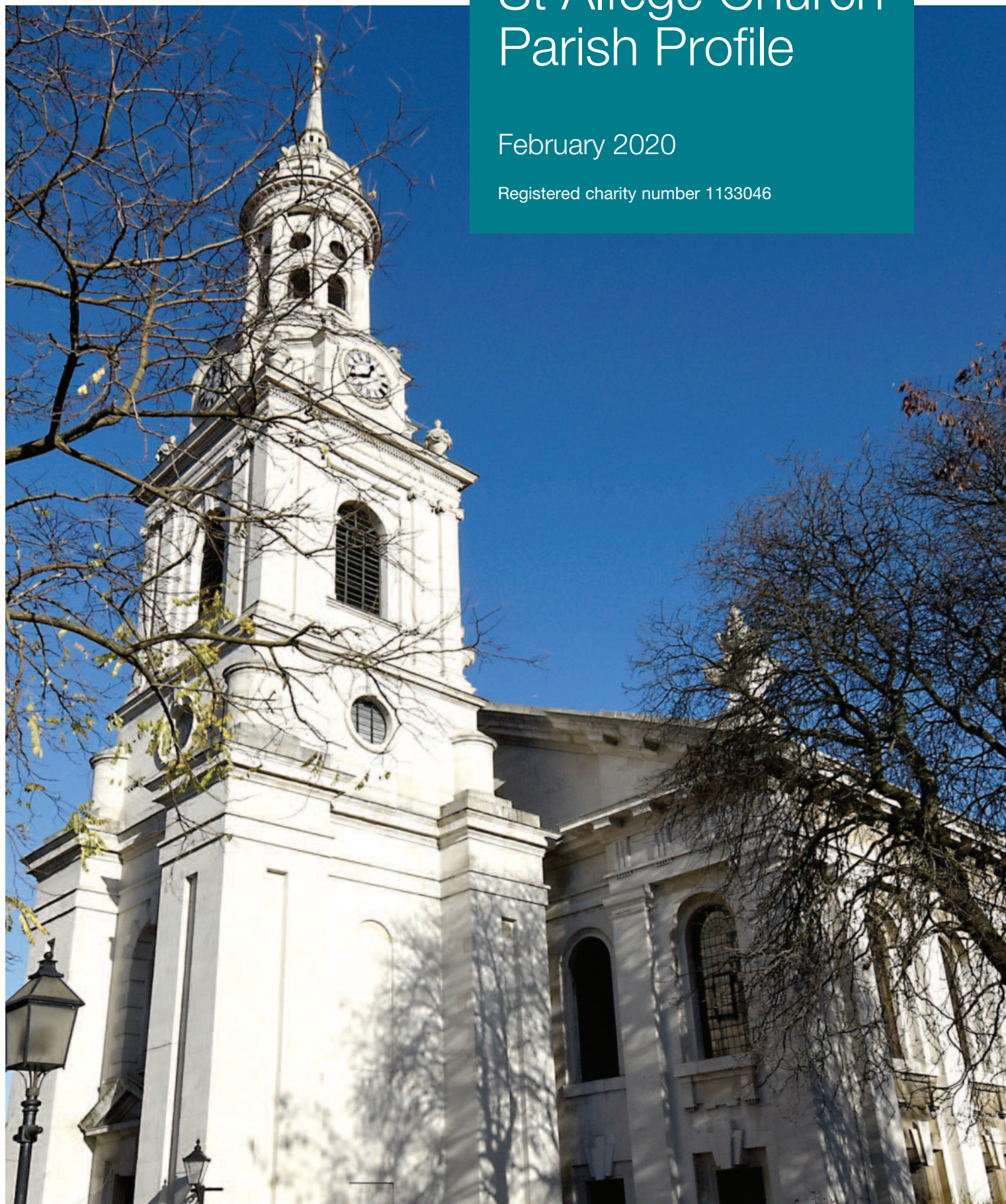


# St Alfege Church Parish Profile

February 2020

Registered charity number 1133046





## St Alfege Church

We are an inclusive church, welcoming to everyone, offering a peaceful place for prayer and reflection, together with inspiring services of words and music.

St Alfege Church, a Crown living, is the Anglican parish church in the centre of Greenwich. It is a beautiful building, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, within a World Heritage Site and has a diverse congregation, a rich musical tradition and a thriving church school. There has been a church here for over a thousand years, dedicated to the memory of Alfege, the Archbishop of Canterbury who was martyred on this site in 1012. Today the church is known and loved for its uplifting services, beautiful music, and for its welcome to visitors and engagement in community life.

Our parish contains a wide social mix, ranging from the very affluent to the underprivileged. Some residents have lived in the community all their lives. There is also an increasing number of newcomers from other parts of London and far beyond. The parish welcomes a number of refugees and asylum seekers. Greenwich is a centre for tourism which brings many visitors to the church and its heritage. The University of Greenwich and Trinity College of Music brings temporary residents - young people from diverse backgrounds, some of whom are involved in the music of the church.

St Alfege Church plays a major role in the religious and cultural life of Greenwich. The average number of regular attenders is 182, (292 on the electoral roll; communicants 130) which does not reflect the very large number of people who pass through our doors each week, for concerts and recitals or as pilgrims or visitors. A volunteer programme helps the church to stay open every day between 11am and 4pm (noon on Sundays).



St Alfege Church congregation and choir

## Worship and Prayer at St Alfege Church

St Alfege is a central mainstream church. We are of the liberal catholic persuasion with the Eucharist at the centre of our acts of worship. At our main Sunday service, we follow Common Worship, Order One in traditional language and the Book of Common Prayer. Members of the congregation appreciate a stimulating sermon. The church is renowned for its quality of music, with an excellent choir (cathedral standard) which takes part in the main sung Eucharist on Sundays, monthly Evensong, Advent, Nine Lessons and Carols and other services. There is also a service of Holy Communion using the Book of Common Prayer at 8am on Sundays and on Thursday mornings.



Servers at 10am Parish Eucharist

## Parish Eucharist

Lay involvement in the church is very good. There are three lay ministers: two Readers and a Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary. Members of the congregation read lessons, prepare and lead the intercessions, serve at the altar, administer communion, run the Children's Church, arrange flowers, produce service and notice sheets, update the website and help maintain the general fabric and generally keep the church in good shape. A staff team (including some paid members of staff) looks after the administration of the church and hall, the music and special events and services. There are social activities (bring and share lunch at Harvest, for example) fund-raising activities (Friends of St Alfege) and some just for fun, like the recent Ceilidh organised by the Social Committee and held in the church hall. A group meets monthly to discuss and explore different aspects of the spiritual life. There is a wide range of professional skills in the congregation. Our PCC works with energy, care and dedication, supported by subgroups that include other members of the congregation. There is a stewardship programme to encourage planned giving on the part of the congregation, and a small investment income which serves the church well.

Following our successful application to secure funding from the National Lottery Heritage Lottery, we are about to complete vital repairs to the fabric, renovation and enhancement of the building and immediate surrounding area, highlighting the splendid work of architect Nicholas Hawksmoor, and providing improved facilities in and access to the church. The church will be in an excellent state of repair.

## Side Chapels

The church is open every day for visits, prayer and reflection.

St Alfege with St Peter Chapel (north chapel) – this side chapel is used for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and 8am Holy Communion on Thursdays.

The altar cloth was prepared by our children's church to mark the Millennium of St Alfege in 2012.

The Coventry Cross of Nails is also located in this chapel, as a sign of commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation through healing the wounds of history, learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity, and building a culture of peace.

There is also a votive stand for candles and the chapel provides a space for anyone to spend time in prayer or in quiet reflection.

Chapel of our Lady with St Paul (south Chapel) – a beautiful painting of Madonna and child by Patrizia Fineschi, an artist living in Siena, hangs in this chapel.



Lighting a candle



Children's Church

## Children at St Alfege Church

Families, children and young people are an integral part of life and worship at St Alfege Church. We aim to encourage and nurture children's spirituality through teaching and activity, as well as through familiarity with, and inclusion in, our weekly Eucharist.

Children's Church is more than a Sunday school. It is an increasingly large offshoot of the main church that enjoys a looser, family orientated, supportive environment.

It is led by knowledgeable volunteers and supported by adults and young people who enjoy the creative atmosphere.

This aspect of the church is popular and attracts young families. It is a developing and growing area in every way.

On the first Sunday of the month, there is a Family Eucharist in the church hall for children and their families and on the last Sunday of each month the whole congregation shares a Communion service together in the church. On the intervening Sundays, our children gather with their families for collective worship in the church hall and join the church congregation for the Eucharist at the appropriate time.



## The Chapel of St Peter and St Paul within the grounds of the Old Royal Naval College

The Chapel sits within the parish boundary and is a working church with its own schedule of services and events. Marriage registers are shared. Both the Chaplain (F/T) and Assistant Chaplain (SSM) are also licensed as Assistant Priests at St Alfege. There is also a retired priest with PTO who is also able to take services at St Alfege. The Chaplain is responsible for pastoral care and services for all who worship, study, work or visit Old Royal Naval College (ORNC).

The Chaplain's post is of incumbent status and the present post holder values the close working relationship between parish and ORNC. It has been the practice to meet regularly for mutual support and to plan joint services and enterprises such as the Lent course, marriage preparation and confirmation preparation. The Ash Wednesday service is held alternately at the Chapel and the parish Church. Good Friday devotions begin at the Chapel with the Liturgy of the Cross and then continue at St Alfege Church with some form of led meditations. Ascension Day is kept at the 8.00am said service at St Alfege. Midnight Mass is at the parish church with the Chaplain and Assistant Chaplain in attendance. Team members preach at least once a year at the services of the other.

## Trinity Hospital and Queen Elizabeth Almshouses

Clergy and Lay members of the congregation ensure that there are regular weekly services held for residents of the almshouses within the parish.



Young communicant from Children's Church

## Growing in faith

An Early Admission to Communion Class is provided where children aged eight and over can learn about Holy Communion in preparation to join the regular congregation in taking communion each week. For young people over the age of 12 together with adults, we run classes to prepare for confirmation.

We are aware and concerned that although we are blessed with an all-age congregation there are fewer young people between the ages of 13 and 20 and the church would love to consider youth work for the future.

**Okutendereza mu Luganda** - A service in Luganda is held every second Sunday of the month at 3pm in the church. This is an Anglican service organised under a Bishop's Mission Order and led by Okutendereza mu Luganda, a fellowship of Luganda speakers from Uganda and Rwanda. Many people travel from neighbouring London boroughs and everyone is welcome. The Luganda Church community has also organised seminars on various topics including Knife Crime Prevention.

## Music

The present church choir, one of the finest of its type in the UK, is an excellent mixed-voice choir with over 30 members led by the Director of Music. The Assistant Organist accompanies the choir and liturgy week by week. The repertoire of sacred music ranges from the 16th to the 21st centuries. The choir sings to a cathedral standard every week at the sung Eucharist on Sunday and Choral Evensong.

St Alfege Church regularly hosts recitals and concerts with free lunchtime concerts every Thursday and most Saturdays at 1.05pm. These are mainly given by students of the locally based Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, as well as other musicians. The Thomas Tallis Society Choir and Orchestra is closely connected with our church.

St Alfege Church has a peal of 10 bells which are rung for Sunday services and for weddings and other special events and occasions.



St Alfege Church choir



Free lunchtime recitals



Children's Church

## Safeguarding children and adults at risk

St Alfege Church works to provide a safe environment for the whole church family. We aim to be a place where children and young people are nurtured and protected, where all people, and especially those who may be vulnerable for any reason, are able to worship and pursue their faith journey with encouragement and in safety.

We follow the national legal and procedural framework for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and Church of England policy and practice. We have trained safeguarding officers for St Alfege Church.

We provide safe recruitment, training and support to our voluntary and paid workers with children and vulnerable adults. This includes DBS checks for all our Children's Church leaders. We also hold relevant safeguarding training annually for our many volunteers and have run first aid and mental health awareness courses.

## Outreach

Volunteers from our church work with the 999 Club in Deptford to provide hot meals for the homeless twice a week throughout the year. There are also donations for the local foodbank and people give generously to a number of different causes. The church facilitates the Meridian Money Advice Centre, with rent free accommodation, to work with the community giving financial support and advice.

Many local schools visit both as part of their curriculum or to take part in the Christmas Journey. There is a summer lunch club (during school holidays) with food provided by donations from the congregation and prepared and organised by a small group of volunteers.

Information about worship, concerts, recitals and other activities is promoted widely across the parish and beyond through a recently updated website, digital marketing and printed materials. This ensures a high turnout to many events throughout the year and help to swell our numbers to several hundred on special occasions. Every year the church organises a project called Advent Windows across the town centre when 24 windows are created by local people, shops and schools in the lead up to Christmas.

The incumbent is the direct representative, or delegates to named others, for the following:

- Chaplaincy at Queen Elizabeth almshouses (Drapers Company)
- Chaplaincy at Trinity Hospital, (Mercers Company)
- Ex officio trustee of the William Boreman Trust, educational charity; Ex officio trustee of the Penn and Widow Smith Almshouses; Ex officio trustee of the Hatcliffe Estates Charity. Ex officio Trustee of the Greenwich Charities.
- The most significant commitment the incumbent must have is as an ex officio school governor for St Alfege with St Peter School.



Advent window

## St Alfege with St Peter's Church of England Primary School

St Alfege with St Peter CofE Primary School is our church school. Members of the clergy (two) and congregation (six) give their time generously as governors leading the school strategically. The clergy, a lay reader and the Chair of Governors regularly take assemblies, and other governors from the church make regular visits to the school. Monthly school family services are held in the church which are led by a different year group along with clergy and others in the church. This brings new families into the church. There are also special services for the whole school at Christmas, Easter and end of the school year.

We are very pleased that following the recent SIAMS inspection as a Church of England School, St Alfege with St Peter's has been deemed 'Outstanding'. Outcomes in 2019 are in the top 20 per cent nationally.



## Our church hall

This is a great asset which is used every day of the week. On weekdays, we have regular events and classes such as Monkey Music and Baby Ballet for babies and toddlers and Taekwondo and Karate for teenagers and adults. The kitchen is used to cook for the 999 Club (homeless shelter). The Greenwich Community Police use the Frank Smith Room for a regular community surgery/drop-in. The hall is also used for meetings of the local residents' association.

The hall is used for children's parties at weekends, for receptions for concerts and recitals, and for receptions after weddings and baptisms in church. It is also used for church and charity social functions.



North courtyard and new entrance

## Heart of Greenwich Place and People project

Following our successful application to secure just over £1.8m from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, we are now implementing our Heart of Greenwich Place and People project. Building restoration and access works will be completed in early 2020. This will make our church more accessible to a greater number of people.

The project aims to reinforce the church's position as a heritage asset at the heart of Greenwich, reveal and interpret our hidden spaces and heritage for visitors, school children, their families and a diverse local community. Vital repairs to the fabric are bringing to light the splendid work of Nicholas Hawksmoor, improving access to and facilities in the church. Landscaping including a community memorial garden, signage and interpretation will be enhanced. The project will offer a comprehensive programme of community engagement activities in the future.



Heart of Greenwich Place and People



Crypt tour





New access ramp

## Volunteering at St Alfege Church

People come from all over the world to visit St Alfege Church. They come to find silence or to pray, to follow up family connections with the church, to see its beautiful architecture, and to find out about the history of the many famous people associated with the building such as St Alfege himself, Henry VIII, Thomas Tallis and General Wolfe.

We have a team of enthusiastic volunteers who keep the church open every day and who provide a warm welcome and helpful information to visitors. Volunteers work in two or three-hour slots either regularly every week or month or occasionally as and when they are available. From Spring 2020, hidden spaces volunteer guides will provide tours of our crypt and bell ringing chamber. Training and support is given.

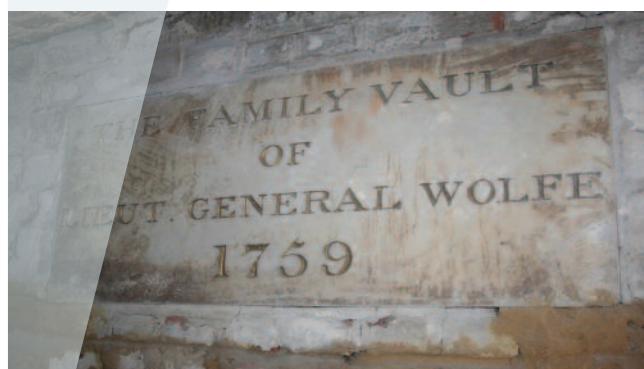
We also rely on the skills, time and enthusiasm of members of the congregation to run services, to keep the church looking beautiful and to help the community.

## A thousand years of history

History at St Alfege Church begins in 1012 when Alfege, Archbishop of Canterbury, was taken hostage by Viking warriors after they burnt down his cathedral during a raid on the city. He was taken to Greenwich, his captors hoping to ransom him for 3,000 gold marks, a huge sum of money. St Alfege refused to be ransomed, knowing it could mean starvation for many of his people, and as a result he was martyred. In the floor of the church in front of the altar, you can see his memorial, inscribed with the words: 'He who dies for justice, dies for Christ' (St Anselm).



St Alfege memorial stone



Family vault of General James Wolfe



Thomas Tallis stained glass window

The murder of Alfege, here in Greenwich, led to the building of the first church. It was rebuilt in the 13th century, and later, with Greenwich Palace not far away, was fortunate to have Thomas Tallis as church organist. It is also believed that Henry VIII was baptized here.

When the roof collapsed, the medieval church was replaced in 1718 by the present building, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor.

Bombing in the Second World War led to a second roof collapse, and a wholesale restoration of the interior. The church was rededicated in 1953. Among the extraordinary cast of characters buried in the crypt and graveyard is General James Wolfe, victor of Quebec.

Heritage at St Alfege Church is as much about the living as the dead. We may not know exactly where Tallis is buried beneath the chancel, but his music is still regularly sung by the choir as it has been in the past. 2012 was marked not just by the London Olympics, but by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, leading a special millennium service in the church, with a recreated Anglo-Saxon village outside taking us back to the days of St

Alfege. Those who remember the Blitz, and saw the church burning, or those who sheltered in the crypt, have given powerful first-hand accounts of their experiences to Open Church volunteers. Those with happier memories or who come from all over the world to research their family histories, are equally welcome to tell their stories.

## Family history

Over the years, thousands of people have been baptized, married or had their funeral service in St Alfege Church. We very much welcome visits and enquiries from people who are following up a treasured family connection with the church.

There is a small number of memorials to people associated with the church in the church itself and there are many gravestones in the churchyard and burial ground. It should be noted that it is not easy to locate particular gravestones and the inscriptions on many have weathered away. There are over 1,000 bodies buried in 64 vaults in the Crypt. Each vault has the name of the first person to be interred there.

## Charlton Deanery

Charlton Deanery is a small but active deanery with churches and congregations which reflect the diversity of the local communities. There are 11 churches and nine parishes in the deanery with St Alfege Church sitting in the northwest corner. It is currently seeing huge growth in population with several significant redevelopments and the resulting new communities. An active Deanery Leadership Team aims to lead the deanery forward as the Diocese of Southwark encourages a deanery focus on mission and ministry. The Charlton Deanery has a simple Mission Action Plan which includes aiming to become an eco deanery, planning a deanery wide holiday hunger project and continuing the successful Charlton Deanery schools project.



# St Alfege Church Mission Action Plan

## TELL Proclaiming the Good News

- Church noticeboards
- Church website (which includes sermons)
- Leaflets delivered throughout the parish, a monthly e-newsletter and social media
- Individuals spread the news through their workplaces
- Wider outreach to local community for major festivals e.g. Mothering Sunday, Harvest
- Visits from schools to learn about Christianity
- Advent windows across the centre of Greenwich

**Development** – Improved noticeboards and information for visitors to the church

## TEACH Nurturing new believers

- Children's Church
- Visits by local primary schools
- Assemblies led by members of our clergy and others at our church school
- Services for church school and other schools held in church
- Links with the education programme for Heart of Greenwich project
- Christmas Journey
- Lenten course

**Development** – develop an Easter Journey; make education programme more widely known; youth involvement; children's community choir

## TEND Responding to Human Need

- Home visits for sick, elderly, housebound and lonely
- Summer Holiday Club (lunch provided)
- 999 Club – providing food, volunteer cooks and servers
- Food Bank Hub
- Social events

**Development** – access to pastoral care when the church is open 11am to 4.00pm; response to national issues/concerns

## TRANSFORM Working for peace and justice

- An inclusive church welcoming everyone
- Member of the Community of the Cross of Nails and committed to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation by healing the wounds of history, learning to live with difference, celebrating diversity and by building a culture of peace
- Working with other partners to respond to the homeless, the hungry and refugees

**Development** – to work closely with the deanery, diocese, government and others to fight injustice

## TREASURE Safeguarding God's creation

- Buying from Fairtrade
- Raising and sharing awareness of waste, use of plastic, global warming etc.
- Providing outside space with trees and plants for relaxation and reflection

**Development** – work towards eco-church bronze award; continue to raise awareness of the dangers to our planet and sharing suggestions for changes to individual lifestyles; create a community memorial garden

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### **St Alfege Church**

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