

A view from The Bridge

Spreading the Good News

'Good news is no news', they say in the world of journalism. But good news, one name for the Gospel, is the whole point of Christianity. Christians need to argue about the content of the Gospel - what Jesus's promptings and questionings precisely mean. But the propagation of the Gospel is universally seen as the primary duty of Christians. It is what preaching is. A preacher is salesman, teacher, entertainer, but she (or he) is only all those things in order to spread the Faith.

So there can be no argument that the Church needs to be in the business of communication, which is why the Diocese of Southwark has a serious and professional communications department, and why you are reading this leader in the Diocesan newspaper. Communication is education. Newspapers are thought by some to be on the way out (perhaps, even, reading will be a thing of the past, as humanity descends into the brute use of sign language and visual aids to communicate the truth - thereby losing the capacity to communicate or think about anything that matters). Seeing is believing, paraphrasing St Thomas.

Or is it? Pictures have to be interpreted and can be easily faked. Jesus had the last word in that iconographic story about faith and conviction. We must remember we are communicating not just "the Gospel" - but Gospel Truth. And, like goodness and beauty, truth has to be discerned. It is often not obvious, though some think it should be.

Jesus, in fact, seldom told it straight. He taught vital lessons through stories whose ambivalence demanded listeners use their brains. So our Southwark communications are not about laying down the law or putting out a diocesan line like politicians and Borough Councils do, which is now called "Spin". The Gospel is not spin. The Gospel is all the things, big and small, we failed to think of.

The Bridge conveys what's going on in the Diocese not because Southwark is so wonderful at the business, but because actions speak louder than words - and if you want to know what we Church of England people in South London, Surrey and Kent think Jesus meant by "my Father's business", you look at what we are doing. Conversion is not about switching one illusory reassuring statement for another. It is about changing what you do and where you are going. Communications are how we fertilise the soil, and prepare for growth. Not quite the Gospel, but certainly the "spreading".

Tom Sutcliffe



Southwark PEOPLE

Fr Clive French retires

After almost 40 years of ministry, Fr Clive French took his last service on 6 September 2009 - at St John the Baptist Church in the Parish of Catford (Southend) and Downham.

Left: Fr Clive and his wife Jeanne

The church was filled to overflowing with 300 well-wishers, including family and friends. The service included a presentation on behalf of the congregation of a piece of sculpture - especially chosen by Clive to represent his time in SE London. During his 3½ year incumbency the church has been re-ordered and re-equipped, the Church Hall has been refurbished (including a new kitchen) and the Vestry renovated. Clive's initiatives have also included the Youth Club, Pram Club and Seniors Social Club.



Bishops ordain 12 new Deacons

The Area Bishops of the Diocese of Southwark ordained 12 new Deacons in three locations across the Diocese on Sunday 11 October. The new Deacons will serve their curacy in the parishes indicated.

Croydon Area

- Anne Doerr Belmont, St John the Baptist
- Richard Ford Sanderstead Team Ministry
- Elizabeth Goodridge South Beddington and Roundshaw
- Wendy Harvey Hurst Green, St John the Evangelist
- Gerald South Tatsfield, St Mary
- Robert (Bob) Weldon Caterham Team Ministry

Kingston Area

- Suzanne (Suzy) Brech Battersea, St Michael
- Graham Fairbairn Surbiton Hill, Christ Church
- Peter Kelley Hook, St Paul
- Victoria (Vicky) Stott Battersea Rise, St Mark
- Peter Wintgens Battersea, St Mary
- Woolwich Area
- Abigail Adetayo Peckham, St Mary Magdalene

All of the above are non-stipendiary, which means unpaid for their work as Deacons, with the exception of Vicky Stott who is stipendiary, but funded by the parish.

Reader celebrates 25 years

A service was held on Sunday 11 October at St Andrew's Catford to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Reader, Nicole Burgum's licensing.

During that time she also completed a period as Warden of Readers for Woolwich Area.

Canon Andrew Nunn, Sub-dean at the Cathedral and Warden of Southwark Readers, was invited to celebrate at the service held in October.

Nicole preached on the theme of "every cloud has a silver lining"..

The service was followed by a parish lunch in the hall.

The Bridge

is produced & published by Kent Christian Press for Communications and Resources on behalf of The Diocese of Southwark, Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW Tel: 020 7939 9400 Fax: 020 7939 9468 e-mail: bridge@southwark.anglican.org

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The December/January edition is due to be published on **4 December**

and in your parish from the following Sunday. Material for that edition must be with Wendy S. Robins at Trinity House by

23 November

Whilst we try to include as much of what is sent into us as possible, because of space limitations, we cannot guarantee to publish everything. In addition we reserve the right to edit material.

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