

Parish Profile



St George the Martyr, Shirley

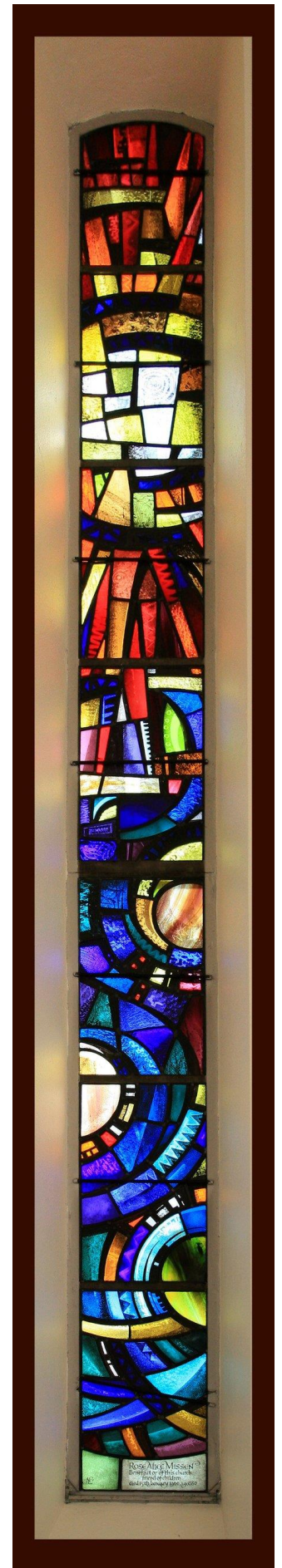
Welcome to St George the Martyr, Shirley

St George the Martyr, Shirley is a vibrant and thriving church located in Shirley in the London Borough of Croydon. We are part of Croydon Addington Deanery.

+ Following Christ + Serving Community + Welcoming All +

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Brief history of St. George's



Shirley has a history dating back hundreds of years, and until the early twentieth century was a heavily wooded area, used mainly for agriculture; the area developed as a suburb during the inter-war years.

St George's developed alongside the expansion of the Shirley area from the 1930s. The first wooden church on the site was built in 1937 and was dedicated on October 14th 1937 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in response to the

development of land in the north of Shirley. It was funded by our mother church, St. John' the Evangelist. This original building now forms the hall, with the building of the "new" church delayed by the outbreak of the Second World War.

The permanent church was built in phases from 1952 to 1967. On November 15th 1952, the Archbishop dedicated the new church, saying "I have rarely come to a new church to find it at once so full of the spirit and worship." The second building phase, which added the sanctuary, Lady Chapel, choir gallery, flower kitchen and choir vestry, was eventually completed in 1967. The church is of an Arts & Crafts style with a simple and pleasing aesthetic having the altar (unusually) at the west end of the church and makes the most of the light flooding in from the tall lancet windows on the south wall.

A recent reordering in the church has replaced the original pews with chairs making the church a flexible large space that can adapt to changing needs.



Above – Sunday Eucharist



Right – Junior Church Summer Party in 2022 in the cool of the church when the outside temperature was 35^o+C

The next phase is the construction of an Annexe to the northside of the church which will provide an accessible toilet, high-quality kitchenette with a new meeting space for medium sized groups. This will also include accessibility enhancements to the church and refurbishment of outdated facilities. This project has been in development for several years with input from our Eco Group to ensure it has fully considered sustainability. Planning permission was granted in October 2023 with a view to construction in 2024. Funding, which is expected to be sufficient, has been ringfenced for construction.

The final and most significant part of developing the facilities will be the eventual replacement of the church hall. These projects are led by a strong Steering Group as a subset of the PCC in collaboration with the Diocese and will ensure our mission and ministry in the Shirley area is fit for the next century.

Person specification

We are a church in the liberal catholic tradition and a member of Inclusive Church, welcoming all irrespective of ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability. We are well-known for being a welcoming congregation committed to our community.

We are therefore looking to appoint someone who is:

- inclusive, encourages diversity and is welcoming.
- secure in their own faith and has a strong ability to share it with others.
- able to preach the Gospel in a thoughtful way, relevant to modern life and our community.
- committed to outreach and mission to the wider community.
- a reflective and collaborative leader able to delegate and empower others and work as part of a team.
- emotionally intelligent, prayerful and approachable.
- pastoral, a good listener and able to engage with people across the generations.
- financially astute and happy to talk about financial stewardship.
- appreciative of a variety of musical traditions.
- engaged with environmental and conservation issues who will support our Eco Group's work.
- supportive of our ecumenical links.
- organised and forward-thinking in their approach to administration.

About the vicarage

The original vicarage built on site is due to be demolished as a result of subsidence. A diocesan house in West Wickham is presently designated as our temporary vicarage. Although not in the parish, this temporary vicarage is in the heart of a local community and is easily accessible from the church. The diocese has factored in provision for a new vicarage within the parish in their forward financial planning.

About the area

The parish is ideally located to enjoy the best London has to offer within easy reach by excellent public transport and with equally good access to the countryside and coast. The local areas of Shirley and West Wickham offer thriving high streets with quality schools and many local parks.

Local attractions include the Shirley Windmill, Addington Hills with spectacular views of the Capital and the award-winning Museum of the Mind at Bethlem Royal Hospital. Shirley and West Wickham have a range of shops including a Marks & Spencer food hall, Lidl, Boots and Sainsbury's along with independent shops, restaurants, and cafes. There is a large Tesco at the north end of the parish.

Whilst Shirley is a predominantly inter-war developed suburban area, there is ongoing change as London grows. The area is seeing infilling with the construction of more small blocks of flats and some rented properties. It is important that our mission and ministry responds to this change in the area to ensure St George's remains relevant to those it serves.

Our worship

At the centre of the worship at St George's is the Sunday morning Eucharist at 10.00am. This well attended service sees a regular congregation generally in excess of 50 augmented by others tuning in via our YouTube link and is based on Common Worship. The service includes active participation from the congregation with a regular rota covering the first and second readings as well as leading the intercessions. This service and others are supported by a robed choir of dedicated singers together with a small band of instrumentalists playing alongside the church's organist.

We celebrate the special events of the Christian calendar, to which the flexibility of the recent church re-ordering replacing pews with chairs has allowed us to bring a fresh dynamic.



During Holy Week the flexibility of the space inside the church enables a changing shape to each day through the week to reflect the variety of mood. Notably the Maundy Thursday Passover Meal, a strong parish tradition for many years, now has a fresh experience being held in the church, rather than hall, as part of the Holy Week liturgy. On Good Friday there is a walk of witness followed by a service held with seating as shown on the next page, creating a reflective atmosphere for the solemn day. We currently welcome Easter with a sunrise service and the first fire of Easter to light our Pascal candle.

Sunday morning services are livestreamed, along with other special services, such as weddings and funerals. This uses a high-quality camera system the church invested in during 2021 and ensures those who cannot attend in person remain part of our community. A small and growing regular rota of laity are responsible for the streaming.



In recent years we have celebrated 'Creationtide' in September showing our commitment to the fifth Mark of Mission and supporting the practical action of our Eco Group. During October we celebrate Black History month including a special service. We mark the start and end of Baby Loss Awareness Week with simple, meditative music, prayers and Compline. Our November services include All Souls, Safeguarding Sunday and in November 2023 we marked the International Transgender Day of Remembrance for the first time.



We hold a Blue Christmas service mid-December, recognising the difficult time of year this can be for many people.

Throughout the year we hold a monthly all age service along with Parade services at least once a term including Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Sunday. We wish to refresh our previously strong and historic links with the uniformed organisations.

At present Morning Prayer is said Monday to Friday (now usually on Zoom) and on Wednesday mornings there is a said Eucharist which is currently being evaluated due to dwindling numbers.

We have growing opportunities for pastoral and sacramental ministry to housebound members of our community.

Our people

The church has a staff team of an Assistant Priest and two Readers (photo right) who have been leading much of our worship during the interregnum. Services are supported by a small team of servers along with a rota of readers, intercessors and live stream volunteers.

We have over 100 on the electoral roll which includes a wide mix of heritages and age groups. Many are active in supporting the life of the church either being on a rota for worship, welcoming, refreshments or volunteering to help with fundraising, supporting one of the groups the church runs e.g. Little Dragons or completing vital tasks such as maintenance.



The PCC has 17 members including Secretary and Treasurer and both Safeguarding Officers. There are two Churchwardens (photo left) and two assistant wardens. The administration of the church is ably managed by a church administrator/hall manager. We have three Deanery Synod lay representatives and the deanery Diocesan Synod representative is also from our parish.

As well as worshipping together, building fellowship is very important to us. Sharing of food is key to this with bring and share lunches to mark key events and the Summer parish BBQ.



Music at St George's

Music plays an important part in the worship at St. George's. Supporting the worship, the church has a small choir of dedicated singers and musicians throughout the year whose numbers are augmented for services such as Nine Lessons and Carols. Hymns are generally taken from Hymns Old and New, however a varied range of songs and music are used including songs in other languages reflecting the diversity of the congregation. The choir and musicians are led by the director of music who is also the organist and has been part of this parish all of her life. Looking ahead the choir hopes to increase in size bringing in new members to strengthen its long-term viability.



Caring for our environment (See Fifth Mark of Mission)



St George's Eco Group was formed at the end of 2019. This proactive group is a core part of the mission of the church - meeting monthly on Zoom.

St George's achieved A Rocha Bronze Eco Church Award during 2021 and Silver Eco Church accreditation in 2023. Following the various sections of Worship & Teaching, Land Management, Global & Community, Buildings and Lifestyle, this group has promoted environmentally aware behaviour through weekly eco tips in the newsletter, measures to reduce waste, changes in the products bought and used in the upkeep of the church and hall and in products used at church events. The group has instituted a regular community litter pick throughout the year in the one small area of the Great North Wood which remains within the parish. We have solar panels installed and have bike racks at the church to help reduce our carbon footprint.

The Eco Group is actively working towards the A Rocha Gold Award and continues to embed environmentally conscious practice into the life and awareness of the church family. In order to achieve the Gold Award, the new Priest-in-Charge will need to be fully onboard and proactively involved in encouraging further engagement by the congregation.



Children and young people at St George's

Junior Church: After a dip in the regular membership during the middle of the last decade the congregation has seen a growing number of young families attending. Throughout 2020 and 2021 the Junior Church leadership team ran weekly Zoom sessions for the children – including throughout the summer holidays, Christmas and New Year. The leaders felt it was important to provide the children with one constant activity in their lives, when everything else they would have been doing had been either suspended or closed down due to Covid. This weekly event even received an international audience!



The Junior Church presently has a regular attendance of up to 16 children. It has a strong committed leadership team of six with a good mix of ethnicity, age and gender representing the church's wider congregation. All those working with children are DBS checked and have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training as part of our commitment to being a safe church.

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As part of the church family our Junior Church is woven into the Sunday Eucharist by taking a candle from the altar to their meeting and reporting back to the congregation at the end of the service. The Junior Church thought about what sort of person they want our next Priest-in-

Charge to be and wrote adverts and drew pictures of their ideal person. The word cloud reflects the result of their thoughts.



Every Good Friday the Junior Church team runs a workshop open to all local children; a popular, longstanding and well attended event. This regular activity has brought in new families. Developments on the church site such as the proposed annexe project will further strengthen our Junior Church and youth ministry.

We want to continue to develop our ministry to young people and remain relevant to them as they grow. Our Mission Action Plan aims to develop a Youth Emmaus for secondary school age children and to restart Messy Church for younger families. We look forward to our Priest-in-Charge exploring new family-friendly opportunities for worship and outreach (e.g. Bubble Church?)

Little Dragons: On Monday mornings we run this parent/carer and toddler group. The group is very popular and welcomes up to 25 children with their parents/carers. Many pastoral opportunities with the local community have taken place as a result.



Links with local schools

Within the parish there are two primary schools, Monks Orchard and Orchard Way. The church has links with both, especially Orchard Way which used to include regular assemblies. We continue to host their Christmas Carol Service. Orchard Park High School is located a few minutes' walk from the church but there are currently no links with this secondary school.

We hope our Priest-in-Charge will be able to build on and extend links with all three schools.

Adult Groups and Activities at St George's

St George's benefits from a range of groups as part of its mission and ministry:

Pop-In: This well attended seniors social club meets on a Monday to enjoy coffee, chat and occasional lunches and is run by volunteers from the church and community. (Photo – right)



Flower Guild: We have an active membership who arrange the flowers each week in church. This is well supported through donations from the congregation.

Bible Study Group: This small group meets weekly on Zoom.

Book Reading Group: This small group meets monthly on Zoom.

St George's Eco Group: See separate paragraph above (page 9).

Georgettes and Men of Georges: offer fellowship through meetings, meals and occasional outings.

Lent and Advent Groups: We run groups that allow people to explore faith in a relaxed and engaging way.

Supporting the Community:



Shirley Neighbourhood Care (SNC): Supporting the wider community is central to St George's mission. We are currently hosting the SNC by providing office space to enable this vital local service to function effectively. We are encouraging church members to both volunteer with and use their various services helping local older people to remain independent in their own homes.

Shrublands Trust Food Bank: We support this local foodbank in Shirley by providing a monthly donation of food funded as part of our charitable giving from church funds. In addition to this monthly donation, individual congregants regularly donate their own money or items to the food bank through the church.

Uniformed Organisations: St George's has a long history of links with the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies and Guides all of whom have met on the site over many decades. We want to strengthen these links after a period of drift over recent years and it is vital that the new Priest-in-Charge actively promotes and supports links with these key community groups.

Churches Together in Shirley: brings together churches of different denominations in the Shirley area. St George's is actively involved in CTIS and has provided the last two chairs of the group. We meet together in each other's churches or on Zoom for monthly prayers and for the combined Christian Unity Week service. This group needs reinvigorating post-Covid.

Longheath Community Centre: St. George's was involved in the establishment of this Centre in 2000 on a Local Authority built estate in the north of the parish. Until October 2023, we have always provided at least one church member as a Trustee for their Board but have not, at the time of writing, been able to find a volunteer to maintain this link despite a strong request from their Chairman. Two Christian fellowships (Longheath Baptists and Arise Fellowship) currently meet there.

Charitable Links:

Christian Aid We support this charity during Christian Aid Week. We hope our new Priest-in-Charge will help us become more aware of the worldwide church and opportunities for overseas aid.

USPG: There have been long standing links with USPG although these have weakened since Covid.

McMillan Cancer Support: In recent years an annual fundraising coffee morning and cake sale for this charity has been well supported.

The Children's Society: The collection from the Christingle Service is normally sent to this charity.

Manna Society: The Harvest Festival collection of food goes to the Manna Society in Southwark.

Fundraising:

Fundraising plays an important part in the social life of the church with quiz nights and a Murder Mystery Evening held each year.

Summer and Christmas fetes are not only fundraisers but are also important community events, attracting the wider community to the church, where we offer a warm welcome to all.



Financial position

The church had been lucky to maintain the services of the same treasurer for a number of years, however their move to nearer the coast and retirement of the (separate) hall treasurer necessitated a fresh think in how we manage our finances. In 2023 a small Finance Committee was established to share the workload. Recently the Committee has been joined by a non-worshipping 'friend' willing to be Treasurer, bringing significant experience of this role from other organisations with which he volunteers.

Until early 2023, the Church and Hall accounts were run as two separate entities and historically have had separate bank profiles. These are now managed together by the Finance Committee. As the Parish Accounts show, the parish has considerable invested funds, which are ring fenced for developing the Church Annexe and new hall. A significant part of these funds has come from the sale of a rental property that the Church no longer wished to rent out.

Income has not grown in recent years especially considering the impact of inflation although the church is debt free. The new Priest-in-Charge will need to be comfortable making the case to the congregation for sustainable funding as well as supporting efforts to fundraise. We are also looking to move to Parish Giving early in 2024 to streamline cash flow - especially claiming Gift Aid.

We have made a cautious Parish Support Fund pledge to the Diocese for 2024 of £37,200. However, our finance strategy sets an ambition to increase this. Many parishioners give regularly through their bank and also respond to extra appeals e.g. when the roof urgently needed repair but there is no budget in place and financial forecasting is currently absent. The uncertainty about the costs of the future building developments causes anxiety to some. The church has received grant funding for several projects thanks to the skills of one member of the congregation writing successful grant funding applications.

Developing our facilities

The current church site reflects the development of the church up to 1967, with limited development after this. On the site there is currently the church itself, the church hall, separate Scout hut and a number of storage garages. We are engaged in a long-term programme to develop the site and increase the facilities offered to the community to fit them for the next century of mission and ministry in our area of Shirley.

The main body of the church can hold around 150 and the Lady Chapel is suitable for smaller services. The church has a choir vestry as well as a Vicar's vestry, together with a basic flower kitchen and two toilets. In the last decade the church has benefitted from a complete rewiring and reroofing of the Lady Chapel as well as investment in solar panels and energy efficient boilers.

In October 2023 London Borough of Croydon granted planning permission for an annexe to be built on the north wall of the church. The Chancellor's confirmation of a faculty is awaited at the time of writing. This creative development will provide a much-needed accessible toilet, a well-fitted kitchenette, another toilet and a meeting space. Funding for the annexe is in place and ringfenced. It is anticipated that building work will commence in Spring 2024.

The final and most significant part of developing St George's facilities will be the eventual replacement of the church hall. This project is in the early stages and will be funded by the joint sale of land with the diocese and our own fundraising/grant applications. This exciting project is seeking to deliver a fully accessible modern hall to support the needs of the congregation and wider community. Both the annexe and new church hall projects are led by a strong Steering Group as a subset of the PCC.

In addition, we have a longer-term aspiration to build on the foundations of previous generations with a project to enhance the memorial garden which includes a consecrated area for the interment of ashes. Money for this project has been donated on previous Gift Days by members of the congregation and again, is ringfenced for this purpose.



Mission Action Plan – Following a PCC away day we developed our MAP several years ago. Much of our vision at that time has been realised and we are now at a point where our MAP needs refreshing. We anticipate this is something our new Priest-in-Charge will engage with early in their ministry with the parish.

Challenges and Opportunities

It is important that our mission and ministry responds to ongoing changes in the demography of the area to ensure the church remains relevant to those it serves in our local community. Our vision is to:

- enable all to grow in discipleship, love and faith.
- continue the longstanding tradition of facilitating and supporting those who feel called to all aspects of ministry, particularly lay ministry.
- rebuild the strong links held in the past with our uniformed organisations.
- provide new opportunities for our young people with involvement in worship and contributing to the life of our church.
- review and refresh weekday worship.
- develop our buildings to make them fit for today.
- support the dreams of the congregation to become a carbon neutral church.
- achieve and retain the gold Eco Award.
- enable and support the integration of the Parish finances.

We are a thriving and vibrant church, but we are not complacent and wish to stay alert to God's leading in the future. We are excited about the future direction into which God is leading us.

