

# **WHITSTABLE TEAM MINISTRY**

## **(Church of England) TEAM TALK 2025**

### **Annual Report for 2024**



Dear Friends

Well, we still seem to be living in interesting times. A long view of history and our lives can help us to recall God's faithfulness over time. Sadly, the agony of war and injustice remains the backdrop to our daily news, and yet we are called to resist despair and

respond with faithful lament as the backdrop to our prayers: our online daily prayer continues Monday – Friday. This year we have been shocked many times by human cruelty and the dereliction of duty in the church. Yet we have also heard of incredible human courage and kindness, diligence and patience that has shone the light of truth into some very dark places. Although this has not yet brought complete reparation and healing, at least there is a stronger commitment to restoration and justice, particularly with regards to safeguarding. I echo Bishop Rose's words in thanking so many of you for the day-to-day work of creating a safer church in our parish and championing safeguarding culture where everyone in our churches realises that safeguarding is each of our responsibility. All five of our churches are now using new online tools to help us continually improve: the Dashboard and the Hub. Parish Safeguarding volunteers now meet regularly to talk things through together, which is already a great source of support as we navigate changes and developments in the wider church.

In April our new Diocesan Secretary, Iain Blythe, moved to Canterbury Diocese from St Albans and was in at the deep end with Diocesan Synod elections for the new triennia. Congratulations to Sue Bowles, Rosalind Drewitt and Malcolm Waller who were elected to serve Reculver Deanery in this capacity. In the Autumn, elections to the Archbishop's Council were held: congratulations to Rev Simon Tillotson who was elected to represent Canterbury Archdeaconry clergy.

With our new Finance director, Natalia Olszewska, and new Chair of the Board of Finance, Tony Richter, there is a very welcome change of culture in communication and an increased spirit of collaboration. Financial challenges remain for us as for many dioceses, but it is good to have fresh leadership in this area. Perhaps the biggest event to affect us here in Canterbury Diocese, was the unexpected resignation of Archbishop Justin in the Autumn. Beyond the focus and work on supporting survivors of abuse, the timing of his departure highlighted weaknesses in our diocesan election processes particularly to the vital Vacancy in See Committee (ViSC) which are now being resolved. Closer to home in our Deanery, it has been a pleasure to welcome Rev Chris Carnaby-Denyer to Reculver as Priest in charge at Herne with Greenhill.

Gathering for worship on Ascension Day and Advent Sunday continues to be a blessing and our gathered choir from across the churches goes from strength to strength. Many of our esteemed retired colleagues provide invaluable support across the parish, and the annual thank you lunch also includes those who have decided to lay down their PTO as we model what it is to treasure our elders. We continue to play an active part in Churches Together in Whitstable, with people from all churches participating in the Good Friday Walk of Witness, the annual celebration in the Autumn and involved in the shared social action projects described on the back page. Our fellowship across difference in Churches Together is an important witness to koinonia and agape – loving community and friendship – that is possible for Christians even when they don't agree on everything.

In 2024 the PCC and DCCs carefully considered and passed an 'umbrella' motion supporting the use of the prayers for love and faith for same sex couples within worship services in the parish, on the understanding that each Team church can adopt their own process of discernment and implementation of this liturgy. This was an easier conversation in some churches than others, but the permission-giving approach allowed for different convictions to be respected, while not stifling our missional vocation as a whole.

The parish continues to foster vocations to lay and ordained ministry, with 5 people continuing in their discernment and one training for ordained ministry. Rev Claude was appointed to a new benefice in Maidstone following the successful conclusion of her curacy. We give thanks for all that she brought to our parish, and continue to pray for her, her family and those entrusted to her care and ministry.

At this time of annual reflection and prayer, a quote Dag Hammerskjold:

***“For all that has been, Thank you. For all that is to come, Yes!”***

Rev Rachel C Webbley, Team Rector



### **St Alphege Seasalter** **[www.stalphegeseasalter.org](http://www.stalphegeseasalter.org)**

The first two-thirds of 2024 were full of challenge and change. We began the year facing a large deficit financially, mainly due to rising costs, then the consultation and decision to use the Prayers of Love and Faith led to around 30 people leaving the church. It was a very painful time relationally, and of course further impacted on the financial situation. However as we 'leaned in' to this season of change, we found ourselves to be firmly in God's hands - and by the end of 2024 were feeling a new and deep sense of joy and community across the ages in our worship and fellowship, an energy in our different activities, a strengthening of our ministry teams, and seeing new people joining the church. Through God's grace, some amazing acts of generosity and hard work we ended the year with the finances stabilized and all commitments met - we are excited for all God has in store for the year ahead.

We continued to support vocational training, with Claude Gayle beginning her final year of Curacy with us, Dan Ralph moving on to take up his Curacy post, Hannah Rogers rejoined us for her final year of Curacy, Lise Jennings, Helen Jones and Sarah Hammond continued to progress through the Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry. **Rev Paulette Stubbings**



**St John's Swalecliffe**  
**[www.swalecliffestjohns.co.uk](http://www.swalecliffestjohns.co.uk)**

St John's Swalecliffe has a core of very determined lay members which leads to lots of energy being expended usually in extremely effective ways. 2024 saw this continue as an application for funding to support Jane Myhill's work was successful so that we hope to be able to sustain this ministry for the coming years. Added to that the grant allowed for a part-time Youth Minister who was interviewed and appointed shortly before Christmas, Emma Rafferty. We would appreciate your prayers as they work together in mission into the future with their team of volunteers. We are very grateful to the Diocese for allowing the former St John's Rectory to have its garden divided into two so that the larger part can be used for activities by the church and this continued in 2024 with some outstanding events taking place. We have also seen the gradual arrival of new members of our congregation so that sometimes our numbers have reached 40 at our 9.30am service which is encouraging. At the end of the year we were sorry to witness the final service led by Rev Pat Strowger before she officially retires though we are glad she will remain a member of our congregation and we wish her all the best in her retirement. **Rev Simon Tillotson**



**All Saints Whitstable**  
**[www.allsaintswhitstable.com](http://www.allsaintswhitstable.com)**

All Saints has shown a slight increase in attendance in 2024 which is welcome, with the arrival of new people into the congregation. This was despite the upheaval of having to worship in our church hall from October 2003 to the end of March 2024. A thinking day in July led to new ideas for growth which include the possibility of making the church dual use during the week though it will be some time before this vision becomes a reality. Our midweek groups such as Cameo and Singing for Fun and Health have continued to grow and we had a very good number of baptisms in the year, 26 in all, which is a positive sign. Advent and Christmas saw over 900 people attend our various services. Elena Markova and her team continue to run successful workshops for young families though your prayers would be for this to impact our Sunday child and youth attendance which still remains low compared to before the pandemic. Our monthly Cafe church, though not everyone's cup of tea, continues to be a useful way to bring the congregation closer together and encourage newcomers to join the church.

A particular highlight was the ordination to the diaconate of Rev Jayne Edinboro and we look forward to Jayne's priesting in June 2025.

Let us pray that our recovery continues into 2025.

**Rev Simon Tillotson**



**St Alphege Whitstable**  
**[www.stalphege.org.uk](http://www.stalphege.org.uk)**

Our big blue doors have been open more this year, with the return of the Swalecliffe Enablement Day Services cafe alongside our church-sitting team each week. We hosted many funerals, particularly while All Saints was closed and four of our children have taken their first communion this year. A large crowd gathered to hear local general election candidates at the hustings held at short notice. We welcomed many choirs for concerts, the Coastal Family Hub for interviews, and children from Boughton school who enjoyed hearing the story of St Alphege told through our glass screen. Worship continues to flourish, with regular visiting preachers, and particular attention to a variety of music during Sunday services. In Holy Week a choir from different churches and children from the Endowed School performed 'From Pharoah to Freedom' to prepare for Easter. As a church we often travel to worship beyond our building, with many taking the journey to Lydd for Rev Jack's licensing, a group taking monthly trips to St Paul's Canterbury for sung Evensong and supper and good attendance at services across the parish. We have expanded ministry into Tralee nursing home and continue to regularly visit Maylands home for adults with learning disabilities. It was a delight to celebrate together the 20th anniversary of Rev Rachel's ordination. The Quinquennial report reflected the diligence of our fabric team, and our Eco Team are creating a wonderful wildlife garden. We continue to work hard on effective and enjoyable fund-raising events alongside careful stewardship.

**Rev Rachel Webbley**



## **St Peter's Whitstable**

[www.stpeterswhitstable.org.uk](http://www.stpeterswhitstable.org.uk)

A highlight of the year was celebrating Fr. Chris' 50th anniversary of priesting, with a wonderful eucharist shared with St Alphege and guests, as Rev Rachel celebrated 20 years of ordination. Sadly one of our Churchwardens' close family members died after a short illness which shook us all. It was a delight to host the parish Advent Carol service in December, and to welcome several new regular worshippers to our Sunday congregation, including one member who was confirmed in June. We also express our thanks to Fr. Chris Smith who has helped us over many years, and to two long-serving members of the DCC who have stepped down this year. The Blessing of the Waters is an important ecumenical event led by the St Peter's team, which was well received and attended by many from the town. Essential building works have included replacing the heaters in Church House, remedial work to the roof, and the clearing of excess chairs from above the choir vestry. We continue to challenge via the ombudsman the excessive gas tariff imposed on us through an unscrupulous broker and to support our treasurer. We have transitioned to online banking, and plans are underway to create an online donation option on the website to which we can signpost people attending church. We are engaging with the Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub and are seeking to grow our online presence, with a new Instagram account alongside a refreshed website and more active Facebook page. **Rev Rachel Webbley**



2024 was the last full year that Rev Claude Gayle was with us as Team curate as in February 2025 Claude with her family moved to her first incumbency role based in Maidstone at St Paul's and St Nicholas Allington.

We have all greatly loved Claude's ministry amongst us and will miss her greatly.

**OUR ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING FOR THE WHOLE  
WHITSTABLE TEAM**

**Will take place on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm for 7.30pm at St  
Alphege Whitstable in the High Street.**

**Please do come along.**

**OUR TEAM ASCENSION DAY SERVICE WILL TAKE PLACE at All  
Saints Church on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm (not 7pm as  
previously advertised). Again, please do come along.**



Average Weekly Attendance in  
2024 (known as AWA)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2023	2024
	AWA	AWA	AWA	AWA	AWA	AWA
				Adults		Children
All Saints	75	74	74	84.75	5	7
St Peter	25	22	18.25	22.75	0	0
St Alphege	64	77	77	80	8	12
St John	30	40.75	42	44.5	6	5
Seasalter	109	107	127	94.5	24	14
St Andrew						
	303	321	338	327	43	38

WHITSTABLE TEAM OCCASIONAL  
OFFICES 2024  
(2023 figures in brackets)  
Funerals 65 (68)  
Interment of ashes: 22 (35)  
Weddings: 9 (19)  
Renewals of vows 2 (0)  
Baptisms: 40 (35) plus 3 thanksgivings  
(0)  
Confirmations: 13 (10)

## **CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WHITSTABLE**

We continue to be actively involved in the various ministries in the town often working with other Christians from other churches as part of our commitment to Churches Together in Whitstable. The following were active in 2024:

**Whitstable Beach Pastors** – which has a team which goes out into Whitstable on Friday nights to Care, Listen and Help whilst the prayer team pray over the town of Whitstable

**Christians Against Poverty incl Job Club** – helping release people in our community from the burden of debt, poverty and their causes, to bring good news, hope and freedom

**Community wardrobe** -recycling good quality school uniform to help beat the cost of living crisis.

**Fair Share**- offering just past sale date supermarket food for free to anyone in our community who would appreciate it.

**Haven Project** – which runs a drop in centre three times a week from St John's Methodist Church

**Mothers Union** – aiming to promote the wellbeing of families with interesting talks and visits.

**Remembrance** - playing an active role in supporting the RBL in running this important service for the whole town community

**Ride and Stride** – raising money to help historic churches in the county

**Sacred Space** – an hour of silent prayer by candlelight

**Warm Space** – keeping our buildings heated and open for community use for certain periods to help with heating bills