

PARISH OF ST PETER & ST PAUL TONBRIDGE

PARISH PROFILE

Our town and area

Tonbridge is a Kentish town in the Medway Valley. It has been a market town since the Middle Ages and the Normans chose it for their splendid motte and bailey castle which, with the River Medway, dominates the town to this day. Tonbridge is located about 30 miles south of London and has a population of About 35,000.

Tonbridge is well situated for communications. It has several industrial estates, with a predominance of distribution and light industrial units. The town is an outstanding centre for education with the well known Tonbridge School being a major employer. There are also other large secondary schools, including three grammar schools, and numerous state and private primary and junior/preparatory schools.

There is a wide range of sporting and cultural facilities in the town or not far away. There is a small Chamber of Commerce, as well as Rotary and Lions Clubs. There are many different clubs and societies ranging from music and the Arts to horticulture, bird watching etc. Tonbridge has the 'Garden of England' on its doorstep, including the beautiful countryside of the Weald and Ashdown Forest and many tourist attractions, including castles and gardens.

Our Parish

St Peter & St Paul Tonbridge was once the largest parish in the Diocese of Rochester. It formerly stretched from Hildenborough to Tunbridge Wells, but is now much smaller and the southern part of the town comprises the neighbouring parish of St Stephen's. It is part of the Tonbridge Archdeaconry which comprises of 91 parishes and 68 benefices led by the Archdeacon of Tonbridge, the Ven Julie Conalty. The Area Dean, the Revd Miriam Barker, Community Chaplain, heads the Tonbridge Deanery which embraces 8 benefices many of which are rural, one of six deaneries in the Archdeaconry.

We are a lively and vibrant evangelical parish with four churches and different styles of worship. But we are united in seeking to deliver God's mission by:

- loving for the Bible and seeking to live according to its teaching
- praying as we rely on the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire our life together
- working together to serve the church family, the people of our Parish and the town of Tonbridge and our various mission partners around the world.

The Parish population is approximately 22-23,000. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of housing developments, particularly apartments. Whilst there is a wide demographic range across the Parish there is also a large ageing population many of whom live independently.

In our church family there are many people with a rich variety of backgrounds, gifts and experience. Many offer their gifts willingly and generously in the ministry of the church, but we would really like more people to become inspired and involved.

Our people

St Peter & St Paul is currently service by a Vicar, Revd Canon Mark Brown and a Parish Curate, the Revd Wendy Carr, a Youth and Children's Minister, a full-time Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) who, with the administrative staff and Vicar's PA, form the staff team. There is a strong cadre of LLMs, Readers and Pastoral Assistants who work across the Parish in leading, preaching and caring roles.

There are many lay volunteers who support the work of the Parish in a wide variety of ways including the Parish Treasurer and a finance team, Churchwardens, Deputy and Assistant Wardens, caterers, flower arrangers, sacristans and many others.

Our churches

St Peter & St Paul Parish Church is the oldest and largest church in the Parish. It is open all the week until 2pm for visitors and the café is open from 10.00am – noon. It is the hub of the Parish administration and the focus of many social activities.

St Andrews is our smallest church. It is a little wooden building on the northern edge of Tonbridge. It is a prayerful and friendly community offering a warm welcome to all.

St Philip's Church is located in the centre of the north end of Tonbridge between two large housing estates. It hosts many community groups and associations during the week. As it is envisaged that an important element of the Associate Minister's role will be to provide leadership for St Philip's, a more detailed profile of that church is attached.

St Saviour's is a Victorian church in Dry Hill Park Crescent offering a traditional service and a caring family. Re-ordering of the church has provided a flexible space for concerts, meetings and gatherings.

Our services

We hold a range of services at each of our four churches within the Parish.

St Peter & St Paul

8.00am Holy Communion (1st and 3rd Sundays of the month)

10.00am Morning Service (4th Sunday – Holy Communion)

6.30pm Evening Service

St Andrews

10.00am Morning Service (2nd Sunday – Holy Communion)

St Philip

9.00am Holy Communion (1st Sunday in the month)

10.30am Morning Service (3rd Sunday – Holy Communion)

St Saviour

8.00am Holy Communion (2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays in the month)

10.00am Morning Service (1st Sunday – Holy Communion)

Occasional offices and confirmation

Preparation classes are held for couples preparing for marriage, those bringing children for baptism and for individuals, both children and adults, coming forward for confirmation.

Several of our lay ministers are trained to take funerals and engage in ministry to the bereaved.

Our activities

Mission and outreach. The Parish supports individuals and organisations across the world. including Retrak, the Diocese of Kondoia in Tanzania, Agape, the Langham Partnership, the Lawrence Barham Memorial Trust, OMF International and work in Japan.

On the home front various outreach events are held throughout the year including lunchtime concerts, invitation services and evangelistic evenings in the local Pizza Express. We are currently building on a successful Big Questions series and will be using this as a springboard for outreach based at St Philips in the New Year.

Youth and childrens work. We hope to recruit an assistant for our Youth and Children's Minister to enable us to do more in the vital discipleship of children and young people both within the Parish and in the local schools where we regularly take assemblies. Local schools also visit us for events like Experience weeks, Extravanganzas and festival services.

There are various groups for the children and young people on a Sunday morning. Connect, for school years 6-8, meets regularly to explore the Christian faith through fun, food and fellowship. Refresh, school years 10-13, provides the opportunity to look at Christianity and the Bible in the context of everyday life. Over the past few years a group from the Parish has attended Soul Survivor and in 2019 a group of 12 young people are going out to our mission partners in Kondo.

Other groups include Tiny Acorns (under 1's), Teddies and Tots & Co for pre-schoolers

A very successful and lively Holiday Club is a much anticipated annual event in the Parish at the end of July.

Other groups

Coffee Break meets every Monday morning in St Saviours for coffee, fellowship and a 'Thought for the Day'. Women's Fellowship meets twice a month at St Philip's for chat, fellowship and a range of activities. A friendly group of women meet as Stepping Stones Thursday mornings in term time to study the Bible and to encourage one another to grow in the faith. More of the wide range of activities are described in the St Philip's profile.

A men's group meets twice a month in term time at St Philip's Church and has a varied programme of events including such adventures as the 3 Peaks.

Hospital chaplaincy

Seven of our members are part of the local hospital chaplaincy team

Prayer

Parish-wide prayer meetings are held at 9.00am every Saturday morning in St Peter & St Paul. There are a number of other church- or issue-specific prayer-related activities throughout the Parish including a termly Parish-wide prayer and praise gathering .

Home Groups

Home groups have had for many years, and continue to have, a key role in the Parish. We currently have 13 home groups across the Parish, some meeting in the afternoon rather than the evening.

Music

The musical style and tradition of music is different at each of our four churches. Worship at St Peter & St Paul morning service is usually led by a worship group. The evening service is principally currently led by an organist and, for some services, a choir.

At St Andrew services are accompanied by a piano or small electronic organ. St Philip has a lively worship style and services are led in a more informal way within a liturgical framework with a music group interacting with the congregation.

St Saviour has a fine two-manual organ and the services of an organist. A worship group leads the singing once a month.

Music 'Bashes' are held periodically to encourage more people into music ministry across the Parish.

There is a dedicated and talented band of bell ringers at St Peter & St Paul who ring for morning and evening services there and for weddings and other special occasions.

Some Facts and Figures for 2018

- Over 1,300 people attended our Christmas eve, mid-night and Christmas day services.
- Easter services were attended by over 500 people.
- Our Electoral Roll has 426 members
- Our usual Sunday attendance was 305. This is split between our 4 churches as follows
 - 160 people St Peter & St Paul
 - 50 people St Saviour
 - 65 people St Philip
 - 30 people St Andrew
- 17 Baptisms
- 10 Weddings
- 58 Funerals
- Holiday Club week saw 130 children coming to our churches