

# My Damascus Moment

by Bishop Howard Tripp and Jo Driver



**The Clergy Support Fund Campaign has recently reached an important new milestone, having raised just over £2 million in gifts and pledges.** This means that we are almost half-way to achieving our overall target of £4.5 million and every penny raised is being used to care for the sick and retired priests of Southwark Diocese.

Southwark's Episcopal Vicar for Finance, Canon John Weatherill said on behalf of all involved: **'I am tremendously grateful to all our donors and supportive laity for their generosity, whether financial, or through the gifts of time and talent in sharing this need with fellow parishioners. As well as helping to address a temporary shortfall in funds between 2014 and 2018, the Campaign represents an important step towards engaging with the concept of stewardship in Southwark Diocese'.**

Charities often publish photographs of the resources that donations have purchased, but in the case of the Clergy Support Fund Campaign this is a little challenging. However, as Chair of the successful Pilot Campaign in Croydon Deanery during 2012 - 2013, Bishop Howard Tripp has kindly shared a recent turn of events which clearly illustrates the importance of your contributions:

*'I have been amazed since retiring and breaking my leg at the interest and concern shown to me. Many have come to visit me bearing gifts, the 'Get Well' cards have outnumbered the Christmas cards and there have been an abundance of offers of help. It's not just those I have known recently but those whom I met or served long ago.*

*Celebrating the Chinese New Year with my nephew, his Chinese wife and their children earlier this year, I had a Damascus moment when I stooped down to pick up a serviette, went head over heels and broke my leg. Caravaggio's picture of St Paul, blinded by a great light and falling off his horse flashed through my mind and I thought 'this is it – I shall never say Mass again'.*

*But that was not the view of Archbishop Peter who, after an operation to mend my leg, insisted that I should have a rigorous course of physiotherapy and short period of convalescence with the Little Sisters of the Poor in Vauxhall under the care of the Diocese. And who is the Diocese? That is you, my brothers and sisters.*

*My Damascus experience means a great deal more than just physiotherapy. I am now able to offer Mass each week in four different Convents and in a Home for the Elderly, and to act as a chaplain in a hospice. To be able to say Mass daily, and with a congregation, is a very important part of a priest's spiritual life.*

*We are in the Jubilee Year of Mercy and I now realise that during the Croydon Pilot Campaign we were inspired ahead of the Year of Mercy by the works of mercy in providing care for our sick and retired priests. Contributing to or helping to run the Campaign requires generosity of heart, and not just that of pocket. It is a wonderful way of undertaking the spiritual and corporal works of mercy to which our attention is drawn this year. May I therefore conclude by saying a great 'Thank you' to you all for the care and generosity you have shown me and offer you the assurance of my prayers'.*