

St Mark's Kennington

Parish Profile 2011



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1. Introduction



“...a diverse family from many age groups, cultures, ethnic, denominational and educational backgrounds, but with a common love of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour ”

St Mark's is a diverse family from many age groups, cultures, ethnic, denominational and educational backgrounds, but with a common love of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour (we subscribe to the Evangelical Alliance's Basis of Faith as a member church). It is our informality, authenticity, and friendliness which draw people in and encourage them to stay, and it is a strong sense of fellowship and love for God which hold us together.

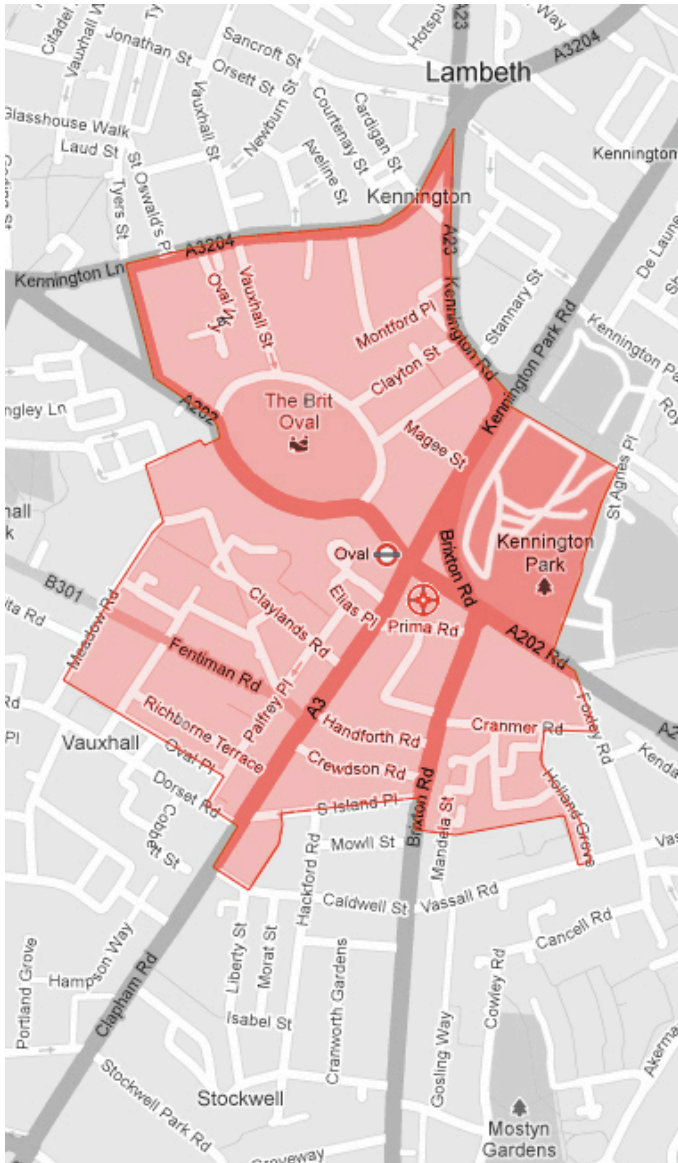
We believe we exist as a church to worship God, to love and disciple one another as a diverse family and to demonstrate the love of Jesus through serving our local community. We encourage each other to develop and share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit for God's glory.

Through this profile, we have tried to convey some of the ways in which St Mark's has been blessed by God and seeks to bless others, to give an honest assessment of where we are at as a church and to suggest some of the challenges and possibilities for the future. A helpful review into the church as a whole was recently undertaken by Southwark Diocese and we have alluded to some of the findings and recommendations in various places in this Profile to give prospective candidates a useful external perspective.

We are an exciting church which, while not without its challenges, offers great potential for a new incumbent who feels called to help with God's work in transforming lives in an inner London area.

John Wesley preached to over 50,000 people in Kennington Park opposite, and we believe that this message of hope is still as relevant to the people of Kennington today. In reading this Profile, we hope that you will feel some of the same excitement that we have for the chance to see God at work in Kennington.

2. About the Parish



Location

St Mark's is situated in a busy inner London area in the London Borough of Lambeth, about two miles south of Central London. The church building is at a main crossroads, opposite Oval London Underground station, and people and traffic pass by continuously to head to the West End, the City, or south and east to other suburbs. As such, St. Mark's has a tremendous location from which to demonstrate the love of God and the hope that is found in Jesus – it has the potential to be a 'city on a hill'.

The local community

The local area is very mixed, with expensive Georgian and Victorian properties right next to two social housing estates which lie within the Parish boundaries (Ashmole Estate and Kennington Park Estate). The ethnic make-up of the area adds to the sense of diversity – around 40% of parishioners are of black or minority ethnic origin and these influences are evident in the local shops and restaurants as well as the church congregation itself. This makes the area diverse and exciting but, unsurprisingly, the Parish also exhibits some of the paradoxes and very tangible challenges that are typical of inner London.

Tensions/aspects of this mixed community include:

- There are significant pockets of high unemployment, crime, and social deprivation, and yet also many affluent professionals who commute into the City. In the midst of some very gentrified areas, Lambeth has the highest teenage conception rate in the UK and an associated above average number of single parent families. It also has the highest rate of HIV infection in the UK;
- Some experience a strong sense of community and have lived in the area a long time, and yet the local area can also feel quite transient, in particular due to the 'young professional' rental market which has grown in recent years;
- The churchyard is the location of an affluent Saturday farmers' market as well as home to several alcoholics and rough sleepers;
- In the west of our Parish, Vauxhall is one of the most established gay communities in Europe and many people travel into the parish at night or at weekends for the clubs/nightlife which the area offers.



Other organisations within the Parish

The Parish also contains the following:

- Three primary schools, including our own church school, also called St Mark's
- Two secondary schools, including Archbishop Tenison C of E School which backs onto the vicarage and the church hall
- A number of small independent enterprises
- The Lambeth police headquarters, of which a previous incumbent was chaplain
- Three business centres – the largest of which, Kennington Business Park, is opposite the church
- The famous Oval Cricket Ground, which creates a significant influx of people on match days throughout the summer

3. The church as buildings

The church benefits from a significant amount of property:



The church itself

The church was built in 1824 and is one of the four Waterloo churches. It is Grade II* listed and is recognised as a dominant local landmark. It consists of the large main hall, a crypt (often used by the youth and as storage by the farmers' market), a smaller upstairs chamber hall (recently refurbished), and upstairs offices (used by other churches). The churchyard has green space and some parking and serves as a key walkway to/from Oval station; this is managed by Lambeth Council. As well as the two regular St Mark's Sunday services, a Pentecostal church rents the church building to hold services on Sunday afternoons, and another church meets at Montgomery Hall on Saturdays.

Despite the optimal size and location of the church, there is scope for redevelopment to make it a more inviting place for worship and to allow it to fully serve the needs of the congregation and the community. In particular, the building can feel quite cold and gloomy in winter, and the crypt, toilet and kitchen facilities are currently relatively poor. It can also give the appearance to passers-by of being closed and unwelcoming. We have done initial thinking about replacing the oil-based heating system, which is old and quite expensive to run.





Montgomery Hall

Montgomery Hall is a large hall complex opposite the Oval cricket ground, about five minutes walk from the church. It has two halls, a reception area, a kitchen and a large back garden. It also contains the Parish Office and a small one bedroom flat. We use the hall for regular meetings, the youth club, and parents and toddlers group; it is also rented out to maximise income at other times, notably to other churches and to Oval cricket ground during the summer.

Prima Road house

We own a house on Prima Road opposite the church that is divided into three flats: a one-bedroom flat rented by the worship leader, and a studio flat and three bedroom flat let on the open market.



The vicarage

The vicarage is a detached house next to Montgomery Hall on the busy main road of Kennington Oval. It is spacious with five bedrooms, a study, a large living room and dining area, bathroom, kitchen, downstairs cloakroom, and large front and rear gardens. The kitchen and bathroom were renovated in 2009 and double glazing installed. The rear garden backs onto Archbishop Tenison School, and it is quite removed from other housing. Parking is available next to the house.

4. The church as people



“ St Mark’s has a very ‘local’ feel which enables members to devote time throughout the week to each other and to community activities. ”

Church family

We have 183 people on our electoral roll (74 men and 109 women), plus a significant number of children and young people who are an important part of the church family. 63% of the church are under 40 (compared to 46% in the Deanery) and 90% live within 20 minutes drive. In contrast to some London churches St Mark’s has a very ‘local’ feel which enables members to devote time throughout the week to each other and to community activities.

In keeping with the local area, the congregation is diverse in its make-up: we have a significant number of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, people from a wide range of theological backgrounds, many young professionals and those with young families, and also a limited number of older members.

We love this diversity and the variety which it brings; coexisting as God’s family can be a glimpse of heaven and is something which attracts many to the church. This diversity also presents challenges: differing cultural and denominational backgrounds can lead to varying expectations about how we ‘do’ church and where our focus should lie - we have to work hard at times to avoid misunderstandings and embrace different personal styles.

Sunday services

The two Sunday services are at 10.30am and 6.30pm. Both are generally informal, with times of sung worship (led by a group of musicians and singers in a contemporary style), bible readings, a sermon, prayers, and often a time of response/reflection. In contrast with some of the larger central London churches, our style does not tend to be very polished; some see this as an asset and value the authenticity and ‘fallibility’ that it conveys.

While there is some overlap of congregation (particularly with evening service members attending in the morning to help with worship/groups etc.), the general demographics are quite different. Some reasons for this are natural (families prefer to attend in the morning, young singles/couples often in the evening), but there are other divisions more entrenched by habit which we would like to address to make sure that all congregation members feel equally welcome at each service. We would invite, and strongly encourage, a prospective incumbent to visit both services before applying to get a rounded impression.



Morning service

This is the larger service, with around 100 adults and 50 children attending on a regular basis. It has a mix of people, but tends to have more families and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Communion is held twice a month, and there is an 'all-age' service on the first Sunday of the month; children and young people go to their relevant Sunday groups aside from that. There is also an informal crèche area, and we are actively looking to have a manned crèche so that parents can participate in the service.



Evening service

This is smaller and more reflective, with around 40 adults, and tends to attract mainly young professionals, the majority of whom are white. It has two key aims of providing spiritual nourishment (particularly to those who serve in the morning), and also to give opportunity to those who feel led to lead/preach in an accountable environment. While there is a lay-run planning team, a new incumbent would be expected to have oversight and active involvement, and also provide mentoring and spiritual leadership to those who lead/preach. Communion is held on one Sunday per month.

The teaching of God's word is an important part of life and services at St Mark's. We would expect an incumbent vicar to take an active and regular part in leading both congregations to study and apply God's word and will offer support to enable a new vicar to preach to a timetable he/she desires.

St Mark's is used for baptisms, weddings and funerals. In 2010 we had 16 baptisms, 1 infant dedication, 1 confirmation, 3 weddings, and 7 funerals (3 at the church, 4 at the crematorium).





Church fellowship

A sense of family and community is very important to us at St Mark's, and many identify fellowship as one of the things they like most about the church. However, friendships and participation in different events can often run along cultural and age lines, and there is a danger that some people or groups can occasionally feel on the edges. We would like to find ways to encourage us to fellowship and socialise more as a whole church.

We currently have the following:

Home groups:

These are an important part of our fellowship and spiritual growth. There are six in total generally on weekday evenings and we also have a Mums' 'pray and play' group which meets during the day.

Church weekend away:

For the last five years around 100 people have been to our weekend away held at either Herne Bay or Ashburnham retreat centre and these have been good opportunities for teaching (last year we had excellent teaching into the Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit and this year we discussed our role and responsibility as part of the 'Big Society'). A good cross-section of the church attends and it is a great time of refreshment, fun and getting to know each other better.

Bring and share lunches:

These have been less frequent recently, but have historically been popular and often involve a variety of international dishes.

'Come Dine with Me':

This has been a successful way of extending hospitality and encouraging people to host people they don't know well. Unlike the TV show it hasn't (always) been competitive!

After services:

we have refreshments after both the morning and evening services, along with a bookstall, and people usually stay to meet each other and catch up.



Agent X comes to St. Mark's!

On 25th July 2011, a group of inspired volunteers transformed St. Mark's into a spy base set in Egypt and welcomed local children to our church's first ever holiday club, 'Mission Rescue'. Agent X infiltrated the church to tell how God rescued the Israelites and no clue was left uninvestigated, no code unbroken as the children deciphered God's plan to rescue them as well.

The week was a tremendous success – around 60 children from within and outside the church attended and the club culminated in a celebration for the children and their families.

Prayer life and pastoral care

We are a church that seeks to be rooted in prayer in everything we do, and we have times of prayer in both services as well as occasional prayer ministry afterwards. We are blessed to have a few within the church who are real 'prayer champions', very committed to lifting the church and world before God at services, privately and at prayer meetings. However, our regular monthly prayer meeting has not always been well attended, and we would like to explore ways to improve our corporate prayer life across the whole church.

Pastoral care is led by a team of three Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries (SPAs), who have particular responsibilities to pray for and visit those in the church and community with emotional, social and spiritual needs.

There have at times been difficult and tense relationships between church members, and so a new incumbent will need to have a patient heart and skills in conflict resolution and pastoral care.

Youth and children

Youth and children are an important part of our church, and around 50 attend on a typical Sunday. Additionally, we have regular contact with other local youth through our football and youth clubs. We hold regular Sunday groups during the morning service for children aged 3-5 ('Bubbles'), 5-8 ('Splash'), 8-11 ('Xstream'), 11-14, and 14+, and we make use of age-appropriate resources from Scripture Union among others. For the past few summers we have also taken some of the older youth to Soul Survivor, which has been a good opportunity for them to go deeper with God and meet other young Christians. A small youth home group has also recently started for young people in school years 9 to 13.

We are blessed to have a dedicated team of volunteers in both our youth and children's ministries, and we have seen real growth and improvement in recent years. In the past we have had gap year workers from Uganda to assist us with our youth work. The church has for some time considered employing a youth and children's worker to promote and coordinate our youth ministry; at present it relies on a core of volunteers and is potentially unsustainable - it is therefore a ministry we feel warrants immediate attention and we would welcome the support of a new incumbent as we seek God's guidance to appoint somebody to perform this role.

5. The church in the community



Outreach and mission

The church aims to have outreach and mission at the heart of what it does, and we seek to serve people practically and share the hope that can be found in Jesus. We currently have the following outreach ministries:

Parents and toddlers group:

This is attended by about 25 each week, and has proved popular with families in the local area. This group is a great portal into St Mark's for local families and it has huge evangelistic potential as most of the families who attend are non-church goers.

Community lunches:

The church puts on occasional lunches for needy people within the area, although these have been less frequent recently and have had sporadic attendance.

Youth club:

This runs monthly and is attended by about 10-15 young people, both from the church and from the local area. We have also run weekends away in the summer with a clear evangelistic focus, and in 2010 held a successful youth Alpha course.

Football club:

Since 2008, St Mark's has had a youth team in the London Saturday Youth League. This runs weekly and is enthusiastically attended by about 30 young people, principally those who otherwise have no contact with the church.

Holiday club:

In summer 2011, St Mark's ran a holiday club for children from the church and local schools. This was supported by a large cross-section of the church and has allowed us to rebuild some of the links with the local primary schools.

Global Mission Group:

St Mark's also cares about mission further afield and has sent out, and is currently supporting, missionaries in Asia.



Robes project:

For the last five years, St Mark's has participated with other local churches in the 'Robes' project, to provide food and overnight accommodation to homeless people in the area over the winter period.

Street Pastors:

A number of our congregation work with Street Pastors in South London to offer practical and emotional support to people out and about in our area on a Friday and Saturday night.

While these various ministries have had some success, work is needed to ensure their long term sustainability as they have tended to be carried by the passion and service of a few individuals. We would like to have a more coherent vision for outreach as a whole church, and the recent review by Southwark Diocese recommended that we take time to understand the needs of the area so that we can position our outreach ministries in a more structured way.



External relationships

As mentioned in Section 2, there are several organisations located within the Parish, and we are keen to build better links with these as we see them as an important part of the fabric of the community. In particular:

- Historically, the church has had a strong relationship with our church primary school, St. Mark's, and has had consistent opportunities to input into life at the school. However, these links have weakened in recent years. Restoring these links is a priority – a previous vicar was chair of the governors and entered the school regularly to take assemblies and form relationships with the children and teachers alike. We also hold a school leavers' service in St. Mark's every year.
- We have developed a strong and successful partnership with Oval cricket ground through the use of Montgomery Hall.
- A farmers' market is held in the churchyard every Saturday, popular with the more affluent local residents. A local group, the Oval Partnership, is working on plans to redevelop the churchyard and make it more suitable for community events. Although interaction is currently minimal, this offers a good opportunity for St Mark's to participate in wider community life and be a beacon of light.

At present there is little interaction with other local churches or Diocesan events apart from the Robes project, although there are clear opportunities if these links can be built up. For example, there are several youth and children's events in which we could participate more, and there may be the possibility of running an Alpha course (or other such outreach activity) with another church. The church has also recently decided to join in Vauxhall Christian Centre's food bank initiative.

6. The church's leadership and resources

Staff team

We employ an administrator, a worship leader, a secretary, a finance clerk, and a duty manager/cleaner – all on a part-time basis. The previous incumbent was supported by HR professionals within the church to develop good structures of performance appraisal, and a new incumbent would be expected to provide management assistance to our administrator, our worship leader and our parish secretary.

Leadership structures

The following leadership structures exist within the church:

PCC:

A well-functioning and collaborative body consisting of 15 elected representatives including a church warden, vice chair, secretary, treasurer, and Deanery Synod representative.

Several sub-committees of the PCC:

Including standing committee, staffing group, mission giving group, and the buildings group.

Co-leaders:

This was reformed to support the church warden and provide ministry oversight during interregnum, and includes the PCC vice chair, treasurer, lay reader, and key ministry leads.

Lay reader and Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries (SPAs):

We have a lay reader who has responsibilities in preaching and spiritual leadership, as well as three SPAs who have responsibilities in prayer ministry and pastoral visiting.

Other lay leadership:

We have volunteer leadership for a number of ministries, for example youth and children's work and planning the evening service.





Lay members of the church have typically taken an active role in decision making and direction setting within aspects of church life (with many ministries entirely lay-run), and there are several in the church with leadership skills and experience. However the recent review by Southwark Diocese highlighted that leadership tends to be concentrated in a relatively small number of people in the professional groups, and recommended that the church look for ways to encourage a broader cross-section of the church to take a more prominent role. Also, some of the different ministries can at times feel quite disconnected from the overall leadership of the church. We are therefore looking for a clear leader who can set overall direction for the church and also help to facilitate greater representation of the wider church community in active leadership.

Volunteering and involvement in church life

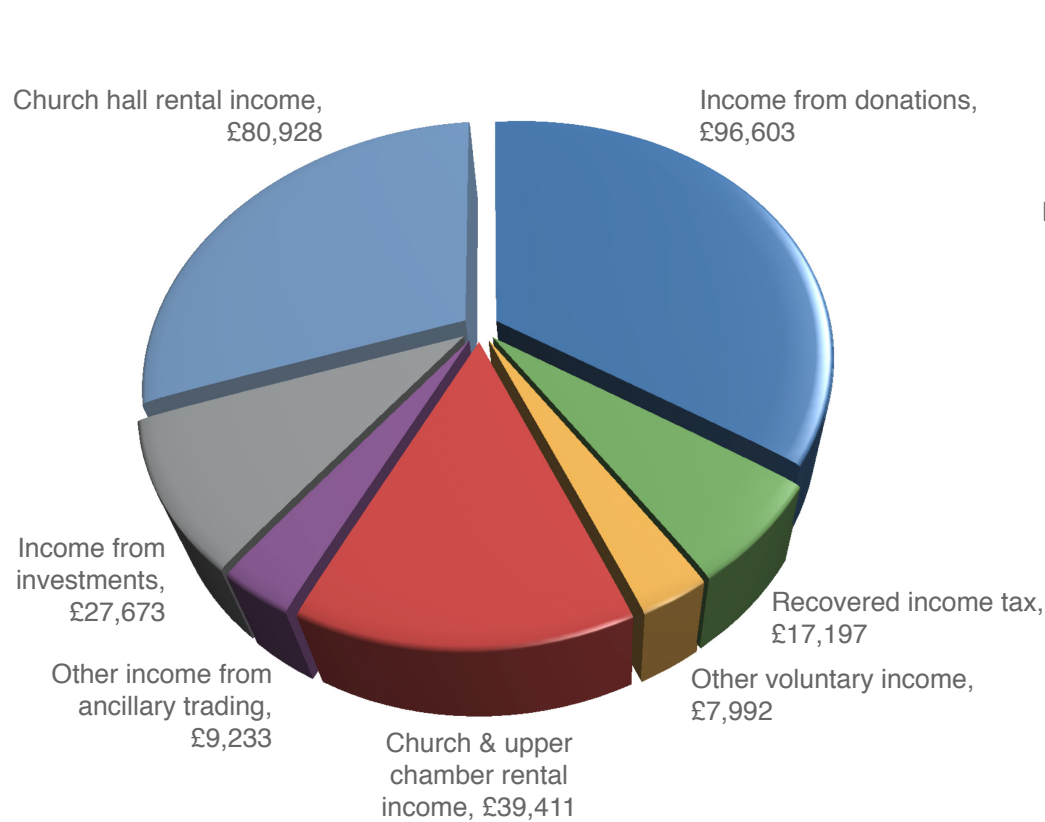
St Mark's is blessed to have a number of volunteers with a wide range of skills, and many people are attracted to the church in the first place by the opportunities to serve and get involved. This has allowed us to sustain a large number of the ministries set out in the sections above. In keeping with the culture of the local area, reliability and timing can at times be quite relaxed, which often gives some of the ministries and services quite an informal feel; this is something a new incumbent will need to work with and not be put off by.

There are good examples of a broad cross-section of the church family coming together to serve God, such as the worship team and the recent holiday club. However, as with many churches, a number of the ministries are quite reliant on the energies of a relatively small core of committed volunteers, which can at times lead to weariness. We are looking at ways to broaden participation across the whole church body and encourage more members to step forward and use the talents that God has given them.

Finances

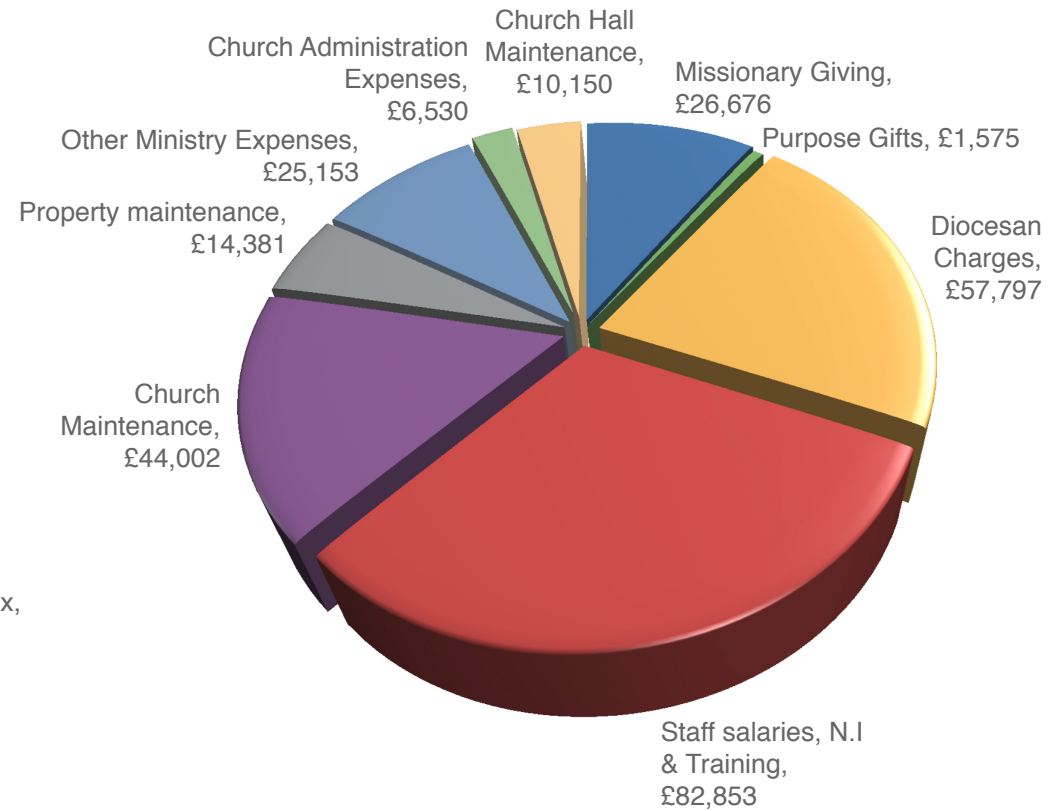
The overall financial position of the church is reasonably healthy, with overall income stable and broadly keeping pace with expenditure in 2009 and 2010 despite the national economic situation. This has in part been helped by strong rental income from Montgomery Hall and the flats at Prima Road. Around 60% of giving is gift-aided.

Income...



Total Income for 2010 - £279,037

Expenditure...



Total Expenditure for 2010 - £269,117

7. What we are looking for in a new incumbent

As well as a strong personal faith, lifestyle integrity, and reliance on God for strength and guidance, the qualities which we feel would be particularly relevant to allow a new incumbent to thrive at St Mark's are set out below.

Qualities we are seeking in a new incumbent

Essential:

- Someone who is friendly, patient and approachable, with very good relational skills and experience in caring for and uniting a diverse family across differences of ethnicity, age, class, gender etc.
- An individual who will provide vision and leadership in an urban context; somebody who will thrive on the challenges presented by a diverse inner city community and is excited about seeing God at work in this situation.
- An enabling leader concerned with our spiritual maturity and potential, willing to nurture our corporate and individual prayer lives.
- Someone who can teach faithfully from God's word and encourage us to seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit to equip us to serve God.
- Somebody committed to discipleship within the church and interested in fostering and structuring this.
- Someone with a heart for young people and ability to connect with them, and a desire to work closely with our primary school.

Desirable:

- A natural relationship builder - someone who is keen to get out and about in the parish and strengthen connections with local services and amenities and other churches.
- A personality who can work well in a more informal culture while at the same time bringing more structure and direction to our different ministries.
- Somebody able to communicate with people from different backgrounds, who is imaginative and proactive in the ways in which they engage with both Sunday worship and mission.
- An individual capable and willing to train a curate should the opportunity arise.

...and what we can offer

What we can offer a new incumbent

All at St Mark's are looking forward to welcoming a new incumbent and offering support in the form of prayer, friendship and practical help, both to settle in and throughout their ministry here.

We believe as a congregation we are called to bless our leaders by providing for their wellbeing and by supporting and encouraging their spiritual growth.

The role offers practical pay and benefits in accordance with the Terms and Conditions for Clergy in the Diocese of Southwark (which can be viewed at <http://www.southwark.anglican.org/downloads/resources/PayCon11.pdf>).