



The BRIDGE

Magazine of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark Vol.31 No.3

Christ
Centred
Outward
Focused



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The BRIDGE

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Members of St Margaret,
Chipstead passed round
a purple ribbon as they
prayed for our new
bishop. See page 16.



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VIEW FROM...

Bishop Christopher's valedictory Eucharist at Southwark Cathedral in July was very moving. He handed on the symbols of office, and we said our formal and fond farewells, expressing our love and gratitude in thanksgiving for our journey together with him, and confident in our hope for the future.

Now I am charged, as acting Bishop of Southwark, to exercise all the functions of Southwark's Diocesan Bishop until a new Bishop takes up office – God willing, towards the end of 2027.

Across the following pages you will find much reason for encouragement and inspiration – from the stories of creative, dedicated and joyful mission in our parishes to celebrating the diversity of our communities and affirming the gifts of all God's people. These are stories that speak powerfully to who we are in God – and to where he calls us to love, act and pray.

The Gospel makes real-world claims about racial and social justice, about how we order our lives together, and we each can play our part – however small it may seem – always acting with compassion and kindness. In this next season of our life together – an in-between, neither-this-nor-that season – there is much to be thankful for, despite the many challenges that our churches and communities face.

As we wrestle with the present and look to the future together, may we hold fast to Christ and all that he calls us to do and be. May we use this time to reflect, refresh and re-fuel for the journey ahead.

The Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett

Bishop of Croydon and Acting Bishop of Southwark

Waving goodbye to Wendy

In September, the Revd Canon Wendy Robins, Director of Discipleship and Ministry retired after 34 years of faithful service to our diocese. In a blog post on our website, Read more here: southwark.anglican.org/blogs



Over the years, Wendy served in a number of different roles. In 1992, Wendy became the Diocese's Director of Communications and Resources and was charged with launching a brand new diocesan newspaper – *The Bridge* – among many other key

responsibilities and alongside her ministry as a self-supporting priest. We wish Wendy well as she retires and give thanks for her service.

Black History Month: worship, learn, listen and celebrate with us!

This year, our Black History Month celebration service, in partnership with the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education, took place on Saturday 3 October at Southwark Cathedral.

Focused on 'Honouring our Communities and Sharing our Stories', during the event, we featured our parishes, chaplaincies, school groups and Christian initiatives who 'live life abundantly' (John 10:10) by making a positive difference in the lives of black-led/black-majority communities across our diocese. Bishop Rosemarie presided and the address was given by Joseph Vambe, Church Relations Manager at Christian Aid.

There were also performances by the Archbishop Tenison's School Gospel choir,

Choir from St Michael's CofE Primary School and drummers from St Paul's Church, Brixton.

Congratulations to all the Community Honours Awardees and shortlisted nominees – honoured for their work shared during the service and presented with an award. You can read more and catch up on the service and presentations here: southwark.anglican.org/black-history-month

Look out for more Black History Month events taking place throughout October and across the diocese on our website, Facebook and Instagram.



Creating churches where everyone belongs and flourishes

We're launching a pilot partnership with charity Growing Hope.



The Church is called to reflect the beauty and diversity

of God's creation. Disabled and neurodivergent people are not simply welcome in our churches; they are an essential part of the Body of Christ, bringing unique gifts, insights, and experiences that enrich our communities.

Yet many people still encounter barriers to full participation in church life. Accessibility is about more than buildings and facilities. It is about creating communities where everyone feels valued, included, and able to contribute. True belonging means recognising that every person is made in the image of God and has a place in the life, worship, and mission of the Church.

“Accessibility is about more than buildings and facilities.”

When churches become places where disabled and neurodivergent people can

flourish, the whole church flourishes. We all benefit from communities that embrace different ways of thinking, communicating, worshipping, and engaging with the world.

To support this vision, our diocese is launching a pilot partnership with the charity *Growing Hope*. Through specialist training, accessibility audits, and an accessibility awards programme, churches will be equipped to identify and remove barriers, strengthen inclusion, and develop welcoming environments for all.

This partnership is about more than meeting standards. It is about fostering a culture of belonging, listening to lived experience, and recognising the gifts that disabled and neurodivergent people bring to our churches.

The Rt Revd Alastair Cutting, Bishop of Woolwich and lead bishop for those living with disabilities said, “We are delighted to be partnering with *Growing Hope*, helping us enrich our welcome to all, and especially making our churches more accessible to those with disabilities, visible or hidden.”

Together, we can build communities where everyone is welcomed, everyone is valued, and everyone has the opportunity to flourish in faith and fellowship.

Whether your church is just beginning to think about accessibility or is looking to build on existing good practice, *Growing Hope* can help you identify the right next step.

Additional provision is available through our Area Disability Advisors who are able to provide support as well as resources on our diocesan website.

We encourage every church to consider how this opportunity can help ensure that all children, young people and families are able to participate fully in the life of the Church.

To find out more or to register your interest, visit: tinyurl.com/ymnv4s9x

For further information on *Growing Hope*, to find out more about the disability work in the diocese, or get in touch with your Episcopal Area Disability Advisor please contact the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Team at jpicadmin@southwark.anglican.org



Bishop Martin, the Rt Revd Cleophas Lunga, Bishop of Matabeleland and Vicar at St Laurence, Catford (centre) and Bishop of Botswana, The Rt Revd Metlhayotlhe Rawlings Beleme (left).

73 years of the Diocese of Matabeleland

On a recent visit to our oldest Diocesan Link – The Anglican Diocese of Zimbabwe – the Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston and colleagues joined parishes, schools and the Mothers' Union for a series of events in celebration of the 73rd

anniversary of the Diocese of Matabeleland. In a post on Instagram, Bishop Martin said, “We pray for our fellow pilgrims in Christ in Matabeleland, giving thanks for all that has been and looking ahead to what is to come.”



CELEBRATION OF LAY MINISTRIES

The Celebration of Lay Ministries is an opportunity to recognise the service of Lay Ministers in your parish or context and offer them support and encouragement in their ministries. Lay Ministers contribute to the vibrant life of the parish community and often inspire others to discern how God might be calling them to offer themselves.

This year, we have offered two opportunities in our diocese to celebrate our Lay Ministers. The first of these was on Sunday 1 February 2026 on Candlemas and the second is on Sunday 18 October, to follow the licensing and commissioning service for Lay Ministers being held on Saturday 11 October at Southwark Cathedral.

There are resources and materials available on our website, which we hope will help you to celebrate your laity and all that they do in your church.

You will find:

- Ideas on how to celebrate Lay Ministry.
- Service outline for thanksgiving for the gift of Lay Ministry.
- Re-commitment pledge for Lay Ministers to be used during the service.
- General intercessions for Lay Ministry.
- Communications/ Announcements to advertise the theme of the day.

These materials can be used at any time, although we hope that you will feel encouraged to use them on 18 October as an opportunity to welcome and pray for your new lay ministers.

Members of the Discipleship and Ministry team and Lay Ministers can be available to come to preach at a special service throughout February. Contact Helen Medland: helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org to enquire.

For more information about the Celebration of Lay Ministries visit:
southwark.anglican.org/lay-ministries

Above: 65 years of Pastoral Lay Ministry in our diocese was celebrated at All Saints, West Dulwich.

A joyous occasion

On Saturday 12 September, a service to celebrate 65 years of Pastoral Lay Ministry in our diocese took place at All Saints, West Dulwich. The service was an opportunity to give thanks for pastoral lay ministers and all they do. Bishop Rosemarie presided and preached.

Wendy Stephens said, "It was a lovely joyous occasion, and I especially liked the fact that

many retired SPAs (Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries, now known as Commissioned Pastoral Lay Ministers) joined us. We are a band that stays together and I hope moving forward there will be more opportunities for all to come and enjoy each other's company and share stories."

"I especially liked the fact that many retired SPAs joined us. We are a band that stays together."



Pastoral affirmation

We are committed to encouraging more lay ministry and vocations and have a wide range of recognised lay ministries across the diocese. Affirmed ministries are locally driven and respond to local need – often involved with partner organisations in the community. Training takes place within the parish and can be in the form of a day-long course or a course that lasts a few weeks.

After successfully completing their training, 14 people were affirmed in pastoral ministry during a special service at Christ Church, Purley. The service was led by The Venerable Carol Coslett, Assistant Director of Lay Ministry over the summer. Jenny Hird, Commissioned Pastoral Lay Minister shares her reflections on the service and celebrates the team of affirmed ministers at her church.

Jenny writes:

It was a delight to have 14 people be affirmed in Pastoral Ministry. They all received a badge and a certificate.

Their training was led by our then Vicar, the Revd Doug McHardie. He led two sessions, one in the afternoon and another in the evening to suit all, which ran over some months. We also trained with people from other churches. The main areas of focus throughout the course where presence, provision, prayer, life, death and struggle, bereavement, practical skills and looking after yourself. In addition, we heard from external speakers on good listening skills, bereavement and mental health. We also discussed many case studies, which was very useful and informative.



I feel it is important to use individual gifts in the area of pastoral care. Pastoral ministers at our church are

involved in bereavement support, some are actively listening in our coffee shop foyer, while others are visiting our seniors – often in care homes. All have now been given official recognition to administer communion at home too. We meet as a group once a month for feedback on our ministry and undertake any training.

I give thanks to God for our team, especially after a long time of being just two of us!



STAINED GLASS AND LYCRA

Almost twenty years ago, Martin Grant-Hudson a keen cyclist and member of St Barnabas, Dulwich, set up Holy Rollers – a cycling group that meets early on a Saturday morning, getting the weekend off to a great start. Martin’s vision has done just that and more, with members drawn from the parish and local community who venture into Kent and way beyond, as well as raising funds for local charities. However, there is one thing that Holy Rollers has lacked: its own cycling jersey.

Holy Roller, Andrew Gould said, “We were keen to have a jersey that reflected both St Barnabas and the club’s activities. The church has a contemporary design unlike most others in the diocese. It is bright and airy: visit on a sunny morning and you will be greeted by glorious patterns of light dancing on the brickwork as it passes through the stained glass artwork *Project Phoenix*, designed by Caroline Swash. With the expert help of the team at Lusso – the cycling clothing company in Manchester – these patterns provided the canvas from which the concept was transformed into reality. The front

boldly displays the obligatory club name, complemented by a newly-created logo. The left sleeve displays the three local charities; St Christopher’s Hospice, Link Age and Pecan for whom we have raised funds. The right sleeve has the St Barnabas logo. Cyclists do not always have the best relationship with motorists, so the strapline ‘Bless you for your patience’ completes the design on the back of the jersey. Only time will tell how well this is received!”

This unique cycling jersey gives the club a recognisable identity and the design that reflects the ethos and history of St Barnabas.

“It may have taken almost twenty years, but the wait has been worth it.”

For more information visit:
stbarnabasdulwich.org/holy-rollers



Holy Rollers setting out in their jerseys which were inspired by the *Project Phoenix* stained glass window.



Barnes charity bike sale raises £20K

On Saturday 12 September, St Mary, Barnes held its 19th annual Barnes Charity Bike Sale.

Since mid-August, a team of around 24 volunteers has been working hard to refurbish bikes that had been generously donated to the church for onward sale in aid of charity.

Judy Gowing, PCC member said, "By Saturday 12 September, we had 200 bikes of all shapes and sizes to sell, from children's, teens and adult bikes to top-end racing bikes and children's princess balance bikes with pink ribbons!

There was a queue of around 160 people before we opened the gates and everybody who bought a bike got a bargain and went home happy. We sold the vast majority within two hours.

"The bike sale is a wonderful exercise in sustainability. It encourages people to clear out their garages and sheds and save their bikes from the dump. We clean them up and give them some TLC before sending them to a new home and a new lease of life."

This year's bike sale raised £20,000, which will be shared

between St Mary's Barnes, Castelnau Community Centre, Disasters Emergency Committee, Under Tree Schools and the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund.

For more information visit:
stmarybarnes.org

"The bike sale is a wonderful exercise in sustainability."



Top: Locals queue for bargain bikes. Left: 200 donated bikes awaiting sale. Right: The team of volunteers who helped get the show on the road.



MAPPING CROYDON'S BLACK HISTORY

For a number of years, the Church of England has held a commitment to understand its own historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery, seeking to learn from the past and address issues of racial justice in society today.

Within Southwark Diocese, research has been carried out within the Croydon Episcopal Area to map Croydon's black history and local church connections to the historic slave trade.

Stephanie Offer, independent researcher and community historian writes:

Three years ago, following conversations with Bishop Rosemarie Mallett (Bishop of Croydon) I began researching what links the Church of England in Croydon, particularly the Croydon Minster church, had to African chattel enslavement. My expectation, having previously done some brief research on the subject, was

there might be a few individuals yet they would likely be hard to find.

However, what emerged is a large, complex network of people involved in every aspect of African chattel enslavement and its wider economy spanning the 17th to 19th centuries – as well as glimpses into the lives of Black 'Croydonians', both enslaved and free.

Four of the five vicars of Croydon between 1765 and 1879 had family links to African chattel enslavement – for only 23 years in that time did the priest not have such links. The first, Revd East Apthorp (portrait above) was from Boston, Massachusetts. His family were deeply involved in slavery and had enslaved domestic servants. However, enslavement was not only happening thousands of miles from Croydon; in 1765 one of the first people Apthorp baptised at the Minster was a black man named Charles, who had been enslaved by Apthorp's brother John.

A decade earlier, an enslaved man named John Baker, who lived by Waddon Ponds, had been baptised at the Minster and in 1722 an enslaved woman, Judeth Timmothey – who lived on the High Street near what is now the Croydon flyover – was buried at the Minster. Tragically, in January 1762, a young, enslaved man who had escaped his enslaver's ship on the Thames was found rough sleeping at Coulsdon – it was only when he developed gangrene in both feet that the Coulsdon and Croydon parish authorities agreed to help him.

Croydon's Black history actually stretches back even further to 1502, when two North African women who had been enslaved in Spain came to live with the widowed Katherine of Aragon at the Archbishop's Palace next to the Minster. They returned in 1509 when Katherine and her new husband visited Croydon, heralded by black royal trumpeter John Blanke.

Historically, enslavers were part of the life of the Church. They were baptised, married and buried at the Minster and involved in its finances. In 1808, the year after Alexander Caldcleugh trafficked 377 enslaved people across the Atlantic on his ship 'The Croydon', a plaque was mounted on the church walls recording repairs he had funded. Nearly 60 years later – when the Minster burnt down in 1867 – nearly 20% of the money for the restoration came from people with links to African chattel enslavement.

My research shows that the Church of England's financial links to African chattel enslavement were not limited to the South Sea Company or Queen Anne's Bounty; but that substantial sums also entered the Church at parish level. It also indicates that enslavers, both clergy and lay, and enslaved people were present, not only in the Caribbean and the Americas, but in many seemingly ordinary parishes across Britain. Croydon Minster was therefore not exceptional: this network of enslavers extended beyond the parish and the diocese, forming part of the social and financial life of many church communities across the country.



Head of a Man, John Singleton Copley. © Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund.

Page 10: Portrait of John Apthorp (1730–1772) of Boston and his daughters, who's family were deeply involved in African chattel enslavement.

Above: John Singleton Copley, who is buried at Croydon Minster painted the above portrait, he was given enslaved people – Lucy, Cato and a child named Snap – as a wedding present.

Below: Croydon Minster.



© Eve Milner.



YMIC GOES TO TAIZÉ

Over the summer, a team from Youth Ministry in Communion (YMIC) went on pilgrimage to Taizé. The group – which included 28 young people, alongside YMIC staff and the Bishop of Kingston, the Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, embarked on an eight-day trip to join 3,000 young people from across the world in worship and reflection.

The community of Taizé is an ecumenical order of monks who invite young people to spend a week living alongside the brothers and join their life of prayer, silence, and community. During the pilgrimage, the brothers invited the group to reflect on the words of Jesus to Mary Magdalene ‘what are you seeking?’ – a theme that led them throughout the week as they shared with others about life and faith.

Bishop Martin described Taizé as “a place of encounter, encounter with the living Christ and with one another”. A number of young people shared the impact the pilgrimage has had on them. One young person said, “It’s helped me to realise I need more time for myself, to breathe, to speak to God during that eight minutes of silence. It also helped me to understand that the church isn’t about the building

“It’s helped me to realise I need more time for myself, to breathe, to speak to God...”

but about the people and the community of the church. It helped me to pray to God more than twice or three times a day as well!”

Another added, “I have realised that my faith is stronger than I had previously thought... there is so much more to life than just screens and education.” Another said, “I believe I have grown and learned in Taizé from having more patience, being honest and to help serve”.

Br Matthew, the prior of Taizé, thanked all for their “humble pilgrim presence.”

Look out for a video from the YMIC trip, which will shortly be released alongside details of next year’s pilgrimage. For more information and to find out how you can engage with YMIC, visit: ymic-southwark.org, follow on Instagram @ymicsouthwark or email the Revd Fr Kieron Rowley, Director of YMIC: kieron.rowley@parishofputney.co.uk

Young people from across the diocese joined the community of Taizé for a week of prayer, silence and community.

Wilma the Whale on tour

This summer the 'Shipwrecked' Holiday Club at Holy Trinity, Redhill, became home to a four metre long papier-mâché blue whale named Wilma.

Lesley-Anne Clegg, Church Administrator said, "Wilma the Whale helped us to tell the story of Jonah – pointing us to Jesus the greater messenger and rescuer! Our church has been meeting at St Bede's School on Sunday mornings whilst we're going through a building project, so our final day of

holiday club was in the school and we couldn't do it without Wilma. The solution was to carry her there and back on the shoulders of some of the kids, parents and leaders who had been involved in Shipwrecked.

"Car drivers slowed down, some rubbing their eyes in disbelief, whilst those carrying her stopped for regular rests! Wilma has since appeared at the Belfry Shopping Centre in Redhill as part of their Arts Takeover event."



Wilma on the way to St Bede's.

Drawn into your presence

As part of its participation in the national Heritage Open Days festival, St James, Clapham present 'Drawn into your Presence' – a striking and professionally staged exhibition by award-winning documentary photographer Jim Grover.

The exhibition features 30 enlarged photographs of Victorian-era steel-plate engravings uniquely paired with contemporary photographs of faith and church ministry in South London. Presented as enlarged, high-resolution photographs, these engravings – sourced from a rare 1870 edition of the Imperial Family

Bible, once a familiar devotional centrepiece in Victorian homes – reproduced as iconic biblical scenes by master artists such as Raphael, Titian, and Da Vinci.

Jim said, "I am in awe of these beautiful engravings which give a new life to iconic and familiar artworks. Photographing and enlarging them reveals the incredible intricacy of the original craftsmanship, allowing us to see them in an entirely fresh light as magnificent artworks in their own right."

The exhibition will run until 18 October 2026. To find out more, visit:
tinyurl.com/mstefjnm



© Jim Grover.

"Oh let me see thy footsteps and in them plant mine own" – a portrait featuring the Revd Canon Kit Gunasekera Vicar, St James Clapham and Area Dean, Lambeth South Deanery.

Tree of the year?

This 4,000 year old Yew tree at St George, Crowhurst was a contender for the Woodland Trust *Tree of the Year* competition. See front page.

Find out if it won:
tinyurl.com/y4zrehd3





Sparkfish: encouraging young people in faith, hope and love

Sparkfish is a Christian charity that supports over 35 local schools in Reigate, Redhill, Merstham and Horley, Surrey. The charity works with children from very young right through to young people attending sixth form. In this edition of the Bridge, our Editor Vernia Mengot speaks to Harriet Pearce, Director of Sparkfish.

What does Sparkfish do for children and young people?

Sparkfish aims to inspire and encourage young people in faith, hope and love. Schools are fully equipped for academic learning, but many appreciate support in the areas of spiritual, moral and social development. Our initiatives help young people to reach beneath the surface of life – to explore their identity and relationships, their values and beliefs. Schools can access skilled support within the three complementary strands of our work: *Learn, Think and Hope*.

Learn focuses on bringing the Bible to life through school assemblies, in partnership

with local churches and *Walk Through the Bible* lessons (the whole Old Testament taught in five weeks) as well as Religious Education lessons. We also run Christian Unions in three local secondary schools.

Each year, our *Christmas Journey* welcomes 1,200 children from local primary schools for three weeks in three difference churches. We invite Year 2 children (6–7 years old) to come along and experience an interactive retelling of the true Christmas Story.

Our *Easter Experience* is aimed at children in year 5 (ages 9–10) and they are invited to witness Holy Week as an interactive play. The play ends with Jesus resurrected and his friends celebrating and sharing the good news. The cast then stay in character, and the children are invited to ask them questions – there are always a lot of questions for Jesus and Judas in particular!

We currently run around 18 *Think Spaces* in local schools every year, which offer

space and time in a busy school for reflection and wonder, hopes and prayers. We are part of the network of Prayer Spaces in schools – a national organisation that came out of 24/7 prayer.

Lastly, our *Hope* strand supports students who need one-to-one mentoring, as well as offering a small peer group focused on topics such as self-esteem, loss and bereavement, friendship and healthy relationships. We also offer drop-in lunch clubs and transition workshops for year 6 students heading to secondary school.

Sparkfish also fosters teamwork between youth and children's workers in local churches, as well as local clergy, encouraging them to build relationships with schools. Some offer extra-curricular clubs where students can find out more about the Bible.

Can you describe your role and share a bit more about the work behind the scenes at *Sparkfish*?

I lead the charity and help shape the strategy and vision, working alongside a team of full- and part-time staff and trustees who bring their expertise from different walks of life with experience in strategy, project management and finance.

We are incredibly blessed by our amazing volunteers and supporters! We have more than fifty incredible volunteers who serve in all areas of our school's work – from helping with setting up our 'Think spaces', to serving tea and coffee, baking cakes, organising events and leading our Christmas Journey and Easter Experience sessions.

What are your plans for the future?

We're incredibly excited about the growing faith seen in our Christian Unions. We also hope to offer a programme of discipleship opportunities, with regular youth prayer and worship evenings. We also hope to take a group of young people from our Christian Unions to a Christian festival next summer!

Can you share a bible verse or scripture that best describes the work you do?

1 Corinthians 13:13 "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

We seek to demonstrate love to all the young people in our local area, offering them hope in a dark world. We have faith that these small seeds that we are planting will one day grow and that young people will find the love of God for themselves.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

What is the most rewarding thing about your role?

I have been in the role for nine years now and I absolutely love meeting young people who have experienced *Sparkfish* throughout their whole school life. We have young people who have had a *Think Space* in their school every year since nursery and when they get to experience one in their new secondary school, they feel so at home and relax straight away. I have also been so excited about young people coming along to our Christian Unions with no prior knowledge of the Christian faith, and now excited to own their own Bible (which we have gifted them) and praying for themselves.

Get in touch with Harriet

Visit sparkfish.org.uk or email harriet@sparkfish.org.uk or office@sparkfish.org.uk



Left: *Sparkfish* volunteers ready for role play.

PRAYING FOR OUR NEXT BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK

Churches, clergy, congregations and individuals from across our diocese were encouraged to join a weekend of prayer (12–13 September) as we continue the process of seeking to discern our next Bishop of Southwark.

As well as joining a special evensong at Southwark Cathedral and using prayer resources available, the weekend was an opportunity to seek God's guidance, wisdom and blessing as we discern the future leadership of our diocese.

Find out more and access more prayer resources here: tinyurl.com/mt4amtrj



St Margaret, Chipstead's weekend of prayer

As part of their diocesan prayer weekend, members of St Margaret, Chipstead planned their café church around prayers for our next Bishop of Southwark.

Together they used some of the resources included in *17 ways to pray* to help them pray for our communities and for the person that God is calling to become our next diocesan Bishop.

The Revd Hannah Gordon, Rector at St Margaret, Chipstead and Assistant Area Dean, Reigate Deanery said, "We set up the Bishop's prayer with sticky notes, created a prayer trail throughout the churchyard praying for all the churches and deaneries. We also had dressing up as a Bishop – with a handmade mitre – and all together we passed round a purple ribbon as we prayed, then cut it into sections to take home or wear".

How are you praying at your church or school? Let us know by email: bridge@southwark.anglican.org





CREATIONTIDE – LIVING WATERS

There is no better time in the year to reflect on God as Creator and Sustainer of all life, and on what this means for our relationship with the world around us than the Season of Creation. Each year, the season runs from 1 September – 4 October. This year's Creationtide theme is Living Waters, inspired by Ezekiel 47:1-12.

In Ezekiel's vision, a river flows from the temple of God, bringing life wherever it goes. Dry lands are restored, barren places flourish, and creation is renewed. It is a powerful picture of God's life-giving presence: a reminder that where God is at work, healing, abundance and hope can emerge in the most unexpected places.

Yet the theme of Living Waters also invites us to reflect honestly on the state of our waters today. When we look at many of our rivers, lakes and seas, the picture can feel far removed from the flourishing described in Ezekiel's vision.

Across the UK, waterways face increasing pressures from sewage pollution, agricultural runoff and other contaminants. Ageing water infrastructure struggles to cope with growing demands and this summer, many parts of the country experienced drought conditions.

The situation is even more acute in some of our linked dioceses. In Zimbabwe, climate change is projected to reduce water availability by 38% by 2050. When we look to Barbados, the island is already one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. These realities reveal the consequences of humanity's failure to live well within God's creation. Water is fundamental to life, yet one in four people globally lack access to safely managed drinking water.

Across our Diocese, churches are already responding in a variety of practical ways to water-based issues – God's people are at work. While no single action can solve these challenges alone, local steps taken together can contribute to the wider change we need to see.

Creationtide allows us take time to give thanks to God for the gift of water and to reflect on its importance in your own life and in the lives of those around you. Consider what role you and your church might play in looking after this precious resource, however small that step might be. And let us remember the source of living water from whom our actions flow – the God who sustains and renews us all.

See how you and your church might take action using the resources listed in our blog: tinyurl.com/yc5y9t



Prisons Week 2026: all are invited

Prisons Week runs from 11–17 October. It's a week when the Christian community, through individuals and churches are encouraged to pray for prisoners and their families, the victims of crime and their communities, those working or volunteering in the criminal justice system, including prison chaplaincies. As well as time to pray for the many organisations who are involved in caring for those affected by crime both inside and outside of our prisons.

Wendy Stephens, full-time Prison Chaplain, writes:

This year the focus is on the words from Matthew 22:1–14 “the servant went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.” God’s desire is that we would all respond to his invitation, both good and bad, for we all require God’s clothes of righteousness. God seeks us out whatever we have done and calls us to be changed; to take off the old and put on the new.

In the introduction to their prayer for Prisons Week, The Welcome Directory reminds us that the people leaving prison often find closed doors, meaning the good work done inside in prison by chaplaincy and others often falls by the wayside. Yet, a true kingdom community is defined by radical hospitality to the marginalised. True Welcome is never passive.

“True welcome is never passive.”

During this Prisons Week, please pray for the five prisons in our diocese and think about how you as individuals and churches can help the people for whom you are praying.

Prisons Week prayer

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison.

Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist.

Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care.

Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime.

Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day.

Amen

For more information and resources to download visit: prisonswelcome.org and for more information about The Welcome Directory visit: welcomedirectory.org.uk. You can also look out for the daily prayers for Prisons Week on our website: tinyurl.com/6vynf38y

175 Years of HMP Wandsworth

Earlier this year, Southwark Cathedral played host to a service of Thanksgiving to mark the 175th Anniversary of HMP Wandsworth.

The service which took place on 26 March 2026 offered an opportunity to reflect on the prison's long and distinguished history, while celebrating and honouring the dedication of

HMP Wandsworth staff, past and present. Enriched by prayers written by serving prisoners, reflections and musical contributions, the occasion recognised the relationship between HMP Wandsworth, Southwark Cathedral, local faith organisations and the wider community.

In his opening address the Governor, Andy Davy said, "as the 40th Governor of HMP Wandsworth, it was a privilege to be able to be part of the celebrations and to recognise the importance the prison has played in both part of the wider Southwark Diocese and history."



The Wanno Choir.

Saint Cecilia's awarded for academic excellence

Saint Cecilia's Church of England School, Wandsworth has been recognised among the UK's leading schools for academic excellence.

The National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) has awarded Saint Cecilia's for its commitment to providing exceptional challenge, aspiration and opportunity for all pupils and students. The accreditation places the school among a select group of schools recognised nationally for their excellence in meeting the needs of high-potential learners while maintaining high expectations for every student. Following a rigorous assessment process involving lesson observations, interviews with pupils, students, staff, parents

and governors – assessors praised the school's ambitious curriculum, culture of high expectations and commitment to ensuring every student can thrive.

Renata Joseph, Headteacher, commented: "I am incredibly proud of the work being undertaken and the culture of curiosity, resilience and a genuine love for learning that exists across the school. This accreditation reflects the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our pupils and students and our commitment to ensuring every young person is challenged and supported to achieve their very best."

SCHOOLS

40 years of *Venture Week*

Venture Week holiday club – led by a team of volunteers – began in July 1986 and each year over 100 children from St Nicholas and St Emmanuel, Sidlow, attend for a week of fun missional activities, learning and community engagement.



This year's theme was 'Celebration' to highlight the event's 40th anniversary.

The Revd Sue Lepp, Rector of the Benefice of Charlwood and Sidlow Bridge, said, "Venture Week was the bright idea of a lovely lady called Nicky Tredennick. Although she never had any herself, she loved children and wanted to make St Nicholas' and our sister church Emmanuel, the best place to worship for children. In 1986, Nicky went to the Rector David Clark and suggested a children's

summer activity week. He agreed and Venture Week was born.

"This year, we looked at the celebrations of Jesus – his birth, the wedding at Cana and then at Pentecost in our church services across the week. The children spent the days in various venues across the village doing arts, crafts, sports, games and enjoying a special swimming day in a local resident's pool.

The children also hosted a marketplace, selling items they had made or baked, from brownies and cupcakes to bath bombs shell decorations – all on offer alongside items donated by parents and guardians, including clothes, toys, games, and furniture – raising a total of roughly £900. Additionally, *Venture Week* supported *Stripey Stork*, a local charity that helps children and families in need. The Week came to a close with a celebratory afternoon tea party in the churchyard, where former leaders and helpers from over the years enjoyed refreshments and a trip down memory lane.

Above: Children enjoying Venture Week.

Parish Eco Church awards

The Eco Church programme developed by A Rocha UK – a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world – provides a framework to support your church across different areas of church life to take practical action on caring for God's earth.

Huge congratulations to the following churches for achieving their Eco Church Bronze and Silver Awards.

Bronze

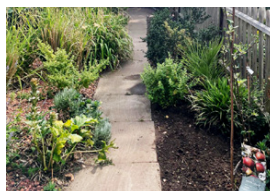
St Mark, Wimbledon
St Peter, Limsfield
St Augustine, South Croydon
St John the Baptist Church, Malden

Silver

Holy Trinity & St Matthias, Tulse Hill
St Peter, Norbiton
St John the Divine, Richmond

And well done to our churches that recently joined the Eco Church scheme.

Find out more about the Eco Church scheme and how to get involved here:
tinyurl.com/482vss36



Left: St Peter, Norbiton's gravel garden.

Richmond 'preachathon'

Imagine preaching for 12-hours straight! That's what the Revd Robert Stanier, Vicar did on Tuesday 22 September at St Mary Magdalene, Richmond.

A fundraiser for vital funds for the Richmond Soup Kitchen and the church's new bells program, Robert preached from 'dusk till dawn' and was joined by some very special celebrity guests along the way. The church was filled with local people dropping in throughout the event. A pop-up coffee shop ran alongside



the preachathon. At the time of writing, the preachathon has raised just over £22K. Robert said, "I feel elated to have completed the challenge and pleased that it worked on several levels."

For more information, visit: facebook.com/StMaryMagdaleneRTM

Over 60 years of service

On Saturday 19 September, a Lancelot Andrewes medal was presented to Andrew West, Organist at St Paul's with St Saviour's Church, Brixton for 62 years of service. The medal was presented by The Venerable Simon Gates, Archdeacon of Lambeth.



All Saints' Church, Carshalton – 750K views on TikTok

All Saints, Carshalton has landed on the FYP (for you page) of thousands of TikTok users, as vicars go viral at the church with one of its videos reaching around 750,000 views.

A recent article by local news *Secret Carshalton* praised the Revd David Fisher, Rector and the Revd Peter Greenfield,

Assistant Curate at All Saints for reaching people who might never walk through the church door.

TikTok – a popular social media platform, enables users to watch and discover millions of personalised videos. More recently churches and cathedrals across the country have

developed an online presence by posting videos as a quick and easy way to engage with communities and welcome more people into God's kingdom.

Catch up with the latest from All Saints, Carshalton's TikTok here: tinyurl.com/3zar64b7

Send us your Christmas images



Calling all parishes! As in previous years, we would like our diocesan Christmas cards to feature images from around our parishes. Send us your best festive photos from last year and we'll select the best for our cards. Images must be high-resolution, have permission to use and where known a credit should be provided. Please email by 13 November to: Bridge@southwark.anglican.org

The BRIDGE



To read this online or to access past issues, please scan the QR code.



Publishing dates

Edition	Copy deadline	In our parishes
Winter	27 November	31 December
Spring	27 February	7 April
Summer	26 June	3 August
Autumn	4 September	5 October



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



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Southwark Mission Conference 2026: *Signs of Hope* – Saturday 21 November



Our theme for our annual Mission conference is *Signs of Hope*. We will share our stories of growth and innovation in different contexts and traditions across the diocese. Come and be inspired and help your parish thrive.

For more information see our booking form: tinyurl.com/Signs-of-Hope

Living, Loving, Serving

Thursday 15 October, 7-9pm

Holy Trinity Church, 234 The Broadway, Wimbledon, SW19 1SB

The Kingston Area Racial Justice Group will be showing *Living, Loving, Serving*, a documentary focusing on black women in Christian leadership, produced by *Keep the Faith* magazine and featuring Bishop Rosemarie. The screening will be followed by a discussion with one of the producers.

Trust in the Media: a conversation with Richard Coles and Ayesha Hazarika

20 October 2022, 18:30–20:00

St Paul's Cathedral. Information & booking: tinyurl.com/37wn2can

Drawn into your Presence – photography exhibition – until 18 October

This striking exhibition by award-winning photographer Jim Grover features photographs of Victorian-era engravings uniquely paired with contemporary photographs of faith and church ministry in South London.

St James' Church, Park Hill, Clapham, SW4 9PB. Weds–Fri 11am–6pm (8pm Thurs); Sat 11am–7pm; Sun 1pm–6pm. Admission free.

Croydon Episcopal Area Black History Month event

Saturday 24 October, 4pm

Croydon Minster, Church Street, Croydon, CR0 1RN

We are hosting a special service 'Honouring our communities and sharing our stories'. All are welcome.

For more information, visit: croydonminster.org

Monthly Taizé service at St Michael's East Wickham

A gentle, contemplative space of prayer, sung chants, scripture, and silence rooted in the spirituality of the Taizé Community. Everyone welcome.

Dates: stmichaelelew.co.uk

People's Emergency Briefing

17 November, 7-9.30pm at Holy Trinity Church, Trinity Rise, SW2 2QP

The UK faces a growing climate and nature emergency. Yet most people have never been fully briefed on what it means for our lives, our economy and our future. The People's Emergency Briefing brings together people in local communities across the UK to hear the evidence and discuss how to respond – together with their MP.

Join us at Holy Trinity Church for a screening of the resulting 50-minute film presented by Chris Packham followed by a discussion time.

To reserve your spot, visit: tinyurl.com/4s66fd6y

SOUTHWARK
◆ CATHEDRAL ◆

Scan the code to view events.



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

LOOK AHEAD

TOP PIC(K)



This summer the 'Shipwrecked' Holiday Club at Holy Trinity, Redhill, became home to a four metre long papier-mâché blue whale named Wilma. See page 13.

To feature a photograph here, send a high resolution image to: bridge@southwark.anglican.org