



The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Chislehurst

PARISH PROFILE



April 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF RICHBOROUGH

The Rt Revd Luke Irving-Capel



When we are discerning the next steps in priestly ministry of course the first thing to do is to pray. As you read this Parish Profile, I am praying for you and for a renewed consecration of your life and ministry; of faithful, joyful and sacrificial service; and that you will consider joining us as a fellow priest and pilgrim here in the Richborough family serving within the Diocese of Rochester.

Rejoicing in the fullness of Catholic life within the Church of England, our parishes serve a huge variety of communities, rural, coastal and urban, across 14 Dioceses within the Province of Canterbury.

Amidst this diversity, we are called to bring Jesus Christ to all those whom we serve in his name, working in close and fruitful partnership with our sisters and brothers in each Diocese. We do this through the beauty of holiness manifest in our liturgical and sacramental life, in our pastoral care, in our evangelistic zeal and through our active care for the most vulnerable: that God's holy people may be fed, nurtured and equipped for his loving purposes in the world.

If the Lord is calling you to serve as the new parish priest for The Annunciation, Chislehurst, may your 'yes' be a source of life and peace for you and those whom you will serve in his Name.

+Luke Rutupiae

NEW INCUMBENT & PRIORITIES

The Warden and Fellows of Keble College as Patrons of the living for the parish of The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Chislehurst ('The Annunciation') invite applications for the incumbency, which is vacant following the retirement of The Revd Paul Farthing, SSC in January 2025 after 11 years as Vicar of the parish.

The PCC accepts that a new incumbent will bring his own gifts and talents to the post and will welcome these.

The congregation of The Annunciation rejoices in its Anglo-Catholic tradition, and the weekly worship of Almighty God is not just a duty but a delight, enhanced as it is by its liturgy and music.

The PCC is prayerfully seeking a Society priest who is a Godly, wise, prayerful and holy, with a passion for sharing the joys of the Gospel with all in his care through mission and evangelism, and who will celebrate the sacraments with dignity and devotion to Almighty God.

A pastor who will visit parishioners, especially those who are poorly in need.

A priest with a sense of humour who enjoys his ministry and can laugh alongside us.

One who encourages us to learn and grow in Christ through his preaching, teaching and personal example, and will work in collaboration with others to build up the life of the parish in all aspects.

Be prepared to tackle the challenges of fund raising (for the tower restoration) and to undertake the various tasks associated with administering the two trusts and the related property management.

In return ...

We as a PCC will support and pray for him, and share his ministry with our own gifts.

We offer a beautiful church building in a prominent position, with fine Anglo-Catholic worship and a good welcome and Christlike hospitality.

Application should be made in the first instance to The Ven Allie Kerr, Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley:

archdeacon.bromley@rochester.anglican.org

THE LIVING

From its inception in 1870, the parish has had a Catholic tradition, which has been maintained to the present. The parish had previously passed Resolutions A & B, and has now successfully petitioned under the House of Bishops' Measure for Extended Episcopal Care. This is provided by the Bishop of Richborough.

Chislehurst is part of the London Borough of Bromley, and is situated within the Diocese of Rochester, in the Archdeaconry of Bromley & Bexley, and the Deanery of Bromley. The Annunciation parish is on the border of the Diocese of Southwark.

There are two other Anglican parishes in Chislehurst, St Nicholas, which is middle-of-the-road, and Christ Church, which is charismatic evangelical. This provide the full spectrum of Church of England traditions, to the great benefit of the Chislehurst population, and enables us to work together to our mutual advantage. The Roman Catholic Church of St Patrick is quite close to The Annunciation, and historically there have been close and friendly relations with them, as well as with the Methodist Church in the parish. There is a flourishing organisation called *Churches Together in Chislehurst and Bickley*, and we have joint services from time to time, as well as running a charity shop.



PARISH LIFE

The Annunciation is in an informal Mission Partnership with three other local Richborough parishes: St George's Bickley, St Mary's Swanley and St Augustine's Belvedere. Although COVID and recent vacancies at Belvedere and Bickley have limited joint activities recently, in the past we have offered priestly support and organised joint study days and other events, as well as supporting special services.

Services

Apart from the 8.00 am Sunday Traditional Language Mass, celebrations generally follow Common Worship Order One, with customary additions. See Appendix 1.

There are between 5 and 10 baptisms a year, usually taking place during the 10.00am Sunday Mass. We have few weddings, with couples in Chislehurst generally opting for Saint Nicholas due to its picturesque surroundings. In common with many parishes, funerals have fallen off dramatically since COVID, with only 3 taking place in 2024. We have generally held a Confirmation every other year, with four candidates presented at the most recent service in 2023.

The average Sunday attendance for both services is about 50. Easter attendance in 2024 was just over 100, and Christmas attendance over 200, including our popular Crib Service.

There is a small serving team of mixed ages. At the main Sunday Mass readings and intercessions are offered by members of the congregation on a rota basis.

There is an annual pilgrimage to Walsingham, usually with one of our partnership parishes.

Social & fund raising

Regular social events are held, together with fund-raising activities. There are fetes in early summer and autumn. A gift day is held once a year, normally coinciding with Heritage Open Day, the proceeds being split equally between an overseas charity, a UK charity, and the church. Appeals are also held after some natural disaster.

Just before Christmas each year we support *Crisis at Christmas*, the charity for homeless people, with some form of fund-raising event.

There is an active branch of Forward in Faith in the Diocese, and it has long been a custom to support one another's parishes for patronal festivals and other occasions. There are a number of Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament members in the congregation.

There are 70 people on the Electoral Roll, of whom about half are resident outside the parish.



We have coffee mornings once a week, which are very popular and regularly bring in non-churchgoers. The parish supports Welcare and has a donations box for the local Foodbank. During the summer we open the church for visitors on Saturday mornings. There are many other ways in which we can improve our outreach, and these should be explored.

A monthly magazine is published, and there is a parish web site accessed through [*A Church Near You.*](#)

Music



Music plays a large part in parish worship. There is a small but capable choir that sings a variety of Mass settings and anthems, as well as singing for occasional Evensong & Benediction. The music is under an experienced Director of Music.

A large three manual Phoenix digital organ was installed in 2010. There are occasional concerts, and there is scope for further development in this area.

A small endowment (called the Margaret Halmshaw Music Trust, after a former choir member) provides funds for music purposes.

Education

The Vicar regularly leads worship at St Nicholas' School, and is on the Head Teachers' Advisory Council. Other schools regularly visit the church for educational tours or concerts.

BUILDINGS

The Church

The church and its parish were established in 1870/71, through the vision of the then Rector of St Nicholas, Chislehurst, Canon F. H. Murray. It was built in Victorian Gothic style under the architect James Brooks. There is a central nave and two side aisles, with a gated chancel which is richly decorated. At the end of the south aisle there is a Lady Chapel, and this leads to another small chapel, known as “the Capella”, where the Blessed Sacrament is customarily reserved. Also leading from the Lady Chapel there is a utility area, which enters into a small room under the detached bell tower. This room is used for various purposes including choir practices. It has a small kitchen area and a disabled-friendly toilet.

There is a very fine Salviati mosaic above the rood screen and a mural over the west door depicting the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. There is also some very good Webb Arts & Crafts style stained glass in the Capella.

The church has been granted Grade II* status by English Heritage.

Quinquennial work to the stonework has recently been completed, apart from repairs on the west wall which are still outstanding. Otherwise it was reported that “The building itself is in very good condition both inside and out”



The tower

In the tower there is a peal of eight bells, tuned to Eb, with the tenor weighing 19-1-17. The peal is considered one of the best in the old county of Kent. There is also a separate Sanctus bell rung from inside the main church. We have a Tower Captain, who organises ringers on Sundays and on other occasions. The tower was built some thirty years after the main church. Time has taken its toll on the fabric, and large-scale repairs are now needed - see Appendix 3.

Churchyard

There is an extensive well maintained graveyard, which is now full, and, at the time of writing, is in the process of being handed over to the London Borough of Bromley for regular maintenance. Ashes may still be interred in the ash plot in front of the church. A private footpath runs through it and this is widely used by the general public.

Curate's house

The Diocese owns a house, originally intended for a curate, about five minutes' walk away. It is rented out to private tenants, for which the church receives the rent, and is responsible for repairs and maintenance.

Doctors' surgery

The church owns part of the land on which the next-door medical practice is located, and receives ground rent for this.

Hall

Alongside the churchyard is a hall, run by a separate trust (see Appendix 2).

Almshouses

A terrace of almshouses is administered by another trust (see Appendix 2) and provides subsidised accommodation for seven residents.



The vicarage

The modern Vicarage is about half a mile distant from the church, and situated in a small cul-de-sac. The Vicarage has three reception rooms, and five bedrooms, although one is quite small. The church's copying and printing equipment is kept in the study. There is a garage forming part of the ground floor, and a small garden at the rear.



LOCATION

Chislehurst is an outer London suburb. It was in Kent until the local council reorganisations in 1965, when it became part of the London Borough of Bromley, but it still retains its village atmosphere. Many residents commute to central London for work. The M25 and M20 are within easy reach. As well as young families, many of the residents are retired, and there are elderly people living alone and single-parent families. There is a good variety of shops and restaurants to meet local needs.

Chislehurst and Elmstead Woods Railway Stations, although not in the parish, provide a convenient service to Charing Cross, as does Mottingham Station, which is to the north of the parish. There are several bus services operating from just outside the church, and these enable access to the railway stations, including to Bromley South which has a fast service to Victoria.

The parish is quite small, being about 1 square mile in size, with some 6,000 inhabitants, and the housing is mixed, ranging from small rented accommodation to expensive dwellings. There are several residential homes either in or close to the parish.

The historic heart of Chislehurst is actually around St Nicholas' Church on Chislehurst Common. However, most shops, cafes and restaurants, including a supermarket, can be found within The Annunciation parish.

Chislehurst Common, which is quite extensive, is mostly in the parish, and there are two ponds with a variety of wildlife. Not far away are Scadbury Nature Reserve and National Trust woodland and farms.



YOUNG PEOPLE & SCHOOLS

There is an independent pre-school, which meets Monday to Friday in St Mary Hall and has regular links with the church.

There are a few teenagers, and several young children who regularly attend worship mostly with their families.

There are several state Secondary and primary schools in the Borough. Several are in the Aquinas Academy Trust which has a Church of England Secondary School (Bishop Justus) and several Church of England Primary Schools (including St Nicholas in Chislehurst). Bromley has two selective secondary schools, St Olave's for boys and Newstead Wood for girls. Both figure predominantly in the exam league table each year. St Olave's was originally a church foundation and in premises in the Southwark Diocese. There are couple of independent schools in Bromley.

STAFFING

As with most parishes, much of the necessary work is carried out by volunteers. Apart from the Director of Music there are no paid staff. The parish is fortunate in its treasurer and secretary, and is also grateful for the volunteer work in cleaning and laundering, and for the small team of skilful and artistic flower arrangers.

A retired priest lives in one of the almshouses on a house-for-duty basis, and assists on Sundays and takes some weekday services. Bromley College for retired clergy and clergy spouses is about three miles away and can sometimes be a source of priestly help.

Churchwardens

Miss Carole Poll	99 Tubbenden Lane Orpington BR6 9PP	07876 030 810 carolepoll@gmail.com
Mr John Symes	14 Benedict Close Orpington BR6 9TU	07802 275 412 j_symes@talk21.com

FINANCE

In 2023, incoming resources amounted to £128,035, of which £50,149 was from voluntary donations, £40,703 from income on investments and £19,084 from a VAT grant refund for Quinquennial repair works.

Outgoing resources amounted to £231,389. This sum, however, included £127,038 spent on non-recurring Quinquennial repair works. The Parish Share in 2023 was £63,000.

At 31st December 2023 the balance of unrestricted, designated, restricted and endowment funds was £371,611, (this includes a house valued at £225,926 which is rented to tenants).

In 2024, because of the settlement of a rent dispute, outstanding rental payments of £80,000 were received, the majority of which has been transferred to reserves. (Rental income in 2023 was £34,834, for 2024 it will be £52,627 in total.)

Away giving for 2023 was £4,276.

Full accounts for 2023 can be supplied on request, they are also available on the Charity Commission website.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – SERVICE TIMES

Sunday 0800 Low Mass, using traditional language, at High Altar
 1000 Sung Mass at Nave Altar

Weekday Low Masses:

Monday 1000
Tuesday 1830
Wednesday 1000
Thursday 1930
Friday 1000
Saturday 0900

Baptisms Normally carried out during the Sunday Sung Mass.

Weddings As required

Confessions Regular times for this are advertised, or at any time on request.

Lent The parish has regularly followed the Way of the Cross during Lent, and there are also study groups once a week during Lent.

APPENDIX 2 – PARISH TRUSTS

Manning & Anderdon Trust

This exists to provide inexpensive accommodation in a terrace of almshouses next to the church. There are seven properties, three of which are self-contained and the other two pairs share stairs and entrance halls. Funding is provided by rents from four properties in Chislehurst. The Vicar and Churchwardens are ex-officio chairman and members of the trustees. There are two other trustees.

St Mary Hall Trust

This trust runs the hall (so it is not actually the 'church hall' as is often supposed), and the rents received belong to the trust, not the church. The trust stipulates that surplus income is to be used for educational purposes. Again, the Vicar and Churchwardens are ex-officio chairman and members of the trustees.

Both these trusts require the expenditure of time and effort: there are regular meetings of the trustees, and property maintenance matters are a constant source of work.

APPENDIX 3 – FUTURE PLANS

Our main focus will always be maintaining the Catholic tradition of the parish in all its aspects. There is always more that can be done to widen our appeal to the people of Chislehurst.

We have coffee mornings once a week, which are very popular and regularly bring in non-churchgoers. During the summer we open the church for visitors on Saturday mornings. Occasional concerts and lectures are also popular.

There are many other ways in which these things can be extended to improve our outreach, and these should be explored.

Before our 150th anniversary we had a plan to reorganise the back of the church and make a more welcoming space, including moving the children's area from the side into the body of the church. A donation was received for this purpose. At the same time we intended to repair and restore the inner south porch doors, which at present will not open. These are in fine Arts and Crafts style, but had been used as a notice board, resulting in some damage.

Having received a quotation, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is obvious that the door restoration is a major project in its own right. Both jobs are worth doing, and it is hoped to try again in due course.

The condition of the tower is clearly of serious concern. The structure is brick, faced with stone to match the church. Over the years, water has seeped in and is separating the brick and stone. In addition, the roof lantern and flagpole are damaged, and repairs will need to be carried out soon. Estimates of the cost, including scaffolding, are daunting. Nevertheless, the job has to be undertaken.

The tower is a significant landmark in Chislehurst, and the flagpole, apart from a small horizontal one on a High Street restaurant, is the only one in the village, and residents expect a flag to be flying on special occasions.

A considerable fund-raising effort will be required. A modest start has already been made in this regard.