

St Luke's Parish Church Tunbridge Wells



“St Luke’s Church seeks to be at the heart of the community, there for all, helping people to explore their faith and share the love of God.”

www.stluketw.co.uk



**May you find here
peace to pray
joy to share
love to pass on**



St Luke's – a brief introduction

The Parish of St Luke's is part of the Tunbridge Wells Deanery, in the Archdeaconry of Tonbridge and the Diocese of Rochester. The parish is about 1.5 miles to the north of the town centre of Tunbridge Wells, which is near the border of Kent and Sussex.

The church was built in 1910. The Parish wasn't formally constituted until 1911, but its origins had grown from the mission work of St John's Church in the early 1890s, when a great deal of residential development was taking place in this part of the town. The mission was carried out first in a tent and then in a tin church and the area appears to have been known as St Luke's from about 1904 onwards, before the new church was built or a separate parish formally established.

We provide a range of worship in keeping with the central traditions of the Church of England. We use set liturgy with seasonal variations and our readings are taken from the Lectionary. We robe for most services.

We seek to be a warm and open community welcoming all who come to St Luke's and this is reflected in the statement our church family has recently adopted.

"We believe in Inclusive Church – church which does not discriminate, on any level, on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical or learning ability, race or sexuality. We believe in church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ."

We currently have 141 on our Electoral Roll and at our main 10am service have an average attendance of 50+ adults and 20 children. Regular weekly attendance is no longer so common, but the number of people who regularly attend is more like 120 adults and 35 children. There is a wide age range within the congregation.

Like many parishes, the disruption of Covid resulted in some members not returning once churches were re-opened. However, we are very fortunate to have a continuing influx of new families, and we are working hard to grow and enthuse our congregation and rebuild our church structures.

The Parish contains close to 2,500 homes, a mixture of old and newer houses and flats. Many of the homes are owner occupied, but there is also rented accommodation especially in the social housing area at one end of the parish. In general terms, the socio-economic basis is mixed. We also have one care home within the Parish.

It's shaped rather like a large figure of eight with the railway line splitting the two halves, as you will see on the map on the back cover. The church's location in more or less one corner of the parish means that some residents living at the other end of the parish boundary identify more with our neighbouring parish of St Philip. But the church is not dependent only on people who live in the parish boundaries. As in many urban areas, parish boundaries are not so significant to residents and many worshippers at St Luke's live outside the parish boundaries.

The parish is wholly residential with only one small parade of shops which is five minutes walk from the Vicarage. This contains a supermarket, hairdressers, chemist, bakery, off licence, newsagent, and several takeaway food vendors.

More information about the area can be found later in the profile

Some Parish People

The current ministry team comprises the Vicar, a Reader with PTO and an LLM. Leading services and preaching is shared between them.



Members of the congregation are encouraged to read lessons, lead intercessions and to present the offertory. Our Sacristan prepares the elements for Communion and assists with the Chalice. We also have a Welcome Team to greet people, hand out service information and support the wardens. Our church bells are rung from a keyboard and there is a small team of volunteers on our bell ringing rota. You can read more about our singing group and organists later.

Explorers (our young people) are led by a team of members of the congregation, whose work is supported by the Incumbent and the Reader.

As well as the formal offices of Church Warden and PCC members, many volunteers are involved in a number of different other ways to help run the church – cleaning and maintaining buildings, organising and participating in fund raising and social events, looking after the church gardens to name but a few. We also have a volunteer Parish Administrator. Some of our work is organised through planning groups which report to the PCC. We currently have a fabric group, fund raising group, children's ministry group and finance group and are looking for people to join other groups.

Of course there is also a wide network of care given by members of the congregation to family, friends and neighbours and we try to keep aware of the different needs we could meet.

Our Pattern of Worship

Our Sunday Service is at 10am and generally follows the pattern outlined below, although there are some seasonal variations:

First Sunday	Parish Communion
Second Sunday	Morning Worship
Third Sunday	Parish Communion
Fourth Sunday	Morning Worship with a special focus on our young people
Fifth Sunday	Parish Communion or Morning Worship



There is also a mid week service of Holy Communion (BCP) on a Wednesday morning at 11am.

Our Explorers group of young people, which takes place during our Sunday service, meet in the hall 3 times a month and join us for the fourth Sunday. We also run “Kidzone” on a Monday which is a more informal worship group for families with young children. More about both of these can be found later in the profile.

A warm welcome is given to all those attending our church and approaching us for occasional offices. Baptisms are held as part of the 10am Service. Parents seeking Baptism and couples requesting marriage at our church are encouraged to attend services before they make their final decision.

For many years we have shared Confirmation services with other churches in the town and young people and adults who wish to be confirmed join classes for preparation.

Festivals:

Festival services are often attended by a larger number of people and give us an opportunity to reach out beyond our regular congregation.

Christmas:

We start our Christmas celebrations with a Nativity presented by our Explorers group. A Carol Service is held in the evening on the Sunday before Christmas; a Crib Service in the afternoon on Christmas Eve and a Service of Holy Communion also on Christmas Eve – generally at midnight. We now hold our Christingle Service at Candlemas and have found this a good way to fulfil the Church's Christmas season and bring light into the dark early months of the year.



Lent, Holy Week and Easter:

Lent begins with a Eucharist together with ashing offered both in the morning and evening. We also run a weekly Lent Course. Holy Week normally begins with a dramatic reading on Palm Sunday and we have a reflective meditation offered on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday.

Maundy Thursday is marked with a service of Holy Communion in the evening and on Good Friday we hold a service for families in the morning "Telling the Easter story" with a more meditative service in the afternoon "At the Foot of the Cross".

Easter Day is celebrated, of course, with Holy Communion.

Harvest Thanksgiving:

Harvest is celebrated with a beautifully decorated church and a collection of e.g. tins of food for a local charity.



Remembrance and Memorial:

A special service is held for Remembrance Sunday and we also hold a biennial Memorial Service when people are invited to come and light a candle in memory of loved ones.

Music

We use “Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New” as our hymn book alongside a song book of more modern worship songs.

Approximately 10 of our congregation comprise an enthusiastic [non-robed] group of singers, who generally accompany all our morning services.

They also play a key role in our Carol Service [based on the Festival of Nine Lessons], and occasional anthems are sung for other festivals. When requested, members have also sung for weddings.



We are blessed with a beautiful Norman & Beard organ, which is played by our 2 in-house organists and 2 visiting ones.

We are constantly looking for new younger talent and for someone who can lead us into some more modern music while still appreciating the beauty of more formal structures.

Our Young People

Explorers is for our younger members of the congregation; from Reception to early Secondary and they meet in the hall during the main Sunday morning services. There are on average 15-20 children each week with approx. 30 children registered.

It is led by 7 adult volunteers on a rota basis and involves looking at the New Testament passage from the Lectionary and exploring it through theme based craft/creative activities, Lego and junk modelling and playing active group games. We use the Roots scheme. The children return to church for the end of each service when they share what activities they enjoyed and can also join communion with their families.

Kid Zone has been running for several years for primary school age children and their families. They meet every Monday after school to enjoy crafts, songs and Bible stories and has proven to be very popular with approximately 15 – 20 children attending each week. At the end of each session, take-home sheets are handed out which include a simple word search or crossword, colouring or other activities based on the bible story for that week.



Holiday Club has been run by a group of volunteer adult leaders for a number of years for between 3-5 days during the Easter or Summer holidays with a different theme each year. It is for school age children from reception upwards and as the children move to secondary school, some enjoy returning as young leaders. The annual theme, whether it is pirates sailing the high seas or brave knights battling to protect their castles, will be incorporated into crafts and activities with lots of games, squash, and biscuits to keep the children busy.

Blend focuses on the older children from school years 6 to 9 providing them with some independence in preparation for secondary school and an opportunity to regroup with friends as they attend different schools. The children can chill out with toast, milkshakes and biscuits following a busy day at school, complete homework in quieter areas and enjoy crafts or activities to include dodge ball, Wii or table football to name a few. It was set up in partnership with the local YMCA. They are now taking over running it, but we will continue to have a close relationship with the group.

Safeguarding

St Luke's is fully committed to doing everything it can to ensure that Safeguarding is a priority.

We have a 3-tier system for our Safer Recruitment:

1 person is responsible for DBS, 1 for taking up references, and the PSO [Parish Safeguarding Officer] for ensuring the correct training certificates are obtained.

Our PCC undertakes the Diocesan required Basic, Foundation, and Domestic Abuse Awareness training, and those who work with our children do the Basic and Foundation.

Safeguarding notices are on display on the website, and in both our church and hall. Our hall hirers sign a safeguarding statement as part of their conditions.

In everything we do we aim to make Safeguarding an instinctive part of our church life.

Our Mission to the Community and Our Away Giving

Sadly our local infant school was closed some years ago, but our current incumbent does an occasional Assembly for St John's Primary School, which many of our church family children attend. She has also been a regular visitor to the Care Home that lies within our Parish.

Our recent focus has been very much on young families and children. We started both Kidzone and BLEND (details of which are on our page about young people). Unfortunately other groups were lost during the pandemic and we would now like to look at how we can engage with other age groups in the community again.

Tunbridge Wells attracts many people moving out of London who are then seeking new friendships and a sense of community. Within a town, rather than a village, a community can be more difficult to find and for a church to build, but as well as using our own website and face book page, we also use other local facebook pages for communicating to a wider audience.

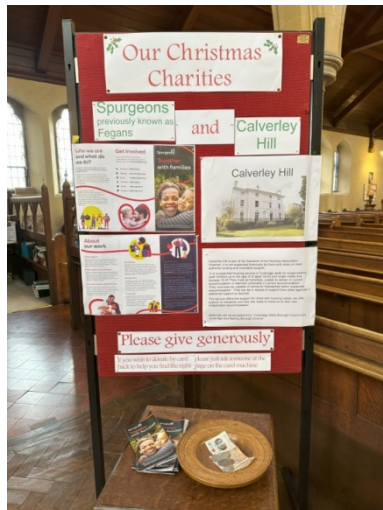
The community makes good use of our hall in addition to the Nursery School, a pre-school which meets every day in the hall. We have close links with them and support their Christmas Nativity and Harvest celebrations. They also support many of our events. Other groups which use the hall are Slimming World, one of the local W I groups, a dance group, a dog training group and a local beaver scout group which can't be accommodated at the church they are attached to. The hall can also be hired for private bookings.

Of course, much of our contact with the community is also made by the members of the congregation who live in the parish and are part of all the local networks. We have also made sure we joined organisations such as the WI which meets in our church hall.

For our away giving, we respond to disasters with one-off collections, but also support four charities a year with a donation from PCC funds. As well as this, we have a special collection at our main Christmas Services which goes to a local charity nominated by the PCC. We also take part in “Operation Christmas Child” run by Samaritan’s Purse where boxes are packed with toys and other items for children in different parts of the world. We encourage support of Nourish, our local food bank and have a box for collecting donated items which are taken to them regularly.



The care given to those in need, which is so much a part of the history of this parish was reflected in our strong involvement in the movement to make Tunbridge Wells a Fairtrade town and we are also a Fairtrade Church. We are keen to explore new projects for mission.



Our Buildings

The church was built in 1910 of Kent ragstone with bathstone details and tiled roofs. Five beautiful stained glass windows designed by William Glasby were dedicated in 1924, with other

smaller stained glass windows added later. Our bell tower was dedicated in 1919 and contains bells with are clavier chime with ringing clappers. The Norman and Beard organ, fitted in 1910, a rare example of its type, was extensively renovated in 1991 with some further works carried out in 2017. A number of internal

alterations have taken place over the years, including the creation of a memorial chapel in 1952, but the church still has its original pews. There is no graveyard, but to the front of the church there is a well-maintained Memorial Garden where ashes are buried.



Our church hall was built in the early 1970s. It comprises a medium-sized hall with a newly refurbished kitchen leading off it, and a smaller hall with an additional lounge or meeting room. There is a fully fitted accessible disabled toilet as well as male and female toilets. There are baby changing facilities as well. The hall

itself is accessed by both a step and an access ramp.

The Vicarage

Purpose built in the 1970s, the Vicarage is constructed from red brick and half tile. It is only five minutes walk from the church.



It is a comfortable family sized home comprising on the ground floor a good sized hall, kitchen, utility room, dining room, lounge with open fire place, study, a small further work space and a downstairs cloakroom. The stairs to the first floor are in the hall and lead to a good sized landing off which are 2 double bedrooms, 2 single rooms and a family bathroom. The property benefits from double glazing and gas central heating throughout.

There is a single garage and large walled parking area at the front with a mature low maintenance border. The rear garden is also large and well planted.

There is a large, well maintained park within a few minutes walk with some sports facilities, a children's playground and a community orchard.



Our Finances

The basic cost of running the church in 2022, excluding major capital expenditure, was approximately £78,000, of which about £39,000 (50%) was covered by congregational contributions and Gift Aid tax recovery.

Our deficit between direct giving and running costs was almost mitigated by our rental income from the church hall, which in 2022 contributed £17,000 net of costs, and also by our fundraising events which raised a further £6,000. Interest on reserves provided £650. Donations, fees and other income sources brought in £9,000. Our excess of expenditure over income was approximately £6,360 which we believe to be a fairly good outcome for the year given the effects the pandemic. Copies of the annual accounts are available.

We also actively do our own fund-raising having two major events a year – a Summer Fair and a Christmas Fair, as well as two smaller ones. As well as raising much needed funds, these are also another opportunity to provide a warm welcome to a wider community and encourage those who are not church-goers to come and meet us and come into the church buildings. Many members of the Parish are regular supporters of these events.



We have also found a generous response to special projects which has enabled us, in the last 6 years, to renovate our organ, and improve our disabled access in the hall as well as refurbish our hall kitchen.

Our overall financial position means that we can continue to pay a Parish Contribution to the Diocese which more than pays our way.

We have increased the number of people who now give regularly by Standing Order, which helps with budgeting. Since the pandemic we have also focussed on digital giving, as a result of which we can now accept payments by card, phone and even smart watches.

Our Links with Other Churches

Tunbridge Wells Deanery currently contains 14 benefices within the town and some of the outlying villages. We play a full part in Deanery activities and send representatives to Deanery Synod meetings.

We are also blessed in the town with a thriving ecumenical group “Tunbridge Wells Churches Together” who meet to pray together, share ideas and to develop and bring together projects of mission and social action e.g The Good Neighbour Project, Street Pastors, Youth for Christ. They were also responsible for running a Winter Shelter for a number of years and have now developed Mosaic Resource Centre bringing together services for people who are homeless.

Our recent Incumbent has served on the Board of Trustees and has also been involved in the organisation of the annual World Day of Prayer.

Our Local Area

Location and transport

Royal Tunbridge Wells, founded in 1606, is a thriving busy town and the largest in West Kent on the very edge of East Sussex. The town itself has a population of some 60,000 although the administration borough of Tunbridge Wells extends well beyond the town's borders. It covers an area of 127 square miles and has a population of almost 116,000.

Tunbridge Wells is located only 40 minutes from Gatwick airport, an hour from London terminals by train and an hour from the Sussex coast. It has two train stations and many bus routes. The vicarage is within walking distance of a mainline train station, bus routes and town centre.

Facilities and things to do

The historic spa town has welcomed visitors for over 400 years - browsing the independent shops of the colonnaded Pantiles and the High Street, with bustling cafes, bars, music and one-of-a-kind shops.

Visitors can discover the history of the Wells, inspiring temporary exhibitions, and tourist information in the newly opened Amelia Scott Centre, in the town, which also includes a well-stocked library. There are also two theatres within the town centre which host a wide variety of events, a large cinema and several venues offering live music.

There are many well-maintained parks within the town offering playgrounds, nature walks, accessible paths and cafes. These parks also host events including the Mela, a visiting circus, fair, the winter ice rink, fireworks display, and the Saturday Park run.

There is also a beautiful common within walking distance of the town centre with wooded walks, rock formations and a cricket ground, which is popular with picnickers and dog walkers.

Tunbridge Wells offers many opportunities for an active lifestyle including several gyms, sports clubs, and teams and a bowling complex. There are also climbing facilities and rock climbing takes place at Harrisons Rocks, near Groombridge. Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre, which is only a 10-minute drive from the vicarage, has recently undergone a £1.7m redevelopment, which has seen many aspects of the facility improved. Its facilities include a modern gym indoor cycling area, 2 swimming pools, indoor tennis courts, squash courts and sports halls for basketball, trampolining, badminton, table tennis and football. We also have a football & rugby stadiums, cricket pitches and both grass, 3g and 4g football pitches throughout the town, with many teams for adults, boys and girls. Other local clubs include the TW Harriers, TW Tri Club and of course all the scouting & cadet groups.

There are many doctors and dentist surgeries available within the borough and a large, modern hospital with A&E just outside the town.

The town centre contains an extensive shopping area, including Royal Victoria Place, a pedestrianised area with well-known chain shops, and many independent shops. There are number of large supermarkets in the area, and the nearby industrial estate also offers an array of larger retail stores & DIY outlets.

Education

Tunbridge Wells has several nurseries and playgroups (one of which is based in our church hall) and primary and secondary schools, some of which are within walking distance of the vicarage. Kent continues to use the selective secondary school system with Tunbridge Wells offering exceptional schooling for free in its prestigious single-sex grammar schools. These schools are significantly over-subscribed and have an excellent reputation. Alternatively, the Bennett Memorial Diocesan School is an all-ability co-educational academy which caters for mixed students and is extremely popular.

Blessings and Challenges

We are blessed with a warm, friendly church family seeking to spread the love of God.

Our challenge is to grow in understanding of how we demonstrate this more fully and enable more members of our community to experience the healing and transforming love of God.

We have been blessed with thoughtful and challenging preaching and teaching and a leadership that has encouraged the development of prayer life.

Our challenge is to continue to grow in faith and practice of prayer finding ways to help people understand the relevance of their faith.

We are blessed with lay leadership, singers, others who participate in worship and many other people contributing to various aspects of church life.

Our challenge is to grow greater collaborative ministry/leadership where gifting is discerned, nurtured and encouraged.

We are blessed with regular newcomers to our church including families with young children and recently some teenagers coming alone.

Our challenge is to continue to find unity as one family, sharing worship, work and social occasions building a committed community of faith, who still understand the place of faith and the church in an increasingly pressurised secular world.

We are blessed with the growth in numbers of young people coming to our church.

Our challenge is to continue to provide good quality children's work and for older teenagers explore and improve our provision and their involvement.

We have been blessed for many years with church leaders concerned about issues of social justice and the needs of those who are marginalised.

Our challenge is to explore and broaden our mission initiatives seeking perhaps to find partnerships with other churches and/or organisations.

We have been blessed by the on-going work that has improved our financial standing.

Our challenge is to maintain this in hard financial times, with also maintaining our generosity to others.

We are blessed with a beautiful church and a hall which provides good facilities for members of the community as well as ourselves and provides vital revenue.

Our challenge is to maintain these buildings in good order and to look at how we could use the church when our hall is unavailable to us.

We are blessed by being a church amongst many others in the town.

Our challenge is to work effectively with others to build the Kingdom of God in this area.



We seek to find an incumbent who

- is a spiritual leader, with a lively and enquiring personal faith, who is comfortable with a range of forms of worship in keeping with the central traditions of the Church of England
- will be keen to develop new opportunities for worship and for groups which grows our understanding of and love for Jesus.
- values collaborative ministry and will encourage lay leadership and participation supporting the discernment of individual gifting further developing the structures to do this
- will meet the challenge of offering relevant worship and teaching to our young people whilst also valuing the needs and concerns of older members of the congregation
- has a passion for social justice, mission and outreach and a warm pastoral heart with a willingness to provide sensitive, wise pastoral care within the church and the community



