

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, BICKLEY

PARISH PROFILE 2021

Diocese of Rochester
Archdeaconry of Bromley & Bexley
Deanery of Bromley

Under the Sacramental & Pastoral Care of the Bishop of Richborough

The parish is under the patronage of the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith

Address: Bickley Park Road, Bickley, Kent BR1 2BE

Website: www.stgeorgebickley.co.uk

Facebook: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/stgeorgebickley/>



Mission Statement

- We are called to serve God where there is need and especially in the parish of Bickley. We rejoice in our heritage in the Anglican Catholic tradition and that the Proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Mass are at the centre of our life together. Baptism, frequent Mass, Perpetual Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the availability of priests to hear Confessions at advertised times are fundamental to our identity as a local church.
- Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we seek together to answer the call to give glory to God and to proclaim the Gospel by our worship and outreach, our prayer and study, our work with children and our social life. We work to include everyone as fully as possible in the life and worship of God's people, the Church.
- We are a church that is open to all, of whatever tradition or ecclesial integrity. We are called to be a community of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ in which without exception everyone is welcome and valued. We rejoice to work with our ecumenical partners in Churches Together.
- We acknowledge and accept as our Anglican and Apostolic heritage the legal rights and privileges of the Bishop of Rochester. We receive valued Alternative Sacramental and Pastoral Care under permission of the Bishop of Rochester. In accordance with The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops, the parish is served by male priests only and the sacramental ministry of bishops is exercised only by bishops who have not ordained women to the priesthood.
- We are corporate members of The Society, Forward in Faith and the Church Union, and under the patronage of the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith.

Introduction & History

The dedication of St George's Church took place in 1864, as part of the development of the surrounding Bickley Park estate by the wealthy landowner and railway builder George Wythes (1811-1883). The parish was created out of the old parish of Bromley, as the population of the area was increasing. The original spire was shortened in 1905-06 to its current height of 175ft and is a fine local landmark. For this reason, the building was also substantially damaged during the Second World War, losing much of its glass and the roof. In 1989, a fire destroyed much of the interior, which has since been re-ordered. Today, the building is in sound condition and has a light and airy interior. There is easy access for wheelchairs and other disabled users, and a disabled lavatory. The sound system was replaced in 2016 (and has been augmented in subsequent years) and at the same time new LED light fittings installed.

The parish is primarily residential (population c.7,500), with few shops or other amenities. There are several schools (*see below*), and various care homes. However, only a third of the congregation lives within the parish.

The main shopping centre can be found in central Bromley some two miles away with Chislehurst High Street a similar distance. There are several parks within the borough. The parish is located about 12 miles from central London.

Bickley railway station is just on the border of the parish with links to London Victoria, Blackfriars and St Pancras International also to Sevenoaks, Rochester and the Kent coast. Chislehurst railway station is again just outside the parish with regular trains to Charing Cross, Waterloo, London Bridge and Cannon Street. Bus routes 162 (Beckenham to Eltham) and 269 (Bromley to Bexleyheath) both pass the church.

The Church Building

Our beautiful building (open daily to public access) is arguably both one of our greatest assets, as well as one of our greatest liabilities: significant attention and financial resources are expended each year maintaining the church in sound condition. All work recommended in the last Quinquennial Inspection Report has been completed. In 2015, the striking image of Our Lady originally carved by Guglielmo Tosi in 1935, was restored to its original glory; in 2016, the restoration of the war memorial in our churchyard took place, resulting in its designation as Grade-II listed (the same status as St George's Church). Following a successful fundraising campaign, our splendid Walker organ (installed in 1991) is to be renovated in the summer of this year. A ring of eight bells hangs in the tower, and an automatic mechanism chimes the Angelus. Routine repairs to the building are carried out promptly throughout the year, including the complete repainting of the chancel in 2019. The church grounds are maintained to a very high standard by a committed groundsman and others. A contract has been signed for the installation of telecommunications equipment in the tower at some point during 2021: this will generate annual rental income of £6,000 (in addition to an initial one-off payment of £5,000).

There is a church car park and unrestricted parking in all adjoining streets.

The church is open every day from around 8.00am to 6.00pm.



Aerial view of the church



The interior of the church

Halls

Our two church Halls ordinarily generate a substantial proportion of our annual income, although this has been much reduced during the pandemic. The main hall is adjacent to the church and this is let to various organisations during the day and most evenings. In normal times, refreshments are served in the hall to the congregation after the 10.30 Mass on Sundays and many other parish events are also held there. The hall includes a well fitted kitchen, toilet facilities (including disabled) and a permanent stage.

The Choir Vestry is now also used as a small hall and is available for hire.



The Church Hall

View of the Church Grounds

The Vicarage

The detached Vicarage, built in the sixties, is next to the church and hall and stands in its own grounds, with its own garage, driveway and parking for about six cars. There are three reception rooms and four bedrooms.

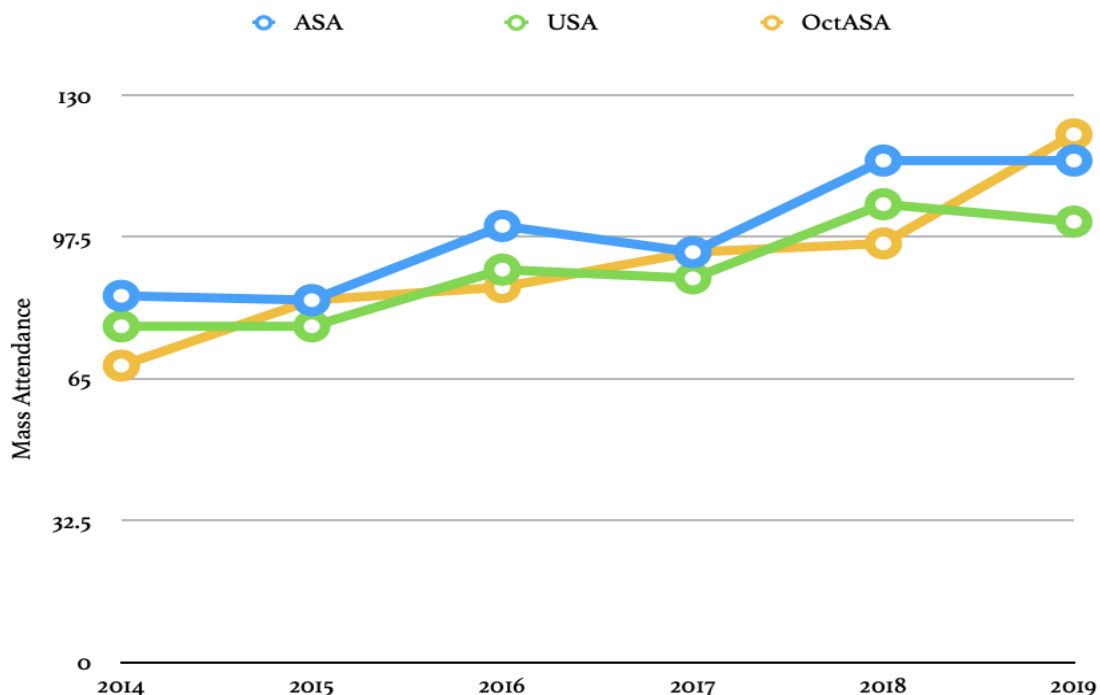
Worship

The usual weekly pattern of worship has been as follows (reduced to two weekday and one Sunday Mass during the interregnum):

Sunday	Low Mass, 8am Sung Mass & Children’s Church, 10.30am Healing Service (<i>monthly, after 10.30am Mass</i>)
Monday	(no Mass – incumbent’s day off)
Tuesday	Mass, 9.30am
Wednesday	Holy Hour, 9.30am Mass, 10am
Thursday	Mass, 12 noon (<i>live-streamed only</i>)
Friday	Mass, 9.30am
Saturday	Mass & Rosary, 9.30am (<i>followed monthly by brunch</i>)

Usual Sunday Mass Attendance (USA) in 2020 was 84, Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) 89 and Average Sunday Attendance including Baptisms (ASAB), 95. In this year, the church was able to be open for 33 out of 52 Sundays. Usual Sunday Attendance during October (the measure used in the preparation of national *Statistics for Mission*) was 88, rising to 95 when attendance at weekday Masses was included.

The following graph shows the variation in these measures during the period 2014-2019:



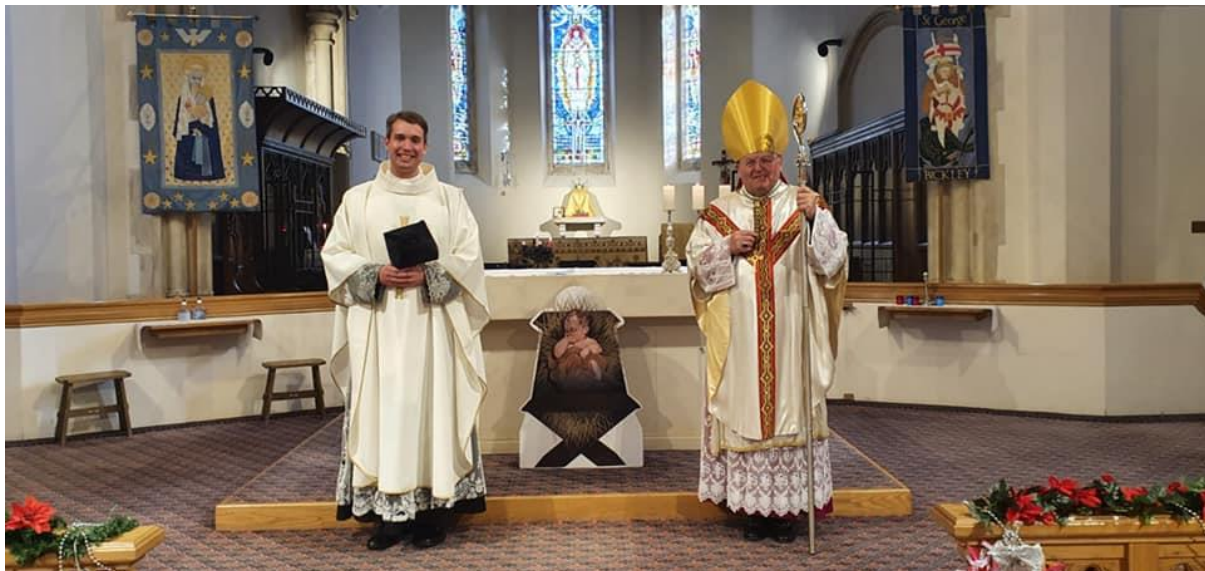
Usual Sunday Attendance in the first quarter of 2020 (before the announcement of lockdown) was 106 (ASA, 103). We are a growing church.

The following table gives details of attendance at Christmas and Easter, on Ash Wednesday and for All Souls:

	Easter Vigil	Easter Day	Carol Service	Crib Service(s)	Midnight Mass	Christmas Day	Ash Wednesday	All Souls
2010	57	190	N/A	N/A	105	93	48	47
2011	56	156	40	N/A	168	80	42	29
2012	68	138	94	N/A	162	82	43	44
2013	54	155	N/A	N/A	119	93	32	36
2014	46	159	90	260	127	73	31	68
2015	50	152	114	290	202	85	36	29
2016	32	215	128	385	209	132	42	34
2017	63	183	122	353	225	68	47	89
2018	91	212	114	368	152	108	61	66
2019	89	215	195	385	204	98	63	81
2020			220	113*	87*	95	67	79
2021	50	184					53	

*Numbers restricted due to the Pandemic.

Attendance at weekday Masses varies between 2-20. A team of around a dozen altar servers (coordinated by our M.C.) assist with Sung Masses. The complete liturgies of Holy Week are celebrated, including a Sung Mass (with choir) on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week. Evening Sung Masses are held for Epiphany, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Corpus Christi, Assumption, All Saints and All Souls (except where they fall on a Sunday). Our Patronal Festival has in recent years been held on the nearest Sunday after 23 April with a Sung Mass at 6.00pm. On Christmas Eve there are, due to the numbers attending, two identical Crib Services for families. We have been pleased to welcome a variety of guest preachers throughout the year.



Christmas



St George's Day



Palm Sunday



Remembrance Sunday



Maundy Thursday Watch

Occasional Offices

The following table shows the number of occasional offices in recent years:

<i>The Occasional Offices</i>	2018	2019	2020
Baptisms	34	36	12
Confirmation	20	11	6
Weddings	7	10	2
Service after Civil Marriage	-	1	-
Funerals (Church)	9	6	5
Funerals (Crematorium)	9	13	14

This year, ten weddings have been scheduled to take place; and there are five weddings already booked for 2022. St George's featured in the ITVBe mini-series, *Elliott and Sadie: the Wedding* in 2017.

Families seeking Baptism are invited first to attend a Sunday Mass, and then to meet once with the Parish Priest for baptism preparation. Wedding couples are prepared for marriage by the Parish Priest, over a period of around six months. Bereaved families for whom funeral services have been conducted are invited to a weekday Requiem celebrated for their loved one, and to the annual All Souls' Requiem (attendance at which increased from 29 people in 2015 to 89 people in 2019 (77 in 2020). Invitations to special services and events are sent (by e-mail, post and text message) to all pastoral contacts.



Confirmation



Baptism

Music

Our choir ordinarily comprises around eight singers, although this number increases significantly for special services. Under the supervision of our Director of Music, the choir rehearses twice weekly, and sings on Sundays and for festivals (including every day in Holy Week). Choral Evensong is typically sung two or three times each year. For Christmas 2020, we partnered with the choir of St Giles, Farnborough for two services of Nine Lessons & Carols. The church is also used by various choirs and other ensembles for concerts.



St George's Choir



Sine Nomine Concert

Bells

The church has a peal of 8 bells, hung for change ringing, and are an extremely well regarded ring by visiting ringers. We do not currently have a local band of ringers, but are very lucky to be supported by those from neighbouring churches, who help us with ringing for weddings, funerals (where required) and for other general peal ringing for national/local events. The tower is often requested by visiting ringers who know of the bells quality and want to ring them as part of an outing. There is an automatic hammer on the 3rd bell (Gabriel) which rings the Angelus three times a day, and can also be used during services.

Servers

An experienced team of around ten servers assist in the Sanctuary at all Sung Masses and some Low Masses.



Children & Families

Our Children's Church team includes three hardworking volunteers, who ordinarily lead activities in the Hall for the first half of Mass each Sunday: prior to the pandemic, on average 18 under-16s attended Sunday Mass. Between 2017-2019 we enjoyed the ministry of a Families Missioner, appointed in conjunction with The Annunciation, Chislehurst.

Families are welcomed into the church hall, and encouraged to share news, and achievements. This is followed by the lighting of a candle and a short prayer and gospel. We are fortunate to be able to divide the children into two age groups to support them further. Our younger ones will focus on a more practical craft, where the theme is discussed verbally whilst they do their supporting activity. The older ones will take a deeper dive into the theme, often working on a project over several weeks, and asking more in-depth questions. Once children return to church, they are encouraged to sit for the remainder of the service with their family, supported with appropriate Mass booklets for children to engage them with the Mass, but have an opportunity towards the end of the service to share with the wider congregation what they have been doing.

Messy Church, which celebrates 10 years of running this year, also took place during each school holiday (attracting 40-50 participants), although this is currently suspended on account of COVID-19. Messy Church provides great out reach into the wider community, and families come along from near and far to enjoy the many different themes explored through craft, messy activities, worship, shared meal and singing.



Children's
Church

Schools

We enjoy a close relationship with our parish primary school [link](#) which belongs to the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust. St George's is a two-form entry primary school: regular church attendance is not among the admissions criteria, and the school was rated "good" in its most recent OFSTED and SIAMS inspections. The previous incumbent contributed twice-weekly acts of Collective Worship (which moved online during the pandemic), chaired the school's local Aquinas Advisory Council and was a member of the Aquinas Trust Board. Small groups of pupils were able to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham on pilgrimage.

There is a girls' state secondary school within the parish (which has also opened a free school for boys), an independent boys' preparatory school, and an independent girls' school comprising senior and junior schools. Three of these schools visit St George's annually for their Christmas Carol Services (as does also a mixed preparatory school slightly beyond the parish boundaries), and two regularly welcomed the previous incumbent to lead assemblies.

Previous incumbents have served as chaplains ("padres") to 228 (Bromley) Sqn RAF Air Cadets (contributing a monthly "Padre's Hour") and have tentatively re-established a connection with the 15th Bromley Scout Group, who have attended Remembrance Sunday Requiems, and their own Carol Services – as well as helping at the Summer Fete.

Safeguarding

The parish is committed to implementing the House of Bishops' safeguarding policies and good practice guidance. A formal statement under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults) to adopt the House of Bishops' "Promoting a Safer Church: Safeguarding Policy Statement" has been agreed by the Parochial Church Council. The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is taken very seriously.

House of Bishops' Declaration

The PCC has recently reviewed and reaffirmed its request for extended episcopal care under *The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops* and rejoices to belong to the Richborough Family.

Parish Mission Partnership and the Wider Church

St George's is in an informal mission partnership with the parishes of The Annunciation, Chislehurst, St Augustine, Belvedere and St Mary, Swanley – all parishes of The Society, under the extended episcopal care of the Bishop of Richborough. The partnership has organised a joint Study Day (with another planned before the pandemic led to its cancellation); brought together church officers for networking; arranged pulpit swaps and fostered close clergy fraternity. The clergy of the partnership are assisting with cover during the interregnum.

We likewise value our relationship with other parishes of The Society, travelling together to regional festivals and visiting each other's churches during Lent, for Stations of the Cross. The parish is affiliated with *Forward in Faith*. We enjoy a warm relationship with our patrons, *The Society for the Maintenance of the Faith* (hosting their Annual Festival in 2018).

Representatives are elected each year to Bromley Deanery Synod; St George's also belongs to *Churches Together in Chislehurst & Bickley*, who promote a joint service each year during Christian Unity Week, and an act of witness in Chislehurst on Good Friday.

Pilgrimage

There is an annual weekend parish pilgrimage to The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, involving 20-25 members of the congregation. There have also been parish pilgrimages in recent years to Rome and Malta.



Parish Pilgrimage to Walsingham



Parish Pilgrimage to Malta



Parish Pilgrimage to Rome

Fete & Fundraising

The Summer Fete usually raises in excess of **£3,500** for parish funds, alongside other fundraising and social events including parish lunches, quizzes and outings.

We are pleased to support our partner charities and have a longstanding financial commitment to *Welcare*. We have also raised significant sums in recent years for the Bromley Borough Food Bank (£1,000 - in lieu of Harvest foodstuffs; ordinarily, donations for the Food Bank can be left in church); local charity *SteerRight* (£880, match-funded from the diocesan Children & Young People's Fund), and the Cancer Centre at Guy's Hospital (£4,500).



Summer Fete



Social Events

Throughout the year a number of parish social events and visits take place. There is usually a pre-Lent lunch, Easter Vigil party (with fireworks), St George's Day party, lunch/BBQ for the Dedication Festival, Assumption lunch and Harvest lunch. Parish visits to Hampton Court with Evensong in the chapel, Westminster Abbey for a tour and Evensong, Westminster Cathedral for Vespers, breweries and other locations have taken place in recent years.



Dinner after a visit to Westminster Abbey

Pre-Lent lunch

Finances

The parish share agreed for 2021 is £60,000, an increase on the previous year, despite the financial challenges of the pandemic. We have successfully utilised digital giving (Facebook fundraisers, the PayPal Giving Fund, SwiftAid and a GoodBox contactless donations plate). Significant legacies have, in recent years, boosted our income – although we are conscious that such income cannot be relied upon in future. The Annual Report and Accounts for 2020 can be viewed [here](#).

Lockdown

During the three periods of lockdown instigated because of the COVID-19 pandemic, St George's adapted to a mix of online and in-person worship, live-streaming Masses via our Facebook Page, and uploading videos for our own Children's Church and to support Collective Worship in local schools.



Palm Sunday live-streamed during the first lockdown



Tower lit in blue in support of the NHS during first lockdown



Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Corpus Christi in the church grounds during first lockdown

Communications, Social Media and Parish Website

The production of a monthly *Bulletin* magazine has been paused during the interregnum; this publication detailed services and events, with other contributions from clergy and congregation members.

The parish website (stgeorgebickley.co.uk) was upgraded in 2019. St George's also has a presence on Facebook (with over 1,300 followers), and a YouTube channel.

Clergy Team and PCC

St George's is fortunate to benefit from the support of two honorary assistant priests: Fr David Cossar SSC lives with his wife at Morden College, and was latterly the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Lamorbey in Sidcup; Canon Owen Beament MBE lives in Orpington, and was latterly the Vicar of All Saints, Hatcham Park, New Cross. One young man in the congregation is exploring a vocation to the priesthood with the Diocese.

Our PCC has participated in Away Days in recent years, to consider the parish's mission and vision. Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, and a Parish Safeguarding Officer has been appointed: PCC members and others undergo thorough Safeguarding training, using national resources. There were 111 names recorded on the Electoral Roll at the 2021 APCM.



Visit by the Mayor of Bromley



Reciting the Angelus



Corpus Christi



Sunday Mass



From the Bishop of Richborough

Saint George's Bickley certainly ticks the boxes. From the moment you enter the church you can feel that here is a community of committed Anglicans who understand and live out the Christian faith in all its fullness. 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 this flagship church which enjoys an excellent musical tradition and a high standard of preaching and teaching. Saint George's is also very child friendly and has a thriving Sunday School. This is 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 can be guaranteed to be rewarding, dynamic and challenging.

The congregation are keen to appoint a creative and prayerful priest ready and able to take them forward into the next and exciting stage of Christian witness in Bickley.

Priorities for the future/Objectives

The new incumbent will no doubt wish to establish his own priorities in collaboration with the PCC and others but provisionally the parish would identify the following:

- continue to grow the membership of the church
- to maintain and enhance the worshipping life of the parish.
- to develop work with young people and children in the parish and enhance links with the church school and other schools in the parish.
- to lead the parish in a secure path in view of developments in ministry in the Church of England.
- to develop lay ministry in the parish
- to fully support and maintain the musical tradition of the parish.
- to maintain and enhance the social activities of the parish.
- to continue and enhance links with other Society parishes in the diocese and with Churches Together in Chislehurst and Bickley.

Person Specification

We do not discriminate on the grounds of age or experience, or of marital status, providing that the norms of Catholic moral teaching are observed.

It is expected our new incumbent will be able and willing to:

- maintain the Catholic traditions of the parish, developing them as appropriate to the needs of the Church at the present time.
- maintain our tradition of the daily Mass.
- have a strong discipline of personal devotion and prayer.
- be sensitive to those of differing traditions and opinions.
- work in collaboration with fellow clergy, the PCC and Director of Music.

- further develop work among children and young people, and with local schools and other organisations.
- enthusiastically support and encourage our parish school and enhance its links with the church.
- have good communication and organisational skills and be self-supporting in administration and IT.