

St. John's College
Oxford
OX1 3JP

From the Chaplain
The Rev'd Dr Elizabeth Macfarlane
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August 2026

Dear new member of St John's,

Welcome – I look forward to meeting you in the coming months. I hope you may already have set foot in the chapel, either on an open day, or at offer-holders' day. The chapel is at the historic heart of St John's, 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 2026 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 as chaplain to look after the worship in chapel, and 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, (evensong on Sunday and Wednesday, morning prayer Monday to Friday) and a termly Eucharist with a free supper afterwards. People come to chapel for a variety of reasons: 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.

If you're a singer, please consider auditioning for the choir. Music is a key part of our services, and David Bannister, the choir director, (david.bannister@sjc.ox.ac.uk) would be delighted to hear from anyone who is interested. 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. All members of the choir receive one-to-one singing lessons from our singing teacher to develop their voice and technique, and payment for special services, such as Gaudy evensongs and Alumni carols services. We have a superb programme of masterclasses, tours, special events and recordings, and we award choral scholarships in Hilary term each year for those who demonstrate commitment and excellence.

Please do be in touch with me by email if you have any questions. Overleaf, you'll find details of major faith group contacts within the University so you can reach out before you arrive if you wish.

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 can be found via: <https://www.catholic-chaplaincy.org.uk>. The Orthodox chaplains are the Very Rev'd Ian Graham (Greek Orthodox) fr.ian@holytrinityoxford.org.uk and Archpriest Stephen Platt (Russian Orthodox) fr.stephen.platt@gmail.com.

ISLAM

The Muslim Chaplain is Maulana Ibrahim Mohammad Amin, based at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies: <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk>. There is a dedicated prayer room in central Oxford in the Robert Hooke Building on Parks Road. The Oxford University Islamic Society, <https://ouisoc.org>, organises Friday prayer.

JUDAISM

The Jewish Chaplains are Rabbi Moish Blum and Rebbetzin Tanya Blum moish@mychaplaincy.co.uk and tanya@mychaplaincy.co.uk. 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. The Oxford Jewish Society: www.oxfordjsoc.co.uk

SIKHISM

For information, see Oxford University Sikh Society <https://ox.sikhsoc.org>. The British Organisation of Sikh Students website is: www.boss-uk.org

HINDUISM

The Hindu Chaplain is Shaunaka Rishi Das shaunaka@ochs.org.uk. The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is at 13-15 Magdalen Street, Oxford OX1 3AE www.ochs.org.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). The Longchen Foundation: meetings held at the Friends' Meeting House, 43, St Giles, Oxford, www.longchenfoundation.com. Tibetan Buddhist Centre: Thrangu House, 42 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RB. Theravada Tradition: The Oxford Buddha Vihara, 356-358 Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4TQ Email: oxford_buddhavihara@yahoo.co.uk www.oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk Abbot: Ven. Dr Khammai Dhammasami.