

The View

News for Clergy, Churchwardens, LLMs and Lay Chairs

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Everything is a Gift

**A reflection by the Venerable Robin King,
Archdeacon of Stansted**

There's a bend in the river Stour as it meanders alongside the meadows in Sudbury, marking the boundary between Essex and Suffolk. It all looks very pretty, except from the perspective of members of the local rowing club – because it means the races at the annual regatta have to negotiate a bend, which obviously favours one lane over the other. To compensate for this the crew starting on the Essex side (with the advantage of the bend) starts a few meters further down the river. This is meant to make the races fair, but the unintended consequence is that the first thing all visiting competitors do when they arrive is study the draw and then survey the river in minute detail to decide which is the best lane and so whether or not they will be starting with a disadvantage.

Of course, all this does is breed uncertainty and despair – which is never helpful preparation. Many decades ago I used to waste huge amounts of mental energy doing this, sometimes losing the race in my head before I'd even set foot in the boat.



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

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It took a while, but eventually I decided that a better philosophy was to think that the lane I got was the lane I wanted. I have since said the same thing to all the crews I have coached, “The lane you get is the lane you want, and the conditions you get are the conditions you want.”

If the water is rough, you want it rough because you’ve trained for that. If the water is calm, you want it calm because it makes it easier to row your best. If you start ahead of the other crew because you’ve got the outside of the bend, that’s good because you can see them but they can’t see you. If you start behind but with the bend in your favour, that’s good because when you begin to tire the bend will start working for you.

This tortured thinking about how good or bad a hand we’ve been dealt, doesn’t only happen to rowers - we all do it.

When we were able to go out on Sundays to worship (and hopefully again, soon) I was often greeted by church wardens apologising (even before saying hello) for the few people they were expecting that morning. Understandably, whenever we plan something in church we hope for a good response. We want a good crowd at the carol service, we want lots of people to sign up to the quiet day, the Lent course, the harvest supper, and so on. But what if we stopped fretting about those things? The people we get are the people we want. Believe that the few or the many you have are the ones meant to be there and you will see how God is at work. Worry about who isn’t there, and you may well miss that.

Before we heard who our new bishop was going to be, people asked me if I had any preferred candidates – to which I replied, “The bishop we get is the bishop we want.” That’s not to say I don’t care, it’s that I care so deeply that I truly believe that Bishop Guli comes to us as a gift from God.

Jesus told his disciples (Matthew 16:24), “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Let go of some of the things you don’t need to carry – they may seem important to you at the moment and letting go may feel like a real sacrifice, but in truth, the road you see before you is the one you need to concentrate on. It’s no use worrying about things you can’t change, things you have no control over, but you do need to think about the things that God has set before you to do – and to think how any hardships might actually help more than hinder. Whichever lane you have in a rowing race, it’s still going to hurt like mad as you pull your hardest in order to win.

The last year has been really hard – headwind, rough water, the long way round - but has there been any part of it that has helped? Is any of it a gift to us? Clearly not all of it (there’s been a tragic death toll, a huge strain on our hospitals and massive disruption to businesses and schools), but have we learnt any valuable lessons as a church and society? Have we been able to draw alongside new people? Have we been reminded of the value of human contact, what it means to be incarnational? Can we say with St Paul (Romans 8:28), “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Robin King.

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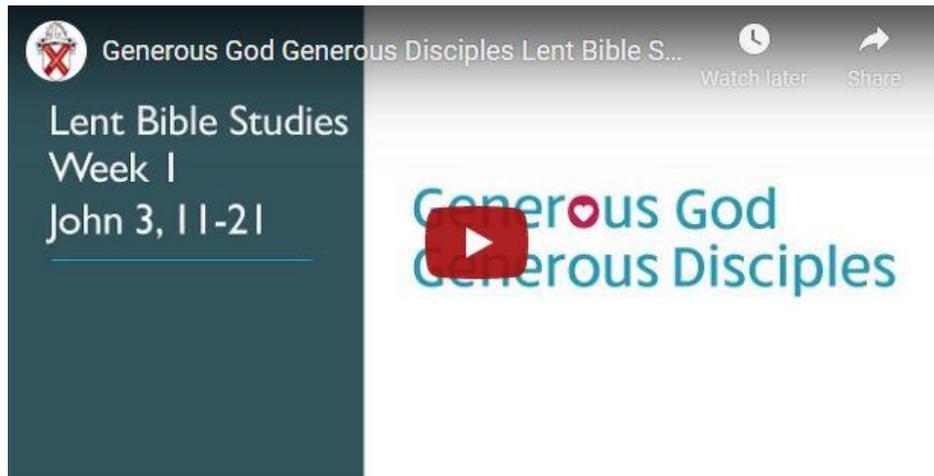
News and information

Generous God Generous Disciples

Lent Bible Studies

Week 1 materials now available

Thank you to everyone who took part in the first of our Generous God, Generous Disciples Lent Bible Studies. The video recordings are now available for you to make use of in your own parish [here](#).



Week 2 – Generous Disciples

This Sunday's Bible Study considers Generous Disciples and will be led by Archdeacon Vanessa. You can sign up [here](#).

The bible studies take place on Zoom and provide an opportunity for people across the diocese to meet and study together.

Weekly Bible Studies:

- Week 2: Sunday 28 February 6pm - 7pm. Generous Disciples – Romans 11:33-12:8. Led by Archdeacon Vanessa. [Register here](#).
- Week 3: Sunday 7 March, 6pm - 7pm Generous Giving – 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. Led by Bishop John. [Register here](#).
- Week 4: Sunday 14 March, 6pm - 7pm Generous Loving – James 2:8-17. Led by Archdeacon Ruth. [Register here](#).
- Week 5: Sunday 21 March, 6pm - 7pm Generous Living – 1 Peter 4:7-11. Led by Bishop Roger. [Register here](#).

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Forthcoming Generous God, Generous Disciples Webinars

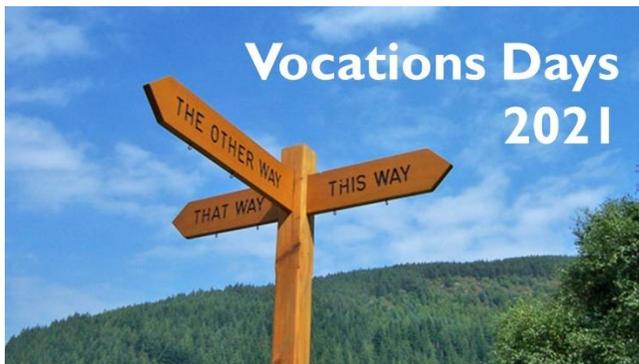
Our Generous God Generous Disciples Webinar programme aims to equip parishes with practical tools and resources to support stewardship and giving. The webinars take place on Zoom and recordings are made available on our [website afterwards](#).

Marketplace, Tuesday 23 February, 7.00pm

This webinar will signpost some of the commercial opportunities that are available to parishes to help generate additional income. We will be joined by Ama Lawrence from the Parish Buying Scheme, Roisin Lyons from Easy Fundraising, Nicola Satterford from Ecclesiastical Insurance and Sarah Mohammed from Quadient. [Register here](#).

Diocesan and Parish Finance, 16 March, 7.30pm

Join Interim Chief Operations Officer, Maureen Cole and our new Finance Director, Michaela Southworth for an overview of diocesan and parish finance. This is an opportunity to understand more about the diocese's finances - including where the money comes from and how the money is spent. If you have always wondered how your Parish Share is used then this is an opportunity to find out! There will be an opportunity to ask questions during the evening. However if you have any specific questions you would like answered, please [click here](#) to submit them beforehand so that we can include them in the presentation. [Register for the webinar here](#).



Bradwell Area Vocations Day, 27 February

The Bradwell Area Vocations day will take place by Zoom this year on Saturday 27 February between 10am and 2pm.

For further information and to register, please [click here](#).

Barking Area Vocations Day, 6 March

The Barking Area Vocations Day will take place on 6 March between 10am and 12 noon. Bishop Peter will give the key note address, there will be presentations and testimonies about lay and ordained ministry as well as plenty of opportunity for questions and discussion. Please join using Meeting ID 820 6465 9725, Password: Vocation.

Colchester Area Vocations Day, 12, 19 and 26 April

The Colchester Area Vocations Day takes place across a series of three webinars. Each webinar starts at 7.30pm and lasts approximately 1 hour 30 minutes. The webinars explore the age old question "What's my calling?" and are open to anyone aged 13 or over at any stage of life or faith. To find out more and register, [please click here](#).

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Joiners, movers and leavers

Movers

- The Revd Miranda Seaman is to become Associate Priest at All Saints Stock Harvard and St Mary and St Edward West Hanningfield having served as Associate Minister at St Margaret Downham, St Peter South Hanningfield and St Mary the Virgin Ramsden Bellhouse.
- The Revd Susan Hurley is to become Priest in Charge at the Pilgrim Parishes Stebbing having served as Assistant Curate at the Pilgrim Parishes Stebbing.
- The Revd Kenneth Wylie is to become the Area Dean for Havering Deanery and will remain as Vicar at St Andrew Hornchurch

Leavers

- The Revd Paula Griffiths has announced that she is to retire in June as Associate Priest at St Mary the Virgin, St James and St John, Saffron Walden, St Mary the Virgin Wendens Ambo. Holy Trinity Littlebury, All Saints Ashden, St Botolph Hadstock, St Mary the Virgin Debden, All Saints Wimbish with Thunderley, Great and Little Chesterford.

Please join us in praying for all those who are leaving, joining or moving between roles in our diocesan family.

Church of England, Evangelism and Discipleship Webinars

The Church of England Discipleship and Evangelism team are running a series of webinars to offer practical advice for church leaders in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Webinars include:

- Covid and Youth Ministry
- The Pandemic and Church Growth- missional opportunities
- Bereavement and funerals

For more information and to register, [please click here](#).

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Good News – St Matthias Canning Town Foodbanks

Church Plant, St Matthias Canning Town has partnered with local residents and other churches, to form a grass-roots network of foodbanks during the pandemic.

They have made a video about the foodbank which can be watched below.



Each contributing organisation has played a unique role depending on what they have to give to the network. Although they have limited physical space, St Matthias' have offered funding and delivery capacity. From their parish hub alone they have provided over 15,000 meals since the start of the pandemic, mostly resourced by Sunday offerings from their 'great-grandmother' church, Holy Trinity Brompton. They turned the children's church room into a foodbank pantry and got a grant to build a new kitchen to store food effectively.

Before the latest lockdown, they turned Sunday services into foodbank preparation and packing sessions with 20 minutes of Morning Prayer in the middle. Priest in Charge the Revd Ben Atkins says 'It was probably the truest worship we've offered to God since we planted.'

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Because of the foodbank network, St Matthias have made friends with many neighbours in the packing and delivery team as well as those requesting deliveries.

At Christmas they handed out 100 special Christmas hampers, and asked foodbank users to nominate a friend to receive one too. Ben picks up the story “We realised many people who needed the support were not accessing it because they were ashamed, so we created a system where people could volunteer to pack and prepare, and also take a bag home for themselves. This worked well.

This is an important sign of what we have wanted to achieve: to make lasting friendships and be part of a neighbourhood effort. We are not a powerful service provider; simply a bunch of people wanting to follow the Servant Jesus.”

The scope of St Matthias service to the local community has continued to grow and in January they employed a neighbourhood mental health worker.