

All Saints, Herstmonceux and St Mary Magdalene, Wartling

Parishes' Profile

Summary

Be shepherds of the flock God gave you, and look after it willingly, as God wants you to... 1 Peter 5:2

Two rural parishes in a single benefice in East Sussex, who work in harmony together, seek a part time (0.5 - normally Sundays + 3 more working days a week) minister of broad churchmanship to lead and inspire spiritual growth throughout the community. The post might suit someone with a young family, but the parishes remain open-minded about the circumstances of applicants. Our villages have a total population of about 3,150 (in the 2021 census), scattered through villages and hamlets with new houses continuing to be built since then. There is both a Church of England Primary School and Bader College (part of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario); many agricultural workers and a few commuters; people who have lived here all their lives as their ancestors have also done and several newcomers (who are made welcome and quickly integrated into the community); people living alone and large families.

This Profile describes the villages, local educational facilities, the churches and rectory, the church team, church worship and activities for all ages, and the parishes' Mission Action Plan. Information about church giving is included. More detailed information about the finances and the church buildings, and also a copy of the monthly Parish News shared by both parishes is available on request.

A profile of the priest we are looking for is included as a separate section at the end of this document. We seek someone to lead us joyfully in proclaiming the gospel in our communities, living out God's love in our parishes. We are keen to welcome and support new leadership, and innovations that will encourage sustained growth in our congregations.



All Saints, Herstmonceux



St Mary Magdalene, Wartling

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Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith

In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Selsey. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin

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The Villages

We are in the heart of the beautiful countryside of East Sussex, and only about 7 miles from the sea. The local communities include members of the farming community, young working couples with and without families, retired people, people working from home and commuters (e.g. to Tunbridge Wells, Haywards Heath, Brighton, Eastbourne, Hastings and one or two to London).

Wartling parish includes the villages of Boreham Street & Windmill Hill as well as Wartling itself. These are small rural villages set in farmland, partly adjacent to the marshes. Windmill Hill has a post office & shop. Boreham Street also has a pub with restaurant. The parish of Herstmonceux includes the village of Cowbeeche. Herstmonceux itself has a post office, village stores, Fire Station, bake shop, hairdressers, coffee shop, Health Centre, pharmacy, restaurant, pub, fish & chip shop, antique shop and commercial plant nurseries. Cowbeeche has a pub with restaurant. Each parish has a thriving modern Community Hall, well-used for a wide range of activities.

Herstmonceux has a Quaker Meeting House (also used sometimes by the churches for its ease of access in the centre of the village) and one Independent Congregational Chapel. We have good relations and various joint activities with these denominations.

It is 2 hours by car to central London, an hour to the M25, 45 minutes to Brighton and 1½ hours to the Channel Tunnel. Our nearest towns are Hailsham (4 miles - facilities include 3 supermarkets, a range of high street shops, a cinema and a leisure centre with a swimming pool), Heathfield (7 miles). The larger towns of Eastbourne (12 miles) & Hastings (13 miles) also have District General Hospitals which serve these parishes [all mileages from Herstmonceux]. Buses run between

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Hastings and Eastbourne via Bexhill, Herstmonceux, Hailsham & Polegate (normally hourly), and there are good local taxi services. The nearest railway stations are at Polegate (7 miles, on the Hastings to Brighton or London Victoria lines) and Battle (9 miles, on the Hastings to London Bridge / Cannon Street / Charing Cross lines).

Education

There is both a pre-school nursery and a tots & toddlers group in Herstmonceux.



Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School, to which children throughout the parishes travel, has about 210 pupils. It is associated with All Saints & St Richards C of E primary school at Old Heathfield, both schools being part of Sussex Spires federation. The priest is a Foundation Governor of the school in Herstmonceux, (as is currently the vice-chairman of All Saints PCC) and is expected to lead an assembly about once every 3 weeks as part of a rota (with a small team) and to participate in school life. The SIAMS report of summer 2023 found that collective worship at the school was 'good' - well planned and resourced. It also commented that Religious Education had an outstanding impact on pupils ... and that there was an impressive spirituality among the pupils. Bernice Burke, Foundation Governor for Sussex Spires Federation, says "The children and families of our two rural parishes who attend Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School, and the Staff, are looking forward to welcoming our new Rector, to share in the life of our happy and lively school." Mega Explorers, the two church-led groups for older & younger primary school children, meet at the school as an after-school club in alternate weeks.

There are two secondary schools almost equidistant from the village, Heathfield Community College (awarded Specialist College status in 2003 and specialising in both the visual and performing arts) and Hailsham Community College (awarded Specialist College in Sports status in 2000 and Specialist College in Business and Enterprise in 2004). A special school bus goes from the village to Heathfield Community College, and a public bus service is available for Hailsham Community College.

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Herstmonceux Castle was built in the 1440s, one of the first brick-built castles in England. It now belongs to Queens University, Ontario, whose Bader College is located there. About 200 students (currently mainly 1st year, with some 3rd year), are based at the Castle for up to one year; shorter courses for undergraduate and graduate students are also run. By informal agreement, the priest visits weekly and provides pastoral care to students, staff and faculty of varied denominations and faiths. Alpha courses have also been run there by the priest in charge in recent years.

The Observatory Science Centre, in the grounds of the Castle, is run independently by an educational charity amid the domes and telescopes of the former home of the Royal Greenwich Observatory. A range of astronomy related courses and an annual Astronomy Festival take place here.

At Windmill Hill, the PGL Residential Adventure & Study Centre for Schools & Groups was opened in 2009 around an impressive Grade 2 listed mansion house set in 21 acres of grounds.

The Team

There is a lay minister installed in 2000, and two occasional preachers, as well as support from another priest who was previously a curate in the parishes; and two supportive & active PCCs. Both parishes are in the rural Deanery of Dallington, in which the clergy are mutually supportive and meet regularly.

Bearing in mind this is a part time post, the post holder is expected to take proper holidays and days off as well as time for training (CME), reading, personal development, retreat and academic study.

Activities

The popular monthly Parish News is produced and delivered largely by church volunteers for the churches and the community, and runs at a profit from advertising. A thriving Lunch Club meets in Herstmonceux Village Hall monthly, sustained by many local volunteers. Founded by a previous incumbent, it is greatly appreciated by older and lonely local residents. The Village Information Centre is staffed by volunteers.

The staff team members are also involved with other local activities which provide support & encouragement for those in need. Monthly newsletters and prayer sheets cover both parishes.

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There are also local clubs and societies catering for adults and children across wide-ranging sporting, cultural and other activities, including Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. The village has a large recreation ground with a children's play area. Football, Cricket and Bowls clubs each have their own facilities. A representative from the churches is on the Vitality Villages Committee.

The churches organise at least two Fairs a year, and a Plant Sale, as well as occasional concerts, all of which help in reaching out to the wider community.

Church Buildings

The two Grade 1 listed historic churches (the current building at All Saints, Herstmonceux dates from 1180AD; St Mary Magdalene, Wartling dates from 1260AD) are 2½ & 3½ miles respectively from the Rectory. The churches are steeped in the spiritual peace that comes from centuries of prayer and worship. St Mary Magdalene is in excellent order - recent developments there have included rewiring and installation of a toilet & kettle point. The church has a Silver environmental award from A-Rocha. All Saints has benefitted from installation of a toilet and kettle point, and of an area of flexible seating at the rear of the church, which is particularly useful as there are no separate church halls. All Saints has recently registered with A-Rocha, with a view to achieving an environmental award. The Friends of All Saints, a charity, contributes funds towards restoration and preservation of the church building. Active steps are being taken to tackle long-standing damp at All Saints as well as a wider renovation project.



St Mary Magdalene, Wartling



All Saints, Herstmonceux

The buildings and churchyards are generally well maintained and received reasonable quinquennial reports from the supervising architect in 2022 but, inevitably with such old buildings, the reports also identified features which need attention within the next few years. Copies of the Church Guides are available on request.

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The Heron at Wartling



Christmas at All Saints

The Rectory in West End, Herstmonceux, is modern, well-appointed and ideal for family occupancy. It has a double garage, and is a few minutes' walk from the centre of the village and its primary school. It has 4 good-sized bedrooms (one with a handbasin in the room) and a bathroom (with both bath & shower) upstairs; a large dual aspect dining/living room, a sitting room, a fitted kitchen, a separate utility room, and a toilet/shower room downstairs. The large study/parish office, which is spacious enough to use for PCC and other meetings, has a door into the larger reception room as well as a separate entrance direct from the driveway, and French doors into the garden. The garden of about ½ an acre includes a greenhouse and two garden sheds, some established fruit trees, currant bushes etc.



Rectory from the road & from the back garden (note the conservatory, and the large tree on the right, both shown in the picture from the rear, have recently been removed - the Diocese has recently undertaken to repaint parts of the exterior)

The Mission Action Plan

Mission is a standing item on the agenda of both PCCs. Our shared Mission Action Plan reflects our commitment to grow & enhance relationships with the community of faith through both spiritual and social activities: to show the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and to continue to

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create opportunities to build individual relationships. We are committed to developing the covenant relationship between the church and the village C of E Primary School and to developing wider prayer activity in our villages, as well as increased participation in different aspects of our worship. We have a joint website and a Facebook page. We are starting to make progress in raising the profile of the churches through an increased IT presence, and we are keen to take this further.

The parishes are keen to increase home visits. While there is no formally co-ordinated lifts scheme, awareness has increased among drivers and several people are regularly offered lifts (not only to church services, but also to meet other needs). There has been increased participation by families with younger children recently: these parents are seeking more active involvement with church events.

The parishes look forward to utilising the gifts and strengths of the person appointed to this post as we work together to take forward Christian mission in our villages.

Church Activities & Worship



At the 2023 APCMs, there were 87 people on the Electoral Roll in Herstmonceux, and 37 in Wartling. The majority of the congregations reside within the parishes. Numbers of baptisms, weddings and funerals vary considerably from year to year. By early June 2023, there were 4 and possibly 5 weddings booked at All Saints for 2024.

The local churchmanship is broad, recognising the importance of Scripture, reason and tradition, and aiming to act out the love of God in the parishes in practical ways. We are keen to learn and grow as Christians through the preaching at services.

There is an active weekly prayer group as well as a range of daytime and evening house groups.

The current monthly service pattern includes

- i. Two (occasionally three) services each Sunday, spread between the two parishes - all services are for both parishes, wherever they are held. These include an 8am Holy Communion if there is no other Holy Communion in the parishes that day; a morning service usually at 10am; and sometimes an afternoon or evening service.
- ii. Varied worship forms, including Common Worship, the Book of Common Prayer and Celtic worship among others
- iii. a monthly Family Service, currently followed by a Bring & Share lunch. This service sometimes includes a small drama on the theme, involving the children, and activities are always available for children at the back of the church.

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- iv. a Rural Service of special interest for farmers & growers, usually with an external speaker, held in alternate months.
- v. A joint service with the local Free Church on each 5th Sunday
- vi. Occasional Healing Services

The congregations are always keen to welcome new people to services. For example, an older long-standing church-goer who lives several miles away moved to worship with us after Covid. He is now a permanent and active member of our congregation - he said he had never been made to feel so welcome (or been given a birthday card) by any other church he had attended. Another couple who also live outside our parishes but have chosen to worship with us have commented "We are very appreciative of the Home Groups where we have been warmly received, encouraged, and spiritually engaged. They have been pivotal in helping us to integrate into the rhythm of Church life."

The organists and small choirs at each church integrate music at all Services (apart from 8am), which is greatly appreciated.

A Safeguarding Officer provides advice and support to both parishes, ensuring the necessary policies and DBS checks are in place and up to date. No Safeguarding incidents have been reported.

Rotas of parishioners decorate the Churches with flowers throughout the year, except Lent, with more extensive floral arrangements for Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Other groups maintain the churches' cleanliness. Working parties, including occasional input from Castle students, help to maintain the extensive churchyards in good condition.

There is a wide variety of regular meetings such as House Groups, and a tradition of Advent and Lent courses arranged by the priest each year - some of these are held jointly with the Free Church. There are also occasional Away Days.

Children's Church Activities: Mega-Explorers, two church-led groups for younger and older primary school children, are held after school; holiday clubs run at least twice a year, sometimes jointly with the Free Church. Special activities currently include a Good Friday Family Service, an Easter Egg Hunt after Easter Sunday Communion, a very popular Christmas Eve Celebration at Herstmonceux Village Hall, and Christingle. All Family work is supported although we recognise that children's Sundays also include activities such as sport, dancing and drama clubs which affects church attendance.

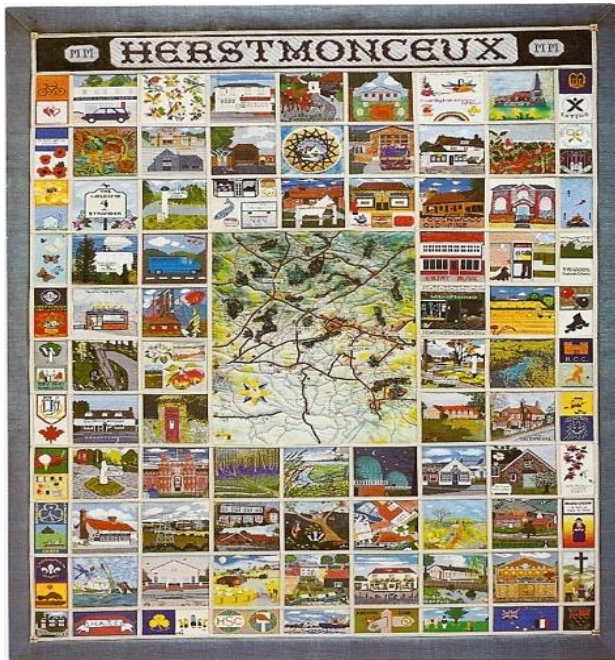
Churches' Accounts

Accounts for 2022 are available on request. Both PCCs have paid the full parish contribution requested by the Diocese, which covers the full costs. In addition, the PCCs pay the incumbent's parish expenses, including Council Tax.

Charitable Giving

In 2022, the parishes committed to making donations to the following charities: Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School, Matthew 25, Beachy Head Chaplaincy, Hailsham Food Bank, Prison Fellowship and the Children with Cancer Fund. In addition, some collections were taken specifically for other charitable causes, and there is a collection point for Warming up the Homeless in All Saints Church. The giving in total reflected about 3% of parish receipts.

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Millennium Maps: Herstmonceux and Wartling

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Profile of the Priest

We recognise that no individual will fulfil all the characteristics and functions described here, especially in a part time post. However, we are keen to work as a team to support one another's strengths and weaknesses in the light of the new priest's particular areas of interest and expertise. We also recognize the importance of open discussion and flexibility to ensure effective working together.

With an essentially positive and hopeful view, this person will lead the community while welcoming its diversity; will pray, preach and teach; will encourage us to love God in all the persons of the Trinity and our fellow human beings; and will recognise that the church exists not only for those who are its members but also for those who are not, reaching out prayerfully to everyone, and encouraging us to do the same. We seek someone who applies their theology with a gentleness of spirit, and is at ease with the wider role in the community useful in rural parishes.

Our ideal candidate -

1. is a good communicator, actively committed to sharing the gospel and inspiring people to participate in all aspects of Christian life. There should be a balanced emphasis on Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, presenting a living faith to everyone which is both emotionally and intellectually engaging.
2. has particular enthusiasm for working with children and young families, and ideally also with older children & young people. Welcomes the strong links with both Herstmonceux C. of E. Primary School, and Bader College, to inspire the longer-term vitality of our congregations.
3. is a person of prayer & spiritual insight, committed to spiritual growth but grounded, with an understanding of country ways in predominantly rural parishes. This person expects to provide leadership, teaching and spiritual training.
4. looks forward to having a high profile - being known by, and knowing as many parishioners as possible, including those not regular members of the congregations; and is committed to developing the lay ministry and pastoral care in the whole community. (Both sick and well local residents mainly welcome pastoral visits.)
5. seeks to maintain our churches at the heart of the community - a vital part of its rural life - encouraging and attracting greater involvement in church activity while proclaiming broad, central churchmanship. This person recognises that unlike urban parishes, it may be very difficult for people of different churchmanship to travel to worship in another parish - and has a flexible, open and inclusive approach to worship.
6. wants to work with the existing staff team; will provide leadership and guidance to the PCCs; and will support the fund raising needed for both churches, both by actions and more importantly by prayer.
7. is willing to discuss and lead debate on contemporary ethical issues from a biblical perspective; and to maintain current strong ecumenical links with other denominations, including the Society of Friends and the Free Church.

NOTE: Public transport is extremely limited, so a driving licence is almost essential as is appropriate transport. Computer literacy is also expected. **August 2023**