

Thursday 11 December 2025

This week's clergy letter comes from Bishop Martin:

Dear Fellow Pilgrims in Christ,

'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' (Luke 1: 38)

I am writing this from the Diocese of Matabeleland, our Link Diocese in Zimbabwe, where I am visiting to see progress on the schools we are supporting. On Tuesday, we drove for five hours on a difficult road from Victoria Falls to the new St Cecilia's secondary school in the countryside near Lupane. One of my colleagues said being in the back of the car was like having a thorough workout with a chiropractor!

As we arrived at the school site, the transformation in just a year was unbelievable. Before, we had sat under the shade of a large tree and discussed the plans for a school. Now, there are two large classroom blocks close to completion with children expected to occupy them in January. More are planned. The Mother's Union, who were accompanying us, immediately broke into a song of thanks to God for God's generous provision. I give thanks to God for the generosity of so many in the Kingston Episcopal Area in supporting my run along the Pennine Way, which enabled us to make a financial contribution to the school at a key moment. The Mother's Union bus then got stuck in the sandy soil and had to be dug out but that's another story!

As you read this, you will be advancing purposely through Advent with all that this entails! I hope it is going well. I look forward to being with at least some of you for carol and Sunday services, for midnight mass, and, of course, Christmas morning in HMP Wandsworth.

Above, I invoke the words of Mary to the angel as told in Luke's gospel. These words have been my companion in recent days – Mary's yes to God which is also the yes to God of all baptised Christians. I think also of the 200 people I have confirmed this year – a big increase on last year. It has been so encouraging to see new faith and commitment visibly blossoming before my eyes. And Mary's words also speak into my own sense of commitment and call, seeking to live this out faithfully as your bishop.

In February, on the Feast of Candlemas, I will have been Bishop of Kingston for three years – can you believe it?! It has felt an appropriate time to take stock, to revisit priorities, and to give thanks to God for all that has been. What I have noticed is that while new and unexpected things have bubbled to the surface – teaching and learning, a commitment to growing confidence in the faith, the importance of the Link with Matabeleland – some of the things I began with remain current. One of the first things I said when I arrived was that I wanted to be present, alongside and accessible to parishes and clergy. This feels as important as ever and remains at the heart of all I do. I continue to enjoy getting to know people and places and feeling ever more at home in Southwark. While life is not always easy or straightforward, being in relationship with you, sharing in ministry with you, seeking to discern God's prompting together is a privilege I continue to relish.

One of the things I have been doing in 2025 with my immediate team – Bridget, Charlie, Hannah, Simon and Vanessa – is exploring how we want to be with each other. That is, exploring what the values are that we wish to govern what we do. After much discussion, we came up with the following:

In the Kingston Episcopal Area, we aspire to grow in confidence in God, the Church and one another.

To do this we seek to:

- Build strong and healthy **relationships**
- Cultivate an attitude of curiosity and **learning**

- Be honest and **transparent** in our dealings (i.e. being straightforward)
- Encourage **creativity** and openness to new ways of doing things
- Be **effective** in getting things done while working in a sustainable manner

Therefore, the KEA team seeks to be relational, transparent, curious, creative and effective.

But these values are not just about how we wish to be with each other. They are also how we commit to interacting with yourselves – with parishes, schools and chaplaincies – and the wider Diocese. Of course, values are no good if they just remain on paper. They have to be lived. We commit to trying to live these values out in our dealings with you. We will not always get it right but we hold ourselves accountable to these values and, if you are willing, we commend them to you as well. I like to think we are trying to model something distinctive in the Kingston Episcopal Area, particularly to create a climate in which all voices are encouraged, that people know they will be listened to and taken seriously wherever we end up.

Earlier this week, I had the honour of sharing in the dedication and consecration of a new church, St Cecilia's Nzwanzani, not far from the school we are supporting. My name is even on the cornerstone, which is a first for me! During the celebration of Holy Communion, which was a wonderful celebration with singing that would have made St Cecilia proud, the Bishop of Matabeleland, the Rt Revd Cleophas Lunga, distributed the host with the words 'Become what you are, the Body of Christ'. It struck me as a lovely phrase, capturing that sense that Christian discipleship is about growing into what we already are, our true selves in Christ, how God has made us to be. Just as I am greatly encouraged by all that I see in the Kingston Episcopal Area, I hope that you too will take encouragement from what you are part of – perhaps particularly a sense of being part of something bigger, which is always driven home to me when I visit Matabeleland. May we indeed 'become what we are' not forgetting the values I and my team have committed to!

As Advent turns to Christmas, I wish you a peaceful and restful one, hope and courage for the journey ahead, and I thank you for all you do.

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston

Please pray for:

... **Fr. Jamil Khadir and the Anglican congregations in Nablus** in the West Bank; for the peace of Jerusalem, release of hostages and for an end to conflict

... **Christ Church**, the Anglican Church in Kyiv, and the people of Ukraine

... **Christ's School**, and other schools in the parish

... **All who work in the media**, especially those who risk their lives working in places of war and conflict.

... **Richmond Soup Kitchen**, for all guests and volunteers

... **Christians of Congo**

... **the sick and those in need** - Epp Jones, Sarah Pryce, Georgina Merchant, Gordon Hamilton (Georgina's father), Gerald Fearn, Julie Burman, Paul & Caity Manning, Christa Browne, Barbara Adamson, Irene Chalmers, Sabine Staton, Frances Irwin

... **the departed, may they rest in peace** – Jennifer Thornton, Jennifer Lock, Gilly Valentine

If you would like your own name added, simply [email the parish office](#).

If you would like to add someone's name, please ensure you have their agreement, if at all possible.

Prayer needs: Is anything weighing on your heart at present that you would like us to hold in prayer for you? The St MM prayer group meets regularly to pray in complete confidence over specific prayer needs made known to us. Please feel free to send us your prayer requests

at: richmondprayer.request@gmail.com or post a request anonymously on the prayer board at the back of church in St Mary Magdalene.

If you (or a loved one) find yourself housebound for some reason (even temporarily, after an operation, say) and would like to receive home communion, or if you would welcome a home or hospital visit from one of the pastoral care team, please do get in touch with the church office (admin@richmondteamministry.org) and we would be happy to arrange it.

PRAYER & WORSHIP:

St John the Divine's Sunday service at 11.00am is both in-person and live-streamed via their [Facebook page](#). St John's midweek service takes place on Tuesday evenings with half an hour of quiet contemplation focused on the Blessed Sacrament at 6.30pm, followed by the Said Eucharist at 7.00pm. The last Tuesday of the month our regular Said Eucharist at 7pm is a Eucharist for Healing and Wholeness, with the opportunity to receive the Ministry of Laying on of Hands with Prayer and Anointing for yourself or to receive it on someone else's behalf. All are welcome. **Please note there will not be Tuesday worship at St John's on the first two Tuesdays after Christmas, 30 December and 6 January.**

St Mary Magdalene's Sunday services are at 8.00am, 9.30am, and 6.30pm. There is a Said Eucharist at 10.00am every Wednesday, followed by coffee.

St Matthias' 9.30am Sunday service is an in-person service. The midweek Eucharist at St Matthias is held on Thursdays at 10.00am and is followed by coffee and biscuits. Everyone is very welcome to join us.

Orders of service / readings for all three churches can be found on the News page of our website – here: <https://richmondteamministry.org/news/>

Private Prayer:

St Mary Magdalene is normally open for visiting and prayer, on Saturdays between 10.00am and 12.00noon and Monday – Friday 8am until 3pm.

Morning Prayer, Monday – Fridays, at 8.30am:

Morning Prayer takes place in church and on Teams. We meet at St Matthias on Mondays and Fridays, at St John the Divine on Tuesdays, and at St Mary Magdalene on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Morning prayer will be here every day:

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 331 749 912 278

Passcode: 96s9Aa

You may already have Teams downloaded on a Microsoft computer. However, if you are joining from an iPad or other device, you may need to download the App.

Please contact John Palmer if you have any concerns about this or need a hand with the tech.

Evening Prayer at St Matthias each Wednesday at 5pm

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Details of our Christmas services are now available on the homepage of our website. Please note this year St Mary's are doing just one Christingle service on Christmas Eve at 5pm.

NEW: Carols by Candlelight at St John the Divine - Saturday 13th December at 6pm

This much-loved service is a beautiful way to pause, breathe, and let the music of the season wash over us. We will enjoy a rich blend of well-loved carols, Bible readings, and musical pieces, led not

only by our home team, The St John's Singers, but also joined by the brilliant Orpheus Leander on violin and the wonderful vocal ensemble Gaudeamus. The evening will conclude in suitably festive fashion with mulled wine and mince pies, a perfect opportunity to linger, chat, and share the joy of the season together. Do please invite friends, neighbours, and family - this is a service that's especially easy to say yes to.

NEW: Christingle Nativity Service at St John the Divine – Sunday 14th December at 4pm

On Sunday afternoon we gather for our Christingle Nativity, where we tell the Christmas story in a lively, accessible way - with the added bonus of being able to dress up as a nativity character if you'd like! This is a particularly wonderful service to invite those with children, grandchildren, godchildren, and friends along to.

Christingle Nativity, Wednesday 24 December 5pm. St Mary Magdalene.

Message from Maia Rushby and Sarah Brown

Please let us know if your child/young adult would like to take part in the nativity section of the Christingle Service. The 'performance' will depend on numbers and ages. Current thinking is that we'll have alumni performers as narrators and our younger performers dressing up! Rehearsals during Sunday services in December. Please let Maia (07500 765733, maiarushby@hotmail.com) know who would like to join, and whether they would like a speaking part, a dressing up part or would just like to be on stage! We also need help with costumes.

Thank you, Maia & Sarah.

Christingle making at St Mary's will be on Tuesday 23 December, 10-12 noon.

CHURCH NEWS:

NEW: Christmas 2025 Opening Hours

Please note the parish office will be closed from Tuesday 23 December, 12 noon. We will re-open on Friday 2 January. There will be no newsletter for those next two weeks.

Our churches will be closed 26, 27, 29, 30 & 31 December and 1 January, although Rev'd Anne will be working and available if anyone needs priestly support. There will be Morning Prayer at St Matthias on Monday 29th and Wed 31st Dec and on Fri 2nd January, but no morning prayer at St Mary Magdalene or St John's until the new year.

NEW: The Honourable Artillery Company Band

We are very thankful to the Honourable Artillery Company Band for giving a magnificent concert at St Mary's last Saturday. This has now become a traditional annual event which many look forward to from our Churches and the wider local community.

It was widely supported with over 350 people in attendance and was a fun and jolly occasion.

Our special thanks to Maia who took the leadership role this year and to the many volunteers who helped in its success.

We look forward to welcoming them again next year.

NEW: BIBLE STUDY – PHILEMON

There will be a one session Bible Study on the Paul's letter to Philemon on Tuesday 27 January 2026.

Morning: in person 10am-11:15am, Evening: in person and online 7:45pm-9pm. Contact me to express interest and let me know which one you are coming to. Bibles will be available in church.

Rev'd Joe – joe.moore@richmondteamministry.org

Welcoming Rev'd Robert Stanier to the Team – Licensing Service notice

The Team are delighted to announce that Rev'd Robert Stanier will be Licensed by Bishop Martin as Team Rector of Richmond Team Ministry and Vicar of St Mary Magdalene at 6:30pm on Sunday 22 February 2026 at St Mary Magdalene. Further details will follow, but in the meantime please put the date in your diaries.

Sunday 14 December - Wear Pink for the Soup Kitchen

In some traditions, on the 3rd Sunday of Advent ('Gaudete' Sunday), the vestments change from Advent purple to 'rose' (pink). To reflect this, we are encouraging RTM folk to wear items of pink clothing (as little or as much as you like!) to the morning service, and to bring £5 to go towards the soup kitchen.

Exploring 'Listening to the Music of the Soul'

If you would like to join with others to explore Bishop Guili's Advent book we have two possible Advent group options: Ruth Martin on a Tuesday evening or Rev'd Anne on a Wed afternoon. Please contact the leaders for more information: anne.crawford@richmondteamministry.org or ruthtea304@hotmail.com

Murder In The Cathedral

Some very exciting thespian news for Autumn 2026. RTM is delighted to share the news, recently announced by the Orange Tree Theatre, that our wonderful church St John the Divine will host a new production of T.S. Eliot's 1935 religious play MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL next October. The renowned verse drama explores the timeless questions which dominated much of Eliot's work: of worldly and spiritual authority; faith and doubt; and temptation and martyrdom. Award-winning actor, local resident and RTM parishioner, David Suchet will return to theatre to play Thomas Becket. Besides his iconic TV role as Hercule Poirot, the Emmy Award winner's five-decade stage career includes *Amadeus*, *Oleanna*, and *All My Sons*. We look forward to hosting this sweeping, atmospheric drama, which will include live choral music, in our very own St John's. Tickets are now on sale via the Orange Tree website.

Coffee Mornings at St Mary Magdalene

The Church Committee has agreed with the suggestion of the pastoral group to hold three Saturday 'Open House' Coffee mornings in St Mary's. This is to show local residents that we are still active during the vacancy and we wish to encourage them inside our church for coffee and informal chat.

18 October 10.30 - 12.00

15 November 10.30 - 12.00

13 December 10.30 - 12.00

Any member of the congregation is most welcome to join us for these. It would be lovely to see you too.

The bells of St Mary Magdalene

The bells of St Mary Magdalene are to undergo a dramatic transformation. The three most historic bells dating from 1680 are to be incorporated into a brand-new ring of eight bells that will be faithful to the presence of centuries past while bringing a new sound to the town. The work, that is planned to begin next year, will help future-proof the art of bell ringing and maintain the unique music of church bells in Richmond.

With a target of £200,000 the Richmond ringers will lead the fund-raising effort and are hoping that some benefactors will be prepared to sponsor one of the five new bells that will have the potential to be inscribed with names and messages that could last for hundreds of years. Please visit the ringers' website for more information: HOME | SMM Richmond Bells

Or email smmringers@gmail.com or call Jackie Harrison, Bell Tower captain on 07747 111525

Little Chicks at St Matthias – Fridays 9.15am to 10.45am

Our newly launched toddler group is taking a break over Christmas, and will return on Friday 9th January at 9.15am.

St Mary Magdalene in Vacancy, Special Notice

If as a St Mary's worshipper you have any pastoral concerns or worries during the vacancy, whether your own or on behalf of others, please contact either of the Churchwardens in

confidence. Our emails are below. Alternatively contact John Palmer in the Parish Office. One of us or a member of the Pastoral Group will get in touch with you.

John Buckingham - SMMChurchWarden1@richmondteamministry.org
Anthony Bell – SMMChurchWarden2@richmondteamministry.org

If you would like to speak with a Priest then your Team Clergy - Rev'd Anne Crawford anne.crawford@richmondteamministry.org and Rev'd Joe Moore joe.moore@richmondteamministry.org – are available and more than happy to meet in person or via a telephone conversation.

Giving, one off, regular and planned

At the end of each service you will find a plate at the back of church for your cash offering. Gift aid envelopes are available if you are a UK taxpayer. You can also give by using the card machine. If you can, would you consider making a regular gift to the Richmond Team, for the upkeep of our churches and the work of the Team?

Last year we introduced the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). Many thanks to those of you have joined the scheme. If you are still making regular donations by standing order, envelope or GiveALittle, please do switch to PGS if you are able to. This will help us enormously by reducing the amount of administration and significantly improving our cashflow. If you have any questions, please [contact Jackie Harrison](#) or 07747 111525.

Parish Safeguarding Team:

The Richmond Team Ministry takes its responsibility to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults very seriously. If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact our Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Representatives

[Jo Kitson](#) - St Mary Magdalene

07880 500528

[Gertrude Seaborne](#) - St Matthias

[Helen Peatfield](#) - St John the Divine

Or, [contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor](#)

Diocesan News:

A Message from The Bishop of Southwark, The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we begin the Church's year and the wonderful season of Advent, so full of promise and hope, I share with you that His Majesty The King has graciously consented to my request to retire on my seventieth birthday in August next year. I have had the privilege of serving this Diocese for over twenty years in two episcopal roles, and of sharing the cure of souls with the many excellent clergy who hold my licence. I am mindful of all that you have given generously and sacrificially, as clergy and lay people, to strengthen partnerships in the Gospel in the parishes and ministries to which you have been called. I thank God for you daily, and ask for your prayers in these concluding months.

I shall be nominating Bishop Rosemarie as Acting Bishop of Southwark, to work with the Diocesan College of Bishops. A year ago when I was convalescing, greatly encouraged by your prayers and good will, Bishop Rosemarie convened the College of Bishops with authority and grace in an uncertain time. I ask for prayers for her during the Vacancy in See, and also for my esteemed colleagues Bishop Martin and Bishop Alastair. I shall hand the Diocesan crozier to Bishop Rosemarie at my final service at Southwark Cathedral on

Saturday 18 July 2026 at 12 noon and I am confident that she will lead a senior team that is well prepared for this change – it is a brilliant and effective team.

During my time in Southwark I have very much enjoyed leading diocesan and co-leading ecumenical pilgrimages, particularly to the Holy Land. In recent years I have a very strong sense of how important the reality and metaphor of journey and pilgrimage is in the Christian Faith. It is the Way, as we seek together to understand God's loving purposes for us, to speak well of each other, and to honour our Baptism and participation in Christ.

I have a heartfelt desire, God willing, to continue to serve Christ's Church, but my own personal sense of pilgrimage is captured in Walter Raleigh's poem, 'The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage':

*Give me my scallop shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.*

It has been a privilege to make my pilgrimage with you over these years. You have been hearty companions. I am confident that in God's providence there will be joy and sustenance for each and every Southwark pilgrim in the faithful years to come, the Lord himself being our helper.

Community News:

Holocaust Memorial Day at Richmond Synagogue, Sunday 25 January, 7-9pm

Please register early to be assured of a seat. The event concludes at 9pm, followed by refreshments and conversation.

Please note that our small car park is open *only to blue badge holders*, but there is plenty of street parking available nearby as well as Paradise Street car park. We look forward to welcoming you to a meaningful evening.

Registration Link [HERE](#)

Richmond Soup Kitchen – Winter Appeal

A heartfelt thank you to Richmond Team Ministry.

As we step into the coldest months of the year, Richmond Soup Kitchen is preparing for our busiest winter yet - and we could not do this work without the extraordinary support of Richmond Team Ministry.

Your hospitality, encouragement, prayer, practical help and generosity have been fundamental to our ability to serve those most vulnerable in our community. From hosting our services on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, to welcoming our volunteers and sharing in our compassion, you have helped create a space that offers dignity and hope to hundreds of local people.

This winter, the need is greater than ever. Many of our guests are facing bitter weather, financial hardship, loneliness and poor health. A hot meal, a warm drink, a kind word and a non-judgemental welcome make a profound difference.

This year we have expanded our offer to include:

- The Help Hub – providing hygiene items, warm clothing, extra food and gentle signposting
- Saturday Breakfast Service – the only Saturday food offering in the borough

Both are becoming essential lifelines for guests.

If you feel able to support our Winter Appeal, we would be deeply grateful.

Ways to give:

Set up a monthly donation via our website: richmondsoupkitchen.org

Give to our Winter Appeal via Crowdfunder: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/richmond-soup-kitchen-winter-appeal>

COMMUNITY CHOIR - ALL WELCOME

We would like to set up a community choir for anyone interested singing in a light, fun and relaxed environment. All experiences/ability levels welcome, and reading music is definitely not required. If you are interested, please email [Seb](#) or come and find him at St Mary's!

With best wishes,
John
Parish Administrator

Parish Office, St Matthias Church, Church Road, Richmond TW10 6LR
020 8940 0362
Richmond Team Ministry
St Mary Magdalene • St Matthias • St John the Divine
www.richmondteamministry.org
Registered Charity No 1130018

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[Click here for St John the Divine's Facebook page](#)



[Click here for St Mary Magdalene's Facebook page](#)