

Welcome to the Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling



Contents

Message from the Bishop of Rochester.....	3
Welcome to the Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling	4
Who are we looking for?	5
The Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling	7
The communities	8
Parish overview	10
Current patterns of worship	11
Ministry and Mission	13
The West Malling Vicarage.....	17
Buildings, finance, administration, and communication.....	19
Our wider area	20
A major opportunity for the future.....	21
Contact information	22
Appendix A – Local schools	23



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**

Welcome to the Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling

We hope that you will enjoy reading this Team Profile and that you will gain a helpful insight into our churches and this ministry opportunity. We also hope it will help you understand what we are hoping to find in our new Team Vicar.

As you read this profile you will discover:

- ❖ churches worshipping in a wide range of styles and a variety of contexts;
- ❖ a diverse group of seven communities including both established and new housing developments, an historic market town and five rural communities;
- ❖ churches featuring all ages but with a range of opportunities to develop ministry amongst children, young people, and families within a diverse population;
- ❖ a group of Christian communities who have made a positive start to exploring a new future by encouraging and supporting one another, growing together as a team, committed to working together to serve a diverse and rapidly changing context in God's name;
- ❖ an area with a great deal to offer, but with significant challenges for mission and ministry;
- ❖ plenty of support for your ministry – an experienced Team Rector with a commitment to working collegially, administrative support to release you into mission and ministry, along with curate colleagues and a team of licensed Lay Ministers and a number of retired Clergy with PTO;
- ❖ details of the housing – a five bedroom house and garden;
- ❖ churches that recognise its ministers' needs for rest and relaxation, regular time off, holidays and annual retreat.



Jubilee celebrations, 2022

Who are we looking for?

This is an exciting time to join the Kent Downs and Malling Team. There is genuine commitment to working together and a willingness to embrace and support new ministries. Each parish is in a process of developing its particular missional priorities, and in discerning what is best done locally and what as a team. This post provides a rare opportunity to serve in a context where there is a wide range of church traditions and styles of worship, alongside experienced colleagues, at a time where there is potential for new fruitfulness and flourishing.

In the two years since the Team was formed we have:

- ❖ appointed a Team Administrator and begun creating efficient Team-wide processes for safer recruitment and Life Events. We are working on a whole Team communication framework and look forward to welcoming a colleague who can contribute to this.
- ❖ got approval for the formation of a Joint Council to enable governance to be more effective, releasing PCC's to focus on local mission and ministry. An ability to think strategically at both Team and local level is a key quality for the Team Vicar role.
- ❖ identified engaging with families, children and young people as a core vision and mission priority across the Team. We have established a very successful Team Messy Church, run by a team from across the parishes and travelling round to different village halls. Our Team Youth Group has grown in numbers, with six young people being confirmed in 2023 and ten attending a four week Lent group in 2024. Music ministries with children and young people are flourishing at West Malling and Leybourne and new opportunities continue to arise. We have active relationships with all six primary schools in the Team. The Team Rector leads on this and a new colleague will share in this expanding and exciting area of ministry.
- ❖ built trust and good relationships across parishes through a Vision Day in October 2023; shared Lent sermons and Lent course in 2024; Team services on fifth Sundays; a Festival of Arts and Faith in June 2024 involving every parish; Stewardship Campaign autumn 2024. A requirement for the new Team Vicar will be an ability to be spiritually at home in a range of different traditions and to enable worship which enriches and enlivens congregations in their particular context.



We are looking for a person with strong faith who will be a team player and leader, able both to exercise authority and to be accountable, working alongside our Team Rector, Assistant Curates and Lay Leaders to help us move forward together in mission and ministry. The Team Vicar will be based in West Malling Vicarage. Team Clergy are expected take services in all seven churches and to be the primary pastoral contact and community link for specific congregations. St Mary's West Malling and St Michael's Offham are each at different stages of a journey to extend their buildings to provide toilet, refreshment and meeting space and the Team Vicar, alongside the Team Rector, will need to be able to give energy and impetus to these projects.

The new Team Vicar needs to be someone who:

- ❖ is Christ-centred and prayerful, ready to develop and strengthen the spirituality of our congregations while prayerfully open to the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit for themselves and for us all;
- ❖ is happy to work with the strengths and weaknesses of the individual churches, whilst honouring their distinctive identities;
- ❖ is able to work in alignment with the emerging strategic priorities of the Team and of parishes, and able to help shape an evolving Team alongside others;
- ❖ has strong pastoral skills, relating well to people of all ages and stages of faith;
- ❖ will be imaginative and creative in encouraging mission and community engagement;
- ❖ understands the dynamics of small rural congregations and is willing to both lead and play a part in community life;
- ❖ is organised, able to thrive in managing complexity and willing to delegate, prepared to step back and enable others, and take regular time off for rest and refreshment;
- ❖ can do it all with skill, efficiency, love, and a sense of humour.

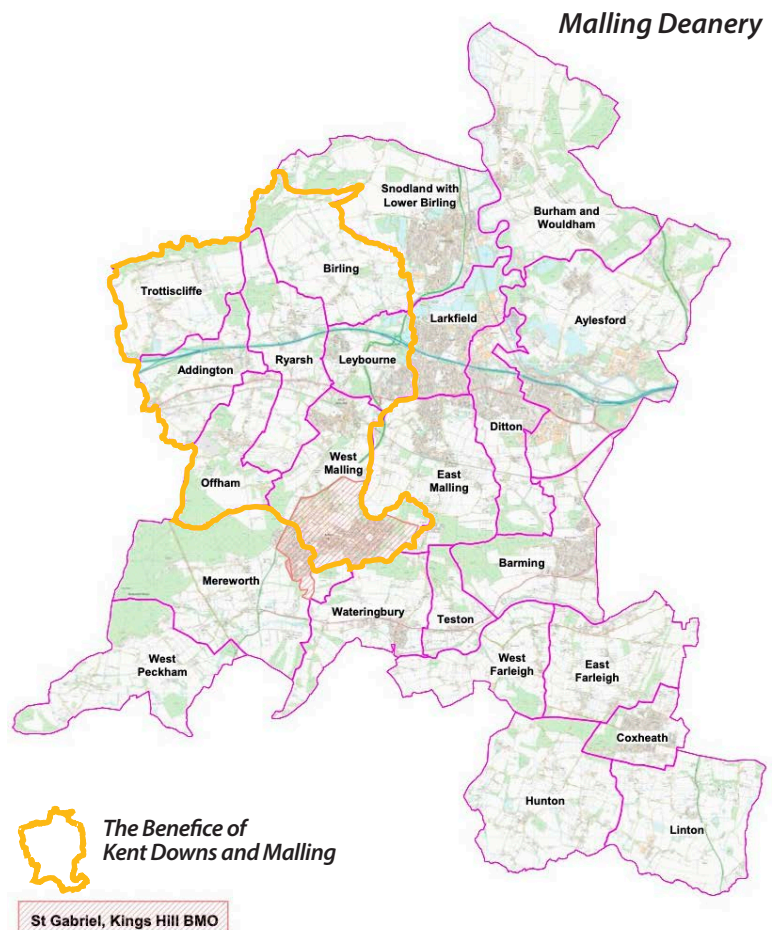
The Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling

In late 2020 and early 2021, Leybourne's Vicar left to become a full-time RAF Chaplain and the Incumbent at Birling, Addington, Ryarsh and Trottscliffe (BART) retired. As these posts became vacant, conversations began concerning the best way to organise mission and ministry amongst the seven parishes. After careful and prayerful deliberation, we agreed to become a Team Ministry of seven parishes served by two Incumbent-level Clergy; a Team Rector and a Team Vicar.

We are discovering what an exciting opportunity for mission and ministry this is to utilise the gifts and skills of our church communities whilst allowing each to bring its particular charisms to the Body of Christ as a whole.

Each church is best placed to reach out to its local community and context and has begun a process of identifying missional priorities. We are discovering those areas where we can fruitfully work together and now have in place Team-wide systems for Team Shared Costs, safer recruiting and DBS checks and mutual support for Parish Safeguarding Officers. Our Team Youth Group, Fusion, is flourishing, likewise the new Team Messy Church, as a result of working together across parishes.

Much more remains to be developed and there is scope for a Team Vicar to bring and exercise their particular gifts within the overall strategic vision for the Team. We hope that you will relish the challenge of joining us on this next stage of our journey, prayerfully engaging with our developing vision and playing a part in the shaping of the leadership of the Team going forward. From September our Joint Council will be up and running, which will in due course reduce the number of PCC meetings that Team clergy are expected to attend.



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The communities

Addington

Addington is a small, relatively affluent community spread into three separate areas divided by a golf course. Set in the Green Belt and in an area of outstanding natural beauty the church, village green and pub are also in a conservation area. There are approximately 570 on the Electoral Register with relatively large commuter and retired contingents. There are 57 people on the church's Electoral Roll.



Birlinging

Birlinging is a small, rural village with a big heart, surrounded by farmland, with approximately 145 houses. The Parish Council is openly supportive of the church. The church is on a favourite walking and cycling route. There is a very well supported traditional annual fête which raises money for local charities, including the church. There is also a children's play area behind the church yard which is well utilised. Many of the children attend or attended Ryarsh Primary School.



Leybourne

The population of Leybourne is c 5,000. It is a fairly affluent community with many residents of working age commuting to local towns and London. Several former flooded gravel pits have recently been developed into the Leybourne Lakes Country Park and former Leybourne Grange hospital site has been redeveloped for housing as Leybourne Chase. The church building stands adjacent to a 13th Century castle dating back to Norman times and very close to the local Church of England Primary School. Facilities in the village include two hairdressers, a newsagent/general store, village hall, two pubs and restaurants, and a budget hotel. There are sports clubs and junior football teams and a cricket club, as well as children's and youth uniformed organisations. There are 100 people on the church's Electoral Roll.



Offham

Set in the Green Belt, Offham lies on a hill two miles from West Malling. An attractive Kentish ragstone village protected as a conservation area, it is centred around a village green and famed for its Quintain, a tilting post, which is believed to be the last remaining example in England that is still in its original position. The village has grown significantly in the last century within the confines of its envelope, and is now home to around 900 people and 300 houses, and a well-regarded one-form entry Primary School. The village also has tennis courts, a Cricket Club, a Village Hall and the Kings Arms pub and a popular annual May Day celebration. Offham is also home to Spadework, a local charity which runs a Café, Garden Centre and Farm Shop while providing services and employment for adults with learning and other disabilities.



Ryarsh

Ryarsh is a small rural community with a one form-entry primary school and a village hall. We enjoy a very good working relationship with both the parish council and the Duke of Wellington village pub. There are 680 people on the Electoral Register. A new building development of 93 homes has been built during the past few years. A small number of houses within the curtilage of the new Leybourne Chase development is also included within the ecclesiastical boundary of Ryarsh. The remainder are in Leybourne Parish.



Trottscliffe

Trottscliffe is a small community at the foot of the North Downs near to the Pilgrims Way, where locals and visitors enjoy walking and celebrating the beauty of this special place. The 2021 census lists 514 residents of which around 20% are 0 -17 years, 50% 18 - 64 years and 30% 65+ years. Trottscliffe has its own Church of England Primary School. There are 45 people on the electoral roll.



West Malling

West Malling is a historic market town, the market charter being vested in St Mary's Abbey. Most of the town is covered by a designated Conservation Area which underscores its historic character, and the High Street has a variety of listed buildings, including the Church at the top of road, St Mary's Abbey and the ancient monument of St Leonard's Tower.

The parish has a current population of around 2,500 people, with plans for further development. It is a popular commuter location, with good links to London by both car and rail. There are two Primary Schools. and in addition to our own Church, there is St Thomas More RC Church, West Malling Baptist Church, the Pilsdon at Malling Community, and the Anglican Benedictine Community based at St Mary's Abbey.



Parish overview

Meet the team

Our team currently consists of a Team Rector (the Revd Canon Dr Helen Burn), two Assistant Curates (the Revd Kelly Parsons, who will leave us at some point after November 2024, and the Revd Carol Bridge, who begins her curacy at the end of September 2024), and a part-time Administrator (Jonica Thomas). We also have a wider Ministry Team which meets termly comprising six Licensed Lay Ministers and Lay readers, one Pastoral Assistant, five supportive retired Clergy living locally, and a variety of musicians (some paid, some voluntary). There are many lay volunteers who support the work of the parishes in a wide variety of ways, including our churchwardens, parish treasurers, pastoral carers, musicians, flower arrangers, sacristans, children and youth workers, and many others.



Helen Burn has been the Team Rector of the Kent Downs and Malling Team since June 2023. Helen lives in Leybourne Rectory with her husband Geoffrey and they have two adult daughters. Helen is Carol Bridge's Training Incumbent.



Carol Bridge started as the Assistant Curate in the Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling Team in September 2024. Helen is her designated Training Incumbent. Carol is a self-supporting minister and lives in New Ash Green.



Kelly Parsons started as the Assistant Curate in West Malling with Offham in the summer of 2022. She lives in Hadlow with her husband Michael, and they have three young adult children. Kelly will be leaving us at some point after November 2024.

Current patterns of worship

The following table shows the current arrangements for Public Worship in each parish. This pattern reflects arrangements that were in place while we were in our previous Benefices working separately with three stipendiary Clergy. We have retained them for the initial season of the Team's existence for the sake of continuity.

The seven parishes have agreed that a review of patterns of worship, involving consultation and a final decision, will be best undertaken by the new Joint Council. We need to work towards a sustainable pattern which takes account of continuity as well as capacity.

	First Sunday	Second Sunday	Third Sunday	Fourth Sunday	Fifth Sunday
Addington	10.00 Open House (MP)	10.00 Café Church	10.00 Open House (MP)	10.00 Open House with Communion	Team Service – for combined parishes which takes place at a single church
Birling	11.00 All-Age CW HC		11.00 All-Age Worship		
Leybourne	10.30 CW HC	10.30 All-Age HC	10.30 CW HC	10.30 CW HC	
Offham	09.15 All-Age Worship	09.15 CW HC	09.15 CW MP	09.15 CW HC	
Ryarsh	09.30 Family Service		09.30 CW HC		
Trottscliffe		09.30 CW HC		09.30 CW SoW	
West Malling	08.00 BCP HC 10.00 CW HC	08.00 BCP HC 10.00 All-Age Worship	08.00 BCP HC 10.00 CW HC	08.00 BCP HC 10.00 CW MP	

Abbreviations: CW – Common Worship, MP – Morning Prayer, HC – Holy Communion, SoW – Service of the Word

Mid-week worship

Until July 2024 there has been a 9.30am Wednesday service of Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) at St Mary's, West Malling, which has been suspended while we are without a Team Vicar. No other mid-week services currently take place. Morning Prayer is said by the Team clergy at 9am every Tuesday at SS Peter and Paul Leybourne and 9am at St Mary's West Malling every Thursday. All are welcome to attend. On other days Morning and Evening Prayer are said individually by the clergy.

Online worship

During the Pandemic, all of the parishes started to offer online worship and ministry. Currently West Malling and Leybourne continue to provide live-streamed worship every Sunday morning



Tenebrae online, Holy Week 2020

Occasional offices

	Baptisms			Weddings			Funerals		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
Addington	1	0	2	0	2	2	4	3	0
Birling	0	1	5	0	0	0	2	1	2
Leybourne	2	2	7	0	2	2	9	7	9
Offham	5	2	1	1	3	5	4	9	2
Ryarsh	3	0	4	0	1	1	1	0	2
Trottscliffe	0	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	0
West Malling	13	14	30	1	9	9	22	21	16
Total	24	20	49	3	20	20	43	41	31



Ministry and Mission

As we have begun our journey as a Team, we have allocated areas of responsibility and oversight to be exercised Team-wide. Stewart Biggs oversees Discipleship and Evangelism for the Team and runs the Team Alpha Course. Stewart also oversees music ministry and has encouraged musicians to support one another in practical ways by covering for one another and finding ways of joining together for Team services. The Team Rector oversees Stewardship, Safeguarding and ministry with Families, Children and Young People. There is scope for the Team Vicar to oversee key areas according to their gifts and passions. The Ministry Team meets termly to pray, study the Scriptures and discern direction for sermon series and areas where we might need to focus. This has enabled us to have a shared Team focus in Lent, using study material from Exodus, and to follow this up with Stewardship month in September culminating in a Team service for 'Generosity Sunday.'

Prayer and discipleship

Our current Clergy already meet regularly for the Daily Offices. There are a variety of Home Groups around the Team, information about which has been collated in a Team leaflet. Leybourne has a Prayer Ministry team, and in all our parishes, there are also local prayer chain systems for particular requests from the church family.

Pastoral care

At present pastoral care takes place at a local level. West Malling and Leybourne both have teams of pastoral visitors who visit elderly and housebound church members and help to support the pastoral activity of the Clergy. West Malling also supplements their Funeral Ministry with a bereavement support group called 'Grief Moves' which is based around craft activities and active listening. Each parish has a member of the clergy team allocated as their primary pastoral point of contact, recognising that there are no rules as to whom any individual might feel they want to approach for support. At present the Team Rector covers Leybourne, Trottiscliffe, Birling and Addington; Revd Kelly covers Ryarsh, and West Malling and Offham are being shared between them. This will be reviewed when the Team Vicar arrives. Our retired clergy are also much valued sources of pastoral support.



Fellowship activities and groups

Many of our churches consider social activity and fellowship support to be a key part of our growth as church communities. You can find out more in our Additional Information document on our website. In many of the parishes, you will find people who are very happy to help organise events, support fellowship in a variety of creative ways and several of our churches have good facilities (halls and meeting rooms with toilets and kitchen facilities) that make those kind of events much easier.



Work with families, children and young people

All our parishes have identified this as a priority and are responding to the God-given opportunities which arise in their settings. Over the last twelve months Addington have been able to re-launch their Sunday morning Children's Church twice a month; Trottiscliffe have hosted very successful family worship events at Christmas and Easter (the former helped by the Baby Jesus stones hidden around the village in the week before); children's choirs in West Malling and Leybourne have seen children grow in faith; links with local schools have resulted in several visits to St Martin's Ryarsh; and 'Welcome to the Lord's Table', a Communion before Confirmation course, resulted in ten children receiving communion, four of whom were also baptised, in June 2024 in Leybourne. Team Messy Church began in October 2023 with a Team drawn from across the parishes and takes place six times a year in different village venues. From this we have a core of regular families who we can invite to other events.

Confirmation preparation is done Team wide and six young people and one adult were confirmed at the Deanery Confirmation service in November 2023.

Occasional offices

We offer an annual Marriage Preparation course in partnership with the Swan, a restaurant venue in West Malling. We have in place the Benefice Entitlement to Marry which enables couples to marry in any of the seven churches as long as they have a qualifying connection with any one of them. We have one Team Order of Service for baptism and share the taking of these services, usually as stand alone services after the main morning service. Our Team Administrator Jonica uses the Life Events Diary from the Church of England to track all Occasional Offices.

Churchyards

All seven of our parishes have Churchyards. They are all open for burial although one or two are getting fairly full. We recognise the importance of providing our communities with local sacred spaces in which beloved family members and friends can be laid to rest. To that end, we seek to maintain our churchyards to a good standard. Most (but not all) of our parishes have partnerships with volunteer groups and local parish councils to maintain the natural environment and the amenities provided. A small team led by Stewart Biggs is able to advise on fabric matters, including churchyards, and to offer practical support.

Mission and Outreach in the Community

Across the seven parishes, we seek to serve our communities in a variety of ways that might speak of God's love and grace. All seven churches play a key role in their communities at major festivals. Remembrance Sunday events being well attended by the wider public, and Christmas Carol Services, Christingles, Nativity plays all take place either in our churches or in prominent locations around our villages like local pubs, village greens or even a pétanque court!

Many of the churches get involved in local fetes and May Day fairs, running stalls to advertise our churches or simply helping out to serve the wider aims of the event and the village communities.

In 2022, all of our parishes hosted events for the Platinum Jubilee. For example, Ryarsh organised a concert and tea party for 170 people, West Malling hosted a flower festival, and nearly 10% of the population in Trottiscliffe attended a Thanksgiving Service.

Addington has an amateur dramatic society, 'Hedgehog Productions', who have often put on plays with a Gospel message. Addington also hosts a fortnightly men's breakfast at the Golf Club. Because of its good acoustics and capacity, St Mary's in West Malling has a particular role as a regular venue for music. The Music at Malling festival every September is the most well-known but a variety of concerts take place throughout the year. Meanwhile, in Addington in the summer of 2019, 'Angel Space' was held on the village green as a gift to the village with music, activities and free food. We try to be open to new ideas and creative ways to serve and bless our local communities.

Some of our activities, like the Men's Breakfast, are more overtly evangelistic. We are running our first Team-wide Alpha course this autumn.



Centenary of the First World War, St Martin's, Ryarsh

Away giving and Missionary partnerships

Many of our parishes support a variety of missionaries and mission agencies in this country and around the world. Approaches vary. Some allocate a percentage of their income and distribute it each year. Some feel very strongly about wanting to continue to do that and maintain their existing links as they come into the Team. Others host annual collections for specific purposes and projects. Harvest gifts are given to a variety of local charities and Christingle services support the Children's Society.

Local schools

Our local links with Primary schools provide an opportunity for outreach and service to our local communities. There are seven local Primary Schools, three of which are Church Schools. The Clergy Team serve as School Governors and some of our lay people are Governors in some of the schools as well. A full rundown of the schools is in Appendix A.

Residential care homes

There are three Residential Care Homes in the Team. In Leybourne, Waterside Court sheltered accommodation had a good link with the church prior to the Pandemic. West Malling has built up a good relationship with Lavenders in West Malling and our Clergy and Lay Ministers lead services in the home for residents on a weekly basis. St Mary's Court is also in West Malling and while services do not take place there, there is a good relationship with the Warden and support for some residents. There are a number of sheltered housing areas around the Team and a further home, Harpwood House, just over the border in the parish of Platt.

Uniformed organisations

Uniformed organisations at Leybourne take part with the church there and join the worship for the second Sunday of the month.

The West Malling Vicarage



The West Malling Vicarage was built in 1965 in the grounds of the Old Vicarage on West Malling High Street. Despite the address of 138 High Street, the house is set back off the main road on a private drive that skirts St Mary's churchyard. The Vicarage looks out upon the church and the picturesque surroundings of the churchyard.

At the front of the house, there is adequate off-road parking for several vehicles. There is a large rear garden, mostly laid to lawn with a covered patio area. At the bottom of the garden is the 'Coach House', a Grade II listed former stable

which presumably once hosted the Vicar's horse and carriage! Its future is uncertain.

The Vicarage is double-glazed throughout and has gas central heating with radiators throughout and a central thermostat. The downstairs has an entrance hall with doors leading to a study for the Vicar, the downstairs cloakroom and lounge (with open fire). There is a separate dining room and large kitchen which was last refurbished in 2010. At the rear of



the property is a garage and a small separate boiler room, both accessed from the covered patio.

Upstairs, the vicarage has five bedrooms. Two are large, with two more bedrooms of a good size and only the fifth bedroom being smaller. There are sinks in two of the bedrooms. The bathroom and toilet upstairs are separated.

A programme of works will be agreed with the Diocese in due course and the Team is aware of their responsibilities for internal redecoration.



Buildings, finance, administration, and communication

Finance

Before the Team was formed, our parishes operated in different arrangements as BART, West Malling with Offham, and Leybourne. We now have a Team Treasurer and a Team Bank account to handle Team Shared Costs. An annual process has been put in place, to be overseen by the Joint Council, whereby a budget is set for the following year's Shared Costs, and the formula for calculating what each parish pays into the Team Account is reviewed. Shared Costs includes clerical expenses, the costs of the parsonages, the cost of our Team Administrator, and some emerging areas of shared ministry such as Messy Church. Parish Share is still decided by individual parishes, and each parish's finances will continue to serve mission and ministry in each place. In line with diocesan advice, our Team expect to pay full clerical expenses (including allowances, telephone, and parsonage rates).

Overview of data

	Year	Addington	Birling	Leybourne	Offham	Ryarsh	Trottiscliffe	West Malling	Total
Electoral Roll	2019	67	23	99	59	34	49	96	427
	2020	61	23	99	58	33	49	96	419
	2021	57	23	100	53	39	49	97	418
Income	2019	£39,374	£22,244	£64,781	£47,378	£24,620	£28,067	£66,391	£292,855
	2020	£37,725	£14,602	£59,541	£40,238	£21,175	£26,681	£73,668	£273,630
	2021	£35,959	£14,789	£52,686	£47,464	£22,233	£21,107	£66,688	£260,926
Expenditure	2019	£39,104	£17,696	£66,477	£43,600	£21,869	£26,365	£79,438	£294,549
	2020	£34,448	£19,823	£57,123	£36,874	£23,788	£29,267	£63,736	£265,059
	2021	£30,573	£15,170	£39,684	£42,767	£20,960	£19,406	£75,567	£244,127
Parish Share		£17,250	£8,790	£22,769	£17,850	£15,750	£13,069	£33,150	£128,628
Indicative Offer 2022		£17,708	£8,399	£23,842	£17,325	£17,038	£9,277	£43,063	£136,652
Avg planned giving per giver in 2020		£16.20	£9.69	£10.41	£14.35	£13.23	£5.40	£18.70	£ 87.98

There are no major debts anywhere in the Team.



Future building projects

St Mary's, West Malling is in the process of preparing a major £1.5m re-ordering of the church including an extension. While significant funds have been raised, more work needs to be done to both raise the total funds required and to take forward the faculty applications and planning consents required. The new Team Vicar will need to be agile in getting up to speed with the project and playing a key role in driving it forward.

Trottscliffe are in the process of raising funds for a project to help make the church more accessible through the creation, within the footprint of the church, of a lavatory and refreshment facilities.

St Michael's Offham are actively exploring the possibility of adding some toilet and refreshment facilities through a modest extension to improve their opportunities for worship, community engagement and outreach.

Administration

Our Team Administrator Jonica Thomas works 10 hours a week. The majority of her role involves administration for life events (baptisms, weddings and funerals), and acting as Lead Recruiter for DBS checks. All of our parishes recognise that enabling our Clergy to be released into ministry and mission requires a well-established Team Co-ordinator and central point of administration, and all contribute financially to this provision via Team Shared Costs.



Communication

Over the past year the separate parish websites have been unified to be reached through a shared website, Kent Downs and Malling Team. There is more work to be done on the website and scope for further development in our Team Communications Strategy.

Our wider area

The communities in which you will minister are a fabulous place to live.

The Vicarage in West Malling is within walking distance of the High Street and the railway station. The wider local area has easy access to several major supermarkets, a range of leisure opportunities with two golf clubs at Kings Hill and Addington, several gyms, and a centre for community sports facilities.

Transport and the surrounding area

We are served by the A228 which connects to the M20 to the North and the A21 to the South. There are regular bus services throughout the area and West Malling train station has recently been upgraded to make access from Leybourne and Kings Hill easier. West Malling is on the line from Maidstone East to London.

The M20 is less than ten minutes away which means that the O2 Arena in London and the Kent coast are both around 45 minutes away. Nights out in London and trips to France are both fairly easy.

Shops and other facilities

The local economic centre is West Malling which has a lovely range of restaurants, pubs, and niche shops. There are two pubs in Leybourne (the Old Rectory and Castle Lake) but plenty more country pubs nearby in all the parishes. There are also a range of takeaways nearby with Larkfield, West Malling and Kings Hill all offering a variety of tasty options.

Slightly further afield, Maidstone town centre by car is about 15-20 minutes drive and has a wide range of high street chains and shopping opportunities. It's also the nearest major town for things like the cinema and theatre. In other directions, Sevenoaks, Rochester, and Tonbridge are 30 minutes away. Bluewater Shopping Centre is a 40 minute drive along the M2/A2.

Schools

A full breakdown of local schools is given in Appendix A.



A major opportunity for the future

The new housing development of Leybourne Chase poses questions and provides opportunity for future mission

There have been a number of housing developments over the last 25 years in our local area, including the major new development of Kings Hill which is now under a Bishop's Mission Order for ministry and outreach. Right in the middle of our team is the new housing development of Leybourne Chase. Centred around the restored Manor House, Leybourne Chase is now home to 1,273 adults (plus anyone under 18) who live in approximately 860 homes.

The estate has grown quickly with a certain degree of infrastructure including a new Primary School run by the Valley Invicta Academy Trust, a convenience store, a sports pavilion, football fields, horse trail, walled garden and a GP surgery (although no GP has yet been found to run the surgery). There is no Christian congregation on Leybourne Chase at present. Residents tend to look to West Malling, Leybourne or Ryarsh for church involvement and the Occasional Offices.

There is a clear and exciting opportunity for our Team to reach out to the residents of Leybourne Chase together, and the successful candidate will need to be excited about the opportunities and able to lead church and community into an exciting future through community development, community engagement and mission.

Addington Church v Trottiscliffe Church cricket match, 2022



Contact information

Having read this Team Profile and viewed our websites, if you have unanswered questions or wish to talk further about anything contained in this document, please contact the Revd Nick Cornell; his details are below.

Revd Nick Cornell

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Appendix A – Local schools

We recognise that our local links with Primary and Secondary Schools provide an opportunity for outreach and service to our local communities. However, we also recognise that prospective candidates for Team Vicar may have a family of their own and be interested in the schools as parents. We hope this brief rundown of local schools might help on both fronts.

Leybourne Ss Peter & Paul CE Primary Academy (Tenax Academy Trust)

OFSTED: Good (2021). SIAMS: Outstanding (2017). One-form entry, 215 pupils.

The school has a very close relationship with Ss Peter & Paul in Leybourne. The Team Rector and Team Curate lead collective worship weekly and school services are held in the church at key festivals in the year. Ten children attended an afterschool 'Communion Club' run by the Team Rector and Team Curate and took their first communion in church in June 2024. The Team Curate is a member of the Governing Body. There are three Foundation Governors from SS Peter & Paul. <https://leybourne.school>

Offham Primary School

OFSTED: Outstanding (2015). One-form entry, 211 pupils.

The school has a good relationship with St Michael's, Offham. It is not a Church School, but the Headteacher is supportive and often invites the Team Vicar in for assemblies. Some school special events such as Harvest, Christingle, and Easter services are held in the church with children, staff and parents present. <https://www.offham.kent.sch.uk/>

Ryarsh Primary School

OFSTED: Outstanding (2012). One-form entry, 211 pupils.

The school has a good relationship with St Martin's, Ryarsh. It is not a Church School, but the Team clergy are invited to lead occasional assemblies and certain festivals, like Harvest, are held in the church with children and staff present. <https://www.ryarsh.kent.sch.uk/>

More Park Catholic Primary School

OFSTED (2017): Good. Catholic Inspection (2016): Outstanding. One-form entry, 200+ pupils.

More Park has a strong and close relationship with St Thomas More RC church in West Malling. As such, it is not a school to whom we seek to reach out in mission and ministry. <http://www.moreparkprimary.co.uk/>

Trottiscliffe CEP School (Voluntary Controlled)

OFSTED (2017): Good. SIAMS (2018): Outstanding. One-form entry, 82 pupils.

The school has a strong Christian ethos. Children are selected to work with the RE lead to plan worship and prayer. The Team Rector leads collective worship every week, co-plans special reflective events in the church, and is an ex-officio member of the Governing Body. Three of the Governors are regular worshippers at Trottiscliffe church. <https://www.trottiscliffe.kent.sch.uk>

Valley Invicta Primary School at Leybourne Chase (Valley Invicta Academy Trust)

OFSTED (2018): Good. One-form entry, 175+ pupils.

Valley Invicta is a relatively new school that was established on the new housing development and to accommodate rising birth rates in the locality. Ss Peter & Paul, Leybourne have established a good link with the Headteacher which we hope to build on in the future. <https://www.leybournechase.viat.org.uk/>

West Malling CEP School (Tenax Academy Trust)

OFSTED (2017): Good. SIAMS (2022): Good. One-form entry, 210 pupils.

The school is well-regarded, especially for its McGinty Speech & Language Unit which is integrated fully into the life of the school. St Mary's West Malling offers three Foundation Governors to the Governing Body, including the Team Vicar as an ex-officio member. There is an excellent relationship with St Mary's. We lead assemblies on a weekly basis, and works with staff on both RE and to help with spirituality and Christian ethos in the school. <https://www.west-malling.kent.sch.uk/>

Secondary Schools

There are no Secondary Schools anywhere in the Benefice. The nearest Secondary School is The Malling School in East Malling, assessed by OFSTED as 'requires improvement' in 2019. However 11+ selection operates in Kent and many local children travel to Hadlow, Maidstone, Paddock Wood, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Wrotham for secondary education in Comprehensive, Grammar and Church schools. An annual bus pass for a secondary school-age child from Kent County Council is £450 and can be paid in installments. If three or more children are under the age of 16, you only pay for the first two.

Spaces in all the schools are limited and early discussion of any need for school places is advised.