

Message from The Dean of Rochester Cathedral

Friends United

I don't know if you've noticed, but there's a revolution going on. It's more of a battleground really, a struggle to wrench the true meaning of friendship away from the grasp of history.

In this war, there are winners and losers. Current winners include the highly successful US comedy series 'Friends', and the ground-breaking 'Friends Reunited' organisation.

Among the losers are the environmental agency 'Friends of the Earth' and the Quakers – the 'Religious Society of Friends'.

The problem is that we seem unable to speak about friendship these days without a Pythonesque 'nudge nudge, wink wink, say no more' sub-text to the conversation. In our sex-crazed culture, friendship can no longer be platonic.

Which, of course, is nonsense. Ever since human beings first learned to communicate and move in groups, the true notion of friendship has been about the mutual enjoyment we all get from supportive companionship on life's journey.

Enjoyable, supportive companions – that strikes me as a pretty good description of the 'Friends of Rochester Cathedral'. Friendship is an incredibly positive word. Friends enjoy spending time together in a close, faithful relationship; they always look out for each other, and yet allow each other sufficient space to be their own person. Friends don't suffocate each other, they liberate one another to be confident in who they really are.

I am so grateful for the way in which the Friends travel supportively with the Dean and Chapter here. It's a relationship I value tremendously, and I hope this is a 2-way process that benefits us both. We are united by our shared desire to see the Cathedral thrive and make a significant impact in people's lives and in the life of Medway.

At a time when the world is waking up to the economic impact that heritage can have on areas of deprivation, there is the opportunity for a new kind of partnership between cathedrals and their 'Friends' organisations – one in which the restoration and improvement of cathedral buildings can go hand in hand with a commitment to social and spiritual regeneration. This sort of creature friendship represents a 'win-win' situation for all of us who love Rochester Cathedral –and the good news is that we don't have to get into bed together to do that

Very Revd Adrian Newman
Dean of Rochester