

### Walking Welcoming Growing

Vol.28 No.10 December 2023/January 2024

**Diocesan Synod** 

A message for Advent from Bishop Christopher See page 3



#### Growing Faith this Advent

12 ways your parish church can connect with its local school See pages 6–7



#### Robes SleepOut

More than £40,000 has been raised for the Robes Project See page 12



## Royal visit honours work with Korean community

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames has one of the largest expatriate communities of Koreans in Europe. Particularly focused around the New Malden area, it is sometimes referred to as 'Koreatown'. Known to be one of the most densely populated areas of Koreans outside South Korea, there are estimated to be around 10,000 Koreans in New Malden itself and up to 20,000 Koreans living in surrounding areas.

The area includes Korean language churches and nursery schools, plus restaurants and shops. As well as the Korean population, New Malden also has a substantial wider Southeast Asian population and is the most ethnically diverse area in the borough.

In 1889 the Korean Mission Partnership was founded to support the Anglican Church in Korea. It was formally launched when Archbishop Edward White Benson of Canterbury consecrated the Revd John Corfe, a naval Chaplain to be the first Bishop of Korea at Westminster Abbey.

Last November a special service took place at St John The Divine, Kennington where the Korean Mission Partnership was founded. During the service the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, commissioned the Rt Revd Bishop Moses Yoo as Assistant Bishop and his wife, Revd Dr Song Woo Hur, as Deacon to serve the Korean community in south London.

Bishop Moses served as Bishop of Daejeon for eight years and was elected Primate

of the Anglican Church of Korea in 2018, a role in which he served for two years. Deacon Song Woo, a University Professor and expert in feminism and Christianity and women's movements in South Korea, was ordained as a Deacon in 2021.

In a post on 'X' (formerly *Twitter*) after the service, Bishop Christopher said, "It was a joy to commission the couple to serve the Korean community" and that he was thankful to all who gathered in support of St John the Divine, Kennington, where the Korean Mission Partnership was founded.

On 8 November, both Bishop Moses and Deacon Song Woo were invited to meet His Majesty King Charles III who visited New Malden's Korean Community ahead of the State Visit by The President of the Republic of Korea and the First Lady. During the visit, His Majesty met with faith and community groups at New Malden Methodist Church and heard about Korea's culture and cuisine, before visiting a stall showcasing a selection of Korean specialities. The King visited the Cake & Bingsoo Café to meet young Koreans, watched a contemporary dance performance and listened to the local London Korean Hummingbirds Choir sing the traditional song 'Beautiful Country'. His Majesty also visited an exhibition organised by the Korean British Cultural Exchange in collaboration with Kingston Museum on the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston and Revd Martin Hislop, St Luke, Kingston and Deputy Lieutenant who coordinated arrangements







Top: The licensing of Bishop Moses and Deacon Song Woo at St John, Kennington, pictured with Bishop Martin and Bishop Christopher. Bottom (I–r): King Charles meets children from the Korean community before visiting the Cake & Bingsoo Café.

with the Palace were also in attendance and there was much interest in initiatives involving Bishop Moses and Deacon Song Woo.

Another of our parishes building strong relationships with their Korean community over the past five years is St James, New Malden. Through their diverse ministry, the church has sung with the Korean Choral Society and regularly hosts a South Korean crafting group, language classes and counselling for North Korean refugees. Revd Katie Thomas, Vicar at St James said, "This is a very exciting time – we are delighted to be supporting Bishop Moses and his wife Song Woo in their pioneering work with the Korean community in New Malden. We've longed to provide an Anglican Eucharist in the Korean language for some time and at Epiphany Bishop Moses will be presiding in Korean at our main Sunday service for the first time – so everyone can experience this before they launch their own service in the New year."

fy

# A view from

This year pilgrims will not be able to make their way to the Holy Land because of the conflict between Israel and Gaza – and our hearts go out to our brothers and sisters in Israel and Palestine.

There have been many other times in history when pilgrims have been prevented from travelling to the place of Christ's birth in the Holy Land. We are indebted to the Franciscans for responding imaginatively to initiate new traditions that have become normative in many churches – that is, a nativity crib in Advent and Christmas and Stations of the Cross during Lent.

At the crib we may journey in heart and mind to the Holy Land. First, to Nazareth in Galilee in modern Israel where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, who responded with the great "yes!" on which our salvation hung: 'be it unto me according to thy word' (Luke 1. 38). There, the Franciscans have built a beautiful modern basilica above the cave where an ancient church marked the traditional site of the Annunciation. Then, we may travel on to Bethlehem in the West Bank of modern-day Palestine where, in another cave grotto, a star recalls the place of Christ's birth – the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, full of grace and truth that we might behold his glory (John 1.14). As we kneel at the cribs in our parish churches in pilgrim adoration to rejoice at the birth of our Lord and Saviour, let us also journey in prayer to Gaza to the Parish of the Holy Family. The Holy Family one of the three significant places of the remaining Christian presence in Gaza - the



other two having suffered from missile attacks – where large numbers have sheltered in the current conflict. In this parish, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity continue their selfless ministry of love to young people with severe learning and physical disabilities.

Knowing the acuteness of the suffering of our brothers and sisters of all faiths in the land of Christ's birth, it is hard not to despair even as we kneel in faith this year at the crib. But the message of Christmas is to hold on to hope in thanksgiving for the promise and fulfilment of God's loving purposes in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In The 'Joy of the Gospel', Pope Francis wrote that intercessory prayer 'moves us particularly to take up the work of evangelisation and to seek the good of others' (Evangelii Gaudium, 281). This Christmas, let us make our hearts a crib so that Christ may be born anew in them, preparing them carefully and intentionally with a focus on intercessory prayer for situations in the Holy Land – and reaching out wherever possible to our Jewish and Muslim neighbours to counter the great social evils of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia – increasingly evident in this current fraught context. I also commend to you the appeal for the Anglican Hospital in Gaza (bit. ly/3G7AvHH) jointly endorsed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, our good friend Archbishop Hosam.

I wish you and those you love the joy and peace of Christmas.

**Bishop Christopher** 

### 🧕 NEWS IN BRIEF

#### 'Prayers of Love and Faith'

The national assembly of the Church of England – General Synod – has agreed that special services of prayer and dedication asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples authorised under Canon law should soon be introduced on a trial basis.

During Synod (13–15 November) in London, members voted narrowly in favour of a motion containing an amendment to bring forward the standalone services. This is based around texts known as *Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF)* a collection of prayers, readings and other resources for praying with and for a same-sex couples who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God. *Read more here: tinyurl.com/yp29sw5e* 

#### Unity and climate action

COP28 is the 28th annual United Nations (UN) climate meeting where governments will discuss the ongoing global climate challenge. This year's summit is being held in Dubai,



in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 30 November until 12 December 2023. Please pray that the outcome of these discussions contributes to climate justice. *You can find out more here: cop28.com/en/* 

#### **Season of Lay Ministries**

The Season of Lay Ministries will take place during Epiphany, starting on Sunday 7 January and running until 28 January. It is designed to encourage people to think about whether God might be calling them into new things through vocations and ministries to faithfully serve God. There will be sermon outlines, with hymn suggestions and videoed sermons for use over the period as well as some resources for children and young people. Read Bishop Christopher's letter on page 14. *Look out for resources here: bit.ly/3QCM8v6* 

#### **Treason the Musical**

A historic tale of the Guy Fawkes story and the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, *Treason the Musical* toured the UK last month with an opening show at The Festival Theatre, Edinburgh and then proceeding to London. Complete



with original folk and pop songs, this one-of-a-kind musical tells one of the most intriguing tales in Britain's history. Read an article published by the Church Times here: bit.ly/3QZFpN0

Revd Doug Ross, Assistant Vicar at Christ The King, Salfords and producer of *Treason The Musical* said, "As a working priest and producer of socially significant theatre, I believe that *Treason* provides a catalyst for important discussions around topics such as divided societies, community disruption, systemic oppression, the dynamic power of our church and state institutions, and political upheaval. *Treason* is an explosive new epic British musical based on the gunpowder plot that not only challenges us to think about how we view history but is also highly entertaining." To close the tour a final show took place at the London Palladium on Wednesday 22 November.

If you missed it, you can watch a clip of the musical here: bit.ly/3QXc7P9

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:** Vacant

#### Editorial Group:

Nicola Thomas Editorial Adviser (vacant) Alastair Cuttings

#### Next Issue: Submission deadline and guidance

The FEBRUARY edition is due to be published online and in print on 1 February 2024. Material for that edition must be with Vernia Mengot by email by **MONDAY** 8 JANUARY.

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

# Vision for the future: November Diocesan Synod

On 18 November 2023, people representing parishes from across our Diocese gathered at St Peter, Battersea for Diocesan Synod. Bishop Christopher welcomed members to the November meeting and in particular Nicola Thomas, as it was her first Synod as Diocesan Secretary.



Nicola Thomas, at her first Synod as Diocesan Secretary.

The meeting followed General Synod's agreement for Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) asking for God's blessing for samesex couples to be introduced (see page 2) during its three-day debate in London.

In his Presidential Address to Synod, Bishop Christopher talked about working together, acknowledging differences as strengths. He said, "It was a narrow vote but an historic moment, confirming Synod's decision made in February, mandated then by each of the three Houses – a decision that began with an apology and recognised the dignity and gift to the whole Church of God of our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters... I welcome the decision that has been made." Speaking on use of the PLF, he said, "There is absolutely no compulsion to use what is provided. How we respond locally to General Synod's mandate is up to us. In each Deanery, in each Episcopal Area, and in my own staff team we model unity in diversity - great diversity. Read Bishop

Christopher's full Presidential Address here: tinyurl.com/4jsx2643

During the meeting co-chaired by Revd Lotwina Farodoye, Chair of the House of Clergy, Synod heard about changes to the ways in which the role of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers will be supported and managed. In future, they will be known as 'Diocesan Safeguarding Officers' which will mean they provide independent advice to the Bishop – the model we already have in Southwark.

Next, Adrian Greenwood, Chair of the House of Laity, invited Bishop Christopher to advise Synod of the intention to fill the vacant See in Woolwich following the death of the Rt Revd Bishop Karowei Dorgu in September this year. Consulting Synod, Bishop Christopher asked members to give any comments or recommendations regarding the need to continue to have a Bishop in the vacant See - these responses were formally noted and will form part of the documentation that is submitted to the Dioceses Commission. This was followed by an informal show of hands to indicate Synod's unanimous agreement to appoint to the See.

Roz Cordner, Diocesan Director of Education, and the Ven Simon Gates, Archdeacon of Lambeth, gave a presentation on the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) – which supports 103 schools and academies, colleges and universities across the Diocese. SDBE provides advice and support to develop the distinctively Christian ethos of our schools; to ensure they are inclusive and serve their local communities. The presentation was an update on the year to date and plans looking forward into 2024 and beyond. This included achievements, difficulties and financial outturns.

This was followed by an update on the 2023 annual objectives and the proposed



Top: Revd Derrick Chandler who was commissioned by Bishop Christopher as Croydon Area Retirement Officer. Left: Adrian Greenwood, Chair of the House of Laity, and Revd Lotwina Farodoye, Chair of the House of Clergy. Right: Roz Cordner, Diocesan Director of Education.

objectives for 2024 by the Diocesan Secretary and Jackie Pontin, Deputy Diocesan Secretary. Synod members were invited to ask questions and a formal vote took place to endorse the objectives.

Sir David Beamish, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance with Diocesan Secretary and Mark Rhodes, the Director of Finance, presented the budget and members voted by show of hands to approve financial plans for 2024.

After an item to agree election representation to Diocesan Synod in the next triennium (2024) members shared together in a lunchtime eucharist. During worship, the Diocesan Secretary, Nicola Thomas, shared a reading from the *Book* of Wisdom and prayers were read by Revd lan Luke-Macauley, Vicar at St Peter, Battersea. Bishop Christopher also commissioned Revd Derrick Chandler as Croydon Area Retirement Officer.

Ruth Martin, the Bishop's Lead for Strategic Development and colleagues from the Diocesan Investment Programme Working Group gave a presentation on

the culmination of the Southwark Vision 2024–2035 consultations following the July Diocesan Synod. This sets out the priorities as a basis for the objectives of the Diocese. The presentation linked to the National Church's Diocesan Investment Programme, which for Southwark, subject to a bid next year, will be a nine-year funding partnership linked to Southwark Vision and the National Church's Vision of becoming Simpler Bolder Humbler. The Southwark Vision 2024-2035 is centred on the Diocese becoming Christ centred—Outward focused, prioritising: parishes, ministry, growth, youth and diversity, deepening our discipleship and healing. The motion was moved by Bishop Christopher and members voted by show of hands to accept this motion. The Ven Alastair Cutting, Archdeacon of Lewisham and Greenwich, gave an update on General Synod. The meeting ended after formal questions.

Details and papers for the Synod can be found on the Diocesan website here: tinyurl.com/bdh2hypy

### Evensong for the Holy Land

On Sunday 19 November, Southwark Cathedral hosted a special Evensong with the Very Revd Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College in Jerusalem and Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral.

Following the service, there was a forum for discussion with Dean Richard about the current conflict in Israel and Gaza, as well as of the broader issues facing Christians in the Middle East. The event was very well attended, with the Cathedral Nave full – and many staying to hear Dean Richard's contributions. Speaking after the event, Bishop Christopher remarked: "It was very moving that people came in such good numbers on Sunday to Southwark Cathedral to hear from Richard Sewell about the long road to peace for Israel and Palestine, Hamas terror with its victims and hostages, and the intense suffering for the people of Gaza.

"Richard has asked us not to look away from the events currently unfurling in



L-R: Richard Sewell with Bishop Christopher.

Israel and Gaza", he added, asking people to continue to express solidarity with the peoples of the Holy Land through prayer and financial giving. During Advent, Bishop Christopher is especially encouraging parishes to support the Archbishops' Joint Appeal for Gaza and Jerusalem through donations made at their Christmas services.

"It is easy to feel powerless in the face of such tragic events," he said. "But it is not so. We can pray and we can give – according to that which has been given to us – and we can reach out to our Jewish and Muslim neighbours in our communities in friendship and goodwill at a very tense time."

If you wish to make a donation you can do so via the Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association: cafdonate.cafonline.org/24666

### Festive scenes from around our parishes

This year we reached out to our parishes on social media asking for their best 'Christmassy' pictures that could be used on one of our Diocesan Christmas cards. A big thank you to all those who responded and sent in some really wonderful shots.

A short-list was drawn up and, with difficulty, two pictures were chosen – one for the Diocesan Secretary's card (1) and another for the Kingston Episcopal Area card (2). All of the short-listed pictures are shown below.

With Christmas just on the horizon, are you be able to take some stunning shots of your church, its people and its environs? We'd love

- to share them on social media and
  - they might well be considered for next year's cards!

All pictures copyright.



St Edward, New Addington. Taken by Revd Dhanaraj (Prem) Premra.









Runners-up (clockwise from top left): All Saints, Tooting, by Tahir Shams. St Peter, Limpsfield, by Revd Helen Cook. Carol service, St Mary the Virgin, Horne by Judith Calver. The high altar reredos at St Paul, Wimbledon Parkside, by Lesley Hazel. The choir of St Leonard, Streatham, by Ela Yalcin.



Mary, depicted in a stained glass window at St Michael, Stockwell. Taken by Miranda Snow.

#### Diocesan Advent campaign...

Open your church doors this Christmas and follow the nativity story with our Advent Campaign. This Advent we are sharing a daily video on social media where, each day we open the doors to a different church within our Diocese.

The idea is to collectively welcome local people into churches this Christmas and to share the nativity story through scripture. As each church opens their door, you'll be able to follow the story with others around the Diocese. These videos invite people to attend their local service at Christmas and we hope that you, too, will invite people to join your church community or help them find their local church on A Church Near You (achurchnearyou.com).

Help us share the Gospel accounts of the birth of Christ – watch the videos here:

youtube.com/@SouthwarkDiocese



### Maureen's mission onboard Global Mercy

Mercy Ships is a faith-based organisation that deploys hospital ships to some of the poorest countries in Africa. Founded in 1978, the charity has worked in more than 55 countries, supporting people in need. Following the model of Jesus by 'bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor', Mercy Ships deploys a three-step process to help people of all faiths and none. This is done by offering direct medical care and surgery, training and mentoring local health professionals and working to improve healthcare infrastructure.

In this edition of *The Bridge*, we hear from healthcare professional Maureen Cook, from St Barnabas Church, Eltham as she heads to Sierra Leone, on a mission with *Mercy Ships*.

Maureen began her career in healthcare in 1985, when she trained as a nurse at King's College Hospital. After 10 years on the wards, she moved into a new role as a health visitor in Bexley, before lecturing in Public Health at Canterbury Christ Church University.

In 2021, after vaccinating for the NHS during the covid-19 pandemic, Maureen retired from the NHS. Seeking a new challenge, she retrained as an ophthalmic



Maureen Cook, on a mission to assist with paediatric sight-saving in Sierra Leone.



nurse with Optical Express. It is this role in ophthalmology which inspired Maureen to use her new skill set to make a positive impact where it is needed most.

"I was drawn to volunteer with Mercy Ships as I wanted to use my skills in a place where access to healthcare was limited. I was shocked to learn how little access to surgery there is in many countries."

To assist with paediatric sight-saving surgery, Maureen will work onboard the *Global Mercy* for four weeks.

In talking about what inspired her to volunteer she said, "I was drawn to

London Liberal Synagogue (SLLS) for

Godleman, working together to build

good community and faith relations.

During a programme of readings and

prayer for peace amidst the conflict in

Israel and Gaza, Bishop Christopher read

Chair of Living Bankside, led the prayer.

The Venerable John Kiddle, Archdeacon

of Wandsworth, attended an interfaith

event hosted by Councillor Sana Jafri

at Wandsworth Town Hall to bring

**Commemorating Imam Hussain** 

from the Torah (in English) and Amir Eden,

the Shabbat Service with Rabbi Nathan

volunteer with *Mercy Ships* as I wanted to use my skills in a place where access to healthcare was limited. I was shocked to learn how little access to surgery there is in many countries. We are so lucky in the UK. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to help even in a small way.

"Cataracts and vision problems are more common for children in West Africa than in the UK, so this is a much-needed service." she added.

Mercy Ships work with local governments to strengthen the country's healthcare system and drive policy change.

If you would like to find out more detail about this work, please visit *Mercy Ships* UK website at: bit.ly/3QI3JBN

### Interfaith across the Diocese

As a Diocese we are committed to building strong and positive relationships with members of other faith communities – a crucial part of serving all the people of our parishes to promote peace, human flourishing and tackle issues of common concern.

Interfaith Week in November also gave us many opportunities to celebrate and strengthen our Diocesan links with other faith communities. The Ven Johnathan Sedgwick, Archdeacon of Southwark, shared a round up in this blog. You can read more here: tinyurl.com/26fp2zjt

#### Peace and Harmony

Faiths Together in Lambeth organised a celebration of 'Peace and Harmony' at Lambeth Town Hall involving political and faith leaders, with representatives of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim community speaking about their own faith's understanding of peace and reconciliation, recognising our work towards the common good, while acknowledging our diversity.

#### Tree planting with Revd Anne Clarke

Ahead of Interfaith Week, Revd Anne Clarke, Area Dean of Dulwich and the Vicar of St Stephen, Dulwich joined a treeplanting event organised by *Faiths Forum for London* in partnership with the Dulwich Estate with the support of the Mayor of London's 'Grow Back Greener Scheme'.

Good community and faith relations

Last month, Bishop Christopher joined neighbours and friends at the South



Left: (back row) John Heyderman (SLLS), the Ven Jonathan Sedgwick, Archdeacon of Southwark, Amir Eden, Rabbi Nathan Godleman, Bishop Christopher;. front row: John and Liz Woodhouse, Westminster Cathedral Interfaith Group and Faiths Together in Croydon. Right: All gathered to commemorate Imam Hussain Day at Wandsworth Town Hall.

awareness to Imam Hussain day. The grandson of Prophet Muhammad, Imam Hussain was a great leader. 1300 years ago he held onto the beacon of light for God and struggled to the extent that he sacrificed himself and his family for God and Islam in the battle of Karbala. During the battle of Karbala many Christians were part of Hussain's army.

The event held on 9 October was an opportunity to commemorate Imam Hussain day, where faith leaders from Wandsworth, alongside the Mayor of Wandsworth joined together to say a few words on God, brotherhood and solidarity, and light a special candle.

Archdeacon John said, "It was a great privilege and honour to attend the candle lighting event at Wandsworth Town Hall on Monday night. I was very moved by the words that were shared and especially by the attendance of so many young people and their evident strength of faith and desire to live lives of courage, generosity and peace.

"It was indeed an evening full of hope, and especially so in the light of the situation the world finds itself in."



IN FOCUS... Children & Youth this Advent

# Growing Faith this Advent

Growing Faith is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England.

It involves churches, schools and households working together to help children, young people and families share the love of Jesus.

Nationally, 43% of churches have no children and young people (CYP) within their worshipping congregations and this figure rises to 50% when churches with fewer than five children or young people are included. In Southwark Diocese the outlook is brighter with only 7% of churches with no CYP and 25% with less than five children or young people.

However, as part of the National Strategy, our vision is to grow a younger and more diverse Church – growing in faith with the confidence to share God's love, contributing to the life of the Church and its mission, at every level.

To help with this the CYP Team have put together 12 ways your parish church can connect with its local community school...



#### Relationships

Connect with the Headteacher, staff and school through a service, perhaps with donuts and homemade cakes for the staff room. Offer to read with the children.



#### Prayer

Ask the school what they would like to pray for – perhaps nervous students at exam times, school trips or any other important school events. Let them know that they are regularly prayed for in church.



#### Assemblies and Collective Worship

Offering lead gatherings on a regular basis is a wonderful way to engage children with the Christian faith. They can be lead by children's and young people's workers, volunteers or Vicars. Spinnaker and Open the Book offer assemblies, RE Resources and training to support with this. Sparkfish also provides RE Events, reflective spaces and mentoring in the Reigate, Redhill and Merstham area. Consider working with your school to create a prayer and reflective space for the children or young people.



#### **Get on board** Offer to serve as a school

Governor or, if its a Church school, a Foundation Governor. This will make a tangible difference to any local school – and will grow both your understanding of the school and your relationships with its staff.

#### **Musical connections**

Invite pupils to join a children's or youth choir. Encourage parish musicians to support music in the school and speak to the school about inviting children who are learning instruments to play them in church.

#### Work to care for God's creation

Volunteer to help with the school garden or eco projects, set up an eco club at church and invite pupils to join them through the school.



#### Work experience Encourage your congregation to

think about opportunities they could offer as work experience for older students. It can help young people to make future career choices. Through the school you could also offer volunteering opportunities for those students taking part in Duke of Edinburgh awards.





#### **Church visits**

Part of the RE curriculum may include visits to places of worship. Invite teachers to bring their class to your church. Offer activities and refreshments as well as supporting their lesson aims. A *CSI Easter* workshop is ideal for Key Stage 2 pupils.

#### Invitations to church events

Make or find appropriate opportunities in the church events diary to which pupils and their families may be sent special invitations. These might be holiday clubs, *Messy Church*, Christingle, harvest services... ask your school to share details with families.

#### Celebrate the school

*Education Sunday*' is the second Sunday in September. Use your church service to celebrate and pray for all those in your congregation and community who work in schools. There are lots of resources online. Make your local school a regular agenda item at your PCC meetings. This could include inviting members of the school community to the meeting to share an element of their work and explain how the church can support them.





#### Informal visits

Consider starting an after-school youth drop-in, offering a safe space for young people to meet and enjoy food and activities.



### Partner with Christian organisations

Partnerships are a great way to support your local school. Examples include *Operation Forgiveness* – an early intervention knife crime initiative; and *KICK* – which explores the power of sport with Christian values.



#### Useful links for children and youth organisations

Spinnaker spinnaker.org.uk

Open the Book biblesociety.org.uk/getinvolved/open-the-book/

Sparkfish sparkfish.org

Prayer Spaces in Schools prayerspacesinschools.com

CSI Easter (Diocese of Southwark) bit.ly/3G8VoCe

Kindness Song video tinyurl.com/yf6a3av8 operationforgiveness.org.uk Transforming Lives for Good tlg.org.uk XLP xlp.org.uk KICK kick.org.uk YouTube: tinyurl. com/4rfmtkw7 Hymbact!

**Operation Forgiveness** 

rscm.org.uk/learn-with-us/ hymnpact

### Try something new with children and young people in your church

Sharing God's love and good news with those around us in our communities, at home, church and at school, is at the heart of the **Season of Lay Ministry**. During the Season (see page 2) and as part of the resources available, the Children and Young People (CYP) team have put together some ideas for Lay Leaders to try with children and young people in their church. As well as hymn suggestions, there is also access to an all age talk.

For information and support about leading a children's or youth group, contact the CYP team: Jo Gavin (Joanne.gavin@southwark.anglican.org) and Imani McEwen (Imani.mcewen@southwark.anglican.org), or visit: tinyurl.com/33u52ycc

Here are some suggestions from the team. If you would like to share what you have done we'd love to hear about it.

#### Junk modelling

Being baptised (Mark 1: 4-11) means having a new start with God. At home, church or school try giving things another chance and a new purpose. Use recycled items to make new junk models.

#### Try kindness

As a church, family or school class listen to Worship for Everyone's 'Kindness Song' and decide on one thing to do over the next four weeks, to be kind and share God's love and hope with those around us. For example, could you speak to someone new at school? How did you find out about God's love? How could you tell or show someone else? When you wash your face, you can speak God's words as a reminder to yourself: "This is my child who I love; with you I am well pleased..." What are you pleased about this week and why?

#### Shine your light brightly

Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael (John 1: 43-51) to be people who follow him and make God's love known to others. How can you shine your light brightly so the those around you will know Jesus' love?

Stained glass shines God's light into the world – choose a stained glass window in your church and take the best picture you can. Write a short caption telling people a bit about the window and why you chose it. Invite people to come and see the



window, and let them know when your building is open. You could ask an adult to post it on 'X' and tag @ImaniandJoCYF with the hashtag #StainedGlass #SouthwarkCYP.

Create your own stained glass picture using tissue paper, glue and black card. Write a short caption telling people about what you have made. Stick your stained glass picture to the window and remember to let God's light shine through you.

#### Make your own Christingle

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple (Luke 2:22-40) people saw him and knew straight away that Jesus was born to do great things and be a light in the world. What gifts and strengths has God given you to shine bright and make a difference in the world? Make a Christingle to represent Jesus bringing hope to the world.

#### CYP grant

Use a CYP grant of up to £900 per calendar year to subscribe to *Hympact!*, a resource for primary schools and churches that provides hymns and songs that are appealing to children and adults of all ages.

More information about Lay Ministries is available at: tinyurl.com/4pwmwj9s



tinyurl.com/43y7p8x8 Diocese CYP webpage tinyurl.com/568ad3y4 CYP team: Jo Gavin (Joanne.gavin@ southwark.anglican.org) and Imani McEwen (Imani. mcewen@southwark. anglican.org)

# Letters to a Young Generation

After months of research, Amanda Wilson, headteacher at St Alfege with St Peter's Primary School, Greenwich (pictured) has compiled a book 'Letters to a Young Generation' which aims to inspire and encourage black teachers to pursue leadership positions in education.

According to national statistics, black teachers in headship are underrepresented in the education sector and Amanda, with over two decades of experience in teaching and senior leadership, is part of the 1% of black headteachers across the country.

Following the launch of her book, we spoke to Amanda about what inspired her to compile the letters, how aspiring teachers can follow in the footsteps of senior leaders who have paved the way before them and the value of having a faith in education.

This is the third book in a series containing letters that Amanda has compiled. The first

focused on inspiration for young black boys and the second was aimed at young girls. Amanda talked about noticing a lack of inspiration and wanting to bring together a range of known faces in the black community who also grew up in the UK to write letters sharing their personal life journey. She strongly believes in shared learning, mentoring and coaching, and this latest book aims to provide young leaders with exposure to a wealth of opportunities to be like the leaders who have shared their powerful stories.

In talking about obstacles she faced in her career, Amanda said, "I have been very fortunate – the biggest obstacle was my own doubt, but I had a good support network and have been blessed to have not struggled."

With her early career in community schools, Amanda has now worked in church schools since 2014 and has been Headteacher at St Alfege for the past five years. In her current role, she has been part of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Educate Against Racism (EAR) Partnership – a group of school leaders

dedicated to making a positive difference in the community by addressing racial biases and imbalance. The group, which started in 2020 and is headed up by the Local Authority, provides tools through various forums to educate against racism. In 2022, EAR held a conference in Greenwich to offering an opportunity for young and aspiring black and Asian leaders – most of whom

have never experienced being in the same room as so many global majority heritage leaders in education – to understand their experience in the education sector firsthand. Leaders also visit universities to meet with teachers in training.

ongly believes in shared and coaching, and s to provide young irre to a wealth of like the leaders who We asked Amanda what more could be done for black students embarking on their teaching career to encourage them to pursue leadership positions. She said, "Leaders like us need to make ourselves

available." She went on to share an example of what the 21 schools who are part of EAR are doing, "Some schools have become host schools to trainee teachers." Feedback from the initial conference held for teachers included providing, mentoring, secondments and shadowing opportunities and work continues to raise awareness with headteachers and governors about the things they could do to support aspiring school leaders from black and Asian communities.

As a previously Ordained Minister, Amanda spoke of how she is passionate about working in a church school. She said, "My faith has always been front and centre. People knew I had faith when I worked in a community school. Working in a faith school - it doesn't feel uncomfortable to practice your faith – here you can express your faith fully. It allows me the freedom to carry out faith initiatives. For example, I recently wrote to parents to ask them to send in prayer requests so that we can pray from them as a school."

"Everything you do, do it with your whole self – with a spirit of excellence."



Importantly, she added, "Integrity is paramount and I have to live by my values."

Amanda said, "My favourite scripture is Ecclesiastes 9:10 – Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. Everything you do, do it with your whole self – with a spirit of excellence – that Bible verse epitomises every part of me."

Since the launch of her book, Amanda has been featured in The Guardian Newspaper.

She said, "It's had such a good response from different avenues. Book sales have been good and those that have bought it and read it have felt an impact. The book provides people with a better understanding of the experience of black leaders."

So, what is next for Amanda? She'll be part of more panel discussions, has been invited to attend equality, diversity and inclusion events and speak on podcasts as she continues to champion black leadership in education.

You can read more information about Letters to a Young Generation at: bit.ly/3R683fl

### Bubble Church goes national

In the July/August edition of *The Bridge*, Keli Bolton, Bubble Church Mission Enabler at the Ascension Balham, introduced us to Bubble Church – a Sunday church service especially for little ones and their families to worship together.

Since then and following on from the latest Bubble Church video, 30 churches from around the country have been inspired by Bubble Church and are taking the next steps for children in their church communities.

Teams from these 30 churches came together for regional training days to learn how to launch Bubble Church and have now formed into learning communities. All of them will launch Bubble Church by early 2024 – ahead of another cohort of churches preparing for training.

Keli said, "it's been brilliant seeing churches from different traditions engage with Bubble Church. One in particular, in Southwark, started totally from scratch and they are loving building their church community."

Here's what some of the recently trained churches had to say about launching their own Bubble Churches:

#### Gemma, St Mary, Templecombe

"I love the way that Bubble Church is specifically tailored to the youngest children. It's an authentic church service and it contains everything that excited me when I was that age. Everything is carefully thought through so that although it's short and simple, it packs a proper punch. It was so encouraging to spend time with people from other churches in our area with a heart for ministry for children and young families and that there will be other people in other places stepping out in faith too."

Sharon, All Saints, South Cave "We just love how everything about

Bubble Church is so accessible and well thought through. The support we have been given by the team has been outstanding, taking all of the stress out of our preparations to launch the service. The training day was a mixture of fun, fellowship and support. We came away feeling equipped, enthused, supported and confident and we just can't wait to get started!"

#### Dan, St Oudoceus, Llandogo

"There are lots of toddlers in our villages but we don't see them in church. 'Bubble Church is coming!' has already started a buzz around young families. And the training day was the best fun I've had in ages."

#### Helena, St Mary, Beverley

"I'm looking forward to meeting more young families and helping to bring them into our church family and I think that Bubble Church will be the perfect tool for that!"



#### In addition, churches

in Southwark and London Dioceses continue to add to the numbers of launching Bubble Churches with bespoke training by the Bubble Church team.

Revd Marcus Gibbs, Vicar of Ascension, Balham was there at the very beginning for the creation of Bubble Church. He said, "We've seen incredible growth and discipleship at Ascension; what a privilege to be part of effectively planting 30 new churches. We have been so blown away by what God is doing across the nation and look forward with excitement to the impact on local communities and building God's kingdom together."

Bubble Church is a puppet-packed, Jesus-centred, coffee-and-food-fuelled, 30 minute kids and families adventure.

Read our July/August Bridge article at: bit.ly/40EsJye Watch Bubble Church – Growing Church with Families video at: bit.ly/3R0XHxB

If your church is interested in joining the pilot to start a Bubble Church, contact Keli Bolton, Bubble Church Mission Enabler: bubblechurch.org





### Helping people join in a community of faith through Fresh Expressions and Pioneering

On Saturday 25 November the Mission and Evangelism team held a conference: *Towards a Mixed Ecology of Church* in partnership with the Diocese of Chichester. The conference was an opportunity for parishes to hear from others, learn, ask questions and share ideas.

In welcoming delegates to the conference Bishop Christopher said, "When we talk about a mixed ecology, then, we are talking about proclaiming the Gospel afresh in this generation. We have an obligation; we are called upon – the phrase is deliberately active rather than passive – to respond to God's love by making the Gospel comprehensible to those who need to hear it. Which is to say, to make it comprehensible to everyone because there is not one person who does not need a healing encounter with Christ."

Revd Dr Sharon Moughtin, theologian and Pioneer Vicar of St Mary's Eco Church, spoke about the need to pay attention to diversity, rootedness and creativity and to notice how these can help to pollinate churches so that they bear fruit. Revd Martin Poole of Beyond – a Fresh Expressions of Church, Chichester Diocese spoke in the afternoon about engaging with creativity and the arts to reach people outside of the church. There was a wide selection of thought provoking seminars throughout the day which included experiences of mission on our estates; reaching children and young people through the use of choirs; getting started with pioneering and fresh expressions; forest and eco church; young families; reaching those from different ethno-linguistic groups; and church grafts.

The day concluded with gospel singers from Christ Church, East Greenwich.

One attendee said, "It was a wonderfully diverse group of speakers and inspiring to see a room so full of people keen to learn more about how they can communicate the gospel to a fast changing world. I "Mixed ecology is not a call to de-prioritise the traditional norms of a parish but instead to help our parishes to further thrive..."

went away encouraged and hopeful.... Heartfelt thanks"

Revd Canon Will Cookson, Director of Pioneering Ministry and Dean of Fresh Expressions said, "Mixed ecology is a call to help our parishes to further thrive and embrace ideas of pioneering, Fresh Expressions or church planting to reach those in their communities who would otherwise not come to church."







L-R: Revd Canon Will Cookson led a conversation 'where we go from here in a post-pandemic world'; Revd Dr Sharon Moughtin spoke about growing a healthy mixed ecology community; and delegates take part in a breakout session.

### Your invitation to a journey through Lent for climate, ecology and justice

Vanessa Elston, Pioneer for climate spirituality and action, Battersea Deanery writes:

Pilgrimage with others feels a particularly apt spiritual practice for those of us who feel overwhelmed when we consider the enormity of climate and ecological breakdown and the injustice to those suffering its worst effects. With this in mind, a small team have been planning a pilgrimage for six separate days in Lent 2024 with the Bishop of Kingston who is our lead bishop on the environment.

Each walk is an invitation to take time out of the everyday routine and slow down to a walking pace. Walking with a prayerful intent allows us to connect differently to the places we are walking through, and with companions alongside us on the road. As a pilgrim, I become more open to encounters and observations that speak to the inner change I am seeking. Pope Francis recently wrote of the need for humanity to think of ourselves differently in response to the climate crisis, not as 'autonomous, omnipotent and limitless' but in 'a humbler but more fruitful way'. Walking, praying and listening to each other on pilgrimage offers the possibility of opening our



Pilgrims from Battersea churches at a walk earlier this year.

hearts and minds to what 'this way' might look like for us in our personal lives and communities, as well as in other parts of the globe.

Everyone of all ages is welcome to join in with one or more of the days outlined below, with more information to follow in the coming months.

### Deaneries and dates for walks in 2024

Reigate and Tandridge: 17 February Kingston and Merton: 24 February Charlton and Deptford: 1 March Tooting and North Lambeth: 8 March Schools and Young People: 20 March Battersea walk to Southwark Cathedral: 28 March

For more information and to register your interest or to sign up for future walks email: vanessaelstonpioneerpriest@ gmail.com



DISCIPLESHIP & MINISTRY Arts in the community

### Showcasing creativity and celebrating arts in the community

Nine Elms Arts Ministry, a Fresh Expression ministering in Nine Elms, Battersea was invited by Porsche, a luxury car brand to be their community partner for their PORSCHE NOW Pop-Up Space at Battersea Power Station.

From 17 October to 1 December 2023, the arts ministry presented *Creative Soul NOW* – a collection of contemporary art and fashion by female artists working locally or based in Battersea. The collection was a celebration of the creativity, vibrancy and fun of Battersea and Nine Elms – its iconic landscape, and the diversity of its creative community.



The collection also showcased artists who work with the ministry – a number of whom are part of a missional prayer community. Arts well-being workshops were also held in the space.

Much of the ministry's work focuses on nurturing well-being through creativity – allowing us to pause and let our creative souls blossom.

Revd Betsy Blatchley (pictured), who leads Nine Elms Arts Ministry and was recently awarded the Faith Leader's Community Champion Award by Battersea MP Marsha de Cordova, said, "Much of the ministry's work focuses on nurturing well-being through creativity – allowing us to pause and let our creative souls blossom. We hope that this collection will inspire visitors to the pop-up to take a moment, in the midst of their busyness, to pause, enjoy the art, and consider their place in creation and how they might nurture their own creative souls."

Following their community partnership, the arts ministry has a new collaboration, having curated 'Follow the Star' – a Christmas Community Art studio at the internationally acclaimed Art'otel, next door to the power station. A 7m  $\times$  3m mural of a 'Battersea Nativity' is the centrepiece with a range of community and creative events and activities taking place around the theme throughout the month of December.

#### More information

nineelmsartsministry.org 'X' @nineelmsartsministry

LET US PRAY...

DECEMBER

The Venerable John Kiddle Archdeacon of Wandsworth

#### Advent

Advent is one of the shorter seasons in our Church year. The sad thing is that the wonderful richness of Advent can easily get lost in the busyness of Christmas preparation – whether at home or at church.

I love Advent calendars. It's good to build expectation and excitement as we anticipate the celebration of the birth of Jesus, but Advent is so much more than a countdown to Christmas.

There is much in the world at the moment which, understandably, causes us

despair and distress; much that feels dark and hopeless. Advent is an opportunity to open our eyes and our ears and see and hear something different. It's not an invitation to ignore the pain and the darkness, but within the despair and the grief, to begin to see signs of light and hear songs of hope.

During Advent we look forward to what will be, a future shaped in God's redeeming love and justice, a future of peace and restoration. Advent readings from the prophets, and Advent prayers from our hearts open our eyes to that



future and we find hope stirring within us. Come Lord Jesus.

Moved by that hope we look around us and begin to see, here and now, signs of God's good future. Glimpses of glory. Hints of hope. They are there – very much there – and as we pray with eyes wide open, we see them. *Come Lord Jesus*.

Shaped by that hope we also see our own lives and hearts in a different way. We see

God's future of peace and restoration at work in us. We hear God's call to play our part in making that future a reality now. *Come Lord Jesus*.

Come Lord Jesus Bless us in this season of Advent May we see more truly And listen more deeply.

In the darkness may we see your light In the noise may we hear your song.

Come Lord Jesus Come to your world Come to our lives Come with hope and healing Come with peace and justice.

Amen.

# WHAT'S ON

Please send details of your next events for FEBRUARY ONWARDS to Trinity House **BY FRIDAY 12 JANUARY** 



### December

#### SATURDAY 9 DECEMBER

EAST DULWICH – 'Carols by The Green' – carols, mince pies, refreshments, home-made produce stall, brass group players and more. 11am–1pm St John the Evangelist, East Dulwich, SE22 9AT. All welcome. Free.

#### 9–16 DECEMBER

WEST WICKHAM – Community Christmas Tree Festival. Come and have some refreshments, listen to some music and get ready for Christmas. Raising money for Welcare in Bromley, a charity that provides support and advice to families in need. At St Francis of Assisi, Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham BR4 0PA. Free. Times: Sat 9 10am–1pm, Sun 10 12–3pm, Wed 13 10.30am–1pm, Fri 15 10am–1pm, Sat 16 10am–1pm. Details from: Kate Dyer katedyer41@ hotmail.com or Nicky Nightingale nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk

#### SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER

PETERSHAM – Concert in aid of St Peter's music and The Vineyard Community Centre, Richmond. Handel's Messiah, selected highlights. The Elysian Singers and Players of London – conductor, Sam Laughton. 6pm at St Peter's Church, Church Lane, Petersham, Surrey TVV10 7AB. Tickets £15 from: tinyurl. com/PetershamMessiah. Enquiries: avantectnatarenatarsham@gmail.com

#### **THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER**

KENSINGTON – Friends of the Holy Land Christmas concert. London Welsh Male Voice Choir with soloists Margaret Keys and Anthony Stuart Lloyd, compere Mal Pope. 7.30pm at Our Lady of Victories Church, Kensington. Tickets £30, 6pm buffet £50, at: tinyurl.com/mry2k5w8

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

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

#### 🎜 St Matthew, Redhill

- Lunchtime concerts: 1.10–2pm.
- 14 Dec Yoko Ono, piano recital
- 21 Dec 'Faronel', early music recital
- 4 Jan The Elegia Consort, soprano, clarinet & piano
- 11 Jan Ella Rundle cello
- 18 Jan Emilia De Geer, piano
- 25 Jan Matthew Wilsher, clarinet

Free but a minimum donation of £5 each is suggested to cover expenses. St Matthew's Church, Station Road, Redhill RH1 1DL.

#### **SATURDAY 16 DECEMBER**

WIMBLEDON – Wimbledon Chamber Choir concert – 'Christmas in Venice' music by Monteverdi and the Gabrielis, with period instruments. 7.30pm at St Matthew's Church, Durham Road, Wimbledon SW20 0DE. Tickets £16 (under 16s free) at the door or from: bit.ly/3tlXQIA

#### SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER

 STREATHAM – Christmas carol service sung by the church choir.
6.30pm–7.30pm at St Peter's Church, Leigham Court Road, Streatham SW16 2SD. Free.

### January 2024

#### SATURDAY 27 JANUARY

SOUTHWARK – Lay Ministry taster day. Find out about different types of ministries such as Pastoral, Pioneer, Reader and Children & Young people (CYP). Explore training opportunities and courses. Join in some fun CYP activities. For all ages (families welcome). 10am–2pm at Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, London SE1 1HW. Register at: learning@southwark.anglican.org. Sign up for CYP events at: bit.ly/3ZLEkLo

# Communion for the sick and housebound in Sanderstead

At All Saints and St Antony, Sanderstead: Sylvia Smith, Lyn Davison, Kevin Wright, Ann Turner, Tom Griffiths, Rosemary Kempsell, Sue Wragg, Richard Wragg and Libby Eldridge have made their commitment to serving God in home communion during a service affirming their Pastoral Ministry.

The service which took place on 17 September, was an opportunity to bless new ministers who can now visit the sick and housebound to offer a service of holy communion with reading and prayers. They administer the already consecrated sacrament on behalf of All Saints and St Antony's churches in the Parish of Sanderstead.

The new administrants have either received hands-on training or will receive training by accompanying Revd Carol Bates, Priest-in-Charge, to carry out supervised home communion visits.

Revd Carol said, "There are an increasing number of faithful parishioners who have attended All Saints, St Antony and St Edmund. However, over the years, due to sickness, old age and other infirmities, they are now unable to travel into a church building for a Sunday morning



Carol Bates (far left) with the new administrants who affirmed their commitment to pastoral Ministry.

service. The Canons of the Church of England allow for the distribution of already consecrated bread and wine to people in this situation."

The task of home communion may be performed by any Priest, Deacon or Reader licensed to the parish. It may also be performed by laity who have been given permission by the Bishop to distribute the sacrament in their parish.

One of the nine administrants who made their commitment during the service and was approved by Bishop Rosemarie is Kevin Wright. He said, "It is a real privilege to extend my eucharistic minister duties to the sick and housebound in the Parish of Sanderstead."



Anglican and Eastern Churches Association

Pilgrimage to Kerala and South India

#### 22 April – 4 May 2024

In the Footsteps of St Thomas, from Chenai (Madras), to Kerala: The Syriac Churches of Southern India.

Led by their Graces, Abraham Mor Stephanos Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church In the UK, and Bishop Christopher Chessun, Anglican Bishop of Southwark.

To express interest contact Fr Ben Drury, Pilgrim Secretary, Tel: 01702 466617 email benjamin.drury@gmail.com



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



FAST & EFFECTIVE PEST CONTROL Let your pest be our problem 0800 056 5477 IN FOCUS... Robes Project SleepOut

# steep robes

### **Robes SleepOut returns** to Southwark Cathedral

On Friday 24 November, Southwark Cathedral hosted the annual Robes SleepOut. So far, over £40,000 has been raised for the Robes Project, with donations still coming in.

The Robes Project has been serving people experiencing homelessness in Southwark and Lambeth since 2007. The charity aims to relieve poverty among people who are experiencing homelessness by the provision of winter night shelters, food, advice, support, and re-settlement services to help them rebuild their lives.

The annual Southwark Cathedral SleepOut – which started 13 years ago – is the homeless charity's main fundraising event. Each year, groups from across Diocese give up the comfort of their homes to sleep out in the churchyard to raise awareness of homelessness. This year's Cathedral team included the Revd Canon Michael Rawson, Interim Dean of Southwark, and a group of young people from Junior Xpress and Youth Xpress (Sunday School) who raised over £2,500. Hodge, the Cathedral cat also had a fundraising page – though spent his evening tucked up in the Cathedral.

Those sleeping out and their supporters were treated to an evening of entertainment including performances from the South London Jazz Orchestra (pictured) and a very special take of TV favourite Would I Lie to You. On the night, Gavin and Stacey and Eastenders star Larry Lamb took part in a game of 'Would I lie to thee', alongside Tomi Ogunjobi, Revd Canon Kathryn Fleming, Southwark Cathedral Precentor, Dr Paula Gooder, Canon Chancellor, St Paul's Cathedral and Revd Grant Bolton-Debbage, Priest-in-Charge, All Saints, Hatcham Park. The event concluded





Above: all those who took part in the SleepOut together with supporters.

with a short act of worship and a cooked breakfast the following morning.

Last winter, Robes were able to support 30 guests, of whom 24 are either in, or awaiting, long-term accommodation.

During the winter of 2023/24, the Robes Project will once more be running its Winter Night Shelters and weekday dropin centres which provide vital support, advice, and shelter to those most in need.

### Southwark schools raise £7.2K

Each year, The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education Multi-Academy Trust (SDBE MAT) rally a group of staff together from across their schools to take part in the Robes Sleepout. The team were keen to raise more money than in previous years and get more schools involved and this year, they managed to do both.

A team of 11 people, including staff from across SDBE and MAT, and even a family member took part to raise funds for the charity. Together, they raised over £7,200. Mark Burnett, Team Leader and Chief Operating Officer for SDBE MAT said, "The Robes Project is a fantastic charity seeking to provide shelter to those most in need. Homelessness is something we see on our doorsteps every day, as do many of our children when they are going to school. Raising awareness and money for such a cause helps ensure we continue to play our part in helping those most in need. We hope we can encourage more schools and more staff to take part next year."

### Help to see our buildings as blessings

As part of a national Church of England initiative, The Diocese of Southwark will receive a grant of £217,000 for its work to improve church buildings for mission and ministry across South London and East Surrey. The grant will be awarded over two years as part of the initiative which will see £9 million shared with dioceses for repairs and specialist advice to parishes.

The Diocese will use this funding for two key areas of work. Firstly, £73,000 will be put towards creating a new full time role that will offer parishes advice on making repairs and improvements to church buildings – including fundraising support. This Church Buildings Fundraising Support Officer (a role that will be funded until 2025, with 40% of the costs covered by Diocesan funding) will also offer guidance on the sustainability of church buildings.

Secondly, throughout 2024 and 2025, parishes will be able to apply to the Diocese for grants towards the costs of minor repairs and improvements for church buildings. Funds awarded will typically be between £5,000 and £10,000 per parish and will be drawn from a total of  $\pounds$ 144,000.

Bishop Christopher said, "Parish churches can be places of great blessing and joy and opportunity... We're delighted at this opportunity to offer a greater level of support to our parishes as they seek to serve their communities."



"Parish churches can be places of great blessing and joy and opportunity... We're delighted at this opportunity to offer a greater level of support to our parishes as they seek to serve their communities"

Nicola Thomas, Diocesan Secretary added, "This is fantastic news for our parishes... We know that our church buildings are crucial for our mission and ministry – but the challenge of keeping and maintaining them can be enormous. This funding will go some way towards helping parishes experience our buildings more like the blessings they are."

The grants for this work come from the £11 million *Buildings for Mission* scheme, funded by the Church Commissioners and administered by the Archbishops' Council over the period 2023 to 2025.

Emily Gee, Director for Cathedrals and Church Buildings for the Church of England, said, "Buildings for Mission will help to fund the repair the improvement of church buildings through the dioceses, as well as to boost professional advice and grant money for rural and urban church buildings most in need.

"Churches are wonderfully supported, year in year out, by volunteers who give their time and financial support so generously. This funding will help foster robust and flourishing congregations and release resources, energy and potential for mission and outreach."

Details of how to apply will be made available in 2024. Contact details at: tinyurl.com/5aw6ukrd

#### New plants, LED lights and solar panels for St Stephen

The congregation at St Stephen, South Godstone braved the autumn chill to watch Revd Peter O'Connell plant a commemorative Acer tree. The Acer, purchased in celebration of the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, was instead planted in memory following her death. The tree was blessed and those gathered prayed together in remembrance. The Acer is planted in a small green space by the car park on the church grounds.

As part of a wider green initiative, LED lights have now replaced 14 fluorescent ceiling lights in the Church Hall. Having reviewed their electricity bill, large amounts were being spent on hall lighting. The new brighter LED tiles, fitted by a local supplier, will now provide a substantial saving – resulting in the reduced cost of just over 16p when the hall lights have been switched on for one hour. The congregation have also installed a smart meter to monitor electricity usage and costs, and they look forward to their next project to install solar panels.