

Maidstone Vacancy Newsletter

October 2022

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A Chaplain's Introduction

With the retirement of Bishop Rod Thomas on Sunday 2nd October, the See of Maidstone is now vacant. We understand that the process of appointing a successor to Bishop Rod is well underway, and we are expecting an announcement later in the autumn. It is expected that Rod's successor, who will become the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, will be consecrated in January 2023.

During the vacancy, the Pastoral Advisers and I will be seeking to provide as much pastoral support to 'resolution parishes' as we can. The Maidstone Office will also remain open over the coming months, although we are sad to be saying goodbye to Mrs Rachel Lickiss, who has served faithfully as Rod's PA throughout his time as bishop. Mrs Naomi Teasdale continues to be based in the Office, however, and will be happy to deal with any administrative questions you may have over the coming weeks. Please, therefore, do not hesitate to be in contact if we can assist in any way; our contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Meanwhile, do join us in praying for whoever it is that the Lord is calling to be the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. They will be taking on their episcopal responsibilities at a critical time in the life of the Church of England (the consecration is expected to be only twelve days before the February General Synod, for example), and they will have a heavy workload in their first few months in office as they seek to develop working relationships across the different dioceses of the Church of England. Please pray for both the grace and the power of God in their life and ministry.

Finally, in this newsletter you will see the wonderful news of the appointment of Carrie Sandom as a Pastoral Adviser for Women in Ministry, a "thank you" note from Rod after his Farewell Service (as well as a YouTube link for those who would like to see the recording of that service), and some practical details about the vacancy period. I hope you find it helpful.

With love in Christ,

Mark

Senior Chaplain to the Bishop

Pastoral Adviser for Women in Ministry

Carrie Sandom has been appointed the Bishop of Maidstone's Pastoral Adviser for Women in Ministry, and joined his team on 1st October 2022. This is a one day a week secondment from the Proclamation Trust, where she will continue to work the rest of the time. Her appointment was one of Bishop Rod's final actions before his retirement, and he was delighted the appointment could be finalised before the vacancy period.



Carrie was ordained to the permanent diaconate in July 1994 and, since then, has worked in local churches in a range of different contexts. She served her title at St Helen's Church Bishopsgate, before working for 9 years at St Andrew the Great in Cambridge. She then worked for the United Benefice of Henham, Elsenham and Ugley, before returning to London to serve at Christ Church Mayfair. In 2011, she joined the staff team at St John's, Tunbridge Wells, where she worked with women of all ages and stages of life. She stepped back from this role in 2018, following her appointment as Director of Women's Ministry at the Proclamation Trust in London. This involves teaching and tutoring women attending the Cornhill Training Course and running training days and residential conferences for women in ministry.

Carrie has a wealth of experience in local church ministry and has championed complementarian ministry within the conservative evangelical constituency for over 25 years. She is a much-needed addition to the Bishop of Maidstone's team of Pastoral Advisers and, amongst other things, will be seeking to support the 150+ women currently serving in 'resolution parishes' throughout the UK.

A note from Rod

Dear brothers and sisters in ministry,

Having now retired, I look back on my seven years as Bishop of Maidstone with great thanksgiving. Psalm 28:7 says 'The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts and I am helped'. I have certainly felt the Lord's strength and help in this time and I hope you feel the same way too.

Those of you who were able to be at one of my Regional Meetings this year will know that I believe that in terms both of number and attitude, complementarian evangelicals have established themselves firmly in many dioceses, even if there are still struggles to realise all that the House of Bishops' Declaration looked forward to. This is by no means all my doing. Many of you have had to face difficult times as you helped your PCCs move towards the passing of resolutions. You have also engaged with your Diocesan bishops in gracious and courageous ways that have then opened the door for my ministry. Ours has been a genuine partnership in the gospel and I am profoundly grateful for your commitment.

Many of you have been in touch with me to express regret that you could not be at my Farewell Service. The fact is that the rail strike made attendance impossible for many – and I just appreciate very much that you were thinking of me. In the event, I found the service at Oak Hill very moving, surrounded as I was by a good number of dear friends.

After the service I was presented with a large number of cards and one very large cheque. I was completely taken aback by your generosity – and Mark told me that many people had contributed. So may I say a heartfelt thank you to everybody who did so. Not only will the gift make a real material difference to what Lesley and I are able to look forward to in retirement, but I see in it too a real expression of love. I can't tell you how good it is to come to the end of my stipendiary ministry knowing that at its heart are such warm, loving relationships. Thank you very much indeed from us both.



As I hope you know, I am continuing to be a member of the House of Bishops' Next Steps Group until January after which I trust that my successor will be in post. I am also helping with some particular pastoral support. That apart, I am taking a bit of a break from things episcopal until Spring of 2023. So this comes with best wishes from us both and many 'thank yous' for your fellowship and generosity.

Rod & Lesley Thomas

[The recording of the Farewell Service for Rod can be viewed online via <https://youtu.be/VkvQE36EoZo>]

Arrangements for the Vacancy in See

Revd Mark Wallace, as Senior Chaplain to the Bishop, will be seeking to oversee arrangements during the vacancy. He is available via mark.wallace@bishopofmaidstone.org or on 01206 572641.

It may be particularly helpful to be aware of the following:

- **From Maidstone to Ebbsfleet.** You will have noticed that we are continuing to use the 'Maidstone' language, even though the next Bishop will be appointed to the See of Ebbsfleet. At some point, probably in January, we will be making the transition from Maidstone to Ebbsfleet (which will affect, for example, the website address and all staff email addresses). We will seek to give as much notice of these changes as we can, once we have greater clarity about the relevant processes.
- **Vacancies & Interviews.** As much as possible, the Maidstone Team will seek to assist with 'resolution parish' vacancies and interviews. We particularly encourage all clergy who are aware of upcoming vacancies to notify the Senior Chaplain as soon as possible, and we hope that all 'resolution parishes' going into a period of vacancy (or with interviews coming up) will feel able to call upon the support of the Bishop's Chaplain and/or the Pastoral Advisers.
- **Requests for Information about PCC Resolutions under the HoB Declaration.** Requests from Incumbents, Churchwardens, or PCC Secretaries are welcomed – either about passing a potential resolution for the first time, or about reviewing a resolution that has previously been passed some years ago. It may be possible to arrange for the Bishop's Chaplain or one of the Pastoral Advisers to visit a PCC to assist with discussions and answer any questions.
- **Ordinands & Ordinations.** We expect that the Bishop of Ebbsfleet will be in post for the 2023 Ordination Services. However, it would be very helpful to know in advance of any ordinands who might be requesting the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's involvement. Please therefore contact

Naomi Teasdale in the Maidstone Office with any information or updates about proposed ordinations potentially involving the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet.

- **Confirmation Services.** The Office is happy to register any requests for Confirmation Services. These requests will await the incoming Bishop of Ebbsfleet, and we expect to be able to respond to requests in the spring.
- **Office Arrangements & Contacts.** Rachel Lickiss will be retiring at the end of October. The Maidstone Office will therefore be overseen by Naomi Teasdale, and we hope also to be able to announce shortly news of an Administrative Assistant to support the Maidstone Office Team. The Office in Blindley Heath remains open, for now.
- **Email addresses for Rod and Rachel.** Please note that Rod's email (rod.thomas@...) and Rachel's email (rachel.lickiss@...) will have ceased to operate by the end of the October. Emails that would have been sent to Rod should instead be redirected to Mark Wallace, as Senior Chaplain; emails for Rachel should be sent to Naomi Teasdale (contact details below).

The Maidstone Commitments

We are pleased to report that 16 PCCs have now made the Maidstone Commitments, and are working towards meeting them over the coming months. Several more have advised us that the Commitments will be on their PCC agenda later in the autumn. Do please keep the Maidstone Office informed of progress in your own parish.

As you may recall, the Maidstone Commitments were formulated by a working group established by Bishop Rod in 2021, in the wake of concerns that had been raised about the culture of some evangelical churches. These five commitments are specifically for those complementarian parishes under the Bishop's pastoral care, and form part of a series of initiatives designed to promote the gospel by generating fresh confidence in the culture of conservative or 'classical' evangelical churches.

The Maidstone Commitments are now available in printed form, and any church wanting additional copies should contact Naomi Teasdale in the Bishop's Office. The PDF is still available for download [from the Bishop's website](#).

Prayer Requests

Please give thanks to God for:

- the ongoing progress in the appointment process for the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet
- the appointment of Carrie Sandom as Pastoral Adviser for Women in Ministry
- the faithful ministry of Rod Thomas, and the celebration of that in his Farewell Service

Please pray for:

- the faithful ministry and personal godliness of the new bishop
- the process of transition as the next bishop begins their public ministry
- Rachel Lickiss as she retires from the Maidstone Office in the coming days
- Rod's ongoing involvement in the LLF process, reaching its culmination early in 2023

Bishop's Staff Team & Contact Details

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Revd Dick Farr, the Bishop's Pastoral Adviser for the Southern Province
07871 657920 rw.farr@bishopofmaidstone.org

Revd Carrie Sandom, the Bishop's Pastoral Adviser for Women in Ministry
07941 295932 carrie.sandom@bishopofmaidstone.org

Mrs Naomi Teasdale, Office Manager
01342 834140 naomi.teasdale@bishopofmaidstone.org

[Please note that Mrs Rachel Lickiss, who has served as Bishop Rod's PA from the beginning of his episcopal ministry, will be retiring at the end of October. We are deeply grateful for her service to Rod and the wider church, and will miss her greatly.]

Postal address: The Old Vicarage, 29 St John's Meadow, Blindley Heath, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6JU

If you wish to unsubscribe from our newsletter, please email naomi.teasdale@bishopofmaidstone.org