



Sing out!

The return of
Christmas choirs
after COVID

See pages 6-7



Local champion

Bishop signs
Mission Order for
Kingston Pioneer

See page 8



Family values

How Welcare has
supported families
for 127 years

See page 12



St Barnabas' Messy Church explores the story of Moses with Songs of Praise team

On the afternoon of Sunday 21 November, the BBC's *Songs of Praise* team and CBeebies presenter Gemma Hunt joined St Barnabas, Dulwich's Messy Church in the parish hall to explore the story of Moses being called to set God's People free, writes Aike Kennett-Brown, Mission Support Officer (Children and Young People).

The place quickly filled with families from local primary schools. In total, 196 adults, teens and children took part in the afternoon's activities.

They spent the first hour exploring different parts of the story through craft and science experiments. There was junk modelling, using recycled items to create pyramids, and Pharaoh headdress-making, reminding us of the cruel rule of Pharaoh over the Israelite slaves.

It was safety-goggles on for the fire-making experiment, remembering how God spoke to Moses from the burning bush; as we made candles, we remembered how God promised to be with Moses on the mission he was sent



CBeebies' Gemma Hunt (right) with Bernita, 9, at the Messy Church event.

to do, and that God promises to be with us. Other activities included bread-making, sand-play, nail art, and the chance to watch prayers written on folded paper open up like waterlilies as they floated on water.

The Revd Rachael Gledhill then told us the story of how Moses used the power God had given him to answer his call to set God's people free. I wonder what God is asking of us and how we will use our God-given gifts and talents in this season.

During our mealtime of cheesy tomato pasta, fruit and chocolate cake, the *Songs of Praise* team interviewed some of the children, families and leaders. Nine-year-old Alice felt nervous but lit the candle she had made during the activities, asking God to help her "Be brave, like Moses".

If you want to catch a glimpse of their stories, tune in to *Songs of Praise* on Sunday 23 January 2022, as the programme celebrates the centenary of the Bible Reading Fellowship, host of the national Messy Church team. We hope that the joy of our Messy gathering will inspire others to explore the Bible in creative ways.

Freezing conditions fail to deter those sleeping out for Robes charity

Some 30 sleepers braved high winds and rain on the night of Friday 26 November to join the annual Robes Sleep Out at Southwark Cathedral.

This is the 11th such fundraising event to be run by the homelessness charity, which has been providing food, shelter and advice for homeless people in Southwark and Lambeth since 2007.

The Sleep Outs, which see participants bedding down for the night in the

Cathedral churchyard, have raised thousands of pounds since they began, with nearly £20,000 raised this year so far.

Before the sleep out began, participants and well-wishers – including a group of Scouts from the Copleston Centre in Peckham, who went on to sleep out at the centre – were treated to an evening of entertainment. The fun began with a silent disco held in the South Transept, before performances by Shalom Chorale gospel choir and drummer Samuel Johnson.

The evening's entertainment concluded with a conversation between the Dean, Andrew Nunn, and Bafta award-winning actor Toby Jones, before participants headed outside for the night.

Paul Venning, Chair of Trustees of Robes, who was also sleeping out, said: "We can't close during COVID as some organisations can, because we still need to take care of our guests," adding: "None of this is possible without the help of good folk like you."



Sleepers Abi Baruwa and Wendy Thompson outside the Cathedral.

A view from The BRIDGE



The Archbishops of Canterbury and York are encouraging us this year to go to the heart of Christmas. The birth of a child, the sight of parents looking at their newborn, is indeed a matter of the heart. At Christmas we dare to let the birth of Jesus move us deeply, for we remind ourselves that God's loving purposes for us are brought to completion in the birth, death, and resurrection of his Son. Christmas is the new and unconquerable beginning, the start of the eternal life won for us.

In the birth of his Son, God has opened his heart to us and for us, for Christ is begotten of his Father's heart. At Christmas, then, we ought especially to open our hearts to those in need because of the love God has brought to birth in our hearts at the Nativity. Be generous because God has been generous to us. I am always mindful at Christmas of the work of the Robes Project (see page 1), and of prisoners. I hope to be at Wandsworth Prison this Christmas if COVID permits. I encourage you this season to consider giving to support Robes or other homeless projects, as well as local charities including food banks.

As we gather with family and friends to celebrate and give thanks, we must not forget our wider duties of hospitality which we owe to the Lord's people (Romans 12.13) and to strangers (Hebrews 13.2). How could it be otherwise when the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24.1)? We remember St Benedict's instruction that all guests are to be

received as Christ himself. We all long to hear Christ say to us, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25.35).

If we make this Christmas truly a matter of the heart, we shall find it more fulfilling and rewarding than we can possibly imagine. In all we have been through in this long, global fight against a life-threatening virus, the rebirth of hope and a proper focus on the miracle of divine love made flesh sows the seeds of new life and renewed faith.

Poets often catch the joy of things, and Henry Vaughan's poem *Christ's Nativity* begins —

*Awake, glad heart! get up, and sing!
It is the birthday of thy King,
Awake! awake!
The Sun doth shake
Light from his locks, and all the way
Breathing perfumes, doth spice
the day.*

So let us wake our hearts and make them glad by recalling the Nativity. Let us celebrate Christ's birth by truly taking it to heart. For if we do, we shall discover that just as the Sun sheds light and breathes perfumes to spice this most joyful day, so Christ himself is the eternal sun who gives light to our life and makes all things beautiful and radiant, and full of the spice of holy delight.

I wish you and those you love peace and joy this Christmas and through the coming year.

Bishop Christopher



NEWS IN BRIEF



Go hand-to-hand to help feed the hungry

International development charity Feed The Hungry has launched a new community food packing initiative, "Hand-to-Hand", which encourages church communities to collaborate in packing and sending a shipping container of meals to children living below the poverty line across the world. Feed The Hungry provides the equipment, food and a team of people to run the event at church venues.

If your church would be interested in getting involved with a Hand-to-Hand event, please find out more here: fth.org.uk/handtohand or call 01455 618455

Join the Churches Together in England forum — free!

Churches Together in South London has six fully-funded places, including transport costs, for the triennial forum of Churches Together in England in March 2022. CTSL is especially keen to take at least two young people aged 18-30, lay or ordained. If you are engaged with ecumenism or simply have a heart for matters of unity and justice, and would like to join the delegation, you can find more information here: cte.org.uk/about/about-cte/forum/2022-forum. If you have any other queries, please contact: claire@ctslondon.org.uk

Taster events for aspiring healthcare chaplains

The Department of Spiritual Health Care at Guy's and St Thomas' Healthcare Trust is running two taster events for those interested in a career in healthcare chaplaincy. You can find out more about healthcare chaplaincy courses, chat to lecturers and get advice about career routes.

Monday 6 December (4.00-5.00pm) or Tuesday 14 December (4.00-5.00pm). Zoom link: bit.ly/3DXGQ5u, Meeting ID: 876 5852 061. Passcode: 1LsTDa

Help is at hand for Advent

The National Church has launched its Advent campaign, At the Heart of Christmas. You can find reflections, prayers and printed materials to help with your own Advent planning here: www.churchofengland.org/resources/advent-and-christmas-2021-resources-heart-christmas. The Diocese will also be releasing a series of prayers from the Dean and Bishops over the course of Advent — watch out for them on social media (twitter.com/SouthwarkCofE and www.facebook.com/SouthwarkCofE).



Grants available for 60-plus single Christian women

Does your church know of any Christian women aged 60-plus who have lost their partner or are single and living on small incomes within the M25? The Sarah Rachael Titford Trust makes twice-yearly grants to women in these circumstances whose total income, excluding the state pension and benefits, does not exceed £6,000 per year. They currently have vacancies for two beneficiaries and would love to hear about any believer you know who might be eligible. Applicants will need to fill in a short application and provide an affirmation of faith and a letter of support from the Vicar of the parish to which they belong. For further information please contact Barbara Spittle on 01932 787186 or b.spittle@btinternet.com

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Next Issue: Submission deadline and guidance

The FEBRUARY edition is due to be published online on 1 February 2022. Material for that edition must be with Sophia Jones by e-mail by **FRIDAY 21 JANUARY**.

Space limitations mean that we cannot guarantee to publish everything we receive and material may be edited. All photographs submitted for publication are assumed to have the necessary permission for printing. So, please ensure that people are happy for their photographs to be submitted before you do so.

Forms for permission for the use of photographs of children and adults who may be vulnerable can be found at southwark.anglican.org/safeguarding/diocesan-policies-procedures



IN FOCUS...

News from the Diocese

Bishop Richard licenses vicar of pioneering Eco Church in Lambeth



On 29 November, Bishop Richard joined a host of well-wishers, including the Revd Canon Chris Russell, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Advisor for Evangelism & Witness, at Lambeth Palace Chapel to license the Revd Dr Sharon Moughtin as Team Vicar of St Mary's Eco Church in North Lambeth.

At this multi-generational service, mother and son Emma and John Addo-Nortey, who represented St Mary's Eco Church at the Southwark Cathedral Vigil for COP26, read from Luke's Gospel. A poem entitled *Arctic Change* by Year 6 pupil Isla Penfold, which was written for the St Mary's Eco Church pop-up event during COP26, was also read out.

Bishop Richard said: "The development of the Eco Church is significant for a number of reasons. It is the result of close partnership working between Lambeth Palace, the Diocese and the Trustees of

the Garden Museum and has been made possible through Strategic Development Funding. Sharon's 'Eco-Pioneering' post is unique but particularly relevant in the wake of the impact of COP26, and the aim is to connect it with environmental work in the Diocese but also across London and nationally."

Sharon added: "I am so excited about all the possibilities that St Mary's Eco Church opens up. This is a wonderful opportunity to take seriously God's call to safeguard creation, to show our care of the earth, and to model ways of living differently at a crucial time and in such a vibrant location. We're looking forward to meeting the many different people who will join with us in seeding this new worshipping community."

St Mary's Eco Church has already made a start on its mission by holding a week-long pop-up church in St George the Martyr, Southwark, during the COP26 negotiations. Read more here: southwark.anglican.org/calling-out-creativity-and-hope

Croydon chaplain leads prayers to remember tram victims



On 9 November, Croydon remembered those who lost their lives in the Sandilands tram derailment at a civic ceremony to mark the fifth anniversary of the tragedy.

Members of the public joined the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Croydon for the service, which was held on Tuesday 9 November at Market Square, Central Parade, New Addington. The Revd Andy Dovey (above, second from left), Lead for Chaplaincy & Spiritual Care with Bereavement Services in Croydon and the Bishop's Adviser for Healthcare Chaplaincy, led the prayers.

More than 60 people were injured in the tragedy and Dane Chinnery, Donald Collett, Robert Huxley, Philip Logan, Dorota Rynkiewicz, Philip Seary and Mark Smith lost their lives when the tram derailed near Sandilands tram stop on 9 November 2016.

Andy said: "On 9 November 2016, following the Croydon tram crash, I led the chaplaincy team serving all those that were involved, providing God's presence to the families that lost loved ones and those injured. Christ's ministry was one being with

those in their darkest need. Following Christ's example is what chaplains do in ministry today, and it is a privilege and honour to serve."

The Mayor of Croydon, Sherwan Chowdhury, led a period of silence, before inviting floral tributes to be laid at the memorial plinth installed to remember the tragedy.

Councillor Hamida Ali, leader of the council, said: "The Croydon tram derailment was a devastating incident in which seven residents lost their lives, many more were injured and countless lives were changed forever. We will always remember them."

Bishop Christopher commissioned Andy as his Adviser for Healthcare Chaplaincy on Saturday 20 November, at Diocesan Synod. Andy said: "Healthcare chaplaincy has been at the very heart of ministry in the last two years, and all those working in the profession have had to put themselves last and God's people first, regardless of the risks to themselves. As Bishop's Adviser, I am praying that I will be able to work with the NHS and the Church to continue to build on the work we have done in the last two years."

Read the full Synod report on page 10.

Upside down and inside out: a report from the Croydon Area Lay Conference

I have to be honest and say that the thought of spending most of a November Saturday on Zoom filled me with a certain amount of trepidation, but my worst fears were not realised. The Croydon Area Lay Conference was a inspiring and fascinating day, writes Alice Hicks, Deanery Lay Chair for Croydon Addington.

It began, on 6 November, with a short time of worship, with music led by the band of Christ Church, Purley. There were a few Zoom hiccups, but this was a good beginning to the day.

The keynote speaker was Andrew Graystone, author, broadcaster and

commentator. His subject was "Upside Down" and he spoke about coming to prominence by standing outside his local mosque in Manchester, after the massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand, with a placard saying: "You are my friends, I will keep watch while you pray."

Andrew used a passage from Mark 6 about Jesus telling the disciples to go out without any baggage, and said that often we need to think what we need and then leave it behind. He gave us three pointers — learn to love our limitations, learn to love and live with losers, and to find the place where God wants you to be and learn to love it. It was a thought-provoking and challenging talk.

We then went into workshops; mine

was the informative and helpful session, "Mending Circles, repairing, talking and slowing down", led by Dr Alison Clark, an artist and lecturer. She spoke about how art can help in a time of crisis. Perhaps we should be *The Repair Shop* for those inside and outside the church.

After lunch we went into our second workshop; mine was "Everyday Faith" led by Dr Nick Shepherd of the National Church. He spoke about the fact that 95% of churchgoers do not have an official role, and 95% of our time is spent not on church activities. His questions were: what is your role and what do you love about it; what are the challenges and opportunities you face; and what prayers would help you in your roles?



We ended with another act of worship, followed by Peter Graystone interviewing Bishop Jonathan about mission and living inside out. We need to live with and love those outside our circle of family, friends and acquaintances and the laity are out in society where the ordained clergy are not able to go, said the Bishop. He was asked what he would like his legacy to be, but felt that was for others to decide.

At the end of the day I was slightly cross-eyed, but challenged and inspired.



IN FOCUS...

News from our parishes

StreetDoctors' first aid lessons are "the answer to a prayer"

When a young man was stabbed outside her flat in 2020, Susan Patterson could not have foreseen that a year later she would be organising first aid lessons for teenagers and young adults at St Stephen, South Dulwich.

"I was visiting the tree where he died and tidying up the flowers and I heard his friends chatting, because they were gathering there every day," said Susan. "I heard one of them say, 'the thing to do when somebody is stabbed is to put them into the back of a car and drive them to A&E', and I thought, 'No, the thing to do is to put pressure on the wound.'"

Susan, a Reader at St Stephen's, started trying to find a first aid course for young people but was having no luck. "I began praying about it and simply nothing was happening," she said. Then, a year later, she heard about StreetDoctors.

This is a national charity, originally founded in Liverpool in 2008, which delivers vital first aid training to young people aged 11-25 who are affected by violence. The sessions are led by young healthcare professionals and last around an hour. Since 2013, the organisation has partnered with more than 300 organisations to train more than 20,000 young people all over the UK.

In the first session set up by Susan on 3 November, there were nine participants drawn from the church family and others in Dulwich Deanery. She is now hoping to run further sessions in the New Year and expand the invitation to other churches – any young person is welcome.

The sessions are valuable to the young people taking part, but they are also rewarding for the healthcare professionals



Rosie McEachen leads a session at St Stephen, South Dulwich.

who lead them. Rosie McEachen, one of the trainers at the Dulwich event and leader of StreetDoctors' North East London team, said: "I became involved in StreetDoctors in my first year studying nursing at university. I am now in my third year and I have really enjoyed being a volunteer. What I love most about the sessions we deliver is that often the young people we work with already know so much, we are just helping bring it all together and teach vital first aid skills."

Her fellow trainer Tom, meanwhile, who is leader of the South London team, said: "For me, training young people how to respond in these dangerous situations gives me such a good feeling; it's amazing to know that these individuals now have the skills to save themselves or someone else in a critical situation. Plus, seeing the lovely comments young people write at the end of our sessions really assures us that what we are doing is useful!"

Further StreetDoctors sessions will be held in Southwark in the New Year. For more information and to register your interest, e-mail Susan at sssdreader@gmail.com

St Peter, Battersea celebrates dedication of new church

St Peter, Battersea was finally able to celebrate the dedication of its new church building (right) on 31 October, after COVID and other delays meant the ceremony took place three years after the congregation had moved back into the building.



Bishop Peter Price led the dedication in Bishop Christopher's absence. Starting the service outside the building, he said: "Through the ages, Almighty God has moved his people to build houses of prayer and praise," before blessing first the new church and then each of the community areas.

The Revd Patrick Malone, Priest-in-Charge at St Peter's, said: "When I came to St Peter's 15 years ago, leading a small group to join the faithful remnant here, there was a row of decrepit terraced houses, some church buildings with rats as big as cats and some very dodgy wiring. No one wanted the job.

"I should mention that some years previously the Church Commissioners

had held a meeting to shut St Peter's down, and shuffle off the congregation to another parish. In that meeting, a small group of African and Afro-Caribbean women stood up and resisted this group of men, with the words: 'Over my dead body!' Needless to say they won the day and here we are years later."

This new building, designed by Portal architects, is St Peter's third incarnation, after the original 1870s church was destroyed by fire in 1970, and its replacement was demolished after falling into disrepair to make way for this new, fit-for-purpose church and community building.

St Matthew, Surbiton named country's best-kept church



St Matthew, Surbiton has won the 2021 Naylor Awards for Excellence in Church Maintenance, it was announced on Friday 19 November. The award also comes with £7,500 in prize money. Read the full story here: southwark.anglican.org/news-events/news/latest-news

St John the Evangelist, Upper Norwood, wins £50,000 grant from specialist Government fund for heritage sites

St John the Evangelist, Upper Norwood has received a major boost to its finances after being awarded a £50,000 grant in October through the Government's Culture Recovery Fund.

Administered on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) by Historic England, the grant comes from the second round

of the Heritage Stimulus Fund, which is part of the Culture Recovery Fund. The St John's grant will go towards repairs of the window and masonry at the east end of the south aisle and should see the window made safe and stonework repaired and restored by May 2022.

The Revd John Pritchard (pictured right, in front of the window), Vicar at St John's, said: "It has been a welcome piece of news that St John's



has been awarded £50,000 grant, representing 80% of the total projected cost, towards repairing a window at St John's which under routine inspection has been found to be in a rather precarious state."

He added: "This was our second attempt at an application to the Culture Recovery Fund and it shows that persistence pays off. Especially when we can feel a bit neglected in these outer parts of London with heritage

as impressive as that found in central London but without the profile of religious and secular attractions found there."

The Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage – Emergency Resource Support has recently reopened. Find more information and express your interest here: www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/culture-recovery-fund-emergency-resource. If you would like to contribute to the repairs at St John's, please be in touch with John Pritchard.

Amal the refugee makes special journey to meet St Mary's Primary pupils

On Friday 22 October the children of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Lewisham, escorted a special guest down Deptford High Street.

Nine-year-old refugee Amal is a 3.5m tall walking puppet, who is at the centre of The Walk, a travelling festival of art and hope in support of refugees. Before arriving in Lewisham, she had already walked from the Syrian/Turkish border across 8,000km and eight countries.

Shashi, a Year 5 pupil, said: "When I went to see Amal, I felt sorrow. Refugees don't have

"When I went to see Amal, I felt sorrow. Refugees don't have a home. The ones without their parents have an even harder life"

a home and they need food and water to live. Refugees without their parents have an even harder life."

The children were invited by the Migration Network to decorate a huge welcome banner for Amal on Deptford High Street. "There was a giant washing machine for Amal to wash her clothes. The children thought it was absolutely amazing! They took bunting out and walked along the road with her. We also did media interviews," recalled headteacher, Christine Graham.

St Mary's is a School of Sanctuary – one of three in London. "We are a place of safety and welcome for anyone seeking sanctuary or refuge. We educate our whole school community about the human right to sanctuary and we identify practical ways in the school to demonstrate that commitment," added Christine.

This includes literacy and numeracy workshops for parents new to English. "The school is such a place of welcome that they know they feel safe in coming here to learn the language. We support them to access services that perhaps they wouldn't know are available, and our Family Support Worker gets in touch with new families to let them know that she is there to help and support them," said Christine.

Over the last three years, St Mary's has partnered with Citizens UK on projects close to the children's hearts. They lobbied their local MPs and the local authority to change the rules that were denying some children free school meals if their families had no recourse to public funds. They also wrote hundreds of cards to the Director of Lewisham Hospital expressing their concern at NHS migrant charges. "It was around Christmas time," recalled Christine. "He thought he was getting Christmas cards."

The children work on a variety of issues for their community and beyond, collecting socks and gloves for the



Amal the refugee being greeted by pupils in Deptford High Street.

homeless, Climate Justice, collecting food for LewCAS refugee food bank and planting bulbs in St Mary's Church therapeutic garden.

"The children know how much they are making a difference in their community," said Christine. "Everything is based on our school values and vision. Our vision is to promote the unique gifts, well-being and potential of every person. Our work is founded on the work and teaching of

Jesus, building on his message of equality, peace and justice and guided by his words 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'

She added: "We instil those values within our children so that they can live them out too, so that when they become adults they will be conscientious about others, they will be respectful of others, but they will also stand up for things that aren't right and for social justice."

Working in tandem: cyclists from the parish of Herne Hill raise £28,000 for charity in 2021 with sponsored ride

Each year since 2003, a group of cyclists from St Paul's and St Saviour's in the parish of Herne Hill – with many friends and family – have organised a four- to seven-day sponsored cycle ride in the UK or Ireland to raise money for charity, writes Simon Brindley, a Reader at Herne Hill.

Starting in 2003 as a ride through the Welsh hills to raise money for a new St Saviour's primary school hall, Whoosh, as it became known, this year hit two major milestones: a record total of over £28,000 raised for three different charities and an overall Whoosh total of over £250,000.

Alongside significant sums raised to help adults with difficult mental health or drugs backgrounds into work through the London charity First Step Trust and a donation to Afghan Aid, this year's major beneficiary, Tumaini Health Centre in Rwika, rural Kenya, has strong Southwark



At the start of the 2021 Whoosh bike ride outside Reading station.

connections. Tumaini (meaning "Hope") is the vision of the Revd John Itumu, Whoosh cyclist and formerly Associate Vicar in Herne Hill, now vicar of St Peter, Woodmansterne.

Tumaini is built on land John inherited from his Christian parents. To honour them, he and local colleagues have set out to offer, on firm Christian principles,

holistic care delivered by compassionate and competent professionals. They intend to establish their reputation through word of mouth and to grow a strong and trusted reputation as God leads them. The Centre has opened and the funds raised by Whoosh will enable them to establish their operation or possibly expand into maternity services.

An annual cycle ride is not just a great way to raise money for good causes, it's a great way to spend quality time in beautiful countryside with friends old and new, as well as keeping fit (and having to eat rather more than you normally might, just to keep going!).

Whoosh cyclists have included people from seven to 77, both experienced riders and first-timers, and organisers have worked hard to make events inclusive. With nearly 20 years under their belt, including raising money through local events in a pandemic, Whoosh is happy to share with other parishes how they have organised these rides if others would like to try. Do contact Jim Belben (jim.belben@btinternet.com) or Simon Brindley (sgbrindley@yahoo.co.uk) if you are interested.

To find out more about Tumaini, please visit www.tumainihealth.org or contact Revd Itumu at St Peter, Woodmansterne. To find out more about First Step Trust, please visit www.firststeptrust



Joyful and triumphant!

After COVID restrictions prevented choirs from singing in church for more than a year, Director of Communications, Sophia Jones hears from music directors and others across the Diocese who are preparing their singers for an emotional return this Christmas.

When Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the first lockdown on 23 March, no one was prepared for what lay ahead. Bishop Christopher organised a Coronavirus Task Group which continues to update parishes on the latest guidance and information through the Coronavirus Task Group Bulletin. Singing was forbidden and congregations and choirs were not allowed to sing in church.

“Singing is a massive part of our liturgy and because of the way you sing and because of it being a respiratory virus, all the rules and regulations were like a sledgehammer literally through years and years of work,” said Jonathan Pix, Director of Music at St George the Martyr, Southwark.

There are four choirs who meet in St George the Martyr in the evenings after work. One of them is a traditional four-part choir, called The Godwine Choir, who sing once a month during the church’s main act of worship.

When lockdown happened, the church started livestreaming its services, which have had a good following. “The service (in-person) was a big part of people’s life,” recalled Jonathan. “There are the regulars who go to every evensong and morning prayer, they couldn’t do that, and some of the elderly are not so savvy with the livestreaming and don’t necessarily have smartphones, laptops or computers, so despite the fact that we were trying to do things that people could look at, still it didn’t always get to all the people we would have liked to. That was devastating.”

At Croydon Minster, the choir rehearsed on Zoom and recorded music for use in online services. “Families also recorded hymn singing which was used too. To maintain the choral tradition for the liturgy we have done all we could – complete with risk assessments – to keep the singing going,” said the Revd Canon Dr Andrew Bishop, Priest-in-Charge at Croydon Minster.

Ben Vonberg-Clark is Musical Director at St John the Divine, Kennington, where he organised a Zoom rehearsal every week for those who could take part. The choir at St John the Divine is made up of four separate choirs which include primary school girls and boys, secondary and adult. Combined, they are 120 singers in total.

“We recorded all our church services on a Sunday. I got some of the older kids to record some singing at home and then I accompanied it after they had recorded it and we used that,” said Ben. “We had virtual choirs. We did a huge performance at Easter of Bob Chilcott’s St John Passion which is about an hour long and it is on our YouTube page. We maintained the musical presence every week.”

During COVID, when singing was allowed in church, Ben recalled that they did combinations, either small groups of adults, or bubbles of children who could sing together because they either lived together or were in the same class at

school. “I also went into the church primary school, St John the Divine, to do class singing with them all which was allowed because they were all in the same bubble,” said Ben.

Jonathan Pix recalled that they had just reintroduced termly school services for St Jude’s School in the church before the pandemic struck. “We used to do it in school but at the end of 2019, just before the lockdowns and pandemic struck, we had reintroduced our termly act of worship at the church. So we had a Christmas Carol service, also a summer service for the leavers and an Easter service,” he said.

Andrew Bishop contrasted Christmas 2019 to 2020. “Christmas 2019 was just pre-pandemic and our Midnight Mass was broadcast live on BBC1 and is still on YouTube! So 2020 was a complete contrast, but still the choir sang, albeit without the congregation singing carols. One thing we did was *A Carol for Croydon*

involving choir, congregation and Minster schools which was a gift from us to the community," he said.

At St George the Martyr, the singing group usually leads the services. "The service is always a musical service with traditional hymns and non-traditional hymns. We always sing a Psalm and it's a core part of life," said Jonathan. "Christmas is usually a very busy time and because it is a beautiful church and there are lots of organisations around us, people come to us for their carol services."

Jonathan explained that lockdown had a devastating effect on the congregation who "loves the worship and we love the social time afterwards. We are a very friendly congregation and everybody knows everybody and to not have that community spirit was devastating, really."

However, he was able to provide music for the livestreams. "We did the music from the gallery, socially distanced from the priests who were at the east end and the musicians, singer and organist were at the west end and we experimented with different formats of recording and amplification. It was luck of the draw, a bit of experimentation trying this, trying that."

For Christmas 2020, churches were allowed small, risk-assessed, socially distanced numbers and many organised



"We are a very friendly congregation. Not to have that community spirit was devastating, really."

a ticketing system. "There was no singing from the congregation. That was one of the golden rules. The singing was done to them, as it were. So it was up to our Cantor soloist, Siobhan Aarons. She would literally sing all the hymns amplified by a speaker played by the organ so that it could be picked up by the camera following the liturgy. She sang the carols on Christmas day to the congregation," said Jonathan.

Recalling what happened at St John the Divine last Christmas, Ben said: "We couldn't do a massive event, which is a shame. You don't get any of the special feeling. I was able to pre-record each class in the school singing, but obviously you don't get any of the immediate feeling of singing together. I made sure we did have a carol service that went out on YouTube but obviously it is not the same. So we are looking forward to being back to as normal as we can this year."

Now that singing is back, the choir sings every Sunday and there will be two carol services as well as Midnight Mass. The full choir will come together for the carol service on 19 December. Ben stressed that the choir is not just busy at Christmas. "We have a full programme throughout the year and we take every festival seriously," he said.



From top: the Advent procession at Southwark Cathedral; Croydon Minster rehearses over Zoom; the "Dragon Connects" event, which was organised by charity Water City Music, at St George the Martyr, Southwark. Page 6: the choir at St John the Divine, Kennington.

Croydon Minster choir has a full agenda too. "The choir will be singing at Midnight Mass and on Christmas morning and then on the Feast of the Epiphany. Before all that, BBC Radio 3 are coming to broadcast Choral Evensong live on 22 December at 4.00pm," said Andrew. "The real challenge is that the day before the BBC is recording choral evensong for broadcast in April, so we will be in Eastertide for that day! Our choristers are also singing with John Rutter at the Royal Albert Hall in a major concert."

Christmas rehearsals are well underway at St George the Martyr, according to Jonathan. "All the singers were eager to get back and were watching the deadlines for when the Church and Government let things happen. We have reformed our singing group and we have our Godwine Choir back with us, who are going to do our carol service on 19 December at 6.00pm. Congregational singing is now allowed but behind masks. Normality is the thing I'm looking forward to and to rebuilding the joy of singing in worship. You don't realise you have something until it is gone. You know that people have missed the singing and love the hymns because they can't wait to sing again and now we are getting lots of requests," he said.

For Jonathan, Christmas is the high point of the year. "There is the expectation of the solemnity of Advent and the beginning



"You know that people have missed the singing and love the hymns because they can't wait to sing again."

of the Church year coinciding with the deepening of days and winter. It is the beginning of a new start where you can put aside any problems."

Congregations across the Diocese rejoiced on Advent Sunday with the freedom to sing, albeit behind masks. Southwark Cathedral celebrated the start of Advent with the Advent Procession and parish Twitter feeds were abuzz with news and updates on Advent Sunday.

The Revd David Fisher, Rector at Carshalton All Saints, tweeted: "Beautiful Advent Carols @CarshaltonAIIIS this evening, led by the choir, followed by mulled wine and mince pies!" St Mary, Balham tweeted: "This morning we had the delight of Bishop Richard coming to preside, preach and encourage and tonight the most stunning service of Advent Anthems, Carols and Readings. As Advent begins, we give great thanks for our choir and organists and their contributions."

Sean Gilbert, Vicar of St Alban the Martyr, South Norwood, tweeted: "Happy New Year! Today we celebrated the First Sunday of Advent, preparing hope for Christmas. We acknowledged today with lots of new things! New: choir robes and medals, admission to the junior choir, servers cassocks and cottas, altar frontals. All were blessed."



IN FOCUS...

Diocesan people

Kingston Pioneer's work formally recognised by Bishop



From left: Archdeacon John Kiddle, Diocesan Secretary Ruth Martin, Bishop Christopher signing the BMO, and Andrea Campanale.

On 10 November, Bishop Christopher signed his Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) for Kingston-based ministry, Sacred Space, with its founder Andrea Campanale, alongside Archdeacon of Kingston, the Venerable John Kiddle and Diocesan Secretary, Ruth Martin.

"The BMO is recognition of the fact that Sacred Space is a Fresh Expression of Church and that it is able to operate across parish boundaries in order to reach spiritual seekers across Kingston," said Andrea, who also became Southwark's first licensed Lay Pioneer Minister on 30 November at St John the Evangelist, Kingston.

"It is an acknowledgement of the work I have done up to this point. It is a recognition of doing that mission work."

Andrea started Sacred Space 16 years ago and is excited that the ministry is being recognised in this way. "It is an acknowledgement of all of the work that I have done up until this point. It is a recognition of doing that mission work and then that mission work evolving into a Fresh Expression, and then leading that Fresh Expression for this time, and then

building a relationship with St John's as the parish so that we are not just isolated and on our own. There is accountability through the relationships that we have with the parish and Archdeacon John Kiddle. It is also about having accountability as a community in the Diocese," she explained.

At the heart of Sacred Space is working with people in the community that are already doing things which "are in line with extending the Kingdom of God, whether people recognise that or not. One of the things that I like to do is serve other people's vision. In the past we set up the town centre chaplaincy service. That has paused because of COVID but it's something that I hope will continue. One of the initiatives that one of our members is involved with at the moment is creating a bereavement garden near Surbiton Station, so that is one of the community activities that we would like to get involved in and support," said Andrea.

Also at the core of Sacred Space is creating spaces where people feel comfortable to encounter Christ. "We should then respect the fact that they are going to continue to express that in ways that might be unfamiliar and might be difficult for us as Christians to embrace, but that is part of where we learn and we are changed through the process," she said.

Are you being called to lay ministry?

Are you called to ministry as a Lay Pioneer? To find out more about this and the other new licensed, commissioned and affirmed lay ministries offered by the Diocese, visit our website: southwark.anglican.org/layministries



Deputy Director of Vocations licensed at Cathedral

Family, friends and colleagues gathered at Southwark Cathedral on Sunday 14 November to witness the licensing of the Revd Raymond Baudon as Deputy Director of Vocations and Assistant Diocesan Director of Ordinands during Choral Evensong. Raymond was also installed as an Honorary Minor Canon of the Cathedral.



Speaking after the service, he said: "It's such a wonderful joy and blessing to have been licensed into my new role in the Vocations Team and to have been installed as an Honorary Minor Canon at the Cathedral. I have already been in the Vocations role for a few months and it's a privilege to be walking alongside those who are discerning God's call in their life."

He added: "Being an Honorary Minor Canon allows me to have a worshipping community at the Cathedral that I can call home and I am very grateful to the Dean and Chapter for their invitation."

From the new year, Raymond will also be more closely connected to the Cathedral's parish church at St Hugh, Bermondsey, where, he said, "I am looking forward to keeping my hand in with parish ministry."

For his licensing, Raymond was joined by the Revd Canon Leanne Roberts, Diocesan Director of Ordinands. He then knelt before Acting Archdeacon of Southwark, the Revd Canon Jonathan Sedgwick, who prayed over him.

The Dean and Chapter Clergy moved to the Tower Steps and the Precentor, the Revd Canon Andrew Zihni, presented Raymond. During his installation, Dean Andrew said: "We who share in the daily offering of worship in this Cathedral welcome you. The daily work of prayer and praise is the work of God. Will you gladly take your part in this as a member of this Cathedral Foundation?" to which Raymond responded, "I will."

In his sermon, Canon Jonathan said: "The task of Director of Ordinands and vocations is a demanding one which requires great wisdom and discernment and the capacity to say 'no' as well as 'yes' but always in a way that tries to help each individual to experience that deeper and broader 'yes' which is God's love and acceptance of each of us."

If you feel that you are being called to ordained ministry, find out more here: bit.ly/3ld544r

Pictured above from left: Jonathan Sedgwick, Leanne Roberts, Raymond Baudon and Andrew Nunn.

Wendy Stephens licensed as Chaplain of HMP Wandsworth

There was much rejoicing as Wendy Stephens was licensed by the Venerable John Kiddle, Archdeacon of Wandsworth, as Chaplain of HMP Wandsworth within the Chaplaincy team, writes the Revd Philippa Boardman, Vicar of St Mary Magdalene, Wandsworth Common.



The work of the chaplaincy was warmly commended by the Governor of Wandsworth Prison, Graham Barratt OBE (pictured right with Wendy and Wandsworth's managing chaplain, Imam Ibrahim Lewis), especially during the challenges of the past two years. Graham was accompanied at the service by Mia Motter, the Deputy Governor, as well as by prison staff, volunteers and many of Wendy's friends and fellow Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries (SPAs).

Wendy's ministry in the prison also received praise from Imam Ibrahim.

Wendy said: "Prison ministry has been

a major part of my ministry as a SPA and I am excited now to be taking up this new role in the chaplaincy, working with really dedicated chaplaincy and prison staff to support the men in these very challenging times."

The service was hosted by St Mary Magdalene, Wandsworth Common, the parish church of HMP Wandsworth, whose members volunteer regularly at the prison, leading Bible studies, supporting short courses and supplying packs of clothes for prisoners being released through a project called "the Shed".

“It feels like a positive place to be right now”

Chris Brown is Student and Young Adults Worker at St Mary, Summerstown. He was commissioned in October by the Archdeacon of Wandsworth, the Venerable John Kiddle. Prior to coming to the Diocese, Chris worked in a similar position in Bristol. He spoke to Communications Director Sophia Jones about his role.

“I started in May. It was a funny time because things hadn’t started opening up after COVID. It gave me a good opportunity to get to know the church family and settle in.

“My job includes admin, preaching, leading services, with a particular focus on students at St George’s Hospital Medical school across the road and the group aged in their twenties and thirties.

“I became a Christian while I was a student in London and felt privileged to have great Bible teaching. A lot of people set aside time to invest in me. I thought,

‘I have benefited so much from this, it would be great if I could be that person for others.’ Student life is a key time when people are asking questions and figuring out who they are and what they believe in.

“I meet with students one-to-one to read the Bible, pray together and help them with their discipleship. I also meet non-Christian students interested in looking into who Jesus is. We have started a weekly student Bible study group so a lot of my time goes into planning and running it. With the twenties and thirties group, we are focusing on one of the nearby housing estates — some of our church members live on the estate. They meet weekly. My time is spent planning what we are going to do as a group and in reaching out.

“We have developed a great relationship with the university Christian Union. I help when they are putting on events and have also been invited in to speak at their meetings. Often students are better placed to reach students so I am trying to serve and help them in reaching their friends.



From left: the Revd James Fletcher, Archdeacon John Kiddle, Chris Brown, Sylvia Brown and the Revd Canon Jay Colwill.

“I think that the peace and assurance that comes from knowing Jesus is increasing. In the conversations I have had it’s quite attractive. It feels like there are quite a lot of opportunities at the moment as well in terms of how the world is and also with what is going on with this particular parish.

“There are the new flats, which is part of the reason that the job was created. Wimbledon Football Club has moved back. Students are back after having a year of not being on campus. It feels like it is

a positive place to be at the moment in amongst the difficulties that everyone has faced over the last 18 months.

“Being commissioned was a positive experience with the church family, praying together for the work we are doing. It gave us an outward focus, thinking about the estates around us and the university.”

This role is one of six Strategic Development Fund projects across the Diocese jointly supported by the Diocese and the Charity Commissioners.



IN FOCUS... Black History Month

Events marking Black History Month continued well into November, with parishes across the Diocese celebrating in collaborative and creative ways. Below, we hear from some of those who contributed.

St Peter and St Augustine, South Croydon

The united benefice celebrated Black History Month (BHM) for the first time on 21 October with a special service, at which Richard Reddie of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland preached. There was also an exhibition of photographs of high-profile Black people. Karen Ip, one of the event organisers, said: “Researching and writing about notable people from the Black community has been an inspiration to me.”

Croydon Minster

The team at Croydon Minster chose to highlight Black saints as part of their BHM celebrations: St Martin de Porres, St Josephine Bakhita, St Charles Lwanga and the 21 Martyrs of Uganda. “Let us give thanks for the Black saints who have reflected the love of Christ in their lives. May they pray for us all,” they said.

St John’s Angell Town CofE Primary School

According to Patrick Williams, Deputy Headteacher at St John’s Angell Town, BHM is “a special part of the academic

calendar”. As part of this year’s celebrations, the school was invited to present at the Kingston Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns Committee (KMEACC) showcase event on 16 October. The Year 6 pupils decided to focus on RuNett Nia Ebo’s poem, *Lord, why did you make me Black?* (listen to it here: www.poetebo.com), which is written as a conversation with God about the true beauty of Blackness. This, said Patrick, “enabled the learners to look closely at work produced by a Black poet and also combine learning through a Christian context.”

Kingston MEACC

In addition to the pupils of St John’s Angell Town, the KMEACC showcase event heard about the experiences of Black people in business — one of this year’s themes in the Diocese’s BHM celebrations.

Jacqueline Smikle, a Black therapist in private practice, Julia Nimmons, a woman of mixed race who works in the corporate world, and Damilola Bamidele, head of programmes at a national charity, all spoke of their experiences in the

Sharing Black culture at St Mark, Kennington



Members of St Mark, Kennington show off copies of the Diocese of Southwark’s Anti-Racism Charter at their Black History Month celebration on 28 November. At the event, the congregation gave thanks to Akyaba Addai-Sebo, the architect of British Black History Month; heard about the contribution of Sierra Leone-born RAF officer, John Henry Clavell Smythe, to the Second World War; and listened to interviews with young Black people about the importance of BHM. They also shared a selection of Black authors’ books, a variety of Black dolls, Christmas card activity inspired by Black artist, Zoë Whitley and a selection of ethnic food.

professional sphere, and how they help to mentor other Black professionals in order to progress equality.

The KMEACC event also heard from an interfaith group of young people in Brixton about their understanding of equality and diversity, and how they wanted to “fight discrimination with love”.

Read more...

Read more about these stories and Black History Month on the Diocesan website at: southwark.anglican.org/news-events/news/blogs



Diocese lays out plans for growth and mission in first Synod of the triennium

Newly elected and returning members of Diocesan Synod (bit.ly/31eSBXu) gathered online on Saturday 20 November for a lively and engaging meeting, the first of the new triennium.

Bishop Christopher welcomed attendees via Zoom, as the meeting was not able to take place in person. Bishop Karowei led the Synod in prayer, followed by the announcement of the chairs of the House of Clergy and House of Laity for the new triennium: the Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett as the former and Adrian Greenwood as the latter.

Presidential address

Bishop Christopher then delivered his Presidential Address (bit.ly/3r83t3D). He first thanked Bishop Jonathan for his 10 years of service, calling him an “exemplary episcopal colleague”. He then spoke of the Christian belief that Christ is Lord of all, and how this belief in what he described as “a truly cosmic Christ – the Lord, the King of the Universe” might be key to reimagining our God-given task to be good stewards of the Earth, as well as giving those working together on both Diocesan and General Synods a “common purpose and a common vision”.

The Bishop’s address also mentioned the “three big themes” of the next three years: the Anti-Racism Charter, the environment, and “the character of our common life” as “people characterised by hospitality and generosity”.

The bedrock of this, he said, was the parish. “That is the primary way we fulfil our mission: priests and people working together in joyful partnerships in the Gospel”. However, he added, we must be ready to adapt to rapidly changing contexts, making it our task to “proclaim afresh”, which was why we were developing lay ministry in Southwark in “exciting new ways, so that each may live out by service the dignity conferred in baptism”.

See of Croydon

Despite the meeting being held on Zoom rather than in person, Diocesan Synod members leaped at the chance to put their views on the process to appoint a new Bishop of Croydon following Bishop Jonathan’s retirement, which will go before the Dioceses Commission (bit.ly/32UKwri) in December. Among the many points made, it was felt that having an Area Bishop was vital for clergy well-being; it was also noted that the work done by Bishop Jonathan with refugees was vital for Croydon. In conclusion, all members affirmed their wish to appoint a successor.

Annual objectives

Diocesan Secretary Ruth Martin and Deputy Diocesan Secretary Jackie Pontin were then invited to present the objectives for 2022 which had been approved by the Policy and Finance Committee and the Diocesan Council of Trustees. Connection and communication was the first theme, with a particular focus on clergy well-being and the Southwark Diocesan Conference 2022. Rebuilding finances after the pandemic was also a priority.

Objectives included embedding the new lay ministries (southwark.anglican.org/layministries), alongside the rollout of the second phase of the Strategic Development Fund. In terms of mission and social justice, there continued to be a focus on Deanery Leadership Teams (bit.ly/3rrmOgw), as well as the Anti-Racism Charter (southwark.anglican.org/antiracism) and becoming an Eco Diocese (southwark.anglican.org/environment). Safeguarding, too, remained a priority.

The question of well-being dominated a lively discussion after Ruth’s presentation, with speakers stressing the need for support to be lived out on the ground, putting the case for lay ministers’ well-being, and noting that lay officers were also facing increased burdens.



Screenshot of Bishop Christopher leading the welcome to Diocesan Synod.

A vote was then taken, with members unanimously endorsing the Annual Objectives for 2022.

“Our Common Life”

The Revd Canon Wendy Robins and the Revd Lotwina Farodoye then led breakout groups as an opportunity to discuss Our Common Life Together: Going Beyond Southwark Vision. There was much useful feedback for us to learn from.

Budget approval

Alan Saunders, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, presented the 2022 budget for Synod’s approval, noting that the “remarkable” generosity of the parishes, for which he gave thanks, as well as several grants, meant that the financial picture was healthier than anticipated last year with only a small loss forecast for 2021. He explained how the DBF had arrived at the figures for 2022 and why, despite a provisional deficit of £1.1m, the Diocese remained financially resilient as it emerged from the difficulties of the pandemic.

Synod members were equally engaged with this important subject, with questions answered about rises in inflation; the Strategic Development Fund budget; how to protect parishes in vacancy; and why Southwark was unlikely to be called on to share historic assets with the National Church, as discussed in General Synod.

After serious scrutiny and vigorous discussion, the budget then went to a vote and was passed overwhelmingly with 102 in favour, two against and two abstentions.

Elections update

The Chair passed to Adrian Greenwood for an elections update. The House of Laity appointed five members to DCT and two to Synod, while Ray Wheeler, Warden of Readers, and Wendy Stephens (Diocesan SPA) were announced as Bishop Christopher’s appointments to Synod. The results of the SDBE elections were also announced. Rebecca Chapman followed with an excellent presentation on the inaugural General Synod, which had taken place earlier that week.

Business concluded with formal questions on the advisers used by the Diocese; the hustings process for Synod; and the Diocesan commitment to ethical investment.

Joining in worship

After a pause for reflection, Synod joined in worship, and Bishop Christopher commissioned Chris Elliott as Chair of Welcare and the Revd Andy Dovey as Bishop’s Adviser for Healthcare Chaplaincy.

The morning ended with the assembled group saying the Lord’s Prayer together, and Bishop Christopher announcing how the money raised by parishes for Lent Call in 2021 was to be distributed: £8,000 to each linked Diocese in Zimbabwe; £7,000 to the Diocese of Jerusalem; and £3,500 each to the food bank at St Matthew, Redhill, LewCAS, the Norwood & Brixton Foodbank Ltd, Together Southwark and Wandsworth food bank.

A video highlighting the work of deaneries and parishes from the past year can be seen here: bit.ly/3nPIBxa

Building resilient communities at the Churches Together in South London Big Gathering



Bishop Karowei, Chair of Churches Together in South London (CTSL), opened the Big Gathering

meeting held on Zoom on 3 November with a prayer. During the meeting he encouraged everyone to plan for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which takes place from 18 to 25 January. The topic of the

meeting was “COVID, COP and Community: Churches Together for a hope-filled future”. Paul Morrison, Policy Advisor to the Joint Public Issues Team, led with an overview of the economic state of play for the community and the huge changes that are coming their way. He explored the impact of the Chancellor’s Budget and the ramifications of COVID and COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference, in order to look at

how churches are responding to bring about flourishing communities. Andy Frost of the Gather Movement and Share Jesus International spoke about the Movement for Recovery, with a snapshot of what is happening nationally, an overview of the Mayor of London’s priorities and how our churches can engage together. Abi Saidi of Christians Against Poverty presented CAP’s vision for empowering churches to help the

most vulnerable in society and the successes when multiple churches come together to do this, as well as how CAP can support ecumenical activity in South London. In breakout groups, actions were discussed that had been trialled and ideas were generated for what could be done together to bring about thriving connected communities. Jenny Bond from Churches Together in England closed the meeting in prayer.

WHAT'S ON

Please e-mail bridge@southwark.anglican.org with details of your next events for FEBRUARY onwards by **FRIDAY 21 JANUARY**



December

SATURDAY 11 DECEMBER

- * **KENNINGTON** — Synergy Network Thanksgiving Service at St Mark's, Kennington. 4.00-5.30pm. Free but please register at: bit.ly/SynergyXmas
- * **ONLINE** — "Advent and the Birth of the Word within us", an online day-long workshop of talks, meditation and conversation from the School of Contemplative Life. 10.00am-5.00pm. £25-£35. Buy tickets at: bit.ly/3FvPOaj

SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER

- ♪ **STREATHAM** — Recital by Olivia Bell (soprano) and Christopher Jeanes (piano) performing Robert Schumann's Dichterliebe. St Peter, Leigham Court Road, Streatham SW16 2SD. 11.50am. Free. <https://stpeters-streatham.org>

FRIDAY 17 DECEMBER

- ♪ **DULWICH** — Christmas Mirrored, performed by the Myriad Choir, pairing well-known Christmas anthems with contemporary settings of the same texts. Conductor: Lucy Goddard. St Stephen's Church, College Road, London SE21 7HW. 7.30pm. £12 in advance (£14 on the door). Under-16s free. bit.ly/3x5O5pK

SATURDAY 18 DECEMBER

- ♪ **DULWICH** — St Barnabas Choir and Dulwich Children's Choir will be singing the *Manchester Carols*, supported by a professional orchestra. Narration by actor Robert Glenister. St Barnabas Church, Dulwich, London, SE21 7DG. 7.00pm. £12.50. bit.ly/3olqdoj

January 2022

14-16 JANUARY

- * **SWANWICK** — This three-day Christians Aware Annual Conference will follow a theme of "Transcending Divisions in a World of Diversity". Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Find more information here: www.christiansaware.co.uk

February 2022

THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY

- * **PIMLICO** — National Estate Churches Network London Regional Conference 2022. The focus of the day will be on exhausted clergy and laity finding well-being post-COVID. St James the Less Church, Pimlico, SW1V 2PS. 10.00am-4.00pm. £11.37. bit.ly/32Ks2tt



LET US PRAY...

DECEMBER

The Very Revd Andrew Nunn

Dean of Southwark

(follow [@deansouthwark](https://twitter.com/deansouthwark) to see the Dean's daily morning prayers on Twitter)

"What do you want for Christmas?" It's a question I really don't like being asked, but at this time of year it's inevitable and I have to admit to asking it myself of others. I ring my sister: "What does Dad want? What does my niece want? What do you want?"

To be honest she is usually quite good at coming back with some suggestions. But I often just don't know what to say. What I want and what I need are two quite different things – and it takes a bit of wisdom to be able to distinguish between the two.

We are all hoping, of course, that whatever Santa leaves for us under the tree this year, Christmas will be more like it has been before and not like last year. What we want for Christmas this year is much more, I suspect, about who we will be with, what it will feel like, what it will say to us.

God knew exactly what we needed for Christmas. So in the stable at the back of a very full inn, in an obscure little town in a far away country, to a young girl and an older man, a baby was born. The child was "God with us", Emmanuel; Jesus, saviour. The gift was wrapped not in pretty paper but in the swaddling in which we wrap our children, the blanket that keeps them warm and safe. This was the most precious bundle, the most special gift that the world could imagine and it brought shepherds



from their flocks and magi from afar to look and wonder and be thrilled.

What do we want for Christmas? We want and need the love and peace that God gives and Jesus brings. This really is the gift that keeps on giving and whatever else Christmas Day does or doesn't bring, know that you have already received the greatest gift of all, wrapped and tied and sent to you, with a simple message from God, "I love you."

**God of love,
in Jesus we see and
know you.
Bless us this Christmas
with your peace
which passes understanding
and your life which leads
to eternity.
Amen.**

Southwark Cathedral hosts Remembrance Day Service for City Hall

Dignitaries from the Greater London Authority, including London Mayor Sadiq Khan, gathered at Southwark Cathedral on 12 November to mark the centenary of the Royal British Legion at their annual Remembrance service.

Usually held at City Hall, the event was moved to the Cathedral while the GLA's move to the Royal Docks in East London was being finalised.

In his address, the Very Revd Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark, recalled the words of Jesus in John 15, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."



"It's one of the most powerful things that Jesus says," he said, adding: "All of those we remember today, whatever conflict they were engaged with, were there for their neighbour, their friend, making the ultimate sacrifice, making the ultimate offering, for peace."

Following the anthem *They Shall Not Grow Old*, sung by members of the London International Gospel Choir, a bugler from the Scots Guards sounded the Last Post, falling silent at precisely 11.00am for two minutes' silence.

After more music from the choir, the congregation was asked to commit themselves to "responsible living and faithful service" by faith representatives from the Muslim Council of Great Britain, City Sikhs, the Hindu Council UK and the London Jewish Forum.

Colonel Jane Davis, Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, led the Mayor and others in laying wreaths to remember those in public service who had lost their

lives in wartime, from the sailors, soldiers and airmen of London to the firefighters and St John Ambulance members who gave their lives in service.

The service ended with the National Anthem, and a closing message from Len Duvall, Assembly member and Chair of the City Hall branch of the Royal British Legion. Len gave his thanks to the reservists, armed services, cadets and volunteers present, "not just for their military work but also the non-military, and the way they have supported civilian services in emergency situations".

He added: "We also want to recognise those left behind, the friends and families who have to bear the scars of that loss."

Supporting local families for the past 127 years

Welcare, the family support charity for the Diocese of Southwark, has been hit hard by COVID-19. Here, they reveal how staff have gone the extra mile through the pandemic and beyond.

Welcare has been supporting families in South London and East Surrey for 127 years. Today, the charity provides practical and emotional support and advice for families with children up to the age of 13 who have experienced domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, behaviour problems and those with children who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Welcare works alongside parents and carers to give children secure and confident childhoods by supporting families and children to develop resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

Working collaboratively with the community, schools and churches, the charity's mission is to enable children and families to thrive by providing practical support to meet immediate needs, such as supermarket vouchers or help applying for grants.

“Most families don't know what help is available. While working with a family we connect them with the right organisations”

Welcare works with families to prevent the need for statutory social work interventions – for example, by liaising with children's services on their behalf. They also develop services to support children's emotional health and well-being such as providing mentors.

Responding to COVID-19

Families have experienced unprecedented challenges during the pandemic. There were increased incidences of domestic abuse, parental conflict, mental health challenges and social isolation, particularly among first-time mothers or those whose children have SEND. Families who had never faced financial difficulties before found themselves at breaking point and experienced job losses and illness.

Welcare's Families in Crisis campaign funded supermarket vouchers for the purchase of essential items and sourced laptops to distribute to children being home-schooled.

By working closely with voluntary sector partners, Welcare targeted support where it was most needed. Staff provided support by telephone, online, or face-to-



Summer holiday programme in Lambeth (above). Welcare CEO Anna Khan and new chair Chris Elliott (below).

face in parks and gardens throughout the pandemic. When groupwork programmes could not be delivered in person or online, Welcare offered individual one-to-one support. In total, 344 families received support from Welcare in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Youth offending

Welcare staff have also been working closely with Lambeth Youth Offending Team, both with children who have been in trouble and with their siblings, helping them to rehabilitate and stay away from crime. This work was funded by the Youth Endowment Fund.

Family Support Worker, Nicola, for example, supported a 12-year-old boy and his family. The young boy had been arrested and subsequently excluded from school. The family needed support with education and housing. “We talk to the referring officer about the needs of the child and the family, and work from there,” said Nicola.

The Early Help Team had been involved as the children were out of school. “After the eldest child was excluded, Mum no longer wanted to send her youngest child to school alone. There were concerns of bullying, and she felt they wouldn't be safe alone,” said Nicola. “We worked with Lambeth Children's Services to find a suitable school for both boys – both have autism spectrum disorder, so they needed a specialist school.”

The family also faced issues with suitable housing. With both boys out of school, they were becoming frustrated at home, their behaviour was challenging, and their mother had become increasingly anxious.



Part of Welcare's role involved identifying and coordinating various agencies to help meet the family's needs. “As well as looking for schools, we were involved in ongoing communications with the family's Housing Officer; we applied for a grant for a new cooker. For another family we applied for a Samaritan Grant from

London Catalyst – most families don't know what help is available. While working with a family we also connect them with the right organisations,” said Nicola.

Nicola's next goal is to find a mentor for the boys. “Once housing and schooling have been organised, I want to identify a mentor to work with the boys and to take some pressure off Mum. The boys' dad is not around consistently, and Mum is currently anxious about letting the boys out of her sight. A mentor would help alleviate some strain, whilst also giving guidance to the two children,” she said.

The next stage

Behind the scenes, Welcare continues to be supported by a strong governance structure.

Bishop Christopher recently confirmed the appointment of Chris Elliott as Chair of the Board of Trustees (see *Diocesan Synod report, page 10*). Chris is a former churchwarden of St John the Evangelist, Redhill and has been a trustee of Southwark Diocese, Lay Chair of Reigate Deanery and continues to be a member of Diocesan and Deanery Synod.

He chairs Reigate Archdeaconry Social Justice Focus, which aims to join churches and others across Surrey in raising awareness of the signs of county lines drug dealing, modern slavery, serious youth crime, and domestic violence, as well as how to report concerns.

Chris said: “I was pleased to accept Bishop Christopher's nomination to join the Board of Welcare and to lead a charity with such a long history of supporting the vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community.”

Get involved

Welcare is grateful for prayerful support and financial contributions. You can donate to its mission to support vulnerable children and families living in the Diocese through the website at: welcare.org/getinvolved/donate

Sign up to the quarterly newsletter to hear more about Welcare's work at: info@welcare.org