



Diocese
in Europe

European Anglicans

News and stories from the Diocese in Europe

Winter 2026



Welcome!



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[Our chaplaincy in Gran Canaria](#)



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European Anglicans Winter 2026 edition

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Daily Prayers



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Please note that if you are viewing this magazine as a pdf, the video links (accessed by clicking on the video screenshots) will open in a new tab on an external site called Vimeo.



**From Ruth Blanco,
Head of Communications**

“It’s a huge privilege to be part of the unfolding story of this diocese”. Bishop Andrew’s words as part of his reflection in this edition echo my own thoughts. In the communications team we get to hear and see so many vibrant and diverse stories which reflect the life of our diocese.

We hope that this magazine is a chance for you to discover something new, or reflect more deeply on some of our many stories. For example, you may have heard of the Racial Justice Conferences we hold annually - Archdeacon Leslie shares why they are so important in Europe today for all of us, as part of our ongoing pilgrimage. You may have heard that we have a new Diocesan Secretary Mervyn McCullagh. Hear him speak about his hopes as he joins our team.

Last year we marked the 1700th anniversary of the council of Nicaea and the Creed that we still all proclaim together today. Our story as individuals, chaplaincies and a wider church is embedded in that faith and hope together. As one of our young people, Anthonette from the Hague shares about what a great church looks like. “I believe that a safe church and a good church should be a place that accepts everyone, preaching the love of God and sharing the love of God. People will be transformed and will be able to do more for the Kingdom”

Please read and share these stories, and hold everyone in them in your prayers as we work together for the Kingdom of God.

Welcome to Mervyn McCullagh

Mervyn McCullagh joined the Diocese in Europe at the end of 2025 as our Diocesan Secretary. Head of Communications, Ruth Blanco, caught up with him recently in the Diocesan offices in London.



Mervyn McCullagh addresses Gibraltar Synod, January 2026



Please ask for strength and wisdom for Mervyn as he begins this important role.



A reflection from Bishop Andrew

Much to celebrate as time moves on



Among the mementos of my first year as Suffragan Bishop in Europe is an envelope, with a stamp on it. It's a first day cover, postmarked with the date the stamp design was first issued. This gift takes me back to my childhood, when low-tech stamp collecting was a popular hobby amongst children. I still have my First Day Cover collection. But the passage of time has made my recent postal souvenir feel quite 'retro', in our age of digital communication.



What's on the stamp is itself a reminder of the passage of time. It's a picture of our chaplaincy in Monaco and the words 'Centenaire de l'église anglicane Saint-Paul 1925-2025'. 100 years have passed since the newly built church of St Paul's was consecrated on a plot of land donated by the Prince of Monaco. The church's significance in the intervening years ranks among other features of Monaco life that are honoured by a postage stamp, such as the tenth anniversary of the Electric Grand Prix, also commemorated in 2025.



 Monaco first day cover



 Monaco e-Prix stamp



 With the Church Wardens in Monaco

My schedule over these past months has provided fascinating reminders of the passage of time across our Diocese. Some, in common with Monaco's centenary celebrations, bear witness to the longevity of our ongoing relationships within the countries where our chaplaincies are found today.

In Belgium, for example, I took part in the Royal Evensong at Holy Trinity Brussels, in the presence of Philippe, King of the Belgians. We were celebrating 150 years since his predecessor, King Leopold II, established the Anglican Church as a nationally-recognised church, receiving state funding. Also in Belgium, I took part in the joint Anglican-Roman Catholic conference in Malines, celebrating the groundbreaking ecumenical dialogue that was started there 100 years ago.



 With the King of the Belgians



 Leipzig confirmations

My visit to Leipzig coincided with commemorations of more recent beginnings. Following the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, a chaplain was appointed to found a new chaplaincy in Leipzig in 1995. It was the same year I began my curacy in the Diocese in Europe, so I got to know this enterprising chaplain quite well and was encouraged to hear of the early fruit of his ministry. This autumn I confirmed nine young people in our Leipzig chaplaincy in its thirtieth anniversary year, an uplifting indication of the longer term fruit of what started out as a pioneering venture.

A reflection from Bishop Andrew

Taken together, then, these landmark celebrations of the passage of time are an indication of two things: the deceptively deep roots of our diocese and the fact that ours is an ongoing story of new beginnings. Other examples illustrate this too. St Alban's Copenhagen, where I confirmed six candidates this autumn, was consecrated nearly 140 years ago, also with royal support, from Princess Alexandra of Denmark. St George's Madrid, which I visited in June, was celebrating the centenary of its establishment through the generosity of the local English-speaking community.

Our chaplaincy in Liège, whose Christmas service I led, was formally established much more recently. I discovered that my visit coincided with the tenth anniversary of its establishment as a state-funded Anglican chaplaincy. But its roots go back four centuries, when the future King Charles II of England made use of the nearby town of Spa, to take the curative waters, setting a future trend. This town became a fashionable destination for English-speakers, complete with its own Anglican church and, in due course, casinos and road racing. The Belgian Grand Prix was established there, whose centenary was celebrated in 2025.



Liège Christmas service

Like in Monaco, road racing in Spa was commemorated on a postage stamp. But with the passage of time, Monaco upstaged Spa as a fashionable destination and the much-reduced Anglican congregation moved to temporary premises in Liège. The flourishing present-day chaplaincy, now state-recognised, has an average weekly congregation of around 50. It comprises a wide array of nationalities from Nigeria, Taiwan, Canada, Cameroun, Iran, Ghana, Congo, Belgium, Burundi, Italy and Ethiopia, along with a handful from the UK. Its chaplain is Congolese.

Alongside visits to chaplaincies across the diocese, I've also greatly appreciated opportunities for joining in-person gatherings, such as Archdeaconry synods, the racial justice conference, deanery chapters, a youth gathering and a residential for curates and their training incumbents. As I've spent time with clergy and lay people, I've been impressed with both a cherishing of our rootedness and an openness to starting new ventures.

It's a huge privilege to be part of the unfolding story of this diocese. We live in changing and unsettling times in Continental Europe, with fresh challenges and opportunities. I'm convinced that faithful Anglican ministry is called for in Europe as much as ever. But with the further passage of time, I wonder what members of our chaplaincies will be celebrating in the years ahead, with its origins in the 2020s? What will the equivalent of a 'first day cover' have on it in the coming decades, giving thanks for what happened in our present era?



Please remember
Bishop Andrew in his
work and ministry as
well as for safe travel
across our diocese.



Farewell to Andrew Caspari

Andrew Caspari was our Diocesan Secretary from 2019 until the end of 2025. He sent us the following reflection to share with all across the diocese.

The pattern and rhythm of the church year with its changes in mood and colour always fascinated me. I arrived in my role in the Diocese in Europe at Epiphany and left at the festival of All Saints. Over the time, as at Epiphany, much has been revealed to me and I have indeed encountered 'Saints' in every corner of this extraordinary and diverse diocese. Each worshipper, church officer, chaplain and volunteer has been revealed as a saint dedicated to serve.

Thank you all for your support shown to me and to the diocesan office over my 7 years. There is no role for the diocesan office other than to enable chaplaincies to flourish but we are together in this enterprise and without the personal and financial backing of all the chaplaincies little can be achieved for anyone. In particular and on a personal note, thank you to everyone who contributed to the collection for two causes close to my heart as my leaving gift. Over £1500 will be shared between the night shelter at the Museum of Homelessness and support for young people in the inner city seeking to training or education as they start careers in the arts.

Many of you will know how I love the theatre. At the end of 2025 I was struck by the contrast between two huge shows that opened in London; The Hunger Games and Paddington the Musical. The former is a dystopian drama based around the actions of a totalitarian regime dominated by violence, vanity and enmity. The latter draws on Michael Bond's tales of kindness shown to Paddington, who, like my parents, is a refugee. He is a focus of joy and of light. Both shows continue to attract great attention. They are entertaining and thought provoking but I know the world I would rather be in and it is one with an abundance of marmalade sandwiches. (Timely as we have just made our first delicious seasonal batch of marmalade.)

In a diocese of great diversity, where we are both guests and hosts, our welcome and hospitality shown to 'the other' is at the core of our mission and ministry. We can take encouragement from Michael Bond's creation now brought to life on stage as we strive in these dark months and seemingly dark times to reflect the light..

It has been my privilege to see how people across this diocese and those who I have worked alongside strive to do just that. Thank you for having me and go well as you continue that work.

Andrew Caspari



Please remember
Andrew in your prayers
with gratitude, as his
journey continues
elsewhere.





The Community Kitchen, Brussels, Belgium



Contributor

Katie Jickling, member of Holy Trinity, Brussels and former journalist

What is significant in a church year?

The high-profile moments are perhaps the most self-evident — the Evensong attended by King Philippe, for instance, commemorating 150 years of Anglicanism in Belgium. We might look to the events that fill the pews wall-to-wall — an ecumenical climate event, perhaps, or to the arrival of new clergy.

But significance of a different sort occurs not in the sanctuary, but in the basement of the church. Among motley crew at the Community Kitchen who create a slow transformation through making food and community.

I go to the Community Kitchen foodbank on Tuesdays — to work on my French, even more than out of some charitable impulse. By 11a.m., the church basement is a sea of people, predominantly middle-aged Moroccan women, drinking coffee, waiting to collect their food for the week.

I go for the stories: The 77-year-old Belgian woman whose dad worked in the mines when she was a child. The pigeons on the balcony keep her company in the mornings, she said; in return she shares the bread she gets from the food shelf.

There's Raj, who comes in to cut vegetables and serve food, in spite of his inflamed hands — swollen from the sleeping on the streets through a frigid Brussels winter.

And Ahmed, a gray-haired Moroccan man, who had advice to offer this American: The only way to survive in a foreign land is to rely on the help of strangers, people who visit when we're sick or lend us a bit of flour when we run out. He's made it here in Brussels that way, he informed me. And so it goes: the stories and stories.

These Tuesdays are not significant in any conventional way. There are messes, and complaining, and sometimes some shoving to get the best food items. Nor is the foodbank a definitive solution to hunger in this city; these people keep coming back week after week, still hungry.

This is a different sort of feeding of the 5,000 than we imagine. (The Community Kitchen makes 5,000 meals a week, in addition to the Tuesday foodbank.) It's a miracle wrought by the hands of an unlikely group of volunteers and those living on the fringes.

In other words, it's a miracle of a very human variety. The kind away from the center of power, without robes or champagne or people with titles; the kind that you might just miss if you don't look closely. Every Tuesday, I leave filled — with coffee and cake, and also with the stories about the vulnerability and kindness of people. It's the kind of miracle, in other words, that Jesus would do.



 Volunteers



 Behind the scenes at the Community Kitchen



Highlights of our 2025 celebrations

Last year, our diocese celebrated the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea and the writing of the first version of the Nicene Creed.

It was an incredibly rich, varied year of shared learning, fellowship and offering fresh perspectives on the words of the Creed. It challenged each of us to read the words afresh as we proclaim them each week in our chaplaincies.

Here are some of the highlights and of course all of the resources remain pertinent to engage with:

Proclaiming the Creed



Pilgrimage

Around 70 people took part in a special pilgrimage in Western Turkey (former Asia Minor) to commemorate the 1700th anniversary. The pilgrimage was jointly led by Orthodox Archbishop Nikitas of Thyatira and Great Britain, Lord Chartres, and our chaplains in Athens and Izmir, Ben Drury and James Buxton.



Learning and fellowship with the Lent Course

The Lent course was commissioned especially for us, written by the Rev Donald McFaddyen. Over 14 chaplaincies from right across the diocese opened up their online sessions to any that wished to participate.

Feedback was extremely positive, including this comment from the chaplaincy in Kyiv:

“My motivation to undertake the Lent Course was in attempt to bring people of our chaplaincy together after the services, and to distract them from continuous concerns about the security situation in Ukraine and in Kyiv, from grave consequences of intensive nightly shellings, and to turn their minds towards eternal and therefore more comforting themes of theology and Christian spirituality. And the course sessions proved to be a rather efficient mind comforter, that was mentioned by several participants. I experienced that myself.”

We encourage chaplaincies and individuals to access the course at any time via our website.

Perspectives on the Creed

Various individuals shared a reflection on the Nicene Creed through the lens of their own personal perspective, proving to be one of the most thought provoking aspects of our year long focus on the Creed.

Feminist Perspectives

There are three of these, the following is by Bess Brooks:



Young People's Perspective

Noura Eid, an MES intern

A Youth Representative at the Diocesan Synod

Ecumenical Perspective

Written by Father Nevsky

Inter Faith Perspective

Written by Rev Canon Dr. Arun John

LGBT Perspective

One by an LGBT diocesan clergy and another personal reflection by an LGBT member of our diocesan community.

The Nicene Creed and Creation with Zelig Peppiette



Music

Bishop Robert encouraged all chaplaincies to sing 'Hymn to the Trinity' written by Bishop Geoffrey Rowell, the previous Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe.

We were treated to a special recording by the choir at Holy Trinity Geneva, which you can view here.

With warm thanks to the generosity of all who participated and contributed.

We asked our young people what it is that they think makes a great church:

Anthonette from the Anglican church of The Hague

“So I believe a safe church and a good church should be a place that accepts everyone, preaching the love of God and share the love of God. People will be transformed and will be able to do more for the kingdom.”



Güven from Christ Church Istanbul

“For me, a great church is a church where people can come together despite where they're from, despite their culture, despite what language they speak, and have fellowship.”



Catalyst Experience

Six children and youth workers from across the Diocese (Tangier, Geneva, Nice, Amersfoort, Geneva, Stuttgart) gathered in the UK in January this year as part of a year long Catalyst course. The Catalyst course is run by Ridley Hall and is fully funded by our Diocese and the Church of England, at no cost to participants. The C&Y workers who are taking part are all currently actively involved with children and youth ministry in their chaplaincies, They engage in online learning throughout the year and also attend a residential, building their skills, helping to be successful in their ministry. It also offers the opportunity to meet other workers from Diocese across the UK and hear about their experiences.



We hope to share more details about future courses as they become available. If this might interest you, or someone you know, please get in touch with Rev Iain Bendrey at iain.bendrey@europe.anglican.org



St Vincent's Chaplaincy, Algarve, Portugal



Contributor

Tricia Wells, Local Environment Officer in the Archdeaconry of Gibraltar

Over the last four years St. Vincent's Algarve has endeavoured to 'push' ECO ideas having devised an 'How Green are You' questionnaire and organising an A Rocha and St Vincent's 'Plastic Ocean' conference across the Diocese in Europe.

Reflecting back on our work, two things of significance come to mind:

The launch of the GECKO Newsletter marked an important step forward. As a Local Environment Officer (LEO), it can sometimes feel isolating, which is why Archdeacon David (Gibraltar) proposed starting an Archdeaconry Eco Newsletter to help everyone share their projects, achievements, and even setbacks. The first issue was published in June 25, and we were both surprised and relieved to receive article contributions from various chaplaincies throughout the archdeaconry, as well as support from A Rocha, Christopher Shiell (our Archdeaconry Environment Officer), and Dr. Dave Bookless. Additional ideas from other chaplaincies appeared in the August issue, which focused on Creationtide, and in the December edition, which featured eco-friendly suggestions for Christmas. Our next release will be in early March, and we invite Advent and Easter ideas or projects from across the Diocese.

Secondly, the getting off the ground of the 'Change the World: Donate a Tree' Project, a combined A Rocha Portugal and St Vincent's Anglican Church Algarve initiative.

About three years ago my husband Chris (Reader, St Vincent's) was approached by Marcial Felgueiras from A Rocha about the possibility of a reforestation project on our surplus land. This project has several aims:

- Get the churches in Portugal to understand the command to care for the earth as part of their Christian discipleship
- Help the churches in Portugal to engage with society in a transformation process which fosters:
 - Nature conservation and promotion of biodiversity
 - Protect forests from fire and the land for the erosion that always takes place after a fire
 - Adapt the land for Climate Change scenario, with prolonged dry summers and shortage of rainfall
- Develop a pilot project of a forestation unit, which will demonstrate all the above and to inspire other churches to have hands on projects honouring God's name and caring for God's earth



For more information
about Gecko:

Tricia.d.wells@gmail.com

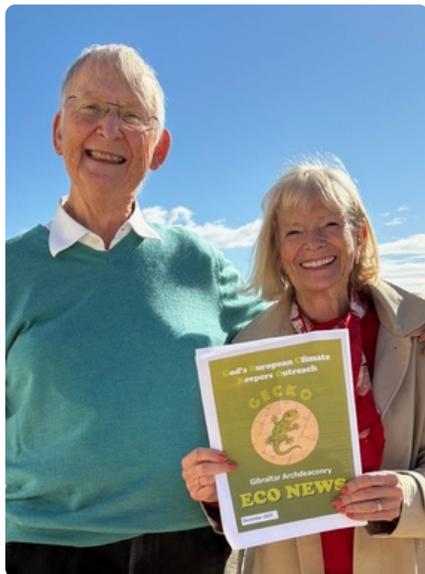


St Vincent's Chaplaincy, Algarve, Portugal

Over the last three years, we have carried out preliminary work, a biodiversity assessment (Cruzinha A Rocha) and an exploration of optimal tree types, as well as a feasibility study of clearing and planting. Work has started on land clearing and, weather permitting, we are hoping to plant the first trees early in 2026. To date we've raised 2,100 euros and are about to order the first batch of trees!

This long-term project aims to plant 1,000 trees each year over the next eight years, resulting in a total of around 8,000 trees. The vision is to establish a natural forested area where wildlife can thrive, and trees contribute to carbon offsetting. Both Anglican and Portuguese-speaking church communities are invited to support this initiative. If you are concerned about your carbon footprint or want to offset the emissions from your travels, this could be an excellent way to back a Christian environmental effort.

With enough support, we plan to develop facilities such as seating areas and even a lodge for overnight visitors, creating a peaceful place where Christians can gather to appreciate nature and reflect on God's creation. Trees also make thoughtful gifts, so be sure to check out the article in the December issue of Gecko to discover how you can help our planet and make a donation.



Chris and Tricia with a copy of Gecko



Clearing the land ready for tree planting

Bradon Meuillenburg reflects on his role as Anglican Refugee Support role and encourages us all to participate in this ever-increasingly vital work, in whichever ways we are able:



“Sometimes it can feel really isolated and alone. And I think we can do a lot more together than we can do alone.”

For regular updates, please subscribe to our Diocesan You Tube channel:



Resources to support chaplaincies and individuals working alongside refugees on our website:



A prayer for refugees from the Church of England

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own;
look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger,
homeless and hungry.
Bless those who work to bring them relief;
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



FROM RIPPLES TO WAVES

God's Kaleidoscope and the Church's Journey toward Racial Justice



Contributor

The Revd Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel

Archdeacon of Germany, Northern Europe and the Eastern Archdeaconry and Chair of the Diocesan Racial Justice Working Group

Below is a slightly abridged version of the article.

To read the full version, please visit our website: [Racial Justice](#)

Introduction

In recent years, racial justice has moved from the margins of public discourse to its very centre.

The Racial Justice Conferences organised within the Diocese in Europe have sought to engage this reality through prayer, reflection, dialogue, and action.

What Is Racial Justice?

Racial justice goes beyond the absence of racism. It is the proactive work of recognising, challenging, and dismantling systems, structures, and attitudes that privilege some racial or ethnic groups while marginalising others. At its heart, racial justice affirms the inherent dignity and worth of every human being, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

For the Church, racial justice is not an optional agenda item; it is integral to the gospel itself.

The Diocese in Europe: Commitment to Racial Justice and Inclusion

The Diocese in Europe, marked by immense cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity, occupies a unique space within the Anglican Communion.

The Diocese has made an intentional commitment to racial justice and racial inclusion, recognising that diversity alone does not guarantee justice.

The Racial Justice Conferences are a key expression of this commitment. They have provided safe yet challenging spaces for clergy and laity to engage honestly with difficult questions, to confront uncomfortable truths, and to imagine new possibilities for being Church together.

More resources about Racial Justice

[Diocese in Europe website](#)

[You Tube](#)

FROM RIPPLES TO WAVES

God's Kaleidoscope and the Church's Journey toward Racial Justice

Our Racial Justice Conferences

God's Kaleidoscope 1 - Naming Racial Discrimination as Sin

The first Racial Justice Conference was a much needed space to share experiences, ask difficult questions, pray and reflect and to forge a way forward. There was a clear focus each day: grieving the past, challenging the present and envisioning the future.

God's Kaleidoscope 2 - All of Us or None of Us

The second conference deepened the journey, From Lament to Action. We Lamented. Tears are shed today; those of migrants and refugees facing hostility, of minority communities experiencing discrimination, and of individuals whose dignity is daily eroded by racism. By learning to weep together, participants recognised that racial justice work must be rooted in compassion as well as conviction.

Crucially, the conference looked forward with active hope—a commitment to work toward a world where justice and peace are not distant ideals but lived realities.

God's Kaleidoscope 3 - Hopemakers: From Hostility to Hospitality

The third conference turned attention to the present moment and the future. Participants examined the many manifestations of hostility in contemporary society — xenophobia, racism, political polarisation, and the erosion of democratic values in several contexts.

It offered a sobering assessment of how fear and exclusion are often normalised, and how these dynamics affect both society and the Church.

Yet it refused to remain in despair. Participants affirmed that the tears and fears did not overwhelm them. Rather they sharpen our vision. They deepen our resolve. The Conference issued a call to become hopemakers—people and communities who actively cultivate hospitality, inclusion, and solidarity.

Hospitality was explored not as a superficial welcome, but as a radical Christian practice that challenges power imbalances and creates space for genuine belonging.



Images above are from 2024 and 2025 conferences.

FROM RIPPLES TO WAVES

God's Kaleidoscope and the Church's Journey toward Racial Justice

Why Racial Justice Conferences and Public Theology Matter

First, they create space for naming reality. Racism often thrives in silence, denial, or minimisation. By bringing people together to listen, learn, and speak openly, conferences help expose injustice and break the isolation of those who suffer from it.

Second, they contribute to formation. Racial justice is not only about policies or statements; it is about shaping hearts, minds, and practices. Through Bible studies, theological reflection, storytelling, and dialogue, participants are invited into a deeper, more faithful understanding of God, humanity, and the Church's mission.

Third, such gatherings contribute to public theology. They enable the Church to reflect theologically on contemporary issues and to speak into the public square with moral clarity and compassion. In a time when public discourse is often polarised and hostile, the Church's engagement with racial justice can model a different way—rooted in truth, humility, and hope

Conclusion: From Reflection to Transformation

Taken together, the Racial Justice Conferences represent more than a series of events; they mark an ongoing pilgrimage. From naming sin, to lamenting injustice, to cultivating hope, the journey of God's Kaleidoscope calls the Church to continual conversion.

The movement from ripples to waves is not automatic. It requires sustained commitment, courageous leadership, and the willingness to be changed. Yet these conferences have shown that when the Church dares to look through God's kaleidoscope—to see humanity illuminated by divine love—new patterns of justice, reconciliation, and hope can emerge.

In a world fractured by racism and fear, the Church is called to be a sign of another way. The Racial Justice Conferences remind us that this calling is both urgent and possible, when we walk together in faith, truth, and love.

The Revd Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel

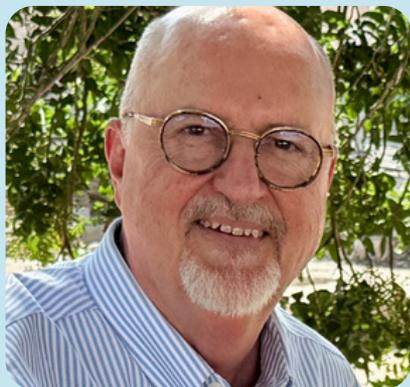


A collect for Racial Justice Sunday Church of England

Merciful God,
you are righteous and love justice:
stir the hearts of your people that,
rejoicing in our diversity,
we may repent of the wrongs of the past,
and, by your grace, seek the peaceable
kingdom of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.



Finding Words Where Silence Once Lived: Reflections on Poetry, Faith, and Calling



Contributor

Johannes W H van der Bijl, DMin

Originally from Namibia, Johannes has travelled and worked extensively in cross-cultural settings in different countries around the world. He and his wife, Louise serve as missionaries with SAMS-USA and currently reside in Heiloo, the Netherlands. Johann serves as the Chaplain at Christ Church, Heiloo. They have two married sons and five precious, rambunctious grandchildren.

I began writing poetry long before I ever thought of myself as a writer.

As a child, growing up during the Angolan war, words became a way of surviving what I could not yet understand. I was raised in a deeply dysfunctional family, marked by violence, anger, and absence, and poetry became a private language in which fear, death, and confusion could be named without having to be explained. Long before I had theology or psychology, poetry gave me a way to make sense of a world that felt unpredictable and unsafe.

Only much later did I realise that I was not the first in my family to do this. My grandfather was a poet shaped by the First World War, and I suspect that he, too, used poetry to carry what could not easily be spoken. That inheritance, both of trauma and of words, has stayed with me.

Over the years, poetry has remained a place of processing and prayer. I live with Complex PTSD, and writing is often how I work through experiences and emotions that resist linear explanation. Poetry allows me to hold together memory, faith, grief, hope, and silence without forcing them into neat conclusions. In that sense, poetry has never been a hobby for me; it has been a form of listening.

My life and ministry have taken me across continents...Africa, North America, India, and now Europe...and each place has left its mark on my writing. When my wife and I worked as missionaries in Gambela, a war-torn region of western Ethiopia on the border of South Sudan, I wrote some of my darkest poems. Living amid displacement, violence, and profound human suffering

stripped away sentimentality and forced honesty. Those poems are not easy, but they are faithful to the ground from which they came.

In more recent years, something has shifted. While I still write poems that wrestle with pain and lament, I have increasingly found myself writing hymns, songs, prayers, and promises. This feels less like a departure and more like a deepening, the long journey from a raw cry to a communal voice. The Psalms have been particularly formative here, and my first published poetry collection, [Of Psalms and Songs and Poetry \(Wipf & Stock\)](#), is a poetic engagement with all 150 Psalms, alongside a small number of original poems and songs.

Some of my poetry has also appeared in anthologies, including *In Silent Silence* (Clarendon House Publications). My current poetic work continues in the same vein: poems, prayers, and promises that seek to speak truthfully before God, without rushing toward resolution.

Finding Words Where Silence Once Lived: Reflections on Poetry, Faith, and Calling

I am, by calling, an Anglican priest, theologian, missionary, and teacher. I have lived and served in many places, founded and led theological institutions, planted churches, and taught Scripture across cultures. Yet poetry has been the quiet thread running through it all, a place where faith and fragility are allowed to speak to one another without fear.

Finally, I would warmly welcome collaboration. If there is someone in the diocese who writes music and would be interested in working together, particularly on hymns or sung prayer, I would love to explore that possibility. Poetry, after all, is meant to be shared, and sometimes it finds its fullest voice when it is sung by the people of God.

If you are interested in working with Johann, please contact him at: vanderbijl@gmail.com

Where you can source Johann's work

Of Songs and Psalms and Poetry available from [Wipf & Stock](#)

Narrative Commentaries available from [Langham](#)

Johann's Blog: [Blessed to be a Blessing](#)

Someone Better Names Your Name

Let what is breaking come undone, stop grasping things so randomly.
Not every thread is meant to run unbroken through life's tapestry.
To clutch what is to fall apart,
will wear you down and drain your heart.
So breathe; release your aching hands,
some things belong to shadowlands.

Let others think what they will think and let them judge and let them scorn.
You are not made to shrink or sink beneath the weight of fleshly thorns.
Their eyes see through a glass unclear,
their truths are theirs, but not your sphere.
You owe no answer, no defence,
to those devoid of commonsense.

Cease asking where the road may lead or fearing what you do not know.
Your way is set in ancient creed: the path unfolds, and you shall grow.
Though loss may tear your world apart,
it sometimes clears the weeping heart.
What must depart will surely go,
what must remain will find you so.

There is a rhythm, fierce and wise, where ends give birth to what begins.
We suffer when we idolize the crumbling shell, the emptied skin.
Yet God, unending in his grace,
will bring new dreams to take their place.
The hands that cling to what is past
must open wide, set free at last.

The beauty is not all behind, the best has not yet slipped away.
There's joy ahead for you to find, a dawn beyond this darkened day.
But first, make room for love anew,
release the ghosts that hinder you.
Ask what you grasp that holds you low,
and when you see it, let it go.

For someone better names your name,
And gives new life instead of shame.

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St George's chaplaincy, Madrid, Spain

Walking the Camino Inglés: A Centenary Celebration Pilgrimage



Contributor

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On September 14th a group of 11 pilgrims from St. George's in Madrid set off. We had been planning the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, along the Camino Inglés, for a year as part of our centenary celebrations.

The first morning was a little damp and fitting weather to begin our walk in. We started the morning with a circle of prayer guided by our chaplain, the Reverend Canon Sal McDougall. We picked up seashells from a beach to be released in Santiago, each shell a worry, a grief, a question or a longing. About halfway through the first day we came across the ancient monastery of San Martiño de Xubia, a beautiful little monastery from the beginning of the 12th century in Romanesque style.

In the late afternoon we reached Neda, and our first "Camino Angel". The angels of the Camino, as they are known, are local Good Samaritans who help out pilgrims in need. This particular angel, whose restaurant's kitchen was closed by then, took in some of our hungry pilgrims to share his family meal with them that day, an act of kindness reminding us that grace often arrives unexpectedly.

Day two started with prayers beside the river and we set off aiming for Pontedeume.

There was a sensation that we could be on a hike anywhere, yes we were following the yellow arrows and granite markers of the way but there was no initial feeling that we were doing anything special, then after a conversation with a passing pilgrim on the morning of the third day, it dawns on you: we are each on our own journey and no two people will have the same one even if we travel the Camino together, we were all travelling different inner journeys.

Leaving Pontedeume the next day started with a tough almost 3km climb compensated by a sweeping view over Pontedeume and its landmark bridge over the river Eume. We soon discovered that this was going to be one of the hardest days with relentless hills.

The next day unfolded more quietly and the feel of the Camino had changed, from that of a sense of adventure to a more meaningful and contemplative journey as we walked often in twos and threes in companionable silence. There were still lots of hills and pain and discomfort, challenges to be overcome, but there was a peaceful aspect to the day that nurtured reflection and spiritual growth.



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Bruma to Sigüeiro was the next day, the longest distance that we were covering in one day, but with fewer hills than the previous two days. Again, we set off in small groups, often walking alone for stretches but there was never a sensation of being alone. Even though there was no one in sight, we knew that other pilgrims were not far away and there is something comforting about knowing that there are people ahead of you and behind you on the same path.

As we reached the beautiful enchanted forest just before Santiago the rain stopped. The closer we got to Santiago as the way markers went by, we seemed to be walking more slowly, maybe we were unconsciously slowing down because we did not want the pilgrimage to end. We gathered the group together near the 2km marker stone and entered Santiago as we had left Ferrol - together.

Reaching Santiago was a mix of emotions, happiness and joy at arriving but also sorrow that the pilgrimage was ending. At a fountain in front of the Cathedral, we released the shells we had carried from Ferrol and with them the burdens we had carried along the way.

Sunday morning saw us celebrating our own very special outdoor Communion service which became all the more meaningful when a rainbow appeared over us in the sky.

Did we find what each of us was looking for and did we even know what that was? Were we changed by the experience? No doubt we all have different answers, but we left with a sense of accomplishment and deepening of faith. The Camino breaks you, reconstructs you, teaches you lessons in humility and courage, strips away those excess items that we feel we cannot do without and reveals that matters. It is indeed a challenge, physically, mentally and emotionally but the rewards are many.

The morning we left Santiago called for an early visit back to the then quiet and empty cathedral, for a moment of solitude and prayer, with a newfound inner peace, a traditional pilgrim's hug to the statue of St. James and a promise to heed the call of the Camino and return soon.



Church of England Independent Audits



<https://ineqe.com/churchofengland>

“In August 2023, INEQE Safeguarding Group was appointed by the Archbishops’ Council to carry out the next round of independent external audits of Church of England dioceses and cathedrals. The purpose of these audits is to make sure dioceses, cathedrals and palaces are doing all they can to create environments where everyone feels safe, valued and respected.”

The Diocese in Europe INEQE audit is coming

Preparation is underway during 2026

Priority 1 (January and February 2026)

- Every chaplaincy must be on the Dashboard
- Every chaplaincy must have a CSO
- Every Churchwarden must be safeguarding compliant

Surveys and evidence submissions will commence in January 2027

Fieldwork commences in October 2026

Click the image/s for further information

Safeguarding Dashboard



Safeguarding guidance & resources



Join the Friends of the Diocese



The Friends of the Diocese is a group of people who have been supporting the Diocese in Europe since 1996 and share in its life through their interest, prayers and financial support.

For more information and to enquire about joining, please see our website: [Friends of the Diocese](#)

A beautiful prayer produced specifically to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day this year.

With many thanks to Madeleine from St Thomas a Becket in Hamburg

Holocaust Memorial Day



In case you missed it!

Watch the short story of the most Northerly Church of England carol service in Svalbard (in partnership with the Church of Norway) and the most southerly one at our chaplaincy in Gran Canaria.



Recent past events



Open Door Online Event

An 'Open Door' event was held on 8th January to offer chaplaincies the opportunity to ask questions about environment actions and to share experiences with others.

Future events will be listed here:

[Care for Creation Events](#)



Together on the Way

In this open online session, members of the 'Soul Friends' (Diocese in Europe Spiritual Directors) described the nature of their Ministry and explained how to find a spiritual companion.

You can watch a recording here:

[Together on the Way](#)

Upcoming events



Online Prayer Service for Ukraine

25th February
17.00 GMT/18.00 CET/19.00 Kyiv

Further information and Zoom link will be made available shortly on our website.

Join us around the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine for an online service of prayer for peace.

We join to support and hold in prayers the people in Ukraine and especially our congregation. As the war continues, we know that making them assured that they are remembered, prayed for and supported is very important for them.



God of strength and peace
Send your blessing on the
people of Ukraine.
Sustain them in their struggles,
hold them in their fear,
protect them from all danger
and be for them the hope they
desire.
For Jesus Christ sake.
Amen.

Bishop Robert



Thank you for reading.
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European Anglicans Winter 2026

Please get in touch with ideas for articles and stories for future editions

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**Daily Prayer
Diary**



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