

Archdeacons' Visitation News



Dear Churchwardens

I wonder if you have scripture passages which simply will not let you go. Here is one of mine, from Matthew's Gospel: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Perhaps it is unsurprising that these lines speak deeply to me as I prepare for retirement. At the same time, they present an abiding challenge for anyone's pilgrimage into God's deeper grace and mercy. I think it is a passage that we are all called to be mindful of. However, it might speak especially to churchwardens.

Jesus reminds us that he has no wish to destroy us. Rather he wants to set us free to have life in abundance. He says, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' The work and ministry of a churchwarden, even when exercised in the company of a gifted and able team, is demanding. It can be a recipe for weariness precisely because being a warden requires a readiness to carry significant responsibilities. Wardens' work is weighty work. Nonetheless, to be in the company of Christ is first of all to be in a place of rest. Jesus offers a vision of service and ministry which asks us to be yoked with him and his company for the most remarkable work: the preparation of God's field, the world, for the full flowering of the Kingdom.

I am not naive. The image of a 'yoke' potentially conjures a vision of us being like beasts of burden trudging across fields while Christ, the farmer, urges us on. Perhaps that is how ministry feels sometimes. I know that feeling. The weary, burdensome trudge of service. The loneliness and exhaustion, where love seems to have worn thin. The sense that one shall not see the glorious day when God's Kingdom flowers with grace, mercy, peace.

Nonetheless, the call is to find 'rest for our souls'. The great spiritual director, Fr Gerry Hughes, claimed that we are 'made for rest.' What he meant is that though we are called to work and serve, the defining call on our lives is to shape them around worship and prayer. Prayer and worship are rest precisely because they open us to God's deepest reality. This is the reality

which is free from fear and frenetic flailing about, the urge to try and keep everything going or attempt to keep the juggling balls of ministry from falling to the floor. When we are yoked to this inner freedom we grow more like Christ.

So may we all, lay or ordained, warden or not, dare to take the risk of letting go. Of being where God is – the God who is Love and who grants us rest and peace. Let us dare to pray. To worship the God whose yoke is easy and who grants our souls rest.

Archdeacon Rachel



The Venerable Dr Rachel Mann
Archdeacon of Salford and Bolton



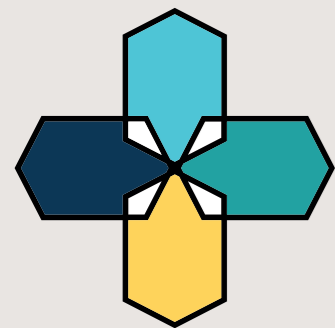
The Venerable Karen Best
Archdeacon of Manchester



The Venerable Karen Smeeton
Archdeacon of Rochdale



Our Vision



Our vision is for the Diocese of Manchester to be a **worshipping, growing, transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community.**

So much of what we are already doing is contributing to a culture of hope and an expectation of growth thanks to the continued

commitment of clergy and lay leaders across our diocese. Thank you to our churchwardens who play a key role in all that we do here in the Diocese of Manchester.

We serve in an area that has a rich history of culture and innovation, shaped by diverse and vibrant communities and a longstanding commitment to social justice. It is a wonderful place to engage in Gospel Ministry.

Our work together grows out of Jesus's Great Commandment which is to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... and love your neighbour as yourself' (*Matthew 22: 36-40*)...

...and out of his Great Commission, 'to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (*Matthew 28:19-20*).

Our strategy is based on positive, inspiring and relevant plans for the future, building on our learning from the significant changes and investments that are already underway. Many of us have experienced first-hand how things are changing for the better.

We now have the opportunity to be even more creative and ambitious with our plans for the future, living out our values of **faith, hope** and **love**.

Based on four key themes – **Parish Renewal, Growing Younger, Church Planting and Revitalisation, and Developing Missional Leaders** – this strategy will guide our work over the coming years. We have recently been awarded significant additional funding from the national church as part of the Diocesan Investment Programme to support us with this mission and ministry.

Parish Renewal

Parishes lie at the heart of our vision for growth and transformation across the diocese. We are committed to providing specialist, practical support to strengthen both the missional and financial sustainability of our parishes. This includes targeted financial support for those seeking to establish New Worshipping Communities.

Growing Younger

Our aim is to double the number of young active disciples and ensure a flourishing children and young people's ministry is within reach of every young person. The Encounter Project will provide specialist teams to support them at every stage of their discipleship journey. The Equip training programme will support lay and ordained leaders to grow in confidence in children and young people's ministry.

Church Planting and Revitalisation

We are accelerating the rate of church planting and will set up four new Resource Churches representing a range of traditions. We will continue to strengthen our partnership with the Antioch Network and develop Sing my Soul, which aims to inspire church growth through mission and music in Catholic, sacramental and broad-church traditions.

Developing Missional Leaders

We are bringing forward and developing talented ordained and lay people representative of the diversity of our diocese. We are building on work already underway to develop ordained and lay vocations, support young adults in discerning their vocation, and strengthen support for first incumbents.

We remain deeply committed to championing **racial justice** and ensuring that our clergy, lay leaders and congregations represent the rich diversity of our diocese. We are working towards the 2030 net zero carbon goal set by General Synod, by supporting our churches and schools with measuring their energy use and taking simple, practical steps to reduce their carbon footprint. We will continue to provide a safe environment for all by promoting effective **safeguarding**.

Living Our Faith Through Racial Justice

We recognise that we have much to learn in a world where many still struggle for racial justice. We are committed to advancing this cause, grounded in our Christian calling to promote equality, unity and inclusion, and tackle racism. Our aim is to create an environment where people of all heritages can thrive and fully participate in the life of the Church, reflecting the diversity that God has created; and where the values of hospitality, welcome and generosity are at the heart of our life together.

The Church of England's Racial Justice Unit awarded our diocese funding to support four key initiatives:

- We are rolling out the **Shades diversity and anti-racism programme** beyond its successful pilot in Bolton Deanery, making it available for young people in our schools and parishes across the diocese.
- We are providing **direct support** for our Global Majority Heritage congregations.
- We are focusing on **development and training** for our clergy and lay leaders, enabling our parishes to welcome people from all backgrounds and ensure they are supportive of and open to the recruitment of clergy and lay people from all backgrounds.
- We are also able to award **grants** for innovative local parish projects.



Racial Justice Parish Grants

Could your parish benefit from funding to make a real difference in your community?

Grants of up to £3,000 are available to support projects that promote diverse ministry and foster racial justice, diversity and inclusion. These projects should respond to the specific needs of local communities and encourage meaningful, lasting change.

This funding is provided by the Church of England's Racial Justice Unit and aims to empower churches to engage in ministry projects, launch new activities, or develop resources that support racial justice and contribute to the delivery of our strategy for long-term church growth. Where funding is requested for capital expenditure, a clear justification must be provided outlining how the investment will support revitalisation and future growth.

Here are some examples of how the grant might be used:

- Hosting multicultural events or festivals that celebrate and enhance the diversity of the church community.
- Creating inclusive liturgical resources that reflect the diversity of the congregation.
- Organising workshops or speaker events on racial justice, unconscious bias and inclusive theology.
- Setting up book clubs or study groups focused on racial justice themes.
- Providing mentoring or leadership development for young people from diverse backgrounds.
- Creating culturally inclusive children's ministry resources.
- Creating visual displays or installations that celebrate racial and cultural diversity.
- Investing in technology to support multilingual services or hybrid worship formats.

Before applying, please contact Diane Gray-Stephenson, Racial Justice Programme Lead, who can support you through the application process:

✉ dianegray-stephenson@manchester.anglican.org

Application Deadlines

Final applications: **10am on Friday 7th August 2026.**
Decisions made on Monday 25th August 2026.



Net Zero Carbon Quick Wins Grant

Could your parish take simple steps to reduce its carbon footprint?

Thanks to funding from the Archbishops' Council, parishes can apply for Net Zero Carbon Quick Wins grants of up to £10,000 for their church or church hall. Funding can support projects such as LED lighting, insulation, heating controls, electrical upgrades and solar PV. Applicants must meet eligibility criteria – more details are available on our website at:

🌐 www.manchester.anglican.org/quick-wins-grants

Deadline for Applications:

5th October 2026



Image taken at Stephen Lawrence Prayer Walk in Heaton Park

Places of Worship Renewal Fund – Information for Churchwardens

The Places of Worship Renewal Fund (PWRF) is now open, and detailed guidance on eligibility and the application process is available on the Historic England website.



This new Fund replaces the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which closed on 31st March 2026. The previous scheme allowed listed places of worship to reclaim VAT on eligible repair and maintenance works. As of 1st April 2026, VAT can no longer be reclaimed through that route, and the new Renewal Fund instead

operates as a competitive capital grant scheme administered by Historic England, targeted at repair and conservation needs in England.

Grants ranging from £10,000 to £1,000,000 will be awarded for capital works that keep buildings safe, open and in public use. Any listed place of worship in England can apply, of any faith or denomination, provided it is an active place of worship.

Parishes considering an application are strongly encouraged to make sure they are fully prepared before applying. In particular, if your Quinquennial Inspection is overdue, this should be arranged as a matter of urgency. This advice applies to all parishes, whether or not you ultimately decide to apply for funding, as up-to-date inspections are essential for responsible stewardship of church buildings. Parishes should also begin collating the information required to support both a Faculty application and a Renewal Fund application.

Criteria for applying to the Fund:

- Your project must be based in England.
- Your project must involve a building listed at Grade I, Grade II* or Grade II.
- Your project must involve an active place of worship.
- Priority will be given to projects in areas of England with the highest level of deprivation and need for investment.
- Your project must involve the type of repair, conservation, and conversion activities which will be considered. These are: capital works, minor repairs, improvements and alterations, project development, adaptive reuse, and heritage interpretation.

The application process begins with an Expression of Interest, which means that only eligible and well-prepared projects can progress to a full application. For the first funding round, it is

particularly important that projects can be delivered quickly once funding is awarded.

Further information guidance is available via the Historic England website and at:

<https://www.manchester.anglican.org/places-of-worship-renewal-fund/>

For questions, please contact:

robchilton@manchester.anglican.org



A Prayer for Churchwardens

Gracious Lord,

We give thanks for our Churchwardens and the role that they play in the leadership of their churches in vision and mission.

We rejoice in their faithfulness, cheerfulness and humility as they help maintain and grow our church communities. We celebrate all that Churchwardens do in the stewardship of church buildings and the support of our worship.

Give to all Churchwardens, we pray, your gifts of wisdom, insightfulness and a pastoral heart. Grant, O Lord, that in all things they may seek your holy will to the good of your Church and the glory of your Name.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

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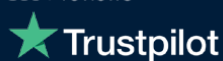
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