

Dover Town Benefice

Parish Profile



Our churches



St Mary the Virgin, Dover



St Andrew, Buckland



St Peter & St Paul, Charlton



St Martin, Dover

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An Introduction from Revd Melissa Carter, Team Rector

The Dover Town Team is a great place to minister in because across our four parishes we offer a range of traditions and styles of worship. This means that together we can reach out to everyone in Dover, meet people where they are, offer them a warm welcome and a way to connect with God which they can relate to.

We pray that working together we can encourage one another on our faith journey and helps others come to know God's presence in their lives.



Our Team Vicar and Team Rector:
Claire Coleman (left) and Melissa Carter (right).

The ethos behind the way our team is set up is that when we create a supportive foundation and work together, we can support the flourishing of God's kingdom through our congregations, schools and outreach. The core clergy team will be made up of the Team Rector and two full time Team Vicars. Each of the core clergy team have a focus on one or more parishes connecting with their churchmanship and offering leadership and pastoral support. Currently I am focal minister for Charlton and St Andrew's, which

are our two Anglo-Catholic congregations; the Revd Claire Coleman is focal minister for St Martin's, our evangelical congregation. Our new Team Vicar will be focal minister for our traditional, choral congregation at St Mary's, which is also the Civic church for Dover. Focal ministry is about offering our congregations a stable support network whilst also enabling our clergy and wider ministry team to work collaboratively across the Benefice so that everyone's gifts can be celebrated.

Many of our parishioners describe our churches as being 'Beacons of Hope' in the community and we look forward to welcoming a Team Vicar who will shine their light with ours.

If you would like to have a conversation with someone to further explore this opportunity, please contact:

Revd Melissa Carter (Team Rector)

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Melissa (Revd Melissa Carter, June 2025)

God of life,
As we see the power of your love in creation to reconcile and restore, help us listen to your plans for us and to desire growth in numbers and faithfulness.

By the power of your Holy Spirit remove our apathy and increase our trust in you to build your church.

As a Benefice may we: Come together in unity, deepen our faith, and grow in understanding of one another.

As your church may we be emboldened to reach out together, through words and actions.

Help us continue to serve those around us, share the joy of knowing you and the hope of eternal life.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benefice Prayer for Growth

A Welcome from the Deanery Leaders

The new Team Vicar will receive a warm welcome into the collegial life of the Dover Deanery. As part of the Diocesan Vision and Strategy, we are developing a Deanery Mission Plan which seeks to draw together the missional priorities of our parishes for mutual support and to take up opportunities for working together across boundaries. The deanery is naturally split into three ministry areas:

- West (mostly suburban/rural) – Benefices of Alkham, Capel & Hougham, River, and Temple Ewell & Lydden.
- East (mostly rural) – Benefices of Bewsborough, and St Margaret at Cliffe.
- Central (town) – Benefice of Dover Town.

In addition to Synod, we hold Deanery Days of Encouragement, 'Greater' Chapter meetings of lay and ordained ministers, Chapter breakfasts, and an annual residential to Condette, France for ministers.

We look forward to welcoming the new Team Vicar as a new colleague as we share The Good News of Jesus in this place.

Andy & Nigel

Revd Dr Andy Bawtree, Area Dean & Vicar of River
Nigel Collins, Lay Chair

Could it be you?

Within the team, the Team Vicar will have specific local leadership responsibility for the Parish of St Mary the Virgin, Dover, and an overarching responsibility for our Civic and Port work.

Recently, St. Mary's PCC worked on a **vision and mission statement**:

At St Mary's we are an inclusive, traditional, choral church in the high street, with an adjoining parish community centre, civic links and connections with the port.

We believe we have been called by God to share the good news of God's love reaching out into the community, to give space for exploration of faith and the challenges of life, and to provide a safe inclusive, peaceful and welcoming sacred space for both the worshipping and wider community.

As a parish they are looking for:

- **a team player** who will work collaboratively with and alongside the clergy and others in the wider benefice team, in an inclusive way, that strengthens the team identity, as well as working with the Readers, ALMs, churchwardens, and members of the PCC at St. Mary's.
- **an inspiration** for faith and worship leadership, being at home with inclusive, choral, musical, Eucharistic traditions, with the support of a Director of Music, Choir, Sacristan, Serving Team and Children's Church Leaders.
- **a welcoming** presence ready to build and celebrate the already developing diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility of the congregation.
- **a pastoral-centred** person with a large heart for a varied community which includes a demographic that is transient and deprived. Gifted with fortitude, sociability, confidence, resilience, listening skills, an encourager who is approachable and relatable.
- **a community-orientated** leader, able to build on the growing momentum of the church & parish centre's ministry and mission. This includes opportunities to gain experience with Port Chaplaincy and Civic matters, working alongside the very able PCC and wider benefice team.

In common with all members of the Ministry Team, the Team Vicar will:

- lead worship across all four parishes.
- fully participate in all aspects of the collegial ministry of the Team Ministry, Dover Deanery and the Diocese.
- participate in a weekly team leadership meeting for prayer, bible study and planning.
- take full advantage of opportunities for personal wellbeing and ministerial development as expressed within The Canterbury Diet for Incumbents.

Housing

The Team Vicar with a focus of St Mary's will have a choice of two clergy houses, both are situated in the parish of St Mary's:

The St Mary's Vicarage, Taswell Street, Dover CT16 1SE (shown on the right). Built in 1978, the vicarage is a 2-storey property with a dedicated reception area and study, family lounge, kitchen with utility room, dining room, ground floor toilet, family bathroom, 3 double bedrooms (one is ensuite) and a single bedroom. There is a detached garage and garden.



3 Monastery Avenue, Dover CT16 1AB (shown on the left) is situated in a cul-de-sac. Built in the mid 1990s the vicarage is a 2-storey property with attached garage and garden to the rear. It has a family lounge, kitchen and utility room, dining room, study, ground floor toilet, 2 double bedrooms (one is ensuite), 2 single bedrooms and a family bathroom.

Dover



The town of Dover, one of the original ancient Cinque Ports, is well-known around the world as the home of the White Cliffs, Dover Castle and one of the busiest international ports for cross-channel ferries, freight and cruises. Its newly developed pier and Western Docks Marina & developments have brought a new lease of life for local arts and culture.

Dover is the UK's closest town to mainland Europe. There are excellent connections to France via cross-channel ferries (90 minute crossing) or the Eurotunnel (35 minutes) terminal in nearby Folkestone. The high-speed rail service HS1 means St Pancras International Station in London can be reached in just over an hour and its excellent motorway connections (M2 & M20) offer speedy access from other parts of the UK.

The Cathedral City of Canterbury is 15 miles to the north-west; and the coastal town of Deal – the home of the renowned Deal Festival of Music and the Arts – is just 7 miles to the north.

Dover offers exciting challenges and opportunities for ministry that are rarely found together in the Church of England. Our parishes serve a population of around 38,000.

The St James development is a regeneration project, situated close to the town centre and offers free parking, a retail complex, food outlets and multiplex cinema. Dover has just been awarded £63M from the government levelling-up fund; this will see a new creative and educational development hub being built and the Arts Council have identified Dover for further community funding.

Employment is mostly found from within the Port, retailers, health and social care, and education sectors. There are also three major post-war estates in the outer areas of the town.

Nationally, the town is considered a disadvantaged area where its many families struggle, child poverty and youth unemployment are high. Levels of literacy are low compared to other parts of Kent. The parishes of the benefice are among the most deprived within the diocese and nationally.

The national spotlight often falls on the town because of the issues around refugees and asylum seekers. The local response is mixed and varied, there is an opportunity to explore the complexity of these issues and join with us to do some contextual theology as we respond in practical ways.

Dover Town Team Ministry

The Team Vicar will join a team of clergy and lay leaders working together. The staff leadership team currently consists of:

- **Revd Melissa Carter**, Team Rector with local (focal) leadership responsibilities for the Buckland and Charlton parishes, with a team-wide leadership role for schools and young families. She is also a street pastor.
- **Revd Claire Coleman**, Team Vicar with local (focal) leadership responsibilities for St Martins parish, with a team-wide leadership role for mission. Claire joined the team in September 2024.
- **Revd Trish Godfrey**, PTO Priest based at St Marys where she has a lead role for Children's Church.
- **Revd Graham Snellin**, assistant curate serving the benefice.
- **Nigel Collins**, Reader based at the Buckland parish where he has a focal role in the community. He is also Deanery Lay Chair, and the Diocesan Lay Ministries Adviser and Pastoral Secretary.
- There are a number of readers and locally authorised lay ministers who work within and across today and we are also generously supported by local PTO clergy.
- Reader Chris Scoble is currently going through the discernment process for ordination.

What you will find in the Benefice:

The Benefice Forum is an informal space for travelling together. The Benefice Forum meets bi-monthly (in alternative months from the PCCs) and is hosted by the different Readers, local lay ministers, churchwardens, treasurers, PCC members, but with an open invitation to other church members. The Forum provides a safe space for learning and team-wide planning where ideas can be explored and developed before being taken for decision at PCCs.

Individual PCCs meet separately under their own arrangements. Whilst the Team Rector would be ex-officio of all the PCCs, the relevant local (focal) team clergy normally co-chairs meetings along with the respective lay Vice-Chair. Each PCC meets at a day, time and place which suits them (normally in alternative months from the Benefice Forum).



Top to Bottom: Revd Trish Godfrey, Revd Graham Snellin & Nigel Collins



A recent meeting of the Benefice Forum at St Andrews

Partners in Mission

The Team Vicar would join the Team in our work with our partners in mission across Dover.

There are three significant outreach activities which come under the arm of Christians Together in Dover (CTID):

- Dover Foodbank – all churches are collection points; the distribution centres are located within the town area.
- Dover Street Pastors – providing loving service in the town centre on a Saturday night. The St Mary's Parish Centre is used as a base for the Prayer Pastors while the Street Pastors are operational.

The Dover Outreach Centre (DOC) is a charitable trust initiated by, but now separate from CTID, it is based in Snargate Street and:

- Provides drop-in service and support for those who are homeless, or with similar needs.
- Organises the Winter Night Shelter (WNS).
- Runs the Sunrise Café.

Ecumenism is active across the town and surrounding area, working together to tackle challenging issues and to share the Good News of Jesus. Other churches in the benefice area include: the One Church Dover (Apostolic), the Beacon Church and Christian Centre (URC/Methodist), Dover Baptist Church, St Paul's Catholic Church, Our Lady of Dover Catholic Church, the Gateway (Pentecostal) Fellowship, the Vineyard Church Dover (operates the Beehive café/support service for women), there are also a number of Gospel Churches meeting in the area.

St Mary-in-Castro (SMC) is the C of E church at Dover Castle, within the town area. It is an extra-parochial place under the ownership of English Heritage (having formerly been the Army Garrison Church); it has its own chaplaincy team and is represented within the deanery.

In recent years opportunities for mission has developed through a number of cross-town initiatives headed up by Maison Dieu and supported by Dover District Council. These include cultural and arts projects, Pilgrim festivals, Dover at Night, with more such events and activities to come.



Around the Parishes



St Mary the Virgin Dover

The Church of St Mary-the-Virgin is situated in the town centre close to the Market Square. This is predominantly an urban-commercial area and is close to the Port of Dover and the seafront. St Mary's Church is regarded as firstly the Civic Church; the Team Vicar can expect to be appointed as Chaplain to the Town Mayor and at the 'Sailor's Church' as part of the Port Chaplaincy; services throughout the year reflect both these aspects.

St Mary's is in the choral tradition with an excellent Choir under the Director of Music, Jake Convery. There's also a bell ringing team and we would describe our worship as traditional, liturgical and central but with a relaxed, family ambience with children's church weekly. St Mary's Sunday worship has the fourth Sunday of the month as a Family Eucharist service involving children in increasing participation and the first Sunday of the month now offers Laying on of Hands Healing ministry. The second Sunday of the month is a Lay-led Matins service and lay leadership is much encouraged. Our Sunday attendance is around 50 adults and 12 children. Our prayer life is augmented by the spiritual and social ambience of the mid-week Holy Communion with around 16 attending, Saturday informal prayer and reflection time called with 8 attending and traditional Sung Evensong -with supper - once every 3 months with between 40-60 attending. Our pastoral team are continually present and take Home Communion to those unable to attend church.



There is a purpose-built Parish Centre with Parish Centre Manager Trish Simmons which is adjacent to the Church used by many community groups from across Dover and for a number of key church social events as well as missional outreach initiatives such as Little Lambs Toddler's & Parents with 25 families, a new toddlers faith group called Shining Lights with 7 families, a monthly Community Café with around 50 coming & going, and collaborative events with Dover District Council – the jobs recruitment fair saw hundreds come.

We maintain a close connection with Dover College Senior School & Sixth Form where the team offer Chapel on a weekly basis as well as key services during the year and with Mary's CE Primary School and Aycliffe primary school where we offer regular collective worship. St Mary's has recently been a significant part of the Kent Pilgrimage Festival and Dover At Night alongside other organisations the town and this is being developed upon for the coming years and also plays a major part in Christians Together in Dover.

St Mary's mission plans include:

- a re-ordering building project that will see the back of church opened out for increased children's work and adaptable for other events – this is due to be completed June 2025.
- Further development of the use of technology for communication purposes.
- the development of a weekly community wellbeing outreach event for older people.
- Developing our work with young people.
- an opportunity to be part of developing a community forum on the Aycliffe estate.



Director of Music: Jake Convery



Parish Centre Manager: Trish Simmons

Buckland-in-Dover St Andrew with St Nicholas Buckland Valley

All are welcome, we are an inclusive church offering a welcome to people irrespective of their age, gender, race or circumstances. Our worship is a blend of formal and informal, influenced by the Catholic and Marian traditions of the Church of England. St Andrew's church is a grade 2 listed building. The church and churchyard with the ancient Buckland Yew are popular with dog-walkers and families who see it as their 'family' church which accounts for the significantly high number of baptisms and weddings.

We are one of the largest parishes in the deanery, serving a population of over 12,500 with around 5,200 occupied households. It is one of the 10% most disadvantaged parishes nationally, and consists of a number of distinct communities and neighbourhoods:

We are a relatively small but faithful worshipping community with an average Sunday attendance of 20 including a few children. Our weekly 10:30am Sunday services include both eucharistic and lay-led services. We also have a Tuesday morning Taizé meditation style service, and a Wednesday afternoon group. We hold an annual Community Open Day in September and are re-establishing an annual Pet Service. The vestry at St Andrew's was recently converted into a kitchen as part of a Tesco Community project and we hope to develop a 'pay-it-forward' café for passers-by and the wider community (the Yew Tree Café project).

Charlton Dover

Charlton church was built 130 years ago and is physically the largest in the town, seating up to 300, making it the perfect venue for concerts and various community events.

Our worship is of the anglo-catholic tradition, enhanced by the use of incense and bells at our main 9.30am Sunday Sung Eucharist. Our communion services on Sunday at 8.00am and Thursday at 9.30am are said. A service of the Litany and bible discussion takes place on Friday morning. We have a faithful team of altar servers, readers and intercession prayer leaders.

Bubble church takes place every 4th Sunday in the church.

Charlton CEP school has established a close link with the church and regular discussions take place to further enhance our work together. We are continuing to build our links with other schools in our parish with regular visits from church members and clergy.

We are seeking to re-engage and further build links with the community and have recently initiated a programme of various social events held in a church environment, ranging from themed musical evening to fine arts events. An annual community open day has been established making use of the green space of the closed churchyard at the side of the church.

Our focus as a parish church is:

- To serve the community.
- Seek ways to build and develop our connections with young people.
- Be a place of welcome and encouragement for all who are in search of God.

St Martin Dover

St Martin's is an Evangelical church with a strong Ministry Team with a curate, two Readers, and two ALMs alongside a strong worship music team.

Our worship is a contemporary style following common worship. Within services we make time for the Holy Spirit to move, extemporary prayer and testimonies are encouraged and we are developing our pastoral prayer ministry. We have a weekly Sunday school except for the 1st Sunday of the month which is an all-age service focusing on developing confident faith through discussion and activities.

In the parish there are two community primary schools and one special needs school supporting students with significant emotional and behavioural needs. There is also a pre-school who runs out of the church hall.

Mission & Outreach:

Our vision is to build relationships with the community. Since 2021 we have been regularly running a weekly parent and baby/toddler group. A church-based group called 'CAMEO' (Come And Meet Each Other) meet three times a month in our church hall and has a range of people from St Martin's, other local churches and the community attend. We also have a community garden in our grounds offering a place for fellowship, prayer and quiet rest.

A monthly Bubble Church service will be starting in September 2025 on 2nd Sunday of the month.

- We are friendly, hospitable, and sociable and seek to offer a welcoming space to nurture faith and support people in all stages of life.
- We have a Christ-centred theology which is rooted in scripture and its practical application is at the heart of our missional activities.

Appendix: Parish Statistics and Pattern of Services

Parish Statistics (2024¹)

	St Marys	Buckland	Charlton	St Martins
Population	5,014	12,521	8,417	7,178
Occupied households	2,494	5,168	3,666	3,028
Parish Deprivation²	532	688	910	1,811
Parish ER	100	16	25	41
Worshipping community	45 adults 10 children	18 adults 5 children	22 adults 2 children	37 adults 8 children
Usual Sunday Attendance	52	16	17	34
Average Weekly Attendance	82	15	23	39
Baptisms	8	14	5	5
Weddings	3	7	4	0
Funerals	3	6	1	1

¹ Source: Census 2011, Statistics for Mission 2024, Church of England Digital services.

² Ranking of most deprived parishes out of 12,161 parishes nationally (the lower the number, the higher the deprivation)

Current Pattern of Sunday and Weekday Services across the parishes

	St Marys	Buckland	Charlton	St Martins
	Wed 10am Holy Communion	Tue 9am Taize & Prayers	Thu 9.30am Said Communion Fri 9.30am Service of Litany	
Sundays				
1st	10.45am Sung Eucharist w prayers for healing	10.30am Sung Eucharist	8am Said Eucharist 9.30am Mass	10.30am Morning Worship 6pm Connect service
2nd	10.45am Sung Matins	10.30am Service of the Word ('Andy's Invite')	8am Said Eucharist 9.30am Mass	10.30am Holy Communion 4pm Bubble Church
3rd	10.45am Sung Eucharist	10.30am Sung Eucharist	8am Said Eucharist 9.30am Mass	10.30am Morning Worship
4th	10.45am Sung Family Eucharist	10.30am Morning Prayer	8am Said Eucharist 9.30am Mass & Family worship in hall 4pm Bubble Church	10.30am Holy Communion
5th	10.45am Sung Eucharist	10.30am Sung Eucharist	8am Said Eucharist 9.30am Mass	10.30am Morning Worship