



# ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH PARISH PROFILE

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# ABOUT US

St. Matt's is a warm and welcoming local church in the centre of High Brooms, which forms part of the borough of Tunbridge Wells in West Kent.

We are an inclusive evangelical church, rooted in our love for Jesus and a desire to share that love with others. Our worship style is contemporary and informal, aiming to be accessible, relevant and meaningful in today's world.

We are a community of people who follow Christ, united by our mission '*Igniting passion for Jesus*'. This mission shapes all that we do. We seek to grow in our own relationship with Jesus and to help others encounter him for themselves, by reaching out into our local community.

Inspired by Jesus' example of radical welcome, we strive to offer hospitality and acceptance to all, whatever their background or circumstances. We are a church that celebrates and affirms every person and actively opposes discrimination in all its forms, including on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexuality, learning disability, mental health and neurodiversity.



Our church family is made up of a range of ages, from children up to people in their eighties! We have just under 100 people on our electoral roll, which reflects the size of our church, with about 30-40 children and young people regularly attending our Sunday groups.

We are made up of people from different church backgrounds and traditions, who come together in our love for Jesus and for worshipping him. We offer both modern and more traditional styles of worship to enable as many people as possible to meet with God.



There are many ways to engage at St. Matt's – from simply joining us for worship to becoming involved in the life and leadership of the church. We are blessed with a diverse congregation, and we encourage everyone to use their gifts in service, leadership and ministry.

Community and relationship matter deeply to us. Just as Jesus called people into connection with one another, we seek to nurture genuine, life-giving relationships. We offer small groups (including house groups and prayer pods), activity hubs that combine shared interests with community, and various courses to support faith and personal growth.

Community outside Sunday worship is also an important part of our church life. We reach out to our community in various ways, including midweek youth and children's sessions, a community larder and a community hub.

As we look to the future, we see the huge potential for expansion and growth within our church, both

spiritually, in numbers and by developing our buildings. We are seeking to grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus, to carry on reaching out to our community and seeing people come to know Jesus for themselves, and to develop a wider vision for how our buildings can be used to support our ministry and our community.



*"I love how welcoming and inclusive St. Matt's is – if you've been there 30 years or it's your first time – you're given the love Christ asked us to give one another."*



# OUR VISION

As we look forward to what God has for us as a church, we are both excited for the potential for growth but also aware of the challenges we face.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE IS TO:

- **Grow spiritually** – we are committed to deepening our spiritual life as a church family, but we recognise discipleship through house groups and corporate prayer needs new vision and focus.
- **Grow in numbers** – we are excited to see new people coming into church since Covid, and we see the potential for further growth stemming from our community outreach, but we also recognise the challenges associated with integrating new members whilst engaging meaningfully with those already part of our church family.
- **Grow community outreach** – our existing community larder, community hub and midweek children and youth work provides a strong foundation



as we seek new ways to reach our community. There is exciting potential to develop and expand our community outreach and our buildings to further share the love of Jesus with people in High Brooms. This brings the challenge of resourcing, and we would love to see an increase in our staff team as we move into the future.

# OUR NEW VICAR

Therefore we are seeking a new vicar who:

- is authentic and leads with integrity, who is willing to share their journey with others and who is ready to walk with people through the highs and lows of life.
- demonstrates compassion, empathy and understanding, and will support us as we continue our journey towards being a fully inclusive and welcoming church. We recognise and value the broad range of views within our congregation and therefore seek a vicar who can lead us with grace, wisdom and sensitivity.
- can nurture and disciple new and existing Christians, igniting a passion for Jesus through prayer, teaching and example.
- values collaborative ministry and who encourages and develops gifts in others through the discernment of the Holy Spirit.



- has a heart for the wider community and a clear, Spirit-led vision for mission and growth. Someone who will inspire and equip us to reach out beyond our walls and help us share the love of Jesus in fresh and relevant ways.



## HOW WE WORSHIP

### HOW WE WORSHIP

St. Matt's is a warm and welcoming, Christ-centred, local church. Our Sunday services reflect our values as a church, focusing on Jesus, the Word, the Cross, the Holy Spirit and sung worship, in an informal and contemporary way which we hope makes sense for people today.

### 10AM SERVICE

Our main service each Sunday is our 10am service, which is relaxed and family friendly.

Our contemporary sung worship is led by worship bands, and we are blessed to have a team of talented musicians, including a couple of amazing teenagers on drums!

We have a team of lay people who have the Bishop's permission to preach and lead these services, and we celebrate communion together once a month in this service.

Our informal style means we don't use much liturgy in this service and clergy don't traditionally wear robes.



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We offer prayer after the service at the moment as we seek to re-establish our prayer ministry team.

A passionate and committed volunteer team provide groups for our children and youth during our main service, except for the first Sunday of the month when we all worship together in an all-age family service.



Drinks are on offer before and after the service and people like to stay around and chat after church.

Our 10am service is a hybrid service every week, with most people worshipping together in the building but the service also being live-streamed to YouTube and Facebook. We have some regular local people who join us online each Sunday for our service, and the services, talks and worship songs stay on You Tube for people to come back to if they want to.

Average weekly attendance at our main service is 65 adults and 22 children, with another 20-25 people watching online each week.

### 8AM COMMUNION SERVICE

On the first Sunday of the month we have an 8am Book of Common Prayer Communion service, which has been led by our retired vicar during the interregnum. This is a small service with 6-10 people regularly attending.

### 5PM SERVICE

We also have a 5pm service on the second Sunday of the month, which is a much more liturgical service with the organ accompanying the hymns and communion celebrated on alternate months. Tea and cake are served before the service to give time for fellowship. This service has 10-15 people regularly attending.



## SPECIAL SERVICES

Certain times of the year bring more people from the community into church, and our Easter and Christmas services are always special.

Our Easter services include an Ash Wednesday service, a Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service, Good Friday family worship and Easter Sunday Family Celebration.

At Christmas we have services for everyone, including nativity, carol service, a reflective service, Christingle on Christmas Eve afternoon, Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve and a Christmas morning family service. This year we welcomed over 550 people into church across our Christmas services.

We also host a contemplative memorial service on Remembrance Sunday for people who have lost loved ones. This is attended by a number of non-church local residents and seen as an important service during the year for many.

## SCHOOL SERVICES

We have very good links with St. Matthew's CE Primary School and each year welcome them into church for their key services at Easter, Harvest, Christmas, and for a year 6 leavers' service in the summer.

## LIFE EVENTS

During 2024, there were 7 baptisms, 1 wedding and 4 funerals conducted by our vicar at St. Matt's Church. The funerals were conducted at the local crematorium or cemetery.

Our baptisms are both infant baptisms throughout the year (typically in family services) and full immersion baptisms for adults and teenagers, which we enjoy celebrating on Easter Sunday.

*"I love that St Matt's is a church that allows people to be who they are and encourages them to get closer to God in their own way without being prescriptive."*

# OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our church family here at St. Matt's is friendly, welcoming and inclusive, spanning a wide range of ages, traditions and backgrounds. We are committed to our church and to each other, and to serving God in our community. Although we have a wide range of Christian backgrounds and theological persuasions represented here, St. Matt's is built upon a strong evangelical tradition with a heart for our local community.

Our decision to join The Inclusive Church Network reflects our desire that everyone should be able to worship God freely and be able to serve and lead in church according to their gifts. In our recent church survey, many of our congregation highlighted the church's open and accepting nature as a key strength.

## VOLUNTEER TEAMS

Nearly everything we do in terms of ministry and outreach is made possible thanks to the generosity of our volunteer teams. Around 75 church members are involved across our activities and services, supported by a further 20 volunteers from the local community.

To show our appreciation for our volunteers, we aim

to have thank you evenings for as many teams as we can once a year, with some food and also time to chat as a team and feed back how things are going.

## SOCIAL EVENTS AND HUBS

It is important for the health and growth of the church that church members meet socially and have time for fellowship together. We therefore have social events throughout the year, giving opportunities for our church family to spend time together and grow friendships – things like BBQs, bring and share harvest lunch, quiz night, women's Christmas craft evening, dinner together, walks.

We also have some activity hubs where people with a shared interest meet together for support. These have recently included knitting hub, sewing bee hub, table tennis, walking hub and gardening hub.

*"Welcoming everyone without exception.  
The first sign of the Kingdom of God!"*



## HOME GROUPS AND PODS

Our home groups and smaller prayer pods have been the main way that people are supported and disciplined in church, however these have reduced in number since the pandemic. At the moment we have 4 house groups running during the week.

In our recent church survey, there was a strong sense of belonging and support, but 20% of members mentioned house groups as something we could be doing better, and should form an area of focus moving forward.

## PASTORAL CARE

Here at St. Matt's we try to make sure people feel supported and loved, especially during difficult times in our lives. Church members are good at looking out for each other informally, and we also have a pastoral care team who meet once a term to make sure no-one in the church is being missed when they



are in need of support. The team organises things like hospital visits, home visits when people are ill, suffering or unable to leave their homes, provision of cooked meals for those who are ill or who have had an operation or a baby, and lifts to appointments. One of the members of the pastoral care team also does odd jobs for those who are unable to do them.

*"We don't pretend to have it all together or to have all the answers, but we walk alongside one another in the difficult times, being honest and sharing openly about life's challenges."*

# YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Reaching out to children and young people and helping them to feel like they belong to our church family is very important to us. We believe that everyone can encounter Jesus for themselves, no matter how young or old. Our recent survey showed that youth and children's work is one of the things people value and feel like we are doing well at the moment.

Having previously employed youth and children's workers over many years, this area of ministry is now successfully run by volunteer teams.

## SUNDAY MORNINGS

On Sunday mornings during our main service, we have one group for primary school aged children and one group for youth (11-18 years olds). The children's group meets in our church hall up the road, and the youth group meets in a small room off the main church building.

## MIDWEEK GROUPS

During the week we run several outreach groups for children and young people.



On Mondays after school we run Deeper for children in school years 3-6. There are lots of fun activities for the children to do, as well as giving them a snack of toast and squash. They also hear a thought for the week, which is God based. An average of 21 children came to Deeper each week in 2024, with our limit being 24 due to leader numbers. The children who come to Deeper are mostly non-church families, and there is an increasing pattern of some of these families accessing many of our groups, like Ignite, the community larder and toddler group.



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Ignite is our group for secondary school age young people up to year 11. They meet on Tuesday evenings, and one of the successes of this session is that they share a hot meal together and have time to chat and build relationships. Ignite has been run in conjunction with a staff member from Tunbridge Wells Youth For Christ and we are hoping to renew this arrangement later this year. Ignite had an average of 21 young people attending each week in 2024, with numbers increasing towards the end of the year as the young people brought friends along. Again, these are a mixture of church young people and those from the community.

Ignite runs some special events during the year for the young people, including a BBQ, boating at Dunorlan Park, fireworks and ice-skating.

We also run a baby and toddler group on Thursday mornings, for preschool children and

their parents or carers. The group is very relaxed, with lots of time and space for the children to play and the adults to connect with each other over refreshments. We then have a story and song time at the end, with biscuits and fruit for the children. The toddler group saw an average of 19 children a week with their carers in 2024, again with numbers growing towards the end of the year.

All these groups are great at nurturing and encouraging the children and young people who attend, but they are also great opportunities for us to then invite families to key services at church throughout the year, and to introduce them to Jesus.





# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

St. Matt's Church is a key part of the High Brooms community and our mission statement of '*Igniting passion for Jesus*' means we want to reach out and share the love of Jesus with those around us. Everything we do as a church is open to everyone in our community, but certain activities and groups are more aimed at reaching the wider community and meeting the needs of those in our area.

For the size of church that we are, we do a lot of community outreach, however we know there are more people to share the love of Jesus with, and we have the desire and the vision to do more as resources (and energy!) allow in the future. We would love to be a hub for our community, a beacon on the hill for those around us, a place where people can feel accepted and encounter the love of Jesus.

## ST. MATT'S COMMUNITY LARDER

Our main community outreach is the community larder. This amazing venture is completely run by volunteers from the church and the local community and welcomes around 100 people each week to access cheap, good quality food.

Volunteers are involved in collecting food from supermarkets, buying additional supplies, setting up the larder, serving customers, offering tea, coffee and cakes in the café area and doing all the behind-the-scenes cleaning and admin involved.

Anyone can access the larder without referral, and it has become a strong community on a Friday morning, with friendships being formed and signposting to wider support being offered.

*"The Community Larder is an incredible resource for the community and a great way of us serving High Brooms."*

## ST. MATT'S COMMUNITY HUB

We run a community hub every Wednesday from 11am–2pm. The Community Hub is a welcoming, friendly and free space, which offers drinks and a light lunch for anyone locally. There are board games and newspapers available, and people to chat to, as well as art activities each week to help people with their mental health. This was set up as a warm space as the energy crisis hit but has developed into a hub as we realised there were greater needs of loneliness and mental health issues that needed addressing.

We now get about 20 regulars coming to the hub each week and have a team of dedicated volunteers who serve drinks and lunch.

## SCHOOL LINKS

As mentioned earlier, we have good links with St Matthew's High Brooms CE Primary School. As well as welcoming them into church for services throughout the year, our vicar and staff members have historically taken acts of worship on a regular basis, although this has not been possible more recently.

The incumbent of St. Matthew's Church is expected to be a governor of the school, and this is an exciting opportunity to develop links with the community

and reach many families in our local area, sharing God's love with them. We also have two other church members who are governors at the school.

## LINK MISSION PARTNERS AND GIVING TO CHARITY

Our main mission links at the moment are:

1. Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in Uganda
2. Tearfund
3. Church Mission Society (CMS)
4. The Sozo Foundation (Cape Town, South Africa)
5. Life & Soul in Tunbridge Wells

We pray for our mission links each Sunday, and we have a monthly mission prayer meeting to hear updates and pray for them all. We invite our main mission partners to speak at one of our services annually to share their vision, to receive prayer and forge ties with the congregation. These services have been well received in the past and long-standing relationships are in place with our mission partners.

We also support various other charities during the year with our tithe money and sponsored events that church members take part in.

# OUR STAFF & LEADERSHIP

Our Leadership Team oversees the ministry areas of the church and includes people who lead children, youth, pastoral care, Sunday services and worship, as well as the Church Wardens, the Treasurer and the Operations Manager.





## OUR BUILDINGS THE CHURCH

St. Matthew's Church stands as a prominent red-brick structure on High Brooms Road. Established in 1886 as a mission church to St. Peter's in Southborough, the current building was completed in 1902, reflecting the architectural style of the late Victorian era. Constructed using locally produced bricks from the High Brooms Brick and Tile Company, the church embodies the robust and functional design characteristic of the period.

Inside, the church has been thoughtfully adapted to support contemporary worship and community activities. The interior offers a flexible space that accommodates various services and events, reflecting the church's commitment to serving the needs of its congregation and the wider community. The sanctuary is equipped with



modern audio-visual systems, which support the live streaming of our services.

Adjacent to the main worship area is the church centre, which is equipped with a kitchen area and toilets. This is used for midweek groups and hubs, for serving drinks on Sundays, and for evening meetings.

Also off the main worship area are two smaller rooms – one is the office used by the Operations Manager and the Vicar. The other was an office space in the past when we had more staff members but is now used as a youth room for our Sunday morning group.

Outside the church there is a small, well-kept garden. Whilst not of a size for practical use it does make the church more attractive and helps it to stand out from other buildings in the area.

St. Matt's is committed to inclusivity and accessibility. The building features step-free access via a ramped entrance, accessible toilets, baby changing facilities and free Wi-Fi. The church is easily accessible by public transport, with High Brooms



railway station just a 5 minute walk away, bus stops opposite and adjacent to the church building (with two main routes passing through) and some street parking available nearby.

While the church retains its historical charm, it continues to evolve to meet the needs of its diverse and growing congregation and community, with the PCC now considering how to develop and expand the church centre to further enhance its use for community outreach.



## OUR BUILDINGS CHURCH HALL



St. Matt's Church Hall is situated approximately 40 metres up High Brooms Road from the main church building. Although separated by a public road, the hall is an integral part of the church's facilities and community outreach.

The building includes a main hall, a kitchen area and a small enclosed courtyard, making it a versatile space for a variety of uses.

From Monday to Friday, the Hall is hired out to a local preschool, providing a safe and engaging environment for early years care. On Sunday mornings, the space is used for children's groups during the 10am service, supporting our vibrant family ministry.

The PCC is currently in the process of commissioning improvements to expand storage capacity for the playgroup. These upgrades will also enhance the Hall's suitability for broader community use, including commercial hire for activities such as children's parties and other events.



# OUR BUILDINGS

## BETHEL HALL

The Bethel Hall is located on High Brooms Road, approximately 100 metres from the main church building. This is an old chapel which ceased worshipping around 2007. At its closure it was the wish of the existing Bethel Trustees to transfer the building to St. Matthew's Church. For various reasons, this was not possible, therefore the Bethel Hall is currently managed by a separate board of trustees and operates independently of St. Matthew's Church. In recent years the PCC has provided financial support while governance and maintenance matters have been addressed.

The Bethel Hall is currently home to the St. Matt's Community Larder, which is the largest larder in Tunbridge Wells.

Looking ahead, it is possible that the trustees will proceed with the sale of the Bethel Hall, as the



trust currently has no sustainable source of income. Should a sale go ahead, St. Matt's Church may be eligible to receive a portion of the proceeds. Any such funds could potentially support the development or enhancement of the Church's buildings and facilities.

## THE VICARAGE

The Vicarage is a generously proportioned detached house located within easy walking distance of the church (5 minutes), situated on Powdermill Lane. The property is well-positioned for local schools, shops, public transport, and community amenities, making it a practical and welcoming home for a vicar and their family.

### ACCOMMODATION

The vicarage includes:

- Five bedrooms, providing ample space for family life, guests, or for flexible use as an additional study or hobby room.
- A spacious lounge and separate dining room, ideal for both family relaxation and hosting parishioners or small gatherings.
- A breakfast room adjacent to the kitchen.
- A study/home office, located near the main entrance to allow a professional space for meetings and pastoral work, with some separation from private family areas.



- A downstairs cloakroom in addition to the family bathroom on the first floor.

### ADDITIONAL FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Gas central heating and double glazing
- Broadband and phone connections



## OUTDOOR SPACE AND PARKING

The property is set within a good-sized, private garden (mainly laid to lawn with some mature shrubs) offering an outdoor space for children to play, gardening, or quiet reflection.

There is also:

- A driveway with off-street parking
- A garage or outbuilding for storage
- Fencing and hedging that provide privacy and security

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The vicarage is set within a vibrant and diverse community, well connected by public transport (a 10 minute walk to High Brooms Station) and within walking distance of local parks, schools and shops. It provides a solid base from which the vicar can be fully involved in parish life while enjoying a balanced family and personal life.





# FINANCE

St. Matt's Church is financially sustained by the generosity of its congregation and the careful stewardship of our resources. As a parish, we are committed to transparency, good governance, and using our financial resources to support our mission *'Igniting passion for Jesus'*.

## GIVING AND INCOME

The majority of our income comes from regular giving by members of the church family, many of whom contribute by standing order.

We are deeply thankful for the faithful generosity of our congregation.

Additional income is generated through:

- Hire of the Church Centre and Church Hall
- Gift Aid recovery
- Direct payments for activities
- Restricted funds – the Community Larder
- Legacies

## EXPENDITURE

Our core expenditure includes:

- Parish Share contribution to the Diocese of Rochester
- Staffing costs (including clergy expenses, administrative support)
- Ministry and worship resources
- Maintenance of church buildings and the vicarage
- Utility and insurance costs
- Mission and charitable giving

We aim to maintain a balance between sustaining our core ministry and investing in growth and outreach.

## RECENT FINANCIAL POSITION

In the last financial year:

- Day-to-day income broadly covered operational expenditure
- Paid a reduced Parish Share, whilst still increasing our payment year on year
- Some additional support was provided by PCC reserves for specific projects and hall maintenance.

While our financial position remains stable, like many churches, we face ongoing pressures with rising costs and the need for building investment. This makes regular, planned giving especially important.

## RESERVES AND STEWARDSHIP

St. Matt's maintains designated and restricted reserves in accordance with Charity Commission guidelines. The PCC regularly reviews finances to ensure responsible stewardship and long-term sustainability. Having previously benefitted from some generous legacies, we have funds of around £300k for potential future development. We continue to encourage a culture of generous, cheerful giving that supports both local ministry and wider mission.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead there are areas for potential growth:

- Enhanced use of our Church Hall for income generation
- A potential share in proceeds from the sale of the Bethel Hall
- Greater regular giving as the congregation grows

In the future, major expenditure could come from:

- New staff position(s)
- Development of the Church Centre and rear entrance of the church to form an enhanced community space

## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

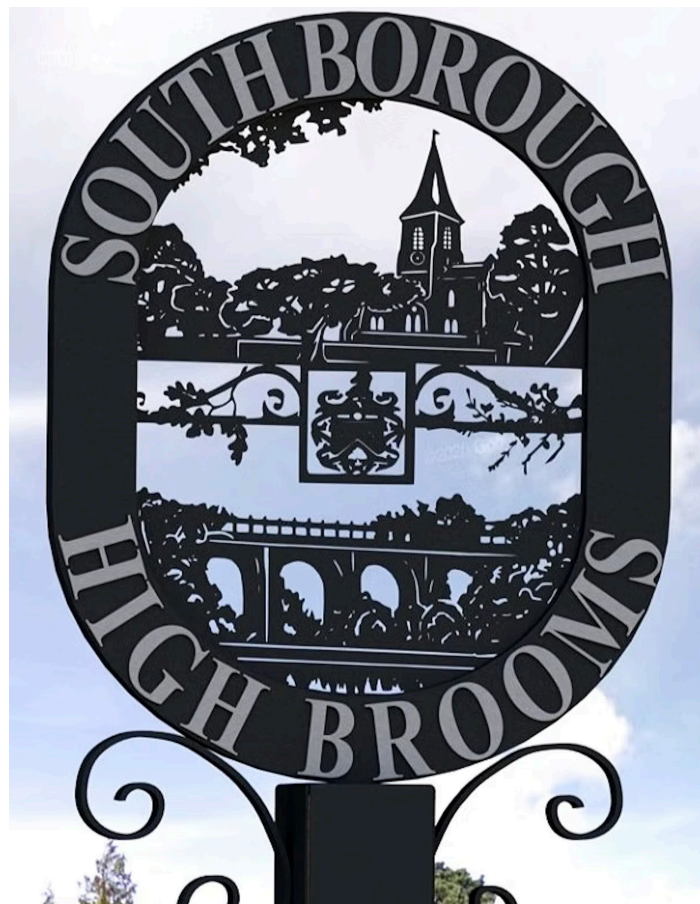
	2022	2023	2024
<b>Income</b>			
Voluntary Income (including restricted funds)	240,080 (includes £80k legacy)	162,814	152,029
Income from church activities	23,707	32,079	41,406
Other Income	1,036	10,461	11,502
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>267,823</b>	<b>203,354</b>	<b>204,937</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Parish Share	62,000	60,500	70,600
Salaries/ Wages / Clergy expenses	51,183	26,457	32,952
Church Running expenses	21,802	24,903	29,295
Church activities	19,824	34,876	35,073
Mission	10,463	13,781	9,162
Church Hall Expenses	10,463	12,625	11,670
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>173,992</b>	<b>173,142</b>	<b>188,951</b>
<b>Nett Movement of funds</b>	<b>93,841</b>	<b>32,212</b>	<b>15,987</b>

## OUR PARISH

The parish of High Brooms is a suburb to the north of Tunbridge Wells in the Southeast of England. It is located about 30 miles south of London and is surrounded by the beautiful Kent and Sussex countryside.

High Brooms is a small mainly residential parish with almost 6,000 residents living in just under 2,300 households (2021 census data), which is becoming increasingly diverse in recent years.

The parish falls in the middle of the national deprivation ranking but is one of the more deprived boroughs of Tunbridge Wells, which is a generally affluent town and area. This is reflected in the high numbers of people accessing



our community larder on a weekly basis.

In the 2021 census, almost 50% of people in our parish stated they were Christian, with just over 40% saying they had no religion.

A quarter of the parish is under 18 years of age, and there are 3 primary schools within the parish, one of which is St. Matthew's CE Primary School.

Schools in Tunbridge Wells are very good, with most local primary schools being either Church of England or Catholic schools. The secondary schools include grammar schools, a Diocesan Church

of England school (Bennett Memorial School), a Catholic school and a comprehensive school.



With so many children and young people in our parish, we would love to be able to reach more of them and their families as we move forward.

The parish is part of the Tunbridge Wells Deanery, and we have 2 PCC members who are Deanery Synod reps, one of whom also attends Diocesan Synod.

## THE LOCAL AREA

Royal Tunbridge Wells, founded in 1606, is a thriving busy town on the Kent/Sussex border, with a population of around 115,000 people.

Tunbridge Wells is ideally situated with easy road and rail access. The local station is on the mainline to London and to Hastings, and by car you can reach the A21 within 5 minutes (which then links to the M25). The town is also located only 40 minutes from Gatwick Airport, 45 minutes from London terminals by train and an hour from the Sussex coast.

High Brooms is very close to the local industrial estate, with big supermarkets, shops, a cinema and bowling alley. 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, fayres/

fetes, the winter ice rink, fireworks display and the Saturday Park run. Tunbridge Wells has lots of restaurants and pubs, as well as a variety of shops and the historical, aesthetic area of the Pantiles.

There are also two theatres within the town centre which host a wide variety of events and several venues offering live music. High Brooms itself has a few local shops and amenities.

Tunbridge Wells offers many opportunities for an active lifestyle including several gyms, sports clubs and teams, a bowling complex and climbing facilities. Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre is only a 10-minute walk from the vicarage, and includes 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 stadium, cricket pitches and 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.

## SAFEGUARDING

At St. Matt's, safeguarding is a fundamental expression of our Christian commitment to love, care and protect one another, especially the most vulnerable among us. We fully adopt and implement the House of Bishops' safeguarding policy, *Promoting a Safer Church*, and we are committed to ensuring a safe environment for all, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We believe safeguarding is the responsibility of the whole church community. Our PCC has appointed a Parish Safeguarding Officer who works closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to ensure that all procedures and training are up to date and effective. All those in roles working with children or vulnerable adults are safely recruited, undergo regular safeguarding training, and are DBS checked in accordance with Church of England guidance.

Safeguarding is embedded in the life of the parish through regular PCC review, appropriate signage, clear reporting pathways, and a culture that



encourages openness and accountability. We welcome all who come through our doors and strive to make our church a place where everyone feels safe, valued and heard.

We are committed to listening well, responding promptly and supporting survivors of abuse with compassion, recognising our shared responsibility to reflect Christ's care for all.

# 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



*"Our parishes and congregations are the beating heart of the Diocese."*



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