

Isle of Sheppey – three exciting new ministry opportunities

Thank you for considering ministry opportunities on the Isle of Sheppey.

Sheppey is a Kentish coastal gem combining natural beauty, rich maritime history, and vibrant seaside towns. Visitors enjoy vast wildlife reserves, explore beaches known for fossil hunting, and discover centuries of naval and aviation heritage. Its peaceful, scenic landscape offers an authentic and refreshing escape from the busyness of life.

However, this community-rich, historic island faces both challenges and mission opportunities for the church. With its diverse population exceeding 40k, maritime heritage, and areas of real social need, ministry roles here involve building relationships, engaging in outreach, and fostering discipleship. It's a place for compassionate and collaborative ministry. Ministry is challenging for sure, but the people and the location make this a rewarding opportunity for the right people to share the Good News of knowing Jesus and serving the Lord.

There has been a Christian presence on the Island from 664AD and following in the steps of those first pioneering Christians, we are looking to develop again a strong ministry team to support, lead and pastor the people. There are two benefices on Sheppey and both are currently vacant. The bishop is passionate about re-building a strong team to serve the Island. To this end the bishop has consulted the parishes and together with her leadership team has met local stakeholders to understand fully the needs of the church and the community.

We are looking for priests to:

- shepherd the people and prayerfully minister to all.
- enable confident disciples to participate in mission and love and serve God, the community and each other.
- support and nurture the ministry team following the interregnum.
- grow and develop confident disciples able to serve.
- grasp the opportunities to work collaboratively with other key stakeholders and other churches who are very supportive.
- engage with the three Church of England Primary Schools and other community schools through to sixth-form.

The opportunities are great, but planning for growth is essential. Currently there are two benefices on the Island forming a Group Ministry. West Sheppey is a single parish with three district churches (Minster, Queenborough and Sheerness); and on the other side of the Island is the Parish of Eastchurch with Leysdown and Harty. Together with the PCCs we are considering the most appropriate way of sustaining ministry for the whole Island that can lead to the flourishing of all and to develop mission initiatives reaching into the heart of the community. To this end the bishop is looking to appoint **two**

Associate Priests initially supporting each benefice but working missionally across the Island; and also a **Priest-in-Charge** who will lead the ministry team. This postholder would initially be licensed to both parishes, but with the intention of exploring what pastoral reorganisation might look like creating a more cohesive and collaborative vision for ministry and mission.

The churches have demonstrated a resilience to work through this vacancy period without any formal priestly ministry on the Island; yet behind this resolve is a degree of fragility and we are looking for the right people with appropriate gifts to nurture, love and grow the church. These are key appointments and there will be support offered as the team develops. If you feel this could be you, please read the profiles and for further information or an informal conversation please contact Lynn Bourne (lbourne@diocant.org).

The Revd Canon Sharon Copestake
Archdeacon of Maidstone

The Revd Richard Braddy
Associate Archdeacon