



The BRIDGE

Newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark

Christ
Centred
Outward
Focused

Vol.30 No.9
November 2025



Gaza

Cautious welcome
for ceasefire deal
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Celebrating the diversity of our ministries

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Bishop's Certificate graduates delight in receiving their certificates.

© William Horne.

A celebration of Growing in Faith and Life

On 27 September, participants in the 2024–25 Bishop's Certificate course gathered in Southwark Cathedral to celebrate their learning and growth over the previous year. The Cathedral was full of participants and the family members, friends, and other guests who had come to help them mark their achievements.

Bishop Christopher presided at the joyful service and the Revd Canon Dhanara Premraj – Area Dean of Croydon Addington and one of the Old Testament tutors on the Bishop's Certificate course – preached, encouraging participants to remain open to God's calling and continue to bear good fruit from what they have learned. Bishop Alastair and Archdeacon Chigor assisted

Bishop Christopher in handing out scrolls bearing a special prayer to all who had taken part. A lively reception in the Cathedral after the service provided an opportunity for participants to catch up with each other and meet their tutors again.

Every year, all sorts of people from across our diocese participate in the Growing in Faith and Life course – known

as the Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship. Some participants are discerning a call to ordained or lay ministry; many others take the course for the sheer pleasure of coming to know Christ more deeply in a supportive and friendly atmosphere.

Participants have called the course 'life-changing'. One 2024–25 participant said:

'I feel that my faith has grown deeper and more vibrant – partly because my knowledge and understanding of God has increased, but also because along with that my personal relationship with God in prayer has grown.'

Taught by Southwark clergy and lay ministers, the Bishop's Certificate course covers the Bible, church history, what Christians believe and how to live out the Christian faith every day. Classes meet either online or in-person over ten months, from September to June each year. The course ends with a weekend residential at Wychcroft, our diocesan retreat house.

The course continues to go from strength to strength. In 2024–25, 72 people from churches around Southwark Diocese and beyond took part in the course. There are 87 participants on the 2025–26 course, which began in early September – a record-breaking

number, which we hope will grow further as God continues to call the people of Southwark.

It's not too early to register your interest for the next Bishop's Certificate course starting in September 2026. Information packs and application forms will be sent after Easter. Contact bishopscertificate@southwark.anglican.org to be put on the priority list to receive them.

You can find out more about the Bishop's Certificate at: tinyurl.com/4k6n582w

A view from The BRIDGE



The theme of this month's Bridge is reflection, one word that nevertheless has many meanings. Reflection can be a time to look back and remember, to review, consider and ponder past or recent events. Reflection also describes what we might see when we look at ourselves in the mirror or express the behaviour of light as it bounces off and illuminates what it touches.

These encompass the many stories that thread through across our diocese. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the *Faith in the City* report. This report was a call for action by the Church of England to address growing urban poverty and economic decline in Britain, as well as tending to the structural roots of these problems, such as poor housing, rising unemployment and decline of social provision. As I write, these are issues I continue to reflect on as we prepare for the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Conference on 8 November. The day will be an important time to truly reflect – to take stock on where we are as well as celebrate and shine a light on the great work of mission taking place today through action, compassion and service by our churches and in our communities.

Our parishes continue to bring people from all walks of life together, responding to their needs in loving service, seeking

to transform unjust systems, challenging violence and safeguarding the integrity of creation. In big and small ways, people across our diocese are reflecting the love and care of Jesus and seeking to point others towards Him.

Though much progress has been made, we lament and continue in prayer for total transformation in our communities as we still grapple with unjust systems and deepening needs, unrest and divides in our communities.

This season, let us reflect on ourselves, our churches and that which has taken place before. May we ensure that we seek to live as encouraged in the book of Micah – to be just, to love and diligently practice kindness and compassion, to walk humbly with our God, setting aside any overblown sense of importance or self-righteousness. In doing so exactly where God has placed us, we will surely reflect Jesus in the current time and see lasting transformation in the world around us – and see all people come to know Jesus as Lord!

Natalie Walters

*Natalie Walters is
Head of Justice, Peace
and Integrity of Creation*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sarah Mullally named as next Archbishop of Canterbury

His Majesty The King has approved the nomination of the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally, as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Downing Street has announced. The 106th Archbishop of Canterbury since Saint Augustine arrived in Kent from Rome in 597, Bishop Sarah will be the first woman to hold the office and will be installed in a service at Canterbury Cathedral in March 2026.

© Lambeth Palace



Bishop Sarah said: "I want, very simply, to encourage the Church to continue to grow in confidence in the Gospel, to speak of the love that we find in Jesus Christ and for it to shape our actions."

Area Dean of Croydon Addington appointed

On 24 September 2025, the Revd Canon Dhanaraj (Prem) Premraj, Vicar of St Edward, New Addington, was commissioned by the Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon, as Area Dean of Croydon Addington for a five-year term. On the news of his appointment, Prem said, "As Area Dean, I hope to strengthen the fellowship we have as deanery clergy and the people and see how we can support one another and learn from each other and share the Southwark Diocesan Vision. I look forward to have meaningful Deanery Synod meetings with discussions and deliberations that will enrich us as a deanery and also have meaningful Chapter meetings which will help us to continue to serve with joy and contribute to the work of our Diocese."



Warm hearts, cold toes

Could you spend a winter's night sleeping outside? Swap your cosy bed for a night under the stars and join volunteers to raising money for the Robes winter night shelter. The 15th annual SleepOut will take place on 21 November at Southwark Cathedral. The evening will include entertainment, free hot drinks and snacks for those sleeping out – along with a hot breakfast in the morning.

Register and find out more at robes.org.uk

100 years of Art Deco



As part of its Black History Month celebrations, St John Upper Norwood celebrated 100 years of the Art Deco movement and highlighted the profound African and Caribbean influences that shaped its style and spirit. The evening featured music, poetry, art, professional artists, community creatives, and good soul food.

The Bridge is produced & published by:

Communications Department, The Diocese of Southwark, Trinity House,
4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW

Tel: 020 7939 9400 Email: bridge@southwark.anglican.org

The Editorial Team from the Communications Department:

Commissioning Editor: Anna Drew

Editor: Vernia Mengot

Advertising and Distribution:

Joseph Callanan

Next Issue: Submission deadline and guidance

The SEPTEMBER edition is due to be published online and in print during the beginning of the month. Material for that edition must be with Vernia Mengot by email by **FRIDAY 14 NOVEMBER**.

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



NEWS FROM OUR DIOCESE

Bishops pray Gaza ceasefire brings relief and comfort

The Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun, the Church of England's lead bishop for the Middle East, together with the Bishops of Chelmsford, Gloucester and Norwich welcomed the ceasefire deal struck between the Israeli government and Palestinian nationalist group Hamas in late September. The bishops say there now needs to be a "fundamental shift in attitudes and behaviour" to secure long-term peace in the region.

In a statement responding to news of the deal, they said that what has happened in Israel and Gaza "must never be allowed to happen again, anywhere" and pledged to continue to stand in solidarity with the Churches of the Holy Land.

They said: "We hope and pray that today's agreement will bring immediate relief and comfort to those imprisoned and held hostage, to those who are hungry and homeless and to those fearful for their lives and the lives of their loved ones. After two years of unimaginable death

and destruction now is the time for all parties to turn away from war and commit to peace.

"A credible peace must start with a ceasefire, but it will not last without a fundamental shift in the attitudes and behaviours that, for too long, have maintained Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory and thwarted Palestinian self-determination and statehood. The settler violence in the West Bank must cease and the settlement-expansion programme must be reversed.

"We call on our own Government and the wider international community to now work tirelessly in order for Hamas, and for other Palestinian factions, to fully commit to decommissioning their arms and dismantling their military capabilities, while at the same time securing the necessary commitments from Israel to end the occupation in accordance with the International Court of Justice's ruling of July 19, 2024.

"All wars, even this war in Gaza, are subject to international law. Where those laws have been broken, those responsible



Delivery of medical aid supplies to the Al Ahli Hospital.

must be held accountable, even after the war's end.

"To do otherwise would be to undermine respect for the rules of war and to encourage a culture of impunity in future conflicts. What we have seen in Gaza these last two years must never be allowed to happen again, anywhere. Similarly, the attack on Southern Israel on October 7, 2023 and the killings and taking of hostages must never be repeated anywhere.

"A lasting peace is not one that is imposed by outside powers," they continued, "but one that is built and owned by the affected communities themselves. Palestinian Christians have an important part to play in that process and we will support them in their efforts to be peacemakers."

The Very Revd Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem also expressed a cautious welcome for the

deal – and in early October reported that the Rafah border had been reopened, with food and aid trucks finally able to deliver to the people of Gaza. For months, Dean Richard has been fasting every Wednesday in solidarity with the people of Gaza and encouraging others across the world to do likewise. He said, "Although there is still so much to do to secure sufficient and reliable sources of food and medical aid, I feel for me, my #FastforGaza can at least be paused. I'm amazed at how many people have joined over these past four months with this act of solidarity with the starving people of Gaza and I feel that this, and so many other acts of prayerful solidarity have helped to bring about the improving situation which currently exists. The time for joy is not yet upon us but I will receive all these steps forward with a thankful heart, whilst knowing the struggle for an end to the trauma of Gaza continues and the wider peace between Palestinians and Israelis is a very long way off."

'Confident faith in a changing world'

"Can we recover that revolutionary confidence in God so that the living waters that Christ promises us may rise and we with them?" asked former Archbishop Rowan Williams.

On Saturday 20 September more than 150 people from the Kingston Area gathered at St Cecilia's Church of England Secondary School for a day dedicated to nurturing lay disciples.

The Rt Revd Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston, introduced the day by reflecting on how we discern God's purposes in our fragile and increasing polarised world. He spoke to the urgent need for Christians to 'rediscover their voices', locally, nationally and globally, in a way that does not just mean shouting louder. In the morning there were a choice of workshops designed to generate discussion and reflection on topics including reading the bible, prayer, tackling global challenges, children in church, being human, making with our hands, caring and parenting, being a Christian in the workplace, and God-talk with those

outside the church. Key questions and insights from these workshops were shared over lunch, after which Bishop Rowan Williams gave his keynote talk followed by a plenary discussion.

Bishop Rowan started by addressing the 'wrong kind of confidence' that people associate with the Church: a Church as 'full of itself, and very bossy, and very eager to tell people what they can do and think.' He also addressed the wrong kind of lack of confidence: a Church as 'completely useless, consumed with anxiety, fuss, internal tension and debate'. What we might understand as the right kind of confidence was introduced by reflecting on the beginning of the Church in the opening pages of Acts, before anything resembling an institution existed. Here Bishop Rowan spoke about how a movement had been birthed in the realisation that God had kept his promises to his people, demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Reflecting on the Church as a 'covenanted people of promise', he spoke of the call to live



The conference workshops were designed to generate discussion and reflection on a number of topics.

out this depth of commitment by 'being a community that does not walk away.'

During the plenary session participants discussed how clergy and laity can work together to release each other's gifts and vocation. They also explored what it means to be formed in the image of God, so that we become those who can take risks for the good of the other. You can listen to the full plenary session here: tinyurl.com/4c9twwne

Feedback on the conference was positive, with many reflecting on how much they

enjoyed the opportunity to engage seriously on matters of faith with others from different churches. Gratitude was expressed to St Cecilia's School for being wonderful hosts and to all the workshop leaders and curates who made the day possible. A follow up session to the conference will take place on Saturday 22 November 11am–1pm, at St Barnabas Southfields. Email vanessa.elston@southwark.anglican.org if you would like to be part of continuing the conversation.

NEWS FROM OUR PARISHES

Helping those with dyslexia learn Jesus' word

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

St Michael & All Angels, Blackheath is a parish church in South-East London. As part of its 'World Focus' program and in connection with the Bible Society a new initiative was born to spread the word of Jesus.

The idea was to help support the local prison – Belmarsh – with bibles and gospels. The prison's request was for dyslexic-friendly bibles, as the rate of dyslexia in prisons is higher than the national average. This immediately intrigued and interested the Revd Trevor

Kemp, Vicar at St Michael's who himself has dyslexia.

Trevor, who spent a placement at Norwich Prison during his curacy and has passion for a project that can "quite literally change lives" said, "It was a little daunting when the wish list arrived to discover the cost was almost £3,000 for three full bible sets and 250 individual gospels. However, the congregation responded fiercely with great generosity and this target was quickly reached. He added:



Members of St Michael & All Angels congregation display their 'gift of outreach' to Belmarsh prisoners.

"What a joy to think that because of the gifts of this community some men's lives might be transformed forever by being able to read and understand the story of God's love for them."

Members of the congregation felt empowered by the gift of outreach and supporting men in prison to be able to be able to read and understand the bible.

For more information about dyslexia friendly bibles visit the Bible Society: tinyurl.com/4k8efy49

Blessings for the forgotten departed

During the summer, The Revd Hannah Gordon Rector, St Margaret, Chipstead and Assistant Area Dean, Reigate Deanery conducted a short service of blessing with former staff, current trustees and residents to remember those buried in the Netherne Hospital Cemetery. Hannah writes:



Netherne Management Limited, has spent a lot of time and energy trying to get clear answers and finding none. He and the board have taken responsibility, cleared the area, mended the fence, worked with the local farmer to create an access path and installed a bench for people to rest and reflect.

It is my understanding that there may be around 1,350 people buried at the cemetery, ranging in ages and backgrounds. In many ways only God knows the truth of who might be buried here and how they died. What we do know is that each and every person who died and was buried was a precious child of God, created perfectly in God's image and dearly loved by him.

"It was an honour and privilege to be able to recognise those who names are forgotten and pray that they continue to rest in peace and pray for their families and relatives and all who have campaigned and worked for the Netherne Hospital Cemetery."



Netherne Hospital, known previously as Netherne Asylum, was operational between 1909 and 1994 when it was developed into housing. When the housing development was built the village was transferred into St Margaret, Chipstead from a neighbouring parish. The responsibility for the cemetery has been unclear over the years and the records of who is buried there are hard to find. Jonathan Hart, Estate Manager for

Bellringers mark 200th anniversary of the modern railway

On Saturday 27 September the bells at St Mary, Rotherhithe rang out to mark the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. The bellringers rang 224 Plain Bob Major.

On this date in 1825 George Stephenson's Locomotion No. 1 hauled the world's first passenger train along the 26-mile Stockton & Darlington Railway. Around 40,000 people watched this steam-age marvel and it marked the start of a journey that would shape the modern world.

Edward Gormley, Tower Clerk at St Mary's rang the fifth bell. This number comes from the end of 1825 and 2025. All the bellringers raised a toast to the modern railway on its 200th anniversary.



Edward holds the rope connected to the fifth bell, along with his red flag, mallard coin and Stockton & Darlington Railway 200th anniversary keyring.

A service of celebration

On Sunday 14 September, Holy Cross Church, Motspur Park celebrated its patronal festival – the Feast of the Holy Cross.

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kington presided and preached during the service and joined the congregation in celebrating its team of lay Readers. John Barrow and Elaine Miller have both served for 20 years as Readers in the parish and Ken Dovey marked his 50th anniversary as a Lay Reader. They were all given certificates from Dr Clare Dowding, Warden of Readers for Southwark, as well as gifts from the church community. Ken was also awarded



Ken Dovey receives the Lancelot Andrewes medal from Bishop Martin.

the Lancelot Andrewes medal, presented by Bishop Martin on behalf of Bishop Christopher in recognition of his long and faithful ministry in the parish.

St Catherine’s garments of praise

Community spirit has found a fresh expression at St Catherine, Hatcham, where the new *Swap Clothes Project* is helping neighbours share what they have and find what they need.

Every Saturday from 10am–2pm, volunteers, Bev, Novella, Jasmine, Stephen and Pierre set up rails of clothing in the churchyard – or on rainy day, inside the Church.

Inspired by Matthew 25:36–40 – “I was naked and you clothed me” – the project offers practical help, friendship, and dignity to all who come.

What began as a small act of generosity has grown into a lively community hub. People now drop in regularly for a chat,

or simply to meet others, helping to reduce loneliness in the parish. As winter approaches, the Church also plans to serve as a warm space for those seeking comfort and company.

Donations range from everyday essentials to brand-new clothes and designer labels, showing how generosity and care are at the heart of the local community. Everything is free, with no stigma – visitors are encouraged to choose what they need and fill a bag with care.

The *Swap Clothes Project* is part of St Catherine’s ongoing commitment to social justice, reducing waste, and caring for creation. It helps to tackle poverty, promote sustainable living, and creates a space of belonging where people experience practical love in action.

The Revd Stanley Njoka, Vicar of St Catherine’s, said:

“When we share what we have, we live out the Gospel in the most practical way. It’s about community, stewardship, and compassion.”



Volunteers set up for the *Swap Clothes Project* – part of St Catherine’s ongoing commitment to social justice, reducing waste, and caring for creation.

For St Catherine’s, the project reflects the parish’s vision of being “a beacon of hope on the hill” – a place where faith meets action and everyone is welcome.

The *Swap Clothes Project* continues every Saturday, and all are invited to donate,

collect, or simply come along to connect. Bring a bag, bring a smile, and leave knowing you’ve made a difference.

From palace to palace

Jimmy Davidson, chorister at All Saints, West Dulwich, swapped his cassock for lycra, cycling 450 kilometres to the Palace of Versailles for St Christopher’s Hospice.

Jimmy set off on his fundraising bike ride, in memory of his schoolmate Walter Samuel, along with two friends from Tulse Hill School, Brixton. St Christopher’s hopes to raise in excess of £200,000 for its work at the hospice and care at home. Jimmy, age 71, said, “If you include Walter, our total age exceeds the number of miles being cycled.” In total, more than fifty cyclists covered the distance over four days. One team member fell ill early on, but the remaining cyclists toasted their arrival in Versailles with a champagne celebration.



L–R: Michael Duncan, Anthony Welterveden, Jimmy Davidson, and Andrew Baker.

see W G Grace’s kneeler and writing desk at St Andrew’s.

The second part of the event will be held over the May bank holiday next year, which will include St John, Eltham; St Barnabas, Eltham; St Luke, Eltham Park and Holy Trinity Eltham.

The walks are in aid of much needed funds for the St Edward’s *Community Foodbank and Garden* – a two-year project focusing primarily on supporting local residents in the Mottingham estate and surrounding area, who face food insecurity. The community garden aims to be relaxing, educational, accessible and productive space to be enjoyed by all.

You can find out more here: tinyurl.com/ypfd4rmt

The Woolman’s crook

On 21 September, at St Stephen, South Dulwich, the Rt Revd Alastair Cutting, Bishop of Woolwich, was presented with a new shepherd’s crook – a symbol of the bishop’s pastoral ministry.

The crook was presented to Bishop Alastair in memory of Raymond J R Cousins, Master Woolman 1993–94. Raymond was an active member of St Stephen’s for over 50 years. He was Churchwarden from 1986–1991. The area name ‘Woolwich’ indicates that in early medieval times this area was a ‘trading place for wool’.

During the service for deanery confirmations, the Revd Canon Bernhard Schunemann, Vicar at St Stephen’s said, “A special thank you to David



Hopkins (pictured) who is this year’s Master Woolman and has come to give Raymond’s Shepherd’s Crook today.”

Eltham & Mottingham deanery amble

Last month, a group of walkers from Eltham & Mottingham Deanery successfully completed the first part of a deanery amble.

All Saints, New Eltham; St Saviour, Eltham; St Andrews & St Alban, Mottingham and St Edward, Mottingham all opened their doors for the group to enjoy fellowship, prayer, and listen and learn about the history of each church. Cricket fans can

Crystal Palace Friends of Palestine

On 27 September, St John, Upper Norwood, hosted Crystal Palace Friends of Palestine for “A Night for Palestine” – an evening of music, poetry, and remembrance featuring the Arab creative collective Dyarr and Haifa Ibrahim.

The hall was full, bringing together the community in solidarity and celebration of Palestinian culture. All proceeds were in support of enabling the Daughters of Jerusalem Choir, an all female Palestinian youth choir who performed in London on 1 November.

One participant said, “The choir’s performance was extraordinary – their music carried the weight of their experiences while also expressing strength, hope, and cultural pride. It was an opportunity not only to hear their voices but to celebrate them and the heritage they represent.”



DISCIPLESHIP & MINISTRY

Lay ministry

All are called

The New Testament makes clear that God calls us all to be those who share the Good News in our words and in our actions. Each of us is called to be a minister of God's love and compassion. Jesus' earthly ministry made it clear that all are welcomed by God and that our gratitude is to be shown in our service to others. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians lists some of the roles to which we may be called: 'And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, and those with gifts of healing, helping, administration, and various tongues' (12:28-29).

Today there are many new ways of service as well as these. We may be called to particular ministries, such as preaching and teaching, or to work with young people or with those more on the margins of the Church. For others, their service will be as a member of the PCC or helping with the administration of the parish. Some will be called to the ministry of welcome as people arrive at church, to offering hospitality after the service, or helping the liturgy to flow through serving at the altar or playing in the band. We each have different gifts given to us by God and we are all called to use them in God's service in church and in the wider community.

It is part of our diocesan strategy to increase the number and diversity of recognised lay ministers serving in our churches – and we have been working hard to achieve this. The number and variety of ministries is growing, and once again we want to celebrate this in 2026.

Our diocesan licensing and commissioning service

On Sunday 12 October, Southwark Cathedral was full and buzzing with joy and excitement as 22 people came to be commissioned or licensed as lay ministers (pictured below and top right).

On this happy day, Bishop Christopher licensed seven Readers, two Lay Pioneers, a Church Army Evangelist and a Youth and Children's Worker. Two Readers, three Lay Pioneers and two Licensed Pastoral Ministers also received their permanent licenses, having completed their post-licensing training. Bishop Christopher also commissioned two Pastoral Lay Ministers and two Children and Youth Ministers.

At the service Bishop Christopher said "Thank you" to those who were retiring from active lay ministry. He also thanked Caroline Ogden, who had been the Registrar of Readers for over a decade. He then Commissioned Lindsay Ould to this role and Rob Barber to the role of Croydon Area Warden of Readers and re-Commissioned Wendy Stephens as our Diocesan Lead for Lay Pastoral Ministry.

The Warden of Readers, Dr Clare Dowding, led the pre-licensing and commissioning retreat, which was held at Wychcroft, our diocesan retreat centre. She also preached at the service, exploring the nature of vocation in the context of Isaiah 61. She recalled her own pre-licensing and commissioning retreat and urged those present to hold onto what they had gained from theirs, as they began their ministries.

It was a wonderful time of celebration for those who were licensed and commissioned and their families – and for our diocese – as the number of our lay ministers continues to grow.

Our first Licensed Lay Youth & Children's Minister

Bishop Christopher was delighted to welcome Richard Sontan (pictured) as our first Licensed Lay Children and Youth Minister.



Richard has been a youth worker for many years – and much of his work involves young people and sport. Having 'topped up' his qualifications with some courses at Ridley Hall,

Cambridge, he was ready to be licensed, before continuing his post-licensing training. Richard serves at St Stephen, South Dulwich, and his vicar, the Revd Canon Bernhard Schunemann, was there to support him, along with his family. Speaking just before the Bishop's Charge at Wychcroft, Richard said that he had been trying for many years to ensure that children's and youth ministries are better recognised and supported. He went on to say that he was absolutely delighted to be licensed, that he felt this showed that Children and Youth workers are valued – and he intends to encourage others to think about getting licensed, too.

The Bishop's Clergy Study Day

On Wednesday 8 October, more than two hundred diocesan clergy gathered for our Clergy Study Day at Southwark Cathedral.

Bishop Christopher is very aware that, since the pandemic and with the increasing



Newly licensed and commissioned lay ministers.



Newly licensed and commissioned lay ministers.

demands upon people, it has become harder to find those who have the time to undertake roles within our parishes. So, with the title of 'We are the Body of Christ,' Bishop Christopher invited Mark Russell, Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Society, to come and speak about 'Inspiring people to lead'. Heather Barker was also invited to speak about and share her extensive experience of 'How we select, recruit, train, retain and motivate our volunteers'.

Following their addresses, Bishop Christopher chaired a panel composed of the two speakers and clergy from our diocese who have experience of working with volunteers in their parishes and of encouraging people to serve: the Revd Canon Roxanne Eversley, the Dean of Cultural Diversity, the Revd Canon Younis Francis from St John the Divine, Selsdon and the Revd John Pritchard,

Vicar of St John, Upper Norwood, who all answered questions from those gathered.

Celebrating lay ministries in 2026

Next year, we will be taking two opportunities to celebrate the work of lay ministers across the diocese.

The first opportunity will be at Candlemas. This falls on Monday 2 February, but we hope that many will feel able to celebrate lay ministries on Sunday 1 February. In 2026 we particularly want to celebrate those who have been affirmed for ministry in their parish. As the Diocese of Southwark has encouraged more to consider whether they have a vocation to lay ministry as commissioned or licensed ministers who are selected, trained and recognised by our diocese, we have also been encouraging recognition

and celebration of all those who undertake so much in our parishes.

Our Churchwardens are recognised at the archdeaconry services where they swear their oaths – but there are so many other roles that people undertake in our parishes which we do not celebrate in a more collective way. It is so important that we say "Thank you" properly and recognise all that members of our congregations and local community do to keep our churches running. Some of our churches are beginning to recognise this and to affirm those in their parishes for their ministries.

For the 2026 Celebration of Lay Ministries, we will have stories and videos of the work of some of our Affirmed Lay Ministers. These can be shared to encourage others to consider whether they may be called to take on roles in their parish or in the local community.

Roles that might be locally affirmed include welcomers, the hospitality team, those who arrange the flowers, those who are members of the pastoral visiting team or lead fresh expressions of church or new worshipping communities.

In addition, there will be a brief liturgy for use in the regular Sunday service to affirm people in their ministries – possibly for the first time. In addition, there will be a short liturgy to say "Thank you" to those who are already recognised and to re-affirm their commitment to ministry.

We hope that you would like to have a lay minister as guest speaker who can encourage others in your parish to come forward to serve in lay ministries. We won't be able to be in every parish on 1 February, but we will be able to come to you on other Sundays around that time. If you would like a speaker please contact the Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Ministerial Education Team: email Helen Medland at helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org

On 31 January 2026 there will be a Lay Ministries Taster Day from 10am–2pm at Trinity House.

This will be an opportunity to meet representatives from the various lay ministries and learn more about what they do. Email learning@southwark.anglican.org for more information or to sign up.

We will also be celebrating our lay ministers again in October 2026 so look out for more details nearer the time.

Explore your call

Find out about lay ministries at: tinyurl.com/4pwmwj9s

Philippa's pioneering arts ministry



In our diocese, we are committed to encouraging more lay ministry and vocations and have a wide range of recognised lay ministries. Lay ministers share God's good news with those around them – working with others in their churches and communities to show God's love to all.

Volunteering to make a difference is just one of the many ways that lay ministers give their gifts and time to contribute to the life of the Church and the communities they serve. In this edition of *The Bridge*, Licensed Lay Pioneer Minister, Philippa Parry (pictured left) shares her experience about volunteering with the Orpheus Centre in Godstone, Surrey. Philippa writes...

I have worked in the arts for many years. Before going through the vocations process, I felt very drawn towards arts chaplaincy, in supporting people engaged in the arts through faith. After two years of training at St Augustine's College of Theology and with the diocese's Fresh Expressions team, I was licensed as a Lay Pioneer Minister in October 2023. Shortly after that, I began volunteering at The Orpheus Centre in Godstone, a charity and college set up by musician Richard Stilgoe, which supports young disabled adults aged 18–25 who all have a love of the arts. Through the Venerable Carol Coslett, Assistant Director of Lay

Ministry, I'd heard that Orpheus' Chief Operating Officer was looking to start a multi-faith chaplaincy project. She and I then began to set up a series of special events every couple of months. Guest speakers of different religions and faith groups would come to the Centre and lead a creative activity to mark a particular event or festival.

Since September 2024, I have been leading a weekly lunch club for students and now work alongside the Student Wellbeing Officer and occasionally another long-



term Orpheus volunteer. I've also been working with the staff there to organise a couple of external events, including planned visits to Wintershall – an open-air staged drama and a local Hindu temple.

It takes time to build relationships with staff, students and other volunteers and having never worked on interfaith projects before, it's been a learning curve, but alongside other pioneering projects that I'm involved with, it feels the right place to be committing some of my time.

IN FOCUS...

Reserve a chair for those lost to domestic abuse

Susan Gibbin, Mother’s Union Trustee writes:

According to the United Nations, globally, every 11 minutes a woman or girl dies at the hands of an intimate partner or family member.

The goal of this simple but effective call to action is to individually and collectively speak out for the women and girls who have lost their lives to violence. 25 November is the UN’s ‘International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women’, which marks the first day of a campaign of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. This is the ideal time to take action.

The Mothers’ Union (MU) in Southwark is asking people to support this initiative by joining its RISE UP Campaign. Parishes can respond very simply and powerfully by joining with the MU in the *Red Chair Project*. Led by Christian charity Restored,

this involves reserving a chair at a public place with a sign highlighting facts about domestic violence. The empty chair also serves as a visual symbol of those no longer with us, the partners, mothers, sisters, daughters and friends lost to gender-based violence.



With a focus on ‘Christian care for families’ the MU also recognises the impact of domestic abuse on the wider family. One in five children in the UK experience domestic abuse, impacting on their behaviour, brain development, education outcomes and overall wellbeing both as children and later on in adult hood.

By taking small steps like supporting the *Red Chair Project*, we can pay tribute to victims, make the voices of victims heard and help those still living in abusive situations to know they’re not alone.

For more information, contact a local MU branch directly or via mothersunion.org/diocese/southwark or head directly to restored-uk.org

We therefore pray together:

May we, your church, rise up and be a voice for the voiceless.

May we have the courage to stand up and be counted – challenging a culture of cover-up and silence in our midst.

Help us to create safe spaces where survivors are listened to, believed, and loved.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen.



Mothers’ Union Red Chair Project which aims to highlight facts about domestic violence.

Action Speaks Louder

Safeguarding continues to be a key priority for the Diocese of Southwark. As we seek to be a blessing for our communities and our world, Christ’s call for healing and reconciliation requires us to grapple with many challenging issues – including how we can learn the lessons of the past and work proactively to create safer, healthier churches.

This year Safeguarding Sunday will take place on 16 November, with the theme *Action Speaks Louder*. Safeguarding Sunday is an opportunity to show your community that you take safeguarding seriously as an outworking of your faith in a just and loving God. Pioneered by the UK’s leading independent Christian safeguarding charity *Thirtyone:eight*, the day encourages churches not just to talk about safeguarding but to take positive action towards creating safer places, learning from where they may have got things wrong. Through a range of free resources, the charity hopes to help parishes to build on the ways they are supporting those who’ve been hurt by the Church, as well as highlight all the good work being done behind the scenes to protect vulnerable people.

To take part in the campaign you can register for a free online guide and

resources which makes running a whole service, or part of a service, easy. It includes prayers, sermon notes, activity ideas, children’s resources and loads more. Find out more at safeguardingsunday.org.

Parish Safeguarding Dashboards

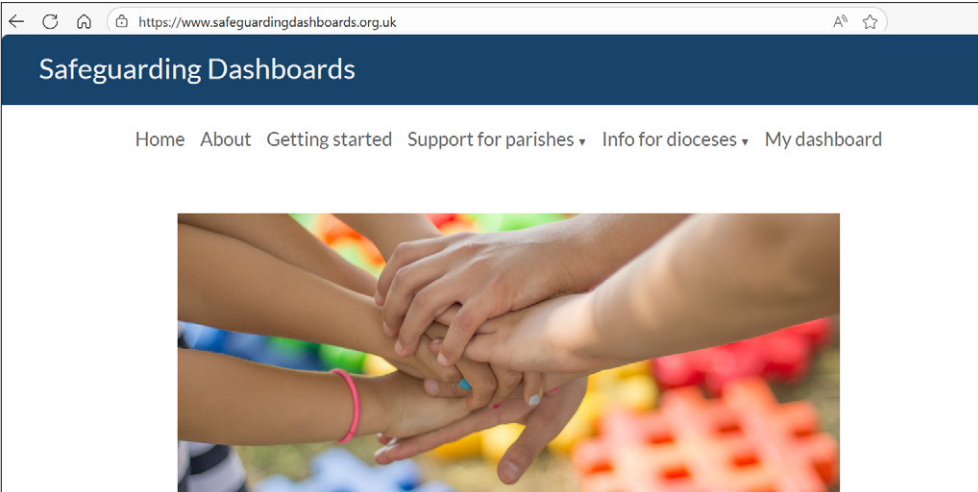
Safeguarding in the Church of England has changed considerably in recent years, and is likely to continue to evolve over the coming months and years.

New policies and procedures are making churches safer, but we know that they have also brought a significant increase in the amount of administration for safeguarding officers. Parish Safeguarding Dashboards address this challenge by making safeguarding administration simpler

for everyone – and they’re available free of charge to churches in our diocese.

They have been designed to display a clear and simple dashboard on a mobile phone, tablet or computer. The home page allows the safeguarding officer, incumbent, churchwardens and other authorised users to see the current status of their parish’s compliance at a glance. Green lights bring reassurance that all is well; amber means that action is needed, and red means urgent action is required.

Following a small trial with handful of churches over the summer, all parishes have now received their invitations to join this new system. If you have any queries, please email the team via parishdashboards@southwark.anglican.org



Farewell to Pamela



Farewell to Pamela Chisholm (centre), pictured with Bishop Christopher and Nicola Thomas.

On 8 October, diocesan colleagues gathered at Trinity House to give thanks for Pamela Chisholm’s work as our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and say farewell as she moves on from the role. Pamela joined the Safeguarding team in 2021, having served with the Met Police as Acting Detective Chief Inspector. She brought more than 30 years’ policing experience to the role and oversaw diocesan safeguarding during a time of significant change and development. Writing to thank Pam for her work, one Parish Safeguarding Officer said, “Thank you for all of your patience, calmness, endurance and care. Thank you for being forward-thinking and for responding to safeguarding challenges in a positive and effective way.”

 NEWS FROM OUR DIOCESE

© Photos Tom Bradley.



On Saturday 4 October, Southwark Cathedral hosted a special Black History Month service – a celebration of identity and belonging. Read more here: tinyurl.com/4p2em4yz

Black History Month

‘That wicked report’ and its impact

The Revd Matt Drummond, Vicar, Joint Benefice of St Francis of Assisi West Wickham and St Mary writes:

The Church is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the publication of the *Faith in the City* report. This historic report, first published in 1985, was released at a time of continuing urban unrest, and is still of great relevance today. *Faith in the City* asks what future is there for our inner cities and housing estates, and considers how the Church of England, and other bodies, including government should

respond. As part of these celebrations Terry, (former Bishop of Southwark Tom Butler’s Chaplain) and academic Joseph Forde have published a book of essays entitled: ‘*Celebrating Forty Years of Faith in the City*’.

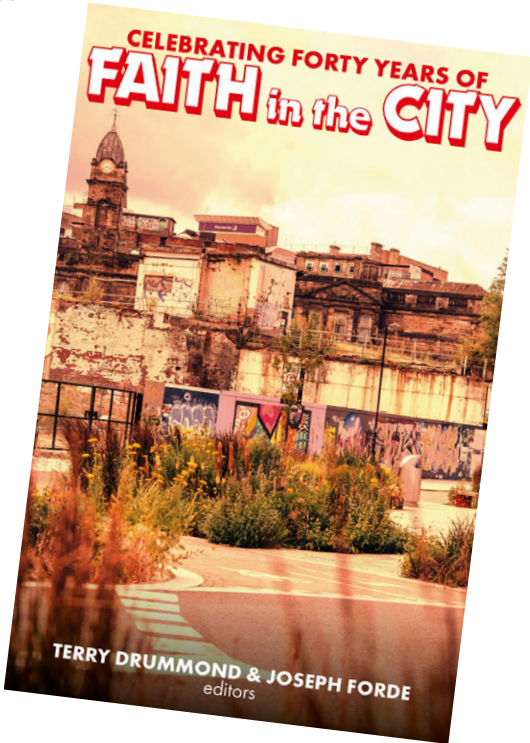
The book takes the reader through the history of *Faith in the City* and its reception, and readers of a certain age will remember it being pilloried by the Thatcher Government for being ‘that wicked report’. At the time, prominent Anglican and Government Minister John Selwyn Gummer said that the Church should be bringing the “word of God to God-forsaken inner cities not soggy chunks of stale politics that read as if they have been scavenged from the Socialist’ Party’s dustbin”. High praise indeed!

Following an essay on the report’s history, the new book offers a series of reflections on what the report meant for those ministering at the ‘coal face’ of urban communities, and the impact it continues

to have on the Church’s ministry. These essays draw from across the spectrum of the Church – both Anglican and beyond – and will be of use not just to those with an interest in Church history, but also to all ministering in urban communities. This collection complements the Revd Jonathan Macy’s book: *Sowing Seeds with Songs of Joy* and the Revd Canon Gary Jenkins’ Grove booklet: *A Forgotten People: Mission, Evangelism and the working class*.

Terry and Joseph are in the process of arranging a day conference to mark the anniversary of the report’s publication – look out for details through diocesan channels soon.

‘*Celebrating Forty Years of Faith in the City*’ (RRP £19.99 Sacristy Press) tinyurl.com/2ds8xtnn





Revitalisation: a friendly colleague and practical steps

In our series unpacking the priorities of the Southwark Vision, Charles Lamont writes...

In church buildings, studies, vestries and Zoom calls across Southwark, clergy and lay leaders are carving out time to think, pray and plan for growth in their local context. My role is to come alongside these leaders as a friendly and experienced colleague, helping teams bounce ideas around and shape next steps that fit the grain and gifts of each local church.

Rather than 'ministering to a template', we start with what God is already doing in that parish. Informal coaching and 'thinking sessions' create unhurried space in busy weeks to name priorities, surface gifts and turn energy into a short list of actions. We create plans to develop mission and discipleship that are deliberately simple and workable. These

consider the full sweep of church and community life: from toddlers to teens, parents, singles, adults and seniors. We look at how Sundays, small groups and community touchpoints can align so that each age and stage is genuinely welcomed, nurtured and sent to share their gifts.

Much of my part of this work is facilitation. In PCCs and staff teams, or with a hall full of congregants, conversations happen so that vision can be owned locally and translated into practice. We test ideas against reality: what might help a toddler's family feel at home in church? Where can teens hear the good news clearly, discuss, question and follow Jesus? Where can people lead and learn? How do singles find belonging on and beyond Sundays and be salt and light in the workplace? What supports busy parents with their family discipleship? How can adults deepen faith and tell their neighbours? What

enables seniors to serve and be cared for, and be sent on mission to their communities? Out of these questions come specific, manageable steps to grow the mission of the local church.

Where a parish is in vacancy, I support churchwardens and congregations to imagine what mission could look like in their next chapter, grounded in the resources they have today. The conviction beneath it all is straightforward: God can grow churches without waiting for new money or extra staff. The people of the local church, filled with the Holy Spirit and carrying the good news of Jesus, are our primary resource for mission. Our task is to teach the way of Christ, walk together, notice gifts, bless and deploy those gifts with confidence for the sake of the world.

This work all sits within Southwark Vision's priority of valuing all our parishes and enabling and serving them so that they can minister to the whole people of God in their local context. It complements the momentum that is already building through other elements of our nine-year Diocesan Investment Programme and the practical learning that is emerging from across our parishes. Across our diocese, light touch initiatives are forming (like our new Small Churches Network) so that practitioners can share what worked for them, what didn't and what they're trying next. The emphasis is on being companions rather than experts, and on developing practice



Charles Lamont.

that fits parish contexts rather than one-size-fits-all strategies.

In this season of reflection, the invitation is modest and hopeful: could you take one faithful, realistic, Spirit-led step. Time and again, churches discover that the seeds of growth are already in their hands.

To find out more and to book a conversation, do get in touch via Charles.lamont@southwark.anglican.org

Charles Lamont is Dean of Revitalisation for the Diocese of Southwark.

Details of Southwark Vision and the core document can be downloaded at: southwark.anglican.org/southwark-vision



LET US PRAY

The Revd Anna Drew

Director of Press and Communications

As a child, coming across a pile of fresh autumn leaves would be such a treat. It was as if I'd never seen such shades of red and orange and green before. When you're a kid, there's not much to stop you from just falling in face-first, rolling around and revelling in delight – especially if your supervising

grown-up hasn't noticed what you're up to.

Now I'm an adult, perhaps a little more decorum is called for. But, even now, on the rare occasion I'm out for an autumnal walk on my own (and think no one can see) I'm pretty tempted. I'll shuffle closer and closer

until my feet are just under the edge of the pile, I'll lift and scuffle – tentatively kicking up leaves, feeling their wetness and weight, admiring the gift of this moment, this offering of the season.

To me, autumn seems an especially apt season for remembering and giving thanks. The celebration of All Souls Day and Remembrance Sunday seem particularly well-placed here. Somehow nature reads and reflects the sentiments of our hearts (or perhaps

it's the other way around?). Falling leaves draw to mind both the joy and the fragility of the gifts that spring and summer have brought. There is a deep sadness – but also tremendous and breathtaking beauty – in their passing.

And – like the leaves – each person, life and sacrifice that we give thanks for is unique, beautiful: a gift of the seasons of life. Sometimes it is only in 'the fall' that we are able to see and appreciate their beauty so clearly.

*Faithful God,
in all seasons
help us to remember rightly
and remember well.
Accept our gratitude for all your gifts
and engrave your love on our hearts.
Amen.*



Please send details of your next events for OCTOBER ONWARDS to Trinity House **BY MONDAY 17 NOVEMBER**

November

🎵 **Croydon Minster**

40 minutes of music – lunchtime recitals, Fridays 1.10pm

14 Nov Amelia Qian, piano
21 Nov Pavlos Triantaris, organ
28 Nov Anglo American Duo
5 Dec Laine Theatre Arts Choir

Free but donations gratefully received.
Details: croydonminster.org

FRIDAY 14 NOVEMBER

🎵 **WEST STREATHAM** – Gospel concert, 7pm at St James Church, Mitcham Lane SW16 6NT. Tickets £20.

SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER

* **LOCAL** – Safeguarding Sunday – ‘Action Speaks Louder’. Join together at your church to talk about safeguarding and help protect vulnerable people. Free guide and resources: safeguardingsunday.org

🎵 **St Peter, Streatham**

Saturday 1 November 4–5pm:
Song Recital: Melanie Metherel (soprano). Free, retiring collection.
Details tinyurl.com/34bkwaxy

Saturday 8 November 7.30–9.30pm:
Streatham Choral: Carmina Burana.
Tickets £10–15 tinyurl.com/3nd6mn7w

Sunday 21 December: 6.30–7.30pm:
Nine lessons and carols sung by the St Peter’s Church Choir. Free.

Saturday 17 January 2026: 5–6pm:
Organ recital, Norman Harper.
Venue: St Peter’s Church, Leigham Court Road, Streatham SW16 2SD.
Details: stpeters-streatham.org

SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER

* **SOUTHFIELDS** – Every Day Justice: Foundations for Social Action. Explore how justice can be a natural part of our everyday discipleship and be outward looking to the needs of our local communities. 10am–1pm at Brathway Hall, Brathway Road, London SW18 4BE. Free. Register: tinyurl.com/yhck4stz

SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER

* **SOUTH CROYDON** – St Peter’s Church, Christmas Market. 10.30am–2.30pm at St Peter’s Hall, Ledbury Road, South Croydon CR0 1EP. Hot lunches and refreshments, homemade cakes, toys, bric-a-brac, Christmas goods and tombola. Admission 50p.

SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER

🎵 **EASTCHEAP** – Choral concert by *The Ionian Singers*, with conductor Timothy Salter. The choir will be joined by an instrumental duo – Lucy Driver (flute) and Mared Pugh-Evans (harp), the King’s Harpist. 7.30pm at St Margaret Pattens, Eastcheap, EC3M 1HS. Tickets: tinyurl.com/pu2srdyz

December

FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER

🎵 **SOUTH CROYDON** – *South Croydon sings Christmas!* Free community sing-a-long to carols and Christmas favourites. 7.30pm at St Peter’s Church, St Peter’s Road, Croydon, CR0 1HJ. Licensed bar. Details: events@southcroydonbenefice.org.uk

Share your church Christmas photos

We’re looking for last year’s ‘Christmassy’ photos to potentially feature on our diocesan Christmas cards this year. Please provide high-quality, original large images, a caption and credit (if a professional photograph). Please ensure you have **consent to use the image** – ensuring that no children or vulnerable adults are pictured.

Send photos by 17 November
to: bridge@southwark.anglican.org



SATURDAY 6 DECEMBER

🎵 **WEST WICKHAM** – St Francis of Assisi’s annual *Big Christmas Sing*, in aid of Christian Aid. Join us for carols sung by the West Wickham Choir & choirs from local primary schools. All welcome, 4pm at St Francis of Assisi, Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham, BR4 0PW.

SATURDAY 6 DECEMBER

🎵 **SOUTHFIELDS** – Putney Choral Society Concert: Martin Palmeri, *Missa a Buenos Aires*; Scarlatti, *Magnificat*; Haydn, ‘Emperor’ Quartet. Music Director Jamie Powe. Professional orchestra and soloists. 7pm at St Paul’s Church, Augustus Road, Southfields, SW1 6EW. Tickets: £25 (incl. programme & refreshments), from: tinyurl.com/urktbj8e or at the door (card only). putneychoralsoc.org.uk

SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER

🎵 **PETERSHAM** – Petersham Messiah: the *Elysian Singers and Players*, directed by Sam Laughton, perform excerpts from Handel’s Messiah in our fourteenth Petersham Messiah charity concert. 6pm at St Peter’s, Petersham TW10 7AB. All donations go to the Vineyard Community & Richmond Foodbank or music at St Peter’s. Tickets £15 and any further donations at: tinyurl.com/PetershamMessiah

12 DECEMBER

🎵 **MERTON** – Morden Park Choral Society: Christmas Carol Concert. 6pm at St John The Divine, High Path SW19 2JY. Tickets £10, on the door. Car parking in Abbey School grounds.

24 DECEMBER

🎵 **PETERSHAM** – Carols by candlelight, between readings and prayers which follow the Christmas story. With Choral Scholars and members of the Elysian Singers performing songs and music. 5pm at St Peter’s, Church Lane, TW10 7AB.

Southwark Ecumenical Pilgrimage: Rome and Assisi: 2–9 March 2026

This Ecumenical Pilgrimage for the Diocese of Southwark and the Archdiocese of Southwark will be led by The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, and Bishop Paul Hendricks, Auxiliary Bishop for the Kent Area of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark. Tour includes four nights in Rome, three nights in Assisi and return flights to and from Rome.

Costs, details and booking are here: tinyurl.com/3x99cuxy



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



IN FOCUS... *Family, faith & community*

Bringing Bethlehem home

Maria Asfoura, General Manager at Laila Tours, and a member of the Bethlehem Gift Shop Team, writes:

Bethlehem is more than a name from scripture – it is our home. Here, where Jesus was born, we walk shaded by olive trees along sacred streets once filled with pilgrims from across the world. For generations, our families have welcomed visitors, guided tours, and crafted olive wood, as well as shaped mosaics that preserve centuries-old traditions. In Bethlehem, faith and daily life are inseparable.

But in October 2023, everything changed. The doors of Bethlehem closed. Pilgrims stopped coming. The streets that once echoed with prayer and song grew silent. Tourism, the lifeline for so many of us, disappeared overnight. We lost not only our income but also our sense of purpose and connection with the world.

Yet out of this silence, something new was born – not from comfort, but from necessity, love, and faith. We decided to create an online platform to share the stories behind our beautiful handicrafts made by local artisans deeply affected by the crisis.

Bethlehem Gift Shop was born not just as a business, but as a story of perseverance. With Michael's responsibility, Georgette's strength, and our determination, we built something that is more than a platform, it is a testament to faith, courage, and hope.

Our mission is clear: to connect the world with Bethlehem (if the world could not come to Bethlehem, perhaps Bethlehem could go to the world?) by sharing both its handmade crafts and the authentic stories of its people and families striving for dignity in the land of Christ's birth.

Michael grew up as the eldest of four children. With his father unemployed and much responsibility resting on his shoulders,



Left: Maria Asfoura (second from right). Right: Hand crafted gifts from the Bethlehem Gift Shop.



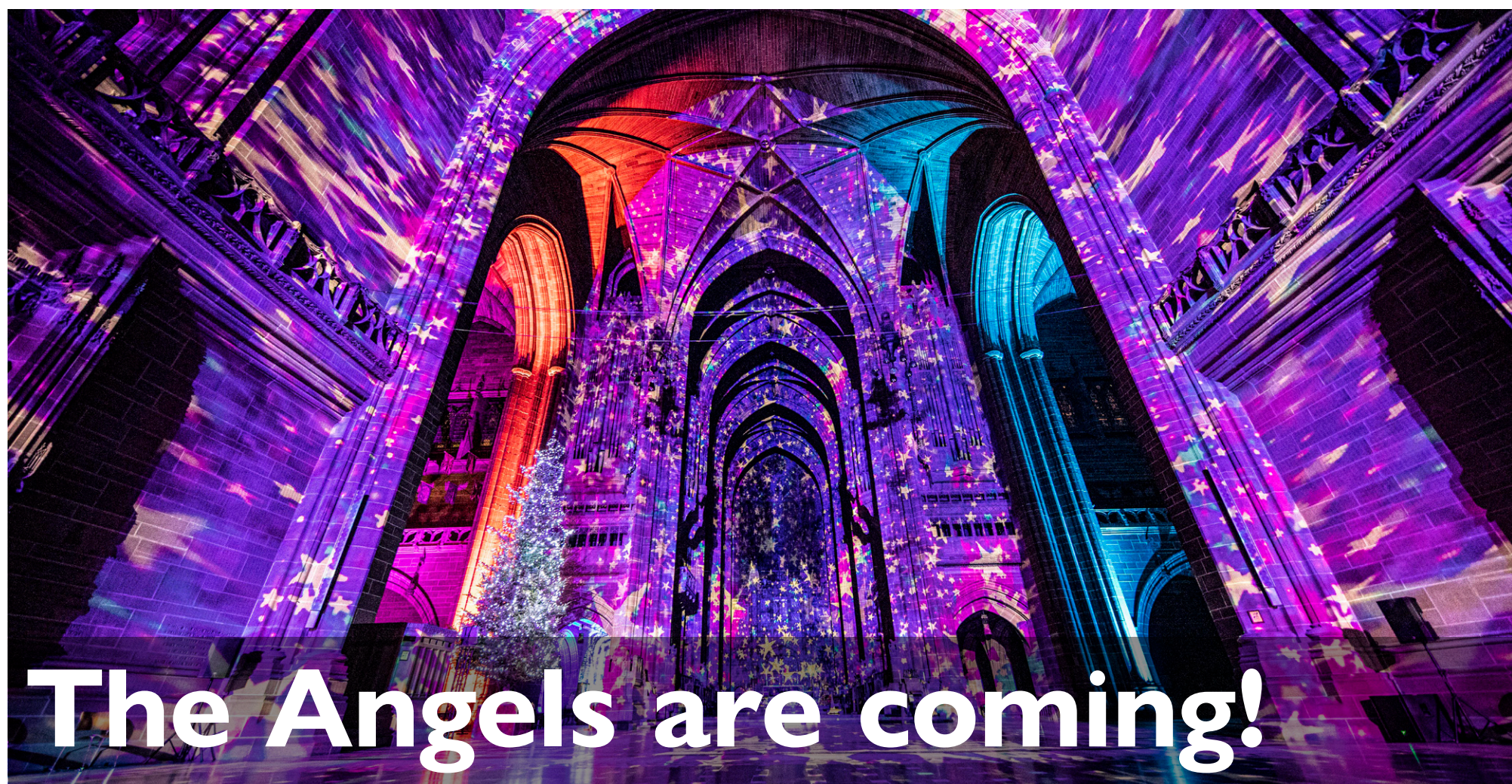
he naturally became the backbone of the family. To support them further, he pursued studies as a tour guide, seeking every possible opportunity to bring in income and secure a future for his loved ones.

Georgette, one of five children, carried her own deep story. Years ago, her family faced the heartbreaking loss of their youngest daughter. From that moment, Georgette became the only daughter in her household, carrying both the pain of loss and the strength of survival. Life had its trials, but the Lord's plan was greater: Michael met Georgette, they fell in love, and their union became a new chapter of hope. Today, they are blessed with two beautiful children, ages three and seven months.

Their journey intertwined with that of mine: a mother of three children aged eight, seven, and four. With a degree in political science from the University of London, I had envisioned a bright career path. Yet, the shifting political situation closed many doors that I once thought were open. Instead of despair, I chose determination – seeking new ways to create, contribute, and provide for my family.

When you visit the *Bethlehem Gift Shop*, or even when you share our story, you are not only receiving something handmade with devotion. You are giving hope and sustaining a community.

For more information visit:
bethlehemgiftshop.com



This November, step into a world of wonder as Southwark Cathedral is transformed by *The Angels are Coming!* – an awe-inspiring light and sound spectacular by the award-winning artistic collaboration, Luxmuralis.

As Advent approaches, immerse yourself in a magical, modern celebration of

Christmas. Stunning light displays, mesmerising projections and beautiful music fill every corner of the space –

The Very Revd Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark says: "Southwark Cathedral welcomes everyone – families, children, young and old – to experience this wonderfully immersive show. In it, we see how the heart of Christmas, the story of the birth of Christ, is a light throwing a spectrum of colour, hope, and love into a dark world. Come and see it! It will make this Christmas memorable!"

guiding you through a powerful journey that ends with the story of the very first Christmas unfolding before your eyes.

Luxmuralis is a leading artistic collaboration between sculptor Peter Walker and composer David Harper, renowned for immersive fine art, light, and sound installations across the UK and internationally.

For more information and to experience Christmas like never before visit: tinyurl.com/2emwe9ae