

St Paul's Church, Beckenham



Mission Statement:

Sharing God's love revealed in Jesus Christ

Welcome to St Paul's



Visitors often mention the warm welcome they receive when they come to St Paul's, and many of those who make our Church their home say it is because of the welcome they received when they first came. We aspire to create opportunities to develop deeper relationships with Christ and one another through teaching and encouraging, discussion and fellowship. We are keen to be led by our new vicar through changes that are necessary to respond to the world around us in the 21st Century. We have a prayerful heart for starting and encouraging people on a journey with Christ.

We celebrate an increasingly diverse fellowship, and embrace varied styles of worship, with Biblical teaching at its heart. We are looking to clarify a vision for God's work in our community, and how we can use and develop our buildings and gardens to serve that vision.

We are anticipating what the Lord can do in the coming days with enthusiasm, and look forward to experiencing joy and fun through challenges along the way. Are you called to lead us in this venture?

The Parish of St Paul, New Beckenham

The Parish was established in the late 19th Century, in a part of Beckenham that was rapidly being developed as part of the Cator Estate. Today it is an attractive area with broad, tree-lined roads and several (privately owned) open spaces, including Kent County Cricket Ground and Crystal Palace FC's practice ground. Many of the Victorian properties have been replaced with flats, though some of the more recent developments have been of detached or semi-detached properties. The Parish's population is steadily growing: in the 2011 Census it had a population of 5400; and it is anticipated that it could soon be approaching 6500.



Beckenham Junction Station provides good services into London and out into Kent, as well as a tram service into Croydon and on to Wimbledon; New Beckenham Station gives access to other London termini as well. Due to these good communication links, Beckenham is very much a dormitory area and many residents are daily commuters to London. Many of the flats are single or dual occupancy for young professionals; consequently when people marry and begin a family



many move out of the area to more suitable properties elsewhere, often well away from the Parish. The demographic profile of the Parish supports this, in that about 32% are aged 30-44, and there is a very small proportion of children over 7.

St Paul's is seen as a natural centre to the Parish and is well used by a variety of community groups, including a Preschool, Bridge Club, and Pilates class; as well as providing the only open space where residents can peacefully walk or sit.

The only other main focus to the parish is Worsley Bridge Primary School, which has recently become a Community Primary School with new buildings to enable it to expand to accommodate children from 4 – 11. St Paul's has a good relationship with the school, regularly taking part in assemblies and for many years also hosting beginning and end of term services for the school at the church.

The only shop within the Parish is a Waitrose supermarket. Beckenham town itself, which has a good variety of shops, several other supermarkets and plenty of choice for places to eat out, lies just outside the Parish boundary, across the main railway line.

There are several Sports Grounds and Leisure facilities in the Parish which are well used by local residents and those who travel from further afield. There are also a few pockets of light industry, though several of these have recently been converted, or are being converted, into residential use.

St Paul's Church: Its People and Activities



There are currently 157 people on the Electoral Roll, of whom 96 live outside the Parish. The congregation are increasingly diverse in social, ethnic background and age, though we are weak in the 30-50 year-old group compared to the demographic profile of the Parish. On a Sunday morning approximately 120 of us gather to worship at 10:30 a.m., along with some 10-20 children aged up to 10. Though the congregation at the 8 a.m. Holy Communion Service is small the attendees are mostly different from those at later services. At the Evening Service there are regularly about a dozen

people. We would describe ourselves as being Biblically based within the Evangelical tradition but in the congregation there is an appreciation of different worship styles and theological viewpoints. However, we work well together and appreciate the variety, providing it is done reverently and to a high standard.



Pattern of Sunday Worship

8 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)

10:30 a.m. (1st Sunday) Holy Communion (CW)
(2nd Sunday) Morning Worship (CW)
(3rd Sunday) Holy Communion (CW)
(4th Sunday) Morning Worship or All Age Service

4:00 p.m. Evening Worship

(1st Sunday) Prayer Meeting or Reflective Service
(2nd Sunday) Holy Communion (CW)
(3rd Sunday) The 4 O'clock (Informal, Contemporary Worship)
(4th Sunday) Holy Communion (CW)



For the past three years we have benefitted from a paid Children & Family Worker who has revitalised our Sunday Children's work, and amongst other things has initiated Families Together, a monthly after-school, activity-based form of Church on Thursday afternoons, which is regularly attended by 40 children plus parents and carers.

Alpha Courses are run regularly (one is running currently, with 15+ attendees), and we recently ran the "Everybody Welcome" course. We also trialled the "Puzzling Questions" course for a small group of enquirers.

Christian nurture and fellowship for adults is a strength of St Paul's: about 80 meet in home Groups once a fortnight to follow a coordinated course of study and we have recently started a pilot TIDE (Training in Discipleship and Evangelism) course once a month. We have benefitted from two weekends away together as a Church in the last five years, giving us the opportunity both to explore in depth a theme for the two days and also to have time to get to know one another better as a church fellowship. Three of us attended the "Leading Your Church into Growth" course two years ago which challenged our thinking about where we should be going as a Church.

St Paul's has always been supportive of Mission, both at home and overseas. We have links with several Mission Partners and month by month adopt a different missionary organisation in our Mission of the Month scheme. 10% of our income is given away to mission causes.



A Lunch in the Hall adjoining the Church

Other activities include:

- ✚ A weekly Wednesday Fellowship;
- ✚ A time for Prayer and Bible Study each weekday morning;
- ✚ A Prayer Cordon which responds to urgent needs for prayer;
- ✚ A Prayer Ministry Group who are available during Communion Services for confidential prayer;
- ✚ A Choir, which contributes to the worship on main feast days and other special services;
- ✚ There are also a variety of social occasions for the benefit of the Church family.

The Church and Community

Our premises are well used. Among the regular activities taking place are:



Community Choir Practice

- ✚ a thriving Preschool (originally started by Church members)
- ✚ A popular Babies and Toddlers Group
- ✚ An annual Marriage Preparation course for wedding couples
- ✚ A Seasonal lunch is put on every quarter
- ✚ We hold a summer picnic for the Parish to which well over 100 come along
- ✚ A community choir
- ✚ Some of our members run a bereavement group.

We have good links with our local Primary School: staff and pupils come to St Paul's for regular beginning and end of term services and our Children & Family Worker and others visit to take assemblies. Our premises are also regularly booked for a variety of other meetings and functions.

Individual preparation for Baptism is conducted with care by one of our Pastoral Assistants, and our Pastoral Assistants regularly take Home Communion to those who are house bound.

However, reaching out into the community is a challenge as many of the blocks of flats and new small estates are secured and hard to enter to make contact.

The Church and its Buildings

The Church building is a Grade II listed building which is a prime example of Victorian Gothic architecture. It has been well maintained over the years and is generally in a good state of repair. The main seating area is pews but there is a small kitchenette at the back of the church and space around the building to circulate informally and share a cup of tea or coffee after services. The church has good acoustics and is often used for concerts. Music is provided mainly

by an organ and a piano, while the monthly 4 O'clock contemporary service is led by a guitar group. We are in the process of upgrading our audio-visual system.

The side chapel provides us with a flexible, smaller area which is used for worship at 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Sundays and for the Morning Prayer & Bible reflection on weekday mornings, and other meetings from time to time.

Linked to the church so that they can be directly accessed from the sanctuary, are two moderately sized halls and a small kitchen. The halls can be used either as one large room, or separated by a removable dividing screen. They are well used and we have been looking at ways in which we can improve our facilities to enable them to be used to their full potential. Several times we have looked at the possibility of



redeveloping or reordering either the church or the halls but have never been able to progress the ideas proposed. This may be something that we need to revisit in the coming years.

The church gardens are well maintained and are often used by the community as a place where they can enjoy some peace and quiet, to sit and reflect or gently stroll. They are the only open public space in the Parish.

The Vicarage is adjacent to the church and is a four-bedroom property with a private garden and garage. It benefitted from a number of improvements about 5 or 6 years ago.

St Paul's and other Churches

There is an improving level of activity and co-operation between Churches in the Deanery, and members of St Paul's take an active part: recently there has been a sharing of information on different activities that we participate in and an exploration of how we can better support one another. We support Food Banks run by two local Churches.



St Paul's also participates in local ecumenical events organised by Churches Together in Beckenham (CTiB), which presents a public face to the people of Beckenham. For example there is an annual March of Witness on Good Friday when some 500 or more walk from the Catholic Church along the High Street, to the open space next to the Anglican Church (St George's), where we have a short act of worship. There are also activities and services on Beckenham Green and several united Services at different times during the year. We have also in the past had members who

were part of the Beckenham Street Pastors, though we do not have any doing this at present.

The Church, Finance and Administration

The Church has adequate reserves available for major projects, but the general level of day-to-day giving and income has not kept pace with the expenditure to which we are committed and recently some difficult decisions have had to be made both with regard to our outgoings and also in respect of realising an increased level of income.

The PCC has 16 members who meet ten times a year and take their responsibilities seriously and prayerfully. There are also 7 Subcommittees with PCC members and members from the Electoral Roll dealing with different aspects of Church life.

The Ministry Leadership Team numbers ten plus the incumbent: two Church Wardens, two Pastoral Assistants, three Readers, an Evangelist, the Children & Family Worker, and the PCC Chair (who is an ex-churchwarden).

Challenges

There are several challenges and potential opportunities that we are aware of, many of which are not unique to St Paul's:

- ✚ We are aware it is often a small core of people who undertake a majority of the work and leadership in the life of the church. So there is a need to challenge and deepen people's commitment to the Lord so that they respond in better stewardship of their resources, take a more active part in Church life and offer themselves for more of the leadership roles.
- ✚ The church is surrounded by many 25-45 year olds who live in flats or gated developments. We need to find ways of engaging with them and serving them as we seek to bring Christ to them. The challenge of impacting the immediate Parish is not helped by the fact that many of our active membership live outside the Parish.
- ✚ Our accommodation is often a limiting factor for some of our activities and extending our work in the community; for example we have a growing work amongst the 8-12s group, but there is nowhere for them to meet if we wanted to hold a meeting for them on a Sunday morning.
- ✚ The Church has faced some challenging pastoral matters in the recent past and the outgoing incumbent has exercised a ministry of healing and rebuilding confidence. During his time we looked at a variety of ways of developing our life together and reaching out to the community around, but now we need someone who is willing to take us forward and has the ability to lead us into fulfilling God's purpose for us in this place.