



Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES ➞ CHANGING LIVES

THE BENEFICE OF HEADCORN AND THE SUTTONS

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Someone who can lead us as well as walk alongside us, we will welcome you!

We are seeking a Vicar who

- Will shepherd our flock with wisdom and discernment;
- Will offer inspiring and thoughtful worship;
- Will guide us in the ways of deepening discipleship;
- Will work collaboratively with lay leaders and lay ministers, retired clergy etc....all who are willing to serve as required
- Will seek to identify, nurture and develop gifts within the worshipping community;
- Will be a visible presence in our villages and will help us to reach out to the wider communities.
- We are looking forward to welcoming a priest who can be a leader;

We can offer

- Growing congregations that are unique and distinct, but who come together in support of each other;
- Committed members who are keen to explore faith and discipleship;
- Deep involvement in the community life of our villages
- Buildings and finances managed carefully
- A newly refurbished four-bedroom vicarage in Oak Lane, Headcorn.



ROLE DESCRIPTION

Introduction

- We seek a priest who will nurture faith, inspire worship, deepen discipleship, and help us engage creatively with our communities.

Purpose of the Role:

- To lead our Benefice spiritually, pastorally, and in mission and service;
- To enable our congregations to grow in prayer, discipleship, and confidence;
- To support and develop outreach to families, children, older people, and those on the edges of church life;
- To maintain the unity and distinctiveness of our four churches, fostering a shared vision while respecting local identity.

Key Responsibilities of our new Vicar:

A. Leadership & Vision

- To provide spiritual leadership rooted in prayer, Scripture and the sacramental life of the Church.
- To work with PCCs and churchwardens to shape and deliver a clear, realistic vision for the future.

B. Worship & Preaching

- To lead worship across the Benefice, ensuring it is reverent, thoughtful and accessible.
- To preside at the Eucharist, celebrate festivals
- To support the choirs and musicians, and value the different worship styles present in the Benefice.
- To encourage innovation where appropriate, including continuing to develop Café Church, informal worship, and services for children and families.

C. Pastoral Care

- To provide compassionate, visible pastoral ministry to all four villages, including home visiting, care home ministry, and occasional offices.
- To support and guide the work of pastoral visitors and lay leaders.
- To offer sensitive ministry around bereavement, illness, and life transitions.

D. Mission & Community Engagement

- To strengthen the churches' presence in village life, building bridges with schools, businesses, community groups and uniformed organisations.
- To support and develop ministries such as Sunbeams, Messy Church, youth engagement, and intergenerational activities.
- To encourage outreach to new residents, commuters, young families, and those not currently connected to church.
- To maintain positive ecumenical relationships, especially with "Churches Together in Headcorn."

E. Benefice Collaboration & Organisation

- To work effectively with the churchwardens and the Benefice Administrator.
- To coordinate the Ministry Rota in partnership with lay leaders and clergy.
- To ensure good communication across the benefice, through the magazine, the website and other channels.
- To chair PCC meetings when required, supporting good governance, care of the buildings, safeguarding and compliance.

F. Stewardship, Governance & Buildings

- To support responsible financial stewardship and encourage generosity in giving.
- To engage positively with the Diocesan Parish Share process and local fundraising efforts.

G. Personal Ministry & Development

- To maintain a healthy rhythm of prayer, study, retreat and rest.
- To participate in Deanery and Diocesan life, including Chapter, Synod and continuing ministerial development.

Attributes & Gifts Sought

The person specification outlines the qualities we value most, but in summary we seek someone who is:

- Prayerful, thoughtful, and spiritually grounded
- Warm, relational, and community-minded
- A good collaborator with lay ministers and volunteers
- Comfortable with multi-church ministry
- Hopeful, resilient, and ready to work with both strengths and challenges
- Joyful in worship, flexible in approach, and confident in preaching the Gospel
-

Scope & Commitments

This is a full-time, stipendiary post within the Diocese of Canterbury. The Vicar will ensure coverage of services across the benefice; The role involves travel around the benefice and active engagement with all four church communities.

Conclusion

We are praying for a priest who will walk alongside us, encourage us, and help us become the people God is calling us to be—loving, confident, outward-looking, and deeply rooted in Christ.

ST PETER & ST PAUL HEADCORN

1: THE MISSION OF OUR CHURCH

Our Logo is 'following Christ together', and this appears on our Notice Sheet each week and in our Magazine each month.

Over the coming years we want to continue to build up a loving, prayerful and confident congregation that will be a powerhouse for witness and service.

We are looking for effective ways to integrate our young families into the main church congregation.

We live and worship in a medium-sized village, where there is a generous overlap between church and community. There are many joint activities with the village, including the annual Christmas tree festival. There is good care for the elderly with a weekly lunch club held in the village hall. Our Men's Breakfast and Women's Breakfast groups tackle issues relating to the world of work and social concern.

Sunbeams is our group for babies, toddlers, mums and other carers and meets every Friday.

Messy Church gives us exciting new contacts with young families in our village, and we are at present re-shaping the way we run this group.

Our Magazine Committee produces an attractive edition each month which is popular both in the church and in the wider village community.

Our Pastoral Group coordinates care for those who are ill, housebound, and in nursing homes.

Into this exciting mix of achievement and potential, we will welcome our new priest, to walk alongside us, and to inspire us with vision and leadership.

2: THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE PARISH

Headcorn is one of the largest villages in the area with 6,000 residents. There is a well-mixed population of young families, working-aged people, and the retired. Housing is a mixture of owner-occupied and rented.

There are a significant number of commuters, as Headcorn has a main-line service to London Charing Cross every half-hour, and the journey time is approximately one hour. There is also a direct train service to Canterbury and Dover. There is a regular bus service to Maidstone and Tenterden.

Headcorn Primary School is situated close to the village centre and has recently been rated 'Good' by OfSTED. The village has a popular pre-school and a nursery has just been started. The nearby towns of Maidstone and Ashford have a mixture of boys' and girls' Grammar Schools, Comprehensive Schools and Sixth Form Colleges. The historic and picturesque towns of Tenterden and Cranbrook are also nearby with Comprehensive Schools.

The Village Hall is a thriving centre for many activities, with over 30 clubs and societies. The village has many sporting facilities including golf, cricket, football and tennis clubs. The old Methodist Church is now called the Heart of Headcorn and also has many community groups.

'Churches Together in Headcorn' include the Baptist, Catholic and Methodist congregations as well as ourselves. We have special times together in Lent and Holy Week, at Christmas, and during the Week of Prayer for Unity.

3: OUR WORSHIP

As well as all the major festivals the following is a summary of our regular services:

1st Sunday of the month: Café Church

A relaxed lay-led service lasting about 30 mins, preceded by light refreshments served from 9:30am. We also celebrate special festivals – Harvest, Mothering Sunday, Pet Service, Christingle – on first Sundays at 10am.

Other Sundays: Parish Communion at 10am

We use Common Worship, and a robed choir leads us in our singing.

Members of the Pastoral Group take Communion to our housebound communicants as requested.

We are busy through the year with baptism, wedding and funeral services, and the statistics about these can be seen in the Statistical Appendix at the end of this Profile.

There are 12 members on the PCC, and we meet five times a year apart from the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Our finances are sound, and we have paid our Diocesan Share in full for many years. We are very grateful to the Friends and Fundraising Group of Headcorn Church who raise a significant sum each year and help us with many aspects of fabric repairs and ongoing maintenance costs. A summary of PCC accounts can be seen in the Statistical Appendix.

News about our church can be found in the regular monthly Magazine and on our Benefice web-site. <http://www.handschurches.org/>



4: OUR CHURCH BUILDING

The Parish Church stands at the west end of the village High Street, and is surrounded by the graveyard, which is not yet closed. The church is approached through a lychgate, built in 2000 to commemorate the new millennium.

The church dates largely from the 14th and 15th centuries and is in good order. We have now completed an ambitious plan to modernise our hospitality area, including a new kitchen servery and a fully accessible toilet. The choir vestry has been completely modernised at the back of the church.

The tower has a ring of eight bells, which are also in good order. They are well maintained by the bellringers, with help when necessary, from the County Association.



ST MARY'S, SUTTON VALENCE

Sutton Valence village lies between the parishes of East Sutton and Chart Sutton on the top of the Greensand Ridge. The dominant building is Sutton Valence independent school which is on top of the hill overlooking the oldest part of the village. The busy A274 runs north to south and divides the village geographically, with the Church on the west side and the village on the east. North of the village and on the west side of the A274 is the well-supported village infant and primary school, directly opposite the co-educational independent school. An active, independent pre-School operates in the Youth Centre on the north side of the churchyard.



The village is in a conservation area and supports a 'castle ruin' (in reality, a small 12th Century Keep). Farming is a major industry and there are two popular pubs, a hairdresser and a barber's shop. There are also three garages, two of which have shops. The village had a population of 1,863 in the 2021 census, although recent house-building will have increased this figure.

There is a large, well-equipped, and, consequently well-used village hall to the north of the village centre, two play areas (discounting the schools) and two areas of allotments, all well used. To the North there is a private nursing home.

Headcorn and Staplehurst train stations are a few miles to the south with regular services to London in one hour as well as Canterbury, Ashford and the Kent coast. Maidstone, the county town of Kent, lies six miles to the north so Sutton Valence has a relatively high proportion of commuters, both locally and to and from London. A bus service operates from Sutton Valence to Maidstone in one direction and to Headcorn and Tenterden in the other.

THE CHURCH

There are no Churches of any other denomination in the Parish, although Sutton Valence School has its own Chapel and a full-time lay Chaplain.

St Mary's Church is to the west of the main road just south of the primary school. Behind the Church is the youth centre which houses the local very successful pre-school.

The Church building is early Victorian (1830s) on the site of older Church buildings. It is in very good condition with dedicated funds for its maintenance, thanks to a sizeable legacy restricted to upkeep and maintenance of the church building. It easily seats 200. It has a vestry, two tower rooms – one on the ground floor and the other at the level of the glassed off west end gallery. This houses parish archive documents used to put on local archive exhibitions. There is a kitchen with power and water, and a toilet.

New lighting has also been installed throughout the Church. There is a good Victorian organ, much used. Responsibility for decorative maintenance of the Sanctuary rests with the Diocese of Rochester. A number of pews have been removed from the rear of the nave, making a useful area for coffee, meetings etc. There is also a comfortable seating area in part of this space with toys and child-size tables and chairs.



The regular Sunday service is the 10.00am Common Worship Holy Communion from specially prepared seasonal Orders of Service booklets. These services are sung, with hymns and a service setting. Bible readings and intercessional prayers are given by members of the congregation. The numbers at the Sunday morning service average 15 – 25, rising to between 50 and 100 for special services on Remembrance Sunday, and at Christmas (especially, in recent years, at the Christingle Service held on Christmas Eve afternoon – 2024 pictured) and Easter, when the congregation has a larger proportion of younger people. The age profile of the Sunday congregation reflects that of the village, and tends towards the more elderly and retired.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Home communion for the infirm has not hitherto been properly formalized, but contact has now been made with the Nursing Home, including the holding of regular monthly services, and with individual parishioners in their homes. This has been greatly appreciated by all those involved.

‘Preparing the Christingles’

Mission Action Plan

The PCC has put together a Mission Action Plan, with the aim of improving and developing our Ministry, Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Care, Inclusiveness and Celebration at St Mary’s Church. The general aims are to grow the spiritual life of the Church, to improve Worship and increase average attendance, to grow our ministry with families and children, and generally to make St Mary’s Church more relevant to the wider community. To seek to ensure that we are on the right lines, we have completed a SWOT Analysis assessing the internal and external factors that contribute to our relative advantages and disadvantages. The Analysis is aimed at highlighting our strengths, but also, and more critically, our weaknesses, as well as the barriers to the implementation of the plan.

In brief, we believe that our Strengths are the wonderful building, in good repair, with some relatively new facilities; a small group of very active members of the congregation who keep it so; two Lay leaders for Services of the Word, held, at present, on one Sunday each month; growing congregation numbers, consistently back to levels last seen about ten years ago, and magnificent church flower arrangements.



We perceive our Weaknesses to be a lack of car parking and the very busy main road separating the church from the larger part of the village, no Sunday School, and no children attending services on anything like a regular basis, a lack of 'doers' and a dependence on a very small, though willing, group, a lack of an active Church link with uniformed organisations, limited benefice 'togetherness' apart from joint services on fifth Sundays (so only three or four times a year), and no stipendiary ministry apart from the Vicar, so a lack of outreach and visibility of clergy in the village. Very sadly, our churchwarden who was also the organist, died suddenly early in 2026.

To balance the weaknesses, there are Opportunities, either pre-existing or ones we can create. We now lead short services in Sutton Valence Care Home once a month, taking the reserved sacrament; we hope to continue to re-establish links with the village primary school after a few difficult years; and we have several new and active members of the congregation.

We perceive the Threats as coming from the financial situation following the loss of a substantial part of the income from the telecommunications mast (see below), the ever-present risk of the closure of one of the three Sutton Churches given the ageing population (itself a threat), the debilitating effect of a possible lengthy period of vacancy, and, while the small group of active members of the congregation keep the place upright, this very smallness is a threat. We see this five year MAP as definitely "work in progress" and to an extent, aspirational. Measurement of progress against the Plan is on the agenda for each and every PCC meeting.

As part of establishing links with local uniformed organisations, the local Suttons Cubs group recently came into church for their Faith badge. Among other things, they were let loose on the organ, discovering what sounds different stops can make (all under the close supervision of the church organist!). We were also able to provide some gardening experience for older pupils of Sutton Valence School in the churchyard, again under close supervision!

FINANCE AND GIVING

St Mary's, like other churches in the Benefice and indeed the wider church community, continues to face many financial challenges in the coming years not least of which are reducing collections, donations and fund raising as well as increased running costs, including our parish share.

Unlike other churches in the Benefice, however, we have been severely impacted by the significant reduction in our legacy mast income. The annual mast income of £10,000 is set to reduce to £3,250 p.a. in 2025, with a one off initial receipt of £3,500 as a transitional concession. The PCC are reviewing all options to mitigate this situation but we will inevitably have to rely on the local community and the goodwill of the Diocese to support our church.

Regular banker's orders and collections plus related tax refunds were marginally down year on year. Donations, fund raising and fees earned were also down.



Costs were up in the year including our Parish share, a commitment that we met in 2025 in order to support the important work of the Diocese, but it looks unlikely that we shall be able to do so again in 2026. Like other Churches, St Mary's has relatively high, inflation driven, fixed costs in terms of insurances, clergy and benefice expenses and utilities and our parish share, along with everyone else's, will inevitably increase each year. It is encouraging that the Diocese are looking into the allocation methodology of the Parish share which may yield savings.



We are very fortunate to have a sizeable residual legacy, the majority of which is placed in a Diocese-managed fund. However, this legacy is restricted and it can only be used for repairs and maintenance to the Church fabric of the building, its permanent fixtures, and the Churchyard. There is also a small deposit account, which is also restricted, from which St Mary's has a commitment to maintain certain graves in the churchyard.

Despite an ongoing difficult financial position, the PCC continue to support the good work performed in the community and maintain the historic structure and fixtures and fittings of St Mary's church and look forward to the appointment of a new Vicar to lead not only our financial sustainability but our worship within our community.

Fund raising from functions such as coffee mornings, a quiz, and musical events with refreshments, has continued to bring in useful income, We aim to hold more of these to try to offset some of the loss of the mast rental referred to above.

ST PETER AND ST PAUL EAST SUTTON

If you walk from Sutton Valence to Ulcombe, you will pass the beautiful and ancient church of St Peter & St Paul, East Sutton.

This small church sits on the Greensand Ridge, perched on the hill overlooking the Weald of Kent.



There was a wooden church on this site in about 1086 AD. It is now a building of Kentish Ragstone, mostly 13th Century which has been extended over time. It features 14th C additions of the North and south chapels, while the tower and porch are 15th C. We have a window with inserts of medieval glass and a large brass of the Filmer family. The church was once the chapel for the Filmer family who resided in East Sutton Park opposite. We have visitors from all over the world wanting to see their family origins. East Sutton Park is now a rehabilitation female prison. Our church cleaners are volunteers from the prison.

We have working gas lights and a new set of lights in the roof funded by one of the congregation. There is a Norman font and a Jacobean pulpit. The church is Grade 1 listed.

The tower has 6 bells in good condition. There is a combined team of bell ringers, visiting campanologists come from all over to ring them.

A closed churchyard surrounds the church, this is being maintained by the generosity of a villager and has recently been planted with hundreds of daffodils. A toilet has recently been installed at the far end of the graveyard, by a substantial donation from a local family.

Across the road is the 'new' graveyard and War Memorial, and the path leading to the memorial has been re planted.

Working parties are organised when necessary to clean gutters and clear fallen trees etc.

The church is part of a small hamlet, although the parish extends some distance south, there are approximately 150 homes and about 400 people. There are several large farms, an assortment of businesses and good commuter links. A popular golf runs alongside the graveyard with another golf course in the south of the parish!

At present, there are 40 on the electoral register, from these there is a small group of attendees.

The local village hall 150 m along the lane was once the school. Events are held there.

The church is popular for marriages, baptisms and funerals, we have a Ladies choir for these events.

Although the congregation is small, at Christmas time we can be nearly at capacity, the church holds about 110 people. There is a band of flower arrangers and a kneeler group, now making pew cushions. The choir sings at special events, not only at East Sutton but combines with the other churches for some services.

The PCC works well together. We have a set of skills between us and support each other. The churchwardens have been brought together by the Interregnum.

Fund raising throughout the year takes the form of coffee mornings and afternoon teas. Carols by Candlelight, Ride and Stride and the Christmas Fayre.

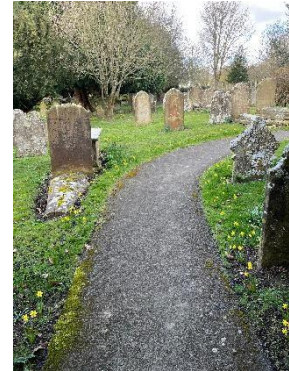
Services are on a monthly rota

2nd Sunday 8am Holy Communion

3rd Sunday 11am Themed Family Service and Holy Communion

4th Sunday 6pm Evensong

5th Sunday 10 am Joint Benefice service (rotating)



Harvest Festival, Remembrance, Carol Service, Christmas Day Family Service and Mothering Sunday

We are fortunate to have 3 people to play the organ and Lay readers and retired clergy, who are serving us well during the Interregnum.

Our church and congregation are small but there is a big heart here, we are friendly and welcoming. It is a hub in a village with little centre and it is supported by people who are generous in their giving.

East Sutton church has its own personality, a feeling that it has been a holy place for so long and people pay homage to its antiquity and beauty.

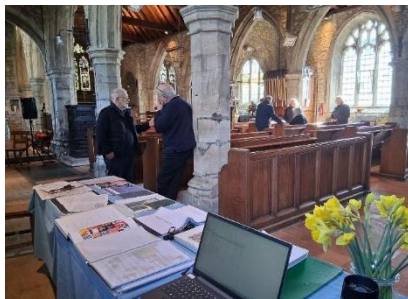
FINANCE

Our annual income is currently about £15k for the general 'Freewill' account, with an additional 34.5k in a designated 'Fabric' fund from covenants, donations and investments.

Approximately 75% of the income is donated either from covenants or church collections, plus associated Gift Aid. The majority of the balance arises from fundraising events and parochial fees, of which the latter may vary each year.

The major item of expenditure is the Parish share 311,600 in 2024. Insurance costs £3.3 pa. we have been running at a small deficit for some years.

General funds, currently run total about £1.5k and there is £37k in the Fabric fund. There are smaller, restricted funds, some dating back centuries, totalling £22k.



ST MICHAELS CHART SUTTON

St Michael and All Angels Church sits proudly on the Greensand Ridge looking South with magnificent views of the Weald of Kent, the famously named 'Garden of England'

It is adjacent to Chart Place, Sutton Valence Preparatory School and a farm complex exhibiting architectural styles adopted from the lucrative Dutch wool trade era.

A significant part of Chart Sutton parish is given over to farming including apples, cherries, strawberries, cereals as well as livestock. The fruit sector especially attracts many overseas workers who are housed on site



Community activities in the parish are largely centred in the Village Hall which very recently has undergone a major refurbishment bringing it into the 21st Century with external heat pumps, solar panels and EV chargers. Activities include yoga classes, dog training, art classes, dance classes, pilates, short mat bowls, a sewing group, various committee gatherings including Parish Council and Benefice meetings. It also hosts a couple of services each year

There is also a Memorial Playing Field which is regularly used for sports and community activities as well as a children's play area.

The Village Green hosts our carol singing and sale on the green activities which assists in our desire to promote church and village integration

The Church

The site has been used for Christian worship for over a thousand years. The current church building dates from the late 18th Century although the tower survives from earlier years. The building is generally in good condition with no major items of concern contained in its quinquennial report.

It was rewired a few years ago and the carpets have been replaced. New heated seat pads have been installed at considerable expense. There is a Church clock which works. The tower contains six bells which are regularly rung by the active bell ringing team (being a joint team with East Sutton) and also visiting ringers. The musical accompaniment is provided by a modern electric keyboard and portable CD player. A Faculty is being applied for in connection new churchyard gates for which finance is already in place.

Services

Services are currently limited to two evensongs per month, plus several services held by the School during term time. In addition, there are some Holy Communion services often linked with special occasions such as Easter and Christmas. In September each year, a 'Battle of Britain' remembrance service is held by the Headcorn Branch RAF Association in commemoration of a pilot who crash landed in the village. There is a memorial ground in one of the orchards nearby where the plane landed .

In addition, two services a year are held in the Village Hall , one a carol service and the other a pancake service prior to Lent , both involving refreshments and both of which attract good attendance from the village.

The Benefice also runs a Friday night compline service which is hosted by St Michael's, plus short monthly Bible discussion group.

Finances

The Church finances are solvent with £27,000 on deposit at the Bank. The Parish Share has been paid in full and on time for many years

There are a number of fund-raising events in the Parish involving our small Village Green, and various parishioners' gardens where parties are held.

The Future

The PCC is keen to develop further the Church's engagement with the local community which in recent years has diminished somewhat. There are various reasons to believe that the future could be bright at Chart Sutton with its potential developed as follows

- The generosity of the local residents is significant as witnessed by the heating being primarily funded by them
- Sutton Valence School including the Preparatory School located next to the Church value the facilities provided by our Church as evidenced by these words from James Thomas the Headmaster:

'It is such a joy and privilege to be able to use St Michael's Church so often with our pupils from Sutton Valence Preparatory School. It is a beautiful spot steeped in history and our many services there throughout the year are enhanced by their taking place at this spiritual



gem. It feels like an integral part of our lives and is hugely appreciated by staff, pupils and parents. '

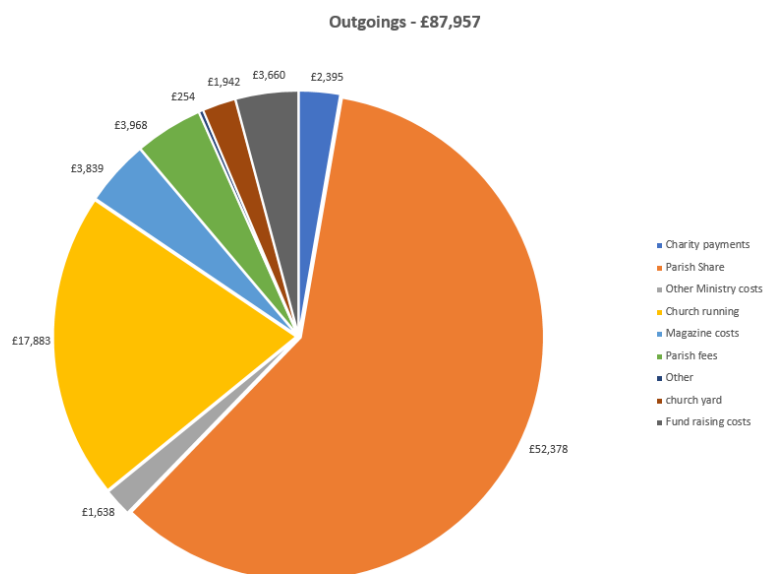
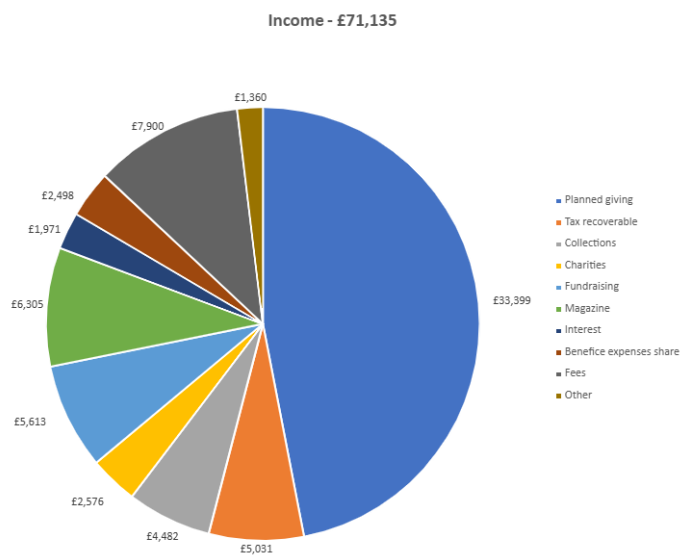
APPENDIX 1 - HEADCORN & THE SUTTONS: BENEFICE MINISTRY ROTA

Typical Monthly Pattern of Services

	Headcorn	Sutton Valence	East Sutton	Chart Sutton
First Sunday	10 Café Church Lay-led	10 Parish Communion	No service	6 Evensong
Second Sunday	10 Parish Communion	10 Parish Communion	8 Holy Communion	No service
Third Sunday	10 Parish Communion	10 Service of the Word Lay-led	11 Holy Communion	6 Evensong
Fourth Sunday	10 Parish Communion	10 Parish Communion	6 Evensong	No service
Fifth Sunday	10 United Service in one of the four churches in turn			

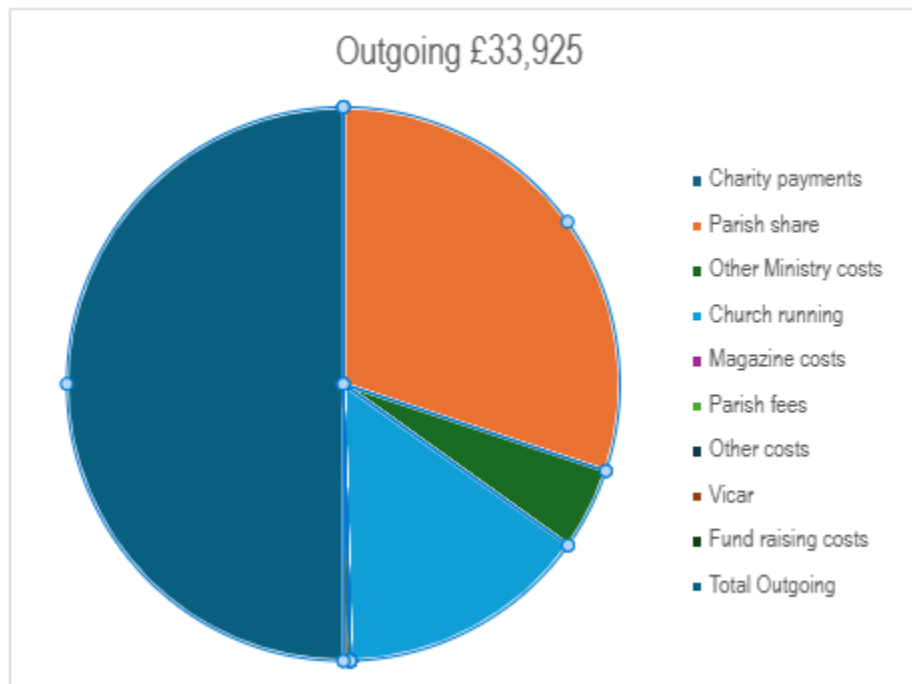
APPENDIX 2 – FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Headcorn St Peter & St Paul



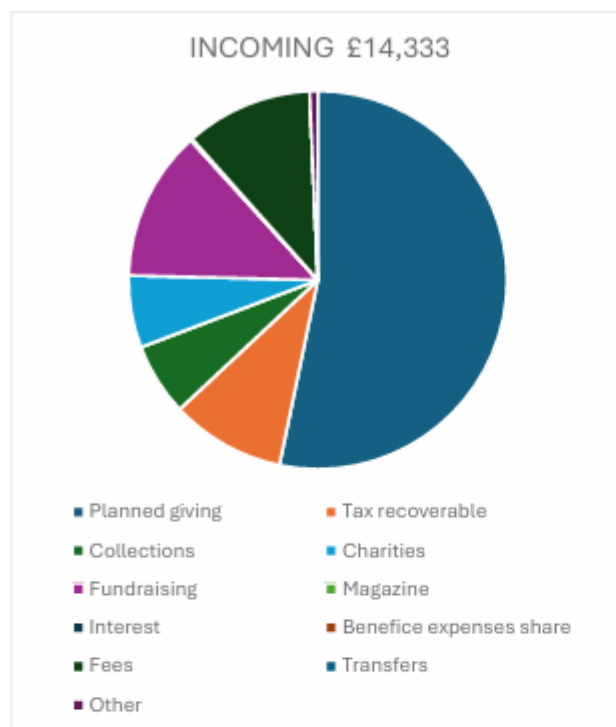
Sutton Valence w East Sutton

Sutton Valence St Mary

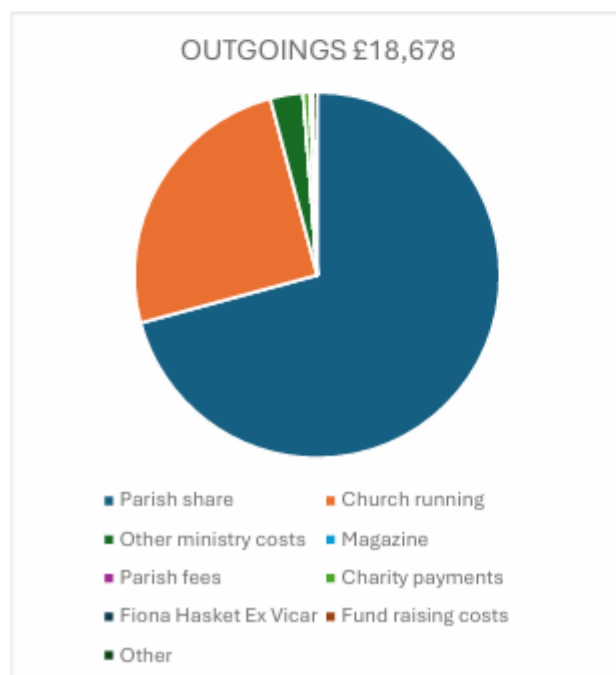


East Sutton St Peter & St Paul

EAST SUTTON ST PETER & ST PAUL
Financial Statement Year Ending 31 Dec 2025



Planned giving	7,687
Tax recoverable	1,411
Collections	892
Charities	891
Fundraising	1,861
Magazine	0
Interest	20
Benefice expenses share	0
Fees	1,571
Transfers	0
Other	0
Total Incoming	<u>£14,333</u>



Parish share	13,236
Church running	4,689
Other ministry costs	544
Magazine	0
Parish fee	0
Charity payments	110
Fiona Hasket Ex Vicar	0
Fundraising costs	48
Other	51
Total Outgoings	<u>£18,678</u>

Chart Sutton St Michael

