

St Nicholas Church Strood

The Church in the High Street



Parish Profile

We aim to help children; young people & adults live out everyday faith through knowing Jesus; and to give loving service in the community.

Summary of the profile

The Vicar we want

About the Parish

About the church (Our Current Worship Pattern, The Church Team, Rites of Passage)

The Church and the Community

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The Vicarage

The vicar we want:

St Nicholas Church Strood is looking for a priest who is approachable, is dedicated to their calling through following word and sacrament. We welcome applicants regardless of their gender or ethnicity.

We are looking for someone with the following qualities:

A good Bible based teacher and effective communicator, able to lead us into a deeper understanding of God's message and life lived in all its fullness.

A skilled enabler with the ability to encourage, develop and release gifts amongst us.

Someone with enthusiasm and vision for moving the church forward.

Someone who can be flexible.

Someone who has resilience, self-confidence and a sense of humour, able to work with and lead a diverse range of people, including the young.

Someone who will subscribe to our aim of being open and hospitable, welcoming all. We regard ourselves as an inclusive church.

Someone to unite us all through love by being approachable and down to earth, with pastoral sensitivity, empathy, and compassion for those who might be going through difficult times.

Someone who, has the ability to draw those on our 'fringe' into a closer relationship with Jesus and the Christian faith.

Opportunities for the Future:

Whoever God leads to our church as our new vicar has a fantastic opportunity to develop the use of our wonderful new space. Our vision is for it to be open more on weekdays for:

- services for schools
- services for parents /carers and young children
- services for those who can't attend on Sundays
- private prayer and reflection
- Community use (e.g. guidance and support services, blood donation)
- Conference space for Community and Church groups

There is the potential to offer different kinds of services on Sundays and during the week. The space makes it possible to involve theatre, dance and music on a far greater scale than has been possible to date.

About the Parish



The Church Electoral Roll for 2024 is 104, 58 live inside the parish and 46 outside. There are 32 males and 72 females. *In 2022 our usual Sunday attendance was 53 adults and 11 children. In 2023 (when for half the year we had to use the Lower Hall as our Worship space) it was 60 adults and 11 children.*

The Population of the Parish is about 12,000

St Nicholas Church is situated in the High Street in Strood and is, therefore, at the heart of the community. The High Street is an important thoroughfare for all who live and work in this busy place. The High-Speed trains are a further attraction to the area. The Business Park has a Marks and Spencers' Food Hall, a B & M, KFC, Poundland, Hobbycraft, Next, Argos, Matalan and Starbuck. The ongoing redevelopment of Strood town centre has seen the car parking area enhanced and the one-way system being improved. The High Street has a vibrant community hub which houses the library. The Strood riverside area is being redeveloped and much needed housing and new facilities are being provided. Furthermore, the church is within walking distance of a large residential area and a short walk from the station, so it is easily accessible. Therefore, there is a lot of opportunity for people to pass and come into the church. There is diversity in terms of housing, social need and income.

There are 4 primary schools in the parish, including a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary school, a special needs' school which caters for children with severe mental and physical disability, a Primary which draws from an area of social deprivation. There is also a very large Primary school. As regards social deprivation, this Parish ranks 3,457 out of 12,508, where 1

is the most deprived of Parishes in the country. This means that it is relatively deprived compared with other Parishes.

The previous incumbent had links with the Strood Community Hub, Medway Voluntary Association (MVA), the schools, and the All Faiths Network. He was, and other congregation members are School governors at St Nicholas Primary School. We work with All Saints church, Frindsbury, and share some services.

We would expect our new incumbent to continue these links.

We would like our new incumbent to develop links within the Community, including local businesses, further.



Photo courtesy of Astral Ltd

About the church

We have recently made the worship area of the church more flexible and accessible, so that we can have events and groups using the space in ways which were not possible before due to the fixed nature of the pews.

We have moved from this:



To this:



We are very excited about how we can use this space. So far we have been amazed at how much room there is when the chairs are stacked. We have been able to hold Book and Jumble Sales on a Saturday morning whilst also running the Coffee Shop in the Lower Hall. Although we used the church space previously for Book Sales and our Christmas Bazaar we had to balance tables on the pews and setting up took a very long time.

We are looking forward to holding concerts and musical events in the church, to show films for entertainment and for Christian output. Due to the central location of the church, various groups have shown interest in having a suitable venue for events and conferences in Strood, we intend to continue and develop being an integral part of the community and be able to facilitate these events. The Mayor of Medway and

local Councillors attended our Rededication service and they have promoted the new worship space on their Social Media pages. A short video has been produced by the Diocese of Rochester celebrating the space and the part the Missionary Fund played in enabling the purchase of the chairs.

https://www.rochester.anglican.org/news/church-in-strood-celebrates-end-of-major-reordering-project.php?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR26kuKk-daMBE7_rECPGhXxNW4GiXFuWOgfTf6MgZ7Xev3O8dFKgwdOdEM_aem_AQki0m2E5pf4RqH5xIA2m22LhMz2rQ_6qsvyPsKhj8raefH7qsFtYUKO3MGTT2N5EN111WcgGgpLx37GHWT36BaG

We can now provide a worship space within the church for the children of Abbey Court Special School, many of whom are in wheelchairs. Several of our regular attendees to Sunday worship rely on walking aids and they can now negotiate seating far more easily than when we had fixed pews.

We are now able to set the church out for different styles of worship (eg worship in the round). The twice-monthly Evensong service has a small attendance and the seating is now able to be organised to make it a more intimate service.

Likewise the “new to us” font and Baptismal area make it possible for small Baptisms not to be “lost” in the space. As Baptism is central to the faith, the font is the only fixed item in the space.



We have increased the worship space in the nave and have improved the floor finish for the whole worship area.

We have had a camera and WiFi in the church for several years. The camera was originally installed so that anyone who felt the need to vacate the worship area e.g due to a coughing fit, a fractious child; could go into the Swain Vestry and watch the service on the Smart TV in there. During the Pandemic we purchased a device that would allow live streaming of services. During the reordering project the camera has been upgraded so that it can pan to different areas, drop down screens have been installed either side of the chancel, 2 projectors and a courtesy screen have been put at the back. This was part of the vision for the church space to be multipurpose and for different styles of worship to be possible.

Our Current Worship pattern:

The current worship in the church is standard Anglican. Central Inclusive with vestments worn at all services.

We offer a wide range of services:

1. BCP 9am Communion (said) service every Sunday
2. CW 10:30am Sung Eucharist every Sunday
3. BCP 5pm Evensong every fortnight
4. About 4 times a year we have a Festival Eucharist at 6:30pm
5. 1st Sunday of the month Sunday Club takes place in the 10:30am service
6. 3rd Sunday of the month 3pm Families @ 3, stories, craft and worship



Music plays a very large part in our services. We are fortunate to have an organ and a choir. As well as hymns many of our responses and the Lord's Prayer are sung.

The congregation takes part in services by doing the readings and leading the prayers. The serving team of 6 are a wide mixture of ages.

We have a team of Stewards who welcome people into the church.

We have continued to live stream the 10:30am services and some other special ones as we feel it is very important for those who cannot physically attend church.

We consider the young as the future and involve them in services as much as possible. We have Communion before Confirmation and encourage children to take part as servers and readers and carrying the collection and the elements.

The Church Team

- 1 incumbent (vacant)
- 1 Pioneer Minister (shared with All Saints Frindsbury)
- 1 LLM
- 2 church wardens
- 1 Parish Administrator
- 1 Treasurer
- 1 organist (also the Director of Music and currently a church warden)

We have 2 Deanery Synod representatives and 8 lay members on the PCC. We employ a financial advisor to keep the accounts. Which we have done so for some time, and we find it is good to have the perspective of someone who is “outside” our church. Two of our Team manage the day-to-day finances. We have a Parish Safeguarding Officer and Deputy. We employ a cleaner.

We have had curates in the past and more recently have been involved in the training of LLMs. As we are centrally placed, and endorse the ethos of it, we were a venue for the Living in Love and Faith course in the Strood area.

We wish to continue and develop: All the activities we currently have for children and families as we regard them as the future.

- Families @ 3, Sunday Club,
- Toddler group
- Involvement in the local schools.
- We have Communion before Confirmation for children who are regarded as mature enough to understand, and who complete a 6-week course.

We would like to:

- Reinstate the bereavement group,
- Improve our Harare connections,
- Provide space for activities such as donating blood, concerts etc.
- Provide more for the Community by expanding the Community Larder.
- Opening the church more for prayer and reflection during the week.
- Reestablish connections with Care Homes

Rites of passage:

In 2022 there were 17 Baptisms, 3 weddings and 3 funerals held in church, 13 funerals were conducted at Crematoria. In 2023 (when for half the year we had to use the Lower Hall for services) there were 9 Baptisms, 1 wedding and 2 funerals in church. 6 funerals were conducted at Crematoria. Links are kept with the families of children Baptised, with invitations to join in Sunday Club and Families @ 3.

The Church and the Community:

We hold a study group for those in the community who wish to explore the Faith.

This has been combined with the Lent study this year.

We were hosts for the Living in Love and Faith course.

We have held a Warm Space here in 22-23 and 23-24.

We have been involved in the Medway Night Shelter and we were a venue pre-pandemic.

We allow a charity run by young people for young people's mental health use the Swain Vestry as office space and work closely with them on Community events.

Medway Foodbank operate from our Lower Hall twice a week

We provide additional support for families through our Community Larder but would like to do so much more.

Many support groups hire our halls.

We have a good relationship with the Playgroup which rents our Upper Hall on weekdays.

We were approached by local businesses some years ago to rent out the car park to their employees during the week. This gives the church added regular income but means that parking on weekdays is very limited.

We have a weekly coffee shop on Saturdays and hold social / fund raising events about once a month.

We hold a Big Lunch once a year.

We provide a hall as a Polling Station.

The Church and its Buildings

Use of building:

We have supported Medway Night Shelter financially and by providing a venue since its inception up to 2020. The Shelter has been forced to alter the way it works so we are no longer a venue.

Raising Youth, a mental health charity for young people, uses one of our halls as an office. We charge them a peppercorn rent. They support us by providing activities for children at our Community events.

We held Big Lunches for the Jubilee and Coronation.

Warm Welcome Space. We opened our smallest hall as a Warm Space in 2022-23 and in 2023-24.

Medway Foodbank operates from our Lower Hall 2 days a week and uses one of our cupboards as storage space.

Community Larder. Since 2021 we have been supporting a handful of needy families by providing additional food supplies – we would like to do more for this if we had the appropriate storage space.

At Christmas we have provided hampers for needy families, these are usually identified by the schools. The hampers contain presents and treats as well as basic food.

Toys. At the toy service people bring along new unwrapped toys which the local Salvation Army distribute to families in need.

Harvest. Our harvest goods are collected by Caring Hands who provide meals for the homeless.

The Church has two halls and the Swain Vestry for the use of both the congregation and outside groups.

The Upper Hall is used by a Playgroup, Rainbows, Street Dance group and a Ballet class.

The Lower Hall is used by GA, AA, The Phoenix Art Group, Garden Club, Compassionate Friends, Friends of Medway Archives, CA, Yoga and Floral Art. These all provide the church with a regular income.

Medway Foodbank and a church run Parent Toddler group use the Lower Hall too.

The Swain Vestry is used by the church, Strood Fellowship, Friends of Rede Common, Warblers Close and Kent Family History for meetings. Compassionate Friends hold a monthly Sunday afternoon meeting to support bereaved families.

Raising Youth, a mental health charity for young people uses the Swain Vestry as an office.

The Church space has been hired for concerts.

The Lower Hall is often hired for Children's parties. Due to problems in the past we don't hire the hall for evening / adult parties.

The Lower Car park is rented out to employees of local businesses Monday-Friday 8am-6pm.

Recently an All Faiths network has been set up locally.

For many years we have taken part in the World Day of Prayer with the other churches in Strood, taking it in turns to host it.

In 2023 and 2024 our Lower Hall has been used as a Polling station.

We are linked to a church in Harare, but this hasn't developed as well as we would have liked.

History: There are records mentioning a church in Strood in 1075 of Saxon or early Norman construction, annexed to the Parish of Frindsbury. The Strood church became the Parish Church of St Nicholas in 1190, a new church was built in 1193. The present church was designed by Sir Robert Smirke in 1812 and was opened at 10.30am on 9th October 1814. The organ above the south porch was built by H Wedlake and was installed in 1862. The organ has been modified and rebuilt a number of times, most recently in 1953 by J W Walker when a detached console was added. It was cleaned and restored in 1983. In 1983 a major modernisation of the church was carried out. The church was divided, creating a worship centre in the east end, upper and lower halls in the western third.

In 2011 the south porch was completely refurbished, with new front doors and new inner glass doors. The porch was blessed by The Rt Rev Dr Brian Castle, Bishop of Tonbridge, on 4th December 2011. The grounds have been much improved with seating and pathways. A new entrance to the car park has been made and there are additional disabled parking spaces next to the church. In 2022 we were able to install railings and replace the benches due to funding from a Community Project Fund.

A new sound system has been installed. From late 2015-early 2016 a new entrance to the church to improve access for those with limited mobility was made, the Swain Vestry was completely refurbished and, the Apse ceiling beautifully restored. These were blessed by the Bishop of Rochester, Rt Rev James Langstaff, on 22nd May 2016.

In June 2016 a system was installed to relay services into the Swain Vestry and enable WiFi in the church and halls. During the Pandemic we extended the capability of our equipment to be able to live stream services. In the recent reordering the camera has been updated to be able to pan, screens have been installed at the front and projectors placed on the back wall.

In 2020 Medway council installed architectural lighting in the grounds to "show up" the church, as the focal point in Strood High Street. We also had an automatic fire

alarm installed.

2020-21 we had new boilers installed for the church and Lower Hall and radiators installed in the Upper Hall

In 2022 we had the Lightning protection updated and repairs to the roof carried out.

In 2023 we had new flooring put down in the Lower Hall and the whole of the church reordered. We have a kitchenette at the back of the church, a chair store and table store.

Building issues

2024: unfortunately, in spite of recent repairs, some more roof repairs are needed.

We are also having problems with the heating in the church space due to the large amount of re-routing of pipe work necessary during the reordering.

The Upper Hall kitchen needs updating, as do the toilets in the Upper and Lower halls.

The doors at both entrances to the church need attention as do the doors and windows in the Lower Hall.

Several areas of the building need redecorating.



The organ:

The organ was rebuilt 1953 and last had a major refurbishment in 1983. It needs quite a lot of money spent on it in the near future.

Finances:

The reordering project was very costly but was mainly financed by two large legacies. The renting out of the car park and the hall lettings provide us with a regular income.

Net current assets at 31 May 2024 were £127,473

Money is held in the following accounts:

Current account £29,702

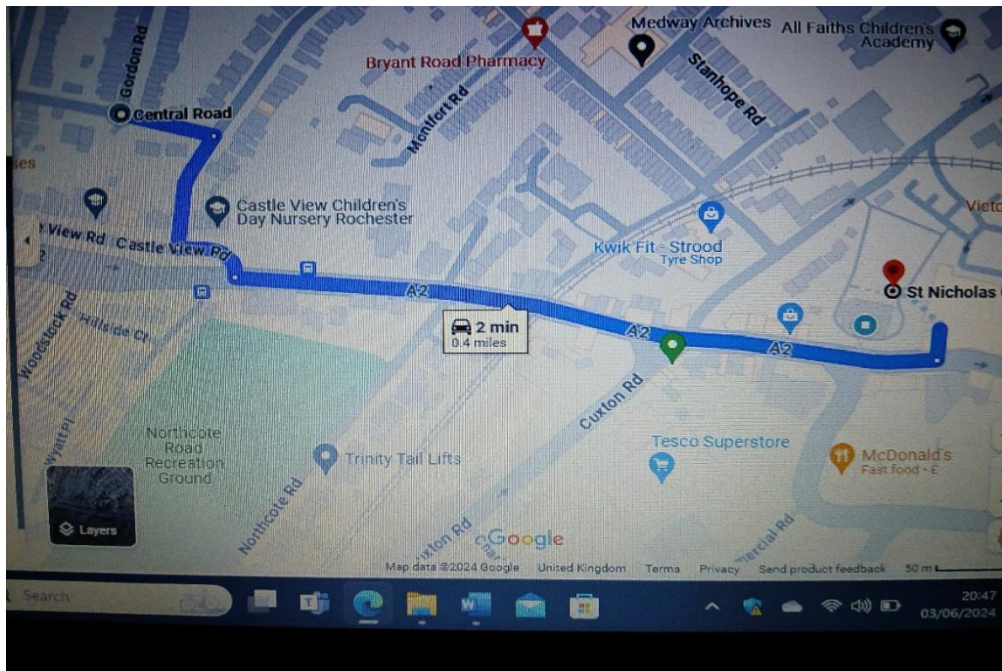
CCLA £91,257

Church repair £7,425

Hall and key deposits & agency £852

Housing for the Incumbent:

Will be the Vicarage which is in Central Road



The Vicarage

The vicarage dates back to the 1980's. The main entrance to the property is via an entrance hall with an entrance to the study on your immediate left and then an additional door into the house proper.

Inside the front door is a cloakroom and storage cupboard.

There is a spacious lounge with a patio door to the rear garden and a second, slightly smaller reception room.

The kitchen leads out to a utility room.

There is a downstairs toilet.

Upstairs there are 4 bedrooms with a 5th space under the eaves. There is a separate toilet, a bathroom and a shower room.

Independent of the property is a garage with access from the drive at the front and a door at the side.

The driveway at the front of the property is of hard surface and allows for parking of at least 3 cars.

There is a large rear garden.

The vicarage garden





The front of the Vicarage

