



# St Francis Monks Hill

## Situation

St Francis is situated in Monks Hill which is in the bottom 14% in terms of Indices of Multiple Deprivation and so this makes it an area of significant deprivation. Our community is a post war council housing estate with around 3000 residents. The estate has its fair share of social problems - ill health - mental and physical, chaotic homes, social isolation, anti-social behaviour, and knife crime - especially among young people. Although many young people are well behaved and good citizens, there is a section of troubled youth who have struggled in education, been excluded from school, used and dealt in drugs, damaged property, and more recently carried knives culminating in a knife murder in 2016. Fortunately, things have calmed down somewhat since then when St Francis together with local police, schools and the Monks Hill Community Association worked in partnership to give young people better alternatives to slipping into criminal behaviour.

## History

The church was established in the 1960s as a daughter church of St John the Divine Selsdon and was quite reliant on support from St Johns for many years and broadly followed the tradition of St Johns, but perhaps in a more relaxed way.

In 2004, the Bishop of Croydon decided that St Francis should become a mission project of Emmanuel church South Croydon and it became a conventional district at that time, renewed in 2012. Members from Emmanuel joined St Francis in several waves, although most have moved on to pastures new.

## Tradition and Worship

Since 2004, the church has moved from middle of road/catholic to evangelical in terms of tradition, although the eucharist remains a key part of worship. Music is a mixture of worship songs and hymns, performed by a band of young people. The main service is at 10am, which is mostly Communion with occasional "Praise and Worship". Common worship is used for Communion services. On the first Sunday of the month, there is an early communion at 9am and Café church at 10am. Once a term there is an informal healing service at 6.30pm with prayer ministry and words of knowledge. Alb and stole are worn at communion services.

Sunday school has two classes with around 15-20 children and young people.

Housegroups meet in the week every fortnight.

Alpha course is run most years.

One Accord contemplative prayer is held monthly on the first Sunday.

Of course, all of this is up in the air because of the Coronavirus.

## Congregation

There are around 70 on the electoral roll and 30 children on the books.

The usual Sunday attendance is 45 adults and 15 children.

The congregation is quite diverse with west Africans, Caribbeans as well as local white people from the estate and further afield.

## Staff Team

**Minister in charge** - Rev Peter Wyatt has been in post for 9 years

**Youth worker** - Jonathon Canning does youth work in the community and for the church - he has been in post since September 2019

**Outreach and Development worker** - a community worker paid for by the National Lottery due to start in Autumn 2020

**Churchwardens** - Yemi Oseni and Jimmy Wavamunno

**Lay readers** - Steve Thomas and Olu Akitoye

**Retired Clergy** - Rev David Huntley

Of course, there are many hard-working volunteers as well.

## Church Activities

St Francis has a strong track record of running activities which benefit the whole community, including youth work, homeless shelter and healthy living sessions. In more detail:

(a) Our Youth Club for 11-16yrs.

Attracts 50 young people in any one term and has a regular group of around 20 people attending each week. In its current form, it has good behaviour standards, and good engagement from the young people involved and an excellent team of volunteers.

(b) Food for Body and Soul for 11-16 yrs

Youth club for Christian young people and those interested in the faith

(c) Monks Hill Football Academy

This runs every Sunday for those aged 9 to 14 years old. It attracts around 50 children and young people per season (a core of 8-10 attend each week) and provides a free training session, with occasional matches.

(d) Floating Shelter

This overnight shelter for homeless people in Croydon is open from November until Christmas each year, one night per week, part of Croydon Churches Floating Shelter.

(e) Coffee Morning

This monthly group operates mainly for those who are retired and connected with the church but does much more than simply providing refreshments. It provides a social space to help lonely people combat isolation.

## Needs

It sounds like the church carries out a lot of activities but this is with the help of community volunteers as well as church members. Many church members are getting older and moving on and younger members are often busy with jobs and children. Middle class people have joined from Emmanuel and other churches but tend to move on after a couple of years, so it has been difficult to sustain a pattern of growth. We have seen the church grow to 80-90 regularly only to fall back to 60 a year or two later. We have had some success in reaching estate

people, but often they come with emotional baggage which is demanding and limits their contribution to the church. Finally people from an African background often tend to gravitate to Pentecostal churches in the Croydon area, so all in all it is a challenging and demanding situation.

The needs of the estate are multiple and familiar to anyone who has worked or lived on a council estate - debt problems, addictions, mental health, abuse etc. Nevertheless we believe the Lord has the answer to all their needs!

20<sup>th</sup> July 2020