



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Friends of the Diocese in Europe

Dear Friends

The Friends' Reunion: Old Friends, New Friends and an Overpriced Umbrella

It had been a long time since I had travelled to London or in fact anywhere more than a few miles from home and from the many exits available from London Bridge Station chose the wrong one and found myself in very unfamiliar territory and it was pouring with rain. Retracing my steps and choosing another way out, I passed a shop selling umbrellas, bought one (expensive but needs must) and moved on out into the wet and gloom, and eventually found Southwark Cathedral. Mind you when I asked the security guard to direct me to the entrance I was greeted by 'have you got a ticket'. I explained my purpose and made another short walk to a further gate, and I was asked if I was a member of the visiting choir. I began to think I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Another explanation and I found the Garry Weston Library, which was set up ready for the after-service get together and I began to think that everything was going to be all right after all. And so, it was.

Members of the Friends, Bishop David, ordinands, locum priests, the recently ordained, chaplains, former chaplains and a soon to be chaplain of the diocese, current staff and former members of staff, were amongst the group that gathered to celebrate the Friends' Reunion. What was to be said Evening Prayer became Choral Evensong with a visiting choir, Rochester Cathedral Volunteer Choir, which was a lovely surprise and made the occasion even more special. My list of attendees, which somehow bore only a passing resemblance to those present, was stuffed into my bag and I relaxed into the event. It was a real joy to see everyone.

My Friends' Reunion umbrella was a very last minute addition to my carry-on bag for a recent trip I made to get some sunshine. Yes, it rained and once again proved the fact that my husband and I even after many years of marriage cannot share an umbrella. Let's put it this way, one of us still got very wet and, yes, it was me that dripped into the restaurant!

By the time you read this letter, the festive season will have passed, hopefully providing some light and cheer after the darker days of Advent although I have to say the stirring Advent hymns are amongst some of my favourites. I do hope there were moments of joy that will see you smiling well into 2024.

With kind regards,

Jeanne

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