

Bridgemary & Elson

PROFILE



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Diocese
of Portsmouth



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BISHOP'S WELCOME

I am delighted you are seeking to discern whether Jesus is calling you to serve with His beautiful people in the parish of Bridgemary and Elson. Be assured of our prayers in the diocese for you and those you love as you step into a time of discerning.

The Diocese of Portsmouth is a community of communities focused and centred in Jesus, and seeking the Father's heart of love for the world. We shall be praying for you as you discern your next step of faith in response to God's faithfulness.

With love, in Christ,

Jonathan Portsmouth



THE RT REV JONATHAN FROST,
BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

'As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.'

Colossians 3: 12-13

ARCHDEACON'S WELCOME

This role presents an unusual opportunity for distinctively sacramental, socially inclusive, incarnational ministry in areas of significant deprivation. The congregations of St Matthew's and St Thomas's are already working together with vision and energy, fed by the Eucharist and bringing the love of Christ to the communities they serve, through a variety of forms of worship, engagement with all ages, and grassroots projects.



**THE VEN KATHRYN PERCIVAL,
ARCHDEACON OF THE MEON**

They now seek a wise and gifted parish priest, with the pastoral insight to join in with the joyful labour of these places, and to lead it forward with purpose and skill. 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.

Do get in touch if you would like an informal conversation.



GOSPORT DEANERY

Gosport Deanery covers the borough of Gosport, and as such it's the smallest deanery in Portsmouth Diocese! However, that means deanery clergy have good working relationships with each other, as we seek to lead our churches and bring the Good News of Jesus to Gosport. Deanery Chapter meets monthly, for conversation, discussion, prayer – and lunch. Deanery Synod meets two or three times a year, and each time we try to have a guest speaker to bring a wider perspective to our area. We also try to do things together as a deanery where there's a benefit to doing so. For example, in the autumn of 2025 we ran a Lay Pastoral Assistants course within the deanery with around 35 people, drawn from all our parishes, being trained.



**THE REV DR PAUL CHAMBERLAIN,
AREA DEAN OF GOSPORT**

As deanery clergy, we're looking forward to have a colleague ministering in Bridgemary and Elson. Be assured of our prayers in the application process, and our support for whoever becomes the next vicar in this brilliant parish.





WELCOME FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS



It's our absolute pleasure to welcome you to the parish of St Matthew and St Thomas the Apostle. As a recently reorganised parish with two distinct church buildings it really is an exciting time to join us as we continue to see where God is calling us to be.

Across our parish we have seen significant growth with new worship services which complement the traditional sacramental services that have been a staple part of the parish. We pray that we can enhance these services to enable more people to hear the Gospel and embark on their own faith journey.

The parish has introduced a café, food/clothing bank and toddler group to name just a few of the new initiatives in the community for the community. We are a parish which has placed the local community at the centre, creating a space where the love of God shines brightly for all to see and receive.

The next stage of our church life requires a leader who has vision and drive to support people on their journey of discipleship. You will be supported by a small but strong team of both paid staff and volunteers.

This post offers the opportunity to come to a church that is active in outreach and seeking to follow our vision:

'To manifest the love of God through acts of service, transforming lives and lifting the community by addressing both spiritual and physical needs.'

VISION AND MISSION

Our vision is to serve two distinct yet closely connected communities in Gosport, bringing the love of Christ to families and individuals across the generations.

The parish of St Matthew and St Thomas the Apostle is a welcoming community rooted in traditional Anglican theology with a sacramental heart.

We are a member of Inclusive Church. We aim to be a genuine community church, fully engaged with the people around us. Our different congregations are diverse with a mixture of socio-economic groups and backgrounds.



OUR PARISH

The parish has a population of about 18,100, Gosport itself having a population of approximately 82,400. A parish of roughly 7,700 households.

Gosport is a town defined by its maritime legacy and dynamic social fabric. Long-term residents form the backbone of the community, fostering deep-rooted connections and preserving local traditions that give the area its distinctive character. At the same time, the parish's proximity to Naval Bases brings a steady influx of naval families, many of whom stay temporarily due to military postings. This blend of permanence and transience creates a unique cultural landscape – where heritage and continuity meet adaptability and change.

Approximately 37% of the parish are unemployed and 52% of the households deprived in at least one dimension.

Within the parish we have 5 primary schools, 1 secondary school along with numerous pre-school settings.

This demographic is often overlooked by both government support and traditional middle class church programmes, making the outreach that we do particularly vital.



ABOUT THE CHURCHES

Our Parish is supported by two church buildings. St Matthew's opened in 1955, originally planned as community rooms. However, after failing to secure additional funds for an additional build it was consecrated as the local church. The building lends itself to support various community projects and needs. We have recently launched a project to renovate the building offering better accessibility and development to the worship space and café area to offer better use. St Matthew's has the addition of lots of outdoor space allowing the opportunity for outdoor experiences.



St Thomas the Apostle opened in 1845. It is a traditional Victorian church, surrounded by grounds, that has seen many changes over its lifetime. The nature and style of the building ensures a natural home to traditional services held throughout the year including many saints' days and observances. St Thomas' also has land a short walk away from the church which previously housed the Church Hall. This is in the process of development which will provide funds towards a new community space built at the side of the church.

Across our churches we offer a range of Sunday and midweek services. The liturgical year is observed as part of this, with many additional and special services, such as, Christmas, Holy Week and Easter. The traditions across the parish vary across the services.



Typical monthly pattern of regular Sunday worship across the parish:

	St Matthew's 8am	St Matthew's 9am	St Thomas' 10am
Week 1	BCP with Communion	Bubble Church	Parish Mass
Week 2	BCP with Communion		Parish Mass
Week 3	BCP with Communion	Bubble Church	Parish Mass
Week 4	BCP with Communion		Parish Mass
Week 5	BCP with Communion		All Age Mass

In addition to the above Sunday services the following services are held:

Each Wednesday lunchtime in St Matthew's there is a midweek gathering. Currently on the first week we hold a midweek communion supplemented on other weeks by 'Messy Vintage'. It is hoped that each week will see a midweek midday communion.

St Thomas' have a monthly Puppets and Praise service held during the week after school.



In St Matthew's, on the second Saturday of each month we hold a 'Muddy Church' session where we look at scripture and then complete tasks and activities. This session is held outside with access to our chickens.

Once a month we hold a 'Gathering' which gathers people from across the whole parish and all congregations and groups to come and socialise together.

St Thomas' aspires to hold an additional midweek evening service.

In addition to our services our buildings support our communities with other provisions and groups.

St Matt's on the Corner is a community café which opens 8:45am to 1:30pm, 6 days a week, offering affordable meals and snacks to anyone that comes in. The café has become a hive of activity with regulars often meeting for food and chatter.

Every Wednesday throughout the year we offer a two-course meal to all those that need it throughout the community. The needs are not always financial but this provision sees people through various difficulties such as financial or isolation.

Each Friday we have our 'Toddler Playground' a vibrant safe space for little people and their carers offering play for little ones and support amongst the adults. This group continues throughout the holidays to alleviate isolation.

During each of the school holidays we offer packed lunches from both of our churches to anyone in need.

Our churches hold various events throughout the year to raise money for the continued work that we do and to also offer community outreach.

OUR TEAM

EMPLOYED

The following are employed using money from SDF project which is due to end at the end of September 2026.

- Steven Smart – Children, Youth and Families Minister (Lay)
- Sally Dudley – Parish Administrator (PT)

LICENSED TEAM

We are supported by:

- Corinne Pattinson – LLM Reader (PtO)
- Brian Williams – Clergy (PtO)
- Sue West – Clergy (PtO)

We are supported by a small group of dedicated individuals to assist with the daily operations of our café and to help with some of our family outreach.



STATISTICS

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE	2022	2023	2024	2025 (to date)
Sunday 8am	6	8	10	10
Sunday 10am	34	46	45	43
Bridgemary Midweek	12	12	12	13
Bubble Church	0	0	30	36
Muddy Church	0	18	24	29
Puppets & Praise	0	0	0	26
Baptisms	12	3	7	12
Confirmations	2	0	0	2

(4 additional Baptisms booked for 2025)



FINANCES

The parish has been blessed by significant support as part of a reorganisation by funding from the national Church of England's Strategic Development Fund.

Despite financial difficulties the parish is currently on track to pay full parish share this year.

Regular giving through the Parish Giving Scheme continues to increase enabling us to be more strategic with our finances.

We have a full fundraising calendar with events such as Summer and Christmas Fayres along with afternoon teas and other family social events.





WE ARE LOOKING FOR A LEADER WHO...

We've been blessed with growth – people are coming through our doors and we're building a fantastic community around the café, toddler groups, and family services. What we need now is a priest to help us grow in spirituality and discipleship; someone who can deepen our sacramental life, connect our worship more intentionally to our service, and walk with people on their journey of faith. We've created the welcome – now we need to nurture the roots.

- Has a heart for both traditional Anglican worship along with innovative family ministry;
- Can lead and develop ministry across two distinct but connected communities;
- Demonstrates pastoral care for a wide community facing economic pressures;
- Will build upon our successful community engagement programmes;
- Can work collaboratively with volunteers and community partners;
- Understands the challenges facing working families in today's economy;
- Has vision for sustainable church growth whilst maintaining our community focus.

This role offers an opportunity to lead two thriving churches with complementary ministries, serving communities that represent both traditional Anglican heritage and contemporary family-focused outreach.

'To manifest the love of God through acts of service, transforming lives and uplifting the community by addressing both spiritual and physical needs.'

THE VICARAGE

Bridgemary Vicarage is situated to the south of the church accessed by a path. The vicarage is a modern well-maintained 4 bedroomed house in its own grounds with a separate garage. Replacement windows were installed in 2011 and there is gas central heating throughout. There is a study and 2 additional reception rooms downstairs and a modern kitchen. The house is reached via its own driveway and gate from Duncton Way, off Wych Lane.





VISION AND STRATEGY

Our vision in our diocese is to be a Church with Jesus Christ at the heart of everything we do, a Church in which we seek God's Kingdom, and where all are enabled to experience a life-transforming encounter with Jesus Christ in order to become disciples.

We have now crystallised that thinking into a phrase that we hope sums up what we aspire to be: a rejuvenating community (one that rejuvenates itself and seeks to rejuvenate others) of Jesus-centred (learners and followers of Jesus, with our actions shaped by him), Kingdom-seeking (including our devotion to God, our passion for social justice, our care for creation and fellowship with each other) disciples (we are committed to our faith, and want to keep on becoming more like Jesus).

That vision is supplemented by two further priorities:

- We deliberately prioritise our work with children, young people and young adults, to enable a new generation to grow in faith and find their voice. They are the Church of today.
- We value and treasure our older people, and ensure they are being cared for holistically, by the provision of Anna Chaplaincy to support them in every parish, benefice and cluster across the diocese.

As a diocesan community, we are invited to take part in the strategy that we pray will guide us towards the vision described above, as we are led by the Holy Spirit. This strategy aims to tackle some of the challenges we know that we face as a diocese: declining attendances, older congregations, expensive buildings, over-stretched staff, and a gap between the costs of our ministry and our income.

So our REJUVENATING strategy aims to place children and young people at the heart of our planning, and also seeks to REVIVE, REVITALISE and RENEW our network of parishes, chaplaincies and church schools. Creating thriving churches with an emphasis on children and young people is a watermark that runs through these parts of our strategy:

- **REVIVE:** a call to spiritual renewal for all our clergy and lay leadership to experience a continued personal refreshing of the wonder of God's presence in our lives.
- **REVITALISE:** to grow our existing churches, connecting ministries together to form a pathway that reaches people who are unconnected with church, and supports them as they journey to become committed disciples who own for themselves Jesus' mission.
- **RENEW:** in communities where there is no effective church presence, we believe it is right to plant/transplant new congregations and build New Worshipping Communities to focus on outreach and younger generations.

Our STRATEGY is summarised in this diagram:





INTRODUCTION TO THE DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH

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.

a Rejuvenating community of Jesus-centred, Kingdom-seeking disciples



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