

Church Hatches Very Unconventional Plan to Get More People Through the Doors

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Will Maule, Faithwire



Image source: Facebook/Rochester Cathedral

A church in the British town of Rochester has launched an unconventional initiative it hopes will encourage more people to darken the sanctuary doors.

Quite an array of “seeker-friendly” activities will be facilitated inside Rochester Cathedral in the coming weeks, including a fully-fledged crazy mini-golf course. In addition, a fifty-foot tall helter-skelter will be erected inside the enormous church, along with the holding of a gin and prosecco festival in neighboring Peterborough.

“We hope that when people come in, they will know that they’re welcome and they will have an enjoyable experience,” Rochester Cathedral’s Rev, Canon Rachel Phillips told Premier News.

“So while people are here, having fun and playing crazy golf, they will take the opportunity to reflect on that wider theme of building bridges that they might find that they would like to pray, light a candle. Maybe talk to somebody.”

Great to hear our crazy golf idea getting such an airing in the media

Canon Rachel was great on BBC SE last night <https://t.co/Vfs4A4qff2> @VisitKent @churchofengland @engcathedrals

— Rochester Cathedral (@RochesterCathed) June 4, 2019

Ultimately, despite being unconventional, the goal for these events and activities is to get people into the church and for them to hear about Jesus, Phillips said.

Extraordinary! Just called by BBC local news for comment on camera re a crazy golf course in Rochester Cathedral. I declined!

— Mike Warren (@Mike_the_Warren) June 3, 2019

“This is about welcoming everyone into the cathedral, letting people know that we’re here,” she said. “We’re open. It’s free to come in and everyone is welcome. We hope that we’ll reach more people with the message the good news that Christians have to bring that Jesus came to bring peace.”

Not everyone agreed, however. Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, a former prelate at Rochester deemed the installation of a golf course to be rather ill-fitting for such a holy place of Christian worship.

“Crazy golf, helter-skelter and gin festivals are not in keeping with the sanctity of these wonderful places of worship,” he said, according to the Daily Mail. “These are places where people come to pray to God and you have to ask whether these events are befitting of this.”

In addition, a priest from the neighboring county of Norfolk, Father James Mather, made a rather tongue-in-cheek remark about the bizarre initiative. “I imagine some small part of this venerable sacred building will be reserved for anyone who might wish to, er, say their prayers,” he said.

“We are very supportive of innovative ways to make buildings accessible to a new audience,” said a Church of England spokesperson. Archbishop Justin Welby is, himself, likely on board with the golf idea. Last year, he was quoted as saying, “If you can’t have fun in a cathedral, do you really know what fun is?”