

Deanery of Orpington

The United Benefice of St Peter and St Paul, Cudham and St Mary's, Downe



St Peter & St Paul, Cudham



St Mary's, Downe

Rural communities within the London Borough of Bromley

Interim Priest-in-Charge

Parish Profile

www.pcd.org.uk

www.facebook.com/pcdchurches

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Appendix: Diocesan Vision Summary

Archdeacon's Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to prayerfully consider whether God might be calling you to serve as Interim Priest-in-Charge of St Peter and St Paul, Cudham and St Mary's, Downe.

These parishes have small but enthusiastic congregations who are committed to sharing the love of God with their communities.

Cudham and Downe are rural villages, located on the edge of the London Borough of Bromley and provide easy access to both London and Kent, with beautiful countryside right on the doorstep. They are part of the friendly and supportive Orpington Deanery.

The warm and friendly congregations of Cudham and Downe are looking forward to welcoming an Interim Priest-in-Charge who will lead them in mission and ministry. Both churches have strong links with the village primary schools, offering potential for growth.

With a population of just 2075 people across the two villages, it is my hope that during the three-year duration of this post the Interim Priest-in-Charge will work with myself, the congregations and the Diocese to explore the long-term future of mission and ministry in Cudham and Downe and across a wider area.

This is an exciting time in the life of Rochester Diocese as we reflect on how we as a diocese, and in different ways in each of our parishes, might Change and Serve and Grow so that God's Kingdom can be increased, and more people can come to know the love of Christ. Our diocesan strategy prioritises and supports parish ministry and clergy well-being. We are committed to supporting mission and ministry in rural communities.

Please be assured of my prayers as you discern whether you are the person the Holy Spirit is calling to join us in this next exciting stage of mission and ministry in Cudham and Downe.

Ven. Allie Kerr, Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley.

Welcome

We're delighted you are looking to join us in Cudham and Downe.

The churches of St Peter and St Paul, Cudham and St Mary, Downe are the centres of friendly, welcoming village communities, and are part of the Church of England within the Diocese of Rochester. In 1976 our two parishes were incorporated into a united benefice; our PCCs frequently meet together, and we are open to exploring formalising the Joint PCC model.

We have a rich historical heritage; both churches have been here for over 700 years and are listed buildings, Grade II*. Cudham is mentioned in the Domesday book as Codeham.

Although we have historic buildings, the churches are very much living communities of faith and concerned about developing our outreach and service in the modern world in which we live.

Both churches are warm, friendly and welcoming village churches. We are a Bible based evangelical fellowship and we are looking for a man or woman to lead us both spiritually and practically in our day to day witness and, with us, support the wider community. The patrons for Cudham and Downe are the Church Society and the Bishop of Rochester respectively.

We are keen to grow the church for all and have been working on adapting how we both reach out to and draw in anyone who might be seeking to grow in their faith. We are very keen to find a Priest-in-Charge who can lead and support us with fresh insights and ideas, and help us in discerning the future of the parishes.

Our Mission Statement is that:

- We **WORSHIP** the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ
- We **WITNESS** the love of Christ shown supremely in his life, death and resurrection
- We **WELCOME** all people into our fellowship with the love of Christ



Christingle Service in Cudham Church



Bank Holiday Show in Cudham

The Parishes

Cudham and Downe are rural villages on the south-eastern edge of the London Borough of Bromley. They lie on the North Downs on the border with Kent, embracing areas of Special Scientific Interest (SSIs), with stretches of woodland known locally as 'shaws' and deep valleys between. The area is criss-crossed by footpaths, attracting many walkers. The life of Charles Darwin is celebrated at Down House, now under English Heritage ownership, where he lived and worked. Another popular venue for visitors is Christmas Tree Farm, also in Downe, where families can see and feed a range of animals.

The villages are very different in their physical layouts, Downe being focused around a village centre (and the church) whereas Cudham is more of a linear community along the principal lanes, with its 'heart' found around the church and the pub.

Cudham has around 600 households that are dispersed over a wide rural area. Downe has around 350 households, also in a rural area. There is a combined population of about 2,100 people.

Both villages have large and popular recreation grounds with good children's playgrounds. Cudham recreation ground (the Rec) is home to Cudham Wyse Cricket Club and Cudham Football Club and hosts the annual Show and Fete on August Bank Holiday Monday. Downe Cricket Club's ground and pavilion is in Luxted Road, part of the Down House estate.

Adjacent to Cudham rec is the Blacksmith's Arms public house, a popular pub which runs regular social and community events. Downe village has two public houses – the George and Dragon and the Queen's head, both near to the church and equally popular.

Both parishes have Village Primary Schools, currently with 50-60 children at each. Cudham CE Primary School is located about a mile from the church and is an academy within the Aquinas Church of England Trust. Downe Primary School, a Pioneer Academy school, is within walking distance of St Mary's Church. We are involved in leading the Collective Worship on a weekly basis at both schools and preparing and organising their Harvest, Christmas, Easter and end of school year services in the respective churches.



Cudham CE Primary School service

The children from both schools are involved in outreach events, for example, summer tea parties in conjunction with the Pastoral Team for senior parishioners, and the school choirs have performed for Warm Welcome and Holiday at Home events.

Both parishes have halls, indeed Cudham has two - the Parish Hall (originally the Church Hall) in Cudham Lane South and the Eldon Hall on the Hazelwood Estate in Cudham Lane North. Downe's is the old village school, donated by the Lubbock family, and is across the road to the church. All are run by trustees and are well used for a variety of private and community events, and each has an interesting history.



Cudham Parish Hall



Downe Village Hall

Both parishes have a graveyard or cemetery. St Mary's churchyard is closed and the current cemetery is in High Elms Road. The churchyard of St Peter and St Paul was extended in the 1930s by adding a section of the adjacent Recreation Ground and includes several Commonwealth War Graves. Volunteers at Cudham maintain their church grounds by monthly churchyard working parties, whereas responsibility for the land around St Mary's now lies with Bromley council and a contractor maintains the cemetery.



Cudham Churchyard working party

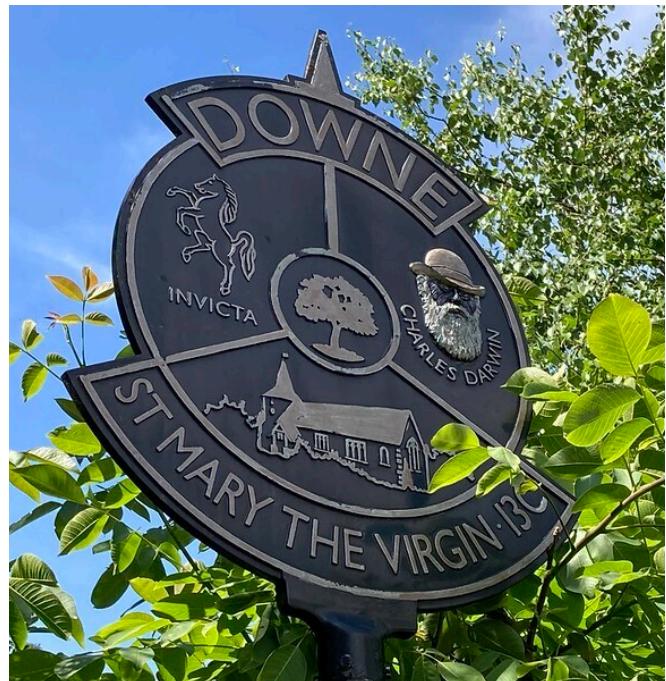


Downe

There is one other church in the Benefice, a Baptist Church in Downe, with which St Mary's has a good relationship.

There is ample opportunity for a Priest-in-Charge to become fully involved in our close knit and very active communities. In May, Downe celebrates the crowning of its May Queen, the Village orchard makes much of the apple harvest and come December there are great festivities around the Christmas Lights switch on. The highlight of the year in Cudham, meanwhile, is the Village Show and Fete, run by Cudham Village Club on the August Bank Holiday Monday. It attracts a large number of people from far and wide. The Show is held in the church, entrants vying for first prize with their vegetables, flowers, cookery and crafts, whilst on the rec there are lots of stalls, a band, children's activities and a tea room.

Both communities have a local magazine, Cudham's is delivered monthly to subscribers (the subscriptions benefit the church) and the *DowneTime* magazine is delivered free to every household. They also have their mailing systems, email alerts informing residents of road closures, local events, etc..



Our Ministry

Services

Currently Sunday services at St Peter and St Paul, Cudham are held at 11am. Services are accessible and friendly, with Sunday Club for younger members of our congregation available on weeks 2, 3 and 4, following the lectionary. We use a variety of resources, including the book of Common Worship. The usual pattern over the Sundays of a 4 week month is:

- 1st - Worship Together ('All Age Worship') – this service can include crafting activities around tables, using specially prepared service books.
- 2nd - Holy Communion
- 3rd - Morning Worship
- 4th - Holy Communion

Sunday services at St Mary's, Downe are held at 9.30am, the pattern of services being:

- 1st - Holy Communion
- 2nd - Morning Worship
- 3rd - Holy Communion
- 4th - Morning Worship

In a month with a 5th Sunday we tend to jointly take the opportunity to offer something a little different, for example, a Café Church in one of the halls.

On the 3rd Sunday of the month we often include a time for prayers for healing, either during the service itself, or afterwards.

Refreshments are available after each service.

Before our current vacancy, a service of Holy Communion (or a Service of the Word) was being held weekly at St. Mary's, Downe, on Tuesday mornings at 10am. Currently a time of prayer is being held on the first Tuesday and a service of Holy Communion (a quiet and reflective service) on the second Tuesday.

Special services have included the following:

- Christingle Service, alternating at Cudham or Downe Churches
- Carols by Candlelight – at both churches. Cudham's has traditionally been on Christmas Eve, Downe's the Sunday before Christmas
- Children's Nativity – St Peter and St Paul, Cudham
- Christmas Day – All Age Holy Communion at both churches
- Palm Sunday - 'Walking with Jesus procession' with donkeys from Christmas Tree Farm to St Mary's, Downe
- Maundy Thursday (sometimes with an Agape meal)
- Good Friday, often with Messy Church in Cudham and a reflective service in Downe Church
- Easter Sunday – All Age Holy Communion at both churches
- May Queen crowning – St Mary's, Downe
- Pentecost Celebration
- Harvest Festival – both churches
- Celebration of St Francis of Assisi Day and Blessing of Animals at Christmas Tree Farm

- All Souls service at both churches, remembering loved ones who have died
- Remembrance Sunday at both churches
- Taizé services with meditative music and readings



Carol service in Downe



Palm Sunday in Downe



Remembrance Sunday in Cudham



Downe poppy display

Occasional Offices

We are delighted to have held baptisms over recent years. Families are encouraged to attend services before the baptism which generally takes place during a Sunday morning service.

We encourage weddings, blessings of civil marriages and renewal of vows. At its meeting in January 2024 the PCC agreed to support our previous minister in his views on the issues relating to "Living in Love and Faith", and not offer the prayers of blessings to same sex couples. However, we recognise that there are a variety of views in our congregations and communities.

With open burial grounds parishioners and others as allowed by the Diocesan Regulations can be buried or their ashes interred therein.

Numbers

There are 35 people on the new Electoral Roll at Cudham and 32 at Downe.

The combined weekly attendance at the Sunday services is usually about 40, with extra people joining online when live streaming took place. Although regular congregation numbers are small, we are a friendly, vibrant caring community. Our many special services attract more, particularly our carol services when the churches are full.

Services are advertised on the Parish website, via social media (on Facebook), via village e-mailings and in the village magazines.

Music

We gather together members of the church and the local communities to form choirs for special services and weddings upon request.

We are blessed with, and share, several musicians able to play for services and on other occasions. Both churches have fine organs plus Cudham has a piano and St Mary's a keyboard. In the past we have had a music group and we are open to exploring this again.

Bellringers

Cudham tower has a peel of 10 bells, the oldest of which was cast in 1490 by Thomas Bullisdon of London. Downe's tower has a peel of 6 bells, the oldest two made by William Dawe of London (1385-1418) and amongst the oldest in Kent.

We are very fortunate to still have an active bell ringing community which rings the bells at both churches for special events and services and practice weekly across both sites.

Children's Ministry and Messy Church

Children's ministry is very important to us and in the future, with our new Priest in Charge's support, we would like to extend the provision to offer more for teenagers.

At Cudham, Sunday Club for Pre and Primary School age children is usually held on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays of each month in the church's Upper Room. This is prepared on a rota basis by 2 or 3 different leaders each supported by a helper. The teaching programme follows the lectionary as used in the main service and typically follows the Roots for Churches resource material. Numbers vary between 2 and 8 children.

Downe has established a Play and Pray area for the younger members of the congregation, whilst accommodating them in all services.

Messy Church gatherings are held 6 times a year during the school holidays, either in Downe Village Hall or Cudham Church. Sessions cater for all ages, with themes relevant to the liturgical year and the emphasis on creativity, hospitality and celebration. Attendance is usually 30-40 children and adults.

The Benefice takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously; our PSO is shared between the Parishes.

Encouragement of our faith

Homegroup meetings take place on a regular basis for an informal time of study and fellowship. The group follows either a study based on a particular book or passage in the Bible, or discusses the readings from the previous Sunday's services, or sometimes studies a book on a topical theme e.g. during Lent.

Christian Meditation takes place on the first and third Thursdays in the month in St Mary's Church. The group follows the method taught by John Main, an English Benedictine monk.

Prayer ministry is an important aspect of our two parishes, which prior to the time of Vacancy was established in a weekday pattern of morning and evening prayer. Currently, a time of prayer is held on the first Tuesday of each month in St Mary's Downe. Additionally, prayer requests may be telephoned to the parish office which are confidentially passed on to our prayer group. Prayer points are included in the weekly notice sheets.

Outreach

Pastoral Visitors' Team

We have a team of trained Pastoral Visitors with the added benefit of two of them being Anna Chaplains (offering 'Spiritual care for those in later life'). They meet on a regular basis and will visit, listen to and chat with anyone who calls for them, as appropriate, as well as providing home Communion, on request. They distribute gift bags at Christmas and Easter to around 30 parishioners.

Warm Welcome and Holiday at Home

Warm Welcome and Holiday at Home events are held three or four times a year in Downe Village Hall or Cudham Parish Hall. Designed mainly for those of more senior years, guests can engage in fellowship and fun, with light refreshments and activities throughout the day, around a wholesome hot lunch.

The Church Buildings



St Peter & St Paul, Cudham



St Mary's, Downe

Both buildings are generally in good order. Cudham's next quinquennial Inspection is due in 2027, Downe's in 2028.

Cudham has recently spent time on developing plans for improvements in the church, which include updating the heating system, servery area, carpeting and new accessible toilet facilities.

Downe is also investigating installing a kitchenette area, an accessible toilet and remodelling the Vestry.

The Parish Office is based in St Peter and St Paul, Cudham.

The history of St Peter and St Paul, Cudham, i.e. the current Church guide, can be found via [this web link](#).

The history of St Mary's, Downe can be found via [this web link](#).



Cudham



Downe

Governance, Administration and Communication

The team

- We have a paid Parish Administrator who works for up to 8 hours a week.
- Both Churches have two Church Wardens, 3 of whom have served in this capacity for many years.
- There are separate elected Parochial Church Councils but they will meet jointly as appropriate; we are giving consideration to formally adopting a Joint Council.
- The Honorary Treasurer keeps the books for both Churches and is a member of both PCCs.
- Our Safeguarding Officer stepped down recently but remains the Lead Recruiter. An excellent new Safeguarding Officer has been appointed from the community.
- Serving on both PCCs is a Licensed Schools and Families Evangelist.
- We support two commissioned Anna Chaplains.
- A member of Cudham's PCC serves as the Parish children's representative.
- The churches communicate with congregations via email Notices, and with the wider community via the website, posters, Facebook page and mailing systems in both villages.

Finances

The finances of both churches are in good stead, Cudham's supported by two recent generous legacies, Downe's more generally by its Parishioners. Copies of the latest financial reports are available via our website ([Cudham Financial Report](#) [Downe Financial Report](#))

Trusteeships

The Priest-in-Charge and Churchwardens of Cudham are trustees of the Sarah Wood Charity, an historical, ecclesiastical trust established in the 1850s to provide bread for the poor of the Parish (which at the time included Biggin Hill) at Christmas and Easter. Although largely dormant its purpose has been augmented to permit general help to those who might need it.

Cudham C of E Primary School is an Academy within the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust. The Trust has established Advisory Councils within each Academy, and there is a potential opportunity for the new Priest-in-Charge to serve on this Council. There is a potential to be a Governor on the board at Downe Primary School.

The Vicarage

The current vicarage is named 'The Boundary' and is situated on the lane which runs between Cudham and Downe, just under 1 mile from each church. It is a four bedrooomed house built in the 1980s. On the ground floor it has a generous study, an open kitchen / dining room and a lounge which opens into a conservatory. The bedrooms are all well-proportioned, the main bedroom has an en-suite bathroom. There is a utility/toilet on the ground floor with a bathroom on the first. The double garage with electric vehicle charging point separates the front and rear gardens.



Our Vision and Values

Our vision is for lively, loving and flourishing village church communities which are committed to growing God's kingdom in the areas of Cudham and Downe. This involves regular worship and outreach, serving everyone, from the very young to the very old. We are keen for our new Priest-in-Charge to build on this with their own insights to help us move forward and we are open to being guided by God in new directions.

Role Description

We are seeking a warm and naturally engaging person, who is comfortable leading both formal and informal worship and is also able to enter into village life with enthusiasm, reaching out to our whole community with the love of Jesus.

We would like someone who can lead us in our spiritual growth and oversee the running of the churches. They should be able to support those who serve on the PCCs and those who serve the churches in other ways.

We particularly seek someone who has a gift for engaging with children, for nurturing the growing faith in young people and embracing the continuing needs of the older generation.

The successful candidate would need to be able to identify and implement a plan in the following key areas:

- Drawing more members of our communities into the lives of our two Churches
- Growing our regular attendance at services
- Supporting us to actively pray for and participate in the mission, ministry and life of our Churches
- Growing our children and young people's ministry
- A prayerful leader
- Confident in sharing the love of God with people of all ages.

We hope you have found this information helpful, and pray that you may be the person to lead us in mission and ministry in Cudham and Downe.

If you believe God might be calling you to join us in sharing the love of God with the communities of Cudham and Downe and to play your unique part in building the Kingdom of God as Interim Priest-in-Charge of St Peter and St Paul and St Mary's we'd love to hear from you. Application details are available on the Diocese of Rochester website at www.rochester.anglican.org

If you'd like an informal conversation about this vacancy please contact Fiona Porter (EA to the Archdeacon of Bromley & Bexley) on fiona.porter@rochester.anglican.org

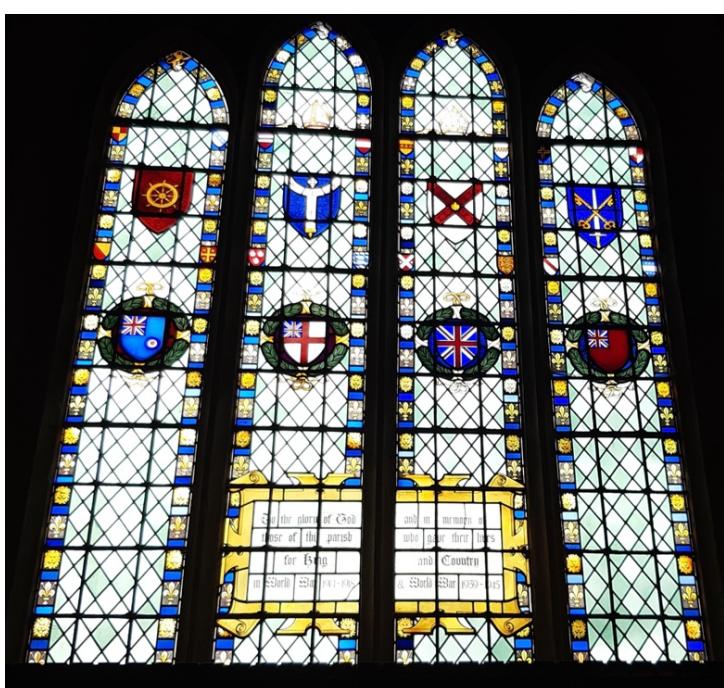
Gallery

St Peter & St Paul, Cudham





Commonwealth War Graves, Cudham





St Mary's, Downe





Appendix: Our Diocese Vision Summary



BE PART OF IT

The vision stands on the shoulders of a generation of previous post-war pilgrims of the Diocese of Rochester who, also at a great moment of societal change, upheaval and challenge, had a steadfast belief that through their combined endeavour, generosity, and faith, they could grow the Church and God's kingdom.

This is what we are being called to - let's make it happen!

OUR VISION

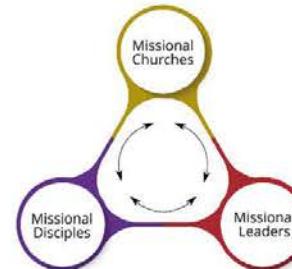
As a family of faith across the areas of Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley we understand that we are:

Seeking first the Kingdom of God, and are called together by God to change, serve and grow with compassion, courage, and creativity.

OUR KEY OBJECTIVES

Within this vision, our key objectives are to grow **missional churches**, with **missional leaders** and **missional disciples**, that are:

- Growing a safe and healthy culture for all
- Growing younger and more diverse
- Growing spiritually and numerically
- Impacting their communities
- Releasing financial resources for mission
- Planting and growing new missional churches



MAKING IT HAPPEN

Four workstreams help focus our work to **grow God's Kingdom** and ensure a **flourishing and well-resourced parish structure**.

All are seen through the lens of **growing safe and healthy cultures**, because if we are truly seeking God's Kingdom, then we must reflect its values of righteousness, peace, wholeness, and fullness of life for all.



Dear God,

Fill us with courage and vision to carry your light into new places, meeting people where they are, and sharing the life-changing truth of your gospel.

Bless these communities with strong and Spirit-filled leaders, faithful disciples, and hearts ablaze with love for you.

May our churches and communities become vibrant and healthy expressions of your Kingdom—places where your Word is proclaimed, lives are transformed, and communities are renewed.

Guide us, Lord, and remind us always that you are with us, empowering our every step, even to the end of the world.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.