



Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES ⇌ CHANGING LIVES

Parish Profile: West Sheppey





West Sheppey Churches

Sharing God's Grace, Love & Forgiveness.

Introduction



West Sheppey currently provides worship in three Traditional-Central churches on the Island, off the North Kent Coast, building upon the 1400+ years of continuous public worship at Minster Abbey. East and West Sheppey form a Group Ministry and we look forward to welcoming someone who will work with our Priest in Charge towards building this Group Ministry into a Mission-Focussed partnership, helping us

shine out as the Light of Christ and enabling both parishes to serve the many needs of the Isle of Sheppey into the future.

Our Ministry Together

We are looking to welcome a Mission Priest across the Isle of Sheppey who will help us:

- build relationships with the Island communities and enable us to share the gospel.
- identify those gifted in all forms of evangelism and help them recognise and build upon those gifts.
- discern and nurture those whose gifts relate to a public ministry in whatever form that may take.



- equip our congregations with the courage to reach into our communities, mirroring Jesus' earthly ministry to the vulnerable and dispossessed.

As witnesses and disciples of Jesus' ministry we are mindful of the two greatest commandments, to love God and our neighbour. We envisage a co-operative relationship with the Mission Priest will allow us to engage more meaningfully with a 'new life in Christ' which will be evident in how we live our lives not just on Sundays but every day. We currently offer an informal Bible Study group (The Vine) but this is an area that needs to be built upon. We look forward to working with the Mission Priest to explore how this ministry can be developed.



West Sheppey has a variety of Authorised Lay Ministers with active public ministries in our churches. In our witness to Jesus' example of responding to human need we have developed an active Food Bank (of last resort) together with a Bereavement Support Group and are actively looking at 'Death Cafe's' in partnership with a local Funeral Director to dispel the taboo's surrounding death.

Until recently our Ignite project (a Mission Outreach to the un-Churched/de-Churched and dispossessed) was held weekly from Holy Trinity Sheerness. Whilst this has sadly drawn to a close, we are actively seeking to engage with those in our communities and our expectation is a new form of Outreach will be developed between our Priest in Charge and the Mission Priest as an act of loving service in the day-to-day lives of Jesus' followers, and to those who are yet to encounter him.

Our church communities

Minster Abbey is the oldest Christian worship site on the island. It was founded in the Late 7th Century by Kentish Queen, St Sexburga as a Nunnery: a place of prayer and mission. At the highest point on Sheppey, it has been, is still, and should continue to be a spiritual powerhouse and we are





actively working with local community action groups to develop our witness in this area.

Holy Trinity with St Paul's, Sheerness, serves the town of Sheerness as the civic church and is in a prime location to minister to the needs of the town. It is the venue for our Food Bank. We are in early discussion with Oasis, who are seeking to form a Community Hub, in an effort to develop this building into a multi-purpose role that will work with multiple well known community support groups across the Isle of Sheppey and our expectation is the Mission Priest will form a part of this project.

Holy Trinity Queenborough is the smallest of the three churches. This church is highly integrated with the Queenborough community and is focussed on good community relations.

Our Team across West Sheppey Parish is currently provided by:

- Rev'd Paul Kite - Priest in Charge with a focal ministry on Occasional Offices and working with Primary Schools
- Rev'd Jeanette McLaren – Sheerness Town Centre Chaplain (half time), reaching out to the Town Centre trading and arts communities on Sheppey.
- The Rev'd Chris Baker (a student counsellor with PTO)
- We have a part time parish administrator currently based at Minster Abbey.
- We are also privileged to have the following Authorised Local Ministers:
 - Claire Beardsmore, Dan Beardsmore, Julie Palmer, Ashley Shiel, Mark Young and Angie Cummings who assist in leading and offering reflections on Scripture at our Churches.
 - Rowena Squire assist in Pastoral Ministry and leads our bereavement support group as well as Healing Ministry.



Occasional Offices

Baptisms take place in each Church during Sunday Communion Services to ensure clergy availability. They are preceded by an informal preparation meeting for parents. In 2022 we held **22** baptisms. In 2023 we are expect to hold **31**.



Weddings are frequent and generally span the period April to October. Most occur on Saturdays but mid-week services are becoming more popular. There is an information/preparation event in January for couples intending to marry in the coming year. In 2022 we held **17** weddings. In 2023 we expect to hold **18**.

We have good relations with local Island Funeral Directors. Our administrator takes initial requests and sources appropriate ministers. In 2022 we held **77** funerals. To June 2023 we have held **30**.

Our expectation is our Priest in Charge and the Mission Priest will work collaboratively where Weddings and Funerals are concerned to provide sufficient cover across the Island. We also want to explore together how we can offer follow-up opportunities to create a more enduring relationship with those to whom we minister in this regard.

Looking Forwards

We believe the Isle of Sheppey holds many opportunities for Mission, Evangelism and Discipleship with the right partnerships in place. We are currently exploring the shape these partnerships might take, and are looking for



someone to join with us on this exciting journey as we begin shaping the future of Public Ministry, Service and Jesus' model of Hospitality in our local communities.

We very much hope if you are reading this you too will be excited, and want to join with us in reaching out to those who are still far off, but oh so close, to Jesus.