

THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH MILTON-NEXT-GRAVESEND



INTENTIONALLY INCLUSIVE - DELIBERATELY DIVERSE

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CHRIST CHURCH INTRODUCTION

Inevitably the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 have had a severe effect on all aspects of life and worship at Christ Church. Where relevant this is reflected at the appropriate place in the text. Otherwise the intention is to show Christ Church as it is in normal times.

At Christ Church we are an inclusive and diverse community where everyone can find a welcoming smile and can join with others in the worship of God, enjoying acceptance and friendship, and expressing the Gospel through care and concern for our neighbours, both locally and beyond. We are a member of Inclusive Church. During 2018 we hosted a celebration of Black History Month and in 2019 a celebration of LGBT History Month. Both were well attended. We try to be a Church with open doors and large windows, one which takes seriously the sharing of the good news of Jesus, without being stuffy or self-regarding.

This profile attempts to give a comprehensive description of the worship, activities and structure of the parish to inform possible candidates for the post of Vicar of Christ Church.

To find out more about our church and for an inside look at our vibrant community, you can find us on the sites below:



www.christchurchgravesend.org.uk



@christchurchgravesend



Christ Church, Echo Square



@christchurchgrv

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN OUR NEW VICAR AND WHAT WE CAN OFFER

We are a well-established and well-resourced church with firm foundations. We are seeking someone:

- Who is looking for an inclusive church in the liberal eucharistic tradition and who will join us in our mission to make Christ Church a welcoming place for all, with no exceptions.
- Who is comfortable with traditional styles of worship but with the imagination to consider different styles and forms.
- Who sees the building of our future through young people as a priority.
- Who will strengthen and renew links between the church and our 2 local schools.
- Who will support our strong and varied musical tradition. We want someone to encourage and support all the good things that are happening but also to encourage us to explore possibilities for innovation and growth.
- We want a leader with a collaborative style who is not afraid to provide a loving challenge; someone with a heart for pastoral care who encourages others to share in the parish ministry and has an interest in developing future leaders.

We can offer:

- A supportive and engaged congregation who work in a multitude of ways to maintain both the fabric and the spiritual life of the church.
- The support of an active and experienced PCC.
- The support of an associate priest, four lay ministers with permission to officiate, two pastoral assistants and an Anna friend.
- Encouragement to make full use of holidays, day-off and days for personal development.

We have much to give and look forward to joining our new Vicar in furthering God's work in this place. We hope you will see we are a busy, happy, forward looking and active parish and that the well of potential support for any new incumbent shines through. We know that such an incumbent will wish to make changes and there is goodwill to embrace change within the broad framework set out in the profile.

Within Christ Church, toddlers and octogenarians, teenagers and professionals, singles and couples, the disabled and people with a variety of skills, enthusiasms, and talents drawn from a multi-ethnic community, join together in worship. All are valued, and people of different backgrounds, experiences, and circumstances come together in harmony.

Along with worship there is much else quietly happening as people give of their talents, including: serving in the sanctuary; running administration; the website; cleaning and gardening; producing the magazine; photographing events; organising fundraising; teaching the young; baptismal and marriage visiting and preparation.



OUR MISSION ACTION PLAN

Christ Church has a regular, realistic and pragmatic programme of triennial Mission Action Plans, most recently for 2017-20, attached and on the website. These are built up through a period of listening and discernment for the PCC and shared with the congregation. A priority with a new Vicar will be to set out a plan for 2020-2023. The key elements of the current plan are:

- Building our church's future, whilst valuing our past as we grow with Christ;
- A church with big windows and open doors, going out in love into the wider community;
- Making Christ Church a welcoming and inclusive place for all – with no exceptions;
- Communicating Christ and the Christian life in the digital age. Our priority of mission in coming years will be assisted by a bequest which we have designated for mission rather than meeting our immediate needs to improve fabric.



BACKGROUND

Christ Church, Milton-next-Gravesend, is one of half-a-dozen Anglican churches in the town of Gravesend, part of the Borough of Gravesham, on the south bank of the River Thames. The map on Page 9 shows the boundaries of the parish within the built-up area that is the town of Gravesend.

Gravesham is part of the Thames Gateway, designated by government as a main strategic area for business and residential growth in England. This stretches from Dartford to Sittingbourne and there are already major developments in place. Ebbsfleet railway station is a key part of the Channel Tunnel Rail link and is adjacent to the developing Ebbsfleet Garden City to the west of Gravesham, planned to host 15,000 households and associated infrastructure.

Bluewater Shopping Centre, fifth largest in the UK, is five miles away. A key challenge for the parish and the churches is how we respond to the challenges of major investments in the area, which will continue to change the community in ways we cannot foresee.

The first of two longer term proposals is the Lower Thames Crossing, a new road connecting Kent, Thurrock and Essex through a tunnel beneath the Thames. This has been the subject of considerable controversy and consultation is ongoing. Statutory consultation is also under way for a new major theme park on the Swanscombe peninsula, to the west of Gravesham next to the River Thames. Known as "The London Resort" and branded "Britain's answer to Disneyland".

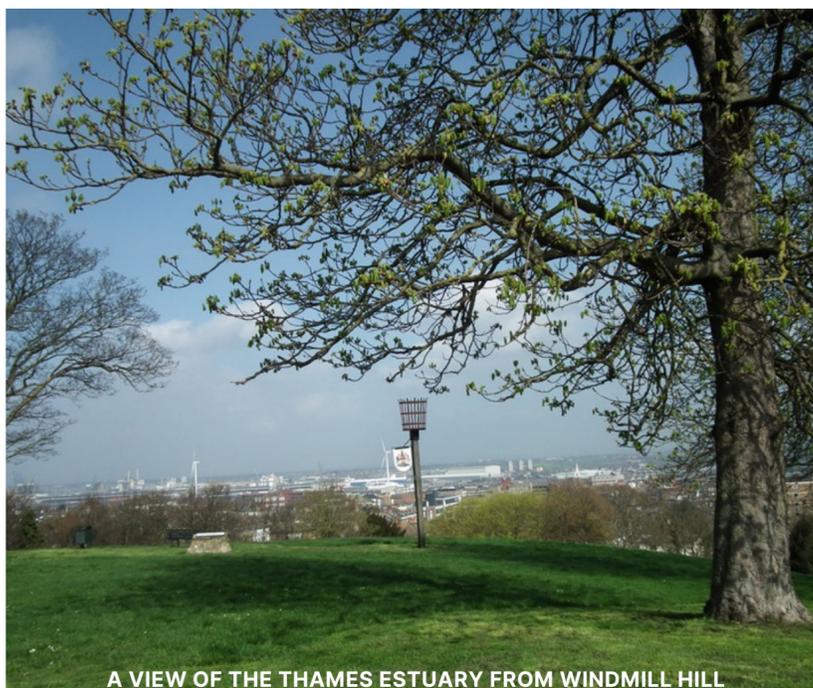
The main A2 road passes to the south of Gravesend, linking with the M25 Orbital, providing further excellent road links with other parts of the county, country and continent. The town is also linked directly by rail to London Charing Cross (55 minutes) and High Speed to St Pancras International (24 minutes), as well as the Medway Towns.

The town is multi-ethnic, with a 15% Sikh population, and smaller numbers of other ethnic groupings, including increasing populations of African origin and people from Eastern Europe. Relationships are generally regarded as a model for other towns, and the largest public gatherings are the annual Sikh celebration of Vaisakhi, including a march through the town centre, the Churches Together Easter Celebration; the St George's Day Parade; and the Christmas Celebration. The Sikh community has built the largest Sikh Gurdwara in Europe in an adjacent parish, and Sikhs play an important part in the life of the town, although the proportion of Sikhs in Christ Church parish is low. We are welcoming an increasing range of ethnicity in the congregation.

Gravesend is home to many commuters, although there is also a wide range of mainly smaller industries. The varied provision of schooling in Gravesend is typical of Kent towns and is described in a later section.

There are two main hospitals: Gravesend Community Hospital with an attached Day Care Centre is in the town itself, carrying out blood tests and with a minor injuries unit, and Darent Valley Hospital, the local district general hospital, lying between the town and Dartford.

Gravesend main shopping area has suffered from the impact of Bluewater, but still has two shopping centres and a Debenhams department store. It offers a very wide range of restaurants and eating places, partly reflecting the multi-cultural nature of the town. There is also a retail park by the riverside.



A VIEW OF THE THAMES ESTUARY FROM WINDMILL HILL

There are two leisure centres, both of which have swimming pools and cater for a range of other activities. There are also two golf courses.

Gravesend is served by two large Country Parks, one at Shorne, the other at Jeskyns, a large open- space recreational area with areas being developed as wild life habitats.

We are situated five miles from the picturesque North Downs. The town borders the River Thames, and its historical connections remain strong.

OUR LOCAL AREA

The parish

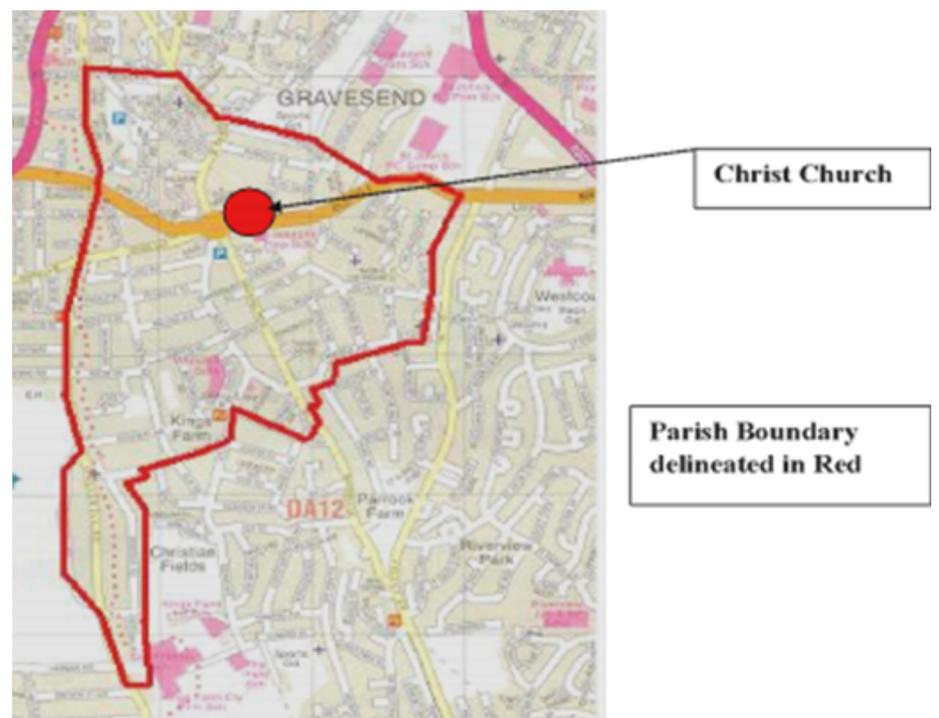
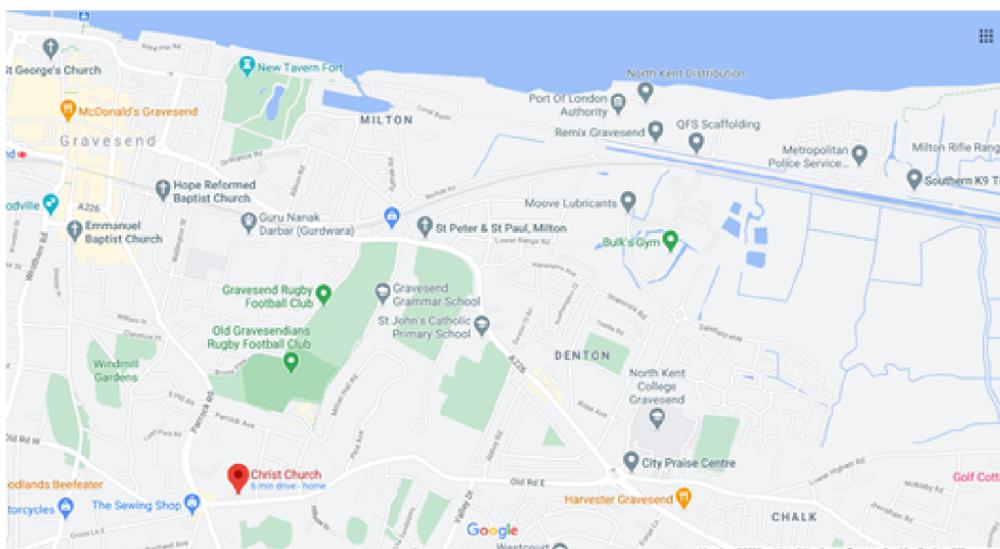
The parish occupies an area of the town mainly built up in the 1920s and 1930s comprising overwhelmingly private housing. There are some Georgian houses situated in the conservation area of Windmill Hill. Most recent developments are infill, including three large blocks of privately owned flats, one an "assisted living development" of 61 flats with links to the Parish. There is little social or council housing, although there are a number of privately owned care homes for the elderly.



There is a group of local shops around Echo Square, a couple of hundred yards from the Vicarage.

House prices are relatively high, reflecting the nearness to London. There are clear differences with some neighbouring parishes as the gap between prosperity and social and economic deprivation widens. A church history is available, published on our 150th anniversary.

A MAP OF CHRIST CHURCH IN GRAVESEND AND IN THE PARISH



OTHER CHURCHES

Christ Church is part of a legal group called the East Gravesend Cluster with the neighbouring benefices of St Aidan's Church, and Holy Family Church with St Margaret, Ifield.

Cluster clergy meet most days for morning or evening prayer and meet weekly with clergy from other local churches as well to share news and resources and say Morning Prayer together. The Cluster shares in confirmation and marriage preparation. Two of the churches share the use of a photocopier.

The parish has five neighbouring Anglican town parishes, and there is a significant pattern of worshippers crossing boundaries to the church of their choice, reflecting considerable diversity in styles of worship. There is a pattern of some worshippers attending two churches on different weeks in the month. Christ Church is probably a net importer as a result of this activity.

Christ Church is a member of the Gravesend Deanery, comprising the area largely north of the A2 and south of the river, extending from Greenhithe in the West to Shorne in the East. There is a Deanery Mission Plan based around sharing resources and working on shared projects. Deanery Chapter meets 6 times a year for collaboration and mutual support. The Deanery clergy also have regular social events and in recent years have enjoyed an annual retreat shared with Dartford Deanery. There is a deanery protocol on baptisms, with agreement that those seeking baptism from anywhere in the Deanery will be welcomed at any of the Deanery churches, and the local ministers will be kept informed.

Churches Together in Gravesham is an active group of some of the local churches from established and newer denominations. As well as occasional joint services, some held in the Town Square, Churches Together is involved in a foodbank, a winter night shelter, Street Pastors and School Pastors.

There are several strong evangelical churches in the town. There is an active Sikh religious community with a modern temple, and small informal Muslim and Hindu groupings. Occasional Interfaith events are organized to encourage growth and understanding between the various faith groups in the Gravesend area.

SCHOOLS

There are two large church comprehensive schools in the town, one CofE, and one Roman Catholic. In addition, there are two single sex grammar schools and three other secondary schools, two single sex. There is the usual spread of primary schools. In addition, there are also three well-established private schools, St Joseph's Convent School (4-11) being adjacent to the Vicarage. Christ Church has a close relationship with several local schools. These include: Saint George's Church of England School; Whitehill Primary School – an academy within the parish; Holy Trinity CE Primary School - a Voluntary Aided primary in an adjacent parish; and Ifield Special School. Whitehill and Holy Trinity are within walking distance of the church.

WORSHIP AT CHRIST CHURCH

Regular Services

In common with all other places of worship we have been following Government and Church of England instructions with regard to worship during lock-down. As soon as we were permitted to do so we opened the church for private prayer on Wednesday and Sunday mornings and subsequently introduced a shortened service of Holy Communion on Sunday mornings. What follows is a description of services during normal times, which we hope will be not too long in returning.

There is an 8.00 a.m. said service of Holy Communion each Sunday.

The 10.00 a.m. Sunday worship on three Sundays each month is traditional Anglican Common Worship sung Holy Communion, led by a robed choir. Readings are taken from the Common Worship Lectionary. Refreshments are available and popular in the hall after the 10.00 a.m. service.

God's Gang, our activities for children aged from 4 to 14, meets during the 10.00 a.m. service except when there is an all-age service.

Once a month there is a more informal all-age service of Holy Communion, including the uniformed organisations, with the Semiquavers music group leading the worship.

We have a strong tradition of preaching by clergy, readers and visiting preachers.

Sung Book of Common Prayer Evensong takes place on the second Sunday at 4.00 p.m. and is usually led by a Reader.

There are also weekday services as follows:

Monday 8.00 am Morning Prayer

Wednesday 10.00 am Holy Communion

Wednesday 5:15 pm Evening Prayer

Saturday 8.00 am Morning Prayer

In 2019, an average of 76 worshippers attended 10.00 a.m. Sunday Communion.



Festivals and other services

There is a full program of Christmas and Holy Week services.

On Maundy Thursday there is a Communion service at 8am, followed by an evening service at 7.30pm where communion is celebrated at individual tables. This leads into silent prayer/watch until 10pm.

Good Friday begins with a children's Hot Cross Bun Service at 10.00 am. There is a well-attended central Good Friday three-hour service. Easter Day starts with a service of Holy Communion at dawn, when the Paschal Candle is lit. Additional Holy Communions are celebrated on New Year's Day, Feast of the Annunciation, Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi and All Souls Day.

The Mothering Sunday Service and Harvest Thanksgiving are particularly popular.

The pre-school nursery group meets in church on alternate Wednesdays for a short act of worship.

Holy Communion is taken to parishioners who are housebound or unwell and to local retirement and care homes.

A Lent course is held together with other churches in the Local Cluster.

A Pilgrim group meets twice a month for bible study and discussion.

Occasional Offices

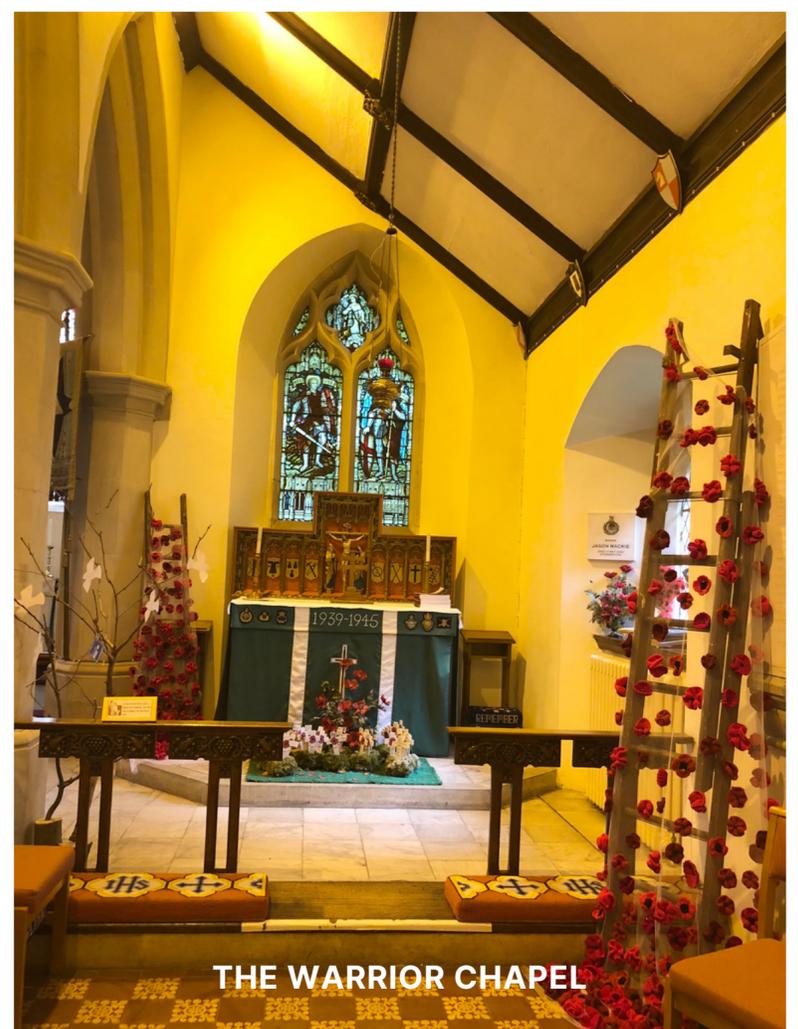
During 2019 there were: 44 baptisms and 6 weddings (together with baptism and wedding preparation); 19 funerals held during the year in the church, crematorium and local cemeteries.

The PCC voted to bless same sex marriages when permitted to do so.

Baptisms are normally held after the main Sunday Holy Communion service, and occasionally during the service. Gravesend Deanery Churches have agreed a protocol on baptisms, allowing any family within the Deanery to arrange baptism at any of the Deanery churches.

Christ Church is a popular venue for Weddings for those who live in, or have a qualifying connection with, the parish.

The Warrior Chapel (see right) is also a place set aside for private prayer and reflection.



YOUNG PEOPLE AT CHRIST CHURCH

Children and young people are given a high priority and we support them with a range of activities, encouraging as many as possible to be aware of the church. Whilst comparatively few attend church services on Sundays those that do come are made welcome. There is a commitment within the congregation to encourage children to be full participants in the life of the church and this is seen as the key challenge for the future of Christ Church, as children need to experience church life if they are to stay in our church.

Central to church involvement are the All-age Service and God's Gang. First Steps offers parents and carers with children under five the opportunity to join in informal worship and enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat afterwards.

Younger Children are prepared for taking communion through our programme "Welcome to the Lord's Table". Volunteers prepare children for confirmation on a cluster basis.

Sunday Services

The creative monthly all- age service is based around a theme, with the music led by the Semiquavers and Music Group. Our local Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, sponsored by the church, also attend. The Vacancy and Covid-19 restrictions have put on hold our plans to have an in-depth review of our worship provision for children. This will be a priority action with a new Vicar and as soon as conditions permit.

Young people assist at the Sunday service as servers or acolytes, reading lessons and leading prayers. Some act as vergers at baptisms.

The Christingle Service and the Christmas Crib Service both see the church absolutely packed, showing that the potential for growth exists. The Hot Cross Bun Service is also very popular.

Children in the Church

There is a Christ Church Tots Group that meets weekly in term time. This is open to all, normal attendance being around 30 families. Church members support this, also providing refreshments. First Steps, for pre-school children, meets monthly on the second Wednesday afternoon for a short church service followed by a cup of tea and a chat for carers, with opportunity for children to play together.

Christ Church run an Ofsted 'Good' Pre-school for local children which takes place in the Church Hall and on the Pleasance, taking advantage of its volunteer built decking. Details can be found at <http://christchurchnursery.wixsite.com/preschool>

The West End of the church includes a children's area, with toys and books, which can be used there or taken back to the child's seat in church. There are baby-changing facilities in the disabled toilet.

MINISTRY AND THE ROLE OF THE LAITY

Ministry Team

Christ Church welcomes women's ministry. The Revd Jacqueline Littlewood is licensed to the parish as a self-supporting Associate priest and has been instrumental in maintaining worship during the Vacancy.

There are four Readers who have permission to officiate and minister within the parish. All are able, committed and play a full part in the worship and work of the church.

Our Ministry Team normally meets every month. Priests, Readers, Wardens, and Pastoral Assistants meet to share pastoral concerns, plan and review. We are joined occasionally by our Anna Friend (A volunteer commissioned by the Diocese to exercise pastoral ministry among the elderly and to those suffering from Dementia).

We have Church members engaged with Hospital and Bluewater Shopping Centre Chaplaincy and visiting residential homes for the elderly and those receiving care in the community.

The Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council comprises: the clergy, our two churchwardens and 14 lay members which includes one representative on the Deanery Synod and one Lay Member of the General Synod. Other Parish Officers are the PCC Secretary and Treasurer.

Role of the Laity

The church is committed to involving the laity fully in its work and worship, and the range of activities is too large to list here. The Readers play a key role in leading church activities. Twelve parishioners are licensed to administer the chalice. There is a large team of sidespeople. Lessons are read and intercessions led by an increasing pool of the congregation including newer members. A group who support the bereaved is important in our mission. The church has a committed and talented band of flower arrangers.



Christ Church has the capability and commitment to mount major events. As an example, in 2017 as part of the Deanery's commemoration of the centenary of the Great War we organised a major exhibition of the lives and service of the 62 WW1 casualties commemorated in the church. This included a large number of descendants becoming involved in a service of dedication for a new WWI memorial, replacing one which had been long lost. There was also a flower festival, and an instrumental and choral concert.

The church has a strong relationship with the Royal Marines. One of our two chapels, the Warrior Chapel, commemorates the men of 48 Commando who worshipped at Christ Church on the eve of D-Day 1944.

MUSIC IN THE CHURCH

We benefit from different Music styles so that a traditional Choral style is complemented by a more modern worship. We currently use Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New in services with occasional additions that are printed in the service sheet.

Christ Church has three choral groups. The main choir, led by the talented organist and choirmaster Tom, plays a key role in our worship. Both the Adult and Junior sections are mixed. The choir is robed.

The Semiquavers, is a thriving young people's choir with some 30 members. It gives a lead in the All Age Service, provides music at special events and its own concerts, and also sings at other venues, including Trafalgar Square and St Thomas' Hospital. The group regularly enters competitions.

There is also a Music Group, which now works closely with the choir and comes together for special events.



THE CHURCH PREMISES



Christ Church

The church is on its second site: when it was first opened in 1856 it was nearer the town centre by about half a mile. The original Gothic architecture has twice been changed: once in 1870 to provide more accommodation; and again in 1935 when the entire church was moved and extended on its current site.

The Building is a traditional Church which we try to use flexibly, greatly helped by having chairs rather than fixed pews which has proved particularly valuable to allow us to manage social distancing during covid-19. Christ Church allows for full disabled access within the church, a number of our parishioners are able to attend in their motorised scooters.

There is a seating capacity of around 350 (tested to the full at the Christmas Crib Service when we have found it necessary to have two services to accommodate all who wish to attend!). There are two chapels: St Faith's, used for Saturday Holy Communion and other smaller services of worship; the Warrior Chapel reflects our connections with the Royal Marines. Both are available for private prayer and contain votive candle stands. The ancillary rooms include Vicar's vestry, choir vestry, and parish office.

There are regular and ever changing large prominent displays of church activities mounted on our display boards.

Christ Church is in a sound state of repair, with great efforts made on upkeep; we have been fortunate with legacies. The substantial cost of organ refurbishment was achieved within a year through fundraising.

The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in 2016. Some remedial work was undertaken, but nothing of a major nature. The church and hall heating has been completely reviewed during 2020, including the replacement of boilers.

Church Hall

The church hall was added to the building in 1973.

There is a fitted kitchen attached to the hall which is well-used by both church organisations and other users, both regular and occasional. There is a full suite of toilets, including disabled/ baby changing facilities, equally accessible to church and hall. There is a Hall booking officer and the church employs a cleaner for the hall & vestries.



Church Grounds

The church is set in pleasant grounds, with an open area surrounded by trees known as The Pleasance behind it. It is maintained by the volunteer Garden Group.

The Pleasance is used for a variety of activities, including the church Summer Fete, and by the pre-school group daily.

A Garden of Remembrance that lies to the east of the church is regularly used for the interment of ashes and is well maintained and valued.



The Vicarage

The Vicarage is located at 48 Old Road East, almost opposite the church. It is a Victorian double fronted detached building on two floors. Downstairs there are a large lounge, a smaller sitting room, dining room, study, fitted kitchen with larder, toilet and a cellar. Upstairs there are five bedrooms, three of these being large doubles, there are two good size singles. There is a large bathroom with power shower, and a separate toilet.



The house is part double glazed and fully centrally heated. The vicarage has recently been redecorated. There are gardens to front and rear. The large rear garden is grassed on two levels. There is a garage.

ORGANISATION

Much of the work of the PCC is carried out through its committees, whose decisions are then ratified by the PCC.

The committees are as follows:

Standing Committee

The committee comprises the Vicar, Church Wardens, PCC Vice-Chair and treasurer. It meets primarily to discuss and take action on matters that arise between meetings.

Other Committees

Five PCC committees meet between PCC meetings to move forward the life of the church and to put the Mission Action Plan into action:

Children and Youth;
Buildings and Finance;
Community and Social Events;
Worship and Discipleship;
Pastoral and Social Concern.

In addition, sub-committees are convened as needed to manage the church hall and to identify charitable concerns for the church Lent appeal.

A sub-group of the PCC forms a pre-school Management Committee to manage our pre-school and its seven employees.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Mothers' Union

Christ Church Mothers' Union is very active with over 30 members who meet monthly in the church hall for talks and discussions. They play an active role in the life of the church, running stalls at fetes and bazaars, holding an annual Sunday service and organising social occasions and outings that are also attended by non-members from the congregation. "Quiet mornings", incorporating a Holy Communion service, are held occasionally in church.



Once a month 'Mustard Seed', a social meeting where everybody is welcome, meets over tea and cakes - an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.

We raise funds to support a number of other good causes throughout the year - and we have a special link with Christian Aid, with various fundraising events through the year.

We also have Girlguiding groups based at Christ Church, a Rainbows unit and two Brownie units.



COMMUNICATION

Church Services

The congregation is provided each Sunday with service sheets prepared for the day's services including readings and accompanied by a weekly news sheet.

Parish Magazine

The production of the Magazine is currently in abeyance and we are seeking a new editor

Parish Coverage

Twice yearly, before Christmas and Easter, a card is delivered to every house in the Parish, giving details of forthcoming services and activities.

Website

We have a comprehensive parish website at <http://www.christchurchgravesend.org.uk/>

We are also on social media with Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages.

FINANCE

Regular giving is encouraged through a stewardship envelope scheme, also enabling tax rebates to be claimed where appropriate. During normal times the Church finances are sound as can be seen from the accounts, a copy of which is included with this profile. In common with all churches our financial situation has been severely affected by the shut-down, greatly restricting collections and our annual fund-raising activities. We are in the process of introducing contactless giving through digital collection plates. We are confident that we have the ability to return to a sound financial position as normality returns.

Reasonable savings in expenditure are achieved by means of the monthly working party, who carry out smaller maintenance and cleaning needed on the building.

The church supports many good causes, administered through PCC Committees. In addition a 200 Club (drawn monthly) adds to church funds.

We have a very experienced Treasurer.

CONTACTS

The Church Wardens are:



Jan Osborne
01474 740763



Lucy Hornby
07545 444760

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Copy of Mission Action Plan 2017-20: You will find this on the church website.

Copies of Parish Magazine: You will find previous copies on the church website.

Copy of church accounts for 2019: Attached