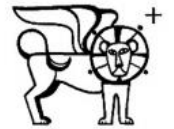




The Benefice of South Norwood Holy Innocents and St Mark Parish Profile



"United together in Christ, shining Christ's light in our community."

The Benefice

The united benefice was formed in 2014. We are part of the Archdeaconry of Croydon and within the Diocese of Southwark. The benefice falls within the Croydon North Deanery which enjoys good supportive relationships between the clergy. The benefice has a supportive ministry team including Reverend Mtr Susan Wheeler-Kiley PTO Priest and Cicelyn Hinds PTO Reader, Norma McKnight and Laurel Hird, Church Wardens.

The previous incumbent was the first of the new united benefice and as parishes we have been slow to recognise the great benefits of being a united benefice. However, the pandemic showed us that working and worshipping together as brothers and sisters in Christ is both possible and rewarding. The interregnum has also encouraged us to look at how we can work more closely together whilst recognising the value of our own individual parish ministries. There is still work to be done to fully realise the synergy of our united benefice and this will form part of our Mission Action Plan (MAP).

We are currently working together on our joint MAP which has given us opportunities to work in small cross parish groups allowing a sharing of ideas and deeper fellowship. We hope to have our MAP ready for our new incumbent's review in the next few months.

Serving in a highly densely populated area, both churches have ample opportunity for outreach and growth and both congregations share a desire to develop to be as welcoming churches as we can be. We share the same social challenges within our community which include poverty, isolation, addiction and homelessness. But these challenges are set against a background of strong community proud residents and churches with committed and outward looking congregations.

Our biggest challenge is how we grow and become financially viable whilst serving a deprived community. We are grateful for your consideration of this vacancy and very much hope that through prayer and reflection you will feel called to apply to be part of our next exciting chapter.

The Place

Community and Vibe

What stands out most about South Norwood is its strong sense of community. It's diverse, friendly, and full of local pride. Whether you're chatting with neighbours at the brilliant South Norwood Community Kitchen or browsing stalls at the Clock Tower Market, there's a sense of belonging here that you don't always find in busier parts of the capital.

Church in the community

The church plays a vital part in supporting the community both by providing for its most needy and the under represented as well as being involved in supporting wider projects to promote social cohesion and South Norwood as an important south London hub.



Green Spaces

For nature lovers, South Norwood delivers more than you might expect. South Norwood Country Park offers wide open spaces, wetlands, and walking trails, making it perfect for joggers, dog walkers, and anyone needing a breather from city life. South Norwood Lake & Grounds is another serene spot ideal for picnics, fishing, or simply watching the seasons change.

Transport Links

Commuters appreciate how well-connected the area is. Norwood Junction station gets you to London Bridge in under 15 minutes, and there's a solid network of Overground and bus routes. Central Croydon is close by as is Crystal Palace which provides some great bars and restaurants.

Affordability & Growth

Compared to many parts of London, South Norwood remains relatively affordable, especially for first-time buyers or young families. It has that 'up-and-coming' energy—modern developments mix with Victorian terraces, and there's a lot of local investment happening without losing the area's soul.

Local Amenities & Culture

South Norwood is growing, and with that comes a wave of independent shops, cafés, and eateries that add flavour and character. Places like The Craft Beer Cabin, The Portland Arms, and Yeha Noha Café Bar are just a few of the welcoming spots that have put the area on the map for locals and visitors alike. Each year there is a community Fair at which the benefice is represented. We also have Stanley Halls, now called Stanley Arts where you can enjoy art, music, dance, comedy, film, spoken word, theatre, workspaces, bars, café & more in the heart of South London.



South Norwood Leisure Centre



Stanley Halls (now known as Stanley Arts)

South Norwood Leisure Centre in Croydon offers a range of facilities, including 30 weekly fitness classes, with an impressive 25m main pool and training pool are ideal for both recreational swimming and swimming lessons for children and adults through the Better Swim School.



South Norwood Community Fair

The Person

We are praying for a priest who is, or with our love, can grow to be:

Someone from within whom the hope of the gospel message shines out

A spiritual leader to develop and deepen the worship and faith of our congregations and community.

Experienced in running a parish

Someone with both life experience and experience of running a parish, well organised and able to communicate with and inspire all

A celebrant of the rich cultural diversity that our benefice and community is blessed with

Creative and innovative with pastoral care; Personable, caring and sincere, a kind listener with an infectious faith and with a sense of humour

A team player able to work collaboratively with the ministry team, church wardens, PCCs, Church School and church volunteers

Someone to build strong links with the community and engage with ongoing partnerships

The People

For our part, we will seek to be:

Open to new challenges and positive to a fresh approach

Working as a united benefice to put the church at the heart of community regeneration.

Ready to play an enabling part in bearing witness to the Gospel in our community

Supportive and understanding of the needs of our new priest and any family they may have.

Joyous and positive in sharing the privilege of ministering to our community.

The Vicarage

St Marks Vicarage is a nicely proportioned four-bedroom detached house that was built in the 1950's.

The property benefits from a large garden and block paved driveway and has a garage.

Internally the hallway and main reception rooms have nicely finished wooden parquet floors.

The property is relatively near Norwood Junction Train Station and South Norwood Country Park.

There are several primary and secondary schools within a 10-minute walk of the Vicarage.



St Mark's: In Depth

Saint Mark's Parish was created out of the parish of All Saints' Upper Norwood, itself built as a chapel of ease of Croydon Parish 30 years earlier. The church was built in 1852, and the building was consecrated on 13 October of the same year, and the parish's separate existence was created in September 1859. The building was extended in the 1860s to include the apse, then north and south aisles and vestries. In the 1890s money was raised to build Holy Innocents' Church which was opened in 1895, but a separate parish was only established in 1948. The parish has approximately 2,000 residents. The houses vary from flats through to a few detached properties. St Mark's Church of England Reach 2 Academy is attached to the church.



The main weekly service is at our Parish Eucharist at 10.00am on Sunday morning with a regular attendance of about fifty people. About ten people regularly attend Holy Communion using the Book of Common Prayer at 8.00am. There is a smaller attendance at said Evensong at 6 pm. The main service on Sunday morning is live streamed, by our IT team. There is a Rota of servers, sides people and communion chalice bearers and members of the congregation read the lessons each week. There is also a Rota to serve coffee after the 10am service, sometimes with cake and produce sales, which provides a regular opportunity for fellowship. There are also volunteers who regularly clean the church and hall and arrange the flowers. We have occasional workdays for minor maintenance.



The Sunday School meets in the Hall during the 10.00am service and is regularly attended by between seven and ten children, with eighteen on the register. They closely follow the themes of the adult service taking place in the church. The children from Sunday School often take part in Special Services and show their work during the notices on a Sunday. There is a nativity play during the 10am service in church on the last Sunday before Christmas. After Christmas the children with accompanying adults go to the St Mark's Players Pantomime, which we all thoroughly enjoy. The PCC subsidise half the cost of this.



Leadership: The Parochial Church Council (PCC) consists of 9 members including two churchwardens and a lay reader, whilst in Interregnum we have a lay chair. While the Church wardens are responsible for the overall running of the Church, the PCC is active in helping. There are also Sub-Committees chaired by PCC members, which report back to the PCC. These are the Family and Education group which organises the social and fund-raising activities, the Hall committee, Premises and a worship committee which chooses hymns etc. Also, a member is tasked with safeguarding matters. Reports are also heard from the Sunday school and the very active Mothers Union. If the occasion arises, we hold an extra ordinary meeting in lieu of a standing committee.



St Marks Church Building: It is a Grade 2 listed building. The stained-glass windows include the “Good Shepherd” light, in the canted portion of the south aisle’s outer wall, which is reputed to be the work of Henry Holiday (1839-1927). The large west window, depicting the three archangels (and, in the lower portion of the central light, St. Paul’s release from prison), is the work of James Powell & Sons, and commemorates the parish’s first vicar, C. M. Arnold; and dates from 1893. The Baptistry was added and decorated in the years after 1891. Five scenes from the Bible and Christian history were painted on canvases, which are fixed directly to the wall. The creation of wall paintings, in this way, was very rare indeed and they may be the work of mural artist Rupert Corbould, who worked for stained glass artist A. C. Hemming. The three lights set high up in the baptistry’s southern wall may be the work of Alfred Octavius Hemming (1843-1928). A history of the Church, still available, was written by congregation member Dr John Thomas in the 1980s. ‘A Brief History of St Marks’ was expanded into an A4 booklet with colour illustrations in 2022- a revised version is planned for 2027 which is our 175th anniversary.



The Church Hall was built in the 1960s using proceeds from St Marks players. St Mark’s Players are an amateur dramatic group which was originally founded by parishioners at St Mark’s Church to raise funds. This organisation has continued to exist separately from the church and rehearsals for performances are still held in the hall. Various improvements have been made to the original including a new fitted kitchen in 2013. The annual income from hall rentals is approximately £15000. Currently regular users are Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, a weekly lunch club, dog training, Oddfellows club, Ghanaian groups, adult and children’s parties. A local artist runs occasional courses and Croydon Council elections are held here.

Community: We have a variety of fund-raising and social events suitable for the whole family. The Church has strong links with the community with its Christmas Dinner at St Mark's and Easter Monday Lunch at St Mark's run by a dedicated team welcoming those who are on their own to celebrate together. A rota of people every year also join the other Croydon churches to make sandwiches for the homeless to help them over the winter. We actively support Churches Together in South Norwood joining in with the Walk of Witness on Good Friday and joining in with the Multi faith Picnic in the Park in Croydon. South Norwood Mosque and Islamic Centre is in our Parish, and we have very positive links with them. We also take part in the annual "Open House festival", in September 2024 over 30 visitors were offered a guided tour. The Open House scheme raises the profile of St Marks effectively, creating considerable goodwill both within and outside the Parish.



The Mother's Union at St Marks provides support to local hospitals, refuges, and homes as well as working on worldwide projects. There are a number of projects currently underway such as knitting clothes for premature babies at Croydon University hospital, making crosses in pockets for the Evelina unit at St Thomas's, collecting household essentials for the women's refuge group, providing personal toiletries and new underwear for the women and outfits for the babies as well as knitting blankets for the elderly and infirm in a local residential home. The group also has strong links with other branches and has visited Cathedrals in the Southeast.



The School was started in the 1850s and the schoolhouse was built at the beginning of the 1860s. The school children come into church on a Wednesday for their collective worship and the Church presents Bibles to the Y6 children when they leave Primary school. A member of the school staff is on the PCC. The current school is located next to the church hall and the church has access to part of the playground and school field for functions at the church. The building shown below was the original school building, then became the music room for the school, a Year 6 classroom for several years and then became the library. The building has now come back into the property of the Church. Repairs to stabilise the west gable wall have been done and the eventual plan is to add a kitchen and toilet and let the building to a preschool with options to rent it out as a space at weekends. This further work is dependent on funding from grants and fundraising in church but organising this and the subsequent project management is currently beyond our voluntary capacities.

Financial Position We are located in an area of high deprivation, and the congregation also has many pensioners. We also have a high mobility of a large proportion of the congregation, and the finances of the church are a constant challenge. In the past many of the congregation had children who attended St Marks School although this has not been as true of recent years.

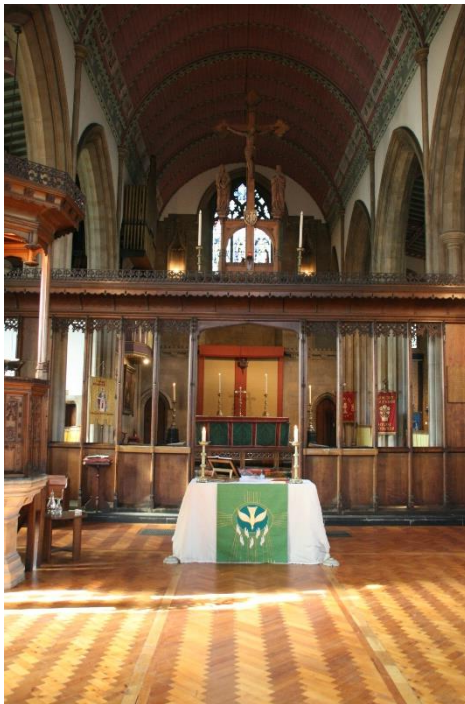
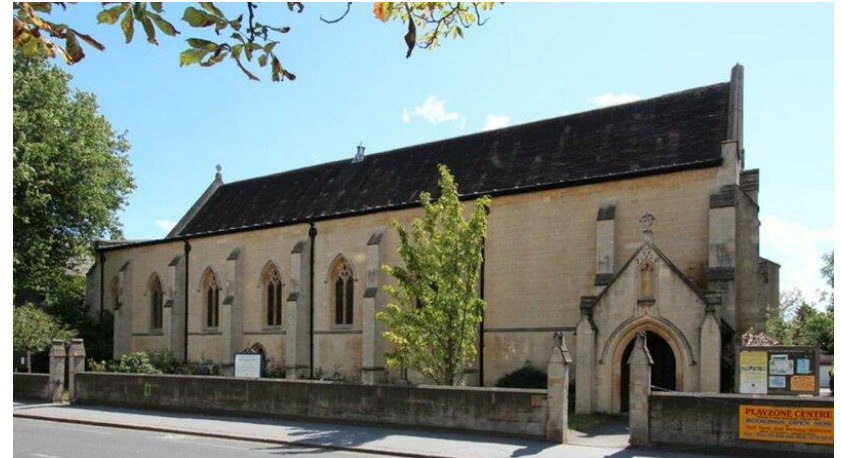
The final accounts for 2024 showed that we had receipts of £50,121 and expenditure was £36,788. We have paid as much as we can towards our annual Parish Share every year, in 2024 we could only afford to pledge £12000, but in 2025 we raised this to £15000. The monthly income from giving is approximately £1700 and the monthly outgoings are more than £2000. We have a gift aid secretary who regularly claims tax back from HMRC on our giving, in 2024 she recovered £3600. There is a Family Purse scheme in place, and a Stewardship campaign was undertaken in April 2024. Approximately £220 is paid through this scheme each month with 35 people paying by standing order each month.

We hire out the hall as often as we can and there is a group who organise and run fundraising events, flowers are often paid for by donations and during the summer, plants and produce are sold by those with allotments. We have grant money of £5000 in hand to proceed with further work on the school room and receive a grant from the Ros Harding trust to help towards the Christmas and Easter community events. Fund raising events include Christmas and Easter fairs, food fairs and quizzes. In summer we have a stall at the South Norwood community fair in the South Norwood recreation ground and use this to advertise our presence in the community.



Holy Innocents: In Depth

History: During the latter part of the 19th century, South Norwood was a rapidly growing community owing this to the development of the railway to London, the relocation of the Crystal Palace Exhibition to Sydenham, and the commercial and residential growth of Croydon. The parish church of St Mark in Albert Road could not cope with the influx of new residents. In 1888 a temporary iron church was erected on the present site in Selhurst Road while plans were made to build a permanent church in keeping with the prosperous nature of the area. Residents were able to raise sufficient funds to commission one of the most distinguished architects of the day – George Frederick Bodley. The church provided for a congregation of 800.



Congregation: The congregation has dwindled in line with some other congregations in the north Croydon area through the effects of Covid prior to which, the church had a thriving congregation of around 50 to 70 each week. However, congregation numbers are rising once more but significantly lower than previously. Our parish has a highly transient population which means we welcome new members, but they then relocate out of the area. Many of the large houses, previously owned by single families, are now houses of multiple occupancy, with isolation and poverty replacing the former prosperous nature of the area. Much of the housing is now converted into flats, and there are a number of sheltered housing complexes in the parish. We have a primary school in the parish as well as a secondary school academy and special needs unit almost next door. We also have the Croydon Youth centre close to us.

Partners in Faith: We also work closely with Churches Together in South Norwood. We have good connections with other local churches, and we are hoping to develop a local plan aimed at investing more in the local area by way of addressing social needs such as mental health and addiction. With its significant position and its proximity to many local amenities, as well as partnerships with other agencies, Holy Innocents could once again be revived as a local hub for a diverse community. At present there are opportunities for working with a youth-focused church charity to expand the churches' connection to work with young people in the community. We have thriving pre and after school facilities in the church hall. The latter hosts a Holiday Club funded by the Government. Both the after-school club and church are currently

in discussions aimed at addressing the particular needs of the community concerning children and families. The church is also en route for hundreds of football fans passing by on their way to Premier League matches at the Crystal Palace ground nearby offering a great opportunity for outreach. We are also proud to be about to start hosting part of the community payback scheme at the church allowing probation service to undertake various works across the church site.



The Building: The church is Perpendicular Neo-Gothic and is Grade II* listed. It was consecrated on 19th June 1895 by the Bishop of Dover and dedicated to the Holy Innocents, the children massacred on the orders of Herod. From a social perspective, this does resonate with the continuing concern about children, their mental health and social media. It could be used more purposefully as an outward focus for the church's mission among children and the vulnerable. The design of the church was very much in the High Anglican tradition. The organ was built by Norman and Beard and was dedicated on 18th October 1898. This, too, is listed. Above the nave, on the barrel roof are seen words from the Book of Revelation which appear in the Book of Common Prayer in the Epistle for Holy Innocents Day, while the roof above the Chancel has the words from the Communion Service. We understand there is only one other church in England with this feature. The East Window, the window overlooking the Baptistry, and the East Window in the Lady Chapel are the work of Charles Kempe, one of the best late Victorian stained glass artists. A mural of St Francis was painted by a local artist in 1952, while the provenance of a large oil painting "Angels and the Dead Christ" is unknown. There is a collection of paintings behind the high altar which we have yet to identify. In the Baptistry on the wall is a modern glass cross which was designed and made by the wife of a former Bishop of Croydon. She also designed and made a modernistic depiction of the Madonna and Child for the Baptistry.

Worship: At present, the church is open on Sundays and Thursdays and other holy days for Eucharist services. Our primary worship is the 10am communion each Sunday this occasionally includes the use of incense and bells, but we are praying for a priest who is as comfortable with Messy Church as they are with more traditional styles of worship. The church is open almost every Saturday for a community event or meeting, or coffee mornings. It is also open for most of the day on Thursday either for meetings, or for people to come in and pray. Community meetings take place during the week in the meeting room at the rear of the church. We hold a communion service once a month in the sheltered housing next door, and the dementia home in the parish.

The strengths of the church: Having recently completed a Mission Action Plan, we have identified many opportunities for mission in the area due to our proximity to the park, the shops, transport links, and an attractive space with great acoustics which was originally designed for large scale music. These offer potential opportunities for engaging with the following groups: Community meetings, craft groups, well-being mental health hubs in association with Croydon Citizens and SLAM, a community garden project, music and choral events and exhibitions. We receive many enquiries to use the church. However, the above activities are limited by the lack of heating in the church. Growth in congregation numbers, and opportunities for events in the colder months are seriously impeded by the fact that there is currently no heating available in the church.

With the right investment in heating and updating the church building, Holy Innocents can achieve its vision and aims of becoming an outward facing, mission focused church, as well as a place for both traditional and fresh expressions of worship, attracting new members and perhaps those who would not normally associate themselves with a church.



Financial Position We are also located in an area of high deprivation and part of the congregation is transient, reflecting the high mobility of the area. There is however a good and faithful core congregation, most of whom contribute regularly to the upkeep of the parish.

The final accounts for 2024 showed that we had receipts of £40,858 and expenditure of £41,045. We are pleased to have broken even despite the loss of a major church Hirer and additional maintenance bills. We have paid our agreed annual Parish Share of £5,250 in 2024 and hope to keep increasing this contribution in coming years. Our Planned giving has increased significantly over the last year as has our income from the hire of the Church Hall.

There are several opportunities to further share the church building which would increase our income with little effect on our expenditure. We are currently in conversation with a church youth programme which offers exciting possibilities for partnership.

We have a PCC member who has been trained in bid applications for grants and are currently looking at grants for organ restoration, heating and roof repairs.