Welcome to our new Readers
A photo and the names of all the new Readers admitted and licensed in October.

Sixty years and still going strong!
Alfred Wood shares experiences from his sixty years as a Reader.

Why men struggle in small groups
Louis Alexander tells of his work with men’s groups.

Who we are
Statistics on Southwark Readers compiled by Ray Wheeler.

Helping Trinitarians
Nicole Burgum explains how three Readers help a local school.

News and regular items
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Published by The Board of Southwark Diocesan Association of Readers
Letter from the Editor

Dear fellow Readers

Welcome to the latest edition of Southwark Reader and a particular welcome to those of you who were licensed and admitted in Southwark Cathedral in October. We all wish you a happy and blessed ministry.

When I last wrote to you the country was just beginning to immerse itself in the Paralympics and what a great success they were - beyond everyone’s dreams including Lord Coe’s! I was lucky enough to attend 5 Paralympic events and was absolutely stunned at the determination of those athletes. I hope you were able to watch some of the events either at one of the Paralympic sites or on TV and were equally impressed with the talent of these sportsmen and women. After the Games we were able to celebrate with the athletes as they paraded through the streets of London. Once again, I was lucky enough to be there, cheering them on. What a summer to remember.

Three months have passed since then but we still are being reminded about those awesome days and I wouldn’t mind betting (although I’m not a betting woman!) that an Olympian or Paralympian will become the BBC’s Sports Personality of the Year! Celebrating talent is always a great thing to do and of course it doesn’t have to be just for those who the whole nation knows about and so in this edition of Southwark Reader we are celebrating the talent of Readers. Perhaps talent is the wrong word but we are nonetheless going to celebrate the diverse ministry that we have. We hear from Alfred Wood about his sixty years as a Reader; Louis Alexander tells us of his work with all male church groups and I tell you a little of a ministry that myself, Marian Watson and Grace Blyth have at Trinity School in Lewisham and Ray Wheeler has compiled some stats about the demographics of Southwark Readers.

To further celebrate ministry the Diocese has recently published its Strategy for Ministry which Adrian Greenwood wrote about in the last issue. It recognises the importance of Reader ministry and this can only be a good thing. Undertilng its importance to Readers Bishop Michael is attending a Readers’ Board meeting to tell them more and get feedback. I urge you to read, pray about and feedback upon its contents. The Readers’ Board will be pleased to hear any feedback that you have.

Celebration is the name of the game at this time of year and whilst for many it is only about presents and excessive amounts of food and drink, for us, of course, it means so much more, for we are about to celebrate receiving the greatest Christmas present, the most amazing gift of all - a small, helpless babe lying in a manger bed. As we approach the Christ Child this Christmas let us celebrate and give thanks to God for this most amazing gift so freely given and for all the gifts that he generously gives to each one of us as Readers which enable us to make his love known to those around us.

I hope you celebrate our Lord’s birth in style, wherever you are, and I wish you all a happy, holy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful 2013.

Best wishes

Nicole

PS please forgive me using a Paralympic photo - just couldn’t resist it!

Me at the Aquatic Centre during the Paralympics (it was really hot in there!)

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU PROCEDURE

As you are aware CRB Disclosures are renewed every 5 years. All licensed Readers and Readers with PTO must have a satisfactory enhanced disclosure to exercise their ministry. If you have been sent a CRB form to complete DO NOT ignore it. Please make an appointment to see Linda Craven at Trinity House, Ray Wheeler or Trot Lavelle to arrange to take your completed CRB form and proofs of identification.

The guidance on the level of disclosure has changed, therefore can you also enclose a continuation sheet (A4) to state what your duties are to ensure the right level of CRB disclosure you need to apply for.

Please contact Linda Craven on 020 7939 9402 or email linda.craven@southwark.anglican.org if you have any queries.
A warm welcome to our new Readers

Admitted and Licensed as Readers in Southwark Cathedral, by the Bishop of Southwark, on Monday 15th October 2012:

Steven Craven
Stephen Greenall
Kim Honey
Yunghee Koh
Katy Loffman
Ruth Martin
Alex Mutyaba
Jeffrey Richards
Susannah Shucksmith
Robin Yates

East Greenwich Team Ministry
Blackheath, St John the Evangelist
Chipstead, St Margaret
Malden, St James
New Malden, Christchurch
Richmond Team Ministry
Peckham, St Mary Magdalene
Sutton Team Ministry
Reigate, St Mark
West Dulwich, All Saints

Please hold them all in your prayers as they commence their ministry.
Sixty years and still going strong!

Alfred Wood is a Reader at St Margaret of Antioch, Lee. After 60 years of being a Reader he is still going strong and in this article he recounts some memories from his long ministry. His milestone was celebrated at the Reader Licensing and Admission service in Southwark Cathedral in October.

The presentation in the cathedral on the 15th October to mark the Diamond Anniversary of my admission as a Reader was an honour and I am deeply grateful to the officials of the Association of Readers who were responsible for the arrangements. The special certificate received, with a personal handwritten endorsement by Bishop Christopher, now takes pride of place in my study.

The past 60 years have been a great joy. During that time I have had the privilege of being licensed by six Bishops of Southwark and to have served with five Rectors at St Margaret’s, Lee.

In 1952, St Margaret’s still rented pews and had an electoral roll of over 1,000. There were no lady Readers and Readers were not permitted to preach at the Eucharist. Blue scarves were yet to come, Readers being identified by a blue collarette supporting a Y-shaped silver medallion bearing the diocesan Coat of Arms and the inscription “dioeces: southwark lectori”. (sic) Permission to read the Epistle and to administer the chalice were rarely given and then only after special application by the incumbent to the diocesan Bishop. As we wait nine years for this privilege!

Throughout the years, the scope of my ministry has widened. In 1963, on the archdeacon’s recommendation, Bishop Stockwood granted me a diocesan licence to officiate in any parish in the diocese. Subsequently, I was accredited to preach in United Reformed and Methodist churches. The possession of a diocesan licence was found to be useful during a long interregnum. At the suggestion of John Robinson, then Bishop of Woolwich, I was invited to preach in a number of parishes and thus enable clergy to accept invitations to preach in St Margaret’s.

With the wider licence and as a result of Free Church contacts my annual records show that I have officiated in 51 churches and chapels. This has involved the preaching of 750 sermons, leading or assisting at more than 3,000 services and officiating at 49 funerals.

In the 1980s, the Bishop of Woolwich confirmed my appointment as a spiritual director for a SPA attached to another parish and after further training I qualified as a bereavement counsellor for Age UK. Later I was awarded the Archbishops’ Diploma by Robert Runcie.

After an audition by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), I was accepted as a reader for their student tape library and later was chosen as one of their team to record the RSV Bible. When Vera Phillips (the widow of J B Phillips) lost her sight, it was a great pleasure to record one of her husband’s books at her request. This was of particular interest as J B Phillips was known to me when he was an assistant curate at St Margaret’s.

For several years, a youth group (which originated from a disbanded confirmation class) met weekly at our home. It has given me great satisfaction to know that two of the members have been ordained. One is now a retired rural dean and the other has represented the clergy of the Birmingham Diocese in General Synod.

In the 1950s when the chaplain at the former St John’s Hospital in Lewisham was seriously ill I was invited to act as assistant chaplain. This arrangement continued for several months until the priest concerned was sufficiently recovered.

I remember an occasion when a former Bishop of Southwark, Bertram Simpson, had been invited to preach at Evensong and the Rector had been rushed into hospital earlier in the week. As the only other member of staff available, I found myself alone with the Bishop in the vestry. The Bishop commented that when he visited parishes, incumbents usually arranged for local ‘big wigs’ to read the lessons. He turned to me and said “I leave the rest of the service in your hands but I would love to be ‘allowed’ to read the first lesson!”

When Donald Coggan, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, preached at St Margaret’s, he kindly autographed the New Testament handed to me by Bishop Stannard on my admission as a Reader. Bishop Christopher has now kindly appended his signature on the same page.

On 29th November 1952 when I was admitted I never envisaged the opportunities, challenges and privileges which Reader Ministry would open to me. In addition to leading public worship, ministry of a personal nature has assumed a great importance.

In conjunction with the South London Industrial Mission I organised a Christian Union at my office. All grades of staff joined from a hall porter to the Chief Medical Officer. Most denominations were included from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal. My lunch breaks were frequently interrupted by staff who came with wide ranging personal problems and anxieties.

A special message of consolation was required of me, as a Reader, following the car bomb assassination in Dublin of the Ambassador Ewart Biggs and his secretary Judith Cook. Many millions must have seen the pictures of the enormous crater on television and in the newspapers. Early the next morning I received a telephone call at the office from a retired colleague and distressed father, who said, “it was my Judy.”

At the age of 92 I am thankful to be able to continue in office and look forward to further challenges in the years to come.

ALFRED WOOD

Alfred receiving his special certificate from Bishop Christopher in Southwark Cathedral
Why Men Struggle in Small Groups
(and what can be done about it)

Louis Alexander is a Reader at St John the Evangelist, Blackheath. Louis and his wife, Victoria, are both committed to small-group ministry and have for over 35 years been involved in the formation and co-ordination of different types of small groups, including couples groups, intergenerational groups of married and single people and single-sex sharing groups. Here he shares his experiences with us:

Those who come into our churches for the first time may be unfamiliar with the style and content of our services. They may also feel intimidated by a large group of people, particularly when they don’t know anyone. And even after coming for several weeks they may not have made new friends. In many of our parishes small groups are the answer.

Known variously as “home groups” “cell groups” or “sharing groups”, they are often seen as the best way of integrating newcomers into the life of the church. In small groups they are known as individuals, develop friendships, become more familiar with the Word of God, learn to pray with others, experience community, make their commitment (or re-commitment) to Christ and grow in their service. They are also spaces where they can share what God is doing in their lives.

Yet, sadly, not everyone thrives in a small group. Men in particular may find them difficult.

Over many years’ experience with different kinds of small groups I have found that, generally speaking, men who may be very eager to share their views on sport or politics are somewhat less keen to talk about their faith journeys.

Pastoral leaders who understand men, particularly men on fringes of parish life, have learned that some of the characteristics most valued by the church family actually go against the average male’s natural inclinations and interests. For example, a good local church tries to be a safe, nurturing place and an oasis of stability and predictability, whereas most men are more drawn to environments where there are elements of challenge, adventure and risk.

And when it comes to home groups there can be a serious “bloke deficit”. Even quite committed Christian males can feel less than comfortable in mixed groups where people hold hands in a circle and, on occasion, weep openly. And during worship they may have difficulty envisaging falling in love with another bloke - even if his name is Jesus! Little wonder that men in mixed home groups tend to clam up and leave sharing about personal feelings and spiritual experiences to the women.

This is why our church, like many others, takes the ministry to men very seriously and attempts to offer them more robust and challenging expressions of Christian faith. One of the most established of these expressions is our early morning men’s prayer and sharing group. We meet in the vestry every Wednesday morning. Two men arrive extra early to brew and serve tea. Mugs in hand, we all gather at 7am. The group is fluid and open. No one is pressured into coming every week. A dependable core of seven regular attenders is enlarged by others who turn up as and when they can. We usually number between 9 and 14 men.

The “regulars” take it in turn start and end each meeting and decide on the input. We tend to begin with a song followed by a scripture reading and a short meditation or “thought for the day.” After that each man takes a few minutes for personal sharing. We end by praying for one another.

When they first arrive most men find it difficult to know how and what to share. What they say may be quite superficial and restricted to practical issues, such as a list of DIY jobs awaiting them at home. This is normal and expected. In the early stages it is more important to get used to sharing than to share in depth.

Gradually, as the participants grow in confidence and are certain that all personal information will be kept strictly confidential sharing becomes more honest and open. Then, sooner or later everyone comes to appreciate the benefits of mutual accountability. But accountability presupposes a measure of transparency.

Within our sharing group we use the phrase “being committed to each other’s commitments”. It works as follows: One man shares something he has resolved to do. He may want to break a bad habit, mend a broken relationship, lose weight or read a chapter of the Bible every day. The others in the group then demonstrate their commitment to his commitment by remembering to ask him every week how he is getting on, encouraging him while he is working towards his goal and rejoicing with him when he attains it.

Finally, in order make sharing more straightforward we have four questions that each man attempts to answer when he shares. The questions are:

1. What is most on my mind today?
2. What has been my closest moment to God since we last met?
3. What is my greatest sin or difficulty?
4. What is God teaching me at the present time?

Whenever these four questions are answered honestly the other members of the group gain valuable insight into all the key areas of a man’s life.

Of course, we are not prescriptive and the men are free to answer only one or two of the questions. Nonetheless, just having them there for reference has improved our sharing, focused our prayer and helped us to grow in understanding and brotherly love.

LOUIS ALEXANDER
News from the Registrar

SDAR News

Board Meetings The Board met in September.

Reader Training

We were pleased to welcome Jeremy Worthen, Principal of SEITE (South East Institute of Theological Education). All Southwark Reader training is now organised by SEITE and either he or Simon Stocks would be attending all future SDAR Board meetings. Also a member of the SDAR Board sits on the SEITE Council, a position which is held by the Bishop of Southwark who has the power to nominate a representative on his behalf. Revd Lu Gale has been nominated as the representative and will report to the SDAR Board on relevant matters.

Matters discussed included:

a) Publicising the availability of bursaries to encourage Readers to consider courses in addition to those offered in Southwark CME
b) Identifying CME gaps
c) The Reader Training Course is now 4 years. Readers will be admitted and licensed after 3 years but the fourth year of training will be compulsory. Parishes need to understand that future fees include the fourth year
d) Funeral Training course - not everyone completes the course satisfactorily so not given the Bishop’s certificate to officiate at funerals. Incumbents are informed accordingly
e) Importance of CRB disclosures being completely up to date via Linda Craven, Readers are inclined to be ambivalent about this
f) Ethnicity statistics circulated
g) Reader selection undergoing changes. Janice Price appointed Vocations officer to work closely with Revd Lu Gale, Marion Gray and Canon Leanne Roberts DDO.

Dates 2013 Board meetings:
Thursday 7 March
Wednesday 19 June
Thursday 26 September
Wednesday 4 December

Admission and Licensing of Readers 2013:
Monday 14 October in Southwark Cathedral.

New Readers - We admitted and licensed 10 new Readers (see page 3 of this issue of Southwark Reader). The Acting Archdeacon of Croydon, Revd Barry Goodwin, had lead the Readers’ Retreat at Wychcroft and preached at the service. We were pleased to welcome Bishop Michael and Bishop Jonathan to the service in addition to Bishop Christopher who presided. Barry’s sermon can be read at: http://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/sermons/bg20121015

Area Events

You will receive formal notice very soon but please make a note in your diaries now of the dates of your appropriate Area meetings:

Croydon Area - Saturday 2 February 9.30am - 12 noon
St Matthew’s, Redhill
Station Road
Redhill
Surrey
RH1 1DL

Woolwich Area - Saturday 2 February 2pm - 5pm
St George w Christ Church and St Paul, Perry Hill
Vancouver Road
Forest Hill
London
SE23 2JG

Kingston Area - Monday 18 February 7pm - 9.30pm
St John the Divine, Richmond
St John’s Road
Richmond
TW9 2PE

Figures are back! What have you been up to as Readers in Southwark Diocese in 2011?

Services taken in the parish: 3107
Services taken outside the parish: 235
Sermons: 2095
Sermons outside the parish: 213
Services taken in old people’s homes: 423
Sick Communions: 904
Funerals: 197

This is only half the story though as Readers are involved in running house groups, Lent and Advent groups, Bible study sessions, Sunday School, pastoral visiting, baptism, confirmation and pre-communion preparation, chaplaincy work, Messy Church, ecumenical and inter-faith activities, etc, etc. A full statistical breakdown of Reader demographics are on page 7 of Southwark Reader.

Annual Forms

Yes it’s that time again! With the papers of the Area Meetings you will receive your Annual Forms which for Licensed Readers will include a Working Agreement, Change of particulars and Summary of Work. For those Readers who have PTO you will also receive a Blue renewal. Please would all Readers complete these as soon as possible and return to me by, at the latest, 28 February 2013. When sending forms please make sure you add the correct postage to the envelopes. A number of forms went astray or required my picking them up at the Sorting Office because insufficient postage was added and consequently I had to pay the difference! Forms to me at the Annual Meetings even better!

Ray Wheeler
Who we are

The tables below detail the Southwark Reader statistics as at 26 June which are referred to in “News from the Registrar”.

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Are you looking for resources to enrich parish worship, to enliven that tricky sermon or to enhance your own studies?

The Croydon Faith Education Resources library has books, DVDs, artefacts, pictures and much more available for loan to individuals, churches and faith groups.

There are resources suitable for all age worship, youth groups and Sunday Schools, Bible study groups, for personal study, for quiet days, Messy Church and Godly Play.

The library is a neutral setting open to all to support understanding into the beliefs and practices of all religions.

Come and see us at our new location next to Oasis Academy, Shirley Park, Shirley Road, Croydon CR9 7AL. (Parking is available, buses 367 and 130 stop outside and Woodside and Blackhorse Lane tram stops are nearby.)

We are open Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 5.30pm and on the 1st Saturday of each month 9.30am to 12.30pm or visit our website at www.cferinfo.org.uk to browse the catalogue and where registered members can reserve items.

Individual membership is £20 per annum or why not join as a church for £30 per annum and encourage Sunday school teachers and members of your congregation to use us too.

For more information contact:

Sheila Fenner - CFER Resources Officer
Tel: 020 8656 6535
Email: resources@cferinfo.org.uk

CFER is a registered charity supporting the faith education of children and adults. Serving schools, churches, faith groups and the wider community.

I hope you are always keeping your eyes open to spot potential Readers - and encouraging them to put themselves forward. Please be aware that becoming a Reader is now quite a lengthy process, and people can’t necessarily expect to begin training in the same year that they decide that is what they are called to do. Just to remind you - these are the steps in the process:

- The process begins with a discussion with the incumbent to ensure that the incumbent will support the candidate;
- Incumbent contacts Sue Hoad in the diocesan office to arrange for the candidate to attend a Vocations Forum;
- Candidate attends Vocations Forum and is linked with a Vocations Adviser;
- Candidate meets with Vocations Adviser on a number of occasions - which might extend over several months;
- Candidate meets with Director of Reader Selection, and if the candidate is felt to be ready to apply is given an application pack - the application form must be returned by March 31st, allowing time for references to be dealt with, CRB check, etc.
- Selection date is agreed with the candidate - to take place during May or June, probably at Ham Convent - a residential 24-hour stay.
- The selectors’ decision follows within a few days of the selection conference, and training begins in September.

Anyone beginning the process now is unlikely to be able to begin training in 2013.

Marion Gray
Director of Reader Selection
Three Woolwich Readers have been invited to help at a local school. Here Nicole Burgum tells us about how they assist.

Trinity School is a Church of England secondary school in Lee, south east London. The school prides itself on strong discipline and old fashioned values which create a warm, happy and calm environment in which young people grow and develop into outstanding members of society. The school has built up a great rapport with local churches and at their all-school Eucharists which are held twice a term they have up to eight visiting priests. Apart from these Eucharists, house Eucharists are held termly and a Eucharist is held in the small school chapel every Wednesday lunchtime. It is at this Eucharist that three Readers - Marion Watson from St Mary, Lewisham; Grace Blyth from St Laurence, Catford and myself from St Andrew, Catford - assist. We each attend one Wednesday in the month and our role is to administer the chalice but more importantly to meet and talk with the students who go along. This is a real privilege as we get to listen to what is exciting or worrying the students. We are another ear to listen or shoulder to cry on for them and as we are not someone who they will have to look at every day we hope that they find it easier to share a burden with us that they are unable to share with a teacher or Fr. Mike, the school chaplain. We are also warmly invited to join the whole-school Eucharists which is great and gives us a chance not only to chat with the students but also the school governors.

Trinity is a Woodard school. Founded in 1847 by Fr Nathaniel Woodard, Woodard Schools form the largest group of independent Church of England schools in England and Wales. They offer the highest standards of academic education coupled with a supportive and nurturing environment where every individual is encouraged and valued. Trinity is an affiliated school and as such is keen to have a relationship with other Woodard schools in order to share best practice, beliefs and to provide interschool opportunities for their students.

Recently I had the opportunity to join eight Trinitarians and Fr Mike on a visit to Ardingly College in Sussex. Ardingly is an independent co-educational boarding and day school and is one of the oldest Woodard schools. The eight Trinity students were being trained to be servers by the Ardingly Chapel Team of Sacristans. Their visit included being hosted for lunch followed by a chance to explore the School. The Trinitarians especially enjoyed their visit to the Art Department! At the end of the day, we all attended the whole-college Eucharist in the school’s stunning chapel at the heart of the school. It was wonderful for me to be able to watch the students share in a different school environment to their own, to see how they learnt from each other and shared their experiences. I also was able to get to know the students better and to build up more of a rapport with them.

For us as Readers, helping in a school is a great way to share our ministry with young people and to take our ministry into the community - and to have fun along the way. Long may it continue!

NICOLE BURGUM
Letter from the Acting Warden

“Granny do you think Jesus liked chocolate?” a question I was asked by our five year old granddaughter last week. She was looking longingly at the Advent calendar she had just been sent by her Godmother! Neatly tucked into each numbered window was a small chocolate. Actually there was a Bible sentence too but she hadn’t begun the exciting build-up to Christmas yet. December was still a few days away! Tantalizing but exciting.

The post communion prayer for the last Sunday of the church year invites us to “Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people”. Many will be reminded to make their Christmas puddings whilst others will avidly read the comparative judgements made by cookery journalists. The same day also celebrates Christ the King. The King born humbly in a stable, no crowns, trumpets or standard bearers. The King who in life was mocked, scorned and publically humiliated by onlookers, together with those who considered themselves to be authority.

In Advent we are making preparation for what is to come - Ad Vent. I personally try and tackle a particular book focusing on the Advent message of hope, or adopt a prayer cycle that links into a particular theme for Advent. This year I am attracted to “Embrace - a Christian development charity tackling poverty in the Middle East”. It was formerly known as “Biblelands, Christian Love in Action”.

The front cover of their Christmas 2012 magazine has a haunting headline - “No crying they make - the silenced children of Bethlehem”. At this time of year we all associate Bethlehem with the birth of the Christ child without perhaps stopping to think and pray about the events of the present day in that very special place. They too want to welcome the celebration of Christmas and enjoy the build-up alongside Christians the world over. Tragically their places of living and worship have become a terrifying reminder of adversity and poverty, confusion and trauma. Family lives are all too often brutally destroyed by violence.

The visual reminders of the Holy Family, the pictures, the wonderful presentations in art galleries are heart-warming and we sing gladly, voices echoing the songs of the angels who carried the news of the most joyous birth. As we pray for those who possibly never see an Advent Calendar - certainly not one with a chocolate for each of the 24 days leading to Christmas - let us hope that our wills be so stirred that as our Lord’s faithful people we see Christian love in action and hear the young and not so young join together in one voice “O Come let us adore him, Christ the Lord”.

Trot Lavelle

Reflection on Christmas

This is a month of delights and duties. Every duty becomes a delight as we put the joy of the Lord into it. There will be plans to be made, shopping to be done, there will be many things that demand our attention this festive season. We can, however, enjoy them all if we remember the reason for it all - CHRISTMAS.

When we shop we can be poised, calm, thoughtful, polite - this is part of the spirit of Christmas. When we address cards or wrap presents, we can give a blessing. Giving a blessing, pouring out our love, this is part of also part of the spirit of Christmas. As we prepare our home for guests, let us prepare our hearts for the most important Guest. Then how easy it will to be clean, decorate and bring cheer into our homes. In all we have to do, let us remember the spirit of Christmas. Then we can do all with joy and in love.
Not Only Christmas Day

Lord, this is my prayer
Not only on Christmas Day
But until I see You face to face
May I live my life this way:

Just like the baby Jesus
I ever hope to be,
Resting in Your loving arms
Trusting in Your sovereignty.

And like the growing Christ child
In wisdom daily learning,
May I ever seek to know You
With my mind and spirit yearning.

Like the Son so faithful
Let me follow in Your light,
Meek and bold, humble and strong
Not afraid to face the night.

Nor cowardly to suffer
And stand for truth alone,
Knowing that Your kingdom
Awaits my going home.

Not afraid to sacrifice
Though great may be the cost,
Mindful how You rescued me
From broken-hearted loss.

Like my risen Saviour
The babe, the child, the Son,
May my life forever speak
Of who You are and all You’ve done.

So while this world rejoices
And celebrates Your birth,
I treasure You, the greatest gift
Unequaled in Your worth.

I long to hear the same words
That welcomed home Your Son,
"Come, good and faithful servant,"
Your Master says, "Well done."

And may heaven welcome others
Who will join with me in praise
Because I lived for Jesus Christ
Not only Christmas Day

Mary Fairchild

A Christmas Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible.

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother’s arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God’s love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God: The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.

I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world.

Mary Fairchild

(http://christianity.about.com/od/prayersverses/a/christmas-prayer.htm)
STOP PRESS!!

Recently Esther Whittlesea Reed, a Reader at St Luke’s, Charlton, had a rather interesting experience - she sang at the top of The O2 along with members of choir of St George’s, Westcombe Park. They sang a host of traditional carols.

The Telegraph reported: The performance marked the start of festive activities at The O2, including pantomime Aladdin: A Wish Come True, which starts on the 7th December.

On the way up the children were moaning about whether they really wanted to do it but when they got up there all the moans went, Jeremy Fraser, vicar of St George's Church said.

The choir was standing on the viewing platform of The O2 attraction which is 170ft above the ground.

“You could see a really good view from where you were standing. When you were up there it was vibrating so it felt like you were floating in the air,” choir member Toby Brito said.

A video can be viewed at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/topics/christmas/christmas-videos/9727377/Choir-sings-Christmas-carols-from-atop-the-O2.html

Esther is in the middle of the picture

Photo © The O2

Don’t forget to read the Diocese’s new “Strategy for Ministry”

It can be downloaded from the Diocese’s website:


Please send any feedback that you have to the Readers’ Board.

Details of the members of the Board are on the back page of this issue.

Readers’ RIP

Gordon Aylott, age 81 - St Matthew, Croydon

We give thanks for his ministry and pray that he may rest in peace and rise in glory.

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