

Parish Profile

Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden



The Church of St Nicholas, Sturry

October 2025

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A Message from the Bishop of Dover



*Rt Rev Rose Hudson Wilkin,
Bishop of Dover*

Welcome and thank you for taking an interest in the role of Rector Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden. The Parish Profile sets out the needs and priorities of the parishes, their shared Person Specification will give you an idea of the kind of priest they are looking for.

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.

Our vision

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. In 2023, Diocesan Synod agreed to three bold outcomes which flesh out how our vision will be achieved by 2030.

Three Bold Outcomes

1. Double the number of children and young disciples.
2. 200 new Christian communities.
3. Every parish, benefice and deanery showing signs of revitalisation.

Every deanery is currently working on updating their deanery plans from the versions that fed into our 2022 strategy document [which you can find here](#). Our strategic planning across the diocese is a dynamic process - and it's exciting that parishes are considering our vision and the bold outcomes vision for themselves, exploring together what actions they will commit to take, what their local 'Therefore we will...' might look like.

As well as the three bold outcomes our diocesan synod has committed to a net zero carbon action plan. When General Synod and Diocesan Synod adopted this goal, it was clear that it would be very challenging. However, the significant changes in global weather events in recent years have underlined the urgency of tackling the amount of carbon we produce. The leadership shown by the Church of England is important and the action plan takes a positive approach to working towards this ambitious target.

At the heart of all we do is a commitment to transformation for ourselves and our communities: *Changed Lives* → *Changing Lives*. If you are the right person for this role, we will be looking for you to join in with what God is already doing and play a crucial part in making our vision a reality.

Our Safeguarding Ethos

As a diocesan family, we are also deeply committed to our calling to build a safer, more welcoming church for all. We will never be perfect, but we can work together to make our churches safer. At the heart of this ethos is the conviction that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – and that it needs to be at the heart of everything we do. You can find out more about our approach to safeguarding [here](#).

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. A similar lay programme is in development too. 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rose" with a small cross or plus sign to the left of the first letter.

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

The Canterbury Diet for Incumbents and Priests in Charge

After licensing the Incumbent meets with the Director of M&M who introduces the priest to the Canterbury Diet and offers a Pastoral Supervisor with whom she/he meets not less than six times per year	Golden threads 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?
Ministers acquire a Spiritual Accompanier and meet regularly, recommended 6-8 weekly	
In the first two years the Incumbent or Priest in Charge attends the Ministry Training Programme Monday to Friday residential courses generally held in Ashburnham Week One : The Minister as Learner (soon after licensing) Week Two: The Minister as Leader (six months later) Week Three : The Minister as Missioner (a further six months on)	
Participation in the annual Ministerial Development Review Meet with Consultant Reviewer, complete a Personal Development Plan; meet with Archdeacon a few months later and update the PDP, with opportunity to review Pastoral Supervision and Spiritual Accompaniment. Also meet with the bishop every 12 to 18 months.	
As able, participate in professional ministry courses: Working with Conflict Working with Change Practical Skills Course the first are two by one-day courses, offered regularly at advertised times through the year, the third an annual one-day course	
Participation in Wellbeing Courses two-hour evening meetings, two offered per year	
Participate in relevant Continuing Ministry Development Events at advertised days and times	

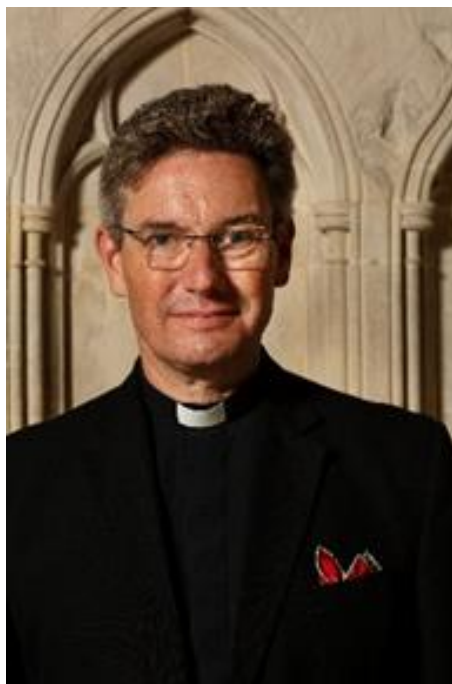
And a note from the Archdeacon of Canterbury

Thank you for showing interest in the vacant post of Rector of Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden. The name of the benefice is a mouthful, but you will see from the profile that most of the life of the parish is concentrated in Sturry, at one end of the benefice. There is, though, a great deal of new housing being built along the length of the benefice from Broad Oak in the west to Hersden in the east. This is a parish with a great deal of promise, and great opportunities for mission supported by a small but warm and appreciative congregation.

St Nicholas, Sturry has been a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church since before the term LEP was invented. The ecumenical nature of the church community is hard wired into it and the church exists (and has existed for years) comfortably within the Canterbury Deanery and the Canterbury and East Kent Methodist Circuit. This brings some extra work but also brings in extra support and fellowship.

The Deanery of Canterbury is working hard on putting together a Deanery Mission Plan. The Deanery Chapter aims to be a mutually supportive body and the Deanery Mission and Ministry Committee is active in looking for opportunities to share ministry across boundaries and traditions. The Area Dean, Canon Jo Richards, is the incumbent of the City Centre Parish.

If you would like to have an informal conversation about the parish, please do not hesitate to contact me. This is a parish where there is a real job to do and it will be a great place for the right person.



*The Ven Dr Will Adam, Archdeacon of Canterbury,
archdeacon-canterbury@diocant.org*

From the Area Dean

We are ten parishes and a Cathedral, working to support one another in mission and ministry across the city and immediate district of Canterbury. Chapter and Synod are both well attended and widely appreciated and we enjoy good relationships across the full diversity of Anglican tradition, viewpoint and expression. Over the last three years, our Deanery Leadership Team and Mission and Ministry Team have been facilitating reflection, planning and resourcing of deanery planning, working closely with both diocese and parishes. The Deanery Mission Plan has been well received across our Deanery with a six-point action plan that is filtered down to the parish level, where seeds are sown and growth occurs.



*Revd Jo Richards,
Area Dean of Canterbury
rev.jorichards@gmail.com*

From the Churchwardens and Church Stewards

Thank you for taking an interest in the Parish of Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden. Our Local Ecumenical Partnership between the Anglican and Methodist Churches has been an integral part of our church life for more than 50 years. Our worshippers and the population more widely welcome the breadth of experience that the partnership brings to God's presence in our communities.

As we describe elsewhere in this Parish Profile, our last permanent incumbent was an Anglican priest and an authorised Methodist Minister, his duties at Sturry - reflecting both denominations - were 0.75 fte. He retired in 2021. Since then, ministry in Sturry and District has taken a number of forms.

We are now able to move to a more settled pattern. We are seeking an Anglican priest, to minister for the equivalent of two days per week plus Sunday duty with housing provided and with a 0.2 stipend. This person will work closely with the Team Ministry in the Canterbury and East Kent Circuit of the Methodist Church who will also provide 0.2 fte of ministerial time.

This Profile shows that despite change and uncertainty in recent years, we are a lively and outward looking worshipping community which has achieved a lot. We are aware of the challenges we face, especially a growing and changing population and financial difficulties. We are confident with God's help, with the right ministerial direction and with our strong lay leadership, those challenges will become opportunities.



Martin Pilgrim and Jane Freeman

mpilgrim.easynet.co.uk@gmail.com; jane.m.freeman@hotmail.co.uk

Our role titles, churchwarden and church steward, reflect the nomenclature in each of our parent denominations.

The Big Picture

Background

In the past months, we have held two consultation meetings about the future of Sturry and District Church. In March, we invited the wider community – councillors, those attending church groups, as well as regular worshippers - to discuss ministry in Sturry; 25 people came. On 13 July, after Morning Service, we addressed the specific needs of a parish profile, there were approximately 20 people present, including Archdeacon Will Adam.

This note is informed by both events and is a synthesis of views expressed there.

Vision and Mission

As a church family, we know that we need to do more to reach out to the new communities in our parish.

Our forms of worship and church life should be attractive to a wider range of people and give them an opportunity to understand their faith, so it can be a real foundation to their lives.

In the past four years, without an incumbent, we have offered a variety of forms of worship, e.g. Café Church, led by ministers and laity from both denominations. Our existing congregation has largely welcomed this and we feel that it has been a factor in improving our outreach.

Our being a Local Ecumenical Partnership has been a tremendous strength in this time. Whatever tradition from which we come, we feel strongly that being an LEP should continue as a key part of our vision and mission.

What can we offer a new minister

We are an enthusiastic and supportive church family which has grown in strength and confidence.

We have a competent and committed lay leadership team.

We offer the challenges of serving a growing and changing population, in many ways different from our present worshipping community, while continuing to meet the needs of our present community.

We have thrived in an ecumenical environment.

What we want from a new minister

We are aware that we need capable ministerial leadership and are looking for a person who will build on the work already underway.

She or he needs:

- To be a good communicator.
- To have a prayerful approach.

- To be concerned for the increasingly frail older people in our church family and their need for home communion, etc.
- To engage with our increasingly diverse communities
- To work with the state and independent schools in our parish.
- To develop and deepen faith by leading and encouraging study and prayer groups

Geography, Population Data and Development

Where Are We?

Our parish is three miles from Canterbury city centre. Canterbury is a lively city with three universities, a thriving tourist industry, theatres and many restaurants. It is 55 minutes from London by HS1 and 30 minutes from the Eurotunnel terminus at Folkestone.

Our Parish

The Parish of Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden has five settlements.

Sturry is a village going back to Roman times. The village centre has a High Street but after a heavy bombing in World War II it now contains only a few shops, some older houses and brutal 1960's housing, including sheltered accommodation. The village is divided by a railway line and traffic is regularly interrupted by a level crossing. Most of the housing in the village is 1960's development, private and social housing in an area north of the railway line.

The village has within it, near to St Nicholas' Church, an imposing Elizabethan manor house, now known as Milner Court. With other buildings around, Milner Court is home to Junior King's School, the preparatory school for The King's School Canterbury.

The River Stour runs through the village.

The A28 road through the village is heavily used as the main road from Canterbury to Thanet. A by-pass is planned to avoid the oldest part of the village south of the railway line.



Sturry High Street



Broad Oak is a settlement north of the village of Sturry, mainly housing and one public house.

Fordwich is a town with a charter, a Mayor and a Town Council, it is not a village. It is claimed to be the smallest town in population in Britain. It contains a redundant Grade I Listed church, a Michelin-starred restaurant and another public house. It is an attractive place, attracting

visitors, on the River Stour with many architecturally important houses.



Fordwich from the Stour

Westbere is a small village east of Sturry. Its church is All Saints'.



Hersden owes its existence to the now-closed Kent coalfield. There is pre-war social housing built for miners and later private sector development after the closure of the coalfield. The Kent coalfield was largely opened in the 1920s and 1930s and miners sought work there from all over Britain. At one time the village had Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches, representing the dominant traditions of the areas from which the miners came - only the Roman Catholic Church remains. The Methodist Church joined the Anglican parish to form our Local Ecumenical Partnership; the Methodist building in Hersden is now a community centre.



A representation of a miner outside the former Methodist church in Hersden, now the Social Centre

Population Data and Development

The estimate of the Church Urban Fund, using data from the 2021 Census, is that the population of our parish is 8,139. The previous estimate from CUF using 2011 Census data was 7,530.

The 2021 statistic understates our population count because of recent developments. The Canterbury City Council Local Plan 2017 scheduled an additional 540 dwellings in Sturry / Broad Oak between 2021 and 2026. Land north of Hersden was to be used for a further 570 dwellings. This is a total 1110 dwellings, perhaps over 3,000 people. This could be an increase of nearly 40%. Much of this housing is now built and being occupied and the church is engaging with the new population, beginning with working with estate sales offices.

Who Lives Here?

CUF data based on the 2021 Census show that 91% of the population of our parish is white. People aged 19 and under comprise 23% of our population. Older people (70 and over) are 17%.

In 2018, we made a successful bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Part of our case was that incomers to the new housing in our parish were likely to be different from the existing population, especially in age and ethnicity. That is proving to be our experience as new residents engage with church, they tend to be younger and more ethnically diverse.

Just over 50% of the population of Sturry told the 2021 Census that they were Christian. 41% said they had no religion.

Ministry and Worship

Sturry has been a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England for more than 50 years and was one of the first in the country. Our last incumbent retired in May 2021 after 23 years in Sturry. He was an Anglican priest but was also an authorised Methodist Minister. Our services used both Anglican and Methodist liturgy.

Since May 2021, there has been a variety of arrangements, with support from the Diocese and Circuit. For two years to mid-2024, we enjoyed 0.2 fte of a minister from each of the Circuit and Diocese. Until August 2025, we had 0.2 fte of a Methodist minister and valued ad hoc support from the Diocese. Our non-stipendiary Anglican priest with Permission to Officiate takes some Sunday services as well as baptisms, marriages and funerals.

Since 2024, our worship leadership has become more integrated with the Methodist Plan. Ministers and local preachers across the Circuit take services more often, along with continued support from the Diocese, including the Archdeacon personally and a member of the chaplaincy team at the King's School Canterbury. We have also ventured into other, less

formal, forms of worship, including very popular “Café Church” events – “Local Arrangements” in Methodist terminology¹.

In debates with our congregation and more widely, our community has greatly welcomed these varied approaches to worship.

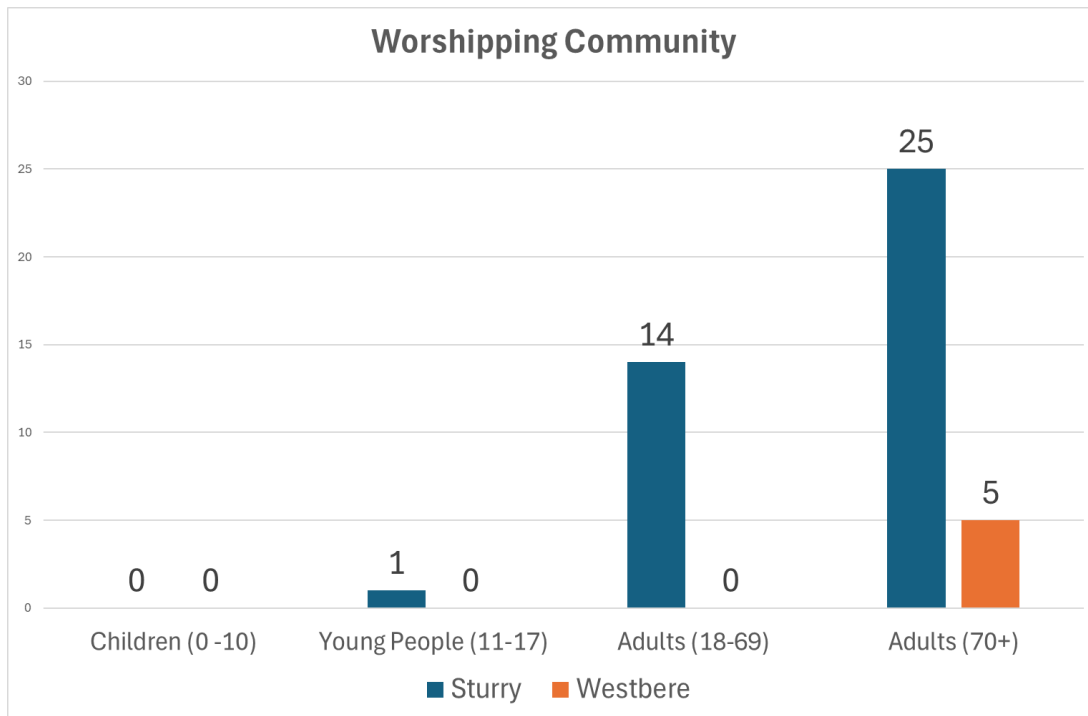
In the area of our LEP and parish, we have two churches – at Westbere (All Saints’) and Sturry (St Nicholas’). We also have responsibility for the closed churchyard at Fordwich (the church there is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust).

We are beginning to explore options for the future of Westbere Church as we spend £5,000 pa on heat, light and repairs for the building and very few attend services there. The Archdeacon has recently advised that we should continue to hold services at Westbere until a formal decision is made. Our most recent practice at Westbere was to hold one Sunday service a month, but those services attracted mainly people who would otherwise have been at Sturry. We are now considering our future pattern of services.

Key Data from Statistics for Mission 2024

Electoral Roll (Sturry and Westbere)	24
Usual Sunday Attendance when there is a service (Sturry)	23
Usual Sunday Attendance when there is a service (Westbere)	11
Easter 2024 Attendance (Sturry)	56
Advent Attendance for congregation and community services	73
Advent Attendance for special services for civic organisations and schools	618
Attendance at services at services for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (Sturry)	87
Attendance at services at services for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (Westbere)	29

¹ “Worship is the work of the whole people of God: a congregation is not an audience or a group of spectators”. (Methodist Worship Book)



NB The electoral roll and worshipping community figures provided for the Anglican Statistics for Mission return are only 50% of the effective numbers. The LEP agreement provides that all of our worshipping community are deemed to be adherents to both the Anglican and Methodist traditions but, for statistical purposes only, the total of our worshipping community is split equally between the two denominations.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals in 2024

There were two baptisms at Sturry. Three couples were married in Sturry Church, one couple was married in Westbere Church. Five funeral services were held at or on behalf of our church in Sturry. Three funeral services were conducted by a member of our ministry team at a crematorium or cemetery.

Comparisons with pre-COVID

The national debate on church attendance often refers to a slow return to pre-COVID levels. There seems to be a mixed picture in our LEP in the Statistics for Mission data. Our usual Sunday attendance is slightly down (26 [2019] to 22 [2024]). However, the total of our worshipping community has risen from 29 in 2019 to 40 in 2024.

Buildings and Churchyards

The Church of St Nicholas, Sturry

St Nicholas' church in Sturry has been part of our community for at least 1000 years. It is a Grade I Listed Building. There was probably a Saxon chapel on the site before the Normans built a church in the early 12th century, replacing the earlier chapel. And there is reason to believe that the Romans were here before that.

The Norman church still forms the heart of the present building. Additions and alterations have been made over the centuries, but the church still conveys a sense of history, of community and of shared spirituality.

Sturry church is the most significant medieval building in Sturry, close to the crossing point of the Roman road east out of Canterbury over the River Stour. This location is very important as the church stands on the first land that did not usually flood during the winter.

The original early 12th century nave and chancel remain reasonably intact as well as a significant part of the western tower. To this building simple north and south aisles were added during the 13th century by cutting arcades through the earlier walls and the large chancel arch also dates from this building period. In the late 14th and 15th centuries the aisles were widened and extended. Features such as the font date to the late 12th or early 13th centuries, but the decorated ledge around the top was added during the Tudor era, clearly shown by the Tudor roses. Records from the Churchwarden's Accounts describe the mid-18th century interior with high-panelled box pews, the reading desk, pulpit, wooden communion table and a west gallery for the singers. The Royal Coat of Arms was painted onto a board and hung high above the chancel arch.

As a Grade I listed building, it is celebrated for its exceptional architectural and historic interest. The exterior drip mouldings keep the rain off the windows and are finished with carved human and animal heads.

Over recent years various aspects of the church's historic structure had begun to fail with age.

Inadequate heating and the groundwater level made the church a damp, cold and unwelcoming place. Local fundraising and grant aid from the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme (a landfill site is very near the church and the grant scheme was to compensate local communities for this) enabled the installation of new, efficient heating system in 2017. This keeps the church at a low ambient temperature and then boosted when the building is in use.

Also, the roof, tower, guttering, and windows had deteriorated in places, letting in water and damaging the ceiling, walls and plaster. During 2018-19, major fundraising and volunteer time successfully came together for a £300,000 project to make repairs and to enable the church to be a more welcoming place for residents and visitors. Substantial funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Friends of St Nicholas' Church and others not only has conserved the building's fabric for the long term but has also supported

activities to strengthen its role as a venue at the heart of the village. The local community, schools, groups and visitors have gained a better understanding of the church and Sturry's heritage through a series of events, new leaflets and exhibition materials.

We plan to install a supplementary glass door and to improve the north door entrance porch. We are now seeking a faculty. The funding is in place if needed, but we hope to fundraise for this specific purpose too.

Churchyard and Grounds

Sturry churchyard is closed and responsibility for it now lies with the Sturry Parish Council. Sturry PCC holds 2800 m² of land to the south of the churchyard – known as the Milner Ground - on trust for the community. The total area of the church, churchyard and Milner Ground site is some 9300 m² or 2.3 acres. Maintenance, grass cutting etc in the area around the church are provided by a combination of: contractors financed by Sturry PC; pro bono grounds staff from the Junior King's School; and, offenders doing unpaid work in the community instead of a custodial sentence (Community Payback).

We are working with Sturry Parish Council and other community groups to manage better the total area of the churchyard and Milner Ground. This fits in with our Eco Church mission.



Major Building Works at Sturry

The Church of All Saints, Westbere

The Church of All Saints, Westbere dates from the 13th or 14th century but it is speculated – without any record – that a Saxon church predated it. Some evidence for an earlier church is in the reused materials in the chancel. These include puddingstone, a naturally occurring conglomerate of pebbles and cobbles.

It is a Grade I Listed Building. The chancel has very fine 14th century masonry, particularly the carved caryatid corbels, piscina and triple embattled sedilia. The building underwent a significant 19th century restoration that replaced the small medieval western bellcote with the present three arched stone bellcote.

The 2022 Quinquennial Inspection identified the need for some immediate repairs which have been effected.

As mentioned elsewhere in this Parish Profile, the future use of Westbere Church is being considered.

Fordwich Churchyard

The building of St Mary the Virgin, Fordwich is under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. The churchyard is the responsibility of the PCC. The churchyard is in the middle of the historic town of Fordwich and backs on to the River Stour. Until last year, the churchyard had been neglected, trees and undergrowth had become overgrown and the whole area was unsightly. Trees had begun to imperil the church building and boundary walls.

The PCC took action. We organised Community Payback to clear much of the undergrowth but they cannot take on the felling and removal of dead and decaying trees. We paid for a professional tree survey which has enabled us to seek permissions from church and local authorities. Once we have a faculty, we will fundraise for the major works; the sum is c£5,000. Our aim is for the churchyard to become an asset for the community of Fordwich and the many visitors to the historic town.



Overgrown Trees in Fordwich Churchyard

Finance

Some detail is in the charts below. In summary....

We spend about £51,000 a year

Of this, about £25,000 (c 50%) goes to our parent denominations for the cost of ministers, etc..

We spend £10,000 pa on heat, light, water and insurance for our two church buildings in Sturry and Westbere.

We use Westbere for only occasional services but heat, light, repairs etc there cost nearly £5,000 pa; as reported elsewhere in this Profile, we are reviewing the future of Westbere Church.

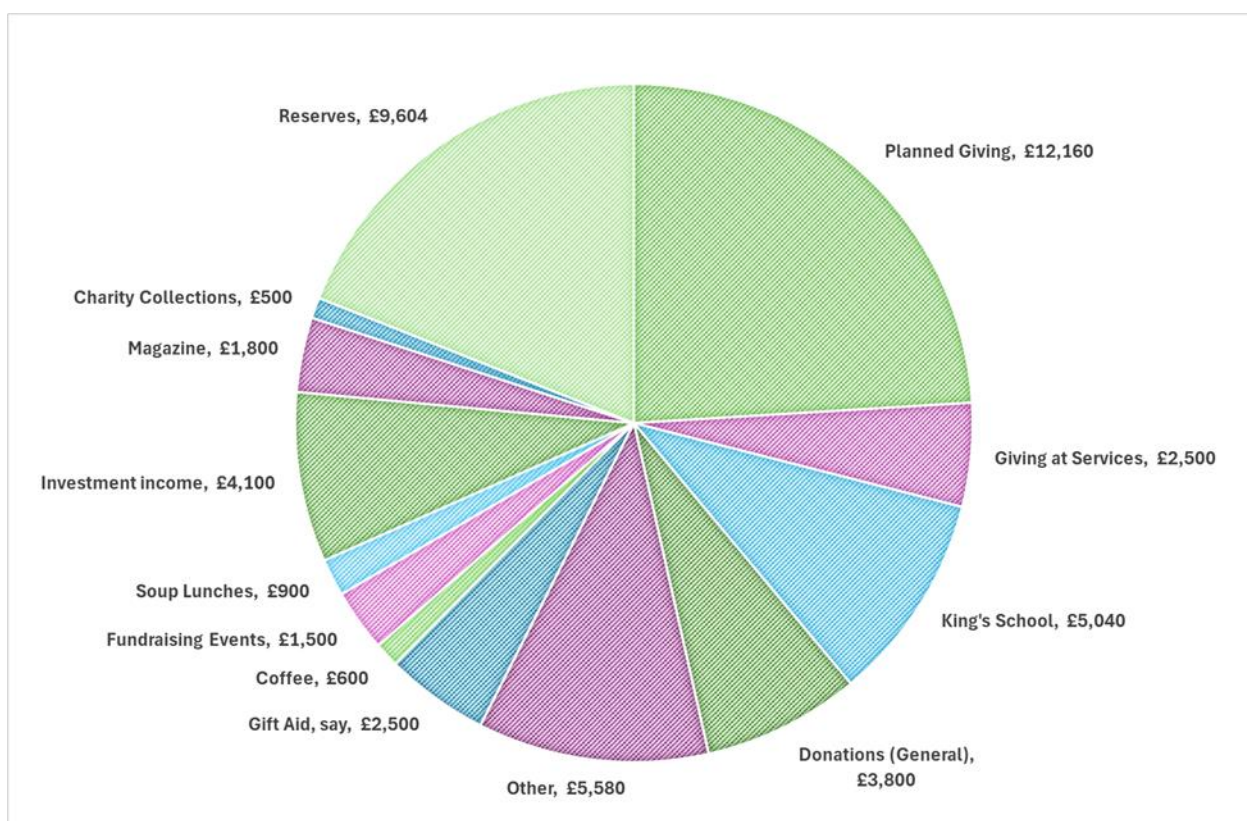
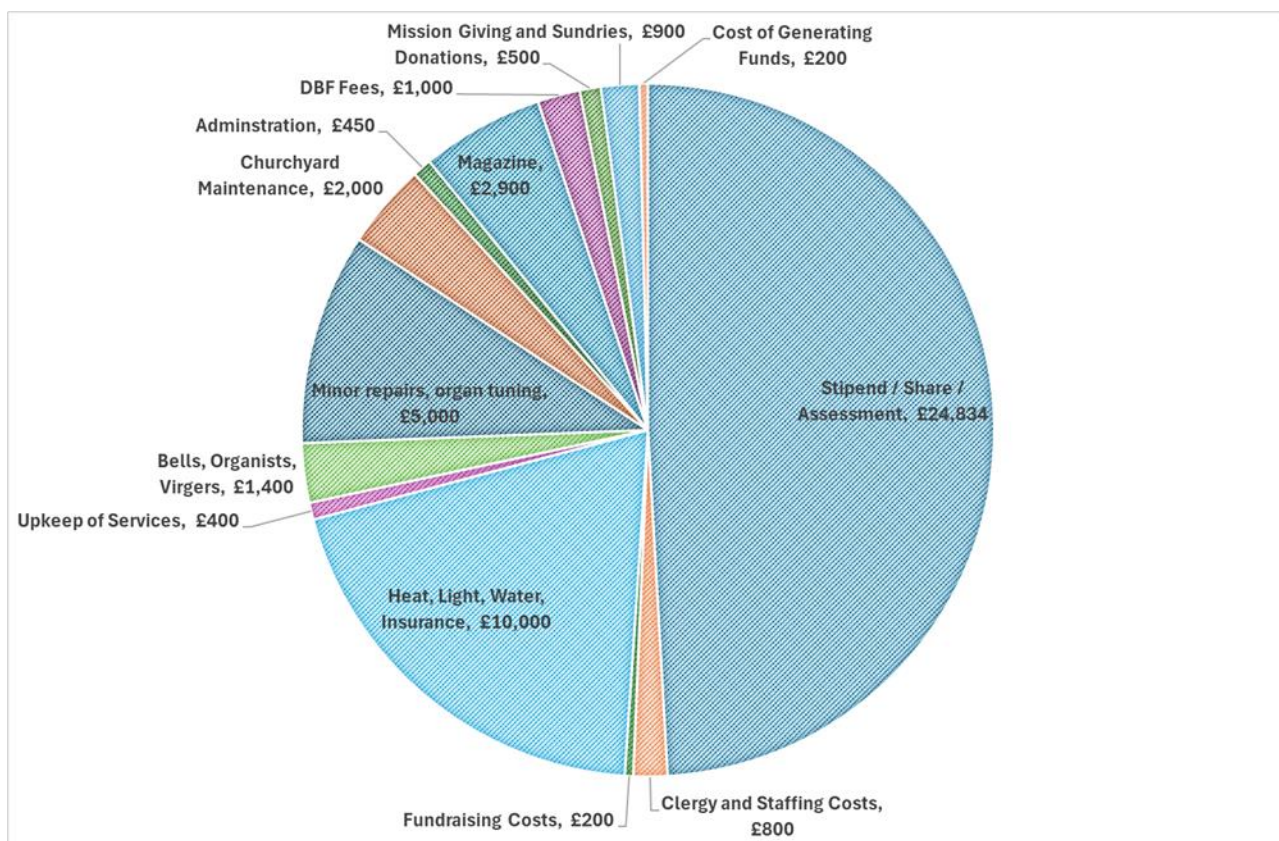
To finance this spending, just over £15,000 (34%) comes from giving (regular giving, occasional giving and Gift Aid).

We generate nearly £3,000 pa from fundraising events. We are looking to revitalise the Friends of St Nicholas' Church to improve our fundraising capability

The King's School Canterbury contribute £5,000 pa for use of Sturry Church by Junior King's School. This amount has not changed since 2006-07 and we are seeking to increase it. It would be £9000 if it had risen in line with inflation.

Other income comes from a number of sources, including investments (£4,000). Investment income will decrease as interest rates fall and we reduce our reserves to finance annual spending.

We balance our budget by drawing on reserves – nearly £10,000, or about one-fifth of our spending. This is not sustainable. The church has £176,000 in reserves, including endowments.



Regular Groups and Activities at the Church

Sturry Singers is a local singing group, formally independent of the church, whom we welcome into the church for rehearsals and occasional concerts. The fifteen or so Singers also perform at church events and some services.

Soup on Saturday is held monthly. There is a choice of meat-free soups available in return for a donation to church funds. It is a fundraising event but is also a social occasion. And sometimes, our hospitality has been extended to local rough-sleepers. There are usually around twenty-five “customers”.

Each Wednesday, there is **Coffee Morning** at the church, usually around a dozen people attend. The sessions provide friendship and ease social isolation.

Sturry Church has a fine set of **bells** and an accomplished **band of bellringers**. The earliest bells date back to 1622, the most recent was added in 1904.

Crafty Allsorts meets weekly in the church to practice a range of crafts – knitting, crochet, sewing, patchwork, quilting and paper crafts. In 2024, the group produced a banner, now on display in the church, celebrating many facets of life in our town and villages.

The bereavement group, **Butterflies**, aims to provide a safe and welcoming environment for individuals to share their experiences of bereavement or any kind of life changing loss. They have a small team of compassionate listeners, and they welcome people of all faiths and none. The group meets monthly in the church.

In the Wider Community

Schools

The church has close links with the neighbouring preparatory school for The King’s School, Canterbury – the Junior King’s School. During term time, JKS holds twice-weekly assemblies or morning service in the church for around 250 pupils and 30 staff. Other school services in the church include occasional evensong, Harvest Festival and end-of-term services. The School also uses the church as a rehearsal space, and an educational resource. JKS makes a financial contribution to the church and also gives support in kind – such as help with grounds maintenance and some oversight from the security team. The church has also benefitted from support from the King’s School chaplaincy team with the Associate Chaplain, the Revd Lucy Sullivan, often leading Sunday worship.

Sturry Church of England Primary School is sited in the 1960s housing development to the north of the village. It is part of the Stour Academy Trust. The church is strengthening links with the school, the most recent development is Open The Book, when each month a team from the church take an assembly and act out a Biblical story. We were pleased to improve the links with the school in this way and we feel it has helped to encourage children and their parents to participate in church events and services too.

Other Bodies

Sturry and Broad Oak Residents' Association (SABORA) has used the church and its grounds for events, most recently a two-day Fundays Art and Craft Fair and a concert. We are also working with this group on better management of the Milner Ground and churchyard.

There are two civil Parish Councils (Sturry and Hersden) and a Town Council (Fordwich) for our ecclesiastical parish. Sturry PC takes a monthly page in Link Up (see below) and we are working with them and other partners on our Eco Church project and plans for the future of the Milner Ground. We have good links with Hersden PC. And once we obtain a faculty for major tree works in Fordwich churchyard, we hope to involve the Town Council in that improvement project

Community Payback

For some eight years, Community Payback have helped with maintenance and litter picking in the Sturry churchyard and Milner Ground. Recently, they have also carried out extensive undergrowth clearance and improvements at Fordwich churchyard.

These people are offenders who have been sentenced by the courts to periods of unpaid community work instead of a custodial sentence. The church introduced them to our wider local community and since then other local organisations, such as the Scouts and the Parish Council, have used them.



The offenders and their supervisors join the congregation for coffee after Sunday morning service.

Link Up Magazine



"racist, threatening and offensive"

Archbishop of Armagh, John McDowell

The Parish Church Magazine for
STURRY, BROAD OAK, FORDWICH,
WESTBERE & HERSDEN

August & September 2025
50 pence

We produce a church and community magazine, 10 editions a year, usually 24 pages, A5, professionally printed. 450 copies are widely distributed in our settlements; this readership is many times more than the number of people who have any formal relationship with the church.

The Rectory,

2, The Hamels

The Rectory is a modern detached house, 125 m from St Nicholas' Church. The Hamels is a quiet road, ending in a car parking area for Junior King's School. On the east side of The Hamels there only five dwellings all of similar standing to The Rectory. On the west side, there are a converted oast house, used by the nursery department of Junior King's, the Grade II Listed Headmaster's House, and the School Hall, a Grade I listed Elizabethan barn.

The accommodation comprises:

Ground floor: study, cloakroom, kitchen, utility room, lounge and dining room.

First floor: four bedrooms, bathroom, toilet.

Outside: gardens front and rear, double garage.



A Year in the Life of Sturry & District United Church

An extract from our Annual Report for 2024.

Introduction

2024 was for Sturry and District United Church a year of change and innovation. We do not take for granted the work that goes into our regular events – the worship, weekly coffee mornings, the monthly Soup on Saturday, the production and distribution of our monthly magazine, Link Up with a print run of 450 copies, the work of our bellringers, the regular groups, such as Crafty Allsorts and Sturry Singers – we could go on.

Below we have taken a look back at the year and some of the memorable events and happenings.

January

We began 2024 by making it easier to give money to the church. We installed a machine which enables donors to use their debit or credit cards. Regular churchgoers and visitors have used this. We are also encouraging more people to give regularly using the Church of England centralised system, which helps with Gift Aid and enables giving to be updated in line with the rise in prices.



Winter 2024 was dominated by a crisis about the cost of heating. Sturry Church responded to this by running a “Warm Wednesday” programme from the end of January until the spring. Films, activities, refreshments and a warm welcome were on offer, enabling people to save the cost of an afternoon’s heating at home.

February

We began Lent with a service for Ash Wednesday, 14 February.

Then, on 22 February, Revd Preb Gilleen Craig began a weekly five-session course on Mark’s Gospel, in which 10 or 12 people studied and discussed the gospel.

In Fordwich, Philip Lewis organised a series of themed displays in the Church of St Mary the Virgin. This included passages to read and activities to do. The programme ended with a service on Holy Saturday, 30 March.

March

On Saturday, 16 March, there was a Celebration of Spring in Sturry Church, featuring games, refreshments and crafts.

Sturry Church organised a deep, spring clean the morning of Saturday, 30 March, followed by a fish and chip lunch.



Also in March, Stephen Marsh of the bellringers was able to get the clock on the north face of Sturry Church tower working again. In his poem, “The Old Vicarage, Grantchester”, Rupert Brooke asked whether the church clock still stood at ten to three. In Sturry, the church clock no longer still stands at seven minutes past five.

Sturry Church was recognised as an Eco-Church in March, with Bronze status. This was based on our work in: worship and teaching about the environment; the management of our buildings and land; our community and global engagement; and, lifestyle.



April

As part of our eco-church mission, we recorded 14 varieties of birdsong in Sturry churchyard and the Milner Ground. We also noted the appearance of beavers on the River Stour, only a hundred yards from the church.



On 18 April, we were represented at the Licensing Service for the Reverend Lucy Sullivan as an Associate Chaplain at The King’s School, Canterbury. Revd Lucy has particular responsibility for the Junior King’s School and we have been pleased to welcome Lucy to lead occasional Sunday worship at Sturry and Westbere in addition to her responsibilities at the school.

May

Sturry Church received a new wall hanging. The Craft Allsorts Group, which meets in the church each week, with others in our village have produced a banner celebrating many facets of life in our town and villages.

On 29 May, during the Spring Bank Holiday half term week, we ran an activity afternoon in Sturry Church for 23 children and helpers. As one of the organisers said, “Children were happy, parents were happy, church people were happy – we have a good team.”



June



On 9 June we said “farewell and thank you” to Revd Prebendary Gillean Craig and his wife, Linda. For two years, Gillean had been the Anglican part of our “ecumenical team ministry”, along with the Methodist Revd Catherine Wagstaff. He had made a great impression and worked tirelessly – far beyond his nominal 0.2 full time equivalent.

We held our Annual Strawberry Tea on 23 June. This is a fundraising event but also a great summer social occasion for the whole community.



The Archbishop inspects the ceiling in 2017.

At the end of June, we finally signed off the National Lottery Heritage Fund Project. This had begun in 2017 when the Quinquennial Inspection had identified the need for major repairs to Sturry Church. With funding from the NLHF, donations from individuals, fundraising activities and volunteers' time valued at £27,000, we delivered a £317,000 project. Along the way we had COVID lockdowns, a liquidated main contractor and three church treasurers. However, the building was repaired, kitchen facilities were improved and we became able to share the building and its heritage with the wider community.



June also saw the ordination at Ripon Cathedral of Rebecca Mathen as Deacon in the Church of England. Rebecca's parents are part of our local worshipping community. Rebecca worshipped at Sturry when her studies at Cambridge made it possible. Revd Rebecca began her ministry as Curate in the Bradford area.



Revd Rebecca Mathen

August



In August, Revd Catherine Wagstaff stood down as our Methodist minister after two years. In her place we welcomed the Revd Danny Wheadon, who is also our Circuit Superintendent Minister. Like her Anglican counterpart at Sturry, the Revd Preb Gillean Craig – to whom we said farewell in June – Catherine was nominally 0.2 of a full time equivalent, but also as was the case with Gillean we were pleased to have more than that effort from her.

Discussions continue with our parent denominations about the future of ministry in Sturry and District but our clergy resources are – at least for the time being – much less than we have been used to. We have welcomed ordained and lay people from the Methodist and Anglican Churches to lead our worship, and we are grateful for that support. But quite often our local church family has been left to organise and lead worship ourselves. In Methodism, this is known as a Local Arrangement. Local Arrangement services make real the statement, *“Worship is the work of the whole people of God: a congregation is not an audience or a group of spectators”* (Methodist Worship Book). One of the innovations using this freedom has been “Café Church”, which combines Sunday worship and breakfast.

September

On 14 September, the annual **Ride + Stride** event took place. This is a fundraising event in which participants are sponsored to visit as many Kent churches as possible in a day. Half of the money raised goes to the participants' local church and half goes to help repair and maintain Kent churches. In Sturry, our local efforts raised a total of £764.



Some Sturry folk did their bit by being sponsored for completing circuits of Sturry church with their mobility aids.

Also in September, we began monthly visits to Sturry Church of England Primary School. Using resources from “**Open the Book**”, a few of our team give short dramatizations of Bible stories at school assemblies. We were pleased to improve the links with the school in this way; we feel it has also helped to encourage children and their parents to participate in church events and services too.

October



At the autumn half term, we ran another activity afternoon in the church for children of all ages. During this event we launched a project as part of our work as an Eco Church, we set up bird feeding stations in the churchyard.

November

We recognised the problems faced by those suffering bereavement or other life changing loss by inaugurating our monthly “Butterflies” group. People can share their experiences and be listened to. The group welcomes people of all faiths and none.



December

Advent and Christmas were an exciting and busy time. As well as traditional services and events, we had a “Blue Christmas” service to meet the needs of those who – for one reason or another – were not in a position to have a happy Christmas. Our 2024 Christmas Tree Festival attracted 36 entries from a wide range of church and community groups and schools. St Mary’s Church, Fordwich hosted a Carol Concert with readings, reflections, carols, hot punch and mince pies.



Appendix: Contact Details

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