



The Benefice of the 'Elham Valley Group' of Churches

Benefice Profile for a New Rector

Role Specification,
Person Specification,
and Parish Profiles
Summer 2023



St Martin Acrise



St Mary Magdalene Denton



St Mary The Virgin Elham



*St Mary & St Ethelburga
Lyminge*

*The Elham
Valley
Group of
Churches*



St Oswald Paddlesworth



*St Mary & St Radegund
Postling*



All Saints Stanford



St Martin Wootton

A Benefice of Eight Churches in Six Parishes

Visit our website at [Elham Valley Group of Churches](https://www.elhamvalleygroupofchurches.org.uk)





RECTOR FOR THE ELHAM VALLEY GROUP

A Message from the Bishop of Dover



Welcome and thank you for taking an interest in the role of Rector of the Elham Valley Group. You will see from the profile some of the specific things that the benefice is looking for – and a little of what the team here hopes the future may look like. Of course, part of your discernment process in coming to this role is gaining a sense of the bigger picture of us as a diocesan family, our vision, and priorities for the future.

Who we are

Founded in 597 by St Augustine, Canterbury Diocese is the oldest diocese in England and has a special place in the life of the national and worldwide Church. With its iconic Cathedral it forms a focal point for the life of the whole Anglican Communion, offering a spiritual home and place of pilgrimage for people from every nation and walk of life.

Kent is renowned as the ‘Garden of England’ and this rural heart is core to our identity – yet the communities we serve are very diverse. Our Diocese stretches from Maidstone to Thanet, from the Isle of Sheppey to the Romney Marsh. We have 350 miles of coastline with historic ports and seaside resorts, alongside rural communities, market towns and commuter-belt urban developments. Affluent areas often sit alongside pockets of major deprivation, offering an exciting and challenging mission context.

Where we are heading

At the heart of all we do is a vision of transformation for ourselves and our communities: no one can encounter God and remain unchanged. Increasingly, in our diocese, we want to become a Christian community transformed through encounter with Christ, overflowing to transform and bless the families, homes and communities we serve in Kent: *Changed Lives* → *Changing Lives*. In your role, in your place, we will be looking for you to join in with what God is already doing and play a crucial part in making this vision a reality.

Changed Lives → *Changing Lives* unites us in purpose but will be expressed in different ways according to what makes sense for different parts of our diocesan family. It is also a living strategy – as we listen to God and one another, the shape of our work together will undoubtedly change and grow. In December 2020 I wrote to all the Deaneries to ask them to consider, in light of all we have experienced over the last two years, what their mission priorities are and how their deanery should be shaped in order to flourish and be sustainable. In response every Deanery has set their own starting place to move forward from. The Area Deans write more of the Deanery in the profile.





To find out more about this post please contact the Archdeacon of Ashford, the Venerable Darren Miller (01233 712649/darren.miller@archdeacashford.org). You would also be welcome to have an informal discussion with the Area Deans, the Revd Barry Knott (01303 883243/ rev.barry@icloud.com) or the Revd Bob Weldon (01303 253831/ revbob62@gmail.com).

Our commitment to you

We know that supporting healthy, flourishing ministers (lay and ordained) is crucial for a healthy, flourishing diocese. Therefore, we offer the '**Canterbury Diet**' to all our new incumbent ministers – this is an intentional programme for ministerial development, health, growth and faith. If a lay appointment is made to this post, we will endeavour to provide equivalent support to you. We offer pastoral supervision and spiritual accompaniment, an invitation to be part of residential training programmes focused on learning, leading and mission, action learning sets, as well as a range of specialised training events, and other regular opportunities for growth in prayer and spirituality.

In short, I hope that you will be as excited by our vision, priorities and opportunities as we are. Be assured of our prayers as you consider your next step in ministry.

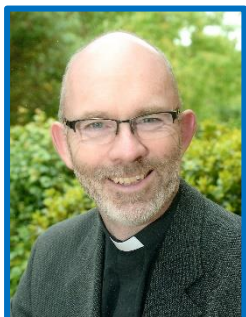
+ Rose

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson Wilkin
Bishop of Dover and Bishop in Canterbury





Archdeacon's Introduction



From my perspective, this is a benefice that is exploring change, working with the reality of today and working to be churches that can be effective in that environment. That is not to say that there will be radical upheaval in these parishes, but rather there is a willingness to look anew at aspects of being church. This is a comparatively new benefice but there is increasing partnership between the churches, as evidenced by the work of the Benefice Committee. There is a frank realism on the financial front (running close to the wire but getting by) – and a determination to tackle it and ensure a sustainable future (which is an issue more connected to mission than simply finance). There is a strong element of lay ministry

and leadership and a variety in the worship that's offered. That is all reflected in the person specification where the benefice is looking for a collaborative leader who can enable others.

The person called to serve here will be someone who can look to the future confident in God's providence, able to adapt but also be sympathetic to village life and the particular needs of rural communities. They will also need to work with schools and the wider church as we all work together to proclaim God's love and enable people to know the difference he can make to them and us – *Changed Lives*→*Changing Lives*.

In all of this, we are committed to your full support with great colleagues in the deanery and we would expect you to have a pastoral supervisor and can work with you on other training and support as required.

I hope that you will find much information about the benefice and diocese in the recruitment pack but please feel free to contact me for an informal discussion if that would help.

With my prayers as you discern whether God is calling you to serve in the Elham Valley.

The Ven Darren Miller
Archdeacon of Ashford





The Canterbury Diet for Incumbents and Priests in Charge

<p>After licensing the Incumbent meets with the Director of Mission & Ministry who introduces the priest to the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Canterbury Diet</p> <p style="text-align: center;">and offers a</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pastoral Supervisor</p> <p style="text-align: center;">with whom she/he meets not less than four times per year</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Golden threads</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">How are prayer and spiritual practices being developed? How am I learning and reflecting on ministry practice? How are we attending to good relationships and collaborative ministry?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ministers acquire a</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Spiritual Accompanier</p> <p style="text-align: center;">and meet regularly, recommended 6-8 weekly</p>	
<p>In the first two years the Incumbent or Priest in Charge attends the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ministry Training Programme</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monday to Friday residential courses generally held in Bruges</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Week One : The Minister as Learner (January, soon after licensing)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Week Two: The Minister as Leader (June, of the same year)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Week Three : The Minister as Missioner (January, the following year)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Participation in the annual</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ministerial Development Review</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Meet with Consultant Reviewer, complete a Personal Development Plan; meet with Archdeacon a year later and update the PDP, and so on, with opportunity to review Pastoral Supervision and Spiritual Accompaniment. Also meet with the bishop <u>during the course of the two-year cycle</u>.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">As able, participate in professional ministry courses:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Management Skills Course</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Working with Conflict</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leading Change</p> <p style="text-align: center;">each a two by one day course, offered regularly at advertised times through the year</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Participation in four</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wellbeing Courses</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>two hour</u> evening meetings, two offered per year</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Participate in relevant</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Continuing Ministry Development Events</p> <p style="text-align: center;">at advertised days and times</p>	





OUR DIOCESAN VISION

Changed Lives, Changing Lives

By God's grace we want to be a people who are...

...confident & creative disciples of Jesus Christ

...rooted in scripture & drenched in prayer

...living gratefully, giving generously, caring for creation & sharing the gospel

...growing in number & expectations – of God & ourselves

...motivated by justice & love, open to the Spirit & ready for adventure!

Therefore we will ...

'Therefore we will...' is a recognition that words without actions are empty. It is a commitment to taking real steps *now* to make this vision a reality *soon*. The current actions that flow from this vision - both at a diocesan level and in our deaneries - are outlined in detail over the rest of this document. Of course, these actions will change and develop over time - and we would encourage our parishes to consider this vision carefully for themselves, to explore together what actions they will commit to take, what their local 'Therefore we will...' might look like.



Area Deans' Introduction

The Deanery of Elham, the largest in the Canterbury Diocese, is rich in diversity, and reflects broad traditions and churchmanship. Relationships between churches are very strong and form a genuine supportive network. Events and services are communicated across the Deanery, and everyone is encouraged to see the church beyond their own church boundary. For example, occasional joint Evensong moves around the Deanery allowing smaller choirs to participate.

We would welcome a priest who is keen to take their place within our family in the Elham Deanery, supported by an outstanding group of churchwardens. The role is ideal for someone with a broad churchmanship, as it will allow them to experiment with new ideas and initiatives that feed into the Diocese Action Plan for growth.

In addition, we are keen to welcome a priest who will play a full part in the Deanery through regular Chapter meetings, Deanery Synod, Deanery Worship, and encouraging vocations throughout the whole family of churches. The Chapter includes all licenced clergy and meets monthly for breakfast and informal discussion. The breadth of experience is immense, and we embrace each other in love regardless of individual theology. There is an annual retreat allowing time for fellowship and growth together.

Ecumenical relationships are strong and much encouraged to work together to witness to the wider community the fundamental need for unity in the mission of God.

We offer you a genuine welcome into the Deanery family, supportive professional relationships free from competitiveness, practical assistance to cover services in time of need, a breadth of traditions that enables corporate theological reflection upon the issues of the day and a genuine desire to see you and your churches flourish.



Bob Weldon



Barry Knott

Reverend Bob Weldon & Reverend Barry Knott
Joint Area Deans



NB. To follow a link in this document, please click on the page number in the contents list or on any identified hyperlink within the document itself.

Contents

1 Our Mission	2
2 Role Specification	2
3 Person Specification	2
4 Description of our Benefice	3
Eight Historic Churches.....	3
Aerial views of all the churches and schools	3
5 Benefice Information	4
Transport.....	4
Schools.....	4
Shopping	5
Sports and Leisure	5
Healthcare	5
The Vicarage	6
6 Our Church Family	15
7 Our Benefice Administrator	15
8 Our Ministry Team	16
Views from our Ministry Team	16
The Curate's View	16
Self-Supporting Ministers' Views.....	17
Lay Reader's views	19
ALM's View.....	19
9 Safeguarding.....	20
10 Our Financial Position	20
11 Benefice Links with C-of-E Schools	20
12 Parish Profiles	22
St Martin's, Acrise with Swingfield.....	22
St Mary Magdalene, Denton with St Martin's Wootton	25
St Mary the Virgin, Elham	27
St Mary and St Ethelburga Lyminge	30
St Oswald Paddlesworth (Chapel of Ease with Lyminge).....	32
St Mary and St Radegund Postling	34
All Saints Church Stanford	36
13 Appendix	38
Average attendance Figures Oct 2022	38
Useful Links.....	38

The Benefice has permission to include all photographic images of both adults and children in this document.



1 Our Mission

Is to spread the good news of the Gospel to all, by:

- Offering differing styles of worship, Christian fellowship, quiet reflection, pastoral care, and community events for all ages across our rural communities and schools, whilst cherishing our ancient churches.

2 Role Specification

We are looking for a Rector who will:

- Provide oversight and team leadership in our spiritual life.
- Pursue growth, both in numbers and in depth, working in partnership with the Ministry Team, churchwardens, PCCs and congregations.
- Develop our capacity to provide pastoral support.
- Enhance the ongoing work with our primary schools.

3 Person Specification

We are seeking an energetic and enthusiastic individual to join us in growing our churches, who can clearly demonstrate the following key characteristics:

- Able to inspire prayerfulness and obedience to God.
- An excellent communicator with groups of all ages and backgrounds, demonstrating sound emotional intelligence in dealings with others.
- A good team player, able to lead in a consultative fashion, by empowering those around them.
- A creative risk taker, willing to try new and varied approaches to growing our churches.
- Able to demonstrate good pastoral care, working with the Ministry Team to support those requiring help at difficult times.
- Be IT literate, and confident in using social media platforms. Embracing available technology, in both worship, and administrative settings.
- Willing to learn about rural affairs and the environment.



4 Description of our Benefice

The Benefice of the Elham Valley Group of Churches sits within the stunning North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in East Kent. The rolling chalk downland offers a rich diversity of wildlife habitats, including meadowland and woodland. The area is entirely rural and consists of several villages and rural communities, with farming being at the core of the business community.

Eight Historic Churches

The eight churches in the Benefice, are distributed across six parishes:

Please follow this link to see:

[Aerial Views of all The Churches and Schools](#)

*Please click on the name or picture of a church to view each individual parish profile.
Or read on, regarding the Benefice as a whole:*



[St Martin Acrise](#)



[St Mary Magdalene Denton](#)



[St Mary The Virgin Elham](#)



[St Mary & St Ethelburga
Lyminge](#)

The Elham Valley Group of Churches



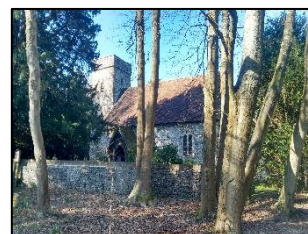
[St Oswald Paddlesworth](#)



[St Mary & St Radegund
Postling](#)



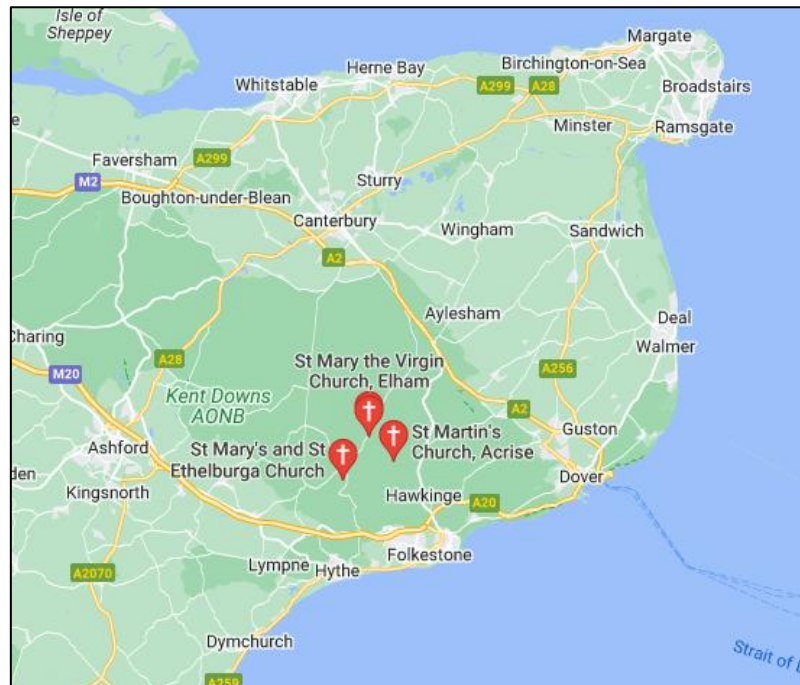
[All Saints Stanford](#)



[St Martin Wootton](#)



The 'Elham Valley Group' lies within the Diocese of Canterbury and the Deanery of Elham, with easy reach of the City of Canterbury to the north, and the coastal towns of Folkestone and Hythe to the south.



Location of Elham Valley Group of Churches Within East Kent [[Google Maps](#)]

5 Benefice Information

Transport.

There are excellent road links to London and the rest of the county of Kent via the M20 and A2. Railway stations at Folkestone and Sandling (3 miles) provide fast rail services to London on the HS1 line, travel time to St Pancras International from Folkestone being 59 minutes. There are excellent links to the continent via both the Channel Tunnel and the Port of Dover.

Schools

There are three Church of England primary schools in the Benefice, all of which are graded as good in their most recent OFSTED reports. All these schools have close links to their local churches and the ministry team. [See schools section below.](#)

There are Grammar schools in both Folkestone and Canterbury, with the nearest secondary school being Brockhill Park in Saltwood. Additionally, the Archbishops School is situated in Canterbury. Canterbury is also home to two universities, and a further education college.



Shopping

The main supermarket retailers have branches in Canterbury, Folkestone, and Ashford, with good quality farm shops located locally at Ottinge, Lower Hardres and Sellindge. Canterbury has a good range of both branded and independent retailers, whilst the [McArthur Glen designer outlet](#) is within easy reach at Ashford.

Sports and Leisure

The area is ideal for walking, cycling, and riding with an excellent network of footpaths and bridleways to explore.

For those interested in the natural world, there can be few places in southern England to rival the Elham Valley. We are only a short drive from the [Royal Military Canal](#) and the Romney Marsh, which is a major draw for birdwatchers and artists alike.

There are numerous opportunities for watersports activities, due to the proximity to the coast, and there are sports and leisure facilities in Folkestone and Canterbury.



The Beautiful Elham Valley is Ideal for Outdoor Activities.

More locally there are clubs for both football and cricket within the Benefice. There is an excellent golf course within the Benefice, and another very close by.

There are several excellent public houses in the Benefice and the surrounding area, offering fine food and drink.

Healthcare

There are GP surgeries in Lyminge and Elham, with hospitals in Ashford and Canterbury, and a minor injuries clinic at Folkestone. The local pharmacy is situated in Lyminge.



The Vicarage

The Vicarage is a lovely house in the village of Elham, adjacent to the church and near the primary school and bus route to Canterbury and Folkestone.



Location of 'The Vicarage' in Relation to the Church and School

The large Vicarage built in the 1960's, adjacent to the 'Old Vicarage', is centrally heated with an oil fired boiler, as there is no gas supply to the village. It has double glazed windows, and is insulated.



The Vicarage is Accessed Via a Drive from Vicarage Lane

It is located on Vicarage Lane, which is in a quiet area within a short walk of the heart of the village, and immediately adjacent to the [Elham C-of-E Primary School](#).

The house can be used as a 4 or 5 bedroom house. It has a ground floor study.



Outside there is a patio, within a large garden with a firepit.

The sitting room faces SE, has lots of light, and is adjacent to the patio.

There is a garage attached to the house.

The building has high-speed broadband and mobile phone coverage.



The Vicarage from the Rear Garden



View of the Rear Garden from the Patio



A Firepit in the Garden



An Imposing Front Door



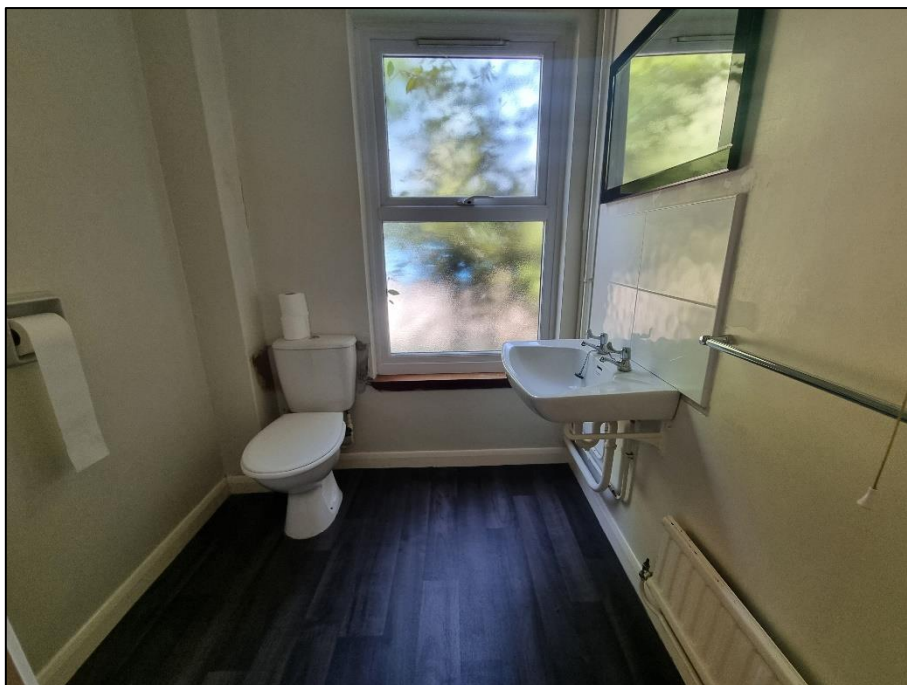
Leads to 'The Entrance Hall' With Stairs to First Floor



The Kitchen is Part Tiled and in Good Order



The Study, Used as an Office Space for the Incumbent



A Cloakroom for Guests



The Lounge with Patio Doors to the Rear Garden



The Dining Area off the Kitchen



The Landing with Bedrooms and Family Bathroom Off



Bedroom



Bedroom



Bedroom



Bedroom



Family Bathroom



6 Our Church Family

- As a group of churches, we are supportive of each other, both in our relationships as congregations, and as PCCs. The operation of the Benefice Committee in the current interregnum has highlighted and enhanced a close and professional way of working between the churchwardens.
- There is huge potential within the Benefice both in terms of those currently involved in church life, and in the wider community.
- We are prayerful and obedient to God.
- We are open and welcoming to those coming to church for the first time, whether visitors or new residents to the area.
- We offer a varied and diverse range of worship styles and events. Please see the individual parish profiles.
- We have strong links to the three Church of England schools within the Benefice.

7 Our Benefice Administrator

There is a paid, part-time administrator (10 hours per week), who usually works from home and maintains contact with the Ministry Team and Rector, using electronic communications, such as email, and the Church of England's 'Life Events Diary'.



Alison Dale
Benefice Administrator

The main annual service planner for the Ministry Team, Benefice Expenses, and the Administrator's hours are all recorded using Excel spreadsheets.

Alison drafts, edits, and prints the Benefice 'Hub sheet' newsletter and maintains the [Elham Valley Group of Churches](#) website.

She responds to enquiries on behalf of the Rector; for example, email and telephone enquiries for weddings, baptisms, and funerals, along with website generated general enquiries from the public at large.

Her wages are funded by all the Benefice parishes paying a contribution, (calculated according to the Diocesan formula applied to the Parish Share), to the Lyminge Church PCC Treasurer, who then pays the Administrator's wage and expenses, along with any other expenses claimed by the Ministry Team.



8 Our Ministry Team

Although we are in interregnum at the moment, and are looking for a new incumbent to take charge of the Benefice, anyone considering applying should not think they will have to spread themselves across all eight churches within the six parishes alone; for there is a hardworking Ministry Team in place, who will offer assistance and guidance as required.

The current clergy consists of a Curate, Revd Deb Scoble, and two self-supporting priests, Revd Stephen Dougal, and Revd Sharon Paine. Sharon was one of our lay readers, and has just been ordained as a self-funding Assistant Curate within the Benefice from 1st of July this year. Please see below.

There are currently two Lay Readers: Diana Baldwin and Bill Meakin.

We also have our ALM, Janet Butcher-Weisner, who engages in the schools, and also leads worship in many of the parishes as requested.

Churchwardens, and various others who are trained in leading worship, also share the load as required.

Views from our Ministry Team

The Curate's View

Deb Scoble

It has been an enormous privilege to serve my curacy in the Elham Valley Benefice, and I'm delighted to share a few thoughts on my experience.

The Elham Valley Benefice is situated within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but, whilst the scenery is truly wonderful, it is the outstanding natural beauty of the people and communities the Benefice serves which is the real attraction. The eight churches which comprise the Benefice are dedicated to a wide spectrum of saints, from royalty to redeemed sinners, and everything in between, and the communities cherish the traditions passed down to them through generations.

These are faithful rural communities steeped in history and ancient buildings soaked in prayer, rooted in the earliest days of English Christianity. However, these are not communities that focus on the past – they are vibrant and open to the movement of the Spirit to grow and develop, to nurture and encourage each other, seeking new ways of expressing faith (as well as cherishing well-loved traditions) that enable all to have a meaningful relationship with Christ. Embodying the qualities of their designated saints, these are communities of abundant generosity, endless compassion, and unprejudiced hospitality, all the while recognizing their own need for God's grace.



They respond unfailingly to local, national, and international appeals for support, and – always discerning responses through prayer - relish the opportunity to serve others as Christ would. These are rural communities that are working together to overcome the difficulties they face; communities that are learning the importance of listening to each other as well as to God; communities that are yearning to be the places Christ has called them to be. The Elham Valley Benefice Group of Churches serves a community who are looking to the future, and I commend them to you.

Deb Scoble
Curate
Elham Valley Group Benefice



Self-Supporting Ministers' Views

Stephen Dougal

The Holy Spirit is certainly at work in this place, and it is a joy to serve God in this beautiful Benefice of eight rural churches. While each church is distinct with its own style and character, they are equally happy to act as one when the need arises. The congregations are friendly, open and have a deep sense of faith and love for God. We have an excellent MLT of lay and ordained ministers who work well together, and are able to offer a variety of worship styles that are suited to the needs of each church. The new incumbent will certainly have plenty of support, gifts, and experience to draw from during their time here.

Like most rural parishes, there are challenges to be faced, but those issues are small when compared against the kaleidoscope of opportunities for growth. The demographic of our population is mixed and gives much scope for reaching out to the young, old and everyone in between. The Benefice has close links with the three Primary Schools, and we work well with our Methodist brothers and sisters in Elham and Lyminge. There is work to be done, but a lot to be thankful for, and a great deal of hope for the future.

Some of the smaller congregations are a bit weary, but are not despondent, and remain alive in the spirit. They know there are rewards to be reaped if they don't give up, and are praying for renewal. Over recent years each congregation has become more aware that they, and not just the priest, must be the tool through which God's love is shared to the communities they serve. They know that they are all called, and they appreciate regular encouragement through prayer, scripture, and teaching. The roots are there, and the roots are deep.

So, we are looking forward to our new incumbent, and praying for those who are discerning whether God is calling them here to lead us. Whoever that person might be, they will find a welcoming, enthusiastic, and supportive group of people to help them grow God's Kingdom in this beautiful place. The Holy Spirit is indeed at work here.

Stephen Dougal
Associate Priest
Elham Valley Group Benefice.





Sharon Paine

Having previously been an LLM, I have been leading worship across the Benefice since 2018. I have also conducted funeral services.

The variety of services across the Benefice is interesting, ranging from BCP Matins, and Common Worship services, to Celtic Christianity formats. Service rotas are produced well in advance for those involved.

There is a lively 'Family Service' held several times each year at Acrise church, and all the churches have various worship events, with more social aspects included within them. Non-church venues, such as outdoor countryside worship, churchyard pet services, and farm buildings have provided further options. Recent priestly resource constraints have meant that Eucharist services have necessarily reduced in favour of 'Services of the Word', but my experience has been that these alternatives have been welcomed.

Following my ordination on the 1st of July this year, I am excited about the prospect of being involved more deeply in Ministry.

Sharon Paine
SSM Assistant Curate



Edward Clark (Retired Priest)

Elham have an additional priest, the Revd Edward Clark, who helps out at their church alone, and is not a member of our full Ministry Team. Ted is a retired priest with 'Permission to Officiate'. Currently he conducts a Eucharist service every month at St Mary's Elham, where he may also lead additional services as and when asked.

schools lead families
future ministry
leader help
worship team



Lay Reader's views

Diana Baldwin.

I have been a LLM (Lay Reader) for over 20 years, based originally in the former Lyminge Benefice (with Paddlesworth, Stanford and Postling).

I have lived in Lyminge for nearly 35 years, and brought up a family in the village. Change has been constant throughout that time, including a move to more informal lay-led services, and increased emphasis on social events to bring people together.



The recent archaeological dig at Lyminge, the recovery of the Saxon church, and the inclusion of Lyminge in long distance modern pilgrimage routes, have helped the church to welcome visitors of all faiths and none.

The Covid Pandemic interrupted the implementation of a vision for the larger Benefice, where the tough challenges of administration, housekeeping ancient church buildings, and caring with respect for everyone in their close knit, loyal and independently minded congregations, are properly balanced. However, Covid also showed that we are adaptable, resilient, and hopeful.

Diana Baldwin
Lay Reader

Bishop Rose Blessing the Monument to Ethelburga

ALM's View

Janet Butcher-Weisner

I was pleased when Rev Weeks welcomed me to the Ministry Team as an ALM. The team meet regularly, about every couple of months, to discuss and plan. A few of us also meet online by Zoom on Wednesday mornings to pray for the Benefice.



The churches are all very different, but I love going to all of them to lead 'Services of the Word', such as 'Fellowship' services at the smaller ones, and Evensong at Lyminge. I have helped with Lent and Advent courses, which move around the Benefice, and I find the local church teams are always very helpful.

The Rector or Curate and I have alternated in leading 'Collective Worship' at the 3 schools since 2019. The schools all welcome us, and also another team from both Lyminge church and Lyminge Methodists, using ['Open The Book'](#).

Janet Butcher-Weisner
Benefice ALM



9 Safeguarding

Each of the individual parishes PCCs has its own appointed safeguarding single point of contact officer.

10 Our Financial Position

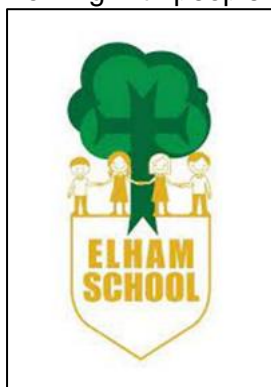
The parishes within the Benefice have paid their parish share for 2022 and are committed to endeavoring to do so for the next three years as a minimum. The only exception being Elham, who were not able to pay their full share in 2022 but are striving to work towards paying their share in the next three years.

11 Benefice Links with C-of-E Schools

Anyone who's been concerned about recent census data which seems to indicate a decline in Christianity in the UK should visit the primary schools in our Benefice. There are three Church of England Primary schools here; two are located within the villages of [Elham](#) and [Lyminge](#), and there is also [Selsted](#), which is located in a secluded spot just off the A260 Folkestone to Canterbury main road, all of which are thriving.

All the Head teachers and staff are very welcoming and supportive to members of the Benefice.

Children and staff in all three schools enjoy working with people from the Benefice, with



Elham School Logo

'Collective Worship' being led once a week by a member of the Ministry Team, usually the Curate or Janet.

Worship on other days is normally led by school staff, with support from Diocesan resources.



Selsted School in the Snow

All the schools in the Benefice follow the 'Diocesan Fresh Approach Worship Plans', and the Diocese provides courses and training.

The schools use a mixture of new Christian songs and more traditional tunes, in worship, with children contributing and saying prayers, some spontaneous, and some pre-prepared in class. The children all participate, responding well to church input, sharing their ideas, acting out Bible stories, discussing in pairs, or using silent reflection. School staff help in the use of computers, sound systems, screens, and other resources.



At Lyminge, the pupils say that the '[Open the Book Worships](#)', led by some of the congregation from [St Mary and St Ethelburga](#), and from the Lyminge Methodist community, are their favourite.

The children also enjoy Collective Worship and say they like it best when they get to lead services in churches, or being together for 'Leavers Day', 'Harvests Festivals', 'Christmas Services', and particularly they say, the 'Easter Service', which '*is magical*'.

The children would like to spend more time at the church as part of RE lessons, and for Collective Worships. They say they want the new Rector to be **fun**, and teach them in ways that they can understand!

Several Benefice members are on the Governing Boards of the schools; they visit and monitor RE and Collective Worship, and undertake training, e.g., for SIAMs inspections.



Central Image Kent-Teach.com



12 Parish Profiles

St Martin's, Acrise with Swingfield



St Martin's Church, Acrise, dating back some 900 years, continues to retain the simplicity and atmosphere of its original early Norman construction.

Comprised of a nave and chancel, topped by massive wooden tie beams and king posts, it lies quietly hidden from the road, being approached through an avenue of trees.

Being a hamlet, Acrise comprises a very small community. However, the congregation is drawn from a very wide area, with people travelling from many surrounding villages to seek the style of worship and friendly welcoming congregation.

Acrise Church Christmas Family Service 2022

We are pleased to be a part of the Elham Valley Group of Churches Benefice. The church provides a place of local worship for both the residents of the area and visitors, and provides for life changing needs, ensuring there is:

- A visible presence of God in the local area by maintaining the building.
- A focal point for the local community, making the building and grounds accessible to local people and groups, for community driven activities.
- A 'Parish Share' contribution paid, to ensure the presence of a priest.
- A weekly service provided appropriate to the needs and desires of existing worshippers, accessible to those individuals and families coming to church for the first time.
- A venue for weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other 'life' events.
- Family centred services to spread the Gospel and grow the church, in which inexperienced individuals and families feel included.
- Community centred events, to draw the faithful and secular members of the community together.
- Outreach working with Selsted C-of-E School; with the aim of bringing the families of those children closer to God.



Our church's mission is to inclusively spread the good news far and wide, supporting all ages, by offering traditional and fellowship/family services.

We firmly believe we must attract families to enable 'the church' to grow.



Worship at St. Martins Acrise is alternately led by members of the Benefice Ministry team, supported by churchwardens.

Services usually follow the BCP style for traditional services of Holy Communion and Matins, supported by less formal 'Services of the Word' e.g., Café Style family services.

Acrise Mothering Sunday 'Café Style' Family Service 2023

All ages are always welcome to our services, with children mixing with retired people freely.

Many weddings and christenings are also held in the church through the year

St Martin's, Acrise has a varied social life. Including the Summer Festival, annual 'Beating the Bounds' walk, annual cycle ride, garden teas, and refreshments served after every service.



Refreshments at the Summer Festival



Financially, parishioners mainly donate by planned electronic giving, supported by fundraising events, and occasional visitor donations. Gift aid is used by many donors.

The main fund raising events of the year are the annual summer festival and Christmas fair.

We have a business plan [available on request] which following the recent increase in the parish share shows a deficit of £8-9k. We are working to cover this.



Christmas Fair 2022 Father Christmas Team

There is an active 'Friends of St Martin's' fund raising and support group, involving several neighbours, who, although many are not active worshippers, do support the church in various practical ways.



The Family Team Planting a Queen's Canopy Hedgerow



St Mary Magdalene, Denton with St Martin's Wootton

The Parishes of St Mary Magdalene, Denton, and St. Martin's, Wootton joined together in 2015, to become one Parish, with a single PCC. This was a natural union as the two villages are right next to each other geographically, with Wootton at the top of the hill and Denton at the bottom!

The two churches have been closely linked for centuries, and most of the congregation live in one of the villages but attend both churches. We have strong links with the community, which supports us financially through our fund-raising efforts, and joins in with social events. Our PCC meets at the [Jackdaw pub in Denton](#) and our hosts are keen supporters of our events, such as the 'Harvest Supper' and the 'Summer Fete'. Services are held every Sunday at 11:15, at one or other of the two churches.

The average congregation is around 14, mainly mature adults; although in 2022, we were delighted to have full churches for our candlelit Christmas Carol Service in Wootton, and Christmas Day Service in Denton. We celebrate our patronal festivals, and all the traditional events of the Christian calendar. For, despite being small in numbers, we are big in heart



St Mary Magdalene Church in the Snow

Both churches are open all day, every day for private prayer and reflection.

St. Mary Magdalene, Denton is a beautiful medieval church which stands back from the road in grounds that boast beautiful spring flowers, surrounded by the Kent countryside. It was constructed largely in the early 13th century, with architecture typical of the period. The churchyard and 'Garden of Remembrance' remain open.

Unless it is 'Holy Communion', on Sundays in Denton we have a short, simple service called 'New Day at Denton'. It usually lasts about 45 minutes, and comprises a mixture of hymns, readings, sermon, and prayers. We celebrate our Patronal festival in July. There is a 'Spring Fayre', and a 'Summer Fete' which are very popular in the community and surrounding villages. We enjoy traditional carol singing round the village in December.



St. Martin's, Wootton is also a typical country village church of a similar age to St Mary Magdalene. Our usual alternate Sunday service is 'Wootton Worship', which again, is a short, simple service along the same lines of 'New Day in Denton'.

The Churchwarden of both Churches is also a member of the [Wootton Village Hall](#) Committee, so enjoys being fully involved with village life by offering and fostering mutual support.

Social events during the year include the 'Fish'n Chip Quiz supper,' and 'Burns Night', which is a favorite with some of our congregation who are experienced Scottish Dancers!



Burns Night 2023 in Wootton Village Hall



A Beautiful Wedding Venue

St Martin's, coupled with the amazing Estonian timber Village Hall, also makes Wootton a popular wedding venue.

This twin church Parish faces the same financial challenge as many rural churches in the UK.

The Parish has a dwindling, maturing congregation, and the pressure of maintaining two beautiful but occasionally fragile buildings.

Members of the congregation pull together to carry out some of the cleaning and maintenance themselves where possible. However, the average running costs for both churches are rising sharply, as, energy bills in particular, take their toll. The Parish Share was paid in full for many years, and the PCC is committed to trying to meet its share in the future.



St Mary the Virgin, Elham

Elham is a rural parish situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in East Kent. The picturesque village has a population of 1,509 and is 12 miles from the ancient cathedral city of Canterbury.

There is a village shop, a café, hairdresser, three pubs that serve food, a large village hall and a very good C-of-E Primary School. St Mary's is the Parish Church of Elham, dating from 1170.

The Church replaced a Saxon Church on the same sloping site which overlooks the Elham Valley and the Nailbourne stream.

From The Square on its north side, the Church is an impressive building with a tall tower topped by a steeple. It is constructed of largely flint and dressed masonry walls with lead and tiled roofs. It has a high, wide Nave with North and South Aisles. Merton College at Oxford University is our Patron historically.

During the late 19th and early 20 Centuries, St Mary's interior was extensively refurbished by the architect Mr F. C. Eden, who left a fine legacy of furniture and fittings. The Church is in good condition and the last Quinquennial Inspection Report was conducted on the 10th September 2021.

A great asset for the church is its pipe organ. Thirty years ago, it was extensively rebuilt by the celebrated organ builder Martin Renshaw, and a recent survey described it as "idiosyncratic, interesting and unique". Though in good working order, there are plans for a major overhaul, and fundraising to date has reached over 50% of the £20k needed.



Craft Fair in the Church (Showing Organ)

We recently completed a 'New Facilities' project, comprising an accessible toilet, a kitchenette, two new oil heating boilers and improved wheelchair access. The cost of approximately £100,000 was fully funded by an appeal for donations from the congregation, the village community and trust funds. As a community service and source of funds for the church, there is a successful bookstall in the church.

St. Mary's Elham has a wonderful set of bells and team of bellringers – the peal of bells is a familiar sound across the village. The Friends of St Mary's support the church by raising funds for capital projects to maintain and improve its fabric.



Money and Finances.

St. Mary's has had a long-standing record of paying its parish share in full. In recent years, however, in common with many rural parishes, reserves have been drawn down to meet the challenge of payment, and in 2022, we were only able to make a partial payment. We have cash reserves only enough to maintain a positive cash flow balance to meet expenditure. Much time and effort is given by faithful parishioners for fundraising events, led by the Social and Fundraising Committee.

Services and Worship.

Sunday services offer weekly celebrations of sung Eucharist or in conjunction with our Benefice churches, and the Elham Methodist Church.



Ukulele Group Leading Christmas Singing in the Church

Music is very important; we have an outstanding organist and a small but enthusiastic choir.

Church attendance ranges from ten to thirty five on any given Sunday.

However, we can accommodate up to 200 for special services such as the Crib service at Christmas. Our annual outdoor Remembrance Day service is held jointly with the Royal British Legion, the Methodist Church, the Parish Council, and members of the Elham community. St. Mary's has a special place in the centre of village life, as evidenced by a steady stream of life events - baptisms, weddings, blessings, and funerals throughout the year.



Our churchyard was closed in 1940 but we have an active cemetery a short walk away.

We visit Canterbury Cathedral for communion with our sister Benefice churches during November. We have a Rogation Walk with our Benefice church colleagues.

A procession with donkeys on Palm Sunday takes place with members of the Methodist church and a Walk of Witness on Good Friday.



Palm Sunday 2023

Community Events and Church Hall.

We have a good relationship with the [Elham C-of-E primary school](#) and the local nursery school. They both make regular use of the church for services and visits.



Community Event Held in the Church

We hold many community events in the church such as Summer and Christmas markets, organ and ukelele concerts.

Along with community carols with lighting of the village Christmas Tree.

The 'Church Hall' built in the 1960s and situated on the main road in the village can cater up to 50 people and has toilets and a kitchen. There is a three-bedroom flat above the hall, which is currently rented, and is a welcome source of income for church funds. The hall is well used for community activities including very successful and pastorally important monthly 'Friendship Lunches', regularly attended by 30 villagers. We hold our PCC meetings there.



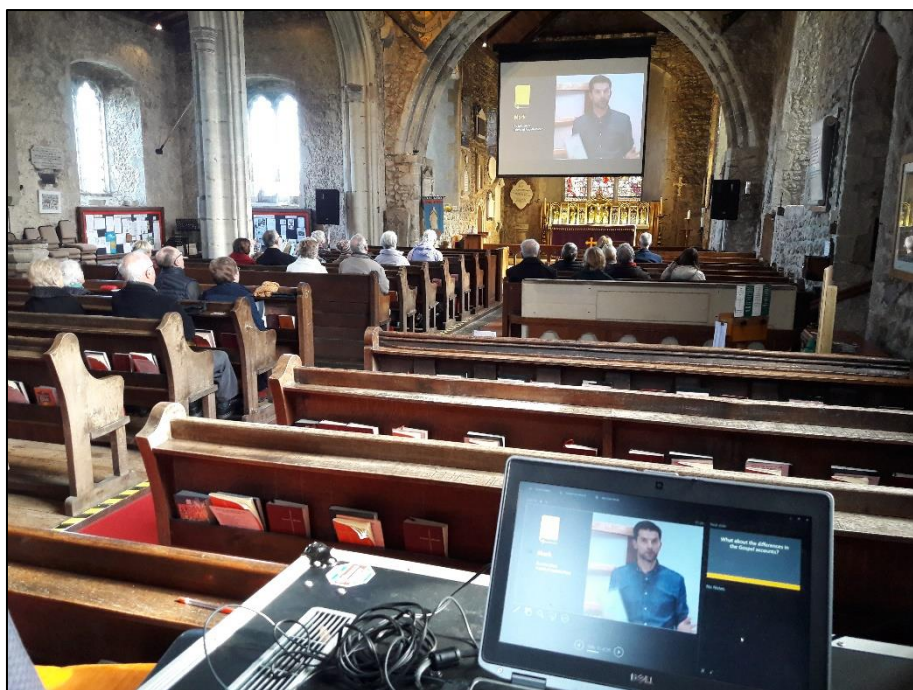
St Mary and St Ethelburga Lyminge

Lyminge is a rural parish of some 3,000 souls about two thirds of whom live in the village of Lyminge itself and the remainder in the surrounding area. It has been the site of dwellings since the Bronze age, and was a royal settlement in Saxon times. The church was established in 633AD by Ethelburga, daughter of King Ethelbert of Kent, the first Saxon ruler to be converted to Christianity by St Augustine. The present building dates from around 1000AD and is in good overall condition.

Lyminge is an active and welcoming Church with 69 on the electoral roll. The average attendance on Sundays is 20-25. The Church has strong links with [Lyminge C-of-E Primary School](#), and four parishioners assist a Methodist-led team with [“Open The Book”](#) assemblies. We would look to a new incumbent to strengthen and develop these links.

Lyminge provides a varied mix of styles of worship with two formal Eucharists, one Choral- Evensong and two lay-led services with hymns and songs, supported by the choir and a worship band.

This provides at least one service every week in the church and caters for the varying preferences of worship found in the congregation.



Lyminge Ways of Worship Service

We are blessed with a strong band of lay readers and worship leaders within the Benefice and look for a committed and prayerful priest to lead this team of willing volunteers. Recently there have been two Home Groups run during the week, one of which is still active.

There is a very busy and friendly PCC with a progressive Fabric and Finance Team which keeps on top of building maintenance. We await a reordering project at the rear of the building to provide more flexible space.



BBQ After Rev Deb's First Communion at Lyminge Church

Parish finances are healthy (with a good level of reserves) although, in common with most parishes, we find it necessary to draw down from reserves to balance the books in some years.

The churchyard is still open and is maintained by volunteers from the congregation.

There is a good team of bellringers with an excellent ring of eight bells which are rung every Sunday and on special occasions such as weddings.

We have a strong choir which sings at most services and supports other churches in the Benefice when requested.

The church building is often a focus for the population of Lyminge and stages music evenings, barbeques, coffee mornings and afternoon teas to fit in with village events.



Lyminge Church Choir Singing at a Service



The recently established Benefice Committee is helping to coordinate activity, service coverage and better interaction between the eight churches of the Benefice. There is sound cooperation within the group despite the widespread nature of the Benefice and we are keen to support joint services held in the other parishes.

In 2022 we celebrated 10 funerals or interment of ashes in our church, one wedding, one wedding blessing, and five baptisms, numbers significantly reduced due to COVID.

We are keen that a new incumbent can, together with us, concentrate on mission in the Parish to grow the number of active Christians.

St Oswald Paddlesworth (Chapel of Ease with Lyminge)



St Oswald's Church Paddlesworth Viewed from the Path Joining it to the 'Cat and Custard Pot'

'Highest church, lowest steeple, poorest parish, fewest people' – the motto of the tiny hamlet of Paddlesworth (population 38) where our 11th century church of St Oswald is situated among the fields, high up the North Downs. It is simple but beautiful and very well loved. St Oswald's is renowned for its deep sense of peace, which is felt and commented on by all who visit whether those with faith or without faith.

Our church, together with the ['Cat and Custard Pot'](#) pub next door are at the heart of our local community, working together to be welcoming and hospitable to all. We are open for all every day.



Our Easter Sunday sunrise service, followed by breakfast at Church Cottage, 'Rogation Service' with breakfast in the pub, as well as our Christingle Service and our Christmas Eve Carol Service, which begins in the pub, are much appreciated by our local community.

In addition, we hold several parish supper parties every year, hosted by Church Cottage, and contributed to by all.



Christmas Service at St Oswald's

Our services are currently traditional but informal. 'Evensong', which is often attended by our friends from Lyminge, is led by our wonderful lay reader twice a month and is followed by refreshments and time for chat. We hold a service of 'Holy Communion' once a month.

We are also popular for weddings, funerals, and baptisms where we can provide the intimate friendly feeling that our visitors are seeking.



[Matthew 19:14](#)

We are in the process of developing an outreach programme with a local retired vicar, with the aim of ensuring that a spark of faith will remain here in Paddlesworth long after our present population has departed.

We are also actively fundraising within the local community to raise funds to help support the maintenance of our ancient building.



St Mary and St Radegund Postling

Postling village is tucked under the North Downs, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. During lambing season sheep outnumber its human population of about 200 people.



Celebrating the Jubilee and the Renovation of the Phone Box

The village boundaries extend out to Farthing Common on Stone Street, Loughborough Lane at Newbarn, and The Wents at the corner of Sandling Road and the A20, but most people live in the centre of the village, within 100 yards of the beautiful 11th century church.

The origins of the church are even more ancient, and it is often described as a spiritual '[thin place](#)'. The building is loved and well used by the community.

A rota of people from no less than 19 households ensures that the church is open every day to welcome visitors, including many walkers as they pass through the parish on the North Downs Way.

The church is in an excellent state of repair. Our last Quinquennial inspection was in March, and only recommended some minor works. We pay our Parish Share in full, and thanks to the generosity of the village and their readiness to support the many fund-raising events that we hold, we have good reserves.

There is a service in church on most Sundays, with a monthly service of Holy Communion. Our other services are lay-led and often informal, including Tea and Breakfast Services during which we share food and drink, discuss the readings of the day, and pray for the world, the village and for each other. We no longer hold Prayer Book services, and our more informal services are not liturgical in nature.

The village is small, so Sunday congregations are not large, but our communal prayer life flows naturally from the fact that we know each other and regularly bump into each other during the week. Except during Lent and Advent, not a day goes by without lovely flowers in the church.



Our churchyard is maintained as a wildlife haven. Most of the grass is cut only at the end of the summer, raked up by volunteers and taken to a local farm for composting. The result is a profusion of primroses, cowslips, and orchids as well as a range of fauna.

We have an active Church Council. Our two churchwardens have complementary skills and interests. One can turn his hand to multiple practical tasks in the church and churchyard, while the other helps to run most of the non-Eucharistic services.'



Churchyard 'Clear Up'

The PCC is keen that the church building is recognised as the beating heart of village community life. The only other facility in the village is the village hall, which hosts a thriving pre-school that uses the church for its Christmas and Easter events. Our 'Happy Hour,' held in church on the fourth Friday of every month is always well attended, and there is also a monthly Coffee morning. Both events raise funds for local charities. Village meetings are often held in the church, which is also used as the village Polling Station.



'The Crib Service' in Pent Farm Barn 2022

Sometimes we hold services in the churchyard, and, since the pandemic, some of our Christmas services are held in a barn at a local farm

We even have live animals amongst the nativity characters for our crib service on Christmas Eve.



We ensure that a good proportion of the income of the church is given to local, national, and international charities. We want to be known as a church that looks outwards and not inwards.

The term 'close -knit community' can be misused, but it is a very apt description of those who live in the parish. When a resident is passing through challenging times, perhaps through illness or bereavement, the village always responds with kindness, care, and practical help. Pastoral care depends on all of us and is a natural extension of our communal village life.

All Saints Church Stanford

The Church of All Saints, Stanford sits on a hill overlooking the village and is bordered by the main road to Canterbury and the East Stour river. There are sheep fields all around it, and the churchyard has an upper part where the older graves and Ashes plots are sited,



All Saints Stanford Sits on a Hill

and the lower part with a war memorial and the more recent graves.

The M20 was built in the 1980s, and this cut the village in two, forming Stanford South and Stanford North.

Stanford South adjoins Westenhanger with its train station serving London and the coast, the two halves being linked by a farmers' bridge.

All Saints has its origins in medieval times. The current church was rebuilt in the 19th century, the nave in 1841 and the chancel in 1878. The beautiful organ dates from 1878.

The Quinquennial inspection which took place in February 2023 indicated a few areas needed attention. Extensive repairs interior and exterior were undertaken to the west face and Bellcote last year, with the help of personal donations and the Friends of Kent Churches.

All Saints is up to date with the Parish Share, but we only have small reserves in the bank.



Until recently a traditional Summer Lunch was held at the Drum pub hosted by the PCC with help from some villagers.

This was a primary source of revenue for the church but due to circumstances we have not been able to host it since 2019.

The Electoral role currently stands at 11.



Summer Lunch at All Saints 2018



Stanford Churchwardens with [Rev Stephen](#)

We have two churchwardens who double up on other roles too. We have two very good flower arrangers, who also help with domestic duties, with the churchyard attended by volunteers.

In addition to marriages, baptisms and funeral services, the church holds two services per month; a Morning Prayer, hosted by the popular Lyminge Worship Group, followed by coffee, and Common Worship based Communion. The congregations are not large despite there being several hundred people in the village. However, there is the opportunity for this to alter significantly in the future as Otterpool Garden Town is due to be built next to Westenhanger Station with the prospect of 8,500 houses, which would make Stanford the largest Parish in the Benefice.

The church is used as a Polling station as and when required.

Our church has a reputation amongst the other churches for 'putting on a good spread' whether for Rogation or Christmas mince pies! Although small we have a big heart.



13 Appendix

Average attendance Figures Oct 2022

These data are taken from the 'Statistics for Mission' returns from the Benefice, for October 2022. They do not accurately reflect the actual worshipping communities, as there were no Family Services in the Benefice in that month.

Average Attendance During October 2022		
<i>Source 'Statistics For Mission' Return</i>		
	Adults	Children
Acrise	14	2
Denton & Wootton	12	0
Elham	20	0
Lyminge	26	0
Paddlesworth	5	0
Postling	9	0
Stanford	11	0
Total Across Benefice	97	2

Average attendance across the Benefice Oct 2022

Please note there were 3 services at Paddlesworth, and 2 at Stanford in October 2022. All other parishes had a service each Sunday.

As there was a fifth Sunday in that month, the last Sunday, Sunday 30th October, was a Benefice Service held at one Church in the Benefice.

Useful Links

- [Visit Folkestone and Hythe:](#)
- [Visit Canterbury:](#)
- [Kent Downs:](#)
- [Lyminge Historical Society:](#)
- [Elham Valley Way:](#)
- [Canterbury Cathedral:](#)
- [Canterbury Diocese:](#)
- [Explore Kent – Royal Military Canal:](#)
- [Folkestone Creative Quarter:](#)