

St. John's College
Oxford
OX1 3JP

From the Chaplain
The Rev'd Dr Elizabeth Macfarlane
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August 2023

Dear new member of St John's,

Congratulations on gaining your place at St John's. I look forward very much to meeting you, and in this brief note, I'd like to introduce the work of the chapel.

St John's has a chapel, and a chaplain to organise services, as our founder Sir Thomas White wished when he set up the college in the middle of the sixteenth century. Of course, this doesn't mean that in 2023 St John's favours Christianity over any other faith: our college draws together people of all faiths and none, on a basis of mutual respect. It is my privilege to work with all who seek me out, irrespective of their belief system.

The chapel welcomes all people without seeking to 'convert' anyone, and I am proud that we were the first place in St John's to display the LGBTQ+ flag. We're not 'just' affirming: it's who we are. There are regular services during term-time, and people come to chapel for a variety of reasons, many of which are nothing to do with religious belief: many simply enjoy the music sung by our excellent choir, the time to reflect and the calm, quiet space. The chapel, like the rest of the College, is a place for questioning and thought, and those who are invited to speak reflect their understandings of what it is to be a human being in the twenty-first century.

Music is a key part of our services, and the Choir Director, David Bannister, (choir.director@sjc.ox.ac.uk) would be delighted to hear from anyone who might like to audition for the choir. Neither Christian belief nor experience of singing in a choir is necessary, and many highly successful choristers have never sung in chapel before coming to St John's. We award choral scholarships in Hilary term each year for those who demonstrate commitment and excellence. All members of the choir receive one-to-one singing lessons from our singing teacher, and payment for special services, such as Gaudy evensongs and alumni carols services.

Please be in touch with me by email if you have any questions, or let me know if you'd like to meet and talk when you arrive. Overleaf, you'll find details of major faith group contacts within the University so you can reach out before you arrive if you wish.

Throughout your time at St John's, you can come to talk to me in confidence about any matter, and I'm always happy to go for a walk, or provide a hot beverage. You can find me in Front I.I, or drop me an email.

With every good wish for the years ahead,

Elizabeth

CHRISTIANITY

Oxford is host to a wide variety of approaches to Christianity, of which the college chapel is only one, and many students explore different traditions during their time here. Such are the politics of contemporary Christianity that it would be invidious to name certain churches and not others, and there are too many to cite here. If you would like help finding a church, please drop me an email giving me some indication of the tradition you come from or are seeking, and I'll give you suggestions as to places that might be plausible for you, and where possible, put you in touch with people who attend them. The Roman Catholic chaplaincy rep in St John's is Laurence Raran (laurence.raran@sjc.ox.ac.uk). The Orthodox chaplains are the Very Rev'd Ian Graham (Greek Orthodox) frian_graham@yahoo.co.uk, and Archpriest Stephen Platt (Russian Orthodox) fr.stephen.platt@gmail.com.

ISLAM

The Muslim Chaplains are Afifi Al-Akiti – afifi.al-akiti@worc.ox.ac.uk and Professor Muhammad Talib – muhammad.talib@anthro.ox.ac.uk. There is a dedicated prayer room in central Oxford in the Robert Hooke Building on Parks Road. The Oxford University Islamic Society, www.ouisoc.com, organises Friday prayer, and details of its events can be found at www.facebook.com/ouisoc.

JUDAISM

The Jewish Chaplains are Rabbi Michael and Tracey Rosenfeld-Schueler michael@mychaplaincy.co.uk and tracey@mychaplaincy.co.uk. Their website is oxfordchap.weebly.com. Services take place under the auspices of the Oxford Jewish Congregation at the Synagogue: The Oxford Jewish Centre (OJC), 21 Richmond Road, Oxford OX1 2JL (01865 514356). The Oxford Jewish Society: www.oxfordjsoc.co.uk; info@oxfordjsoc.co.uk.

BUDDHISM

The Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies: <http://www.ocbs.org>. The Oxford Buddhist Centre: 18 Bhandari Close, Cricket Road, Oxford OX4 3DT (Western Buddhist) (01865 777297). The Longchen Foundation: meetings held at the Friends' Meeting House, 43, St Giles, Oxford: contact Sally Sheldrake (01865 725569). www.longchenfoundation.com. Tibetan Buddhist Centre: Thrangu House, 42 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RB (01865 241555). Theravada Tradition: The Oxford Buddha Vihara, 356-358 Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4TQ (01865 791591). Email: oxford_buddhavihara@yahoo.co.uk Website: www.oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk. Abbot: Ven. Dr Khammai Dhammasami

HINDUISM

The Hindu Chaplain is Shaunaka Rishi Das (01865 304303) shaunaka@ochs.org.uk. The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is at 13-15 Magdalen Street, Oxford OX1 3AE (www.ochs.org.uk)

SIKHISM

For information, see www.oxfordsikhs.com. The Oxford University Sikh Society email is: sikhsoc@gmail.com. The British Organisation of Sikh Students website is: www.boss-uk.org