



# Kemsing and Woodlands



## Parish Profile

November 2024

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# 1. Message from the Bishop of Rochester

Welcome to the Diocese of Rochester and thank you for your interest in this exciting role. Our parishes and congregations are the beating heart of the Diocese and are central to our desire for churches to flourish and God's kingdom to grow across all our wonderfully diverse communities.

## Our vision

As a Diocese we share the vision that we are Called Together **to change, serve and grow** the church across the areas of Medway, north and west Kent and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Much work has taken place to understand what these three themes mean for the life of the Diocese and our priorities, and to define what and where resources will need to be allocated to deliver them.

Through prayerful engagement and discernment, what has begun to emerge is an understanding that we are a community:

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

- **Change** is about the need for us to adapt in a changing world, so that our churches can play their full part in serving God and drawing people once more to faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Serve** is about the attitude we need to adopt if we are to earn and gain that cherished place in people's hearts and at the heart of our communities.
- **Grow** is about what God wants to bring about in us and through us, as people growing into the likeness of Christ, and as churches where people are being drawn to follow Jesus through our words and through our deeds.



## Our objectives

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

- Growing younger and more diverse,
- Growing numerically, spiritually, financially and in impacting their communities, and in turn are
- Creating a safe and healthy culture for all

This is the latest phase in developing our strategic plans, which are vital to our seeking to grow the kingdom of God across the areas of Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Central to these plans is sustaining and growing a flourishing and well-resourced parish structure, so as to enable our local churches to take their full and rightful place at the heart of their communities: serving God and serving the people, loving God and showing his love in and to our communities.

If this vision excites you and you believe God may be calling you to this role, then we would love to hear from you.

With my prayers and best wishes,

*+Jonathan*

The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs  
Bishop of Rochester



## 2. Welcome

Thank you so much for taking time to read this, our Parish Profile, as you seek prayerfully to discern if the Lord is calling you to minister, teach and lead with us.

In both praying for and preparing this, we have sought to produce a document which appeals to the right person, is honest about where we are as a parish, and direct about what we need as opposed to what we might want.

As you read it, we hope that you will see something of our characters as church families and sense our fervent desire to honour our Lord, to worship and understand Him more deeply, and to spread His word in our communities.

We are praying for every applicant, that you will feel confident in God's guidance and that this document helps you in the process.

## 3. The Parish of Kemsing and Woodlands

The two Parish Churches of St Mary the Virgin lie at the heart of their respective communities of Kemsing and Woodlands, just to the north of Sevenoaks.

Kemsing is a village of about 4,500 people and Woodlands is a scattered rural community of about 1,000.

We are an all-age church family and we enjoy worshipping and serving together. The diverse congregations embrace a generous orthodox theology, holding firmly to the Anglican belief in the authority of the Bible, the relevance of meeting together regularly, thus deepening our relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and encouraging each other in prayer and Bible reading. In recognition of the love of God, we are also committed to responding to the various needs within the village and wider community, wherever possible.

### St Mary's Church, Kemsing

St Mary's Church is a Grade 2 listed building. It has been a place of worship for nearly a thousand years. Inside the beautiful church many artefacts, ancient and modern, encourage an atmosphere of calm and peace conducive to prayer and reflection.

It is a caring church and is rooted within the village. When the local Evangelical Free Church building in Dynes Road was sold some years ago, its members dispersed to various nearby Christian fellowships, including St Mary's.





As time has passed, being the only church in the village, Christians from other traditions have been absorbed into our welcoming and friendly services. As part of the universal church of Christ, we are united, but there is not always uniformity. We seek to create opportunities to know each other better, encourage each other in a deeper faith in God and to serve within our village and church community according to our God-given skills.



We hold a variety of services each Sunday aimed at different age groups and different styles of worship. Our weekly 'Pilgrim News' sheet, gives not just news of events of interest, but Bible readings for the Sunday service and occasional patterns of prayer for specific occasions. This can also be used as a basis for our individual devotions during the forthcoming week.

A linked project was initiated between the Parish and the Diocese of Rochester, to build a new church hall and also a new vicarage to replace the existing one, with respective responsibilities for each. Planning permission was initially only approved for the Parish to build the church hall, with the basic outer structure completed (to first fix stage) in September 2021.

There has been a long delay in planning permission being given to the Diocese for the building of the new vicarage, subject to two appeals, which was granted in July 2024. Discussions with the key Diocesan Officers regarding the building of the new vicarage, including the sale of Parish land and a potential loan are ongoing, which will enable the completion of the church hall.

Meanwhile, we have been able to rent or use other venues in the village for our activities, thus becoming very accessible within the village. In addition, with the growing connection between the nearby primary school and the church, occasional school celebrations have been held in the church building with the parents and friends invited to enjoy Easter and Harvest presentations.

Although the church building lacks a designated 'kitchen', we have adapted an area for serving refreshments. Our historic building lends itself for fund raising events, when we find ourselves well-supported by our friends and neighbours from the village.

Our iconic church, with its many decorative memorials from bygone generations of worshippers, is not well suited to the modern age of sophisticated technology. Creative thinking is sometimes needed to overcome some of the limitations presented. We are currently reinstating a Projector Team to assist in this area. We are forward thinking in our wish to present the gospel of the love of God to all church members and the wider community.

## St Mary's Church, Woodlands

St Mary's Church, Woodlands, alongside its adjacent church hall, exists to stimulate and promote the experience of worship, including a small number of 'Life Event' services. Its Christian presence is committed to the presentation of the Good News and the provision of a community resource in the Woodlands area of the Parish.



The church was temporarily 'closed' in March 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic national lockdown came into effect, which coincided with the decline of the small congregation. During 2022 a decision was made to introduce a series of 'Festival Services', initially a Harvest Service and Carol Service. This has developed over the last two years to also include a Palm Sunday Service and Summer Songs of Praise.

During this period there have been two weddings and the Baptism of three children. Although the churchyard is 'closed', maintained by Sevenoaks District Council, it is still available for burials in existing graves and for the burial of ashes.

The buildings and churchyard are maintained within the overall responsibilities of the Parish, although members of a local family make a positive contribution to cleaning the church and church hall, as well as tidying the churchyard. A working party, organised by a local geocaching group takes place annually, in November, to clear the leaves and undertake several other small maintenance jobs.

The three wooden benches, donated by the geocaching group in memory of one of their members, have been well used by visitors to the area. The churchyard provides a quiet place for visitors to enjoy, especially as the church is located next to a frequently used public footpath by walkers venturing across the North Downs area.

The church hall is well equipped for use by the congregation and wider community. It is envisaged that, in the short term, the church will continue to be used as a Festival Church, pending a long-term plan for the church and the hall, recognising that they constitute the only 'public' buildings in the Woodlands area and provide both an important Christian presence and place of worship, alongside associated resources.

## 4. Our Parish Vision

Our shared Parish Vision, agreed by the PCC in November 2023, is to be:

**Rooted in Jesus,  
Nurturing His Love,  
Growing His Church.**

### Rooted in Jesus

We aim to build on the patterns of prayer in the services, weekly notices, and occasional prayer meetings for specific causes. We aim to support private prayer habits by making resources available and encouraging the life of prayer through preaching and Bible study groups. We aim to teach prayer as a two-way dialogue, and to encourage waiting on God for the Spirit's enabling.

We aim to build faith in God by preaching, which is rooted in the Bible and engaging in style, whilst continuing to offer traditional and modern forms of worship. We seek to increase the number of Bible study groups and increase the proportion of the congregation that are involved in them.

We aim to build our worship grounded firmly on the Bible, as well as using the musical and artistic talents of the congregation, and the beauty of the church building.

### Nurturing His Love

We want to build a church community where everyone's talents are valued and contribute to reaching the vision, by making it easy for people to be involved and thanking them for doing so.

We want to encourage the congregations of each service to integrate through shared coffee time and collaborative events.



We undertake to be a loving, caring and welcoming church, with biblical values, being willing to step outside the church to show God's love in action.



## Growing His Church

We aim to strengthen the connections between social events, worship and the gospel message; to have more people transition from event participants to worshippers.



We aim to recognise the needs of the community and provide for them, within our limited resources. Our priority is to meet spiritual needs, alongside our understanding of people's physical and emotional needs.

We aim to live distinctive lives that reflect the authority of the Bible; to have integrity between our beliefs, teaching, and behaviour, sharing the gospel based on the truth of God's word in today's context.

We aim to speak to people about our faith in Jesus, reflecting his love as we treat others with kindness and compassion; to be visible and involved in the community.

## 5. Our Churches

### Worship

Our church family covers all ages, from a few months old to 90+, and we enjoy worshipping together, predominately in Kemsing. We gather weekly to worship God on Sundays and we meet in each other's homes during the week. Together we seek to serve our wider community.

Recently, we have seen a steady growth in our congregation numbers at the main Sunday morning services, the number of young people attending being a particularly encouraging feature. A large part of this growth can be attributed to our Priest in Charge engaging with the wider village community and strengthening relationships with the village school children, through weekly assemblies, as well as growing numbers in our Sunday Special and Toddler groups.

Our worship is at the centre of what we do. Part of our Parish Vision is to build up our faith, to learn more about Jesus and follow in His Way, growing in our understanding of God's purpose for us through a commitment to biblical teaching. We aim to do this through Bible Study, Home Groups, Sermons and listening to Him and one another in prayer. We also enjoy a richness of music and musical events to offer praise to God including Summer Songs of Praise, Harvest festivals, Carol Services and occasional Choral evensong.

## Church Attendance and Statistics

### Parish Electoral Roll:

128 parishioners were registered on the Electoral Roll (April 2024).

Services (2023)	Kemsing	Woodlands
Avg. Sunday Attendance (Adults)	75	31 (4 Festival Services)
Avg. Sunday Attendance (Children)	12	3 (4 Festival Services)
Easter Attendance	149	N/A
Christmas Attendance	675	41
Baptisms	18	2
Thanksgiving for Gift of Child	1	0
Weddings	2	1
Funerals (Church)	8	0
Funerals (Crematorium)	4	0
Interment of Ashes	13	1

### Services in St Mary's Church, Kemsing

Worship within the family of St Mary's is varied, with each of the main Sunday services having its own distinctive style and music, based on Common Worship and the Lectionary, alongside the occasional Sermon Series.

The **8.00am** Holy Communion service is a traditional spoken service, which occurs twice a month, using the Book of Common Prayer. The congregation is a committed, warm, welcoming group.



The **9.30am** Holy Communion service has a traditional Anglican style. The music is accompanied by the organ and a small choir with hymns and sung responses. It is a family community, many of the members remain after the service to chat with friends and newcomers over coffee and biscuits.

The refreshments link services together, so that members of both congregations (9.30am and 11.00am) have a chance to meet and get to know each other.

The **11.00am** service is an all-age worship service, which actively encourages the participation of young people. The music is varied, incorporating a piano, a violin and a small singing group. The children help with the action songs and with readings.

The ministry varies from week to week with the vicar and sometimes readers or lay preachers offering their interpretation of the Bible passage. Once a month the service includes the Lord's Supper.

This service also encompasses 'Sunday Special', when children aged 4 to 14 years old meet for their own time together to receive teaching and games appropriate to their age; they enjoy some activities together and then split into primary and secondary-aged groups.

On the first Sunday of the month, the children remain in the church for an interactive service.



## Special Services

Special services are held throughout the year to include the parish community – Open-Air Services at Easter, on Green Hill, overlooking the church; Remembrance Sunday; All-Age Christingle Celebration; Christmas Carols; and an Open-Air Carol Service around the Well. We also celebrate St Edith's Day, in September, with a short service at the Well, remembering that there has been a Christian presence in Kemsing for many centuries.

There are special services at Woodlands Church, with a unique atmosphere, particularly the Candlelit Carol Service and Summer Songs of Praise.

Baptisms are often incorporated within the 11am service at Kemsing Church to welcome the child into the family of Christ. Thanksgiving services are also offered.

Several weddings and funerals occur throughout the year.

## Bible Study Groups

**Sundays at 5pm.** All ages welcome for a shared meal and fellowship.

This is a relaxed, enjoyable way to explore the Bible. We meet for a communal meal and a chat. Then we listen to a 17-minute interactive talk, suitable for all ages, with a questions and thoughts session. After that the children explore other activities, whilst the adults delve more deeply into the Bible passage.



**Friday mornings at 10am.** House Fellowship/Zoom meeting.

Our House Fellowship morphed into a Zoom meeting during Covid days. We discuss sections of the Bible following guidance from well-known Christian writers.

## Prayer Groups

**Tuesday evenings at 9.00pm.** A house group and online.

A get together for an informal chat, a Bible reading and then prayers for global, local and individual concerns.

### 'Connect' Monthly Parish Prayers

**2nd Thursday of each month at 1.30pm.** Meeting in the church.

This time of prayer is an opportunity for us to come together to 'connect with God', particularly seeking God's guidance as important decisions are made.

## Julian Group

**Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm.** Contemplative prayer, interdenominational.

Friends from any Christian tradition, or none, are welcome at Julian Meetings where a simple pattern of meditative prayer is followed. Ps.46 v10: *'Be still and know that I am God'*.

These Bible study and prayer groups are mainly led by members of the church.

In addition, the church is open daily to everyone for quiet, contemplative prayer.



## Pastoral care, community and outreach

The Bible clearly teaches us that everyone is important within the church family, so it is vital that we encourage one another to use our talents. We provide various activities within the church and community, using the gifts He has given us. The completion of the new church hall will enable these activities to thrive and improve the development of greater outreach.

### Pastoral Team

The team includes seven Church members who are all enhanced DBS checked. We support each other and work closely with the Priest in charge. We visit newcomers, the sick and housebound, the bereaved, and those in residential care. We also coordinate the Road Stewards to keep in touch with all who are in need and deliver a Welcome Pack to new residents.

### Church Groups

#### Baby and Toddler Group

The Baby and Toddler Group meets on Monday afternoons and continues to fulfil its aim to provide a warm and welcoming space for all. At the end of each term the families receive an appropriate Bible-based story book.



#### Bell Ringing

Bell ringing practice is every Tuesday evening. The joyful sound of the bells can be heard throughout the village for Sunday services, on Christmas day and, half muffled, on Remembrance Sunday.

## Craft Group

The membership continues to grow and people seem to enjoy their chatty Tuesday afternoons from 2pm in the library. New members are always welcome and teaching is offered, as required. Items are made for the Queen Mother's Clothing Guild (QMCG) and the Church Christmas Fayre.

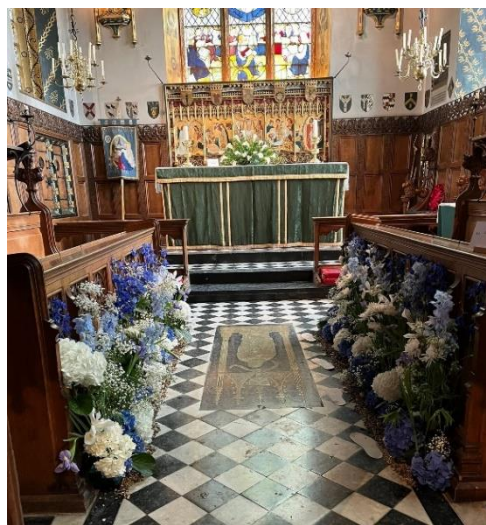


## Choir and Music

There are two small choirs, which are organised by our talented Director of Music. One choir sings at the 9.30am service, providing mostly traditional choral music accompanied by the organ. The Singing Group sings more modern music accompanied by a piano and a violin at the 11.00am service. A recent addition is the Special Service Choir, which includes other members of the congregation, who join the main choir for special services and events.

## Church Flower Group

The church is beautifully decorated by the team of flower arrangers. They produce some stunning displays, notably for the coronation of King Charles III and the amazing Flower Festival with a biblical theme.



## Fundraising Team & Friends of St Mary's Kemsing

Both groups raise money for the church. The Friends of St Mary's raise funds to help maintain and restore the church building. The Fundraising Team provides money for the general administration of the church. In addition, the Kemsing Old School Trust financially supports children and Youth Worker activities.

## Helping Hands Driving Scheme

Volunteer drivers provide transport for Kemsing residents to get to hospital and other medical appointments.



## Open Door

Open Door meets on Mondays to offer friendship and companionship for the elderly and housebound.

Activities include hand bells, birthday celebrations, outings etc. There is also a 'Thought for the Week' at the end of each session. Children from the village school occasionally join with the group.

## The Well (Kemsing and Woodlands Parish Magazine)

The Well is published and distributed free to every household in Kemsing and within the Woodlands area, four times a year, by the PCC of St Mary's Church, Kemsing and St Mary's Church, Woodlands. Its aim is to encourage and stimulate the life of the church and wider village communities.

## Children and Youth groups

Over the past year, Sunday Special has had anywhere between 9 and 22 children attending on a Sunday morning. As a lively group, the focus has been on Looking, Listening and Loving - demonstrating practically their respect and love for each other; we follow Bible teaching based on Mustard Seeds materials. It has been wonderful to see the children and young people involved in other areas of the life of the church - singing in the music group and choir, helping at the Food Festival and participating in the Christmas Tree competition. On Remembrance Sunday, many children from the uniformed groups in the village also attend Sunday Special.

This is a key area for growth. We had three weekly youth groups (Explorers, Wednesday Club and T7), but these are presently suspended as we are currently seeking a part-time family/youth worker. However, we have good links with St Nicholas Church, Sevenoaks, which offers a youth group called Centrepont (for years 7 to 9) on Wednesdays, and several of our young people attend this regularly.





St Mary's has enjoyed a fruitful partnership with Oak Hall Expeditions, a Christian ministry which takes about 10,000 young adults on Bible-teaching events each year. The church building is only 700 metres away from Oak Hall's headquarters (known as Otford Manor) and some of Oak Hall's leadership team attend the church. Currently, some of the Oak Hall Team run a club for secondary school age children which a number of children from the church attend. In the past, students from Oak Hall have been placed at St Mary's Kemsing whilst studying on their eleven-month training course and Oak Hall has hosted events in partnership with St Mary's (Light Parties, Christianity Explored, Holiday Bible Club, Family Camp).

## **Safeguarding**

We have a safeguarding officer who has ensured that the safety and wellbeing of all people is taken seriously and all those working with children and vulnerable adults have completed the necessary training. DBS checks have been carried out for all church members who need them, as per safe recruitment procedures.

## **Local Groups associated with St Mary's Church**

### **Kemsing Lunch Club**

Meets every Wednesday and provides a home cooked lunch and fellowship for senior members of the community. This is a combined village service with AGE UK and a large group of supporters.

### **Loaves and Fishes**

Donations of food items are collected continuously at the church and at a church member's home to enable both the church and village communities to join in this most valuable form of caring concern and outreach. Once a month, the food is taken to the Food Bank at St John's Church, Sevenoaks, for distribution.

## **Global Mission**

We pray regularly for those in need. Over the years we have supported missionaries, Poverty & Hope, Traidcraft and global catastrophes using the 'parish pot' for donations. Recently we assisted a Ukrainian family and had a special service for Ukraine. We collect for the Children's Society and Operation Christmas Child sending 135 boxes last Christmas. However, this is an area for development.





## Parish Ministry Team

Priest in Charge

Ruth Mason: Licensed Lay Minister with PTO & Anna Chaplain

Mary Quenby: Reader with PTO

Philip Walker: Reader with PTO

Laura Shield: Currently undertaking *The Bishop's Certificate in Christian Ministry* course

Martin Brightman: Locally recognised Lay Preacher

Paul Mayo: Locally recognised Lay Preacher

## Parish Structure and Working Groups

PCC, including Churchwardens, Deanery and Diocesan Synod Representatives

Safeguarding Officer and DBF Administrator

Health & Safety Officer

Sidesmen (Welcome Team)

Finance Working Group

Fundraising Team

Pastoral Care Team

'Sunday Special' Team

Church Hall Working Group

Joint Churchyard Maintenance Committee (in conjunction with Kemsing Parish Council)

Friends of St Mary's, Kemsing

## Administration

A part-time parish administrator is responsible for DBS checks, printing the Pilgrim News (weekly information), service sheets and flyers about forthcoming events; also answering queries by phone or email and coordinating the arrangements for 'Life Event' services.

There is a website, which is mainly updated by the Priest in Charge and a Facebook page. The Well magazine is produced and distributed throughout the village to serve the whole community.

## Our Premises

There are two beautiful churches within the parish. Both churches remain in a fundamentally sound condition, although a few areas of deterioration have been identified for attention within the next 2-4 years.



## St Mary's Church, Kemsing



A delightful old church dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and nestling under the North Downs. It has three windows that are over 600 years old and some stunning stained-glass windows, notably the Madonna Rondel (1220). The nave was extended in the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century and the wedding porch was added around 1340. A timber bell tower and reconstruction of the chancel took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the vestry and North aisle were added; Comper was commissioned to carry out restoration and

redecorating of the chancel including the intricate rood figures on top of the oak screen and in the early 1900's he designed several beautiful windows. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the pews under the bell tower were removed and a carpet in a maze design was handmade by the parishioners. This allowed space for extra chairs or activities for children.

*It is interesting to note that some visitors to the church are walking along the Pilgrim's Way from Winchester to Canterbury and a few pilgrims have come from as far away as Australia.*

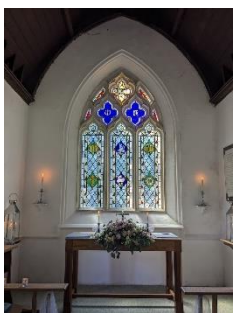
There is an open churchyard where several burials and internment of ashes occur every year. The churchyard is maintained by the Maintenance Committee and volunteers. The cost of maintaining the churchyard is shared between the PCC and Kemsing Parish Council.

## The Church Hall, Kemsing

The church hall outer building is complete and watertight. The interior still needs to be finished, but progress is now being made and a new Church Hall Working Group has been appointed to oversee the development.



## St Mary's Church, Woodlands



This is a Victorian church built by John Vincent, who moved to Woodlands in the late 1840's. The church was consecrated in 1850. A school and a vicarage were also built; the school was later altered to become the church hall. It has a closed churchyard.

Although the 'festival' services are well attended, collection donations do not meet the church's running costs. There is a lack of population on which to build a regular congregation, as well as inherent parking difficulties. This makes the continued viability of the church a challenging situation.

## 6. What we are looking for

We are looking for a person of deep faith, rooted in prayer and Bible teaching, who can effectively communicate the gospel of God's love for everyone.

He or she will lead the parish in worship, discipleship and mission.

The main qualities and skills that we feel are important include the following:

- A person with the necessary experience, who can demonstrate the relevance of the church today and has a passion for growing and nurturing the church, building on the foundations that are already in place. Someone able to inspire deeper bonds of Christian love and unity.
- Someone with leadership skills, who is a good listener, approachable, caring and enthusiastic, with a sense of humour. They will encourage and develop members of the congregation to use their gifts and talents and to work together in groups or teams.
- Someone who is comfortable with a broad range of Anglican traditions, but who is also happy leading a more informal style of worship suitable for young families, worshippers from other Christian traditions and those with no church background.
- A person who can communicate and engage with young and old alike and is able to provide memorable, meaningful sermons, relating scriptures to life today.
- A person who is a godly role model to the congregation and shows the character of Christ to the village by their love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- Someone who is committed to pastoral care across the parish, willing to reach out to our local community and to be involved in village life, continuing links with the local schools.

### The Shoreham Deanery

The Shoreham Deanery will see a considerable change in leadership of its churches over the next five years, as a number of the clergy are due to retire. This provides opportunity for the right leader to help shape the future of the Deanery, as well as preparing the parish for the potential of deanery reorganisation within the priorities of the Archdeaconry and Diocese.



## 7. Listening to God's family

The church family were asked to prayerfully consider the needs of the churches in Kemsing & Woodlands and the way forward.

### Our perceived strengths

What do we value most and feel good about with our church?

**Caring and sharing in practical ways**

Our church is friendly and welcoming. The pastoral team and various other groups, run by members of the congregation, demonstrate caring and sharing in practical ways to include young and old alike.

**Welcoming church; open daily for everyone**

**Strong links with village organisations**

A wide programme of events is run that attracts people from the village into the church including the following: Food Festival; Flower Festival & Garden Trail; BBQ; Quiz Night; concerts; and Christmas Tree Festival.

A small number of Bible Study groups are held. Periodically a Christianity Explored group is run. We run courses and groups to build faith and provide prayer support for members' needs. A letter from the vicar in the magazine 'The Well' extends the message into the community.

**Bible study and prayer groups**





There is good participation of all ages across various church services and events. Per population percentage, numbers attending are about double that for the Church of England across the country. The Christmas service at The Well and Remembrance Day attract several hundred from the village. There is a very positive relationship with the local primary school with the incumbent leading an assembly each week and running festival services for the school in the church.

**Good participation of all ages**

**A wide range of worship patterns**

There is a breadth of worship style, appropriate to our congregations who are from a wide range of Christian backgrounds. Our very experienced organist, pianist and musical director leads the choir for Sunday services and special events using music as a medium to communicate the gospel message.

A band of bell ringers announce services in the traditional way.

## Our evident challenges

What are the challenges to be addressed and areas for development?

There will be a significant building project over the next 2 years, including completion of the new church hall, alongside the building of a new vicarage.

Energy price increases, insurance costs, and rental of venues to hold events have put a strain on church finances.

Consideration would also need to be given to the financial implications of the transition from a half-stipend to full-stipend incumbent.

**Building Project**

A variety of theological positions are held within the PCC and more widely within the congregation. In particular there has been a range of views expressed about 'Living in Love and Faith'. All want the church to be welcoming to everyone. The traditional doctrine of the Church of England on Christian Marriage is our anchor point.

### **Youth work and weekday Youth clubs**

Current provision for school age to mid-teens is good. However, some age groups are not so well catered for. There is a lack of provision for older teens and twenties. Whilst there are some people of these age groups in the congregation, there is a risk that we may not retain or attract new people within these age groups.

Woodlands Church had attendance lower than critical mass, and a decision has been taken to hold only festival services there. Available parking is a restricting factor. The PCC are due to consider initiating the process of church closure. Woodlands Church also has some areas of building deterioration which will require remediation within the next 2-4 years.

### **Woodlands Church**

### **More Leaders needed**

There is a general shortage of lay readers and worship leaders. The incumbent priest leads and preaches at the majority of services, ably assisted by lay readers and preachers. Holidays are covered by priests from neighbouring parishes or those with permission to officiate.

Some of those who lead events and groups want younger people to be involved, or to handover to younger people. Church members with school-age children do participate, but find their time in short supply, often also being in full-time employment.

There is a need for wise leadership around succession planning.

## Our future aspirations

What are the main priorities in response to the shared vision for the parish?

The Parish Vision sets our direction of travel, using it to clearly define the next steps, which is significant for the Parish and for the new incumbent to facilitate.

**Share God's  
love and  
serve others**

St Mary's is the only church in Kemsing, as is St Mary's church in Woodlands, so preaching and demonstrating the gospel must be a priority, remaining true to the Bible to give the Holy Spirit no cause to depart. We want to show integrity in the way we live, following the teaching of the Bible; to be visible at village events and serve within the community where possible.

Kemsing church hall building project needs to be finished and the hall used to extend existing and forge new links with the community. Hall lettings and event surpluses will increase church income.

**Completing  
the New  
Church Hall**

**Ministry to  
youth and  
young  
adults**

We want to build on existing links with Kemsing Primary School to increase numbers in Sunday Special. We need to take care not to lose what we have and to retain children as they pass through their childhood years. We need to continue the relationship with the school and community to ensure there is a steady stream of participants.

We need to pray for guidance on activities to fulfil the requirements of age groups not well catered for today.

We should look for opportunities with other parishes, denominational groups and Christian organisations in the area to resource youth work, for instance by sharing the cost of a youth worker.

We should seek opportunities for mid-week youth and young adult work; also explore whether a Junior Church Choir is feasible.

We should work towards increasing the number of house groups and prayer groups.

**Bible study  
and prayer  
groups**

**Make good  
use of our  
website and  
technology**

We need to use the website as our virtual front door to offer the gospel to people whose first communication choice is digital. We should ensure that events are advertised on the website and explore the greater use of social media to reach different age groups.

We should introduce more working groups to make use of leadership talent, increase the number of people involved, share workload and facilitate succession planning. For instance, there could be working groups for worship, prayer, discipleship, buildings, and youth work etc.

We want to create opportunities to get to know each other, leading to greater unity in Christ. We want to exercise respect for others when engaged in controversial topics; to have respect towards those of other denominations or faiths.

**Get to  
know each  
other better**

We want to strengthen the work of the church in the area of global missions.

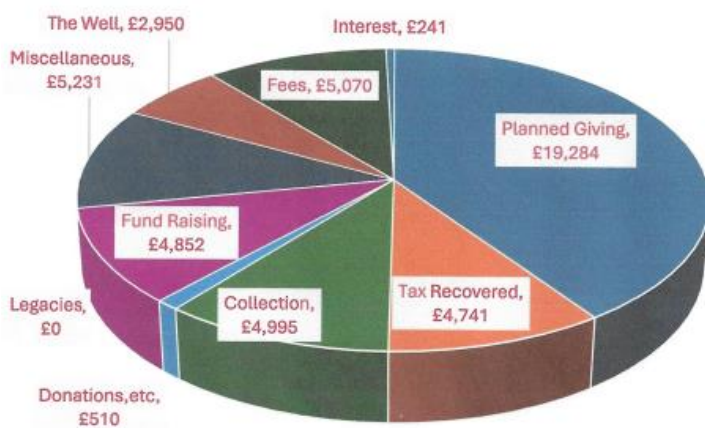
## 8. Our Finances

The Fundraising Team has put in considerable effort to raise money and involve the community in diverse events. The 'Parish Offer' contribution to the Rochester Diocese has been increased, despite greater operating expenses (particularly energy and insurance), which is a challenge to the Parish as it endeavours to maintain and develop a healthy financial position.

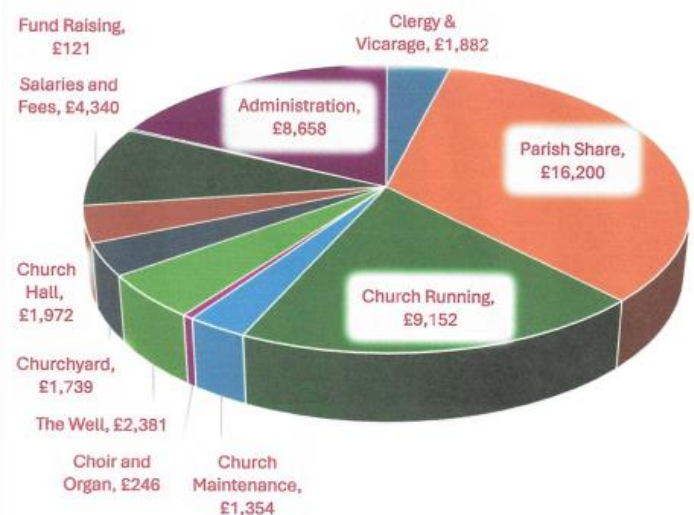
However, the unrestricted finances for the first half of 2024 are promising. Also a digital giving station has recently been installed at the back of the church, which enables more visitors to donate to the church and should help to increase church funds.

An additional drain of our financial resources has been the continued delay in completing the construction of the new church hall, which when established will be a valuable source of revenue for the Parish. The Diocese now has planning permission for a new vicarage to be constructed on the 'church field' and that should have a significant impact on our finances and ability to complete the construction of the hall.

Unrestricted Income - 6 Months 2024  
(£47,874)



Unrestricted Expenses - 6 Months 2024  
(£48,050)





## 9. The Vicarage

The current temporary vicarage (Sunnybank Cottage) is a modern 4-bedroomed detached house with a beautiful garden.



The new vicarage now has planning permission and there are ongoing discussions with the key Diocesan Officers about the building of the new vicarage and completion of the church hall.



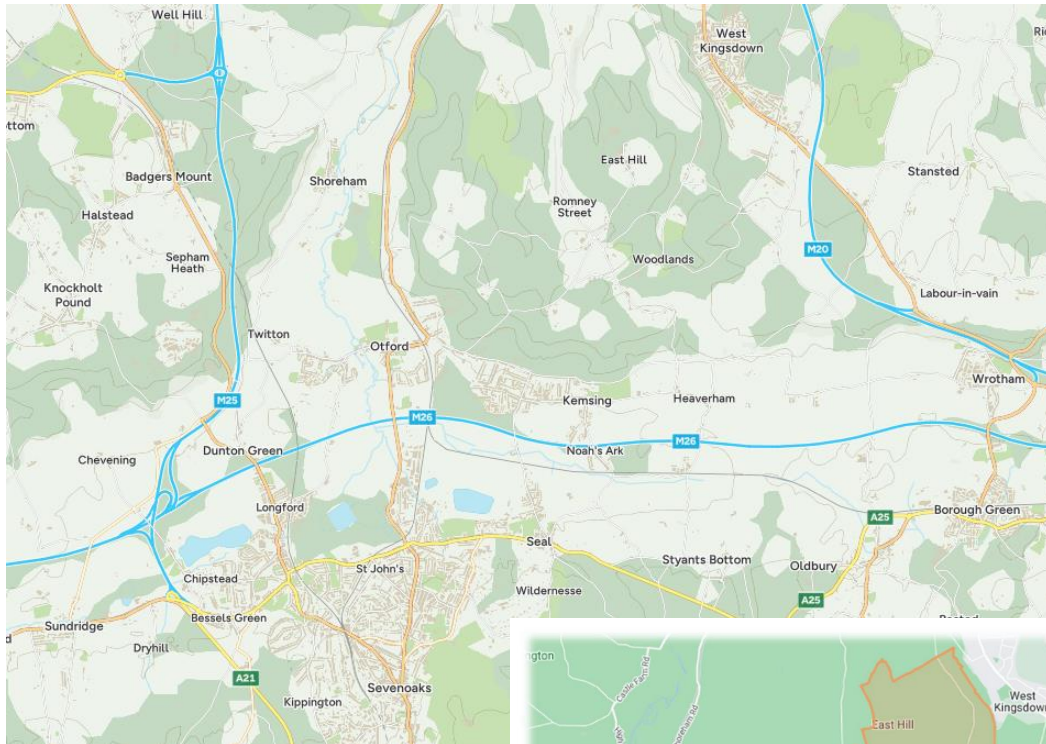
Architects Drawings of the planned new Vicarage, located near to the new Church Hall and St Mary's Church, Kemsing



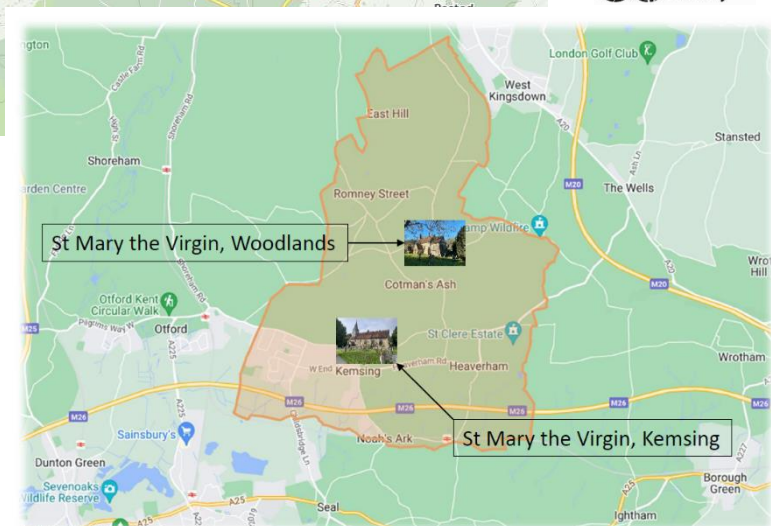
# 10. Our Parish and surrounding area

## Location and geography

Kemsing is a friendly, welcoming village located at the foot of the North Downs, some 4 miles from Sevenoaks town centre and just over 20 miles southeast of Central London. Much of the land to the north and east of the village falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is designated as National Landscape (previously known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Nearest villages are Otford to the west and Seal to the south.



Though surrounded by beautiful countryside, Kemsing has excellent rail links to London from Sevenoaks station (fastest journey times to London Bridge from 22 minutes) or from Otford station (from around 30 minutes). Junction 5 of the M25 motorway is located to the north of Sevenoaks. Access to the Kent coast and Channel Tunnel is about an hour's drive away, via the M26 and M20 motorways. There is also a regular bus service from Kemsing to Sevenoaks.



The Parish of Kemsing and Woodlands



## A brief history

The first record of Kemsing dates back to AD 822. It is likely that the settlement grew close to the line of springs that emerge where the chalk of the North Downs meets clay.

Edith, the daughter of King Edgar, was born in a local convent in AD 961. After the death of her father and brother Edward, she was offered the throne. Having taken holy orders, she refused the crown, became revered for her life of devotion and was reputed to be a miracle worker. She died aged 23 and became a saint in AD 987. Although she spent most of her life in Wilton near Salisbury, many of Kemsing's roads and buildings include reference to St Edith. A stone wall plaque commemorating St Edith is located at the Well, close to the historic core of the village.

By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the village was largely an agricultural community comprising several farms. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the population of the village changed as people travelled further to find work. Kemsing grew rapidly after the Second World War with much of the expansion taking place to the west of the older areas of the village. Kent County Council estimated the population to be 4,330 in mid-2022.



The village sign

Winchester and Canterbury Cathedrals are depicted on the top left and right hand of the sign respectively, linked by the Pilgrims' Way that runs to the north of Kemsing.

The St Edith's Well with stone plaque commemorating St Edith.



## Amenities in the village and surrounding area

St Mary's Kemsing is the parish's principal church, located in the centre of village. A smaller church, St Mary's Woodlands, is some 2.5 miles to the north in a more rural setting.

The village is a thriving community with:

- local shops including mini-markets (Londis and Budgens);
- Kemsing Pharmacy;
- GP surgery;
- Kemsing Primary School, which has strong links to St Mary's;
- St Edith's Pre-School and Bumble Bees Day Nursery;
- Kemsing Motor Company for vehicle repairs and servicing;
- Indian restaurant and takeaway;
- Chinese takeaway;
- Fish and chip shop;
- Kemsing Italian Deli;
- Hair and beauty salon;
- St Edith's Club (a social club); and
- The Bell public house.

Over twenty clubs and volunteer-run organisations use the St Edith Hall in the village, including Brownies, the Women's Institute, keep fit and Pilates classes, amateur dramatic and singing societies.

Kemsing Parish Council owns and maintains the Kemsing Downs Nature Reserve and nearby land on the North Downs as well as two recreation grounds, the largest of which is home to football, cricket and tennis clubs.

The area has a good provision of both state and independent primary and secondary schools. Kemsing Primary School is near the centre of the village and St Michael's Prep School is about 1.5 miles away. The Parish is one of the churches supporting the Trinity School, a co-educational Christian secondary school three miles from Kemsing in Sevenoaks. The Weald of Kent Grammar School for girls (with boys in the sixth form) and the Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys also have campuses on the same site. The Knole Academy – a co-educational secondary school – is approximately four miles away in Sevenoaks.



Sevenoaks Hospital, which has an Urgent Treatment Centre, is around 3.5 miles from Kemsing. Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone Hospitals – which have A&E units – are both around 15 miles away.

Some national and local retailers are in Sevenoaks and the town has a good provision of supermarkets. Major retail centres are found at Bluewater Shopping Centre and in Tunbridge Wells, around 17 miles to the north and south of Kemsing, respectively.



### And finally

We thank you for reading this profile and  
would like to share the prayer that has  
underpinned our preparation:

God our Father, help us to put our trust in  
you to send your chosen person to lead us  
on to where you would have us be.

Amen



Diocese of *Rochester*  
called together