



ST HUGH'S BERMONDSEY PARISH PROFILE

THE PARISH

St Hugh's Bermondsey is technically a Conventional District within the Southwark Cathedral parish, but works as if it were a parish church. St Hugh's has its own Annual Parochial Church Meeting and elections, and we talk about the St Hugh's 'PCC' and 'Electoral Roll'. It is licensed for Marriages and calls the banns of those who live within the St Hugh's part of the parish.

It occupies the south-west quarter of the Cathedral parish, east of Borough High Street and north of Long Lane. The 2011 Census data does not distinguish between the Cathedral and the St Hugh's, but we estimate that St Hugh's covers about a quarter of the Cathedral parish geographically and houses at least a quarter of the Cathedral parish's 6000 residents.

The St Hugh's 'parish' is densely populated, with most people living in social housing, built in and since the 1960s, much of it Council-owned. The parish includes half the Tabard estate and part of the Leathermarket estate. The area has yet to benefit from the economic regeneration so evident in other parts of Bankside and Bermondsey although standards of living do appear to have risen. The Borough of Southwark no longer scores high in the indices of social deprivation, so no longer attracts the subsidies and charitable organisations that it once did. It is therefore arguably harder to be poor or old in the area now than in former times.

The St Hugh's parish is ethnically very diverse, with a large number of second and third generation people of West African origin. The area is therefore largely Christian in faith. And this diversity is reflected in the congregation.



The population is relatively young, with 75% of the population below the age of 45, this includes families with young children, and increasing numbers of students. This age-profile too is reflected in the congregation. St Hugh's has a long tradition of valuing and including children and young people, for whom we run Junior Church (pre-pandemic), we admit them to Communion before Confirmation and encourage them to occupy visible roles in the life and worship of the church. Unemployment is not high, but people work long and sometimes antisocial hours.

There are a few shops in the parish but no large employers. Next door to the church is a primary school for children with special needs and a secondary Inclusive Learning Centre (formerly a Pupil Referral Unit). But being five minutes from Guy's Hospital and London Bridge Station, Borough Tube Station and fairly well-served by buses, the area does not feel cut off from the buzz of the city around it.

THE CHURCH

Founded in 1896, St Hugh's was originally part of the Charterhouse-in-Southwark Mission Settlement providing much-needed social, educational and skills-training opportunities for local young people.



The old Charterhouse and St Hugh's building

The Missioner was usually a young, single Anglo-Catholic priest and the church, in high Victorian style, retained the vestiges of its high-church past. But the Trustees who owned the building (the church was in the basement) decided in 2009, after years of indecision, during which the buildings were neglected, to sell its three buildings and become a grant-making charity supporting other service providers. Protected by a fortunate piece of ecclesiastical Faculty law, the church was demolished in 2011, but the developers and new owners were required to provide equivalent space for a church in the new building. In December 2013 the Bishop of Southwark dedicated the stunning and innovative new church building and community space, into which the congregation are now happily settled.



The interior of St Hugh's

The Church has excellent meeting spaces with kitchen and toilet facilities. The building is owned by a housing association, from whom the PCC leases the building at a peppercorn rent. Responsibility for the structure of the building resides with the owners.

St Hugh's has an electoral roll of 50 with average attendance on a Sunday of about 20 (45 pre-pandemic), including significant numbers of children many of whom attend Cathedral School. Despite a significant number of people of West African descent, it is not a black church and strives to be inclusively Anglican.

There are two churchwardens and two Readers. The clergy rota includes regular visits from Cathedral and Diocesan clergy. The spirituality of the people at St Hugh's is strong and committed and it is an exciting and encouraging community with whom to work and worship and an enriching complement to Cathedral life and worship.

THE FUTURE

St Hugh's, both as part of Charterhouse-in-Southwark and in its own right, has a long history of service to the local community. Emerging from the pandemic our challenge now is reconnecting with the local community and ensuring the community space (The Rainbow Room) is used creatively. Bookings have picked up since the end of lockdown but we are still keen to encourage new groups to use our facilities. The new Minister-in-Charge will help the congregation re-engage with the tenants and residents groups, schools, and hospitals in the local area, as well as welcoming them onto church premises. An annual Inter-Faith walk includes St Hugh's and there is scope for deepening relationships with other local faith communities. There are also possibilities for working with the South Bank Churches group.

St Hugh's has come a long way from the days when it was run by two or three highly-committed lay people. There is now a wider degree of participation but there is still work to be done in strengthening and consolidating a sense of responsibility within the congregation. A key priority is rebuilding the congregation and midweek church groups which have diminished during the pandemic as well renewing our ministry among families and young people. Finances are beginning to recover from the loss of income over the past two years and a stewardship drive will be needed in 2022.

St Hugh's is grateful for all the ministerial support it receives from the Cathedral and remains proudly independent, with its own distinctive character, energy and context.

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