

St Augustine's Church Rock Avenue, Gillingham, ME7 5PW

Parish Profile



*"Our Vision is to
enrich lives and serve
our community by
being a vibrant open
and inclusive church
as we grow in faith"*





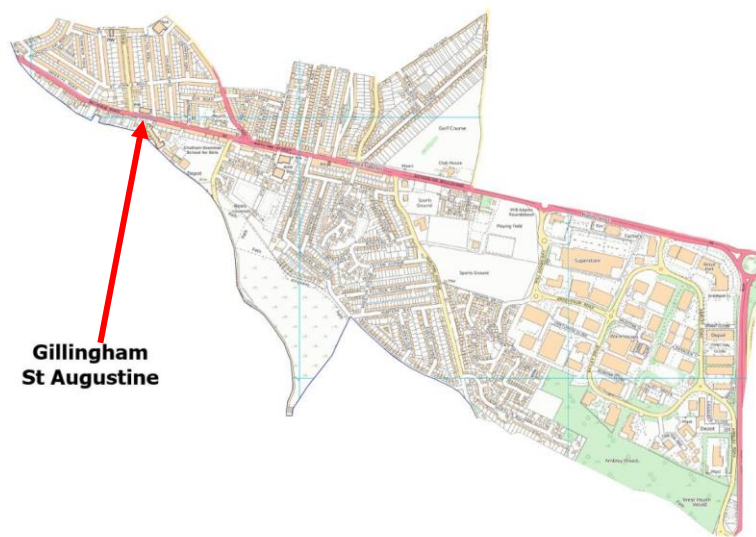
St Augustine's Church, Gillingham

The History of St Augustine's

St Augustine's church dates from 1916 and is the only church in south east England designed by the great Victorian architect Temple Moore. St Augustine's came about by a combination of spiritual need and a vision for the area in which it is situated. Originally a Mission Church, known colloquially as the "Iron Church", was established on the site in 1911 and this was later brick clad and reroofed to form the present Church Hall. The Rochester Diocesan Society was very supportive of the project and paid the first incumbent's salary. St Augustine's celebrated its centenary in 2016 during which some acknowledgement was made of the changes in Temple Moore's fine building over the previous 100 years. Principal to these was the reordering that took place post a fire in 1992 that saw extensive smoke damage to some of the north side of the building to a height of around 2.5 metres with significant smoke impact on much of the internal fabric. Now, as we move further into the second century of the church, we are excited by new community missional challenges, how we modernise some of our facilities to meet local community needs and regenerate use of the huge space in the church.

The Parish

St Augustine's sits in the far south west corner of the Parish as can be referenced from the parish map shown below. It is in a highly visible location in Medway on the corner of a busy junction between the main A2 and Rock Avenue. The site consists of the church and church room at the west end: behind the church room to the north east there is a car park, Vicarage and Shaw Memorial Hall. The car park is used by the church family and users of the premises. A primary and secondary school are close to the church.



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In terms of domestic residences much of the area around the church buildings are terraced houses built in the early part of the 20th century. Property residents in this area tend to be young families of all ethnic backgrounds along with a considerable number of elderly single residents. There are an increasing number of properties in this area being “Let” and we know from those who attend services from time to time that some are itinerant workers, including employees of the nearby Medway Hospital. As one travels east from the church all of Watling Street (A2), including small businesses is in the parish.

North of the A2, most of the housing is again terraced but noticeably of a higher standard and now in a conservation area. As a general rule property prices here are about 25% higher than in the area close to the church (and for those houses in the parish down Chatham Hill).

To the south of the A2 is the Darland estate. Developed both before and after the Second World War, house prices here are amongst the highest in Medway. Residents come from all ethnic groupings and span right across the age spectrum.

Further east from the Darland area is a further estate of detached and semi-detached residential housing built in the 1980s after the Army left the area. Close by is both a Premier Inn and Brewer’s Fayre, and the Gillingham Business Park, all of which is in the Parish.

The population of the parish is around 10,000. According to the Church Urban Fund, St Augustine’s ranks around average on the deprivation scale for parishes in the country, however, the Citizens’ Advice Bureau and other sources indicate that it is one of the most deprived areas in Medway and in the South East. In the immediate area around the church, including some of Chatham Hill, what is known locally as Poets Corner and some other streets to the north of the A2, CAB and other sources indicate particular issues around social

isolation and levels of debt. More generally there are also significant healthcare issues in the locality including obesity and substance abuse.

The Deanery of Gillingham

Gillingham Deanery comprises eight parishes with twelve churches. Travelling broadly from North to South: St Luke's, St Mark's, (which has a church plant at St Mary's Island in the old dockyard area), St Mary Magdalene's, St Barnabas, Holy Trinity Twydall, St Augustine's with St Margaret's Rainham and South Gillingham Team Ministry in the South (St Matthew's Wigmore, St Peter's Bredhurst, St Paul's Parkwood, All Saint's Hempstead). St Mary's and St Barnabas now share a priest. A map of the deanery is shown below.

Gillingham Deanery



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The parishes range from inner city with high levels of deprivation (St Luke's), to urban and suburban in the south and east. Approximately 106,000 people live in the Deanery, which is mostly within the Authority of Medway. The current Area Dean is Team Rector of South Gillingham, which has five clergy (stipendiary and non-stipendiary). The Deanery as a whole publicises events from each parish, and churches in the Deanery support them as well. St Mark's also has an initiative called REACH at Gillingham Pier, which makes connections with local people to help meet practical, social and spiritual needs. The Deanery is bounded by the River Medway in the North and West, and farmland woods and countryside to the

South and East. The whole area has formal parkland, wild green spaces and several country parks.

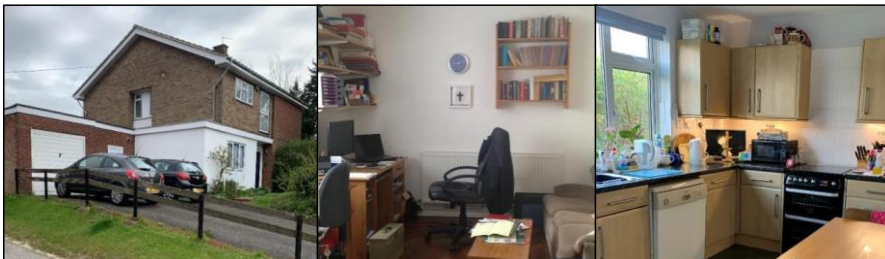
Gillingham Deanery is varied in churchmanship and setting, but there is a good history of the churches cooperating and supporting each other, enabling each parish to play to its particular strengths. We are open to innovative ways of working, without being 'precious' about parish boundaries, seeking to see each expression among us of the mission and ministry of God flourish. Members of chapter will look forward to welcoming a new priest at St Augustine's, and working together to build the Kingdom of God in this deanery.

The Diocese of Rochester

Called Together: The PCC has agreed and is responding proactively to the Diocese led "*Called Together*" strategy launched in 2017. This is centred on growing disciples, enriching communities and resourcing our mission and ministry. The PCC has been determined that St Augustine's plays a pivotal role in doing its part in embedding the three core areas of the strategy in its own future development for the church and community.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage is of 1960s construction. Downstairs the study is at the front of the house with a dining room, lounge, kitchen (including a new gas cooker which stays with the house as it was bought by the diocese) and cloakroom along with a covered entrance to the adjoined garage. Upstairs there are three double bedrooms and one single bedroom, a bathroom and separate toilet. The house has gas central heating throughout. There is a large garden, some of which may well be affected by church extension plans.



Worship

St Augustine's is a friendly and welcoming church, worshipping within the liberal catholic tradition. Our primary Sunday worship is the Parish Eucharist celebrated at 10.00 am attended by approximately 60 to 70 communicants, the service format being Common Worship Order One. The service is supported by an experienced serving team, an Assistant Curate and a Reader and Preacher. The church has a tradition of using vestments in all services and, in recent years, incense at some major festivals and saints' days.



Although currently we are not operating a Sunday School, there are some families with young children who attend regularly, and this is a ministry that the PCC places a particular priority on now developing not least given its community project.

On days such as Remembrance Sunday, Christingle Sunday in December and on other special occasions, there is a spoken Eucharist at 9.00 am followed by a non-Eucharistic service at 10.00 am. At Christmas there are a variety of services, such as carol services, crib services and Midnight Mass. At Easter there are evening services throughout Holy Week including keeping the Triduum from Maundy Thursday. We provide a reflective and informal Good Friday morning service as well as the formal vigil service.

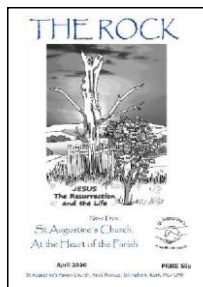
The clergy observe Morning and Evening Prayer in church when possible, and the congregation are encouraged to attend services throughout the week but particularly on Wednesdays and Thursdays. [Indeed since worship has started again post lockdown Morning Prayer ministry on Thursdays has been shared by a strong team of lay members leading it. When a priest is available t](#)The weekday Eucharist is celebrated on Thursday at 9.30am and there is a regular attendance of approximately 15 to 20 people. The service is followed by morning coffee which, from time to time, some members of the local community also come in to.

We have also attended various festivals such as Greenbelt and visited locations such as Walsingham and Aylesford Priory.

Outreach

Parish Magazine

St. Augustine's has had a parish magazine for many, many years. It has 36 black and white pages and eight pages of adverts from 16 advertisers. The title has changed several times and now called The Rock, it is published 10 times a year. (The December magazine combines with the January edition and the July magazine combines with the August edition). There are eight regular contributors including an editorial from the parish priest. Other



articles concern the devotional, parish life, events in the parish, wider community and the diocese, articles about charities, and puzzle pages.

Over the years the number of magazines sold has slowly decreased as people have moved away or died. The numbers have dropped from 300 in the last 10 years. In February 2020, 245 magazines will be distributed by 25 people and 20 magazines will be put in the rack for people to buy directly. 300 magazines are printed by a small local printer who delivers to the church in time for delivery prior to the last Thursday of each month.

Uniform Organisations

We have Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies and Guides who all meet weekly during term time here at St Augustine's. They are encouraged to join with worship at Family Eucharist services and usually support the Christmas Fair and Summer Garden Party. Some of the leaders across the sections are regular members of the congregation and there is effective communication between St Augustine's and the uniformed groups.

Place of Welcome

A Place of Welcome operates in the main body of the Church every Wednesday between 9.00am and 11.00am. Tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits are provided free to all who attend. However, almost all insist on giving a donation. This keeps the initiative self-funding. During the Place of Welcome, activities take place, for example art and craft workshops run by Medway Adult Education. Other organisations such as Citizens Advice and MIND attend regularly. St Augustine's was the third Church in Kent to open a Place of Welcome. [We are about to be joined by a Christian charity supporting young Mums.](#) It is run entirely by volunteers from the congregation and sees a wide section of the local community come through the door every week.



[Before reopening the Place of Welcome again in September we ran for a few weeks outside the church a Chatty Church. This was simply aimed at providing an opportunity outside for anyone who might be passing to have a chat. We found that the need to provide a forum for this was clear with one week 19 people attending all socially distanced.](#)

Schools and the Community

Within the Parish we are fortunate to have two schools one of which – Chatham Grammar School for Girls – sits more or less opposite the church. The other school – Byron Road – is a primary school and is no more than a ten minute walk from St Augustine's. Both schools use the church with the respective Head Teachers regular visitors and very much supportive of our future vision and community work. Elsewhere the community comprises many occupational groups with healthcare professionals, our own local “ high street” on the A2 with independent and other traders, a funeral director, pubs and eating establishments along with a Premier Inn, B&Q superstore and retail outlets.

Current Church Users

Our aim is to develop opportunities, to be inclusive to those under-represented in our church community and to encourage greater participation. Groups currently using our church building and facilities on a regular basis - weekly, monthly, bi-monthly and at festival times – reflect a diverse range of needs in the community. They include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autism South East | <input type="checkbox"/> NHS Retirement Group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Byron Primary School | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent, Baby and Toddler Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carers First | <input type="checkbox"/> Pilates Class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chatham Grammar School for Girls | <input type="checkbox"/> Royal British Legion Industries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cocaine Anonymous | <input type="checkbox"/> Turning Point |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes Support Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Uniformed Groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Karate | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Institute |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medway Community Healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Word International Ministries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (MCH) | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Lives Foundation |
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Our facilities are also used by Medway Council as a Polling Station when required.

Events

In 2019 we promoted a number of musical events for the local community and we have a programme of events lined up for 2020. This includes a Big Band from a local school, two community Big

Bands, a Choir concert, a Bavarian Night and a Brass Band concert. This is a platform for local community music and reaches out to the community – especially people who might not otherwise come into the church building. We are finding that increasing numbers of organisations want to use our facilities and our recently upgraded AV system makes us an attractive venue.



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Our vision for Mission and Growth

As a PCC and parish, we are listening and being guided by the Holy Spirit as to how we can reach out to and meet the needs of our community. Our calling in 2020 and in the years that follow is embodied in our vision where we “*seek to enrich lives and serve our community by being a vibrant, open and inclusive church as we grow in faith*”. Quite simply the vision is about using the building seven days a week for and by the community and not just on Sundays. As someone working with us on mental health recently observed “*Such a beautiful building needs to be used for the community. It needs to be lit up with the light of the service to the Lord*”. That is our generation’s calling. We pray that God will gently guide our new



priest to us to join us on the missional focussed path.

Progress over the last 18 months since we started our community focussed journey led by the Holy Spirit has been humbling. We have been successful in obtaining grant funding to install Wi-Fi throughout the



extensive church estate and a new state of the art Audio Visual system is allowing us to bring more innovation to services and for community purposes. [The new AV system was used for the first time in August 2020 when worship began again.](#)

[We have now sourced 200 new chairs. We have been granted a faculty to replace all the original chairs and have now secured the funding to procure 200. These were blessed by the Archdeacon of Rochester on 20th September 2020 and are single stackable chairs to allow us and those from the community increasingly coming on board of real benefit for social distancing and will allow us a far greater agility and flexible use of the space including for worship and community use.](#)

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Our community model is already bearing fruit. We see and hear on a weekly basis how those attending the Place of Welcome are engaging and interacting. We see new friendships. We see those who have come in with a particular need now helping lift tables and talk to others. We hear laughter. We see community care officers bringing those in real need to us. We wonder at the Holy Spirit working. Local social prescribers believe in us. RBLI, Turning Point, Autism South East, Medway Asthma Self Help group and a domestic abuse agency use the church regularly to support local need. With Medway Community Healthcare we are developing health and wellbeing initiatives from the church as we are too with education through Medway Adult Education and local schools. And



MIND have run four suicide prevention workshops and helped us organise an event around children's and adolescent mental health. Much more is planned including the use of the building for topical social care plays. We also have agreement from Rochester Bridge Trust to have their Adventure Golf project in the church [in 2021, once COVID-19 restrictions allow.](#)

Modernisation project

In order to grow and reach out missionally we seek now to invest in an extensive modernisation programme at the western end of the church. Briefly, the intent is to construct a new parish office from which all site management will be undertaken and build a new church room able to hold meetings for around 75 attendees and serve hot and cold food and for there to be new toilets and storage facilities. Such work links directly to the PCC vision and its wish to be able, amongst other things, to offer baptism and wedding parties somewhere to use at competitive prices. The PCC recognises that it has to adopt a more business focussed approach making effective use of social media and through local marketing.

The DAC visited us in mid-February giving us some very useful pointers on the feasibility study and modernisation works, including relocating the font. Currently work is in hand to firm up on the modernisation scheme, which includes sale of the Shaw Memorial Hall, and to establish a fund raising committee. We are working closely with the Diocese including on project management support and hope to submit a faculty application for the main project [before the end of the year once capital funding has been secured.](#)

[To further develop our rapidly developing community project we have formed a Community Steering Group comprising social prescriber agencies and professionals, such as the local Primary Headteacher, to develop the community support offering from the church as the Community Hub. This group is being chaired by the Diocese Community Engagement leader and is already 20 strong. There was very strong support for the group and the church's community outreach at the first meeting in September with a focus on how the needs of local people will vary from month to month given both national and local economic and healthcare matters. -](#)

Social Activities / Fundraising Events

The church family come together on a regular basis to enjoy a wide range of social events either in the church itself or in the church grounds. These events are open to families and the wider community. The recent addition of the Audio Visual system will enable us to offer a wider range of activities in the future. Our activities include the following:

- Bring and Share Lunch
- Christmas Fayre
- Concerts
- Monthly Jumble Sales
- Quiz Nights
- Summer Garden Party
- Travel Talks
- Weekly Coffee Mornings

Last Christmas the community was invited to make and display wreaths in the church, which was open for visitors to come and see the many offerings on show.



Growing the younger church – our aspirations

We feel that it is important to have a balanced mixture of worship, fellowship and learning about the Christian faith. It's not just about education, but also about spiritual engagement in a way that is fun, accessible and meaningful for young people. A joyful, faith-led journey from an early age to set them on the right path into adulthood.

We aim to maintain and develop our communications with local schools and uniformed groups as well as the local parish and aspire to reach out to families who may also wish to become involved with helping the younger church.

Building a partnership for growth of the church in north Gillingham.

One of the central aspirations of the PCC's vision for St Augustine's is for greater working together between ourselves on the one hand, and the other two churches – St Mary's and St Barnabas – on the other to secure closer alignment in terms of worship and spirituality. At St Augustine's we recognise that we cannot afford a full time parish priest and we know that the other two churches struggle financially as do we. Over the last year in particular we have tried to reach out to our sister parishes inviting them to both services and social events: the churchwardens have also met with their fellow Wardens. All three churches share some issues in common such as social isolation challenges.

Led through our new priest, Churchwardens and PCC we aspire to develop, share worship and enrich ourselves spiritually by joining together more with our fellow brothers and sisters at St Mary's and St Barnabas. We seek to develop the missional outreach especially in relation to the three churches personal growth and spiritual life. Crucially though, and building upon the community work already being developed at St Augustine's, the PCC sees many opportunities for resources, including those at Ministry level, along with ideas, to be shared in order to build more sustainable churches in a part of Medway where, now more than ever, the church needs to listen to and respond missionally. The PCC is united in its view that, only by working more systematically and consciously together, can we respond to "Called Together".

What we are looking for in our Parish Priest

We are looking for a Parish Priest who will lead us with enthusiasm and inspire us in our church mission in Gillingham. We would like the new incumbent to be a person of prayer, with daily Office being said in church, who will preach confidently, with candour and sound

doctrine, who is a good leader able to work easily with others. Someone who will make the sacraments available to all. A Parish Priest who will listen to other's points of view, is a good communicator, is energetic, organized and has a sense of fun too in bringing the Gospel to life for all ages.

We seek someone who can:

- Develop the spiritual growth of the church family (home groups and prayer meetings).
- Deliver a flexible range of spirit-led worship where the Eucharist is central but valuing wide and different traditions and new and innovative approaches to worship and different styles of music.
- Facilitate the nurture and growth of others as we seek to grow our young church bringing the Gospel to life for children and their families.
- Maintain a worshipping community church that is 'open', and inclusive – where all are welcome.
- Continue to develop outreach with local schools and the community including links with other local churches working collaboratively with neighbouring parishes and the Deanery.
- Provide vision, and ability to help drive the parish project and support with our Development Plan.
- Support and encourage the existing musical gifts that we have in our church and use 'the arts' to enhance our Services.
- Embrace technology; e.g. Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype - where appropriate for worship and community support and embrace ecological and sustainability issues and can action.

What we offer in return

At St. Augustine's we are a very committed group who offer support to our clergy knowing we are faced with many challenges and that it is not all plain sailing, but we do have good lines of communication and support in dealing with conflict and issues that may arise. Our team of strong, effective and enthusiastic PCC members and Church Wardens offer this support and equally support the welfare of the incumbent. We ensure days off are respected, holidays are taken and that time off is given for spiritual nourishment and an annual retreat. Our Curate and retired priests from the church family offer support at these times.

We offer an established church family with the infrastructure in place and the potential to sustain the parish in the future. We have a Development Plan (a copy of the current version which is being recast is attached for information) for the fabric of the church and an accompanying plan for St. Augustine's itself incorporating the growth and development of our community through prayer, worship and action, with development opportunities for personal and spiritual growth and becoming a more sustainable and resilient church.

Where are we now?

Finances

Let's get this out in the open – Finance at St Augustine's is a challenge!

We are unable to pay full parish share, something that we faced up to a couple of years ago. This year we will be paying £30K (twice what we paid in 2018) and this is the amount we expect to pay for the foreseeable future. Conversations about money in the church are sometimes frank BUT, and this the important thing, nothing is hidden from the congregation, everyone knows we struggle financially, and it is a team effort to overcome any problems that arise.

Whilst our accounts for ~~2019 last year~~ show a loss £3,452, this is an impressive result given that we increased our Parish Share payment from a low of £15,000 in 2018 to £27,640 in 2019. It also shows our commitment to “paying our way”. Our budget for 2020, however, is showing a loss of almost £9,000 mainly due to a significant fall in planned giving income due to changes in circumstance for some of our donors.

It should be noted at this point that both the Development Project and the Place of Welcome community initiative are accounted for separately and both recorded surpluses last year. Their funding is coming from grants, separate fund raising and specific donations.

74% of our fundraising income for the church operation comes from just two sets of events – our Christmas Fair (45%) and monthly jumble sales (29%) – the latter providing an important service to our community. It is therefore beneficial for us to have more fundraising events so that we are not completely reliant on these two things. Consequently, last year we held a Summer Garden Party, an Easter Cake Sale and were more active in Ride & Stride – three things that we had hoped to build on this year to reduce our budget deficit, however, current events may reduce our opportunities for 2020.

Our accounts for last year are not yet included in the Parish Profile because although they have been compiled by our auditors, final sign off has been delayed due to the current COVID19 issue.

Statistics

There are 88 members on the Electoral Roll, two thirds living within the parish boundary and the remainder from the wider community.

Our average attendance at Sunday services is 69 with our Carol service and Christmas Day service reaching 168. Easter Day saw 109 adults and 14 children celebrating and our Remembrance Day service saw over 150 adults and children in attendance.

Throughout the last year we have held 20 baptisms, 1 wedding and 1 funeral service.

PCC & Governance

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected at the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The PCC meets at least every two months and in 2020 will have 14 members.

The overall structure of the organisation consists of the PCC and Standing Committee as statutory requirements, with the Church Wardens looking at issues around buildings, property and maintenance and a reformed Children and Education Committee looking at both the interior life of the Church community and its mission. The Treasurer is responsible for monitoring the income and expenditure of the Church and its accounts and advises the PCC, Standing Committee and other groups as issues arise.

The standing committee has power to undertake certain actions between meetings. The Children and Education Committee seeks to meet every two months to consider matters relating to the church community (although due to personal issues this Committee has met less frequently in 2019).

St Augustine's falls under the Deanery of Gillingham (see above). Membership of the Deanery Synod consists of two elected members and the Priest-in-Charge.

Safeguarding

We are committed to ensuring that our church is a safe place for all. We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody. We follow legislation and Church of England and diocesan guidelines regarding the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. We work to ensure that necessary checks are in place for all who hold relevant roles and responsibilities and that they also undertake the Church of England Safeguarding training at the appropriate level. We hope that anyone would feel able to talk to someone about any safeguarding concerns they might have. Guidelines would be followed for reporting such concerns.

Music

The musical offering at St Augustine's is varied, usually consisting of a worship group on the first and third Sundays of the month and organ and choir on the remaining Sundays. We have our own resident organist and pianist for most occasions with a visiting organist on the fourth Sunday of each month.

The worship group consists of piano, guitar, flute, violin and trumpet with vocalists who provide a lead for the singing on the first and third Sundays of the month and there is some overlap with worship group members and the choir.

The choir of St Augustine's provides a singing lead at Sunday morning Eucharistic services as well as notable Christian festivals. During our weekly practices we have explored, and sung, many different forms of choral music ranging from plain chant, anthems, Taizé, hymns ancient and modern, differing mass settings and more recent popular composers such as Rutter. This rich diversity enables us to appropriately respond to the requirements of planned services. Although we are small in numbers, we are big in enthusiasm and have in the past called upon established choirs from other churches to help 'raise the roof'.

This year through our affiliation to the Royal School of Church Music we are exploring the possibility of undertaking the 'Voice for life' syllabus. This educational programme provides a structural grading leading to coloured ribbons worn with the choir robes.

We are keen to recruit new members, previous experience really is not necessary, just the desire to express through singing the different facets of worship.

Music is key for the worship and future of our church and parish. At present there has been a sung Eucharist at our 10.00 am Sunday service but we seek a spiritual leader who will broaden the worship offering including through the use of music and use of media. Leadership is key for music in the future in this parish and we have a wonderful talent and musical excellence. It would be good for the new incumbent to have an interest and some musical knowledge, (not necessarily a qualified musician), someone who would be confident in bringing the musicians together and enable us to go forward in the future of this church.