

The Archdeacon of Ashford

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The Benefice of Calehill with Westwell

This is a benefice where long-standing tradition has met with innovation in order to serve today's communities. The benefice had existed for some time comprising seven parishes and then reducing to six. Much work was done in the benefice to explore what the best structure might be to support the work of the church locally and this resulted in five parishes uniting to form the parish of Calehill last October. Innovation hasn't only been structural with all of the communities responding to change in ways that are right for their context. For example, Pluckley has developed its local history interpretation within the church, Little Chart had developed the lay-led *Cornerstones* expression of church and there is a varied mix of worship offered across the benefice, both formal and informal.

The new Rector will therefore be working with people who have proven able to adapt to change. I believe they understand that there will need to be more change in how we 'do' church going forward and so will be open to adapting further. Of course, villages also value the traditions they care for and so the Rector will need to be someone who can bring ideas, build consensus and is sensitive to the needs of traditions as well as the new. In doing so, she or he will be supported by a wider diocese that is also exploring how to change for the future. Our *Changed Lives* → *Changing Lives* programme is encouraging all Christians to be confident in their faith and ability to share it, as well as encouraging lay ministry to complement ordained ministry. The Covid-19 crisis has also encouraged us to notice what God might be saying at this time and discern what lessons we can learn for the future.

This is a role that offers a supportive and capable lay leadership, variety and challenge. These are villages that are not caught up in the past but vibrant places where community matters and those communities are growing. The new Rector will be involved in traditional ministry as well as helping the church adapt further for its ministry to those developing communities.

As you endeavour to discern whether God might be calling you to share in the ministry at Calehill with Westwell, I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

With my prayers and best wishes

The Ven D N Miller