

Why an associate vicar?

The background to the job advertised by St Andrew's and St Mark's, Surbiton.



St Andrew's and St Mark's, Surbiton is a parish with both a growing congregation and a growing amount of activities. While we have a fully engaged congregation with significant amounts of lay participation and leadership, we believe we have come to a point where, to achieve the next stage of our growth, we need an associate vicar in addition to the vicar (and, at times, a curate).

Historical Background

St Mark's was built in 1845 and St Andrew's was built as a daughter church in 1872. Periodically, they operated as independent parishes but for most of the 20th Century, there has been one parish with two churches in it.

If you had visited the parish in the 1980s, you would have found the churches largely operating in parallel, but with some success.

St Mark's worshipped in a mainstream, central tradition, with a choir and a regular eucharist. St Andrew's worshipped in an Anglo Catholic tradition, with incense and bells, as well as a choir and a regular eucharist. The services happened at about the same time on a Sunday morning.

Between about 1990 and 2010, however, the numbers in both congregations were in gradual decline. Ten years ago, one Sunday, there were about 75 at the main service at St Mark's and 50 at the main service at St Andrew's.



The response in the early 2000s was a vision for both churches, in which they would be re-ordered to improve both community use and an attractiveness for worship.

To achieve this involved successive rebuilds of both St Andrew's and St Mark's. First, in 2010, St Andrew's was closed for its reordering; during that time, the congregations began to worship together. When St Andrew's reopened in 2011, St

Mark's was closed in turn, and the congregations continued to worship together. In 2012, St Mark's was also completed.

This left two newly restored churches, but essentially one congregation, which was happy to be together, although it meant some compromises liturgically; for instance, incense no longer happened weekly, as had been the case beforehand at St Andrew's, but only 'on high days and holy days'. The churches, though, were now much more attractive as worshipping spaces than they had been before.



Congregation development

The path mapped out as a way forward was to increase the frequency of a service for young



children, which had been a service only happening about once a month, as well as introducing a eucharist specifically aimed at all ages. The service for worship for families with young children has become a firm part of the worship, and takes place at 9.15am in St Mark's on a Sunday three times each month; on those Sundays, a

traditional choral eucharist is kept at St Andrew's at 11am. On the first Sunday, the main choral eucharist takes place at 9.15am at St Mark's, but is done in a manner particularly accessible to children; the service at 11am at St Andrew's is usually a baptism.

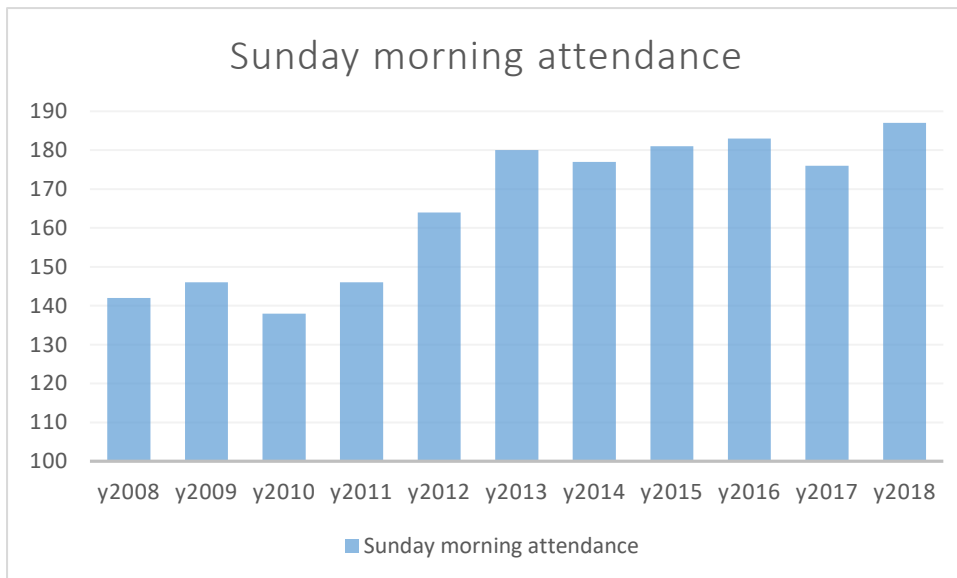


There is a significant amount of overlap between these congregations, though some people only attend at 9.15am, and others only attend at 11am.

The different times and different styles of service have meant that:

- i. The parish is offering clearly different styles of service
- ii. It is possible for one member of clergy to lead the services at both churches.

Chart: Sunday morning attendance, including adults and children: 2008 to 2018



The new service pattern was fully introduced in 2012.

Attendance in the first half of 2018 has actually been higher than at any other time this century, but the wider picture, as shown in the chart above, is of a plateau in congregation numbers since 2013 and it is hard to envisage significant growth beyond this without increased ministerial input.

Community use of the churches

The vision for the redevelopment at St Andrew's and St Mark's was not, however, primarily focussed at growing congregation numbers. The vision was that these church buildings should be 'at the heart of the community'. Although well sited, it was felt that they were not serving the community as they could be.

As part of the vision, both churches had new rooms built, attached to the side of their churches, which could be hired out and/or used by community groups. This has been a great success. The churches are now used by 11,000 people a year outside of services and there are over thirty regular lets, from Alcoholics Anonymous to the Vocality Singing group.



With the greater through-put of people has come an increase in people coming occasionally to the church, be that at Christmas or during the year for weddings, baptisms and funerals: 5,000 different people worship at St Andrew's and St Mark's each year, well over 15% of all the people who live in Surbiton.

Moreover, the congregation has been engaged in wider issues, most recently being much more active with those who are homeless. As well as being part of the local winter nightshelter project, teams from the congregation now staff the Joel Community Project at the nearby church of St Peter's, Norbiton, for two nights each month.



Staffing

Until 2012, there were always at least two stipendiary priests serving in the parish, often more. For most of the time St Mark's and St Andrew's each had a vicar, plus a number of assistant clergy, stipendiary and non-stipendiary. As part of wider diocesan cuts, this was reduced to one incumbent's post in 2010, together with the possibility of a curate working in the parish as well. For four of the last six years, the vicar has been the only

stipendiary priest working in the parish.

Arguably, this has led to greater leadership from the laity, and involvement there; this is good and welcome. However, we believe there would have been more growth, both in the congregation, and in the church's engagement with the community, had there been more human capital at the centre.

That said, there is a good core of workers:

- Parish administrator, four days per week
- Director of music, 6 to 10 hours per week
- Retired non-stipendiary priest
- One reader
- One SPA (Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary)
- From July 2019, a stipendiary curate.

The new Associate vicar would augment this ministry team.

Opportunities for growth

New developments in the church - be that the buildings, the congregation or its wider work - have given us all sorts of opportunities in all sorts of areas. Many are not developed, purely because of a lack of resource. These include:

- Improving welcome for babies and children coming for baptism, and their families
- Nurturing congregation members with young children
- Improving spiritual provision for primary age children, including fostering the children's choir and admission to communion classes
- Developing links with local schools and uniformed groups
- Developing provision for children of secondary age with appropriate activities
- Providing opportunities for spiritual growth for people in their twenties, who are typically single and/or child free
- Improving our social media outreach
- Developing pilgrimage opportunities for the parish.

This is far from an exhaustive list, but gives an indication of the type of areas the associate vicar might work in.

We are at an exciting time. At one level, an outsider might just look at the parish and think that the churches are thriving as they are; that is partly true. At another level, though, we could flourish even

further, growing in depth of faith and in engagement with people as they come to church, and in serving our community with greater dedication. **We believe God is calling us to do more.**

Part of the role of the associate vicar will be to have fresh insight into what the best opportunities are; the other part of the role is to follow through on those opportunities, with tenacity, bringing others into the new vision as well as offering a deep level of personal commitment.

The financial opportunity

The parish has been, of necessity, cautious about new financial commitments for some years. The redevelopment of the buildings was achieved largely through the sale of land for housing development, but it was known that there were certain issues not yet dealt with. In particular, repairs to the roof at St Andrew's were an unknown factor, but recent drone surveys have led the inspecting architect to schedule a set of repairs that were more limited than anticipated. Repair work on the spire at St Mark's was completed in 2014; moreover, lettings from the hall are generating a significant income.

This means that we have a sum of capital which we are seeking to use on ministry, and from which we would find the money to pay for the new associate minister at the same level as an incumbent status post in the Diocese of Southwark. While payroll and pension would be administered through the diocese, the post would be entirely funded by the parish.

The PCC agreed in 2018 to support funding for up to five years, for this role.

Role

The associate vicar would ultimately be answerable to the vicar and the PCC. While the post is rooted in 'conventional' parish life, with regular daily prayer, and the eucharist on Sundays, the role would involve grasping the new opportunities offered by the parish and running with them.

After a period of discernment, the associate vicar would agree with the incumbent the areas which would merit particular focus. This would both be reflective of the Mission Action Plan of the parish, but would also shape the next revision of the Mission Action Plan.

There would then be an agreement about what the desired outcomes would be in these areas. The associate vicar would take the lead in the ministry and development of them. Supervision in these areas would be offered by the incumbent; there would be wider Ministerial Development Review offered by the Diocese.

The candidate would be expected to be part of the wider diocese, and would benefit from the training and support offered by the diocese.

It is important that the person chosen has not only the creativity to spot where growth can come, but also the tenacity and determination to follow through on making it happen. The person will need to be able to work alongside volunteers to achieve these goals, offering both inspiration and friendship.



While it is envisaged as a full-time role, there is flexibility on this and the role could be shaped for part-time work, or someone who needs to work flexibly.

Given the profile of the congregation and the demographic of the parish, it is certain that at least some of the new pathways will involve ministry for children and their families.

The candidate must be confident in working with children and leading worship for children, of various ages.

While it is anticipated that some of this role will involve informal ministry and worship, the bedrock of the parish remains a eucharist in traditional 'catholic' style: the candidate must be comfortable with leading worship in this way.

The parish is signed up to 'Inclusive Church'. People in same sex relationships are fully welcome at this church; the candidate should be supportive of this aspect of life.

The candidate would be under the episcopal oversight of the Bishop of Southwark and the Area Bishop, the Bishop of Kingston.

Why apply here?

This could be a brilliant post for someone who has completed curacy and is looking for something different before going onto incumbency, or for someone who seeks to exercise their priestly ministry in a way that is unfettered by conventional incumbent responsibilities.

This post has the potential for someone who wishes to work flexibly or part time.

Surbiton is a lovely area in which to live, with good schools, leisure opportunities.

The church buildings at St Andrew's and St Mark's offer all sorts of possibilities for new types of ministry.

There is an exciting, happy ministry team to work and pray with, who are open to new ideas as well as rooted in the Anglican tradition.

There is a supportive PCC and congregation.

If the parish were a school, at present, we might be assessed by OFSTED as 'good'; with the help of the associate vicar, we would hope to become 'outstanding'.

Pay and Accommodation

The post will be paid at the rate of an incumbent's stipend in Southwark Diocese, with a full Church of England pension and accommodation paid for, including Council Tax. In the case of a part time application, stipend would be offered on a pro rata basis. There is flexibility with regard to accommodation: the parish is prepared to find accommodation, and will seek to fit the flat or house to the needs of the priest and his or her family, but a housing allowance can be offered, if the candidate prefers to take control of this aspect of their life.

The context of the parish

Possibly because of the similarity of the word, Surbiton is iconic for epitomising London's suburbia, most notoriously in 'The Good Life' TV sitcom from the 1970s. It is not entirely untrue: the area is neither as edgy as inner London, nor is it really part of gentrified Surrey: it is 'in the middle'.

Within the parish lives a population of about 12,000. We would like to think that they came to live here for the outstanding local Anglican churches; more realistically, it is popular because of a combination of the following:

- good schools, primary and secondary
- excellent train links (London Waterloo is 17 minutes away by rail)
- its own sense of locality with the a strong local High Street, shops, coffee bars, restaurants etc.
- charming location by a beautiful stretch of the river Thames
- very easy access to Kingston Upon Thames in one direction
- easy access to the Surrey countryside in the other direction
- for more, consult one of the dozen local estate agents.

All that said, it is not as middle class as you might think: for example, the proportion of children receiving Free School Meals in the local primary schools is broadly in line with the national average. There is a significant amount of social housing as well, alongside the terraced housing; quite a few families live in flats or maisonettes. There is also a women's refuge and a big YMCA complex in the parish.

A quick glance at the professions listed among those families recently coming for baptism includes: solicitor, marketing manager, shop assistant, teacher, midwife, banker, IT consultant, garage mechanic, PR worker. That is a reasonable reflection.

Institutions and schools

- Within the parish are five schools: Maple Infants School, St Andrew's and St Mark's C of E Junior School, Lime Tree Primary School, Hollyfield Secondary School, Surbiton High School (independent, mixed at primary age; girls only at secondary age).
- There are several nurseries for pre-school children.
- There are two residential homes for the elderly.
- There is a local doctors' surgery (Surbiton Health Centre) with an outpatients department that encompasses minor procedures, but the main hospital is Kingston Hospital.
- There is a strong YMCA at the heart of the town, with room for about fifty residents.
- There are strong beavers, cubs, brownies and scouts troops attached loosely to the church.

Geography and transport

You could walk from one end of the parish to the other in just over half an hour; you could cycle it in under ten minutes. For funerals, the most commonly used Crematorium is Kingston, which is in a next door parish.

There are very good local bus routes, and the parish is increasingly covered in cycle lanes. Ability to drive a car is useful but not critical.

Fun stuff

Leisure-wise there is plenty to do. From within half a mile of the church you would find:

- a dozen restaurants, from fast food to high end, with plenty in between;
- a park with a good playground for children
- the river Thames, and a gorgeous place for a stroll
- Sainsbury's
- Waitrose
- two gyms
- a swimming pool
- 275 coffee shops (only slight exaggeration), both independent and chains.

Within three miles, you have the Rose Theatre, a good cinema, a historic royal palace (Hampton Court), Bushy Park (the original home of Park Run), Richmond Park and all that Kingston has to offer.

Appendix: Information about incumbent

- The Reverend Robert Stanier

- St Mark's Vicarage, St Mark's Hill, Surbiton, KT6 4LS
 - 020 8399 0639
 - E-mail: robertstanier@btinternet.com

- Ordination date: Deacon 2006; Priest 2007

- Length of time in present parish: 5 years

- Other posts: Area Dean of Kingston (June 2018-)
 - Previous posts and experience of incumbent:**
 - Before ordination, work in strategic marketing consultancy
 - Curacy: Perry Hill, St George with Christ Church and St Paul (2006-9)
 - Part-time School chaplain: Archbishop Tenison's School (2009-13)
 - NSM Assistant priest with responsibility for youth: North Lambeth Team and St Anne and All Saints, Vauxhall (2009-13), *alongside school chaplaincy role*
 - Vicar, St Andrew's and St Mark's, Surbiton (2013-).