

NOTICEBOARD



News and Events from the Diocese of Southwark
SEPTEMBER 2021

New lay ministries set to launch in Southwark

The Diocese is expanding its vocational offering by launching a series of new lay ministries this month, which will complement the ordained and lay pathways already in place. Entry into the new ministries is via three different routes – affirmed, commissioned and licensed. The aim is for a renewed focus on vocations and ministry within the Diocese to strengthen our existing ministries, and to strengthen the relationships between clergy and laity as each support the other in mutual flourishing.

Bishop Christopher said: “I am delighted that we are offering these new and exciting lay ministries. Our laity play a very important role in the Diocese working alongside the clergy in leading, enabling and serving our parishes and communities. My prayer is that those who feel called to lay ministry will pursue it, in the full knowledge and assurance that they will receive excellent training and support, equipping them to carry out their calling effectively and to God’s glory.”

The new ministries are:

- Lay Children’s, Youth, and Family Workers (affirmed, commissioned and licensed)
- Licensed Lay Pioneers
- Pastoral Lay Ministers (affirmed and licensed).

They will sit alongside the Diocese’s existing lay ministries:

- Readers
- Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries (SPAs)
- Commissioned Lay Pioneers
- Church Army Evangelists.

Affirmed lay ministers are chosen within the local parish where they will serve and training happens locally. Commissioned lay ministers serve in their parish or local community having gone through a discernment and selection process run by the Diocese. Licensed ministries are discerned at Diocesan level and nationally recognised; the ministry is transferable across dioceses.

Publicity about the new ministries will be sent to all churches in the Diocese later this month. You can also read about them here: southwark.anglican.org/layministries

PERSONNEL

RESIGNATION/RETIREMENTS

The Revd Benjamin Brown, presently Team Vicar of Merstham & Gatton Team Ministry, is to resign on 19 September 2021 to take up the post of Rector of the United Benefice of Lewes, St Anne, St Michael & St Thomas, in the Diocese of Chichester.

The Revd Gordon Jeanes, presently Vicar of Wandsworth, St Anne, is to retire on 9 November 2021.

The Revd Benjamin Jones, presently Curate of Croydon, Emmanuel, is to resign on 15 September 2021 to take up the post of Vicar of Hedge End, St Luke in the Diocese of Winchester.

The Revd Leonard Marsh, presently Vicar of Upper Norwood, All Saints w St Margaret, is to retire on 1 October 2021.

The Revd Charles Thomson, presently Curate of Battersea Rise, St Mark, is to resign on 1 September 2021 to take up the post of Team Rector of Melksham in the Diocese of Salisbury.

The Revd Sue Weakley, presently Priest-in-Charge of Charlwood, St Nicholas & Sidlow Bridge, Emmanuel, is to retire on 8 October 2021.

Personnel notices

Other information on clergy comings and goings will return in October's edition of Noticeboard.

In the meantime, open vacancies can be found on the Diocesan website at: southwark.anglican.org/about-us/who-we-are/vacancies/

CLERGY VACANCIES

CROYDON AREA

St Helier (North Sutton Centre for Mission): Pioneer Evangelist (Lay Minister/Church Army)

NOTICES

Robes charity seeks Trustees

The homelessness charity, which has been operating in Southwark and Lambeth since 2007, is seeking three new Trustees across the following skills/backgrounds:

- a person with lived experience of homelessness and night shelters
- a person currently volunteering with a homeless charity and/or passionate about making a difference to inner city homelessness
- an individual representing our existing volunteer base
- someone with a link to the Southwark/Lambeth Church community.

Please contact Bernice Rook at recruitment@ep-uk.org for a full information pack. Closing date is 13 September. For more information, see ep-uk.org/job/trustees-robcs

New Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser starts

Pamela Chisholm, the new Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, is now in post. She can be contacted at: pamela.chisholm@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9423
07982 279713

EVENTS & NOTICES

Hope by the Creed & Culture Project

Saturday 25 September, 2.00-5.00pm, Emmanuel Centre, SW1P 3DW, £12

This Creed & Culture Project event asks whether the Christian message can shed light and offer encouragement during this time of intense social disruption. Benjamin Amos and Ally Gordon will present, and Professor John Lennox will speak.

Book at: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hope-tickets-166085818153

Community Businesses in Places of Worship programme

The Plunkett Foundation is offering support for community-owned and run businesses to establish projects in active church buildings.

Full details are available on its website: plunkett.co.uk/community-businesses-in-places-of-worship

Circle the City

11-12 September

Southwark Cathedral will be one of 10 virtual stops at Christian Aid's annual Circle the City event this year. Each stop will be plotted on an interactive map, with participants able to explore via a series of videos. There will also be two self-directed walking options. Find more information and sign up at: caid.org.uk/circle

Parish Information Review 2021

The Parish Information Review 2021 process is ongoing, and we would encourage parishes to make a start if they have not already done so. The links to carry out the 2021 review were sent earlier in the summer to the PCC Secretary or person nominated by the parish as the reviewer.

Please e-mail parish.reviews@southwark.anglican.org if you need the link to be resent. You can also use this e-mail address to raise any queries you may have whilst completing the review.

It has been good to see so many parishes undertaking the review. For those who have not yet been able to do this, we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you all for everything you do for your parish.

Online parish returns

The Church of England's online parish return system, which we use for capturing church membership data (also known as "Statistics for Mission"), closed at Easter. However, we are still keen to receive data from you if you are able to provide it.

Your data can be submitted by completing the Statistics for Mission form available at: southwark.anglican.org/2020-statistics-for-mission-form

The completed form, or any queries you may have in relation to this, should be e-mailed to data@southwark.anglican.org

NOTICES

Croydon University Hospital Chaplaincy seeks volunteers

Can you or someone you know spare half a day a week? The Croydon University Hospital Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Department is looking to recruit and train new Chaplaincy Volunteers in 2021. Volunteers will:

- visit the wards
- bring people to the hospital's Sunday service
- support the office with administration services.

Training dates are 19 and 26 October and 2 November 2021.

E-mail andrew.dovey@nhs.net or download the flyer at southwark.anglican.org/chaplaincy-volunteers-training-poster-2021 for more details.

Win up to £6,000 for good news stories

Ecclesiastical Insurance is inviting parishes to share their good news stories for the chance to win prizes of up to £6,000. The competition closing date is 17 September. Find full details at: www.ecclesiastical.com/church/competition

Diocesan Directory update

The latest edition of the Diocesan Directory is now available on the password-protected area of the website. If you find any information which is out of date or inaccurate please e-mail: data@southwark.anglican.org

Southwark Cathedral confirmation service

The next Diocesan Confirmation Service will take place at the Cathedral on the eve of Christ the King, 20 November at 6pm. There are still spaces available, so if you have any candidates who would like to be entered please e-mail their names to susanna.bloomfield@southwark.anglican.org no later than Wednesday 13 October.

Grants for “We are open!” invitation cards

The Mission Team is offering invitation templates for parishes wanting to invite parishioners back to church, and micro-grants of £100 to help with this initiative. Invitation cards and application forms can be downloaded at: southwark.anglican.org/we-are-open. Completed application forms should be e-mailed to: mission@southwark.anglican.org

Gilmore Fund

Deadline: 5 November 2021

The Gilmore Fund is open to grant applications from women in ministry in Southwark Diocese. It is available to clergy, Readers or SPAs, and, in some cases, those with specific and significant lay ministry roles in churches and chaplaincies.

Download the application form here: bit.ly/Gilmore2021. Please send completed forms to gilmoregrants@gmail.com

DIOCESAN EVENTS

The Diocesan Spirituality Day: Wells of Salvation

Saturday 9 October, 10.00am-1.00pm, Southwark Cathedral, £5

Guest speaker Justine Allain Chapman, Archdeacon of Boston and author of *The Resilient Disciple*, will be reflecting on the resilience that God can give us. Nick Mayhew-Smith, writer and broadcaster, will be speaking about ancient holy wells. Bishop Christopher will bring the morning to an end with a talk on finding joy in your salvation.

Buy your ticket at: spirituality-day.eventbrite.co.uk. Download the event flyer at: southwark.anglican.org/wells-of-salvation-flier

The Croydon Area Lay Conference: Inside Out

Saturday 6 November, 10.00am-3.30pm, Zoom

The event's keynote speaker is Andrew Graystone, the broadcaster and author of *Faith, Hope and Mischief*, and his subject will be Upside down: a different way of looking at your church's mission. Bishop Jonathan will close the conference by discussing his vision for an Inside-out Church.

There will be 16 workshops to choose from, all concerned with how lay people can take the love and joy they find inside the church out beyond its walls.

To secure your ticket, visit: croydonlayconference2021.eventbrite.co.uk

Vocations Forums

Saturday 18 September OR Saturday 13 November, 9.00am-1.00pm, Southwark Cathedral and Trinity House

A vocations forum is a chance to reflect, pray and discuss with others what ministry God might be calling you into. The focus is on licensed lay ministries and on ordained ministry as a Permanent Deacon or Priest.

You will need your incumbent or chaplain to sponsor you to attend. Please ask them to book your place by e-mailing sue.stewart@southwark.anglican.org

An evening with the Archbishop of York

Thursday 30 September, 8.00-9.00pm, Zoom

The Mission and Evangelism Team is delighted to welcome the Most Revd and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, to introduce his book *Dear England*.

The Archbishop will talk about his passion for evangelism and his work on the strategy and vision of the Church of England, and then answer questions.

To book your place, e-mail mission@southwark.anglican.org

DIOCESAN & OTHER EVENTS

Black History Month celebration

Saturday 2 October, 11.00am-3.00pm, Southwark Cathedral

This year's Black History Month service will celebrate Business, Science, and the Arts; it will be followed by workshops in the afternoon.

The Bishop of Woolwich, the Rt Revd Karwei Dorgu, will preside at the Eucharist. The preacher will be the Revd Les Isaac OBE, founder of Ascension Trust and Street Pastors and Ecumenical Canon to Southwark Cathedral.

Further details and information on how to sign up can be found at: southwarkbhm21.eventbrite.co.uk

Spirituality and well-being weekend

3-5 September, Wychcroft House, cost on application

SPAs and those with a pastoral ministry are invited to join this residential weekend exploring the connections between Christian spirituality and personal well-being.

It is led by spiritual director, teacher and writer Christopher Chapman, and Sue Eastaugh, the Archdeaconry SPA for Wandsworth. There are a maximum of 20 places available.

For more information, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

The Diocesan Clergy Study Day: Jerusalem – the Holy City

Tuesday 19 October 2021, 9.30am-1.00pm, Zoom

A morning of learning, study and prayer for all clergy in Southwark Diocese.

The Most Revd Naoum Hosam, Archbishop of Jerusalem, will speak on the current situation in the Holy Land, and the Revd Dr Andrew Davison, Starbridge Senior Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences, Fellow in Theology and Dean of Chapel, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, will speak on the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Find more information and sign up here: bit.ly/ClergyStudy21

Save the date! Southwark Diocesan Conference 2022

1-3 September 2022, Bacon's College, Rotherhithe or Zoom

This will be a tremendously significant event in the life of Southwark Diocese and will take place both in person and online. The theme is "Christ-centred, outward-focused".

Speakers include: Mark Greene, Carrie Myers, Francis Spufford and the Revd Azariah France-Williams.

Full details will be available at southwark.anglican.org/news-events/whats-on; bookings will open in January 2022.

CHILDREN & YOUTH EVENTS

Southwark Diocese Messy Meet-up

**Wednesday 15 September,
7.30-8.30pm, Zoom**

No booking is necessary for this informal Zoom Messy Meet-up. The session will be hosted by Aike Kennett-Brown and the Revd David Cundill and will offer Messy Church leaders and teams the chance to meet fellow practitioners, ask questions, and find support and inspiration.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88613726185?pwd=Y2FSCHFTUW5kaTNxdnFndk5uNmpxQT09>

Meeting ID: 886 1372 6185
Passcode: 957569

Croydon Youth Forum BBQ

**Saturday 25 September,
1.00pm, Croydon**

All previously registered young people will be invited but there is still space for more to join the conversation (maximum three per church).

Parents should sign up their young person (13-plus) at: bit.ly/CYPBBQ

All leaders and young people must confirm their attendance on EventBrite at: bit.ly/CYPBBQtickets (password "Jonathan youth").

Affirmation services for leaders of children and young people

**Woolwich: Tuesday 28
September, 7.00-8.30pm, Zoom**

A service of affirmation led by Bishop Karwei for those who work with children and young people in the Woolwich Episcopal Area. Book at bit.ly/AffirmationWoolwich using the password "Karwei". The team will be sending out an attendee pack with some goodies so sign up soon!

**Kingston: Tuesday 5 October,
6.00-9.00pm, St Mark,
Battersea Rise**

Bishop Richard will lead a short service at this event for CYP leaders and volunteers in Kingston. It begins with dinner from 6.00pm, then continues 7.00-9.00pm. Book at bit.ly/AffirmationKingston using the password "Richard".

**Croydon: Saturday 27
November, 2.00-4.30pm,
Holy Trinity, Redhill**

Service and afternoon tea for CYP leaders and volunteers in Croydon, led by Bishop Jonathan. Book at bit.ly/AffirmationCroydon using the password "Jonathan".

Woolwich Youth Forum

Saturday 9 October, 4.00-5.00pm, Zoom

Parents should sign up their young person (13-plus) at: southwark.anglican.org/news-events/events/whats-on/woolwich-youth-forum. Leaders, please e-mail keli.bolton@southwark.anglican.org if you plan to attend.

ECO NEWS AND EVENTS

The Nations' Climate Sunday Service

Sunday 5 September, 4.00pm

On Sunday 5 September from 4.00pm, churches from across Britain and Ireland will come together online and in Glasgow Cathedral to pray and to present pledges to the Government ahead of COP26. The service, which will be opened by the Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Archdeacon of Croydon, will be broadcast live from Glasgow Cathedral with contributions from Christians around the nations.

Register for the service here: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nations-climate-sunday-service-churches-prepare-for-cop-26-tickets-165258230817

For those wanting to hold a Climate Sunday service of their own, there is still time to register here (bit.ly/3huDo8l).

Fundraising webinars

**Tuesday 7 September,
12.00noon-1.00pm - Part One:
Environmental Opportunities**

**Thursday 9 September,
12.00noon-1.00pm - Part Two:
How to Start Fundraising**

The Church of England's Environment Programme has announced new webinars on environmental fundraising. For full details and to register please go to the Environment Programme's website: bit.ly/CoEwebinars

Prayer Vigil for COP26

23 October 2021, 2.00-3.45pm

South Bank Churches & the Diocese of Southwark invite people of all faiths to a prayer vigil for the success of COP26, the international conference on climate change. You are encouraged to make a pilgrimage from your place of worship to arrive at Southwark Cathedral between 2.00pm and 3.00pm.

Book at: www.stjohnswaterloo.org/page/1791/vigil-cop

The Great Big Green Week

18-26 September

Communities across the country will be joining together for the Great Big Green Week in advance of the COP26 summit in Glasgow. You can find ideas for events, organiser's guides, resources to get people talking about climate change and more at: greatbiggreenweek.com

Reminder to fill in the Energy Footprint Tool

As we begin our work towards carbon neutrality, it is essential that we monitor the greenhouse gas emissions of the Diocese.

Please remember to make sure someone has filled in the Energy Footprint Tool (bit.ly/3AjezVL) for your church, via the online Parish Returns System (bit.ly/3dBHyuf), before it closes this autumn.

DIOCESAN TRAINING

Missional new monastic communities

Tuesdays 7, 14, 21, 28 September, 10.00am-12.00noon, Zoom, £20.00 (plus booking fee)

A four-week introductory course on missional new monasticism, led by the Revd Ian Mobsby, Interim Pioneer Rector of Christ Church, Blackfriars.

Book your place at bit.ly/3w6VanG

Inspiring generous giving

Wednesday 22 September, 1.00-2.00pm OR Thursday 23 September, 7:30-8:30pm, Zoom, free

Gabby Parikh and Clare Lucas, of the Southwark Diocese Giving Team, explore how to foster a generous culture within our parish communities.

Book for Wednesday's session at: tinyurl.com/IGGwebinar1

Book for Thursday's session at: tinyurl.com/IGGwebinar2

Steps to recovery: resourcing social action projects

Wednesday 29 September, 10.30am-12.00noon, Zoom, free

A morning of one-to-one consultancy support for social action projects, led by Mark Ereira-Guyer and Francesca Godfrey of Civil Society Consulting.

To book your place, register online at bit.ly/3dzqlS3 or e-mail JPICAdmin@southwark.anglican.org

Running church projects to support people with dementia

Thursday 30 September, 10.00-11.30am, Zoom, free

This SAGE (Southwark and Ageing) webinar is being presented jointly by Southwark Diocese and Rochester Diocese, and is led by Julia Burton-Jones, Canterbury Diocese's dementia specialist.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Stop slavery where you live, where you work

Saturday 2 October, 10.00-11.45am, Zoom, free

A webinar led by Reigate Archdeaconry Social Justice Focus focusing on the tell-tale signs of slavery and what you can do to help bring slavery to an end.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Leading funerals

Tuesdays 5, 12, 19 and 26 October, 6.30-8.30pm, Trinity House, free

A course for Readers who have been licensed for more than a year who wish to be authorised to take funerals, led by the Revd Hilary Fife, formerly Senior Chaplain of Croydon Health Services NHS Trust.

To apply for a place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

DIOCESAN TRAINING

Twelve Steps: a journey to freedom

Tuesdays 5, 12, 19, 26 October and 2 November, 2.00-4.00pm, Zoom, £30.00 (plus booking fee)

A course to help people involved in pioneering ministries develop a spiritually nourishing life of prayer. Led by the Revd Ian Mobsby, Interim Pioneer Minister of Christ Church, Blackfriars, and Tim Lea, from the national Fresh Expressions team.

Book at: bit.ly/2Tm40Rm

Coming out of COVID

Thursday 7 October, 10.00am-1.00pm, Zoom, free

A morning for clergy and lay leaders to discuss missional opportunities for parishes as they come to terms with COVID-19. Led by the Revd Canon Jay Colwill, Director of Mission and Evangelism.

To book your place, e-mail mission@southwark.anglican.org

A Messy masterclass: baptism and communion

Thursday 14 October OR Thursday 11 November, 7.00-8.30pm, Zoom, free

A training session for those who already run a Messy Church and wish to explore ways of incorporating baptism and communion.

Book at: southwark.anglican.org/news-events/events/whats-on/messy-masterclass-baptism-communion

The Holy Spirit and the Early Church

Wednesday 20 October, 7.30-9.00pm, Zoom, free

An evening of encounter with the Holy Spirit through the eyes of the Early Church, led by the Revd Sue Thomas, Assistant Priest at St John the Evangelist, Old Coulsdon.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Communicating with people with dementia

Wednesday 3 November, 7.30-9.00pm, Zoom, free

This SAGE (Southwark and Ageing) webinar is led by Julia Burton-Jones, Canterbury Diocese's dementia specialist. The session will be useful for people both with and without personal experience of the subject.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

An introduction to Franciscan spirituality

Thursday 4 November, 7.30-9.00pm, Zoom, free

The leader of this session is Sr Sue, a Franciscan sister for more than 25 years, who currently serves as Provincial Minister for the Community of St Francis.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

DIOCESAN TRAINING

The environment – the science that every churchgoer should know

Monday 8 November, 7.30-9.00pm, Zoom, free

Bishop Richard leads this seminar alongside Dr Nicholas Heavens of the Space Science Institute at Boulder, Colorado.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Preaching on Luke's Gospel

Tuesday 9 November OR Saturday 13 November, 10.00am-1.00pm, Zoom, free

This workshop is led by the Revd Dr Raewynne Whiteley, Deputy Director of Discipleship and Lay Ministry, and the Revd Ellen Eames, priest in charge of St Christopher, Walworth. It is being offered twice in order to make it available to as broad a range of lay and ordained preachers as possible.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org, stating which session you wish to attend.

Connecting the generations: a Living Faith seminar

Wednesday 10 November, 7.30-9.00pm, Zoom, free

The Children and Young People Team (CYP) are joining together with Southwark and Ageing (SAGE) for this evening aimed at anyone

involved with children and young people, whether you are a parent, godparent, grandparent, ministry leader or volunteer. It includes ideas for connecting the generations as we come out of the pandemic, the role of parents, grandparents and godparents in the faith development of children, and the part that leaders of children and young people can play in connecting the generations.

Book your place at bit.ly/3zTCjyU

Prepare the way of the Lord: Preaching though Advent

Monday 22 November, 10.00am-12.00pm, Zoom, free

An opportunity for preachers, lay or ordained, to explore the themes of Advent. The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark, will lead the session.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Diversity training

Thursday 25 November, and repeated on Tuesday 22 March 2022 & Saturday 18 June 2022, 10.00am-12.30pm, Trinity House, free

A programme to help individuals, churches and communities address issues of unconscious bias which arise in diverse communities. This training is important for all in positions of leadership, both lay and ordained. It is led by the Venerable Rosemarie Mallett, Archdeacon of Croydon,

DIOCESAN TRAINING

and the Revd Canon Wendy Robins, Director of Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Ministerial Education.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Action against gender-based violence

Thursday 25 November, 7.30-9.00pm, Zoom, free

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Southwark Diocese Mothers' Union will lead an event discussing one of its most active causes, campaigning throughout the world for an end to gender-based violence.

The session is for both men and women, whether or not they are already members of Mothers' Union.

To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

Equipping Christian leadership in an age of science

Tuesday 7 December, 10.00am-12.30pm, Zoom, free

Bishop Richard hosts a morning about theological and Christian narratives of salvation in the COVID-19 world. He will be joined by three members of the Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science project (ECLAS).

Dr Franziska Kohlt and Dr Thoko Kamwendo will share research on virus narratives. The Revd Dr Lucas Mix will speak on biological narratives in the Bible.

The Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship

September 2021 - June 2022, Trinity House or on Zoom, including a 24-hour residential event

Booking is now open for the Bishop's Certificate. The course is for anybody who wants to be more confident about what they believe, read the Bible with more understanding, and reflect on their journey as a Christian.

This year there is the option of taking the course in a venue or online.

The cost is £220. However, we do not want anyone to be prevented from taking the course because of the cost, and grants are available.

To request an application form and a schedule of dates, contact bishopscertificate@southwark.anglican.org

The event is aimed at all in lay or ordained leadership roles, and is of particular importance to those who preach. To book your place, e-mail ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org

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Bishop Karwei writes...

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I bring you greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our saviour, who died to give us new life in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father, who loves us with an eternal unconditional love.

As we recover from the challenges, trials and trauma of the last 18 months of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic, we reflect on the lives lost, jobs lost, livelihoods lost, relationships lost, tranquillity lost and for some earthly paradise lost. We pray for the Lord to comfort the bereaved, give grace to the informed and grant that the souls of the faithful departed rest in Christ.

The travails of COVID-19 remind me of the experiences of the disciples of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion, death and resurrection from the dead. They were distraught, broken, frightened, disillusioned and depressed, so they went into lockdown. The disciples of Jesus had a lockdown at different levels — emotional, physical and psychological. It was also spiritual in their distance from God and his purposes for them at that time. Thank God for his unconditional love for us, in that even when we are unfaithful, ungrateful, rebellious, distant and in sin, he continues to love us with unimaginable passion through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:8).

Thank God the resurrection of Christ happened after his crucifixion and that confirms to us that God can bring new life out of death. The risen Christ appeared to his disciples at Easter and

they were filled with the Spirit, and at Pentecost they overflowed with the power after the Holy Spirit was poured upon them (Acts 2). Then those men and women believers in Jesus Christ became passionate witnesses of Jesus Christ and preached the gospel even in the face of threats to their lives. They built back better and stronger, giving birth to the Church that today boasts of more than 1.5 billion followers worldwide.

As we emerge from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, I encourage us to remember that the Spirit that worked in the disciples, bringing them out of lockdown and turning them into passionate witnesses, calls us today as modern disciples and followers of Jesus Christ to build back better and stronger. He encourages us to be passionate witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ caring for God's creation, caring for the salvation of our fellow humanity through Christ, caring for racial justice, caring for social equality, caring for the elderly, caring for the environment as diligent stewards of God who calls us to participate in Missio Dei — God's mission in the world.

This is our call to build back better and stronger prayerfully, theologically and missiologically through Jesus Christ. So, do not fret but stay focused on God's love for you through Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit as we go forward.

Blessings to you all in Christ,

H Karwei Woolwich