

ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, SEAL

PARISH PROFILE



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in being our Priest in Charge at Seal, and for taking the time to read this Parish Profile – we hope it encourages you to apply for the role.



Who we are?

We are a welcoming, varied and committed congregation looking for a Priest in Charge who can offer a positive approach to Christian worship, a tolerant and inclusive attitude to all members of our diverse society, and a commitment to the development of the Parish. We are looking for a Priest in Charge on a part-time basis of 0.5 of a full stipend.

We hope and pray that in reading this Profile you will get a sense of the opportunity available to become a leading part of life in our village and community.

What we hope to become

We believe that everyone is loved by God and is part of his family. We hope, with God's guidance, strength and Grace, to be able to spread this message more widely. So, whatever someone's background, age, ability, disability, gender or sexuality is, whatever their level of faith or doubt, whatever the story of their life has been, we'll be glad to see them. We are registered with Inclusive Church and support its aims and values.

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The Role

The Priest in Charge we Need

We are looking for a person of deep faith, rooted in prayer and Bible teaching, who can effectively communicate the gospel of God's love for everyone. Someone who can engage with and inspire us to deepen our relationship with God and energise our development of sharing God's love with the wider community and with an interest in worship activities both inside and outside of church.



The ideal candidate will be:

- An excellent communicator, able to explain how scripture is relevant in our lives today and able to connect with those who have little knowledge or concept of the Christian faith.
- Passionate and creative about mission and outreach, able to inspire us to find new ways to reach out to the local and wider community.
- A visible presence in the local community and willing to be involved in activities, thereby being a living example of the relevance of faith in today's increasingly secular society.
- Collaborative and eager to work with the PCC and congregation to develop a strong Vision which will respect our Eucharistic worship traditions whilst allowing us to develop more contemporary worship styles and ways of "being church".
- Liberal, tolerant and committed to the aims of Inclusive Church.
- Compassionate and forgiving with an understanding of the impact of life's ups and downs. We do not expect perfection and hope that you are of a like mind.

What we can offer

A welcoming and committed congregation rooted in a friendly village set in a very picturesque location but not far from large town facilities and easy access to London. We have a strong Lay Ministry team, finances that are managed well and a committed Safeguarding Officer.



Ministry and Lay Ministry



St Peter and St Paul is a happy, all-age and fully inclusive church proud to welcome all and to uphold our worship traditions. Children are always welcome and we have an activity corner for them to use during services if they wish.

You won't be alone as we have an established Lay Ministry team that can lead non-Eucharistic services and activities, a flavour of which is given below.

Worship

For our main Eucharistic Services, we have a robed choir who are led in procession by the Crucifer followed by the Priest who wears vestments (cassock-alb or cassock and surplice). It is an established part of our tradition for the Gospel to be read by the Priest from the pulpit before an explanatory sermon is preached from there. For non-Eucharistic Services we welcome diversity in the style of and delivery of the services. Children are encouraged to participate in our All-Age Worship services.

Our normal services pattern is as follows:

Sunday

- 10am - Holy Communion (Common Prayer) *Approx. 1 hour including 10 min sermon; 2nd Sunday All Age Worship*
- 3pm - Messy Church (held once a month)
- 6.30pm - Holy Communion or Breathing Space Communion or Evensong (BCP) *A short said service in the Lady Chapel*

Wednesday

- 11am - Holy Communion at Lavender Fields care home *A short said service held once a month followed by refreshments*

Friday

- 9am - Holy Communion (BCP) or Morning Prayer *A short said service*

The 10am service is usually followed by refreshments served at the back of the church.

There are 90 on the electoral role and average Sunday attendance is 40 adults and 5 children. The Priest usually officiates for a number of baptisms, weddings and funerals/interments a year.



Festivals and Special Events

We hold a Christingle service on behalf of the Children's Society and a separate Crib service on Christmas Eve both of which fill the church with children, parents and grandparents, many of whom do not attend St Peter and St Paul on a regular basis.

Our "not Midnight" Mass Service (held at 9pm on Christmas Eve) and Carol Service are led by our choir and are equally well attended.

We mark Ash Wednesday and All Souls with reflective services and at Harvest we welcome our local uniformed Scouts groups.

During Lent we hold regular Eco Church walks which include a gentle stroll focusing on God's generous provisions, short scripture readings, poems and prayers, followed by refreshments.

Local schools hold their Christmas, Harvest Festival and leaving services in church.

A popular pet blessing service is held annually in the churchyard.



Music



We love to sing and music is an important part of our worship tradition.

We are fortunate to have a committed, robed choir who lead us in our 10am Eucharist services, including singing parts of the Eucharist. Our choir is open to all, without audition, and this is something we are keen to continue.

We have an organist on 1 Sunday a month together with others when available for which we are very grateful.

Our small music group leads our All-Age Worship on the second Sunday of the month and we use downloaded music to support other services.

We are currently advertising for a Musical Director to lead the choir. It is a credit to the choir's dedication, that they continue to practise and lead the church in choral worship.

Our Church in the Community

The activities we undertake as a church are many and varied...



Our Messy church meets once a month in the church hall and provides an opportunity for children to learn about God in a fun way.

The Church has very strong links with our local Church Primary School. Our Priest has always conducted fortnightly assemblies at Seal Primary School, in line with the diocesan programme for church schools within Rochester. These have always been well received by the children and staff at the school, so not wishing to lose this very important link, a team from the congregation has kept this going during the interregnum. This team is also hosting a small parents' prayer group who meet fortnightly in the Lady Chapel of our church. The school promotes this in its newsletter, and we hope to see growth in this group.

A Bible study group meets once a month in the church hall for a stimulating and thought-provoking exploration of the Bible. Similarly, we have 2 thriving Home Groups, (with another being established) 1 meeting weekly and 1 fortnightly, and we always have the opportunity to follow a Lent course, this year, with our Lay Reader leading the studies.

We have a very dedicated team of bell ringers, who regularly turn out to call us for weekly worship and for special events such as weddings.

We have an events team who organise various opportunities to raise funds, develop fellowship, and reach out to non-church families in our community - this year their Christmas Pudding making evening was very well received. We have a number of excellent cake makers and enjoy eating their products!



Eco Church



We have a very active Eco Church team who are inspiring and encouraging our congregation and wider community to care for the wonderful world God has provided for us. The team have ensured we use ecologically friendly products in the Church and the Church Hall and have championed thoughtful recycling by providing a small

collection facility in the village.

The team run events aimed to engage with the local community, such as the construction of Easter nest boxes and bird feeders, a garden safari treasure hunt around our wildlife area with Frog life's "There Be Dragons" trail, Great British birdwatch and butterfly count sessions and Lent Eco Walks. Our annual Love Your Burial Ground/Churches Count on nature week surveys include a Swift survey and bat detector sessions, as we are fortunate to have both species nesting here. This year, a Moth Trap will be introduced, with a breakfast ID event!



Mission and Outreach

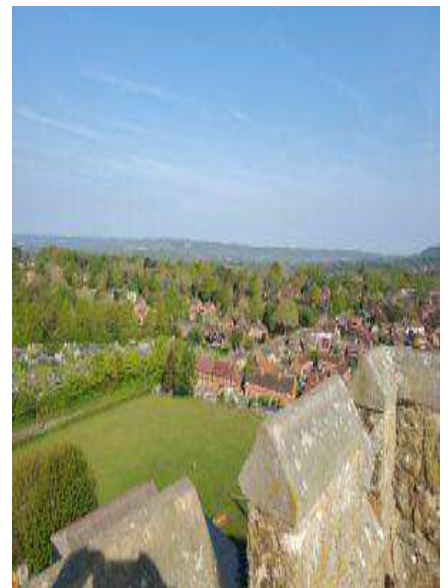
Outreach is a major challenge as it is for many churches and we need to capitalise on the fleeting visits by parishioners at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Your role will include looking at how the church can engage with outreach in our local communities as well as mission further afield.

We see capitalising on our good links with local schools and developing our children and youth offer as key areas of outreach and growth.

A number of our congregation members provide support, voluntarily, to Sevenoaks For Families (S4F) which provides emotional support and encouragement to families coping with problems relating to health, education, anti-social behaviour and other family-related issues. These volunteers are trained in enhanced active listening skills and are supported by coordinators and counselling supervisors attending other local churches.

Sevenoaks District Council has plans to develop a brownfields site adjacent to the parish into a substantial housing development. Whilst not strictly in our parish this is another area of potential growth.

It is important to us that the church is accessible to all and we have a team of volunteers who ensure it is open.



The Parish of St Peter and St Paul

Our Location



The parish combines the village of Seal and the area of Godden Green. Seal is situated about 2 miles north-east of the town of Sevenoaks. Seal is mentioned in the Domesday book and has about 1600 residents. The parish has a CofE Primary school, a range of shops, a library, a residential care home, a mental health hospital and 2 pubs. Seal's location meant that historically it was a centre for ironworking and agricultural tools and there were a number of forges in the village.

The parish presents a very mixed demographic. The East of Seal is one of 4 neighbourhoods in Sevenoaks that are among the most income-deprived in England whilst a smaller area of Seal also comprises some of the least income-deprived households in the country.

We also have a few thriving businesses in Seal, meeting all our main needs; we have a village butcher, grocer, coffee shop, a take away kebab shop and a small pet hotel.

We have a very popular primary school, boasting its own community farm and forest school, and we are walking distance to 3 secondary schools and a short bus ride to a 4th. Among these are a faith school, a girls' grammar, a boys' grammar and a coeducational all ability secondary. There is also a pre-school nursery in the Pavilion on the recreation ground.

Our Wider Community

Seal has a grass roots project called Know Your Neighbours, which aims to bring as many people in the community together, as possible. A weekly newsletter is sent out to around 350 households and annual meet and greet sessions are held to promote social inclusion and welcome new residents.

There is scheme known as Talking Village, which provides several opportunities each week to bring people together in the coffee shop, the library and the Church Hall. There is a weekly group that meets in the Church Hall for social recreation. Whilst these are not Church groups, most of these are hosted by our Church members.

Our library is a vibrant part of the community, and though only open part time, it is home to a monthly book club, a monthly group known as 'The Tea Set' where speakers talk on various interesting subjects. There is also a weekly visit from an IT volunteer to assist people with computer issues. The village also has a very active allotment society, who hold open days and annual fair. There is a monthly group for Over 60s, providing teas, and a weekly toddler group. Sessions of Qi Gong, Pilates, Yoga, Short Mat bowls and Sequence Dancing take place in the Village Hall. Since last summer, there is also a community cinema which takes place every 2 months.

The Pavilion on the recreation ground, is currently mainly used for Top Banana, a children's' nursery and for Parish Council meetings.

Our Resources

The Church, Vicarage, Church Hall and Churchyard



St Peter & St Paul Seal is a very picturesque Grade 1 listed building dating back to 1280 with significant Tudor (porch, tower and Nave) and Victorian (North Aisle, organ loft and vestry) additions. It occupies a prominent position, sited at the highest point of the village, and overlooks the beautiful North Downs. There is evidence that a church stood on the site even earlier, probably from Saxon times. The church is home to many beautiful stained-glass windows and a number of interesting monuments.

The church can seat approximately 160 people in pews, and there are extra chairs for very well attended services.

Our bell tower houses 6 bells, and the tower itself is one of the highest for miles, providing a great venue for visiting campanologists looking for a challenge.

We also have a very much-admired organ and tower clock, both of which have had major renovation work over the past few years - all funded by special appeals.

There is a very handsome, purpose-built vicarage, constructed in 1983, opposite the church. There is a good-sized study to the left of the main entrance, meaning visitors for church business can be met and served without needing to enter the main living area. There are 4 good sized bedrooms, a private drive, garage and a beautifully well stocked garden. More photographs of the vicarage can be found in the Photo Album Appendix.



We have a small Church Hall, a wooden building constructed in the 1950s, with a small outdoor space and well-equipped kitchen.

The churchyard is open for burials and interments.

Our People

You won't be on your own!



We are very fortunate to have a strong Lay Ministry team led during the interregnum by our calm, kind and considerate Reader, Kevin. He has been supported in services by a mixture of visiting priests who can preside over the Eucharist and 2 PCC members who have the Bishop's permission to conduct services under supervision. Three lay members of the PCC have permission to administer communion to the sick and housebound and we have a small team who visit Seal Primary School regularly.

The Parochial Church Council consists of 16 Members and meets alternate months. We have a strong and committed Standing Committee of 5 members consisting of 3 ex

church wardens, Kevin (our Lay Reader) and Babs our PCC secretary. The strength of the Standing Committee is such that an absence of church wardens is not felt.

The church is financially secure and its finances well managed. We have a small team assisting our Treasurer Andrew in looking after the church finances with experience of bookkeeping, accounts preparation, gift aid reclaims, VAT reclaims, goods and services negotiation and grant applications.

Our Fabric Committee oversees the overall condition of the buildings and responds to the various needs raised by the Quinquennial inspections. They have also worked hard to create a welcoming and safe church - recent projects included the installation of a refreshments station at the back of church and an upgrade of the lightning conductor.

As previously mentioned, we are blessed in that our congregation and the wider community regularly come together to support the church financially. Examples include table top sales, cake sales, Christmas wreath making activities and supporting appeals to fund major expenditure such as the recent clock refurbishment.

There are a lot of people who play a small but significant part in the everyday life of our church – preparing rotas, cleaning, gardening, reading, leading intercessions, taking hall bookings, serving at the altar, updating our website, acting as sidespersons, flower arranging and offering coffee and refreshments after every morning service giving the congregation regular opportunities for fellowship.

Our Finances

Like most churches of our size, we aim to meet our day-to-day expenditure each year and this is generally achieved by regular giving by the church family. We also recognise that from time to time there will be one-off costs, usually for items arising from the quinquennial review, that will require a special appeal. In 2023 such an appeal was made to meet the costs of work to the clock tower. Over £20,000 was raised which, together with the Gift Aid tax recovery, enabled the necessary work to be carried out in 2024 and 2025. We are always immensely grateful for the generosity of the church family in meeting our financial needs.

In 2024 our finances show a stable position, a summary being set out below. The budget for 2025 shows a similar position and includes the remaining costs of £8,137 relating to the 2023 appeal. All costs are subject to regular

review to ensure we are achieving value for money and that particular suppliers remain best suited to the church's needs.

We are in the process of moving to electronic banking which will simplify some of our procedures and ease the administrative burden. We make full use of the Parish Giving Scheme which has facilitated the early collection of tax recoveries and improved our cash flow. The finance team is well resourced and keen to ensure the church remains financially secure.

2024 Financial Overview

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Planned giving (incl. tax) | £58,302 |
| Total income | £70,568 |
| Total normal expenditure | £49,534 |
| Expenditure relating to appeal | £12,555 |
| Excess income over expenses | £ 8,479 |
| Reserves in cash and investments | £127,026 |
| Parish offer | £24,000 |

Our approach to Safeguarding



Safeguarding is fundamental to the health of our Church and to our Faith. We can't claim to love and welcome all people unless we are ready to do what we need to keep them safe.

The appointed Parish Safeguarding Officer PSO Marshall Kent and the PCC take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Together we strive to create and maintain Seal Church as a place that is safer for all, that promotes well-being, that prevents abuse, and that creates nurturing, caring conditions within our Church for children, young people and adults.

The PCC continues to strengthen and review these Church environments and activities. This is done by training, support, communication, learning, governance and quality assurance processes as follows:

- The PCC has signed up to the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy for children, young people & adults and follows its guidelines in the way we run our activities.
- We have links on our website, and information in the porch for anyone who needs to raise a concern.
- Safeguarding is a standing item on every PCC agenda.
- All relevant persons are currently DBS checked / cleared.
- We use the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Dashboard, which provides an audit of our parish practice and provides directions for compliance and mitigating areas of Safeguarding risk.
- The Dashboard converts into a 'Promoting a Safer Church' action plan in place that sets out, in line with national and local priorities, how the policy is being put into action at Seal and is reviewed regularly by the PCC.
- The PCC and Church Officers undertake Safeguarding training at the appropriate level for the activities and roles they undertake.
- The PSO and PCC are focused on continuing to maintain the high standards and compliance achieved in Safeguarding practice and delivery at Seal while the Church is without a Priest.

The Local Area

About Sevenoaks

Sevenoaks is a historic market town about 25 miles SE of London, 2 miles from the M25 and has excellent transport links to London. Its town centre has a wide range of national and independent retailers, cafes, charity shops, bookshops, pubs, restaurants, banks and estate agents.

Sevenoaks has a large leisure centre, library, museum and many sports facilities and clubs. The Stag Theatre/cinema and Pamoja Hall provide excellent performance stages. The Annual Sevenoaks Festival showcases local and national talent and there are many choirs, orchestras, concert and jazz bands within the area.

Sevenoaks is on the main railway line from London to the South Coast (Hastings and Dover) and provides fast, regular access to the capital and the West End (35mins). This makes Sevenoaks a desirable commuter town and there is pressure on housing, particularly affordable housing.

There are a number of outstanding schools in Sevenoaks and the local area, both independent and state funded. We have already detailed the schools within the parish. West Kent retains a selective education system to assess suitability with Weald of Kent Grammar School for girls and an extension of Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for boys both nearby. Also in Sevenoaks are Trinity School, a co-educational Christian school and Knole Academy with Sevenoaks School and Walthamstow Hall School contributing to the independent sector. Many pupils travel to Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells to school, including Bennett Memorial Diocesan School which provides excellent co-educational opportunities.

Time Off?



We certainly expect you to have time off and Sevenoaks and the surrounding area provide plenty of opportunities to enjoy it. With the North Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty to our north and the Weald just to the south we are surrounded by beautiful countryside.

The National Trust owns many properties nearby, including Knole House (actually in Sevenoaks) and its deer park which is a popular location for many a Christmas/Boxing Day family walk, Ightham Mote, Churchill's home Chartwell and Emmetts Garden. Hever Castle and Penshurst Place are also on our doorstep.

If you are a keen gardener then you will be spoilt for choice for gardens to visit as Riverhill Himalayan Gardens, St Clere, Great Comp and Lullingstone World Garden are close by. The coast is just a short drive or short train ride away



Appendix – A Photo Album

Here are some photos to see more about the Church, Churchyard, Vicarage, Church Hall and also the surrounding Village. These and more can be seen at <https://sealpeterandpaul.com/parish-profile/>.

Vicarage



From the front garden



Kitchen

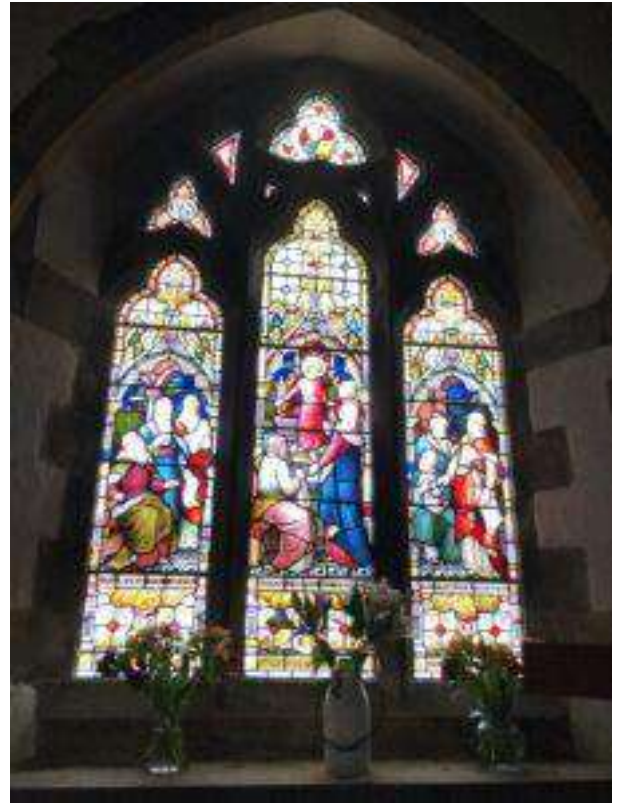


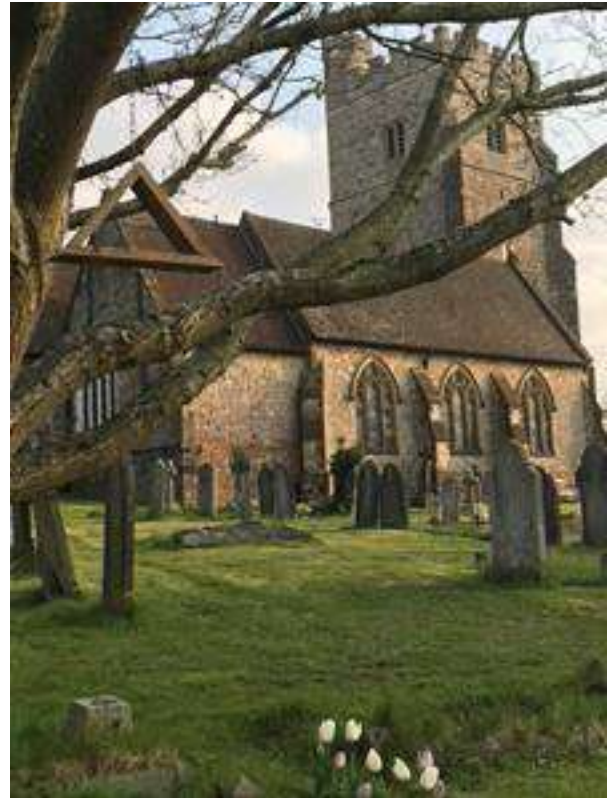
Lounge



Study

The Church







Church Hall



From the Vicarage



A party!



Inside

A few of Seal Village



Study





Further information



For further information please see:

www.sealpeterandpaul.com

Or contact:

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Archdeacon of Tonbridge

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