



The Parish Church of
St James Weybridge
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Rector: The Revd. Father Damian Harrison-Miles, BTh.



Damian Harrison-Miles – Rector of Weybridge

updated June 2023

Who I am and how did I end up a Vicar?

I was born in Leeds, Yorkshire but grew up in Hastings, East Sussex where my family attended Christchurch St Leonards (affectionately known as the Cathedral of the South Coast). After attending Bexhill High School and Bexhill College I spent a year at Huddersfield University studying food and catering management before taking a post with the Child Support Agency where I became a Civil Servant (Executive Officer) and staff counsellor. I was blessed to worship at St John's Upper St Leonards, with great encouragement to foster my vocation from Jeff Hopkin Williams – now Vicar of St Mary's Twickenham. Following a selection conference in 1998 I read Theology at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge / Westcott House and graduated with a BTh (2:1) in June 2002. My tutor at Cambridge was the inspiring Canon Angela Tilby.

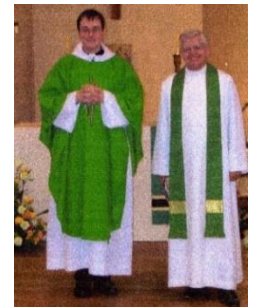


I was made a Deacon in Chichester Cathedral on Sunday 28th June 2002 by Bishop John Hind and served my curacy at St Mary the Virgin Willingdon for 4 years with the brilliant (and sadly late) Martin Onions. I was blessed to minister alongside and learn from the lovely David Wilcox, former Bishop of Dorking, who had recently retired to Willingdon and is a great inspiration. I was ordained priest at St Andrew's Church Eastbourne on Sunday 29th June 2003 by Bishop Wallace Benn and served as his interim chaplain from February to October of the same year.

In 2006 I was appointed Priest in Charge of St Paul, Nork in Epsom Deanery, where I had a busy and happy 4 years.

Here I began work as a local vocation's advisor for Guildford Diocese, helping people take their first steps towards ordination, which I continue to do today. In 2010 the Holy Spirit (and the then Bishop of Guildford) prompted me to think about a move.

At Candlemas 2011, I was licensed as Priest in Charge of beautiful St Mary's Church, Thorpe in Runnymede Deanery. There were many challenges to overcome from significant fundraising, to overseeing building works including new church heating and LED lighting, re-pointing many sections of the Medieval walls, refurbishment of the halls complex and even installing an additional 4 bells in celebration of Magna Carta 800. We upgraded footpaths around the building, created accessible entrances for all and a patio area beside our hall to improve the outdoor realm and safe spaces for socially distanced activities! We even introduced an outdoor sound system for use at events, Christmas, and funerals. We fitted projection and other IT facilities inside the church to help enhance the liturgical worship. A top priority was to grow the congregation, introducing worship for all ages and renewing community relationships. The community financed and built a Thorpe CofE Primary School where I served as deputy chair of governors. I was also a Training Incumbent, first seeing Gerard Mee through his STETS training at Salisbury before he became assistant curate and then Jo Winn-Smith, who was made deacon in July 2019.



In June 2015 I was Inducted as Vicar of Thorpe by the Bishop of Guildford, reflecting the progress we had made. That was before Covid struck and the church, like others was closed for long periods and worship moved online. As part of a brilliant team, we worked hard to pastor the community



through tough times and begin the re-grow post pandemic. We have launched various initiatives among families with children, from Faith & Fun Groups after school at Thorpe Primary, to a Lego Club, along with fortnightly Family Services with a gentler approach. I loved living in Thorpe and the community were so supportive, inclusive, and generous.



St James' Church, Weybridge

In November 2022, The Lord Chancellor announced that I had been appointed as the next Rector of St James Weybridge. So, a new season of ministry began, as we moved to The Rectory in mid-January, with my induction and collation held later that month, led by the Bishop of Guildford, including a declaration by King Charles III. It has been a joy to get to know the St James' Church family and work with Louise Bishop, who served as Curate until June 2023. We hope to have a new stipendiary Curate serve with us at St James from July 2024. In Weybridge I serve as a governor at St James CofE Primary School where I lead worship weekly. I have also started a Lego Club at St James! I love the Choral tradition of this community, and an extensive social calendar of events and activities. St James' is a busy inclusive church!



Family Life

My husband Jason and I entered a Civil Partnership in 2016, and have since adopted two children, and we also have two cats and fish. Jason works in marketing and admissions for a large independent school in Surrey. Family life is very important to us, and our children are the life and soul of the party! We enjoy many hobbies, among them the Rectory Garden, part of which is left wild, with fruit trees and a nature walk, and part is dedicated to growing vegetables. This year we hope to enjoy the fruits of our labour including potatoes, beans, spinach, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, peppers and much more. We have a box of vegetables delivered fortnightly and are committed to living as much as we can in hand with God's creation. And all love cooking! I am passionate about our environment and champion recycling, and I wish to see a significant reduction in plastic waste. I am committed to Eco Church and St James' PCC has begun the process of working towards our first Eco Church award – and there is so much to be done as we seek net zero carbon emissions, which will not be easy with a beautiful and yet challenging Victorian building! New heating and lighting will help us achieve this and perhaps even reduce our costs.



The Wider Church

For the past four years I have served as the Rector of the Society of Catholic Priests (SCP) in the Diocese of Guildford, a growing international society of women and men serving as priests, deacons, and consecrated religious throughout the Anglican Communion. The Society aims to promote priestly spirituality and catholic evangelism which is very much at the heart of my call as a priest in God's Church. I have also served on Guildford Diocesan Synod for many years, up to January 2023. I am also a long-standing member of the Unite Union and encourage all clergy to join!

In life and ministry, by the grace of God I seek to equip all people, lay and ordained, of all ages and traditions, to play an active part in the life of the church as disciples. Affiliated to Inclusive Church, at St James' we live out the call of Christ to be one, in all our diversity; one family of faith at the heart of Weybridge Town Centre. Perhaps God is calling you to join us too? I certainly hope to see you soon. Do drop me an email if you would like a chat: damomiles@btinternet.com.

Pictures show St James' Church, Weybridge, June 2023.

