

Little Gidding Trust

For immediate release

LITTLE GIDDING APPOINTS NEW DEAN



The Directors of the Little Gidding Trust Ltd, in consultation with the Bishop of Ely, have appointed Christina Rees CBE as Dean to work with them to realize an exciting new vision for the future of Little Gidding. With its historic links to Nicholas Ferrar, George Herbert and T. S. Eliot, Little Gidding will be developed as a centre for the study of Anglican spirituality and the arts. It will continue to host the annual T.S. Eliot Festival, Ferrar Day and Little Gidding Pilgrimage, as well as continue to welcome individuals and groups for weekends and retreats.

Christina is a well-known writer, speaker and broadcaster. Over the last 25 years, she has served on many boards and committees in the Church of England, as a member of General Synod, a founder member of the Archbishops' Council, and on the governing body of Ripon College Cuddesdon, the largest ministry training institution in the Church of England. She has wide experience of other provinces of the Anglican Communion, and in 2009 was the Church of England's official delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Christina was Chair of Women and the Church for over 13 years and was prominent in the campaign for women bishops. In 2015 she was awarded a CBE for services to the Church of England.

Christina says, "Little Gidding has an extraordinary history and has meant so much to so many people over nearly 400 years. I am incredibly excited to be involved with the development of a centre where Anglican spirituality can be explored. There is the potential for Little Gidding to play a huge role in the renewal and reform of the Church of England and to be of service to the wider Anglican Communion."



The Chair of Directors, the Very Reverend Frances Ward says, "We look forward to working with Christina Rees as together we develop our exciting plans for the future for Little Gidding as a unique place of Christian pilgrimage, steeped as it is in the spirituality of the 17th Century and the poetry of T S Eliot. With her wide contacts and rich experience, she will help us to make a reality of our vision to serve the Gospel and mission of the Church, providing for all who seek to find God in today's world".

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Little Gidding holds a unique place within Anglicanism. In the early 17th Century Nicholas Ferrar (1592 - 1637) and his household moved from London and set up a lay community there in the years leading up to the Civil War. Under Ferrar's leadership, the community devoted itself to a disciplined pattern of life and worship, and also established a school, a pharmacy and an infirmary for the surrounding villages. Ferrar had studied medicine and pharmacology on the continent and passed on his knowledge to his nieces. The community produced a number of renowned concordances known as the 'Gospel Harmonies', large illustrated volumes piecing together chronological accounts of the Gospels, one of which was presented to Charles I at the king's request. Charles I visited Little Gidding three times, including on the 2 May 1646, seeking refuge after the Royalist defeat at the Battle of Naseby.

The Ferrars restored the local church next to their Manor house in Little Gidding, and a close friend, the poet George Herbert (1593 - 1633), also restored the church at Leighton Bromswold where he was the parish priest. George Herbert entrusted the manuscripts of his poems to Ferrar, who ensured they were published.

On 23rd May 1936, T. S. Eliot (1888 – 1965), publisher, playwright and one of the major poets of the twentieth century, visited Little Gidding. He had a profound experience which he captured in the fourth section of his poem *The Four Quartets*, published in 1942. Since then Little Gidding has been a place of pilgrimage and hosts the annual T. S. Eliot Festival.

Christina Rees was born on Long Island and spent her childhood in the US, the West Indies and Europe. Her undergraduate degree was in English and the Performing Arts and she holds a Master's Degree in Women and Religion from King's College London. She lectures and preaches widely and has contributed to numerous radio and television programmes, newspapers and magazines. Her books include *The Divine Embrace*, *Feast + Fast – Food for Lent and Easter* and *Voices of this Calling, Experiences of the First Generation of Women Priests*.