

TOGETHER

The FREE magazine from the Diocese of Rochester | Issue 29 | May - July 2026

CHANGE | SERVE | GROW

COVER STORY: WELCOMING THE NEW ARCHBISHOP PAGE 8



TO BE A
'LOCAL'
PILGRIM

EVERYDAY
FAITH: A STREET
PASTOR'S TALE

STAND FOR
GENERAL
SYNOD





SUPPORT THE POVERTY AND HOPE APPEAL 2025/26

Sharing blessings, building hope

For more information visit:
www.rochester.anglican.org and search for Poverty and Hope

Scan to donate



CONTENTS

It has been an exciting time in the life of the Church globally and nationally.

We share a Rochester view of the recent installation of the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, and the welcome Archbishop Sarah was offered as she made a pilgrimage through the Diocese on her way to Canterbury (pg 8).

The theme of pilgrimage continues in our centrespread, as we look ahead to the Church of England's new Pilgrim Places, Holy Lives materials, and offer some tips on how to bring a sense of pilgrimage into your daily life.

In **Focus On** (pg 12) we hear about the partnerships underway allowing churches to respond to specific needs in their communities such as addiction and loneliness, plus we meet the church putting care for creation into practice through sustainable floristry (pg16).

In the **Big Issue** (pg 18), Bishop Jonathan reflects on the Easter story and what it means to truly accept and know that Jesus rose from the dead.

While in **Everyday Faith** (pg26), we meet the volunteer living out their faith as a Street Pastor, as they offer care and comfort to late night revellers in need.

Finally, don't miss the invitation to all church members (pg 21) to play their part in shaping the future work of the Church of England by standing for General Synod.

Go well.

Jennifer Ross
Head of Communications

Editor: Jennifer Ross
jennifer.ross@rochester.anglican.org

In-house design:
Katerina Gerhardt
Design: CPO
Print: Yeomans

Front cover: Welcoming the new Archbishop

Deadline for next edition: 10 July 2026

Get in touch :
communications@rochester.anglican.org

FIND US:

@CoERochester
 @SeeofRochester



INSIDE TRACK

4-7 Latest news

FOCUS ON

- 8 Welcoming the new Archbishop
- 12 Transforming lives in partnership
- 14 To be a Pilgrim
- 16 Sustainable floristry in bloom

BIG ISSUE

18 Why does it matter that Jesus rose from the dead?

HEAD SPACE

20 Resources: Thy Kingdom Come

DON'T MISS

22 Top upcoming events

PEOPLE

- 24 One to One: Jen Coleman
- 26 Everyday Faith: Shirley Rogers



GOING SOLAR

St Nicholas Church, Sevenoaks opened its doors and its roof, to people from across the Diocese as part of an event organised by the Diocesan Net Zero Team.

The Grade II* listed church recently installed a set of solar panels, with the power generated being used entirely by the church itself to support ministry on-site, day to day.

Those who came gained expert advice from a range of speakers, including the Diocesan Advisory Committee which supports churches on matters around the repair and development of church

buildings. Visitors also enjoyed a roof-top tour to view the PV installation itself and to hear firsthand from those involved with the project regarding installation, capital cost and potential savings.

Kayleigh Ward, Net Zero Adviser for the Diocese, said the day was a positive way for people to learn more about this source of renewable energy, "For us as a team, it was a great way of bringing people together to connect, share knowledge, and encourage each other in the journey towards making our churches more sustainable for generations to come."



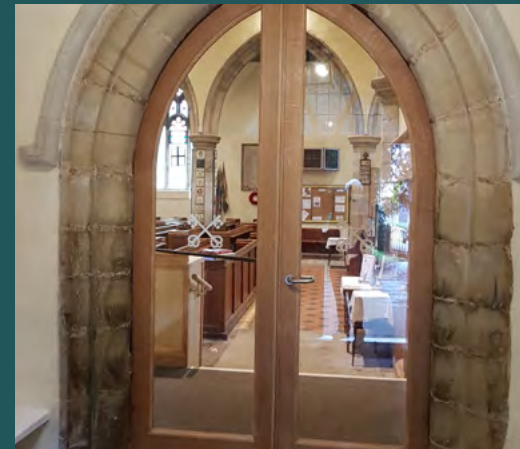
POP-UP JESUS

St John's Church, Bexley, found a novel way to invite people to come and find Jesus (quite literally) each Sunday at church. A mini-crocheted Jesus made surprise, pop-up appearances every Sunday morning until Pentecost, just as Jesus did with the disciples following his death and resurrection that first Easter.



GROWING HEALTHY CULTURES

St Bartholomew's Church, Otford were grateful to all those who attended their recent in-person safeguarding training event. Twenty-seven people attended and gained their Basic and Foundation training, a great sign of how many people across the church are taking safeguarding seriously and are committed to growing a safe and healthy culture.



'COME ON IN'

A Welcome Project at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Yalding, is enabling the parish to be a more inclusive and accessible place of worship. Supported by a range of partners and funders, including the Diocese of Rochester's Missional Property Fund, work has included the creation of a fully step-free route through the main entrance, improved aisle access, and new glazed doors making the entrance more inviting.



FRIENDS OVERSEAS

Representatives from St Stephen's Church, Tonbridge, and Bishop Chavasse Primary School have taken part in a trip to learn more about their partnerships in Mpwapwa Diocese, Tanzania. While there, the group visited a local Church-run school, medical facility, and theological college. Rochester Diocese also enjoys flourishing links with the Anglican dioceses of Kondoia in Tanzania, Harare in Zimbabwe, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Estonia.



SUPPORTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Over the last year, the Diocese's Children and Young People (CYP) Team has been taking active steps to help parishes and schools address the growing concern around the mental health of children and young people.

It comes as recent NHS statistics show that one in five 8 to 25 year olds have a probable mental health issue. Childline reports that 52 per cent of its contact with children and young people during 2024/2025 related to emotional and mental well-being, with anxiety making up around a quarter of all contact both online and via phone.

To resource youth leaders, chaplains, teachers and clergy to recognise poor mental health issues early, the Diocesan CYP team has facilitated the running of the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England's two-day Mental Health First Aid Course.

Lynne Parkinson, Youth Mental Health Advocate within the diocesan team, says the training is about building people's confidence to start conversations about mental health and to signpost individuals to

professional support or community resources.

"This is a vital initiative which underlines the fact that good youth and children's ministry – both in church and in schools - can make a real difference by equipping the whole person to flourish, including a young person's mental and emotional wellbeing, as well as their spiritual wellbeing".

Due to generous funding from the Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust, the team has been able to offer the training for free, and since March 2025, around 80 people have been trained to be MHFAiders, with plans to run more courses in 2026 and 2027.

The training is clearly making a difference, with one course attendee saying that the training had encouraged them to think more intentionally about wellbeing within the school environment and how to build a culture where pupils and staff feel safe to share when they are finding things difficult. "Overall, it has strengthened my confidence in supporting mental health needs within the school community."

FRESH COMMITMENT TO TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY

Figures show that currently more than 122,000 men, women and children are trapped in modern slavery in the UK (Clever Initiative).

While Modern Slavery has always been a matter of concern for the Diocese, over the last year there has been a renewed commitment to responding well to the issue, including a reinvigoration of the Diocesan Modern Slavery Network to engage with parishes.

The Network is made up of eight volunteer ambassadors, each of whom has been trained on the different forms of modern slavery, how to spot the signs, and ideas on how to prevent and be proactive against modern slavery.

A training package is being developed for them to use in settings across the Diocese.

Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge, a key advocate on the issue of modern slavery said, "We want to cascade the knowledge as far and wide as possible including within community settings and schools.

"Our focus as a diocese is on training as many people as possible because, quite simply, a trained person is far more likely to spot the clues and know what to do with them."





WELCOMING THE NEW ARCHBISHOP

In March, Archbishop Sarah Mullally was installed as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury at a service in Canterbury Cathedral. It was a moment of great joy, with our bishops among other members of the Diocese of Rochester to see her installed as the first woman in the role.

Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge, and other members of the Diocese of Rochester were among the more than two thousand people from across the country and around the world who came to Canterbury Cathedral for the installation service of Archbishop Sarah.

The service included many symbolic moments, beginning with Archbishop Sarah knocking three times on the Cathedral's West Door with a wooden staff, and invited in by a group of young people from John Wallis Academy, Ashford.

Later in the service, she received her pastoral staff and was placed in the Chair of St Augustine, as the Dean of Canterbury invited everyone to welcome their "...newly installed Archbishop".

Reflecting on the diverse and moving service, Bishop Jonathan said, "It was a wonderful and joyful occasion - a real sense of God's call in Archbishop Sarah's life.

"Wonderful too that we should be meeting on the Feast of the Annunciation, with that call to Mary, and

that sense of saying 'Here I am', and responding to God's call with great humility and joy."

He added: "We had musicians from Africa and Canterbury Cathedral's musicians were on top form. It was wonderful for me too to be standing almost next to St Augustine's throne and surrounded by bishops from across the Anglican Communion.

"It was incredible to be able to support Archbishop Sarah on that special day."

As part of her spiritual preparation ahead of her Installation, Archbishop Sarah had embarked on a 6-day walking pilgrimage from London to Canterbury.



ARCHDEACONS AT THE INSTALLATION



Her pilgrimage took her through the Diocese of Rochester, where she was quietly welcomed to morning and evening prayer at various churches along the way.

“Sarah is entering into a huge responsibility but she is doing it not in her own strength but because God has called her by name.”

On the third day of her pilgrimage, Bishop Jonathan was part of a small group who joined her at Broomhill Park, Strood, to accompany her as she walked down into Rochester itself.

Along the way, they took the opportunity to speak with passers-by and hand out prayer cards before being welcomed at the Pilgrims’ Door at Rochester Cathedral.

After a much needed stop for lunch in the Cathedral Crypt, Archbishop Sarah then joined Rochester Riverside

School for a time of collective worship, in which she spoke to the children about pilgrimage and answered any questions they had.

She then finished the day as part of the congregation for Evensong in the Cathedral, during which she received a pilgrim’s blessing.

The following day, Archbishop Sarah walked on into Aylesford, which sits just on the border of Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses.

There, she met the Carmelite brothers of Aylesford Priory who, after a time of private prayer together, sent Archbishop Sarah on her way with the singing of hymns of praise.

Bishop Jonathan said it had been a great privilege to have welcomed Archbishop Sarah on her pilgrimage ahead of her installation.

“Sarah is entering into a huge responsibility but she is doing it not in her own strength but because God has called her by name, God walked with her on her journey towards Canterbury, and God will walk with her on the journey that lies ahead after her Installation.”

Archbishop Sarah will return to Rochester Diocese in June, as part of four pastoral visits she is making this year to dioceses across the country.





TRANSFORMING LIVES IN PARTNERSHIP

From addiction recovery to fitness initiatives, funding from the Colyer Fergusson Trust and support from diocesan teams is enabling a growing number of churches to meet the needs of their communities through partnerships.

At St George’s Church, Gravesend, a specialist exercise class for older members of the community is underway.

Delivered by the charity **Keep Phytt**, the Rev Jim Fletcher, Vicar at St George, says offering the classes came from a desire to respond to a clear local need.

“We were aware that many older people were experiencing isolation, reduced mobility, or just having trouble accessing fitness activities. By partnering with **Keep Phytt**, we saw an opportunity as a church to support physical health while fostering human connection at the same time.”

Ian and his wife Carole, who co-founded **Keep Phytt**, are themselves Christians, and are passionate about combining care for physical wellbeing with a lived expression of their faith.

“We want to help people stay strong and active, improve their balance and flexibility, and overcome aches and pains, whatever their age or ability.

“As a not-for-profit, we’re passionate about making exercise accessible, and through our partnership with local churches we can reach more people in the heart of their communities.”

The connection was created with help from the Diocese’s Children and Young People’s Mission and Ministry Team, and the Community Engagement and Social Action Adviser, as part of a targeted plan to enable parishes to think creatively about how they build resilience in their communities and respond to issues caused by deprivation.

A key part of the approach was to encourage churches to work alongside specialist organisations to deliver

outreach that might otherwise extend beyond the church’s own in-house expertise. Parishes received some initial funds to get the projects off the ground.

“We wanted to encourage churches to recognise that they are not alone in responding to the needs around them and they don’t have to provide all the solutions by themselves,” says Cheryl Trice, Children, Young People and Families Mission and Ministry Lead Adviser.

“There are many excellent organisations with deep expertise in areas such as mental health, addiction, and physical wellbeing. It means that sometimes, the most effective role a church can play is to partner well - offering space, welcome, publicity and encouragement, so that people can access the right support in a trusted, local setting.”

At Christ Church, Luton, a 15-week course providing a safe and supportive environment for people struggling with addiction of any kind has now been delivered twice over the past two years, and has been described as having a life-changing effect on those that participate.

Called the **Recovery Course**, the course providers

work with churches and other organisations to run sessions locally to help those with addiction and their families find recovery.

The church has been thrilled with the changes that they are seeing in the lives of the attendees.

One church leader said, “You can tell that people are relieved to be in a safe place where they can share their struggles.”

While rooted in Christian principles, the course is open to everyone, regardless of their faith background. Participants consistently highlight the respectful and non-judgemental environment as one of its greatest strengths.

One participant said, “I cannot recommend the course enough. It is very clear, encouraging, and helps people to recentre their lives on God and to look at all the things that make them hide their pain in their addictions”.

For Magali van de Merwe, initiatives such as **Keep Phytt** and the **Recovery Course** demonstrate how churches can play a meaningful and transformative role within their communities.

“By opening their doors, forming partnerships, and offering spaces of welcome and care, churches are helping to address real challenges while strengthening the fabric of local life.”

She adds, “This growing work across the Diocese reflects a wider vision: that churches, supported by diocesan teams and working alongside trusted partners, can respond effectively and compassionately to the needs around them.”

“We want to help people stay strong and active, improve their balance and flexibility, and overcome aches and pains, whatever their age or ability”



To be a pilgrim

This summer, the Church of England is offering a new series of reflections centred around pilgrimage – the places and stories that help us feel part of something bigger on our journey towards God.

Called **Pilgrim Places, Holy Lives**, through a set of readings and reflections, eight places will be explored – including Kent - which were important in the spread of Christianity in England, and the stories of the saints who lived there.

To get involved, you can download the Everyday Faith app to receive the reflections every Monday to Saturday from 25 May to 20 June.

Printed booklets are also available from Church House Publishing at: www.chpublishing.co.uk



Become a pilgrim at home

To be a pilgrim one does not have to seek out distant shrines in faraway lands. The ideas below allow every church to be the goal for a pilgrimage and for a sense of pilgrimage to be brought into ones daily life.

1

Walk to a church

Historic or not, every church can be the focus of a pilgrim journey. If a church is on a hill, or over a river, or through a wood, the walk to church becomes even more of a pilgrimage. See what a difference walking to a church can make to your spiritual preparation.

2

Journey through a church building

Old or new, all churches bear witness to the journey of life and all the ways in which people grow in their experience of God as they grow older. Imagine making a pilgrimage from the entrance of the church to the altar. Notice those parts of the building where key life moments occur – the font at baptism, the step before an altar where people are married or placed at their funeral. Or what are the stories told in the stained glass or other monuments?

3

Place a pebble

Pilgrims often bring pebbles from one place to another, especially marking crosses by adding their stone to a cairn. Hold a stone, a cross or other item on your journey, or at a moment of stillness. Feel its weight and texture. Consider its story – where it came from, how that story speaks to you. What do you glimpse of God through it?

4

Walk a labyrinth

Labyrinths are ancient spiritual pathways used as an aide for prayer. In contrast to a maze, the labyrinth has only one path that always leads to the centre. You can walk a labyrinth at your own pace and when it is not possible to walk a full-sized labyrinth, finger labyrinths can be used for prayerful reflection. Find out more in the book *Growing in Prayer* by Susanne Carlsson visit: www.brf.org.uk

5

Discover local saints

There are many saints associated with Kent and the South East to explore. For instance, St Bertha - Queen of Kent (580). A radical queen of her time, she refused to marry pagan King Ethelbert until he promised she could practice her Christianity. Bertha not only converted her husband to Christianity, but through the influence of them both, enabled Christianity to be established in Kent and start to spread across England. How can Bertha and the lives of other saints inspire you to keep praying?

Find out more about Pilgrim Places, Holy Lives at www.churchofengland.org and search Pilgrim Places or SCAN the code.



SUSTAINABLE FLORISTRY IN BLOOM

A practical workshop at St Martin's Church in Ryarsh has shown how small, creative changes can help churches care more intentionally for the environment, echoing a wider call across the Church of England to use more sustainable flowers in worship.



Members of the flower team at St Martin's Church, Ryarsh, recently gathered for a hands-on tutorial led by Lin, one of the church's volunteers and a professional florist.

Her aim was simple: to demonstrate how beautiful church arrangements can be created without using floral foam, a commonly used material that contains plastic and does not biodegrade. Instead, Lin shared a range of traditional and inventive alternatives.

"It's all about your containers," she explained enthusiastically, as she demonstrated how everyday items can replace foam while still supporting elaborate displays.

Among her suggestions are using scrunched chicken wire in a dish placed inside a basket as a base for arrangements, and tying covered test tubes to sticks to give height for displays in church windows or on pedestals.

Other tips include filling containers with pieces of plastic tubing or taping a grid across a vase to hold stems securely in place.

She also demonstrated how to hand-tie flowers and foliage before placing them into a pot, which is a classic floristry technique that creates a natural and reusable arrangement.

The initiative at Ryarsh reflects a growing movement across the Church of England, following a decision by the General Synod, to encourage the use of more seasonal, locally sourced flowers and to phase out the use of floral foam where possible.

Among those supporting the motion was Jane Rosam, one of the Diocese's representatives at General Synod, who spoke passionately about the importance of aligning worship with care for the natural world.

"What we place on our altars says something, says much about what we value," she told the Synod. "We should not be people who bless the Creator while at the same time contributing to the harm of creation."

Jane emphasised that using seasonal flowers and locally sourced foliage can deepen the connection between worship and the landscapes around churches.

"These flowers offer beauty with integrity supporting local growers, reducing emissions and connecting our worship to the landscape around us," she said.



"Reminding us that God is present not only in the showy and exotic but in the hedgerow, the garden, the field and the changing seasons." Far from diminishing church decoration, she said that the change offers an opportunity for renewal.

"This is not about making our churches plain, it is about making our worship truthful," she said. "It is about aligning our practice with our prayers."

At St Martin's Church, the flower team's willingness to learn new methods is a practical example of that vision in action.

By rediscovering traditional techniques and adapting modern creativity, volunteers are showing how churches can continue to celebrate beauty in worship while reducing their environmental impact.

Jane described the shift as a simple but meaningful step: "Let our churches and their altars speak not only of beauty, but of responsibility. Not only of tradition, but of transformation."

As churches across the country explore more sustainable ways of arranging flowers, the work of volunteers like those at Ryarsh shows how caring for creation can begin with the everyday details of parish life even something as ordinary, and as cherished, as flowers in church.

Find out more at www.suschurchflowers.com

WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD?

In this Easter season, Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Bishop of Rochester says that in a world that seems scary and hopeless, now is the time to remember the supernatural reality at the heart of the Christian faith.



Do you ever find yourself saying, “What on earth is going on in the world?”

With me it’s a pretty regular occurrence, whenever I wake up in the morning and listen to the news headlines. Internationally, politically, economically, socially, environmentally and spiritually – the world is in a mess.

The reality is that the gods of materialism and of humanism – the twin beliefs that all we need is what the material world can afford us and that human beings are able to solve all our problems by our intelligence and ingenuity – these gods have failed us, and we and our offspring are paying the price for the folly and hubris of humankind.

So why is it that these gods have failed us so spectacularly – and what is the alternative?

Firstly, because they do not understand human nature. Liberal humanism is built upon blind faith in the goodness of human beings.

It assumes that if we create the right conditions, human beings will behave well towards one another and, if they don’t, what is needed is more education and more support.

This is frankly nonsense, as every parent of a toddler knows all too well. Secondly, they do not have an answer or an antidote to evil.

They simply cannot recognise or comprehend that there are forces at work in our world that are not explicable in purely material and mechanistic terms.

Yet we see evil at work in our world at all sorts of levels each and every day.

Finally, humanism and materialism cannot offer hope, but only a blind optimism that somehow or other things will get better in the end.

Tell that to those who are starving in Sudan or living in constant fear across the Middle East. Tell that to those whose livelihoods are being devastated by climate change.

Optimism alone just won’t cut it in today’s world, and a whole generation is waking up to the fact that humanism and materialism have nothing to offer – and they are beginning to look for different, spiritual answers to the questions they are facing.

The Christian faith has answers to all those questions,

answers rooted in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, going back to the events of Good Friday and that first Easter Day.

It is a faith rooted in history, not in myth or ideology. What we are dealing with in the gospels is the testimony of eyewitnesses, collected and collated within a few years of the events themselves - bringing out their deeper meaning - but utterly faithful to what actually happened however difficult that may be to understand.

The second crucial thing we need to understand about the Christian faith is that it is also totally and utterly and unashamedly a supernatural faith.

For too long, since the days of the so-called Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, people have tried to water down the supernatural content of the Christian faith, to make it seemingly more palatable to modern ears.

But the result in the end is that the whole thing falls apart because, unless Jesus really died and really rose again as St Paul says, we have nothing to offer to the world and we above all are most to be pitied.

So please, let’s be clear, the tomb was empty and Jesus really is alive.

He met with Mary on that day and subsequently with many of the other disciples. He ate and drank with them, but he also did things that his former, purely physical body could not have done, like appearing in a locked room to a bewildered and frightened group of disciples.

This is the supernatural reality which is at the heart of the Christian faith, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, that he is able to meet with each and every one of us by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and that he is able to do amazing, wonderful things in our lives just as he did when he walked this earth as a physical human being.

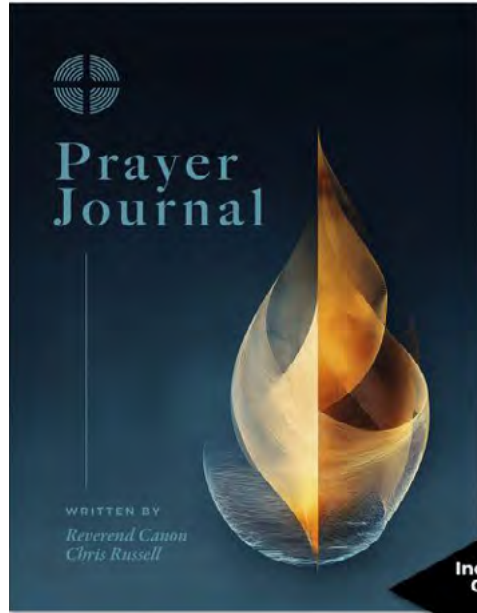
There is so much going on in our world that is deeply scary.

The lesser gods of our own making have failed us. Now is the time to turn back to the one true and living God who can guide us and lead us through all that lies ahead; to turn back to the one who has conquered sin and death and who offers us the hope of new lives in this world and in the life to come.

Now is the time for us also, like Mary, to carry the news of Jesus and his resurrection to those who so desperately need the hope that he alone can bring.

RESOURCES – THY KINGDOM COME

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. Taking place from Ascension to Pentecost (14 to 24 May), it's a great opportunity to incorporate some new prayer habits into your daily life.



Individual Copies

PRAYER JOURNAL

Taking inspiration from the ancient prayer of the Church: 'Come Holy Spirit', this prayer journal reflects on what it means to pray 'Come Holy Spirit' in the company of some momentous characters of Scripture.

With space to write the names of five people that you might particularly wish to pray for during your journey of prayer, as well as your own reflections, it is available in both print and digital formats.

Order or download at: www.cpo.org.uk/thykingdomcome.html



Individual Copies

11 DAY PRAYER ADVENTURE FOR KIDS

This children's prayer adventure journal is a fun and exciting way for children to journey through the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come and beyond.

Packed with videos (QR codes), mini reflections, activities and prayers, this wonderful resource is a helpful way to nurture children's faith.

Designed for children to use with those who care for them, it is available in both print and digital formats.

Order or download at: www.cpo.org.uk/the-childrens-prayer-adventure-journal.html

STAND for SYNOD

New members are being elected to **General Synod** this year – and you are invited to stand as a candidate. The Church of England is looking for candidates who represent the whole range of people and traditions in the Church of England, especially those from backgrounds that may currently be underrepresented.

What is it?

General Synod is the national assembly of the Church of England, and considers and approves legislation affecting the whole of the Church of England. It usually meets twice a year for up to five days each in London and in York, although it can be possible to attend via zoom.

Why stand?

Being a member means you can:

- Raise issues and contribute to debates on social and policy matters.
- Be involved in the national governance of the Church.
- Meet other Anglicans from across the country and the world.

Who can stand?

The good news is almost anyone who attends church regularly is likely to be eligible to stand as a 'lay member' and you don't need lots of previous experience.

Interested?

For more information and to check your eligibility to stand, visit cofe.io/StandForSynod

DON'T DELAY, THE DEADLINE TO QUALIFY FOR ELECTION IS 14 JULY 2026

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



MESSY CATHEDRAL
at Rochester Cathedral
16 MAY, 1:00-4:00PM

A space for all families to meet Jesus through crafts, 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



IT'S YOUR CALLING
at Christ Church Orpington
16 MAY, 9:30AM - 3:30PM

It's Your Calling is aimed at those exploring God's plan for their life and is a space to look at the gifts that God has given us all. The day offers an opportunity to meet others on a similar quest and to take time to think about how God may be calling you. For more information contact vocations@rochester.anglican.org



PRAYER FESTIVAL
ST BENEDICT'S CENTRE, WEST MALLING
30 MAY, 10AM-4PM

A day to find out about the many different ways there are to open our hearts and mind to God. Explore and experience a range of ways to pray, from labyrinths to praying with dreams. Suggested donation £10-£20.

For more information contact the team on bookings@stbenedictscentre.org



MESS ROOM: TIDES
at Rochester Cathedral
6 JULY – 29 AUGUST

MESS ROOM with Kent Association for the Blind. Created through a series of 26 artist-led workshops with blind and partially sighted participants, Wendy Daws brings her series of group works together this year focussing on the River Medway to align with the Cathedral's Art on the Delta Summer exhibition. For more information visit www.rochestercathedral.org

Rochester
CATHEDRAL
Growing in Christ since AD604

Images of Faith

CLIVE TANNER FRPS MPAGB FIPF APAGB

A retrospective exhibition bringing together Clive Tanner's evocative photographs of sacred spaces. From soaring interiors to quiet devotional details, his monochrome and colour images capture the beauty, craftsmanship and atmosphere of places shaped by faith, history and light.

ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

21 May – 30 June

Find out more
rochestercathedral.org/whatson



GROWING A CHURCH FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Having worked in Youth Ministry since she was 18, as a new Youth Advisor within the Diocese's Children, Young People and Families Mission and Ministry Team, Jen Coleman is passionate about the role of young people in the Church. *Together* caught up with her to find out more about the ambition across the Diocese to grow a Church that is younger and more diverse.

There is a strong commitment to seeing an increase in the number of children and young people engaged with the Church. How does it feel to be involved with that?

It is a great time to be involved in Youth ministry! We have seen a gentle increase in young people and young adults attending church, and there has been a greater interest in Christianity amongst these younger generations. This has overlapped with the Church of England and our Diocese being more intentional with our work in this area. It is an exciting time to be involved.

What have you enjoyed about the role so far?

Driving about the Diocese visiting different churches and youth ministers has been great, and soon I will be running courses like Youthscape Essentials for those who would like to develop and grow in their leadership of young people. Ultimately, I want to support churches as they seek to understand the cultural landscape and generational differences that the young people face.

Is part of your work to engage with young people too?

Yes, it's vital we hear the voice of our young people, so one of the areas that I am working on is growing the Rochester Youth Council, bringing young people from all over our Diocese together (both online and in person) to explore with them how we can connect and share Jesus with their generation.

Have you always worked in children and young people's ministry?

I have worked in youth ministry in a variety of different contexts from affluent to deprived, with small groups of young people to large and in both rural and urban communities. All are wonderful and challenging in different ways!

What do you like about being involved with young people?

I love their honesty, fun, enthusiasm and curiosity. I have learnt so much from the different young people that I have worked with. I love their willingness to explore big topics and their sense of adventure.

How can people in congregations support those volunteers and workers involved in Youth Ministry in their church?

Often those doing the children and youth work can feel lonely and they may frequently miss out on Sunday services (because they are out with the kids). In July (6 to 12), there is a National Church initiative called Recognise, which is an opportunity for churches to say 'thank you' to all those who work with children, young people, and families in their parishes. There are lots of ideas online so I would encourage everyone to have a look and take a moment to pray and give thanks for all they do.

Tell us something about your family.

I am married to Neil, who is a Vicar at St Barnabas Church, St Pauls Cray, and we have three children: Ben, who works as a youth minister in Southampton, Archie who is in his second year at Uni in Bournemouth, and Amelia who is about to sit her A levels.

What are you listening to at the moment?

I am listening to both The Youthscape Podcast and Simon Guillebaud's 'Inspired' podcast. My favourite book of all time is Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K Jerome.

Do you have any hobbies?

I play the baritone Ukelele (which sounds and looks like a small guitar).

Have you any pets?

Yes, two dogs - a Border Terrier: Barney, and, a Bordoodle: Bear. Bear is 10 months and rather wild.

Has anyone particularly inspired you?

My parents have been an amazing inspiration to me. They have faithfully served God all their lives and brought my brother and I up with such a good understanding of Jesus' love and grace. They have been great encouragers and wise advisors to Neil and I in our ministry, and also bring great fun wherever they are! I also love Jackie Pullinger who gave up so much and took such great risks to follow God's call and serve and care for vulnerable people in Hong Kong.

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Spending the day with my family, having fun together and chatting... ideally somewhere near the sea with chips and ice cream (one after the other preferably).



STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

Shirley Rogers, a Street Pastor in Medway, says she never set out with a grand plan to become a Street Pastor.

It began simply enough: I met someone who was already serving.

As she spoke about it, I remember thinking, what a great thing to do. She invited me to observe a patrol, and I went along curious but cautious. I didn't expect that by the end of the evening I would feel so invested.

There was something deeply moving about being present on the streets at night, offering simple acts of care. Looking back, I can see God's hand gently guiding me into something that has become a profound expression of my faith.

For me, everything comes back to Jesus. He went out of His way to meet people where they were. He loved people as they were. That is our model. We are not out there to judge, to lecture, or to condemn.

People often misunderstand what we do. Many assume we are going to preach at them or tell them they are sinners. You can almost see their relief when we explain that we are simply there to help anyone who might be vulnerable. Others are surprised that we are volunteers.

The rewards are often beautifully simple. A pair of flip flops for a barefoot woman. A hot drink for someone sleeping rough. Occasionally we can pray with someone right there on the street. Those moments feel like grace upon grace.

We work closely with police, security teams, and even the station staff. We remove bottles and broken glass that could be used as weapons. We check quiet corners and the bridge.

On more than one occasion we have spoken gently with someone contemplating ending their life.

Sometimes simply being there, listening, has been enough for them to choose to go home.

I truly believe our presence makes a difference in Rochester. The prayer alone changes the atmosphere.

"There was something deeply moving about being present on the streets at night, offering simple acts of care."

This ministry has taught me that everyday faith is often quiet, practical, and unseen. It looks like walking slowly down a High Street at midnight with a flask of hot water and a heart full of prayer. It looks like loving people where they are and trusting Jesus with the rest.

To find out more visit www.streetpastors.org or contact medway@streetpastors.org.uk



Diocese of *Rochester*
called together

SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As a family of faith across Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley, let's pray for our shared Called Together vision to grow missional churches, with missional leaders and missional disciples.

Dear God,

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

Bless the places of this Diocese with Spirit-filled leaders, faithful disciples, and hearts ablaze with love for you.

May our churches, chaplaincies, and communities be 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.

Find out more about the vision:

