

The Benefice of St. James with St. Michael and St. Augustine Beckenham



BENEFICE NEWS

December 2025 / January 2026

The Benefice of St James with
St Michael and St Augustine Beckenham
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER
and a member of the Richborough Family



THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JAMES

St James's Ave, Elmers End, Beckenham



SUNDAY WORSHIP

9.15am
Sung Parish Mass
followed by refreshments

Confessions by appointment or after Mass on Saturday

WEEKDAY WORSHIP

Tuesday- 7.00pm
Thursday -10.30am
followed by refreshments
Saturday - 9.30am

THE PARISH CHURCH OF
ST MICHAEL WITH ST AUGUSTINE
Ravenscroft Road, Beckenham



SUNDAY WORSHIP

11.00am
Sung Parish Mass
followed by refreshments

Confessions by appointment or after Mass on Friday

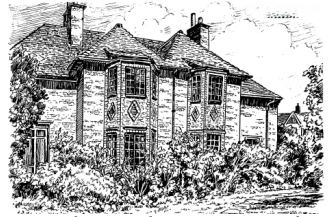
WEEKDAY WORSHIP

Wednesday- 10.00am
followed by refreshments
Friday - 7.00pm

For Solemnities and Major Feast Day see The Benefice Diary on page 8

www.stjamesandstmichael.org.uk

From the Vicarage



Dear Friends,

December brings us to the heart of our year. In these weeks we hear again the message of Jesus' birth. The light of Christ comes into a world that still needs hope, peace, and steady voices of kindness.

Many people around us are open to church at this time of year. They look for a place that feels warm and steady. They look for meaning in the middle of busy days. They look for a moment of quiet. Christmas gives us a chance to welcome them.

If we want our congregation to grow, we cannot leave this to posters or notices. Growth begins with us. A personal invite is the strongest way to reach someone. It shows care. It shows that we value them. It tells them they belong.

Think of one person you know. A neighbour, a friend, a colleague, or someone who once came to church but drifted away. Ask them to join you this Christmas. Bring them with you. Sit with them. Tell them why it matters to you. A simple invite can open a door.

Our services will be joyful. The music, the prayers, and the story of the Nativity speak to every age. People only need someone to guide them through the door. That someone is each one of us.

Thank you for all you give to our parish. Thank you for the quiet work you do behind the scenes. Thank you for the steady support you offer week by week. I see it, and I value it.

Let's make this Christmas a season of welcome. Let's open our doors and our hearts. Let's help others meet the Christ who came to dwell among us.

With my prayers and blessings this Christmas.

R Russell



Message from the External Affairs Committee

The External Affairs Committee would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported the sale of cards throughout the year. We are especially grateful to those who generously donated cards, gifts, and monetary contributions in support of St Christopher's Hospice, a cause that is deeply valued by many in our community.



Through your kindness and generosity, a total of £300 has been raised — the highest amount we have achieved to date. Your continued support is greatly appreciated and will enable us to build on this success in the year ahead.

External Affairs Committee

Advent at St James's

The postbox for distribution of Christmas cards to members of the congregation will be available from 7 December. Please make sure your envelopes are clearly addressed. Our in-house postal service does its best to ensure cards are safely delivered. This is limited to those regular members at our services, as we cannot guarantee to do home deliveries.



The Christmas Prayer tree will be put up on the same date, together with tags for you to put on the tree with your special messages.

'Together' Magazine

Be sure to pick up and read the current edition of the diocesan magazine which includes a reflection from Bishop Jonathan on the role all Christians have at Advent and Christmas to help share the hope given through Jesus.

Music for December



7th December - Advent 2

Introit:	CHfE	575	On Jordan's banks the Baptist cry
Offertory:	CHfE	255	Hills of the north rejoice
Communion:	CHfE	383	Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
Final:	CHfE	268	Our God reigns

14th December - Advent 3

Introit:	NEH	6	Hark the glad sound
Offertory:	NEH	3	Come thou long expected Jesus
Communion:	NEH	483	The Church of God a Kingdom is
Final:	NEH	322	Pour out thy spirit from on high

21st December - Advent 4

Introit:	NEH	11	O come, O come Emmanuel
Offertory:	NEH	465	Thou didst leave thy throne
Communion:	NEH	161	For, Mary, Mother of the Lord
Final:	NEH	10	Long ago prophets knew

24th December - First Mass of Christmas (Midnight Mass)

Introit:	CHfE	577	Once in Royal David City
Offertory:	CHfE	540	O little town of Bethlehem
Communion:	CHfE	643	Silent Night
Final:	CHfE	520	O come all ye faithful

25th December - Christmas Day

Introit:	CHfE	810	While Shepherds watched their flocks
Offertory:	CHfE	630	See amid the winter snow
Communion:	CHfE	66	Away in a manger
Final:	CHfE	244	Hark! the herald angels sing.

28th December - Holy Family

Introit:	CHfE	305	In the bleak midwinter
Offertory:	CHfE	223	God rest ye merry gentlemen
Communion:	CHfE	794	What child is this
Final:	CHfE	692	The first noel

Music for January



4th January - Epiphany Sunday

Introit:	NEH	48	Bethlehem of noblest cities
Offertory:	NEH	49	Brightest and best are the sons
Communion:	NEH	52	O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
Final:	NEH	47	As with gladness men of old

11th January - The Baptism of the Lord

Introit:	CHfE	634	Send forth your Spirit, God our Father
Offertory:	CHfE	661	Songs of thankfulness and praise
Communion:	CHfE	401	Water of life, cleanse and refresh us
Final:	CHfE	241	Hail to the Lord's anointed

18th January - 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introit:	CHfE	143	Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Offertory:	CHfE	688	The Church's one foundation
Communion:	CHfE	556	O thou, who at thy Euchaist
Final:	CHfE	241	Hail to the Lord's anointed

25th January - 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introit:	NEH	407	Lord, thy word abideth
Offertory:	NEH	495	God is working his purpose out
Communion:	NEH	308	Thee we adore, O hidden Saviour, thee
Final:	NEH	362	Glorious things of thee are spoken

ST. JAMES'S NEW YEAR CELEBRATION MEAL

Saturday 10 January 2026,

6.00 pm for 6.30 pm

St. James's Hall

Tickets £10 from Jan (07939 088820)

Please bring your own drinks



Interfaith Week Gathering

On Monday 10th November, during Interfaith Week, our MP Liam Conlon invited members of faith communities from across Beckenham and Penge to gather and celebrate this year's theme, Community: Together We Serve.

Interfaith Week is a national event that aims to strengthen good relations between people of different faiths and beliefs. It encourages understanding, respect, and cooperation, reminding us that while our traditions may differ, we share a common desire to care for one another and for the communities we live in.

Around 250 people came to St George's Church for the event. During the evening we heard from several faith leaders, including a Hindu priest, a Buddhist monk, the Chair of Bromley Reformed Synagogue, Fr Ashley, a Roman Catholic priest, a member of the Beckenham Islamic community, a member of Croydon Sikh Gurdwara, and Rachel Winn from St Paul's.



Each speaker shared an interesting take on the theme, showing how their communities are working to serve the wider community. In essence, all their messages came down to the same thing — love.

A highlight of the evening was the song performed by the choir from St Anthony's School. There were few dry eyes in the church as they sang.

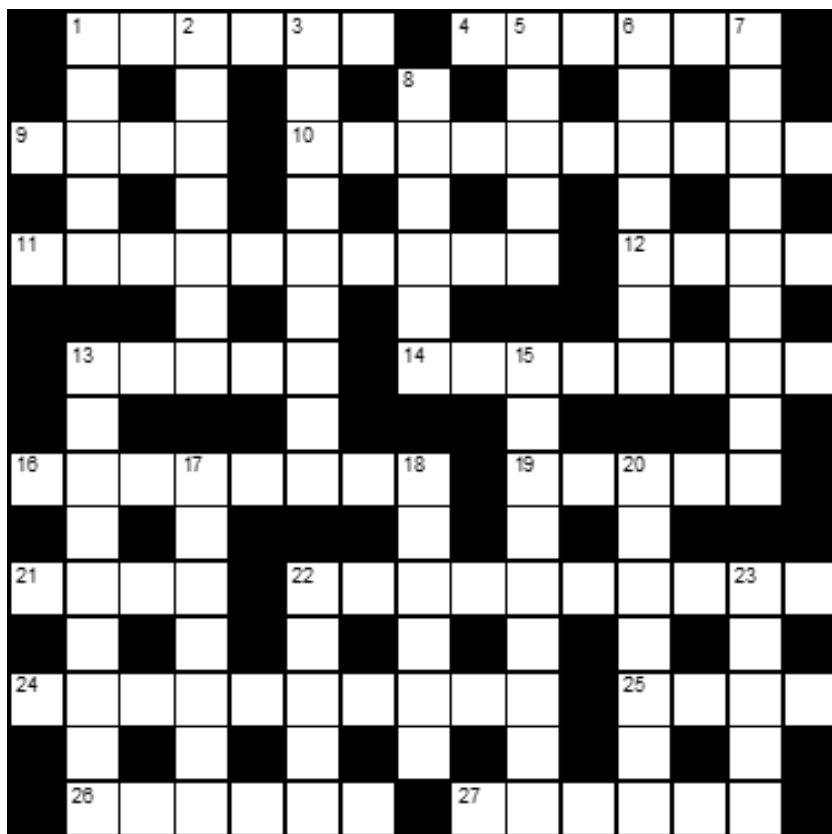
We hope this will become a regular event in the years ahead.

The Richborough Family News

Saturday 27th December St John's Day
12noon St John's Higham



Puzzles (Solutions next month)



Across

- 1 Almost exact summary (6)
- 4 Old governor returns some arsenic (6)
- 9 Initially some petty argument that! (4)
- 10 Leaving a group working in Germany (10)
- 11 Senior religious figure, one with links to preferences (10)
- 12 Evil society with one leaving mixed bar (4)
- 13 Score for background actor (5)
- 14 Doubt Aga can become a nomad (8)
- 16 Dairy farmer not mad gets cooker (3,5)
- 19 Island dish lacking something at first (5)
- 21 Third man sounds up to it (4)
- 22 Got rid of unseen senile dementia (10)

- 24 Between ends, Australian native, by the way, receives husband in military transport (10)
 25 Unpleasantness in slug lying about (4)
 26 Trouble vessel in good condition (6)
 27 Plug opening - it's coming! (6)

Down

- 1 Daily issue (5)
 2 East goes west for picnics (4,3)
 3 Pretend Solon is against a railway (9)
 5 Helpers may have mixed ideas (5)
 6 Call club back for opener (4,3)
 7 Bill wraps mis-shapen insulation (9)
 8 Graduate leader is hot (6)
 13 Where to have a Scottish tattoo (9)
 15 Paid no heed when detectives were left out (9)
 17 Babbles about the Spanish blokes (7)
 18 Nearly lifting the fruit (6)
 20 A résumé could be standard (7)
 22 Stand for changed lease (5)
 23 Style found in returned dental cement (5)

Sudoku

5					3	1		
7			9				2	
8	6				7			
2	7	1						9
9						3	7	1
			1				3	5
	8				2			6
		6	5					2

The Benefice Diary

Saturday 29th November	St James's Quiz Night
Sunday 4th January	St Michael's Epiphany Lunch
Saturday 10th January	St James's New Year Meal



The two churches are open during the week for anyone to pop in for refreshments, a chat, and maybe even some games in a warm friendly atmosphere. St. Michael's Church will be open on Wednesday mornings after mass 10.30 – 12.30, and St. James's after mass on Thursdays 11 – 12.30. (Please note that exceptionally there will be no refreshments at St. James's on 4 December as the preschool will be having their Christmas performance). Everyone is welcome to come along.

How spoilt were we on 14 November when we met for a light lunch. We were expecting soup, but Fern had other ideas, and we were treated to sausage casserole, jacket potato and salad, followed by a choice of dessert. And Fellowship wouldn't be Fellowship without tea and coffee and a lot of natter. Thank you so much, Fern, for a scrumptious spread, and for bringing a smile to so many faces.



On 5 December 2 pm in the Guild Room we shall be having a Christmas Party with usual fun and games (no running!). Dress code, Christmas bling a-plenty. This year we shall have some wonderful musical items performed by Penny, and others of us will do our best to entertain you. Come along and enjoy this extravaganza followed by a festive tea. Our January meeting will be a new year meal on Saturday 10 January (please see separate item), and we shall meet again on Friday 6 February 2026. We wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy, peaceful and healthy 2026.

News from 6th Guides



We had a successful summer camp with hot days and very wet evenings, luckily the rain fell just as we had finished eating and the guides took shelter in their tents, this put the wide game on hold. It was the final of the Women's Euro Championships and there was a Scout group on our site who had rigged up a 'Heath Robinson' projector and the Guides were able to watch the penalty shoot out. With the winning result out dessert was Eton Mess and a Red George Cross was added using the summer fruits that we had left over. I had Guides asking me if we would be coming back to Blacklands next next before the camp had finished!!

This term has been a strange one with various leaders running the meetings while I have been recovering and I have attended when I can. We had an evening up at Heartsease to complete our Have Adventure theme badge and Lava lamps were made along with volcanic film pots.

We completed our Rugby Challenge badge to coincide with the women's Rugby World cup. The guides improved their ball handling skills along with hand eye coordination doing various drills and made high energy bites from nutritious ingredients.

The guides have almost finished an Engineering badge they needed to build a bridge out of newspaper that spanned 500mm, a Chocolate bridge spanning 300mm and recreate a construction that another team had created from Lego; one person (programme manager) gave the instructions to the construction manager who then passed the instructions on to the contractor; interesting results were created!!

We have made butter, with butter accompanying the bread and also Pesto, even though the groups had the same ingredients the final Pestos tasted differently.

The unit joined 5th Guides at Oxygen in Croydon for a Trampoline evening and a Quiz night when the unit had to relinquish the Beckenham West Challenge Shield as a team from 5th won the Quiz.

After years of members of the church having to take home recycling items, from the beginning of 2026 we shall be having 3 bins at St. James's, one for general rubbish, one for paper, glass and tin recycling, and a third for food recycling.

You may have heard of the 'Eco Church' initiative, which provides a framework to take practical action caring for God's earth, covering various areas of church life. Rocha UK is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and committed to equipping Christian and churches in the UK to care for the environment. They run a scheme whereby churches can be assessed for their progress towards a bronze, silver or gold Eco Church award. We at St. James's may not be up for this, but we can do our bit by recycling. Once our new bins are in situ we would ask everybody to be sure to recycle items in the correct bin.

We would also ask all users of our premises to turn off lights when the area is not in use, and be careful with use of the utilities. Our expenditure for gas and electricity has increased substantially over the last years, and we would like to avoid any wastage.



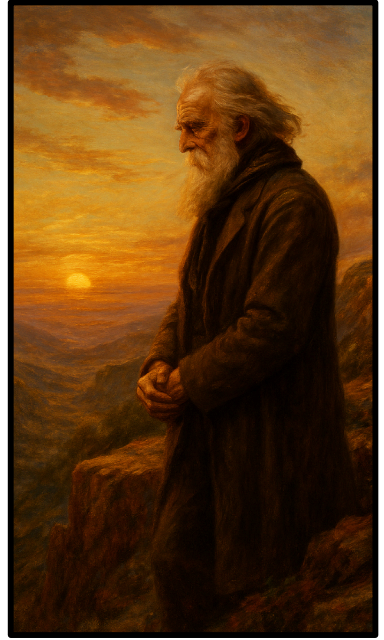
On the subject of caring for God's earth, I am sure you'll all have noticed how beautiful our grounds are, with flowers in due season, and the lawns so wonderfully manicured. This provides an environment for the local wildlife, and an attractive area for our congregation and residents. Unfortunately it does attract the foxes who often leave their calling cards, but that's nature. Thanks to the team who work so hard ensuring that the gardens are well maintained and eye-catching.

Poetry Corner

A Summing Up

By Charles Mackay

I have lived and I have loved;
I have waked and I have slept;
I have sung and I have danced;
I have smiled and I have wept;
I have won and wasted treasure;
I have had my fill of pleasure;
And all these things were weariness,
And some of them were dreariness; -
And all these things, but two things,
Were emptiness and pain:
And Love - it was the best of them;
And Sleep - worth all the rest of them.



Actual children's versions of Christmas Carols:

"...sleep in heavenly peas"

"Joy to the world, the Saviour rains!"



"Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plane..."

"While shepherds washed their socks by night..."

"Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly..."

"We three kings of porridge and tar..."

"On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me..."

News from 9th Penge and Beckenham North Scout Group



In recent weeks our Cubs, Beavers and Scouts have all been working towards a variety badges, and our leaders have been busy planning lots of Christmas-related activities for the festive season.

Several children were successful in earning their Swimming badge, which is a very well organised annual event run by the Bromley Scout District at the Beckenham Spa (NB best avoid if you are hoping for a calm relaxing swim that day!)

And helping out at St James's Autumn Fair was a great fun for all our children, judging by the volume levels in the hall! They all earned their Community Impact badge by helping to run our stall....a 'Splat the Rat' game of fast reflexes. Plus they all spent their pocket money on the other fabulous stalls at the fair. A really fun day with a brilliant atmosphere, thank you Jan & everyone who helped to organise it.

Also this month our lucky Beavers enjoyed a sleepover in the church hall where they ate pizza (and cake of course!), made some rainbow themed crafts, sang round the indoor campfire and slept in tents. For most of our Beavers it was their first night away from home without family, so a memorable occasion all



round. Special thanks to Gwen and Fr Russell who joined us for our campfire for a singsong. We will definitely do it again next year, this has become one of our most popular annual traditions!

St James's Autumn Fair

Well, another successful fund-raising event in November. This year we were a week later, but there was still the autumn feeling in the air. Plenty of well laden stalls, a kitchen working overtime, and the ever popular home-made cakes. A lot of new and familiar faces, and hopefully we were able to put St. James's on the map. It also offered a chance for our uniformed organisations to join us, so socially it was a very valuable day. We raised over £2,000 for church funds on the day, and as we go to print additional amounts are still coming in. Our thanks go to the Internal Affairs & Social Committee for organising this event, all those who contributed with their time, produce and expertise on the day, and all those who supported the event.

Autumn Fair 2025

Money paid in on the day

Books	112.90
Bottle Tombola	157.10
Bric a Brac	176.88
Cakes	259.20
Children's Tombola	31.00
Crafts	325.85
Guess Koala's Name	29.40
Guiding	70.00
Handbags & Gladrags	190.35
Jigsaws	36.00
Money Grid	66.00
Papercraft	110.25
Raffle	165.00
Refreshments	360.11
Scouting	37.70
Unallocated SumUp payments	61.50

News from 6th Brownies



They too Completed the Rugby Challenge badge the ball handling skills did improve over the weeks, and their hand/eye coordination also did improve.

The Brownies have been wanting to make Brownies for sometime and we did this in the run up to Harvest.

We have learnt about money by purchasing items with a random prices and selecting the exact coins to meet the price, the first team with the correct cost won the item.

They have made their own paint and used the primary colours to make differest colours.

We have made fish out of cardboard and wool for a fishing game and the brownies were very competitive in trying to fish for the ones they had created.

The Brownies made felt poppies which were put on display on the outside war memorial and we paid our respects on Tuesday 11 November with a Quite period outside.

Thanks to the various leaders form the Division who have helped me while I Have been recovering and I have noticed the Brownies have become more helpful - putting away the tables and general tidying.

Both units are looking forward to going to see Zootropolis 2 on Saturday 6 December- another badge to add to their collection!!

ST MICHAEL'S EPIPHANY LUNCH

Sunday 4th January 2026
12.30pm

*To book your place
please speak to Fr Russell*



What is Epiphany about?

I was recently asked a question by a member of the congregation about Epiphany, so I thought I would answer it here.

The Feast of Epiphany is one of the most significant celebrations in the Church's year because it proclaims that Jesus Christ is revealed as the Son of God—not just to Israel, but to all nations. The word Epiphany means “manifestation,” and this feast reminds us that Christ's mission is universal. This truth is beautifully expressed in the visit of the Magi, who represent the Gentiles coming to worship the newborn King.



Their gifts speak volumes: gold for His kingship, frankincense for His divinity and priestly role, and myrrh for His humanity and the suffering He will endure. In these offerings, the mystery of the Incarnation shines forth.

Epiphany also marks the culmination of the Christmas season, moving our gaze from the hidden birth in Bethlehem to the public revelation of Christ's glory. In many traditions, this feast gathers together several great “manifestations”: the visit of the Magi, the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, and the Wedding at Cana—each revealing who Christ truly is.

For us today, Epiphany is more than a historical event; it is a call to mission. Isaiah's words echo through the liturgy: “Arise, shine, for your light has come.” Just as the star led the Magi, so the Church is called to be a light to the nations, bearing Christ to every corner of the world. It is a feast of revelation, hope, and invitation—a reminder that God's glory is not hidden but offered to all.



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

churches
together
IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND®

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an ecumenical Christian observance celebrated internationally in the Christian calendar traditionally from 18th - 25th January, the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul.

For 2026 the theme is 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling' (Ephesians 4:4). The reflections this week have been prepared by the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with their Catholic and Evangelical counterparts, emphasising the unity of Christians, drawing from the apostle Paul .

As this newsletter goes to print the the programme for the week is still 'work in progress'. The cafe at St. John's Church, Eden Park, is a possible venue, and hopefully the programme will include the usual campfire worship and Taize service.

It is so rewarding to share worship with Christians of other traditions. How many of you have been to a Taize service? Or campfire worship? Events will be publicised on the notices on the service sheets nearer the time.

Solutions to Novembers Puzzles

Across: 1 Vintage, 9 Apple pie,
10 Legible, 11 Re-export, 12 Rabbit,
13 Inglorious, 15 Seed, 16 Sports car,
21 Evil, 22 Chainsawed, 24 Ersatz,
25 Boundary, 27 Athirst, 28 Reassess,
29 Slither.

Down: 2 Ice water, 3 Twin beds,
4 Gelatinous, 5 Apse, 6 Elixir,
7 Apropos, 8 Dentist, 11 Right away,
14 Occidental, 17 Red shift,
18 Distaste, 19 Iceberg, 20 Natural,
23 Nudism, 26 Rust.

6	4	8	7	1	3	2	5	9
5	2	7	6	9	4	1	8	3
1	9	3	8	5	2	6	4	7
9	1	5	2	7	8	3	6	4
3	8	6	5	4	1	9	7	2
2	7	4	3	6	9	5	1	8
7	6	2	4	3	5	8	9	1
4	3	1	9	8	6	7	2	5
8	5	9	1	2	7	4	3	6



St James's Church

St James's Ave, Elmers End, BR3 4HF



Sunday 30th November 6.00pm Advent Carol Service
A service of carols and readings for the Advent season

Sunday 14th December 4.00pm Christingle Service
*This service is a great way to begin your Christmas celebration
and is great for all the family*

Sunday 21st December 6.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols
*A traditional service of Christmas readings and Carols
followed by mulled wine and mince pies*

Wednesday 24th December 4.30pm Crib Service
*Come and sing your favourite carols and hear the story of the birth of Jesus.
Children are encouraged to come dressed as their favourite nativity character*
8.00pm First Mass of Christmas
This service is an early 'Midnight Mass'

Thursday 25th December 9.15am Mass of Christmas Day



St Michael's Church

Ravenscroft Road, Beckenham, BR3 4TN



Monday 22nd December 6.00pm Cafe Carols
*Join us for coffee, tea or mulled wine with mince pies and
sing some of your favourite carols*

Wednesday 24th December 3.00pm Christingle Crib Service
*Come and sing your favourite carols and hear the story of the birth of Jesus. Children
are encouraged to come dressed as their favourite nativity character*



11.30pm Midnight Mass
A traditional Midnight Mass with the blessing of the crib



Thursday 25th December 11.00am Mass of Christmas Day

DIRECTORY

Vicar:	Fr. Russell Stagg ssc	020 8402 2712 07526 621232
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Churchwardens:		
St. James's	Gwen Binnie	020 8650 0342
St. Michael's	Matthieu Philippault	07838 146467
	Email: office.stmichaelbeckenham@gmail.com	
Benefice Administrator	Jo Perry	07838 146467
	Email: office.stjamesbeckenham@gmail.com	
	Email: office.stmichaelbeckenham@gmail.com	
Hall bookings	Jo Perry	07838 146467
St. James's Fellowship	First Friday of each month Guild Room 2.00pm-3.30pm	
Brownie Guides	6th Beckenham Tuesday in the Hall 6.15pm-7.45pm Alison Mansfield	
		020 8658 1680
Guides	6th Beckenham Friday in the Hall 7pm-8.30pm Alison Mansfield	
		020 8658 1680
Beavers	Thursday in the Lecture Room 6.30pm-7.45pm Claudia Gotor-Pedrerros	
		claudiagotor@gmail.com
Cub Scouts	Thursday in the Hall 6.30pm-7.45pm Sue Guckian	
		sueguckian@gmail.com
Scouts	Thursday in the Hall 7.45pm-9.00pm Jaime Griffiths	
		jaimegriffiths@hotmail.co.uk
All Beaver/Cub/Scout enquiries to Group Scout Leader 9thpbnbeavers@gmail.com		
Pre-School	Jenny Strudwick	020 8249 8386