

## Meet some of our remarkable volunteers...

August 2023

### **Ellen Chaplain**



Hello, my name is Ellen and I have been a Chaplain for six months. I really enjoy meeting all the different people who come into the Cathedral for a variety of reasons and getting to know all the other staff and Volunteers. I love that my "job" is to chat with and learn about other people.

The best part of being a Volunteer is being a part of the Cathedral family. I've felt so welcomed, and the Cathedral has become a second church family to me. I often pop in even when I'm not on duty, and it's a joy to have so many people to say hello to and share my day with.

My very first day was when the Cathedral was hosting a carol service for a large number of schools. I was able to stay and watch and listen, as well as chat to them in between their rehearsals and the concert. It will always be a special memory that I could hear the organ playing and hundreds of voices in song.

A good Volunteer is someone who cares about the Cathedral, whether it's because you love the building, the community, or God. Or all three! Enjoying being with people and showing commitment to the role you've chosen to do.

Whichever role you choose, you'll be assured of a warm welcome from a team who care about you, and you'll be joining a real family as well as helping our beautiful Cathedral to thrive in the 21st century.

### **Joan Various roles**



My name is Joan and I have a number of different roles including Volunteering with the tea and coffee after the Sunday service, chalice assistant, server and intercessor. When I can and the opportunity arises, I offer my time at events, managing public flow around the Cathedral. I started around June 2018 with tea and coffee and gradually took on the other roles mostly in 2022.

I enjoy feeling more purposeful by going beyond attending church and contributing in a small way to the huge demands of a Cathedral Church.

I joined the church in October 2017 and for one year, knew little about its organisation. Volunteering helped and I have had to relate to the volunteering process, clergy, vergers, other Volunteers and so learn more about the cathedral's functioning, other people's commitment, and dedication which in turn motivated me in my roles. I now feel I belong.

Being a member of a team, connecting during the week and when necessary, to ensure plans are in place. This really keeps alive that "church" is not only a Sunday thing and my Christian faith as a way of life.

I had not remotely considered being a server. On the day before Christmas Eve 2022, I received an email asking if I were willing to be a server, "just to carry a candle." There was a challenge of

sufficient servers to cover that night. I thought I should be brave and agreed and proceeded with a bit of nervousness to get it right after hurried instructions, half of which I immediately forgot. When I arrived, chalice was added, which I had done before. To my pleasant surprise, I totally immersed myself in this impromptu role, with helpful clergy and other servers.

It felt like magic, leading me to consider taking it up and I have since done so, learning along the way.

Willingness to be flexible; work well in a team; reliable; have a genuine interest in the organisation; have a sense of wanting to be a volunteer; to be self-aware of what one can offer, are the makings of a good Volunteer.

If you have the time, think about it, then talk to other Volunteers. You will achieve great satisfaction giving of yourself to benefit a place which is so much a part of your weekly routine.

### ***Peter Café in the Crypt***



Hello, I am Peter, a Café in the Crypt Volunteer. I have been Volunteering for 18 months and enjoy meeting staff and visitors in a supportive and iconic environment and banter within the Café team. The Café has grown much busier hence more profitable enabling some investment in new cutlery and crockery, and better monetary contributions to the running of the Cathedral. This is thanks to the permanent Café staff continually improving the offering.

From a giving perspective, the feeling that I have contributed something, every session, however small, is the best part of Volunteering.

My favourite memory of being a Volunteer, is when I forgot to give the Bishop his staff discount!

Volunteers are relied upon to support many aspects of life in the Cathedral, so being reliable in that support is important.

If you are thinking about Volunteering, try it, there's nothing to lose. You can commit to as much or as little as suits you and vary if you want to spend more or less time. Sometimes busy, sometimes not. Always worthwhile. Don't be afraid of the awareness training before you can start, not as daunting as it might look at first and it is necessary these days in most organisations.

### ***Hannah Voluntary Choir***



Hello, I am Hannah and have been part of the Voluntary Choir for over seven years.

I really enjoy being part of an important history with Christianity at its core and excellent music as its expression.

Since I started it has become less cliquy, and more welcoming.

Contributing to ongoing life and high standards in Rochester Cathedral is the best part of being a Volunteer.

My favourite memory is being part of the Choir and seeing the Dean's emotion while we were singing 'I was Glad' for his daughter's wedding.

A good Volunteer contributes and is encouraging. Don't hesitate in offering to join the Volunteer teams there's nothing to lose, and lots to gain.

### **Linda Steward**



My name is Linda and I have been a Volunteer since 2012. I started after a year of treatment for cancer. It was a lovely way to get back to normality in a loving environment and to do something interesting and useful.

I am a Steward and I also help at special events e.g. Opening for the Peace Doves.

I love meeting new people and hopefully help to make them feel welcome in the Cathedral.

I would say that things seem more regulated now and most of the time that adds to one's sense of being cared for and also for those we are here to serve.

The best part is meeting people both regulars and visitors. People of any age and background who are open and friendly. Anyone really...

Being a Volunteer enables one to discover a role that fits - discovering what it's like to be a round peg in a round hole for maybe the first time ever!

### **Alan Library Volunteer and Visitor Experience**



Hello, my name is Alan, and I have been a Library Volunteer and Visitor Experience Volunteer since 2016. I enjoy being able to offer a friendly greeting to visitors and sharing a little of the Cathedral's history and features. In the library, we have the opportunity to explore the many great books and manuscripts in the collection, with occasional, "show and tell" sessions for visitors. When I first started, we were called "Welcomers" and manned the Welcome desks. We had "Day Leaders" who supervised us. The library was

open to visitors every day, and conservation and cataloguing of the collection were continuous processes.

The best part of being a Volunteer at Rochester Cathedral is meeting people from all over the world, interacting with families and hearing their appreciative comments about the cathedral. I enjoy being part of a team and sharing my knowledge with others. I also enjoy the tranquillity.

It is difficult to pick a favourite memory, there are too many. Perhaps the first sight of the Moon illuminated in the Nave in the evening with its atmospheric soundtrack. A good Volunteer is someone who is friendly and approachable, enjoys being part of a team, sharing knowledge and keen to learn more.

The Cathedral is a wonderful place to work in, with a large group of Volunteers from diverse backgrounds, who are always ready to welcome new members to the team.

## ***Jenny Flower Guild***



Hello, I am Jenny, a member of the Flower Guild, and have been a Volunteer for approx. 20 years.

I enjoy being able to share my love of flowers by arranging them in the Cathedral for others to enjoy. Visitors love to chat and show an interest. It is nice to share comments about the flowers and foliage we are using.

Since I have started there are more Health & Safety regulations and other courses to undertake during the year.

The best part of being a Volunteer at Rochester Cathedral is to be part of a team in such an historic building and I particularly enjoy the times when all the Flower Guild are together as a team, arranging the flowers for the different festivals during the year.

I enjoy all the tasks that the Volunteers are involved in, and sharing that enjoyment with others visiting the Cathedral.

There are so many different Volunteer teams, it would be an excellent idea to discover what would interest them the most.

## ***Annette Various***



Hello, I am Annette and have been Volunteering in many roles for over 37 years! I pray that God lets me get to my 40 years!!!!

I am a Steward, Chalice Assistant, Intercessor, Reader at the Eucharist, Chaplain and occasionally help with Education events, I also take Home Communion and am an Anna Friend with the Cameo Service.

I enjoy meeting all the visitors, hearing their stories, and helping them, providing a listening ear when necessary.

I began Volunteering in the old Refectory once a week. We had to be on a rota for Saturday and Sunday including Dickens. We now have Event Hosts, but Stewards originally covered all evening events. Education activities have grown enormously: originally brass rubbing, calligraphy and short tours only. Now there is lots of Safeguarding training.

The best part of Volunteering is being part of the Cathedral family in a wonderful place, serving God and being part of a team. Meeting many visitors and other Volunteers. It is a great privilege and we are cared about!

It is always pleasing when visitors say how they appreciate us being there and we have been helpful to them. One day I will always remember, is when a Welsh party came and sang a Welsh song which my dear husband sang to me when we were courting!!! A few tears shed!!

A good Volunteer is someone who works well with others, being there for any visitors who come through the door and helping them. Listening when needed and a SMILE!! (Smiles are always returned)

## **Val Library & Visitor Experience**



My name is Val and I have a Library Volunteer and Visitor Experience Volunteer for seven years. I enjoy meeting other Volunteers and in the Library the privilege of looking and handling the many interesting unique books. Basically, the main change is the many new Volunteers that I have met over the years.

I enjoy meeting the public, listening to their experience of the visit to our Cathedral and being able to pass on all the information that I have learned from others over the years. My favourite memory are the amazing exhibitions that we have had, it's hard to choose.

Always saying hello to people when they come to area that I am in and being quietly available to people if they want to talk, briefly highlighting areas of interest for them to look at and going into more detail if they want me to, being prepared to just let them browse on their own if that is what they prefer.

From my experience I have gained probably more than I have given if people have the spare time and like meeting people.

## **Sarah Prayer Team**



Hello, I am Sarah a member of the Prayer Team. I have been Volunteering for seven years and enjoy giving something back and being able to invest quality time as a Volunteer.

My favourite memories are when prayers are answered and thanksgiving is duly appreciated.

A good Volunteer needs to be a team player, bring ideas to the table and be sensitive to the role.

To be a Volunteer to me is giving my time and I am sure God appreciates the time we invest. I have seen blessings in disguise come through when my husband and I have Volunteered and continue to Volunteer.

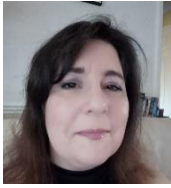
## **Carol Café in the Crypt**



My name is Carol and I have been a Café in the Crypt Volunteer for one month. I really enjoy meeting people and assisting others. The best part of being a Volunteer at Rochester Cathedral is enjoying the environment and admiring the historic value. Good Volunteers have a desire to help others and a friendly and approachable personality.

My words of encouragement to anyone thinking about joining our Volunteer teams, are give it a try, it feels good to give your time to make a difference.

## **Michelle Sunday Club**



I am Michelle and have been a Sunday Club leader for over 10 years and love being part of a brilliant team that has the children's spiritual development at its heart.

Over the years the number of children attending Sunday Club has grown and so has the number of "special events and services." We acknowledge that children's needs are different and so try to take account of this in the activities we offer. The best part of being a Volunteer is the support and friendliness of everybody involved in the Cathedral be it congregation, Volunteers or staff. There is always a smile.

During Lockdown, we were unable to perform the Nativity in the Cathedral, all of the children were given their roles and asked to record their part remotely. It was all joined together to produce the Christmas Story and broadcast online. It was different, a challenge, but a lifelong memory.

Having the willingness to work as a team, being welcoming and having the patience and the mindset that things may not go to plan - particularly when working with children make the best Volunteers.

If you consider becoming a Volunteer, you will be part of a great team. There is always somebody you can ask that is willing to support you. It is a rewarding task seeing the happiness you bring across people's faces.

## **Randolph Steward and Library**



My name is Randolph, and I was originally a library and exhibition Volunteer, but now a Steward together with my lovely wife, Kathryn, since 2016. I enjoy the time spent in the Cathedral, which is a wonderful space to be in. Also, the opportunity to get to know the library which enabled me to write about two of the special items it contains for the Cathedral's website. COVID had a drastic impact, which resulted in Kathryn and I being absent for nearly two years; but we are now back and glad to see that the

Cathedral's Volunteer community is still as enthusiastic and dedicated as ever.

The best part of being a Volunteer at the Cathedral is meeting new people and spending quality time with those we already know.

My favourite memory of being a Volunteer was being asked thirty minutes beforehand, to present a talk on the Reformation to a visiting school party. Having acquired a good working knowledge of the library's contents, as well as improvising a lot, I was able to put together something which I hope the visitors enjoyed. I was later told that one of the teachers who was there on that occasion has since become a Cathedral Volunteer!

## **David Café in the Crypt**



Hello, I am David and hold many different Volunteer roles including a Café Volunteer, Event Host and Visitor Experience Volunteer: I have been involved in some roles since 1981 at Cathedral services but the above roles since I retired in 2015. Meeting a very wide range of visitors to the Cathedral and engaging with them in a meaningful way is both fulfilling and challenging. You never know how conversations will develop. It is satisfying to be able to share something of the beauty, history and spirituality of the building with others.

The Cathedral is far less 'stuffy' than it used to be as it seeks to become more relevant to the local community by offering them its space and facilities for creative, spiritual, social and educational events.

It is really rewarding to be part of a great team in something bigger than the local church. Rochester Cathedral is probably among the list of more go-ahead and enlightened Cathedrals in the country in terms of how it serves the local community and meets visitors' expectations. You can make new friendships among the wide circle of volunteers.

There are too many favourite memories to recount here, but I have enjoyed the contemplative beauty of the Peace Doves at night, the mystery of the moon, the challenge of finding the UK on Gaia, serving coffee and cakes to crowds during a busy Christmas Dickens festival, dancing to the music of *Queen*, helping a potential suicide victim to see life more positively and enabling people to touch heaven briefly by using the visual prompts in the building to discuss matters of faith. Each session is different: you never know how it will unfold.

A good Volunteer will have a willingness to engage visitors in conversation, the capacity to be a good and sensitive listener, to be a good team player.

Give it a try and you may well be surprised at how rewarding it can be.

## **Liz Education**



I am Liz one of the Education Volunteers and have been Volunteering since November 2021. The best part of being in the Education Team is the big smiles on the faces of the children and their teachers or scout leaders and mums and dads as they experience different activities we offer, in the warm embrace of the ancient building.

My favourite memories so far are getting into special places in the Cathedral, specifically going into the organ loft.

A good Volunteer can pin on a big smile one minute but can then have the most subtle listening ear the next.

Volunteering can give you so much back – fun, friendship, new skills, experience, even a new "family".

## **Inna Voluntary Choir**



Hello I am Inna, a member of the Cathedral's Voluntary Choir, since 2022. I like everything about singing in the Cathedral's Choir. I joined the choir together with my daughter Polina who was a Cathedral's choral scholar during the previous year (2021-2022) and then couldn't continue for her second year as she had turned 18. So, she was kindly offered to become a member of the Voluntary Choir instead. The same offer was made to me. I have a PhD in Biochemistry but I have music education, play piano and also, I've been singing in our local Brompton Garrison Church choir for many years. So, I happily accepted the offer, had an audition in August and joined the Cathedral's choir, and thus the great team of the Cathedral's volunteers, last September.

The Voluntary Choir has its duties not very often - about once per two months depending on the time of the year. During this year I've been getting used to the choir's wide repertoire, ways and routine. Thus, for me everything has been new and things kept getting changed with the run of the cathedral's music year.

My role is mostly associated with singing in the choir, but I also participated in several Cathedral's evening events when I helped to assist visitors coming to the Cathedral. I like the Cathedral, its atmosphere and spiritual significance as well as the way it's run and managed and the people who work and come there. So, I like the whole experience so far.

I've enjoyed the most the Christmas time services where we participated as well as the early Easter service - the Dawn Vigil Eucharist - that started at 5:30am (with the rehearsal beginning at 4:30am) when the choir, singing in the procession, entered the absolutely dark Cathedral lit only by our candles. It was an unforgettable experience. Also, I enjoyed late evening events in the Cathedral like the Light show and Peace Dove late openings where I had an opportunity to meet visitors, answer their questions and talk to them about the Cathedral, the choir and the music in the Cathedral on the whole. I learned a lot from other volunteers as well as from the lovely tours we had to the Cathedral library and about Cathedral's history.

Being a Volunteer is an exciting opportunity and honourable occasion as it's based on the one's genuine interest and wholehearted wish to be involved and helpful. This kind of motivation unites the best people that only add to the great experience of being a Volunteer in such a magnificent place like Rochester Cathedral.

Joining the Cathedral's Voluntary Choir and becoming the Cathedral's Volunteer was for sure the best decision I made last year. It had been a difficult period in my life when I joined the choir as I had then entered the first year of the remission after a very grim diagnosis followed by long and tough chemotherapy treatment. In front of me I had the uncertain and fearful future and the hard and traumatic recent past behind. My Voluntary role gave me lots of positive, uplifting and healing experience as well as enriched me with new knowledge of great importance to me. I've met some wonderful and talented people, got to know and perform some beautiful sacred music, expanded my knowledge of local history, enriched my spiritual and meditative experience and most importantly - strengthened my faith. I hope and pray that I could have many more years of being involved in the Cathedral's life to come...

I strongly believe that being a Volunteer in such a place as Rochester Cathedral is a big honour and opportunity. This is the best way to offer one's time and work for the wider community.



It's also a very rewarding role as it enriches and enlightens and gives much more than one can possibly imagine.

### **Mike Visitor Experience**



Hello, I am Mike, and I am a Visitor Experience Volunteer and have been Volunteering since August 2022. I really enjoy meeting visitors and interacting with staff and Volunteers. I feel that I have made a small difference when I leave the Cathedral.

I feel that I am in a privileged position of Volunteering in the second oldest Cathedral, being a part of a team and interacting with visitors.

My favourite memory is being in the Cathedral for a Carol Service during the Dickens Festival – it was magical. To be a good Volunteer you need to be flexible, have good communication skills, being part of a team, willing to learn by going on scheduled tours and other training sessions to enhance your knowledge.

You will be made welcome by Sandy and Helen who are always encouraging, approachable and very grateful to Volunteers for the work they do. Being appreciated means a lot !!

### **Yewande Tea and Coffee**



My name Yewande and I am very new to Volunteering, just starting about four months ago as a Volunteer for Sunday services, serving the tea & coffee. I enjoy carrying out the task with other members of the church, meeting and chatting with people after the service over tea and coffee and enjoy the act of serving people, offering hospitality in a place of worship.

I think it's prestigious being part of the Volunteer team at the Cathedral and I get to meet church members on close range, including the priests.

A good Volunteer should be friendly and reliable. If you are considering joining the Volunteers, you should hurry up and join the team. Being a volunteer in the church is spiritually rewarding because you are indirectly serving God with your time and talents.

### **Graham Chaplain**



I am Graham, and have been a Chaplain for 11 years, 4 months. Being part of a wider team; representing Jesus Christ to all our visitors; the variation of each occasion; meeting people from all over the world. When able, to answer their questions or refer them to someone who can, very much being a host are the things I enjoy most about Volunteering.

Since I have started things have become more professional, partly due to the additional accreditation we must have for our roles and partly due to the excellent management and organisation of our Volunteers. Contact is maintained to a much greater extent. Being Christ's ambassador on the Cathedral floor; leading people in prayer at the appointed times; being able to spend as much time as it needs with people. Praying with people for their concerns. Interacting with our many visitors either in depth or fleeting are the best parts of being a Volunteer.

My favourite memory of being a volunteer is encountering an agoraphobic woman venturing out fearfully to the Cathedral and seeing the freedom expressed having prayed for her.

To be a good Volunteer you need an openness to people; being at their disposal; empathy; interest in what they say.

If you are thinking about joining you will be part of a large team, each undertaking different roles. What you do is valuable not only in the role you want to play but to the total ministry of the Cathedral. You will be valued and acknowledged rather than feel an "also ran".

### ***Jean Library and Visitor Experience***



I am Library Volunteer and Visitor Experience Volunteer called Jean. I first became a Volunteer in the library in 2012, and then as a Welcomer in 2015.

I really enjoy being part of the team who look after the books in the library, also being able to greet visitors as a Visitor Experience Volunteer, hopefully imparting some interesting information about the Cathedral to them.

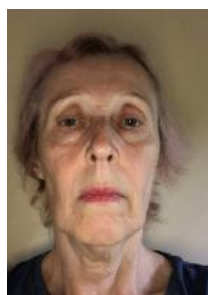
When I first began to Volunteer, those who greeted visitors were known as "Welcomers", and we had "Day Leaders". The library was open to visitors every day and we had various workshops teaching us how to handle the books, and basic conservation.

I enjoy being part of a friendly team, in this beautiful historic building, meeting people from all walks of life, answering their questions, and hearing about their lives too.

There are so many lovely memories, that it is difficult to choose just one. I think the day that the library was re-opened officially, and also when the moon came to visit.

Having a friendly welcoming approach, working as part of a team, being ready to listen, and willing to learn new skills. The Cathedral is a lovely friendly place to work. Everyone is ready to welcome new Volunteers to the team, and to share their knowledge.

### ***Susan Chaplain***



My name is Susan and have been Volunteering here as a Chaplain at Rochester Cathedral for six months. I love meeting, and chatting with visitors and Volunteers, spending time wandering round the Cathedral, exploring and taking in the atmosphere. No two days are ever the same, you never know what to expect, and I have never been disappointed.

I am now getting more familiar with the way around, not having visited the Cathedral except to attend occasional services in the past.

Meeting the people is the best part of Volunteering, they have so many different stories or reasons for being in the Cathedral, either as Volunteers or visitors.

My favourite memory is being welcomed into the community from the very first day.

What makes a good Volunteer is having a welcoming smile, being confident and friendly (but not over friendly) approach.

It's a friendly welcoming community, and a privilege to be a very small part of the continuing history of such a special, spiritual place.