

St Mary the Virgin, Platt



Parish Profile

April 2026

www.stmarysplattchurch.org.uk

Welcome to St Mary's Platt

The churchwardens and people of St Mary's Platt invite you to join our loving church at the heart of the Platt community.



Our church supporters number well over 150. More than 100 are on the electoral roll, many of whom are dedicated volunteers as well as a significant number of others from the community. On a typical Sunday, 45-60 gather for worship but our life together extends far beyond Sundays – in particular to youth groups, the local care home and the village CoE primary school. We seek to spread and share God's love as widely as we can.

The church family provides care and support for one another. We have a mission to extend care to those around us who are in need; many members of our fellowship visit and support those who are less able to support themselves within the community.

We try to change as the needs around us change. We recognise that there is always more to do.

At the heart of our life together, we value both the sacraments and the Word. We believe the church should be a safe, welcoming place where everyone is nurtured, encouraged, and helped to grow in faith.

The Village and Parish of St Mary's Platt

Situated within the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, St Mary's Platt sits halfway between Maidstone and Sevenoaks in rural Kent. Home to around 1,800 people, the parish enjoys excellent road and rail connections. It is a five-minute drive from the M20, M26 and rail station at Borough Green and Wrotham. (There are trains to London Bridge, Victoria and Charing Cross). Buses are routed along the A25 to various destinations.

Local amenities include a welcoming pub, a village hall, two sports fields, a children's play area, a dedicated dog-walking area and a cricket pitch. The neighbouring village of Borough Green offers a variety of shops, several places to eat, a library, the railway station, and large medical and dental practices.



The parish is more than the village that bears its name. It extends to the hamlets of Wrotham Heath, Comp, Nepicar and Crouch (said 'Crooch', no-one really knows why). Just like the boundary between Platt and Borough Green, the boundaries between the village and the hamlets are blurred. There is a small industrial estate and there are pockets of new development. We always welcome new residents into parish life.

St Mary's Church is the only church in the parish. It lies at the centre of the lively, friendly community and backs on to Platt Woods, a 42-acre public open space.

The parish has two hotels, a care home, a small industrial estate as well as Mereworth Woods and Platt Woods within its boundary.

There are a number of primary schools in the area, including our own Church Aided primary school. One of the two secondary schools in nearby Wrotham has specialist provision for those with autism.



Platt CofE (VA) Primary School

The Local Cluster

Since 2000, St Mary's Platt has been part of a local cluster of four parishes (the others are Wrotham, Ightham and Borough Green). We share services on a fifth Sunday and other services such as Advent Sunday, Ash Wednesday and have also shared services of healing.

The Church Building

The church is a Grade-II listed building. It was built in 1843 and stands in an elevated position overlooking the centre of the village. Inside, chairs provide seating for about 200, offering flexibility for both worship and other church events. The building is fully accessible, with disabled access and a sound system that includes a hearing loop.



Well maintained and in good repair, the church also benefits from the Garden Room, an extension built in 1990. The Garden Room is a meeting space for up to 40 people, with recently updated kitchen facilities and accessible toilets, and is available to hire (for instance by the local am-dram society, an exercise class and the parish council and for private parties).

The grounds include a large, well-kept open churchyard, partly maintained by a contractor and partly by volunteers, as well as a peaceful Garden of Remembrance for the interment of ashes. Adjacent to the church are four almshouses. The priest-in-charge is one of the trustees for the almshouses.

Our Worship

Regular Services

- Sunday** 08.30 Holy Communion (BCP) (in abeyance during vacancy)
10.30 1st Sunday – Holy Communion (CW) (with Soul Sessions for older children in the Garden Room before Holy Communion, which some children take)
2nd Sunday – Family Service
3rd Sunday – Holy Communion (CW) (with church for younger children, Splatt, joining for communion, which some children take.
4th Sunday – Morning Worship (CW)
5th Sunday – Service often held with our cluster parishes
18.30 1st Sunday of month only – Evening prayer (BCP) (without choir) or occasional Evensong (with the choir)
- Wed** 09.30 Holy Communion (CW) – held weekly. (Morning Worship during the vacancy)
16.30 Compline with Prayers for Peace

Other Services

The congregation is open to a variety of services and different styles of worship, such as contemplative worship. Café-style services (seated at tables with refreshments) are held at various times of the year.

Occasionally we have held services of healing, with laying-on of hands.

Parade services for the uniformed groups in the village focus on two main services: Remembrance Sunday and Mothering Sunday.

Platt School holds three services a term in the church. Usually these are led by the priest-in-charge or, if needs be, a Lay Minister. The priest-in-charge also takes worship services at the school.

About three times a year there is a full choral evensong.

Seasonal provisions

The church calendar is busy throughout the year.

On Palm Sunday the choir leads the congregation in a service of readings

and Lenten music. In the evenings during Holy Week there may be Compline and the Maundy Thursday service. A one-hour meditation service takes place on Good Friday afternoon.

An annual Service of Remembering is held on All Souls Sunday for those who wish to remember someone whom they will particularly miss at Christmas time.

The all-age Advent Service includes several activities such as signing up for Posada, providing festive food for the Foodbank, and supporting a charity for the homeless by means of a Christmas card 'tree'. Also during Advent, there is a lively nativity presentation given by members of the children's church. To round off the season, a Carol Service is held shortly before Christmas.

Two Christingle services are held on Christmas Eve at 2pm and 4pm. The first is aimed at younger children. The second is packed out with families of all ages and is standing-room only.

We hold a Midnight in Bethlehem Communion service on Christmas Eve.

Music

The church is fortunate to have an excellent pipe organ. It is one of the best in Kent's smaller churches. It is played by various local organists young and old.



Equally treasured is our four-part robed choir, currently about 20 members. The choir sings a wide variety of music throughout the church's year. Our aim is to enrich worship through the words and music of the liturgy, drawing on both traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs as appropriate to the occasion.



Children busily making over 100 Christingles

A grand piano in the church is often used in family services to accompany our small music group, which includes several younger members of the congregation.

Within the choir and wider congregation, we are blessed with a number of accomplished musicians who value the opportunity to engage with music that is both spiritually uplifting and musically rewarding. With these gifts, we are able to offer a rich variety of music that deepens the spiritual life of our parish.

Our church is also a valued venue for concerts, thanks to its excellent acoustics. It is regularly used by visiting choirs, organists and music groups. Its sound quality has attracted both amateur and professional music recordings.

Mission and Evangelism

Our parish magazine, *Village News*, is produced by the church for the whole parish. Funded by advertisements from local businesses, it is delivered free to every household ten times a year. It enables the church to share the Good News, invite residents to take part in church life, and highlight local events and issues. It generates a rich dialogue between the church and the local community, which in turn contributes news and articles. This mutual exchange reflects the magazine's outward-looking nature and the healthy relationship between church and community. The magazine is produced, printed, collated, and delivered by a dedicated team of volunteers.

...To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

School ministry is a vital part of our parish life. The priest-in-charge plays an active role in the spiritual life of our church school, leading worship and hosting school services in the church. Each year, the church presents Bibles to school leavers and to those in the reception class.

We involve the community in the life of the church through fun events such as concerts, barn dances and quiz evenings. Other events held in the church have included a plant sale, a Christmas Market, an Easter Craft Fair, and strawberry teas.



...To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

We uphold an open baptism policy, welcoming all individuals who desire baptism without imposing any conditions. This inclusive stance aims to create a welcoming and accepting environment for all members of the community.

We hold confirmation classes to prepare candidates.

The church supports children who have been adequately prepared to take communion before confirmation.

Our weekly on-line bible study group is a welcoming group which anyone can join.

Lent and Advent Courses also run.

...To respond to human need by loving service

We hold a monthly 'Soup and Puds' light lunch for any who would like a warm welcome and plenty of conversation. It provides a meeting place for church members and the local community and is well attended by both in equal measure. It is dementia friendly.



Wednesday mornings see our weekly coffee morning, Café Platt



– a warm and friendly gathering where church members and local residents can catch up over coffee and cake. It is a great way to meet new people, share a laugh, and generally brighten the week. We encourage guests to bring along neighbours. There's always a quiz to keep brains active.

Like many churches, we collect food donated by the congregation to support the local Food Bank, offering practical help and care for those in need.

The church is open every day as a place of prayer and quiet reflection. Visitors are welcome to pause in the prayer corner, where hand-held crosses, prayer booklets, and the opportunity to light a candle provide simple ways to draw closer to God and find peace.

....To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

We have a link with St Faith's, Budiro, in Harare, Zimbabwe. Our partnership began during a period of severe persecution when the church community had been locked out of their building. Over the years, we have continued to nurture this relationship and look forward to future opportunities for mutual visits and collaboration. In 2014, the church was honoured to welcome Bishop Chad Gandiya, who shared news of Zimbabwe and his vision for the Diocese of Harare.

On Wednesday afternoons, a small group gathers for Compline and Prayers for Peace.

...To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

We hold a bronze award as an Eco Church and aim to buy fairly traded supplies where possible.

We are committed to recycling and have dedicated teams to help recycle council-refused items like pill blister packs, coffee pods and soft plastics.

We collect old newspapers to donate to local kennels, providing bedding for the animals and helping the kennels save on other resources. It's a small gesture that makes a big difference for our four-legged friends.

Mission Giving

About six percent of our total income goes towards supporting both local and international charities and mission initiatives. Through this giving, we are able to extend our community's care and compassion far beyond our own walls.



Pastoral Care

Pastoral care within the parish was overseen by the vicar and two Lay Ministers, both Readers with PTO, one of whom is a Pastoral Assistant and Anna Chaplain. They led a dedicated team in conducting home visits and administering home Communion. These responsibilities at present fall to the Lay Ministers. Regular visits to Harpwood House Care Home were also scheduled, with the vicar and a lay minister alternating their

visits twice a month. During the vacancy, visits to the care home are conducted once a month by a Lay Minister with another person to support her. We are fortunate to have had vicars who value collaborative ministry, involving lay ministers and congregation members in various worship and service roles.

Our inclusive approach extends to marriage and baptism policies. The PCC supports the priest-in-charge's discretion in allowing divorced couples to marry in the church, following a couple's interview and adherence to Canon Law.



Opportunities and Challenges for Ministry

We see ourselves as a welcoming, friendly and hospitable congregation. We are of central churchmanship but are flexible and open-minded.

We still recognise that we face some key challenges, such as:

- Very few people take up the opportunity of study groups.
- We have classes for confirmation candidates and a study group for old and new Christians to explore their faith together, but we have not run a course for the unchurched, such as Alpha, nor a nurture course such as Emmaus; this gap makes it difficult for those seeking faith to make the journey from enquiry to baptism/confirmation.
- A need to develop opportunities for collaborative prayer.
- Children attending secondary schools travel quite far afield and as new friendships and interests inevitably develop, they tend to stop attending church. Soul Sessions for secondary-age children is a way of keeping them in touch once a month, but getting a critical mass of children is pivotal, and we have explored the idea of running this group with neighbouring parishes.
- Splatt for primary-age children, with mini-Splatt for pre-school children, takes place once a month during a communion service. The groups join in the service for communion towards the end of their session. Again, we have explored the idea of running this group with neighbouring parishes.
- Develop the existing healing ministry

Community

Major festivals in the church calendar are widely attended, with strong community participation in events such as Remembrance Day. The church is pleased to collaborate with uniformed groups, with all groups attending services throughout the year.

The church serves as a hub for various community-led activities, including hosting concerts. These events bring residents together and showcase the talent and creativity within the community. (The village boasts a rich tapestry of social groups, including the Scout Association groups, flower arrangers, Platt Ladies Group, signing choir, Brownies and more.)



Platt Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Our local Church school is well attended and was rated 'Good' by Ofsted.

The church is strongly linked to the school. The priest-in-charge is an *ex officio* governor, leads services within school and in the church. The PCC appoints foundation governors to support and uphold the school's Christian ethos.

The Vicarage

The vicarage for Platt is next door to the church. It is currently let to a family. The new priest-in-charge would be accommodated in the Borough Green vicarage and the Platt vicarage used or disposed of as the diocese thinks best.

Figures and Finances

Financial Year 2024	
Overall Income	£88,559
Overall Expenditure	£82,563
Parish Share Paid	£35,112

Parish Statistics	
Residents (2021 census)	1800
Number on electoral roll (2025)	128
Baptisms (2025)	3
Weddings (2025)	2
Funerals (2025)	5
Burial of ashes (2025)	3

The PCC works hard to ensure that income and expenditure are matched in any year, although this is often difficult given the challenge of maintaining a large building. The typical annual turnover is about £90,000 with expenditure kept within our income. There are, however, reserves available to the PCC. We have been able to finance some significant works over the last few years, in particular refurbishment of the organ, kitchen improvements, and there are planned window repairs. Nevertheless the PCC is committed to maintaining its level of giving to support the mission work of the church.

Our New Priest-in-charge

We are seeking a priest with a love of God and of prayer to be a loving and compassionate pastor, with the enthusiasm to build on the strong ties the Church has to the community it serves. With the help and support of the congregation, our priest-in-charge should seek:

- To nurture spiritual growth in all ages of the congregation.
- To inspire the worship and corporate prayer life of the church
- To support and encourage the work of the children's church
- To have an interest in the healing ministry and develop this ministry in both churches.
- To build on the strong links we enjoy with our Church School.
- To enjoy and encourage the quality and breadth of music in worship and community engagement.
- To encourage all age groups to become actively involved in church life and to engage in mission with the local community.

- To work with colleagues within the local parish cluster to grow the Kingdom of God within the wider area.
- To enable us to become the church, within the community, that God wishes us to be.

What We Can Offer

We see ourselves as a friendly, welcoming and hospitable congregation.

One of the Lay Ministers in our supportive ministry team is licensed to conduct funerals, allowing the priest-in-charge more flexibility in his or her time management.

We have many willing volunteers who clean, arrange flowers, polish brass, do the sacristan's duties, and tend the churchyard and Garden of Remembrance, as well as those who undertake pastoral visiting, giving the priest-in-charge more time for ministerial work.

The challenges that we have identified provide an opportunity for rewarding ministry.

The church building needs minimal maintenance as detailed in the 2024 quinquennial report and planned expenditure will be covered by the repair fund.

The church has sound finances and a positive attitude to giving.

We have recently engaged a parish administrator to help with day-to-day secretarial tasks whose time will be shared between our two parishes to help with admin tasks; eventually they will also support the new incumbent.

St Mary's Platt is an attractive setting and a lovely working environment. In the heart of the Kent countryside, but still within easy reach of London, St Mary's Platt is a mix of the best of old and new – old and new people, old and new buildings, old and new ways. The church embodies all of that.

Conclusion

We are so pleased that you have read our Profile and thank you for taking the time to do so. We hope you have been stimulated by the challenge of the idea of bringing two separate parishes together to form a joint benefice which you would lead.

As you will have read, our parishes have striking similarities, but slightly different needs, needs which we feel can be best met by becoming a joint benefice.

Working towards a joint benefice

St Mary's in Platt is only one mile by road from the Church of the Good Shepherd in Borough Green and, with residential housing stretching along the A25 between them.

Currently, we are two similar, but until now, separate parishes. Going forward, we are seeking to become a joint benefice. With the vision and help of a new priest-in-charge we are hoping to develop the connections which already exist between us and further grow our relationship in order to nurture our church families and communities. We understand that we will need to learn to support each other as well as adapt and make compromises when sharing one priest-in-charge.

In a bid to move towards sharing our ministry until we meet our new priest-in-charge, we are planning to share activities such as Lent groups, confirmation classes and run joint services for our young people. There will be the need to form a joint standing committee to enable planning and decisions to be facilitated.

It will be a challenging time for a new incumbent in facilitating the creation of a joint benefice. We will assist in every way we can, whilst also respecting the need for uninterrupted days off and annual leave. Both parishes will work to support and nurture that person, ensuring that they are also given the respect and time they need for their own professional development.



Platt School children leading a school service in church.





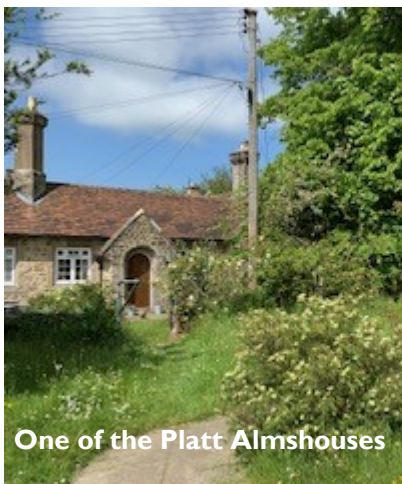
West Window Installed to Mark the Millennium



Clog Dancing Group



Children with Christian Aid Balloons



One of the Platt Almshouses



Easter Tree by Platt Cubs