WELCOME TO THE PARISHES OF
ST BARNABAS & ST MARY MAGDALENE,
GILLINGHAM

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WELCOME & OVERVIEW

The Bishop of Rochester is seeking to appoint a Priest-in-Charge who will serve half time in the parish of St Barnabas and half time in the parish of St Mary Magdalene, both in Gillingham, Kent.

The two parishes are adjacent to one another and cover a total population of approximately 25,000 people. As well as being geographically close together, they are demographically similar, and the two worshipping communities share a similar churchmanship.

As well as developing the existing worshipping community life of the two churches, there is significant scope for the right candidate to work creatively across both parishes in a variety of areas, including discipleship; youth, children and schools work; ministry among vulnerable communities (such as the homeless); work with those in residential care home settings. St Mary’s parish has a large team of Lay ministers who, along with other members of both congregations, are willing to work across parish boundaries to enable the whole area to flourish. The neighbouring parish of St Augustine’s, Gillingham – another church in a similar tradition – has a full time Priest-in-Charge and SSM curate and is also keen to explore working with the parishes of St Barnabas and St Mary’s. A project has recently begun to seek funding for a Community Missioner who would work across all three parishes, as well as the parish of St Mark’s in Gillingham Town Centre.

St Barnabas parish

St Mary's parish
The Medway Towns

Medway is the largest urban area in the South-East outside London. It consists of several small towns of which Gillingham is one. The Medway economy is worth around £2.8 billion per year and has an estimated 13,000 businesses. The population of Medway is around 270,000 and growing.

Medway is part of the Thames Gateway Regeneration Programme – the largest development project in Europe – that will create new opportunities for business expansion and inward investment.

Medway is conveniently located and benefits from comprehensive transport links with the European mainland and the UK. There is access to the M2, M20 and M25, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, domestic services and high speed trains to London St Pancras.

Medway is famous for its historical sites: Rochester Cathedral and Castle, Upnor Castle, Chatham Historic Dockyard. Charles Dickens grew up in Chatham and Rochester and many of Dickens’ books feature places and buildings in Medway. Medway also hosts many annual festivals, the Dickens Festival being one of the most renowned. The Central, Brook and Medway Little Theatres provide a mix of professional and amateur productions and there are several cinemas, bowling alleys, shopping centres, sports centres and an ice rink. In addition, Bluewater shopping centre is just 15 miles away, and the best beaches of the Kent coast can be reached by rail or road in under an hour.

The University of Kent (at Medway), Canterbury Christ Church University, Medway and the University of Greenwich, Medway share a large growing campus in the Medway towns - these have been built within what used to be the Chatham Dockyard area, and although not within the Parish, are less than one mile from the Church. There is a University Chaplain working across the Medway campus. The University for the Creative Arts has a campus in Rochester.

Gillingham Deanery

Gillingham Deanery is the most Easterly in Rochester Diocese, and is one of three in the Medway Towns (the other two being Rochester and Strood). It is one of the most densely populated deaneries in the Diocese, with just over 105,000 people living here – a number which is growing every year, with a number of large property developments due to take place in different parts of the Deanery during the next decade.
Eight parishes, twelve churches and a Bishop’s Mission Order make up the Deanery, and they highlight the diverse make-up of this part of the Medway Towns. There are three ancient churches at St Margaret’s, Rainham, St Mary Magdalene’s, Gillingham and St Peter’s Bredhurst. Central and North Gillingham has four Victorian churches. The more recently built parts of the Deanery are served by twentieth century buildings in Parkwood, Wigmore, Hempstead and Twydall. In the most recently developed part of the Deanery, St Mary’s Island Church meets in the local Primary School, and our new BMO focussed on the development along Gillingham Riverside, known as “Reach at Gillingham Pier” meets in a variety of locations, running along the north edge of St Luke’s, St Mark’s and St Mary’s parishes.

The river, the Royal Navy and the Royal Engineers are fundamental to understanding both the past and the present of Gillingham Deanery. Most of the housing built until the 1960s was intended to serve the workers of Chatham dockyard, and its closure in 1982 caused huge deprivation which is still felt today. The heavy industrial jobs are mostly gone, replaced by light industry, service industry, retail and the ever-expanding London commuter belt. There is even some farming! Central and Northern Gillingham suffers from a high degree of deprivation, with St Mary’s parish being one of the poorest in the Diocese. By contrast, the parishes of Rainham and South Gillingham are more affluent. There is much opportunity in the Deanery for churches to support local people and share Good News with them through local projects like the Medway Night Shelter and Medway Foodbank.

Gillingham Deanery Chapter meets monthly for support, prayer, conversation, news and lunch, as well as to discuss upcoming events and projects. It is well attended, and the Deanery’s clergy are great encouragers of one another. Deanery Synod meets three times a year.

There are many churches of other denominations in the Deanery, and Churches Together groups meet in Rainham, North Gillingham and Twydall, as well as the larger Churches Together in Medway group. In 2018, many churches took part in the “Thy Kingdom Come“ initiative between Ascension Day and Pentecost, worshipping in a different church every night, ending with a Pentecost celebration at St Mark’s in Gillingham Town Centre. The Evangelist J John also held a large evangelistic event in St Mary’s parish last year, when the “Just One” programme came to Priestfields stadium in June.

It’s an exciting time to consider a move to Gillingham Deanery. The population is growing and changing all the time, becoming increasingly diverse. We are looking at creative and innovative ways of working together to engage with and inspire local people, to build community and make disciples.

Education and Healthcare in Gillingham

There are 12 Secondary schools locally of which six are Grammar schools. (Kent and Medway have retained grammar schools.) There is also a large new development for Mid Kent College in Gillingham. There are some very good local primary schools.

Medway Maritime Hospital is situated in Gillingham and serves the surrounding district. The hospital invests in a good chaplaincy team.
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OUR NEW PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

Who we are …

Welcome to St Barnabas Church, Gillingham. We are a forward-looking, welcoming, prayerful church, whose future ministry and mission in this area is inextricably linked to the founding context of this church, a church that was built by the people, for its people, by God’s infinite grace. To this end we are open to new ways of bringing God’s truth and love to all in our parish and to those whose paths we cross. We are ambitious to grow to be the earthly face of God, with a view to supporting our community further by encouraging, listening and being available in times of need and by witnessing to the love of God for and within this area of Medway. We have a strong lay leadership, enthused by the gains to be had from creative collaboration and excited to see what the future holds with a new priest to help us develop and renew our discipleship.

The role …

In the spirit of ‘Called Together’, the Diocesan framework, we are looking for a new, half-time Priest-in-Charge, who will simultaneously and equally be Priest-in-charge at St Mary Magdalene Church, one of our neighbouring parishes. We hope that our new priest will work with us to bless the parish of St Barnabas, inside and outside of the church, as well as guiding us towards finding new and creative ways which will enable our two parishes to work together, and alongside our other near neighbour at St Augustine’s, Gillingham. All three churches have a similar churchmanship, which might be described as traditional Eucharistic Anglican worship, but each offers markedly different resources and strengths. Working with different priests, mostly retired, has offered us the opportunity to experience and enjoy different styles of worship. We value diversity as a means of connecting with a range of people wherever they are in their own personal faith journey.

At St Barnabas, as a result of a threat of closure, God has brought us to the realisation of the need to be more outward looking. We see our mission as actively seeking to work collaboratively with different churches, not only of our own tradition but beyond and with other local organisations and faith groups for the sake of the ‘shalom’ of our precious shared community.

What we are hoping for …

St Barnabas Church has been without a vicar of its own for over ten years now, and we are excited to see what the future holds with a new priest at the helm. Encouraged by growing numbers and a more prominent presence in the local community, we are now looking forward to being challenged and led in new directions. In particular, we are hoping for someone who can:

• Pray with us and for us as part of a community seeking God’s will for this part of Gillingham
• Lead us in meaningful, accessible acts of worship where we draw closer to God together
• Build, with us, a team that can lead St Barnabas into a confident and creative future
• Preach and teach in ways that draw us further on in our personal and corporate discipleship
• Discern and encourage vocations, especially to lay ministries, among members of
the St Barnabas congregation

- Help us to re-imagine the way we use our buildings and our assets, creatively making use of the many assets available.
- Work with us to build lively and productive links with the primary and secondary schools in our parish, and to grow our ministry with local families and children
- Build on the work we undertake to support local vulnerable and isolated people currently including those that are homeless or vulnerably housed, elderly, disabled, isolated and marginalised and with residents in our care homes.
- Help us to engage in new ways with our local community that we may be a living witness to the good news of Jesus Christ

In return, we would offer you

- An enthusiastic welcome, prayer and support
- A congregation committed to pray, to learn and to get involved
- A hardworking PCC, with a proven capability for managing the resources and maintenance of the fabric of the church and its holdings
- An oasis of calm and quiet reflective space which is flexible, a sacred haven of ‘coolness and balm’ in the Summer months (we are working on the Winter months!)
- Collectively an open mind, willing to try new things to open this church up for its community
- A good understanding of our local community, its strengths and its needs and our encouragement and collaboration in forging new links
- A willingness to work with others to serve the people of the local area.
- Support and respect for your privacy and time off
- A small current team of retired priests who may continue to offer their services in some form in the future
- A steaming cup of tea on those days when it’s cold in church(!)

Most of all, we are passionate about having a visionary and enterprising priest who wants to be here, who has a vision for utilising the potential of this space as a community resource, which makes welcome and offers Christ’s hospitality to anyone and everyone that works, lives or visits in the community.

As we have been without a full-time priest since 2008, during which time the PCC has looked after this church, we are well aware of the demands looking after two churches will have on your time. We would continue to help as much as possible taking on aspects that we, as lay people, can lead, leaving you to focus on the cure of souls and growing our numbers, on being a priest.
THE PARISH OF ST BARNABAS, GILLINGHAM

The Parish

St Barnabas parish is, for a large part, made up of Victorian terraced houses, originally built to house workers for the dockyard and related industries. More modern housing has been built over time as the earlier housing has been demolished and the parish is now a patchwork of different types of property. As the railway station sits on the edge of the parish, a sizeable number of people who live here commute up to London every day.

As well as the terraced housing, there are many larger properties in the parish, particularly located around Gillingham park.

Gillingham North Ward, within which the Parishes of St Barnabas and St Mary’s are located, is deprived; it is one of the most deprived wards in Medway and using the overall Indices of Multiple Deprivation is in the top 10% nationally. The St Barnabas part of the ward, however, is significantly less deprived, and only sits in the top 50% overall, though barriers to good housing remain significant. About two thirds of homes are owner occupied, with a very small number of homes being social housing. Medway Council’s housing office is just over the parish boundary, and so we see an increasing number of homeless people in the parish.

In the last census there were 9,100 residents in the parish, and this figure is constantly growing. The parish is largely residential, with only small employers to be found within its boundaries.

There are several other churches in the parish, including Salem Church of the Nazarene and Beulah Christian fellowship, both in the same road as St Barnabas, with whom we have very good relationships. Third Avenue Church and Community Centre (Methodist) is also in the parish, and the local Hindu Education Centre and Jamia mosque are just outside the parish boundaries.

The Vicarage

St Barnabas’ vicarage is currently occupied by the curate of St Mark’s church. It is currently anticipated that the new Priest-in-Charge will live in the vicarage adjacent to St Mary’s church, which is a mile away from St Barnabas.
The Parish Church

St Barnabas Church was built in 1890 and for 128 years has served its parish in Gillingham. It is a ‘sizeable church with considerable presence in the local landscape’. ‘The large interior space is well cared for and of some value as an open space.’ (CBC report 2013, available on request) The attractive interior benefits from pews that are not fixed to the floor, allowing the space to be creatively used for worship and other events. In 2015, a small kitchen and new toilets were added to the South aisle, allowing the space to be used for community activities, such as the popular Wednesday club, as well as for hospitality after worship. A good attractive renovation could make this an appealing venue for affordable wedding receptions.

The church is a good example of spectacular Victorian Architecture and this combined with the recently (2012) restored Stained Glass Windows makes it a large and beautiful venue which is the perfect backdrop for Weddings, Baptisms and School Events. These have grown in popularity in the last three years.

St Barnabas also benefits from a large hall, the first building (church) on the site, which is rented out to a community preschool for much of the week. This provides a useful revenue stream, as well as serving a real community need. A member of church sits on the Preschool Board. The hall is also hired out for parties and is a regular venue for the Medway Night Shelter, both as a shelter venue and the regular meeting place for the Board of Trustees. Once a month the hall hosts a parish lunch for members of the church providing a two course home-cooked meal, for which a new range cooker has recently been purchased.

A small house, once the residence of the verger, is attached to the hall. A reasonable rental income is attained from this house and we have long-term tenants in residence.

Work started during the autumn of 2018 to repair and make safe the retaining walls around the church is nearing completion. This has improved the aspect of the church making it more welcoming and immediately noticeable from two busy roads.

The church is well-maintained and good condition. The PCC and community is eager to continue worship within the church and recognises that this may require widening the use of building for activities in addition to worship. The PCC is keen to work with the new priest and the Open and Sustainable team of the Cathedral and Church Building Division to look at the possibilities of combined use and to widen the potential of the building.

The acoustics are, for example, ideal for musical performances. However the church heating system is not very effective and nor is its lighting. Fundraising towards upgrading these systems is being actively undertaken with a grant towards the works obtained recently. Work needs to be started before the end of two years. There is also limited car parking on site. ‘It has a good location, with good transport links and with a small amount of off-road parking.'
**WORSHIP AT ST BARNABAS**

**Our main Sunday service takes place at 10:15am.** This is a Common Worship Eucharist with hymns accompanied by a computerised music system. We use *Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New* supplemented by newer hymns projected onto the screen. While we have the Common Worship service books, we also project liturgy onto the screen, especially during special services. Average attendance is 34.

**On Thursday mornings** we have a weekly bible study and prayer time. On the third Thursday of the month this forms the “Liturgy of the Word” element of a midweek Eucharist. Average attendance is around 9.

We do not currently have a choir or music group, but there are enthusiastic singers within the congregation, and we do have a guitarist who plays on occasion. We “borrow” music groups from other local churches for special occasions. We are very keen to expand our repertoire!

During the course of the year we have held a variety of services at celebrations and festivals. During the last year these have included:

- A crib & Christingle service on Christmas Eve which attracts 100 - 200 people
- Midnight Communion, from 50-60 people
- Ash Wednesday service with imposition of ashes, 20+ people
- Maundy Thursday Eucharist
- Good Friday meditations, during which we run a very successful children’s craft afternoon in the church hall.
- An evening of contemplative prayer open to all the Gillingham churches, as part of our response to Thy Kingdom Come for 2018. Members of St Barnabas also attended services in other churches during the week.
- A patronal service for St Barnabas Day
- A service of “Commemoration of the faithful departed” on All Saints Sunday
- A service of Remembrance to mark the hundredth anniversary of the end of the First World War.

In addition, in the past three years we have held

- A pet service
- A weekend long festival to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the opening of the church
- A variety of family-friendly worship events on Saturday afternoons
- The Confirmation service in 2016 in which 10 of our congregation were confirmed.

**Occasional Offices, schools work and Ministry to Care Homes**

In the last year there have been 7 Baptisms, and 9 Funerals. 1 member of St Barnabas was confirmed at the 2017 Deanery Confirmation service.

We already have baptisms and at least one wedding booked for 2019 and we are enthusiastic about this growing ministry. We would like to learn how to better maintain links with these families and how to bring them through to confirmation. Funeral ministry has grown substantially in recent years. We are working with other parishes in the Deanery who are involved with marriage preparation and wedding fairs, which are being run collaboratively with neighbouring churches.
There are two primary schools in the parish: Napier Primary and Barnsole Primary. They both come into church occasionally and we would very much like to see our new Priest-in-Charge forging greater links with them. Napier Primary in particular is keen to see this relationship grow. They use the church as a venue for Christmas services and also as their emergency evacuation point. In addition, there is a private school, based outside the parish, that uses our church each year for their large events with parents.

We would also like to foster links with the large secondary school within the parish – Robert Napier school (Robert Napier was a significant character in Gillingham’s history!).

Our ordinand regularly takes Home Communion to members of our congregation who are housebound or unwell, and also on request into the residential care homes within our parish. There are three significant homes: Pembroke House run by the Royal Navy Benevolent Fund, Park View Care Home which specialises in dementia care and Greenford House, a small home quite near to church. We regularly visit some of these, offering services and singing at Harvest, Easter and Christmas.

**The St. Barnabas team**

While in an extended interregnum pending the Pastoral Reorganisation Scheme in 2013, which was withdrawn in 2016, the PCC proved itself quite capable of arranging priests to sustain weekly worship while also looking to the sound running of the church, including its maintenance and finances. This is a resource that is available to any priest joining this church.

Our churchwardens Steven and Natasha are enthusiastic and passionate about the future of the church. They work hard, with others, to look after the fabric of the church both maintaining it and ensuring possible improvements and developments are undertaken where possible. Natasha, is also church Treasurer and keeps our finances, including keeping the contracts and other practical aspects of church life, in order. In addition, we have a second year ordinand, Belinda, who is also currently PCC secretary and Safeguarding Officer, as well as taking an increasing role in leading worship and preaching.

Jon is our sacristan, who keeps the resources we need for worship in order and Elizabeth is responsible for the social and fundraising life of the church, along with her husband Peter. Doreen, Pat, Pam, Mavis and Pauline run our increasingly popular Wednesday club, which reaches out in a very meaningful way to some of the most isolated members of our community.

Many others in the congregation are involved in hospitality, practical upkeep and maintenance, readings and prayers. Everyone is willing to pitch in in some way to the best of their ability, for example, after the church service on the 23rd December, 13 members of the congregation stayed to make Christingles and decorate the church for Christmas.

We have a PCC of 8 members plus two Churchwardens and a PCC Secretary which meets four times a year, or more often when necessary. We have one representative on the Deanery Synod, who is also elected to Diocesan Synod. We pay an annual subscription to the very active North Gillingham Ministers Fraternal, an ecumenical group of local ministers, for our new Priest-in-Charge. This can be a useful mechanism for a joint approach to local issues such as homelessness, modern slavery, youth mission.
Discipleship is an area we would like to develop further.

Following the Mission-shaped Ministry course attended by two members of the church, the night shelter initiative became part of our missional activity and after LYCIG, we set up a small leadership team with a view to giving our worship and other activity focus. We have, however, been blessed over the years by the variety of sermons and different views expressed by the priests who take our Sunday morning service, leaving us with something to contemplate during the week.

On Thursday mornings a small bible study group meet, generally working through a different book in the bible. It is a wonder how often the passage being discussed seems to be so apt to the events of the week which tends to trigger some interesting discussions. A period of prayer is then held. During Lent the bible study is sometimes replaced by a Lent course. The group’s activity has extended to include Holy Communion once a month.

ST BARNABAS AND THE COMMUNITY

Community
The community at St Barnabas acts very similar to a family in many ways, looking out for each other and willing to do what is needed to support each other. Many of our congregation are elderly or live on their own so for a number of years a parish lunch has been held most months after the Sunday service to bring the congregation together over food, just able to spend time together and talk. In 2017, a community Christmas lunch was offered together with St Luke’s Church. Social events are well attended, and well supported.

An outing is organised each year for anyone associated with the church who would like to attend. Neighbouring church members are invited and have joined us. This year the congregation expressed a desire to attend a quiet day off-site, consequently this is being organised as part of our Lenten discipline.

Wednesday Club
For two hours on a Wednesday afternoon, a club is held at the church to which all ages and abilities are invited to attend for some companionship. A range of puzzles and games are provided for people to do, including a much-enjoyed game of bingo. Refreshments are provided free-of-charge. The club is attended by a range of people, but generally those who are on their own or the more vulnerable in the area. People come from both within the parish and further afield as word of the welcome they would receive spread. Over the last 5 years the club has roughly doubled in size, such is the need. Several members of the club then started attending the church services with a number confirmed in 2016.

Friday Club
On Friday Evenings during term time a youth group meets at the church led by Lynn and a small group of volunteers. Children of ages 5 to 15 attend to play games, and generally enjoy some fun activities together for a few hours, and enjoy a trip to the pantomime at Christmas. There is potential for this to become a missional activity with the right input.
Holiday Club
The school holidays can be a difficult time for parents trying to find different activities for their children to do at a reasonable price as there are limited activities offered in the local area. As a church we recognise this as an area of need and so a holiday club is provided by members of the congregation for a couple of days over a period of four weeks in the Summer holidays. This is a popular activity, much sought out by parents and families throughout the Medway towns, via our Facebook page.

Opportunities in the local community
Over the last few years we have seen an increase in the number of enquiries for baptism and attendance at the services and activities aimed at the younger members of the community has increased. However, this does not necessarily translate into attendance at Sunday services. Some of the parents we have spoken to have said that the timing of the Sunday service clashes with the children’s Sunday Football meaning they are unable to attend the church service with any regularity. One of the options the PCC would like to consider is whether services could be offered differently or additionally which may better suit the needs of families in the community.

Up until a few months ago, the church hall used to host a local SureStart centre run by the council, where parents and carers for young children could come to meet and spend some time together. Following the closure of the SureStart centre a number of queries have been received as parents look for somewhere to meet, suggesting a need to start a pram and buggy perhaps.

Over the last four years the church has played host to the Medway Night Shelter, and as a result this has really opened our eyes to the growing number of homeless people and those in vulnerable housing in the surrounding area.

Social media – the church currently has a Facebook page and a Twitter account however recognise that we could be making better use of these opportunities and tools to connect with our followers.

St Barnabas continues to maintain links with the schools in our parish and school classes have enjoyed outings to St Barnabas to learn more about the Easter story or the church itself. There is scope for further engagement with the schools, as high attendance at some church events like the Good Friday Workshop and the Crib and Christingle points to a latent faith among our children and their families, which needs to be nurtured.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS
As a church we are forward looking and, if money were no object, we would like to develop the church to be able to offer more of a space to the community, with a view to seeing the church used by more groups and in different exciting ways. We are keen to recruit the services of an architect to identify creative ways in which the church could be adapted while maintaining its endearing features.

More realistically, while finances need to be considered there are still a number of areas in which we are hoping to make progress within the immediate future, in addition to any tasks needed for the general upkeep of the church:

- Replanting of the area surrounding the church following the forecourt wall works, with a view to creating a backdrop for wedding photographs
- Internet installation in the church
• Heating and lighting system upgrades
• Installation of showers and refurbishment of the church hall to make this a good venue for hiring and consequently a viable funds generator.

PARISH FINANCES
As shown in the SOFA for 2017 enclosed, the parish finances have shown a comfortable surplus in the overall funds over the last couple of years, while permissions to allow some necessary building works were obtained, with this work undertaken in 2018. It is expected that as a result the 2018 finances will show a small deficit when considered in isolation.

The PCC has a reserving policy of keeping six months expenditure in reserves and continues to meet this goal.

Both church hall and church house have run a profit over the last few years, really benefiting from long term rental in both and while some maintenance is required this has not been substantial recently. Both buildings are fantastic sources of revenue for the church allowing us to fund the outreach we provide.

SUMMARY
St Barnabas Church recognises the gains to be had from collaborative working with other churches and welcomes this opportunity to have a shared priest for three days a week. The Parish Church has continued to be viable and stable during the long interregnum. It is our prayer and hope that with a priest at the helm and a prayerful Called To Grow plan we will grow numerically and in discipleship. There are weekly signs of new people from the community popping in to the church, a sign of spiritual re-generation may be? Our church needs to be one that seeks out these people in the community and gives them or points them to the answers they are looking for. Are you called to help us and minister to us?
ST BARNABAS IN PICTURES
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY FOR 2017

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST BARNABAS, GILLINGHAM

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2017

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<td>Transfers between funds</td>
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<td>578</td>
<td></td>
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<td>g</td>
<td>Gains/(losses) on revaluation of fixed assets</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11,207</td>
<td>9,391</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>Other recognised gains/losses</td>
<td>11,207</td>
<td>9,391</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>Net movement in funds</td>
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<td>399</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>11,258</td>
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<td>Total funds brought forward at 1 January 2017</td>
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<td>6,924</td>
<td>7,087</td>
<td>163,496</td>
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<td>c</td>
<td>Total funds carried forward at 31 December 2017</td>
<td>160,116</td>
<td>7,323</td>
<td>7,318</td>
<td>174,754</td>
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</table>
GILLINGHAM PARISH CHURCH
St. MARY MAGDALENE
(The Church on the Green)
GILLINGHAM, KENT, ME7 1SS

PARISH PROFILE 2018

www.gillinghamparishchurch.org.uk
Charity number: 1132588
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OUR NEW PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

Who we are.

Welcome to St Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham. St Mary’s is the historic parish church for this ancient town on the banks of the River Medway, with its rich industrial and military heritage. The parish of St Mary’s now makes up the north side of Gillingham town centre, including its football stadium, railway station and the bottom end of the High Street. As a parish we strive to reach out to serve the people among whom we live, work and worship. In recent years, we have pursued a mission strategy, loosely termed ‘fling wide the gates’. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we seek to demonstrate to the people of the area that they are loved by God, no matter what the circumstances of their life, and that they have a wonderful parish church on their doorstep, with so much to offer them in terms of hospitality and community as well as sacred space and active worship.

The role

We are looking for a new, half-time, Priest-in-Charge for St Mary’s, who will also be Priest-in-Charge of St Barnabas, our neighbouring parish and involved in the wider life of North Gillingham churches. We are looking for a Priest-in-Charge who will explore creative ways to work together with our neighbouring parishes, especially at St Augustine’s and St Barnabas, Gillingham. They are churches of similar traditions and demographics to St Mary’s and there is much that we could do better together.

What we are hoping for.

The community in St Mary’s church seeks to be a caring and generous one. We have been through a lot of change over the past couple of years, with challenges and successes in equal measure. The PCC felt it important to engage with the congregation about their
hopes for our new Priest-in-Charge, in terms of who they would be and what they would help us to do, as they become part of the church family here. These conversations happened in all areas of church life, from those who have been here for many years to those who have recently joined. They said:

**We are looking for someone who can help us fulfil our aspiration to be a welcoming parish Church which can offer the local community hospitality, friendship, belonging and – most importantly of all – help them to encounter God, come to know the generous saving power of the Cross and be blessed and filled by the Holy Spirit.**

Some ways in which we would like our new Priest-in-Charge to help us fulfil this aim include:

- Helping us forge new links with the community at large, including nearby schools, neighbouring churches, and local Christian organisations.

- Helping us explore our ministry and mission to the glory of God for the 21st century, finding a healthy and life-giving balance of worship that can be enjoyed by people of different generations and traditions, with the imaginative and creative use of different forms of liturgy, space and music.

- Helping us to engage more effectively with young families, and others who come to us for services of baptism, marriage etc. to encourage them to be long-term members of the fellowship.

- Journeying with us on the road of discipleship, learning and growing together along the way, helping every member of the congregation to explore their gifts, calling and personal spirituality, including encouraging new vocations to lay and ordained ministry.

- Sharing prayer and ministry with our team of lay ministers and leaders, to encourage, equip, support and delegate to them and help them flourish in their calling.

- Helping to drive forward the plans for the re-ordering of the interior of the church, to make it a flexible creative space for worship and community use.

- Getting to know the people who live in the church and wider community, and helping us to know and understand them better.
• Working in collaboration with our friends and colleagues in other churches in the Deanery (especially St Augustine’s and St Barnabas) to explore new ways of sharing resources, mission and ministry

• Leading the PCC and leadership team of the church to envision a creative and exciting future for St Mary’s, and helping us navigate our journey to that place.

• Revitalising our ambitions to be a hub for the community, building up links with other organisations and using the gifts of the church and its people to the full. Helping us to hold the doors open wide enough that all who are seeking will feel a genuine welcome within the St Mary’s family.

• Effectively and collaboratively managing the day-to-day smooth running of the church, with the PCC, Ministry Team, administrator and others.

What we offer you.

We are excited to be beginning this new chapter of our life at St Mary’s, and are looking forward to getting to know our new Priest-in-Charge. We know that life in ministry is not always easy, and so we commit to:

• Helping you to settle in, find your way around the area and getting to know its people and places.

• Praying with you and for you.

• Gathering together for worship, expectant of what God will do in us and through us.

• Joining in with new initiatives, walking joyfully alongside you as we seek ways to bless the parish together.

• Celebrating our successes and mourning our failures together.

• Respecting your privacy and honouring your time off.

THE PARISH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE

St Mary Magdalene parish is, for a large part, made up of Victorian terraced houses, originally built to house workers for the dockyard and related industries. More modern housing has been built over time as the earlier housing has been demolished and the parish is now a patchwork of different types of property. As the railway station sits on the edge of the parish, a good number of people who live here commute up to London every day.

Gillingham F.C., who are in Football Typical parish housing
League 1 at present, play at Priestfield Stadium (five minutes’ walk from the Church) and are a great focus for local people, especially on match days.

Gillingham North Ward, within which the Parish of St Mary Magdalene is located, is deprived; it was the most deprived ward in Medway and using the overall Indices of Multiple Deprivation is in the top 10% nationally.

The parish holds approximately 13,500 people, many of who are unemployed or in the low-pay bracket.

A 2008 study of Neighbourhood Learning Needs identified the following priority groups in Gillingham North Ward (this study still holds true today):

- Vulnerable Adults including those with learning difficulties and learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities or mental health problems.
- Adults with nil or low qualifications (Level 1 or below), particularly those not engaged in learning for two years or more.
- Ex-offenders, including those with learning difficulties.
- Unemployed adults and those on low incomes.
- Parents or carers and those returning to the labour market.
- Migrants settling in central urban areas of Medway who require support with social and economic integration.

Typical of much of the Medway Towns conurbation, the parish has an extremely high density of housing. Much of the housing is in poor repair, reflecting the deprivation suffered by a significant proportion of the population. However, other housing of the same era is very well cared for, reflecting the mix of rented and owner-occupied property, these contrasts often being seen in the same small area or even in the same street.

Woodlands Cemetery is within the parish.

Also within the parish is Grange Road farm shop and the more open and rural-looking community of Grange and Lower Twydall.

The Vicarage

The vicarage stands next to church and dates from the mid-1960s. The front door opens into a large entrance hall leading into a large lounge, study, dining room, kitchen with a serving hatch into the dining room and a downstairs toilet. Stairs lead to four bedrooms, three of which are large and one adequately-sized for a single bed, along with a family bathroom and separate toilet. From the kitchen, the back door opens onto a patio (which is overlooked from the study) and a large well-kept back garden. A garage suitable for one car is attached to the side of the house and this also has access to the patio. There is a large well-kept front garden and a drive to the garage with parking for at least two cars, the drive having a five-barred gate which can be closed. At the moment the drive is used for parking for those who have walking difficulties for the main church services, but this is by permission of the Priest-in-Charge. The house benefits from double glazing, cavity wall insulation and central heating, a new, more efficient, boiler having been installed very recently. For security, a modern burglar alarm is fitted.
The Parish Church

St Mary Magdalene is the ancient parish church of Gillingham: there has been a continuity of worship and witness here for over a thousand years – the church is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The present building dates from the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1868, the church was extensively restored. The railway and the enlargement of the Naval Dockyard at Chatham resulted in an explosion of development in the area at that time. The oldest item in the church is the font, which dates back to Norman times and has been described by a church architect as 'a national treasure'. William Adams was baptised here in 1564. He became a seaman who was the first to establish trading links with Japan and was the creator of the Japanese navy. Thanks to that link we enjoy annual visits by Japanese exchange students and occasionally by Japanese dignitaries.

The church sits within a large churchyard, which is mostly laid to Council-maintained parkland and has been closed to new burials since the 1950s. There is, however, a small area, known as the Memorial Garden, which remains open for the interment of ashes. The church sits at the top of the steep valley leading down to the river, and the view of the Medway is quite striking from this vantage point.

WORSHIP AT ST MARY MAGDALENE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*</th>
<th>Sundays</th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.00am Holy Communion 10.00am All-Age Worship</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer (M-F)</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer 10.00am Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.00am Parish Communion 12.30 pm Holy Baptism</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer (M-F)</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer 10.00am Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.00am Morning Prayer 10.00am Parish Communion</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer (M-F)</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer 10.00am Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00am Parish Communion</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer (M-F)</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer 10.00am Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.00am Parish Communion</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer (M-F)</td>
<td>8.30am Morning Prayer 10.00am Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Week of each month

High Altar and reredos
Services are mainly according to *Common Worship*.

We have a robed choir, all of whom are dedicated and attend choir practice on Thursday evenings at 8.00p.m. This is led by one of our Readers. We use CDs and “Church Hymnal Plus” in place of an organist. The choir and congregation are now singing various arrangements of the Sanctus/Agnus Dei, etc. in the services and we are very keen to use music imaginatively in worship and to expand the repertoire.

During the course of the year we have held a variety of services at celebrations and festivals, including Christmas carol services.

*The Nave, seen from the gallery*

### Occasional Offices, Assemblies and Ministry to Care Homes

In 2018 there were: 9 Weddings and one Renewal of Vows, 20 Baptisms, 16 Funerals and one Burial of Ashes in our Memorial Garden.

There is a steady demand for the occasional offices and as the ancient Parish Church we get a lot of couples coming to us with Qualifying Connections. This is a significant ministry opportunity and, working with other parishes in the Deanery, we are involved with marriage preparations and wedding fairs which are being run collaboratively with our neighbouring churches.

The local primary schools come into church occasionally and a Reader is currently assisting with assemblies in the schools.

The Pastoral Assistants and Readers monthly take home communion to those members of the Church who are currently, through infirmity or illness, unable to get to church.

Holy Communion using reserved sacrament is taken into Age UK three times a month by a Reader and a Pastoral Assistant and once a month to Grace Manor (a local Nursing Home) by the Evangelist/Pastoral Assistant. (The Grace Manor ministry is shared with a representative from the local Roman Catholic Church.) At both Age UK and Grace Manor there are also other occasional services, for example at Christmas, Easter and Remembrance day.

### The St. Mary’s team

We have a very capable and strong hard-working Ministry Team consisting of three Readers, all three of whom have the Bishop’s Permission to Officiate and one Licensed Lay Minister. One Reader and our LLM have been licensed to take funerals. There are two Pastoral Assistants one of whom is a spiritual director. Also there is one Evangelist/Pastoral Assistant.
We have a team of lesson readers, intercessors, chalice assistants, servers, choir, and sidepersons/welcomers, all drawn from the congregation. We also have a Wholeness and Healing Team consisting of 6 trained lay people.

We have a PCC of 10 members plus one Churchwarden and a PCC Secretary which meets six times a year or more often when necessary and a Standing Committee which meets in between those meetings. There are several Sub-Committees, i.e. Buildings, Social and Fellowship and a Finance Committee. A PCC representative attends the Friends of St. Mary Magdalene meetings.

**Beacon Club (Sunday School)**

Several lay members of the congregation are involved in leading this. There is a strong core of five children who regularly attend, with a group of four leaders. We admit children to Communion before Confirmation following a course of preparation. The Beacon Club leaders sat down with our children and asked them what they wanted from a new Priest-in-Charge. They said:

- They should make children feel part of the family of God
- They must be able to hear God
- They should be caring.
- They should be welcoming.
- They should be inspiring.
- They should be trustworthy.
- They should be loving.
- They should be in a relationship with God.
- They should be interested in us.
- They should be respectful of people.
- They should be cheerful.

**Bell Ringers**

We have a team of bell ringers who ring for Sunday Services, weddings etc. There is a good relationship between the church and bell ringers but most of them are not members of the congregation.

**Discipleship**

At the moment, we have two House Groups led by Readers. There is also a third House Group led by our Pastoral Assistant/Evangelist which provides Bible study for a group of people with learning disabilities and their carer.

We have a Men’s group led by a Reader, which meets once a month in a local pub. They normally discuss a topic that is relevant to the current time and how they feel about this from a male Christian point of view. There is also a strong Ladies group, which meets.
monthly in church and which invites speakers and undertakes a range of different activities throughout the year.

THE FRIENDS OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE

The Friends of St. Mary Magdalene is involved in fund-raising, specifically towards the upkeep of the fabric of the church building. This is an independent organisation (*a registered charity in its own right*) primarily for those who support the church, but are not members of it, or have worshipped here in the past and now live in other parts of the country, although a number of current church members do belong to it. The Friends have an Annual Service in church held on the day of their AGM (usually a Sunday in April).

ST MARY MAGDALENE AND THE COMMUNITY

The ‘Fling Wide the Gates’ strategy, is determined to demonstrate to the people of the area that they have a wonderful parish church which can offer so much to the community in terms of hospitality and community space as well as sacred space. New initiatives in recent years include:

- Friday Open Church.
- Monday morning coffee-drop.
- Partners and Community Together (PACT) meetings regularly taking place in church.
- Working closely with Medway Foodbank, collecting food and supporting the Gillingham Foodbank Centre based in St Marks Church, in Gillingham High Street.
- Hosting CAB drop-in advice sessions once a month.
- Christmas and Easter Craft Drop-ins have been a regular fixture in the church calendar. (This is currently under review with a view to expanding their frequency.)
- Summer and Christmas Fayres.
- Relaunch of church magazine (free to publish and distribute as paid for by advertising secured by a third party).
- A Baby & Toddler Group and a Coffee Morning, run as an outreach by Gillingham Baptist Church.
- The retirement organisation The University of the 3rd Age (U3A) uses the Lady Chapel for a singing group bringing the community into the church.
- Film afternoons.

We have a good relationship with a local Scouts, Cub and Beaver Group who attend a number of services throughout the year (including Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Sunday).
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Following the closure and disposal of the Parochial Hall, which was a painful decision for some, we are now looking forward to utilising the capital realised from this asset to enhance the flexibility of the parish church for the good of both the worshipping community and the wider parish and community. This involves removing the pews from church and refurbishing the floor, to create a more flexible accessible worship space, and decommissioning the Lady Chapel to create additional meeting space within the church building. We have plans drawn up and are in the process of finalising a faculty so that the works can go ahead. A copy of the current plans is displayed in the church for our parishioners’ perusal and comment. It is the mission within the church that the changes envisaged to our much loved church building will be made with great care and sensitivity. Over the last 18 months to two years a significant fund-raising effort has been undertaken, including various events that have been held in the church. Whilst raising essential monies towards the project, it has shown the community and ourselves what can be achieved within our church and gives glimpses of what our vision and outreach could achieve.

The re-ordering will enable the church to be used for community events and activities in addition to our traditional days of worship.

As we no longer have a hall, the re-ordering project will allow us to use the Church and Lady Chapel for events such as Summer and Christmas Fairs, Friends events, film shows, concerts etc. giving us the opportunity to bring people into the church from the community who quite often have never been inside the church and do not realise what a beautiful building we have.

We believe that this first step can and will lead on to other things. We want people to know and talk about the ‘Church on the Green’, and discuss what is happening in this beautiful church in addition to what is happening on the traditional days of worship.

PARISH FINANCES

Parish spending has been cut back and our finances streamlined to ensure good stewardship. We have a Parish Office, which is within the church and is fully equipped with a computer, photocopier, etc. For details of our Parish Finances please see the attached Statement of Financial Activity (SOFA) for 2017.
SUMMARY

It has to be admitted that the Medway Towns suffer from a rather negative reputation. Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Building of England: West Kent & The Weald*, after giving good reviews to the local churches, describes the rest of Gillingham thus: “Gillingham's aimless expansion to east and south needs no comment”, and other authors have been equally dismissive of the Medway Towns. But this reputation is ill-deserved. Gillingham, in spite of its acknowledged problems, really does have a lot to offer. For example, the town has a surprisingly large amount of open countryside within very easy reach. The Gillingham Riverside Country Park is only a few minutes from the church by car or at the end of an invigorating walk beside the Medway estuary which is very popular with dog walkers and others. On the other side of the estuary there are the Hoo Peninsula and Isle of Grain which have large tracts of seemingly remote countryside and marshes.

There are numerous cultural activities taking place within the Medway Towns and London, with all it has to offer is less than an hour away by train. In the opposite direction the North Kent Coast – Whitstable, Herne Bay, Margate and Ramsgate – is equally accessible. Indeed, nowhere in Kent, with its delightful scenery, villages and towns, and its rich history, is much more than around an hour's drive from Gillingham.

It also has to be admitted that the task for a new Priest-in-Charge at St. Mary Magdalene Church is a challenging one. The deprivation that exists here and the size of the population of the parish see to that! But we believe that there are enormous benefits too. We have a willing congregation who will work with you and support you in all that you are called on to do here. With the re-ordering of the church that is planned, the future looks extremely exciting. We have suffered a difficult couple of years for a variety of reasons, and that is the reason for our rather longer than average Period of Vacancy. But all that is now behind us and we are looking forward to a bright future.

While we are very proud of our church’s 1,000 years of history, we are not blind to the fact that in the current environment of a more secular society our focus, while remaining fixed on God and his word, needs to be re-thought to enable us to carry out His work in this part of Gillingham. So as we embark on the latest phase in that 1,000 year history, we prayerfully invite you to come and join us and work with us to ensure that this bright, exciting future becomes a reality. Challenges there will be, but we believe there can be plenty of satisfaction too.
# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY FOR 2017

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY MAGDALENE, GILLINGHAM**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income and endowments from:</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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<td>Voluntary income</td>
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<td>Income from investments</td>
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<td>783</td>
<td>784</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church activities</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>8,082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2,773</td>
<td>2,666</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>54,541</strong></td>
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<th>Expenditure on:</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church activities</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>28,701</td>
<td>498</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising funds</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>63,681</td>
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<td>Other resources expended</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>670</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,540</strong></td>
<td><strong>65,049</strong></td>
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<th>Gains/(losses) on investment assets</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Net income/(expenditure)</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>16,456</td>
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<td>7,409</td>
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<td><strong>25,000</strong></td>
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<th>Transfers between funds - transfers in</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>(3,820)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>(3,820)</td>
<td>(1,000)</td>
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<th>Transfers between funds - transfers out</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,720</td>
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<td>3,720</td>
<td>(1,000)</td>
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<td><strong>(1,000)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Gains/(losses) on revaluation of fixed assets</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other recognised gains/losses</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net movement in funds</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20,176</td>
<td>(2,886)</td>
<td>7,509</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>25,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>33,460</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total funds brought forward at 1 January</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>164,725</td>
<td>65,043</td>
<td>52,606</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>282,374</strong></td>
<td><strong>248,914</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total funds carried forward at 31 December</th>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Designated Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Endowment Funds</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>184,901</td>
<td>62,357</td>
<td>60,115</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>307,373</strong></td>
<td><strong>282,374</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We look forward to welcoming you to St. Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham - ‘The Church on the Green’.  
*