

Profile of the United Benefice of St Peter's Church, Ightham & St George's Church, Wrotham

**Gathering in community,
growing in Christ,
going in service**

**To honour and share Christ,
to grow the church and
to serve the community**

www.ighthamchurch.org.uk

www.wrothamchurch.org



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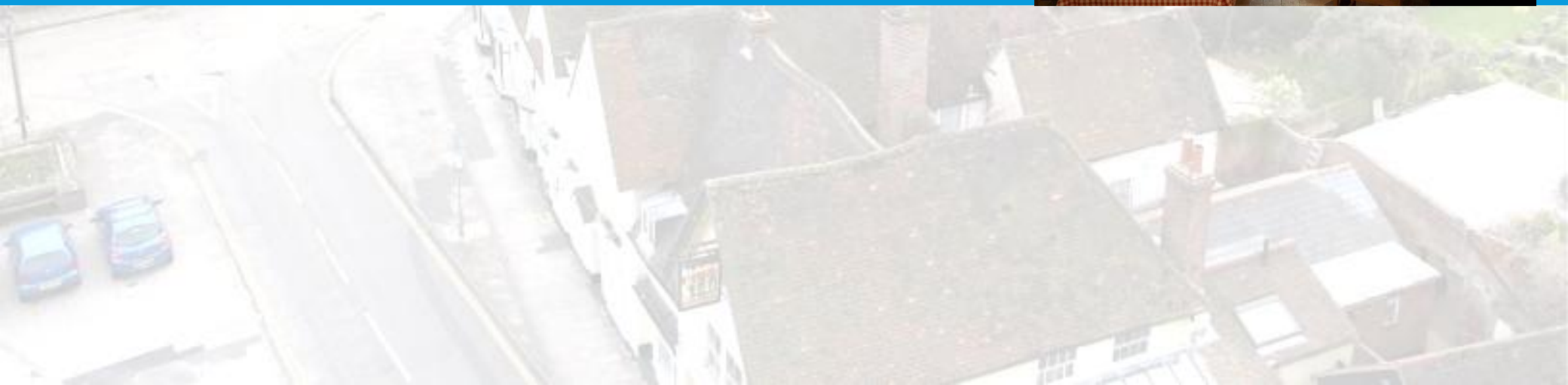
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Overview



Overview



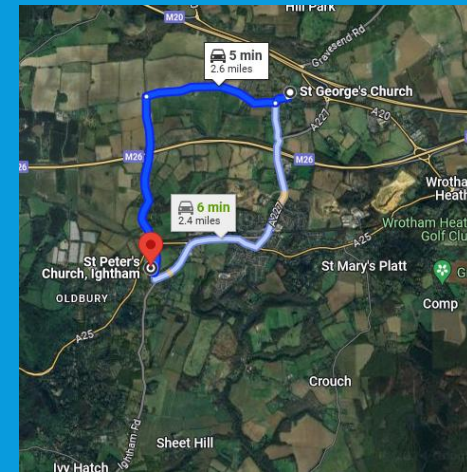
We are seeking an energetic and creative, mission-minded incumbent able to combine the best of the old with the best of the new; balancing the needs of parishioners who prefer traditional services with those of families and young people who enjoy informal worship and music.



We hope to strengthen the close bonds formed across the Benefice, nurture the growth of our congregations and see the church family thrive and grow within our local communities.

Overview

Our Benefice was formed in 2022. It comprises two neighbouring parishes nestled at the base of the North Downs, a patchwork of houses, green fields and ancient bluebell woodland located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, within 30 miles of London and with excellent transport links.



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The parishes have their own distinct personalities with the churches at the heart of village life. Each has a population of approximately 2000 people. The Benefice offers opportunities to address the challenges of growth and age profile facing many commuter-rural parishes. The communities have different demographics and there are no other places of worship in the Benefice.

The Rector we are
looking for



The Rector we are looking for

We are looking for an inspiring and mission-minded person; willing to work with both congregations and serve the whole benefice, share the Good News and grow the Church.

*"Someone funny, kind and caring,
who wants to be here"*

Breakfast@Church attendee, age 9

*"Someone compassionate with a
modern approach."*

St George's C of E Primary School

We are seeking a leader who is:

Essential

- **Visionary:** can work with us to develop and deliver a vision for the benefice
- **Innovative:** with the enthusiasm to lead both parishes to evolve and grow
- **Teacher of High Quality Theology:** able to embrace the best of the old and the best of the new
- **Engaging:** able to connect with all ages, especially children and families, and will maintain the very strong links with the primary schools in both villages
- **Compassionate Listener:** offers a welcome to all and helps people feel part of the church family
- **Community-facing:** has a deep commitment to pastoral care for all and will play an active part in the life of both villages
- **Encouraging:** able to discern and develop gifts and talents, identifying opportunities for mission and connection, including prayer and study groups

Desirable

- **Values Music:** as an important part of worship
- **Computer Literate:** (or willing to learn) we use email, Churchsuite database, Zoom, Powerpoint, Wordpress website

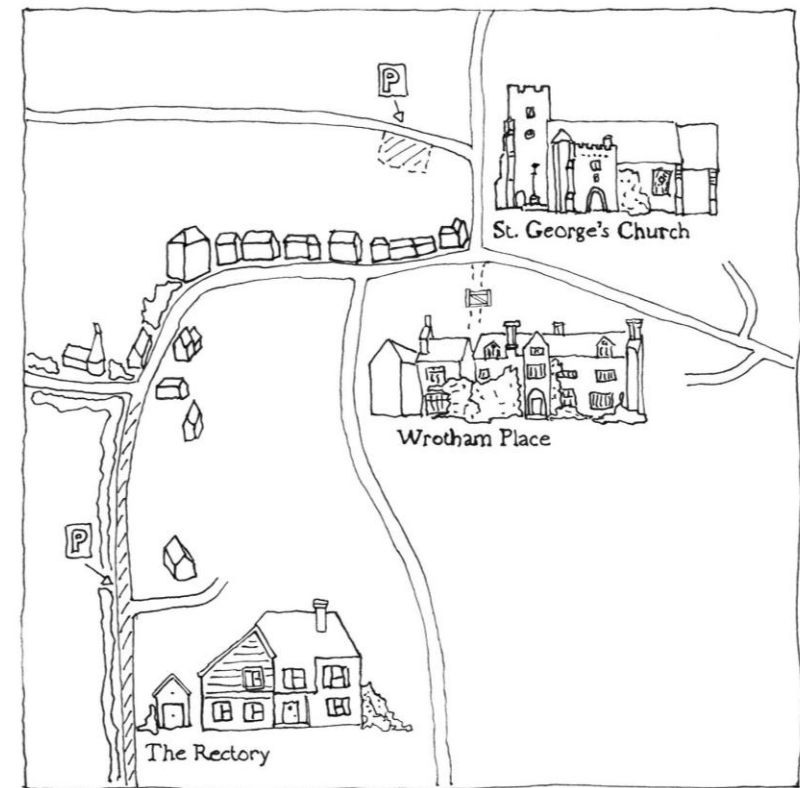
What Can We Offer?

This is a full-time role with stipend.

The Benefice values the health, well-being and professional development of our Rector. We will pay in full all legitimate working clergy expenses, encourage them to take proper holidays and days off as well as supporting them to take time for training, personal development and retreats.

The Benefice Rectory is a few minutes walk away from St George's Church (and is 2 miles and 5-minute drive from St Peter's.)

It is a 4-bedroom house built in the 1980s with a study, which can be accessed without entering the family home. It has a spacious garden with a garage and off-street parking.



Opportunities and Challenges



Opportunities and Challenges

Progress sustainability: financial, environmental & volunteers

We want to find ways to progress our sustainability in terms of finances, impact on the environment and within the capacity and skills of our volunteers.

Securing volunteers is increasingly difficult, especially for more intense roles such as church warden, safeguarding officer and pastoral support.

Grow community engagement

Although the Churches are very much part of their communities, our congregations are ageing; and growing our members can feel challenging among villagers who do not always have the time or feel the need for regular worship in their lives.

We are open to change.

Build on success of Breakfast Church ministry

We would like to:

- encourage greater engagement by families and young people
- develop new initiatives
- build on our positive relationships with the local primary schools, Scouts and other community groups

Further explore Living in Love and Faith

Within the Benefice, there are a variety of responses to Living in Love and Faith that we are exploring.



Broader Context



Broader Context

The Benefice's approach to equity, diversity and inclusion comes from our desire and motivation to reflect Christ's love in our relationships with others and express that love through our mission to gather in community, grow in Christ and go in service. We want everyone to feel welcome in our churches.

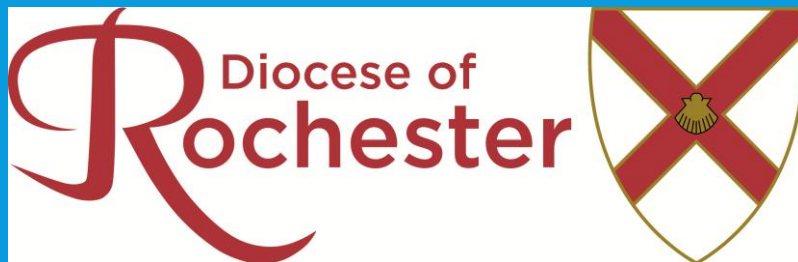
The Benefice is blessed with John, our licenced lay minister (LLM), Michelle and Bryan, our lay readers, and Chris, a retired member of the clergy, who all help lead our worship.

We also have Jane (our wonderful, part-time administrator) as well as two dedicated PCCs and many enthusiastic volunteers who all pull together to keep things running smoothly.

The Deanery and Diocese

We are part of the Tonbridge Archdeaconry within the Diocese of Rochester, covering the areas of Medway, north and west Kent and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

[You can read the message from The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs, Bishop of Rochester here.](#)



The Benefice falls within the Shoreham Deanery and we join in with the Deanery Ascension Day Service each year. There are good, supportive relationships between the clergy of the deanery.

There is an informal cluster ministry, with Platt and Borough Green, (the Pilgrim Parishes).

We worship together occasionally during the year, such as Ash Wednesday.



The Parishes within the Benefice



The Benefice Beginnings



With the encouragement of the previous incumbents, the parishes chose to unite in 2022 due to their similarities and building on a history of collaboration in areas, such as bell ringing and periodic joint services.

The congregations have spent the last year adapting to a single incumbent and learning to support and compromise with each other through the Joint Standing Committee.

The churches have been at the centre of each parish for over 900 years and we hope to grow our connections and deepen our relationships with parishioners.

The future incumbent has a genuine opportunity to embed effective working relationships and good practice as well as shape the Benefice and grow the church.

Parish Statistics

	Ightham	Wrotham
Residents (2021 Census)	2036	1960
Number on the Electoral Roll (2024)	102	71
Overall deprivation (out of 12,239, where 1 is the most deprived parish)	11,901	3923
Baptisms (2023)	2	6
Weddings (2023)	1	7 (+ 1 blessing of marriage)
Funerals (2023)	13 (11 in church/churchyard)	9 (5 in church)

As well as being home to many commuters, both villages include a significant number of professionals working from home or running their own businesses. Unlike Ightham, Wrotham has a significant number of registered social housing properties.

Parish Finances and Governance

Financial Year 2023	Ightham	Wrotham
General Fund Income	£117,624	£66,628
Restricted Income	£13,436	£21,770
Total Income	£131,060	£88,398
General Fund Expenditure	£106,216	£81,440
Restricted Expenditure	£9,320	£21,350
Total Expenditure	£115,536	£102,790
Parish Offer paid	£42,279	£34,408
Annual Reports	<u>Charity number 1136162</u>	<u>Charity number 1177875</u>

The PCCs have retained independent finances and each have their own treasurer.

Benefice decisions are overseen by the Joint Standing Committee and key costs, such as the administrator's salary, are split equally between the two parishes.

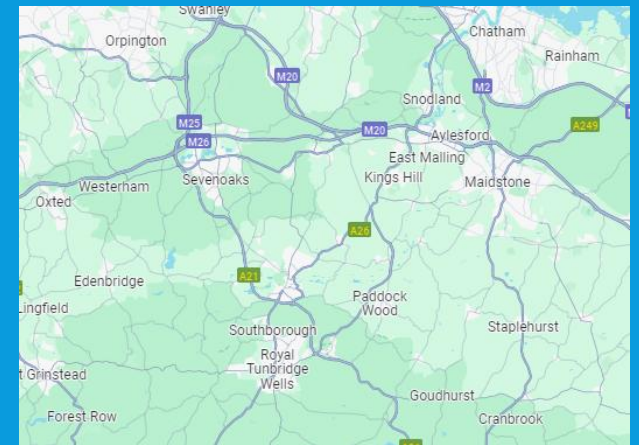
Surrounding area

The parishes enjoy easy access to London from Borough Green and Wrotham railway station and the mainline station at Sevenoaks. Bus services run through both villages. Their proximity to motorways offers swift routes to London, the south coast and beyond. Nearby towns include Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and Bluewater Shopping Centre is within easy reach.

There is a large medical practice, shops and a library in Borough Green.

There are leisure centres in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Larkfield as well as several local spas and gyms.

The Benefice is very well served by a variety of schools in the area: primary, comprehensive, grammar, special needs and independent.



Ightham

St Peter's Church is at the heart of the village, near the village square of half-timbered buildings and the George and Dragon pub.

There are also other pubs, two restaurants and a members social club in the village as well as the Hutch Deli on the A25.



Ightham is surrounded by farmland and there are three plant nurseries within the parish. Ightham Mote, (a National Trust property) lies on the outskirts of the village and shares a number of historical ties with the church. There are also National Trust woodlands at Oldbury and Kent Wildlife Trust maintains a small nature reserve in Ivy Hatch.

Ightham



Ightham is an active village with a supportive parish council. Many groups and organisations meet regularly and hold events including a popular WI, active Tennis and Cricket Clubs, energetic Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Venture Scout groups as well as classes and activities in the village hall. Community groups also use the church centre including West Kent Autism Group and the local school governors and PSA.

Ightham Primary School is a one form entry primary school that has been graded as Outstanding by Ofsted. There is also an onsite nursery called Skips. The village recreation ground is used for School Sports Day and other outdoor events and includes a children's play area.



Wrotham

Wrotham is an active, friendly village on the Pilgrim's Way. It boasts many buildings of special architectural and historic interest as well as housing association properties and more modern developments.

The village has one shop, two pubs, one hotel, a hairdresser, a clock shop and a few small businesses.



The Voluntary Controlled C of E Primary School is a one-form entry school with a charity-run pre-school on site.

The community allotments are very popular.

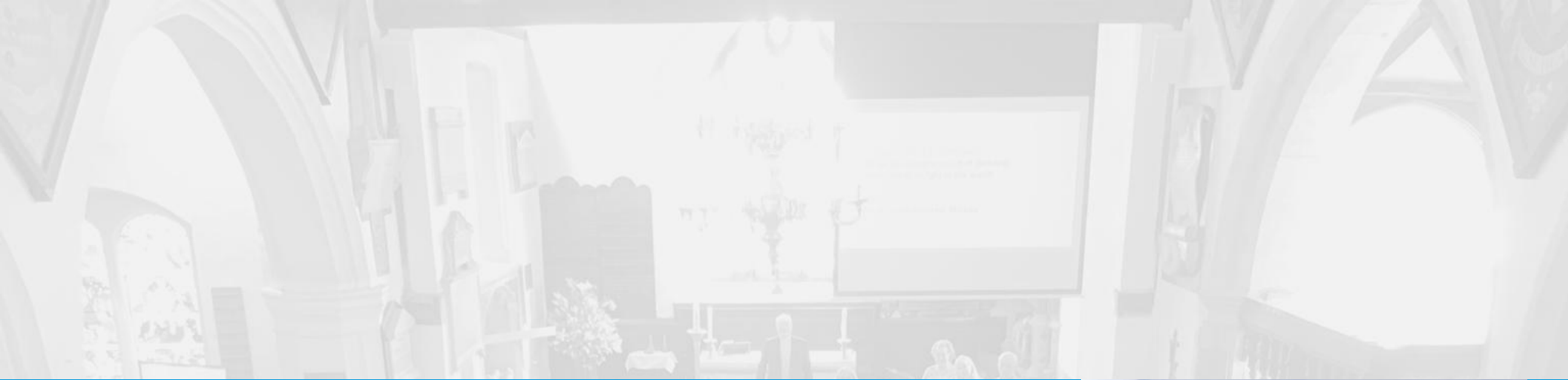
Wrotham has a very good and active Parish Council.

Wrotham

Village life is never quiet with a host of events organised by various groups during the year, including concerts, quizzes, garden safari, plant sale, fireworks display and more. There is also the three-day biennial Arts Festival in the Church, which has now been running for 30 years and attracts artists and visitors from far afield.



Wrotham boasts a football and cricket pitch with a large pavilion and a playground for the younger children. The village hall is a venue for many clubs and activities.



The Church and Our Church Families



The Church and Our Church Families

The time and energy volunteered by many members of both congregations and the wider community is the mainstay of all our activities. Both churches have dedicated PCCs as well as teams focused on specific areas such as hospitality, flower arranging and cleaning the church building.



Within the Benefice, both John (LLM) and Michelle (lay reader) are licensed for funerals, Max and Sandy have completed Hearing and Speaking God's Word courses and Ightham has an Anna Friend, Barbara.

Ightham also has a Green Team who are working towards our Bronze Eco-church award as well as co-ordinating churchyard tidy-ups and other activities. Both churches take safeguarding very seriously.



Worship

We currently offer a complementary pattern of worship across the Benefice which enables the services to be led by one Rector with support from the lay ministry team.

Sunday of the month	St Peter's Church, Ightham	St George's Church Wrotham
First Sunday	9am Breakfast@Church 6pm Evensong	10:30am Holy Communion
Second Sunday	10am Holy Communion	9am Breakfast Church 10:30am Service of the Word
Third Sunday	10am Service of the Word 6pm Evensong	8:30am Holy Communion (BCP) 10:30am Holy Communion
Fourth Sunday	10am Holy Communion	9:00am Breakfast Church 10:30am Sung Matins (BCP)
Fifth Sunday	United Benefice Holy Communion Service (alternating between parishes)	

The main Sunday morning services in both churches are shared on Zoom. Additionally on Wednesday mornings at St Peter's, there is a midweek service.

Worship

Both churches support their local community in many ways including marking key dates as a community. Remembrance Sunday services are held at the respective war memorials with wreathes laid by the local uniformed organisations, services for the bereaved at the end of October and a number of community celebrations at Christmas.

Communion is taken to the housebound at their request.

In general, children and families only attend Breakfast Church and festival services.

Both Evensong at St Peter's and BCP Holy Communion at St George's have smaller but loyal congregations.



Music

Music is an important part of the worship in the Benefice and both churches have small but enthusiastic choirs who combine for united services and the carol service at Christmas.

Wrotham benefits from Neil who is Director of Music / Organist; he leads the music and plays for most services.



Ightham relies on recorded music or live accompaniment from guitar and saxophone - with energetic percussion from the congregation using the church's collection of tambourines, maracas and shakers (notably at Breakfast@Church).

Sharing Christ

In recent years, both parishes have collaborated when running Lent courses and an Alpha course in addition to the Connect Group (an online study group that meets twice a month). St Peter's also has Oasis, a ladies fellowship and bible study group which meets weekly in term time.

St Peter's holds a monthly Prayer and Praise online and St George's has a weekly online prayer meeting. Both parishes also have teams of volunteers who go into the primary schools to share stories from the bible.



St Peter's has a partner parish - Holy Trinity, Twydall - and both parishes enjoy worship and fellowship together when they are able.

Community and Outreach

Both parishes hold weekly community coffee shops and publish their own parish magazines.

St Peter's also has a monthly Men's Breakfast at the George and Dragon pub, weekly Toddler group during term time and an annual Teddy Bear's Picnic and Churchyard Games in the summer.

St Peter's regularly gets involved with village fairs and similar events, collaborating with other village organisations like the WI and School PSA. We host a variety of activities for the community, in the church or church centre, and volunteers help organise an annual fundraising concert by the King's Men.



Community and Outreach

St. George's Church has a thriving regular weekly charity coffee morning which meets in the Church and welcomes both locals and visitors.



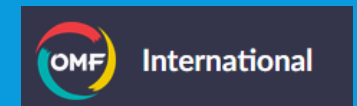
Church members are involved in the Friends of St George's, the bi-annual Wrotham Arts Festival and Music Festival, the Historical Society as well as the local primary school.

The church is much in demand as a venue for village events, which are important for the wonderful camaraderie that they generate.

Community and Outreach

Both churches host a collection point for the local food bank in Borough Green.

St Peter's also has a portfolio of charities supported through regular fundraising activities such as Christian Aid, St Mungo's and the Children's Society as well as those we support through our outward giving including The Princess Project, Starfish Malawi and our mission partners in China through OMF.



St George's has a different charity for each month of the year selected by the PCC annually. The Rector is a trustee of the Betenson Alms Houses Trust in Wrotham.

Buildings and Resources

Both Grade I listed churches are over 900 years old and have been updated with technology to increase their flexibility.

St Peter's also has a modern church centre which incorporates the parish office as well as space for refreshments and parish meals. There is a patio area and French doors to allow events to take place outside in good weather.



St Peter's has pews throughout the nave and north aisle with flexible space in the chancel. The churchyard is still open for burials and contains a public footpath.

St George's contains pews in the nave and south aisle. The north aisle incorporates a tea station with chairs and tables for Breakfast Church, coffee mornings and parish functions.

Buildings and Resources

Within the Benefice, our enthusiastic and supportive PCCs remain independent charities with separate finances for each church. The accounts are well managed and the Treasurers for both churches keep a close watch on expenditure and income generation. Benefice costs, including the salary of the administrator, are currently split equally between the two parishes.

St Peter's is in a slightly stronger financial position with more reserves than St George's. At St Peter's, most donations come from relatively few people so income may be significantly impacted if an individual stops giving for whatever reason.



Buildings and Resources

Although finances at St George's are always very tight, they continue to support a monthly charity as well as one off donations from events. Wrotham has higher indices of deprivation and is less able to rely on donations for income.

The main financial challenge is maintaining the fabric of the old, historic church. However, St George's are greatly blessed by the support of The Friends of St. George's, who fundraise tirelessly for ongoing projects and repairs. We have successfully fundraised and recently completed a major project to provide disabled access to the church.



School Connections

Ightham Primary School

St Peter's has a strong relationship with Ightham Primary School. Although not a church school, they hold services in church several times a year and the Rector or church members regularly lead assemblies.



When asked what they wanted from a new Rector, there were a lot of great suggestions from the children:

"Someone kind and nice... knows a lot about Jesus... does lots of music and singing... good storyteller... fun... wants to spend time with us, not because they have to."

Years 3-6 Ightham Primary School

School Connections

Each year, members of the St George's congregation donate bibles to each of the Year 5 children which is theirs to keep.

The children go on to a wide variety of secondary schools, including Wrotham Secondary School, Bennett Memorial Diocesan School in Tunbridge Wells, Trinity School (a Christian Secondary Free School) in Sevenoaks and grammar schools in the Maidstone, Gravesend and Tonbridge areas.

There is also a charity-run pre-school within the primary school grounds.

The pupils of Grange Park, a Specialist School half a mile away, also regularly visit the Church.





As one of our parishioners said, we are looking for *"someone Christ-centred and scripturally sound, with really good people skills"*, someone who is inspired and excited by the challenges and opportunities offered by this role.

We hope that the new incumbent will have the vision and energy to identify and progress the right opportunities for each parish.

Could this be you?

We are prayerfully waiting.

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.

Message from the Bishop of Rochester

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.

Message from the Bishop of Rochester

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.

Message from the Bishop of Rochester

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