

Meon Valley parishes

PROFILE



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Diocese
of Portsmouth



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BISHOP'S WELCOME

The Diocese of Portsmouth is in good heart and together we have heard God's call to Live, Pray and Serve the Kingdom of Christ, in and for the world.

If you sense the good Lord is calling you to join in with this beautiful work of retrieval and love we will be ready to receive you – all that you bring – in the days ahead.

With my prayers and blessing,

+Jonathan Portsmouth



**THE RT REV JONATHAN FROST,
BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH**

ARCHDEACON'S INTRODUCTION



The Meon Valley Parishes – three rural and semi-rural benefices in the Bishop's Waltham Deanery – are exploring a new model of collaborative working, with love for Jesus and for their communities at its heart. As the clergy and lay people of the benefices together discern the most fruitful way to embody and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ across the communities of the Meon Valley, we are seeking to appoint an interim Priest-in-Charge to provide strategic oversight for the project, building on existing relationships to create a new ministry framework.

Three ordained ministers, have recently been appointed to the MVP grouping, each with a particular focus, but each licenced to all the benefices: one based in the Meon Bridge Benefice, one in the benefice of Soberton, Newtown and Hambledon,



and one who is starting an innovative project for those not currently involved in church life, which has a working title of 'Barn Church'. The parishes are set within beautiful countryside, and are all within, or close to, the South Downs National Park, and the churches are each valued and loved within their villages.



While the future shape of this collaborative working is evolving, all the roles are interim ones, each licensed to all of the benefices. This post will be for an initial three-year period, renewable for up to another three years. Once the shape of the MVP has been made clear, it is envisaged that all the posts will be made permanent.

The parishes are already well underway with this exploration, and have become one of our diocese's pilot 'cairns', with funding from a successful SMMI bid. You can read more about this [here](#).

We are praying for a priest of prayer, wisdom and strategic vision – an inspirer and gatherer of people who will combine courage and sensitivity in building this striking new venture. If this is you, you will find yourself part of a collaborative and supportive deanery, and a vibrant and lively archdeaconry, within a diocese whose will is to be centred in Jesus Christ and seeking the Kingdom. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like an informal conversation about the role.



The Ven Kathryn Percival, Archdeacon of the Meon



AREA DEAN'S INTRODUCTION

Bishop's Waltham Deanery is a special deanery, both for its long history of Christian worship and mission, but also for what is happening today across its 14 churches set within a variety of communities.

As a Deanery, our aim is not to take up valuable time and energy that is best spent in the parishes, but to give support to the church communities to help them flourish in their worship and mission. As a smaller Deanery we know each other well and want to love and care for each other across parish boundaries.

Our Deanery vision statement is: "We believe in Jesus Christ as the source of our salvation and our hope. Having received the gift of his Spirit, we are called by him to live and to pray in ways that help us to grow in our faith and deepen our commitment, so that we can serve the world by helping people see and believe in Christ, live good and fulfilled lives and work together in community."

As we move forward our aspirations and goals are to see:

- Deeper personal ownership of our life in Christ and confidence in sharing it with others, at every stage of life
- Transformational patterns for community worship and personal spirituality
- An increased focus on enabling young people to encounter Jesus
- Our church buildings re-purposed for wider community engagement, in sustainable and environmentally sound ways
- Increased contact between church congregations and their local communities

- Appropriate resourcing for implementation of these goals, including authorised ministry in every parish and benefice, with parishes also reinforcing each other in development by working with common purpose and commitment
- Missional Leaders: Stipendiary clergy, Self-supporting clergy, House for Duty clergy, authorised lay ministers

Following on from previous good work, the Deanery is now moving to develop a strategy and actions that will help parishes develop their own vision, aspirations and goals and put things into practice. In the coming period, our deanery focus is going to be on the support of clergy and leaders within parishes (1 to 1 and in groups) and to provide training in key areas of church life including: vision, discipleship, leadership, evangelism/witness and worship. We also want to help knowledge be shared across parishes in key areas: safeguarding, administration and communication.

The new interim Priest-in-Charge for the Meon Valley Parishes is an important appointment for the parishes and the deanery and we look forward to welcoming you and working with you. Meanwhile, we are praying this prayer:

Shepherd of souls, give to us for the leadership of your church in our parishes a person after your own heart: a person of faith and prayer, filled with the spirit; a person of vision, wisdom and sound judgement; a person with a pastoral heart and true love for all people. Prepare the person of your choice for their ministry among us and prepare us for their coming; and let all be done according to your will and in the furtherance of your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Rev James Hunt, Area Dean
Paul Quinn OBE, Lay Chair

INTRODUCTION

Are you looking for an exciting opportunity to lead a group of rural and semi-rural parishes on the next stage of their journey, in a new and innovative way?

We are looking for an Interim Priest-in-Charge to help us to build on existing relationships in a collaborative ministry framework to take the seven Meon Valley parishes forward in ministry and mission.

You need to be a leader who will enjoy the challenge of building and enabling a new team of ordained and lay ministers, for both locally focused ministry and benefice-wide responsibility.

This is a role for someone who will enjoy thinking strategically and being innovative.

A full-time stipendiary post, based in Swanmore, with a modern Rectory, good schools and communications, and located in the beautiful Meon Valley with all the parishes close to, or in, the South Downs National Park.



BACKGROUND

Five of the Meon Valley Parishes are located alongside or close to the Meon River, while two parishes lie on the west and eastern edges of the area. Previously the parishes have been collated into three benefices, with incumbents operating in solo roles. The new vision for the Meon Valley provides for a generous measure of ministry resource, designed to make the most of the development opportunity arising from collaborative operation, avoiding clergy isolation, supporting parish distinctiveness, building on already developed relationships, and using the rich vein of lay talent.

BENEFICE OF SWANMORE



Swanmore is a lively village, expanded by the recent arrival of three new housing developments. These have brought many new families to the village, attracted by the amenities and good schools. As the main village church, St Barnabas seeks to meet the needs of all ages in the village community through a variety of services and outreach activities. Alongside more traditional Sunday services, we have a monthly Café Church service where we continue to experiment with different expressions of intergenerational worship. We organise bi-monthly touch-point events for children and young families such as the Light Party (Halloween), Messy Good Friday, and the standing-room-only Crib Service.



One of our priority focuses is our link with the CE Aided primary school, just across the road from St Barnabas: we have school families who are regular members of the congregation, and an active cohort of Foundation Governors. Classes come to church weekly for services and St Barnabas hosts regular 'Experience Church' sessions for different year groups.

St Barnabas' buildings comprise the Victorian church, which is connected via a modern foyer to the Paterson Centre: a hall and kitchen well used by church and community events; and Barnaby's: a volunteer-run community coffee shop.

Over the past few years (including in our previous vacancy), we have:

- Run a stewardship campaign, increasing regular giving to the church by 22%;
- Established a Pastoral Visiting team, which helps with baptisms, bereavement, funerals and home visiting;
- Started a church music group, which allows a more contemporary musical edge to complement our team of pianists and organists;
- Started running "Swanmore Cygnets" – a baby and toddler group in the Paterson Centre, which attracts 20-30 families weekly (featured in a [diocesan video](#));
- Continued to run a full programme of social and fundraising events.

St Barnabas is blessed by the ministry of several retired clergy and strong lay involvement. We have two Churchwardens and a full and active PCC including Secretary, Treasurer, and Parish Safeguarding Officer.

BENEFICE OF SOBERTON, NEWTOWN AND HAMBLEDON

- Associate priest is Rev Liz Quinn, resident in Hambledon for 13 years and has been a licensed lay minister in the parish. She is an active Spiritual Director.
- The Benefice aims to have Holy Communion in one church every Sunday and the Benefice church wardens meet every other month to ensure co-ordination.
- There are Benefice-wide activities such as Children's week, benefice service on 5th Sundays. Also, recently Green Shoots and Messy Church.
- Six licensed lay worship leaders have recently been trained.
- Soberton and Newtown share support for the joint parish infant school, including services.



ST PETER'S, SOBERTON

The grade I listed church dates to at least the eleventh century. Its many interesting historical features include the Curl Chapel, dating from 1270, with wall paintings; the East window from 1330, with Victorian stained glass; a 15th-century wooden pulpit; a Bell Tower from the 16th century. The 2-console pipe organ, built by Henry Jones, c.1870, is regularly maintained with major work carried out in 2019.



We strive to ensure a warm welcome is given to all coming to the services or events, whether regular attendees or newcomers. Children's Ministry is integral to our worship, and we are keen to grow this.

The Church Room was completed in 2010. It offers the opportunity for interaction between the church and the community and acts as a catalyst for hospitality, a space for all ages, fun and mission. It is used by the Sunday Club and other groups for church-linked and wider community events such as the History Society, Art classes, Film Club, Stitch and Chatter, and charity coffee mornings. A unique artistic aspect of St Peter's is its icon painting courses which attract people from Hampshire and beyond. The courses bring in considerable and much-needed funds and increasingly are defining St Peter's as a centre for Sacred Art. A range of music events also brings people together. Recently, this has included a choral evensong sung by visiting chamber choir to raise money for local Ukraine groups, an organ recital of music for Advent and Christmas, raising money for the church.

The church community is proud of its grounds, which are at the centre of the community and have beautiful views of the Meon Valley. They are kept well-maintained by a loyal group of volunteers. The churchyard at St Peter's surrounds the church and is approximately 1.5 acres with tombstones dating back to the late 17th Century. The Church Green is maintained by the PCC but is also used as a social space by the pub, the Parish Council, and private users. The annual Soberton Fête raises considerable funds for the Church.

Soberton is home to two pubs and a Village Hall. There is a Ladies' Group, the Local History Society, the Conservation Group, the Soberton Players, dance classes and the Table Tennis Club, which make use of both the Church Rooms and the Village Hall. Brownies and Guides meet in Soberton Heath Guide Hut weekly.

HOLY TRINITY, NEWTOWN



Newtown is a quiet and tranquil village, with a strong community ethos that is linked closely with the church. Holy Trinity was built in 1849 and is constructed of stone and flint work. We have seating capacity for 150 people, but this can be expanded for larger services. Our church is well cared for by a dedicated PCC and a committed team of parishioners who provide cleaning, flower arranging, churchyard maintenance and coffee after our services, as well as keeping in touch with parishioners in need and leading on intercessions. The church has undergone renovations to allow for the inclusion of an accessible toilet with baby change facilities, together with a new utility area and improved disabled access. We have also created a new Garden of Healing alongside our consecrated Peace Garden – together they create a haven which can be accessed by all.

Engaging with our community is central to the activities of our church. To achieve this, we have adapted to preserve some of the traditional forms of worship, whilst introducing more modern approaches. We are still in active ministry for the provision of baptisms, weddings, and funerals. We have close links with our local infant school, which is situated next to the church. The pupils and parents regularly visit Holy Trinity Church for Harvest Festivals, Christmas carols and Easter services. The children use the church and its grounds to enhance their learning as part of the curriculum and they support the annual church fête with a country dancing performance. The school values the relationship with us and warmly welcomed our recent incumbents and parishioners into the



school to help with reading, lead school assemblies and enrich the RE curriculum.

Whilst, like many churches, we have an ageing congregation, we work hard on outreach activities to engage younger people. This includes the Benefice Children's Week, which is organised by volunteers from the church for 70-80 children from our parishes. The children meet daily for a week for fun and games, supported by teenagers, parents, villagers and our local scout troop. The children always give a presentation in church on the final evening, to share their experiences – it is wonderful to see the church full of the children and their families. We also organise regular workshops for children; for example, at our Good Friday workshop, children make Easter Gardens and learn about the Easter Story. We also host popular Harvest Festival lunches, Stir-Up Sundays, and Mothering Day services where the children make posies as gifts for their mothers and grandmothers.

Our Church Meadows, including the Peace Garden and Garden of Healing, is a haven for wildlife.

Our annual Church Fête is one of the most popular in the Meon Valley – it attracts more than a thousand visitors and raises over £14,000 towards the upkeep of the church and to support local good causes.

SS PETER & PAUL, HAMBLEDON

The Church of St Peter and St Paul is literally and spiritually in the village's heart. Our engaged faith community integrates seamlessly into the many village activities revealing Christ's love in many ways. We work with the elderly particularly well, with lay-led pastoral visiting, soup lunches and registration as dementia friendly. Our strong environmental focus as an Eco Church Silver award holder appeals to young people and is a good springboard for our Green Shoots programme and have a close relationship with the village primary school and Scouts/Cubs, in response to the Bishop's call for ministry to young people and Anna Chaplaincy.



We would love to improve our attractiveness to young families and are very open to new thoughts and directions to help it happen. Our knitting group is amazing.

The tradition is Word and Sacramental with Holy Communion 3 times a month, but with a good variety of other service forms (some lay-led) such as morning worship, a short family service, morning prayers or mid-week communion on Wednesday, Taizé once a term, evensong (sometimes choral) monthly, Christingle and Goodnight Services, and a weekly meditation gathering. There are some BCP Holy Communions, but most are Common Worship. We have recently trained five Lay Worship Leaders who are awaiting Safeguarding training and DBS checks before commissioning for the deanery by the Archdeacon. We have one person who starts training as an LMM in September.

Services are supported by an organist, who is also choirmaster for our keen choir of 15-22, who support Sundays and all main festivals with anthems and sacred pieces. The choir also supports evensong, weddings, and funerals. The Church has a ring of six bells and a sustainable and enthusiastic band, with a nice mix of ages. Bells are rung for the main Sunday Service.

There is an active and engaged PCC, and an excellent safeguarding officer. Finances are presently sound with the Parish meeting its Parish share, although this is an increasing challenge. The churchyard is managed in an ecologically-friendly way, with wildflower areas and plants for insects and



birds and is a Silver Eco Church award holder. The beautiful church building dates from Saxon times and is generally in sound condition, with improvement works funded and ongoing. There are aspirations to install an accessible downstairs toilet in the church, with other work to better keep the church warm. This is to help the church be more accessible for families with young children and those with physical disability needs wishing to access the church and other events. This project is still in its early days.

MEON BRIDGE BENEFICE

EXTON, MEONSTOKE WITH CORHAMPTON, AND DROXFORD
The three parishes (with four churches) of the Meon Bridge Benefice have shared a priest and worked well together as a benefice for around 45 years. Each of the three parishes lies within a conservation area and straddles the river Meon; Exton to the north, Meonstoke and Corhampton in the middle and Droxford to the south. The villages of the benefice each have their different characteristics but each, happily, is home to a complete cross-section of society. The Rev Jill Kingston has been recently appointed as interim part-time (0.5) stipendiary associate priest to the Meon Valley Parishes, with a focus on the Bridge Benefice. She lives in the Meonstoke vicarage.

DROXFORD: ST MARY AND ALL SAINTS CHURCH.



A mixed community of retired, professional, and middle-income residents, commuters and young families. Regular events include an outdoor carol service, harvest lunches, Thursday morning communion services and support of the Droxford Country Fair, and Royal British Legion Remembrance. A new annexe to the church houses the volunteer-staffed St Wilfrid's Café, which is open 5 days a week. We are keen to develop before and after-school provisions for children attending Droxford Junior School nearby. The churchyard remains open and the interment of ashes continues. There is a Garden of Reflection adjacent to the churchyard. The Parish Council operates its own cemetery at the northern edge of the village.

EXTON: ST PETER AND ST PAUL'S CHURCH



Mainly affluent older people, and a few families. Includes the hamlet of Preshaw and its estate church at which services may be held. Exton holds popular Carols by Candlelight and All Souls remembrance services. Occasional outdoor services e.g. pet and Lammas (first fruits of the harvest), have been held in the beautiful space to the north of the church. Twice yearly fundraisers are carried out. A fête is held alternately, two years in Exton and two in Meonstoke, raising in the past between £5-£8K for the two parishes.

MEONSTOKE: ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

With a large open west end, Meonstoke hosts services for larger congregations, post-service parties, musical events, etc. The Common Worship sung Eucharist is well attended. Other popular services include Carols (round tree) on Church Green, Village Remembrance, annual Harvest and Toy collections



with local the local Good-rated Church of England Infant School (part of Meon Valley Federation), School end-of-term, Easter and Christingle services, Food Bank donations, the benefice Book of Remembrance, School services, the William Collins Trust, a monthly pop-in coffee and Book-in-Take-out library. The Rectory is in Meonstoke. We would like to re-introduce Messy Church at the school soon. The churchyard and Garden of Remembrance are open.

CORHAMPTON



Contemplative services such as Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday. The Athanasian Consort visit annually for Choral Evensong. It is a much-visited Saxon building with wall paintings of St Swithun. The churchyard is closed.



BARN CHURCH

Barn Church is an entirely new initiative in the Meon Valley, in collaboration with the existing Meon Valley Parishes churches. It is designed to offer an alternative style of gathering and worship, with a focus on reaching those not already part of local churches: both bringing worshippers back to worship where they live, and helping those not in church to meet with Jesus, to know his love, and to start to follow him.

The Rev Emma Andersen has recently been appointed and licensed as an interim SSM Minister to Barn Church.

The first service for Barn Church took place late September 2025. Rev Emma has already run a very successful Alpha course for the Meon Valley Parishes with strong attendance and engagement, with more planned.



ROLE DESCRIPTION

INTERIM PRIEST-IN-CHARGE FOR THE MEON VALLEY PARISHES

PURPOSE OF THE POST

- To lead the seven Meon Valley parishes in developing a collaborative and innovative approach to mission and ministry, building on the existing patterns of shared working in the current benefices.
- To lead and nurture the new team of recently appointed stipendiary and self-supporting ministers to deliver locally focussed ministry.
- To support and empower the continuing development of lay leadership within the parishes.
- To provide leadership for the ministry team and ensure the provision of appropriate support (including training).
- To ensure delegated parish compliance with appropriate regulatory requirements, including safeguarding.
- To promote engagement with schools and young people.
- To recognise and nurture the individuality of local congregations and communities.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

- Enthusiastic with a strong personal faith and prayer life.
- A collaborative team player who can nurture, motivate, and develop others.
- Someone who embraces a breadth of styles of services across traditions.
- An experienced Minister and effective communicator.
- An inspirational leader who has sensitivity, respect and who can connect and engage with all in the

community. Motivated to ensure a visible community presence in the parishes and foster inter-community relationships.

- Resilient with a sense of humour.
- Commitment to their own spiritual and professional development

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Experience in facilitating change.
- Accomplished communication skills.
- Active listening skills to enable participation and group development.
- Enabling and supporting others to develop their own ministries.
- Understanding of the issues involved in the practical management of multi-parish benefices.
- Appreciation of church life in a rural context.





APPENDIX 1: STATISTICS

MEON BRIDGE BENEFICE

Village	Dwellings	Population	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
Exton	55	239	2	2	2-3
Meonstoke	428	880	8	4	3-4
Droxford		685	3-4	4	4

BENEFICE OF SOBERTON, HAMBLEDON AND NEWTOWN

Village	Population	Schools	Services	Parish Share
Newtown	650	Infant school with Soberton	Alt weeks	In full
Soberton	1648	Infant school with Newtown	MW, HC, Family	In full
Hambledon	1000	Primary School	Weekly HC, Family Evensong, Taize	In full

BENEFICE OF SWANMORE

Village	Population	Schools	Services	Parish Share
Swanmore	3454	CE Primary + Secondary	Weekly HC, Café	In full

APPENDIX 2: MEON BRIDGE



Further details on the Meon Bridge Benefice.

VISION STATEMENT

To discern God clearly, to communicate Christ faithfully and to serve our communities thoughtfully.

OUR PRIORITIES

- Galvanise communities, develop new forms of worship for under 60s whilst showing respect for traditional worship.
- Communicate God with spirit and lasting power.

OBJECTIVES


- Build a diverse cross-generational worshipping community for everyone including schools, young families, and those with no church background.
- Find new ways of providing emotional and practical support for those who are vulnerable or needy.
- Make Church the hub of the community, open to all.

STRENGTHS

- Church attendance is, per capita, above the national average.
- Goodwill of large numbers of non-churchgoers who support the churches.
- Parish finances are generally sound.
- Leaders of informal services in training.

CHALLENGES

- Some worshippers are unwilling to travel to other churches.
- Fear that the Meon Valley Plurality is designed to 'manage the decline' of parishes peripheral to Swanmore.
- Only one Churchwarden in the Benefice.
- Whilst the local secondary school is in Swanmore and visited by families



with children, Swanmore is not much visited by our congregations who tend to be older.

OUR WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

One Sunday sung communion service (CW), typically at 10:30 am, at one of the four churches in the benefice. Mattins, Evensong and BCP communion are provided for the singers, the older and the few respectively, and non-communicant worshippers are also catered for with a popular monthly informal service at Droxford. A weekly said communion is held at Droxford on Thursday morning. A benefice choir sings at three services a month.

In the future, we would like to return to two Holy Communion services within the benefice each Sunday when resources permit.

MEET THE TEAM

CLERGY

As well as Rev Jill Kingston, there is a much-loved retired priest with PtO and a retired LLM.

PCCS

Members: Exton 5, Meonstoke and Corhampton 11, Droxford 7, who meet at least four times a year, not including the APCM. One churchwarden in Exton, all other positions vacant.

OTHER PERSONNEL

Choir master, Bridge magazine editor, weddings co-ordinator, two organists, four lay informal service leaders in training, Corhampton Sexton, Droxford Verger, CofE school foundation governor, trustees of William Collins Trust, Church Green Warden (Meonstoke) etc. Benefice Administrator post to be advertised.

FOSACC

Friends of St Andrew's and Corhampton Churches and Friends of Droxford Church are independently run organisations.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

GENERAL

Church Fête and Country Fair as above, Droxford and District Community Care Group (welcome service only for Meonstoke and Corhampton), Meon Valley Garden Club, Meon Valley Arts Society.

EXTON

The Shoe pub and the Parish Meeting.

MEONSTOKE AND CORHAMPTON

The Bucks Head pub (backing onto Church Green), Corhampton and Meonstoke Parish Council, Meon Hall (used for Brownie camps, pilates, yoga, keep fit, amateur dramatics, Meonstorks Baby and Toddler Group, annual Cake and Plant Sale fundraiser, recreation ground, annual hunt meet.

DROXFORD

Bellringing at the church, Bakers Arms and White Horse pubs, Droxford Parish Council, Droxford Junior School, Montessori School, Droxford Scouts, September Scarecrow Festival, recreation ground.

BUILDINGS

EXTON (ST PETER AND ST PAUL)

Grade II with a weeping chancel. Considerable changes were made at the end of the 19th century, Charles Spooner's designs transformed the church. The east windows and The Tree of Life, above the altar, draw the eye.

MEONSTOKE (ST ANDREW)

Grade II*, built in 1230, maybe by the same team which constructed the Great Hall in Winchester (note the roundels above the apex of the arches). It is a good example of early English architecture. The roof and aisles were raised in the 18th century; a wooden top was added to the 15th-century tower in the early 20th century. Other items of interest are Arts and Crafts artist Mary Lowndes, a leading female stained-glass artist, designed and made the Memorial Chapel window; Art Nouveau potter Mary Seton Watts recently designed a large and complex graveyard monument to Dorothy Marshall Lawrence.



CORHAMPTON (UNDEDICATED)

Grade I, built during the reign of King Canute (1016-1035), and has recently celebrated its 1,000th birthday. It is a rare example of a Saxon church, with 12th-century frescos of St Swithun and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The east end collapsed in 1842, supposedly because of road widening which weakened the foundations on which it was built. It has a gallery for the organ and choir.

DROXFORD (ST MARY AND ALL SAINTS)

Grade 1, Norman. North and south aisles were built in the 12th and 13th centuries respectively. It was restored in 2016-18 with a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, and an annexe for a kitchen, toilets and office was built in 2019. The North Chapel is now a café room, and a Heritage Centre displays the story of Droxford from the Meon Valley Saxon heritage through to the D-Day meeting of Churchill and Allied Commanders in June 1944 at Droxford Station.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIOCESE

The Diocese of Portsmouth stretches across south-east Hampshire and includes the whole of the Isle of Wight. It includes 133 parishes, from Botley in the west to Emsworth in the east, and from Blackmoor in the north to Ventnor on the south side of the Isle of Wight. It includes diverse communities, ranging from the densely populated and relatively deprived parts of inner-city Portsmouth, to rural villages in Hampshire; and from a range of seaside towns on the Isle of Wight to suburban communities west of Fareham and Gosport. In total, it covers 420 square miles and has a population of 784,000.

The Diocese of Portsmouth has 170 churches, ranging from historic listed buildings to brand new, purpose-built churches. There are around 150 clergy serving in those churches and their parishes, around 50 of whom are self-supporting. There are also around 70 licensed lay ministers who help with leading services and pastoral work. Around 13,500 people regularly worship in our churches, on Sundays and during the week. Attendance numbers have been declining over the past 10 years, but there are particular congregations that have grown. Only a tiny number of churches have been closed in recent years.



Parishes and chaplaincies within the diocese are supported by a small diocesan team, based in Peninsular House, Portsmouth. These officers support parishes and church schools, administer clergy housing and stipends, manage its property portfolio, promote social justice, handle communications, manage safeguarding procedures, and run a variety of training courses. The Diocesan Secretary oversees these staff. Separate teams of staff are employed in the bishop's office and for the three archdeacons. There is no suffragan bishop.



The diocese includes 44 Church of England schools in south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. These are still mostly schools funded by the local authority, but the diocese supports them with regard to governance and admissions, building projects, Christian ethos, RE and recruitment of headteachers. The education team supports schools across both Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses, under the authority of a Joint Board of Education. Two schools on the Isle of Wight are joint Church of England/Roman Catholic schools.

Bishop Jonathan Frost was installed in March 2022, and has shared his vision for the diocese – a place where all are invited into a life-enhancing encounter with Jesus Christ. It should be a place where children, young people and young adults are given a particular priority; and where ministry to the elderly is supported by a network of Anna Chaplains, working in every locality. The vision is encapsulated by a vocational call to all Christians, which has been supported by strategic funding from the national Church of England to promote the planting of new congregations and a network of pioneer ministers. You can read more about our vision and vocation at portsmouth.anglican.org/our-strategy.

The Diocese of Portsmouth is one of the smallest dioceses in the Church of England, but has often “punched above its weight”, with senior staff and diocesan officers involved in the national Church, managing joint projects or implementing innovative ideas. Financially, the payment of parish share has always been good – but the recent Covid pandemic has resulted in some financial challenges.

There is a range of churchmanship across all traditions within the diocese, few parishes deliberately exclude themselves from deanery and diocesan initiatives, and our smaller, family feel means that most clergy and lay leaders know and respect each other.





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