

# Benefice of Speldhurst with Groombridge & Ashurst and the Benefice of Langton Green

## Introduction – Archdeacon Sharon Copestake

### Some local context

This is a terrific opportunity to help lead four churches in seeking God's path in a beautiful corner of the wider Tunbridge Wells area. Speldhurst with Groombridge and Ashurst has long existed as a single benefice with Langton Green the neighbouring parish. Both Speldhurst and Langton Green share a common civic council while maintaining separate identities as villages. Both benefices fell vacant in 2023 and have spent the past months prayerfully exploring the possibility of working more closely together.

The appointment of a Priest-in-Charge to serve both parishes offers a chance to make the most of the rich opportunities for ministry and mission available in the four communities. The split of time between the two parishes will be 0.7 for Speldhurst with Groombridge and Ashurst and 0.3 for Langton Green. There is a readiness in the four churches to explore ways of working together more closely and to seek God's guidance as to how a future pattern of ministry might develop - especially whether closer links in terms of governance might be a possibility.

You will see from the individual profiles that the two benefices comprise four diverse churches with rich histories and vibrant communities:

- **St Mary, Speldhurst** is a busy, family-friendly church rooted in a popular village with close links to its church school
- **All Saints, Langton Green** offers a welcoming, reflective and community-engaged ministry in a sought-after location
- **St John, Groombridge** offers traditional Book of Common Prayer services that engage a small community extending beyond the village
- **St Martin, Ashurst** is a small but active church in a close-knit rural community.

Individual profiles outlining the ministry and mission of the four churches offer more detail alongside this overview.

The four churches are distinct in their style and outlook but share a common goal of seeing God at work in their villages and using their strengths to bring God's kingdom to the communities they serve. The benefice offers a unique blend of traditional and contemporary worship styles, with opportunities for growth and community engagement. As Priest-in-Charge here, you will have the support of experienced lay leaders, readers, and dedicated volunteers across the four churches. You'll also benefit from being part of the Tunbridge Wells Deanery within the Diocese of Rochester.



## Wider context

The Diocese as a whole is home to some 1.3m people, which is set for significant growth (of around a further 300,000 over the next 20 years). Whilst growth is inevitable, much of Tonbridge Archdeaconry retains its rural identity, with urban centres found in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, and Paddock Wood, and around the Aylesford area.

Tonbridge Archdeaconry shares its life together under the canopy of the Diocesan strategy, Called Together, through which we are seeking together the Kingdom of God - called to change, to grow and to serve. Together, across the Archdeaconry, and across the diocese, we are working to grow missional churches, leaders and disciples that are younger and more diverse across the many different contexts into which God has placed us.

I am delighted to commend this profile for the Benefice of Speldhurst and Groombridge with Ashurst and Langton Green as you discern God's call to serve here as Priest-in-Charge. With prayers for you as you discern God's call to this place.

Ven Sharon Copestake  
Archdeacon of Tonbridge

## Who we are looking for

You will:

- Be a missional leader prepared to work across two (currently separate) Benefices.
- Have experience of managing and leading through change effectively.
- Be a good communicator, able to engage and connect with people of different generations, stages of faith and giftings proclaiming the good news of Jesus as revealed in the Bible.
- Be as comfortable with our Anglican traditions as with the need to reach people in new ways - able to minister across the range of liturgical traditions we offer.
- Be a good team leader and builder, to God's glory - knowing when to cast vision, when to encourage and how to develop people's gifts.
- Respect and support the diversity of the four churches while exploring closer working together.
- Take an active and creative role in the life of our villages.
- Have a ministry among young and old, strengthening links with our village schools.





- Grow, develop and lead lay leaders, willing to delegate and build on the existing good foundations in order to create sustainable patterns of ministry and governance for our new grouping.
- Have a rich and rooted spiritual life.

### **What we want to offer:**

- We have a supportive ministry team including lay ministers and retired clergy with PTO, enthusiastic children and families' volunteers and a parish administrator as well as many active lay members keen to serve and grow.
- We are keen to pray for you and work with you in discerning God's vision for our communities.
- We are committed to valuing your personal well-being and recognise your need for rest, retreat and personal growth.
- We have well-established governance structures in each of the churches.
- There are smooth-running teams for planning, preaching, worship, music, and for organising children's and youth work and homegroups as required by the ministry in each church.
- While we are reasonably diverse in our outlooks, we hope we are refreshingly free of factions and cliques.
- You will have a large and well-kept Rectory on a quiet central lane in the village of Speldhurst.



### **Our communities**

Speldhurst, Groombridge, Ashurst, and Langton Green are charming and sought after villages nestled in the beautiful countryside near Royal Tunbridge Wells all within a 3 mile radius of each other, each with their own distinct character and amenities.

**Speldhurst**, just three miles from Tunbridge Wells, offers a range of local amenities including an outstanding Church of England primary school, a nursery, a doctor's surgery and pharmacy, a community-run shop and post office, and a 13th Century pub.

**Langton Green**, located approximately two miles west of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre boasts useful community spaces including the Langton Green Village Hall, a recreation ground, and the Community Hub which runs a café and serves as a sports pavilion. Langton Green also has a village school and the popular Hare pub.

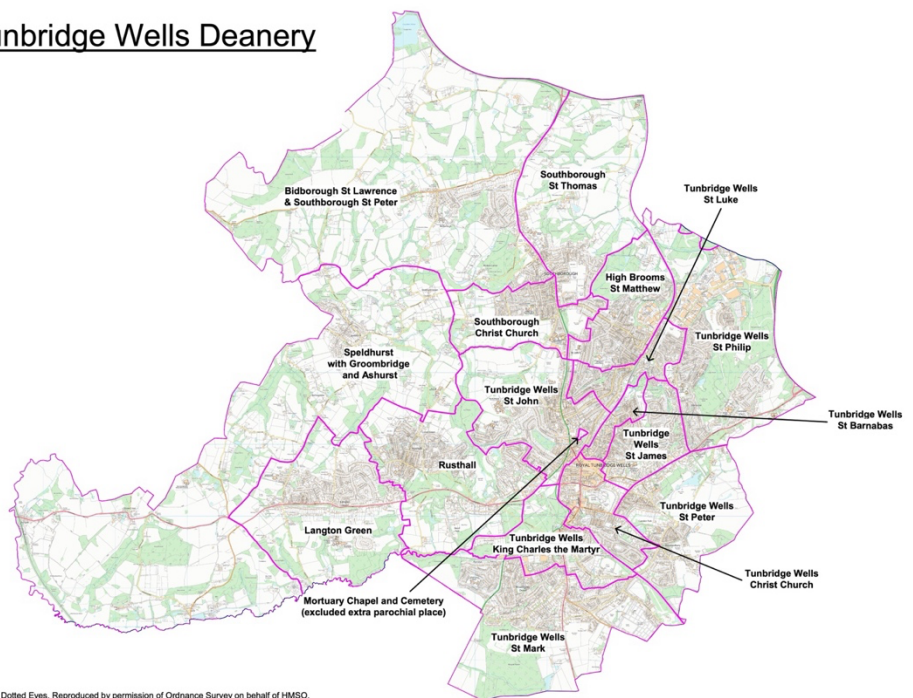
**Old Groombridge**, straddling the Kent and East Sussex border, features a picturesque village green and the historic Groombridge Place as well as a pub and other local facilities.

**Ashurst**, while smaller, boasts a vibrant village hall and a five-acre sports field. It has its own railway station with direct trains to London Bridge, ideal for commuters.

These villages are perfectly positioned to enjoy rural tranquillity while having easy access to the amenities of Tunbridge Wells, where you will find a variety of shops, restaurants, cafes, theatres, and leisure facilities. Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge offer mainline stations providing fast and frequent train services to London and the south coast. Public transport links between the villages are more limited and you will need to be able to access easily the different villages and churches within the benefice, including at evenings and weekends.

The area is well-served educationally, with good local primary schools and easy access to the state and grammar secondary schools of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge including the Outstanding Secondary School, Bennett Memorial Diocesan School. The surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty offers abundant opportunities for walking, cycling, and enjoying the picturesque Kentish countryside. Access to London and the coast takes approximately 55 minutes, and the M25 motorway network is within 20 minutes' drive, making these villages ideal for those who want a balance of rural living with good connections to town life and wider transportation networks.

### Tunbridge Wells Deanery





## The Rectory

The Rectory is a splendid detached house, located on a quiet cul-de-sac right in the middle of Speldhurst village and within walking distance of St Mary's Church.

It boasts a kitchen/breakfast room, 2 reception rooms, a study, 6 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and 3 toilets. It has plenty of parking space.

There's a lovely garden with a large lawn.

