

**All Souls' Church
Parish of Crockenhill**

(in the County of Kent and the Diocese of Rochester)

Parish Profile
(for the appointment of a Vicar)



"We aim to grow closer to God, to spread the gospel of Jesus, express God's love in action and become the most loving place in Crockenhill."

January 2024

All SOULS' PARISH CHURCH is looking for a new incumbent

Following the recent retirement of our incumbent, we are looking for a part-time Vicar (three days per week plus Sundays) to lead our congregation.

We are praying for our vicar to be

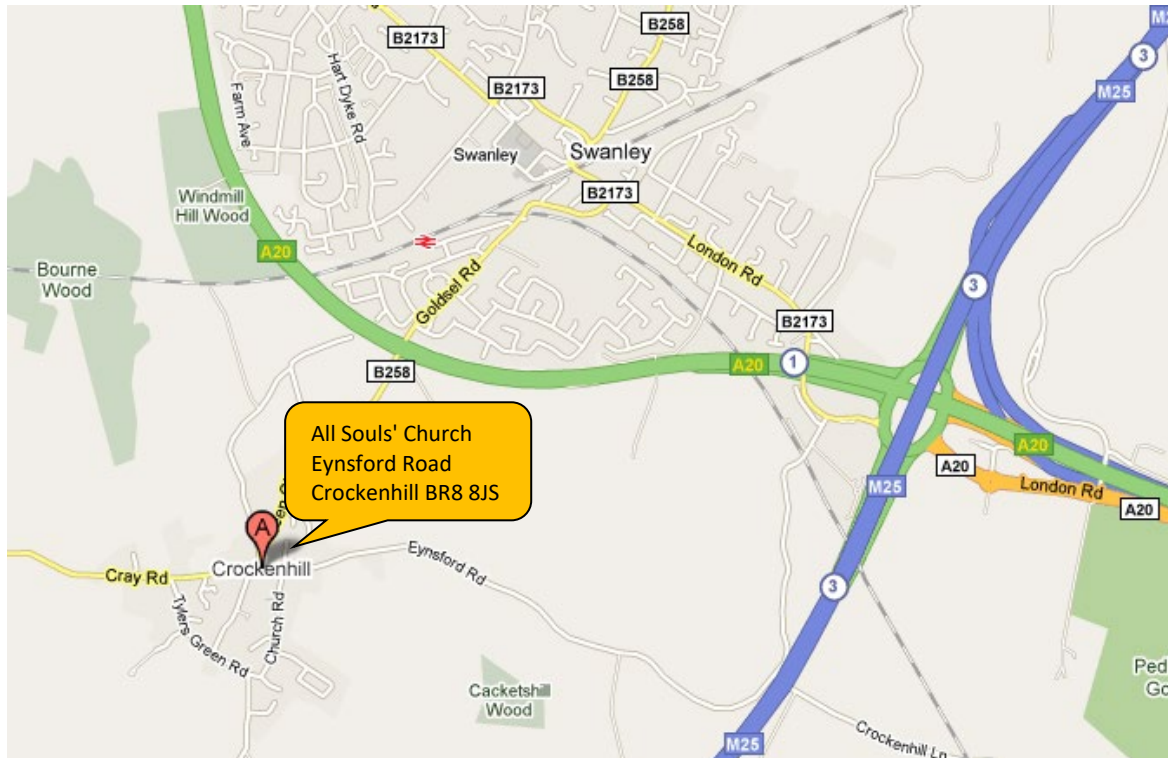
- Someone who is caring, approachable, a people person with a sense of humour.
- Has an appreciation of the values and merits of collaborative leadership style, while possessing the ability to delegate.
- Will embody our values of inclusivity and openness, offering warmth and welcome.
- Someone who is able to discern and enable gifts of others.
- A teacher who conveys the Gospel with modern relevance to everyday life.
- Be familiar with Parish work.
- Will be a visible and active presence in the village. Strengthening connections with the local primary school.

We offer

- A warm and welcoming congregation that feels like family.
- Supportive Churchwarden and PCC who are open to collaborative working.
- Volunteers who work well in teams.
- Good relationships with other local churches.
- A local community which cares about each other. Takes pride in its village and the environment. Supports church activities and fund-raising projects.

1. The Parish

The Civil Parish of Crockenhill lies within the District Council of Sevenoaks and was formed as recently as 1987. (Prior to that date it was part of the Parish of Eynsford). Crockenhill is described as lying within the rural area of North West Kent, though it is close to the town of Swanley with its mainline railway station and links to the A20/M20/M25 routes. See map below.



The semi-rural parish population is approximately 1,800, the majority of working people commuting to London or the nearby large towns, although Crockenhill also continues its long tradition of local agriculture. It has a popular local Primary school. After primary school the local children can continue their secondary education at nearby Orchard Academy Swanley or a wide range of very popular non-selective and Grammar schools in the local area.

Crockenhill is a thriving village with activities for young and old, with the village hall providing a venue for a Pre-School, WI, Crockenara and various entertainment events throughout the year to raise funds to maintain the hall. These are very popular with locals and those further afield. Groups within the village include Pentanque, Football, Harvest/Christmas Fayre, Walking group and a Gardening club. Crockenhill enjoys massive community goodwill and co-operation and the Church is a landmark in the village.

The town of Swanley is little over a mile away and has good shops (including a large supermarket), Doctors and Dentists surgeries and a library. The Bluewater shopping centre

is approximately 10 miles away. Crockenhill itself offers local shops including a Post Office and we are fortunate to have a lovely local pub The Chequers which hosts social daytime and evening events and also provides for private functions. Village clubs include Brownies, (which a member of our congregation helps to run) Cubs and Scouts. The Baptist Church in the village runs successful youth groups. There is a local bus service and nearby Swanley has a railway station from where you can get to London main line stations including London Victoria, Blackfriars and Charing Cross in around 35 minutes and in the other direction to the Kent coast and the Medway Towns.

The Parish lies within the Archdeaconry of Rochester and Deanery of Dartford. The latter comprises 11 benefices located within the Borough of Dartford and Town of Swanley and surrounding area. The Deanery Synod meets three times per year at present and all clergy are ex-officio members, meeting with elected lay representatives from all the parishes. Clergy are also members of and encouraged to support the deanery clergy Chapter which meets 7-8 times per year for mutual support, prayer and Bible-study, sharing the Eucharist and business.

2. Church Building; Churchyard/Burial Ground: Church Room

All Souls' Church was built in 1852 of Kentish ragstone. It can comfortably seat 150 in its Victorian pews. A Quinquennial survey was carried out in July 2023. We have also had a review of upgrading lightening protection and at the time of writing we are awaiting a report. We have contacted a company regarding improving the heating to the church. Plans for a disabled access are also on the agenda with some provisional plans being explored. Other recommendations from the report have already been carried out or organised to be carried out shortly e.g. trimming back of some trees, starting up a Fabric committee and a Social committee. The Father Willis Organ is regularly maintained and is in good condition. The churchyard in which the church stands is no longer used for burials, but is not officially 'closed'. The main burial ground is a short walk along Eynsford Road and has benefitted from an extension (consecrated by the Bishop of Tonbridge in October 2004). This will provide space for burial for a good number of years. The Parish Council give us a grant to go towards cost of grass-cutting of both the churchyard and burial ground/extension. We also employ, on a part-time basis a person who cuts the grasses in the church yard and burial ground between March and October. At the moment we are fortunate that the Payback team – Community Rehabilitation Service - have been working in the church grounds and the burial ground. We are in the process of implementing a new management plan for both areas funded by a recent legacy left to All Souls' as provided by the charity Caring for God's Acre.

3. Worship/Services.

All Souls' covers a church tradition which is Central. All Souls' provides a need in an area where there are several forms of worship, i.e. Anglo Catholic in Swanley and Anglican Evangelical in Hextable and Swanley Village. There is one Service of Holy Communion (Common Worship Order 1) at 10.30am each Sunday attended on average by 30 - 35 adults and 2 - 6 children. Occasionally the format varies slightly, depending on the Season/Festivals etc.



In addition to the regular Sunday Service, special services are also held, for example Harvest Festival (followed by bring and share lunch) held at a local farm, annual Bereavement service, Mothering Sunday, Carol Service, Crib Service. The Carol service is well attended not only by the regular congregation but also the wider community from the village, over 50 people attended the last service.

We would like to introduce a Holy Communion service during the week as this has proved popular in the past.

Baptisms are carried out either during the service

or in the afternoon. There is a Remembrance Service held at the War Memorial in November conducted by either our Vicar or the Baptist Minister.

Whilst All Souls' is fairly traditional in its worship, we realise to achieve our aims, we need to be challenged and stretched as a congregation, to move out of our comfort zone and think outside the box as it were, hopefully our new Vicar would guide us to achieving this goal.

We have one member who has been given permission to preach, and he is very well received and valued by our church community. Last year we had a bible study group, and Living in Faith and Love discussion group which was welcoming and inclusive. He also ran a Lent group this year titled 'The prayers of Jesus'.

Clergy are robed - Cassock, alb, surplice and stole - and some parts of the service are sung. Hymns for services are taken from New English Hymnal (our main hymn book) and Songs of Fellowship. We are blessed with a member of our congregation who plays our wonderful organ for us on a voluntary basis. The singing is led by an enthusiastic choir.

We meet in the Church Room for tea/coffee etc. after the service for fellowship and friendship and to catch up with each other. This is an opportunity for us all to share issues and offer support to those who may need it.



Over the last 3 years, there have been 3 Weddings, 6 Baptisms together with 21 Funerals.

Whilst we have a good relationship with the local primary school, we feel that there is a scope to form even closer bonds and hope that our new Vicar could do this. Some years, the school have used the church for their annual Carol Service and recently children were brought into church as part of an R.E. lesson and we would like to continue with this practice to sow the seed of curiosity and encourage more to feel welcome at All Souls'

Following the Diocese's initiative "Call to Grow", we are focusing on expanding our events for the users of our Community Café.

4. Active Church (Junior Church)

Active Church is held each Sunday. The children meet to explore the meaning of Christian worship and prayer under the skilled guidance of a small team of volunteers. The children start their teaching in the church room and come into the church just before the administration of communion. At the present time there are no uniformed organisations attached to the Church but we would like to encourage stronger links with these village organisations.

5. Ecumenical Links/Churches Together in Swanley and District.

Our church is one of 5 working together as part of 'Churches Together'. The group is very active. We opened the church for a week of prayers for unity. We are also involved with running Lent groups, Alpha courses and World Day of Prayer, our previous vicar led reflection at Ecumenical advent service, with other churches in this organisation. We would want to continue to build on these important links. We have for several years now donated to the foodbank in Swanley and continue to do so.

Details of regular and forthcoming special services are displayed on our notice board by the lychgate.

6. Church Room

We are privileged to have a wonderful Church Room which is the result of many years hard work and effort on the part of the church community and many supporters in the village and locally. We have worked tirelessly to ensure we hit our goal of raising £150,000.00 to build this room – The Social Committee organised various social events in church. It is now our goal that the room is used as much as possible to the benefit of our church and wider community.



Currently the room is hired on a weekly basis by a Pilates group and Jazz Hands – a children's dance class after school. We also have one-off hires – mostly children's birthday parties, Craft group – which are agreed on a request basis, we do not generally hire the room out for commercial purposes, those that we do are because they benefit the local community. Whenever possible we make the room available for the Pay back team to use on a Monday, when they are working either in our churchyard/cemetery or elsewhere in the village. We are not aiming to make a profit but to cover the running costs of the building as our intention is that the church room is for the benefit of both the Church and local community.

We feel our biggest achievement is starting our Community Café every Friday between 10.30 and 12.00 am.

This service is provided by church members on a rota providing tea, coffee and cakes –

sometimes hot food. We run events on some Fridays – a Dementia Café, Craft making days and other activities. We seek to widen the scope of events.

7. The Vicarage

The vicarage is a 4 bedroomed, newly decorated, detached property (with double garage with electric doors) next door to the church (at the east side of the churchyard). The interior and exterior are in good condition and the established garden (which is of a good size and nicely secluded) has been well maintained. Part of the vicarage parking area is available for disabled access during services.



The Vicarage

8. Administration

The PCC, has a committee structure, and currently consists of 9 members, including the Churchwarden, who is ex-officio, and two Deanery Synod representatives who are also ex-officio, and elected for 3 years. The PCC have 4 -6 meetings a year which are minuted. As well as the meetings, the PCC communicate via WhatsApp group and email. The Vicar is also supported by the Churchwarden, Sacristan, Treasurer and PCC Secretary and Safeguarding officer. There are 60 people on the Electoral Roll and half reside outside the Parish. We are currently working towards updating safeguarding training and DBS certificate for the PCC.

There is currently no paid secretarial/administrative assistance provided by the parish. There is also an Almshouses Committee which meets four times a year upon which the Vicar sits. Currently other members of the congregation along with other village residents also sit on this committee.

9. Finance

The treasurer is supported by a deputy who is responsible for banking money, paying bills and liaising with organisations such as fuel suppliers, telephone company etc. A nominated member of the congregation is responsible for claiming Gift Aid. There has been a delay in collecting this but we expect to be in a position to claim all gift aid owing in the coming months. The amount we expect is circa £3,000 per annum.

The church accounts show a healthy reserve, although there are three major items of improvement and repair work required within the next few years. Fees for burials and memorials in the churchyard are a source of income but the number of burials fluctuates. In 2021 there was a considerable drop in our income due to Covid which led to a near £6,000 deficit. We made a small increase of just over £500 in 2022 and look on course for a similar outcome in 2023. All income and expenditure relating to the Church Room is ring fenced and is currently in a healthy position.

All Souls' PCC supports its clergy financially by paying for: council tax and water charges for the vicarage; travel costs at the diocesan approved rate (currently 45p per mile); the vicarage telephone bill and internet costs. All Souls' is committed to paying our parish offer to Rochester Diocese. We cannot afford to pay the full amount to the diocese but pay the amount requested of us, which is capped at 50% of our average adjusted income. Our 2023 parish offer was £15,119.

Detailed financial information is available on request.

Fundraising events are held throughout the year to boost our reserves and provide a useful outreach and enhances community spirit. We have a Social committee, and every year there is a Christmas event held in the Village Hall plus other smaller events we hold in our Church Room.



Amongst all these hopes and desires, we trust in God there will be that special person destined to be right for All Souls', and we pray that those who have to make the final choice will be given the wisdom to recognise that person.

