



# St John The Evangelist Penge

*Making St John's Church a home for everyone*

"We love because God first loved us"

1 John 4:19

Parish Profile – April 2021

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## *Introduction to St John's*

Thank you for taking the time to read our parish profile.

We are excited to discover who God is calling to lead us on the next stage of our journey as we seek to merge with Holy Trinity church and bring God's love to our community and those around us.

We know that God is working in our church and in our community and look forward to the opportunities and challenges this will bring. Our vision is that "With God's love we **CARE** for everyone, through Jesus we can **INVOLVE** everyone, with the Holy Spirit we will **BUILD** St John's Church"

### ***Making St John's Church a home for everyone***

## *About our Church*

St John's has always been a welcoming church, keen to bring God's love to the local community. We are extremely well placed on Penge High Street and have worked hard to build links with the community.



We are a lively, diverse and active church that includes people from all ages and backgrounds and presently have 80 adults on the electoral roll. Our church family includes a number of people who are not first-language English speakers, a very wide range of ages, and a number of disabled people in the church, including those with intellectual disabilities. We do, however, face the challenge of having few people available to lead and to take part in midweek activities, and others juggling demands of busy work lives.

We currently hold one main service a week, at 10.30am on a Sunday morning, taking the form of Family Communion and All Age worship (once a month each) or Morning Worship. The vicar does not usually robe. The feel of our services is informal, using elements of liturgy from the Common Worship. Services are led by the vicar and a team of church members, and our lay team also share the teaching. For Family Communion and Morning Worship services, the whole church family meets together for about 20 minutes before the children of primary school age leave for their own teaching in the adjacent hall. We also hold quieter, more reflective services once a month on a Sunday evening, often following an Evening Prayer format, led by members of the preaching and leading team.





St John's patronage is with the Simeon's Trustees and as a church we are broadly open evangelical. We have a history of strong Bible teaching, and this has in recent years been supported by a linked programme of Home Group study. We currently have five Home groups, all meeting weekly: three evening groups and two daytime groups. Not all church members are members of a Home Group, but this is something we are actively trying to encourage. Home Groups have been a crucial part of church life for many years, offering support, fellowship and prayer as well as the opportunity to study God's word and discuss further. We have also recently run Alpha Courses approximately once a year, with a small number of people becoming church members and starting to attend a Home Group as a result.



Music has always been an important part of St John's services and we have a small group of worship leaders and musicians. We have no traditional pipe organ, but we do use a very versatile keyboard supported by guitar, often drums and sometimes flute. Our service music is mainly contemporary, with a mix of more traditional hymns as appropriate and we strive to ensure it is relevant to the theme of the service and accessible to those worshipping.



Our children's and youth groups are small, and currently led by dedicated church members keen to see these younger members of our church family grow in their faith. In recent years, there has been a small number of youth group members coming forward for confirmation. Some of the current team of leaders for these groups have stepped in temporarily to fill the gaps created when the previous leaders moved away from the area. We are currently seeking some new leaders to provide more sustainable leadership for this work.

For many years, we have supported a variety of mission partners both in the UK and overseas. These have changed from time to time, due to changing circumstances. Currently, we give regular prayer support to a family who are working in Thailand with CMS and also to a church member who for several years has been working in the Middle East with a humanitarian aid organisation.

Apart from the vicar, we don't have additional paid members of staff, but we do have an Authorised Pastoral Assistant and two Licensed Lay Ministers, one of whom preaches regularly. There is no paid administrator but there are one or two church members who currently share some of this work on a voluntary basis. There are a small number of baptisms and weddings throughout the year.



## St John's During Lockdown



Although we are in interregnum, we have worked hard to keep church going during the Coronavirus lockdown. We have become regular users of Zoom, meeting weekly for Zoom church (including a monthly holy communion service), Zoom home groups, prayer meetings and PCC meetings and for several church quiz nights and games evenings. Audio recordings and text script of sermons, prayers and links to worship songs, along with story

animations and activity packs for our younger members, are posted weekly on the church website for those who are not able to join us on Zoom. It has been great to continue to be able to see each other and catch up, albeit digitally. This is in addition to regular email updates to the church family, to share news, prayer requests, answers to prayers and any other relevant information.



Throughout the lockdown, our CAP centre has continued to operate, working hard to adjust routines and give support to clients through phone calls, video calls and emails. Our Food Bank has also continued to operate, supporting CAP clients and families at St John's School as usual. This has been possible due to ongoing generous donations from church members and others to keep us well stocked throughout.

## Our Vision

Before our previous vicar retired, we knew as a church that we needed to look at our current work, mission and opportunities and consider the priorities for the next few years. This work was started with the previous vicar and has been completed by a small group appointed by the PCC.

As part of this, the PCC held an away day to focus on our strengths, challenges, current work and future opportunities. We also took the opportunity, during two services in the summer of 2019, to seek thoughts and views from the congregation and from families in the community who attended our Messy Church breakfasts in August 2019. All this input was considered by the vision team and there was clear consensus about some key areas and a wide range of thoughts about some of the detailed activities that could support our future mission as we aim to show God's love so that others learn about it for themselves.

The three main areas that emerged were:

- **Pastoral Care** - Caring for everyone
- **Involvement** - encouraging active service by all church members
- **Building the church** - with a particular focus on Families and Children, looking at the tremendous opportunities we have within our Little and Big Fish toddler groups and St John's School, as well as building on our own children's and young people's work

All of this work was taken forward by the vision team who put together a vision for St John's, the summary of which is included below.

We are very aware that our new vicar will need to have input into this vision (especially as we are looking to merge with Holy Trinity Church) and we are not embarking on any major long term projects during the interregnum, but we are already looking at some of the ways that we can start to **CARE** and **INVOLVE** people within and beyond St John's as we look to continue to **BUILD** the church.

The summary of the church vision follows:

# MAKING ST JOHN'S CHURCH A HOME FOR EVERYONE

"We love because God first loved us"

1 John 4:19

## This is the vision for St John's:

As God's Church, we want to grow together to become a more loving, joyful and serving community - making St John's church a home for everyone.

*with God's love we*

# CARE

St John's wants to **care** for everyone within and beyond the church family

To care for the church family, St John's would like to see everyone **connect** to a homegroup

To **support** the church family St John's would like to develop and equip the prayer team

*through Jesus we can*

# INVOLVE

To **build** our church, St John's needs us all to become more involved, to find our place and to play our part

Because we love Penge, St John's would like to **strengthen** and **grow** connections with the local community

*with the Holy Spirit we will*

# BUILD

St John's wants to **build** our community to bring together all members as a family of Christ

St John's wants to **invest** in the younger members of the church by growing the children's and youth work

St John's would like to **create** more opportunities to bring Little Fish, Big Fish and School families into the wider church family

## Our links with the Community

Our links with the local community have grown in recent years and we recognise the tremendous potential to develop these further.



**Little Fish** is our very successful pre-school Toddler Group, held in the main church building and run by church members every Monday and Wednesday morning during term time. The Monday sessions include Messy Play opportunities, too. Each session runs on a first come, first served basis and sessions are often full, with 60+ adults and around 80 or more pre-school children. We also run a monthly **Big Fish** session on a Saturday morning, initially for working parents and their children but now whole families and sometimes grandparents are coming along. It is less busy but is an equally good time and includes bacon rolls! All Little and Big Fish sessions incorporate a

short Bible Story time and a time of songs and rhymes. There are lots of opportunities to chat to parents and carers during these sessions. We were privileged to welcome the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, to our Little Fish group as part of his visit to Rochester Diocese.



We have for many years run a busy **Holiday Club** for a week in the summer holidays, but in Summer 2019 altered this to a weekly **Messy Church Breakfast**, opening the church to local families who joined us for Breakfast, teaching and activities following the Messy Church format. Some of those who were invited were families who might find the summer holidays quite a challenge without their free school meals and all those attending were offered packed lunches to take away with them. These mornings proved to be very successful and were well received by

those attending, all of whom were families who did not otherwise come to St John's. This has paved the way for a discussion about whether we could start a regular Messy Church service at some point in the future.

We have strong links with **St John's Church of England Primary School**, just a five-minute walk from the church building. The school is part of the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust.

The previous vicar was very involved in school life, taking weekly Collective Worship and meeting regularly with staff and parents to offer support, including running prayer meetings. The vicar has historically always been on the governing body, or more recently been a trustee of the school. There are also opportunities for church members to serve on the board of trustees and currently one church member does this.



ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



Our **CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Centre** is busy, booked up well ahead and operates in one of the office spaces in the church building. Our Centre manager is supported by two trained debt coaches, and currently has 19 clients on the books. In addition to giving individual advice and support, they run CAP money courses, provide seasonal food hampers and network with the local community. During the past year, 6 of our CAP centre clients have become debt free. The CAP Centre is mainly funded by generous, regular donations from three other local churches and monthly donations from keen supporters. Other opportunities to work with the community include



- **The Alpha Course:** we run Alpha Courses approximately once a year and this is an opportunity for anyone to freely explore the basics of the Christian faith. As a result, a small number of people have become church members and have started attending a Home Group
- **Our independent Food Bank:** this operates from the church, supporting some families at St John's School, CAP clients and others individually known or recommended to us as a church family. The foodbank is maintained by volunteers and stocked by donations mainly from church members both at St John's and another local church
- Links with the **Bromley Homeless Project:** during the winters of 2018-2019 we hosted weekly meals for local homeless people who were then been able to stay the night at another local venue. This is part of an initiative run by Bromley Churches Together and helps to meet a very real and continuing need in our area. We were ready to do this again in the winter of 2019-2020 but it was not possible due to difficulties in arranging the sleeping accommodation locally
- **Remembrance Sunday:** we host the Act of Remembrance each year at the War Memorial opposite the church. In November 2019, 200 people came for the service in the church, including about 80 cadets from local groups, and approximately another 150 people joined the outdoor service and Act of Remembrance
- **Carols of Remembrance:** a service just before Christmas which in recent years we have hosted in conjunction with one of the local Funeral Directors, who invite all the families they have supported during the past year
- **Our Christingle service:** held each year on Christmas Eve, which is very well attended by local families including many from our Little and Big Fish groups
- **The Turning Project:** we have joined with other local churches out on the streets of Penge, sharing the Good News, praying with local people and leading some to Christ.
- **Prayer Walks:** linking with other local churches, we have been part of teams walking the streets of Penge, praying over the challenges of knife crime and drugs



St John's Church is very much seen as part of the local community and we are keen to develop this and strengthen those links further. The School, Little and Big Fish and the recent Messy Breakfasts show how much potential there is for us as a church to reach local families. Our challenge is how to do this most effectively with the people we have, and the time they can give.

We aim to make the church an interesting and engaging space for people by having creative displays on various occasions throughout the year.





## Our Church Building



Our building, which has a high profile on Penge High Street, is Grade 2 listed and was built in 1850 out of Kentish Ragstone. Since the 1970s, considerable reordering has taken place. In 1977 the north aisle was reordered to create an integral hall which is used for Sunday school, Little Fish and also hired out mid-week. At the same time, the space previously occupied by a large pipe organ was converted into an upper and lower room, now used as our CAP centre office and church office respectively.

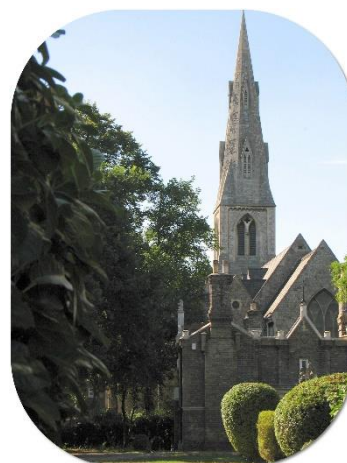
In 2000 we removed the traditional pews and reordered the main worship space to face north, with new staging adding to the more inclusive feel that this has given us. This flexibility allows better use of the building, and visitors and church family alike agree this has made the church a more welcoming, friendly place to share worship and fellowship. Monthly, reflective services, prayer meetings and, until the previous vicar retired, a mid-week holy communion service, take place in the chancel or side chapel, both of which lend themselves to more intimate, quieter times.



A building of this age requires ongoing maintenance and repair. Following a programme of work in 2010, the roof and gutters are currently in good repair, but the stonework will always need maintenance and we are aware that repairs will be needed to dormer window frames in the nave roof. A fire alarm system was installed in 2010 together with dimmable high-level halogen lighting in the nave and hall but with the advent of LED lighting this is something we would like to replace if appropriate funding can be found; in the last few years we have been able to upgrade the lighting in the chancel to LED. The electrics overall are up to date with new fuse boards; however, the south aisle and chapel lighting are still serviced by older wiring. The church grounds in front of our church building are a public right of

way and are maintained in a good condition by the council. We have a bell tower with 6 bells but these are not regularly rung, and safety checks would be needed before regular ringing could take place.

Our building is both a joy and a challenge; our desire to use the space effectively for ministry and mission is somewhat hampered by the challenges that such a building presents. Over the past 6 years, a lot of work has been done, led by our previous vicar, to look at ways of creating more usable spaces in the building. These exciting plans included putting a mezzanine floor into the current hall space, using a glazed screen to create a self-contained but fully accessible café space in the north transept and redeveloping the current kitchen and toilet areas. We had hoped that this work would be funded by the sale of some currently unused land behind the church, for a small development of terraced houses. All the internal plans have been agreed in principle with the diocese, including sale of the land, but unfortunately, we were advised by the local authority that planning permission for the housing development was very unlikely to be granted. This disappointing decision has left us looking at how we might be able to break the project down and



secure funding to tackle some elements of it separately. (Further information on this project is available on request.)

In July 2019 we installed a new heating system into the integral hall, allowing that to be more widely used for church events and as a letting space for the community. In Autumn 2020 the two old boilers which heated the main worship area failed and were beyond repair, meaning there was no way to heat the church building. Facing a bill for new boilers of just over £23000, the church launched a 'boiler fund' and generous donations from church members, another local church and the deanery, covered most of the cost. A grant from AllChurches Trust completed the funding required, meaning that the work could go ahead. In January 2021 new boilers were installed which means we can now reliably heat the church.

## *Living in Penge*

Our community of Penge is part of the London Borough of Bromley and was classified in the 2011 census as a Multicultural Metropolitan inner city. There is a very strong community feel, with active local groups organising community events throughout the year, including a Penge Festival, Penge Day (summer), Pengemas (December) and the annual Penge family Bike Ride to Greenwich. All these and other local activities are promoted through social media via Twitter and the very active 'Penge Tourist Board' Facebook page. Penge is a friendly place where many, including the churches, are working together to improve our community life in this inner-city area.



Common with many other inner-city areas, there are some difficulties with poverty, gang culture, drug dealing and homelessness. However, the churches seek to work together to try in some way to help address these problems. The area has some supervised homes and a day centre for those suffering with mental illness, and there are also several sheltered housing organisations.

We are well served by buses and rail, with local stations serving London Bridge, Victoria and Charing Cross as well as Bromley South, Croydon and north west Kent. The London Overground network passes through Penge West and provides a frequent service to the City and Underground system. There are also links to the tram network, giving easy access to Croydon and Wimbledon. The busy High Street reflects the diversity of the area, with a mixture of small independent shops as well as chain stores including Boots, Sainsbury's, Lidl, Tesco (Express), Iceland, Superdrug, Costa and a nearby Aldi. There are also a number of shops catering to our multicultural community, a Pound shop and a few of charity shops. Penge also has a Post Office, a Library and a Building Society. We are well served by a number of good independent cafes, and several recently refurbished popular pubs, one with a small theatre upstairs.







The area has plenty of open, green spaces and playgrounds, the most popular being Crystal Palace Park. The park is noted for its Victorian dinosaurs, maze and remains of the Crystal Palace.

There are two leisure centres locally, one at Beckenham Spa and the other at the Crystal Palace Sports Centre, both with facilities for swimming, other sports and a range of sporting and fitness activities for all ages.



The London Overground rail service has attracted young professionals to the area, which is reflected in the rise in house prices. The parish has a mix of privately owned housing, housing association properties and privately rented homes.



The population of Penge electoral area is just over 17000, which includes a mixture of tradespeople, home makers and professionals, many of whom commute to London, Bromley or Croydon. There is also some unemployment, people on long term disability and a number of single parent families. Penge is culturally diverse with 29% comprising ethnic minorities - many languages are spoken in the community and a number of other religions are represented, including a large Islamic community.



This is an area where many people set up their first home but move on after a few years. However, it is popular with young families as it is well served by six local primary schools, including St John's Church of England Primary School, and offers good services for pre-school children with a number of play groups and nurseries. There are both single sex and mixed comprehensive secondary schools within easy reach of Penge and good transport links to several other secondary schools elsewhere in the borough or just over the borders, including Bishop Justice Church of England School on Bromley Common.

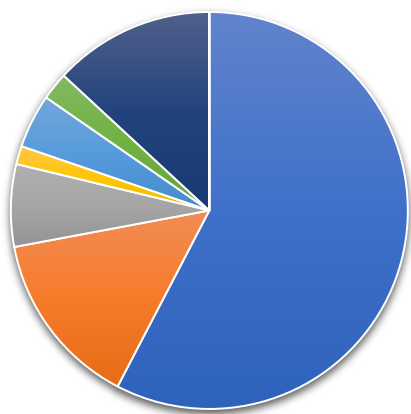
Penge has good health services with local GPs and NHS dentists. It is only a short distance from the range of health services at Beckenham Beacon, including an out of hours GP service and a minor injuries unit. There are major hospitals, with A & E services, nearby at Lewisham (4 miles), King College (5 miles) and Princess Royal University Hospital at Locks Bottom (7.5 miles).



## Summary of Finances

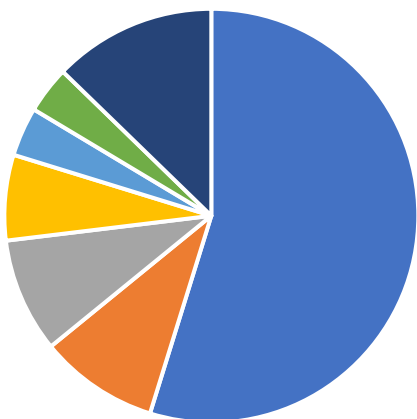
God has an amazing way of ensuring that St John’s always has enough money to do what we plan. We are not a wealthy church, but we punch well above our weight when it comes to the impact we are able to have with our resources. We have regular and dedicated giving, strong financial controls and we will always prioritise the long-term and sustainable use of our money in a way that meets the needs of those who live in Penge. Our main challenge is sufficient resource for capital expenditure on the building, but our focus is on maintaining a space of worship and service and we will continue to trust in God to provide answers to any needs. We do not have large endowments of investments, and our income comes from dedicated givers, hiring our hall and our popular parents and toddlers’ group. We run a balanced budget, with unrestricted income of just under £80,000, a CAP centre that has a turnover of approximately £20,000 and restricted income dependent on the specific needs.

### Income



- Planned Giving Gift Aid■ Income Tax Recovered■ Collections■ Donations
- Hall Lettings■ Weddings and Funerals■ Little Fish■ Interest and Dividends

### Expenditure



- Diocesan share■ Utilities■ Building■ Insurance■ Printing and publicity■ Vicarage■ Other

## *The Vicarage*

The vicarage is on St John's Road, adjacent to the church building. It is a 1960s, double glazed, detached house with kitchen, two reception rooms, study and cloakroom downstairs, all with wooden floors, and 5 bedrooms, bathroom and separate WC upstairs. Outside, there is off street parking, a separate detached garage and a good-sized, enclosed rear garden.

## *Beyond St John's*

St John's is at the north west corner of Rochester Diocese and is part of the Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry and the Beckenham Deanery.

There are a number of occasions when we come together with other local churches. These include an Open-Air Good Friday Service in Penge High Street, the World Day of Prayer service, usually held in March each year, and the Deanery Confirmation service. There are also opportunities for local clergy to get together for prayer, discussion and support.

## *Comments from our Area Dean*

"Over the last 6 years I have been delighted to watch the people of St John's grow and develop into a vibrant and passionate mission focused church with a heart committed to whole of life worship and discipleship across all ages of the community. Despite the difficulties that their building presents, they have not ceased in presenting a living faith to the people of Penge, a community not without its challenges or contradictions. As SE20 experiences the spread of "gentrification" and rising London house prices, it has, at the same time, continued to be home to people in significant economic and social need. Quite wonderfully the ministry of St. John's reaches across the whole spectrum and is the richer for it.

St. John's is a church that has benefited from committed and enthusiastic leadership under the previous vicar and is more than ready to continue.

I commend the people of St. John's and Penge to you as you seek your next post".



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