

Rowner

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 Rowner. 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

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

WELCOME FROM THE ARCHDEACON

The people of St. Mary's, Rowner, are stepping into a new future, following a period of change and growth. This is a place of big hearts – centred in Jesus and filled with prayerful anticipation of what the Spirit will bring next.

There is energy, hope, and openness here, amidst the complexity of estate life. With seven schools in the parish, the nurture of children and young people is key, and the congregation have a desire to reach those of all ages whose voices are yet to be heard, and who do not yet know the transforming power of God's love for them.

They now seek a parish priest to join and lead them, and they are pleased that their new Rector might also have a role in enabling the flourishing of estates ministry across our diocese – you can read more about this on page 18.

Do [get in touch](#) if you would like an informal conversation.



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

WELCOME FROM THE AREA DEAN

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. As deanery clergy, we're looking forward to have a colleague ministering in Rowner.

Be assured of our prayers in the application process, and our support for whoever becomes the next Rector in this wonderful parish.



REV DR PAUL CHAMBERLAIN, AREA DEAN, GOSPORT DEANERY

OUR STORY

St Mary's church has grand historical roots in part being a Grade I listed building, with origins dating back to the Norman period and a consecutive list of names of previous rectors since the 13th century. Fifteen people from Holy Rood Church, Stubbington, formed a new plant into the church in 2021. This was initially as part of a bigger benefice, with two other churches. Supported through SDF funding, a Team Vicar and small staff team were established. Seeds were sown and growth continues. Whilst the plant is embedded and there is now regular attendance of 50 or so parishioners, we see so much more potential for growth, particularly through our vision for community outreach, which is yet to be realised. In August 2025, St Mary's became an independent parish. Extensive work took place to ensure proper governance of this process, which we now see as the start of a new and exciting chapter for the parish.



TIMELINE

Pre-2021 (recent history): St Mary's has served the parish of Rowner in different ways since the 1960's when the parish was one of the largest Naval estates in the country.

The churchmanship has been varied since then and the estate has changed to a mixed estate serving both military and civilian families. During this time the congregation has reflected the national pattern and dwindled. There was a diocesan reorganisation in 2021 that led to a joint larger parish.

2021: During the year, a group of people joined St Mary's as part of the church plant. St Mary's developed an evangelical/contemporary approach to services. The other two churches in the newly formed parish, conducted more traditional services. The community has gradually grown, reaching military and other families. Connections grew through the Eden team, who initially tidied and maintained the church yard and grounds, Treasure Box, and through outreach to schools, and Alpha courses.

2025: In August, St Mary's became an independent parish within the diocese of Portsmouth. The PCC were elected in September and, with the church community, they have worked hard to ensure good foundations for what God has in store for the next chapter.

St Mary's amenities include offices and a small hall with access to an enclosed outside area and larger church hall, which are used by various groups within the community. Our vision is to see the church space revitalised and of greater relevance to the community, through increased partnership working with, for example, support services including debt relief. We would love our church premises to be more widely seen as a safe and welcoming space within the community, although we recognise that funding for repairs is needed to fulfil this.

St Mary's is blessed with a diverse team of committed volunteers, serving on PCC, leading children and youth work, and making lovely tea and coffee after services! As a congregation, we long to see the light of St Mary's, an ancient and spiritual anchor of Rowner, poured out over the whole community.

VISION AND MISSION

St Mary's seeks to be a warm, nurturing environment where faith can grow and people feel comfortable discovering Jesus, sharing prayers and journeying through life together, as an all-age congregation.

We prioritise Bible teaching, heartfelt worship, and community service, aiming to be both spiritually enriching and practically supportive. Our worship is currently informal and participatory, with members of the congregation contributing and leading.

The parish identity is rooted in its historic heritage whilst embracing a more contemporary expression of faith. Our congregation is multi-ethnic and multi-generational, with people at different stages of their faith journey. The rich tapestry of Rowner includes a large estate, housing both civilian and military families. We seek to grow together, building on our church plant foundations, and reaching out with the love of Jesus to the community in Rowner, bringing light and hope, and seeing lives transformed.



OUR MISSION IS LIVED OUT THROUGH:

- **Prioritising prayer** – we hold a bi-weekly prayer gathering and have recently launched a quarterly 24-hour prayer event.
- **Growing our faith** – we run Alpha, children's groups and Connect Groups to support people on their faith journey.
- **Being a welcoming and warm setting** – open to those who have known Jesus for decades, and those starting out on their faith journey.

WE CONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH:

- **Food Pantry** – run on a 'take when you need, give when you can' basis, this is a well-used facility providing essential food and school uniform/ children's items to support individuals and families.
- **Eden Team** – a gardening group who meet weekly to tend to the church grounds and enjoy time together including a monthly lunch.
- **Weekly baby and toddler group (Treasure Box)** – operates during term time, this is a well-attended and much valued provision in the community, run by church volunteers and enabling parents and carers to meet, chat and play with their little ones.
- **Weekly family gathering** – run during school holiday time, this enables those who attend the baby and toddler group to get together with their school age children too.
- **Connect Group** – a mid-week gathering in church to enable Bible study, fellowship and prayer.
- **School Connections** – we have 7 schools in the parish, from year R to year 11, with c200 children in each year group. We love to welcome parish schools in for visits and services.
- **Annual Christmas Scratch Nativity** – a wonderful occasion with real animals where we invite everyone to play a part in telling the nativity story together.
- **Open Mic Event** – meeting once a month, this is a 'warm space' for fellowship with musicians and the audience in a welcoming relaxed atmosphere.

WHO'S WHO

OUR CHURCHWARDENS

Catherine is a longstanding member of St Mary's and has been our Churchwarden for several years. One of Catherine's many hats is serving on the Treasure Box team (she is also a big Crystal Palace fan!).



Jabu is our newly-appointed Churchwarden, serving alongside Catherine. Jabu and his family have worshipped at St Mary's for several years. Both Catherine and Jabu are supported by an amazing assistant Warden, Allie, who also helps with our Children's team and is often found crafting a wonderful creation.



OUR SET UP

Through the Church of England (CoE) Strategic Development Fund (SDF), we currently have a small staff team of a Rector's Personal Assistant, and a Parish Administrator, although this funding is due to end in February 2026. These are fixed term posts and funding expires this year; the PCC is reviewing requirements and resources in these areas.



St Mary's also employs a Children and Families worker, again funded through the SDF, which ceases in August 2026. As a parish, we are blessed with a good number of young children, teenagers and young people who attend services and other activities. To support our work with children and young people, this year we signed up to the organisation Paraklesis.

In addition to the current paid posts, there are volunteers serving in all areas of ministry, leading the worship team, the welcome team, leading services, running groups, supporting administration, the IT team (including the development of a new website) and providing hospitality. The PCC is a passionate and hardworking body, with leads for the areas of: finance, welcome/pastoral, fabric – buildings and grounds, communications, HR, safeguarding, children's work (covering MATL) and hospitality. We have future suggested groups for Youth, and Mission. Our PCC and congregation is rich with a broad range of experience and skills that are used, with joy, to contribute to the running and functioning of St Mary's.

OUR CONGREGATION

Our congregation is made up of people who come together to worship and be the body of Christ. We enjoy using our God given gifts and skills to enable the functioning of the parish, as we seek to spread the good news of Jesus. We encourage each other as we walk with the Lord and we love to give a warm welcome to all who seek to join us.



THINGS WE DO WELL

In December 2025, we asked members of the congregation what we did well at St Mary's and these are some responses:

"It's a very welcoming and friendly place. We recently started coming... People took time to talk to us and it soon felt like we were meeting with family." (Parishoner, aged 60s)

*"Good community among the congregation."
(Parishioner, aged 16)*

"Welcoming people and making them feel included and loved. Involving lots of different people in the service. It's great seeing all ages taking part and being encouraged in their giftings."

*"We love being here, from day 1 we felt included and wanted. We feel like we are home with our extended family around us."
(Parishoner, aged 50s)*



HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Regarding their hopes for the future, people commented:

“Provide a meal for those who struggle to feed their families, somewhere for families including the older generation to meet together, one day perhaps a community cafe, cooking classes and somewhere to get help with debt (tapping into CAP Resources) budgeting, and a warm place to be.”

“More outreach.”

“Remain a warm, accepting and welcoming.”

“Follow up on people who are missing. Having a prayer request/thanksgiving card for those who need prayer or what to give thanks for answered prayer. Have meals for those who may be lonely, old or want company or a warm space during the week-something I’d be interested in helping with or setting up.”

“Reach out to the larger community of Rowner.”

“Have more balance to all-age services so they meet the needs of children and adults.”

“Have a designated youth group.”

WE ARE LOOKING FOR A RECTOR...

- With a heart for mission and drive to reach the whole of Rowner with the good news of Jesus.
- Who unequivocally believes in the unerring power of the Holy Trinity in matters of faith and doctrine.
- Whose inspirational preaching and teaching are invariably grounded in the Word, showing a great love for God, and the transformative power of His word.
- Who is skilled in pastoral care, and understands the power of genuine relationships; can show empathy and communicate with people from a range of backgrounds and lived experiences.
- Who is experienced in and understands estates ministry; and uses this insight to inform outreach and build connections.
- Who is strong in their Christian faith, values good governance and resolute to overcome challenges.
- Who is confident and vision-led, whilst nurturing and developing the strengths of those carrying responsibilities within the church, and encouraging new volunteers.
- Who will enable St Mary's to flourish and grow into an embedded community lifeline.





In December 2025, we asked members of our congregations what they wanted from a Rector and their responses included:

“Warm, friendly and approachable. Accepting the diversity of our community willing and able to get out into the estate community & spread the word.”

“Fun, humorous, passionate for God’s heart.”

“Should be a mature person with a pastoral heart. Encouraging and with a strong faith, rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Keen on leading others into the Kingdom of God.”

“Kind, caring, approachable and joyful.”



OUR CURRENT SERVICE PATTERN

Our Sunday morning service starts at 10am. We are blessed with talented musicians in our congregation who lead our worship each week. Communion is part of our 10am Sunday service on the third Sunday of the month. On the other Sundays, a Said Communion service is held at 8.15am.

There is provision for children's work from year R to year 11. During the school holiday times, our children's groups pause and all age services take place. We are richly blessed with people who have a wonderful blend of skills and a heart to serve including during our Sunday services.

REGULAR EVENTS

- Tuesday mornings (weekly): Eden Team
- Tuesday morning (bi-weekly) Prayer meeting
- Wednesday evenings (weekly): Connect Group
- Thursdays mornings (weekly): Treasure Box baby and toddler group
- Thursday evenings (monthly): Open mic night

FINANCE

As a LINC parish located in an area of acute deprivation when compared to other areas of the county, we understand the cost-of-living crisis and how this impacts our community. The parish has been in receipt of funding from the CoE SDF since 2021. Finance has been and remains an area of challenge for our Parish although we look forward to developing more funding strands, as we seek to preserve our physical estate, whilst increasing outreach and community-based service. The accounts are in good order, and we are able to pay half of our parish share monthly, which is the level agreed with the Diocese, at this stage, under the terms of the plant.

The church has benefitted from one off anonymous gifts over the past 2 years.

Fixing the heating system is a priority where we are committed to the church being a warm and inviting space for the community. We raised money towards this at the summer fayre and continue to look at ways to generate funds to support this goal.





ESTATES MINISTRY ENABLER

Our priority is to find a new Rector for Rowner but, for the right person, there is the possibility of a wider estates role across the diocese alongside your parish responsibilities in Rowner.

Rowner PCC, our Archdeacons, and the Diocesan Ministry and Discipleship Team, would be open to candidates exploring a wider role helping us with missional strategy, advocacy, training and coaching across our LINC (lowest income communities) parishes and estates across the diocese.

All partner parish work would be of an invitational nature working closely with our Estates Representative to Bishop's Staff. The Bishop's Staff team are committed to ministry on the margins, and you and others would help us to make those voices known to strategic decision makers in diocesan teams making sure there is a genuine leverage in wider decision making, strategic planning and delivery.

Under our strategic headings of Revive, Revitalise and Renew, opportunities to work with the Ministry and Discipleship Team and LINC Parishes group, tailoring work to specifically focus on the unique contexts of LINC estates, may include:

Revive, the spiritual renewal and refreshment of our wider estates' clergy and lay leaders:

- Advocacy, training and coaching, sharing concepts and getting alongside;
- Ensuring good patterns of wellbeing and ongoing spiritual development;
- Identifying, encouraging and training lay leaders.

Revitalise, the revitalisation of the parish (bringing specific Wider Estates ministry experience to our 'Lead for Revitalise', Andrew Axon):

- Developing vision;
- Missional strategy and remissioning;
- Raising up and developing leaders;
- Contextual social action with clear pathways to discipleship;
- Developing contextual discipleship models and rhythms.

Renew, promoting growth through church planting, pioneer ministry and new worshipping communities (NWCs):

- Building up and encouraging lay led small-scale planting and pioneering;
- Helping parishes to identify opportunities for NWCs.

Advocacy & Learning:

- Joining with others on our LINC Parishes group in living out and promoting Diocese of Portsmouth's Commitment to Low Income Communities (LINC);
- Learning from networks, practice, and training from across the nation working with other partners where appropriate.

This is a role that we are open to craft together around the skills and experience of the candidate and the needs of the LINC parishes and estates in the diocese. For a conversation about the potential of this wider opportunity, alongside the parish role, please contact [Andrew Hargreaves](#), the Director of Ministry and Discipleship.

THE RECTORY

The Rectory sits within the church grounds, although set away from the church building. It is afforded privacy through being set back from the road. This is a large detached 5-bedroom house, with 3 bathrooms, and a large office room.


There is a spacious entrance area for storing wellie boots after a walk in the local woodland! There is a large garage, and a huge garden to the side and rear of the property (looked after by the Eden team!). The home is modernly furnished and includes a living area with open fire, separate dining area, and recently improved kitchen. It was updated prior to the last rector moving in in 2021.

There are local amenities within a few minutes walk and a larger shopping estate and supermarkets within a short driving distance. The local area includes playgrounds and schools, the wonderful 'Rolling Scones' cafe for a great cuppa, and the Green Dragon pub, which has hosted an Alpha course and other St Mary's functions.



DIOCESE VISION AND STRATEGY



ur 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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