Welcome to the Benefice of

St. Mary's Chiddingstone, & St. Luke's, Chiddingstone Causeway

Welcome to our Parish Profile. The profile describes who we are, where we are, what it is like to live here, our spiritual life and our hopes for the future.
Introduction to our two Parishes

Chiddingstone is approximately 7 miles from Sevenoaks and a similar distance from both Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. Easy access to these towns combined with local rail links to London and the motorway network means that, while the parishes are predominantly rural most of our parishioners no longer work in the traditional country occupations. We have a thriving primary school in which the number of enrolled pupils has grown to over 200. There are numerous schools in Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells; including grammar, faith based and comprehensive schools.

The parish is unusually widespread (the 2nd most sparsely populated in Kent) due to its origins of pig-dens developing into farms, with only small village centres. of these, Chiddingstone village centre (school, shop, Castle Inn and a few Tudor houses) is owned by The National Trust.

Uniquely within the diocese, the parish has two thriving churches which share the main services (half a year each) but the parishioners join together as one congregation whether at St Mary`s or St Luke`s. Similarly, the two PCCs hold one joint meeting.

Shopping

Locally there are village shops, including Post Offices, in Chiddingstone and Chiddingstone Causeway for the ‘forgotten necessities’. For regular shopping, the towns of Edenbridge, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells offer a selection of the principal high street retailers for food and clothing

Local Organisations and Clubs

There are many thriving clubs organised by the parishioners. St Luke’s has its own fête and a couple of weeks later St Mary’s joins with about seven other groups for Chiddingstone Village Fête. We have clubs for Mothers and Toddlers, 2 Women’s Institutes, Over 60’s, Tuesday Group (pre-school), youth club, tennis, cricket and stoolball.

Within the villages we have a very active amateur dramatics group CHAPS which puts on one or two shows a year.

Public Transport

The Chiddingstone villages have hourly rail links to London via the stations at Chiddingstone Causeway, (named rather confusingly Penshurst,) Hever, Cowden and Hildenborough. These stations give access to the centre of London within a journey time of less than an hour. The national motorway network is also easily accessible via the M25 which is about 10 miles away.

Village Halls

The Parishes have 2 well equipped Village Halls close to each Church, which are regularly used for a range of activities
St Mary’s the Virgin, Chiddingstone

Although an early Saxon church is believed to have existed, pre-Conquest, for the `densmen and their families, the present church has 13th century origins but was substantially rebuilt in the 14th century with the fine west tower, stair turret and four pinnacles being added in the 15th century. Following a lightning strike in 1624, which destroyed all but the tower, the church was rebuilt and rededicated in 1629. We have a ring of eight bells in the tower which were all rehung in 1991.

Our font was made in 1628 of local sandstone and has been described as the best production of its period in Kent. The pulpit dates from the same time. We are also proud of our organ (two-manual T.C. Lewis and much loved by our roster of organists) which dates from 1881.

More recently, enhancement of St Mary`s facilities has included the addition of a small chapel in the base of the tower, toilet facilities, and an area for preparing and serving light snacks, tea and coffee for meetings, concerts, visiting groups and regular gatherings after services. Also, a built-in laptop, remote controlled projector and screen has been installed for use within services, by guest speakers and, importantly, by the school.
St Luke's, Chiddingstone Causeway

St Luke's Church Chiddingstone Causeway was built in 1898 when the local community grew with the development of the cricket bat and ball industry carried on by Duke & Sons in the village, and large congregations justified a proper church to replace the small chapel of St. Saviour. The Hills family, local landowners, commissioned the architect Mr John Bentley, designer of Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral. The church is well constructed in Bath stone in the late Gothic style with many notable features.

These include a beautiful Altar window, the work of the leading Impressionist Wilfred de Glehn RA, a fine oak communion table and brass rails with panels of light wrought iron worked underneath; the carved oak-panelled pulpit and lectern; a wide, raised chancel paved with Portland stone; the Font by Messrs Farmer & Brindley constructed of alabaster, Portland stone, marble and the actual basin of Cippolino marble. The original organ, still in regular use, is by Messrs Norman & Beard, and the spacious barrel-vaulted roof lends itself well to the fine acoustic properties of the building.

St Luke's Parish Room is a purpose built free standing oak building. It provides a home for the Sunday School, Youth Groups and Church Office, as well as a hall for socialising after Services, offering baby and disabled facilities. The Parish Room is available for hire to the wider community for meetings and talks, exhibitions and clubs in the area. The building is of 640 ft² and is suitable for events of up to 40 people. The main meeting room has kitchen and toilet facilities. The room is next to the Church, with ample parking.
Worship and Ministry

Our main 10.00 morning services are rotated between the two churches over the year with summer services at St Mary’s and winter services at St Luke’s. On each Sunday Holy Communion is celebrated in one of the churches and the Family Service, Matins or Compline is held in the other church. A warm welcome is offered to visitors and regular worshippers and after our main services tea and coffee are served for social time together. We aim to provide a variety of services for as many ‘tastes’ as possible. There are 46 parishioners on the Electoral Roll of St Mary’s, and 49 on the Electoral Roll of St Luke’s. The Priest is supported by a pastoral assistant and we plan to appoint a number of helpers to increase pastoral care.

Our clergy usually wear cassock and surplice and we have a robed choir for the main services. In each month we offer a variety of services ranging from the very popular Family Service to the very traditional Service of Matins. We hold Eucharist at the main service 3 times a month and a said Eucharist at 8.00am on the alternate Sundays. The regular service pattern is:

1st Sunday  8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
            10.00am Family Service
2nd Sunday  10.00am Sung Eucharist  
            6.00pm Compline
3rd Sunday  8.00am Holy Communion  
            10.00am Family Eucharist
4th Sunday  10.00am Sung Eucharist  
            6.00pm Compline
5th Sunday  8.00am Holy Communion  
            10.00am Matins

Special services are integrated with our normal worship pattern, these include a service of remembrance for the bereaved, sedar supper, Easter, Christmas, Harvest and Remembrance.
Chiddingstone Church of England School

Chiddingstone Church of England School provides a family orientated education for local children which is underpinned by our strong Christian values. It has very close links with St Mary’s Church. Rev Martin Beaumont (our retiring incumbent) and Carol Benton (Pastoral Assistant) have had an excellent relationship with the school and take regular Acts of Worship and contribute to many areas of the RE curriculum through talks and class visits to the Church. This close association has contributed to the school’s success, its expansion to 210 pupils and its status as an Academy.

The incumbent is a member and trustee of the Academy trust and meets regularly with the head teacher and governing body, the chairman being a PCC member.

The school holds a weekly Act of Worship in the church. Special services are held at Christmas, Easter, Harvest and for the Year 6 Leavers’ Service where dance, drama and a mix of traditional and modern songs of worship are used. Interactive prayer stations in the church and in school provide opportunities for children to explore their spirituality and our Church School values.

A good number of children are involved in Sunday School, choir and family services and the strong connection between the school and the church is mutually beneficial. The school is Ofsted "Outstanding" (March 2015) and very recently received an Outstanding SIAMS report (July 2017).
Chiddingstone Nursery School

Location:
Chiddingstone Nursery School is a long established nursery situated in the heart of Chiddingstone village. Our sessions are held in a converted stable in the grounds of Chiddingstone Castle. We have a safe enclosed play area in the castle courtyard adjoining the nursery where the children can experience gardening, sand and water play and use sit and ride toys. We use the area as part of a curriculum learning experience as well as a play area.

Aims:
Chiddingstone Nursery School aims to provide a happy and caring environment for children aged two years until school age. We aim to create an atmosphere in which children can blossom as individuals; promote equality and diversity, develop self esteem and confidence and learn social skills by caring and sharing with others. We work in partnership with parents and carers and add to the life and well being of the local community.

Church Connections:
Each week we introduce a number and letter/sound of the alphabet from the jolly phonic scheme. For the letter sounds ‘V’ we invite the vicar to visit the nursery and for the sound ‘ch’ the nursery children walk over to the church for a visit. The Nursery has close links with Chiddingstone School and the Church, during the summer terms the nursery regularly join the key stage one assembly at the school and for the other two terms the pastoral assistant takes a short nursery assembly at the end of the Friday morning session. The nursery celebrates and performs the nativity in the church.
The Youth Club
Run every two weeks during the school term-time by a loyal and enthusiastic group of leaders, the youth club gives a social focal point in the villages for young people between the ages of 11 to 16. The activities are as inclusive and varied as are the boundaries of the imagination. Recent activities have included curling, splash disco. The lively and empathetic style of leadership is rewarded with a good regular attendance.

The Tuesday Group
The Tuesday Group is a coffee morning for parents and carers of pre-school children living in or near the villages of the Chiddingstones. It is held on Tuesdays from 9.30am to 11.30 in the Parish Room at St Luke’s. The Group has been running for over 30 years and very much welcomes new members. The main focus is for adults and children to make and meet new friends within their community.

The Toddler Group
This group of mums and dads meets twice a month in the chapel at St Mary’s and the Parish Room at St Luke's and led by our pastoral assistant enjoy stories, songs and refreshments.

The Sunday School
The Sunday School Team, of local parents and teachers from Chiddingstone School, bring their enthusiasm and Christian witness to their task of instructing and involving the children in presentations to the congregation on occasions during the year. The numbers attending fluctuate annually, as the children move on to the choir or youth club. The attendance is typically 8 to 12 children.
YOUR ROLE and OUR VISION

The Archdeacon of Tonbridge is currently leading a review of the provision of lay and ordained ministry in the rural parishes of the Tonbridge Deanery – namely Edenbridge, Crockham Hill, Four Elms, Hever, Markbeech, Chiddingstone, Chiddingstone Causeway, Leigh, Penshurst, and Fordcombe. It is anticipated that a number of the current incumbents will retire in the next few years and this presents an opportunity to consult on potential pastoral reorganisation. It is for this reason that the right of presentation to the Benefice of St Mary and St Luke Chiddingstone is suspended.

We are looking for a part time Priest in Charge for these two parishes such as could sit alongside other commitments. Details to be discussed and agreed with the Archdeacon of Tonbridge. Applicants should ideally have appreciation and understanding of the needs of a rural community and of supporting congregations through growth and development.

Our vision is that the church and its people will be at the heart of our local Community and will welcome people from all Churches, faiths, traditions and denominations.

We want to advance the spiritual growth of our children by embracing our school and local families in our Sunday worship and continue to support and care for the pastoral needs of our older parishioners by increased lay involvement.

We aim to be diverse, open and dynamic, through welcoming all-comers, developing new ideas and through active service to the community and wider world, whilst respecting those who have a love of the traditional.
Who we are looking for

Based on the feedback from our congregation, our hopes for the new priest include someone who will:

- Maintain the Church at the heart of the community and enhance the Christian fellowship of our parishes.
- Advance the spiritual growth of both children and adult members of the whole community.
- Build upon the current Christian education including Lent and Advent discussion groups.
- Be a good communicator who will enjoy involvement with the parishioners in a wide variety of both spiritual and social activities.
- Be non-judgemental, sensitive and understanding of the views of all.
- Have a warm personality and a sense of humour and fun.
- Support our traditional liturgical worship and enhance the involvement of young families in our services.
- Ideally have the experience of leading people through a process of transition.
- Become a School Governor for Chiddingstone C of E Academy and provide Christian guidance to the young.
- Become a Trustee of Chiddingstone Parish Charities.
- Above all, embrace the rural nature of the community – being a shepherd to a widespread flock.
Facts...

- There are currently 95 persons on the Electoral Roll; St Luke's 52, St Mary's 46.
- Average Sunday Attendance:
  - Adults 52
  - Children 10
- Average number of Baptisms per annum 8
- Average number of Weddings per annum 20
- Average number of Funerals:
  - Church 6
  - Crematorium 5

...and Figures

The two parishes of St Mary’s and St Luke’s manage their finances independently.

- Regular donors are encouraged to donate by standing order and to use gift aid to increase the value of their donations.
- There is a fund raising group within the joint PCC which organise numerous events throughout the year. The funds raised are then shared between the two churches.
- The budget for the maintenance of the fabric of St Mary’s and St Luke’s is managed on a yearly basis to ensure that all work identified in the quinquennial inspections is carried out.

The full 2016 audited accounts are available upon request.
Called Together – the vision for the Diocese of Rochester

Called Together – the vision for the Diocese of Rochester

Launched in November 2017, Called Together is the strategic vision for the Diocese of Rochester. The vision and core themes were discerned following extensive engagement across the Diocese, seeking to hear what God is calling us to in this place and time. The three themes – Growing Disciples, Enriching our Communities, and Resourcing our Mission and Ministry – seek to give focus and direction to our priorities over the next five years. Every parish in the Diocese is invited to support the shared vision in a way which fits their local context, working towards the same goals.

Called Together marks the beginning of an exciting journey for the Diocese of Rochester. As Bishop James said, “This is a significant moment for us as a Christian community. It has implications not just for how we move forward and connect as a Church family, but how we engage and support people across our communities.”

More information can be found on the Diocesan website at http://www.rochester.anglican.org/called-together

Tonbridge Deanery

Tonbridge Deanery comprises sixteen churches and has within its breadth town centre churches with significant civic responsibilities and smaller rural communities where the church occupies a central role in village life. The clergy and some lay leaders meet for an annual retreat at Worth Abbey and all the Parishes unite each year in its round of synod business and also at Ascension Day for a joint act of worship. In its recent past, the deanery has held joint training events. The deanery is also represented at local council meetings. There is a good appetite for working together and the clergy who meet are actively mutually supportive. Any new priest will find a supportive environment of ministerial colleagues to work alongside many of whom have extensive experience.
The Rectory

The rectory is set back from Chiddingstone High Street, next to the village school, and about 100m from St Mary’s church. It is a comfortable, 4 bedroomed detached house overlooking farmland with two garages and large south facing garden laid mainly to lawn.

The rectory is in good order with no outstanding maintenance work required.

The ground floor comprises a large sitting room with south facing windows, dining room, study, toilet, kitchen and utility room. There is access to one of the garages via the utility room.

Upstairs are four bedrooms and a bathroom with toilet.

The garden is enclosed and extends to the south and west of the house with wonderful views. It is laid mainly to lawn with some shrubberies around the perimeter. There is parking to the front adjacent to the garages, and room to enlarge this area when needed in the future without detriment to the home.