

PROFILE FOR THE PARISH OF
FOREST ROW
Holy Trinity, Forest Row
St Dunstan's, Ashurst Wood
St Stephen's, Hammerwood (closed)



Holy Trinity, Forest Row



St Dunstan's, Ashurst Wood

<http://www.frparish.co.uk>

Registered Charity no. 1132867

Message from Bishop Martin

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.



+Martin

Welcome to the Parish of Forest Row

This appointment is both exciting and challenging, filled with the potential that God's call always contains. It is a key moment in the life of our churches. The gifts and character of our next vicar will be vital elements for our churches becoming a re-invigorated, healthy and thriving church family. However this will present a definite challenge.

We believe that God is opening for us a fresh and exciting path to travel with our new vicar, both in congregational and community life. We want to look forward, not backwards.

We recognize that at the heart of our faith is openness to change. We want to be known as “contemporary, not historical Christians,” filled with hope, and energized by our faith in Jesus Christ. A people willing to re-discover His call to us, and open to the changes that this will involve for us.



Our Vision

“Our Vision is to become re-invigorated, healthy, thriving churches reflecting Jesus’ life in our congregations and local communities”

Although we have experienced a decline in our numbers and in the vitality of our church life in recent times, we are optimistic about the future that God has for us.

This appointment offers the opportunity for a new beginning. We need to change, so that we are connected to and integrated in local community life with both congregations spiritually vibrant and reflecting the age, cultural and social mix of our communities.

See our Mission Action Plan (adopted in January 2022)

Appendix 1

Due to circumstances we have not yet been able to carry out many of the aims in our plan but we have every intention of doing so in the future

The Person we seek

Our new incumbent will have responsibility for both Holy Trinity and St. Dunstan's and part of the now closed parish of St Stephens, Hammerwood.

In addition, they will be a governor of Forest Row C of E Primary School, as well as having an active involvement in Ashurst Wood Primary School.

We would like our new incumbent to be:

- An energetic leader, strong in faith and prayer: Spirit filled, open to the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and committed to discerning and following God's will, and they will see our two churches not as an organisation to be managed, but as a community to be nurtured and grown.
- A teacher, who is biblically based, able and eager to teach in ways that are relevant to our daily lives.
- A person of vision, open to God's work of change in our two churches, and able to facilitate the process wisely, courageously and sensitively. Key changes will include: rebuilding the congregations, in part through introducing new forms of services and worship, contemporary and attractive music which is fresh, in addition to maintaining some traditional services. To assist us in discovering and then implementing God's call for us to serve in the local community.
- An encourager of the current more traditional congregations who affirms the place of the sacraments in the life of the Church.
- A person of integrity who lives out their faith; is committed to developing and encouraging every member ministry, and open to working ecumenically.
- A pastor who is prepared to encourage people with pastoral ministries to serve both congregations and the local communities
- Someone with a sense of fun, humour and adventure, a good listener, who values others, and who will work across both our churches.

We are open to our new incumbent being either male or female. We are aware of the challenges that clergy and their families face in twenty-first century parish ministry. To our new incumbent and their family we will promise our encouragement and support as they live and serve in our parish.



The Parish of Forest Row



The Parish straddles the East Sussex/West Sussex boundary, with both villages set in the beautiful High Weald of Sussex on the edge of Ashdown Forest. Forest Row lies in the valley of the River Medway, with Ashurst Wood some 200 feet higher on Cansiron Ridge. They are on the A22 London – Eastbourne road about one mile apart, just south of East Grinstead, and are within easy reach of the south coast, Gatwick Airport and the M23/M25.

There is a regular rail service to London from East Grinstead which takes around 55 mins.

It is a wonderful place to live offering active village life. Each village has its own identity and character, with good local primary schools, and a preparatory boarding school in Ashurst Wood: Brambletye School. There are several good secondary schools nearby.



The churches of the Parish are Holy Trinity in Forest Row and St. Dunstan's in Ashurst Wood. Joint services are held alternating between the two churches. Both church buildings are in good repair with no serious structural problems facing a new vicar. Although St Stephen's in Hammerwood is closed the parish has responsibility for the churchyard that is still in use.

The parish is administered by a PCC with two District Church Councils. There are two Church Wardens and two Deputy Church Wardens.

In all there are 96 people on the electoral roll, of whom about 50% are regular worshippers. A significant proportion of the congregation is of retirement age.

There is also a part time Parish Administrator working in the Parish Office at St Dunstan's (currently 6 hours per week).

Within Forest Row there is a Baptist Church and a Roman Catholic community whose church is no longer open. We have a friendly and positive relationship between both our churches and the Baptist community through Churches Together and hold regular meetings and joint services on occasions.

Safeguarding: We take very seriously our responsibility for the care of children and vulnerable adults. The Parish has a Safeguarding Officer who is responsible for overseeing safeguarding in the parish. All those dealing with children and vulnerable adults attend training sessions as necessary. The PCC reviews annually the relevant procedures.

The Parish News, the magazine of the Christian Churches Together in Forest Row and Ashurst Wood, is produced monthly. It includes contributions from non-church organisations and is self-financing.

Forest Row

The Village

Forest Row is an attractive village which has its roots back in medieval times when the Ashdown Forest was a royal hunting park. Nowadays it has a village population of just over 5,000 with some small lanes, some homes on the Forest and some newer housing developments.

Over the years, the village has attracted many people of varied outlooks and spiritual beliefs. Michael Hall School and Emerson College (for adults) are Rudolph Steiner establishments, drawing families from all over the world, making the village very cosmopolitan. The Steiner community also has its own community church. The British headquarters of Scientology is nearby, just outside East Grinstead. Greenfields, a primary and secondary age group school based on L. Ron Hubbard's teachings, is located on the fringe of Forest Row.



Forest Row has many more facilities than comparably sized villages, including a community centre with a library and youth club, as well as a village hall. Forest Row has a strong creative streak offering music, art, poetry, storytelling, woodwork and other crafts as participatory activities, as well as local choirs, orchestras, and amateur dramatic groups. There is a very active Parish Council that supports various community initiatives including a

Community Café, Community Fridge, monthly markets, Repair Café, to name a few.

There is an excellent NHS Health Centre, local NHS and private dentist practices as well as several alternative health practices, and outlets for organic or biodynamic foods. In addition Forest Row has a village club, some light industry, a variety of small businesses, a fire station, and a selection of shops, hotels, restaurants, pubs and a Post Office. Buses run to East Grinstead, Crawley, Tunbridge Wells, Haywards Heath and Brighton.

There is an excellent voluntary controlled Church of England primary school, for which Holy Trinity provides Foundation Governors as well as assemblies and other support. There is also a village playgroup linked to the school.

The well-kept Cemetery is administered by the Parish Council.

Sports are well supported with two golf clubs, a tennis club and a sports pavilion where adult and junior football teams meet, as well as sailing and fishing at Weir Wood reservoir. Nearby, there are facilities for youth activities at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre and Hindleap Warren, while Broadstone Warren also offers outdoor activities for guide and scout groups. There is also a small skateboard park and children's playground on the Green.

The Church Building: Holy Trinity Lewes Road, Forest Row East Sussex RH18 5AF



Holy Trinity is a pleasant traditional church, built in 1836 to the design of William Moseley. It holds a prominent position in the village and comfortably seats up to 250 people.

It is Grade Two listed, and was re-ordered around the Millennium to improve toilet and kitchen/vestry facilities. Some pews were removed or relocated to provide a gathering space for activities.

There is a beautiful garden open to the public.

A 'Knit & Natter' group set up by a member of the congregation operates once a month in the Church hall.



The adjoining hall is rented out for various activities and the church is often used for recitals and concerts

For many years Holy Trinity has held a very successful Christmas Tree Festival with more than 20 local organisations providing decorated trees. This and the annual Carol Service attracts many visitors to the church.



Interim has been running at Holy Trinity for many years. It is a friendly monthly gathering catering especially for the bereaved. This is an important outreach of support into the needs of our local community. It is an excellent model of one way that we can serve our neighbours and encourage mutual support.

Ashurst Wood

The Village



Ashurst Wood has a population of approximately 2000. It preserves its own individual character, and has a good range of housing.

The village has a strong community spirit with a number of thriving organisations. Once people come to the village they generally stay, moving within the village as their needs change.

There is an active Village Council that co-ordinates an annual Christmas Market and other village events in which the church is actively involved.

The village primary school has a roll of approximately 120. The school has strong community links and the headteacher also encourages close links with the church.

In addition a small group of the congregation take 'Open the Book' to the school monthly.



Although it is not a Church of England School the clergy regularly take assemblies at the school and on occasions the children visit the church for a service such as harvest festival.

An excellent community Pre-School has its own purpose built permanent accommodation within the primary school campus.

The village has two recreation grounds, a tennis club, a youth club, a small amount of light industry, an MOT centre and garage and an animal feed store. There is a general store incorporating the Post Office, a butcher, a newsagent, a hairdresser, a florist and two pubs.

There is a thriving football club that also runs junior teams for all age groups.

The Church Building: St Dunstan's, Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood RH19 3RU

There has been an Anglican Church in the village since 1884. The original building was an 'estate' church and was given to the Diocese in 1933. It is now a private residence. The current building was constructed in 1859 as a Congregational Chapel. It was purchased by the Church of England in 1977 and after extensive refurbishment was dedicated to St Dunstan in 1979.

There was a major re-ordering of the church and hall in 2010. The old hall was replaced by a modern eco-friendly building incorporating a well equipped



kitchen and parish office, gathering space, toilets and access for the disabled. In the church, the pews were replaced by upholstered chairs allowing great flexibility for worship and related activities. St Dunstan's is a much smaller building than Holy Trinity which makes for a more intimate environment. It can seat up to about 90 people.

There are no other church buildings in the village.

The church hall is hired out to various organisations including the Community Café, a Play Café, the local Bridge Club, the Historians Society, the Quilting group, a weekly Art Class and for private functions and children's parties. There is also an enclosed garden that can be used in conjunction with the hall.



The Community Café is a community based project initiated by St. Dunstan's Church and has been running for more than 10 years. It is staffed entirely by volunteers. It currently holds the top Food Hygiene rating (level 5). Once a year the Café donates any surplus funds to St. Dunstan's Church and to charities which have been nominated by the volunteers.

The café is open every Tuesday lunch time throughout the year, catering for all ages. There is an average of thirty lunches served each week, and customers are drawn mainly from Ashurst Wood, but also farther afield. This is now an established village gathering place, with excellent three course meals on offer for £8.00, and free transportation for those who need it. There is also a takeaway service.



The Play Café started in 2022 was an initiative by a member of the Congregation and provides a place for parents, carers and grandparents and their young ones to meet up with others weekly during term time for coffee while the children play.

A monthly Coffee morning is held at St Dunstan's that attracts a small but loyal group of people.

Hammerwood

Hammerwood lies some two miles north of Forest Row and has a population of approximately 150. The hamlet was once an important centre of the iron industry but lapsed into insignificance until an extensive estate was developed in the 1800s including houses for workers, a school and a church and vicarage. The church was built in 1879 and dedicated to St Stephen.

Today the houses are in private ownership, including the house, now known as Hammerwood Park. This property was built in 1792 by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, architect of the White



House and US Capitol building in Washington DC and many others. The house provides a venue for concerts and filming and is open to the public at certain times in the summer months.

Sadly the church closed in 2016 and is now the responsibility of the Chichester Diocesan Board of Finance. The parish was divided between Forest Row and Hartfield parishes.

The churchyard remains open and is the

responsibility of Forest Row PCC.

There remains a strong community spirit that is now centred around the village hall.



The Vicarage



The Vicarage is a modern detached house on a private road in Forest Row a little over 5 minutes walk from Holy Trinity Church. It has 4 bedrooms (two ensuite) and a family bathroom. The downstairs accommodation is flexible. There is a good size, well equipped kitchen/breakfast room, a utility room, a large lounge, two smaller

rooms and a good size study by the front door (with toilet opposite). There is a roomy single garage with an in and out drive providing extra off road parking.

There is a sizeable, pleasant level garden.



Church Life in the Parish

For the past five years or so, the numbers in the congregation have dwindled and the decision was made to hold joint services alternating between the two churches. A number of members of the congregation play active roles in organising and leading the non-Eucharistic worship on fifth Sundays.

The current service pattern is:

1 st Sunday	8am Holy Communion (BCP) at Holy Trinity 10am Parish Communion at St Dunstan's
2 nd Sunday	8am Holy Communion (BCP) at St Dunstan's 10am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity
3 rd Sunday	8am Holy Communion (BCP) at Holy Trinity 10am Parish Communion at St Dunstan's
4 th Sunday	8am Holy Communion (BCP) at St Dunstan's 10am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity
5 th Sunday	8am Holy Communion (BCP) alternating between the churches 10am Service led by Worship Group alternating between the churches

Current attendance at the 8am service is 10 to 15 and the main Sunday service is between 25 and 40. In reality the weekly numbers at St Dunstan's are holding up slightly better than those at Holy Trinity. Although the character of the villages is very different we have worked to bring the two congregations together as one worshipping community. This is an ongoing process and more needs to be done.

A regular Sunday school no longer operates but a 'Little Saplings' group is provided on the fourth Sunday at Holy Trinity.

Occasional services are held during the year for All Soul's Day, Remembrance Sunday (when there is a service in both churches), Christingle, St Lucia, etc

Both churches are open daily for private prayer

Weddings and funerals are held in both churches although St Dunstan's has few weddings because of its size. Baptisms normally take place during the main Sunday service.

There is a strong music tradition in the parish under committed leadership.

Pastoral care is happening within the congregation and in parts of the local community, through an informal network of committed individuals. For the future, we see the importance of developing a structured and trained Pastoral Care Team serving the congregation and more widely in both local communities.

Home Communion is provided by Lay Ministers of Communion as and when required. Currently this is provided to three individuals no longer able to attend church.

There is a committed group of volunteers who act as servers, readers, sidespeople, intercessors and provide flower arrangements on a regular basis.

Many of our congregation are long-time residents already participating and serving in a personal capacity in village life. We have a growing platform for our community to see us not just as a formal church institution but also as a community of women and men, deeply committed to serving our two villages.

As we connect with the needs of the villages, with our neighbours and friends, opportunities will arise for us to share the love and life of Jesus with them. Just one way for Holy Trinity and St. Dunstan's to become re-invigorated, healthy and thriving.



Finance and the Parish

Over the past years with larger congregations and through the generosity both of active congregation members and bequests, church finances used not to be challenging. Until about 10 years ago we were able to pay a Parish Share which covered the cost to the Diocese of running the Parish.

However, times have changed. Since then the Parish Share we have been able to pay has gradually fallen below the cost of running the parish. With smaller congregations and rising expenses our situation is not as easy.

Members of the congregations are encouraged to consider prayerfully their giving to the work of the two churches and many give by monthly standing order. A good number have signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme run by the Gloucester Diocese which gives donors the opportunity to agree to their giving being increased annually in line with inflation. This has proved a useful tool in our fight for funds.

It is fair to say that the growing financial challenge has been harder for Holy Trinity than for St. Dunstan's with a falling congregation as well as its building maintenance cost. The size of the Parish reserves will only allow us to operate with budget deficits for a short time. Efforts are made to supplement regular giving by fund raising events including a 100 Club, which currently brings in an additional £3,000 annually.

We realise that we have to face and meet this challenge head on. We are committed to remaining a financially responsible Parish. A copy of the latest Annual Accounts can be viewed on the parish website: <http://www.frparish.co.uk>

Mission and the Parish

We are committed to not only growing in faith as God's churches, but also to being able to share our faith with those around us. We recognise that the spiritual life of our congregation needs to be re-invigorated; our worship needs to be more open and accessible to all; and relationships with our local community deepened in both Forest Row and Ashurst Wood.

Both churches support the Easter Team, an organisation that provides shelter and food for the homeless in Crawley and also the local Foodbank in East Grinstead. There is a "Shop and Share" box in each church.

Both churches support various charities as resources permit.

The congregations also support specific projects throughout the year by collecting small change in tubs (The Tubs Project). A project is selected where we can make a significant difference to the life of a person or help a charity with a particular project. On average about £300 is collected each year for this purpose.



Eco-Church Group

The parish has an Eco-Church Group which was launched in November 2019, with 4 or 5 members meeting monthly and endeavouring to follow the A Rocha scheme which sets out environmental goals under the headings of Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community and Global Engagement and Lifestyle.

The Eco-Church Group has been instrumental in improving the parish's carbon footprint, promoting a switch to greener energy suppliers and a new, more eco-friendly heating system at St. Dunstan's. We have already achieved the A Rocha Bronze Award and are in the process of finalising our application for the Silver Award.

The Group has led occasional eco-services and looks forward to initiating more such services in the future.



Forest Row Parochial Church Council Mission Action Plan Proposal

Received by the PCC this proposal at the meeting on 26th January 2022

This Mission Action Plan was prepared by the Standing Committee for Forest Row PCC on the 20.1.2022 from the results of the Mission Audit tool as agreed by the PCC at the December 2021 meeting. This was the culmination of 6 month's work that the PCC prayerfully undertook to consider the questions posed in the Mission Audit document which forms part of the Diocesan Deanery Planning exercise. After completing the 8 questions in the audit document the PCC felt called to focus on Qu7 of the mission audit.

"Qu7; A growing church is likely to nurture disciples, encouraging people to explore and deepen their faith and live it out in their daily lives."

The PCC when answering this session, gave to 7 out of the 8 questions posed an answer of 'NO'. The conclusion drawn from this was that the way we bring people to faith and grow in our own faith journey, our Bible study, our prayer life and our relationship with the Holy Spirit was the area we most needed to focus on.

The PCC authorised the Standing Committee to meet and develop the final MAP.

The aims of the Standing Committee were to complete our Parish MAP which needed to be SMART and in line with the Diocesan Strategy of the 'Four Mores'; More Open, More Converted to Jesus Christ, More Generous, More Engaged. These are linked to the words of the Creed - One, Holy, Apostolic and catholic church.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time limited

Specific aim:

To raise the spiritual temperature of the regular worshipping community.

As a family of faith we are a gathered community of Christians committed to Sunday worship. We know that theological thinking must be built on a combination of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and experience. Amongst our church family we have some understanding of our Christian faith but not a deep level of understanding neither on a personal and/or a corporate level. By learning to balance the elements of Scripture, tradition and Reason and experience our aim is to grow in faith and raise the spiritual temperature across the parish.

Measurable aim:

Simply by recording the scope and number of people who engage with this process.

Achievable aim:

How to achieve this and the Ideas explored to offer the opportunity for everyone to engage and grow in depth of faith.

Sermon series.

To use well known and accessible materials during the sermon slot on a Sunday at the main act of worship as a teaching tool. It was suggested that we begin by using recourses from the 'Christianity Explored' course including the videos narrated by Rico Tice. To then encourage the congregation to use the time at coffee after the service for discussion. This would begin at the start of Lent.

Men's Breakfast.

To arrange an opportunity for men to gather and talk about their faith and life. While encouraging diversity we must also acknowledge that we all have a slightly different perspective and that there are fewer men within the worshipping community than there are women. There are also already well established groups that, although not advertised as exclusively for women, on the whole are only frequented by women. (Quilting group, Knit & Natter, Interim)

Book Club.

To encourage people to read a particular book over the period of 6 months and to gather monthly to discuss the content. A suggestion for the first title is 'The Bible - the story that makes sense of life' written by Dr Andrew Ollerton.

Supper Club.

This would be a social group to offer people the opportunity to get to know one another on an informal level. During our preparations we recognised that to be able to have a frank and open conversation about your faith we all need to feel comfortable with each other and confident that we are in a safe space. The aim of Supper Club would be to build trust.

Pubs.

Our first task is to grow spiritually but looking ahead we need to be thinking about building on this and reaching out to become more open. We felt that it is also important to encourage engagement in the community and particularly gathering in our local pubs. This seems like an odd thing to encourage but within our small Parish we have several pubs, each attracting different cross-sections of our village communities. If we are to be successful in our outreach we must first get to know those who we are reaching out to. Pub quizzes and regular meetings, possibly book club held in our pubs will be part of our mission moving forward.

Church Family events.

Christian Quiz - this could be a fun event held at our regular Saturday morning Café

Quiet/Away Day - we have had 2 successful Quiet days over the past 7 years. It is proposed that we aim to arrange a Quiet day of reflection open to all.

Pilgrim Courses.

Distinctive short, led courses based on various themes all relating to different aspects of faith and church life. The proposal is that these can be run in small house groups.

New Daylight.

New Daylight is a popular and well-loved book with daily devotional scripture readings and related reflections. We propose that this book be encouraged as a daily discipline and a regular group set up (revived) to meet monthly to discuss the readings and reflections. There had been just such a group in existence and the hope is that this can be gathered again.

Realistic aim.

To only carry out a few of our ideas and not to try to do them all!

We felt that the following would be achievable.

- Sermon series
- New Daylight
- Book Club
- Men's Breakfast
- Supper Club - summer months

The hope is that as we move through the year we may find we have also been able to begin some of the other ideas.

Conclusion.

The element of the Four Mores we are concentrating on in phase [i] 2022 is

More Converted to Jesus Christ.

The SMART aims are;

S To raise the spiritual temperature

M The record the number of people who engage with the process

A To work with the suggestions offering opportunities for people to grow in faith

R Only do a few of our ideas

T Phase [i] Ends Dec 2022 - phase [ii] in 2023 - More Open

Report prepared by Forest Row PCC Standing Committee



**FOREST ROW
PARISH CHURCHES**

Grow together rooted in God