St Thomas with St Stephen
Telford Park, Diocese of Southwark
Parish Profile 2020

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Who we are

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden ... In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.' Matthew 5:14-16

At St Thomas with St Stephen, we long to be a church that is always growing, both spiritually and numerically, in our worship, our discipleship and our mission - to be loving and serving God, each other and the wider community.

Average attendance on a Sunday morning is around 85-95 adults and 30-45 children with 182 adults at Easter and 553 at Christmas. The worshipping community numbers about 254.

We have worked hard to improve our youth and young adults’ ministry and have seen numbers rise in these age groups. Our church reflects some of the diversity of the local population in terms of ethnic background. Many were brought up in a different Christian tradition or none at all.

As a church family, we reflected together on the last five years and agreed a highlight has been the successful merger of the two church congregations to form one parish, becoming a united church family who meet mainly at St Thomas’ on Sunday mornings and St Stephen’s for evening and other occasional services.
Visitors confirm we are welcoming to a wide range of people of all ages and backgrounds, particularly to families, children and young people. This has been enabled by the great leading of our Children and Families Minister and our Youth Minister, supported by several volunteer helpers, as well as involving more people in welcome. There is more work to be done in actively welcoming and being inclusive, especially amongst those with disabilities and from LBGT groups.

We value our home study and fellowship groups, and well attended events such as our church weekend at home, as well as Christmas and Summer Fairs. There is a desire to grow further in our individual and corporate faith, particularly as we live it out, and to do more to see others come to faith.

Our faith journey has been enriched by a strong team of Christ-centred worship leaders and preachers, both ordained and lay. We value the diversity of styles, approaches and gifts released, as well as the encouragement of our young adult leadership this has provided. This latter group has also been growing in their love for Jesus, building its own faith foundations with weekends away and regular mid-week gatherings to worship, pray and learn from scripture together.

We have been greatly blessed through our worship, prayer and prayer ministry focus which has been further developed in the past couple of years, backed by training. There is opportunity to develop the range of spiritual gifts across the life of the church and in our everyday lives.

We seek to bless our community through our café, Faithful Bean, community garden and groups such as the Wednesday Club and Little Bears, run from St Thomas’, enabling us to connect with older people from the community, home-workers, parents and carers. There is more to do with these groups to move people on from contact outside of Sunday services to faith in our risen Lord.

Our very successful youth clubs are run from St Stephen’s and our desire going forward is to be more intentional and specific in our goals around local mission in this part of the parish through the legacy of our preparations for the Hope 2020 joint mission across Clapham Park, now postponed to 2021.
We embrace a wide diversity of preferences for styles of worship, spiritual direction and understanding of what church is about. We are also a close knit, supportive and hope-filled faith church family, united by our shared love of Christ and desire to be more Christ-like. On Sunday mornings we try to reach out to a congregation with a variety of tastes in worship styles and offer a mix of more quiet, reflective worship opportunities as well as extended times of contemporary worship with opportunities to respond during services.

There are 12 churches in Lambeth South Deanery Synod led by Area Dean, Johnathan Croucher of Christ Church, Gipsy Hill, with four lay representatives. The Synod meets 3 times per year and is involved in the Lambeth County show, supports the St Margaret the Queen new monastic project and is considering sharing training programmes between the churches.

We are very excited for what is to come in the years ahead and recognise there will be some challenges going forward, not least around finances and people having busy parallel lives. For some, change will take us out of our comfort zones, but we trust that God will provide us with what we need to do His work.

Our Mission Action Plan

We have updated our MAP for 2020 and beyond, click here Mission Action Plan 2020-22 with focus on:

- Growing our joint ministry across Clapham Park
- Prioritising prayer
- Developing as an Eco Church
Our New Vicar

We look forward to the next phase of worshipping and serving God in this community, following Jesus and developing our mission and life as a church. We envisage our new vicar will be someone who:

- can discern God’s will, share and shape our vision and guide the faith community in fulfilling God’s purpose in this place
- can nurture the spiritual growth of all, wherever they are on their journey of faith
- has a heart for pastoral care
- has good leadership skills with the confidence and authority to delegate, encourage and empower people of all abilities to serve
- has the experience or capability to be a training vicar and has broad life experience
- can lead us in mission, outreach and evangelism and will re-evaluate the shape, direction and impact of our evangelism in the community in the light of the Covid-19 crisis.
- will apply scripture to the life of today through preaching and teaching.

We would value a new vicar who will continue to nurture and empower the releasing of leadership in all groups, who is filled with the Holy Spirit and who has pastoral and listening strengths. The new incumbent will be comfortable with differences around styles of worship, music and on issues such as relationships and sexuality, leading with integrity and Gospel-based conviction through these differences.
Where we’ve come from

St Thomas with St Stephen, Telford Park was formed in 2006 after the merger of two neighbouring parishes. We are open evangelical with members holding a spectrum of positions within the usual understanding of that term.

St Stephen’s, in partnership with the Weir Link Community and Children’s Centre with whom we have strong connections and who then used the building extensively, was refurbished in 2010. That year we also began Phase 1 of an extensive reordering and refurbishment of St Thomas’s to provide our future main worship space and a valuable resource for the local community. Funding for this first phase came from a major local fund-raising campaign and a loan from the Diocese, since repaid in full.

In 2013, following the sale of St Thomas’ church hall to Telferscot School, we began Phase 2. Towards the end of this process our incumbent left to become Archdeacon of Lambeth and after a short period of interregnum a new incumbent helped us complete these major works in 2015.

Our most recent vicar oversaw the continued process of merging our two congregations and all that entailed. While handled with great sensitivity, some who missed the more traditional aspects of Anglican worship moved elsewhere. Over the years we have gained many more who enjoy the informality of our worship, with more than a nod to tradition, our church family focus and emphasis on welcome and inclusivity. The electoral roll is currently 143.

With the recent, and entirely coincidental departures over just 4 months of the vicar and associate vicar, married to the children & families minister, we are looking forward to welcoming a new vicar to lead us in the next phase of our church life.
As a worshipping community we value.....

Worshipping Together

Our main Sunday morning service is from 10.15-11.30am at St Thomas’ with coffee served from 10am as well as after the service. We welcome people of all ages and aim to enable them to explore and engage wherever they are in their journey of faith.

The service words are projected onto a screen with a mixture of hymns and contemporary worship, and communion every other week. Children and young people stay in for the first 15 minutes of ‘worship for everyone’ before going to mini church, kids church or youth church. They return for communion once a month. Average attendance is 85-95 adults and 30-45, 3-17-year olds.

We follow a pattern of services:

- All Age usually once a term
- Morning Prayer on the first and third Sunday of the month (the third Sunday usually includes an update from one of our mission partners) with feed-back from children and young people when they return towards the end of the service.
- Holy Communion on the second, fourth and fifth Sunday. On the second we have a focus on healing with members of the congregation invited to receive specific prayer, with general anointing for blessing on the others.

On the first Sunday of the month we have a 30-minute Said Communion service at St Thomas’ before the main service. Numbers for this service are between 5-10. Our monthly informal evening service is
at St Stephen’s on the third Sunday of the month with extended worship, testimony, teaching and prayer. Attendance varies between 8 – 25 adults and young people.

**Little Bears** runs at St Thomas’ every Wednesday during term-time for 0-4’s and begins with coffee and play from 9.30 am with a short activity, song and prayer time from 11-11.30am. Attendance remains strong with around 30 adults and 40 children.

There is a monthly, informal mid-week service for the Young Adults (18-30’s age group) at St Thomas’ with contemporary style worship and testimony.

Once a term we hold a **Transform** service which seeks to connect people across the Clapham Park area and see real change in their neighbourhoods and lives. We gather at 4pm at St Stephen’s with the other Clapham Park churches to pray and encourage one another. The meetings are open to anyone, whether they call themselves a Christian or not and have formed the launch-pad for our **Hope 2021** mission. Our goal is to see pockets of faith across the local estates connecting to make a difference. Average attendance approximately 25 adults. Leading is shared between the other churches of the Clapham Park Group and is supported by a neighbouring Baptist Church in New Park Road.

**Ignite**, an informal evening service at St Stephen’s is held termly for 10-18-year olds for the whole Deanery, hosted at St Stephen’s.

In recent years we have held several **Church Family @Home Weekends** starting on Friday evenings with people having supper in each other’s homes and then gathering for a day of teaching, usually led by an invited speaker, shared meals, opportunities for prayer ministry or family treasure hunts and extended worship concluding on the Sunday morning with our regular service. There is a parallel programme for our children and young people.

An **All Souls** service has proved popular in recent years with both members of the congregation and our fringe, e.g. Wednesday Club and Little Bears families.

We deliver Easter and Christmas cards to households throughout the Parish which always results in good attendance at our main festival services. A Christmas Eve Crib Service is particularly popular with young families in the area and a **Christingle** Service at the beginning of Advent, while the **Carols by Candlelight** service is popular with others.
We are blessed by some very accomplished musicians and vocalists of all ages and abilities and a variety of instruments who make up our **Worship Band** and on high days and a few other occasions, a small but dedicated and talented **Choir**.

We also encourage the wider community, usually through social media, to join us in celebrating **St Thomas’ Day** followed by a barbeque lunch and Summer Fair and a Christmas Fair on the first Sunday of Advent to coincide with the Christingle Service.

**Occasional Offices:** In 2019 there were 12 baptisms, 3 marriages and 1 funeral. Marriage preparation and Baptism preparation courses are run through the church. In November 2016 we hosted the Diocesan Confirmation service with eight members of our congregation confirmed.

**Children & Young People**

There are a large number of young families within the parish and congregation so these ministries have always been of high importance but only in the last six years have we employed a part-time **Children & Families Minister** in addition to a **Youth Minister** as the two distinct needs and roles have emerged.

Our **Children & Families Minister** has continued to develop the mid-week, term-time only **Little bears (0-4 years)** when we regularly welcome over 30 families, mainly from the local area. Many also attend our **Light Party** in October and **Christingle** services but it remains a challenge to encourage this group to engage with faith for themselves.

On Sundays we have two groups, **Mini church** for 0-4 years and **Kids church** (Reception – Year 5). Crafts, games, prayer and songs support Bible learning and twice a month we feed back to the rest of the congregation on our activities.

We usually have at least one All Age service each term and a termly **Family Fun picnic** either in church or on the nearby Tooting Common, depending on the weather.

We do not have a parish Church of England school but there are several local schools within the parish with whom we have built strong links. Most visit around the Christian festivals to support their RE curriculum and we have also hosted several 'CSI Easter - the case of the missing body' events exploring the Easter story using scientific techniques. We see many of the children from all these schools at our community outreach events, Little Bears and major festivals. We have seen increased favour especially with Telferscot, our nearest primary school.
Local Uniformed groups will usually support our Remembrance Day service, but they are few and there is little cross-over with families from church.

For over 30 years STwSS has sought to support and encourage the young people in our congregation and wider community with a Youth Minister. Sam Baker has been with us since 2015. The youth ministry is enabled by a faithful group of volunteers for both the mid-week and Sunday youth ministry programme, however, finding enough volunteers is always a stretch. We were hugely blessed by an intern in the last academic year but despite advertising, were unable to recruit another for this year.

Mid-week we run an Older Youth Night, for 13-18-year olds on Mondays from 7-9pm. On Thursdays our Younger Youth Night, for 10-13-year olds, meet from 7-8.30pm. Both meet at St Stephen’s, attended by around 60+ members across the two nights – a mixture of both our church and the community youth.

All our youth programmes have a focus on sharing the gospel in action and word, welcoming young people from any background, ideally connecting them into the ministry from the age of 10 and developing young leaders. We currently have 7 young people, aged 14-16, serving as Young Leaders at the Younger Youth Night.

During the service on Sundays we have Youth Church for 10-17-year olds, starting in the service
and then breaking out into age-appropriate teaching and activities. On alternate Wednesdays we have a Youth Cell to facilitate deeper discipleship.

Many attend CPAS’ Haslemere Ventures youth holidays with 34 attending in 2019 across 4 Ventures holidays. We run annual Youth Summer Fun Days at St Stephen’s as a way of connecting with more young people in our community.

Sam has been particularly keen, and successful, in broadening our collaboration in the deanery and with local community contacts, especially through our Clapham Park links. The local community police and several of the local schools are very supportive of his ministry.

Prayer

Prayer remains at the heart of our life as a church community and there are many opportunities for people to receive or get involved. Linda Long and Helen White currently lead this area of our church life and several others have been encouraged by training in previous years from Christ Church, Fulham’s model of freedom prayer.

During our services of Holy Communion, anointing for healing is offered on the 2nd Sunday each month by members of the team in the aisles and on the fourth Sunday we offer prayers of blessing. Opportunities for one-to-one prayer are offered by the Prayer Ministry team after the services. We are encouraging an every-member ministry and currently offer monthly Prayer Training sessions on Sunday evenings, often in the café, which are well attended (15-20) to encourage more people to feel confident in different aspects of praying for others. The monthly Sunday evening Informal service usually incorporates times of praying in small groups.

Home Groups are the primary place and way in which many receive support in prayer and there is growing interest in re-introducing prayer triplets. We have Prayer cards in St Thomas’ which anyone can complete and put in a box to ask for prayer or give thanks for answered prayer which are collected for our Tuesday Morning Prayer meeting when a small but committed group of between 4 – 12 meet each week at 9am at St Stephen’s for a half-hour time of prayer for individuals and the ministry of the church.
The **Watchmen Prayer group** met monthly on a Wednesday lunchtime in our **Prayer Chapel** and took over from a weekly **Samuel Prayers** group to wait on and listen to the Lord. This group of up to nine was originally formed to support the clergy, ministries and church at a strategic level as a ‘safe’ place where discernment could be sought. Some feel it has lost direction somewhat and will benefit from new leadership.

The **Prayer Chapel** is in the old organ space behind the café and often used over church family weekends for creative prayer activities as well as quiet contemplation. Before our main Sunday morning service, the service leader, preacher and worship band meet there briefly to pray for the service. It has been used for a small service of commemoration after a scattering of ashes and ring blessing but otherwise is under-used partly through its location, safeguarding and security issues.

### Growing in Faith & Fellowship

Our primary source of teaching and opportunities to grow in faith is our Sunday morning services where the team focus on preaching the passage, preaching Jesus and preaching with a practical outcome in mind, in other words, a practical, exegetical, Christ-centred sermon. We do not tend to follow the Lectionary and usually focus on a book of Scripture.

Important in our growing in fellowship are the nine fortnightly **Home Groups** which approximately 60% of the congregation regularly attend. Two of these groups are for young adults who prefer to meet weekly. The teaching material is usually prepared by the incumbent and follows the sermon series. During Lent we often alternate each year between Home Groups and whole church weekly meetings. The annual and recently bi-annual **Church Family @Home** weekends have also been important opportunities for all-age growth in faith and fellowship.

We have previously run both **Alpha** and **Christianity Explored** courses for those new to faith, usually one weekday evening in the café with supper using both videos and live speakers. Invitations to attend are through personal contacts, church material and social media. Around 8-12 might attend, including the home team.

For families seeking baptism, we have recently used some of the Alpha material in **Baptism Preparation classes** and have loosely explored partnering these families with members of the congregation to give them a lay, local contact to offer continued prayer and support.

We recently ran a successful **Marriage Course** to support couples within the congregation as well as a couple preparing to wed.

A team of 10-12 regularly attend Willow Creek’s **Global Leadership Summit** conferences in October run locally at St Mark’s, Battersea Rise.
Growing environmental concerns have led to us setting up an Eco-church sub-group enabling us to highlight issues around creation more widely in our community. The group encourages and gives ideas for sustainable practices for group members and offers opportunities for the local community to get involved.
**Our Staff & Ministry Team**

**Staff Team:** we currently employ several part-time staff who support the church’s ministry, viz;

two Office Administrators, Sarah Bee, who job shares with our Bookings Co-ordinator, Rebecca Midwinter; our caretaker, Shaun Knox, who supports the maintenance and activities in both buildings; a café manager, Carolyn, and deputy, Kerry. The café, Faithful Bean, is open 9am - 3pm during term time and supported by several volunteers.

**Ministry Staff Team:** our Children’s & Family minister, Sue Musgrave, a recently retired primary teacher and long-standing member of the church, has recently taken this part-time role. Our Youth Minister, Sam Baker, continues to seek an intern and is otherwise supported by several volunteers. Both Sue and Sam regularly lead our All Age services.
**Lay Ministers:** we have four Readers; Mike Hayes, David Woods, Glenn Bee (also churchwarden) and Helen White

and a SPA, Fiona Carnegie, who have very varied backgrounds, all of whom have been members of STwSS for over 20 years.

The preaching team is regularly supported by Robert Musgrave, another long-standing member of the congregation, married to Sue, above, and retired director of one of our local mission partners, Providence House.

More recently, following an in-house training initiative, several others, including two of our young adult and worship leaders, have joined the team.
Governance & Finance

Our PCC broadly reflects our congregation and we try to limit terms to three years with members able to stand for re-election should they so wish. As well as Reader, Glenn Bee has now served as churchwarden for five years and kindly agreed to stay on during the interregnum. Jenny Cairns is entering her fourth year as Churchwarden. Equally long-standing are our Treasurer, Oliver Huggins and deputy, Simon Hemsley.

The work of the PCC is supported by various sub-groups which usually report twice each year at PCC meetings, viz: Blessing, Children & Families, Clapham Park, Community Garden, Eco-church, Fabric, Finance, Governance & Terms of Reference, Pastoral Support Group, Safeguarding, World Church (Mission) Group, Wednesday Club and Youth.

Finances

St Thomas with St Stephen is blessed in having two church buildings that are heavily used by the congregation and wider community, and in having a congregation that generously donates its prayer, time, and money, both as part of regular giving and also one-off gifts on the Parish’s annual Gift Day.

The parish’s total income for 2018 was £338,000 (unrestricted £329,000, restricted £9,000). Key points are:

- The parish had a small net surplus of income over expenditure of £2,500 in 2018 (unrestricted £11,600 surplus, (£9,100) deficit).
- Overall, the General Fund had a carried forward surplus of £15,000 at the end of 2018.
- During 2018 we closed the Phase 2 Building Fund (deficit of £21,600) using money from the General Fund, and added £10,000 to building reserves.
- Regular giving was comparable to 2017. The congregation were incredibly generous on Gift Day 2018, with the annualised pledge being the equivalent of £64,000.
- Building income increased by £16,400 to £119,600.
- Café set-up costs were £8,000, partly covered by £5,000 of gifts.
- The Parish Support Fund payment to the diocese was £94,000.
Many church members give regularly through standing orders or envelope schemes and 59.8% of total income in 2018 came from church members (£196,700 including Gift Aid; 67 individuals/families gave to the parish in 2018). 36.3% of the total is building income (from letting rooms in the two churches to commercial, charity, and local community groups), and the remainder is the café, fees, etc.

The PCC aims to use the buildings income to cover the running costs of both our buildings and our parish administrators and caretaker, and to use the giving income to cover the diocesan payment, our mission and youth work, and the salaries of our children and youth ministers.

The PCC donates 10% of the church’s non-Gift Day giving to our mission partners involved with Christian missionary and charity work in South London, across the UK, and abroad. We have links with ADSMKE, FEBA, International China Concern, Latin Link, and Providence House, and also funded some activities in the parish – for example, our intern. This funding amounted to £14,000 in 2018.

The church has adequate reserves for general purposes and to support its wider mission and is rebuilding its building reserves after the completion of Phase 2. The target for total reserves is £60,000. At the end of 2018, the parish had £48,800 in the bank and unrestricted reserves of £56,900. All clergy expenses (such as mileage, telephone and broadband) are met in full as part of general fund expenditure.

We are grateful for what the Lord has provided, and we look forward to walking with Him as He provides for the journey ahead.

**Sharing Fund**

In June 2016 the PCC agreed to set up a Sharing Fund to help individuals and families in significant financial need, primarily within the congregation. Administered by the clergy and church wardens, the fund started with around £1,000 and intends donations up to a maximum of £300 per person either as gifts or in some cases, an interest free loan.
Pastoral Care & Safeguarding

STwSS seeks to be a church that supports those in need and encourages growth from wherever people find themselves.

Sarah Bee and Sam Baker are our Safeguarding Officers and the PCC annually reviews our Safeguarding Policy. Fiona Carnegie became our first SPA in 2018. Our church buildings are very accessible for those with mobility problems and we seek to ensure our services and the community is welcoming of those with any disability. There are 2 members of the congregation who have recently become ‘Roof Breakers’ as part of Through the Roof charity.

The Pastoral Support Group meets monthly, alternating between business and prayer. It comprises the Vicar, the SPA and 3 members who have a pastoral heart and have connections with different constituents of the congregation. The group members coordinate and provide support for those in need, including those who are elderly, have mental health problems, those with illness or bereavements. They also take note and contact those who withdraw from the worshipping community, either continuing contact or facilitating engagement with another such community. Most of their contacts are church members but sometimes they respond to requests from members of the parish in need of visits and spiritual nurturing.

Some members of the church receive home communion, carried out by the Vicar or one of the Readers sometimes accompanied by other members of the congregation. We also seek to support those who have a caring role within the church. In our church community there are 2 families with adult children with learning disabilities living at home and 2 adults with learning disabilities from a residential home in the parish attend church. We are developing ways of enabling them to be active members of the church community.
Mission & Outreach

In addition to working closely with Providence House, a youth and family mission in Clapham Junction, and having regular updates and visits from our overseas mission-partners, several teams and individuals from STwSS have visited our mission partners worldwide. This underpins our desire going forward to share more closely and intentionally in God’s mission-heart for Balham and Clapham Park, in particular by planning towards Hope 2021.

Linked to this is a group who have a strong vision to see St Stephen’s used for a fresh expression outreach activity and over time for a church-plant at St Stephen’s. Also, a desire to see listening and longer times of prayer offered to people in the community.

The Clapham Park Group Ministry is a legally constituted group comprising three Anglican churches: St Thomas with St Stephen, St James, Clapham and All Saints, Clapham Park. The Chapter (Clergy, churchwardens and licensed lay ministers) meet regularly to support and encourage one another and collaborate in mission. The group also includes Holy Trinity, Clapham, who are the Patrons of All Saints. All Saints has no clergy and is led by an ordinand training at Wycliffe. For many of its mission activities, including Hope2021, the group has been joined by New Park Road Baptist Church and is open to working with more churches. www.claphamparkhope.org

Examples of this collaboration are carol singing in the local pub, Palm Sunday walking around the estates with a donkey, ‘Transform’ Sunday afternoon service at St Stephen’s, the Robes project, providing accommodation for homeless, 24/7 prayer, Food bank and Youth Ministry. Looking ahead, the focus of our collaboration next year will be ‘Hope 2021’ a week of activities to support members of our local community particularly in the Clapham Park Estates with a view to extending some aspects of this ministry in the longer term.

We have been fortunate in building a good relationship with local police and the housing corporation and one of the areas of interest is the ‘Youth café’ – a safe haven for young people across the community. We have also built strong links with New Park Road Baptist Church and they are involved in and support many of these areas of ministry.

By way of background, there are 2 large housing estates in the parish; the Weir Estate and Poynders Gardens. Clapham Park Estate is to the north of the parish and much of the housing is provided by Metropolitan Housing. To fulfil their obligations of community engagement they set up and funded the Clapham Park Project (CPP), an arm’s length community organisation.
When the associate vicar was appointed to the parish, part of his role was to work with the two other Anglican churches to the north of STwSS parish, All Saints Clapham Park and St James’ Clapham, to address the needs of those living on the estates, since there was minimal church impact in the area at the time. The churches are seeking a closer partnership with Metropolitan Housing and CPP.

Door to door visitation to Poynders Gardens estate led to an increased knowledge of the community. A prayer group was formed meeting fortnightly initially in the flat of a church member who lives on the estate. It became clear that it was better for this meeting to be in the community flat, making it an event for anyone to come to. In fact, no additional people have joined since the move, but the perception of the group has changed. One relationship was created when a woman asked the associate vicar to visit her father who was dying of cancer. He was anointed and died soon after, and this has led to increased seeking by the daughter who has since been baptised. There is therefore an increased awareness of the work of God in the place.

The Clapham Park estate is more complex as it is being renovated, buildings knocked down and replaced; there is great flux and uncertainty for the residents. Anyone working with the community there must constantly react to what is happening on the ground. There is a new community Resource Centre, replacing the old one storey prefab building. There have been some community meetings in the Centre, mostly around knife crime and ways of addressing it. There is a divide between the north and south of STwSS parish regarding the perception of and actual crime levels. In the north and Clapham Park estate there is much more anxiety; some parents do not let their teenage children travel alone for fear of harm. Few from the congregation would share this fear. Few from the congregation are involved in these meetings and discussions.

The enormous amount of planning that went into this event has given us a good platform to work from for next year. We envisage a week of activities and events in Clapham Park including a Funday outside the Cube Community Centre to include Lunch clubs, youth & kids clubs, a petting zoo, live music, movie nights, workshops, a community choir and more! There will be something for everyone, whether young or old and all completely free.

London City Mission and Wycliffe College kindly supported the project and members of the participating churches met regularly to plan and pray for the event, now led by our Youth Minister. Members of the congregations will be encouraged to volunteer and support the initiative through Hope prayer tents and getting directly involved in kids’, children’s and youth activities, cooking, renovating the community flat and helping with the Funday.

It is in this context that Clapham Park Hope are developing plans for Hope 2021, postponed from this March due to Covid-19.
Many of our local mission initiatives overlap with and involve the pastoral care team. These include:

**Clapham Park Food bank** is led by Penny Church, a member of the STwSS congregation and supported by a group of volunteers from this church and others in the local area. It is hosted by All Nations Baptist Church.

The **Wednesday Club** is an informal social outreach group for mainly older or isolated members of the local community welcoming those with little faith or none. It is led by volunteers and provides a two-course home-cooked lunch, either by the café or volunteers during school holidays, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month with fellowship and support.

The **Faithful Bean Café** is subsidised by the church and we employ a café manager and assistant to run this outreach facility. They are assisted by volunteers from the congregation and the local community. It serves good quality coffees and hot drinks, excellent home-made cakes and light lunches. The café is open 9-3.00 during term time and has become a popular place to meet for the local community and others who attend activities run at St Thomas’.

**Providence House** and **Shallowford Farm**: Robert and Sue Musgrave, members of STwSS congregation play a key role in leading Providence House, a service for young people and families in the Clapham Junction area. They run youth clubs and holiday programmes, all with a Christian focus. They have a link with a farm in Dartmoor and frequently take groups to the farm to experience life in the countryside amongst the animals. This experience is so life-changing for some that they continue to support the charity through volunteering as adults.
The Community Garden at St Thomas is a positive physical presence all year round. It replaced a community garden that was used by community gardeners on the old ST church Hall site after the hall had become derelict. When the site was sold to provide extra classrooms for Telferscott School we undertook to recreate a community garden as part of the redevelopment of St Thomas’. It is run by volunteers on an informal basis. The gardeners meet on Sunday afternoons and encourage visitors and volunteers from the local community.

There are three focuses: growing fruit and vegetables, creating environmentally friendly spaces and offering friendship and support to visitors and volunteers. The garden is financially self-sustaining being supported by grants, donations and plant sales and costs very little to run. It was the original intention to run a mid-week session, thought to be more attractive to isolated or older members of the community but our challenge has been to find enough volunteers to cover this.

The young adults in our church are passionate supporters of the Robes Project, along with other members of our Catering Corp, providing shelter and meals for homeless people in the Southwark and Lambeth boroughs during the coldest winter months. Local churches take it in turn to host and as yet we haven’t. Our support for this includes volunteering to stay overnight at the churches that offer accommodation, cooking and serving meals.

The Weir Link children’s centre, adjacent to St Stephen’s, is another of our home-grown projects. The original vision was to reuse an abandoned communal laundry building on the Weir Estate. Members of the congregation of St Stephen’s encouraged local residents to create the Weir Link charity, with a new building in 2008. The building is currently home to a nursery run by the London Early Years Foundation and is used for a range of community and training activities, including the nearby Michael Tippett College for young people with a range of learning disabilities. The charity has a licence from the church PCC to use space in the St Stephen’s building at certain specified times.

Although avowedly open to all regardless of religion, race, gender or ethnicity, The Weir Link is enthusiastically supported by church members of STwSS, who serve both as volunteers and, along with others, trustees of the charity and directors of the company. The Weir Link enjoys strong support from the community, Lambeth Council, local elected politicians and other education and community institutions in the area.
Overseas Mission Partners

We are very committed to working closely with our mission partners, providing support through financial giving, prayer and by visiting projects. They are: Latin Link in South America, mainly Peru, visited several times by mission teams, including a number of our young people; the Far East Broadcasting Corporation providing emergency communications systems and training for disaster-prone areas; Tearfund in Kenya and International China Concern in southern China, a charity supporting disabled children in care in parts of China, also regularly visited by mission groups of all ages from STwSS.

During the service on the third Sunday of each month we give ‘mission focus’ updates and are delighted to welcome our partners when they are on leave in the UK. We have a short-term mission fund to assist members of the congregation wishing to engage in mission activities. We have an active World Church Group, which meets through the year to pray for partners, raise awareness and promote mission at home and across the world.

Welcome & Hospitality

We work hard at our welcoming but could still do better! The team is headed up by Sam Baker, our Youth Minister, and has recently been supplemented by Home Groups taking it in turns to look out for newcomers, especially over coffee. We have a Welcome Desk with Get Connected cards and further information about the various activities in the church and the organisations we support. We have recently introduced a new role of Welcome Usher for those services when we expect large numbers of visitors such as Baptisms and festivals.

Once a term the clergy, children and youth ministers, a church warden and one of the parish administrators usually host a Welcome Lunch in the café shortly after the Sunday morning service for people who have recently joined the church. This is supported by our Catering Corps of volunteer cooks. We also have some very gifted cooks among our Ghanaian and Nigerian church members who provide much-enjoyed buffets for our church weekends and other church family occasions.

The Bodywork team plays a vital role in our hospitality and everyone’s enjoyment of our services, whether it’s flower arrangements, providing tea and coffee before and after the service, stewarding or dealing with the IT for projection and sound.
Buildings as blessings

STwSS is blessed with two church buildings following the merger of the two parishes in 2006. St Stephen’s church is located on Weir Road and was rebuilt in the 1970’s as a versatile building to serve the community as well as providing a centre of worship. Currently two other churches use the worship and ancillary space on Saturdays (Spanish-speaking 7th Day Adventists) and Sundays (Power of the Living Word, Pentecostal). During term-times the rear hall, with its own access, is dedicated to a Montessori nursery with many other community groups using the various areas on a regular basis. Our week-day Youth Ministry mainly operates from St Stephen’s on Monday and Thursday evenings and Sunday evening services are usually held here.

St Thomas’s church is a traditional late Victorian building located at the other end of Radbourne Road on Telford Avenue and was the subject of a £2.5m refurbishment in two phases, completed in 2015, following the sale of its church hall to the adjacent Telferscot School. A new full immersion font was built within the Baptistry. Behind the relocated organ is a small Prayer Chapel. The main worship space and other areas of the building were designed to be flexible and available for hire by the community for birthday parties, ceilidh’s, wedding receptions and black-tie events with the raised baptistry serving as an ideal band/DJ area. A second storey has been introduced at the east end, formerly the Chancel, with a fabulous glass window designed by artist Sarah Galloway providing the backdrop to worship and screening activities in the Upper Hall behind. In 2018 Faithful Bean café was launched using the full catering kitchen with its own access to Salford Road. A new unisex lavatory block was added to the building, additional storage spaces, small vestry and with upper and lower furnished lobby areas plus another hall/room upstairs mean we have five areas which can be used for the different Sunday school groups as well as hired by members of the community.

Both buildings are wheelchair accessible and there are presently two members of the congregation for whom this is relevant with a rota of volunteers to bring them to services and other church events. Both buildings are widely used by the local community for a variety of regular activities (mainly at St Stephen’s) and occasional (mainly at St Thomas’) events providing a significant contribution to their running costs.
Our most recent *Quinquennial* report for St Thomas’ was undertaken in September 2019 and St Stephen’s in 2017 and there are no major outstanding works required in the next five years.

**Vicarage**

Thornton Road, SW12 0JU

The Vicarage is a generous 1930’s two story house close to St Stephen’s Church Centre which was extensively modernized, including under-floor heating, during the last vacancy. Front and rear garden. Ground floor: two reception rooms, kitchen, study and WC. First floor: four bedrooms, family bathroom, separate shower room and storage. There’s off-street parking and separate garage.
Where we are

The parish of St Thomas with St Stephen is bounded by the bustling Balham High Road (A24) to the west and Streatham Hill (A23) to the east with train stations on three corners. Most of us live in the parish itself and then others in the surrounding areas. We are excited by the many ways local residents are coming together to love this area of South London. We want to play our part too.

Our parish is in an urban area of South West London with a diverse mix of Victorian/Edwardian terraced and semi-detached houses and local authority/housing association estates. High property prices have encouraged the in-filling of empty spaces with new housing. The population of the parish is around 13,000, living in around 5,500 homes although both will have increased since the 2011 census.

The parish is loosely framed by the A24 Balham High Road, A205 South Circular and A23 Streatham Hill and the railway line between Balham and Streatham Hill. (Click here for map.) The open space of Tooting Common, partly located in the south of the parish, is a very positive amenity and a busy small park in the north (Agnes Riley Gardens) acts as a hub for sports and children’s play. There is a small amount of light industry at the west end of Weir Road.

Public transport hubs are situated in three corners: Balham Overground and Underground stations, Clapham South Underground station and Streatham Hill Overground station. Most of the public transport runs along the edge of the parish. Buses run into Clapham, Balham, Brixton, Streatham and beyond with a new hopper bus, 255, linking Streatham and Balham high streets running past both churches.

Shopping centres are located along the edges of the area, particularly on Balham High Road and in Streatham. Within the parish itself there are no main roads or public transport, save the 255, no pubs and only a few corner shops. Consequently, there is no clear secular parish focus.

Acorn, the marketing tool, divides the parish into 15/16 (“young urban professionals”) and 55 (“deprived estates). The
latter are in general to the north and east, both inside and outside the parish boundaries. This over simplified description nevertheless serves to emphasise the large juxtaposition of affluence and deprivation within our parish.

Within the parish are two popular state primary schools: Henry Cavendish and Telferscot; a Roman Catholic infants, St Bede’s, junior, St Bernadette’ and secondary girls’ school, La Retraite; two private prep schools, the London Steiner School and White House. We also outreach to nearby Glenbrook and Bonneville primary schools and look forward to working with the new Harris Academy. There is a day-care nursery and two nursery schools, one of which operates from St Stephen’s. The area has a high number of young children now reaching school age leading to increased pressure on places at the primary schools.

The Weir Link Children’s and Community Centre is situated close to St Stephen’s Church Centre in the north west of the parish and indeed was established through an initiative between St Stephen’s, local residents and the local authority.

There is an Asian elders’ residential home and three sheltered accommodation developments. The Hayes Dashwood Foundation provides accommodation in the central part of the parish for retired and disabled military personnel. The nearest hospital is the large teaching hospital St George’s in Tooting.

Most of the population are white with around 25% BAME. Around half the population identify as Christian although a third and growing have no religion. Of the other religion Islam is the largest at 5%. There is a large recently refurbished mosque in Balham, a Muslim training centre on Weir Road and a small Mandir (Hindu temple) on Balham High road.
Addendum: Covid-19 Praises & Laments

We give praises for:

- Thanks to the technical gifting of our Youth Minister, Sam, we were able to start inviting people to join Sunday Morning Worship via zoom from the first full week of lock-down, 29th March. We’ve tried to keep to a familiar format with appropriate tweaks, reviewed regularly by the church wardens, readers and ministers.
- Growing numbers have connected through our zoom services and we have seen more people join than in normal times.
- Being able to further resource, through church volunteers, the local Food Bank, which has seen a massive increase in need.
- A telephone line was set up so those without internet access could dial-in to the service.
- We left Palm crosses outside both church buildings on Palm Sunday with a notice that anyone was welcome to take one.
- Sue, a long-term member of STwSS, and already involved in the children’s work, started her part-time role as Children and Families Minister just as churches were closed. She has prepared daily reflections for families, as well as zooming Little Bears, and co-ordinating a children’s slot in the morning service.
- Our lockdown Youth Ministry programme consists of three Zoom sessions a week, daily 60-second Instagram videos, two WhatsApp groups, personal phone calls and online resources on our website. We’re also involved in Haslemere ventures virtual programme in May & August, as our usual summer youth residentials are cancelled.
- Everyone really enjoys the informal coffee time after the service via zoom with break-out prayer rooms.
- Most Home Groups are able to meet via zoom.
- A small group regularly attend a new Mon-Thurs Morning Prayer 30-minute service via zoom using the CoE’s daily reflections app.
- Tuesday morning prayers moved to zoom.
- New Friday morning prayer ministry half hour.
- A new worship song bank created by our worship team, choir and other gifted musicians.
- Pastoral care was stepped up with initiatives set up to ensure the isolated, house-bound and fringe were contacted on a “Leave no-one out” policy.
- Despite restrictions our SPA, Fiona, has been able to offer support for the bereaved.
- The Wednesday Club team regularly checked-in with all members.
- Preparations for Thy Kingdom Come gain pace as prayer becomes so much more relevant to our world!

Things we lament:

- Not being able to share Communion with each other.
- Missing the fellowship of being with each other, especially those who are not able to connect via Zoom.
- Not having a vicar to lead us at this time!
- Hope 2020, our Clapham Park outreach mission project was an early casualty of Covid-19 but a fabulous legacy of learning and relationships has been created to carry forward to 2021.
- Having to furlough staff and close Faithful Bean café.
• Closure of our buildings and the resulting substantial financial loss.
• The need for our Sharing Fund, but grateful that it is there with many indicating a willingness to top it up if required.
• Church income from rentals and bookings has significantly reduced putting a strain on our finances for 2020.