

November
2025

EDGEWAYS

Sacred Heart Parish Magazine

Vol. 36 No. 10

sacredheartwimbledon.org.uk



Getting to know Fr Edwin Raj (pp.6–7)



Wimbledon Catenians' dinner and photographic competition (pp.8–9)



Gregorian Chant Workshop Day (p.10)



'Called to Bear Fruit' ... the results! (pp.14–16)



Jesuit Refugee Service visits the Wimbledon Newman Society (pp.18–19)

***FREE* but donations are always welcome**

Matthew, the 'Ecclesiastical Gospel'

On 30 November, the First Sunday of Advent, we reverted to Year A and St Matthew's Gospel. Even though *ekklesia* (church) only occurs twice, Matthew is often referred to as the 'ecclesiastical Gospel'. What does this mean?

The role of Peter

However much Catholics and Protestants may disagree on the role of St Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome, it is clear in Matthew's Gospel that Peter is the foundation stone of the Church:



'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' (16:18-19)

Peter's, and the Church's, authority to bind and loose does not mean that the Church decides and heaven merely rubberstamps the decision – but, rather, the opposite: God decides and the Church pronounces God's decision. This power belongs to Jesus Christ, but is delegated to Peter and the Church. We can debate how much the 'power of the keys' to bind and loose refers to disciplinary judgment or teaching authority.

The Sermon on the Mount

Peter's commission comes in the middle of a passage about practical issues of church life, a key theme of Matthew. The key text on this topic is the Sermon on the Mount, which is only found in Matthew's Gospel, and focuses on the nature and demands of discipleship.



The Sermon deals with the true character and rewards of discipleship (5:3-12), the distinctiveness of the disciple (5:13-16), their ethical demands (5:17-48), religious observance (6:1-18), the disciple's priorities (6:19-34), their attitudes to fellow disciples (7:1-6,12) and to God (7:7-11), and the contrasts between true and false discipleship (7:13-27).

The Sermon's ethical and practical teaching culminates in the Golden Rule:



'So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets' (7:12)

Although this is the sort of saying a Jewish rabbi would make, there is no parallel in rabbinic teaching: Jesus' words are new, radical, and far-reaching. The Sermon on the Mount has been a mainstay for preachers, teachers and catechists over the centuries; there is little doubt that this is what Matthew intended.

Discipleship

The word *mathetes* (disciple) appears frequently in Matthew, and the 'Great Commission' at the end of the Gospel (also unique to Matthew) offers a useful summary of what Christian discipleship involves:



'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (28:19-20)

First, a disciple is one baptised in the name of God the Trinity. Secondly, the disciple obeys what Jesus has commanded and teaches this to others. A disciple thus has a relationship with the Triune God – and, in particular, with Jesus Christ. They not only obey God's commands, but pass them onto others.

Another important word in Matthew is 'follow'. The disciples are often described as following Jesus, but this means more than simply shadowing Him. It means

adhering to His teaching and conforming their will to Christ's. Despite the occasions when Jesus taught the crowds – like the Sermon on the Mount – most of His teaching is addressed to the disciples alone, to whom a special revelation is given – even if they are sometimes obtuse or deficient, as Peter often was!

Finally, in the Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat (13:24-30), Matthew invites us to recognise that the Church consists of both bad (the weeds) and good (the wheat) disciples. They will all be subject to judgment, so there is no room for complacency.

Chapter 25, which includes the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, makes it clear that it is not those who say 'Lord, Lord' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the Father's will.

As we listen to Matthew in our readings at Mass over the coming year, let us listen attentively to what we can learn about our own place, mission, and growth in the Church and as disciples.

Canon David



Parish Evangelisation Prayer Group

Canon David is keen to start a Parish Evangelisation Prayer Group to support the parish's evangelising work by rooting it in prayer. Bridget Handley will lead the group.

If you are interested in joining, please contact the Parish Office at wimbledon@rcaos.org.uk; Thelma will pass your contact details on to Bridget.

A special 'thank you' ...

... from me, after my recent heart surgery, to all the people who have sent me 'get well' messages and prayers. I really appreciate them all from the bottom of my newly-restored heart.

In this month's Edgeways, Canon David explains **Matthew's ecclesiastical Gospel** (pp.2–3) as we enter Year A. Then we get to know **Fr Edwin Raj** (pp.6–7), one of our two new assistant priests. It will be the turn of Fr Peter Frank Mudu in the next Edgeways!

Following the lengthy synodal process and the questionnaires that we answered in parish groups, we dissect the Archdiocese's report on the **Called to Bear Fruit** lay consultation and point to where you can find more details (pp. 14–16).

Turning to parish groups, a highlight of the **Wimbledon Catenians'** year is their annual dinner for members, families, and friends, which focuses on their photographic competition. This year was no exception. We hear from Tom Conlon and enjoy the winning entries (pp.8–9).

After welcoming the **Jesuit Refugee Service** to speak at the last Newman Circle meeting, we hear the personal experience of an asylum seeker whose family the charity has been helping (pp.18–19).

We then learn about two initiatives resulting directly from the parish's membership and support for Merton Citizens. Firstly, Graham Kennedy explores what the 'Place Chief Officer' role means for our parish's **Be Well Hub** mental health initiative (pp.12–13).



Secondly, we look at Merton Council's application to become an accredited **Borough of Sanctuary** following persistent lobbying by Merton Citizens (p.17). These are just two examples of practical 'wins' by this proactive membership organisation!

In parish music, Bob Rathbone reports on the second well-attended **Gregorian Chant Workshop Day** (p.10), and we ask you to book your seats for **Katy's Songbirds Christmas Concert** on Thursday 18 December (back cover) and clear your diaries for **Mozart's Requiem** on Saturday 20 June 2026 (p.11).

Finally, we flick through the **Edgeways archives** from November 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2019, and 2024 (pp.22–23).

I can honestly say that it is my pleasure to report to you on all of these wonderful parish activities. Enjoy your reading!

David Hurst

We welcome your letters, feedback, and article suggestions! Please email the editor at wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk.

Production credits: David Hurst (Editor, wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk) and Matteo Baccaglini (design and layout).



tinyurl.com/3p5svfsk

This one-day retreat will be an opportunity for young people in and around London to come together in this new year to explore faith, build relationships and find hope. Join us for a jam-packed day of prayer, teaching, friendship, and fun!

'From a land where the Sun both rises and sets on the horizon'

Your editor gets to know Fr Edwin Raj, whom we welcome to the parish as our new Assistant Priest.

Fr Edwin tells me that the town he comes from – Kanniyakumari, in Tamil Nadu ('land of the Tamils') – is as far south in the subcontinent of India as you can get. 'From the same point,' he tells me, 'you can see the sun rise in the morning and then set in the evening on opposite horizons'.

Fr Edwin's full name is 'Edwin Raj Chinnathurai', which means, 'graceful friend, king of a small port'. He was born into a Catholic family on both sides and is the middle of three brothers. As a family, they speak Tamil, English, the classical Indian language of Malayalam, and also ('a little') Hindi. Puts us to shame!

He received a Catholic education and was an altar boy at primary school. Fr Edwin knew from the age of 13 that he wanted to be a priest after first being inspired by his then parish priest, Fr Maria Rajendian. (I've checked and Edwin has thanked Fr Maria!) His formation began with a year-long initiation at St Aloysius Minor Seminary in the Diocese of Kottar.

Fr Edwin then studied for a three-year Bachelor of Arts in English Literature at Nesamony Memorial Christian College, affiliated with Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, in Marthandam, where his favourite authors were Shakespeare (*obv!*), Ben Jonson (*Volpone*) and, new to me, Paulo Coelho, a Jesuit-educated, Brazilian songwriter and author (*The Alchemist* and *The Valkyries*).

His formation continued when he studied for a two-year Bachelor of Philosophy at the Nesamony Memorial Christian College, a mostly-Protestant institute of arts and science, and also a papal seminary in Pune.

Fr Edwin's priestly training continued with 'regency', a period spent working within a community. He worked as a 'brother in training' at the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, back in the Diocese of Kottar, where his duties included youth ministry, adult catechesis, and playing the piano for the choir and at music sessions.

Next was a 'Year of Spirituality' at St Peter's Seminary in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, where Fr Edwin learned about forms of Indian spirituality: Hinduism, Buddhism, psychological analysis, and different spiritual experiences, like the Ashram experience, Christian charismatic retreats, Gandhian spirituality, and Buddhist *Vipassanā*. The year ended with a 30-day Ignatian retreat which, of course, included the Spiritual Exercises, devised by St Ignatius of Loyola. Following that, Fr Edwin returned to the papal seminary for his theological studies, completing his Bachelor of Theology.

Finally, in February 2016, Fr Edwin was ordained as a deacon by Most Rev. Valarian, the Bishop Emeritus of Pune, under the guidance of the Jesuits at the papal seminary. Six months later, after his pastoral course, he was sent on a six-month diaconate ministry at St Teresa's Church, Kanjampuram, in the newly-erected Diocese of Kuzhithurai (bifurcated from the Diocese of Kottar).

Fr Edwin was ordained Priest for the Diocese of Kuzhithurai on 7 May 2017 by Most Rev. Jeromedhas Varuvel SDB at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Thiruvapuram, Kuzhithurai.

Fr Edwin celebrated his first Thanksgiving Mass in the parish church of the Holy Guardian Angels, Melpuram, to which more than 3,000 family, friends, fellow students, and parishioners were invited. Immediately after his ordination, he was appointed as Secretary to the Bishop of Kuzhithurai.

From May 2018 until May 2022, Fr Edwin worked as Parish Priest at St Anthony's Church in Vellaimbalam, along with a substation (St Roch's Church, Veppuvilai). St Anthony's has over 300 practising families, and Fr Edwin coordinated active groups for parishioners of all ages, including the Infants Society (ages 6–7), Little Way Movement (ages 8–13), Young Christian Society (ages 14–17), and youth and young married couples (ages 17+).

Fr Edwin was also Vicariate Director, working for the Youth Commission and organising monthly meetings with young people's representatives from thirty parishes. He was also a governor of two Catholic schools – one was coincidentally called Sacred Heart Primary School!

While serving as Parish Priest, Fr Edwin obtained his Master of Arts in English Literature at Vellankani College of Arts and Science in Tholayavattam, another college affiliated with Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

Fr Edwin later worked for the Special Education Ministry in the state capital of Chennai, with a population of over eight million people and located a mere eight hours' journey to the north! Working under the guidance of Fr Antony

Sebastian at the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore's JD Academy of Excellence, Fr Edwin trained young Catholic students to become government administrators. By visiting Catholic institutions all over Tamil Nadu, Fr Edwin supported the Academy to motivate young Catholics to pass various government exams. Meanwhile, he lectured on *Introduction to the Bible* as part of an ongoing formation course for catechists, conducted by the Christian Life Commission of the Diocese of Kuzhithurai.

Fr Edwin's journey to England started last November, when his friend Fr James Raj, with whom he studied at papal seminary, contacted him from St Anne's Church on Kingston Hill. Fr Edwin was curious to learn about our literature and culture, and he wanted to explore living a totally different experience, including acquiring a diverse pastoral experience. On a Minister of Religion visa, he will work with the Diocese of Southwark for up to five years, initially observing all aspects of how our parish works.

With his vast previous experience and exposure to both practical and academic challenges (he has MA, BPhil, and BTh after his name!), we are lucky to have Fr Edwin in our parish community. He says that he has been made to feel very welcome by parishioners – so, please, do continue to welcome him whenever you meet him!

I always ask my profile subjects about their hobbies – if they have any leisure time! Fr Edwin likes to read, write, and cook. He plays the piano to performance-level and he can also play the Indian flute – his secret superpower! (When will we hear that?!) Since living in London, he has enjoyed exploring the city centre, and especially seeing the Globe Theatre in Southwark.

Thursday 30 October Wimbledon Catenians Photographic Night



The Wimbledon Catenians Circle recently held their annual popular and successful photographic competition. Over fifty Catenians, parishioners, their families, and Canon David enjoyed an excellent meal in a great atmosphere.

The categories in the photographic competition were 'Faith', 'Family' and 'Friendship', reflecting the foundation of the Catenians. There were three judges, including Leo Wilkinson, a renowned photographer pictured with the overall winner, Jiva De Lambert.

Judges scrutinised over 150 entries and, following the results, Leo entertained us with a talk and anecdotes relating to his years photographing celebrities from the world of sport and entertainment.

The Catenian Association was formed in 1908 by a group of friends in Manchester and is organised in circles, where members share their faith and make lasting friendships with like-minded Catholic men and their families. It is a worldwide association; once a member, you are encouraged to visit as many different local circles as you wish.

Circles continually raise money for public charities, as well as two internal charities: the Bursary Fund, which sponsors young people in projects at home and abroad, and the Benevolent Fund, which supports members and their families in times of difficulty.

At the Wimbledon Circle, meetings begin with a prayer, followed by an event, a shared meal (normally an excellent curry for just £10), going to a local pub, or being entertained by a guest speaker.

Come along one Thursday – you will receive a warm welcome and have an enjoyable time!

Tom Conlon

The Wimbledon Catenians Circle for Catholic men meets in the Lounge at 7.30pm on the last Thursday of every month. Enquirers and new members are always welcome. To find out more or to register your interest, please email Des O'Brien at des@boxofcolours.com or visit wimbledon-catenians.org.uk.



Judge Lee Wilkinson (right) awards the winner's shield to Jiva de Lambert (left)



Jiva de Lambert's winning photograph



Faith category winner, by John Woodhouse



Family category winner, by John Woodhouse



Fun category winner, by Terri Redhouse

Saturday 1 November: Gregorian Chant Workshop Day and First Vespers of All Saints

Organised by Deacon Julian and the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, this was the second chant workshop day after last year's success.

The day was again led by Iain Simcock, one of the foremost authorities on Gregorian chant in this country. For seven years, Iain was Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral and subsequently Organist at the Abbey of Saint Pierre in Solesmes while continuing a solo freelance career. He maintains his connection with the Abbey of Solesmes and the Benedictines of the Abbey of Sainte-Madeleine at Le Barroux.

Iain guided us through the chant for the First Vespers for All Saints with a mixture of firm instruction, humour, and encouragement. The 30-or-so participants were made up of seasoned chant enthusiasts, those who regularly use chant liturgically (including myself), and complete novices wishing to learn the principles of chant.

With such a mixed bag of abilities, it was remarkable how Iain managed to mould us into a coherent whole to sing Vespers in the church at 5.15pm. Members of the congregation, mostly arriving early for the 6.30pm Mass, were greatly appreciative and commented on the beautiful sound and how it assisted them in their preparation for Mass.

We hope to be able to have more Vespers using chant (something that the late Len Hay reinstated some years ago, though in English). One really does feel an affinity to those very first Christians who wanted a way of singing liturgical text. Gregorian



Chant remains the eternal musical heart of the Church – and you hear it most times when Mass is celebrated with the celebrant's intonations, albeit sometimes with regional variations!

We would like to thank Iain and the Schola, but especially Deacon Julian for his infectious enthusiasm for liturgical chant and for organising the day at a difficult time.

Bob Rathbone

Mozart's Requiem



Please save the date for **Saturday 20 June 2026**, when Mozart's *Requiem* will resound through our church, twenty years since we last performed it.

The Sacred Heart Chorus and Orchestra
conducted by Robert Rathbone

MOZART'S REQUIEM

(K626)

Save the Date
Saturday, 20 June 2026

For more concert details or to
learn how to join the chorus,
scan the QR code!



SACRED HEART CHURCH, EDGE HILL, WIMBLEDON, SW19 4LU
www.sacredheartmusic.co.uk/concerts/mozart-requiem

Vanessa Ford, Merton's new Place Chief Officer: What does that mean for our Be Well Hub?

Vanessa Ford, Chief Executive of our local South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust (SWLSTG), has been appointed Place Chief Officer (PCO) for Merton. This pivotal role marks a significant step towards creating a more connected and collaborative health and care environment across the borough.

What does the PCO role involve?

Vanessa will lead the development of Place Provider Partnerships, working closely with NHS partners, community, voluntary, and social care organisations, pharmacies, hospices, and others. Vanessa's priorities include:

- Building integrated ways of working across organisational boundaries, from board-level to neighbourhood teams.
- Establishing governance through the Place Provider Alliance to support the delivery of integrated care.
- Allocating management resources for an effective alliance infrastructure and leadership for integrated teams.
- Developing a shared work plan to track progress against the Target Operating Model and set milestones.
- Driving neighbourhood transition targets for 2026/27 and addressing interface issues between providers.
- Mobilising key enablers (population health tools, communications, finance, contracting, etc.), in collaboration with the South West London Integrated Care Board.¹



The opportunity for Sacred Heart Parish as a Be Well Hub

Vanessa's role could be an opportunity to help shape health and care delivery in Merton. Her focus on integrated working and shared vision is likely to mean:

- Greater collaboration with voluntary and community sector organisational partners, like Sacred Heart Parish, in planning and delivering services.
- Opportunities for joint training and learning across teams.
- A stronger voice for community needs in governance and decision-making.
- Potential access to resources and partnerships through the Place Provider Alliance.

Immediate next steps include relationship building with strategic partners, reviewing governance, and developing a roadmap for a functional alliance — creating space for community organisations to engage early and influence priorities.

We're hoping that Vanessa might visit the parish in January 2026.

Graham Kennedy
Be Well Hub Coordinator

If you would like to get involved in the parish's Be Well Hub initiative to improve our community's mental wellbeing, please email Graham at wimbledonbwhc@rcaos.org.uk.

¹ In July 2022, Integrated Care Boards replaced Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Photograph: South West London NHS.

Wimbledon Marriage Care

... is seeking volunteers to join their team of chaperones: can you help?

This vital role involves welcoming clients and ensuring that their session with the counsellor goes uninterrupted. These in-person sessions take place for up to two hours on Monday mornings and for up to three hours on Tuesday evenings in Wimbledon. To learn more, please contact Clive or Teresa Weeks on 020 8393 1607 or 07815 854007 or email c.a.weeks@hotmail.co.uk.

For counselling appointments, please call 0800 389 3801.

Jodie always cheers me up

We always have time for you. Compassionate Homecare beyond compare.

For a friendly chat, call: 0203 1501 888
email: wimbledon@gacarers.co.uk
visit: gacarers.co.uk/wimbledon

Guardian Angel carers
People you can get on with

'Called to Bear Fruit' ... the results!

'Called to Bear Fruit' is the Archdiocese of Southwark's synodal process of renewal. The initiative hopes to inspire and equip parishes to become communities that form disciples, evangelise, and inspire witness to the Catholic faith.

In the process' latest 'lay consultation' phase, parishes across the Archdiocese were invited to form groups to discuss and discern through six themes, and to submit a response for each theme to the Archdiocese.

In total, the Archdiocese received 1,418 responses from 123 of its 175 parishes. Over 2,800 people are estimated to be represented in these responses. In the Merton Deanery, over 60% of parishes submitted a response – including ours.

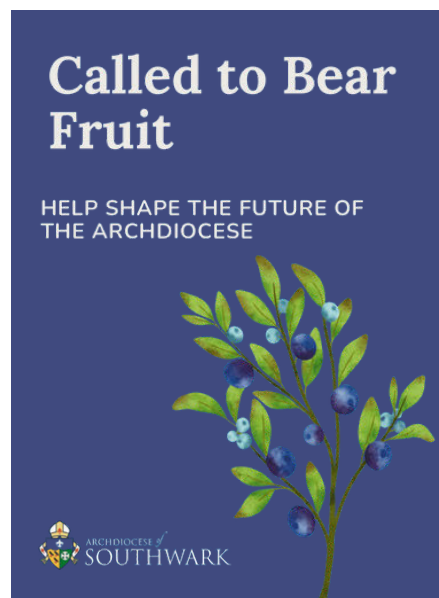
We summarise below the Archdiocese's report on the results. You can read the report in full and learn more about the process at rcaos.org.uk/calledtobearfruit.

Taking Stock

41% of responses said that their parish was growing, while 23% said they felt it was declining. 80% of responses were hopeful for the future. Although 87% expressed a desire for cross-parish collaboration, many identified few existing connections.

In response, the Archdiocese will:

- celebrate existing signs of growth by sharing parishes' renewal stories and examples of best practice;
- share a new vision statement for the Archdiocese and study guides on the purpose of a parish; and
- encourage inter-parish collaboration, e.g. through local liturgies and events.



Proclaiming the Word

While 23% of responses said their parish was missionary, 31% said it was not at all: 22% of responses struggled to name any missionary activity in their parish. A key insight was that lay parishioners desire 'clearer teaching and tools about what evangelisation means in a parish setting'.

In response, the Archdiocese will:

- reshare its existing evangelisation training and resources, with the next 'Evangelisation Expo' in Spring 2026;
- support parishes to move from welcome to invitation via campaigns, events, and resources; and
- share good practice from across the Archdiocese.



'Parishioners note that growth consists not only in numbers at Mass, but also faithfulness, vibrancy, welcome, reverence, and investment in ministries. There is a sense that a shift is needed in people's understanding of what it means to be a 'parish' and how to respond to the needs of today.' (p.10)

Living Discipleship: Faith

More than nine in ten responses said that their parish offers opportunities for faith development, such as through groups, courses, and events. Although responses welcomed family-centred approaches to sacramental preparation, they expressed a 'clear desire' to ensure that parental and family engagement continues past preparation as ongoing formation embedded in a 'next step' approach.

In response, the Archdiocese will:

- encourage catechists and parents to be regularly acknowledged and celebrated in parish newsletters;
- share resources for catechists and parents to be missionary disciples; and
- continue to offer ongoing formation, e.g. through the Catholic Certificate for Religious Studies, Archbishop's Certificate, and Southwark Catholic Youth Services.



'Pipelines are needed to focus what is offered and ensure people are encouraged back into volunteering and ministry themselves. For example: New parishioner joins → Invited to Sycamore → Joins a weekly Bible study → Invited to volunteer at next Sycamore.' (p.18)

Living Discipleship: Prayer and Community Life

Responses identified limited intentional teaching on prayer in a parish context; many people learn to pray at home, as children, or through experience. The availability of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament also varies greatly by parish.

83% of responses said that first-time visitors would have a positive experience in their parish. Two in three responses recognised hospitality initiatives in their parish, such as after-Mass coffees and welcome teams – but some warned that such teams need training and support.

In response, the Archdiocese will:

- promote resources on prayer, such as courses, online apps, and the diocesan Spirituality Commission; and
- strengthen its culture of hospitality.



'Hospitality is one of the simplest and most powerful ways we share God's love. A warm smile at the door, coffee after Mass, or introducing a newcomer to others can make all the difference. ...

- *Be warm and personal:* A smile, eye contact, and a friendly word make people feel seen and valued. Treat it as if you were welcoming someone into your home.
- *Follow up with care:* Noticing new faces, remembering names and inviting people to future events encourages them to return and get involved.
- *Make hospitality a shared culture:* Hospitality isn't just the role of one 'team' – the whole parish community is called to make each other feel at home.' (p.23)

The Witness of Charity

The consultation asked parish groups to recognise those in need in their local community. The top three most common responses were the homeless, elderly, and lonely or isolated. Refugees, migrants, youth, families, and those struggling with addiction were less frequently mentioned.

62% of responses indicated that they do not have enough volunteers in their parish, while 24% said that they did. Respondents felt that volunteers were overstretched, and the need for more help is rarely advertised when required. Many comments concerned the ageing volunteer base and the struggle to recruit younger volunteers.

In response, the Archdiocese will:

- encourage parishes to celebrate and thank their volunteers more visibly, including through an annual 'Volunteer Thanksgiving Sunday' with a blessing at Mass and reception or meal; and
- encourage personal invitations into service – centred on prayer, inspired by the vision rather than the task, and through small, simple, and meaningful first steps.



'Some parishes are already working with neighbours or local Christian communities in food banks, choirs, and outreach projects and many are positive about further opportunities. Others are less sure how collaboration could work, or prefer linking with charities and community groups instead. This suggests fertile ground for building a stronger culture of partnership, but also a need for practical guidance and coordination.' (p.26)

Proposals for Revitalisation

Respondents were eager for their parish to grow in numbers, deepen in faith, and broaden in participation. 57% of responses ranked 'reaching and engaging young people' as essential.

Respondents were keen to collaborate with other parishes, but recognised the importance of maintaining distinct parish identities and navigating the practicalities of collaboration.

The consultation also asked groups what they would need to change if they were asked to share their priest with another parish. Many responses expressed concern, including for priests' wellbeing, and comments instead centred on sharing responsibility between the clergy and laity. The roles of deacons and women were especially mentioned.

In response, the Archdiocese will:

- continue to invest in youth ministry through the Southwark Catholic Youth Service;
- launch a parish renewal course for laity and clergy in 2026; and
- invite everyone into a call to prayer for renewal.



'Archbishop John would like to invite everyone into a time of deeper prayer and personal renewal, by committing to one or more of the following for the intention of renewal in the Archdiocese:

1. A Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament;
2. Praying the Rosary; or
3. Seeking the Lord's mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.' (p.31)

Merton Citizens win for local refugees

Following persistent lobbying by Merton Citizens, in February 2020, Merton Council passed a motion to become an accredited Borough of Sanctuary. In September 2024, the Cabinet endorsed a Strategy and Action Plan that will form the basis of Merton's application.



'We are committed to the principles and values of the City of Sanctuary movement. In line with their vision in the UK, Merton's vision is that Merton will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.'

– Merton Borough of Sanctuary
Strategy and Action Plan 2024–2028

With other local faith groups, schools, and philanthropic organisations, Sacred Heart Wimbledon and Wimbledon College were founding members of Merton Citizens in April 2018. The alliance is the local chapter of Citizens UK, a voluntary organisation focusing on community organising for the common good.

After an extensive listening campaign among over 6,000 local people, the 17-member alliance agreed on four priorities to focus its resources. These included mental health (leading to the Be Well Hub initiative), housing, the cost of living, and refugees.

The fourth priority was making Merton a welcoming borough for refugees and migrants without recourse to public funds and for whom English is not their first language.

In April 2023, Merton Citizens and Merton Council established a cross-party working group to support Merton's Borough of Sanctuary application. The group 'received regular representation from Care4Calais, Polish Families Association, Learn English Together in Merton, Merton Connected, Commonsides Trust, Merton Community Transport, Ukrainian Refugee Help in Merton, CARAS, among representation from other partners and stakeholders'.

The fruit of the group's work was the four-year Strategy and Action Plan. The Plan is a local reflection of the values central to the City of Sanctuary UK scheme: inclusivity, openness, participation, inspiration, and integrity. Merton's vision will promote the rights and welfare of all people seeking safety and protection by:

- helping refugees and residents seeking asylum to feel and be part of the borough;
- developing and promoting projects that create a sense of community, belonging, and togetherness in Merton;
- bringing communities together to address the issues that matter to everyone; and
- celebrating the contributions, culture, and successes of people seeking asylum, along with those of the wider migrant community.

You can read the full Cabinet decision and Strategy and Action Plan at democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AIId=23233.

‘Love crossed every border the first Christmas’

On Wednesday 12 November, the Wimbledon Newman Society welcomed to the parish, for the second time, Liam Allmark, Head of Communications, Fundraising and Advocacy at the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) UK. We share the experience of Victoria B., one of JRS's beneficiaries.

Will you provide families in the asylum system with essential support this winter?

I have two sons. We came to the UK in 2012 to seek safety for my eldest. We come from West Africa. My son is disabled, and beginning when he was two years old, he was repeatedly kidnapped for rituals. If the police were bribed, they wouldn't take action. Again and again, we had to rescue him ourselves. Eventually, I decided to leave everything behind and seek safety for us elsewhere.

As a mother, all of this was heartbreaking, and thinking about it today still makes me sad. Sometimes, feeling like I couldn't protect him, I felt less like a mother. Even though he is an adult now, I still fear for his safety when I'm not with him.

The support you get, even when you have children in the asylum system, simply isn't enough. I wasn't allowed to work to support us. I had to visit charities to have enough food and to pick up clothing to look after my family, to feed us and to be clothed with dignity or warmly in the winter.

Then I found JRS UK, where we can access vital support – food, clothes, and toiletries. I am part of the volunteer cooking team, and I'm often asked to cook when we are welcoming important guests! It makes me happy to see people eating my food.



We were rejected for asylum over and over, sometimes waiting years to hear the outcome of our case. My sons are grown now and have their own asylum applications. I've lost support, and I'm sofasurfing again, dependent on the goodwill of a friend from my mosque.

I can't wait for my children's cases to be resolved: then they will be able to earn and support themselves; they will be able to buy food and clothing. Most importantly, they'll be able to have a safe place to stay, with access to medical care.

Your support for JRS UK means everything. It gives my family and me access to food, clothes, and toiletries, which we can't buy ourselves. It also gives us financial assistance to buy essentials we need, or to travel to appointments. Winter is coming, and I know I'll be able to access warm clothing, hats, gloves, and scarves. It's nice being able to wear good quality clothing: I don't want shabby clothing to always identify me as someone different.

I'm so grateful for your help. May God Almighty bless you. I believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel. This period of my life is dark right now, but I have faith things will turn out for the better.

Thank you, and wishing you a blessed Advent.'

Victoria B.

Victoria's experience reflects the reality for so many families we accompany at JRS UK. And things are about to get even harder.

On Monday 17 November, the Home Secretary announced plans to withdraw support from more families seeking sanctuary and to escalate enforced returns. The government also proposes making refugee status temporary.

At the same time, anti-refugee violence is rising. This summer, women, men, and children hid in asylum accommodation while mobs broke windows and chanted racist slogans. Many of those involved claimed to act in defence of Christian values, even carrying crosses. This is a distortion of the Gospel that should concern us all.

These are difficult times for people seeking sanctuary. But together, we can write a different story. As we prepare for Christmas and reflect on the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, I've been



Donate now:
jrsuk.net/advent

moved by churches, schools, and individuals across the country standing with refugee families. Whether through prayer, raising your voices for justice, or supporting JRS UK's services – thank you for all you have done this year.

Please keep Victoria, her children, and all refugee families in your prayers throughout Advent. And if you can, please support vital practical services for refugee families with your donations at jrsuk.net/advent.

Your generosity provides food, baby essentials, and above all hope. The welcome we offer – together – is a true expression of our faith. As the Holy Family's own journey as refugees reminds us, love crossed every border the first Christmas.

Liam Allmark

Victoria's words are adapted from the original article at jrsuk.net/advent. Photograph: Jesuit Refugee Service UK.



Would you like to write for Edgeways?

Do you have an article that you think would be a great addition to YOUR parish magazine? We're always open to contributions! Please contact the editor at wimbledonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk.

Christmas 2025 at Sacred Heart Wimbledon

Mondays 1, 8, and 15 December

6.30am **Advent Rorate Mass**

These traditional dawn Masses of Our Lady by candlelight will be celebrated on the first three Mondays of December in the Lady Chapel. If you have never experienced one of these special Advent Masses, do make an effort to come along and help prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas. By popular request, these Masses will be sung Masses and in Latin.

Monday 15 – Saturday 20 December

10.00am **Holy Mass**
5.45pm – 6.15pm **Confessions**
6.30pm **Holy Mass**

Saturday 20 December

10.30am **Advent Penitential Service**
with individual Confessions

A short communal Service of Penitence will be followed by individual Confessions, with visiting priests as well as our own. During the Confessions, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for Adoration. Come and confess early for Christmas!

Sunday 21 December Fourth Sunday of Advent

Usual Sunday Mass schedule: 6.30pm (Saturday), 8.00am, 10.00am, 12 noon, 5.00pm, and 8.00pm

Monday 22 – Tuesday 23 December

10.00am **Holy Mass**
5.45pm – 6.15pm **Confessions**
6.30pm **Holy Mass**

Wednesday 24 December

10.00am **Holy Mass** (of 24 December)

Christmas Eve Wednesday 24 December

3.30pm **Children's Christmas Crib Service**

There will be a rehearsal for the Crib Service from 10.45am to 12 noon on **Tuesday 23 December** for children aged 4+ who would like to be involved as actors and children aged 8+ wishing to read. Please contact Rachel Marshall at rachel@marshallemail.net. Offers of help from parents are also most welcome.

5.00pm **Vigil Mass**
7.30pm **Vigil Mass** preceded by
Carols from 7.10pm
Midnight **Midnight Mass** preceded by
Carols from 11.30pm

Christmas Day Thursday 25 December

8.00am **Mass of the Dawn**
10.00am **Mass of the Day**
12 noon **Mass of the Day**

There are no evening Masses.

Friday 26 December St Stephen

10.00am **Holy Mass** (no evening Mass)

Saturday 27 December St John

10.00am **Holy Mass**
5.45pm – 6.15pm **Confessions**
6.00pm – 6.20pm **Confessions**

Sunday 28 December The Holy Family

Usual Sunday Mass schedule: 6.30pm (Saturday), 8.00am, 10.00am, 12 noon, 5.00pm, and 8.00pm

Monday 29 – Wednesday 31 December

10.00am **Holy Mass**
6.00pm – 6.20pm **Confessions**
6.30pm **Holy Mass**

Thursday 1 January Mary, Mother of God

6.30pm (Wed) **Holy Mass**
10.00am **Holy Mass** (no evening Mass)

Friday 2 January SS Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen

10.00am **Holy Mass**
6.00pm – 6.20pm **Confessions**
6.30pm **Holy Mass**

Saturday 3 January

10.00am **Holy Mass**
10.30am – 11.30am **Confessions**
6.00pm – 6.20pm **Confessions**

Reserved seats at the Vigil and Midnight Masses: The front four rows of seats on the left-hand centre aisle of the church will be reserved for frail and elderly persons and wheelchairs, until 5 minutes before the Carols begin.

Parking: Additional car parking spaces will be available at Wimbledon College from 3.00pm on Wednesday 24 December until 2.00am on Thursday 25 December. The church car park's registration system will be deactivated from Wednesday 24 to Saturday 26 December inclusive, and on Wednesday 31 December and Thursday 1 January.

Crib Offerings: The Christmas Crib will be displayed in the St Ignatius Chapel. Please take care when lighting votive candles, especially around children. The Crib Offerings will be sent to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, earmarked for medical and humanitarian needs, via the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, of which Canon David is a Knight Commander. They will support humanitarian aid convoys, enable the provision of schooling and clinics, and help to rebuild communities devastated in the Holy Land. Aid will get to where it is most needed.

Sunday 4 January Second Sunday of Christmas

Usual Sunday Mass schedule: 6.30pm (Saturday), 8.00am, 10.00am, 12 noon, 5.00pm, and 8.00pm

Monday 5 January

10.00am **Holy Mass**
6.00pm – 6.20pm **Confessions**

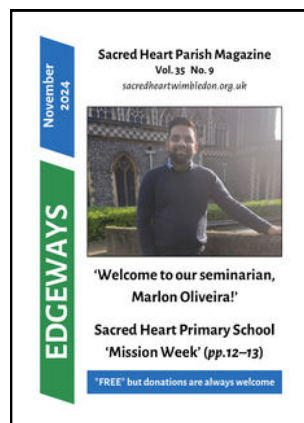
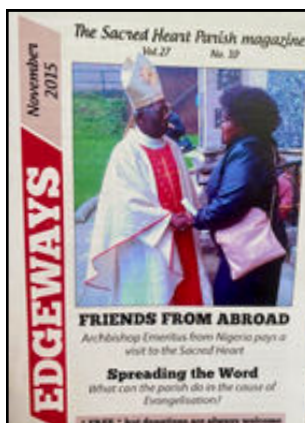
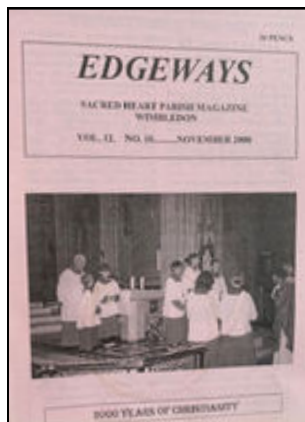
Tuesday 6 January The Epiphany of the Lord

6.30pm (Mon) **Holy Mass**
10.00am **Holy Mass**
6.00pm – 6.20pm **Confessions**
6.30pm **Holy Mass**
8.00pm **Holy Mass**



This month back then – an Edgeways history of YOUR parish!

Enjoy and remember some headlines of stories from back issues of Edgeways in November 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2019, and 2024.



Back issues of Edgeways are available to borrow by emailing David at wimbledonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk. Issues from March 2020 are available in the digital archive at sacredheartwimbledon.org.uk/edgeways.

November 2000 (Vol. 12 No. 10) *top-left*

- Recognising, valuing, and drawing upon cultural and ethnic diversity
- Why St Catherine of Alexandria is immortalised by a firework
- The story of the curiously-sunken Holy Souls altar
- The Newman Circle discusses the future of Catholic moral leadership

November 2005 (Vol. 17 No. 11) *top-centre*

- LIFE Group discusses: 'Does the human embryo have a soul?'
- Welcome tea for over 100 new parishioners!
- 'No one should have to live like this': Reflections by a parish soup runner

November 2010 (Vol. 17 No. 10) *top-right*

- Len Hay leads the parish pilgrimage to Greece
- Cancer Friendship Group hosts the World's Biggest Coffee Morning
- The Ursulines of St Angela Merici celebrate their 475th anniversary

November 2015 (Vol. 27 No. 10) *bottom-right*

- Welcome return for the parish bookshop
- Generations Together students discuss response to refugees
- 'A Life on the Move' interview with Fr Nick King SJ
- Farewells to Fr Sam Davey and Youth Minister, John Quinn

November 2019 (Vol. 31 No. 10) *bottom-centre*

- Parishioners' 'Mission to Margate' for Fr Ted's induction
- Fr Joe Donkor (Ghana) continues in post
- Welcome to Fr Dennis Bukenya, a Spiritan of Uganda

November 2024 (Vol. 35 No. 9) *bottom-left*

- Welcome to our seminarian, Marlin Oliviera
- 'Mission Week' at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
- Wimbledon College students join Jesuit Provincial at Downing Street

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

We welcome into the family of the Church the following who have recently been baptised: Francisco Sunwoo Park • Rosa Jiwoo Park • Penelope McGrath • Eleonora Marcati • Henry Oliver Fox • Finn Samuel Rothwell • Elsie Diana Pretty Antunes • Theodore John Taylor • Elizabeth Anne Hedding

We offer sympathies to the families and friends of those who have died recently: Margaret De-Larrazabal • Gerald Vivian Libert Oury

AND FINALLY ...



THURS 18 Dec 2025 7.45pm

**Sacred Heart Church, Edge Hill,
Wimbledon, SW19 4LU**

**MULLED WINE & MINCE PIES
6.30pm UPPER HALL**

RAFFLE AND BAR

Invite you to their

Christmas Celebration

**AN EVENING OF TRADITIONAL CAROLS
& FESTIVE MUSIC**

**Katy Lees, Katy's Songbirds, Giles Kennedy
Putney & Wimbledon Brass Band
Lantern Arts Youth Choir
Edge Hill Players**

When people come together, incredible things happen

IN SUPPORT OF
Beat
Eating disorders

Tickets £10 on the door, or online:
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/FPEQ>
(or scan QR code)
Children under 14 free



**BREAST
CANCER
NOW**
The research
& care charity