

Greenwich Ecumenical Borough Deans

New Year Message 2012

Following the recent Stephen Lawrence murder trial Greenwich Ecumenical Borough Deans, who represent the local Christian community in civic matters, would like to send a message of hope to all members of the communities in Greenwich. Stephen was a member of a local church and a sixth former at Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England School and his murder eighteen years ago and subsequent events proved to be a landmark in the development of equality and understanding amongst diverse communities.

Much has changed since this tragic loss of the life of a young man who was full of potential for the future. We pray that his memory may help to focus our attention and efforts on the continuing work in Greenwich to foster good relations, friendship, understanding and above all the valuing of the very rich cultural and ethnic diversity in this area of South London.

We regret that knife and gun crime continue to be a grave concern, both locally and nationally, and we would encourage members of faith communities to stand together in the face of these events and encourage and support our young people in seeking to distance themselves from violence and the carrying of weapons. We believe that the vast majority of young people are law abiding citizens who are working hard to achieve their aspirations and make a positive contribution to our society. We recognise that the minority who do get caught up in street violence and knife crime have often grown up in unfavourable situations, affected by poverty and inequality, of a material, spiritual and emotional nature.

We reiterate our call to young people and parents of all faiths and in the wider community.

We ask young people to:

- Avoid confrontational situations
- Not be tempted into carrying weapons of any sort
- Support Police and community efforts to combat street violence

We ask parents to:

- Encourage unconditional love and respect in their families
- Support and affirm their children in non-violence
- Make sure they know where their children go and who they are with
- Support Police and community efforts to combat street violence

We commend the efforts of all members of the community who are already working with young people in our schools, youth organisations, religious communities, and in many other ways, to help them to make a positive contribution to the wider community and to be happy and successful individuals.

2012 will be a momentous year for Greenwich as the Queen declares it a Royal Borough in February and it hosts many events for the 2012 Olympics. We strongly affirm Greenwich Council and the Metropolitan Police Service as they seek to promote and maintain a safe environment and a cohesive community. We are grateful to those who volunteer weekly to provide Street Pastors in Woolwich and elsewhere in the borough as part of the churches response to community needs.

There will be many challenges during 2012 and we call upon all people of goodwill in the Borough to support the efforts being made by so many local people and community partners to develop a community in which we can be safe and which encourages our young people to feel significant and to recognise their true potential. May God bless you all in 2012.

Greenwich Ecumenical Borough Deans represent the Christian Community to the Civic Authorities

The Rev'd Olu Ajanaku (Black-led Churches)
The Rev'd Martin Coe (United Reformed & Methodist Churches)
Lt Nicola Judd (Salvation Army)
The Rev'd Mike Leader (Independent & Evangelical Churches)
The Rev'd Paul Rogers (Baptist Church)
The Rev'd Fr Michael Scanlon (Roman Catholic)
The Rev'd Dr Malcolm Torry (Church of England)