

# Sydenham Life

March 2025

In and around the parish of St Bartholomew

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## Top tips to tackle the debt blues

### Free debt advice charity launches “Budget Not Blues” campaign to help people in South East London out of debt and towards a better financial future

Christians Against Poverty offers free Money Coaching Courses to help locals beat the winter blues and take control of their finances.

182 money coaches in London have been trained by Christians Against Poverty (CAP) to run free money coaching sessions in local communities throughout 2025.

I have worked as a CAP debt coach for five years. The charity offers free debt advice, money coaching and a range of support to people struggling with their finances.

Winter and early spring often bring financial anxieties, and with energy bills and prices continuing to rise, the pressure all adds up. However, CAP's *Budget Not Blues* campaign offers a clear path to taking back control of your finances. Here are simple, effective steps to improving your finances in 2025.

### 1. Find out your financial personality

Try out CAP's new [Money Personality Quiz](https://capuk.org/money-personality-quiz) (<https://capuk.org/money-personality-quiz>) which provides useful tips on building a better relationship with money and helps people understand their spending habits.

### 2. Create a personal budget

Creating a personal budget is key to understanding your financial situation in order to make positive changes.

Download CAP's budgeting guide at [capuk.org/budgeting](https://capuk.org/budgeting) to create your own personal budget.

### 3. Cut back, cut costs and cut out

To make your money go further, you can reduce spending by cutting back (reducing how much or how often you buy

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something); by cutting the cost (finding it cheaper elsewhere), or by cutting the expenditure out completely (identifying if it's a need or want).

### 4. Build up an emergency fund

It's important to save for future emergencies. Start small so that it is manageable within your budget, and set up your bank account to transfer the money into a savings account automatically each month so that you're not tempted to spend it. An emergency fund can offer huge peace of mind if and when unexpected costs arise.

### 5. Seek free help

Attend a CAP service in your local area to help you further improve your financial situation. You can find more information on all CAP's free services in your area at [capuk.org/help](https://capuk.org/help). If you're struggling with unmanageable debt, call our free helpline on **0800 328 0006**. Alternatively, visit [moneyhelper.org.uk](https://moneyhelper.org.uk) for a wide range of support.

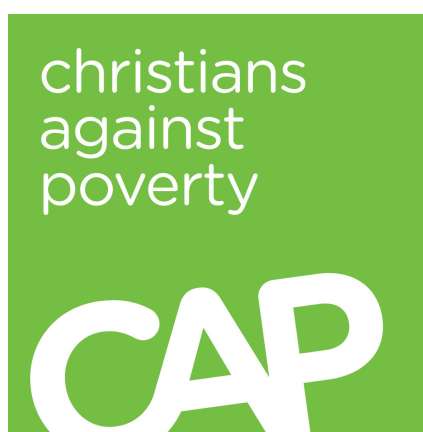
CAP provides practical solutions and emotional support to those in need. Their free services, delivered in Sydenham and neighbouring districts through Holy Trinity with St John's Penge, have transformed lives by helping individuals gain control over their finances.

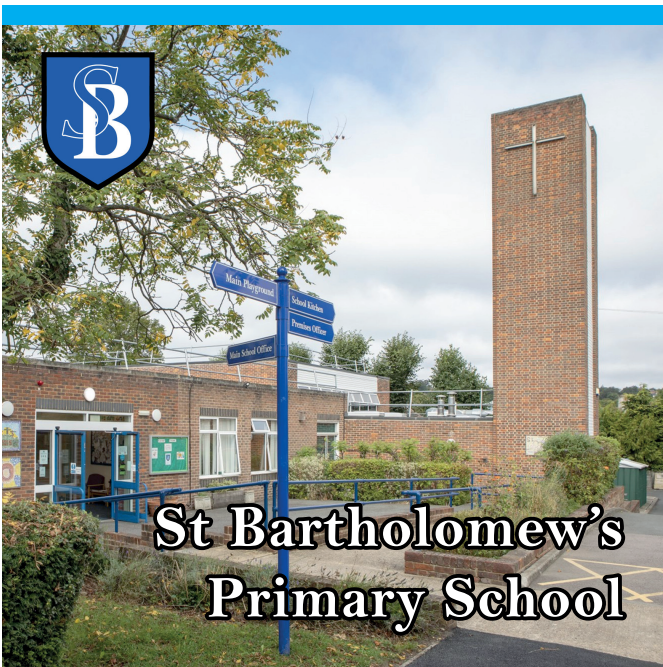
Gareth Hall continued, “We are determined to help people in our local community improve their finances and we do this by offering free Debt Help

and Money Coaching Courses. As we launch our *Budget Not Blues* campaign, we're encouraging people in South East London to prioritise their financial health. To book onto a money coaching course, visit [capuk.org/get-help/money-coaching](https://capuk.org/get-help/money-coaching).”

Gareth Hall


Christians Against Poverty's London Penge Debt Centre Manager,





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# From the Editor

In going from place to place in the environs of Kirkdale I often observe householders placing unwanted household articles outside their premises with signs on them that say, 'please take me' or sometimes (as a note I recently saw on a microwave) 'I am old but in perfectly good working order'. Items can be old tables, unopened CDs and DVDs, books, glass ornaments, crockery and plants, just about anything.

On my walks just after lock-down I saw a small wooden bookcase which had obviously been left in someone's garden and was sodden through with green algae in places and a top shelf that had split and evidence of recent attempts to stabilise it with new brass screws.

I brought it home and sprayed it with disinfectant and left it on the balcony to dry out and there it remained for some time. As I looked at it I knew it would take more attention and skills than I might have to restore it. I felt that I too might have to place it outside but was reluctant to dispose of the bookcase, after all I had rescued it.

One day as I was working from home, I could hear that there was a delivery next door and then a knock on my door, sometimes an indicator that they just want to leave a parcel with me. The courier wanted to know if she could have the bookcase, by this time it had dried out and the algae had gone. I immediately said yes and was pleased that the old bookcase had been rescued. I wonder what it looks like now. In passing, my neighbour had found a very similar bookcase in much better condition that required no work and which now sits in my sitting room with books on it.

I have recently been on the lookout for another small bookcase and have popped in at Mabel's Five and Dime and was not able to find one. However, on my way home from swimming the other day I spotted one that had been placed outside some flats waiting for collection and I could see although it was painted there was some decoration that indicated vintage, it had not been outside for long and I have taken it home, disinfected it, let it dry out although this time because it was painted that was not such a problem.

I think placing unwanted household items outside the gate or on the wall is a great way of recycling unwanted items and better for the environment. Although if you are placing books outside put them in see-through plastic otherwise the rain will ruin them.

Geoffrey Cave, Sydenham Life Editor

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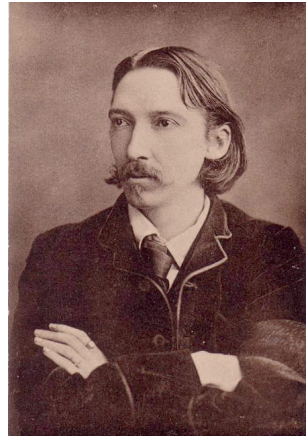
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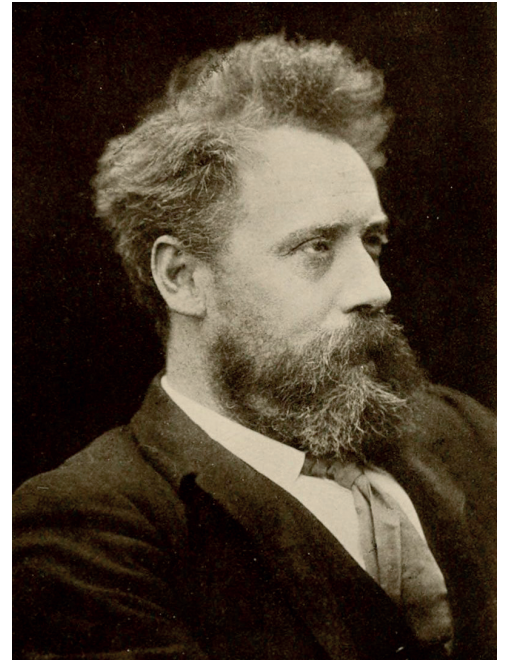
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# William Ernest Henley – the Unwilling ‘Pirate’



Left: a bust of the poet W E Henley in St Paul's Cathedral. Above: Robert Louis Stevenson. Right: W E Henley



St Paul's Cathedral is often the second choice when it comes to competing against Westminster Abbey. Our visitors inquisitive to know about the royal family and the traditions of royalty, are not going to want to see celebrities of earlier times unless it is about Churchill or Lady Diana's wedding and Margaret Thatcher. For most Americans, the American Chapel is the draw – they are patriotic and that is the bait on the hook!

I now look at the black history that is associated with the church, mentioning both Paul Robeson and Dr Martin Luther King junior and referencing John Donne (*no man is an island a reggae tune composed by Dennis Brown*). There are other associative people or events that I can use where necessary.

It was when I was walking through the crypt, I casually glanced into one of the side corridors and saw the sculptured bust of a bearded man. As always curiosity got the better of me.

It was a bust of the poet W E Henley. Why was he important? Well, he was a man with a great story and fascinating connections.

*"I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul."*

These two lines come from Henley's most famous poem, *Invictus*, known and loved around the world – a message of fortitude in the face of adversity. The poem is closely associated with Nelson Mandela, who would read it aloud to his fellow prisoners on Robben Island. Clint Eastwood would later make it into a film of the same name, starring Matt Damon and Morgan Freeman as Mandela. The 'Invictus' name is also used to promote the sporting tournament for injured and recovering military personnel from across the world, launched by HRH Prince Harry in 2014.

Henley wrote the poem in 1875; he was recovering

from surgery under Joseph Lister's care which saved his remaining leg which was affected from tuberculosis of the bone. It is one of his *Hospital Poems*.

Whilst recuperating, he met Robert Louis Stevenson. Through his 15-year friendship with the author, Henley became the inspiration for the most famous literary pirate, Long John Silver, in *Treasure Island* (1883). Stevenson wrote to Henley that it *"was the sight of your maimed strength and masterfulness that begot Long John Silver ... the idea of the maimed man, ruling and dreaded by the sound, was entirely taken from you."*

Through his friendship with another author, J M Barrie, Henley's daughter would also be forever immortalised in one of the most loved children's stories, *Peter Pan*. Margaret would call Barrie her 'fwiendy-wendy', unable to pronounce her r's. The character Wendy Darling was born. Sadly, Margaret passed away at the age of five years old.

A final 'celebrity' connection can be seen in the memorial. If you look very closely at the bronze bust, you can just make out the name 'A. Rodin'. Henley had become a friend of the great French sculptor, Auguste Rodin, a friendship that would see the artist create a number of works to Henley after his death.

In 1902, Henley had an accident that triggered his latent tuberculosis. Henley died the following year at the age of 53. His ashes were interred in his daughter's grave in Cockayne Hatley, Bedfordshire.

After recently listening to a radio play *Silver* by Jonathan Smith that highlighted the friendship between Henley and Stevenson, I could imagine Henley's bellowing voice saying Aha! Jim lad!!

*Angela Morgan*  
Blue Badge Tourist Guide  
Instagram: [angelamorgan365](#)



# *The Forest Within* comes to St. Stephen's

As a composer and artist, I've always found it ironic that while living in Sydenham, I have often recorded the sounds of local nature—birdsong, rainfall, the rustling of leaves—only to use them in art installations thousands of miles away, in places like New York or Los Angeles. To date, more than 500,000 visitors have experienced my *Immersive Forest* installations in renowned locations such as New York Botanical Gardens and The Wild Center. Now, at last, I'm bringing this work home.

From **March 27th to April 6th**, *The Forest Within* will transform **St. Stephen's Church in Dulwich** (next to Sydenham Hill Station) into a fully immersive, screen-free experience that invites you to engage with your most powerful sense: hearing.

The installation features specially written music for 8 choirs of 9 voices pre-recorded and mapped around the space over **16 speakers**, alongside the sounds of **Dulwich Woods at dawn**, recorded simultaneously at 18 locations to capture nature's symphony in its purest form. Inspired by past works such as *The Sky Beneath Our Feet*—the experience aims to transport you deep into *The Forest Within*.



Much of my work explores how technology can foster human connection. Just recently, I returned from New York, where *Street Motet No.*

I brought together a choir of 50 voices and 20 volunteers, walking the streets in perfect synchronization via headphones, slowly merging in (literal) harmony. With *The Forest Within*, I hope to offer a similarly profound sense of connection—not just to nature, but to one another.

If you're reading this, then you're a neighbor. I'd love for you to experience this with me. Tickets are available at the link below (or via the QR code above), and as a special offer, you can get a **1/3 discount** by using the code '**dulwichfriends**' at checkout. I hope to see you there!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-forest-within-tickets-1242025946039?aff=oddtcreator>

If you'd like to know more please feel free to email me here: [forestimmersive@gmail.com](mailto:forestimmersive@gmail.com)

Pete Wyer

## Collected Maxims and Other Reflections – La Rochefoucauld's

Insight aplenty on the Human condition. La Rochefoucauld's accounts and experiences and perspective give pause for thought in several ways.

Some say that he provides a pessimistic view on Human Nature: I say quite the contrary. There is a depth to his observations that I would say is the precursor to modern psychology and psychoanalysis.

He uses the term self-love as a driving force for actions good or otherwise. Noting that we go against our own apparent self-interest for good reason.

The pomp vanity, fanfare of others and even the virtues may not be all they seem. It is put forward that virtue is exalted for reasons opposed to that which is exalted.

Some of his maxims are worth the purchase price alone. The deeper ponderings may bring forth that Ah-Ha moment for those pressed for answers to some less than desirable traits.

He gives us perspective room to disagree. This needn't be a book to be rushed through and if you cut to the meat i.e. avoid all the commentaries as I generally do, then I believe your guided by the author to draw your own conclusions.

Dealing with yourself and gaining perspective with

others. The differing personality types. With the insights abound feel free to have a fresh perspective regarding yourself and others or not. Moreover, the author encourages you to think of everything he lays bare as not being relevant to you. So, feel free to read without bias and be completely impartial revel in the characters and characteristics he so concisely and eruditely depicts- after all how could he possibly be referring to you?

Indeed, what is amazing is how this highly privileged and esteemed member of the French nobility can depict that which is relevant to those who are a world and time away. He is the epitome of one born into privilege yet his insights into the Human condition align with a truth that departs from the pomp and vanity which one might expect. There is no haughtiness or aloofness. He calls out those traits for what they are.

Once again allow yourself to ponder counter -intuitively on what might be considered virtuous behaviour – do you see any parallels today? See how his outlook penetrates beyond the veil of indifference and stoicism. Maybe grow. Consider that he sees you for who you are and in spite of that it doesn't prevent you from being who you want to be.

Daniel Springer

# Nostalgia

Mrs Vicarage says that they can always tell who is in the shower in our house by the music blaring from the bathroom. I recently changed my usual noise for a playlist of 1980's new-wave pop. There was a certain style of that era – melody and pop hooks mixed with a thick streak of minor-key melancholy, while still having a big, danceable beat – that I really liked back then.

This rummaging in forgotten corners of my music collection came after hearing a recent cover version of 'Self Control', a huge international hit twice in 1984, first for the song's co-writer *Raf*, and a few months later for *Laura Brannigan*.

Hearing the song again after many years set off all sorts of nostalgia triggers in my brain. I found myself remembering my old paper-round route, my High School, playing with friends on the estate in the summer. And not just people and places, but the mood, the atmosphere, the feelings of the time.

I don't know why I should have ended up being quite so nostalgic; maybe it's the recollection of a simpler, more hopeful time or perhaps just middle age at work! The risk of nostalgia, I guess, is that we end up getting stuck in the past rather than living in the present and facing the future. And it is a very unreliable way of assessing the past; my particular memories and the feelings they stirred were all good, but I certainly didn't have a perfect childhood, happy in every way.


We have an interesting relationship with the past and nostalgia for it in our church life. At the heart of our being is the 'memorial of our redemption' we celebrate in the Eucharist, which of course looks back 2000 years to the life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus. But we also understand the Eucharist as a place, a moment of encounter, with Jesus here and now. Others can argue over the mechanics but, in different ways, Christians experience Christ as present to us today as we participate in Holy Communion.

Then there is the classic 'it used to be like this...', words guaranteed to make any vicar's heart sink! Remembering the past is of course important; it is part of our collective story, with each generation adding it's own chapter. The experiences and wisdom of those who have gone before us should not be lightly dismissed. And along with the collective story of the church is the story of it's community, especially true of Parish Churches which are often the longest surviving institution and building in a community. The very stones of St Bartholomew's carry some of the story of Sydenham and it's development into the modern town it is today.

But nostalgia for the past cannot be what drives our present or shapes our future, or we risk being little more than a religious museum. Classic hymns and time-honed prayers are wonderful and bring to us timeless truths. And we give thanks for the many beautiful ways that the life and fellowship of the church nurtured and sustained our faith in the past. However we must recognise that sometimes the words and means of expression of the past can be an obstacle or even cause of offence today – much like the playground banter of my 1980's childhood might well cause offence now. And that the practices of the past may be baffling or alien now – does anyone do a paper-round these days?

So where we have been entrusted with timeless treasures we work to make them accessible and approachable to people today. We give fond thanks for the practices of the past that have meant so much to us, but we let them go and work to find what will give life and nurture faith for people today. And as we write this generation's chapter, we ensure that the story is alive to be passed on to the future. Then, because we are alive to the present, occasionally we can indulge in a little nostalgia. And 'Self Control' remains an absolute classic!

*Rev'd Jim*




Ash Wednesday poster featuring a black cross on a white background with the text "ASH WEDNESDAY" below it.

Wed 5<sup>th</sup> March 18:30

Eucharist with imposition of Ashes

*all welcome*



St Bartholomew's Church  
Westwood Hill, Sydenham

6pm-7pm - Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> March

# Quiet Hour

Interactive prayer stations  
Come and go as you please  
Explore God's Word in scripture  
Peace and quiet  
Refreshments



St Bartholomew's Church  
Westwood Hill, Sydenham



# The Law of Unintended Consequences Prevails Yet Again

I believe as a result of the Grenfell Tower Fire our building management, in an endeavor to keep all the residents safe, replaced every flat's front door with a fire door. We received a notice in the mail informing us of this alteration and asking that we contact the door company to schedule an appointment. Which we did immediately. The door was installed on schedule whilst our builder was doing work on our flat. The new keys were given to the builder, and all was well, or so we thought. After receiving the keys from our builder we set out to make additional copies. Trying four different stores we discovered that blank keys for that lock were not available. This necessitated ringing up the company that replaced the front door. They informed me the keys were issued with a tag that had a code number to use to obtain additional keys. I next contacted our builder who told me no tag was issued with the keys – back to the door company. Upon hearing this the door company manager said she would contact the lock company and get back to me. Several days past before the door company manager returned the call.

Whilst awaiting the return call we discovered a second problem with our new door. Our flat is adjacent to the building's electric meter closet, and with our door closed the doorhandle hardware protrudes so prominently that it prevents one from opening the closet door to the residents' meters unless we open our front door. While that solution works, it is not very practical as it would necessitate residents having to contact us every time they needed access to the meters, and our having to be home. So back to the door company yet again.

As the company worked on sorting out this new problem, the lock company got back to the manager of the door company instructing her to have me contact them directly and they would provide me with blank keys. Three telephone calls to them later I was told they only deal



directly with wholesalers and not with consumers. I am not a very good volleyball player, but here I went again back to the door company. This time when they got back to me they had a solution to both issues. They would replace the doorhandle hardware, installing a slender door hand with a different lock. Brilliant!

We set the date for the technician from Kent, where the door company is located, to come install the new doorhandle hardware. Upon his arrival we learnt he had been issued a white door handle instead of a silver one to match the other hardware on the door (peep hole, mailbox slot, door knocker and flat number). He offered to install the white one at that time and return another day with a silver one. At this point here is where he 'lucked out' as my husband only has partial vision in one eye. The handle being white with the lock silver provided a contrast that made it easier for him to find the keyhole. So we decided to keep the arrangement as it was.

Oh, and yes, the new lock came with a coded tag so as to enable us to easily have spare keys made. Relief!

Stay tuned for part 2 of the front door story.

*Geri Falconer-Ferneau*

## 'Ground Floor Guide to the Psalms'

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 19:30 – 20:30

On Zoom **FREE**

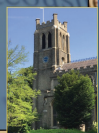
Our Curate, Mthr Bethany, will be leading this session, part of the teaching and learning resources from our Diocese.

Introducing and considering the nature of these poems, why they were written and why Christians use them day by day.

The session is free - book a place by emailing:

[learning@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:learning@southwark.anglican.org)

You will sent the Zoom link on the day.



## New Service @ St Bart's

**Quiet Hour** is a new service: a quiet, flexible, interactive and reflective space to engage with God to complement our regular, more structured services. Whether you're contemplative, neurodivergent, or just after some quiet, this could be the service for you.

**Sunday 16th March 18:00 – 19:00**



## Services at St Bartholomew's Church

Sunday – 8am Holy Communion, 10am Parish Eucharist  
Wednesday – 6pm Holy Communion.

Open church for prayer, quiet and reflection Monday 10:00-12:00,  
Tuesday & Wednesday 17:00-18:00, Thursday 11:30-13:30,  
Saturday 10:00-12:00. Rev Jim is usually available during open  
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*The church is open every Saturday morning  
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We are aiming to build up to two people  
for most rounds. We are also looking for a  
volunteer Distribution Manager. If you can  
help with either of these, please contact the  
current Distribution Manager **Ope Otudeko**  
(otudek@yahoo.com), his assistant **Yvonne  
Springer** (yvonespringer@hotmail.co.uk)  
or Manager **Alexander Seton**  
or Advertising Manager  
**Jane Somers** (slifeads@hotmail.co.uk)

**Please pass Sydenham Life Magazine on  
to other people and recycle magazine.**



Photo by Jane Somers

**Join St Bart's Choir  
OR join St Bartholomew's  
Singers!**

**Contact: Rev'd Jim Perry  
Tel: 020 3422 5343**

### Floodlighting

Anniversary, Birthday or Special Event?  
You can sponsor the floodlighting of  
St. Bartholomew's church for  
one whole week for **£10**.

Contact Claire Adams 07813 989668

**St. Bart's Church Hall** is available to hire for regular  
classes, children's birthday parties, Baptism parties  
and other family celebrations and events. There is a  
well-equipped kitchen and rates are reasonable. The  
church, which has a lovely acoustic, can also be hired  
for concerts. We currently have availability on several  
evenings in the week for regular bookings and on weekend  
afternoons for one-off bookings.

**To discuss your requirements, please call Lesley on  
07785 905355, or email her at l.khatibi@outlook.com**

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