



The BRIDGE

Newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark



Christ
Centred
Outward
Focused

Vol.30 No.1
February 2025

Racial justice

Meet our diocesan racial justice colleagues
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Lent Call

Read a reflection on the Lenten season
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Advent across Southwark

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Gathered at Southwark Cathedral to unveil the new stained glass artwork.

‘Seeing through our eyes’

In the past four months 25 Year 9 students from Christ’s School, Richmond and St Bede’s, Redhill have been taking part in the Glaziers Education Project. This is a collaboration between the Worshipful Company of Glaziers, Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Southwark.

Natalie Walters, Head of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation writes:

The project, ‘Seeing through our eyes’, allows students to use the medium of stained glass to raise awareness of a social

justice issue. In the previous two years, students grappled with the themes of Modern Slavery and young people affected by violence. This year, the theme was homelessness and rough sleeping.

Art has long been a powerful form of advocacy and expression. Therefore, using art via the medium of stained glass as a way to highlight the challenges through both the students eyes and the eyes of those experiencing homelessness is extremely compelling.

The students were first introduced to the theme through workshops led by Lisa Moodie, CEO of Robes. Robes is a charity supporting the homeless and – in this winter season – they have been working tirelessly with churches and wider networks to support those rough sleeping through winter night shelters, advice and support year round. They recently held a

sleep out in Southwark Cathedral to raise funds for the charity.

During the project, students shared that they were unaware of how poorly those facing homelessness are treated, the challenges that they face and that there were many young people who found themselves homeless.

Following this, students learnt about the history of stained glass during a visit to the V&A Museum. It is wonderful to see students of this generation learn the historical roots of stained glass making. At the John Reyntien’s Glass studio, students were able to learn how to cut the glass.

These experiences then formed the foundation of the thought provoking designs each student created. From powerful images to phrases such as ‘treat people with care’ – a piece from every

student’s design was curated into the final stained glass panel.

On Friday 24 January a reception was held to reveal the glass panel, this will sit with those of the previous years in the Chapel of Reconciliation in Southwark Cathedral. An impactful location to stand, pray and reflect as we consider those affected by homelessness. May we intercede for those facing homelessness, seeing them through the eyes and care of God. In doing so, may we be inspired and urged to speak up, to act and to use our gifts to see positive transformation in our communities.

Read more about this year’s sleepout here: robes.org.uk/sleepout-robes



A view from The BRIDGE



As a big fan of the ‘new year, new me’ ideology, I’m an absolute sucker for a New Year’s resolution. Late December every year, I make my list of things to achieve, do and be as the calendar ticks over into January. I love the optimism of a fresh start, the chance to hit the reset button and DO THINGS BETTER. Each time, I promise myself faithfully that this will be the year it all sticks. 2025, you beauty!

Of course – as the saying goes – one way to make God laugh is to tell him your plans. My fit, energised, optimistic 2025 came to a crashing halt after about five days when I succumbed to illness, tested positive for Covid-19 and took to my bed. This was emphatically not what I hoped for – I was furious and disappointed.

But, as it turns out, this was also the wake-up call I needed. As a person in ministry, Christmas in our parish had been joyful but exhausting, and I was going into the New Year already shattered and depleted. Illness is very rarely a blessing, but in this case it forced me to listen to my body, to reset my expectations and to rest in the knowledge of God’s unconditional love.

In this first edition of 2025, we see much great activity and missional energy. Over the coming

pages you will read about great Christmas celebrations, (look out for the “camels and carols”), about education projects, work towards racial justice and ground-breaking hope for schools in Zimbabwe. In big and small ways, these actions of God’s faithful people offer far greater cause for hope than any shallow New Year self-improvement plans. And if – like me – you need a slower, gentler start to 2025, why not curl up with a good book from our recommendations (see page 8) or spend some time in gentle reflection on the meaning of Candlemas with John Kiddle (see page 10)?

Whatever the coming months may bring, God asks us to start from where we are – not where we wish we were – and my prayer is that we step into this year gently, embracing rest and refreshment where we find it and seeking joy in the moments God gives us.

Anna Drew



NEWS IN BRIEF

An evening with Bishop Phoebe Roaf



On Wednesday 15 January, The Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon, hosted an evening for clergy and lay ministers of Global Majority Heritage at Southwark Cathedral. During an evening of prayerful reflection, discussion and networking, attendees heard from guest speaker Bishop Phoebe Roaf (pictured), the current Bishop of West Tennessee. Bishop Phoebe is the first woman and the first African American to serve as Bishop in West Tennessee and is the fifth woman bishop in the history of the Episcopal Church in America. Bishop Phoebe led reflections on the topic of ‘How are we positioning ourselves to speak to the needs of today’s society?’. She also shared her reflections and learnings from ministry experiences both here in the UK and the US. This was followed by a Q&A and lively discussion. Look out for more on the event in the March issue of the Bridge.

Farsi Ministry resources

If you are welcoming Farsi speakers at your church, there is a new page on the diocesan website where you can download resources for discipleship, worship, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.



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Farsi, also known as Persian, is spoken primarily in Iran, where it is the official language. Variants are also spoken in Afghanistan (Dari) and in Tajikistan (Tajik). Significant Farsi-speaking communities can also be found in other Persian Gulf countries. In recent years many UK churches have welcomed significant numbers of Farsi speakers who wish to explore the Christian faith. In Southwark Diocese, Christ Church, Gipsy Hill is working as a hub church for Farsi Ministry, developing bilingual resources for the wider community and offering a monthly Farsi Fellowship.

If you are welcoming Farsi speakers at your church, you may find these resources helpful: bit.ly/4fTRxlx. If you would like to talk to someone, contact farsi@gipsyhill.org.uk

Blessing of the River Thames

The Very Revd Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark, and clergy at Southwark Cathedral joined friends from St Magnus the Martyr in the City of London to lead the annual Blessing of the River service on Sunday 12 January. All were welcomed and gathered on London Bridge as prayers were offered for all those who use or work on the river.

Hispanic congregation pilgrimage to Canterbury



At the end of last year, Hispanic congregations from St Matthew’s Church and Christ Church, Brixton Road went on a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. More than 80 people attended and joined mass in Spanish lead by The Revd Dr Hugo Adán Fernández and The Revd Miguel Angel. Carolina Giraldo, Parish

Administrator said, “It was a true blessing for both congregations to be there and share the Gospel in their mother tongue.”

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Next Issue: Submission deadline and guidance

The MARCH edition is due to be published online and in print on 1 March 2024. Material for that edition must be with Vernia Mengot by email by **FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY**.

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



IN FOCUS...
Racial justice

Intentional action and commitment to diversity and inclusion

In this edition of *The Bridge*, we hear from **Weisi Dennis, Racial Justice Development Officer** and **Reg Amoah, Racial Justice Training Officer** who recently joined the diocesan team.

Based at Trinity House, Weisi's role focuses on engagement with and promotion of the Anti-Racism Charter (ARC) as well as research and data monitoring. Reg's role is to develop new training resource materials pertaining to racial justice and deliver training to parishes and deaneries. Together, they aim to support all parishes on their racial justice journeys and address the needs of our wider diocese, working through existing structures to embed the ARC at every level. Both roles are funded by the Racial Justice Unit of the National Church.

Meet Weisi



Hi, I'm Weisi, the new Racial Justice Development Officer. At my previous organisation, I was responsible for embedding our equity and diversity

work within the context of an increasingly diverse, international group of staff working primarily as support workers in a residential or educational setting. Having initially started out as a support worker providing physical care, I know

first-hand how race, class, economic status, privilege, education play out in a very undervalued (not just in terms of salary) area of industry. Therefore I am very keen to use my privilege and all else that God has given me, to be an advocate and ally. Within the Church where the theological underpinnings behind anti-racism put the onus on all of us to make sure Christianity (and the wealth of resources at our disposal as a church) is as accessible and equitable as possible, I believe we can realise God's kingdom as a multi-ethnic one! I now have an amazing opportunity to combine my professional experience with a faith and theology-driven focus on racial justice, and I am very excited to be tasked with monitoring and achieving the implementation of the ARC, along with Reg who will support this effort with his expertise in training and resources. By taking a Christ-centred approach towards anti-racism, along with an outward focus on how the ARC applies in the context of our parishes, schools, food pantries, prisons and hospitals. I hope to put forward anti-racism as the core lens through which to see our entire diocesan vision and strategy, as it impacts wider society.

Personally, my impetus is quite simply the future I wish for my boys. I have three sons aged 8, 10 and 12, who are being raised in a mixed-race context – my husband is English whilst I am from Singapore (and ethnically Chinese). We met at university here in the UK. I just want my boys to live and a grow up in a world where as few human barriers to their progress, careers, relationships, and ultimately discovery of faith – God-willing – exist.

Racial Justice Sunday – 9 February

This year, *Churches Together* have released a suite of resources for **Racial Justice Sunday 2025** titled **'Coat of Many Colours'** which reflects on the increasing diversity that exists in the churches in Britain and Ireland.

The Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament are replete with references to diversity, in this world and the Kingdom to come. Resources have been compiled by the Racial Justice Sunday Writers' Group (RJSWG) and includes reflections and sermons, by members of the RJSWG and others, who hail from many parts of the globe, and describe their experiences of being part of the *Coat of Many Colours*.

You can download resources here: bit.ly/3VTI1gi

Share your stories

Across the diocese, we actively counter, disrupt and oppose racial injustice and celebrate the rich ethnic diversity and inclusion of all people across Southwark.



Tell us how you'll be celebrating this national day across your church communities and email us your photos:
bridge@southwark.anglican.org

Meet Reg



I'm Reg Amoah, recently appointed as Racial Justice Training & Resources Officer in the Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Ministerial Education

Team. My role is to develop and enable training concerning issues of unconscious bias and racial justice in our diocese and to develop resources for use in parishes. In this role I liaise with Weisi (pictured left), helping her with the implementation of the diocesan ARC.

Much of my lived and professional experience has been focused on better understanding how our differences can lead to exclusion, so I help to create cultures where differences are valued. I previously worked in equality, diversity and inclusion. The riots last summer reminded me that racism needs to be consistently challenged, and we all have a part to play. So this role is a wonderful opportunity for me to be of service in sharing my knowledge and skills working with those

of faith. I have sought to reflect this within the training and resources I have been developing to support vocations and church communities.

I am currently collaborating with colleagues to deliver our unconscious bias training, which is now available across our diocese. These sessions provide useful insights and practical support in maintaining an inclusive and cohesive team or community that is both **Christ Centred | Outward Focused**. Additional resources are also being developed to provide ongoing support in understanding how we can be more aligned with Christian principles on reaching out to, and welcoming, people of different heritages.

I am available to attend meetings and visit parishes across our diocese. Please feel free to get in touch to find out more about racial justice training.

You can contact our new colleagues via email:
Weisi.Dennis@southwark.anglican.org
Reginald.Amoah@southwark.anglican.org

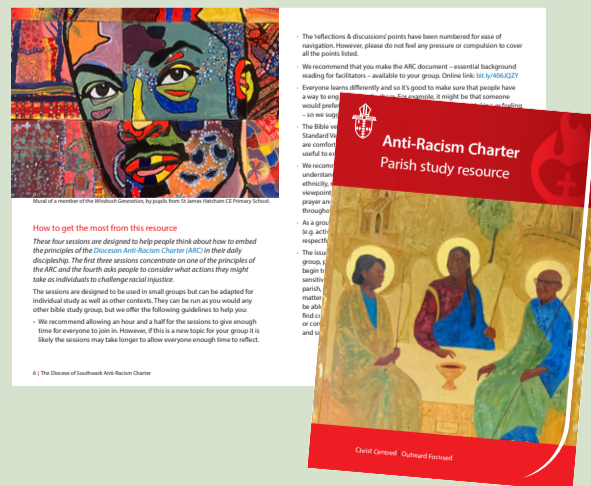
Anti-Racism Charter study resource

We are very excited to be able to share our ARC study resource for use within our parishes, to further support you in exploring and implementing the key principles of the ARC.

This Bible study programme consists of four parts, each of which has been contributed by a different person from our diocese, reflecting a diversity of experiences and perspectives.

We thank all our contributors as well as those parishes who were involved in the pilot study – your valuable input and feedback has gone a long way to help us improve and contextualise the resource. In Bishop Rosemarie's (Lead Bishop for Social and Racial Justice) words:

"May it make you hungry to learn and grow more!"



Copies of the ARC study resource are being sent to every parish. Please email Racial.Justice@southwark.anglican.org to request further copies for your parish. If you would like more information on the ARC study resource visit: bit.ly/3VKHQgf

NEWS FROM OUR PARISHES



A Church of Sanctuary

Last year, All Saints Church, Tooting signed a pledge to join the growing City of Sanctuary movement – a nationwide effort to welcome and stand in solidarity with refugees and migrants.

By signing the pledge, All Saints has started its journey to become an accredited 'Church of Sanctuary' within the movement, which includes increasing numbers of places of sanctuary, such as shops, schools, cafés, libraries, and theatres. In order to become accredited, the church will need to demonstrate that it is learning about what sanctuary – seekers experience and embed this learning in positive action to welcome and support them, sharing knowledge with their wider community.

Led by The Revd Mae Christie, All Saints Tooting aims to be inclusive and welcoming as part of its mission and is known for hosting arts events for the whole community alongside a programme

of worship services. It also has a monthly Lunch Club that is open to all.

The motivation to start on the Church of Sanctuary journey came from The Revd Professor June Boyce Tillman MBE – a member of the All Saints clergy team. June envisioned an Arts for Sanctuary exhibition as part of the annual Wandsworth Arts Fringe.

June said, "The exhibition installation included music, storytelling, film, visual artwork. Local asylum-seeking and international artists displayed their work in the church, and a range of practitioners reflected on the themes of othering and sanctuary. The exhibition is set to run again this year."

The clergy and guest preachers at All Saints frequently speak on the subjects of migrant justice and anti-racism. A peace candle sitting on a map of the world is a permanent installation in the Church surrounded by prayers and drawings by the children of the congregation. Visitors to

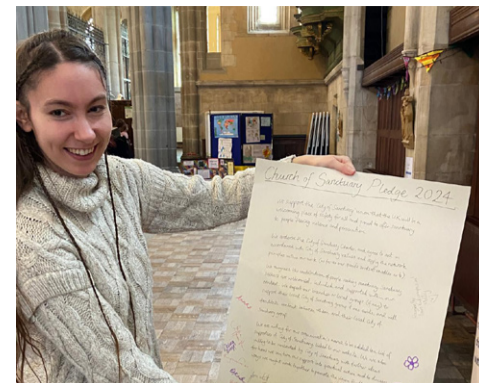
the Church can pray about the situations that force people to flee their homes.

The Church's commitment to the pledge comes as part of a growing City of Sanctuary movement within Wandsworth, which recently became an accredited Borough of Sanctuary. On 31 October MP Fleur Anderson held a celebration event in the Houses of Parliament, at which All Saints representatives were also present. Wandsworth Welcomes Refugees (WWR), is a volunteer-run organisation established in 2016. It offers support to all institutions who would like to gain sanctuary status; Mary Hargreaves of WWR has helped and guided All Saints on their sanctuary journey so far.

All Saints congregant Molly Clark, who is a caseworker in the charity sector and a member of the team leading the Church of Sanctuary project, said,

"I am excited that All Saints is on this journey to learn more about how we can support and empower the sanctuary – seekers in our community."

"The legacy of the UK Government's *Hostile Environment* policy is still causing life-threatening suffering to migrants in the UK, many of whom have already experienced terrifying adversity on their way here, and there is a risk that the voices of hatred will drown out the many voices of welcome. We still have a lot to do as a church to sit down with expert



Members of the congregation signed their names and wrote messages on a scroll as a sign of committing to the pledge.

organisations and with local sanctuary – seekers in order to figure out how best we can serve. But by signing this pledge, our congregation has shown its passion and commitment to love and hospitality. If a church is not a place of sanctuary, then what is it?"

An enchanting immersive light experience

The HeART of Christmas – a multi-sensory, interactive immersive light experience exploring 'What is the Heart of Christmas?' took place at the art'beat studio, art'otel London at Battersea Power Station.

The exhibition was commissioned by Nine Elms Arts Ministry and created by artist Alexa Muen and ran daily from 30 November 2024 – 4 January 2025. It featured three light artworks that move and change colour constantly. These were

a soundscape, a specially designed scent, and an interactive mirror installation incorporating hundreds of messages from visitors, written on tiny scrolls and held in transparent baubles. The exhibition invited people to step into the space to pause and reset from the busyness of the shops just outside and consider what the season is about for them.

Since 2018, Nine Elms Arts Ministry, a fresh expression of Church, has been offering a range of free events that celebrate creativity, build community and

nurture wellbeing and they have developed a partnership with art'otel.

The Revd Betsy Blatchley, Pioneer Minister in the Arts in Nine Elms said, "After the success of last year's residency, we were thrilled to return to art'otel, in the centre of the Battersea Power Station development, with Alexa's beautiful immersive exhibition and our programme of workshops and live events. We welcomed nearly 3,000 visitors, and it was enjoyed equally by art aficionados, local residents, visitors from across the world and children of all ages. The exhibition offered a moment of peace and joy to reflect on what matters most to them in the Christmas season and we had some fascinating conversations with visitors".

The artist, Alexa, trained in Florence, Italy, and Andalucia, Spain. She creates a unique fusion of traditional art and modern technology. Since 2018, she has used programmable LED lights, oils, encaustic wax and synesthetic-inspired projections to craft experiences that are both deeply personal and universally resonant. Each element in HeART of Christmas reflects her dedication to pushing boundaries and creating multi-sensory art that connects on an emotional level.

Having attended the closing event, The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston said:

"I was moved by the beauty of the installation and the creativity that lies behind it. It was a powerful reminder of how the creative arts can lead us in fresh directions in our journey of faith. As Christmas moved into Epiphany it was good to reflect with others on the gift of life that God gives us and our hopes as we enter a new year."

The exhibition was supported by sponsorship from Watkin Jones Group, Battersea Power Station, Polar Bear Live and a grant from the Kingston Area Fund.



Alexa Muen's enchanting artworks displayed at art'otel, Battersea Power Station.

Street art and graffiti at Holy Trinity, Sydenham and Forest Hill

Our Children and Young People (CYP) grants help to fund and support mission and ministry across our diocese.

To be eligible for funding, initiatives must be for growing or restarting mission and ministry with children, young people and families – or training that benefits the ministry of those working with these groups.

A maximum of £900 can be applied for over a calendar year.

Given a grant for just over £300 for a Street Art and Graffiti workshop, Holy Trinity, Sydenham and Forest Hill (pictured) is one example of a church who recently benefited from a grant.

Led by Tom King, Youth Pastor at Holy Trinity, the young people created art for their new youth space in the church – helping them to foster a sense of ownership.

Chloe, one of the young people who attended the workshop, said,

“We had an amazing time bonding with each other and getting to know how we can do art of our own”.

The Church is passionate about providing a place that feels like family for young people, a place of belonging and acceptance, where young people can encounter God, ask big questions and learn what it means to go on the adventure of following Jesus. Young people gather on Sunday mornings in the ‘Low Zone’ and at the Friday Youth Club.

Another attendee, Katie said, “We can use this experience to help decorate and design our Low Zone at church.”



Spirited Arts Award for Putney primary school

St Mary’s Church of England Primary School, Putney has won a Spirited Arts Awards 2024 for its sculpture ‘God the Creator’.

Spirited Arts Awards is an annual competition for students who explore spirituality and faith through creative expression. Organised by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) – and now in its twentieth year – the competition is an opportunity for schools to submit creative artwork around one of the six themes.

Pupils and staff at St Mary’s channelled their creativity around the theme ‘How we envisage God’. Sponsored by the

Church of England’s Racial Justice Unit, this theme encouraged children to explore the endless ways through which people from different faiths, world views and cultures perceive and connect with God.

They also explored their own unique values and how these guide them to question, wonder and marvel at the world, its creation and their own – through all subjects in the curriculum. Learning about American scientist Francis S Collins – who discovered the genes associated with a number of diseases and led the Human Genome Project – the children created a huge sculpture, a double helix DNA model (pictured). Collins advocated that belief in Christianity can be reconciled



with acceptance of evolution and science, especially through the idea that the Creator brought about his plan through the processes of evolution. Now the award winning sculpture hangs in the school hall as a focal point for worship.

To create the sculpture, each child in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 made a tissue paper circle disc to represent a personal response to God in whatever way they chose. Some of the pupils made crosses, some made patterns and some made images of natural forms. The circle can represent eternity, perfection and wholeness. Together, the children joined groups of three circular discs to form triangular prisms which, threaded together to create the two strands of a double helix. The scale, colours, shapes and process of the sculpture all contributed to the purpose and meaning of the piece ‘God the Creator’.

Thousands of schools worldwide participate in the Spirited Arts competition each year with over 450,000 having entered artwork since it started in 2004.

Schools can enter the Spirited Arts competition 2025 at: bit.ly/4j5BEGx

A day of joy at St George’s

On ‘Gaudete Sunday’ (the third Sunday of Advent) Bishop Christopher presented a Lancelot Andrewes medal to Doreen Evans of St George, Camberwell in recognition of her godly service and zeal for the gospel.

Doreen, who has loved and served the Lord at St George’s said, “All my life has been wrapped around, interwoven and shaped by St George’s Church.

“Over a long lifetime, I have done nearly all the possible Church jobs: Churchwarden, Diocesan Synod representative, the newsletter – many of them not very well. I burnt the altar linen and crashed the minibus. I have made a long list, and I think there are enough different roles for everybody in the congregation to try at least once.”

Look out for a new series of blogs on our diocesan website focused on Lancelot Andrewes recipients. Read Doreen’s story in her own words here: bit.ly/3L2aJH6



Doreen with family members, Bishop Christopher and The Revd Sarah Dawson.

Camels and carols

The Revd James Marston, Associate Priest at St Michael, Barnes writes:

Baxter the Bactrian camel attracted hundreds of onlookers as he trod the streets of Barnes as part of Epiphany celebrations at St Michael and All Angels on Sunday 12 January.

Baxter was led by servers, star and Magi bearing gifts, and followed by a brass band, choir, clergy, and local people who joined in to sing seasonal carols. Two-humped Baxter was calm and friendly, quite used to all the attention, and carefully attended to throughout by the wonderful team from *Joseph’s Amazing Camels*.

The Revd Stephen Stavrou (pictured), Vicar of St Michael’s, said, “The aim was to celebrate Epiphany in an exciting and joyful way as well as offering a public expression of faith in the community. Processions are part and parcel of the history of St Michael’s, and I think Baxter fits in well within the best tradition of creative Anglo-Catholic outreach. Like many churches, we get a lot of families at Christmas but getting



© Nico Willis

people to come back again afterwards can be a challenge. In this way, we have shown that Christmas isn’t a day but a season, and Christ isn’t only for Christmas.”

The procession led everyone to church where celebrations continued with an all-age Epiphany service attended by nearly 500 people. Refreshments followed and included coffee with camel milk, camel-shaped cookies, and an opportunity to take ‘camel selfies’.



IN FOCUS...
Lent Call 2025

The Bishop's Lent Call

'Jesus said; Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'

(Matthew 19:14)

This year's Lent Call focuses on children and young people who have suffered traumatic experiences and whose mental health and wellbeing has suffered as a result.

Each year, Bishop Christopher asks that parishes and schools in our diocese should pray for and consider prayerfully what financial support we can give to the projects which have been identified for the year's Lent Call. In 2025, in our own diocese we will be featuring Welcare's *Capability Schools Programme*. In Zimbabwe we are partnered with the Dioceses of Central Zimbabwe, Manicaland, Masvingo and Matabeleland (which are linked with the Croydon Episcopal Area, the Kingston Episcopal Area, Southwark Cathedral and the Woolwich Episcopal Area, respectively). During the Lent Call, we will be sharing news of the work of the Anglican Council of Churches in Zimbabwe. The Council has asked us to support the work it hopes to do with traumatised children and young people in orphanages and in local communities in Zimbabwe. Finally, in the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East we will be looking at the work of The Princess Basma Centre in Jerusalem, which focuses on supporting children and young people living with disabilities.

Welcare's CapeAbility Schools programme

The CapeAbility Schools programme aims to address the root causes of children's trauma and anxiety. It works with children aged between seven and ten years old – who are in years three to five at primary school. The programme began as a result of the distress which children and their families experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. It recognises the profound effect that the Covid lockdowns had on children's social skills, emotional health, wellbeing and resilience, and uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques, arts and crafts, group work and role play to help the children improve their emotional health and wellbeing.

The aim of the programme is to support children to gain or enhance their self awareness, self-expression, social awareness and empathy and to offer help with controlling their impulses. Each session lasts for an hour and has between eight and ten children involved with a facilitator. The programme has



ten sessions for each group. Children who have been part of the groups say that they have learned something about how to resolve conflict, that they have learned to walk away from disputes, that it helps them to talk with a trusted adult and to say sorry. They also say they have learned things about themselves, including how to share their feelings and how to let their feelings go, as well as coming to understand that they themselves are unique and valuable. In addition, they have been able to find out about others' experiences – which helps them to know that they can work with others to find solutions to conflict and understand the importance of accepting that we are all different.

The Princess Basma Centre in Jerusalem



The Princess Basma Centre helping children in Jerusalem.

The Centre has been working in Jerusalem and offering help to those in the surrounding areas since it first opened in 1964. Its origins lie in the realisation that there was a huge need for physiotherapy services for children in the 1960s as polio became widespread in the Palestinian community. The children often needed to travel from long distances to the Centre and so residential care was provided for them. They would often stay for two to three years and be provided with schooling as well as physical rehabilitation.

The services that the Centre offers have changed as the needs of the children it serves have changed and it has begun to work more in the community providing

outreach services and rehabilitation services for adults, too.

In recent times, since the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Centre has begun to offer rehabilitation and therapy for those affected by the violence. They have worked out of the therapeutic unit at the Al Ahli Arab Hospital (which we supported during the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call in 2024) and in areas where there are refugees. As a result of the violence in Gaza, they are now working not only with children and young people born with a disability or living with a disability as a result of illness, but also children who have been traumatised by the conflict and may be living with a disability as a result of it.

Work with orphaned children in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe there are many children who have been orphaned. In many cases, this is due to deaths caused by HIV and AIDS. Although the number of people living with HIV and AIDS has declined, it is still widespread in Zimbabwe and some children with perinatal HIV exposure face severe neglect. Some families are unable to afford or access medical care, which can sometimes lead to not being able to care for their own children. For many years, food insecurity has also been a serious challenge for people living in Zimbabwe. Sometimes there is simply not enough food available in communities – and if there is food in the shops or markets,



Top and above: The Welcare CapeAbility Schools programme.



Bishop Christopher addresses young pupils at the Bonda Mission in the Diocese of Manicaland.

THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK'S LENT CALL 2025



Jesus said; Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.

Matthew 19:14



The Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call for 2025 asks you to pray for and raise money to support projects that help children and young people recover from trauma and which encourage their mental wellbeing. We are supporting this type of work in the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, in our Link Dioceses in Zimbabwe and here in our own diocese. Visit our website to find out how you can become involved and help:

southwark.anglican.org/lentcall



HOW TO DONATE

it can be expensive or out of reach for many communities.

Some orphaned children are looked after by family members and others are cared for in orphanages at Mission Stations. Mission Stations provide medical care and offer education to people in local communities. However, while orphanages provide housing, there are often challenges meeting the running costs of providing professional care for the children. Relatives and caregivers, many of whom attend Anglican churches in the dioceses, do not have the knowledge and experience to enable them to support children affected by trauma and help provide them with the tools they need to heal. We hope that you will feel able to pray for these children and support the work of the Anglican Council of Churches in Zimbabwe through your financial gifts as they seek to bring hope to these children and their communities.

Look out for Lent Call materials which will be published online soon and which will include stories of some of the children whose lives have been transformed by the projects we are supporting this year.

Prayer and Reflection

Lent is a time for prayer and reflection, for looking at our priorities and confessing to God the ways in which we have struggled and failed. As we think and pray about these things, Bishop Christopher hopes

that you will pray for children throughout the world who have been traumatised by events in their lives. For some, it is caused by what is happening in their country – such as the conflict between Gaza and Israel, the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe or lasting impacts of a global pandemic. For others, it is related to traumatic events that have happened at home or at school. The Lent Call materials will provide prayer materials for you to use personally or in your church to help you to focus on the needs of children and young people throughout our troubled world – and especially in the projects featured. Please do try to include prayers for these groups in your services during Lent.

Please also print out the Lent Call project materials and display them in your church and school .

Details and resources



Resources for the Bishop's Lent Call are available on our website: southwark.anglican.org/lent-call



HOW TO DONATE

New Archdeacon of Wandsworth named



Bishop Christopher has appointed The Revd Bridget Shepherd (pictured above) as the next Archdeacon of Wandsworth. In this role, Bridget will succeed The Venerable John Kiddle, who is due to retire in June 2025.

Bridget is currently Vicar of The Good Shepherd with St Peter, Lee. She is expected to move into the new role in late Spring. Bridget trained for ministry at Trinity College, Bristol, before serving her curacy in Croydon. She took up her current role in 2016 and served as Acting Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich in 2024 prior to The Revd Dr Chigor Chike, who took up the role in September.

Bridget said, "Having lived in the Diocese of Southwark for 27 years, and having served in the Croydon and Woolwich areas over the past 16 years, it is a huge privilege to take on this new role."

"I am thrilled to be joining the team in the Kingston Episcopal Area, and to getting to know the churches and communities in the Wandsworth Archdeaconry. For all of my adult life I've been involved in full time mission and evangelism, and remain passionate about proclaiming the gospel, and finding contextually appropriate ways to do that in our different settings. I hope to bring that passion to this role."

Prior to ordination, Bridget worked in full-time youth ministry in a range of settings, including churches, schools and running an emergency accommodation project for young people. Following ordination training at Trinity College,

Bristol, she was ordained deacon in 2008 and served her curacy at Emmanuel Church in Croydon, before becoming Associate Vicar there.

Bridget became Assistant Area Dean of Lewisham in 2017 and was made Area Dean in 2023.

Once she takes up this new appointment, Bridget will have worked in all three episcopal areas of the Diocese of Southwark.

Bridget is married to Nick, who is a Reader in Southwark Diocese, and they have two adult children. She is very active, enjoying indoor climbing, running and yoga. She is a cold water swimmer and is currently completing her fourth winter swimming challenge. She expresses her creativity through dressmaking, DIY and decorating.

Bishop Christopher said, "Bridget is a person of wisdom, depth and enthusiasm – an outstanding parish priest, who is passionate about the difference that the Gospel of Christ makes in our communities. I have no doubt that Bridget will bring great insight and experience to all she undertakes, serving parishes in the Archdeaconry as we continue to focus on resourcing mission and ministry across the diocese."

Bishop Martin said, "I am thrilled that Bridget will be joining the Kingston Episcopal Area as Archdeacon of Wandsworth. It has been good to get to know Bridget as she worked in an acting Archdeacon capacity recently. Bridget will serve a vibrant and diverse part of the Episcopal Area where the local church continues to faithfully live out the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am looking forward to the fresh and practical perspective that Bridget will bring as together we share in ministry with the clergy and lay people of the Archdeaconry."



DISCIPLESHIP & MINISTRY

Sharing God's good news

Celebrating lay ministers

As Christians we are called to work together to carry out God's mission – sharing God's good news with those all around us. Each of us given have been gifts for ministry, whether lay or ordained.

This year we are holding our Celebration of Lay Ministries at Candlemas (Sunday 2 February) and in following weeks if that is more convenient. It is a time to celebrate all those who undertake different forms of ministry within their own parishes and

deaneries. It is also a time to encourage people to think about whether God might be calling them into new things.

On our website we have shared videos of people involved in Lay Ministry, where you can hear their stories of finding their vocations and how it feels to be involved in sharing God's love. Resources are also available to use in your services.

Find out more about our affirmed, commissioned and licensed ministries here: bit.ly/4eUR0pU



Lay ministry resources

The Discipleship and Ministry department can arrange for you to receive leaflets on Reader Ministry, Pastoral Ministry (licensed and commissioned), Children's, Youth and Family Ministry, Evangelistic Ministry, with the Church Army, Lay Pioneer Ministry and a general leaflet on Lay Ministry. The leaflets give all the information needed to explore the various lay ministries on offer in our diocese. You can also contact the team by email: helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org



New year, new books



Good God: Suffering, faith, reason and science by The Revd Dr Michael Brooks, St Augustine's, Honor Oak Park.

The Rt Revd David Atkinson, Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Southwark writes:

Before ordination Michael studied science and medicine, working for 10 years as a hospital surgeon, and then for 20 years as a GP. He has an MA in theology and is a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians – he is a player, composer and singer.

For a long time, Michael has wrestled with the tensions created both by the supposed conflict between science and his Christian faith, and also between his faith in a loving and powerful Creator, and the prevalence of suffering in the world. He has read widely in philosophy of both science and religion, in evolutionary biology and quantum physics, theology and theodicy. He has brought these gifts together in a book which attempts to reconcile these tensions, and particularly to address the ever-present question of suffering.

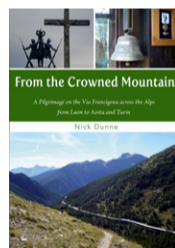
This is not bedtime reading. The reader is taken on a journey from the joys of heaven to a reasoned demonstration, through

physics and biology of God's love for the cosmos. Michael shares his evaluation of and questions put to many conversation partners, and the answers these lead him to. He explores moral evil, and natural evil, the fall, sin, disease and death, asking about the limits of God's knowledge and response to the world's suffering in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and how God now acts in the world.

He does not directly address individual personal suffering, for example "why is this happening to me?", but concentrates on disentangling muddles in our minds, and helping us deal with our questions in the light of God's love and holiness.

Michael interacts a great deal with other writers in considerable detail, and in doing so, he produces illuminating insights into many of the questions which suffering in our world raises for belief in a loving and powerful God and the answers he has come to.

RRP £16.99, Sacristy Press
Find out more: bit.ly/402hrEh



From the Crowned Mountain: A Pilgrimage on the Via Francigena across the Alps from Laon to Aosta and Turin by Nick Dunne.

John Mears, Holy Trinity, Upper Tooting writes:

Nick Dunne is Chair of Trustees of *Pilgrims to Rome*, a volunteer-run charity promoting the 1,900 km Via Francigena pilgrim route linking Canterbury to Rome. *From the Crowned Mountain* is the second volume of Nick's planned trilogy of memoirs of the pilgrimage he and his wife Fiona walked in stages between 2014 and 2022.

Nick's first book – *Walking on Holy Ground* – detoured from the official route to follow World War One's Western Front through Belgium and France to Laon, a medieval town built on top of a rocky outcrop known as the "crowned mountain."

In this new memoir, he retains his gentle humanity, humour and ability to tell a story, or rather stories – a new one for nearly every day. What is essentially a diary of a walk becomes an historical and spiritual journey wrapped up in the reality of a tough day after day physical trial, gentled by many meetings and much kindness.

This volume is quite different from *Walking on Holy Ground*. There is a clear transition from section to section. We start with a

continuation of the horrors of war along the southern section of the Western Front but with more awareness of the present and the realities of today and the physical effort of existence. There is also a clear pointer to the spiritual from the beginnings in Laon. Approaching Besançon, the physical labour of the journey becomes more prominent, especially as the heat, distances and inconveniences become more significant. Finally, as if reaching the Great St Bernard Pass gives a clear view to his ultimate goal, there is a greater feel of the spiritual. A real transcendence.

Nick mentions the physical journey being a metaphor for our spiritual journey, especially on pilgrimage. For me one of the key strengths of this account is the way in which he highlights the small incidents, the chance encounters, the small kindnesses along the road that help us to see God more clearly and to gain a better grasp on our own spirituality. To get closer to what it is that really makes us happy. The journey also brings into focus climate change.

Finally, from 'The Holy Face of Laon' to 'The Shroud of Turin' Nick traces an upwelling of spirituality, a visible growth, fed by the stories of the Saints along the way as well as the contextualising history and those many chance meetings.

For anyone who walks, travels or explores – this is something I feel we can all learn from.

RRP £12.99, York Publishing Services
More information: bit.ly/3Ps63fO



Breaking new ground: The faithful people of the Diocese of Matabeleland

The Revd Claire Whitmore, Pioneer Assistant Curate, St Anne with St Faith, Wandsworth writes:

“Before we had hope, but now we have hope realised.” These are the words of Ntokozo, a 14 year old schoolgirl from Lupane – a rural district in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe. Ntokozo is one of a hundred children in the area currently unable to access education, because there is no local secondary school.

The Diocese of Matabeleland, linked with the Kingston Episcopal Area (KEA), is establishing St Cecilia’s Secondary School in Lupane – with its first class having opened in January 2025, Ntokozo is one of its students.

A team of lay and ordained people from the KEA visited the site of the new school with The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston, and The Rt Revd Cleophas Lunga, Bishop of Matabeleland, as part of a visit to strengthen connections between churches and communities between the diocese and the episcopal area. At present the site has a solar-powered water tap, a latrine block, and a caretaker’s house and garden, but the vision is for so much more. Working in partnership with the local community, rural council, and National Education Authority, the Diocese of Matabeleland plans to build classrooms, a dining hall, dormitories, teachers’ accommodation and a rectory. Over 70 local volunteers have already helped prepare the planned site, working alongside Bishop Cleophas and clergy from the diocese to clear the shrubland to make way for school buildings.

Project Lead: Lovemore spoke movingly about how providing education for local children will help the whole community to

flourish, as they learn and eventually put their new knowledge and education to use in Lupane as engineers and teachers. The headteacher of the local primary school, Sikhangele, explained that this will also keep children safe who would otherwise make long journeys to school on foot and unaccompanied.

The team were able to speak to local teachers, parents and children about their hopes and dreams for the school. Hannah Nightingale, a lay member of the KEA team, said “Playing with the children under the trees at the site of St Cecilia’s school, I could imagine this place filled with more children learning, playing and flourishing.”



“The Link with the Diocese of Matabeleland is truly inspiring.”

This inspiring example of partnership between local communities, local and national authorities, and the Anglican Church was repeated across the diocese, where the team visited a total of 11 churches and schools – some fully established and flourishing, with others in the middle of construction. At all the schools, there was a palpable sense of God breaking new ground – literally bringing water in the wilderness – through the faithful people of the Diocese of Matabeleland, working in partnership with local communities.

The Kingston Episcopal Area will be joining in these partnerships



and strengthening the link over the coming months.

Bishop Martin said, ‘The link with the Diocese of Matabeleland is truly inspiring. Watch this space for ways to get involved. We will be organising a range of activities and events for this to become a living, breathing, mutually beneficial link for all.’



Top: Bishops Cleophas and Martin. Middle: The Revd Claire Whitmore, The Revd Lindiwe Maseko and Hannah Nightingale at St Cecilia’s school. Bottom: Lindiwe preaching.



IN FOCUS...
The Nicene Creed

The Council of Nicaea and the Creed today

The Right Reverend Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark writes:

The year 2025 marks the 1700th anniversary of the world's first Ecumenical Council – the Council of Nicaea of 325, a key moment in the history of Christian faith and for the ecumenical journey today.

Constantine the Great was proclaimed Emperor in York in AD 306 and converted to Christianity but only baptised days before his death in 337. When he convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 from which the Creed of that name emerged, the church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, described the imperial hospitality as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. 1700 years on we acknowledge that the adoption of the Nicene Creed was a key moment in our response to divine revelation as the Christian Church struggled to realise what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and how we live that out in discipleship and worship.

Nicaea and the other great (Oecumenical) Councils of the Early Church came about for two reasons: possibility and need. They

became possible by the measures under Constantine to end the persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire. Large numbers of bishops, presbyters and others could therefore gather from far and wide without harassment. The need for the Church to have creeds was occasioned by controversy. A century after Nicaea, St Vincent of Lerins wrote, "In the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all."

Controversy centred on Christ's nature. Was he truly God and was he in any sense subordinate to the Father? One of the main functions of bishops in the early centuries was to teach and prepare candidates for baptism. We should not therefore be surprised that the Creeds set out to settle Christological controversy in the sort of way from which catechetical teaching would be formed. The version we have and use is one revised in a later Council at Constantinople in 381 and reaffirmed in the Council of Chalcedon of 451.

A creed recited and owned universally, visibly joins us in the proclamation of our

common faith and nourishes the soul. In it we honour the God who acts and reveals himself to us in Three Persons. It enlarges our understanding and banishes misconception. It is the place of unity where we walk in the ready expectation that all who do likewise make the same profession of faith. Some find the Creeds difficult and wordy but their place and content occupies a central place in our common life. They are not optional extras.

The Nicene Creed distils a remarkable amount of doctrine and biblical narrative and does so in a form that is easily recited and may be committed to memory. It is the Credo of our life together in Christ.

(This was originally commissioned for the Croydon Minster Parish Magazine).



An icon depicting the First Council of Nicaea (325), holding the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.



LET US PRAY...
FEBRUARY

The Venerable John Kiddle
Archdeacon of Wandsworth

Candlemas

February begins beautifully with our gentle celebrations of the feast of Candlemas. At first sight it's an intimate and little feast. A little group of people, perhaps unnoticed, in a busy crowded temple. Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna; in their midst a baby held thankfully and offered prayerfully.

Candlemas is a feast often symbolised by a candle flame – small, flickering held prayerfully and thankfully in our hands.

A fragile and beautiful sign of all that we have celebrated in the seasons

of Christmas and Epiphany, intimate, beautiful and wonderful.

And yet Candlemas is also a great feast, with a vast canvas and a wide horizon. Luke tells us, in Simeon's words, that the love of God is both intimate and broad, embracing all people, all nations.

"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."
(Luke 2:30-32)



We might sometimes feel unnoticed, unseen. We might feel that our faith, our witness, even our love is fragile and flickering.

The wonder of Candlemas is that God, in the unnoticed, in the fragile and vulnerable, makes his love and glory known. And the more we welcome that love and the more we see that glory, the more we realise that we encounter something that is not mean and narrow, not exclusive and limited

but is unbounded, beautiful, life giving and welcoming.

Like Simeon and Anna, we see, in Christ, the fulfilment of God's promises; our minds and hearts open to the glory of God, the wonder of God and the love of God.

Like Mary and Joseph, we offer our love and prayers, and discover that, in all its joy, love is costly; for it is both precious and demanding.

Candlemas reminds us that we are called to live our flickering flame of faith and love with generosity, tenderness, courage and joy.

*God of Glory,
Your love is a flame within
our hearts.
Give us grace to tend it
With gentle reverence.
So may your light
Shine with more beauty
Through the fragility of our lives.
Amen.*



News from the diocese

“Thank you” breakfast for church leaders

Diocesan colleagues attended the Deputy Mayor of London’s ‘Thank You Breakfast’ for Church Leaders.

The Deputy Mayor, Debbie Weekes-Bernard, thanked churches for their commitment and contributions and shared that she looked forward to continuing to partner with churches in service of the community across London.

Our Head of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Natalie Walters, delivered the address to church leaders sharing about the social justice work in our diocese, and how we are participating in



L-R: Sara Taylor, Administrator at Christ Church, West Wimbledon, Jason O’Shea, Youth Violence Engagement Officer, The Revd Lotwina Farodoye, Christ Church, West Wimbledon, Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor of London for Communities & Social Justice, Natalie Walters, Head of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and The Rt Revd Alastair Cutting, Bishop of Woolwich.

the Multi Faith Network of the Violence Reduction Unit. She encouraged leaders to continue in the work of peace and hope.

NEWS FROM OUR PARISHES



Welcoming new parish clergy

Mortlake

On 4 November 2024, The Revd Jonathan Haynes was inducted as Team Rector of the Parish of Mortlake with East Sheen at Christ Church, East Sheen. The Bishop of Kingston presided and The Revd Alex Barrow, Area Dean for Richmond and Barnes preached.

Katie Woodhouse, Parish Warden said, “It was a joyous occasion, the parish was delighted to welcome Revd Jonathan.”

Catford



On 12 January, The Revd Rebecca (Bec) Wilkinson was collated and inducted as Vicar of St Andrew The Apostle, Catford by Bishop Christopher and The Venerable Chigor Chike, Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich.

Bec was Assistant Curate of Shaw, Crompton & Thornham in the Diocese of Manchester. In a post on ‘X’, Bishop Christopher said, “a prayerful service with great music and a wonderful service team. Deo gratias!”



The Revd Jonathan (left of Bishop Martin) with parish Clergy, Readers and visiting Clergy from the Deanery.

WHAT'S ON

Please send details of your next events for MARCH ONWARDS to Trinity House **BY MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY**

February

SATURDAY 8 FEBRUARY

* **WESTMINSTER** – ‘Race, Religion, Rhetoric and far-right extremism – a response’. A one-day conference that will see churches and civil society organisations explore solutions to challenge hate and violence. 10.30am–5pm at Church House, Dean’s Yard, Westminster, London, SW1P 3NZ. Free, register at: bit.ly/4g0VU4z

🎵 Croydon Minster

40 minutes of music – lunchtime recitals, Fridays 1.10pm

Feb 7 Elizaveta Velikhova, Piano

Feb 14 Students from Croydon High School

Feb 21 Tommy Tai, Piano

Feb 28 Chingyan Lo, Organ

Free but donations gratefully received. Details: croydonminster.org/events

WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY

* **SOUTHWARK** – JPIC awareness session with *Open Doors*, who will be sharing their work on the persecuted church and how we might respond as churches. 12–2pm, at Diocese of Southwark, Trinity House, 4 Borough High Street SE1 1HW. Free, reserve a place: bit.ly/4g3bOM3

March

SATURDAY 22 MARCH

* **WATERLOO** – ‘Generous Faith – our Wound is our Word’. A one-day conference to ask: what is a prophet and what is prophecy? Where is it

being spoken today? How do we recognise it? Why must the church? Presented by St John’s, Waterloo in partnership with Together for the Church of England and Inclusive Church. 9.30am–5pm at St John’s Church, 73 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TY. Tickets £12–£33, details and booking: bit.ly/42a5Jdk

April

SATURDAY 5 APRIL

* WOOLWICH AREA

LAY CONFERENCE – Calling all emerging and lay leaders in our churches. Venue Ark All Saints Academy, London SE5 0UB. The Rt Revd Alastair Cutting, Bishop of Woolwich said, “The Woolwich Area Lay Conference has gone from strength to strength in recent years in training and resourcing our lay leaders. Join us as we look forward to seeing *Thy Kingdom Come* in the Woolwich Area.” Free. Register: bit.ly/3WUvq4R

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.

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



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IN FOCUS...

Advent across Southwark

Born is the King!

Our 2024 diocesan Advent campaign shone a light on the work of our Church of England schools, and in a series of short films, we shared some of the ways children engage with Advent, Christmas and the Christian faith in our diocese.

The #SouthwarkAdvent campaign featured appearances from the staff and pupils at Christ Church, Purley, Immanuel and St Andrew, Streatham, Archbishop Tenison's School and St Matthew's, Croydon, St Saviours and St Olaves, Southwark, The Kings, Southwark and St Bartholemew, Sydenham.

The choir from Archbishop Tenison's School performed at St Matthew's Church for Croydon's Christmas Tree Festival Concert. They sang the carols 'The First Noel' and 'Born Is The King' as part of the concert. Their performance featured in the third #SouthwarkAdvent film in our diocesan Advent campaign. The evening brought together a wide range of local musical talent, surrounded by Christmas trees and displays from community groups that use the Church.

Revd Ruth Chapman, Vicar of St Matthew's and one of the chaplains at Archbishop Tenison's, said, "I'm absolutely delighted that we get so much support from



Archbishop Tenison School at St Matthew, Croydon.



Children from The Kings Primary School, Kew 'journey to the manger'.

Tenison's in our services here, and that we can work together to encourage and nurture the faith of our amazing young people. It's important for the Church to work with young people, not because the children are the future of the church – it's because they're the church now. Listening to their voices, listening to their ideas, listening to their energy, getting them to take part in services is so important in our Church life."

The school has a close relationship with St Matthew's, with each year group visiting the Church weekly for acts of worship and assemblies, as well as taking part in events like the concert. Prayer is also part of day to day life at Archbishop Tenison's.

Journey to the Manger

'Journey to the Manger', is an annual Advent gathering for school children to explore the Christmas story at Southwark Cathedral. Organised in partnership with Southwark Cathedral Learning Centre and Southwark Diocesan Board of Education, 175 children from The Kings Primary School, Kew; St Faith's

School, Wandsworth; St John's Primary School, Shirley; and St Margaret's Primary School, Plumstead took part.

Each class took with them a life-sized figure of a character from the Christmas story to the Cathedral – these were created by the children using arts and crafts. The children were then encouraged to think reflectively about the importance of each character and the role that they play. At the start of the day, the children gathered to hear a retelling of the Christmas story as imagined in *On Angel Wings* by Michael Morpurgo. Then, the children travelled around the Cathedral visiting stations for each character, hearing in detail the character's part in the Christmas story and making an art and craft gift to remind them of the value that character brought to the story. As the children went on this journey, they collected their gifts in their 'pilgrim bag'.

The journey and day culminated with collective worship and all the crib figures coming together to form a nativity scene in the centre of the Cathedral. The crib figures were also on display for visitors to the Cathedral throughout Christmas.

Art for Advent at St Alfege

In December, St Alfege Church revealed its Children's Church Advent window, themed: 'All is calm, all is bright'.

Wendy Foreman, a member of the church said, "We celebrated the coming of Jesus by showing that our church and community is part of that celebration and that the light of Jesus lives in each home and in each of our hearts. Children and their families joined in a short service of blessing followed by mulled wine, mince pies, refreshments and games in the hall."



During the festive season, the Church also introduced a new Christmas art installation in the East Portico of the church building. The installation – in memory of a member of the congregation – was created by Emma Sheehy, who

gained an MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art (2021-23). Entitled: 'Nativity: Follow the Star' the installation tells the nativity story in three carved frieze-like panels (a triptych) and is made from oak and ash with subtle colouration.

Emma, who has a long-standing connection with the Church said, "I have so many happy memories of Christingle at St Alfege Church as a child. I wanted to capture the excitement I felt and the tenderness, hope and joy of the Christmas story in this space." Emma's work is influenced by medieval manuscripts and traditional iconography.

Charlton Deanery's Christmas Journey

Six churches in Charlton Deanery welcomed hundreds of Year 2 children from local schools to experience the Christmas Journey – an interactive way of telling the story of the first Christmas.

First launched in 2015 at St John, Blackheath and pioneered by Aike Kennett-Brown and Esther Whittlesea Reed, the Christmas Journey has since expanded across the deanery. Julie Mason, Charlton Deanery Synod Secretary said, "Now in its tenth year in our deanery the Christmas Journey has welcomed more than 1,500 children from 25 different schools."

Comments from the schools that attended included, "Great day! Really interactive" and "We look forward to coming every year!" One attendee said, "The children rarely get to engage with such small drama activities so it was a lovely way to immerse themselves in the Christmas story. Thank you for your time and great acting skills. Lovely and welcoming and a fun way to learn the Christmas story. A great way to meet people from our local community, too."

The Revd Simon Winn, Charlton Area Dean said, "Christmas Journey is a continuing success story across our diverse deanery and a wonderful way for hundreds of local children to learn about the story of Jesus in a creative and fun way – thanks to scores of enthusiastic volunteers from our churches."



The Revd Dom Hubbuck, school chaplain, leads an activity with the children.

Christingle family drop-in



Each year Holy Trinity, Redhill opens its church doors on Christmas Eve to host a Christingle drop-in event. An intergenerational event – children and young people from the church community join together to make Christingles and socialise with the wider church family. Throughout the Church there were stations with oranges, ribbon, candles, sweets and prayer booklets. The event featured a giant Christingle in the middle of the Church a prayer display, lyric videos and carols that played on screens.