

Rev'd Amanda would appreciate it if anyone knowing of illness or any other trouble in the Parish would notify her as soon as possible on 020 3940 1897 so that she, or a member of the Church, can call without delay.

If you have any enquiry about baptism, marriage or another service, or if there is something else you would like to discuss with a member of the team, please make an appointment, through the Church Office (020 8462 1373) or by emailing:

info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk

DECEMBER 2025

It will soon be Christmas. All are welcome at our Christmas services as we celebrate together. On 20th December the whole community comes together for "Carols by the Tower", with carols by lamplight outside the St Mary's tower. Families may also enjoy the all-age Christingle service on 21st December, and the Crib service on Christmas Eve. Then of course there are the much-loved traditional services, Nine Lessons and Carols on the evening of 21st December, and Holy Communion on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day morning.

In our carol services we will read again Isaiah's words, proclaiming the coming of "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). In our crib service, angels will proclaim "peace on Earth" as we tell the story of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8-14). They are words of great comfort.

Yet in our world we see what Gerard Manley Hopkins described as "piecemeal peace". "What pure peace", he wrote in his poem, Peace, "allows alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it?" How indeed can we speak of peace at Christmas when in Israel and Palestine, Ukraine and Russia, Sudan, Congo, and many other places there is war? Are our nativities naive?

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, visited Israel and Palestine recently. He returned speaking passionately about the urgent need for peace and justice. Despite expressing relief at "some sort of ceasefire in Gaza... it is still a very long way from the peace that is needed," he said. Quoting the prophet Jeremiah, he continued: "we should be wary of saying 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace' (Jeremiah 6. 14)". Superficial solutions which do not address the deep injustice of violence are too fragile to last. When, as in Israel and Palestine, violence has not actually stopped, proclaiming peace is wishful thinking. Rather, as Archbishop Stephen writes, "peace in Israel

and Palestine must mean peace and justice for everyone – be they Christian, Muslim or Jewish".

We may feel compassion for events around the world such as these, and yet the implications also come close to home: what happens far away can connect to the heart of our own lives and community. Just to offer a few examples: those with family or friends in places of war feel acute fear and distress at the situations of those they love who are at risk. To give another example, when war drives people from their homes, it can lead to difficult discussions about what is offered to refugees. Sometimes the UK itself has a recent or historic connection to a current conflict. We cannot avoid, even if we wish, our connectedness to others.

So building peace and justice is not only a task for places of war, but also one to practise at home, with our families, friends, and our community. It will never be easy but is a painstaking, costly task. It demands a seemingly impossible double action: that we do not reward injustice, and yet that we also honour the humanity of those who we disagree with - or who are our enemies. It may seem impossible, and yet lies at the heart of the way Jesus lived, taught and died.

When we come to Christmas services, when we celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we are not ignoring the reality of war and division. Rather, we are welcoming the life of Jesus into the hard places of our world and into our lives, to do God's costly work of peace and justice there. This is no naive nativity, but the promise of God with us, coming to heal all that needs healing. And, as we welcome Jesus' birth ourselves, we too may find strength in the joy and hope of Christmas to commit ourselves to this godly work of peace and justice, and in that commitment to be ourselves embraced by the Prince of Peace. As Hopkins concluded his poem: "When Peace here does house, he does not come to coo, he comes with work to do".

Rev'd Tim Aldred
Curate

A BEACON OF JOY: A WONDERFUL ALL HALLOWS' EVE LIGHT PARTY!

On Friday 31st October, St Mary's opened its doors to the young families of Hayes. It was a brilliant, positive alternative to the usual spooky Halloween festivities, providing a safe and fun environment for our young children (and their adults) to enjoy themselves. The entire church was transformed with dimmed main lights, lanterns on windowsills; coloured

lights and cheerful decorations spread throughout the whole space. From the moment the families were ushered in through the main doors by Security (Richard and Rev Amanda!) the upbeat music created a lovely warm and welcoming atmosphere.

At the front desk each child collected a 'passport' to guide them around the evening's activities and at each activity station they collected a stamp to chart their progress



The children were kept busy with a variety of activities including silent disco, glowsticks, face painting and making their own lanterns with battery-powered tea lights to take home. The games, such as the 'Lego Saints Scavenger Hunt', donut challenge and our take on the classic apple bobbing, were a huge hit and kept everyone thoroughly entertained.

The Bell tower doubled as a café for the night, serving hot chocolate topped with marshmallows as well as the more usual tea, coffee and squash.

With passports completed, the children returned to the front desk to choose from a rainbow-coloured array of goody bags decorating the shelves at the back of church.

What an incredible effort by all of our wonderful volunteers who made it such an amazing event. Thanks to you all, particularly Kate who did the lion's share of the organising. We decided to make the event free

entry and in total we had 54 child and 46 adult visitors through the doors as well as all of our helpers, so a great turnout. All the feedback received so far has been extremely positive and we're already looking forward to next year's event. Why don't you consider volunteering next time and come and join in the fun?

Stuart Spence



Why a Light Party?

All-Hallows Eve is what we say
To mark the eve of 'All Saints Day'.
For many years tradition stood
To mark the joy, the light, the good.

To celebrate those gone from here
To bless the souls of loved ones dear.
Yet somehow in the years gone by,
Christian traditions went awry.

Confusion crept in: playing pranks
Demanding sweets with little thanks
Dressing up and acting scary
Making other people wary.

And so, as Christians here tonight
Instead of giving you a fright,
We hope to share a better treat,
For love and light is far more sweet.

No skeletons or zombies please,
To mock the dead, to laugh or tease,
Just wholesome joy and family fun
To share God's light with everyone.



St Mary's Hayes Mothers' Union wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year; and that we can continue to grow in our faith and in promoting family unity and love.

Is it just me or does anyone else feel that now the frenzy of Halloween and fireworks have finished, we are rushing headlong towards the hustle and bustle of Christmas? But first comes Advent. So, what is Advent? Advent is the final countdown to Christmas Day, and many children will have an Advent Calendar to help them count the days. It is also really special as the word 'Advent' means coming. During Advent, we as Christians make ourselves spiritually ready for the coming or birth of Jesus Christ. Traditionally an Advent wreath containing four candles representing Hope, Love, Joy and Peace are lit on Sundays leading up to Christmas.

Rochester Autumn Members' Meeting was on Saturday 25th October 2025 at St Justus church, Rochester. Cilla, John and myself were able to represent our branch at this meeting. The morning began with a Eucharist service led by the Vicar of St Justus, Rev Folake Makanjuola. This was followed by a talk by Diana Pattison and an introduction to the Anna chaplains. Diana Pattison, a member from Holy Trinity Bromley Common, spoke about the Anna Chaplaincy movement. She started with the origin and mission of the Chaplaincy and went on to give us some exercises to help us understand the breath and complexity of working with people who may be experiencing the early stages of dementia. Anna Chaplains, together with Anna Friends, have a ministry

to support the spiritual life of older people. Working on a one-to-one basis or with Church communities they bring hope, support and informed compassion to a large section of society who are often sidelined or ignored when parishes plan their worship and social activities. In 2018 there were 1.6 million people aged 85 years and over in the UK. This figure is rising and is projected to continue to rise annually. The Anna Chaplaincy movement wants to enable all older people to be included and embraced within their local faith community. Their aim is to have an Anna chaplain in every parish to support the ministry team. The idea for the Anna ministry began with conversations between Anglican and Methodists in Alton (Hampshire) in 2010. The idea spread and the broadcaster Debbie Thrower led the way. Why Anna? Check out Luke Ch 2 v. 36 – 38. Using exercises provided by the Alzheimer's Society (www.alzheimers.org.uk/) we were challenged to consider the complexity of daily living as our powers of concentration and communication fade. Just how many steps do you take to make a cup of tea? From making the decision that you would like a cuppa to raising the full cup to your lips – 12? 14? 16? Just how many actions have you taken? Diana reminded us dementia is not necessarily a part of the ageing process; it is caused by diseases of the brain and encompasses more than the loss of memory. It is possible to live well with dementia – there is always more to the person than the disease. Diana's message was that each of us is unique. Try to be kind, to be understanding with everyone but particularly with the older people in your community.

Following Diana's talk, the Diocesan President brought us up to date with the Mothers' Union 150-year celebrations and challenges. She invited ideas as to how Rochester Mothers' Union might contribute to the national challenges and what events members would like to see in our diocese.

Assisted by Diocesan Administrator Christina Shannon, Mary Margaret updated us on the paperwork required to keep our entry on the Mothers' Union database in order. The rainbow sales tables were well supported with goods and buyers.

Administrator Christina Shannon is working hard to ensure our entry on the Mothers' Union database of Members and Friends is correct. So, for this year Christina is asking that we fill in the forms to make sure our details are correct. If you pay tax and want to Gift Aid your membership fees, please complete that section. When the database was moved to a new site, the information on Gift Aid was lost so has to be re-entered. If you paid tax up to and including 2020, and you were a member, please tell us. If you did pay tax for some of the past years, tell

us which years. if you started to pay tax, tell us when. Mothers' Union can only claim Gift Aid if you (not your husband) paid tax.

Thank you to Carol, who laid a poppy wreath, on behalf of St Mary, Hayes, Mothers' Union. As usual it was a very moving service and was well attended by members of Hayes community.

Our next meeting is our Christmas Lunch 12 for 12.30 at "The New Inn" Hayes on **9th December**. We will meet as usual on the 1st Tuesday of the month, **6th January**, for a social get together with some of us staying on for lunch.



- *If you have any other wishes or ideas for speakers, please let me know as I am putting together next year's programme.*
- *Please consider whether you would be willing to serve on the committee for Mothers' Union. We need to have more helpers to set up the meetings room, ideas for planning programme.*
- *If you can help with refreshments on a rota at our meetings.*

Please hold all MU members in your prayers. Remember especially those who are sick and on the prayer list, and anyone on their own over the Christmas period. Also remember those who are suffering abuse. Give them hope in their hopelessness; help them find strength in their weakness; grant them freedom from their oppression; transform their brokenness into wholeness; and heal their wounds, visible and invisible. Grant us all the courage and wisdom, grace and humility, to act at all times with compassion and care.

Next month there will be a report on our Mothers' Union stall at our Church's Charity Fair.

If you are interested in joining Mothers' Union, please contact Avril Ashford on **0208 468 7785**.

Avril Ashford

ST. MARY'S CHURCH DIARY DECEMBER 2025

Morning Prayers take place daily at 9.15am Monday to Wednesday on Zoom* and Monday to Friday in Church (10am on Saturday) throughout the year, except Bank Holidays.

Tuesday 2nd	11.00am-12.15pm	Bible Study**
Wednesday 3rd	10.30am-12.00noon	Coffee Morning for the bereaved and those living on their own**
	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
	2.45pm	Hayes Men's Fellowship In OCS

ADVENT 2

Sunday 7th	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	Morning Praise
		Sunbeams session** (age 3-6)
Tuesday 9th	10.00-11.00am	Prayer Group**
Wednesday 10th	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
Thursday 11th	10.30am-12.30pm	Craft Group**

ADVENT 3

Saturday 13th	12.30pm	Churchyard Tidy Up
Sunday 14th	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	Parish Communion CW
		Blaze and Sunbeams session** (age 3-10)
Wednesday 17th	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
Friday 19th	10.00-11.00am	Twinkles – singing, story, snacks**
Saturday 20th	4.00pm	Carols by the Tower

ADVENT 4

Sunday 21st	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	Christingle Service
	6.00pm	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
Tuesday 23rd	10.00-11.00am	Prayer Group**

Christmas Eve

Wednesday 24th	4.00pm	Crib Service
	8.00pm	First Communion of Christmas

Christmas Day

Thursday 25th	10.30am	Family Service with Communion
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1ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

Sunday 28th	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	Parish Communion CW

* for Zoom link please contact the Church office

** denotes Meetings Room

The church is also open for private prayer on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10.00am to 12.00noon unless there is an event taking place. Details of these will be given in the weekly pew sheets.

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## A RECENT MEMORIAL SERVICE IN THE PARISH

Michael Naish

## **HAYES MEN'S FELLOWSHIP**

### **For retired or semi-retired men of any faith or none**

December already? The months seem to be passing even more quickly year by year, but that passage of time does mean that there are more well supported HMF activities for you to read about in these pages!

We start with the first outing of this current HMF Session which was to Ramsgate, visiting the Kent Battle of Britain Memorial Museum at Hawkinge on the way.

The Museum is on the actual site of the de-commissioned RAF station which provided a vital forward base to enable fighters from Biggin Hill and elsewhere to refuel quickly and return swiftly to the battle in the skies above Kent and the English Channel. The rare artefacts on display included many examples of genuine crashed aeroplane parts, both British and German, with vivid and detailed descriptions of whence they were recovered – in the Kentish fields, in the Channel and in France and Belgium. There are also complete aircraft on display in the reconditioned wartime hangars. Uniforms and equipment of the period, in recreations of the appropriate rooms, accompanied by background music and newsreels of the wartime period, add to the historic “feel”.

Later the group went Ramsgate just over a mile away, where lunch was on the menu! Then time for a little sightseeing of the magnificent sea front and harbour facade with a current display about “the little ships” which took part from there in the miraculous evacuation from Dunkirk.

Our most recent walk was led by Keith Dixon who stepped up in the absence of Tony Archer. Keith was joined by a group of members and also by Rev'd Amanda Spence, HMF President. They set off along West Common Road to the common, in light rain. Crossing Croydon Road, they walked through the woods to Keston Ponds and viewed Caesar's Sacred Spring. Allegedly Julius Caesar watered his horses there, being close to a Roman settlement. The spring is the source of the Ravensbourne river. Thereafter the Wilberforce Oak was visited. By that point it was raining cats and dogs and a good soaking was had by all! Retracing their steps, the walkers had an excellent lunch at The Greyhound before returning to Hayes.

Our latest meeting heard a talk from Lara Murphy about “The History and work of the Dogs Trust”. Lara is a Supporter Relations Officer with the Dogs Trust in Canterbury. She explained that the Dogs Trust was, prior to 2003, called the National Canine Defence League and was formed in 1891 to deal with dog welfare issues. In 1967 they adopted a humane non-destruction policy, with dogs unable to find a new home

staying with the Trust for the rest of their lives. In fact one of their centres is used as an old dogs' home for this purpose. One of their most memorable awareness and fundraising campaigns was in 1978 and included the slogan "A dog is for life not just for Christmas".

The Dogs Trust is apparently the UK's largest Dog Welfare Charity and describes its role as dog rehoming and dog rescue charity. Unlike, for example, Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home they are not licensed to take strays off the street. Instead, they receive dogs from local authority dog pounds or from owners unable to look after their pets. They receive no government funding with 90% of their income generated through donations and legacies. New owners are charged an adoption fee of £275 but this only covers a fraction of the overall costs of the Trust.

Now the Trust has 22 centres up and down the country, with over 10,000 dogs passing through their care in 2024. On average, dogs stayed at their centres for just over 60 days before being rehomed.

Overall, a very interesting and engaging talk that got our 2025 session of meetings off to an excellent start, attracting many questions and drawing generous applause at the end.

At our meeting on 3 December the Committee will be treating members to mince pies with their cuppa as the traditional marker of the beginning of our HMF Christmas break. Enjoy yours too, until we are back here in 2026, but remember that our website ([www.hayesmensfellowship.org](http://www.hayesmensfellowship.org)) is always available with the latest details of our activities and news.

**Graham Marsden, Secretary**

**Allan Evison, Asst Secretary**

**Contact details: [secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org](mailto:secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org)  
or phone 07764 153383**



## QUEEN MARY'S NEEDLEWORK GUILD

The Guild was founded in 1882 when Lady Wolverton set up a small sewing circle known as the London Needlework Guild in response to a request from the Matron of an orphanage for help in providing clothes for the children in her care. In 1885 Princess Mary of Tech became the patron of the Guild and when she died in 1897 her daughter Queen Mary became patron until 1953. At the outbreak of World War 1 the Guild supported the troops by providing comforts for them and it was renamed Queen Mary's Needlework Guild. At the end of the war the Guild resumed making and distributing clothes to the poor. In 1953 when Queen Mary died Queen Elizabeth, later the Queen Mother, became patron and in 1986 it was renamed the Queen Mary's Clothing Guild. In 2003, following the death of the Queen Mother the previous year, Princess Alexandra, the Honourable Lady Ogilvy, became patron and remains so until this day. The Guild was renamed yet again in 2010 as the Queen Mother's Clothing Guild in honour of the Queen Mother's long support. Once a year for a week in October, known as Packing Week, all the items made by members of the Guild are displayed in St. James' Palace before they are distributed to various charities.



This history of the Guild has been leading up to an explanation of how the Guild is connected to our Christmas Crib services at St. Mary's. One October day in 2001\* I was very fortunate to be invited by a member of the Guild to attend the event at St. James' Palace. Tables displaying all the garments made that year were lining each side of a very large room. We were able to walk round and look at all the beautiful work and after a little while the Queen Mother, accompanied by several corgis, came into the room to join us all. I don't remember how long she was there but a good while I think and she chatted to the ladies of the Guild. At some point in the proceedings I bought a raffle ticket and at the end of the afternoon when the tickets were drawn I discovered to my great surprise that I had won a doll. It was beautifully dressed in handknitted vest and pants, a dress and pink trimmed bonnet. Ever since then this doll has been wrapped in a shawl and used as baby Jesus in the Crib service though I did remove the dress and replaced the bonnet with a crochet cap to cover all the blonde hair!

I felt so privileged to have had this experience and be in the room with the Queen Mother just five months before her death in March 2002 at the age of 102.

**Hilary Burtonshaw**

*\*You might wonder why this article is being written in 2025 and not in 2001 but a recent conversation with a friend about royal palaces reminded me of my visit to St. James' Palace and made me think it might be of interest to others.*

## **REFORMATION OR A NEW HEART?**

He was very young when he came to the throne, but at the age of eight it was already clear to many that in Josiah, the new King of Israel there were echoes of King David. From the age of sixteen Josiah began to earnestly seek the God of his illustrious ancestor. Throughout the 31 years of his reign he sought to bring the people of Israel back to a faithful and obedient relationship with God. There was no doubt that a significant reformation took place; yet it was skin deep. Josiah died in 605 BC and his successors quickly went rogue again. Within 18 years Jerusalem had fallen to the might of the Babylonians. Israel no longer had any need of a king. As a separate nation, it was no more.

But amongst the exiles were many who remained true to the God of Israel, continuing to keep the light of faith alive whilst captive in those foreign lands; including of course Daniel (and his friends) who rose to a senior administrative role in the empire of Persia which succeeded the Babylonians.

Within 70 years of exile a number began to return to Israel, under licence from Cyrus the new king of Persia. A new temple was built. But everyone realised that the temple and indeed the nation seemed a pale imitation of what went before. Jerusalem as a city was still in ruins. Those who returned found themselves at odds with those who were now there and under severe pressure to compromise their faith. Eventually, towards the middle of the fifth century, word got back to Nehemiah who at that time had a significant role in the household of the then King of Persia, Artaxerxes. The book of Nehemiah records how when he heard the state of the people and the city, he sat down and wept. And prayed. He confessed his own sins and those of the nation. Yet, he knew two things: the God of Israel was a God who redeems and rescues; and He had not forgotten His people.

Nehemiah was given a licence by the king to return to Jerusalem as governor to help his people. A priority was the wall around the city. When the wall had been completed the people stood in the square as Ezra the scribe read out loud the book of the law. All morning the book of the law was read out. The people grieved, most likely as it began to dawn how far they had drifted from the word of God in their daily lives. It was the first time they had heard the voice of God to the nation for a very long time.

*Remains of ancient wall in Jerusalem originally Hezekiah's but likely used by Nehemiah.*



Nehemiah, together with Ezra, began a re-forming and revitalising of the nation. Over the next few hundred years the scriptures became an ever more important building block for the nation, together with Temple worship. The danger was the tendency to so enshrine the words of scripture and the ritual that the voice of God became inaudible.

Four hundred years later the voice of God came to Israel, not in words on a parchment or scroll but through a living person, the incarnated Son of God.

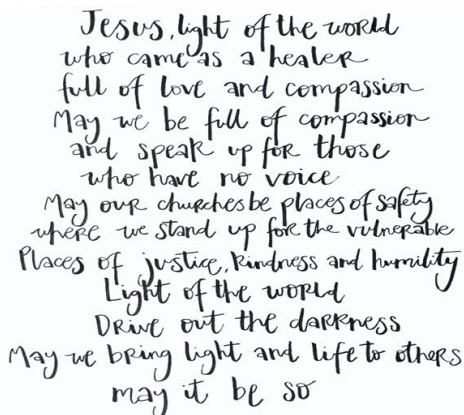
Tragically, the majority of the scribes and religious rulers of the people did not want Jesus. He was too much of a threat to their pride and the lives they had built for themselves. Jesus was later to say of them that hearing, they did not hear because they did not want to hear. But so many others were deeply attracted to what Jesus said and did. There was a hunger for the word of God. The words came with an authority they had never known, and spoke to their hearts, words that challenged and comforted but also restored and healed.

The heart of the nation was being called to repent and to be forgiven their sins. And as He healed the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12) it was clear that Jesus indeed had the power not just to heal the body but also to forgive sins. He had come to heal and restore not just the people of Israel but the whole world. He had come not to reform the nation but, through His death on the cross, to give us all new birth, and the joy of eternal life.

### **David James**

*The central Bible Study meets first and third Tuesdays in the Church Meeting Room. 11am -12.15. All are warmly invited to join us. We are currently studying the early chapters of the Gospel of Mark.*

## SAFEGUARDING SUNDAY 2025



Jesus, light of the world  
who came as a healer  
full of love and compassion  
May we be full of compassion  
and speak up for those  
who have no voice  
May our churches be places of safety  
where we stand up for the vulnerable  
Places of justice, kindness and humility  
Light of the world  
Drive out the darkness  
May we bring light and life to others  
may it be so

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November St Mary's took part in 'Safeguarding Sunday' an initiative seeing churches across the UK use this day to raise awareness of Safeguarding within our churches.

This year's theme was 'Action Speaks Louder' and was to encourage churches to take steps to improve Safeguarding within their church. To raise awareness of Safeguarding issues I spoke at the 8am and 10:30am services and offered Safeguarding training to anyone who would like to take part after the service. It was encouraging to see people attend the training and I am hopeful that it will be offered again early next year.

I also spoke to the young children at the Fresh Start service and in a child friendly way we discussed people who looked after us and took care of us – they seemed to enjoy it and it was a very interactive talk. The best answer given to the question 'Who can you think of who looks after us?' was 'Baby Jesus' – what a wonderful answer!

Part of Safeguarding is ensuring that we are a welcoming and safe space for all and to let those who attend our church know that it is a safe space and that we take Safeguarding seriously. A new Safeguarding Suggestion Box has been set up at the back of the church and if you have any questions about the role of Safeguarding at St Mary's or have any ideas about what we can do to make our church a welcoming and safer space then please put your suggestions in the box.

**Clare Scriven**  
**Parish Safeguarding Officer**

## **Safeguarding Sunday useful contact details:**

**Safe Spaces** Free & independent support service for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church.

Safespacesengland.org.uk **0300 303 1056**

**Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid** BCWA offers free support and advice to all Bromley residents and council staff who have experienced domestic abuse. [Info@bcwa.org.uk](mailto:Info@bcwa.org.uk) bcwa.org.uk 020 8313 9303

**Whiteribbon.org.uk** Charity set up to prevent violence against women and girls – further information and useful links/videos and webinars available on website

### **Helplines**

NSPCC: **0808 800 5000**

Family Lives: **0808 800 2222**

Childline: **0800 1111**

National Domestic Violence Helpline: **0808 2000 247**

Stop It Now: **0808 1000 900**

Action On Elder Abuse: **080 8808 8141**

Samaritans: **116 123**

Modern Slavery helpline – (to report or for victims) **0800 808 3733**

Victim Support **08 08 16 89 111**

Safeguarding Officer Clare Scriven: **0775 123 7577**

Diocese's Support for victims and survivors:

[www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding/supportforvictimsandsurvivors](http://www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding/supportforvictimsandsurvivors)

Diocesan Safeguarding Team: **07825 315 578 07768 036 590**

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Items for the January issue by 16th December please.

Copy to the Editor. January magazines will be ready for distribution on 3rd January.

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