

Parish Profile

St Bartholomew's Otford



www.stbartholomews.co.uk



TONBRIDGE ARCHDEACONRY



I am delighted to commend this profile for the Benefice of St Bartholomew's Otford, as you discern God's call to serve here as Priest in Charge.

You will see from the profile that this is a vibrant parish church with an effective Christian presence in and for its community, within the historic village of Otford. It offers a breadth of worship and ministry, that honors its history, seeks to be relevant to the context of today, and is committed to searching out possibility for mission into the future.

Otford sits within the Deanery of Shoreham, one of six that lie within the Tonbridge Archdeaconry. This deanery is set to see considerable change in leadership over the next 5 years as a number of the clergy are due to retire.

This provides opportunity for the right leader to help shape the future of the deanery within the priorities of the Archdeaconry and Diocese.

The Diocese as a whole is home to some 1.3m people, which is set for significant growth (of around a further 300,000 over the next 20 years). Whilst growth is inevitable, much of Tonbridge Archdeaconry retains its rural identity, with urban centres found in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, and Paddock Wood, and around the Aylesford area.

Tonbridge Archdeaconry shares its life together under the canopy of the Diocesan strategy, Called Together, through which we are seeking together the Kingdom of God – called to change, to grow and to serve. Together, across the Archdeaconry, and across the diocese, we are working to grow missional churches, leaders and disciples that are younger and more diverse across the many different contexts into which God has placed us.

With prayers for you as you discern God's call to this place.

The Ven Sharon Copestake
Archdeacon of Tonbridge



WELCOME TO ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S

Located in the centre of the village, the church welcomes people of all ages, with 183 on the electoral roll, for regular and occasional services, as well as visitors from near and far, including those walking the Pilgrim's Way.

The parish is situated within the Diocese of Rochester, with Westminster Abbey as its patron. We are one of the larger congregations of the 14 rural parishes in the Shoreham Deanery, one of the 6 Deaneries in the Archdeaconry of Tonbridge

The following pages tell you more about us as a church family, our village, our hopes for the future and try to describe the person who will work with us. If you feel God is calling you to consider becoming our next incumbent we very much look forward to hearing from you.





THE PARISH AND VILLAGE OF OTFORD

Otford is a vibrant semi-rural village of some 4000 people, lying on the edge of the North Downs in West Kent, in the Darent Valley, with London just half an hour away by train. Otford is close to Sevenoaks, an old market town which is good for shopping, schools and entertainment.

Inhabited since at least Roman times, Otford is famous for its Archbishop's Palace, the world's largest scale model of the solar system, a Roman villa presently being excavated and our nationally recognised listed duck pond.

Within this lively and beautiful village there is an extensive range of clubs, societies and organisations as well as a Post Office, public library, medical centre, pharmacist, dentist, a variety of local shops, including supermarkets a mile away, and various places to eat and drink.

Otford village has a primary school and

two preparatory schools. There is also a variety of secondary schools in the Sevenoaks area, including a Christian Free School, grammar schools, and also long-established independent schools.

There are three other churches in Otford: Methodist, Roman Catholic and an Evangelical Free Church.





Accessibility, natural beauty and rich heritage makes Otford popular with visitors and commuters alike. This is an affluent area with good rail and motorway transport links but there is a real shortage of affordable housing. We have an above average population of elderly residents but also, being a commuter belt village, many families.

There is a great sense of community and village identity and many of our church members are involved in village clubs, societies and events.

OTFORD HERITAGE TRAIL





THE CHURCH FAMILY AND SERVICES

As our church serves a village, our congregation has a variety of denominational backgrounds and hence broad churchmanship. We have a large support team and a mix of services which attract different congregations. However, there is a great fostering of fellowship at our varied events which are enjoyed by the congregation and non-church going villagers alike.

Support Team - we have two churchwardens, a paid parish administrator, 3 readers, of which one is also a pastoral assistant (with Permission to Minister and conduct funerals), a Safeguarding Officer and a PCC of 15. We have many members of the congregation who are involved in services by leading prayers, reading the Bible and acting as sidespeople.

Congregations and services – we have a range of service styles which suit different groups and many attend more than one service a week.

The typical monthly pattern is given overleaf.





SERVICES

SUNDAY

8am said communion service using Common Worship but with BCP once a month

10am

1st Sunday Family service, All Together Worship with the Band

2nd & 4th Sunday sung Holy Communion with the choir

3rd Sunday Morning Worship with the choir

5th Sunday A healing or other service

In addition, there is Messy Church about twice each term.

All 10am services are live-streamed.

Apart from the first Sunday in the month, the young people start in the church and then go to the church centre for their own activities.

6.30pm - **1st and 3rd Sundays**
Sung BCP Evensong with choir

Prayer Breakfast an all-age opportunity which takes place on the 4th Sunday of every month, some from the 8am service stay for breakfast and are joined by some who arrive early for the 10am service.

WEDNESDAY

10am Holy Communion BCP



Other Services

We welcome many for baptism, funerals and weddings. We will have had 3 weddings of young couples from our church family between October last year and July this year.

Baptisms currently take place during the 10am service or by arrangement.

Our **Christmas** services range from a very well-attended Crib Service to a traditional 9 Lessons and Carols.

We take part in the ecumenical Service of witness with the Roman Catholics and Methodists on **Palm Sunday** holding the service on the green (weather permitting)!

Our **Maundy Thursday** Service has been a joint service with the Methodists.

On **Good Friday** there is currently a Messy Church in the morning and a one-hour devotional service in the afternoon held in church. On **Easter Sunday** we hold a Family Service and Festal Evensong.

A major village event is the **Remembrance Day Commemoration**, in a packed church and afterwards on the green.



CHILDREN AND YOUTH



We have thriving children and youth work in our church with groups for all ages:

First Steps

a joint group with the Methodist Church, who meet in the Methodist Church hall fortnightly, for preschool children and their parents/carers.

Sunday Club

takes place during the Sunday 10am service for age 3 plus.

EPIC

Every Person in Christ or Eating Pizza in Church! A group for years 5 to 8, meeting monthly for games, food, craft and laughter.

YPF

the *Young People's Fellowship* is for those in year 9 and above, meeting every Sunday evening in term time; 12-15 regular attenders from many different local schools.

Messy Church

takes place on a Sunday afternoon from 3pm during which primary age children with their parents/ carers are able to take part in several craft activities, a short informal act of worship, followed by afternoon tea. An excellent opportunity to welcome families in a relaxed atmosphere.

A Youth Weekend

every year in July we take our children and young people away for the weekend to Kench Hill near Tenterden. In 2023 there were about 30 children plus 10 adults. We enjoy a time of teaching and learning in four different age groups and enjoy many activities. Some other members of the church family have joined us for afternoon tea on Saturday.



FELLOWSHIP

CAMEO meet on a Monday afternoon, and some Saturdays, in the home of one of the readers. They have holidayed together.

Refreshments after every Sunday 10am services and the Wednesday morning service once/month.

House Bible study groups we presently have three house Bible study groups.

Advent and Lent courses during COVID we began to offer these online, led by the vicar and readers.

Monday Soup Lunches these take place 6 times a year in the Church Centre. Fellowship over a bowl of homemade soup followed by a talk or interview with a speaker.

Warm Welcome every Friday afternoon fellowship and chat, open to everyone.

Summer Parish Barbeque in July, just before all the schools break for their summer holidays, in the Vicarage garden.

Churchyard Working Party provides fellowship and therapy of a more active kind, with a coffee and cake break.

Events

We are a church which enjoys social events which have included Burns' Nights, quizzes with supper, pop-up restaurants, games nights and watching sport together. We have also used our buildings to host a variety of concerts and productions. The church summer fair is a major village event on the Green, spreading to the vicarage garden. The village holds a Christmas Fair with which we are fully involved.



MUSIC

The broad churchmanship within our church family is reflected in the range of worship styles. These are supported by our two musical groups. The choir and organist lead the music at most 10am and all the 6.30pm services. We have a robed choir of about 16 led by a long-standing organist and choir master. They sing a wide range of traditional settings and anthems and are joined at times by instrumentalists and the choir gives a carol concert each Christmas.

The music group leads the music at the 10am service on the first Sunday of

each month with contemporary worship songs. The group is made up of about 15 musicians and singers of various ages and have so far been asked to play at 3 weddings, with another one in May this year.

All our church musicians unite for special occasions such as Confirmation Services.

St Bartholomew's has six bells which are rung for most 10am services, many weddings as well as Quarter Peals for commemorative events such as the coronation. We have an active trainer for new ringers.





MISSION PARTNERS

We support local, national and international Mission Partners which often have links with people within the church family.

Our Mission Partners are: Hospices of Hope, Sevenoaks Counselling, Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust, The Children's Society, CAP, The Bible Society, CMS, Pursue, A Rocha,

Tear Fund. We also support a local food bank Loaves and Fishes.

It has been or normal practice to invite a speaker from one of our Mission Partners to come to our 3rd Sunday Morning Worship service to speak about the work of their organisation and give us an insight into the work they are currently doing.



hospices of hope
making every day count

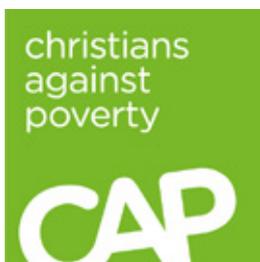
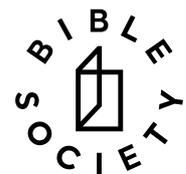


Sevenoaks Counselling

a professional service offered by
Christians to the whole community



The Children's Society





THE CHURCH

St. Bartholomew's Church is located at the centre of the village. It is a Grade 1 listed building, its origins going back to before the Norman conquest. Very little is left of the earlier Saxon building, the earliest parts being the Norman north wall and tower. The rest was added during the following centuries with extensive internal alterations in the 1860s including the addition of the present pews.

The Church Centre was completed in 2007 and is a major addition attached to the north side of the Church. It has a meeting hall which is used routinely for church events and can be subdivided into three smaller rooms, for use by our Sunday club and other groups during the week. The church office, a meeting room (which is also the choir vestry), toilets and kitchen are also within the Church Centre.

In 2000 the tower was strengthened to take four additional bells and in 2012 the exterior was rendered with lime mortar and the interior was refitted.

An internal reordering of the church itself was completed in May 2018 with sympathetic remodelling of the Chancel and Lady Chapel and includes provision for film and other visual presentations. The whole Church Centre and much of the church are accessible and there is a small terrace leading from the centre which in good weather is a popular spot for coffee. The churchyard is now closed but the church benefits from a Garden of Remembrance.





The Vicarage is in the centre of the village about 100 yards from the church, between the churchyard, church car park and the remains of the historic Otford Palace. Some of the Palace has been converted to cottages. (Some remains are also in the Vicarage garden.)



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



THE CHURCH HALL

The Church Hall is located away from the church, in the centre of Otford High Street, adjacent to the village car park and opposite The Bull public house. Built in 1910 and designed by the practice of Sir Edwin Lutyens, it is home to the village Millennium Mosaic and is potentially a valuable asset for both the parish and the village.

It is currently used during the week by Little Treacles Nursery. On selected weekends and Bank Holidays during the summer months, the church use the hall and/or the grassed area in front of it to hold pop-up stalls, which provide both social outreach within the village and fundraising.

A separate budget is maintained for the Hall, which until very recently has been making a loss. Maintenance of the building has fallen by the wayside in recent years and discussions have been held about its future use. A condition survey undertaken in 2019 identified potential costs to restore the building in the region of £400k.

A consultation held - in 2017 - with the congregation and the wider parish identified two leading options and it will be for our new Priest in charge to help us through the decision-making process on the future of the building.





FINANCE

St. Bartholomew's aim to run a balanced budget each year. Unrestricted turnover averages £130k a year with about 75% of income coming from donations and 55% of expenditure forming our Parish Offer to the Diocese, which we have met in full in all but one year recently.

The remainder of our income comes primarily from our fundraising and social events held throughout the year.

The PCC has a policy of maintaining £35k in unrestricted reserves. This is monitored regularly by our Finance Committee, who meet on alternate months to the PCC meetings.

Financial updates are provided to our congregation during the year and regular Stewardship events held where parishioners are invited to review their giving.





VISION AND FUTURE

Since the mid-2010s the PCC have had a “Mission Action Plan” under the “Called to Grow” and “Called Together” initiatives, which is revisited at three year intervals, and we have asked the congregation for their input and used that to plan for the coming years.

Our ‘mission action’ plan based on congregational feedback (in December 2023) and PCC discussions includes:

Growing our church family

Preparing the parish for the deanery reorganisation

Developing pastoral visiting spearheaded by the Incumbent

Improving our relationship with the state primary school

Strengthening our ties with the other churches in the village

Maintaining diversity in our worship but include some more contemporary hymns/songs at the other (than just the 1st Sunday) 10am services





DIOCESE FUTURE VISION

Bishop Jonathan has said that his ministry will be focused most of all on seeking to support and strengthen the life and mission of our local churches and parishes. He wants to continue to affirm the work of “Called Together”, whilst also thinking about:

Change - to meet the challenges of the community in which we serve.

Serve - is both about our attitude to one another within the church and our orientation towards the world outside.

Grow - is about people coming to faith and joining our congregations, becoming more like Jesus, increasing the impact of our churches in their communities and making a difference to those around us.

Whilst parishes within the Deanery do include pockets of social housing Otford has remained static over the last few

years, however future planned large housing developments in the Sevenoaks area will have an impact on the Village.

For St. Bart’s it is likely that pastoral reorganisation will involve sharing an incumbent with one or two neighbouring parishes, there is no specific plan yet. Many of the Parishes within the Shoreham Deanery are smaller than is typical to sustain a full time Incumbent. The PCC has discussed the prospects for change and are keen to embrace and shape the opportunities. The PCC intends to look for occasions to work with neighbouring parishes as we move forward.



WE LOOK AND PRAY FOR SOMEONE WHO:

- models a healthy spiritual relationship with God and seeks to grow the church.
- enjoys different styles of worship encompassing all-age worship with our talented band, Holy Communion with our robed choir and organist, Evensong and BCP. To reflect the calm of a quiet Christmas midnight Communion and rejoice in the chaos of a packed Crib Service.
- can rise to the joys and challenges of living in a large village. Willing to engage and work closely with the other churches, schools and village groups. Be central to village events and work to increase the profile of St Bartholomew's in the area.
- to take an active part in shaping the future vision for the deanery, drawing parishioners into the development of specific plans and providing leadership through the process of change.
- is a people person: visiting the sick, the elderly, the bereaved. Happy to have a five-minute chat with newcomers or the lonely after a service. Willing to engage with the children and young people, supporting our youth team to welcome people and families into our church. Is ready to listen to and nurture everyone, wherever they are on their Christian journey.
- can be discerning and diplomatic, personable, and able to encourage the use of gifts within the church family, to enable us to reach out to the people of Otford who currently have no contact with any Church in the Village. By recognising and cultivating new callings and initiatives, steering us in whatever God has called his church family at St Bartholomew's to do.



