

St Augustine of Canterbury Belvedere



Parish Profile

'Entering St Augustine's I feel a sense of warmth, reverence and friendship.' MD

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*Welcome, and thank you for reading our Parish Profile
for St Augustine's Church, Belvedere.*

*We aim to provide an insight into who we are and how our Church works, and hope that we
have demonstrated a true reflection of our Parish
and the Priest we hope to appoint.*

*We are a friendly and welcoming congregation aspiring to follow the direction in which God is
calling us to travel at this time.*



'The first time I attended St Augustine's I was overcome by the beauty, dignity and mystery of the worship.'

DD

The Parish and The Local Community

Belvedere is surrounded by woodland which is part of the Green Chain Walk; Franks Park Woods in the direction of Erith & Lesnes Abbey Woods in the direction of Abbey Wood. Lesnes Abbey ruins, a very famous historical landmark, is 10 minutes' walk from the church. It was founded in 1178 by Richard De Luci as a penance for being one of the knights involved in the killing of Thomas Becket. It hosts many events including outdoor theatre performances, farmers markets and well-being retreats.



Sunset at Lesnes Abbey Ruins Sept 2022

The parish is part of the Erith Deanery which consists of 13 parishes and is part of the Church of England Diocese of Rochester (Archdeaconry of Bromley & Bexley). The Deanery covers most of the London Borough of Bexley north of the A2, with churches in Barnehurst, Belvedere, Bexleyheath, Bostall Heath, Crayford, Erith, Falconwood, Northumberland Heath, Slade Green and Welling.

Belvedere is largely an industrial area close to the River Thames in the London Borough of Bexley. It has a diverse and lively community. It is divided into Upper & Lower Belvedere the parish being in the latter. It is well served by a number of small shops, café, garages and a large ASDA/ B&Q. It is an area undergoing major rejuvenation with the development of new housing, leisure and retail amenities, Much of the housing is privately rented. The parish includes Dowling House, sheltered accommodation, and a house providing supported living for people with learning difficulties.

At the top of the hill is Nuxley Village with many shops; hairdressers, nail bars, 2 supermarkets, takeaways, an Indian restaurant, a Chinese restaurant and even a tattoo parlour! It also has 5 pubs.

The parish has excellent rail links to central London. Belvedere station is a short walk from the church & Abbey Wood a 15 minute walk. Abbey Wood is the terminal for the new Elizabeth line with easy access to Canary Wharf and the City as well as regular trains to Dartford and Rochester. It has good road links to the A2/M2, M25 and M20.



Lesnes Abbey Woods 2022

The 229 bus stops opposite the church providing links to Abbey Wood, Thamesmead, Erith, Barnehurst, Bexley, Sidcup & terminates at Queen Mary's Hospital. Connecting buses at Abbey Wood go to Erith, Dartford, Bexleyheath, Bluewater, Woolwich, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Charlton & North Greenwich.

Person Specification for our new Parish Priest

The Parish Priest We Need.....

Essential Qualities

- A Society priest within the Catholic tradition of the Church of England who will conduct liturgy with dignity using the modern rite and provide inspiring spiritual leadership
- Committed to regularly celebrating mass during the week
- Excellent people/pastoral skills. He should be caring, compassionate, approachable and sociable and instil enthusiasm into the congregation
- An excellent communicator and listener with all age groups
- A strong leader with diplomatic skills
- A priest who is adaptable and forward thinking
- To reach out and be a visible presence in the local community
- To be prepared to encourage and strengthen our children and youth work
- To take an active role within our church school as a governor and to build on the excellent relationship we have between the church and school

Desirable Qualities

- Proven organisational & financial skills
- An engaging preacher
- Previous leadership experience
- A strong commitment to children and youth work
- Previous experience of school governorship or working within schools
- A sense of humour and a willingness to be versatile and imaginative
- Competent IT skills

The Fabric of the Church

The Church

The church was consecrated in 1916 and is built in brick in the Neo Romanesque style that was popular at the time. The church sits alongside a main road and has a good visible presence.

Moving inside it is incredibly beautiful & excellently maintained– a huge source of pride. The nave is a very flexible space which can accommodate special worship events such as our recent Fan the Flame mission week. It can also be used for social events, such as our Christmas Fair, while preserving the sanctity of the lady chapel and sanctuary. We have a new, very sophisticated lighting system which can enhance the mood of worship. A number of bequests have enhanced the fabric of our church such as sanctuary light, lectern, acolyte candle holders etc. There is a carpeted creche area at the back of the church sectioned off by Monk's benches that have under-seat storage for books and soft play items. Most visitors comment on the beauty and special atmosphere of the church.

The church is heated by a gas boiler system which is serviced regularly. The grounds are very well maintained.



***'I feel privileged and humbled to attend St. Augustine's church for worship and fellowship with fellow Christians, as this Church played a great part in my late Mother's journey of Faith with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as our spiritual guide.'* SB**

The Church Hall

We have an extremely well presented and well-kept church hall which at present is used by the Pre-School uniformed organisations and slimming clubs and hired out for occasional parties. Pre Covid it had many more users such as dog training club, art clubs etc and we aspire to return to this level of occupancy soon



Church Hall & Kitchen area

The Vicarage

The vicarage is a large, detached house and comprises 2 living rooms, a study, a cloakroom, a kitchen & utility room on the ground floor and 4 double bedrooms and 2 bathrooms on the first floor. It has a good size garden and a detached garage.

Finance

We are in a good position financially. Our current account operates with a balance of approximately £ 25 - 35,000. Our deposit account has approximately £40,000. We have a healthy repair fund held with the diocese.

Our income is generated by way of regular giving by 30 members of the congregation by direct debit which was maintained during the pandemic. Some of the congregation prefer to use card payment method which is linked to a gift aid system operated by Goodbox. There is also a cash plate at the back of the church.

Pre-pandemic the vast percentage of our income came from the hire of our church hall which was used by regular users most days. The recovery in this area is quite slow but has very good potential for growth. Pre pandemic income was approx. £20,000 but currently is approximately £12,000.

Fund raising for specific items such as the organ, the lighting system, the Lady Chapel curtain and the organ sequencer was very well supported by the congregation, many of whom give sacrificially.

The PCC

The PCC comprises 12 people including 2 wardens, a deputy warden, a treasurer, a secretary, who also acts as a voluntary parish administrator & a safeguarding officer. It meets 6 times a year and on other occasions when necessary.

‘St Augustine’s is an all round welcoming and diverse church.’ LT

The Church as Worshipping People

Introduction

St Augustine of Canterbury, Belvedere is a Society Parish in the Diocese of Rochester (Erith Deanery) The Society (sswsh.com) under the extended care of the Bishop of Richborough The See of Richborough The PCC first passed a resolution under the House of Bishops Declaration in 1994 and several parishioners are members of Forward in Faith. The Parish has been served over the years by Priests of The Society of the Holy Cross (SSC).

The parish has a modern catholic tradition using the modern rite and incense is used every Sunday. There are regular weekday masses. Baptisms take place either within the Sunday Mass or at 12 noon. We have occasional weddings and a number of funerals in church. Due to the parishes history funerals often come from within the traveller community.

The parish is in an informal mission partnership with The Annunciation Chislehurst, St George's Bickley and St Mary's Swanley. The agreement is one between Parish Priests with the good will of the PCC to co-operate in mission together and reciprocate cover. All 4 parishes are in the Care of the Bishop of Richborough. There is a great tradition in Rochester Diocese for Society Parishes to support each other especially at Patronal Festivals. The parish takes a full part in deanery & diocesan life within its capacity.

The neighbouring Parish of St Michael & All Angels, Abbey Wood is also a Society Parish in Southwark Diocese and is under the leadership of the Bishop of Fulham. Over the past 20 years the 2 parishes have co-operated with sharing confirmations and youth work especially the Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage and trips to Carrotty Wood Christian Adventure Centre.



Carol Service

Crib

Midnight Mass

'St Augustine's gives me a sense of belonging and homecoming' AD

Services

Sung Mass on Sundays at 10.00 am. Family Masses with Parade used to take place on the first Sunday of the month but post covid have been less frequent. We have a daily mass service usually at 10.00 am. Most major festivals are transferred to the nearest Sunday, but we have been in the tradition of keeping the Feast of All Souls on the day with a Sung Mass at 7.30 pm in the evening. We have no organist at the moment and hymn singing is accompanied by an organ sequencer.

Overseas Links

Rochester Diocese have an official Diocesan partnership with the Diocese of Harare, Zimbabwe. Therefore, we have a parish link with St Mary's Chitungwiza & their Mission School. One of their priests stayed in the parish for a week and the previous incumbent spent a week in Chitungwiza staying with him. The Bishop of Harare visited in 2019 and preached at our Sunday Mass.

Our Congregation

Our congregation is a diverse multi-cultural mix. Just under half of our electoral roll live outside the parish. Some members of the congregation have worshipped at the church for more than 30 years. Ages range from very young children to one longstanding parishioner who is over 90. We have a number of young families, and these are increasing. There is a creche area at the back of the church for young children. Our congregation are friendly and welcoming.



Bishop Farai Visit

Children's Work

We have a Junior Church which meets on Sundays when there is not a Family Mass. The children join the congregation for the Lord's Prayer and usually show the congregation what they have been doing during the notices.

We have a long-associated scout group (6th Erith) who meet on a Thursday evening with beavers, cubs and scouts. The GSL is a long-term parishioner. They attend parades and participate in fund raising activities. Messy Church has also been tried over the years and works best when taken into the uniformed organisations and the school. For the past 20 years a group has gone to the Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage and for the past 5 an annual visit to Carrot Wood Adventure Centre.

Fellowship

Coffee & tea is served in the hall after every Sunday mass and folk are encouraged to stay and share fellowship. Pre-Covid Harvest Suppers were held every year and in latter years have taken the form of an International Night. Quiz Nights were also a regular social event before the pandemic. Some of the congregation take part in the Richborough family days in St Albans. We enjoy our Christmas Fair in particular. Our Fan the Flame mission week in 2019 was very successful and extremely well attended.

Church School

St Augustine of Canterbury is a one form entry Church of England primary school, that belongs to Trinitas Academy Trust. We serve a varied and diverse community and have strong links with St Augustine's Church. Christianity is at the heart of everything we do, and our school vision is to 'Promote Aspiration, Nurture Character, Achieve Excellence...through the Fruit of the Spirit'. As such, each class is named after one of the Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and the children experience each of these class names as they traverse through the school. So, for example, the children start off in Joy class, learning what it is to be joyful and then move on to Faithfulness Class, Gentleness Class, Peace Class, Kindness Class, Patience Class and finally in Year 6, Goodness Class.

We celebrate the rich experiences gained from the range of different cultures within our school and we provide a strong curriculum – valuing learning both in and out of school. Our children are lively and keen to learn. They have good relationships with each other and enjoy school.

St Augustine's Church plays a key role in the life of the school, hosting our Christian Festivals of Harvest, Christmas, Easter and the Summer Leaver's Service. The children celebrate Mass in school every Wednesday, led by the Church priest and the previous incumbent was also the Vice-Chair of Governors. St. Augustine of Canterbury C of E Primary School is an 'Outstanding' Church School (SIAMS 2015) and was graded as a Good school by Ofsted (2019).

Mark Alexander-Smale – Headteacher

St Augustine's Pre-School operates in the church hall every weekday and has done so for over 30 years. It is an independent charity, and the leader is a PCC member and PSO. Whilst not strictly a church organisation, excellent relationships are in place and they were awarded a Civic Award in recognition of devoted service to the community in May 2022 and a service was held in church, attended by the Mayor of Bexley as a celebration for this, followed by a lunch.

Fund Raising

Our fund raising comes from various activities the most popular being our Christmas Fair, which in 2021 raised a record £2,200. These are always happy occasions where the congregation pulls together and works hard. Pre-Covid twice yearly Quiz Nights were a welcome source of income and a member of the PCC recently put on a bingo night which was well supported. We hope to increase our fund raising in the future.

Our parish also supports the Bexley Food Bank with a box at the back of the church for weekly food donations which are then delivered to the Food Bank monthly. Our Harvest Festival produce is also taken to the Food Bank with contributions from our church school, and pre-school also.



'St Augustine's has led me into a new part time job, giving me the opportunity to practise my gardening skills on a larger scale especially at a time when I was unable to work in my regular job during the pandemic lockdowns' MA

Walsingham

Each year a parish pilgrimage goes to Walsingham usually sharing a coach with St Mary's Swanley and The Church of Annunciation Chislehurst. We have also attended the Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage for over 10 years. The church has a Walsingham Cell group of 6 members and this is an area that could be developed.



Pictures from pilgrimage to Walsingham 2022

Social Media

The parish has a website which is updated weekly and a Facebook page. Services have never been live streamed and this is an area that could be developed in the future.

Safeguarding

The church has a designated safeguarding officer and a designated DBS lead recruiter. All diocesan and legal safeguarding requirements are followed diligently.

There is a safeguarding committee who meet annually. The safeguarding committee is made up of 4 people who have or had responsibility for safeguarding in their professional careers.

There is a discreet safeguarding email where any concerns are flagged up.

We have had very few safeguarding issues in the past 20 years but any that have arisen have been dealt with quickly and the appropriate authorities have been involved where necessary.



Our Fan the Flame Mission May 2019 was a wonderful week of exploration, prayer, singing and teaching. The aim was to enable discovery and sharing of some exciting experiences to uplift and renew the spirit encompassing Baptism, The Cross, Resurrection and the Eucharist and to deepen the spiritual life of the congregation.

Every night was visually different in atmosphere, teaching and wonderment where we discovered our belonging to Christ, free gifts of God's love focusing on Our Lady, the beauty of reconciliation, the strength of healing and the feeling of thanksgiving.

Our parishioners were kept up to date on a regular basis by way of newsletter and posters during the preparation weeks and asked for their hymn suggestions which would be included during the week. Individuals came forward to offer their culinary delights during the week for the missionaries which was very kind. Prayers from other churches and individuals were displayed for everyone's perusal.

The week was very rewarding as many of our congregation and their friends and family turned out every night. We started the week with three lovely gospel singers which really kicked the mission off in a wonderful way, quite different to our regular worship style. It was evident that everyone found something they were not expecting embracing every emotion whether in song or silence. The testimonials offered each night were deep rooted, revealing and inspiring.



The team worked very well with the missionaries and we formed a lovely working relationship which enabled the week to flow with God's grace and inspiration.

A truly exceptional experience.



Fan the Flame – May 2019

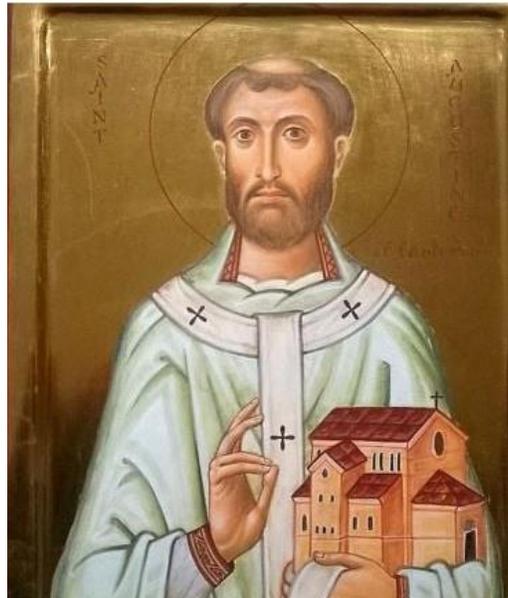
Saint Augustine's Belvedere certainly ticks the boxes. From the moment you enter the building you can feel that here is a community of committed Anglicans who understand what it's all about. From the warmest of welcomes to fellowship after Mass you can feel that here is a place with wide arms and a warm heart. Worship and Liturgy are at the centre of life at Saint Augustine's with a high standard of preaching and teaching. The congregation delights in the joy of nurturing children and young people in the faith and has a steady stream of baptisms and confirmations. This is a definitely a church with energy and a buzz, open to new ideas and committed to outreach while remaining firmly rooted in the catholic tradition of the Church of England.

The profile speaks for itself.

Parish life at Saint Augustine's will always be rewarding, dynamic and challenging.

The congregation are most definitely looking for a creative and prayerful priest keen to help take them forward into the next and exciting stage of Christian witness in Belvedere.

+ Norman
Richborough



Now you know all about us, our needs aspirations and intentions. We look forward to welcoming you to visit us and to explore further.

Thank you from the PCC of St Augustine's Belvedere