



Our Parish Profile

Holy Cross Church

Bearsted
Kent
ME14 4EE

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part of the
North Downs Team Ministry

October 2024

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PRIEST IN CHARGE AT HOLY CROSS, BEARSTED

Who are we and who are we looking for?

Whether you have just finished a curacy or are an experienced incumbent this is an exciting opportunity to develop and to grow in a leadership role within a nurturing and supportive environment, which has grown even more deeply over the past months during our interregnum. At Holy Cross we are on a journey, looking for an energetic, inspirational, engaging, empowering communicator, to be our new parish priest, able to embrace and build on a diversity in styles of worship, and on what we have and with prayerful discernment, challenge and lead us to go to new places.

None of us are perfect, and we recognise we are all “work in progress”, so do not be put off by our aspirations! We want you to thrive here, and help us to flourish... we are here to help you reach your full potential under God.

As Priest in Charge at Holy Cross Church you will:

- Have a lively and active faith in God and be firm in the belief that He is with us, for us, active in our lives today and can, and does, transform lives.

You will also have:

- The ability to grow Holy Cross in its existing ministries and also lead us into new areas of ministry.
- Communication skills that facilitate engagement with people of all ages in a diversity of settings.
- A calling and desire to exercise leadership with an appreciation that this role requires collaboration with other team ministers and churches.
- A creative vision for expanding the Kingdom, with a strategy for making that happen; and a sense of humour.

Helpful (but not essential) experience:

- Working in a semi-rural context and the opportunities and challenges ministry can bring in such places.

At Holy Cross we can offer you:

- A strong, loving, supportive and welcoming community of souls keen to grow in personal faith and to expand God’s kingdom.
 - A comparatively well funded church with 150 plus members, that is able to pay its parish share and provide a fully quorate PCC.
 - Seven Home Groups of which half of our congregation are members.
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- Five regularly run different worship styles, ranging from formal to contemporary, both clergy and lay-led.
- A fully robed choir, an active informal group of singers and musicians, and a well established band of bell ringers.
- Hard working and committed colleagues ready to support you in your work, including two active church wardens, a number of committees managing various aspects of church life, and an administrator.
- A vibrant village with lots of activities for adults and children.
- Beautiful surroundings to inspire you in your work.



A church wedding

We have good community links and try to play our part in village life to share the Gospel message. In 2023 we removed the pews from church in order that we could hold more events for both church and community, including concerts and dinners, nonetheless respecting our place of worship with high quality chairs. We are a popular venue for weddings, baptisms and funerals.

Historically we have had strong children's work with a Children's and Youth worker, in both church and in local schools. Today there is a lay team running a regular Sunday School and we have also run messy church and youth clubs. This is an area we and the diocese are committed to building on, and an opportunity for a new incumbent to develop. We are also open to exploring new forms of worship that might attract our community.

Where are we?

Our parish is part of the North Downs Team Benefice, which sits to the North and North East of Maidstone and covers six semi-rural parishes, including Bearsted. The Benefice was established in 2016 and is staffed by three stipendiary ministers (including this post) with a number of PTOs and lay leaders who offer invaluable service in supporting local ministry both in church and in the community.



Click on map to open

Find us on What Three Words - [///mile.these.moving](https://www.what3words.com/)

Who to contact

If you feel that God might be calling you to a new ministry in Bearsted, please contact the church wardens at Holy Cross for an informal conversation:

Sandra - sandra@knatchbull.uk or Andrew - awknatchbull@gmail.com ,

Or to discuss the role, contact:

The Venerable Andrew Sewell, The Archdeacon of Maidstone -
andrew.sewell@archdeacmaid.org

Be assured that we are praying for you and for the work that you will do with us and among us. We look forward to meeting you.



Our Church

The church is a large, grade 1 listed building situated in an elevated position near the village green in Bearsted, a village at the foot of the North Downs, approximately 3 miles east of Kent's county town of Maidstone. It extends approximately 1.5 miles from east to west and 1 mile from north to south.



Holy Cross church tower

An extension to the church building contains the church office/clergy vestry, meeting room, choir vestry, kitchen and toilets. Both the church and meeting room are regularly used by village groups. The church pews were recently removed and replaced with high-quality wooden chairs, which is helping to facilitate wider use of the church building.

The findings of the most recent quinquennial inspection are available on request.

Our Worship

There are currently 164 people on the electoral roll at Holy Cross.

We regularly offer a wide range of worship designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of worshippers, held in both the church building and also the nearby Memorial Hall.



Holy Cross congregation Christmas Day 2023

- Every Sunday morning in church there is 'Classic' worship. This takes the form of Sung Eucharist using the Common Worship pattern, either led by the large robed choir and organ or by the Holy Cross Singers and piano. A normal congregation is 60-80 people.
- Also every Sunday 25-40 people meet in the Memorial Hall where there is "New Way", an informal contemporary service with Seekers, the Sunday School for children.
- Every first Sunday in the month Classic and New Way come together for a combined service held in church.
- Choral Evensong is held once a month, attracting 50 plus worshippers.
- Every other month there is a lay-led Taize-style evening service.



New Way service in the Memorial Hall

- Lay led Morning Prayer is available on Zoom three days a week and said in church once a week. With an incumbent this was said in church Monday to Friday.
- Occasional contemporary evening worship.

What our congregation say...



Festivals

Festivals play a large part in our worship lives and we attract large numbers of people, not only from our own congregation, but also the wider village and from further afield.

At Easter:

- Maundy Thursday, there is a traditional sung Eucharist at church in the evening with foot washing and stripping of the altar and chancel. Alternatively there is a simpler service with a shared meal in the Memorial Hall.
- Good Friday follows an established pattern of two hours of readings, reflections, prayer and meditation (usually led by visiting clergy), followed by the Good Friday Liturgy, normally attracting over 60 people.
- Easter Day services are held at Holy Cross and in the Memorial Hall, sometimes with a cross-over period when brunch is served. In 2023 we had one combined congregation service of 172, and just one service in 2024 with 122 people.



Remembrance Sunday at Holy Cross

At Christmas:

- Christingle (historically up to three services) and Crib Services (normally two) are well publicised in both village schools, attended by a congregation of nearly 300.

- The Christmas season is book ended by Advent and Epiphany carol services led by the choir. They also contribute to a traditional lessons and carols at Christmas, which last year saw over 250 people attend.
- A joint Christmas Morning service attracts over 175 to the congregation.

Other commemorations:

- Remembrance Sunday Service and wreath laying at the war memorial, attended by both congregations and joined by members of the local community, current and former service personnel
- Remembrance Sunday Evening Contemporary Reflection in the Memorial Hall, with readings, reflections and modern music.



A wedding celebration outside Holy Cross

The church is also the centre of significant events in people's lives with blessings of births, baptisms, marriages and funerals, and special services to celebrate marriage, Mothering Sunday and Holy Cross Tide. In a typical year we would expect to have around 10 weddings, 17 baptisms and 30 funerals, of which roughly two-thirds are administered at the crematorium.

Children

Seekers is our Sunday morning children's provision for New Way and One Way services during school term time. Currently, there are 14 children on the register, aged between 5 and 14, with an average weekly attendance of six. Currently eleven lay volunteer leaders and helpers run the sessions on a rota basis. We have toy boxes at New Way and Holy Cross for children aged under 5.

We also have an active Toddler & Baby group run by paid staff, which meets in church twice a week.

In the future, we have aspirations to expand our children and young people activities such as reintroducing Messy church and clubs, which would necessitate the reinstatement of a Children and Youth Minister. We would need to find funding for this project

Schools

We have good links, supporting worship and spiritual development, with both Primary Schools in the parish: [Thurnham](#) is a voluntary controlled CE infant school, and [Roseacre](#) is a foundation junior school. At Thurnham worship is led by the clergy once a week while at Roseacre it is fortnightly. Children at Thurnham are also welcomed to regular events, such as Christmas and leavers' services, held in the church.

The position for the principal officiating minister on Thurnham School's Governing Board is currently held by a member of the congregation, who as well as being a Foundation Governor is also the Chair.

Further afield Secondary schools in Maidstone include four single sex grammar schools (two boys, two girls), five co-ed community schools (one a specialist school for science and technology), and Snowfields Academy – a school for young adults with special educational needs.

Prayer ministry

We have a Prayer Ministry Team which is led by a lay Reader and is a strong and supportive presence in the parish. They meet regularly as a group for prayer and support and offer prayer monthly at Holy Cross and more frequently at New Way services.

Home communion

Our Pastoral Team offers home communion once a month for those unable to attend church. Communion is also taken to parishioners in local care homes and hospitals when needed.

Home groups

Home groups are a very important part of our church life and approximately half the congregation are in one of the seven groups. They variously meet weekly or fortnightly, mostly in people's homes. Members provide support and encouragement for each other as they journey in faith, developing deeper relationships with God and each other.



A group discussion in church

The Home Group Leadership Team meets twice a year to share ideas on resources, to support each other and for training on topics such as developing listening skills and encouraging participation.

Training, Development and Lay Leadership

Holy Cross is fortunate to have been a training parish for a number of curates, giving them experience of our wide range of services and bringing their fresh ideas and diversity of styles to our congregations. We feel this is a gift we should continue to share. A number of lay readers and lay funeral ministers have also been trained and supported, some of whom have followed their calling into full ministry.

Our community

There is a strong sense of community in the village and Holy Cross is seen as having an active role, hosting musical events, charity events and larger village meetings alongside its spiritual role.

There is a committed group of bell ringers who ring for most Sunday services as well as for weddings and to mark national events.

Ministry to the elderly

Monthly afternoon teas and weekly coffee mornings are held in church. We also have a team of five people who visit the two care homes and one residential unit in Bearsted parish. The team is well known to, and welcomed by, the management and staff of all three residences. Visits are made every month.



The Bellringers

Alpha

Even before the North Downs team establishment, Alpha courses were run jointly across the parishes that now make up the North Downs Team Benefice and helped many people come to faith. During lockdown, a successful online course was held that was attended by more than 60 people, including five young people. Since lockdown, we have reverted to the traditional format.

Bearsted Area Churches Together (BACT)

As well as Holy Cross, Bearsted is home to [St Peter's Roman Catholic Church](#) and [Bearsted Methodist Church](#). The three churches have been working together for decades and the clergy meet regularly. The churches entered into a formal covenant in May 1996 and come together for:

- worship several times a year, including a service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Carols around the Christmas tree on the village green.
- a well-established series of Lent lunches
- an ecumenical Justice and Peace group
- an annual Easter Egg Trail on Holy Saturday, which attracts over 250 children
- a prayer visiting scheme where teams call on homes in the parish to ask for prayer requests which are then used during prayers on the following Sunday.



Carols on the Green

External outreach projects

We have a long history of raising funds and forming ongoing relationships with external outreach projects. Our Christmas collections, and those from other special fundraising

occasions, are regularly split between international and local projects. In recent years beneficiaries have included:

- Christian Aid
- The Children's Society
- Maidstone Homeless Care
- Beachy Head Chaplaincy.
- The Princess Project in Maidstone
- Neema Crafts in Tanzania
- Bana Besu School in Zambia

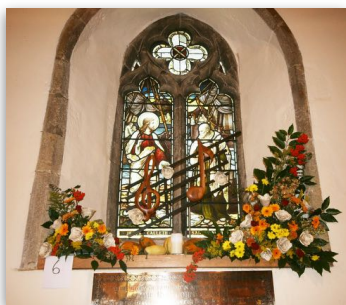
Finance

We meet our Parish Share commitments in full and have historically covered our other financial needs without having to draw on reserves. The most recent audited accounts for the year ending December 2023 are available via the [Charity Commission's website](#). These show a total income of £232,088, which includes stewardship income of £82,356 and legacies and donations of £68,902. Total expenditure amounted to £163,269, including £83,220 for our parish share.

The Raise the Roof Group was formed in 2018 to begin fundraising for extensive repairs to the church roof and tower. It has so far raised over £60,000 (from events, donations and grants), which is treated as restricted funds. Most of this has already been spent on the most urgently needed repairs to the roof and guttering. It is expected that the majority of the cost of repairs will be met by grants from charitable and heritage organisations.

Fundraising and Social Events

The Raise the Roof Group organises fundraising events through the year, culminating in the annual Christmas fair in the church. These events are seen as outreach opportunities to people from Bearsted and further afield (this also helps to broaden the fundraising base).



A church window dressed for the Flower Festival

Significant milestones in church life are celebrated with wine and food at church, organised by a dedicated Social Committee.



The Christmas Fair



One of the Harvest Supper "acts"

This group also organises evening events, including the Maundy Thursday and harvest suppers and refreshments to accompany the APCM. They also ensure Holy Cross is represented at the Bearsted carnival and fayre, as well as other village events.

The Vicarage

The vicarage is a short walk from the church and is accessed via a private shared access road.



Vicarage front view



Vicarage rear view

It is a four-bedroomed house with an adjoining garage set in a mainly lawned garden. Downstairs there is a lounge (with an open fire), kitchen/dining room (with separate utility room), study/office, cloakroom with shower and an orangery. Two of the bedrooms (including the master) have built-in wardrobes, one bedroom has a sink.

Bearsted Village



The Village Sign

Bearsted is a semi-rural village in easy reach of the Kent coast, the channel ports and the Channel Tunnel. It has good motorway links and a railway station (within walking distance of the vicarage) on the Maidstone East line between London and Ashford (Kent). Buses also run to Maidstone and Ashford.

The established core of the village is the village green, with its sports and play facilities and surrounding pubs, restaurants, shops and housing.

The population of Bearsted currently around 13,000, having

expanded considerably in the last 50 years. While new housing continues to be built in the village, it is in relatively small developments.

The current diocesan index of multiple deprivation places the parish as comfortable but not wealthy. Most residents own their own homes. The majority are white British and the average age is in the mid-40s. The demographic of the worshipping community generally mirrors that of the village as a whole, but the average age is older.

Many people commute for work either to London, Maidstone or Ashford, although there are smaller, local independent businesses.

Amenities

Bearsted has a GP practice, two dental surgeries and Maidstone hospital is less than five miles away. There is a large private hospital on the edge of the village.

The village has two libraries and is well served for restaurants, pubs, take aways and coffee shops. Village shops include a butcher's and delicatessen, a pharmacy, two petrol stations, a Co-op, Tesco Express, several hairdressers and barber shops. Between Bearsted and Maidstone is a large Tesco store, a garden centre and two small retail parks, one containing another garden centre, another butcher's shop, and a selection of clothing shops, the other housing Next and Marks & Spencer.

Village Activities

The picturesque village green is the venue for various community events including an annual summer carnival and fayre. [Bearsted Cricket Club](#) has its pavilion and pitch on the green: the game has been played here since the eighteenth century, making it one of the oldest cricket grounds in England. Additional leisure facilities include allotments, [a tennis club](#), [a bowls club](#), two [golf clubs](#) and [football clubs](#) covering all [age ranges](#). The two Holy Cross flower festivals brought many of these groups, along with the Parish Council, other churches, the schools and WIs, together in an enjoyable cross-community event.



Village Green and Play Area



Mixed Blessings Christmas concert in church

Villagers can enjoy many other activities/groups, which meet in church buildings or in the three community halls in the village. The [Scouts](#) and the [Guides](#) have their own land and buildings not far from the church. There are a number of choirs including [Bearsted Choral Society](#) and Mixed Blessings, a thriving local history society, and four Women's Institutes.

In the run up to the COP 26 summit in Glasgow in

2021, the [Bearsted Climate Action Network \(Bearsted CAN\)](#) was founded by three members of Holy Cross to bring together people from across the village to address the climate crisis.

Immediately adjacent to the church is a large [Woodland Trust](#) area, which is popular with many people, particularly dog walkers.

The Benefice and The North Downs Ministry Team

This was established in 2016 within the North Downs, a designated area of outstanding natural beauty, located in the centre of the Garden of England. Apart from Bearsted, it includes the semi-rural parishes of [Boxley](#), [Detling and Thurnham](#), [Hollingbourne and Huckling](#) (known as the [Pilgrim's Way Churches](#)), together with [Otham with Langley](#) and [Leeds and Broomfield, and Kingswood \(LBK\)](#), which can be seen on the adjacent map.

In all there are 13 places of worship, of which 10 are traditional church buildings.

The Team normally consists of a Team Rector (the Priest in Charge at Holy Cross) and two team vicars, one based in Otham and the other in Boxley. Currently the Team Rector role has been suspended. We have deliberately chosen to do this to create options and opportunities to explore the best structure for the team and across the wider Deanery.



From the Pastoral Reorganisation: Information Sheet - Suspension of Presentation
The new priest appointed to Bearsted will be licensed as a priest-in-charge operating under a Bishop's Licence rather than being incumbent of the Benefice. Since any priest-in-charge would be appointed under Common Tenure there is very little practical difference between a rector/vicar and a priest-in-charge. In both cases a priest is appointed to the benefice, in both cases the Patron and parish(es) are involved in the selection process, and in both cases the priest will be free to stay so long as (s)he, the parish and the Bishop feel that staying is right.

In the recent past the Team has also benefited from curates and a Church Army missionary. Beyond this, there are a number of readers, PTOs and lay leaders who offer invaluable service in supporting local ministry both in church and in the community. Boxley parish has an ANNA chaplain and there is also an established and effective Funeral Ministry Team across the Benefice.

Each parish has its own churchwarden(s), church officers and quorate PCC. There is also a team council, made up of the church wardens and church officers (and/or lay chairs) from the individual parishes. Weekly congregations range in size and tend to be older than the general population in the villages. Although many are comfortably off, reliance on fixed incomes can pose challenges for increasing parish incomes.

Across our churches, we have a variety of service patterns, from weekly services to monthly. Most services are held on Sunday morning.

The worship style across the Benefice is broadly traditional, although many churches are open to new forms of worship. Within the Benefice we also have two more contemporary congregations and one all-age, family church at Kingswood, which is an ecumenical partnership with the Baptist and Methodist Churches.

We publicise different services and events offered across the Benefice to encourage attendance and broaden the types of service available to individual worshippers. The Team Council believes that there is great potential for engagement and collaboration across the Benefice.



Role description

PRIEST IN CHARGE, HOLY CROSS CHURCH, BEARSTED

We envisage the majority of time will be allocated to the parish, with perhaps 10% being spent on matters across the team and beyond.

Purpose

- Minister to the parish of Bearsted
- Ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Holy Cross Church, Bearsted

Responsibilities

- To develop a clear strategy for the Parish of Bearsted in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Diocese of Canterbury and to maintain financial stability.
- To recruit and lead a team of staff and volunteers to achieve the objectives of the parish
- To build the Kingdom of God in Bearsted, the North Downs Benefice and the Diocese through ministry to the community and the cure of souls.
- To build congregations committed to prayer, bible study, evangelism and whole life discipleship
- To actively grow links and develop relationships with local people and organisations, both commercial and charitable to support the aims of the church
- To have regard to the calling and responsibilities of the clergy as described in the Canons, the Ordinal, the Code of Professional Conduct for the Clergy and other relevant legislation including safeguarding

Person Specification

Experience

- Ordained in the Church of England with relevant experience of typical range of duties of priest in Church of England parish ministry.
 - Ideally with relevant experience of working outside or beyond the Church before or since ordination.
 - Skilled at leading liturgy that is both glorifying to God and edifying to people
 - Able to identify, devise and implement patterns of worship that will be appropriate for a wide variety of people, including all ages, and those not yet familiar with Christian faith.
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Faith

- Confident in their own faith and secure in their identity as a Christian leader.
- Able to access appropriate resources to sustain and refresh their own faith and spiritual life.
- Practicing good self-care (spiritually, emotionally, socially, mentally and physically) so as to stay fresh and be a positive role-model for others.
- Committed to praying for the church, alone and with others, to discern what God is saying and doing.

Leadership

- Committed to and skilled in delivering leadership and supervision which empowers others through delegation and sharing of responsibilities, and enabling the ministries of others to thrive in worship, fellowship and outreach
- Effective in creating, communicating and delivering inspiring vision in collaboration with members of the congregation and across the team, and in developing appropriate strategy, attainable objectives and clear action steps to achieve it in reliance on God in prayer.
- Skilled at managing change and able to handle conflict calmly, creatively and effectively to promote reconciliation and improved collaboration.
- Committed to personal ministerial development and keeping abreast of appropriate ministerial education.
- Able to give pastoral care to the community

Key Working Relationships

- Bishop of Dover
- Archdeacon of Maidstone
- Area Dean of North Downs Deanery and Lay Chair of Deanery Synod
- Church Wardens of Holy Cross Bearsted Parish Church
- Parochial Church Council of Holy Cross Bearsted Parish Church
- Vicars in the North Downs Benefice
- Local Community partners: church leaders of all denominations, schools etc.

