



THE PARISH OF ST MARY AND ST EANSWYTHE WITH ST SAVIOUR, FOLKESTONE

PARISH PROFILE 2024

Our Mission Statement

The Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe exists to make Jesus Christ known in Folkestone through its worship, its fellowship and its mission. It looks to encourage its members and the people of the community of which it is a part, to realise their full potential as children of God.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	1
COULD YOU BE OUR NEW PRIEST?	2
OUR VISION	2
BUILDING ON OVER 1400 YEARS OF SERVICE	3
SOME CONTEXT.....	4
THE DIOCESE AND DEANERY	4
THE PARISH	5
FOLKESTONE	5
OUR WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY	6
CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS	7
OUTREACH.....	8
The Friends of St Mary and St Eanswythe.....	9
THE BUILDINGS	10
APPENDIX 1	11
ST MARY AND ST EANSWYTHE PRIORITIES	11
APPENDIX 2.....	14
ST EANSWYTHE AND OUR CHURCH HERITAGE	14
St Eanswythe's Relics.....	14

COULD YOU BE OUR NEW PRIEST?

We are looking for an experienced priest, a clear preacher who will uphold our broadly Liberal-Catholic tradition, someone

- Who is enthusiastic and a team player; someone who is comfortable managing multiple projects, delegating, working with teams, and developing the ministry of the whole church.
- Someone who will embrace the vision we have created.
- With a vision for St Mary and St Eanswythe's church to be a thriving hub at the heart of the community for the people of Folkestone – meeting the spiritual needs of the town, and who is keen to work with neighbouring parishes and other denominations in the local area, taking a lead role in specific events that further our Mission and Ministry in the area.
- With a passion for education, to maintain strong links with our parish schools and with a love of children and an ability to relate well to them.
- With a pastoral heart for the whole parish enabling us to make a journey together which will help us to achieve our priorities of ethos, welcome, worship, spirituality, pilgrimage, the arts, children, and social care.

OUR VISION

- To reach out to those who don't know Christ and to be an inclusive church, continually growing the congregation and welcoming people of all ages including those who have left primary education.
- To enable all members of the congregation to grow in the understanding of our faith and join in fellowship around the altar and at social gatherings rejoicing in each other's talents.
- To celebrate our history and heritage, especially with the increasing awareness of St Eanswythe, and to help us develop the shrine of Eanswythe as a centre for pilgrimage and to promote her significance.
- To recognise the many opportunities for mission and ministry to each other, to our parish population, and to the church in the wider world so that we can realise our full potential as children of God whilst maintaining our eucharistic and musical heritage.
- To further develop and support our trained Pastoral Care Team who reach out to the community, and a healing and wholeness ministry of listening.

See **Appendix 1** for our mission and ministry priorities.

BUILDING ON OVER 1400 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe¹ is in the heart of Folkestone. Christian worship has been offered on or near the site since 650 AD. Our faith is what brings us to our church. The Liberal-Catholic tradition underpins our main worship and is what brings many people to us, but to cater for all tastes we want a priest to introduce family services to work alongside our existing services.

The present church was founded and dedicated to St Mary and St Eanswythe in 1138. The relics of St Eanswythe were translated from the old building to the new, which now forms the basis of the current Chancel, on 12th September that year, the date we still keep as one of our Patronal Festivals, the other for St Mary is also held in September. St Eanswythe's relics, assumed lost at the time of the Reformation, were rediscovered in 1885 and are kept in a niche behind a brass door in the north wall of the Sanctuary at the High Altar. See **Appendix 2** for the whole story of St Eanswythe.

St Eanswythe is also Folkestone's patron saint. She served in ways that were new for her time and we want to follow her example. We want to use our resources for everyone in our parish. Our parish expands northwards with part of the former parish of St Saviour, and we need to involve that part of Folkestone much more so that we can continue to serve all people and make God's love a reality for them, as Eanswythe did for those around her. The now well-established Companions of St Eanswythe, which aims to use the monastic wisdom of Lectio Divina and Contemplation for spiritual growth, has a diverse membership from a variety of backgrounds and should be expanded.



The St Eanswythe window depicting two of her miracles



St Eanswythe ministering to the poor

Our mission and ministry reach beyond the confines of our building, beyond our regular congregation and even beyond the confines of our denomination and faith, welcoming as we do people of all faiths and none. The warm welcome people from the community receive when they visit the church or attend occasional offices has encouraged them to join the congregation to develop and explore their faith.

¹ Eanswythe – pronounced 'eans-with'



Scientists at work, conserving the relics of St Eanswythe



The proposed new reliquary for St Eanswythe

During the past four years this church has gone from strength to strength and is really on the map. This is due to many factors, but includes the scientific proof that our relics of St Eanswythe are genuine, together with the design and commissioning of the new reliquary for St Eanswythe – and the worldwide media coverage from these attracted a great deal of interest.

In January of this year hundreds of members of the community attended the funeral and burial of a young boy, which along with the news that the King would give his permission for the burial to take place in our graveyard (closed for burials for over 170 years) made headlines across the UK; also, the unexpected opportunities that resulted from Lockdown and the pandemic have led to us continuing to livestream our services every week. These and other things have resulted in our church being well known, far and wide. People have heard of us and they come to visit.

SOME CONTEXT

THE DIOCESE AND DEANERY

The Bishop and Archdeacon have provided some information on the diocese and this post in their *Diocesan Introduction* document which you can find in the recruitment pack.

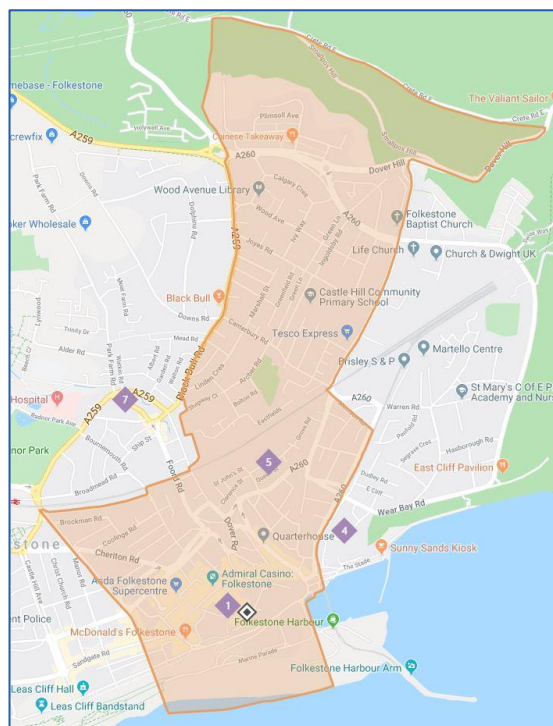


Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES → CHANGING LIVES

THE PARISH

The parish stretches from the sea front right up to the top of the North Downs. To the east is the parish of St Peter, to the west Holy Trinity, and the parish of St John lies to the north west. Approximately 13,800 people live within the parish, which is the 341st most deprived out of 12,239 in the country.²

The church is situated in the town centre with virtually all shops lying within the parish. To the east is the historic Bayle area where the forerunners of the present church were situated. We are part of the community in Folkestone, playing a full part in the life of the town and the wider church.



FOLKESTONE



Folkestone is a former port town on the English Channel, in Kent, southeast England lying on the southern edge of the North Downs at a valley between two cliffs. It was an important harbour and shipping port for most of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The town of has a population of some 52,000. It is served by the four major supermarket chains, and the usual mix of national and local shops and restaurants. The Creative Quarter and Old High Street house numerous artists' studios, quirky shops, and award-winning restaurants. There is a thriving arts scene, with the Triennial displaying the largest exhibition of newly commissioned art work presented in the UK. The Quarterhouse is a performing arts venue, which also houses the annual Book Festival, and the Tower Theatre produces a wide range of performances and is home to the Folkestone and Hythe Operatic and Dramatic Society. Folkestone is Britain's (and the world's) first Music Town and this year is holding a Music in May Festival 'to celebrate all things music'. It has a two-screen cinema and several civic and historical societies.

Folkestone and the surrounding area have a good selection of schools and further education facilities. It has excellent leisure facilities including a sports centre and the world's first multi-storey skate park, where there is also a climbing wall. The Royal Victoria Hospital is a community hospital with a walk-in centre and various outpatient clinics, while the major hospitals are in Ashford, Canterbury, and Margate.

² For clarity, 1 is the most deprived and 12,239 the least deprived.

There are good transport links with the M20 motorway and London is less than an hour away by high-speed train. The Channel Tunnel (on the outskirts of the town), and the Dover ferries (7 miles), link us to the Continent; Canterbury is only 16 miles away.

The Harbour area has undergone considerable regeneration in the past few years. After extensive renovation of the old station and surrounding area, the Harbour Arm has been reopened for leisure, with numerous places to eat. One thousand dwellings are due to be built on the sea front over the next decade or so, most of these being in our parish, giving a great deal of scope for increasing our numbers.

Recently the [Sunday Times](#) reported that Folkestone was the best place to live in Southeast England.



OUR WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

Our 10.30am Sunday Sung Eucharist is based on Common Worship. This pattern of worship has enabled us to maintain a loyal core congregation. At all celebrations of the Eucharist the celebrant is fully robed and incense is used on major feasts including both our Patronal Festivals in September. We are fortunate to have the support and assistance of a retired priest and an Authorised Lay Minister, who is a Reader in Training. Music is a fundamental part of our worship and we want a priest to help us develop this further. The



small adult choir sings at the 10.30 Eucharist on Sundays – held in the Nave – and at weekday evening celebrations, which take place in the ancient Chancel flanked by the Lady and St Eanswythe's Chapels – both special places of prayer used during the week.

A regular weekday Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion service is celebrated at 10.30 a.m. each Thursday. Our Pastoral Care Team administers communion to those who are housebound or ill and is an important part of our ministry.

We have a thriving Children's Church, which meets once a month and we want a priest to help us to develop this even further.

Our livestreamed services (on Facebook) continued after the pandemic because they receive a large enough audience to make them worthwhile – we know that at least two nursing homes show our services to their residents, who are not able to attend church. Sermons at our Sunday Eucharist services are also recorded and placed on our website shortly after the service.

We encourage our congregation to offer their time, talents, and abilities in building up our church, as our mission statement makes clear. There are Discussion Groups during Lent and Advent, and parish lunches are held after the Sunday Eucharist on several occasions during the year.

The church is currently open for visitors on Wednesdays to Saturdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm, and we hope to extend these hours during the summer. Church welcomers are at hand and visitors can write prayer cards in St Eanswythe's Chapel.

The electoral roll now stands at 69. In 2023 there were 9 baptisms and 6 weddings; there were also 2 funerals, neither of which were in the church. In April 2024 11 children and 3 adults were confirmed in the church by Bishop Rose.

Like most churches we find it challenging to raise the money we need. We need to find new and different ways to encourage and increase giving from our congregation and the community. We have a Planned Giving scheme, and the Widow's Mite scheme encourages regular giving of small amounts; the latter is popular with members of the local community who may not be churchgoers but value the building and all it stands for. A copy of the 2023 accounts is available on request from the Parish Office.³

Rendezvous, the church's monthly magazine is distributed to parishioners and some local businesses. It is also available on the church website:

www.stmaryandsteanswythe.org/rendezvous

CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

Our work with children, whom we recognise as the present and future of our church, continues to flourish, and we want a priest to help us to develop this further. All children are welcomed to our services and we have a thriving children's church, which meets monthly. We would also like to encourage children and young people to sing in our church choir.



³ The Parish Office may be contacted at sainteanswythe@gmail.com or 01303 252947 (Tuesday 10-4, Thursday 9-11)

Two Church of England primary schools fall within the parish, St Mary's (approx. 420 pupils) and St Eanswythe's (approx. 210 pupils). The children are welcomed to church regularly for major festivals, including the Christmas Carol Service, and at the end of the summer term. St Eanswythe's school is adjacent to the churchyard and the children see the church as an extension of the school. Several children from the schools are confirmed each year. We would like to develop even closer links with our two church schools.

OUTREACH



The annual Civic Service held in the church on what is known as Town Sunday in June, is attended by the newly elected Folkestone Town Mayor after being sworn in at the historic Town Cross situated in the churchyard.

The church is happy to welcome other organisations for special occasions such as the Town Mayor's Carol Service for Year six pupils, the Harvey Grammar School Carol Service and visiting groups of Pilgrims and students.

In May each year the church hosts the Sacconi Chamber Music Festival curated by the Sacconi Quartet. The church, in partnership with Bayle Music, hosts a regular series of Sunday afternoon concerts. Performers include a mix of national and international professionals and young musicians whose talents and enthusiasm bring vibrancy to the church and town. The Festival and concert series contributed around £2,700 to church funds in the year ending December 2023.

For several years there has been a Living Advent Calendar and each year our church door has been the venue for Christmas Eve, drawing huge crowds of people to hear the choir sing carols and to enjoy mince pies. This is in addition to our traditional Christmas Eve Crib Service and Midnight Eucharist.

We also host art and photographic exhibitions showcasing local work. The church has developed a positive relationship with the town's Creative Quarter – an initiative which has seen the renaissance of the nearby Old High Street as a centre of artistic endeavour. The church hosted an installation for the 2011 Folkestone Triennial, which turned out to be the most visited, and now hosts the Creative Quarter's annual Carol Service.

Over the past two years we have been hosting popular Saturday morning sessions for the Ukrainians living in the district, allowing them space to meet and share both news and experiences. Folkestone Rotary Club and members of the Inner wheel provide and serve refreshments. In January of this year they held a Ukrainian Winter Fair and Traditional

Ukrainian food was served and there was lots of entertainment. More recently, some of the Ukrainians have started coming on a Monday afternoon for conversational English lessons.



We are planning a week of Festival on 7-12 September to celebrate St Eanswythe and the installation of her bones in the niche within the new reliquary. The local community will be involved with various activities, and we also hold a Christmas Festival in December. Both these events will bring in many non-churchgoing members of the community and help to raise much-needed funds.

We hope that the new heating system will encourage even greater use of the church for concerts and other events. We have used our building well for outreach locally and there is scope for more. We now need to find ways to take our faith out to the whole parish, especially to those who are more distant from the town centre and may be unaware that we are their parish church. The Rainbow Centre (a Christian charity which supports vulnerable people facing hardship and homelessness, those in debt or in need of food) is in our parish and we want to expand our involvement and engagement with it.

The Friends of St Mary and St Eanswythe

This group was established in 2014 with the constitutional objective of *the restoration, repair, maintenance, improvement and beautification of the Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe and of the monuments, fittings, fixtures, stained glass, furniture, ornaments and chattels in the church and churchyard, belonging to the church.*

We maintain an excellent relationship with the Friends whose generosity enables us to provide many things in the church, which we could not otherwise afford to do. For example, it is thanks to the Friends that we have the beautiful wooden counter, which is used for the serving of refreshments after services and at concerts.

THE BUILDINGS

St Mary and St Eanswythe church is in a reasonable external state of repair, although damage caused by water ingress is still in need of attention. The internal decoration and stained glass are acknowledged as some of the finest examples of Victorian craftsmanship created by leading specialists of the era. The church has the only full ring of bells in town and an active team who ring on Sundays before the Eucharist and on other festivals and special occasions. The church also has a fine three-manual pneumatic action organ by Hill dating from 1894. However, it needs a significant amount of work to restore it to its former glory; this will be costly and require fundraising from community and grant applications. A new electric heating system has just been installed and will be welcomed by all who use the church. There are no plans to reorder the building.

The chapel of **St Augustine's church** (about ten minutes' walk from the church) is shared with the Greek Orthodox community but has no regular Anglican worship. The rooms are available for hire and the building is managed by a Trust of which the Incumbent and Churchwardens of St Mary and St Eanswythe are ex-officio members.

The Vicarage, built in the mid 1960s, is in good repair with gas central heating and magnificent views of the sea and France. The property has five bedrooms, two reception rooms, kitchen, bathroom, downstairs cloakroom, and study. There is a cellar, an underground garage with parking space on the access slope, a small front garden, and a courtyard garden at the back from which a gate leads directly into the churchyard.



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Saint Eanswythe

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APPENDIX 1

ST MARY AND ST EANSWYTHE PRIORITIES

These priorities will determine where our resources and energy will go during the next five years. The *Actions* have been endorsed by the whole PCC.

Ethos

We aim to embed an ethos that is kind, appreciative and co-operative in which difference is valued, initiative is rewarded and mistakes are treated humanely.

Actions

- Support individuals and teams in developing projects and running them
- Express gratitude both publicly and privately
- Celebrate special moments

Measures

- People feel relaxed and good-humoured
- People feel included and able to have a go at things
- Suggestions are made positively
- Difference of opinion is expressed constructively

Welcome

We want people to feel welcome whenever they come to church.

Actions

- Support our Sidesperson and Welcome teams
- Invite visitors to stay for coffee and to join in the life of the church
- Maintain and give out a Welcome Pack for visitors
- Develop the Pastoral Care Team
- Bring and share lunch every three months

Measures

- The numbers of people who try us out and decide to stay
- Increasing numbers of volunteers
- The Welcome Pack made available

Worship

We aim to enrich our choral, Liberal-Catholic approach to worship.

Actions

- Maintain the tradition of our Sunday morning worship
- Support our Musical Director to strengthen the choir and its repertoire
- Launch a service that uses liturgy, symbolism, the senses, and the arts in an informal and contemporary way
- Provide high-quality care through Occasional Offices

Measures

- Increase in attendance, baptisms, confirmations, and choir
- Launching a contemporary service

Spirituality

We wish to offer support for people on their spiritual journey.

Actions

- Offering reflective sermons
- Offering Lent and Advent Courses
- Offering monastic spiritual traditions like Lectio Divina and Contemplative prayer through The Companions of Eanswythe
- Offering seminars at our St Eanswythe Festival
- Offering prayers for healing and wholeness

Measures

- The number of people who access these groups and sessions

Pilgrimage

We want to develop our church as a centre for pilgrimage.

Actions

- To cost the 'Eanswythe Found' project
- Fundraise for the project
- Develop partnerships with other churches and organisations

Measures

- Accurate bids and fundraising for every aspect of the project from a variety of sources
- Increasing pilgrimage visits
- Increasing income

The Arts

We would like our church to continue to host the Arts

Actions

- To develop our close partnerships with Bayle Music, the Sacconi Quartet, the Creative Quarter, and other artists in Folkestone
- To host more concerts, performances, exhibitions, and community events
- To continue to offer worship events for our wider town community

Measures

- Numbers of events
- Increased footfall or attendance
- Increased income

Children

We aim to bring God's love to children both in our church schools, and in our parish worship

Actions

- Support our Children's Church team
- Support our two church primary schools through Collective Worship, governance, and participation in church events

Measures

- Numbers of families engaging with Children's Church
- The strengthening of Christian values in our schools in their leadership transitions
- Increasing school events in our church
- Church members becoming governors

Social Care

We want to support people going through challenging times.

Actions

- Continue to host our Ukrainian Welcome event, and support the volunteers who deliver it
- Make our support of the Rainbow Centre far more high-profile
- Co-operate better with Churches Together in Folkestone in their social care projects

Measures

- Increased giving for social care projects
- Increasing numbers of volunteers from our church community for social care events or programmes

APPENDIX 2

ST EANSWYTHE⁴ AND OUR CHURCH HERITAGE

Our patronal saint Eanswythe was a Kentish princess who founded her Minster in Folkestone c650. Following the carbon dating and isotopic analysis of her bones discovered in the church in 1885, the completion of the Finding Eanswythe project (a lottery funded partnership involving Canterbury Christ Church University and Canterbury Archaeological Trust) then moved on to become Eanswythe Found with further research into Eanswythe and our church.

St Eanswythe's Relics

In 1885 whilst preparing the Sanctuary walls for the alabaster arcading a lead casket was discovered buried in the north wall. The bones were examined and judged to be the bones of a young woman. The conclusion was that these were the lost remains of St Eanswythe, a Kentish Princess and founder of a Benedictine Minster for women in Folkestone in around 650. The bones were re-examined in 1980 but no further information resulted. We wanted to take advantage of scientific developments to find out more so a Faculty was granted for the examination of the Relics and Reliquary, the latter not having been looked at for over 100 years. Over three days in January 2020 in a locked church a team of specialists examined both and confirmed that the bones were all from the same skeleton. Further information from Carbon Dating pointed to death around 660 and Isotopic Analysis showed that she grew up on a diet with meat and freshwater fish, so not a local (the Kentish Royal Family were based in Canterbury and Lyminge) and the diet suggests someone of high status. The Reliquary is a 9th century originally oval lead vessel that has at some stage been squashed into a roughly rectangular shape, maybe when it was hidden in the wall at the Reformation. The bottom had rotted out of it whilst it was hidden and a wooden tray had been fitted as a base in 1885. It is no longer fit to contain the relics so a new design has been created and approved following an international competition. A Go Fund Me campaign was set up to raise the required £9,000 and this was exceeded within 10 days – amazingly over half of the amount came from members of an Orthodox community in the USA. Faculty approval for the new reliquary is imminent.

St Eanswythe, who is Folkestone's patron saint, is a saint for all as she lived before the various schisms. We have had pilgrims visiting over the years and we want to develop this more and further our links to Orthodox and Catholic communities. For the past few years we have held a St Eanswythe Festival over the weekend closest to her saint's day, 12th September, and will continue to do so.

⁴ Eanswythe – pronounced 'eeans-with'

We are at one end of the Royal Saxon Way linking us with St Mary and St Ethelburga Lyminge and Minster in Thanet (St Eanswythe's niece, Domneva⁵). A new route, The Royal Kentish Camino linking us with Lyminge (Ethelburga⁶) and St Martin's, Canterbury (St Bertha⁷) is now in situ and being walked. We want to build on further opportunities to develop this link.

The Eanswythe and church research has resulted in a wealth of information. We are planning a Heritage Area in the South Aisle that will display the 9th century Reliquary, our early 15th century clock, Saxon grave markers, information about Canon Matthew Woodward (vicar 1851-1898 who transformed the church with murals, stained glass, and mosaics), information about Reverend David Railton MC (curate at our church who conceived the idea of the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior), and modern art installations. We will be renovating the vestry end of the church with new toilets and kitchen facilities to provide modern and improved facilities for our congregation, visitors, and the increasing number of pilgrims who come from all over the world.

Since the inception of the Eanswythe Found project at St Mary and St Eanswythe Church visitors and pilgrims have greatly increased, wanting to know where her shrine is, her history, and the history of the church. These visitors are sometimes local people who have never been in our church before, or people from further afield or abroad who now, with all the media interest given, would like to know more about our church and surrounding area.

The Orthodox and Catholic communities have shown great interest as well as people of Faith or no faith and we were very grateful for the financial support given to us by these communities while fund raising for the new reliquary.

These exciting projects will make St Eanswythe known more locally and nationally and have the potential to attract even more visitors to our church – and provide opportunities for us to share our faith, and the faith that inspired Eanswythe, with them.

⁵ Domneva – founded Minster in Thanet nunnery

⁶ Ethelburga – Eanswythe's aunt who founded the minster for women in Lyminge

⁷ Bertha was the wife of King Ethelbert, also Eanswythe's grandmother