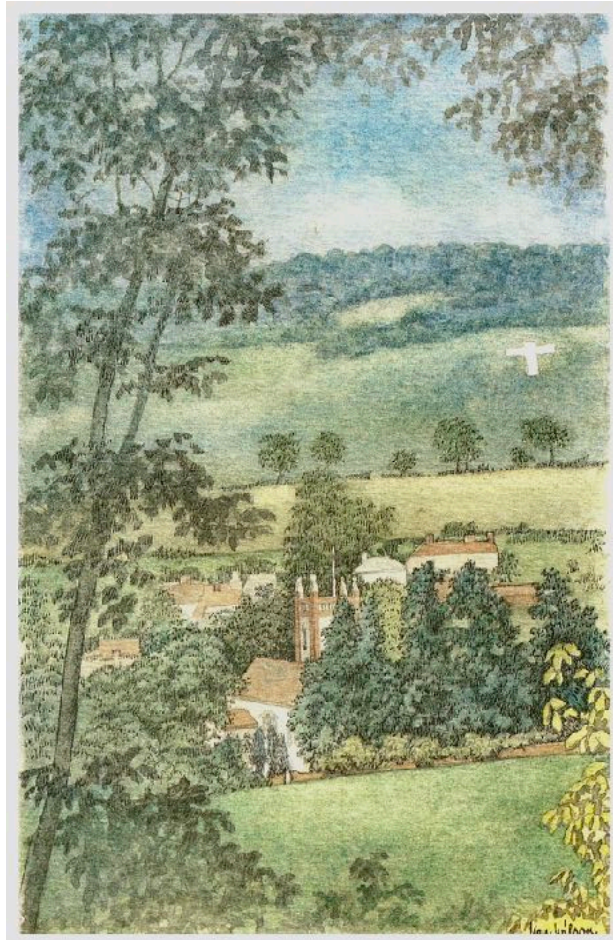


THE CHURCH OF ST PETER & ST PAUL SHOREHAM, KENT



PARISH PROFILE
2025

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Cover illustration by Ken Wilson

1. A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF ROCHESTER

Welcome to the Diocese of Rochester and thank you for your interest in this exciting role. Our parishes and congregations are the beating heart of the Diocese and are central to our desire for churches to flourish and God's kingdom to grow across all our wonderfully diverse communities.

Our vision

As a Diocese we share the vision that we are Called Together to **change, serve and grow** the church across the areas of Medway, north and west Kent and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Much work has taken place to understand what these three themes mean for the life of the Diocese and our priorities, and to define what and where resources will need to be allocated to deliver them.

Through prayerful engagement and discernment, what has begun to emerge is an understanding that we are a community:

Seeking first the Kingdom of God, and called together by God to change, serve and grow with compassion, courage and creativity.

- **Change** is about the need for us to adapt in a changing world, so that our churches can play their full part in serving God and drawing people once more to faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Serve** is about the attitude we need to adopt if we are to earn and gain that cherished place in people's hearts and at the heart of our communities.
- **Grow** is about what God wants to bring about in us and through us, as people growing into the likeness of Christ, and as churches where people are being drawn to follow Jesus through our words and through our deeds.

Our objectives

Within this overall vision, our emerging key objectives are to grow *missional churches, with missional leaders and missional disciples*, that are:

- Growing younger and more diverse,
- Growing numerically, spiritually, financially and in impacting their communities, and in turn are
- Creating a safe and healthy culture for all

This is the latest phase in developing our strategic plans, which are vital to our seeking to grow the kingdom of God across the areas of Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

Central to these plans is sustaining and growing a flourishing and well-resourced parish structure, so as to enable our local churches to take their full and rightful place at the heart of their communities: serving God and serving the people, loving God and showing his love in and to our communities.

If this vision excites you and you believe God may be calling you to this role, then we would love to hear from you.

With my prayers and best wishes,

+Jonathan

The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs
Bishop of Rochester

2. WELCOME

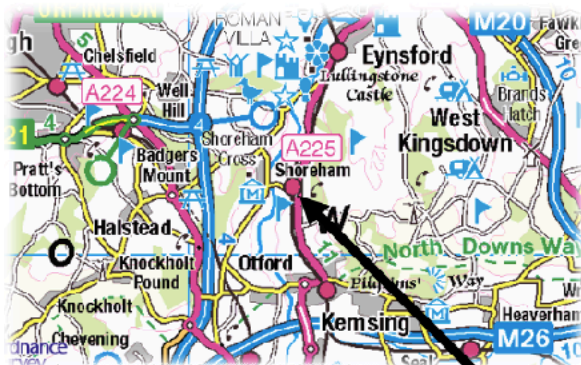
We hope that you enjoy reading this Parish Profile.

In the following pages you will read about:

- A very active and flourishing all-age village community;
- A much-loved ancient church building, open every day, with a recently added Church Room and kitchen, Parish Office, toilets, new heating and lighting;
- A community of faith keenly wanting to see Christian belief and worship extend further amongst the young and the not-so-young, backed by a well-funded programme of ministry expansion;
- A community with a strong interest in music and the arts;
- An exciting opportunity to help prepare the parish for pastoral reorganisation and the possibility of becoming part of a shared benefice.

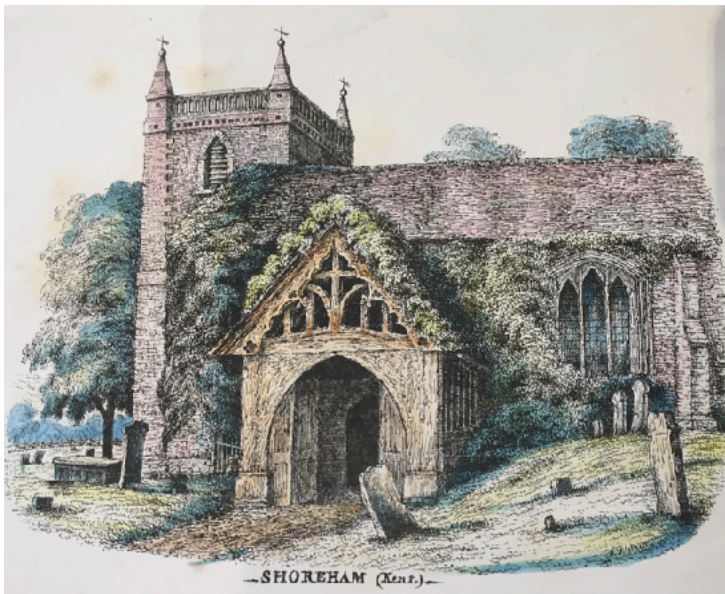
3. THE LOCATION OF THE PARISH

The village of Shoreham in Kent is a 15-minute drive to the north of Sevenoaks, sitting amid glorious countryside and steep hills in the heart of the Darent Valley. The nearest main road, the A225 running between the neighbouring villages of Eynsford and Otford, is a few hundred yards from the church and the centre of the village. The parish encompasses several farms and small outlying settlements which were once served by mission chapels.



4. SHOREHAM PAST AND PRESENT

Shoreham is a special place – not for nothing did the celebrated 19th century artist Samuel Palmer quote Isaiah in describing it as his “Valley of Vision”. Steeped in history and overlooked by the giant chalk Cross on the Hill, a century-old symbol of faith and memorial to the dead of the Great War, it has been and remains a place of inspiration for generations of pilgrims, artists, visitors and residents – with some families stretching back over 200 years. Villagers are proud of all that Shoreham has to offer and work hard to maintain its community-focussed character. Visitors return again and again, many “reliving” their childhood memories with their own families, with the church and churchyard a key part of those formative experiences.



The parish of Shoreham has a population of around 1,500 with a high proportion – one-fifth – aged 16 or below. The village is situated in the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). It has a village shop (with post office), railway station, primary school, three public houses, tea room, golf course, vineyard with restaurant, and the smallest aircraft museum in the world. It is a popular centre for cyclists, walkers and those seeking peace and solace. In addition to its idyllic character, it has very good rail and road links. There are four train services an hour – to London,

Bromley and Sevenoaks – and there is also a (less impressive) bus service.

Although many of the working population now commute, the increase in home-working and the steady growth in visitors means the village is not a sleepy backwater. In fact, traffic congestion on the weekend has caused village grumbling for decades!

Among the many clubs and organisations catering for a wide variety of interests there is the Shoreham Society, Women’s Institute, Shoreham Historical Society, Royal British Legion, Over 60’s, Shoreham Horticultural Society and Shoreham Cricket Club with a beautiful and historic ground overlooking the Cross on the Hill.

There are strong traditions in all the arts. Foremost are The Shoreham Players, a pioneering group and the subject of national newspaper interest when founded in 1924. It remains very popular and well supported, with most productions in the Village Hall, but there have been memorable productions in the church including *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Lark Rise to Candleford* and a Medieval Mystery play.

The Shoreham Music Festival (beginning in 1991) launched a local choir, Temenos, and the Darent Valley Singers often perform in the church. Both of our two local church organists stage concerts in the church – the Sonnet Wind Orchestra is more classical, but with a good modern mix, and the Henry Desmond Orchestra has more of a big band feel. There have also been private concerts and Royal British Legion celebrations.

5. THE CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD

The church of St Peter and St Paul is Grade I Listed in an exceptionally attractive setting in one of the village's two conservation areas. It's believed that priests sent by St Augustine of Canterbury established a settlement a short distance away to convert the valley to Christianity at the dawn of the seventh century.

Christian worship has taken place at the site of our church for at least a thousand years. Early Norman texts suggest a Saxon origin, while the present stonework dates from the 12th century. Shoreham has been at the heart of the Shoreham Deanery for much of that time. The church was given a second aisle in the Tudor period and the handsome tower was rebuilt in 1775 after a fire.

Perhaps the finest glory of the interior is the immaculately preserved Rood Screen bordering the Sanctuary. Most other such screens were destroyed at the time of the Reformation. The early 18th century organ case and the 19th century pulpit both came from Westminster Abbey.



Of the many vicars, rectors and curates who have served at Shoreham, few had a ministry as influential as the Methodist-leaning Revd. Vincent Perronet, a close friend of the Wesley brothers, both of whom visited and preached here (not without controversy) in the 1700s.

Today, the nave is a large open space without fixed pews making it suitable for flexibility in worship, as well as for plays, concerts, exhibitions and events for children. The church is open every day during daylight hours and sits along a public

pathway from the station to the village. Many visitors come to absorb the building's beauty, to pray or quietly reflect, to light a candle or leave a message on our prayer board. There is a free audio tour to guide people to points of interest.

A good number comment on the inspiring sound of our church bells, some of which date from the 1600s. They are rung by a well-schooled team who come from near and far.

The church's extension was opened in September 2019 to provide a hospitality area, a meeting place and an additional space for worship. It includes a kitchen, parish office, toilets and a window with one of the best views in the village! An extensive new heating system was installed in 2024.



The large churchyard, bordered by fields, is a place of exceptional tranquility. It is still open for interments and contains a recently created Garden of Remembrance. Teams of helpers from among the PCC, the regular congregation and the wider community as a whole devote great care to its upkeep.

6. THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH: WORSHIP AND CARE

We have an Electoral Roll of 90, as of April 2025, and are committed to being open, accessible and friendly, encouraging more people to come to church across the whole village and parish, and to attracting those at whatever stage they may be on the journey of faith. The church has a wide range of services for the differing spiritual needs of the parish, and attracts active support from people brought up in a variety of traditions who prefer to worship in the local community rather than travel to a church of their particular denomination.

There is a library of seasonal liturgy developed by our previous Vicar alongside a more traditional 72-page service book produced for the parish in 2003.



We gather to worship God and celebrate Holy Communion at 10am every Sunday, except the first Sunday in the month when there is a Eucharist service at 6pm, and the second Sunday when a Book of Common Prayer Communion is held at 9am before a family service at 10am. All are welcome for prayers and discussion at 9.30am each Friday and there is evening worship and reflection at 6pm on most third Sundays.

Breakfast Church on the first Sunday of every month, with bacon rolls and croissants, is especially popular with families and there is always coffee and tea at the end of the other Sunday services. Special services are held on Ash Wednesday, on the Sunday of our Patronal Festival, at Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. As part of our ministry to bereaved families we hold an annual service in the week of All Souls to commemorate departed loved ones.

On Good Friday, there is a service of quiet reflection and readings from the Gospels. On Easter Sunday, several hours before the main Easter service, villagers climb to the chalk Cross on the Hill to greet the sunrise and give thanks for the Resurrection.

In the run-up to Christmas we hold a major Carol Service, which is always very well attended, and lead two evenings of carol singing around the village which are open to all and great fun. The most popular family tradition is the Christingle Service on Christmas Eve, which attracts up to 300 parents and children. It's a fitting prelude to the Midnight Service and worship on Christmas morning.

Two skilled musicians provide us with organ and piano music and lead our



choir. Our two Readers have added invaluable ministry to that of the Vicar and visiting clergy. They also organise two regular home study groups, deepening our understanding and application of the Bible, and praying together. In recent years, we as a church have participated in two courses from the Bible Society: the Bible Course and the Romans Course. We also participate each year in Thy Kingdom Come between Ascension and Pentecost.

Members of the congregation continue to visit parishioners in their homes or in hospital to offer Communion and check on their well-being. Collections for a food bank are made at the church.

In 2024, there were four weddings, two baptisms, four interments of ashes and seven funerals.

1st Sunday	9am Breakfast Church 6pm Holy Communion
2nd Sunday	9am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship
3rd Sunday	10am Holy Communion 6pm Evening Worship
4th/5th Sunday	10am Holy Communion
Fridays	9.30am Prayers

7. COMMITTED TO GROWTH

Through prayer and hard work, we have discovered over the past incumbency that a small church can also be a growing church. The PCC recently gave heartfelt thanks to our retiring Vicar for a decade of remarkable work, ministry and advances at Shoreham – which included the building of our extension, the development of a greater culture of hospitality, plus considerable outreach to children and families via our Stay and Play group and other social activities. Central to our ministry has been the diocesan Called to Grow project. We have taken the project to heart and continue to develop several of the ideas launched at the start of the process.

We therefore pay particular attention to the needs of the young and their families. Special teams help us prepare for Breakfast Church and other events. Children from the Village School pay visits to the church and take part in services with their poems and other creative work. In the recent Easter holidays we ran a very successful Messy Church.

Monday mornings in term time are special for us – for the last three years we have held a Stay and Play Group for toddlers and their parents in the Village Hall, and on occasions in the church. During that time we have registered over 200 families. The group is free, save for a small contribution towards refreshments, and the number of participants has advanced so that several dozen children are now regular attendees. A prayer and a Christian theme are elements of each week's play and learning. The group is ably led by our Children and Families Worker, and the PCC resolved to extend her role to work with

local families, with funding for her to undertake specialised training. These efforts have borne fruit in terms of new families appearing at our church services.

Comments from a survey in 2024 give a flavour of what our Stay and Play Group offers:

“Large place with great variety of toys for all children. LOVE having the theme of a Bible story each week incorporated into the craft play...”

“Very well organised. Teaching Christian ethos in a kind, easy manner, and understanding for little ones...”

“Choice of toys and activities. Friendly staff. My child doesn’t currently talk but very much loves this group, especially the songs...”

“Love the friendly atmosphere. Always clean. My favourite playgroup...”

But Shoreham Church, like all churches, still faces challenges and our aspirations are still growing. We continue to analyse the needs of people in our parish, to fine-tune our responses, to set an appropriate annual Parish Offer, and to work with the Diocese to expand our mission and ministry. Our congregation outside Breakfast Church is more elderly, so our vision is to grow in our love of God and our community, with particular emphasis on children and families. And we recognise that we need help to build strong relationships with local families so that they can become committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are mindful of the need to prepare for possible Parish reorganisation and look to the different opportunities that becoming a shared benefice might offer.

As part of our commitment to being an open and welcoming church, we respect the variety of theological positions held within our PCC and more widely within the congregation. In particular we have considered our different approaches to “Living in Love and Faith” and are open to further discussion around the possibilities that this might present for welcoming new members to our congregation.

8. AN OUTWARD FOCUS

The welfare of those within and beyond our parish boundaries are frequently in the minds of the PCC and the prayers of the congregation.

The diocesan link with Mpwapwa in Tanzania is at the forefront of our outward giving. We have visited the schools and churches there, kept in touch via social media, and last year £3,600 was donated to support education, worship, health and agriculture.

Last November, we were especially pleased to welcome the Bishop of Mpwapwa, the Rt Rev Luzineth Kingamkono, to Shoreham. A reception for him was held in the church where we exchanged news with the leader of our partner diocese and looked at the latest images from Tanzania. Bishop Luzineth attended a service and took part in the baptisms of two parishioners.

Closer to home, a coffee morning, open to all villagers, is held monthly in our Church Room. There is an outdoor “Hymns and Pimms” event each summer.

The church used to hold a Harvest Supper every year, usually on a bring and share basis. More recently there has been a catered meal, music and entertainment, which has been very well received. Since the Covid pandemic, however, we are only slowly rebuilding these traditions, helped by the improved heating. We have had a St George’s Day Feast and barn dance, and this year successfully revived a Burn’s Night Dinner with a ceilidh, organised by the very generous Friends of Shoreham Church. The Friends also held a successful garden party in 2024.

We keep in touch locally via our popular parish magazine, the *Shoreham Gazette*, which is distributed ten times a year to some 540 homes in the parish by a team of volunteers. It’s estimated that more than 2,200 people read the magazine, including online. A news sheet is also emailed to parishioners each week.

Our website (www.shorehamchurchkent.co.uk) has news of services and other information. People can use it to make donations and there are contact pages for weddings and other occasional offices, plus picture galleries, short videos and information on church history. We also have an active Facebook page and an entry on the Church Near You website.

At Christmas, all villagers receive a card from Shoreham Church with designs by local children, and other cards are sent to those who have taken part in weddings and baptisms.

The village school has around 100 pupils and an established Head Teacher. It is not a church school, but in practice the Vicar has had close links with it and the previous incumbent was a school governor.

By tradition, the Vicar is also an *ex officio* trustee of the Shoreham Almshouses.

9. OUR FINANCES

The church’s finances are sound and sufficient to meet normal outgoings. Last year our unrestricted general income was £78,000 and our expenditure was £67,000. The resulting surplus of £11,000 was mainly due to an unusually low requested parish share (paid in full), the receipt of a backlog of Gift Aid, and some generous one-time donations. This year the requested parish share increased by £18,000, which we could not commit to fund fully, but we have increased our contribution by £8,000 and should break even this year.

In 2024 we had a very successful “Generosity” campaign, backed by a lot of prayer. We raised one-time donations of nearly £3,700 and an increase in monthly giving of £485. The increase in monthly giving represents a 21% increase in committed funding.

St Peter and St Paul was very blessed in 2020 to receive a large legacy worth over £200,000. We have used this funding for major projects including better lighting and heating, and the employment of our Children and Families Worker. We still have £150,000 left of this legacy. One possible call on this is to install projection and streaming facilities; we have decided to pause this project until we have a new incumbent.

The Friends of Shoreham Church also raise considerable funds to help maintain the fabric of the church (which is in a sound condition).

10. DIOCESE, DEANERY AND PATRON



Our PCC, currently of eight members, meets seven times a year and is keen to continue engaging with the Deanery, Diocese and neighbouring parishes. There is a Standing Committee and various groups deal with issues such as fabric and service planning.

Shoreham Parish is in the Diocese of Rochester and the Shoreham Deanery. Our two lay representatives attend Deanery Synod meetings.

The Patron of Shoreham parish since 1547 has been the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey. The previous Vicar but one enjoyed a once-a-year weekday chaplaincy to visitors at the Abbey, and parishioners have paid special visits there. The parish values these links with the Abbey and hopes that they will continue.

11. OUR VICARAGE

A modern vicarage was built in the 1960s. It abuts the churchyard. Downstairs there is a large study, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, utility room and WC/cloakroom. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, a bathroom and shower room. The house has been well cared for by the previous Vicar and is currently being rewired. There is a garage and a garden.



12. THE NEW INCUMBENT

We are looking to offer someone a **part-time, three-year interim post of Priest in Charge**. During this time the opportunities for pastoral re-organisation will be explored within Shoreham Deanery.

We can offer:

- The opportunity to minister and play an active role in a friendly and vibrant village community in a beautiful part of North Kent;
- Enthusiastic, committed Christians who believe that our church depends upon being open and responsive, as individuals and as a church community, to wider society and a changing world so that trust in Christ, love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit can be open to all, now and in the future.

We are looking to welcome a priest:

- Who would like to work with the PCC and wider congregation to bring about the change necessary to secure the church's future;
- Whose teaching and preaching (while firmly based on the authority of Scripture) has meaning in the context of everyday life;
- Who values people of all ages and backgrounds, with a special focus on reaching young people, on whom the future of the church depends;
- Who will enjoy belonging to and becoming part of our local community and offering Christian care, witness and presence amongst those of faith, of little faith or none.



**Thank you for reading this Parish Profile.
We hope and pray you will be inspired to join our journey at Shoreham.**