

ST LAURENCE-IN-THANET

Appointment of a Priest in
Charge

Parish Profile
September 2023

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF DOVER



Welcome and thank you for taking an interest in the role of Priest in Charge of the parish of St Laurence-in-Thamet. You will see from the parish profile some of the specific things that the parish is looking for – and a little of what the team here hopes the future may look like. Of course, a key part of your discernment process in coming to this role will be gaining a sense of the bigger picture of us as a diocesan family, our vision, and priorities for the future.

Who we are

Founded in 597 by St Augustine, Canterbury Diocese is the oldest diocese in England and has a special place in the life of the national and worldwide Church. With its iconic Cathedral it forms a focal point for the life of the whole Anglican Communion, offering a spiritual home and place of pilgrimage for people from every nation and walk of life.

Kent is renowned as the 'Garden of England' and this rural heart is core to our identity – yet the communities we serve are very diverse. Our Diocese stretches from Maidstone to Thanet, from the Isle of Sheppey to the Romney Marsh. We have 350 miles of coastline with historic ports and seaside resorts, alongside rural communities, market towns and commuter-belt urban developments. Affluent areas often sit alongside pockets of major deprivation, offering an exciting and challenging mission context.

Our vision

By God's grace we want to be a people who are...

- ...confident & creative disciples of Jesus Christ
- ...rooted in scripture & drenched in prayer
- ...living gratefully, giving generously, caring for creation & sharing the gospel
- ...growing in number & expectations – of God & ourselves
- ...motivated by justice & love, open to the Spirit & ready for adventure! **Therefore we will...**

'Therefore we will...' is a recognition that words without actions are empty. It is a commitment to taking real steps now to make this vision a reality soon. The current actions that flow from this vision are outlined in our current strategy document [which you can find here](#). Of course, these actions will change and develop over time - and it's exciting that some of our parishes are already considering this vision carefully for themselves, exploring together what actions they will commit to take, what their local 'Therefore we will...' might look like.

At the heart of all we do is this vision: a vision of transformation for ourselves and our communities: *Changed Lives → Changing Lives*. In your role, in your place, we will be looking for you to join in with what God is already doing and play a crucial part in making this vision a reality.

Our direction

Our vision unites us in purpose but will be expressed in different ways according to what makes sense for different parts of our diocesan family. We are working closely with our deaneries to identify, resource and support them as they seek to grow their mission, ministry – and their churches – in ways that make sense to their contexts. Each deanery is developing its own mission plans - and you could play a key role in helping to develop your deanery's vision for the future.

As a diocesan family, we are also deeply committed to our calling to build a safer, more welcoming church for all. We will never be perfect, but we can work together to make our churches safer. At the heart of this ethos is the conviction that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - and that it needs to be at the heart of everything we do. You can find out more about our approach to safeguarding [here](#).

Our commitment to you

We know that supporting healthy, flourishing ministers (lay and ordained) is crucial for a healthy, flourishing diocese. Therefore, we offer the 'Canterbury Diet' to all our new incumbent ministers – this is an intentional programme for ministerial development, health, growth and faith. A similar lay programme is in development too. We offer pastoral supervision and spiritual accompaniment, an invitation to be part of residential training programmes focused on learning, leading and mission, action learning sets, as well as a range of specialised training events, and other regular opportunities for growth in prayer and spirituality.

In short, I hope that you will be as excited by our vision, priorities and opportunities as we are. Be assured of our prayers as you consider your next step in ministry.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Rose". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson Wilkin
Bishop of Dover and Bishop in Canterbury

A NOTE FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF CANTERBURY AND THE AREA DEAN OF THANET:

We are delighted that you are considering an application for the post of Priest in Charge of St Laurence – in – Thanet, a large and complex parish serving the historic seaside town of Ramsgate. St Laurence covers the greater part of the town and there are currently three other benefices (one vacant) making up the rest. The parish has a great deal of potential and a lot of energy. It is situated in the south of the Isle of Thanet. The whole of the Isle forms the Thanet Deanery, which is facing significant change and development at present, with a number of parishes in vacancy and new appointments coming. It will, therefore, be an important time in the development of the deanery.

Thanet Deanery Synod is currently in the process of revitalising its Mission Action Plan and is seeking to enthuse parishes in line with the Church of England's national priorities. The Diocese of Canterbury has recently agreed three bold outcomes for a flourishing and sustainable future. Looking to 2030 the diocese is aiming for:

- Doubling the number of children and young disciples;
- Two hundred new Christian communities;
- Every parish, benefice and deanery showing signs of revitalisation.

The parish of St Laurence-in-Thanet is seeking to grow in these areas and is looking for a priest to join the people and to lead the parish in this important time. This parish profile sets out the features of the parish and its church life as well as setting out some of the strengths and challenges of this particular parish and its constituent parts. If you would like to have a conversation about this important post, please do not hesitate to contact one or both of us.

With best wishes

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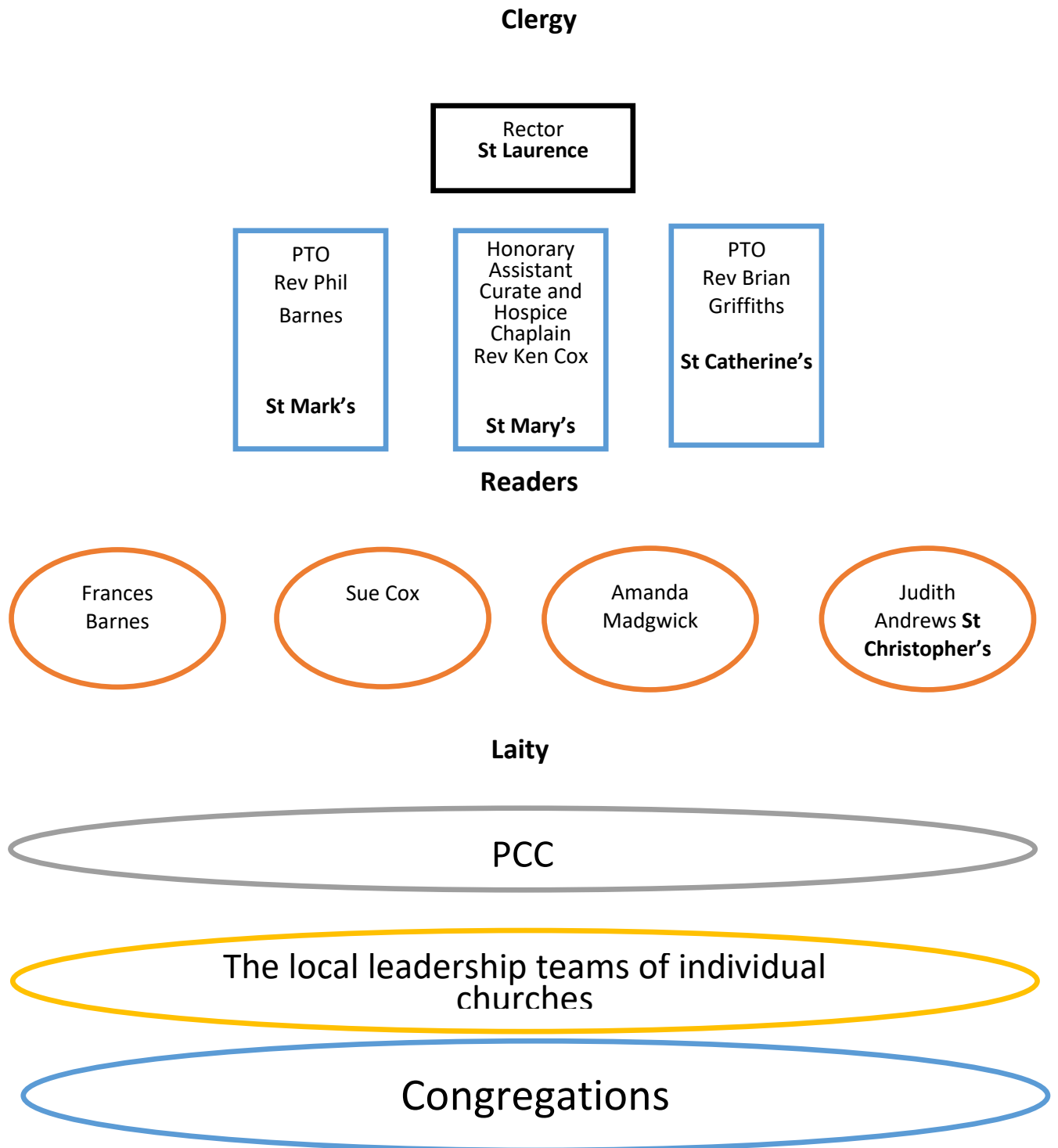


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ORGANISATIONAL CHART

This is a diagram of the governance structure of the parish of St Laurence in Thanet whose motto is “Five churches united in Christ”. We work as a team across the parish, but I have included the churches with which each member of the ministry team is most associated.



THE PARISH IN A NUTSHELL

Strengths

- Clear governance structure (see attached chart).
- Excellent team of clergy and readers with a real depth of ministry and experience. We have an Honorary Assistant curate, two PTOs, and four Readers, one of whom is an Anna Chaplain.
- Each church is strongly individual with its own tradition of worship: we are learning to work more together as a team.
- Lay Bereavement and Pastoral Teams led by several trained ALMs. One ALM is also trained to take funerals.
- Outward looking to the community. St Catherine's in particular excels at this. Harvest and Christmas suppers, and concerts throughout May attract churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike. The church works in collaboration with the local pub (The Jolly Farmer) and the local council to avoid clashing with their events, and they support each other when applying for grants.
- Confirmation and Discipleship Group. Four adults were confirmed last year.
- An interest in local history genealogy brings many people to St Laurence on its organised church and churchyard tours. Summer and Christmas Fairs and Quiz Nights are well-supported by the local community.
- St Laurence has a very active ringing tower and a very experienced Tower Captain. Tower Tours as part of the Summer Fair are extremely popular.
- The St Laurence Church of England Junior Academy is part of the Aquila Trust. Many staff are Christians. Clergy and school staff lead Christian worship and bring year groups into the church.
- Our Honorary Assistant Curate is chaplain to the local hospices.
- Growing population. Westwood Cross, our out of town shopping centre, is the focus of new housing estates. Marks and Spencer's cafe is the venue for an informal group hosted by a member of St Mark's that meets daily at 10 am. St Mark's is a bright, modern church in the evangelical tradition.
- The new home for the elderly and dementia sufferers at Westwood Cross is visited regularly by our Anna Chaplain.
- St Mary's at Cliffsend is a small church with a large heart at the centre of a growing population.

Challenges

- No ministry to young people and children at the moment: a result of Covid and previous leaders moving away. However, there are fledgling Sunday schools at St Mark's and St Mary's with, as yet, only a few children overall but green shoots for the future.

- There are exciting plans to reopen St Christopher's church on the Newington Estate which are supported by local organisations. Can we make these plans a reality?

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARISH OF ST LAURENCE-IN-THANET

Ramsgate is a beautiful seaside resort with an attractive Royal Harbour, sandy beaches and two cliffs with amazing views across Pegwell Bay to Dover and across the Channel to Calais.

The Parish of St Laurence-in-Thanet is set outside the centre of the town of Ramsgate itself bordering the towns of Broadstairs to the east, Margate to the north and the village parish of Minster to the west. Thanet is in the middle of a population and building boom. HS1, the high speed rail link, has made commuting viable and the opening of the new Parkway Station later this year will attract even more people to the area. The comparatively low property prices are also attractive.

However, Thanet is not all professional incomers, stunning architecture and sandy beaches. Historically, Thanet has suffered from widespread unemployment and social deprivation. Although Ramsgate boasts a Waitrose and its Royal Harbour is ringed by expensive restaurants, many people can eat only by attending the many food banks which operate in the area.

So, if you decide to make the move to Thanet, you will encounter a place in the throes of transition towards a more urban context and also one which provides many challenges.

The five churches which make up the parish are described in detail later in this document. However, a very quick overview of the churches and the areas they serve may be of assistance here:

- Two of our districts, St Mary's, Cliffsend and St Catherine's, Manston could once have been described as semi-rural, but the proposed and actual building of large housing estates on once agricultural land will perhaps tip them towards the urban category in the very near future. The airport at Manston is due to begin service again, as a freight hub.

- St Christopher's, currently closed for Sunday worship and infrequently used, is situated on the post-war Newington Estate, and as you will see from later in the document many new initiatives are proposed for its use.
- St Mark's is a large, spacious modern church near the Westwood Cross shopping centre and the Pysons Road Industrial estate.
- St Laurence in Thanet is an eleventh century church situated in what was once the village of St Lawrence which has now been completely absorbed into Ramsgate. It is bordered by a Tesco on one side and a three and a half acre churchyard on the other.

It is worth emphasising that in recent years (Covid excepted) we have always met our parish share and through the hard work of our treasurer and others that we are in a comparatively secure financial position.

We are “five churches united in Christ”, of varying churchmanship, well- practised in the art of working harmoniously together.



PROFILE OF ST LAURENCE CHURCH

"You are here to kneel Where prayer has been valid"
T S Eliot, *Little Gidding*

Prayer has been the focus at St Laurence Church for nigh on a thousand years. Cranmer preached here. The original eleventh century church has been beautified and expanded by successive generations. More prosaic adaptations include a loo and a tiny galley kitchen.

The building itself is managed by a small but effective fabric committee.

The church has a beautiful vestry with ample room for vestments, silver and linen: on the floor above there is a small choir vestry which is sometimes used as a meeting room.

There are servers to prepare the altar and the elements and assist with distribution at Holy Communion.

The church has an active liturgical life, with Common Worship Eucharists, a monthly Service of the Word and a home-grown all-age family service.

Clergy and laity work well together.

Enthusiastic sidespeople greet the congregation and ensure their practical needs are met.

The Local Leadership Team deals with matters concerning St Laurence church, which can then be referred to the Parochial Church Council, as needed. The size of the congregation has not yet recovered from the Covid restrictions but currently averages between 40 and 45 on a Sunday.

People care for each other. The Acorn Club meets in the Parish Hall, and provides companionship and entertainment for the elderly. There is a well- established Pastoral and Bereavement team, of which the Footprints Coffee Club is one part. Throughout the Covid pandemic both teams kept in touch with many people across the parish.

The Holy Dusters ensure that the church is kept clean and well-maintained and there is also a team of flower arrangers.

There is an on-going Confirmation and Discipleship Group, with four people confirmed by Bishop Rose in 2022.

An active group help look after our graveyard, which is closed for burials and is partly the responsibility of the local council. The Churchyard is run for the benefit of wildlife and is a wildlife sanctuary for birds, bees, butterflies and bats, following “The God’s Acre Project” started by the Diocese some years ago. In common with other churchyards in Thanet there are occasional problems with rough sleepers and vandalism. Guided tours of both the church and churchyard take place throughout the year.

The St Laurence bell tower is managed by a very experienced Tower Captain and she and her team ring for services, civic occasions and great national events. Keen volunteers have been working to make our parish hall more attractive for rental. It has a recently refurbished kitchen.

Fundraising is very effective. Covid years excepted, of late the parish share has been met in full and this is largely due to skill and industry of the parish treasurer who is also an extremely committed member of the congregation.

Fundraising events include a Summer Fair, held around the Patronal Festival of St Laurence, a Christmas Fair and a programme of other events including lectures, tours of the church and churchyard, and quizzes. Both Planned Giving and the Gift Aid scheme are set up to benefit the Parish.

The Rectory, which is next door to the church, is a four-bedroomed house, built in the 1960s. It is in very good decorative order, has two bathrooms, central heating and plenty of storage. There is also a large garden. The study within the house has a second door which leads to the parish office. This is currently manned by volunteers under the guidance of the Treasurer.

Links with the local community are well established. St Laurence has a very strong connection with the nearby St Laurence Church of England Junior Academy. One of the Team PTO s helps with worship in the school twice a week. At the end of each term the whole school comes into the church for a service. Chilton School, another local primary, has its end of term Christmas service in the church.

The Christingle Service for children and young people’s uniformed organisations attracts hundreds of participants.

Another member of the clergy team is chaplain to the local hospices.

As a Parish, the Ride and Stride fundraising event for Kent churches is supported every September and churches stay open for the Architectural Heritage days during that month. Thanet Food Link is another actively supported community initiative. Although we think we can be justifiably proud of what we have achieved over the years, we are not the perfect parish and there remains a lot that we could be doing, but aren't. We are a work in progress. We have serious gaps in what we could offer. At the moment we do not have a Sunday Club for school age children because we have no one to help with it. This is a serious shortcoming and although those who attend St Laurence Church of England Junior Academy have the benefit of lots of contact with the church, those who don't attend the school are missing out. It's also a wasted opportunity to make contact with the parents.

So, if you are interested, do come, join us and help us move forward together!





ST MARK'S CHURCH RAMSGATE



St Mark's Church, Ramsgate was established in 1884 when a corrugated iron hut was erected on the site it occupies today. The chancel and church hall were erected in 1939, but it wasn't until 1967 that the money was found to complete the building with a small nave and Bell Cote which housed the bell.

In 1982 St Mark's became an independent parish comprised of parts of St Luke's, St Laurence's and St Peter's parishes. In 2015, the decision was made to incorporate St Mark's into the Parish of St Laurence in Thanet.

St Mark's is situated centrally within the Northwood Ward of Thanet District Council, on a prominent junction on the main road between Ramsgate and Margate.



Building

Over the past four years, works have taken place on the fabric of the church hall. A new floor has been installed in the hall and the kitchen has been totally renewed.

The roof has also had a number of minor repairs. Work in progress includes:

- The hall floor has to be replaced again due to damage caused by the leaking roof. The cost is covered by insurance claim.
- Painting of ceiling in rear meeting room (Pathfinder Room) due to water leaks. The cost is covered by insurance claim.
- PA and loop system to be updated in the church, plus digital projection to be renewed. Cost to be covered by funds already raised.
- PA and loop to be installed in hall. Cost covered by council grant.
- Stage to be renovated. Cost partly covered by council grant.

The church and hall are regularly used by a significant number of organisations including:

- Polling Station; for local, county and national elections
- Public meetings
- Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers.
- Northwood Singers

Values and Mission

St Mark's tithes a percentage of its income (excluding grants) to further its missions; Tear Fund, CPAS, Kisumu Children's Trust in Kenya and Fegan's.

St Mark's congregation has actively supported the Thanet Food Bank since its inception.

There are two homegroups with the principal purposes of Bible study, prayer and fellowship. Recent studies have included Elisha, 2 Chronicles, the prophets Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Obadiah, the Gospel of Mark and passages concerning the Fruit of the Spirit and Bethlehem as a place.

An established pastoral team meets bi-monthly with the aim to support the congregation and keep in touch where needed.

Activities and Outreach

Thursday Fellowship meets every Thursday afternoon with between 12-20 members. Not all are churchgoers but the meetings start with an act of worship, have a speaker and finish with refreshments.

The Belleplate Group meets on Tuesday mornings to play a varied selection of music. The Group plays at church services and other events across the Parish.

The Prayer Group meets weekly for active prayer for the parish, people in need, the local area, the country and the world.

Knit, Craft and Natter is the newest initiative and has been running for about a year. The group has grown slowly and provides companionship and refreshments over knitting, stitching, embroidering and crochet projects.

The Wednesday Morning Work group carries out maintenance and gardening to the church and grounds.

In 2022, a number of events were held including a garden party to celebrate the late Queen's 70th Anniversary Jubilee with music, games and puppets. An afternoon tea party was also held in June and welcomed a number of people who were not church attenders. The 'Macmillan Coffee Morning' raised over £300 for the cancer charity and is planned again for 2023. Lastly, a short carol service was held at Mentmore House, a sheltered housing complex.

Worship

Worship at St. Mark's continues each Sunday at 10am and 6:30pm.

Sunday morning's worship reflects a low-church tradition, with Common Worship being the norm for Holy Communion services, choir robe is the preference, but alb is accepted. The low-church tradition is underlined by water not being added to the communion chalice and the congregation not standing for the gospel reading. The Word of God is highly valued and the norm is to use all three readings every Sunday morning, plus the psalm on some 'Services of the word'. The readings including the gospel are normally read by members of the congregation.

Members of the congregation also prepare and present the intercessions on communion Sundays.

A 'Service of the Word' is also part of the regularly monthly pattern and these services are less formal, and robes are not normally worn. On the occasional 5th Sunday a type of 'Service of the Word' is used, but with a freedom to experiment with different means of involving the congregation. For example, a songs of praise, using music requested by members of the congregation with reasons for their choice. Another example is a service of favourite readings with an explanation of why they were chosen.

The evening service at 6:30pm is a very informal service when the congregation meet to share the word, pray and sing.

All musical worship is accompanied by official backing tracks and presentation of services is by printed service order or by digital projection.

Sunday School

Sadly work with children has been non existent for the last couple of years, but has now (Feb 23) had some encouragement with Sunday School happening just one Sunday per month. On the other Sundays material is provided for children to do during the service. It is hoped this will expand and will be facilitated by more adults being able to take up Sunday School roles.



Our vision for the future

At St Mark's we are aware of the culture change in Northwood. The make-up of the population is still ethnically white British, but with now a presence of white European and a small growing community of black African. Ethnically there is not much change, but there has been a change through the generations, and now as values have changed so has the families view of, and their connections with the church.

Our vision is to work against that and to renew our connections with the local community, so St Mark's needs to be active seven days a week and not just on Sundays. Ideally we would wish to connect with all age groups, but we realise that our resources for that challenge are not enough. Hence a new Rector might be able to help us with fresh vision to enable us to prioritise our outreach activities and also point us in a direction that we may not have thought of before.

THE DISTRICT OF ST. CATHERINE, MANSTON

The village consists of around 250 homes, having recently found itself expanding with a couple of housing developments. There is a limited bus service running from Canterbury through surrounding villages into Ramsgate on week-days only. There is the Jolly Farmer pub which is a hub for the residents and also provides a venue for celebrations. There are a few holiday/caravan parks, Preston Park being situated in the village, albeit on the edge, and residents do use the church, occasionally or more frequently. There is a village hall, which is well-used for weekly clubs and functions. Attached to that is a small nursery school. There is a community park, which is home to the village beacon. One of the housing projects has offered a community café and shop, but this is yet to open. The local villages Community Officer has made contact with us at the church with a view to starting a Coffee Morning there, once it is running. The village war memorial is situated at the front of the church on the village cross-roads. A special commemorative service is held every year for Remembrance Sunday and, when possible, for Battle of Britain Sunday also.



The Ecclesiastical Parish boundary does not match the local government parish boundary which often causes confusion. An example of this is Kent International Airport which is quite close to the Church but which actually lies outside the Parish. The “Riveroak UK” company now owns the airport, and following a long and protracted course of applications and appeals, is set to re-open as an essentially freight operation in 2025.

The Church Building



The Church Building is well cared for and in good condition. It was built in 1874 for the farming communities in Manston and District with land donated by the then Rector of St. Laurence and his wife, and dedicated to St. Catherine of the Wheel. Much later, the church was designated as the place of worship for the Royal Air Force based at RAF Manston. (Nowadays, links with the RAF and the ATC have been broken due to both groups leaving the area.) In fairly recent history a toilet was installed in the “vestry” and at the same time, a water heater.

St. Catherine is part of the village family and has particularly nurtured links with the Parish Council. Long-standing members of the church are also linked with the council and are very knowledgeable about the local area and its history. St Catherine's congregation has been growing steadily again over the past ten years, the congregation is not large, but of a size where everyone knows everyone and looks out for each other. The LLT members work well together and are enthusiastic, planning social events, celebratory events and fund-raising activities such as: country walks, shared suppers and lunches – either in the church/grounds/village hall/local restaurants.

One of the larger projects has been the May Music Extravaganza, with local musical artistes performing on each Friday of May. Essentially this was initiated to celebrate the restoration of the organ (funded by money-raising activities and an extremely generous donation from a member of the congregation), It was such a success that it has been continued this year with a plan for it to be an annual event. The church building is very suited to such activity, the choir pews having been made moveable to create a performance space when required.

The church proves popular for baptisms and weddings, its capacity and traditional beauty being very apt for these occasions. The people of the church always aim to be a welcoming group, with a warm and informal atmosphere, yet with spirituality underpinning all that they do.



St Catherine's Christmas Supper
in Manston village hall



Sunday Lunch at St Augustine's Abbey



Jubilee Lunch



Gardening



Coffee Time



Summer Ramble



Wedding



Wedding



Advent food-bank collection



Crib and Christingle



Barn Dance

THE DISTRICT OF CLIFFSEND AND ST MARY'S CHURCH

Cliffsend is a small but growing village. It is located just outside Ramsgate and straddled by two roads; one the Sandwich by-pass to Ramsgate and the other the Thanet Way towards Ramsgate.

Transport links are not the best in the world if you do not drive. There are buses to Sandwich and Canterbury, but both involve a walk to the main roads to catch one as they do not come into the village. A new railway station has been built just outside the village, called Thanet Parkway, which, when it opens later this year, will serve trains to and from London using the HS1 fast link.

There is a move to reactivate Manston Airport as a cargo hub, and in the future it is hoped that a passenger airline may consider operating from there if the passenger numbers merit it.

The down side of the public transport situation is that people who are disabled or unable to walk a distance are disadvantaged, being unable to get to the relevant transport stop. However, this being Cliffsend, the villagers are always willing to give lifts to the shops in Ramsgate, Margate, Broadstairs and the Westwood Cross shopping complex. There is a petrol station located at the bottom of the village on the Sandwich Road, also catering for basic necessities.

There is a village hall run by a Hall Committee, it is very well used and at present also houses a hair salon. The church often uses this facility for events throughout the year, although the church itself is adequate for any smaller events that may take place such as quiz nights and celebration meals. Cliffsend has a Parish Council and a Residents' Association.

The village is growing at a fast pace, in the last few years two new estates have sprung up, at the time of writing there is a third being built, planning permission is in place for many more houses across the road from the village. The people who will inhabit these new houses are the future of our church in the village.

We already have a new family with children, who came to us soon after they occupied their house. We are looking forward to greeting more families as they get to know us.

Things to do

There are many things to do around the area, the village fronts the sea at Pegwell Bay, beautiful rocks and fossils can be found when walking along the beach. A very popular meeting place is the green picnic area, which has a replica of the Viking Longship 'Hugin' sited there. This was refurbished by the local District Council and is covered during the winter to protect it from the winter weather. Its history can be found online.

In this area there is a small café which is open during the summer. It is here we hold our dawn service on Easter Day, it can be very atmospheric and meaningful if the weather is good, not so much if the weather is against us!

A little way outside of the village on the Sandwich Road is the Pegwell Nature Reserve (SSSI), this is a great place to visit, and an area of excitement during the bird migration seasons. The salt marsh and mud are valuable resources for wading birds, which can be seen by the thousand at the right time of year. But this is also a resource for walking in peace and refreshing one's mind at any time of the year.

St Augustine's Cross

Just outside of the village on Cottington Road stands St Augustine's Cross. The cross was commissioned in 1884 by Granville George Leveson-Gower, 2nd Earl Granville, at the time, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

He was inspired to erect it after hearing the story of a massive oak tree felled within living memory and known as the Augustine Oak, one of a group of trees fringing a field which he owned. According to local legend, under this oak in AD597 the first meeting was held between King Æthelberht and the monk Augustine, newly arrived from Rome.

Augustine had recently landed on the Isle of Thanet, having been sent by Pope Gregory to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity and thereby re-establish the faith in a country in which it had faded with the fall of the Roman Empire. Not far to the south-east was the stream in which, the legend tells us, Augustine baptised his first convert and which subsequently became known as St Augustine's Well.

Tradition holds that Æthelberht was converted to Christianity and Augustine baptised him on Whit Sunday in AD 597. On Christmas Day of that year, according to

a papal letter of AD 598, more than 10,000 baptisms were carried out. Lord Granville chose to commemorate the meeting between Augustine and Æthelberht with a stone cross in the early Christian style, and as a model he selected the 8th–9th century crosses at Sandbach near Crewe, Cheshire.

The Church Building

The church was built in 1874 as a Methodist Chapel, but was rented by the Church of England from the early 1930s, eventually being bought in 1956. In January 1957 the church was officially dedicated to St Mary. It is a small building but contains a flexible worship area with stackable chairs. It has a kitchen area and a space that can be used for a Sunday school if needed.

The Church Community

The community is warm and welcoming with a lively close congregation who take their responsibilities very seriously.

There is a relaxed atmosphere to the worship but that does not mean that it is not taken seriously; it certainly is. The worship is of a liberal evangelical side but at the same time they do like to see things done according to tradition.

The congregation are very pastoral to one another, they visit those who are lonely or in need of any kind. Lifts are regularly provided for those who need them, either to church, home, hospital, doctors, shops, or to join in with our other church activities around the parish.

The events group provided opportunity for church and community to come together, either using the church or the village hall. An annual open air service used to be held in the adjacent field but has since been cancelled for various reasons, unfortunately this has not been reintroduced post COVID.

In the past a banner-making group have provided beautiful banners which are erected at various times of the year, church fetes/fairs etc.

ST CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH, NEWINGTON



Picture from 2005



Picture from 2022

St Christopher's Church was funded by the residents who moved into the post-war homes in Newington and dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1955. It was an integral part of the community until congregation numbers fell considerably in 2017 when the decision was taken to close St Christopher's for Sunday services, with the remaining members of the congregation merged with nearby St Mark's.

The building continued to be used for gospel-led groups and meetings including Ignite, Kneedenuts and EKIDS, and was also part of the Thanet Winter Shelter scheme in 2018 and 2019.

The ladies' toilets were completely refurbished in 2019 resulting in an all-access toilet with baby change facility, and the kitchen was updated during 2016. The heating system is modern and well-maintained.

In 2019, plans formed to reopen the church and the grounds were cleared in preparation for the Advent service which was held in early December 2019. Unfortunately the Covid pandemic curtailed all plans and the church closed its doors in early 2020.

In 2022, the beginnings of a new plan to reopen the church were formed around the Break the Cycle Project (Diocesan project) and Anna Ministry. Discussions were held with interested local residents, Break the Cycle, the Diocese and other local community support groups to plan a way forward.

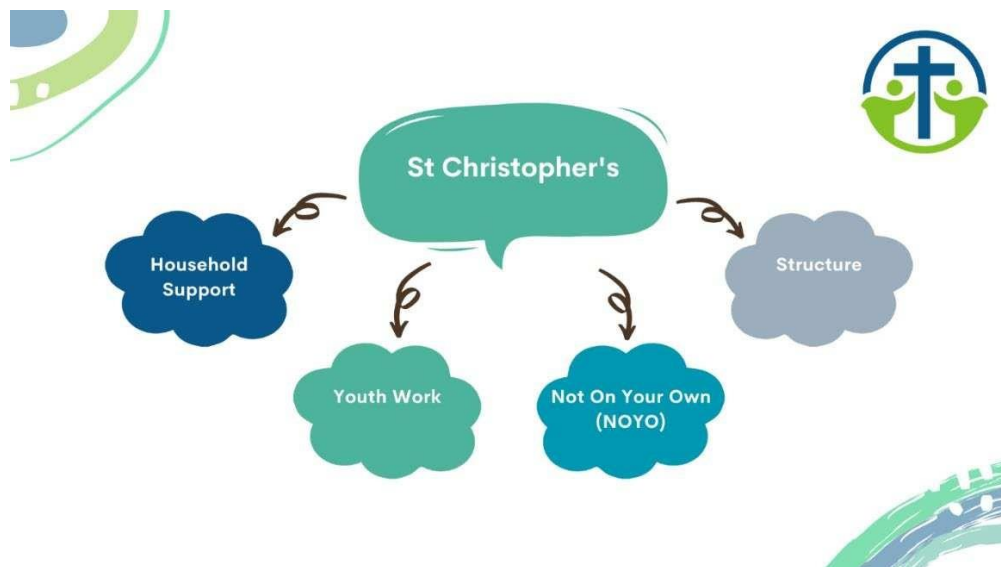
Unfortunately while the church building and grounds have been unused, they have been subject to vandalism and anti-social behaviour, and in July 2022, a break-in caused damage to the doors and boiler room and repairs have taken some months to be completed.

Towards the end of 2022 a number of events were held in order to demonstrate that St Christopher's was very much part of the Parish of St Laurence and the community of Newington. These included training events, equestrian boot fair, dementia café and Festive Food Pantry.

Local residents have been very vocal in their support of St Christopher's and are keen to see the building and grounds used. The PCC has recognised that St Christopher's has played an important part in the community life of Newington and is keen to reopen the church in 2023. An outline plan, "Hope at St Christopher's" has been approved by the PCC and is now in discussion with the Diocese and bids for funding have been made.

Aim:

- To maintain St Christopher's as a church within the Parish of St Laurence in Ramsgate
- To re-open the building for use 5/6 days per week
- To secure the building and grounds and prevent further break-ins and anti-social behaviour
- To use the building for church-led and community-led events and groups
- To provide a useable natural space for the community in the church grounds making the most of the outdoor area



Household Support	Youth Work	Not On Your Own (NOYO)
Connecting Thanet Community Café Food Pantry Place of Welcome Community Garden	Youth worker Family support o School uniform exchange Parent/Carer groups (Coffee and Chaos) Messy Church Homework Club Music Group	Anna Chaplaincy Companionship group for older people Dementia Café Hope Services Activities Group for those living with dementia Men's Shed

ANNA MINISTRY IN ST LAURENCE-IN-THANET

Anna Ministry is a way of responding to the needs of older people and people living with dementia and their families by keeping them at the forefront of church life. The aim for the Parish is to build a team of Anna Friends, co-ordinated by the Anna Chaplains, who will focus on delivering spiritual care support to older people, people living with dementia and their carers, whether in care homes, private homes, churches or community settings.

The Parish was one of the first two parishes to have an Anna Chaplain commissioned in Canterbury Diocese with Judith Andrews (Licensed Lay Minister) in September 2019. There is now a second Anna Chaplain, both with a real passion for ministry to older people and those living with dementia in the Parish.

Anna Ministry is much needed in Thanet for a number of reasons:

- Thanet has a higher than national average for older people
- In addition to the existing residential care homes, a new purpose built home for 70 residents, Chartwell House, opened in January 2023 and there are currently planning applications with Thanet District Council for two more 70 bed homes in Margate and Westgate.
- Following the pandemic, there has been a decrease in social confidence by those in later life as well as a reduction in groups and activities.
- The current economic crisis has impacted those with limited means and there is a need for warm spaces, food help and support.
- Older people and those living with dementia and their families can feel unable to attend church services due to mobility issues and cognitive decline but still want and need spiritual support

Anna Ministry is a ministry of hope, and we are responding to those needs as follows:

- Together with one of our PTO clergy, we now hold a Hope Service at Chartwell House, the new residential home in Westwood Cross with plans to start a Hope Group later in 2023. We also offer 1:1 spiritual support for residents when requested. The team at Chartwell House are keen for the residents to come to church when possible.

- We also plan to use St Christopher's as the base for Anna Ministry within the Parish with a monthly Hope Service and Hope Group. As the Hope for St Christopher's Project develops, there is plenty of opportunity to meet the community's needs with a Place of Welcome, community café, lunches and other activities as time passes.
- In the wider community of Thanet, our Anna Chaplain is also a member of the Thanet Dementia Action Alliance with links to the NHS, other dementia groups and local care businesses.

While the plans are optimistic, the biggest challenge for our Anna Chaplains is to attract volunteers who have the time and energy to support those plans.

Thanet Deanery was the pilot for the Anna Friends training and we would expect to run another course later in 2023 following a presentation to the Deanery in June.

