

# Bridge Benefice

## 2017



The Bridge Benefice contains three parishes situated in attractive Kent countryside just south of Canterbury.

We are looking for a new Priest to be a spiritual leader; someone who will travel with us in our work together.

Supported by lay and ordained colleagues, our new Priest will help us develop teams equipped to take ministry into our rural communities, to reach out to the young, and to provide pastoral care to those in need.

<http://www.bridgechurchgroup.co.uk/>



Welcome – we would like to invite you to come with us on a journey of discovery...

The Bridge group of churches is a benefice in the lovely Kent countryside to the south of Canterbury. We are looking for a new full time Priest-in-Charge. If you are someone willing to be our new Spiritual Leader, who will minister and assist us in our mission within our rural communities, who will become our friend and play a pivotal role in our diverse benefice, we would welcome you to join us on our journey.

## Where we are going

The Bridge Benefice consists of three Parishes and five Churches; Bekesbourne, Patrixbourne with Bridge and Lower Hardres and Nackington. After a long interregnum we need a period of stability as we face the challenges of the coming years. During the interregnum closer links across the parts of our benefice have developed and we have become a team working together to manage our parishes and support each other at this difficult time. The starting point for the new Priest in Charge is to maintain these strengths and concentrate on the immediate spiritual and pastoral needs of the Bridge Benefice. Concurrently he or she will also further develop the partnership with Barham Downs and Aylesham benefices, as part of a new venture to commit to group ministry within the East Bridge Deanery as it becomes one new large benefice.

## Who we are and what we can offer you

- Warm friendly congregations living in growing and dynamic villages, who take an active part in local life and in so doing show our love and commitment to all our neighbours.
- Individual churches with their own special character, and worship and music preferences.
- Congregations who are working at getting to know each other, and not only share in communal worship, but as individuals move around to worship at any of our churches.
- High level of commitment from churchwardens, lay leaders, and the congregations in the life and ministry of the parishes.
- Churches which are well supported by active Friends' groups which raise much needed funds for essential repairs. Money is mostly raised by activities offering social occasions when villagers can come together and feel part of their church community whether they attend Sunday services or not.

## Our vision and needs

The starting point for any benefice vision for the future is to continue the coming together of our churches into one strong Bridge benefice by worshipping together, getting to know each other better, and sharing resources and experience. We are in the early stages of trying to become a single parish benefice. We then need to work on creating our relationships with our partner churches in the deanery, the concept of which is something new to us and a journey we have barely started.

Our vision for the future must include:

- To provide open and strong Christian leadership to the whole community within our villages, by taking ministry out into our communities to reach both young and old, and the sick at home or in the care homes.
- Welcoming those with little or no experience of God's transforming love and introducing them to the Christian faith, while not forgetting to nurture our current congregations
- Rebuilding a strong relationship with our primary school, both its staff and pupils
- Working with the laity to develop pastoral teams that will be able to assist and strengthen your ministry in growing our local churches
- Preparing for the development of ministry in the many new homes of Mountfield Park being built both within and on the edge of our benefice over the next 20years

## What we are looking for in you

Someone who will:

- Bring a lively faith, energy, and enthusiasm for rural ministry
- Be a good communicator (verbally, e-mail and other electronic media), open and accessible with the ability to listen too.
- Preach the gospel showing a depth of knowledge and the ability to feed people's spiritual needs.
- Be skilled in delegating and be a good manager of time and priorities.
- Work as a member of a team both within our own benefice and in the larger deanery.
- Have a passion for engaging with children, young people, and the families on whom the future of our churches depend. A good sense of humour can help here too!
- Lead open discussion at meetings and help us to make difficult decisions in a timely manner.
- Manage their own workload effectively and take time off to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

## What we are offering

The post is initially for a Priest in Charge of the Benefice of Bridge but within the Deanery Mission Plan you will be a member of the ministry Team across Bridge, Barham and Aylesham benefices. The Reverend Stefan Thomas has recently been appointed to the Barham Downs Benefice and is a member of the new ministry team.

You will be supported in your ministry within the Bridge benefice by:

- A Lay Reader, Margaret Clarke, and Beverley Latham ALM. Another member of the Bridge Benefice is hoping to start ALM training soon.
- Lay members of the congregations, who are part of the Family Service teams and others who lead informal worship

We are waiting for a new Area Dean to be appointed but the Cathedral and its Chapter is close by. The Lay Chair of the Deanery is Steve Sheath who lives in Wingham.

Your home, the Vicarage, is situated in the middle of Bridge High Street approached by a drive, almost opposite the Village Hall. It is 5 minutes walk from St. Peter's Bridge, 5 minutes drive from St. Mary's Patrixbourne, and 10 minutes drive from the other churches in the Bridge benefice.



The Vicarage was built in the 1960s, is centrally heated with all services, and has five bedrooms. On the ground floor, double doors separate the large lounge from the dining room and the ground floor study faces the drive. An enclosed porch leads to the front door. The kitchen has modern kitchen units and tiling. The house has a garage and parking space for several cars.

## The local area

The village of Bridge is three miles south of the thriving city of Canterbury. All the villages of the benefice lie about the same distance, or nearer, to Canterbury. Other larger towns such as Whitstable and Herne Bay lie on the coast to the north of Canterbury. The main A2 road is accessed at both ends of the village of Bridge and provides an easy link to the M2 road to London.

Education and tourism are some of the main economic activities of Canterbury, and the land surrounding our villages is mostly given over to farming. The local economy is growing rapidly, with many people commuting from the surrounding villages into Canterbury to work, which is putting an increasing strain on the provision of housing in the area, and house prices are rising. The housing situation is being addressed by the building of many new housing developments both around Canterbury and in the coastal towns. The nearest planned development to Bridge is Mountfield Park (<http://mountfieldpark.co.uk/>), although there is also an initial proposal for the development of sporting facilities, a holiday home complex, and a retirement village at a site at Highland Court Farm to the immediate south of Bridge village.

The three main Universities in Canterbury (the University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University, and the University of the Creative Arts) have all expanded significantly in recent years, and there are three public schools, and a number of state secondary schools, including the Archbishop's (CE) School, and St Anselm's (RC) school within the city. Kent still retains the grammar school system, and the three grammar schools in Canterbury are easily accessed by bus from Bridge.

The tourist trade, focused on the Cathedral and the city centre, ensures that we have certain retail outlets and facilities available in the city that would not normally be present in a town of this size. Canterbury has a theatre and city centre library, a swimming pool and gym, a thriving daily farmers' market and many restaurants and bars. A growing area of tourism is pilgrimage and two pilgrims' routes, The North Downs Way, and the Via Francigena, pass through our benefice.

The coming of HS1 to Canterbury West Station has allowed access to London St Pancras in 55 minutes, and connections to the Eurostar service at Ashford. The local station at Bekesbourne is on the line to Victoria Station London via Canterbury East Station, Faversham, and the Medway Towns. Bridge is a 5 minutes-drive from the Kent and Canterbury Hospital although many major specialities are offered at the regional hospitals at Ashford and Margate. Bridge has a small supermarket which hosts the Post Office, a butcher, two hairdressers, three Public Houses, a Pharmacy and other small businesses. The Health Centre offers a range of medical facilities. A regular bus service through Bridge gives access to Canterbury, Dover and Folkestone. There are two nursing homes in Bridge, one of which specialises in dementia care, and another home at Bekesbourne.

The other villages of the benefice are thriving communities; Bekesbourne has a vets practice, farm shop and coffee shop and a nursing home, Lower Hardres a farm shop and an attractive public house serving excellent food. Howletts Zoo is located on the border of Bekesbourne and Littlebourne.

## Our benefice

### Patronage

The Patron of the Bridge Benefice is the President and Scholars of the College of St. John, Oxford.

## Worship

We would describe our churchmanship within the benefice as having a broad outlook encompassing both traditional and more modern forms of worship, to reflect the diverse makeup of the villages and communities in which we live, and we believe this should be maintained. We use both Common Worship and Book of Common Prayer service books.

The pattern of services within the benefice in a typical month is shown in the service grid below. Services are arranged to provide the opportunity for any person in the benefice to be able to find a service akin to their own style of worship somewhere in the benefice each week, with their own local church providing a range of services across one month.

|                                     | Nackington                | Lower Hardres                | Bridge  | Patricbourne              | Bekesbourne                                   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month | 8.00 am<br>BCP Communion  | 11.00 am<br>Family Communion | 6.00 pm<br>Evensong                                       | 9.30 am<br>Sung Eucharist | 10.00 am<br>Songs of praise<br>coffee morning |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month | 9.30 am<br>Sung Eucharist | 6.00 pm<br>Evensong          | 9.30 am<br>Family Communion                               |                           | 8.00 am<br>BCP Communion                      |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Month |                           | 9.30 am<br>Family Service    | 11.am<br>Choral Eucharist                                 | 8.00 am<br>BCP Communion  | 9.30 am<br>Sung Eucharist                     |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month | 9.30 am<br>Sung Eucharist |                              | 8.00 am<br>BCP Communion<br>11.00 am<br>Community Worship | 9.30 am<br>Matins         |   |

When there is a fifth Sunday in the month the parishes come together for a 9.30am Benefice Communion Service. Each church hosts this service in turn throughout the year. At most services, the organ accompanies the singing, and at some services a choir is present. Other forms of music-making may accompany Family Services and other lay-led services.

In addition to Sunday services there is a 9.30am Tuesday morning BCP Communion Service at Bridge, followed by coffee. During a normal month, a Communion Service by extension takes place in each of the three Nursing Homes and at a Sheltered Housing Complex in Bridge.

At Christmas and Easter, the service pattern may be changed and each church has its own tradition of services, e.g. Carol and Christingle services. Various services are held at Easter, and Harvest and Remembrance services are held at each church. Congregations at Christmas services are exceptionally large.

The Ministry team, the Family Service teams and PCC members take services across the benefice. We are grateful for the help of retired clergy who assist with taking services throughout the benefice, and have been very supportive during the interregnum. The Bridge benefice has welcomed the local Methodists into our community following the closure of their Chapel in 2008.



Details of the services taking place each week can be found on the Bridge Benefice website [www.bridgechurchgroup.co.uk](http://www.bridgechurchgroup.co.uk)

### Organisation

Each of the three Parishes in the benefice currently has its own Parochial Church Council (PCC), attended by the stipendiary Priest-in-Charge, and each of the five churches aims to have two Churchwardens. Each PCC holds regular PCC meetings, has separate accounts, and is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the church buildings and in most cases the churchyard. The whole benefice takes responsibility to pay the parish share to the Diocese, each parish paying a proportionate amount according to size. Lower Hardres had a small grant to help with this. The parish share is paid in full each year.

All the churchwardens meet on a regular basis as a Benefice Council and work together with the incumbent to arrange the services and other events across the benefice, and to agree benefice policy on matters such as baptism, marriage, and burial within the parishes. Each parish contributes a proportionate sum to a benefice account, which pays for items such as Clergy expenses and the cost of administrative support.

### The Life of the Church

#### Work with Young people

Lower Hardres, Bekesbourne and Bridge Churches hold monthly family friendly services in which children and teenagers take an active part.

#### Adult groups

A bible study group known as 'After 8's' takes place on the first and third Tuesdays at Mansfield Court. A ladies' group 'Caring and Sharing' meets on alternate Monday evenings. Lent Groups and Confirmation Preparation classes are held each year.

#### Community Involvement

Our villages are friendly communities with many activities taking place on a regular basis. Many church members play an active role in these organisations such as the Women's Institute, the History and Horticultural Societies and the Tennis Club, (for further details see the Bridge village web-site, [www.bridgevillage.org.uk](http://www.bridgevillage.org.uk)). Some organisations are closely allied to the church value of service in the community, such as the volunteer driver scheme in Bridge, known as the Fish Scheme. Councillors on the local parish councils are church members. We are a caring community and friendships both within and without the church are important in the life of our villages.

The local communities, and people from the wider Canterbury area, support the various Friends' groups. The Friends raise money by social and cultural events to help with the maintenance of the fabric of the individual churches, and to help ease the burden of this task on the church congregations. Many villagers feel strong allegiance to the local church, even if they only attend services such as Christmas Carol Services, or use the Churches for weddings, baptisms, and funerals.

Each month the Parish of Bridge and Patrixbourne publishes 'On the Nail', a magazine distributed to 400 or so homes in Bridge, Patrixbourne and Bekesbourne. 'On the Nail' contains details of church services and activities, and village information. Nackington and Lower Hardres have a similar monthly magazine published by the civil parish.

## Bridge and Patrixbourne Church of England Primary School

Many of the children from our villages, and the wider Canterbury area, attend Bridge and Patrixbourne Church of England Primary School. The school currently has 413 pupils and 45 members of staff.

Our Lay reader leads Key Stage assemblies weekly in school and the school visits Bridge church during Advent, Lent and at the end of the summer term. During the summer term, a year group walks to Bekesbourne Church to study the churchyard.

The school promotes a Christian ethos and welcomes children from other faiths or none. The latest SIAMS report showed that the pupils have a good understanding of church life.

The Vicar is an ex-officio member of the Governing Body.

## Giving and Money

All the parishes in the benefice receive income through the planned giving scheme and this is reviewed annually. Donors are encouraged to Gift Aid sums donated where applicable. In most cases, the money raised by planned giving and collections does not cover all of a parish's financial commitments, and PCCs rely heavily on additional funds from fund raising events to supplement income. We also recognise that people give in many other ways, by serving on committees, applying for grants for repairs, by tending the churchyards, flower arranging and by cleaning and caring for our churches.

## Links to the wider world and the Church

Each year funds are donated to charity. The Christingle collection goes to the Children's Society and we support the Royal British Legion by taking a collection on their behalf at the Remembrance Day Services. In the past we have rapidly put together a Wine and Wisdom evening in response to appeals for money for major humanitarian disasters, such as the Tsunami appeal. Every year the benefice participates in Christian Aid Week and this year the door-to-door collection raised £2585.



Patricxbourne with Bridge PCC supports two children in Delhi India via the Wye and Brook India Trust, and Bekesbourne gives support annually to a charity providing humanitarian aid in the Ukraine and to a local Women's Refuge. Our individual churches support other national and international charities throughout the year. Recently a collection of £625 was sent to the parish of St Clement and St James, North Kensington, for the Grenfell Tower Appeal. We have a personal link to this Parish as the Assistant Vicar there, the Rev. Mary Clarke, is the daughter of our Lay Reader Margaret Clarke.



Traidcraft stall at Patricxbourne with Bridge Coffee morning March 2017

## Our Buildings

### St Peter's Church Bekesbourne



Bekesbourne lies to the east of the Bridge benefice. The village is a scattered rural community set in attractive countryside in the Nailbourne valley with pockets of housing. The focal point of the village is Chalkpit Farm – a converted farmyard which now includes a veterinary surgery, a popular coffee shop and retail outlets.

Sited on a hill in a peaceful position just above the Nailbourne, St Peter's is of Norman origin, but heavily restored in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It seats about 90 people, but regularly squeezes in over 120 on Christmas morning! It has an electoral roll of 57.

St Peter's is a friendly and welcoming church, offering a range of 'middle of the road' services, but is prepared to try something new in its worship. For example, the monthly Parish Eucharist is sung to an accessible modern setting, and we have introduced an annual Pet Service. The Songs of Praise Coffee Morning Service has an enthusiastic congregation, many of whom volunteer to lead, organise, publicise, or serve refreshments.



Lay leadership is strong, with an experienced but now 'retired' ALM who leads the PCC within the Parish. The standing committee work alongside the one churchwarden. The supportive PCC and keen Deanery Synod representatives accept the future need for increasing lay leadership within the church and look forward to the opportunities for the new group ministry benefices.

Arriving for the pet service

St Peter's greatly benefits from the activities of The Friends of Bekesbourne Church, which was set up over 20 years ago. This group provides a focus for the social life of the village as there is no school or even a pub now! They enthusiastically raise funds to maintain the fabric of the church. Membership is spread widely throughout the village and further afield, but since most of the regular congregation are also Friends, this tends to draw others into the church family.

Over the last few years the Friends have 'pump primed' projects which has enabled the PCC to re-roof the nave, restore its bells and organ, install a sound system and, most recently, improve the usefulness of the church by the installation of a composting toilet. St Peter's is the only one of the Bridge benefice churches with bells hung for change ringing and these are much appreciated by the village.

Our 'open' churchyard is a well-maintained asset we have been developing since entering the God's Acre Project. We now have a churchyard trail telling the history of the village, nature days for families and the Bridge School children spend a day each year exploring our church and churchyard.

## St Mary's Church Patrixbourne



Patrixbourne with Bridge straddles the main A2 London to Dover road, south of Canterbury. Patrixbourne was once the main church with a chapel at Bridge, hence the name of the parish. Today, however, St Peter's Bridge is the larger church in the larger village.

The parish includes the highest population in the Benefice and currently has 74 members on the Electoral Roll, although this register probably does not include all the people who attend church.

Patrixbourne lies to the east of Bridge and is a small, attractive village, clustered round the church. It looks to Bridge for all its amenities, and half of the houses in the village are in the Parish of Bekesbourne. A settlement here is mentioned in the Domesday Book. St. Mary's Church dates from 1170 and is a fine example of Norman architecture, with interesting decoration at its south door. Simon Jenkins includes it in his book as one of 'England's Thousand Best Churches'<sup>1</sup>.

Each month the church holds a sung Eucharist service, a Book of Common Prayer Communion Service, and a Matins Service. All are well attended by people from both Patrixbourne and the other villages in the benefice.

St Mary's Church lies both on the North Downs Way from Dover to Canterbury, and the pilgrim route, the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome, which means that the church receives many visitors. It is kept open daily for visitors and for private prayer and contemplation. The number of pilgrims walking the North Downs Way and the Via Francigena has dramatically increased in recent years and the Church has joined the Green Pilgrimage Network. Parties of walkers on these pilgrims' routes now regularly visit the church and plans are being formulated to improve the facilities at the church. The provision of toilet and simple kitchen facilities will allow visitors to take a rest at the church and take refreshment before continuing their journey. Improvements will also make the church more amenable for the congregation or for social events. The Friends of St Mary's Patrixbourne (FOSM) are raising money for this project. Over the past few years FOSM have raised money for repairs for the roof, conservation of our fine Swiss glass windows, repair of the Wheel window, electrification of our Victorian clock and under-pew heating.

This year, the church is being used as a venue for an event during the Canterbury Festival, and such events are a great opportunity for villagers and people from further afield to socialise at the church. This is an important function of the church in a village with few facilities for this kind of interaction. Many of these events help raise funds for the upkeep of the church and to ensure that the church is used for more than just a few hours each week.

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<sup>1</sup> 'England's Thousand Best Churches' by Simon Jenkins. Published by Blackwells. ISBN no. 0713992816



A party of walkers outside the church



A concert at the church

### St Peter's Bridge



St. Peter's Bridge is mostly Victorian in construction but remains of the original Norman Chapel can still be seen in the base of the tower and the arch over the west door. The rear of the Church lends itself to a meeting area and is used for enjoying refreshments after most services and at the many social events held there. The entrance porch was extended in the early 2000's and includes toilet facilities. Glass doors allow people entering the church to see into the church interior and this also helps to keep the church warm. The church is kept open each day, and most days people enter the church to light a candle and pray.

This is the biggest church in the benefice and holds services every Sunday, as well as hosting major benefice services, such as confirmation. A monthly Community Worship Service has recently been introduced and the church welcomes the local Church of England Primary school for services each term.

The churchyard at Bridge is closed for burials and maintained by the City Council. However, the Garden of Remembrance can still accept ashes and volunteers keep this area in a tidy condition and further work is planned to enhance this part of the churchyard.

The Friends of St Peter's (FOSP) was formed in 2015 and a small committee have raised the £90,000, by grants and fundraising events, needed to repair the west wall and to carry out other stonework repairs. The work is due to start in October 2017. A very encouraging effect of holding fundraising events in the church has been more villagers starting to enjoy coming to the church for the social life that has been on offer. This will continue as further repairs are needed on the church and it is good to see enhanced community use of the church building.

Several groups meet regularly which have links with the church. Caring and Sharing is a group who meet twice a month, they enjoy a coffee and chat at one meeting and we invite speakers to the other meeting. We support local charities and have links with Fairtrade and Christian Aid. After 8's is a group who meet fortnightly for bible



discussion. A lunch group for 'singles' has just started, this is not only for church goers, but is led by a church member. A community lunch takes place in the local pub after the monthly Community Service, again this is open to all parishioners and is proving to be popular.

The Fish Scheme is run by volunteers and they organise a monthly Coffee Pop In for the elderly of the village, transport is organised and an annual trip is enjoyed by the most able. This year's 'Winter Warmer Lunch' was hosted by the volunteers and enjoyed by 40 elderly residents of Bridge.



A Coffee Morning in the Village Hall



The audience at a Friends' Concert

### St Mary's Nackington



Nackington is a sparsely populated hamlet to the west of the Bridge benefice and lies between Lower Hardres and the edge of Canterbury. There are few facilities within the village itself, which looks to Lower Hardres for a village hall and to Canterbury or Bridge for other facilities.

The attractive 11<sup>th</sup> century grade I listed church is in a peaceful, tucked-away position overlooking farmland. It contains some early stained glass, thought to come from a French monastery. The smallest church in the benefice, it draws its congregation from the north end of the parish and from south Canterbury. Part of the joint civil parish of Nackington and Lower Hardres; St Mary's Nackington, unusually, is a Chapel of Ease, while St Mary's Lower Hardres is the parish church. While the two churches work together, they organise their services separately and are financially independent of each other. There are two active churchwardens and it has an electoral roll of 14. Services at St Mary's are in traditional language, but use the Common Worship Lectionary. The church is attractive for small weddings, benefiting from the proximity of Winters Barn within the parish, a popular venue for wedding receptions.

The Friends of Nackington church was formed in April 2012 to preserve and enhance the fabric of this ancient building for future generations. The Friends

continue to raise funds usually holding two events a year which have helped to maintain the condition of the building where a programme of continuous maintenance is in place. In the last three years the building has been rewired, the wooden steeple replaced, dry rot and beetle damage dealt with, together with a range of minor but important works.

In 2016 an additional quarter acre of land adjacent to the existing churchyard was consecrated, and should provide burial space for future generations. The next quinquennial report is due in 2017.

Half of the new housing development of Mountfield Park will be in this Parish



The Canterbury Singers at a Friends' event

### St Mary's Church Lower Hardres



Lower Hardres is a rural village to the west of the benefice, surrounded by woods and farmland. It has an excellent village hall, the focus for many activities, a farm shop and a popular pub/restaurant. The church was built in 1830 on the site of a previous church, which fell into disrepair. The 2013 quinquennial makes pleasing reading with only the electrics needing some work to bring them to current standards.

A diverse mix of services is offered at this church, which seems to be a winning formula and all attract a congregation from across the benefice and wider. The electoral roll is 18. It would be fair to say that St Mary's offers a slightly informal atmosphere for worship compared to other churches within the benefice. It is often said by visitors that the church is welcoming, friendly, and bright.

St Mary's is fortunate to have lay reader Margaret Clarke actively working within the parish and there is a good sense of caring within the local community, which contains several elderly people living alone. Over time the village demographics are changing with more young families starting to come and live in the Parish. The monthly Family Service is extremely popular, with many families travelling several miles to attend. Children of all ages are encouraged to participate, offering readings, prayers, singing



in the small choir, and music. Numbers for this service exceed 30 and at special festivals 50+. A member of the congregation helps with the preparation of prayers for this family service and another member of the congregation assists Margaret with leading this service.

Two workshops are organised for children from the Benefice each year and at both the Christmas and Easter workshops the hall is full to overflowing. Recently all parents have started to stay for the whole workshop and the morning has become a social event for those attending. A pleasing development is that some of the older children are starting to run some of the workshop groups. This year the Easter workshop was honoured by the presence of Bishop Trevor who came early, spoke to all the leaders and children and then led a short service of Easter Worship.

Winters Barn, a popular wedding reception venue with which the church has formed a close link, is close to Lower Hardres. This year four weddings are already booked. The church is popular for weddings due to its light, open space, acoustics and rural location. A growing trend is for couples who were married at the church to bring their children back for baptism here.

St Mary's has a Friends group which holds fund raising events which provide social events for all the community to enjoy. The recent repairs to the church roof were funded both by the Friends and generous grants.

In recent years a much closer co-operation has developed between Lower Hardres Church and the other Parish Church, St Mary's Nackington. This is demonstrated by the sharing of churches if large congregations are expected (use Lower Hardres) or inclement weather (use Nackington) or when either church is being repaired and unavailable for services. This has resulted in a much better feeling of the whole Parish working better together.



Music at a Family Service



Bishop Trevor and Benefice Churchwardens 2017

## Where we are on our journey at present

### Our strengths

- Beautiful villages, with welcoming residents, each with their own community identity (not a dormitory of Canterbury!) and a strong affection for their own village church, which are each supported by an active Friends' group.
- Lots going on in the community, with church members involved.
- A good village primary school, with some involvement in the church and from the church.
- Varied range of church services across the benefices- always a service for someone somewhere.
- Established social occasions bring us together.
- Increased movement around each benefice to go to each other's services.
- Established areas of lay leadership.
- Progress in recent years to adapt our churches to new needs, by the provision of toilet facilities, space for tea and coffee, and 'loop' systems to aid the hard of hearing.
- Links with our local uniformed youth organisations.

### Our weaknesses

- Many old village churches to look after and keep open for the worshipping communities of our villages
- We do not have church halls, so we are reliant on the use of village halls or school halls for meetings, or for social occasions.
- The Bridge Benefice Office is currently located within the administrator's home, (though weekly planning meetings are held at Bridge Church). We are starting to consider alternative office provision for the future.
- The people who are 'active' within our churches, in terms of doing more than just attending services, are mostly the older generation; we need more all-age involvement to ensure the life of the church continues in the future.

### Opportunities

- Further development of ministry for young people, the uniformed organisations, young families, and elderly people in the parishes.
- Taking ministry out into the new housing developments in our benefice
- Involvement in the larger deanery benefice should allow greater sharing of resources such as secretarial and financial services, streamline the committee structures, and perhaps allow for the paid services of specialist personnel such as a part-time youth worker.

### Challenges

- Developing and shaping the new group ministry
- Working with the new structures within the new benefice as they develop.
- Developing a ministry team that reflects the changing roles of both clergy and laity in today's church.
- Encouraging greater involvement with and from our local school
- Ensuring all feel included in the shaping of our future church

## Issues and concerns

We share the common issues of many rural parishes in the South East including:

- The high demand for housing in the area means house prices are high, and affordable homes in short supply. The consequence of this is that for many local households both parents need to work, it is often difficult for married children to live near their parents, and elderly residents are isolated from their families.
- Teenagers find little to do in the villages.
- Parking problems make it difficult for residents to access the shops and local businesses.

We invite our new incumbent to join us in celebrating our achievements and working with us as we continue our journey.

Appendix 1.

## The East Bridge Deanery

The East-Bridge Deanery consists of 19 parishes. It stretches from Ash across to Bridge and Barham, and covers an area that is almost entirely rural. The Parish of Aylesham, a former coal mining village and now expanding as a commuter/dormitory area, has received funding from the Church Commissioners as part of their Mission programme.

The Deanery Synod meets regularly, along with various committees, including a 'Ministry & Mission' Committee. The Committee is completing a new Mission Plan which has benefited from the active engagement of Synod members in shaping its thinking. Deanery re-organisation is progressing, with group ministry being established between the Benefices of Aylesham, Barham Downs and Bridge and also between the Canonry and Littlebourne Benefices. These groupings may ultimately combine to form two Benefices. The Deanery Mission Plan also envisages the amalgamation of smaller Parishes through a process of organic change.

The next stage of implementation will see targeted actions to consolidate smaller congregations, review finances and further develop lay involvement in worship and other pastoral work. The Deanery recently hosted a successful Worship Leader's course for Parishes and we are particularly keen to facilitate mutual support networks across and beyond the Deanery.

There is a Clergy Chapter which meets regularly, and collaboration and mutual support between clergy and churches are given a high priority. New colleagues are encouraged to make involvement in the life of the Deanery a priority.

## The Diocese of Canterbury

### *Changed lives, Changing lives*

#### Description

Canterbury Diocese, the oldest diocese in England, stretches from Maidstone to Thanet, the Isle of Sheppey to the Romney Marsh and includes 328 churches in 253 parishes, along with 103 church schools, organised into 15 deaneries and three archdeaconries, Ashford, Maidstone and Canterbury.

Whilst the Archbishop of Canterbury is the diocesan bishop, day to day oversight of the diocese is delegated to the Bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Trevor Willmott.

#### Objectives

Encompassed by the statement: living faith, building community, transforming lives, the Diocese of Canterbury is committed:

- To grow the church numerically and spiritually.
- To re-imagine ministry.
- To build partnerships that enrich communities.

In 2017, after over a year of prayerful conversation and discernment, our Synod further refined these priorities for the next season of our life together in mission. We committed ourselves

- To be a people renewed in missional prayer across our Diocese.
- To grow our Diocesan Ignite ministry, which is reaching the most marginalised in our communities with the good news of Jesus Christ.
- To specific evangelism and discipleship initiatives with teenagers.
- To develop a school of leadership which builds on the extensive lay and ordained training opportunities which we currently offer.
- To develop an innovations hub which offers resources to equip local mission.

#### Frameworks

To facilitate the achievement of these objectives, the work of the diocese is focussed into four key 'frameworks':

- Children, Schools and Young People
- Local Church Development

- Licensed Ministries
- Communities and Partnership

All these are supported, by our Resource Management & Compliance Group.

These frameworks replace the traditional concept of Boards and Committees and represent a flexible way of working for the Diocese with communication and collaboration at its heart.

### Mission Action Planning

The Diocese uses Mission Action Planning as a process and planning tool to help deaneries, benefices and parishes prayerfully review and choose, plan and act on mission activities that will help further the objectives of the Diocese, Deaneries and benefices are supported to this end by Deanery Mission Accompaniers.

We are looking to the way ahead with faith and hope as we seek to be a people united in Christ, celebrating our diversity and reaching out to local communities with the good news of the kingdom.

Further information [www.canterburydiocese.org](http://www.canterburydiocese.org)

**Please visit the links below to view videos relating to our churches and our vision for the future.**

Elizabeth Kirkwood

<https://youtu.be/P61GSsXKM1c>

Stuart Field

<https://youtu.be/XjeVylbkSYw>

Jenny Vye

<https://youtu.be/1bZpGkm4KAc>

Margaret Clarke

<https://youtu.be/qKY4fN1NqE8>

Jean Barber

<https://youtu.be/ptNxZexp478>

David Edmonds

<https://youtu.be/HBQikakSQAw>

Graham Thomas

<https://youtu.be/y-GrW1uihFw>

Flower Festival Songs of praise

<https://youtu.be/ycLmByC-mvg>