



The Diocese of
Southwark

A weekend of prayer: 12–13 September



17 ways to pray for our new Bishop

Saturday 12 to Sunday 13 September 2026 has been designated a weekend of prayer for the new Bishop of Southwark, and the process of discerning the man or woman whom God is calling to that role. Here are 17 ways in which individuals, congregations and families can pray during that weekend.



Prayers with words

1 Use the Vacancy Prayer:

God of all times and places,
send us a Bishop who will lead us faithfully
through days of rejoicing
and nights of challenge,
with prayer and Scripture,
with love and laughter,
with bread and wine.

Send your Holy Spirit to guide
those entrusted with this process.
May they recognise the person of your choice,
with ears that are open and hearts that are wise.

Make us thankful for all that has gone before,
ready and hopeful for all that lies ahead,
with a Bishop whose ministry is a blessing
to everyone in Southwark Diocese,
as we hear the good news of Jesus
and delight in the love of God.
Amen.

Prayers with words

2 A prayer of promises:

Pray using the promises that our new Bishop will make at his or her installation:

We pray that our appointed Bishop, with the help of God, will:

accept the Holy Scriptures as revealing all things necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

be diligent in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen their faith and –fit them to bear witness to the truth of the gospel.

lead our people in proclaiming the glorious gospel of Christ, so that the good news of salvation may be heard in every place.

teach the doctrine of Christ as the Church of England has received it, refute error, and hand on entire the faith that is entrusted to them.

be faithful in ordaining and commissioning ministers of the gospel.

promote peace and reconciliation in the Church and in the world, and strive for the visible unity of Christ's Church.

be gentle and merciful for Christ's sake to those who are in need, and speak for those who have no other to speak for them.

endeavour to fashion their own life and that of their household according to the way of Christ and make their home a place of hospitality and welcome.

work with their fellow servants in the gospel for the sake of the kingdom of God.

accept the discipline of this Church, exercising authority with justice, courtesy and love, and always holding before them the example of Christ.

in the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually stir up the gift of God that is in them, that the good news of Christ may be proclaimed in all the world.



3 Say a prayer written by and for children:

Dear God,

Thank you for loving our diocese and everyone in it.

Please help us while we look for a new Bishop. Show us the right person who will listen to you, care for people and help us follow Jesus every day.

We pray for Bishop Christopher as he retires. Thank you for all the ways he has helped us. Please give him rest, happiness, and lots of your peace.

Help all the people making big decisions. Help our churches, schools, and families to pray and listen to you.

And help us to trust that you are with us and will guide us. Amen.

4 Intercessions:

Pray for God's blessing on Bishop Christopher in his retirement.

Pray for wisdom and strength for Bishop Rosemarie as she takes on a great deal of extra responsibility during the vacancy. And pray for all who support her – the bishops, the archdeacons, the dean, the diocesan secretary, and all who work alongside them in the diocese at this important time.

Thank God for the members of the Vacancy in See Committee, which has been overseeing the process of choosing a new Bishop. And pray for the smaller group called the Crown Nominations Commission as they, alongside our Archbishops, make the choice. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and for grace in the way they conduct the proceedings.

Pray that God will call the right person to be the next Bishop of Southwark, and will equip him or her with all that is needed to lead us in good and godly ways.

Pray for ourselves and all our congregations, that we may be ready to be led in ways that will allow the good news of Jesus to fill Southwark Diocese with love and joy and peace.

Prayers with words

5 Litany:

Hear our prayers, O Lord our God,

Hear us, good Lord,

Fill your Church with love and truth,

Hear us, good Lord,

Send your Holy Spirit on Southwark Diocese,

Hear us, good Lord,

Grant us the unity for which Jesus prayed,

Hear us, good Lord,

Guide your people as we seek a new bishop,

Hear us, good Lord,

Inspire all those involved in the decision,

Hear us, good Lord,

Bring the right person to be our leader,

Hear us, good Lord,

Make us ready and fill us with hope,

Hear us, good Lord,

Help us make disciples of all the nations,

Hear us, good Lord,

Bless and keep all your people,

Hear us, good Lord,

And make the people of our diocese glad to be alive,

Hear us, good Lord.

Amen.



6 Join a group which prays regularly online:

A small online group will be praying monthly about the appointment of the new bishop between September 2026 and his or her arrival in the diocese. You are welcome to join the group once or many times for 20 minutes of simple prayer, to which you may contribute or listen in silence.

The group meets on Zoom on the 4th Wednesday of every month at 6.00pm. The joining numbers are always the same:

Meeting ID: 938 020 2434

Passcode: Bishop

The dates, which are all Wednesdays, are:

23 September

28 October

25 November

No meeting in December

27 January

24 February

No meeting in March

28 April

26 May

23 June

28 July

If you would like to register your interest, so that you are sent a reminder every month, email richard.coe@southwark.anglican.org. Write Online Prayer Group in the subject line, and give your name and email address. But you don't need to do so – you can just join the meeting.



Prayers with silence

7 Lead into silence by using the names of past bishops:

Slowly and thankfully read out the names of the 10 people who have been the Bishop of Southwark in its 121-year history. Follow it with a silence in which to consider and pray for the man or woman whose name will be added to the list.

Bishop Edward
Bishop Hubert
Bishop Cyril
Bishop Richard
Bishop Bertram
Bishop Mervyn
Bishop Ronald
Bishop Roy
Bishop Tom
Bishop Christopher

Silence

8 Meditation:

Lead into contemplative prayer by using words of St Paul from 2 Thessalonians 3:1, where he asks for prayer to be made for the leaders of the church:

Brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured.

Silence

9 Pray with imagination:

Read these words to a group of people, or to yourself. After each deanery is named, pause to allow the imagination to consider the Holy Spirit bringing life to the people of Southwark Diocese, flowing to the farthest west, flowing to the farthest east, flowing to the farthest south:

In silence, imagine a place by the River Thames, right next to Southwark Cathedral, where our new Bishop will one day stand. Pray in whatever way your imagination leads you, for the Holy Spirit to fall on that currently empty space and fill our new bishop with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Imagine the Holy Spirit streaming from that point to the very westernmost point of the Diocese, through Lambeth North Deanery... through Lambeth South Deanery... through Merton Deanery... through Wandsworth Deanery... through Tooting Deanery... through Battersea Deanery... through Kingston Deanery... through Richmond & Barnes Deanery...

And then imagine the Holy Spirit streaming from that point to the very easternmost point of the Diocese, through Southwark & Newington Deanery... through Dulwich Deanery... through Camberwell Deanery... through Bermondsey & Rotherhithe Deanery... through West Lewisham Deanery... through East Lewisham Deanery... through Charlton Deanery... through Deptford Deanery... through Eltham & Mottingham Deanery... through Plumstead Deanery...

Finally the Holy Spirit is streaming from that point to the very southernmost point of the Diocese, through Croydon North Deanery... through Croydon Central Deanery... through Croydon South Deanery... through Croydon Addington Deanery... through Sutton Deanery... through Tandridge Deanery... through Reigate Deanery...

Come, Holy Spirit! Amen.

Silence
Silence
Silence

Prayers with actions

10 A day-long reminder:

Having reminded the congregation that purple is the colour that Bishops wear, give every man, woman and child a piece of purple wool or ribbon. Invite them to tie it around their wrist before they leave the church building. Ask them to wear it until the end of the day, so that every time they catch sight of it, they are reminded to pray for our new Bishop and all those who are involved in discerning the man or woman whom God is calling to that role.

11 A purple planting prayer:

Following a time of prayer that relates to the new bishop, give everyone in the congregation a bulb of an allium plant. Invite them to plant a bulb in their garden or somewhere appropriate. Alternatively, work together to plant a group of allium bulbs somewhere near the church.

Allium bulbs planted in September or October 2026 will flower in bright purple colours in May 2027, which is about the time an announcement is expected of the name of the new bishop. Throughout the winter the growing bulbs will be a prayerful symbol of hope and expectation.

12 The Bishop's chair:

Draw attention to the chair that the new Bishop will sit on when he or she visits your church. Place it, empty, in front of the congregation. Give everyone in the congregation a pencil and a Post-it note or slip of paper. Ask them to think of one word which describes what they would like the new Bishop to be (for instance, prayerful, caring, missional, wise). They write the word on the paper, bring it to the front of the church, and lay it on the chair. When everyone has returned to their seat, say a prayer which offers all these thoughts to God as an act of worship (perhaps the Vacancy Prayer).



13 A prayer walk:

Accompanied by a group, plan a route for outdoor prayers. Stop at various points where someone should lead a prayer related our next bishop. Chat and enjoy each other's' company as you walk, then settle into silence and focus on your prayers at each destination along the way. Make sure the place where you stop is safe from passing traffic and not an obstacle to pedestrians.

At an open place, look upwards to the sky and praise God that he is almighty and Lord over the whole process.

At a crossroads, pray for Southwark Diocese, and that God will show us the right direction to go.

Next to a post-box, pray for wisdom and discernment for the people whose responsibility it is to choose the man or woman who will be our next bishop.

Beside a bus stop or a car park, picture our new bishop arriving, and pray that he or she will have the gifts that are needed to lead our diocese.

Looking at an area of housing or a shop where people come and go, pray that all the Christians in the diocese will be ready to be a witness to Jesus Christ under the leadership of the bishop.

By a school or park, pray for the children of the diocese, asking that they may hear and know the Good News of God's love.

Finally, outside a church, pray for all the churches of the diocese over which the new bishop will be leader. Ask that he or she will be able to inspire them, pastor their leaders, and grow to love them as the Kingdom of God comes in South London and East Surrey.

Prayers for families at home or in church

14 Make a bishop's mitre:

Have a meal together as a family. Make it special by using origami to fold paper napkins into the shape of a bishop's mitre and put one in front of each person. One of the family should thank God for the food and say a prayer that God will send our diocese a fine person to be our bishop, will bless him or her, and will make them a great leader. Then shake out and use the napkins. Bishop's mitres are quick and simple to make from paper napkins, and you can follow the instructions here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvOH4dpfBvY

15 Colouring, watching, praying:

Explore the resources for children and young people relating to our new bishop on the Southwark Diocese website. There you will find print-ready colouring pages, informative activity sheets, articles for teenagers, prayers, links to CBeebies videos for young children and links to YouTube videos for families.

Go to:

www.southwark.anglican.org/consultation-on-the-next-bishop-of-southwark

Scroll down to 'Resources for use with children & young people' and click on the plus sign to reveal everything that is on offer.

16 Make a bookmark:

Cut out a piece of card 17cm x 6cm. Place it so that the longest side goes from left to right, and on one side write: 'Pray for our new bishop.' On the other side draw and colour a line of people of all shapes and sizes excitedly waiting for the new bishop to arrive. Each member of the family can take turns to add another person until the whole bookmark is full of people. To make it extra special, punch a hole near one end and thread a piece of ribbon through to create a tassel. Put it in whatever book you use most often – a bedtime book, a recipe book, a Bible or a novel.

A bookmark with the Vacancy Prayer and an attractive blue design is also available to remind you to pray. Every church and chaplaincy in Southwark Diocese has received a small stock, or you can collect one from Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London, SE1 1HW.



Prayers in the Cathedral

17 Join a service of prayer:

A service specially focussing on prayer for every aspect of the appointment of our new bishop will be held in Southwark Cathedral, London Bridge, London, SE1 9DA, at 3.00pm on Sunday 13 September 2026. It is a service of choral evensong, which will especially feature intercessions and prayer stations that relate to the new bishop. Everyone is welcome to join together and pray on this important occasion. During the days preceding the service, there will be a prayer station allowing visitors to pray for every aspect of the selection of the new Bishop of Southwark whenever they are in the cathedral.