The Parish of Christ Church
Milton-next-Gravesend

The Community of Christ Church
Intentionally Inclusive - Deliberately Diverse

Please go to our website at www.christchurchgravesend.org.uk for an up to date inside look at our vibrant community.

May 2018
Christ Church

Introduction

At Christ Church we are an inclusive and diverse community where everyone can find a welcoming smile and can join with others in the worship of God, enjoying acceptance and friendship, and expressing the Gospel through care and concern for our neighbours, both locally and beyond. We are a member of Inclusive Church. We try to be a Church with open doors and large windows, one which takes seriously the sharing of the good news of Jesus, without being stuffy or self-regarding.

This profile attempts to give a comprehensive description of the worship, activities and structure of the parish to inform possible candidates for the post of Vicar of Christ Church.

We hope you will see we are a busy, happy, forward looking and active parish and that the well of potential support for any new incumbent shines through. We know that such an incumbent will wish to make changes and there is goodwill to embrace change within the broad framework set out in the profile.

Within Christ Church, toddlers and octogenarians, teenagers and professionals, singles and couples, the disabled and people with a variety of skills, enthusiasms, and talents drawn from a multi-ethnic community, join together in worship. All are valued, and people of different backgrounds, experiences, and circumstances come together in harmony.

Along with worship there is much else quietly happening as people give of their talents, including: serving in the sanctuary; running administration; the website; cleaning and gardening; producing the magazine; photographing events; organising fundraising; teaching the young; baptismal and marriage preparation.
Our Mission Action Plan

Christ Church has a regular, realistic and pragmatic programme of triennial Mission Action Plans, most recently for 2017-20, attached and on the website. These are built up through a period of listening and discernment for the PCC and shared with the congregation. Its key elements are:

- Building our church’s future, whilst valuing our past as we grow with Christ;
- A church with big windows and open doors, going out in love into the wider community;
- Making Christ Church a welcoming and inclusive place for all – with no exceptions;
- Communicating Christ and the Christian life in the digital age.

Our priority of mission in coming years will be assisted by a recent, substantial bequest, the bulk of which will be employed for mission rather than meeting our immediate needs to improve fabric.
Christ Church, Milton-next-Gravesend, is one of half-a-dozen Anglican churches in the town of Gravesend, part of the Borough of Gravesham, on the south bank of the River Thames. The map on Page 4 shows the boundaries of the parish within the built-up area that is the town of Gravesend.

Gravesham is part of the Thames Gateway, designated by government as a main strategic area for business and residential growth in England. This stretches from Dartford to Sittingbourne and there are already major developments in place. The new Ebbsfleet railway station is a key part of the Channel Tunnel Rail link and is adjacent to the developing Ebbsfleet Garden City to the west of Gravesham, planned to host 15,000 households and associated infrastructure.

Bluewater Shopping Centre, fourth largest in the UK, is five miles away. A key challenge for the parish and the churches is how we respond to the challenges of major investments in the area, which will continue to change the community in ways we cannot foresee.

The first of two longer term proposals is the Lower Thames Crossing, a road tunnel due to be built to the East of Gravesend (assuming all approvals are granted) opening by 2027. More speculative is a new major Theme Park, set to create 27,000 jobs to open to the west of Gravesham next to the River Thames.

The main A2 road passes to the south of Gravesend, linking with the M25 Orbital, providing further excellent road links with other parts of
the county, country and continent. The town is also linked directly by rail to London Charing Cross (55 minutes) and High Speed to St Pancras International (24 minutes), as well as the Medway Towns.

The town is multi-ethnic, with a 13% Sikh population, and smaller numbers of other ethnic groupings, including increasing populations of African origin and people from Eastern Europe. Relationships are generally regarded as a model for other towns, and the largest public gatherings are the annual Sikh celebration of *Vaisakhi*, including a march through the town centre, the *Churches Together* Easter Celebration; the St George’s Day Parade; and the Christmas Celebration. The Sikh community has built the largest Sikh Gurdwara in Europe in an adjacent parish, and Sikhs play an important part in the life of the town, although the proportion of Sikhs in Christ Church parish is low. We are welcoming an increasing range of ethnicity in the congregation.

Gravesend is home to many commuters, although there is also a wide range of mainly smaller industries.

The varied provision of schooling in Gravesham is typical of Kent towns and is described in a later section. There are two main hospitals: Gravesend Community Hospital with an attached Day Care Centre is in the town itself; the modern Darent Valley Hospital, the local district general hospital, lying between the town and Dartford.

Gravesend main shopping area has suffered from the impact of Bluewater, but still has two shopping centres and a Debenhams department store. It offers a very wide range of restaurants and eating places, partly reflecting the multi-cultural nature of the town. There is also a retail park by the riverside.

There are two leisure centres, both of which have swimming pools and cater for a range of other activities. There are also two golf courses.

Gravesham is served by two large Country Parks, one at Shorne, the other at Jeskyns, a large open space recreational area with areas being developed as wildlife habitats. We are situated five miles from the picturesque North Downs. The town borders the River Thames, and its historical connections remain strong.
Social Geography

The Parish

The parish occupies an area of the town mainly built up in the 1920s and 1930s comprising overwhelmingly private housing. There are some Georgian houses situated in the conservation area of Windmill Hill.

Most recent developments are infill, including three large blocks of privately owned flats, one an "assisted living development" of 61 flats with links to the Parish. There is little social or council housing, although there are a number of privately owned care homes for the elderly. There is a group of local shops around Echo Square, a couple of hundred yards from the Vicarage.

House prices are relatively high, reflecting the nearness to London. There are clear differences with some neighbouring parishes as the gap between prosperity and social and economic deprivation widens.

A church history is available, published on our 150th anniversary.
Maps of Christ Church in Gravesend and in the Parish

Christ Church

Parish Boundary delineated in Red
Other Churches

Christ Church is part of a legal group called the East Gravesend Cluster with the neighbouring benefices of St Aidan’s Church, and Holy Family Church with St Margaret, Ifield.

Cluster clergy meet most days for morning or evening prayer, and meet weekly with clergy from two other local churches as well to share news and resources and say Morning Prayer together. The cluster is developing ever closer links, sharing in confirmation and marriage preparation, in planning and leading Lent and Advent Courses, and in shared services during Holy Week. Two of the churches share the use of a photocopier, and the Cluster churches recently held a joint meeting of PCCs to explore further collaboration.

The three parishes of the East Gravesend Cluster share a ‘cluster curate’ currently in her third year.

The parish has five neighbouring Anglican town parishes, and there is a significant pattern of worshippers crossing boundaries to the church of their choice, reflecting considerable diversity in styles of worship. There is a pattern of some worshippers attending two churches on different weeks in the month. Christ Church is probably a net importer as a result of this activity.

Christ Church is a member of the Gravesend Deanery, the most recent Area Dean being our previous Vicar. The Deanery comprises the area largely north of the A2 and south of the river, extending from Greenhithe in the West to Shorne in the East.

There is a Deanery Mission Plan based around sharing resources and working on shared projects. Deanery Chapter meets 6 times a year for collaboration and mutual support. The Deanery clergy also have regular social events and in recent years have enjoyed an annual retreat shared with Dartford Deanery.

Churches Together in Gravesham is an active group of all the local churches from established and newer denominations. As well as occasional joint services, Churches Together is involved in a foodbank, a winter night shelter, Street Pastors and School Pastors.
*Christians Against Poverty* is organised by the East Gravesend Cluster.

There are several strong evangelical churches in the town. There is an active Sikh religious community with two temples, and small informal Muslim and Hindu groupings.

Occasional Interfaith events are organized to encourage growth and understanding between the various faith groups in the Gravesend area.

**Schools**

There are two large church comprehensive schools in the town, one CofE, and one Roman Catholic. In addition, there are two single sex grammar schools and three other secondary schools, two single sex. Ofsted found each of these Good at its most recent inspection. There is the usual spread of primary schools. In addition, there are also three well-established private schools, St Joseph’s Convent School (ages 4-11) being adjacent to the Vicarage. Christ Church has a close relationship with several local schools. These include: *Saint George's Church of England School* - a previous incumbent is Chairman and two members of the Church were Governors until recently; *Whitehill Primary School* – an academy within the parish; *Holy Trinity CE Primary School* - a Voluntary Aided primary in an adjacent parish; and *Ifield Special School*. Whitehill and Holy Trinity are within walking distance of the church.

The last incumbent of Christ Church shared with other local clergy in leading assemblies at Holy Trinity School about two or three times a term.
Worship at Christ Church

Regular Services

There is an 8.00 a.m. said service of Holy Communion each Sunday.

The 10.00 a.m. Sunday worship on three Sundays each month is traditional Anglican Common Worship sung Holy Communion, led by a robed choir. Readings are taken from the Common Worship Lectionary.

Once a month there is a more informal all-age service of Holy Communion, including the uniformed organisations, with the Semiquavers music group leading the worship.

We have a strong tradition of preaching by clergy, Readers and visiting preachers.

God’s Gang, our activities for children aged from 4 to 14, meets during the 10.00 a.m. service except when there is an all-age service.

Refreshments are available and popular in the hall after the 10.00 a.m. service.

Sung Book of Common Prayer Evensong takes place on the second Sunday at 4.00 p.m. and is usually led by a Reader. In addition, there are occasional evening services shared with our partners in the East Gravesend Cluster.
There are also weekday morning services as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>8.00 a.m.</td>
<td>Morning Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>10.00 a.m.</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>8.00 a.m.</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is evening prayer on Wednesdays at 5.15 p.m.

In October 2017, 540 worshippers attended 10.00 a.m. Communion across the four Sundays.

**Festivals and Other Services**

There is a full programme of Christmas and Holy Week services.

Good Friday begins with a children’s Hot Cross Bun Service at 10.00 a.m. There is a well-attended central Good Friday three-hour service.

Easter Day starts with a service of Holy Communion at dawn, when the Paschal Candle is lit.

Additional Holy Communions are celebrated on special occasions, including: All Saints and All Souls Days; Annunciation; Ascension; Ash Wednesday; Epiphany; and Corpus Christi.

The Mothering Sunday Service and Harvest Thanksgiving are particularly popular.

The pre-school meets in church on alternate Wednesdays for a short act of worship.

Holy Communion is taken to parishioners who are housebound or

A Lent course is held together with other churches in the Local Cluster, supplemented this year by Lent lunches supporting Christian Aid. A Pilgrim group meets monthly for bible study and discussion.
Occasional Offices

During 2017 there were: 53 baptisms and 15 weddings (together with baptism and wedding preparation); 10 church funerals; and eight funerals in the crematorium or cemetery.

The PCC voted to bless same sex marriages when permitted to do so.

Baptisms are normally held after the main Sunday Holy Communion service, and occasionally during the service. Gravesend Deanery Churches have agreed a protocol on baptisms, allowing any family within the Deanery to arrange baptism at any of the Deanery churches.

Christ Church is a popular venue for Weddings for those who live in, or have a qualifying connection with, the parish.

The Warriors’ Chapel (see below) is also a place set aside for private prayer and reflection.
Young People at Christ Church

Children and young people are given a high priority and we support them with a range of activities, encouraging as many as possible to be aware of the church. Whilst comparatively few attend church services on Sundays those that do come are made welcome. There is a commitment within the congregation to encourage children to be full participants in the life of the church and this is seen as the key challenge for the future of Christ Church, as children need to experience church life if they are to stay in our church.

Central to church involvement are the All-age Service and God’s Gang. **First Steps** offers parents and carers with children under five the opportunity to join in informal worship and enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat afterwards.

Younger Children are prepared for taking communion through our programme “Welcome to the Lord’s Table”. Volunteers prepare children for confirmation on a cluster basis.

**Sunday Services**

The creative monthly all age service is based around a theme, with the music led by the Semiquavers (see below) and Music Group. Our local Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, sponsored by the church, also attend.
Young people assist at the Sunday service as servers or acolytes, reading lessons and leading prayers. Three act as vergers at baptisms.

The Christingle Service and the Christmas Crib Service both see the church absolutely packed, showing that the potential for growth exists. The Hot Cross Bun Service is also very popular.

**Children in the Church**

There is a *Christ Church Tots Group* that meets weekly in term time. This is open to all, normal attendance being around 30 families. Church members support this, also providing refreshments.

Christ Church runs an Ofsted ‘Outstanding’ Church Pre School, details at [http://christchurchnursery.wixsite.com/preschool](http://christchurchnursery.wixsite.com/preschool) which takes place in the Church Hall and on the Pleasance, taking advantage of its volunteer built decking.

We recently celebrated ‘Easter Experience’ for the second time. This is a large interactive event, modelled on the Gloucester Cathedral event, bringing in over 800 children from local schools, along with sessions for church organisations and Open Events. Experience Christmas was mounted in 2017, with Pentecost and Harvest planned for next year. Some 40 church members volunteer to be part of the experience working with the young people.

The West End of the church includes a children's area, with toys and books, which can be used there or taken back to the child's seat in church. There are baby-changing facilities in the accessible toilet.
Ministry and the Role of the Laity

Ministry Team

Christ Church welcomes women's ministry. We enjoy the services of the Revd Jacqueline Littlewood, a self-supporting Associate priest in the parish. Our present Curate, Revd Karen Seggie, is serving her curacy with us and with three other churches in our local cluster, currently in her third year.

There are two Readers, and two others who have permission to officiate and minister within the parish. All are able, committed and play a full part in the worship and work of the church.

Our Ministry Team currently meets every two weeks. Priests, Readers, Wardens, and Pastoral Assistants meet to share pastoral concerns, plan and review. We will be joined occasionally by our recently commissioned Anna Friend (A volunteer commissioned by the Diocese to exercise pastoral ministry among the elderly and to those suffering from Dementia).

We have Church members engaged with a number of Chaplaincies including the local Hospital and Bluewater Shopping Centre, visiting residential homes for the elderly and those receiving care in the community.

The Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council comprises: the clergy, our two churchwardens and 18 lay members. We have three representatives on the Deanery Synod and one Lay Member of the General Synod. Other Parish Officers are the PCC Secretary and Treasurer.

Role of the Laity

The church is committed to involving the laity fully in its work and worship, and the range of activities is too large to list here. The Readers play a key role in leading church activities. Twelve parishioners are licensed to administer the chalice. There is a large team of sidespeople. Lessons are read and intercessions led by an increasing pool of the congregation including newer members.
A group who support the bereaved is important in our mission. The church has a committed and talented band of flower arrangers.

Christ Church has the capability and commitment to mount major events. In 2017 as part of the Deanery’s commemoration of the centenary of the Great War we organised a major exhibition of the lives and service of the 62 WW1 casualties commemorated in the church. This included a large number of descendants becoming involved in a service of dedication for a new WWI memorial, replacing one which had been long lost. There was also a flower festival, and an instrumental and choral concert.

The church has a strong relationship with the Royal Marines. One of our two chapels, the Warriors’ Chapel, commemorates the men of 48 Commando who worshipped at Christ Church on the eve of D-Day 1944.
Music in the Church

We benefit from different Music styles so that a traditional Choral style is complemented by a more modern worship. We currently use *Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New* in services with occasional additions that are printed in the service sheet.

We have a newly appointed organist and choir leader. Christ Church has three choral groups. The main choir, led by the principal organist, now numbers seven junior members and fifteen adults and plays a key role in our worship. Both the Adult and Junior sections are mixed. The choir is robed.

*The Semiquavers* is a thriving young people’s choir with some 30 members. It gives a lead in the All Age Service, provides music at special events and its own concerts, and also sings at other venues, including Trafalgar Square and St Thomas’ Hospital. The group regularly enters competitions.
There is also a Music Group, which now works closely with the choir and also comes together for special events.
The Church Premises

Christ Church

The church is on its second site: when it was first opened in 1856 it was nearer the town centre by about half a mile. The original Gothic architecture has twice been changed: once in 1870 to provide more accommodation; and again in 1935 when the entire church was moved and extended on its current site.

The Building is a traditional Church which we try to use flexibly.

There is a seating capacity of around 350 (tested to the full at the Christmas Crib Service!). There are two chapels: St Faith's used for daily Communion and other smaller services of worship; the Warrior Chapel reflects our connections with the Royal Marines. The ancillary rooms include Vicar's vestry, choir vestry, and parish office.

There are regular and ever changing large prominent displays of church activities mounted on our display boards.

Christ Church is in a sound state of repair, with great efforts made on upkeep; we have been fortunate with a number of recent legacies. The substantial cost of organ refurbishment was achieved within a year through fund raising.
The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in 2016. Some remedial work needs to be undertaken, but nothing of a major nature.

**Church Hall**

The church hall was added to the building in 1973.

There is a fitted kitchen attached to the hall which is well-used by both church organisations and other users, both regular and occasional. There is a full suite of toilets, including accessible/baby changing facilities, equally accessible to church and hall. There is a Hall booking officer and the church employs a cleaner for the hall & vestries.

**Church Grounds**

The church is set in pleasant grounds, with an open area surrounded by trees known as *The Pleasance* behind it. It is maintained by the volunteer Garden Group.
The Pleasance is used for a variety of activities, including the church Summer Fete, and by the pre-school group daily.

A Garden of Remembrance that lies to the east of the church is regularly used for the interment of ashes and is well maintained and valued.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage is located at 48 Old Road East, almost opposite the church. It is a Victorian double fronted detached building on two floors. Downstairs there are a large lounge, a smaller sitting room, dining room, study, fitted kitchen with larder, toilet and a cellar.

Upstairs there are five bedrooms, three of these being large doubles, there are two good size singles and one which is used as a box room. There is a large bathroom with power shower, and a separate toilet.

The house is part double glazed and fully centrally heated. It will receive some redecoration and refurbishment before the new incumbent takes up residence.

There are gardens to front and rear. The large rear garden is grassed on two levels. There is a garage.
Organisation

Much of the work of the PCC is carried out through its committees, whose decisions are then ratified by the PCC. The committees are as follows:

**Standing Committee**

The committee comprises the Vicar, Church Wardens, deputy PCC Chairman, treasurer & secretary. It meets primarily to discuss and take action on matters that arise between meetings.

**Other Committees**

Five PCC committees meet between PCC meetings to move forward the life of the church and to put the Mission Action Plan into action:

- Children and Youth;
- Buildings and Finance;
- Community and Social Events;
- Worship and Discipleship;
- Pastoral and Social Concern.

In addition, sub-committees are convened as needed to manage the church hall and to identify charitable concerns for the church lent appeal.

A sub-group of the PCC forms a pre-school Management Committee to manage our pre-school and its seven employees.
Other Organisations

Mothers’ Union

Christ Church Mothers’ Union is very active with over 30 members who meet monthly in the church hall for talks and discussions. They play an active role in the life of the church, running stalls at fetes and bazaars, holding an annual Sunday service in July and organising social occasions and outings that are also attended by non-members from the congregation. "Quiet mornings‘, incorporating a Holy Communion, are held occasionally in church.

Once a month 'Mustard Seed’, a social meeting for the elderly and others, meets over tea and cakes - an opportunity to meet friends and make new friends.

We raise funds to support a number of other good causes throughout the year - and we have a special link with Christian Aid, with various fund raising events through the year.
Communication

Church Services
The congregation is provided each Sunday with service sheets prepared for the day's services including readings, and accompanied by a weekly news sheet.

Parish Magazine
This is a monthly multi-coloured 20page publication produced by a member of the congregation, also containing paid for advertising. A copy is enclosed.

Parish Coverage
Twice yearly, before Christmas and Easter, a card is delivered to every house in the Parish, giving details of forthcoming services and activities.

Website
We have a comprehensive parish website at http://www.christchurchgravesend.org.uk/
The webmaster is an IT professional and works hard to keep it updated. We also have a Facebook Page.

Finances
Regular giving is encouraged through a stewardship envelope scheme, also enabling tax rebates to be claimed where appropriate. The Church finances are sound as can be seen from the accounts. A copy of the accounts is included with this profile.

Reasonable savings in expenditure are achieved by means of the monthly working party, who carry out smaller maintenance and cleaning needed on the building.

The church supports many good causes, administered through PCC Committees. In addition a 200 Club (drawn monthly) adds to church funds.

We have a very experienced Treasurer.
Contacts

The Church Wardens are:

Jan Osborne (phone 01474 740763)
Lucy Hornby

Lucy was appointed at the Annual meeting in April 2018, after the retirement of the previous post-holder.

Additional Documents
(available on Church Website)

Website email address: http://www.christchurchgravesend.org.uk

Copy of Mission Action Plan 2017-20

Copy of Church Accounts, 2016-17

Copies of Parish Magazine