

# ST AUGUSTINE'S

Saint Augustine's is the parish church for Slade Green. We are a diverse community of people who strive to live out the Christian faith in our daily lives. Children and their families are important to us. We gather for worship each Sunday and engage in other activities during the week. We are part of the Church of England and in the Diocese of Rochester.



*The congregation March 2019*

St Augustine's is an Inclusive Church and is open to all. Our main objective is to encourage everyone to discover and develop a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do this through our sermons, study groups, pastoral care and community engagement, endeavouring always to make the Christian faith relevant and accessible to all.

For over a century the people of Slade Green have come to Saint Augustine's to celebrate key events in their lives. Babies have been baptised, couples have exchanged vows and become husband and wife, and loved ones have been brought into church for their funerals.

It is our desire to share God's love to all who live within the parish and we hope you will wish to join us in that aim.

## The Parish

Slade Green is a Thames side parish just north of Dartford and is in the Erith deanery. It is well served with railway links to London and the Medway towns with both Southeastern and Thameslink trains. It has a high level of deprivation with a significant number of children at the schools being classified as 'pupil premium' children. Within the parish are three primary schools. Saint Paul's (C of E), Haberdasher's Askes and Peareswood. Good and supportive links have been established in all three schools. Our Vicar is Vice Chair of the governing body at Saint Paul's (C of E).



*Bishop James opening St Paul's School July 2019*

## Community engagement

Slade Green is a community with many families being able to trace their ancestry back to the middle of the 1800's when Slade Green was a small Hamlet known for growing cabbages. The Hamlet began to grow with the coming of the railways with Slade Green having one of the South Eastern rail depots in the parish. St Augustine's has been the 'family' church for generations and there is a desire to maintain those historic links. The congregation are encouraged to be involved in activities that take place to help make Slade Green the place it is and in doing so share the love of God to others.

Slade Green is a 'Big Local' area with over a million pounds of lottery money being made available for community projects over a ten year period. A team of volunteers work hard in ensuring the funds are spent to meet the needs of the parish and members of the church are part of that group.

The church hall is used extensively by Howbury Friends who provide a wide range of activities for all ages and an after school club is among those regular events. During

the pandemic the hall has become a Foodbank serving the community and beyond and provides food to at least one thousand families a week.

Children and families are very much part of our church community and like all churches the events we had planned for 2020 had to be cancelled. To provide an idea of what we hosted during 2019 we held two events in church. 'Pancakes' in the spring and ' Afternoon at the beach' in the autumn. Both events were very well received by parents and children with attendance being approx. 80 children and 50 adults (majority of these were not regular church attenders). Many parents asked, 'what else do you offer the children'. We feel there is a desire to know more about God and His son Jesus Christ.

Our children's work on Sunday's is presently suspended. As we come out of the pandemic we will be seeking God's guidance on what can be offered. Our Children and Families Missioner will have a key role in helping to discern what is both needed and desired.



*The aftermath following the beach event!*

Prior to the pandemic we were holding a weekly café in church called St A's Welcome café. This is open to all ages and is dementia friendly. It has been operating for a year and was attracting on average 25 people of all ages each week. We look forward to the time we can reopen and offer this invaluable community asset.



*Christine with Charlie at St A's cafe*

### **Our worship**

Our usual pattern of worship has completely changed because of the pandemic. When in lockdown and the church is closed all our services are online. Morning Prayer and Night Prayer are offered daily and on Sunday's Morning Worship is offered. When, we are able to gather together our Sunday service changes to be Holy Communion. Morning Prayer and Night Prayer continued as all services are live streamed which enables those are not able to be present in church to connect for worship. Once we are confident that life can get back to a new normal we will reassess what will be offered.



*Two of the church families*

Prior to the first lockdown attendance was on average 50 adults and 25 under 16's. Children took part in the worship as acolytes, servers, crucifer, readers of the lesson and intercessions. At the west end of the church is a large playpen for under 4's. Attendance following the reopening, although encouraging, did not reach it's previous levels before we had to close again.

### **Our vision**

As we come out of the pandemic we will continue to fulfil our vision which is 'To make St Augustine's accessible to all, so that they can experience God's presence along with that of His son Jesus Christ'.

This is a broad vision and children, and families play an important part in it. We believe firm foundations laid in the early years can never be removed but can be built upon.

### **The team**

Presently we have:

- Rev Jim Bennett - Vicar
- Magali Van der Merwe - Licensed Lay Minister (Reader),
- Supportive PCC
- Enthusiastic congregation

All are keen to welcome our Children and Families community missioner. Together we will continue to fulfil our objective of encouraging everyone to discover and develop a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.