

St. Agnes

KENNINGTON PARK



*Our purpose is to worship
God and, building on the
Foundations already laid, to
show God's Love to the
community we have been
called to serve.*

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Introduction

St Agnes, Kennington Park is a Church of England parish between Kennington and Oval in South London. We are a local, Catholic, traditionalist church. The great majority of parishioners walk to church. We are friendly and inclusive as can be seen from the diverse age, social, economic and ethnic backgrounds of parishioners. There are five other Anglican churches close by. St Agnes is the only Traditionalist one. Together we show the rich diversity of faith and practice within the Church of England.



Covid

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The local community

The Parish straddles the border of the London Boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth; indeed the Borough Boundary was planned to run straight up the central aisle but was finally agreed as the North wall of the Church. Much of Kennington Park is within the Parish boundaries and the Church and the Vicarage overlook it. It is a large Victorian era park with green open spaces and many mature trees. It retains several original features including a recently restored flower garden, children's playground and cafe and many recent additions to provide outdoor activities for the neighbourhood. It was exceptionally busy during the pandemic providing a vital open green space for the community. The Parish which is barely 0.1 square miles, is densely populated with about 4,300 people living here. It is essentially residential with a few older houses beside the park dating back to its Chartist days in the early nineteenth century. Elsewhere there are some tree lined streets of Victorian terraced houses , a terrace of Guinness Trust apartments and the 1930's mansion blocks of the Doddington Estate. Adjacent to the Church is the Brandon Estate, completed in the early 70's and comprising of six 18 story tower blocks and 40 low rise blocks along with a Doctor's surgery, Library, small shopping precinct and an original Henry Moore sculpture. There are many primary and secondary schools in the area but the parish does not have a school. The Lambeth Primary Pupil Referral Unit, the Kennington Park Academy, is adjacent to the Church and we have a good ongoing relationship with the current senior staff. **Other local schools visit from time to time as part of their RE curriculum.**



Most of the accommodation is social housing but the proportion has been declining with the right to buy scheme and some new housing developments. We also know that this is a comparatively young population with about three quarters of people under 44 years old. There are many different types of households, families of all descriptions, sharers and people living on their own including the elderly. Our community is also ethnically diverse with people from many different heritages of the world living here. Approximately half describe themselves as white British and the majority of the rest as of African or Caribbean heritage. Within the Parish there are active Tenants' Associations and a vibrant Social Club for local Seniors, founded by one of our Parishioners. We have a good relationship with the Friends of Kennington Park. Most of the Parish is also within the RC Parish of St. Wilfred.'

Worship is at the

centre of our life at St Agnes, Kennington Park.

We currently use the amended Roman Rite with variations to comply with Church of England requirements. Our worship includes traditional catholic elements of liturgical practice such as incense, sacred vestments, devotions to Our Lady and all the saints, the lighting of votive candles, and the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a tabernacle in a Sacrament House (the font and font cover from the original church) in the Sanctuary. Our worship is formal but we hope that it has a gentle and accessible ethos.

Children are welcome at all services and we ran a flourishing Sunday School pre Covid. It is now rebuilding. At Christmas the children present a Christmas play and there has been, in Advent, a Parish Mass at which the children have played a significant part. Preaching the Word of God is also very important to us and at a weekly Bible Study, after the Wednesday Mass, members of the congregation sought to deepen their knowledge of the scriptures. Members of the congregation run a daily Rosary group.

Sunday	10.00am Parish Mass Sunday school
Weekdays	10.00am Parish Mass
Holy Days	7.30pm Additional Mass

There has been no mass on Bank Holidays.

Since Covid restrictions were removed we have had four Baptised, five Confirmed, one Funeral, one Wedding and two burials of ashes. (There is an area on the south side of the church set aside and designated for the burial or scattering of ashes.)

We have had a Ward of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament since 1936 (a former Vicar was Superior General) and a Cell of the Society of Our Lady of Walsingham since the 1960s. The Parish has seven lay members of the congregation who have a License to Administer the Blessed Sacrament at Mass and to take Communion to members of the congregation in their homes or other places, although these again have not been used during Covid restrictions. The Sunday morning Mass is sung and currently, we have a small enthusiastic choir under the direction of Mo Ng, an Organ Scholar at Kings College. We also have a Serving team of adults and children. Fr. Simon Acland, a retired parish priest parishioner, is Honorary Assistant Priest and helps how and when he is able.

Social

We are a Parish which likes to enjoy ourselves in the World as well as in Church.

During this past two years we have not been able to have our usual highly enjoyable Patronal Festival to which other Traditionalist parishes have been invited. A Parish custom is the “Second Feast” of St Agnes on the 28th Jan, which we keep as a more intimate local occasion (usually Mass followed by Pizza). Shrove Tuesday is traditionally celebrated with pancakes and a quiz. In past summers we have enjoyed trips to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. We had an advent Parish Pilgrimage to Canterbury. Another tradition has been a barbecue after the Solemn High Mass for the Assumption of Our Lady on 15th August and a children’s party at Christmas. Since Covid restrictions were lifted it has been a great joy to be able to spend time together again after Sunday Mass over tea and coffee in our hall.



Mission

Our Mission continues to be one of service and love centred on worship and the offering of the sacraments. The Brandon Estate is on our doorstep and many parishioners are resident there. Many are involved in local community activities and organisations such as Residents' Associations. Building on our traditions, we would hope to draw others in the worshipping and sacramental life of the Church. We are confident that the care and beauty of our liturgy and the faithful preaching of the gospel is attractive to many people of all ages and we would hope to welcome many more to grow in faith and love through participating in that worship. In particular, we hope to continue to welcome and actively involve, children and young people in the whole life of the church.

As the section on our Local Community explains, there are many families in the parish as well as many elderly people and others living on their own on the estate and in the wider parish. We have a comparatively young population. We would hope that with a new vicar we can renew our commitment to turn outwards into that community and find ways of serving it. Although we believe that such activities should always be undertaken for their own sake, we might hope that in time through them some may be drawn into the fuller life of the Church. We understand that within the deanery there is a strong commitment to this kind of vision and with a new vicar we would like to find ways of working together, for example, in providing activities for young people. We would also hope to be more actively involved in the wider life of Traditional Catholics in the diocese and beyond so that we may strengthen and support one another through our fellowship.

Our hope is that this represents an expression of the Southwark Diocesan Vision:

' Walking with Jesus and getting to know Him better as we journey on

welcoming all, embracing our diversity and seeking new ways of being Church

growing in numbers, generosity, faith and discipleship as we grow God's Kingdom.'

History

The parish was originally a Mission District of the Parish of St. Paul's, Lorrimore Square. The original temporary church was first used on 8th July 1874, with Mass said on what is now the High Altar. During the early years there was a great deal of friction with the church authorities, in common with many Tractarian and Catholic Parishes during those days. When the Bishop of London came to consecrate the permanent Church he refused to do so until a window depicting the BVM Crowned was removed. He finally conceded to continue once it was covered with sheeting.

Sir John Betjeman, sometime Poet Laureate and Parishioner, described the original Gilbert Scott Jnr. building as one of the finest in London. He also latterly described the building as "having been destroyed by the Diocese of Southwark, having suffered minor war damage". This was following some incendiary damage to the roof in 1940, which was then removed completely and left open to the elements which resulted in the building being demolished in 1949. In the early 1950's Fr. John Whitelam became Vicar and, whilst continuing worship from a Nissan Hut in what is now the garden, built the current church which was consecrated in 1958.

The architect was Ralph Covell who described the design as 'Gothic in shorthand... a contemporary essay in the early Gothic medium'. He incorporated elements saved from the original church including the Reredos and Rood Screen and in more recent times the original Font and Choir Stalls were returned from Holy Spirit, Southsea and installed under Archdeacon's Licence. The Church is illuminated by twelve brilliantly coloured stained-glass windows above the Nave which tell the story of the Gospel. It accommodates about 120 people in ten rows of pews.

In 2011 the Parish suffered the loss of the Vicar and a group of people (including the Organist and most of the PCC) to the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. We have, however, come through this difficult time stronger and more cohesive. We were fortunate to have Fr Paul Ensor appointed as Vicar in 2012. A highlight of Fr Paul's time at St Agnes was the celebration of our sixtieth jubilee year. Fr Paul determinedly maintained worship during the Covid years. He has recently retired from Parish Ministry and we wish him well.



House of Bishops' Declaration

The parish is within the Diocese of Southwark, the Archdeaconry of Southwark and the Southwark and Newington Deanery. The PCC has passed a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests and is under the oversight of the Bishop of Fulham.

Parish buildings Church

The current Building was built in the mid 50's and consecrated in 1958. It consists of a main Nave with High Altar and Nave Altar in an open Sanctuary. There is a separate Lady Chapel which also contains a Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in the Narthex. The Baptistry in the West end is separated by a screen (from the original church) from the Nave. Above the Baptistry is the Organ Loft and gallery with a Mander Organ, substantially rebuilt when installed in the 1950's, and an electronic organ which was installed in 2018. The Choir leads the music during services from the gallery. The oil-fired heating system was replaced with a gas fired boiler in 2017 and there was a complete renewal of the electrics in the church and hall in 2019.



Parish buildings

Vicarage

The Vicarage is adjacent to the Church. It is a four bedroomed house with one bathroom, downstairs there are a sitting room, dining room, study/office, kitchen and cloakroom. There is a hard-surfaced rear garden and front garden laid to planting beds. There is also a secure garage which can accommodate two medium-sized vehicles. The Vicarage benefits from a pleasant view of Kennington Park.



Parish flats

Thanks to the foresight of Fr. Whitelam the Parish also owns two one bedroom flats next door to the Vicarage. These were originally planned as accommodation for assistant clergy but are now rented out commercially raising an income for the Parish. Currently only one is occupied and we hope to rent out the other soon.

Church Hall

The Church Hall is available for hire during the week and when not required for our activities. A variety of theatre groups regularly book the space for a few days or weeks. Our peaceful location with good public transport connections makes it a popular destination. Post-pandemic, theatre group bookings are starting to rebuild and form a critical part of our income stream.

The Church hall



Kennington park is within the parish, just across the road

Finance

Whilst not a rich Parish or one with legacies we manage to keep our heads above water paying what we have promised to the Diocese (see below) and bills thanks to the flats and hall letting. A copy of the 2021 Accounts is available on request.

The Southwark Diocese operates a scheme for parish giving to the diocese to cover the costs of parish ministry. Under the Parish Support Fund (PSF) parishes are asked to pledge a certain amount each year. All parishes are encouraged to give as generously as they are able. The diocese asks parishes to have in mind the annual cost of providing a full-time priest which, including overheads, is £82,000 in 2022. Those parishes who do not currently give at this level are encouraged to work towards it. The diocese fully understands that for some parishes, especially smaller parishes in poorer areas, this may never be possible and it therefore also encourages those who can afford it, to give beyond that amount as part of our mutual support to one another.

Our pledge in 2022 and 2021 was £22,000 which was a reduction from £27,830 in 2020 because of the pandemic. We recognise that with a new vicar it will be important for us to work together to increase our giving again to play our part in meeting the costs of that ministry.



Our hopes' for the future

To continue to be a centre for traditional worship and prayer for the local community and through our faithful worship and service of the community to draw more people of all ages to know the love of God.

To continue to enjoy being the People of God at St Agnes.

To strengthen our relationship with the people who live on the Brandon Estate and throughout the parish and to find new ways of serving our communities as an expression of the love of God.

To support and encourage those who work with the young and to work with others in the local area so that we can help meet their needs.

To be aware of and help families and those who live alone.

We have survived Covid and we are now ready to continue our parish life under the guidance of a new vicar and welcome the new energy that will bring. We will support our new vicar in every aspect of the work. We expect our new vicar to not only be comfortable using modern technology and communications but also to be able to participate in the everyday practicalities of running the Parish. With one notable exception, in the 1940s, St. Agnes' Vicars stayed with us for a good period. Fr Paul was with us for ten years and indeed at least one Vicar was here for over 30 years! We are therefore looking for a Priest who is willing to get to know us and the local community and its institutions for the long term.

NB NO PHOTOS SHOWING CHILDREN HAVE BEEN INCLUDED FOLLOWING CURRENT GUIDELINES



Contact us:

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Parish website:

www.saintagneskenningtonpark.co.uk