vicar. Then Covid struck in 2020 and, like everyone else, we had to quickly rethink services and ministry.

Have you always been a Christian?

I grew up in a Christian home, where my parents taught my brother and I prayers and songs. So, although we didn't go to church, I knew about Jesus from a very young age. Then, when I was 16, I woke up one Sunday and felt that I wanted to go to church, and never looked back, becoming a Christian at age 17 and confirmed at 18.

Do you have any hobbies?

I enjoy knitting and crochet – I am currently knitting for my first grandchild who is due this summer.

Are you a tea or coffee person?

I am a teapot – all my friends and family don't bother to ask what I will drink because it's nearly always tea!

What are you reading at the moment?

I am currently reading *Practising the Way* (Be with Jesus, Become like him, Do as he did) by John Mark Comer. In it, he talks about how the first followers of Jesus based their habits and way of life on how Jesus lived his life, thereby making more space for God to act in and through them. It is a very readable and accessible book and encourages us to put Jesus first in our lives and make space to see what he will do.

What is your idea of a perfect day?

It would either be a glorious summer day outside with my family followed by a nice meal together, or in the winter, a day in the warm, playing board games.



FAITH IN THE BLUELIGHTS

With a background as a community first responder, Licensed Lay Minister Ellen Couzens is just as at home in an ambulance as she is in a pulpit. Now, as a Senior Chaplain to the South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAmb) in Medway, she is finding fulfilment in combining her experience of emergency care with her passion for supporting others.

Faith has always been a thread in my life, but it hasn't been a straight path. As a child, church was a part of my school routine, but I didn't go to church with family, and it wasn't until my early teens that I felt compelled to explore God for myself.

I joined my grandmother at church and, through the church youth group called Pathfinders, I found my faith.

Like many, I drifted away during young adulthood, caught up in work and life's demands. But years later, after my son's birth, faith called me back.

A church newsletter planted the idea of baptism, and then my son, inspired by a school assembly, asked to attend church. That moment was a turning point. I realised God had been nudging me all along and, through my son, I found my way back.

Immersing myself in church life, I led Messy Church and became a baptism visitor, but my journey didn't stop there. Volunteering as a community first responder in 2014 reshaped my sense of purpose. Amidst emergencies, I found myself not just offering medical care but also emotional support, especially in moments of mental distress. Comforting worried parents or listening to colleagues after difficult calls became the most meaningful parts of my role.

It was in these moments that my calling to chaplaincy emerged. Becoming an ambulance chaplain felt like a divine nudge—my reason for being.

Since then, my ministry has grown to include parish work and serving as a cathedral chaplain. Even through personal challenges, my faith has been my anchor. I've learned to trust God, seeing how difficult experiences have been transformed into opportunities to help others.

Looking back, I see how God has shaped my path, teaching me to listen and follow His call. Whether through offering comfort, guidance, or simply being present, I strive to live a life of faith that supports and uplifts those around me.

To explore how God may be calling you, visit www.rochester.anglican.org and search for 'God's plan for you'.

"Comforting worried parents or listening to colleagues after difficult calls became the most meaningful parts of my role."



Diocese of Rochester
called together

A PRAYER

for our refreshed Called Together vision

Dear God,

Fill us with courage and vision to carry your light into new places, meeting people where they are, and sharing the life-changing truth of your gospel.

Bless these communities with strong and Spirit-filled leaders, faithful disciples, and hearts ablaze with love for you.

May our churches and communities become vibrant and healthy expressions of your Kingdom—places where your Word is proclaimed, lives are transformed, and communities are renewed.

Guide us, Lord, and remind us always that You are with us, empowering our every step, even to the end of the world. In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.