

# The BRIDGE

Newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark

Christ  
Centred  
Outward  
Focused

Vol.30 No.10

December 2025/January 2026

## Bread of life

Stunning glazed artwork for All Saints, Benhilton

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## The Bridge

Changes afoot for our beloved diocesan newspaper

See pages 6–7



## Rediscovering joy

This Advent and Christmas

See pages 8–9

JOY

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## Bishop to retire

**The Bishop of Southwark, The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, has announced that he will retire on his 70th birthday in August 2026, after 43 years in ordained ministry.**

Reflecting on his time in ministry, Bishop Christopher thanked the people of Southwark Diocese, saying, “I am mindful of all that you have given generously and sacrificially, as clergy and lay people, to strengthen partnerships in the Gospel in the parishes and ministries to which you have been called. I thank God for you daily, and ask for your prayers in these concluding months.”

Following Bishop Christopher’s retirement, The Bishop of Croydon, The Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett, will serve as Acting Bishop of Southwark, working alongside her fellow suffragan Bishops. She said: “This Diocese has been enormously blessed by Bishop’s Christopher’s reflective leadership style and pastoral care. Under his guidance, we have developed our vision and strategy to ensure that we prioritise our parishes and the people we serve. Most of all, he has helped us, though all the changes and challenges, to always remember to speak well of and to each other, and to walk together even if we don’t always see eye to eye — and it is these values that we will

continue to honour as we move into the next phase of our diocesan life.”

“In the relatively short time that I have been in Southwark as Bishop of Kingston, I have come to see what a special Diocese it is – vibrant, characterful and diverse,” added the Bishop of Kingston, The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough.” Bishop Christopher has been exemplary in upholding the best of Southwark and it has been a pleasure to serve alongside him.”

The Bishop of Woolwich, the Rt Revd Alastair Cutting said, “It has been an honour and a joy to serve alongside Bishop Christopher. His personal and institutional hospitality are legendary and his prayer and care for people inspires me in seeking to be a better disciple of Jesus.”

In talking about the privilege in working closely with Bishop Christopher, Diocesan Secretary, Nicola Thomas said, “He brings great wisdom and insight and, as a result of his leadership, the Diocese of Southwark remains strong and united as a Christian presence in every community in south London and east Surrey.”

Bishop Christopher’s last day in office will be 4 August 2026 and his last service will take place at Southwark Cathedral at 12pm on Saturday 18 July.

Read more about Bishop Christopher here: [tinyurl.com/3exw3jz3](https://tinyurl.com/3exw3jz3)

## Jubilee: a testament to the ministry of churches

Each year, colleagues in our Mission and Evangelism team host a conference on a key theme for our diocese. This year our Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Team invited people to St John,

Waterloo on Saturday 8 November to explore issues of social justice for today’s society. Entitled ‘Jubilee’, the conference was an opportunity to hear from a range of speakers and attend workshops to challenge, inform, inspire

and encourage. The day also celebrated the 40th anniversary of the *Faith in the City* report – published in 1985 by the Church of England and considered one of the most substantial documents on welfare provision and urban mission and ministry across the country. Introducing the day, the Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, welcomed attendees and reflected on our diocesan history and work in the area of social justice and social action. Keynote speaker

the Rt Revd Rob Wickham, CEO of the Church Urban Fund – a national charity working with local leaders, churches and other faith groups all over England – spoke of the impact our churches are making in their communities, bringing transformation, renewal and possibility in Jesus’ name.

The day continued with workshops led by a range of colleagues. This included sessions on disability and neurodivergence,

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Read more stories at [southwark.anglican.org/blog](https://southwark.anglican.org/blog) or find us on social media @SouthwarkCofE



## A view from The BRIDGE



### TS Eliot in Journey of the Magi quotes Bishop Lancelot Andrewes' (of Southwark Cathedral fame) Christmas Day Sermon and begins *Little Gidding*, the last of his famous *Four Quartets*:

*Midwinter spring is its own season  
Sempiternal though sodden  
towards sundown*

*Suspended in time, between pole  
and tropic.*

*When the short day is brightest with  
frost and fire*

– evoking of the shape and feel of this particular time of year. It is a poem about time and place and about life and death, of the ancient elements (especially fire) and of salvation. It moves at the pace of a country walk in December and demands the same sort of attentiveness as trudging through the mud on a damp mid-winter day.

This is why I believe that the season of Advent is peculiarly suited to these islands as we journey into the winter season. The pace of nature slackens – in my younger days, one caught the whiff of Coalite on the air. It is a time of waiting in hope – akin to the hope for a child. In our case it is for the birth of a Saviour in great manifest vulnerability and for his second coming in glory.

Of course, at this time of year, many of us do not feel that the pace slackens. If anything, what with deadlines at work, increased activity at church and with festivities beckoning in our social life and at home, our preparations can feel much like rushing down a hillside while waving an Advent Calendar hoping that we do not fall headlong.

Yet if we will but pause, and tarry with the readings for Advent, the thoughts that come to us, the worship that engages us, and the actions that mark our response, then we will open ourselves to the God who will remake us in the likeness of His Son.

“Hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5). In this readiness and transformation, we can face the darkness of life, the division and contempt that too often intrudes into our public life, holding on to the faith, hope and love we have in Jesus Christ.

I wish you and those you love a joyful and blessed Advent and Christmastide.

**Bishop Christopher**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Southwark welcomes new Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

Michael Browne has been appointed as the next Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for our diocese. With more than 20 years’ experience in the health, social care and voluntary sectors, Michael is passionate about working to improve the lives of those who are most vulnerable, marginalised and socially excluded.



Michael said, “I’m honoured to take up the role... I look forward to working together to ensure our communities remain safe, supported, and empowered.” Welcoming Michael’s appointment, Nicola Thomas, Diocesan Secretary said, “In Southwark, we’re on a journey of continual review and improvement for all our safeguarding work. We know that there is always room for learning and growth – and I’m so pleased that Michael will be leading the team as we address these challenges and make the most of the opportunities and resources that are available to us.” Michael succeeds Pamela Chisholm, who stepped down from the role in October 2025.

### Bishop of Tewkesbury to be new lead safeguarding bishop

The Rt Revd Bishop Robert Springett is to be the Church of England’s new Lead Safeguarding Bishop, taking over from Bishop Joanne Grenfell, who leaves the role at the end of March 2026, when her three-year term ends.

Bishop Robert, who said “I accept this invitation with a profound sense of calling to contribute to the development of healthy cultures across all areas of Church life.” He will work closely with members of the National Safeguarding Team which provides specialist expertise on casework, policy development, training, evaluation and survivor participation. The Church of England is continuing to strengthen its safeguarding practices by committing to independent scrutiny and improving delivery.

Read more about this here: [tinyurl.com/4eb48nx5](https://tinyurl.com/4eb48nx5)

### CofE church attendance rises for the fourth year in a row

Attendance at Church of England churches has risen for the fourth year in a row, according to data in the latest *Statistic for Mission 2024* report. The report, which concentrates on national totals and trends, is based on figures provided by thousands of clergy, churchwardens, and others across parishes.

Findings show that the overall number of regular worshippers across congregations rose to just over 1 million in 2024, a rise of 0.6 per cent. The report also records a rise in adult and teenage baptisms by more than 1,000, as well as five percent more confirmations.

Read the full story here: [tinyurl.com/yz5x7bke](https://tinyurl.com/yz5x7bke). Download the full report here: [tinyurl.com/36bj6k8n](https://tinyurl.com/36bj6k8n)

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#### Spring Issue: Submission deadline and guidance

The MARCH/APRIL edition is due to be published online and in print in the Spring 2026. Material for that edition must be with Vernia Mengot by email by **FRIDAY 27 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 – and that appropriate consents have been obtained for images of children, young people and vulnerable adults. 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](https://southwark.anglican.org/safeguarding/diocesan-policies-procedures)

 NEWS FROM OUR DIOCESE

# The National Net Zero Carbon Programme

## Major steps and practical action to lower emissions

**The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston and diocesan lead bishop on the environment, writes:**

As I reflect on the past year of our work to achieve *Carbon Net Zero* across the Diocese of Southwark, I offer my heartfelt thanks to the clergy, church wardens, PCCs, congregations and school staff who have continued to show deep care for God’s creation through engagement with our *Net Zero Carbon Programme*, as we seek to achieve Net Zero by 2030.

This commitment to environmental stewardship across our parishes and church schools reflects our shared calling to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation through practical action. This has brought us closer to a sustainable future in a number of ways:

- We have supported 17 churches to access over £300k through the *Give to Go Green* scheme, for projects to improve heat efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

- Over 60 churches have received free carbon audits, mapping pathways to lower emissions and cost savings.
- We have successfully installed of air source heat pumps in half of all of our schools, in a major step toward reducing diocesan emissions.

With over 70% of parishes sharing their data and progress in reducing emissions, we are already seeing the impact of this work and detailed findings will be published next year. However, analysis already shows significant carbon emission reductions among over half of our highest-emitting churches, as well as general reductions across our diocese.

Building on this progress, we are delighted to share further good news. The Church of England has approved £42 million of national carbon reduction funding for 2026–2028, with an additional £120 million for 2028–2034. Southwark has also successfully bid alongside London, Oxford and Winchester Dioceses for support from a new Net Zero Funding Advisor, funded by the National Church. This investment will enable us to:



**St George the Martyr, Southwark is one of the churches in our diocese to receive a £10k Net Zero grant for a new heat management system.**

- Maintain a dedicated part-time Net Zero resource in our diocese.
- Continue supporting churches, schools, and clergy housing with practical carbon reduction initiatives.
- Match the scale of work achieved in the past two years, keeping up the momentum and maximising impact.

The road to Net Zero will undoubtedly long one but – we have already come so far, and I pray that the real progress we

have made so far would encourage and renew us all for the journey ahead.

**Find out more**



For any information on our Net Zero Programme and how to get involved please contact our Net Zero Programme Manager: [jonathan.walter@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:jonathan.walter@southwark.anglican.org)

# 2026 Bishop’s Lent Call

*‘Start children off on the way they should go’* Proverbs 22:6



Each year, the Bishop of Southwark calls the people of our diocese to spend Lent in reflection and prayer. As part of this Call, Bishop Christopher invites and encourages individuals, churches and schools to support a number of projects, through the Lent Call, as part of their Lenten discipline.

In 2025, we raised just over £40,000 (and money is still coming in) to help those in most need of emotional, psychological and community support because of their experience of trauma. The money raised will support projects in our link dioceses in Zimbabwe and Jerusalem, as well as closer to home in South London and East Surrey.

For Lent 2026 – which will begin on Wednesday 18 February – Bishop Christopher is asking people in our diocese to give during his Lent Call which focuses on the work of schools here in our diocese and in our link dioceses.

Schools play such a crucial role in everyone’s lives. Whether you love the classroom and all it has to offer or can’t wait for that bell to ring, so much of what happens at school shapes the rest of our lives.

Our theme for the year is: *‘Start children off on the way they should go’* (Proverbs 22:6). Schools are important as the main place where children and young people

begin to venture outside the family and learn to interact with others outside the home. As Proverbs goes on to say, *‘even when they are old they will not turn from it.’* Our early life experiences are undoubtedly formative – for good or ill. Bishop Christopher is keen to help young people, in all situations, have the opportunity to grow, learn and flourish in positive, well-resourced schools – and he’s asking our parishes and schools to give towards projects that will offer children this possibility.

Schools are important for the communities around them, too. Here, in Southwark Diocese, they are used for community events and provide opportunities for breakfast and after school clubs to help with childcare for working parents and guardians. Teachers work hard to ensure that children learn about issues of importance for their own communities and for our society.

As well as educating children, diocesan schools in Zimbabwe – particularly in the rural areas – often provide fresh water for the local villages and for agriculture, which use their boreholes – ensuring fresh

water to drink, healthy livestock and good crop yields. In the Diocese of Jerusalem, in areas where schools can function, they provide a chance, not only for children impacted by the ongoing conflict to continue to learn, but they often offer help with the trauma that children have suffered and provide food and a safe place for them to look to the future with hope.

Look out for our new Lent Call materials for 2026, which will appear soon on the diocesan website. They will be available in the coming weeks, so that you can begin to plan how you will use them in your church and school. **On the back of this edition of *The Bridge*, you will find a poster that you can display in your Church.** As we keep Lent and think and pray about all that God has done for us, it is good to be generous to others in response to God’s love for us. Please do prayerfully consider what you might be able to give to show your gratitude to God and support others.

Information will become available here: [southwark.anglican.org/lentcall](http://southwark.anglican.org/lentcall)

## NEWS FROM OUR PARISHES



## ‘Bread of Life’ window

**Earlier this year, All Saints, Benilton was delighted to witness the culmination of a vision that has been twenty years in the making with the installation of its brand-new stained-glass window.**

*The Revd Christopher Phillips, Vicar at All Saints, Benilton writes:*

Thanks to a legacy from Simon Norman in memory of his parents Ron and Myrtle, and in memory of Eric Porter (all three of whom had been on the PCC) we were able to commission a design for the complete window, in the north-west corner of the church building. The artist chosen was the award-winning, Surrey-based Rachel Mulligan, who drew on her considerable knowledge and experience of traditional arts and crafts methods to create a beautiful interpretation of Jesus as ‘the Bread of Life’.

Members of the congregation were welcomed to visit Rachel’s studio to see the window take shape and to learn about the craftsmanship involved. It was particularly moving to be able to take a very small part in making some of the stars in the window, knowing that the finished glass will remain for many generations after us.

Installation of the window took place during Holy Week this year, which added considerably to our anticipation of Easter

as the workmen took out the old plain glass and gradually inserted the sections of the new. We were delighted to be joined by Bishop Peter Wheatley (former Bishop of Edmonton) on the Day of Pentecost, when, as well as celebrating the Mass and preaching, he kindly dedicated the finished work.

The window – nominated in this year’s Art and Christianity Awards – stands in the same aisle as the chapel used for daily Mass and for the 8am service on Sundays. It is a powerful reminder of Jesus’ words, “*Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you*” (John 6:53). So many faithful clergy and parishioners have worked to bring this project to fruition, sustained by their eucharistic faith and a desire to share this with others. The church is open every day for worship (except Mondays). We love to welcome visitors to see the window in person and to encounter Jesus in the very sacrament of his Body and Blood that inspired Rachel’s creation.

**For more on the new stained-glass window visit: [allsaintsbenilton.org](http://allsaintsbenilton.org) and to find out more about Rachel’s artwork visit: [rachelmulligan.co.uk](http://rachelmulligan.co.uk). The prize giving for the Arts and Christianity Awards will take place on 23 April 2026. Find out more here: [artandchristianity.org/awards](http://artandchristianity.org/awards)**



## Spreading the light of Jesus

**Jordan Burke, Children and Families Minister at St Thomas with St Stephen Balham, shares the exciting success of holding a ‘light party’ for children, youth and families in their community:**

This year, for the first time in many years, we hosted a family-focused Light Party on 31 October, to provide a safe space for families in our community. As a church, we wanted to spread the light of Jesus by opening our doors on Halloween for



kids, youth and their families to have fun. Our theme was a neon carnival – we had carnival games, face painting, balloon modelling, and LOTS of sweets! God truly blessed the event, with over 200 people attending (most of whom are not a part of our church community). There was such a buzz during the event which carried on into the Sunday service. We also had a ‘Pie the Leader’ vote with the results being revealed on Sunday morning to encourage families to join us at our family service. We did not know what to expect, but God’s light shined bright! It was fantastic!

*Wondering what your church could do to reach out, re-start or grow your children, youth and families ministry? Imani or Jo, the children, youth and families team, would love to chat with you:*

**Imani McEwen:**  
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**Jo Gavin:**  
[joanne.gavin@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:joanne.gavin@southwark.anglican.org)

## Remembering troops from many faiths

**On the evening of Thursday 6 November, the fourth annual Faiths Together in Croydon (FTiC) Remembrance event took place in the spectacular surroundings of the Braithwaite Hall in Croydon Town Hall.**

Organised and lead by FTiC Chair, Penny Smith-Orr (from St Mark’s and Holy Innocents, South Norwood), guests included the Executive Mayor of Croydon, Jason Perry and the Ceremonial Mayor, Richard Chatterjee, along with representatives of faith communities in the Borough of Croydon.

Speakers included representatives of the Croydon Scouts, talking about the contribution of the scouting movement to the running of what was then known as the Mayday Hospital (now Croydon



© Tamkin Riaz.

University Hospital) during World War Two. Guests also heard a presentation from pupils of Oasis Academy Coulsdon who described the wartime service of troops from many faiths and from all parts of the Commonwealth.

Finally, prayers for peace were offered by leaders from Croydon Mosque, the Sikh, Christian and Ahmadiyya communities. The Revd Tomos Reed, Vicar of Holy Saviour Croydon, led the gathering in a two-minute silence to remember those of all faiths who gave their lives in service to their country. Mayor Jason Perry commented that he “hoped to see the FTiC Remembrance Event become an ongoing tradition.”

# A decade of ministry and fellowship

**On Sunday 14 October 2025, the Japanese Anglican Church, South East London – which meets monthly at St Hugh, Bermondsey – celebrated its 10th anniversary with a special service of Holy Communion.**

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Igrave OBE, the Bishop of Lichfield, presided at the service which brought together members past and present to give thanks for 10 years of fellowship, bible study and worship.

Bishop Michael, as former Bishop of Woolwich, was instrumental in establishing the Japanese Anglican Church group on Pentecost Sunday in 2015. The group is recognised as a *Fresh Expression of Church* – a new Christian community that takes place outside traditional parish structures and is formed in response to the culture and needs of a particular community. For the Japanese Anglican Church group, this means creating a welcoming place where Japanese people living in and around London can hear the gospel in their own language and culture. Most of the attendees are not yet Christians but come with openness and curiosity.

Over the past 10 years the group has offered monthly bible study, worship, and pastoral care, helping people explore faith and encounter the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Minako Hall, Licensed Lay Pioneer Minister in Southwark, who led the sermon and preached in Japanese said, “We also have occasional visits to museums and galleries to see how Christianity is portrayed in art and culture.”

The anniversary service reflected the group’s bilingual character, with readings and intercessions by members of the group in both Japanese and English. The service was led by the Revd Eddie Scrase-Field, Vicar of St John, Blackheath and the Revd Delorine Green, Interim Minister-in-Charge at St Hugh, Bermondsey.

Minako added, “Many of the Japanese attendees are not yet Christian but came to show their support and appreciation for the work of the group. We were pleased to see that many people stepped forward to receive a blessing during the distribution of communion.”

To make it more accessible and for those without a faith background, Minako’s sermon introduced the idea of ‘the connection of life’ in today’s digital society, using the image of grapes harvested in Japan’s autumn and the ‘fruitful vineyard’ from Isaiah 27 and John 15.

Giving thanks for the past ten years, the group is looking forward to another decade in ministry and friendship in the hope their fellowship will continue to be a place where Japanese people in London can experience God’s love and discover faith in Christ.

**The group also expressed its gratitude for the encouragement of Mother Delorine, Revd Eddie, Bishop Michael and all who joined the celebration.**

# A whole year of Kids’ Council

**The children and young people of St Andrew, Catford meet regularly to make important decisions for their church.**

The group – which gathers to discuss issues affecting the Church – has met three times over the past year. Firstly, they decided how a bequest for the children of the Church should be spent – new felt-tip pens and a trip out. Then they explored belonging – choosing a figure on a picture of church which most mirrored their experience.

Finally, the children and young people met to decide the charities the church would support in 2026. Participant Maya said:

*“Kids’ Council makes me feel like I have a say in what’s going on in the church. It was fun to be able to choose the charities because it felt like you had a budget instead of being told where the money would be spent.”*

The children – who are aged between three and 13 – each got one vote, choosing between five charities that had been shortlisted from an initial list of 15 that included suggestions from the council too.



**The venue chosen by the Kid’s Council for their day trip.**

The Revd Bec Wilkinson, Vicar at St Andrew, Catford said, “The children and young people chose excellent causes which engage with the issues that matter to them: knife crime, climate change, caring for animals, food poverty and peace-building. As a church we are pleased to support these groups as they also fit with the five marks of mission. They understand that part of the privilege of choosing the charities for the whole church is committing to leading by example on the fundraising, too. Next year the Council will continue to play an important part in leading the Church, meeting with our new Director of Music, and participating in conversations with our charity representatives – and of course the wider life of the church on Sundays and through the week.”

# A new phase of leadership and ministry

**The Revd Michael Walcott received a warm welcome from the Parish of Croydon and the John Whitgift Foundation.**



On Sunday 28 September, the Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon, led a special service to formally welcome Michael (pictured), who arrived in London over the summer.

Michael has joined the diocese from Barbados and arrived in London during the summer. He is primarily based at Croydon Minster and works closely with the Revd Andrew Bishop. Together they serve the parish, with Michael offering dedicated pastoral and liturgical ministry to the John Whitgift Foundation – a charity that has been serving Croydon since 1596 in the areas of care and education.

Bishop Rosemarie said, “It was wonderful to formally welcome Fr Michael to his joint post as Chaplain to the John Whitgift Foundation and associate vicar of Croydon Minster. Michael has made a wonderful start to his work here in Croydon. We look forward to his ministry and leadership as it develops, especially with the young people he is charged to spiritually and pastorally care for.”

# Prayers for peace and reconciliation

**When the Revd Frances Plummer, Assistant Priest at Christ The King, Salfords watches the news, she is struck by how much of what she sees is negative: focused on the desperate needs of the world, all that is shown is about famine, destruction, homelessness, missing people, kidnapping and loss of life. So, she asked herself, “What could we do to help?”**

“The only thing we could all do is pray together, praying at home from Monday to Saturday,” says Frances (pictured). With this in mind, she put together some prayer cards, each with a one-line bible quote and a prayer point, for members of the congregation to take away and pray daily during the week. This led to the creation of a prayer station in the Church – *prayers for peace and reconciliation* – a visible display featuring prayers, illustrations and other materials. A world globe was added to the station to encourage people to look outwards and recognise the needs



across the world, along with a candle “to remind us that God is present in the whole adventure,” she added.

*Give them each their daily bread, and forgive them their sins, as they forgive those who sin against them. Do not bring them to the time of trial but deliver them from evil. For yours is the Kingdom. Amen.*

# IN FOCUS... *The Bridge* newspaper

## Bridging into a bold new era

The first edition of *The Bridge* was published in September 1995, when the late Rt Revd Roy Williamson – then Bishop of Southwark – tasked the Communications Team with producing a new diocesan newspaper.

Bishop Roy wanted the new publication to be like the one that he had valued so much when he was the Bishop of Bradford, prior to coming to Southwark. His enthusiasm led a brand new form of communication for Southwark Diocese, which has changed and developed over the decades. In 2026, *The Bridge* will evolve again – this time, into a quarterly magazine. In this last monthly edition, we look back at how it all started. We caught up with the Revd Canon Wendy Robins, former Director of Communications and Resources (now Director of Discipleship and Ministry) who was charged with getting things started 30 years ago...

Wendy says, “When I was appointed by Bishop Roy it became clear to me very early on that he would like to have a diocesan newspaper, similar to the one that he had valued so much when he was in the Diocese of Bradford. It took a while to get to the point of the Senior Staff team deciding that we should do it – and so it was that in the spring of 1995, I was asked to take a paper to the Bishop’s Council, proposing how we might go about starting one.”

Choosing the title was an easy task as many years ago there had been a diocesan magazine called *The Bridge*, and with this the team began to make plans for the paper and gather news.

Since the first issue appeared, it has continued to be published ten times a year – with double editions in summer and over Christmas. An Editorial Advisory Board, made up of clergy and laity, was formed and met quarterly to help the team plan content and design. For three decades the newspaper has been available in print – with a short pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic, returning to print in April 2023. It has also been available online via the diocesan website.

Wendy adds: “Bishop Roy was clear that he wanted a newspaper that shared news between the parishes, so that they could learn from each other and exchange ideas. He wanted it to be appealing to all, and we aimed for the same reading level as that of the *Evening Standard*. We did not often achieve this! It was our job as the Communications Team to ensure that parishes felt visible in the paper, and each month parishes would be encouraged to send in their photographs and stories.

“Some parishes took to this easily and sent in articles almost every month – others were more reticent, and we spent time encouraging them to tell us more about events that we had seen advertised.”

One of the most important features of each edition was the *Parish Profile*. In this section, journalist and Editorial Board member Tom Sutcliffe would visit a parish and write about their worship and the service he attended. He would also meet and talk to those who held roles within the church to give a more complete picture of life in its parish. Although the person writing the Profile changed, it continued to be part of the paper until a format change in 2016.

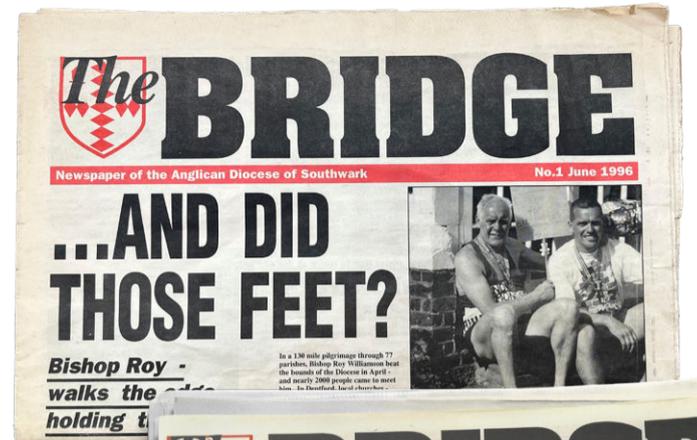
The style and layout of *The Bridge* has been updated on a number of occasions having been consulted on, redesigned and reviewed throughout its time.

The paper featured a prayer column by the former Dean of Southwark, the Very Revd Andrew Nunn, entitled: ‘Let us pray’ which sought to bring the people of Southwark together around a particular event or on a particular theme. That column has continued since Andrew’s retirement, in 2023. For a season, it was written by the Venerable John Kiddle, then Archdeacon of Wandsworth until his retirement in Spring 2025. It’s now brought by a variety of contributors, each taking a turn to share their own reflections and personal testimonies.

The centrespread in every edition has always been an in-depth look into an important or seasonal topic and the paper also covered key moments in diocesan life such as ordinations, consecrations of Bishops and appointments of lay ministers. Photographs of such events have drawn people into the paper and brought the stories of their ministries, Christians and our communities to life.

“As *The Bridge* changes once again,” says Wendy, “it’s a good time to thank all of those who have been involved thus far – and to look forward with anticipation to a new future.”

...tabloid newspaper-style introduced 1996...



...full colour from 2004...



...major revamps 2005 2010 2020



...the final tabloid newspaper-style issue.





## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

# Embracing the joy of Christmas

**The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people ...” (Luke 2.10-11).**

This year, inspired by the Gospels and sharing in the Church of England’s Advent and Christmas theme for 2025, we’re celebrating the great joy of Christmas – the good news the angel declared to the shepherds – the news of Jesus’ birth as *Emmanuel*, God with us.

There are plenty of ways to spread the joy of Christmas this year, with resources for churches, individuals and schools designed for all ages. Find the full range online at: [tinyurl.com/muz9yyrh](https://tinyurl.com/muz9yyrh)

### Advent procession

On Sunday 30 November a candlelit service combining readings and music took place at Southwark Cathedral to mark the beginning of the season of Advent.



### #SouthwarkAdvent

For the past two years George Clarke, our Digital Communications Manager has visited churches and schools across our diocese to share how communities engage with Advent and Christmas. You’ll remember that in 2023 we made a diocesan advent calendar where we opened 24 real church doors over 24 days and welcomed people into our parishes, while collectively sharing the nativity story through scripture. In 2024, we visited Church of England schools in our diocese to share in a series of videos how they introduce children to the true meaning of Christmas.

You can read about how George used videos to celebrate our diocesan schools in this case study with the Church of England’s Digital Labs team, where they interviewed him for this blog: [tinyurl.com/4w8zncc4](https://tinyurl.com/4w8zncc4)

Sadly, over the past month George had been recovering from an operation and wasn’t able to carry the camera equipment to do this year’s filming, but he is as keen as ever to share your stories. So, this year we asked for your help to share the ways you’ve been preparing for Christmas in your context and tell us what celebrating Christmas looks like in your community by sending in your own videos. Thank you to everyone who sent in contributions – we’ve loved being able to share the joy of Christmas across our social media platforms.

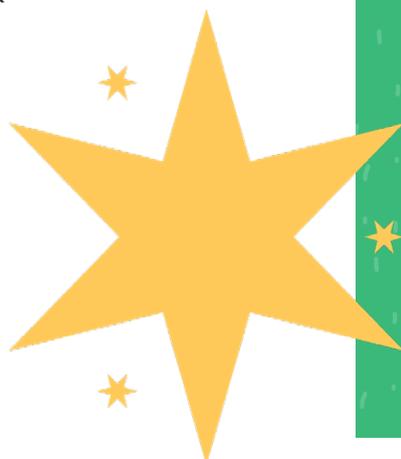
### Christmas card images from around our parishes

As well as asking for videos, as in recent years we also reached out to parishes on social media, asking churches to send us their best Christmassy photos for use on our diocesan Christmas cards. Huge thanks to everyone who responded and sent in their entries. We shortlisted all submissions and chose one to use on our Diocesan Secretary’s card. See left for a look at some of this year’s photos.

Don’t forget, although we’re not back with the new-style *Bridge* until the Spring, please let us know what you have been up to in your parishes throughout the festive period – we’ll share your photos and stories of Christmas joy on our website here: [tinyurl.com/mv64zvww](https://tinyurl.com/mv64zvww)

### How to encourage digital giving at Christmas

Advent and Christmas provide a powerful opportunity to encourage giving in your church. In the spirit of generosity, the national Digital Giving team has produced a range of resources to help churches encourage digital giving this Christmas – including customisable Canva design, video tutorials and tips to make the most of giving opportunities. Find out more and check them out here: [tinyurl.com/3hhhcrbk](https://tinyurl.com/3hhhcrbk)



## Christmas images from around our parishes

Earlier this year, we asked parishes for their best festive photos that could potentially be used as one of our diocesan Christmas cards.

A huge thank you to everyone who responded and sent in some of their best ‘Christmassy’ pictures, featured here. This beautiful photograph below of Christ Church, East Sheen was taken by the Revd Jonathan Haynes and has been used for our Diocesan Secretary’s Christmas card.



Christ Church, East Sheen, taken by the Revd Jonathan Haynes.



The crib at Holy Trinity, Upper Tooting.



Christmas tree festival, Horley Team Ministry.

# Lamb teddies share faith and hope across the UK

**This Christmas, a nationwide heart-warming initiative is offering visually impaired children across the UK the opportunity to experience the gospel through specially designed lamb teddies, embedded with accessible Christian audio stories.**

The *Hope for All* project, led by Torch Trust, aims to distribute 200 of these faith-filled resources for free over the next two years, bringing encouragement and spiritual growth to children with sight loss.

The Torch Trust is a Christian charity with over 60 years of experience in providing accessible Christian resources and services for people with sight loss. The Trust also runs community groups and outreach initiatives to promote inclusion and faith development.

The cuddly lamb teddies feature high-quality audio from the beloved *Jesus*



*Storybook Bible*; they're designed to be soft, comforting, and user-friendly, with each lamb sharing the message of God's love in a format accessible to children and young people with visual impairments. The lambs also provide valuable sensory stimulation through their soft texture and audio storytelling – key elements for supporting emotional

well-being and development in children with sight loss. As well as lamb teddies and other audio, the Trust offers materials in formats such as Braille and large print.

Sarah Dawkins, CEO at Torch Trust, said, "Hope for All is about much more than a toy – it's about ensuring every child can engage with the gospel in a way that resonates with their needs and abilities. These lamb teddies symbolise faith, care, and the power of inclusion."

The project has been made possible through the generous funding of *Fight for Sight* – the UK's only grant-giving organisation funding both sustainable projects that deliver equity and science that brings prevention, treatment, and diagnosis within reach. The support from *Fight for Sight* ensures the lamb teddies can be provided free of charge to visually impaired children across the country, with a goal of inspiring faith and hope.

The teddies will be distributed in partnership with Christian charities, schools, churches, and sight loss agencies (SLAs) to ensure they reach the children who need them most.

**For more information visit:** [torchtrust.org/lamb](http://torchtrust.org/lamb)



Nativity at St Michael, Barnes.



Kings School, Kew: Journey to the Manger.



St Matthew, Croydon.



St George the Martyr, Southwark.

◀ Continued from page 1

## Jubilee: a testament to the ministry of churches

action against modern slavery and how to support older people in our communities. The 'Care for Creation' workshop encouraged churches to think about how they can act locally for climate justice.

There were also sessions on creating routes to help people out of poverty with sharing from the Revd Peter Wyatt on the outreach ministry at St Francis, Selsdon – which is seeking to build Christian community through social action.

Attendees found out about resources to help them in this work – such as the Recovery Course, which supports those with addictions, and the Difference Course, which focuses on navigating discussions across things that divide us.

People shared that they found the conference inspirational. One attendee said they were moved by, "seeing and hearing speakers talk about the Church as a power to effect change and fight unjust social structures."

Another said, "What I found most helpful were the workshops and all the presentations. It was a very insightful, brilliant, learning experience and heartwarming to see what God is doing in our lives as well as in our communities. I'm leaving with knowledge to go back and do something about it so that we as a Church can do better going forward."

There was also time to catch up with new people over lunch and more to engage



© William Horne.

with in the afternoon. A panel discussion was led by Racial Justice Officer Weisi Dennis, with panellists Richard Reddie from *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland* and Joseph Vambe from *Christian Aid*. This was followed by a presentation by Rosamund Kissi-Debrah who spoke about her daughter, Ella, who suffered a fatal asthma attack in which Rosamund spoke of the impact of air pollution on all our lives. The Revd Tracy Marlow and Rachel Marlow, Church Army Evangelist, shared with those gathered how their church is making a difference in their local estate community of St Helier.

Natalie Walters, Head of JPIC team, said, "Jubilee is a powerful biblical image that looks at how God asks for us to care for people and creation – and this conference was a challenge to all of us in so many different areas of life. It was wonderful to see so many people from across our diocese gathering to listen and grapple with what this means for them in their parishes. We are grateful for all the facilitators – with the range of voices on offer it was a challenge to choose our contributors."

Will Cookson, Director of Mission added, "I hope that others went away inspired and challenged as I was by all the contributors to the day."

*"We are grateful for the many ways churches are making a transformational impact on their parishes and wider communities. The conference was a snapshot of the ways and themes that parishes can engage with and the support available from the JPIC team."*

"The day was a great reminder and testament to the ministry of churches in Jesus' name and to persevere in sharing the gospel and serving the needs of the community in these changing times."

**If you were unable to make the conference there are further resources, links and follow-up sessions available on our diocesan website. For further information email:** [jpicaadmin@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:jpicaadmin@southwark.anglican.org)



# VOCATIONS

## Celebrating our Lay Ministers

Lay people undertake so many roles in our churches – some find their contributions are recognised, but others may rarely be thanked. How often do we say “thank you” or “well done” to those who arrange the flowers or make the tea and coffee or are welcomers at the door? These roles may not be seen as leadership roles, but they are vital to the life and welcome of our parishes – so it is good to recognise them and give thanks for their faithfulness.

Sunday 1 February will be a day of great celebration throughout the diocese as our parishes say “thank you” for the work of all Lay Ministers during our Celebration of Lay Ministries.

One of the ways that this can be done is by recognising those involved as Affirmed Lay Ministers. Affirmed Lay Ministry is parish-based – people are recognised in their parish as having an ability to undertake a role and are affirmed and empowered to do so. Some roles, such as being a member of the visiting team, working with the children and young people, leading the intercessions or reading in the service, will require training. This is also undertaken in the parish and when done, people can be affirmed using a short liturgy in the main Sunday service. Why not do that in February?

As well as Affirmed Lay Ministries, which we want to particularly highlight during this Season, there are also Commissioned and Licensed Lay Ministries. Commissioned Lay Ministries are nurtured in the parish, selected and trained at diocesan level and then commissioned by the Bishop. Commissioned Lay Ministers can move parishes within the diocese and if appropriate, take their ministry with them. Those who go forward for Licensed Lay Ministry are nurtured in the parish and they, too, are selected and trained in the diocese. Licensed by the Bishop, their ministry can be transferred if they move to another diocese.

Two lay ministers who serve our parishes, but who are at very different places on their Ministry journey are Lesley Marshall and Anne Beinomugisha.

On Sunday 2 November, St Catherine, Hatcham, was in a celebratory mood as friends and family from far and wide joined the congregation to celebrate Lesley’s 30 years in Reader ministry. All her ministry has been at St Catherine’s, and she started serving with youth work. On her first day



at the Church, Lesley was asked about her previous church involvement, and she said that she had been involved in children and youth ministry. St Catherine’s had just started children’s and youth work, and Lesley (pictured centre above) began to help straight away. It was during this time that she was asked to train as a Reader and, despite finding preaching daunting at first, she has been ministering as a Reader ever since. She has offered much to the community, having initially moved to the area to take up a role in social work – which has been a big part of her life.

Anne Beinomugisha (pictured below) is based at St Francis, Selsdon and has been involved in helping with youth work there for some time now. She has recently undertaken the Catalyst youth training course through Ridley Hall Cambridge, participating mostly online. At the end of October, she was Affirmed in the main Sunday service led by her Vicar, The Revd Peter Wyatt. It was great to be able to celebrate her work and affirm her for her future ministry.



As part of the Celebration of Lay Ministries, there will be worship suggestions and a liturgy of affirmation, all made available on the diocesan website before Christmas. They will help parishes to plan how best to give thanks to God for the work of their laity. Do please think about who you can give thanks for in your church and community. We also have a list of people who would be delighted to go out into our parishes to preach on that day or later in February. Please contact Helen Medland in the department of Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Ministerial Education via [helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org) to book someone.

**We would also love to hear your stories of celebrating your lay ministers, so that we can share them with others.**

## Lay ministry taster day

On Saturday 31 January, an open day will be held at Trinity House to offer people an opportunity to explore how God might be calling them to use their time and talents.

Drop in and speak to people who are already serving as lay ministers and find out more about lay ministry in our diocese.

There will be stalls championing Reader, pastoral, pioneer and children and youth ministries, as well as information on chaplaincy courses, Church Army evangelism and spiritual direction.

At 12 noon we will be joined by our guest speaker Adjoa Andoh, MBE, who is a professional actor, writer and director and licensed Reader in the Parish of Herne Hill. Over a career of almost 40 years, Adjoa has had many leading roles with the National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company – and is more recently best-known for playing Lady Danbury in the Netflix Series, Bridgerton. Join us for what will be an inspiring talk on vocation both on and off the screen.

To book your place visit: [learning@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:learning@southwark.anglican.org) and for more information on lay ministries, please contact the Venerable Carol Coslett by email: [carol.coslett@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:carol.coslett@southwark.anglican.org)



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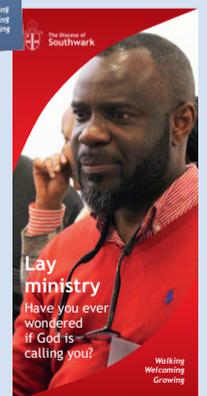
Adjoa Andoh MBE.



Licensing and commissioning of lay ministers in Southwark Cathedral, in October.

## 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 the Diocese. You can also contact Helen by email: [helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org)



Explore your call

Find out about Lay Ministries at: [tinyurl.com/4pwmwj9s](http://tinyurl.com/4pwmwj9s)



## NEWS FROM OUR DIOCESE

## Stories behind the stones: why truth-telling in sacred spaces matters for us all

**On Saturday 7 February 2026, the Diocese of Southwark will host a gathering entitled 'Truth-Telling in Sacred Spaces' at Southwark Cathedral – marking Racial Justice weekend with a bold and reflective programme.**

This event is not only for those communities directly impacted by the legacies of slavery, colonialism and racism – it is for everyone in our diocese who believes the Church must be a place of truth, welcome and belonging.

At the heart of this gathering is listening and reflecting on the stories behind the stones that make up our physical church environments. Our sacred spaces are not just places of worship – they are repositories of memory, shaped by rich histories that are often characterised by pain and hurt for those who have been oppressed. The stones of our buildings have witnessed centuries of faith – but also complicity in injustice. To understand these stories is to understand how our past continues to shape our present. And as scripture compels us, *'if we keep quiet, the stones will cry out!'* (Luke 19:40) – the narratives are irresistibly waiting to be told, and we must own and shape our collective stories, lest we risk them being hijacked by other agendas or whitewashed. Such honest and careful truth-telling is essential as we continue to steward our

sacred spaces in modern day worshipping and missional contexts.

This event invites us to confront uncomfortable truths – not to divide, but to seek healing. Through keynote addresses, storytelling and reflections from our parishes, we will explore how contested heritage affects worship, communities and witness. We will hear from voices across the Global Majority Heritage spectrum, including clergy, lay leaders, historians and theologians. We will also listen to how three parishes have engaged with the historical narratives and slavery-linked monuments within their local areas. We will reflect together on how reckoning with difficult histories and objects impacts our worship and mission today.

Beyond the day, there'll be opportunities for engagement with these stories through interacting with an exhibition curated by the Movement for Justice and Reconciliation ([mjr-uk.com/exhibition](http://mjr-uk.com/exhibition)) which explores the history of African chattel enslavement and the ongoing effects on the descendants of slavery. It seeks to answer the question: "What has this got to do with Britain today?". This exhibition will run from 6–13 February 2026, and will be open to all visitors to Southwark Cathedral.

Racial Justice Officer Weisi Dennis, said: "Why does this matter in our parish



contexts? Because mission begins with honesty. Because welcome must be rooted in justice. Because the Church is called to be a place where all can find transformation, healing and reconciliation. Whether you are someone of Global Majority Heritage, an ally, a parish priest, a lay leader, a member of a congregation or simply someone seeking to understand how faith responds to history – this gathering is for you."

The day will begin with fellowship and will offer facilitated conversations and

reflections on the historical contexts of our sacred spaces. A special choral eucharist, with music led by the choir from Croydon Minster, will take place in the evening, followed by a reception. It will be a space for lament, learning, and hope.

**Register now and be part of this vital conversation. Choose which modules to attend by viewing [tinyurl.com/4pdz5cm4](https://tinyurl.com/4pdz5cm4). Email [racial.justice@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:racial.justice@southwark.anglican.org) for information.**

## Bishop Rosemarie receives Honorary Fellowship from LSBU

**The Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon has received an Honorary Fellowship for leadership and service to the community from London South Bank University (LSBU).**

An honorary fellowship is one of Higher Education's most significant accolades awarded in recognition of an individual's outstanding achievement in a given field or profession.

### LSBU writes:

"Bishop Rosemarie's leadership extends beyond the Church of England. She is known for speaking out on poverty and social inequality, including calls for solidarity with the most vulnerable. Her

background as an academic, coupled with her deep pastoral sensitivity, enables her to bridge scholarship, faith, and social action in ways that empower communities and promote justice."

Read the full article here: [tinyurl.com/3ds579e6](https://tinyurl.com/3ds579e6)

Bishop Rosemarie said: "I'm honoured and humbled to have received an Honorary Fellowship from London South Bank University, in recognition of my service to the community and my leadership.

"I remain thankful to have been nominated for such a prestigious recognition from a university that I feel seeks to engage and encourage all people, whatever their circumstances and background, to strive and succeed.

"Thank you to LSBU for this incredible recognition."

Find out more about Bishop Rosemarie: [tinyurl.com/49w7vtye](https://tinyurl.com/49w7vtye)

**Bishop Rosemarie with The Right Honourable Sir Simon Hughes, Chancellor of South Bank University.**





## NEWS FROM OUR DIOCESE

## Healing the wounds of history

**The Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN) is a world-wide inter-denominational network of churches and other Christian organisations who share a commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation. The network believes it's possible to achieve this through seeking to heal the wounds of history, learning to live with difference, celebrating diversity and building a culture of peace.**

CCN has its roots in the post-war rebuilding and re-birth of Coventry Cathedral and takes as its inspiration the words of Jesus on the cross "Father forgive".

CCN partners engage with the challenges faced by many communities, believing that a just and inclusive society is crucial for stability and peace. Members of the CCN comprise a network of ordinary people who work to learn 'the things which make for peace and the skills to seek peace' and to pursue peace in their relationships and in our everyday lives.

On Monday 13 October the Community of the Cross of Nails hosted a working group at Southwark Cathedral.

**The Revd David M A Evans, Chair Southwark Cathedral Community of the Cross of Nails Working Group writes:**

How many of us have asked in recent times "But what can I do?" in the face of the polarised and increasingly divided and angry public and political discourse?

Addressing this question – "what is ours to do?" – is our aim. The event was facilitated by Rebecca Brierley from the St Ethelburga's Centre of Reconciliation and Peace. Our guest speaker, Jo Berry CBE, shared something of her story of reconciliation with Patrick Magee – the IRA bomber who planted the bomb at the 1984 Brighton Tory Party Conference which killed her father Sir Anthony Berry. During the event, participants explored the habits of reconcilers, using the *12 Habits of Reconcilers* tool developed by the Rose Castle Foundation – an innovative organisation that equips tomorrow's leaders with skills, tools, and habits needed to transform conflict.

If your church would like to consider becoming a member of the Community of the Cross of Nails – a network of over 250 churches and institutions around the world – please visit: [tinyurl.com/3z7j9997](http://tinyurl.com/3z7j9997)



Cross of Nails, Southwark Cathedral.

## Flourishing young leaders

**Flourish is a vibrant and growing movement that's enabling the creation of worshipping communities in schools, creating spaces where children and young people can encounter God, grow in their faith, and develop leadership skills. At The Good Shepherd, Lee – working in partnership with Trinity Secondary School, Lewisham – Sonnet Kelly, Flourish Minister, is present in school 24 hours each week. Sonnet writes about the recent student-led prayer stations:**

As the *Flourish* Minister, I have the privilege and honour to be a facilitator

of intergenerational worship and young leadership. There are currently four *Flourish* young leaders in the *Flourish* group and through their leadership we held a parents and carers breakfast in the church which was fully planned, prepped and facilitated by these incredible young people. We set up three prayer stations in the church, for parents and carers to come together to pray for themselves, their children and the school community. Adverts were sent via email and text message, and the event was publicised in the school newsletter.

Breakfast was provided and the three prayer stations were: 'Bind us Together', 'Just Be' and the 'Prayer Bowl'. One of the proposals of the *Flourish* pilot is Children and Young People (CYP) are more likely to flourish in their Christian spirituality if the school and church together hold a worshipping community in and for the school. One young leader commented saying, "*Flourish* young leaders work in unison, strengthen one another's faith and lead efficiently". Another stated that "the

impact that I think I am having as a young leader and not an adult is that I might encourage others to have faith in Christ and trust Him."

The first prayer station was prayer weaving. Adults were led through the activity by the young leader and were told "as you weave your prayer into the 'fabric' of the other prayers prayed by our community for Trinity School, remember, you are part a rich tapestry which is God's community of believers. Our Heavenly Father hears you and welcomes you and loves you."

Our second station – again led entirely by two young leaders, entitled: 'Be Still' was focused on the verse 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10). Adults were encouraged to take some time away from the chaos and noise of the world: "There is a reason why we are called human beings and not human doings" was part of the young leader's explanation. The adults were encouraged to get comfortable on the large beanbags and take some time to hear from God.

Prayer Bowl was the final prayer station and an exploration of what prayer is and how to pray – our school just like our Jesus, is for everybody and we have families of all faiths and none so the young leaders felt it important to guide the adults who were unfamiliar with prayer through a simple way to pray, "Christians believe that no prayer is too big nor too small. God hears and receives them all", was the encouragement from the *Flourish* young leader.

All the adults – including some clergy who attended – were then led in our sung worship by the *Flourish* young leaders. All those in attendance agreed that the young leaders did a fantastic job and blessed us with their leadership and guidance – a second proposal of the *Flourish* pilot – that CYP are more likely to engage with an exploration of worship if they or their peers are given genuine agency in the shaping, practice, content and leadership of that worshipping community – was clearly explored during our *Flourish* prayer breakfast. The young leaders are keen to do another prayer breakfast for the pupils of the school and their parents and carers.

*"I really pray this inspires other churches to strengthen their church and school connections and to try something similar – you won't be disappointed!"*

Read more about *Flourish* at The Good Shepherd, Lee and St Mark's Kennington here: [tinyurl.com/2v5x9yjt](http://tinyurl.com/2v5x9yjt)

If you would like more information about the *Flourish* programme, please contact the diocesan staff team on [cypadmin@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:cypadmin@southwark.anglican.org)



Students lead collective worship.

## NEWS FROM OUR PARISHES



## Wrapping up for winter

**Emma Rush, parishioner at St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton writes:**

One of the Church of England's 'Five Marks of Mission' tasks us with striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. The inability to do everything does not mean we should do nothing and as part of our commitment to caring for the environment, we took up a new parish project with *WrapUp London*.

*WrapUp London* is one of the largest charity campaigns to collect, transport, sort and distribute thousands of pre-loved warm coats to help those facing a harsh winter.

Through coordinating winter coat collections, it gave us a means of reducing clothing going into landfill and is a way of preaching the gospel through action, as well as opportunity to join with another church in our area.

During the week, people dropped coats off and on Saturdays, our team of volunteers collected coats. This project became a literal and figurative way of

opening the doors of the Church and engaging with the community.

It didn't take a lot of time or resources, thanks to partnership work with the charity, which provides large sacks for collecting the coats and a depot to drop them off.

Since starting, an estimated 300 coats have been given to those in need, including people who are homeless, those in women's refuges and the Salvation Army clients.

It was wonderful to see St Mark's Church advertised amongst the pubs and fire stations participating and it would be even more wonderful to see other churches from across our diocese there next year.

If you can help in any way, please get in touch via email at [surbitonchurchoffice@gmail.com](mailto:surbitonchurchoffice@gmail.com) and if you're interested in taking part in *WrapUp London 2026*, contact [onwulvolunteers@handsonlondon.org.uk](mailto:onwulvolunteers@handsonlondon.org.uk)

## Celebrating 70 and a century

**On 15 October, Alan and Shirley Lidbury celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary at St Mildred, Addiscombe – a month after Alan had celebrated his 100th birthday. They have known each other for 72 years and still attend church regularly.**

The 10am service at 19 October included one of the hymns from their wedding day, 'Love Divine, All Loves Excelling' and the Revd Neil Brunskill, Vicar at St Mildred's, gave them a special blessing, before presenting them with a basket of flowers and a card signed by members of the congregation.



**Cutting their cake on their wedding day and on their 70th anniversary.**

The pair received congratulatory messages from the King and Queen and enjoyed special celebrations with their family and friends.

## Mortlake milestone

**In 1975 the parish of Mortlake with East Sheen was established as the first team ministry in Southwark Diocese.**

To mark the 50th anniversary of the ministry, Bishop Christopher led a joyful congregation from St Mary, Christ Church and All Saints in the presence of guests and the Deputy Mayor of Richmond, Cllr Claire Vollum in a service of celebration and thanksgiving. Previous clergy from the team returned and the service featured music written in the parish. A foreword for the service was written by Bishop Guli Francis Dehqani – former assistant curate at the parish and now Bishop of Chelmsford.

Speaking about the celebrations, The Revd Jonathan Haynes, Team Rector, said, "Wonderful to look back over the history (which is far longer than 50 years) of the parish and our focus is on today and the



future – a future of sharing and celebrating God's goodness and rejoicing in signs of growth across the team ministry as we serve and love one another."



**Participants get set-up to SleepOut in zero degree temperatures.**

## Big night out, bigger difference

**This year the Robes Project celebrated 15 years of its annual SleepOut at Southwark Cathedral.**

On 21 November, almost 90 people of all ages registered to take part in a big *SleepOut* in the cathedral churchyard to raise money for its winter shelter – helping to alleviate local homelessness. Through its night shelters, Robes provide meals, support and a safe and warm night's sleep for homeless people from November through March.

Its major fundraising event of the year, the night was jam-packed with entertainment, featuring a surprise musical performance from the *Southwark Cathedral Lay Clerks*, a conversation about pilgrimage, homelessness and

meaning between Guy Stagg, author of *The Crossway* and the Very Revd Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark, plus a range of music selections from the *LondonSings!* community choir and a performance from *Shalom Chorale* gospel choir.

With over 550 volunteers across south London to help host the winter night shelters, the Project is also dedicated to providing services and support to help people find employment and permanent housing with dignity. The cost of running the charity is £400,000 each year and thanks to generous donations, Robes continues to make a difference to those rough sleeping in Southwark and Lambeth.

**For more information about the Robes Project, please visit: [robes.org.uk/sleepout-robes](http://robes.org.uk/sleepout-robes)**

## 2025 Statistics for Mission and October Count

The *Online Parish Returns System* which we use for capturing church membership data – also known as Statistics for Mission or the congregational count – is now open and is ready to accept data for 2025 including the October Count. The system is open until 31 January 2026, and we encourage parishes to complete the form, which can be accessed online: [parishreturns.churchofengland.org](http://parishreturns.churchofengland.org)

If you have any queries or need help accessing the form, please contact the Diocesan Data team at: [data@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:data@southwark.anglican.org)

## Revision to guidance on storage of parish files

We are pleased to announce that the revised Record Retention Schedule is now published and is available on the Church of England website for Incumbents and church officers: [tinyurl.com/fx8hdzxw](http://tinyurl.com/fx8hdzxw)

You will notice some changes. The former Records Retention Policy is now called the Records Retention Schedule and it no longer has the primary record holder column, as few records were the responsibility of just one church body. We recommend downloading a new copy each time you need to use the Records Retention Schedule as further changes are expected.



# Investing in supporting parish-led mission

*In our series unpacking the priorities of the Southwark Vision, Andrew Dickinson writes...*

I joined Southwark Diocese as Strategic Lead in May this year and upon my arrival, I hoped to use my experience to help our diocese drive forward its work in parish investment through the Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) – as well as championing racial justice, and delivering on our ambitions for net zero. Six months later-entering this Advent season of reflection and hopeful expectation – I write filled with hope and gratitude.

Since joining, I have continually encountered the creative, renewing work of the Holy Spirit across our parishes in small and large ways. Through Parish Conversations – our diocesan initiative that started in Autumn 2024, – I have been encouraged to hear how parishes across Southwark are seeking to proclaim the gospel, serve their communities, challenge injustice, and act as faithful stewards in increasingly difficult times. I have met with parishes championing racial justice through photography in Clapham, sat with 20–30-year-olds rediscovering their relationship with Church in Waterloo, heard of faith-based conversations in Reigate pubs hosted by

our clergy. I give thanks that the Diocese of Southwark overflows with people living out the calling of God on their lives.

Our investment programme has been helping to galvanise this parish-led mission and since its implementation we have significantly increased our reach and are now **working with over 120 parishes across the diocese**.

We are delighted that St Peter's Brockley, one of our Resourcing Churches, has grown its children's ministry to host the largest number of children and young people in the country. In the face of growing racial injustice, we are proud to support a Hub for Farsi Ministry in Christ Church, Gipsy Hill, championing effective work with refugee communities locally and nationally.

We were delighted to welcome our first cohort of **four children and young people's (CYP) apprentices**, all of whom are now working in our parishes. We pray for them as they develop their vocation and hope that through this programme we can help address the long-term shortage of CYP workers which parishes find so challenging. In response to high demand from parishes and an excellent response in our recruitment we have made the decision to accelerate

this work and will be recruiting a further cohort of apprentices in 2026.

Evan, Apprentice, St Luke's Woodside, said:

*"I feel incredibly grateful to be in a lively, committed, and faithful Anglo-Catholic church that is also heavily involved in the community and highly socially conscious. I feel like my ideas are valued and I'm being given lots of opportunities to learn and develop in my faith, practice and vocation."*

In the face of an increasingly challenging financial outlook for our churches, we have welcomed **two specialist fundraisers** into the diocesan staff team. They have already engaged with **55** different churches in the past few months.

We have invested further in creating opportunities for parishes to share and explore missional ideas and equipping our leaders to prayerfully discern how to use the tools they have been given to serve the Kingdom and our communities. This year we launched the Estates Network, supported by The Revd Canon Gary Jenkins, our Dean of Estates Ministry and Springfield Hub Church. Our Parish Development and Renewal programme – a two-year learning initiative where lay and ordained leaders will work with a number of other parishes to learn from one



**Youth Ministry in Communion, a funded initiative by our diocese.**

another – welcomed its first cohort of five parishes, and we hope to have enabled a quarter of the diocese to engage with this support by 2033.

Araba Ababio, a Parish Development and Renewal Programme participant, said:

*"I want to reach out to other leaders in the Church, to create a community, understand what others are doing and take that back to my church."*

As we enter the third year of our investment programme, we are aware that the resources we have are ever more precious. We will continue to support ever more parishes and we'll continue to invest in the long-term future of children's work in Southwark through our next Apprenticeship cohort, as we seek parishes to host them. We will continue to work with and accompany parishes to develop creative ideas for mission which can be shared with others in our diocese.

I hope and pray, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that the seeds we are sowing may continue to produce a bountiful harvest in the years to come.

*Andrew Dickinson is the Diocesan Strategic Lead for Vision and Change. If you would like to learn more about the work and impact of our Strategic Investment Programme for parishes, please get in touch: [strategicdevelopment@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:strategicdevelopment@southwark.anglican.org)*

**Details of Southwark Vision and the core document can be downloaded at: [southwark.anglican.org/southwark-vision](https://southwark.anglican.org/southwark-vision)**



**The Venerable Simon Gates**  
Archdeacon of Lambeth

# LET US PRAY

The season of Advent is one of my favourites. It comes in the UK at a time when everything is dark, the skies are grey and the daylight short, we go to work in the dark and come home in the dark. While the rest of the world seems to think Advent Sunday is the start of Christmas, it's party season after all and shopping is *de rigour*: Christians hold back; celebrate yes, but not yet...

We seem out of step with everyone else. After all it's our New Year, we begin our liturgical calendar – not on 1 January but 1 December. We start our year by rooting it in hope. We're not optimistic that "everything is going to be just fine, thank you". Nor are we pessimistic: "everything is just getting worse, look at the news and the state of our world." Christian hope, as Revd Prof

Simon Oliver once said, doesn't play the odds, it's not about whether things are likely to happen or not. After all, there is quite a lot of the unlikely: Elizabeth in her old age conceiving, Mary in her youth conceiving, a man raising from the dead. Rather, Christian hope is placed in a person, Jesus, and his return and full reign and rule. Advent is the Latin word for 'coming' or 'arrival', and as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' coming as a baby and we look back, so also we look forward and celebrate his second coming at the end of all things.

Advent invites us to watch and wait, for we live in the in between times. To see signs of the Kingdom coming among us now. To prepare to live lives reflecting the Kingdom and its values. To see Jesus' coming to us today.

Advent calls us to be out of step with the rest of the world with its consumerism and rushing pace, and as we pray "Your Kingdom come" in the Lord's prayer, take some time to prepare to receive afresh the coming of our Lord Jesus: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus.

## Advent Prayer

*Gracious God,  
As we enter this season of Advent,  
we turn our hearts to you in quiet expectation.  
In the midst of darkness, we wait for your light.*

*In the stillness, we prepare for your coming.*

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
You came in humility, born among us in a stable.*

*Come again into our lives with hope and peace.*

*Help us to make room for you – in our hearts, our homes, and our world.*

*By your Spirit, teach us to watch and to pray,  
to love and to serve,  
that we may be ready to greet you when you come again in glory.*

*Come, Lord Jesus, come.*

**Amen.**

# WHAT'S ON



## December

### SUNDAY 21 DECEMBER

🎵 **STREATHAM** – Nine lessons and carols sung by the St Peter’s Church Choir. 6.30–7.30pm at St Peter’s Church, Leigham Court Road, Streatham SW16 2SD. Free. Details: [stpeters-streatham.org](http://stpeters-streatham.org)

### 24 DECEMBER

🎵 **PETERSHAM** – Carols by candlelight, between readings and prayers which follow the Christmas story. With Choral Scholars and members of the Elysian Singers performing songs and music. 5pm at St Peter’s, Church Lane, TW10 7AB.

## January 2026

### SATURDAY 17 JANUARY

🎵 **STREATHAM** – Organ recital, Norman Harper. 5–6pm at St Peter’s Church, Leigham Court Road, Streatham SW16 2SD. Details: [stpeters-streatham.org](http://stpeters-streatham.org)

### SATURDAY 31 JANUARY

\* **SOUTHWARK** – Diocese *Lay Ministry Taster Day*: Come and find out more about the different types of ministries including Pastoral, Reader, Pioneer, Church Army and Children and Young People. Guest speaker Adjoa Andoh MBE – actor, writer, director, and Licensed Reader (Parish of Herne Hill). 10am–2pm, at Trinity House, SE1 1HW. For details or to register, email [learning@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:learning@southwark.anglican.org)

## February 2026

### SATURDAY 7 FEBRUARY

\* **SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL** – *Truth-telling in sacred spaces*. A diocesan gathering on church heritage and historical injustice. Join us to reflect on the Church of England’s role in transatlantic chattel enslavement, recognise that our buildings bear witness to the history of the Church’s conflicted heritage, and affirm our callings within these sacred spaces. Free. Register for which modules to attend throughout the day: [tinyurl.com/4pdz5cm4](http://tinyurl.com/4pdz5cm4)

## Truth-telling in sacred spaces

“If we keep quiet, the stones will cry out!” Luke 19:40

Saturday 7 February 2026  
Southwark Cathedral

A diocesan gathering on church heritage and historical injustice. Join us to reflect on the Church of England’s role in transatlantic chattel enslavement, recognise that our buildings bear witness to the history of the Church’s conflicted heritage, and affirm our callings within these sacred spaces.

Choose which modules to attend (scan QR code):

- Global Majority Heritage gathering and keynote address (12 noon–2.30 pm)
- Exploration of sacred spaces and their stories (3–5:30 pm)
- Holy Communion service (5.30–6.30 pm)
- Evening reception (6:30–9 pm)



The Diocese of Southwark

Christ Centred | Outward Focused

Scan to register



From 2026, when *The Bridge* becomes quarterly, ‘What’s on’ will change to ‘Events’ for the printed version. If you would like your events listed they will need to be shared with us well in advance for inclusion in our new quarterly publication.





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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

## Southwark Ecumenical Pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi: 2–9 March 2026

Ecumenical Pilgrimage for the Diocese of Southwark and the Archdiocese of Southwark. Led by The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, and Bishop Paul Hendricks, Auxiliary Bishop for the Kent Area of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark. Four nights in Rome, three nights in Assisi and return flights.



Costs, details and booking: [tinyurl.com/3x99cuxy](http://tinyurl.com/3x99cuxy)

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](mailto:bridge@southwark.anglican.org)

# THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK'S LENT CALL 2026



*“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.”*

*Proverbs 22:6*



The Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call for 2026 asks you to pray for and raise money to support projects that focus on the work of schools that will help benefit children and young people to flourish here in our diocese and in our link dioceses in Zimbabwe and Jerusalem.



Visit our website to find out how you can become involved and help: [southwark.anglican.org/lentcall](https://southwark.anglican.org/lentcall)



HOW TO DONATE