

Getting to know... Rt Rev Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge

I have been Bishop of Tonbridge since 2018 and before that I was Archdeacon of Rochester, also working in the Cathedral there, and a Vicar in Bromley and in Chislehurst. I was born and brought up in Fleetwood, Lancashire, a fishing seaside town, and lived there till I was 18 but I have now been in Kent for 30 years. An interesting fact about me, or rather my family, is that an ancestor of mine was vicar of Holy Trinity, Stratford where he baptised William Shakespeare!



As we approach Easter, everything in the world around us is just really depressing at the moment and people really struggle with that. I notice when listening to people and offering pastoral care that what is happening in the wider world really does impact how people feel about their own lives. But although it doesn't hit the news there are thousands and thousands of good acts and goodness in this country and this community that won't get much attention but actually are a sign of what is coming. So I want to say that this Easter time the global message is one of hope, of resurrection in Christ, of hope of a world to come where these things will dissolve and pass away and there will be a better place.

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This year is a time when I am so worried about what is happening in the world. Jesus gave up his life to take away the sins of the world; to start again in a new era of peace and love; where the curtain was ripped in two as he died showing that God is for us all, is available for us all; is present for us all. Yet here we are seeing lands ripped apart by other powers wishing to have power over areas less strong than theirs. Where is the justice in all this? Are these Just Wars?

Jesus came to bring peace; there are others who only want war to gain more power.

Jesus wants us to love our neighbours; there are others who feed on hate.

Jesus said if you want to be a follower of him then we need to put ourselves last and to be a servant of others; others only want to build towers of power for their own aggrandisement.

At this time in our Christian year now is the time when we pray and pray and pray that we return to what Jesus wants us to do and to be.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul



Edenbridge Easter 2026

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A place for prayer at Easter

Hilary Morgan links Gethsemane with our world today

Back in 2014 I had the opportunity to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. And most important was that this pilgrimage took place over our Easter period. We were there till the middle of Holy Week.

The picture below shows the Garden of Gethsemane; some of these trees are the very olive trees that were there at the time of Jesus, in the very place where Jesus went to pray on the eve of his arrest.

We were there in the very place that Jesus was and going through what happened to him during that time of his arrest, his 'trial' and crucifixion. We were part of his most dreadful, most marvellous, most spiritual journey involving his death and his resurrection. What amazes me is that this was indeed the very time that this all happened those 2,000 years ago. This for me and no doubt for many, is what makes our time of reflection, time of tears and time of celebration the most important festival of the whole year. Don't get me wrong I love Christmas but it is nothing to what I feel about Easter.

And this year it is even more important.

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Confirm, O Lord, your servants . . .

The Bishop of Tonbridge came to confirm seven members of the church on Passion Sunday. Here, Oliver Fisk and the three young people reflect on what this means to them



On 22 March I was privileged to be among the ten candidates from Edenbridge and Three Spires confirmed by Bishop Simon Burton-Jones.

The adults from Edenbridge, Vicky, Kathleen, Clive and I, were led in our journey towards confirmation by Father Kevin, ably assisted by Anthea, over the last few months of meetings at church and in the gracious hospitality of Kevin's own home. As an adult returnee to the Church these sessions were fascinating and invaluable to me and I know for others, and we were delighted to be joined by Valerie and Ben, already confirmed, but looking to refresh and increase their knowledge.

As a group we would like to thank Kevin, Anthea, the Church Wardens and everyone who made our confirmation both possible and incredibly special. It was humbling

to see so many people give up their time, effort, care and kindness in the lead up to and on the day: whether as sidesmen, choir, organist, bakers, bellringers, videographers (and the rest) and those there to give support and witness. Thank you all.

Reflecting for myself on my own journey, you can thank (or blame) Father Stephen Mitchell and a chance introduction as he visited Bertie and Jean while I was stripping asphalt off the leaking flat roof of my recently acquired house. It is the only time I will claim to have been closest to God when talking to a priest, but only by about 10ft.

Having not been a congregant of any Church as an adult, coming to Ss. Peter & Paul in the pandemic, wearing masks and observing social distancing was a very strange reintroduction. But I was drawn by the words on the website that said



I have been going to church for six years as a choir member. This will be the year that I will be confirmed not only to be a church member but to build a connection between God and me and all of my friends in the church. When I am confirmed I will carry on my life knowing that I am a proud Christian and maybe even spread the news to my friends to see if they would like to be confirmed, just like me.

Ben

The reason I decided to become confirmed is so I can take full ownership of my belief instead of following my parents' beliefs only and what I grew up hearing. This allows me to build a closer relationship with God as the choice is coming from me.

Derek

I have been going to church since I was little and I am in the choir and have been in the choir since I was nine. This is the reason why I would like to be confirmed because I feel like it is a calling from God to serve him till the very end and to help others in times of need so that I can do and carry out God's work in the community that I live in.

Helena

it was ok to 'hide in the corner' if you wanted. It is this acceptance, friendship and the opportunity and then encouragement to explore and examine faith and importantly to think, so adeptly extolled by Kevin in our sessions leading to confirmation, that let me know this is the right place for me.

Standing in front of the Bishop nearly five years after that first meeting with Stephen, I reflected on all the good work that our Church does in the community and further afield, embodied by the timely example of George's recognition (*right*). And that while I have not always called myself a Christian I have always believed that every day we can choose to make this world a better place.

Writing this, the day after confirmation I hope it is permissible

to say I am immensely proud to be confirmed amongst those committed, through faith in God, to the same.



During the Confirmation service Bishop Simon presented George Lincoln with a certificate to mark his 40 years of wide and varied service to the church and community and he commended his quiet and faithful ministry