






The BRIDGE

Newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark

Christ
Centred
Outward
Focused

Vol.30 No.2
March 2025



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The fragility of the Gaza ceasefire

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, has spoken of the fragility of the Gaza ceasefire and the vulnerability of the Palestinian people following a visit to the Holy Land. His visit coincided with the hostage-ceasefire agreement coming into effect on Sunday 20 January. He writes:

From 18 to 23 January, Bishop Christopher participated in the Holy Land Coordination, an international meeting of bishops organised by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Mandated by the Holy See, the Coordination exists to act in solidarity with region's Christian communities and share in the pastoral life of the local Church as it experiences extreme political and social-economic pressure.

Bishop Christopher is a signatory to the 'Final Communiqué' issued by the Coordination, which offers a message of cautious hope for the future of the region.

"We came to the Holy Land, this Jubilee Year, as pilgrims of hope. We came in hope that a fragile ceasefire agreement, announced as we travelled here, would hold," it states. Offering their thanks to the Christian of the West Bank who hosted them, the Bishops added:

"We saw how settlements, illegal under international law, which were once enclaves have grown to surround you to make enclaves now of your communities. We hear your cry for peace with justice and your anxiety at what will happen when the focus turns away from Gaza; what will happen to your land. There is a clear need for the international community to act together to facilitate realistic and radical development assistance, as part of a process towards achieving a lasting peace.



L-R: Bishop Christopher with Dean Richard Sewell.

"You are not alone."

"We came to tell you that you are not alone; that you are not forgotten. Your faith and resilience strengthen our own faith."

During his visit, Bishop Christopher also met with Archbishop Hosam Naoum and Dean Richard Sewell at Saint George's College in Jerusalem. On Friday 18 January, he also joined Rabbis for Human Rights, planting olive trees in the Palestinian village of Hussan, south of Bethlehem. The morning provided an opportunity to meet with 40 Israeli Jews and discuss a range of issues with them. Sadly, the tree planting was cut short by the arrival of members of the Israeli Defence Force, who claimed that the efforts were a provocative act and that the group would have to vacate the area.

Reflecting on the visit, Bishop Christopher said: "This ceasefire is a wonderful but fragile opportunity. Unless governments and leaders of the Holy Land – as well as those in our international community who have influence in the region – take seriously the need to address the underlying causes of this war, the cycle of violence will undoubtedly grind on.

"Despite the ceasefire, Israel continues to tighten its grip on the West Bank and the threat of the annexation of Palestinian land remains very real. Even more concerning, Israel's move to ban the work of UNRWA in the region threatens to push the Palestinian Authority and the West Bank to the brink of collapse. People in Gaza remain desperate for food, for water, shelter and medical assistance. They are desperate for peace – with justice.

"I have witnessed firsthand the resilience of the Christian people living in the Holy Land, whose faithfulness to their land and their neighbours is a blessing to many – and an inspiration to us all. Nevertheless, wherever you look, there is exhaustion and trauma – and many are on the brink of leaving. I urge people to keep them and all the peoples of the Holy Land in their prayers and with look to a future with defiant hope."

The Diocese of Southwark is linked with the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

"Wherever you look, there is exhaustion and trauma."

General Synod

General Synod (the national assembly of the Church of England) – took place from 10–14 February in London.

Following the sixth and final report of the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice, Synod members heard about progress made on the Church's mandate

to drive 'significant cultural and structural change on issues of racial justice.' Three years on from the publication of the *From Lament to Action* report, the Rt Hon Lord Boateng (pictured) said, "Racial justice needs to be embedded into every aspect of the Church," urging, "the time has come to act now."

Synod members discussed a number of reports on Safeguarding. Members voted on proposals for the provision of independent safeguarding services for the Church and discussed the findings of the Makin Review – an independent review

into the handling of the abuse committed by John Smyth.

A vote to approve new safeguarding codes of practice were passed overwhelmingly and will come into effect in September 2025.

Final decisions were also made on a new system to handle complaints against clergy. The new Clergy Conduct Measure aims for a more proportionate and pastoral approach to such complaints. Members also voted to strengthen young adults' voices in the Church's decision making processes.



Read more about General Synod here: <https://bit.ly/40UAMYc>



A view from The BRIDGE



The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre (JPBC) stands on top of the Mount of Olives. It affords panoramic views out over the Jordan valley with glimpses of the Judean desert.

Entering into Lent, the desert will feature often in the readings of the season. It's a powerful metaphor for the spiritual terrain of Lent leading us into Holy Week and Easter. The desert as encountered in Israel/Palestine is not quite as you might imagine. Yes, it can be bleak and inhospitable but, in the winter, water flows abundantly through the wadis and colourful flowers spring up in many places. There are treasures in the desert if you know when and where to look. I cherish times in the desert as much as I value the demands and disciplines of Lent. There are treasures there too.

Israel's bombing of Gaza over the past eighteen months has created a different kind of desert. It is a landscape of utter devastation creating human misery by denying people the basic necessities needed for life and so many people have been killed. In Lent, when we decide to deny ourselves some pleasures or luxuries, we might use this to remember those who suffer not through their own choice but by others' cruel actions. The remembering might appropriately lead us to respond with good actions.

It is not possible to see Gaza from the Princess Basma Centre (it is 60 miles away) but it features crucially in the Centre's vision. Before the war broke out in October 2023, they began a project in conjunction with our Anglican Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza City to begin therapeutic work with children with disabilities living in Gaza. Since the war, this work has developed, now with seven outreach workers doing an incredible job in the most challenging circumstances. These are delicate flowers of hope. From the war there are more than 1,000 child amputees, so the need is greater than ever. Bishop Christopher has visited JPBC and has seen their incredible work.

In Lent we are called to take a reality check on our lives and to realign our priorities towards things of real value. Just now the fragile ceasefire in Gaza is holding but terrible suffering continues in Gaza, the West Bank and to some extent in Israel too, but our focus should not only be on the pain. Hope springs like flowers in the desert; to see this we have to be attentive.

Richard Sewell

The Very Revd Canon Richard Sewell is Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Christian Aid Changemakers' Conference

As Christian Aid marks its 80th anniversary, supporters from up and down the country will be gathering for the annual Changemakers' Conference – Changing the world together. The event is an opportunity to hear the results from Christian Aid Week 2024, find out about the stories behind this year's appeal and meet up with other supporters and Christian Aid staff and partners. It takes place on Saturday, 8 March, 10.30am–1pm, at St John's Church, Waterloo in London. If you can't make it in person, there are other ways to join in – from regional watch parties to watching online.

Find out more here: tinyurl.com/yc2rj3ku

National Day of Reflection

The Church of England is supporting the government COVID-19 National Day of Reflection on 9 March. The day is a time to reflect on collective loss, support the bereaved, and hope for a brighter future.

For more information and to find out how to get involved in your church visit: tinyurl.com/3swrr93

£5 million conservation fund for churches

Applications for grants to fund the conservation of special objects such as stained glass, paintings, bells, organs and clocks in churches are open as part of an expanded £5 million scheme administered by the Church of England. Parishes are being encouraged to apply for grants towards the conservation of historical and cultural heritage through this scheme which is supported by £4.68million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The scheme, to be administered over the next five years, will also make grants towards building repairs – of up to £25,000 – that are linked to the conservation of an object, such as mending guttering if a leak is affecting wall paintings. Bids for specialist surveys and help for existing recipients' conservation projects to reach completion will also be considered for funding.

Applications can be made online: tinyurl.com/3pcaz9an. For more information contact: conservationgrants@churchofengland.org

Calculate your church's carbon footprint

The Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) is now open for churches to submit their 2024 energy bill data via the Parish Returns website until the tool closes on the 30 June 2025. The EFT is a user-friendly tool that calculates your church's carbon footprint and provides vital baseline information for work towards Net Zero Carbon. To support you with filling out the EFT, our Diocesan Environment Officer, Sophie Roberts, will be running two online training sessions on Wednesday 12 March, 12–1pm and 6.30–7.30pm.

To book, please email jpicadmin@southwark.anglican.org and for more information visit: tinyurl.com/mrxhwj98



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The Bridge is produced & published by:

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Next Issue: Submission deadline and guidance

The APRIL edition is due to be published online and in print on 1 April 2025. Material for that edition must be with Vernia Mengot by email by **FRIDAY 7 MARCH**.

Space limitations mean that we cannot guarantee to publish everything we receive and material may be edited. All photographs submitted for publication are assumed to have the necessary permission for printing. Please ensure that people are happy for their photographs to be submitted before you do so. Forms for permission for the use of photographs of children (Form 10) and adults who may be vulnerable (Form 11) can be found at southwark.anglican.org/safeguarding/diocesan-policies-procedures



IN FOCUS...
Lenten season

A time of prayer and contemplation

The season of Lent begins on Wednesday 5 March and ends on Thursday 17 April. The season of Lent is always a time of prayer and reflection and each year the Bishop's Lent Call raises funds for local community projects in Southwark and our Link Dioceses in Zimbabwe and Jerusalem.

The Bishop's Lenten message focuses on the theme "Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Matthew 19:14) asking parishes to pray, generously support and help make a difference to

help children and young people recovering from trauma and encourage their mental wellbeing.

We are all called to give in response to all that God has given to us to offer more help to those around us, even in these difficult times. As you keep a holy and prayerful Lent, we hope that you will feel able to generously support the projects we have chosen this year.

We have created a suite of digital resources to support you with fundraising. These are available to download on our website, where you will also find out more information about our chosen projects.



Money raised for the Lent Call will go towards helping projects working to improve the needs of children and young people recovering from trauma and encourage their mental wellbeing.

Details and resources

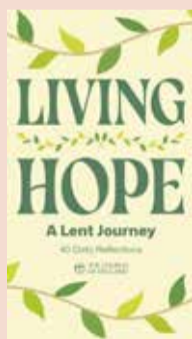
Resources are available at: southwark.anglican.org/lent-call



SCAN TO DONATE

Living Hope – resources for Lent 2025

The Church of England's Lent theme for 2025 is *Living Hope* and this Lent, we are encouraged to put down deep roots of hope by connecting with God who is with us at all times.



In Lent we journey with Jesus on the difficult and thorny road that leads all the way to the cross on Good Friday – and beyond, to the transformation of Easter Day.

God invites us to bring to him our

own journey through everyday life. In the disappointment of daily setbacks and the pain of deeper hurts, we discover that God is present with us. And God promises a future where all things are healed and made new.

Living Hope offers us the opportunity to deepen our hope in God and be part of what God is doing to bring hope in the world.

The readings and reflections explore how we can have hope in times of frustration or uncertainty; the hope found in joining with others; the invitation to notice signs

of hope around us; the courage to face reality and pursue a hopeful future; and the ways God transforms death into life at Easter.



The reflections have been written by Catherine Fungai Ngangira and Belle Tindall – both contributors to *Wild Bright Hope: The Big Church Read Lent Book 2025* (SPCK) – together with Victoria

Mason, Everyday Faith Editor for the Church of England.

Find out more: tinyurl.com/ybfujm5j

Lenten resources

A round-up of other Lenten resources available for use of the coming six weeks.

Searched Me Out and Known Me £12.99 tinyurl.com/bddep3hz



The Revd Charlie Bell Fellow at Girton College Cambridge, Assistant Curate, St John the Divine, Kennington and forensic psychiatrist.

In *Searched Me Out and Known Me*, Charlie offers a soul-enriching devotional

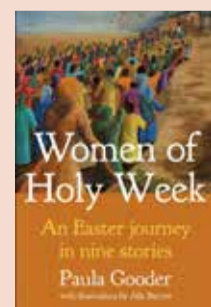
study of the Psalms for reading through the season of Lent: once a week on each of the Sundays of Lent, and once

a day during Holy Week. In these pages he helps us to appreciate the Psalms as texts to be prayed over and to be prayed with, to be breathed in and breathed out, as music and poetry that calls to our hearts and then to our heads – pointing within ourselves and outward in worship towards God.

Each chapter offers a reading from the Psalms and the Gospel reading for the day, a thought-provoking reflection by Charlie, questions for group discussion, and closes with the Church of England's Collect.

"It is to the Psalms that I encourage you to turn this Lent, as a book of music that can still make our hearts soar, and yet which can accompany us through our darkest moments, too." – Charlie Bell

Women of Holy Week £9.99 tinyurl.com/3nd8h7ze



Women of Holy Week is a series of nine stories written by Paula Gooder who uses her extensive biblical expertise to retell the events of the Crucifixion, Resurrection and

Ascension through the eyes of nine female characters she imagines accompanying Jesus during these momentous days. The stories accompanied by nine colour illustrations brings to life the tension, drama and shock of the events of Holy

Week. Originally given as a series of addresses at Southwark Cathedral during Holy Week 2021, these nine stories are for all who long to encounter Jesus afresh through the Easter Story.

Southwark Cathedral Lent Book Group



This year Southwark Cathedral has selected *'Tarry Awhile: Wisdom from Black Spirituality for people of faith'* by Selina Stone as their Lent book group. This book makes the wisdom of Black spiritualities and faith

available for all people. It focuses on seven themes: darkness as a place of encounter with the divine; the unity of all things; movement, belonging and migration; the Spirit as one who moves in unexpected ways; quiet contemplation as essential to spiritual growth; healing in community; and weeping that turns into joy. Sundays in March (9, 16, 23 and 30), 9.45am at Southwark Cathedral.

Find out more: tinyurl.com/2h4x3ct6

NEWS FROM OUR PARISHES



We are one



Last month, the Koinonia C of E Schools Federation hosted the 'We Are One' event at St Mary Magdalene C of E Campus on the Greenwich Peninsula Campus. The event brought students, parents and staff together to celebrate equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Pupils, staff and parents from event host St Mary Magdalene, Greenwich and St Mary Magdalene, Woolwich, Christ Church C of E Primary, Greenwich came together with St Margaret's, Plumstead for this special event. The evening included a range of events, performances and refreshments which reflected on and celebrated EDI.



"Everyone is different and has unique skills. We can all learn from our different cultures"

At the exhibition, Year 5 pupils shared their artwork and writing with hundreds of visitors. The displays featured a variety of works including silk screen printed T shirts, self-portraits and handmade

jewellery. The pupils were also able to discuss their understanding of diversity.

One pupil commented saying that diversity is "when people respect others' beliefs and looks". Another stated, "Everyone is different and has unique skills. We can all learn from our different cultures".

One parent shared how much they had enjoyed the evening and hoped to join in future events which celebrated diversity at the school.

Pupils from St Margaret's had reflected on equality and climate justice. Advocating for eco justice across the world, the pupils demonstrated their deep understanding through inspiring artwork and powerful letters. During the exhibition, visitors were able to vote for their favourite pieces.

Rachel Phillips, Education Advisor for the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education said, "The event was an incredible celebration of the children and young people, their families and school community. Congratulations to everyone who participated in the inaugural event – we look forward to another event next year!"



Food for the soul

On Friday 17 January, All Saints, Tooting hosted the Soul Food Café. The event, organised by Joyce Fraser of the Black Heroes Foundation, as part of Wandsworth's Black History Month 365, saw over 150 people join an evening of food, drink, games, entertainment and black culture. Joyce presented during the evening with DJ Elayne.

The Revd Prof June Boyce-Tillman said that the church "vibrated with the glittering lively energy" and that it "was quite literally celebratory *Food for the Soul*. Over 150 people sang danced celebrated, answered quiz questions and ate wonderful soup, patties and jerk bites, provided by Dawn Burton, while learning undiscovered facts in the canonised history of this country."

The evening included singing by Johnny Orlando, a health and wellbeing session with Loxley and an open-mic session

where attendees sang *Salve Regina* – a Hebrew peace song and a song from the 1960s from Notting Hill. The Mayor of Wandsworth Cllr Sana Jafri affirmed the event and The Revd King ended the event with a blessing.

June gives thanks to the "Enthusiastic and generous helpers from All Saints and the Black Heroes Foundation who helped with the complexity of this event which was part of a series of events hosted at the church to recognise becoming a Church of Sanctuary."



Joyce Fraser of the Black Heroes Foundation organised the event.

Multi-faith rededication service

On Thursday 30 January, the Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Team at Croydon Health Services NHS Trust led by The Revd Andy Dovey, Head of Chaplaincy, held their annual multi-faith rededication service for their chaplaincy staff. The volunteers comprise of 84 Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh chaplains who serve the needs of patients across 550 beds and 4,500 staff over multiple sites.

During the service, awards were presented in recognition of 10, 15 and 10 years of service to four of the volunteers

Aileen Ross (10 years, Anglican), Trevane Wallbank (15 years, Methodist) Pushpa Visrolia (20 years, Hindu) and Sister Sheila Moloney (20 years, Roman Catholic).

Andy said, "Volunteers in our service are critical in providing the high levels of pastoral, spiritual and religious care to our patients and staff, without their dedicated help in visits to the ward we would not be able to identify the pastoral, spiritual or religious needs of all of our patients. Providing the appropriate religious rites according the faith or belief of the individual is paramount in provide a healthy spiritual life to support and sustain physiological and physical recovery".



Hospital Chaplains gathered in St Barnabas Worship Centre, the Hospital Chapel.

Two cathedrals in one mission



© Richard Malins

On Sunday 19 January Southwark Cathedral began the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by inviting the clergy and people of St George’s Roman Catholic Cathedral to sing ‘Solemn Vespers’ in Southwark Cathedral. The choirs of the cathedrals joined together to sing, and the clergy of the two cathedrals processed side by side.

The Very Revd Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark, welcomed the congregation by saying that the week of prayer was to help “safeguard love” between Christians of different traditions. He quoted Pope Francis: ‘Prayer for unity is the primary responsibility in our journey together. And it is a sacred responsibility, because it means being in communion with the Lord, who prayed above all to the Father for unity’. The Dean of St George’s Cathedral, Canon Michael Branch, preached the

homily in which he said, “This evening, in this sacred space, we celebrate not only the bonds of history and geography that bring us together, but also the deeper bond of our shared baptism, our shared faith in the crucified and risen Lord, and our shared mission to proclaim His love to the world”.

The following Sunday Southwark Cathedral choir, clergy and members of the congregation visited St George’s to sing Choral Evensong. The Revd Canon

Kathryn Fleming, Canon Precentor, officiated at the service.

The Revd Canon Michael Rawson, Sub Dean and Canon Pastor who preached said, “We believe it is the first time that Vespers and Choral Evensong have been celebrated in our respective Cathedrals. We are already planning for an ecumenical celebration at the start of a Jubilee Year pilgrimage in June taking in both Cathedral communities.”

Give to Go Green, goes live again for 2025

Helping churches fundraise for green upgrades with the match funding element to double the money!

Give to Go Green was a huge success at the end of last year, nearly £160,000 was raised for green initiatives across twelve Southwark churches. Thanks to the match funding element and social media campaigns churches saw donations from across their communities, not just their

congregations. We’re thrilled applications are open again, with a closing date of **16 March**. You can apply for the grant here: tinyurl.com/253vaze5. Or email our Net Zero Carbon Programme Manager, Jonathan Walter: jonathan.walter@southwark.anglican.org. If you raise up to £10,000 to fund projects such a heating control system, insulation or solar panels it will be matched in funds by the *Give to Go Green* scheme.



The congregation of St John the Baptist, Eltham display their heated cushions, funded by the scheme.

Awesome God, how great thou art!



On Sunday 9 February, St Mark, Kennington hosted members and supporters of UK based charity, YSLEEP (Young Sierra Leoneans’ Educational and Empowerment Project) which celebrated its 25th anniversary in active service.

The organisation was formerly known as Sierra Leone War Relief Effort and originally started in the late 90’s in response to the civil war. After becoming a registered charity in the early 2000’s, the organisation’s main focus has been to support young people in Sierra Leone, West Africa by fundraising for projects aimed at improving health outcomes and providing better educational needs across the country.

Themed: ‘Awesome God, how great thou art!’ (psalm 145:3), the service saw hundreds gathered in person and online to give thanks for over two decades of charitable efforts.

Having led as the officiating clergy at YSLEEP thanksgiving services over the years, The Revd Canon Stephen Coulson said, “I commend and encourage YSLEEP... you have come on board with God to take the opportunity of challenge to mend and heal and bring hope. To God be the glory for these 25 years.”

Find out more about YSLEEP here: ysleep.org

Blessing of the plough at Outwood

On ‘Plough Sunday’ (first Sunday of Epiphany), The Revd Alan Bayes, Rector of the Windmill United Benefice and Rural Life Adviser for the Diocese of Southwark blessed a plough outside St John the Baptist Church in Outwood to mark the beginning of the agricultural year.

The plough was supplied by James and Carole Wells from Hookhouse Farm and members of the Outwood Horticultural Society attended the blessing. Packets of wildflower seeds were also blessed and handed out to those who gathered.



IN FOCUS...
Social justice

World Day of Social Justice

Each year, *The United Nations World Day of Social Justice (20 February)* is an opportunity to recognise the need to promote social justice. The day reminds us to tackle issues such as poverty, discrimination, exclusion and gender inequality as we take steps to build a more just and equitable world.

As we reflect on the challenges people face in their daily lives, we use this as a time to raise awareness and call on communities to take action so that everyone has access to equal opportunities.

This year's theme: *Strengthening a Just Transition for a Sustainable Future* explores how we can make sure that as the world moves towards low-carbon economies it benefits everyone – especially the most vulnerable. It focuses on re-imagining our economic and environmental systems to put people at the forefront of change just as much as prioritising the planet – providing opportunities and resources so that sustainable growth benefits everyone.

Across these pages, read about how we as Christians advocate for social justice as part of our daily lives, take a closer look at the launch of a new social justice programme at Southwark Cathedral and learn about safeguarding God's creation through ethical banking.

Justice is a way of life,
not just a day

Nicole McKeever, Social Action Development Worker, writes:

World Day of Social Justice was a day to reflect on the importance of building a more just and equitable society that reflects the nature of Christ and His

Kingdom. It was a day to remember that, as Christians, we worship and serve a God who "loves righteousness and justice," and who fills the earth with His unending love (Psalms 33:5).

In our society, social justice is often equated with political activism and advocacy for economic stability, access to employment, and adequate living standards. It can become easy to think of justice as something which requires the involvement of lawmakers and powerful figures, and to limit my involvement in social justice to writing to my MP to ask them to campaign in parliament against food insecurity or other social injustices.

Yet the Bible presents a picture of justice which is so much more than this. In the Old Testament times, justice meant caring for the vulnerable and marginalised, the orphans, widows, foreigners, and the 'poor' (Deuteronomy 10:18; Zechariah 7:10). Kings and rulers were responsible for ensuring justice (Jerimiah 22:1-3), but so were everyday people (Isaiah 1:17) as part of their covenant with God and neighbour. Goldingay puts it well when he writes that justice 'was practical and down to earth, personal and costly. It was about doing what you had the power to do on behalf of the people who lives nearby.' In this sense, justice is something every Christian must practice in daily life. Advocating for justice is important, but living justly is equally crucial.

During this season of Lent, there are resources available to guide you in thinking reflectively about how everyday choices can make a difference in the world.

Keep an eye out on our diocese website for the Every Day Justice Lent resources. In the meantime, here are some helpful tools and reading materials to get started.

- Life on the Breadline Lent Course (Free): tinyurl.com/msxsrym4
- Tearfund's Live Justly Bible Studies (Free): tinyurl.com/25987v9w
- J+ Resources (They have free devotions and courses on a variety of topics): jubilee-plus.org/resources
- Generous Justice by Tim Keller: tinyurl.com/ew9kxh79
- A Call to Act by Martin Charlesworth and Natalie Williams: jubilee-plus.org/books

Meet our new Diocesan Social Action Development Worker



I'm Nicole McKeever, and I'm excited to introduce myself as the new Social Action Development Worker for the Diocese. I'll be taking on the role previously held by Nelly Misenga.

Over the past decade, God has been growing my heart for the biblical and Gospel call to share His love with our neighbours, local communities, and the world. With a background in local church ministry, I have spent the last several years conducting research for my ongoing PhD project into the ways which Christian organisations can help the Church respond to food insecurity in the UK. I've also had the privilege of volunteering in a variety of community initiatives, including mentoring in schools, working with my local food bank, and serving at my church's community breakfast club.

In this role, I'll be supporting churches in their local social action work – predominantly focusing on poverty, homelessness, and refugee aid. I'll be offering help for churches wanting to get new projects off the ground or apply for funding, running webinars and sharing ideas, information, and stories of hope, and making connections for new partnerships. Having previously studied for my Masters in Missional Spirituality, I'm particularly passionate about helping churches ground their social action and justice work in prayer, the Bible, Church tradition, and, most importantly, the example which Christ offers us all.

Please feel free to get in touch for a chat, to ask questions, or to let me know what you are currently working on in your parish. My email is Nicole.mckeever@southwark.anglican.org, or you can reach me on 020 7939 9415. I'm looking forward to working with you!

When we witness injustice, we can remember that justice isn't only about campaigning for legal and systemic change – it's also about recognising the needs of our local communities and taking action. It's also in the small, meaningful gestures: pausing to connect with someone on the street instead of rushing past, choosing ethically-produced goods, or taking the time to listen to a neighbour struggling with their mental health or financial challenges. Justice is not just something we do on occasion, it is a way of life.

References taken from:

ILO, Advancing Social Justice, Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2023, 8. Available here: tinyurl.com/4624h42p
John Goldingay, "Do we Really Love God's Law: How the Old Testament Actually Clarifies New Testament Ethics," Christianity Today, May/June 2020, 68.

On Saturday 8 November 2025, we're holding our Diocesan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Conference. More details to follow.



Modern slavery

Novelist Amanda Craig helps launch Cathedral social justice programme.

An important part of Southwark Cathedral's Vision: Making Space for Love with heart, mind, and soul – is a commitment to social justice. Each year a specific area will be highlighted for attention and action. This year, the Cathedral are focusing on modern slavery and exploitation, and there will be a programme of talks, events, exhibitions, stalls and workshops that will run through 2025.

On 23 February, the Cathedral partnered with *Hestia* – a charity that supports survivors of slavery – held a congregation and volunteer training hour about contemporary abuse of human dignity. The informative event gave the congregation an opportunity to learn about what modern slavery is, the forms it can take, how London is affected by it, and what we might do about it as individuals and as a community.

Throughout the year, the Cathedral will be hosting workshops and activities with survivors of slavery, as well as exhibiting art by survivors, and welcoming a choir made up of those who have suffered this cruelty.

The Cathedral staff attended a training session at the beginning of the year.

To help launch this year's programme, the novelist Amanda Craig spoke with The Very Revd Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark, about why this is such an important topic and why she is grateful that the Cathedral has taken up this injustice for exploration. She speaks about her novel *'Hearts and Minds'* (available in the Cathedral shop), in which she tells of

the story of various individuals who find themselves in London, some exploited and abused, and how their lives interact with the dark underbelly of the city, as well as the good it offers.



Dean Mark and novelist Amanda Craig focus on modern slavery.

Dean Mark has also recorded a conversation with the CEO of *Hestia*, Patrick Ryan – a registered psychoanalytic psychotherapist with a particular interest in trauma. Together they discuss *Hestia* and the support it provides to survivors of modern slavery, the extent of slavery in London and Southwark today, how to detect signs of slavery and where to find more information, how to report concerns, and how we can support *Hestia's* work. You can listen to Dean Mark's conversations with Amanda and Patrick on the Cathedral's podcast here: tinyurl.com/3hy6vmna

If you need advice or support on a modern slavery issue, then you can call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700. It operates 24 hour a day, 365 days a year.

Over recent years there has been much work in the area of modern slavery across our diocese, particularly by Jennifer Hyde and Christopher Elliott, our Southwark Against Modern Slavery Team. For information and to contact the team please visit: tinyurl.com/5n83du2p



Faith and finance: why green banking matters



Sophie Roberts, Diocesan Environment Officer writes:

Have you ever wondered what your bank does with your money, and the impact it has?

For many of us, the link between our Christian faith and how we handle our finances isn't always at the forefront of our minds. While money was one of Jesus' most spoken about topics, it is often overlooked compared to other aspects of discipleship. It is even less likely that we have considered how we could unwittingly be harming God's creation and his people through our choice of bank.

With the Church of England's and our Diocese Synod's decision to divest away from fossil fuels in response to the imminent threat of the climate crisis, now is an important time for us to start asking questions about what projects our bank lends our money to.

The facts are staggering. Each year, \$7 trillion of private finance and public sector finance is invested into activities that harm the planet. Yet, only \$200 billion is invested into projects that aim to conserve and restore biodiversity.

Unfortunately, many high-street banks are at the forefront of financing fossil fuel projects. Two of Europe's highest contributing banks alone have invested \$335 billion in fossil fuels since the Paris Climate Agreement was signed in 2015. These projects not only pollute the world, destroy ecosystems and cause land to become uninhabitable, but actively contribute to peoples' exploitation and weather extremes faced by our brothers and sisters worldwide. While those in the global south have contributed least to the climate crisis, they continue to bear the brunt of its impacts.

The Bible calls for us to do good with our money (1 Timothy 6:17-19), love our neighbours and care for God's creation. While we are made to safeguard God's world, the rate fossil fuels are extracted at continues to push the earth beyond its limits for the sake of profit. Therefore, we must not turn a blind eye

to the injustice and destruction at the hands of our banks.

The good news: banking for positive change

Fortunately, it is not all doom and gloom. Some banks have flipped the script, choosing to invest for good rather than solely for profit. For example, Triodos bank lends money to projects with positive environmental impacts, and prioritises transparent banking so users know exactly where their money goes.

So, how can we act out our faith in the way we bank?

Explore ethical banking options

The Just Money Movement are a Christian organisation that encourages Christians to think more about how they can use their finances to positively impact God's world. They offer useful resources for churches and individuals seeking to bank ethically.

- Churches can use Just Money Movement's Greener, Fairer Banking Guide which provides in-depth guidance on banking ethically and avoiding banks that invest in fossil fuel projects.
- Individuals can explore their Big Bank Switch campaign for personal finances, where you can explore different ethical banking options and pledge to switch to greener alternatives.

Use Your Voice

Banks have power, but so do we. Consider taking action by:

- Contacting your bank with questions about their ethical investment policies.
- Joining peaceful protests, like recent demonstrations outside Barclays.
- Encouraging your church to sign Just Money's statement of concern addressed to the CEOs of big banks.

While switching banks may seem like a small step, the collective difference we can make could be monumental. If you make one green switch this month – make it this.



DISCIPLESHIP & MINISTRY

Lay ministry taster day: how might you serve the Lord?

In preparation for the Celebration of Lay Ministries during Candlemas (2 February) – a time to encourage people to think whether God is calling them into new things – the Discipleship and Ministry team held a taster day to celebrate Lay Ministries and give people an opportunity to find out more about how to begin exploring a vocation to Lay Ministry.

Held at Trinity House on Saturday 25 January, the day was full of activities including a series of talks and workshops presented by people involved in various recognised affirmed, commissioned and licensed Lay Ministries. There were representatives including Readers, Lay Pioneers, Church Army, Evangelists, Pastoral Ministers and NHS Chaplains. As well as information on Children, Youth and Family, Racial and Social Justice Focus (RASJF), Spiritual Direction and Southwark and AGEing.

During the event there was an opportunity to learn more about The Bishop's certificate and other discipleship and ministry events open to all.



L-R: Guest speaker Derek Walmsley with Carol Coslett.

Attendees heard from guest speaker, The Revd Canon Derek Walmsley – former Diocesan Director of Ordinands for the Diocese of Leeds and author of the book *God Calls Everyone* – who spoke about Christian vocation. He said, “I had a great time speaking on vocations to over 50 people, there were lots of good conversations afterwards and it was inspiring how God calls us in all our diverse and unique ways.” Other workshops included a session on Diddy Disciples – practical worship and storytelling resources for babies, toddlers and young children, intergenerational ministry and social justice.

The Venerable Carol Coslett, Assistant Director of Lay Ministry said,

“We were so blessed with a bright sunny day, and Trinity House was buzzing with enthusiastic enquirers all asking questions on calling and vocations. We packed the room to hear the inspiring words of Derek reminding us that ‘our service is perfect freedom’ and as St Augustine prayed to follow a call we can also be called by God with our own gifts to serve.”

More information

Online Lay Ministry taster sessions are on 9 April, 4 June, 13 September and 9 October. Sign up by email: learning@southwark.anglican.org. You can contact Carol by email at: carol.coslett@southwark.anglican.org

New appointments



The Revd Gemma Lau (pictured left of Bishop Alastair) has been collated and inducted at St Clement, Dulwich and licensed as Associate Priest at St Barnabas, Dulwich by The Rt Revd Alastair Cutting, Bishop of Woolwich.



The Revd Vanessa Elston (pictured left of Bishop Martin) has been licensed as the Vicar of St Barnabas, Southfields by The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston.

Speaking to the needs of today's society



Bishop Phoebe (centre, in purple) enjoys the company of participants following an evening of lively and engaged reflection on GMH strategies.

In last month's edition of *The Bridge*, we shared a brief news item on ‘An evening with Bishop Phoebe Roaf’ who visited our diocese in January. Hosted by Bishop Rosemarie, Bishop Phoebe was invited as the guest speaker at an evening for clergy and lay ministers of Global Majority Heritage (GMH) at Southwark Cathedral.

It was a wonderful, uplifting occasion for prayerful reflections on the topics of ‘How are our congregations’ sources of light and life in local communities?’ and ‘How are we positioning ourselves to speak to the needs of today's society?’. Lively discussion and networking was facilitated over a delicious light meal, with two-way reflections and learnings from ministry experiences both here in the UK and the US.

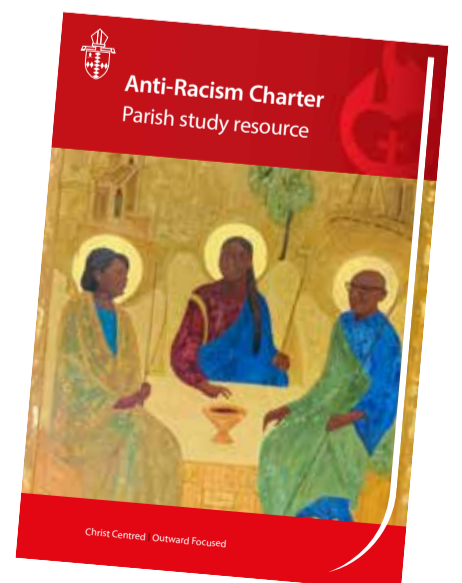
The event created a genuinely warm and safe space for open discussion of, and Q&A on some of the unique challenges from the US, including lessons learnt from the pandemic and its impact on church attendance and engagement. Against an increasingly polarised political and economic backdrop, the discussions affirmed the place of the Church in journeying alongside society with compassion and purpose. One attendee, The Revd Dr Daniel Eshun, Whitelands College Chaplain (Roehampton University) shared that the highlight of the evening was the “clarity of Bishop's address, and the positivity of the answers with nuance and caveats” to provide context and enable translating lessons into practice.

On the subject of taking action as GMH members of the Church, lively dialogue took place on the challenge of connecting to younger and more diverse generations within the Anglican communion. This called to mind one of the key priorities of Southwark vision and the wider Church's Vision. The Revd Chris Henriette, Curate at The Good Shepherd with St Peter in Lee, East Lewisham Deanery, said, “the evening was a chance to lean on the experience and wisdom of older GMH

leaders.” Mentoring and support were affirmed as a way forward in building up younger GMH leaders who would in turn reflect the diversity of their parishes – generating role models and a more accurate representation that reflects in the leadership and participation of the Church at all levels.

The evening closed with prayers led by Marie Williams, Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary at Holy Saviour Church, Croydon and there was an opportunity to connect and network. As part of implementing the Anti-Racism Charter within our diocese, we look forward to continuing to facilitate future opportunities for making meaningful connections within safe and supportive spaces. There was much positive feedback from participants reflecting high engagement and encouragement from the event, another attendee said that the highlight of the evening for them was, “listening to members of the audience sharing their experiences and suggesting realistic strategies that would help”.

To find out more about future events and connect with others of Global Majority Heritage, or to request copies of our ARC study resource, please email Racial.Justice@southwark.anglican.org for support.





IN FOCUS...
News from the diocese

A mother's love

After 34 years at Trinity House, Anne Love, who was secretary to the Diocese of Southwark's Mothers' Union (MU) retired on Friday 31 January.

During a farewell reception with colleagues, Anne was presented with a Lancelot Andrewes Medal by Bishop Christopher for her 'Godly service and zeal for the Gospel'. Anne has also been appointed Lay Canon Emerita at Southwark Cathedral.

Odette Penwarden who leads welcome, front of house and room bookings at Trinity House said, "Anne will be really missed at Trinity House for her kindness and the smile from her desk in the post room, where everyone finds themselves at some time and her cheery wave as people passed her window when arriving or leaving the building. The way she greeted the MU Members when they arrived for meetings was much appreciated by all.

"Anne has seen MU Members and Presidents come and go but has been there as a 'fixture' to organise their numerous meetings and functions for all these years, taking everything in her stride. Everyone knows Anne and will miss her."

In a post on X, Bishop Christopher said, "Presenting Anne Love with a Lancelot Andrewes Medal for 'Godly Service and Zeal for the Gospel' as she concludes her 34 years as Secretary to the Mothers' Union. Thank you, Anne – who also now becomes Lay Canon Emerita @Southwarkcathed @SouthwarkCofE @MothersUnion".

Anne is succeeded by Rosemary Walsh who formerly worked for the Church of England Pensions Board.

Rosemary says "I have been an active member since my son was born in 2017, joining in prayer fellowship, fund raising and service. I am keen to share my skills and to support members across the diocese".



Following the triennial elections, Penny Lohead (pictured left) has now taken on the role of Diocesan President, succeeding Comfort Idowu-Fearon.

"I look forward to working with Rosemary. Having been a member for over 40 years and serving on the Trustee Board for nine years as Vice President of Reigate, Joint Co-ordinator of Communications



and Fundraising and most recently heading up the Faith and Policy Unit I trust in our Lord that I am as well prepared as possible for the next three years as we continue to support and equip members to serve their parishes and communities offering Christian Care for Families."

Top: Bishop Christopher presents the Lancelot Andrewes medal to Anne Love. Right: Rosemary Walsh who succeeds Anne as secretary to Southwark's Mothers Union.



Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

The Listed Places of Worship (LPW) Grant Scheme gives grants towards VAT paid on repairs and renovations to the UK's listed sites of worship, providing £23 million so that thousands of historical buildings, including churches, synagogues, mosques and temples can carry out restoration work.

Last year, there were fears that the scheme would not be renewed this March, but after a successful campaign led by the Church of England and supported by several key partners (including the National Churches Trust, Association of English Cathedrals, Church of Scotland, Church in Wales, the Catholic Church and the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance) the government scheme has been extended for the financial year 2025/26. Parishes were also encouraged to write to their local MPs and to the Secretary

of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

The renewal of the scheme recognises that listed places of worship represent an important part of UK heritage and provide spaces for communities. Marsha de Cordova MP, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, welcomed the announcement of the 12-month extension but cautioned that "going forward, it is vital that a long-term solution is reached for some of the country's most important community buildings", whilst The Right Reverend Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol, and The Right Reverend Dr Andrew Rumsey, Bishop of Ramsbury (the Church of England's joint lead bishops on church buildings) committed to continue their "close working with the faith and charity buildings sector, and the Government, towards more secure funding in the long term for these buildings that are so crucial to their communities." The announcement was made during a Westminster Hall debate when many MPs paid tribute to the commitment and diligence of the many volunteers upon whom falls much of the work of caring for these buildings.

The LPW Grant Scheme gives grants to listed buildings used as places of worship which covers the VAT on eligible works of

over £1,000. One claim – that is less than £1,000 but more than £500 – can also be submitted in any 12-month period. There is now a cap of £25,000 that any one place of worship can claim in total during the year, although this can still be spread across multiple claims. This will affect listed churches which are projected to spend more than £125,000 on repairs or

eligible alterations between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

According to statistics released last year, 86 parish churches in our diocese have received these grants – a total of over £760,000 of government funding for our listed buildings across Southwark.

More details: tinyurl.com/3h64yhv7



**ST OLAVE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL
AND THE KING'S CHAPEL
OF THE SAVOY**

WAKEHAM CHORISTERSHIPS



Applications are invited from boys whose **tenth** birthday falls between **1 September 2024** and **31 August 2025**

Under the scheme, run jointly by St Olave's Grammar School and The Duchy of Lancaster, boys commence at The King's Chapel of the Savoy in September 2025 and in Year 7 at St Olave's Grammar School in September 2026

- Singing in a Chapel Royal Choir
- Musical training at the highest standard
- Admission to one of the country's best state schools

Further details are available via www.saintolaves.net

The closing date for applications is Wednesday, 26 March 2025



IN FOCUS...
Southwark Vision

Implementing Southwark Vision through the Diocesan Investment Programme

Last year, we featured the priorities of Southwark Vision where colleagues from across our diocese shared how we seek to be Christ-centred and outward-focused through our priorities for the future and commitment to our shared values.

Our vision and strategy for Southwark Diocese reflects these priorities and focuses on ways in which we might enable God's church to grow, especially in our own rich and diverse context. This year – as part of a new Bridge series – we'll be exploring our diocesan plans to further resource and implement Southwark Vision through our Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP).

This programme will resource and facilitate mission and growth projects throughout South London and East Surrey, none of which will be at the expense of core funding for our parishes. In June 2024, it was announced that the Diocese of Southwark would receive £29 million over nine years from the Church

Commissioners, with the Diocese working in partnership with the national church to enable us to renew our parishes through a range of initiatives where parishes will have additional resources and support to achieve missional goals, with at least 25% directly participating.

The Diocesan Investment Programme seeks to address the four main missional challenges that have been identified by our Diocesan Synod:

- Growing church attendance.
- Doubling the number of churches with more than 25 children and young people.
- Reaching and resourcing estates parishes.

- Growing pathways to ministry that increase the diversity of leadership and are more accessible to young people.

Mission and ministry is at the heart of Southwark Vision and to address these challenges, the Diocesan Investment Programme offers an integrated programme with a number of workstreams that will resource and enable churches of varying sizes and kinds to flourish and grow.

'Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.'

Ecclesiastes 4:12

In this series, we'll be sharing just some of the inspirational examples of parishes of different traditions, contexts and socio-economic needs who are benefiting from resourcing through DIP funding, to help us meet the missional challenges of our time. In addition, as new workstreams are piloted, such as the Parish Renewal and Development Programme, and Apprenticeship style training, there will be opportunities for further parishes to participate. With each and every project we will be focussing on how successful ideas might be replicated, what we learn from the different initiatives and how it can further help to fulfil Southwark Vision.

A large number of colleagues have been working hard to get the structures and processes in place for all of these strands of work to get underway. They will be offering opportunities for you to engage with members of the team, to find out more about the newer initiatives yet to come on stream such as the Parish

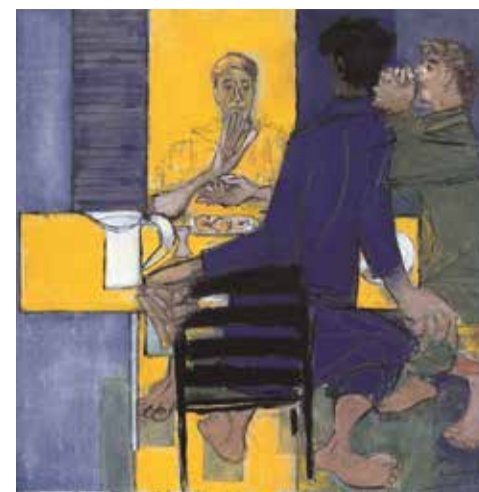


Image: © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

Development and Renewal Programme, local CYP Missional practitioners, Apprenticeship style training. Churches can already apply for Fresh Expressions grants to support local mission.

Ruth Martin, the Bishop's Lead for Strategic Development who is leading the DIP team, said, "This is a wonderful opportunity for us to continue to grow together as a diocese, valuing each of our parishes, recognising the wide range of contexts in which our parishes serve their communities and seek to grow the Kingdom of God. One of the most significant workstreams which integrates and is relevant to all, is encouraging Diverse Vocations, enabling us to better represent the communities we serve and developing a diverse pipeline to ministry."

You can read more about the key elements of our successful bid application on our website: tinyurl.com/4ff8w89h



LET US PRAY...

MARCH

The Venerable John Kiddle
Archdeacon of Wandsworth

Lent

Lent, this year, feels late. A grey and cold February has kept us waiting for too long. But as the daffodils appear, so at last we welcome Lent.

Lent is a season of emptiness, a period of denial, a journey through the desert. It does, after all, reflect the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

But Lent is also the season of spring, of new life, of lengthening days, of colour and joy. The growth we see emerging around us in nature, speaks to us of the life and growth that God loves to enable in us.

Of course, the one leads to the other. Our Lenten disciplines are gifts, not impositions. Gifts, because through them, we are enabled to deepen our prayer life, widen our hearts, open our minds. Gifts of God's grace, beautiful as the flowers of spring.

Let's embrace this Lent – this late and longed for Lent and see what beauty God can fashion in our lives and through our lives.

Grace comes as we joyfully take up our disciplines of prayer and silence, of denial, of service and generosity, of study and reflection. They are seeds of life and



a friend, decide on something and then enjoy the journey.

May we all, this Lent grow in grace and deepen our faith. May we discover afresh the beauty of God's life and the breadth of God's love.

beauty. They are doors which open us to the abundant life of God.

And let's be gentle with ourselves. We're not all called to the same disciplines. We don't have the same resources. There are different calls on our time, different responsibilities.

What are the one or two things that you can do this Lent? Think especially about prayer, about simplicity, about generosity, about study. Take a bit of time to let God put something on your heart, or talk with

*Loving God
For the season of spring
And the journey of Lent
We give you thanks.*

*Bless our disciplines over these weeks,
May they be for us
Gifts of grace
and seeds of life.*

*So may we, with deepened faith,
Walk more gladly the way of Christ.*

Amen.

WHAT'S ON



Please send details of your next events for APRIL ONWARDS to Trinity House **BY MONDAY 10 MARCH**

March

THURSDAY 6 MARCH

ONLINE – Mission Action Planning (MAP) training. Transform your church's future in just one hour! Join this Diocese of Southwark event and gain the tools to lead with confidence. Further sessions available throughout the year. Free. Book at: tinyurl.com/swhem66t

FRIDAYS 7, 14, & 28 MARCH

CROYDON – lunchtime recitals, 40 minutes of music, 1.10pm at Croydon Minster. Free, donations welcome. Details: croydonminster.org/events

SATURDAY 15 MARCH

TULSE HILL – After 35 years in the Diocese of Southwark, The Revd Richard Dormandy, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Tulse Hill will be retiring in May. Join our 'A Wealth of Worship' featuring Richard's worship songs. All welcome. 6.45pm at Holy Trinity Tulse Hill, Trinity Rise, SW2 2QP. Free.

SATURDAY 15 MARCH

* **RICHMOND** – Company of servers (Southwark & London Chapter). Lent quiet morning led by Fr Joe Moore. 10am at St John the Divine Church, Kew Road, Richmond TW9 2NA. All Servers & Supporters welcome. michaeljlewis17@gmail.com

SUNDAY 16 MARCH

STREATHAM – *Be a Chorister Experience*. Join St Peter's Youth Choir for an afternoon in the choir! Play singing games, make new friends, learn new music, and give an evensong performance. Open to boys and girls,

aged 6–13. 2.45–5.45pm at St Peter's Church, Leigham Court Road, Streatham SW16 2SD. Free. To sign up, contact Luca via email: music@stpeters-streatham.org or phone 07455 092370.

SATURDAY 22 MARCH

WIMBLEDON – The Hill Singers Chamber Choir, concert of French choral music incl. *Faure's Requiem*, 7.30pm, St Matthew's Church, Wimbledon, SW20 0DE. Tickets on the door £13–£15, cash only, children under 16 free. hillsingers.co.uk

SATURDAY 22 MARCH

* **WATERLOO** – 'Generous Faith – our Wound is our Word'. One-day conference to ask: what is a prophet and what is prophecy? Where is it being spoken today? How do we recognise it? Why must the church? 9.30am–5pm at St John's Church, 73 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TY. Tickets £12–£33, details and booking: tinyurl.com/49xaam8t

April

TUESDAY 1 APRIL

ONLINE – Mission Action Planning (MAP) training. Transform your church's future in just one hour! Join this Diocese of Southwark event and gain the tools to lead with confidence. Further sessions available throughout the year. Free. Book at: tinyurl.com/swhem66t

SATURDAY 5 APRIL

WIMBLEDON – Morden Park Choral Society Lent concert. 7.30pm at St John the Divine, High Path, South Wimbledon SW19. Tickets £10 per person.

The Bridge survey – thank you for sharing your views

It's been two years since *The Bridge* returned to print and we are so grateful to you for continuing to share stories from your parishes and schools.

At the end of last year, we asked you to share your views to help us shape the future of *The Bridge*. This is your diocesan newspaper and your feedback matters, so it's important to share what you like to read about most.

Thank you to those of you who took time to complete our short survey. The results are in! We are reviewing your feedback and look forward to sharing the results with you soon.



Your opinion matters and we hope to incorporate some of your suggestions in future editions to keep you up to date with all things Southwark.

Vernia
Editor, *The Bridge*



SATURDAY 5 APRIL

* **WOOLWICH AREA LAY CONFERENCE** – Calling emerging and lay leaders in our churches. Venue Ark All Saints Academy, London SE5 0UB. The Rt Revd Alastair Cutting, Bishop of Woolwich said, "The Woolwich Area Lay Conference has gone from strength to strength in recent years in training and resourcing our lay leaders". Free. Register: tinyurl.com/e73569pf

SATURDAY 5 APRIL

* **BATTERSEA** – *Journeying Together* conference. Christian mental health charity *Being Alongside* is holding a half-day conference exploring the topic of journeying together with God and each other through life's challenges. 10.30am–2pm at All Saints Church Battersea, 100 Prince of Wales Drive, London, SW11 4BD. Tickets £10 (£5 for the unwaged) to include refreshments and light sandwich lunch. Book via admin@beingalongside.org.uk with your name, also donate either £10 or £5 via the 'Donate' button at beingalongside.org.uk

SUNDAY 6 APRIL

PETERSHAM – Petersham Passion. Jeremy Summerly, conductor, directs a charity concert, JS Bach's *St John Passion* and *St Matthew Passion*. 5pm at St Peter's Church, Petersham, Church Lane TW10 7AB. Proceeds to St Peter's & local community projects. Suggested donation £15, tickets: tinyurl.com/PetershamPassion. Details: events.stpeterspetersham@gmail.com

THURSDAY 10 APRIL

MERTON – Organ recital with Alexander Binns, Derby Cathedral Director of Music. 7.30pm at St Mary's Church, Church Path, Merton SW19 3HJ. Bar in interval. Tickets £15 on the door. Details: tinyurl.com/jv36zf47

WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL

SELSDON – Tenebrae service, moving and contemplative preparation for the events of Holy Week. Reflect through scripture and music. 8pm, St John the Divine, Upper Selsdon Road CR2 8DD. Details: stjohnsselsdon.org.uk



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Church Mice...
Wasps in the West End,
Pigeons over the Pulpit,
Ants in the Aisles,
Squirrels in the Sanctuary,
Rats in the Rectory,
Cockroaches in the Crypt

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This newspaper is printed with premier paper and the diocese is part of the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and a Carbon Capture customer. This means that we are part of the Woodland Trust's Woodland Carbon scheme, a scheme that aims to mitigate the CO2 emissions generated by the production, storage and distribution of the paper purchased. For every pack of the paper sold, 5p of the wholesale price goes directly to the Trust. Of this, 2p goes towards Woodland Carbon and 3p to their other work, such as the protection and restoration of ancient woodland.

Email your upcoming events to bridge@southwark.anglican.org



IN FOCUS...
News from the diocese

‘Art for Wellbeing’

Studies suggest that when art is used as a form of creative expression, it has great benefits to improving mental health and wellbeing, and coupled with worship and spiritual reflection it allows us to explore God’s love and regain inner peace.

In October 2023, St Helier Centre of Mission became the home to Art for Wellbeing. Having attended a retreat which featured an art room, Hayley Humphreys, Pioneer Evangelist, felt inspired by painting. Even though she had never painted before, it created a vision and she wondered if others might enjoy experiencing the peace she had enjoyed while creating art in the room. Starting with a small grant from the Local Council and enlisting the help of a local artist, she began a group which experimented with different art mediums.

After initially running for only seven weeks, the number of people in the group had grown and participants didn’t want it



to end. In January 2024, Hayley continued leading the group and introduced a spiritual reflection linked to the topic of the painting theme for each week’s session. The Art for Wellbeing group has now hosted three exhibitions where participants present their work to friends, family and local residents. More recently, the group registered as a Fresh Expression and there are hopes to apply for more funding to support its mission and growth.

Hayley Humphreys, Pioneer Evangelist, Church Army at St Helier Centre of Mission writes:

Participants not only discovered that they could paint but this seemed to be a place where other creativity was being released. One person decided to start poetry and creative writing again and her poetry inspired the group, and she has since led a couple of sessions on creative writing. Others have led painting tutorials; one has delivered a session to the youth group and there is also discussion about taking sessions in a local residential home.

Some attendees would describe this place as healing – many have experienced educational wounds – having been told that they are not a good artist or writer,



and they doubted their creativity. “Art opens the closets, airs out the cellars and attics. It brings healing.”

I often start sessions by saying “in the beginning God created, before we know anything else about Him, we know He is creative”. I also quote Van Gogh’s letter to his brother, where he writes “If you hear a voice within you saying ‘you are not a painter by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.’”

“*Art opens the closets, airs out the cellars and attics. It brings healing.*”

A typical session lasts two hours and starts with a welcome, spiritual reflection, guided painting tutorial, refreshments throughout with gentle instrumental worship music in the background. I often put a question to the group based on the reflection and I encourage discussion while painting. Liturgy, poems and scriptures




are often read as part of the reflection. On one occasion we painted ‘the tent of meeting’ and I led a response time where we were encouraged to bring our questions to the Lord.

We finish by viewing all the paintings and I encourage us all to give positive feedback to each other and took photographs to capture our session.

On average 15 people attend, with 25 people registered. It’s a multigenerational group, open to all – 65% of those who attend would not describe themselves as regular churchgoers. Nine people from the group have gone on to explore their faith through an Alpha Course.

Many say that they feel welcomed, have made new friends and enjoyed being creative. Perhaps the last word belongs to one participant who recently said, “It’s my favourite day of the week, helps me relax and forget all the negative things that are happening.”

Information 

You can find out more about the St Helier Centre for Mission from their website: parishofsthelier.org.uk



Left and above: St Helier participants get creative and proudly display their artworks.