Parish Profile
St Bartholomew’s
Otford

www.stbartholomews.co.uk
WELCOME TO ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S

We have a congregation of all ages, with 200 on the Electoral Roll. Located in the centre of the village, the Church welcomes people for regular and occasional services, as well as visitors from near and far. Dating from Norman times, the church is kept open during the day. It is in good condition, benefiting from recent repairs, re-ordering and a 21st-century Church Centre.

Otford is a semi-rural village of some 3500 people, lying on the edge of the North Downs in West Kent. Close to the town of Sevenoaks, it is proud of its discrete identity.

The Parish is situated within the Diocese of Rochester, with Westminster Abbey as its patron. It is the largest of the 14 rural parishes in the Shoreham Deanery, one of the six deaneries in the Archdeaconry of Tonbridge. Many of the benefices in Shoreham Deanery have welcomed new clergy during the last five years, and all the clergy work well together. The Area Dean is looking to develop the life of the Deanery in ways that will affirm the rural nature of the parishes and help the clergy and churches to work together in mission to the area.

The following pages tell you more about us, our village and our Church, paint the PCC’s picture of the future and try to describe the person with whom we seek to share it. If you decide that God is calling you to consider becoming the next Vicar of Otford, we look forward to hearing from you.
Otford is situated in the Darent Valley in Kent, at the foot of the North Downs on the Pilgrims’ Way, in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Our nearest town, Sevenoaks, is some 3 miles away. There are direct rail links to London (35 mins-1 hour) via our local railway station.

Otford has been inhabited since at least Roman times. It is home to both a listed duck pond (voted “Britain’s best roundabout” in 2013) and the remains of a medieval Archbishop’s Palace, amongst many other sites and buildings of archaeological and historical interest. You will find a great deal more information here.

Within this lively and beautiful village, there is an extensive range of clubs, societies and organisations: www.otford.net

Otford has its own Public Library, Medical Centre and dentist, as well as an array of local shops and places to eat and drink. There are three primary schools in the village and three other churches: the Methodist Church, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Free Church.

The spread of the village is constrained by the presence of the motorway, the low-lying floodplains of the River Darent and the North Downs themselves. Sevenoaks District Council’s new Local Plan is currently under examination, and will affect the wider area, although it is not expected to have a big impact on Otford in the immediate future.

Its accessibility, natural beauty and rich heritage makes Otford popular with visitors (including many walkers and cyclists) and commuters alike.
But being situated in an affluent area with good transport links comes at a cost: whilst we have many young families moving to the village, there is a real shortage of affordable housing and little social housing (we have a low young adult population). There is no sheltered housing in the village, although we have an above-average, growing population of elderly residents.

With large numbers of younger residents leaving the village for work or school during the day, and an influx of tourists and other visitors at weekends, we must work hard to maintain our sense of community and village identity, and provide for the needs of all our residents and beyond.
WE SEEK...

We seek an incumbent who will demonstrate by both their preaching and their life the teaching of the Bible and who:

• combines confidence in their own faith with a willingness to engage with those of different theological positions, and who will further develop sensitively our existing pattern of worship and teaching, whilst inspiring confidence in outreach, evangelism and mission

• offers resilient leadership based on experience, valuing and supporting the contribution of the laity, and drawing the parish and our diverse congregation together in a common purpose and vision

• will work out with rigour what it means to be a Church in the village of Otford and who will be themselves a visible and integral part of village life, building on the foundation and sense of community in our Church, and expanding our mission and integration into the wider community

• will bring skill and vision to supporting our all-age congregation in making full use of their talents and gifts

• embraces work with young people in Church, schools and village, and in particular our work with young families, continuing to support older members of the community, and encouraging all to grow in their Christian faith

• respects the necessary stewardship of the Grade 1 listed Church building, whilst encouraging the development of wider use of all our buildings, for opportunities for the community to come together in mission
IN RETURN, WE OFFER:

• a supportive and sustained congregation of all ages, who enjoy a range of styles of worship

• a Church with a large team of volunteers, offering wide-ranging skills, and including a sizeable and diverse Ministry team

• a Church family that enjoys fellowship and having fun together

• an active youth ministry with a dedicated volunteer leadership team

• music from our talented and dedicated organist, choir, band and bellringers

• a financially stable Parish, with a well-maintained historic church, benefiting from up-to-date technology and facilities

• a thriving and vibrant village community of all ages

• a five-bedroom vicarage in the heart of a beautiful village in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
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.”

**Called to Grow** is the Diocese of Rochester’s five-step process for considering the whole life of our church community and what God may be asking of us – as part of the **Called Together** vision. At St. Bart’s, the PCC is now considering our own **Called to Grow action plan**. Plenty of ideas have emerged from our recent consultation of the whole congregation, which elicited a strong and encouraging response. The PCC is looking to implement some short-term ideas during the vacancy, in expectation of developing medium to longer-term goals with the new Vicar.
VISION AND FUTURE

Our vision for the future at St Bart’s is about building on where we are now and taking it further. We anticipate that our new Vicar will share, shape and lead us in this vision, using our gifts and celebrating our diversity. We have an all-age congregation with reasonably sustained numbers overall and increasing in some areas (e.g. Messy Church and our Wednesday BCP service congregations are both growing). To maintain the Church’s position at the heart of village life, our aims are:

• to ensure that through our service pattern, we provide all in the village with the opportunity to worship, in keeping with the central traditions of the Church of England

• to reach out to people beyond the existing Church family within the wider community to spread both the Good News and the love of Christ in Otford

• to support and develop our work with young people, in part by maintaining and developing links with the local primary schools

• to provide for the needs of all our parishioners, in particular exploring more ways to help older members of our community

• to encourage the development of contact with the recently baptised and married, and to support the bereaved

• to make imaginative and innovative use of our church buildings, and to progress the position of the Church Hall in a way which will best serve our mission objectives and Called to Grow plan

• to maintain our current financial stability and the good condition of most of our buildings, whilst continuing to make financial contributions to our mission partners
OUR PEOPLE

In addition to our two dedicated Churchwardens, the Vicar will be assisted by three Readers, one further Reader with Permission to Officiate who is also a Pastoral Assistant with Permission to Minister and conduct funerals, and a retired priest living in the village. There is one further Pastoral Assistant who is one of our two part-time administrators staffing the Church Office five mornings a week.

Recent incumbents have encouraged lay ministry, and many of the congregation help with services, as lesson readers, leaders in prayer, sidespersons and assistants at communion. Three house groups meet in members’ homes.

We have a volunteer team dedicated to working with our young people. Some of the leaders serve on our PCC and its sub-committees. We have a Safeguarding Officer and are providing safeguarding training to our PCC and leaders.

Members of our congregation participate in church cleaning, churchyard working parties, flower arranging, refreshments and other essential jobs.

Our Parish Magazine has a regular circulation of 450, with 11 issues per year.

We consider it a privilege to serve God and his Church, using our God-given talents and gifts for His glory.

“...a volunteer team dedicated to working with our young people.”
WORSHIP

Sunday services
8am
Holy Communion – a said service with a short homily; Common Worship, with Book of Common Prayer once a month; 12-15 people.

10am
1st Sunday  All Together Worship, our family service
2nd Sunday Holy Communion
3rd Sunday Morning Worship
4th Sunday Holy Communion

Sung services; Common Worship; 75-90 adults. After the service is underway, children aged 0-14 go into the Church Centre next door for Sunday Club, returning for Communion.

6.30pm
Choral Evensong – 1st and 3rd Sundays; 35 people including the choir.

Wednesday services
10am
Holy Communion; Book of Common Prayer; 25-35 people.

Other services
Baptisms currently take place during the 10am service or are held separately. The usual Christmas services have been augmented by a Crib service, which is popular with families. We take part in the ecumenical walk of witness through the village on Palm Sunday. On Good Friday, there is currently a family-oriented service in the Church Centre and a one-hour devotional service, with the usual services on Easter Sunday. The Remembrance Day commemoration - in a packed church and afterwards on the Green - is a major village event involving many local people and organisations.
The Choir
St Bartholomew’s has a long history of music making within the Anglican tradition, with a robed adult choir (currently 19 members) led by a long-standing organist and choirmaster. The choir sings at all 10am Sunday morning services (except All Together Worship), Evensong and festival services, and puts on a well-attended fundraising Christmas concert every year.

The Worship Band
The band leads the worship at the 10am All Together Worship service, using modern worship songs. Beginning with just a handful, the band has grown to upwards of 15 members of all ages.

Bell ringing
St Bart’s has had six bells hung for full-circle ringing since 2000. New ringers are welcomed from the church family and the local community. In addition to calling people to worship on Sunday mornings, other ringing events are also held, including celebratory and commemorative Quarter Peals.
The congregation and their friends take part in the following regular events:

- **Soup lunch** six times a year
- **Parish breakfasts**, a new initiative, fortnightly between our 8am and 10am Sunday services
- **Home groups**, Park Farm and The Thursday Group, which meet fortnightly during term time, in addition to CAMEO Men’s group, meeting twice a year
- **Coffee / refreshments** after services are always well attended

The following events also took place in 2018-2019, amongst others:

- **Quiz night and supper** (an annual event)
- **Pop-up restaurants** in the Church Centre - now a regular fixture (Brazilian, Italian and Spanish, so far...!)

St Bartholomew’s Fair, an important social and financial event, well attended by the wider village community, held on the Green every June

Parish BBQ following the Sunday school thanksgiving service in July

Christmas Market held in late November

The recent re-ordering has also assisted with alternative uses of the Church:

- **An Evening with Terry Waite**
- **VOCE choir concert**
- **Reflections on Remembrance**, a film presented by Otford Historical Society
- **Quilting Exhibition**
- **A Turbulent Priest**, a musical comedy by James Cary
The children and young people in our church family are an important part of who we are. Their ages range from the very small to young adults.

**First steps**
An Ecumenical meeting in the Methodist Church Hall fortnightly, for pre-school children and their parents/carers.

**Sunday Club**
During the Sunday 10am service, split into three age groups, following the same teaching programme, adapted to different ages.

**EPIC**
Every Person in Christ or Eating Pizza In Church: a transition group for Y5-Y8, meeting monthly for games, food, craft and laughter. Yes, they do eat pizza – Domino’s love delivering!

**YPF**
Young People’s Fellowship is for Y9+, meeting every Sunday evening in term time; 12-15 regular attenders from different schools - a great opportunity to catch up. Varied activities, questions, discussions. The annual rounders match between current and ex-YPF is taken very seriously!

**Messy Church**
Twice per term on a Sunday afternoon; for primary-aged children accompanied by parents/carers; themed craft activities, a short informal act of worship, followed by afternoon tea. An excellent opportunity to welcome families in a relaxed atmosphere.

**A residential weekend**
Every July we take our children and young people away to provide teaching and activities.

We have just restarted a mid-week Bible Study and shared meal for our older YPF.
OLDER MEMBERS

Older members of our congregation are encouraged to be actively involved in virtually all areas of Church life. They are particularly well represented at our 8am Sunday, Evensong and Wednesday BCP services. The fortnightly coffee after the Wednesday service is popular, and also welcomes people who don’t attend the service.

CAMEO
(Come And Meet Each Other) is a group for members of the St. Bart’s family who live alone. It provides fellowship and an opportunity for interaction, meeting weekly throughout the year, alternating between Bible Study and discussion/planning evenings for regular trips and social events.

CAMEO has existed since 2005 and is greatly appreciated by its participants. The size of the current group is limited and the concept may be worthy of further development in a larger location, whether with the wider St Bart’s family or with non-Church members.
Otford has a local County Primary School with 400 children in 14 classes. There are strong community links between Otford Primary School and the Church: the last Vicar invested considerable time in supporting the children, taking assemblies throughout the year and serving as a school Governor, as well as holding the Harvest and Christmas Carol services in the church. The current Governing Body at Otford Primary School would very much like to maintain these much-valued links with the newly appointed Vicar.

There is also a link with Russell House, an independent preparatory school in the village, through its annual Harvest and Christmas Carol Services.

The third and largest school in our parish, St Michael’s Prep School, is an independent co-educational school with a Christian foundation. St Michael’s has a combined Nursery and Kindergarten, three-form entry from Reception and exit points for children at Y6 and Y8. The school takes seriously its Christian mission to share what they have with those around them. It has established links with Otford and Shoreham Primary Schools and with a parish in Tanzania. The PCC has agreed to develop a link with St Michael’s, and the school hopes our new incumbent will take a weekly Eucharist and a separate weekly assembly.

Older children travel out of the village to access secondary school, some a considerable distance. Trinity School, a co-educational Christian Free School in Sevenoaks, opened in 2013, formally supported by local churches of various denominations, including St Bart’s. Bennett Memorial Diocesan Secondary School in Tunbridge Wells is our closest Church of England secondary school. More information about Kent schools can be found here.
MISSION PARTNERS

St Bartholomew’s supports ten charities both in prayer and financial giving, as well as additional collections during the year. A Mission Practice and Policy agreed by the PCC sets out the overall and financial policy towards mission. In summary, giving to Missionary Charities is set annually in relation to numbers on the Electoral Roll, with a top-up at year end if we manage a positive balance of income over expenditure.

The charities supported include local, national and international organisations: see here. In the last financial year, a total of £9,500 was donated from parish finances. We also actively support the local Loaves and Fishes food bank and the Diocesan Poverty and Hope Appeal.

An amount was granted by way of tithe from the recent Reordering Appeal, which funded the construction of two toilet blocks at Magnet High School in Kenya (linked with World Wide Silver Lining, one of our ten charities).
St. Bartholomew’s aim to run a balanced budget each year, with income equalling expenditure. Unrestricted turnover averages £130k a year with approximately 75% of income coming from donations and 50% of expenditure forming our Parish Offer to the Diocese, which we have met in full each year. Our Mission giving is set out above. Currently £5.5k is allocated each year to cyclical maintenance, including expenditure arising from quinquennial inspections on our Grade 1 listed building.

The PCC has a policy of maintaining £35k in unrestricted reserves, which is monitored regularly, with Finance & Standing Committee meetings held on alternate months to PCC meetings. An invitation for our congregation to review their Stewardship takes place every September.

The recent building projects were successfully achieved as a result of significant fundraising from the Parish, charitable trusts and Historic England, totalling nearly £1.5million.

Further information about our finances can be found with the Charity Commission.
**THE BUILDINGS**

The oldest surviving parts of St Bartholomew’s Church, including the tower, date back to Norman times. There is much local tradition associated with Thomas Becket, who was Chaplain here and later, as Archbishop, resided at the Otford Palace.

Extensive internal alterations were carried out in the 1860s, including the addition of the present pews. Little further changed until this century, starting with the installation of four additional bells and strengthening of the tower in 2000. The construction of our modern Church Centre, attached to the north side of the Church, was completed in 2007. The meeting hall is used routinely for Church events, and can be sub-divided into three smaller rooms, for use by our Sunday Club. The Church Office, toilets and kitchen are also located within the Church Centre. In 2012, the Church Tower was repaired, rendered in lime mortar and refitted internally. Re-ordering of the Church itself was completed in May 2018, with sympathetic remodelling of the Chancel and Lady Chapel, and provision for film and other visual presentations. The whole of the Church Centre and most of the Church are fully accessible.
THE CHURCH HALL

The Church Hall, potentially a valuable asset for both the Church and the village, was built in 1910 and is home to the village Millennium Mosaic. It is located centrally on the High Street, adjacent to the village car park and the Otford Village Memorial Hall. Although it was designed in the practice of Sir Edwin Lutyens, Historic England decided recently not to list the building.

A separate budget is maintained for the Hall, which is currently making a loss. Maintenance of the building has fallen by the wayside in recent years and discussions have been held about its future use. Through initial consultation with the congregation and wider Parish, the PCC has identified two leading options. One is to bring the Hall back into full use, which would require significant expenditure. The alternative identified would be to convert the Hall into sheltered housing, with investment from a Housing Association. These proposals are not without controversy, and have evoked some strong feelings. It will be for our new Vicar to help lead us through the decision-making on the future of this building, which has the potential to further the mission of the Church and benefit the village.
THE VICARAGE

The Vicarage is in the centre of the village, approximately 100 yards from the Church, between the churchyard and the remains of historic Otford Palace, which are partly converted into cottages (some remains are also in the Vicarage garden).

Built in the 1960s, the ground floor comprises hall and lobby, two reception rooms (one with French windows leading on to a patio), study, kitchen and WC. On the first floor there are five bedrooms, bathroom and WC. There is a detached double garage with outbuildings at the rear, and a spacious garden.

External redecoration will be undertaken by the Diocese during the vacancy. Some internal decoration and refurbishment will be carried out by the Parish after consultation with the new incumbent.
FROM OUR PATRON

“As Patron, the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey greatly values its historic association with the Parish. Over recent years the incumbent has acted as one of our Duty Chaplains at the Abbey and we would very much like this to continue. There are approximately 50 Duty Chaplains at the Abbey and each Chaplain spends a week each year in residence with accommodation and expenses provided. The historic relationship between Otford and Westminster Abbey goes back almost 500 years. It began in 1560 when Otford came to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster under the Grant of Elizabeth I (“And all our Rectory and Church of Shoreham and our Chapel of Otforde”). As Patron, the Dean and Chapter has a role in providing a proper balance between finding the person of God’s choice and fulfilling the needs of the Parish without being unduly influenced by other factors. We see the involvement of three parties, Parish, Patron and Bishop, as representing an important and constructive balance. We rejoice in the ministry of St Bartholomew’s, and pray regularly for the life and work of the parish.”

http://www.stbartholomews.co.uk/

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