

Benefice profile

The United Benefice of

St Peter and St Paul, Wadhurst

St John the Baptist, Tidebrook

St Peter, Stonegate

Section 1 Summary

We have a vision for our churches to be lively, growing places where people of all ages know and respond to the love of Jesus and accept him into their lives.

As we seek to appoint someone who will serve as Associate Vicar alongside the Vicar of Wadhurst, Tidebrook and Stonegate, living in Stonegate and focusing primarily on Stonegate and Tidebrook. The communities offer varied opportunities with the young, schools, the elderly and numerous village organisations. We are looking for an individual who will be led by the Holy Spirit and join with us to preach the gospel, grow our churches and serve our communities. There is the opportunity to share ministry responsibilities with the Vicar so that both focus primarily on their greatest strengths.

- We are praying for an inspiring and visionary priest with gifts of evangelism who is committed to spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. **Are you that person?**
- We have seen growth recently and a lowering of our average age. **Will you help us discern how God will continue to do this work among us?**
- We are active, long-standing and supportive communities, with strong traditions of preaching and teaching God's Word. **Are you experienced and willing to enthuse and develop the growth of our churches?**
- We are passionate about seeing people come to faith and grow as disciples. We are developing strong links with families with young children, but have relatively few teenagers. **Will you foster opportunities for families to grow in faith and help us be relevant to this generation, while being sensitive to and recognising the importance of those in our communities who value more traditional forms of worship?**
- There is a strong, prayerful, committed core of worshippers who also want to be growing in their faith. **Will you support and encourage them?**
- There are many different needs in our villages. **Will you be a pastor to all?**
- We have facilities and programmes to be of practical service to our communities. **Are you someone who can bring a fresh perspective to our desire to serve the common good?**

Section 2

The broader context

Where we are

The three churches are part of the 15-parish Rotherfield Deanery in the Archdeaconry of Hastings. The deanery encompasses a range of church sizes, settings and churchmanship, from a large evangelical town parish, to small more traditional congregations across quite a large rural area. Wadhurst, Tidebrook and Stonegate all send representatives to deanery meetings.

National initiatives:

- The three parishes embraced the Archbishops' *Thy Kingdom Come* initiative over recent years and hosted prayer meetings over Zoom during the week of prayer in 2021.

Diocesan initiatives:

- In 2016, the Diocese of Chichester encouraged parishes to think of 'One Thing' they planned in order to grow their church communities. Our parishes identified their 'one things' and actively pursued them.
- In 2017, the Diocese encouraged the 'Year of the Bible'. The parishes supported this by encouraging more individuals to join home groups and followed this up by studying The Bible Course as a sermon series and in home groups. This greatly enhanced our familiarity with, and appreciation of, the whole canon of scripture.
- In 2018, the diocesan emphasis was the 'Year of Prayer'. The parishes followed the Diocesan Lent Course on prayer. Prayer Stations in Wadhurst church were set up for quiet reflection over the festival of Pentecost and a course on Ignatian Prayer was offered as a study option in the Autumn.
- 'The Big Church Day Out' and 'Bible by the Beach'. Individuals from the parishes attend both these annual events and really enjoy the fellowship and teaching they offer. Others attend Soul Survivor, Spring Harvest or house parties run by the Stewards' Trust.
- In autumn 2021 the Diocese has asked every parish to complete a Parish Audit and Mission Action Plan. Our parishes have engaged enthusiastically with this process, building on the Mission Action Planning that has been done in the past.

Deanery initiatives

- Representatives from all three parishes attended a conference on Church Growth by Bob Jackson, organised by the deanery. The day sparked ideas for each parish to take forward. In 2017, a similar deanery day conference, led by Ian and Irene Smale, was organised by Wadhurst on the topic of working with children, and individuals involved in children's work benefitted greatly from this too. Deanery initiatives have been limited recently due to COVID.

Relationships between the parishes

Although we are a new benefice, established in June 2020, the parishes of Wadhurst, Tidebrook and Stonegate have worked together over many years. There are strong bonds of fellowship between the three parishes. Members are very loyal to their local parish and also recognise that they are part of a greater whole.

Stonegate and Tidebrook are smaller villages and correspondingly have smaller church congregations than Wadhurst, but both retain the goodwill of their communities and are supported more widely than by just the Sunday congregation.

The three villages are home to families who have lived in them for many generations but they have also attracted new residents who wish to move to a more rural life. Many of these work outside the area; quite a large number travel to London. This diversity of residents provides plenty of opportunity to reach out to a wide range of people.

Special arrangements:

The parishes do not have any special arrangements with the Bishop regarding the ordination of women priests. The ministry of women priests is endorsed and welcomed by all the leadership team and the congregations.

Leadership Teams

Benefice

- The benefice has a Ministry Leadership Team who meet with the Vicar to pray and reflect. It would be anticipated that the new Associate Vicar join this group.
- The benefice is currently served by two Readers who exercise ministry across the benefice in collaboration with the Vicar.

Wadhurst

- The church has had a part-time, paid, Pastoral Assistant for Families since 2016, and in 2021 appointed a part-time, paid, Youth Worker and Schools Pastor Coordinator. These roles are currently filled by one person working full time.
- There are teams to plan and run the All Age Worship services, J-Club Sunday School, 'Activate' children's group, the after-school club and the Jellybeans babies and toddlers group.
- The church has recently set up a Fellowship Group to provide the church family with a calendar of social events now COVID restrictions are easing. This began in September 2021 with an evening at Scotney Castle Gardens.
- The church has recently set up a Pastoral Group to try to ensure that the pastoral needs of the whole church family are met.

Tidebrook

Most leadership is provided by the PCC but there is a team to plan and run the All Age Worship services once a month. One of the benefice Readers lives in Tidebrook and ministers primarily there.

Stonegate

Most leadership is provided by the PCC but members of the church co-operate as a team to undertake specific tasks.

Section 3

The priest we need

We are looking for a minister who is:

- Firm in faith, prayerful, rooted in the Bible and led by the Holy Spirit;
- In the mainstream of the evangelical tradition and able to embrace a spectrum of churchmanship represented by the three parishes and their services (from BCP communion to contemporary worship and Sweaty Church);
- A gifted communicator experienced in evangelism, with a passion to help others find a relationship with Jesus Christ;
- An able, thoughtful and inspiring Bible teacher;
- A collaborative worker and team player who will help people discern, exercise and develop their gifting
- Someone who will encourage the congregations and help the churches reach out effectively to their communities;
- Someone who will work with the wide age range found in our congregations, getting involved in the life of our villages and schools.
- Someone who will support and encourage the wide range of music styles currently used in worship, from the traditional to the modern and including songs and choruses that enable our worship to be accessible to all.

Section 4

About the parishes

Setting

The churches of Wadhurst, Tidebrook and Stonegate are situated in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The location is popular with families wishing to

move out of London to enjoy a more rural setting and lifestyle and with those wishing to be part of a stable, established community. There are good schools in the area, Bewl Water is within easy reach for sailing and water sports and there are many National Trust properties to visit. The wonderful countryside, Bedgebury Pinetum, the South Downs and the coast are all near enough to enjoy. Alternatively, London is only an hour away by train.

Demographics

- The demographics of the three parishes are very mixed, but there is an above-average proportion of professional and more affluent people.
- Across the three communities all age groups are represented, from young families to the more elderly. It is an expensive area to live in for young couples starting out, so often they



View from the Church Tower towards Bewl Reservoir.

move away, resulting in individuals in their 20s being under represented compared to the national average. However, young professional couples often arrive when they start a family. There are also long-time residents and extended families still living near one another.

- Many working individuals are commuters, to Tunbridge Wells and elsewhere. There are good bus transport links from Wadhurst and train services to Hastings and London, via Wadhurst and Stonegate stations.
- New housing developments have appeared in Wadhurst in recent years and more are planned. New housing in Tidebrook and Stonegate is only permitted on existing building 'footprints'.
- All three villages benefit from a very strong community spirit. We would like all our churches to reflect the demographics of the communities of which they are a part.

What are the villages like?

- **Wadhurst** is a semi-rural large village / small town, population c.5000, about 8 miles from Tunbridge Wells, with a range of housing including some social housing. It is a thriving community with a range of shops in the High Street, a large number of clubs, societies, evening classes and sporting activities. There is a busy GP surgery, chemist, range of health practitioners, three small supermarkets, a health food store, ironmonger, butcher, green grocer, art gallery, several hairdressers and barbers, a delicatessen, gift shop, clothes shop, beauty salon, a flower shop and an independent book shop. There are two Public Houses in the High Street and a variety of other eating establishments.

Wadhurst has a residential care home as well as sheltered housing for the elderly. Communion services are held once a month in the care homes.

- **Tidebrook** is a small hamlet, population 700, occupying 254 homes. It is approximately 3 miles by road from Wadhurst. The ecclesiastical parish covers about 6 sq. miles of farm land and the residents consist of a good number of young families along with older and retired people. Only one or two commercial farmers remain.
 - **Stonegate**, lying about 3 miles south east of Wadhurst, with a population of around 500, is a rural community with a range of housing, a much-valued Village Hall and a thriving Church of England Primary School. Agriculture used to be the main occupation of those who lived in the village and still plays an important role. The landscape of the Weald provided inspiration for the poet Andrew Young, who was vicar of Stonegate from 1941 to 1959. In 1952, while vicar, he was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry.



Schools in the area

Church Schools in the benefice

Wadhurst C of E Primary School (voluntary controlled)

Boys and girls 4-11. 1½ form entry and with a pre-school attached.

Most recent OFSTED report: Good.

SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools): Outstanding

www.wadhurstpri.e-sussex.uk

Stonegate C of E Primary School (voluntary controlled)

Boys and girls 4-11. ½ form entry and with a pre-school attached.

Most recent OFSTED Report: Good

Recent SIAMS report (2019): Good

www.stonegate.e-sussex.sch.uk

Both schools have foundation governors appointed by the PCCs, they are well thought of locally and attract children from the villages and surrounding areas. Both school communities attend church for festival and leavers services. In Stonegate the pupils help to plan and lead one service in church each year. At Wadhurst a team of pupils “The Stargazers” help to plan assemblies in school and special services in church. The Vicar and his wife take weekly assemblies in both schools. The new Associate Vicar would be encouraged to engage actively with at least one of the schools.

Secondary Church School in Tunbridge Wells

Bennett Memorial Diocese School (Rochester Diocese)

Co ed 11-18. Students on roll 1,496

Most recent OFSTED: outstanding

Most recent SIAMS: outstanding

www.bennettmemorial.kent.sch.co.uk

Oversubscribed and highly acclaimed. Although out of county, accepts applications from clergy and church member families, living in East Sussex. A number of children from Wadhurst church families attend.

Other Education provision in the villages.

Sticky Fingers (nursery) offers pre-school provision. It also provides before school care “Toasties” and after school care “Oasties” for primary school age children.

The Sacred Heart, an independent preparatory catholic school

Boys and girls 2-11. Pupils on roll 120. www.sacredheartwadhurst.org.uk

Secondary provision

Uplands Community College Wadhurst

Co-ed 11-18. Students on roll 1,006. Most recent OFSTED: Good

One of the best performing secondary schools in the East Sussex comprehensive system. Most students from Wadhurst primary school transfer to Uplands Community College for their secondary education.

In **Tunbridge Wells** and **Tonbridge** there is a wide range of single sex grammar schools. A few children from Wadhurst Primary School qualify for attending these schools, by passing their 11 plus examination.

Stonegate Vicarage

Stonegate Vicarage is pleasantly situated on the edge of the village surrounded by beautiful countryside. Downstairs the house has a south-facing sitting room overlooking a good-sized back garden, a dining room, kitchen, bathroom and lavatory together with a large double bedroom and a study/4th bedroom. There are two further bedrooms upstairs, and there is a garage.



Church and Community spaces and facilities

Wadhurst

- The recent re-ordering of the Wadhurst church building provided modern toilet facilities, a large refreshment point and a significant open space for fellowship and activities, such as Who Let the Dads Out?, J-club, Jelly Beans (toddler group) and church lunches.
- St George's Hall, owned by the Wadhurst PCC, is situated in the densely populated Sparrows Green area and was opened in 1927. It is used for a weekly Lunch Club (CAMEO), a monthly Afternoon Fellowship meeting for the elderly and for numerous community activities, including meetings of uniformed organisations.
- Carillon Cottage was purchased by the Wadhurst PCC in 1999 as an information, signposting and community service centre and as the venue for the Sunday School groups. It is run by a team of volunteers drawn from the churches and from the local communities. The Cottage provides offices for both the Wadhurst Church Administrator and for the Pastoral Assistant. The meeting rooms are well used by diverse village groups, Sunday J-club for children, adult church groups (prayer meetings, homegroups), the local parish council and the local MP. Carillon Cottage is the centre for the Social Action Project (SAP) which provides transport and other practical support to local residents. During the COVID pandemic the Cottage has served as a community helpline coordinating over 150 volunteers providing shopping and prescription collection services, lifts for medical appointments and vaccinations (www.carillon-cottage.org.uk/, also on Facebook).
- The Commemoration Hall in the centre of the village is used for a wide variety of community activities and events including the monthly Wadhurst Community Film Club, History Society meetings, Twinning Association events, drama productions, Brass Band concerts, Saturday markets and fund-raisers.
- Sparrows Green Recreation Ground and Tennis Club (plus pavilion) provides further meeting places for sports classes and group activities and a green space for children to play.
- Other well utilised facilities for the community include Uplands Community College Sports Hall and Gym, the sports field, the cricket pitch and the bowling green.

Stonegate

- Significant alterations to the back of the church have provided facilities for light refreshments and a children's corner. The thriving community choir rehearses and performs in the church.
- The well-appointed village hall was built in the 1960s and is widely used by both residents and people from outside the village. It is a meeting place for various organisations and the highly regarded Stonegate Amateur Dramatic Society (SADS) is based there.

Tidebrook

- The building in 2009 of the Parish Room at the back of the church provided a venue for both community and church events and has become a 'hub' for the village.

Section 5 About the churches

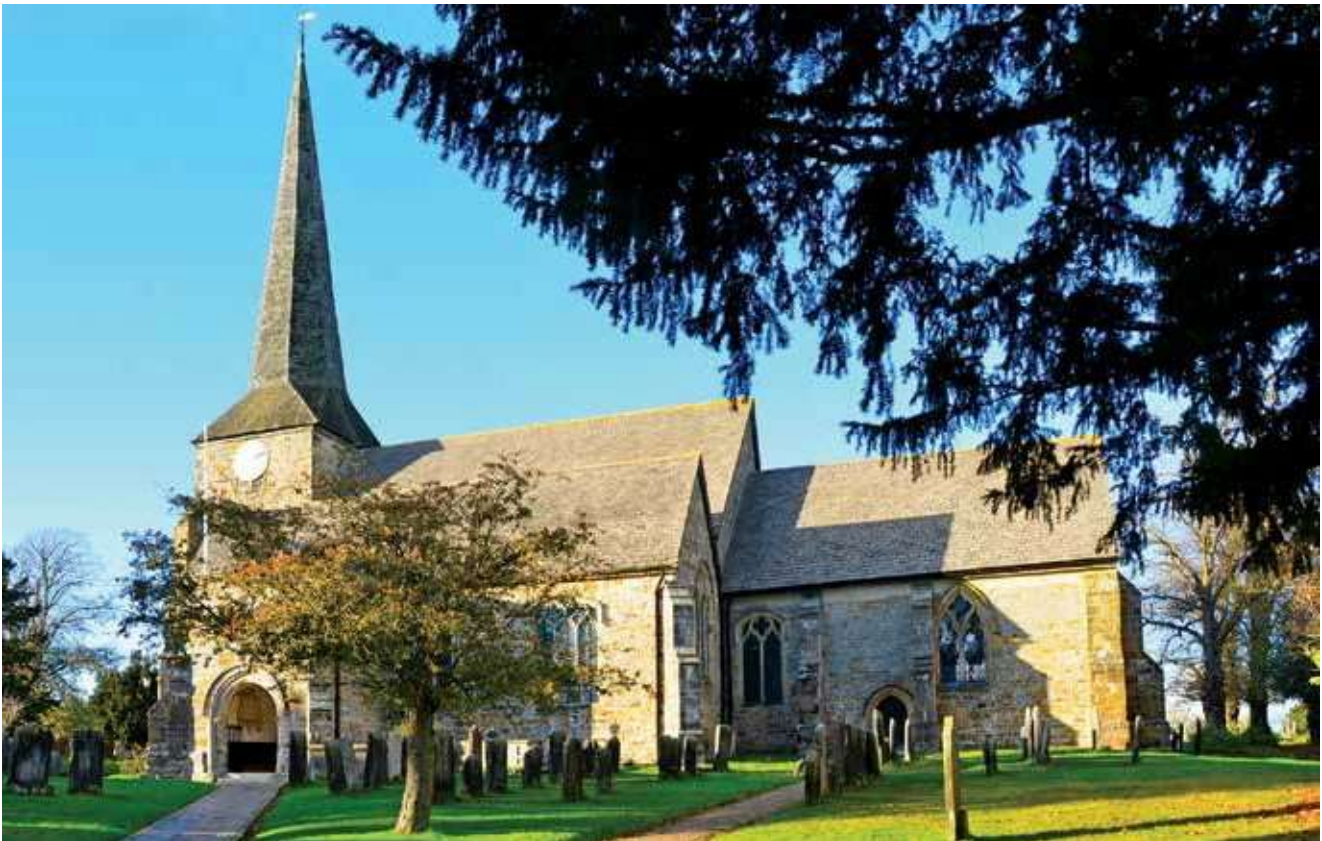
1. The church buildings

St Peter and St Paul, Wadhurst

Standing behind the High Street, Wadhurst church interior is spacious, seating about 450. It is a Grade 1 listed English church – a medley of styles of varying dates, made in the welcoming browns and greys of the local sandstone. As a reminder of the past heyday of the iron industry, the church boasts about 30 decorated iron slabs set into the aisles and chancel, commemorating famous ironmasters and their families. There are some commemorative wall monuments, a good organ, some fine stained glass windows, an attractive glass-doored ringing chamber and a ring of eight bells – varying in dates from 1670-1955.

The 2015 re-ordering at the rear and north aisle provided much-needed space and a well-appointed refreshment area for activities and events (see section 4 for more details). It is a busy place when groups are using the church but one of deep peace and calm at other times. It is open each day for prayer or quiet contemplation. A ceiling-mounted projector allows for words, images and videos to be projected onto a retractable hanging screen which is used on many different occasions.

The 124' spire was completely renovated in 2014, with financial support from the community, after a storm sheered off one side of the old steeple. The PCC treasurer diligently plans for each quinquennial report and the building is kept in good repair.



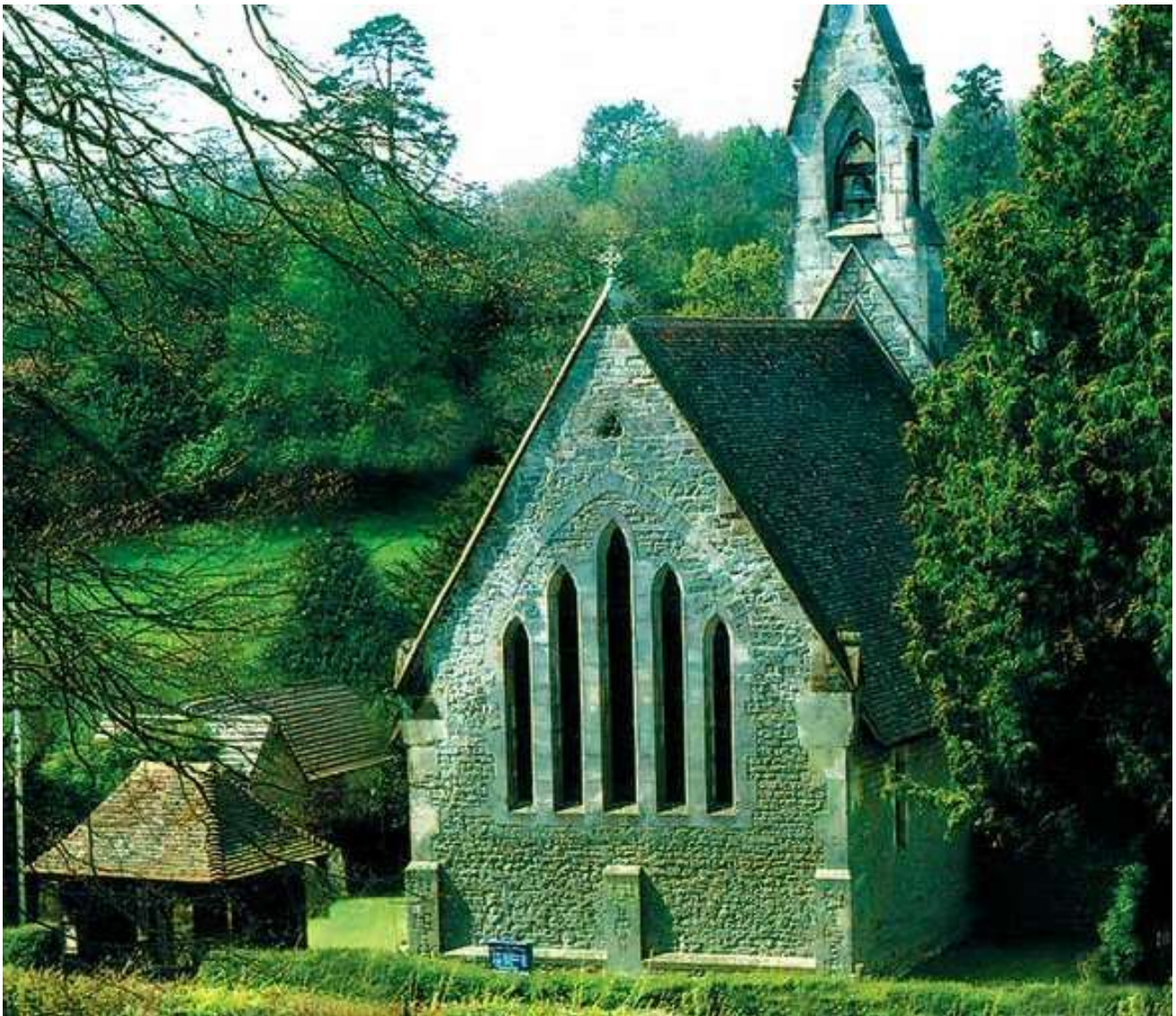
St John the Baptist, Tidebrook

Build in 1856, midway between Mayfield and Wadhurst, the church became a plurality with Wadhurst in 1951. It is the last remaining public building in the parish. When the ground floor and balcony are full, the church seats about 150 people.

The building was recently enhanced by the creation of the Parish Room, comprising a carpeted meeting room, seating 40, kitchen and toilet. A Mother and Toddler group has been meeting here.

A timber walkway provides access for babies' buggies and wheelchairs. A safe parking area was created two years ago. In all the property is in good repair and carefully maintained. The church yard in Tidebrook is carefully tended and maintained by volunteers.

The church is open daily for quiet contemplation and prayer.



St Peter, Stonegate

Originally part of the ecclesiastical parish of Ticehurst, Stonegate was established as a separate parish in 1836. The first church was built in 1838, but demolished when found to be unsafe. The present church, built in 1904, is in the Arts and Crafts style and is listed Grade 2. It seats 150, has clear glass windows in the nave and stained glass windows at the east and west end. The Jesse window at the west end is particularly fine.

The church is a place of peace and tranquillity, open each day for prayer or quiet contemplation. It is in good repair and well maintained.



All three parishes have received Quinquennial Inspection reports within the last year. All three reports indicate that the church buildings are in good repair. The spire of Stonegate church has recently been renovated

2. Worship patterns

Current patterns of Sunday Worship

Time	Wadhurst	Tidebrook	Stonegate
08:00	HC (BCP) first 3 Sundays	–	HC (CW Trad) 4 th Sundays
	10:30	10:00	10:00
1st Sun	All Age Worship	All Age Worship	Morning Prayer
2nd Sun	Morning Worship + J-Club		Holy Communion
3rd Sun	Morning Worship + Activate	Holy Communion	All Age Service
4th Sun	Holy Communion + J-Club	Morning Prayer	
5th Sun	Three As One – sole, joint service for all churches together		
17:00	On 2nd Sun ‘The Five’ contemporary worship service for all three parishes is held at Tidebrook		

Attendance: Based on 2019 pre-COVID attendance figures, the average attendance at Wadhurst was 19 adults at the 8am service and 90 adults and 20 children at the main service. At Tidebrook the average attendance was 25 and at Stonegate 18. Attendance at festival services is much higher. During the pandemic we have been posting pre-recorded services online and these have been very popular attracting hundreds of viewings each week.



St Peter and St Paul, Wadhurst

Worship in Wadhurst

Wadhurst Mission Statement

Using the gifts God gives us, we bring others to Christ, deepen our faith in Him, develop the life of the church family, serve each other and the wider community and so express our worship to God in every part of life.



Worship in Wadhurst ranges from traditional BCP to more contemporary services, to offer as broad a variety of worship as possible. BCP Communion is celebrated as a said service at 8am on the first three Sundays of the month with an average attendance of 19. The main service has recently moved from 10:00am to 10:30am. The first Sunday of the month is an All Age Service with the Worship Band usually attended by brownies and guides groups. The 2nd and 3rd Sundays are Morning Worship in varying formats and Holy Communion is celebrated on the 4th Sunday. Attendance at the main service averages about 90 adults and 20 children. The modern AV system is used for all services, with printed service sheets available for the visually impaired. A robed choir sings for Communion and Festival services.

Sunday J-Club, provides children's groups, organised and run by lay members. It is held in Carillon Cottage as part of the 10:30 morning service on 2nd and 4th Sundays, children return in time to receive prayer during communion. **Weekday J-Club**, for primary school children, runs on Tuesday afternoons in the church.

Morning Worship & Activate: A music ensemble played for the service on the 3rd Sunday of the month before the COVID pandemic but has not yet reformed. The children's programme '**Activate**' is modelled on ideas from Scripture Union's 'Sweaty Church'. Lay led and aiming to include those on the fringes of the church, it is held in Uplands Sport Hall at the same time as the service in church. The youngsters return to church to join the adults before the end of the service.

Weekday services: HC (BCP), 11:30, 2nd Thursday attracts a small, regular group.

Festival Services are occasions that particularly attract the wider community. Easter, Harvest, and Remembrance services are very well attended. At recent Christingle services (2 held on Christmas Eve) over 750 people were in church. In 2017, approximately 1,800 attended church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Worship in Tidebrook

Tidebrook Mission Statement

Taking Christ to the community through service and pastoral care.

Worship is Bible centred, in contemporary language, using liturgy from Common Worship.

All Age Worship is held informally in the Parish Room, with plenty of interaction, crafts and activities. About 12 families (25-35) – with children of varying ages – attend at one time or another.

The Five, held at 5pm on the 2nd Sunday of the month, is preceded by a bring and share tea at 4:30. It is a gathering for informal, contemporary worship and separate children's activities in the Parish Room, during the talk. The worship band leads the singing.

Holy Communion on 3rd Sundays is suitable for families: topical themes include how the Christian faith relates to day-to-day life.

Morning Prayer (CW) is held on the 4th Sunday of each month.

Festival Services e.g. Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest (50-60), Christmas (80-120) are well attended.

Creation Sunday is held on the 1st Sunday in May. Weather permitting, this service is held outside in the beautiful churchyard.



Worship in Stonegate

Stonegate Mission Statement

We exist to honour God and seek to enable everyone to discover the significance of Jesus Christ.

The style of worship across the month is broad, ranging from traditional forms of liturgy to a more contemporary style of worship at the All Age Service.

Parish Communion is attended by a wide range of church members, including families with older children.

All Age Worship is popular with ages from pre-schoolers to 80-year olds. It is devised and led by the Wadhurst Team.

The monthly **8.00 am Communion** is valued mainly by older church members for the beauty and familiarity of its language, combining much of the language of the Book of Common Prayer with a more satisfying order of liturgy.

Morning Prayer follows the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer.

Festival Services attract the wider community (50-100). Harvest Festival is well attended and the Carol Service is particularly popular.



Occasional Offices

The number of occasional offices vary year by year but typical numbers are 20 baptisms, 15 weddings and 20 funerals (approximately half in church and half at one of the local crematoriums). Most of the services taking place in church do so in Wadhurst.

- Invitations to a joint, annual **Remembering Loved Ones** service in Wadhurst in late October is very well received and attended by those who have been bereaved.
- From time to time there has been a **Celebration of Marriage** service and reception in Wadhurst, to provide an opportunity for married couples to celebrate and renew their marriage vows.

3. Expressions of church life

Prayer gatherings

- Prayer is seen as undergirding all that is done in the name of Christ - but it is hard to find times for corporate prayer that suit everyone. There are **meetings for prayer** each Saturday morning at Carillon Cottage (9:00 to 9:45) and there is a monthly **prayer breakfast** in the Parish Room at Tidebrook Church (8:30-9:45) on the 1st Sundays of the month.
- **Prayer ministry** is available during communion and after Wadhurst 10:30am services.
- **Prayer Pastors** pray while the **School Pastors** (drawn from Wadhurst and Tidebrook congregations) are present in Uplands Community College on Fridays (14:00 – 15:00).
- There is an ecumenical '**prayer for healing**' group.
- The **Prayer Net** of people who pray for the needs of the community.

Fellowship

- Visitors to our churches often remark on their warm and friendly character. We seek to build on this through serving refreshments after morning services, through Hospitality Sundays (which have been less frequent of late) and through occasional bring and share lunches, annual BBQs, parish picnics and AwayDays. Our social events have not been as frequent over the last couple of years and Wadhurst has recently formed a **Fellowship Group** to enhance this aspect of church life.

Discipleship

Discipleship is a core value of our churches. We seek to enable all our members, of any age, to live and grow as disciples of Christ.

- All three churches join in with homegroups for Bible study and prayer, and some groups also have participants from the local Catholic church. There are currently 12 groups with over 90 members.
- The **annual teaching strategy** defines several sermon series that are explored during the year and homegroups study the same material in parallel. It also includes Advent and Lent courses.
- In late October, there is often a choice of Options for homegroups. A variety of studies are available in order to provide for a range of interest and learning styles. Studies are normally 4-5 weeks in length. Homegroups take a break over the Christmas period.

Mission

- All three churches are committed to supporting organisations that seek to manifest the gospel message of being 'good news to the poor'. A number of local, national and international charities are supported. Stonegate has a particular link with a CMS mission couple in Brazil. Tidebrook and Wadhurst are linked with a Crosslinks family working in Cape Town and with a Church Army officer working in Greenwich.
- In 2017, a team of **School Pastors** began training and their work has started in Uplands Community College. The COVID pandemic interrupted our presence in the school but we maintained our links and will begin patrols again in September 2021. The relationship developed through the School Pastors has helped to rekindle our links with the school. We are the first School Pastors established in a non-urban setting.



- Through the inspiration of a local Tidebrook couple the **Wadhurst-Burundi link** was established in recent years. Support and involvement in this extends beyond the local churches and includes Wadhurst Primary school, where pupils exchange pictures, letters and gifts with the school in Mwumba. Small groups from Wadhurst and Tidebrook parishes have visited the community in Burundi. There have been a number of fund-raising initiatives to send financial assistance for the building of water tanks and a Diocesan guest house, to provide a local income.

Young People

Although young people are under-represented in our congregations, our churches are committed to addressing this. All three churches have an All Age Service once a month, and Wadhurst and Tidebrook have provision for children other weeks. Wadhurst has employed a Pastoral Assistant working with families and children for five years now, and has just appointed a Youth worker supported by a diocese mission grant. These initiatives have been very fruitful with a growing number of young people represented in our church families.

The **Grid 78:4** youth group was running Youth Alpha with about 10 teenagers involved when the pandemic struck and prevented us completing the course. The group has not met during the pandemic as our young people found they had enough of online meetings through school work at home, but Grid will be starting again soon.

4. Church staff and leadership

The staff team presently comprises the Vicar, an ordinand in contextual training, two Readers, the Pastoral Assistant for Families and Youth Worker and School Pastors Coordinator (one person with three related roles) and the Church Administrator (mornings only).

Vocations

Ordained ministry

We believe that God gives his people gifts and skills to be used in ministry and so we are alert to identifying, encouraging and enabling people to develop and exercise these gifts. In the last three years two people have gone to residential theological college to train for ordination, one is in non-residential contextual training with us, and one is training for the Permanent Diaconate.

In the past, Wadhurst has been a training parish is on the Diocese's list of approved training parishes.

Lay ministry

- In all three churches lay people are involved in every aspect of the worshipping life of the church e.g. welcoming, leading services, preaching, suggesting sermon series themes, reading, leading intercessions, administration of communion, prayer ministry, All Age Worship planning, operating the audio-visual equipment and recording sermons and in leading homegroups.
- In all three churches there is a small group of people who are trained to give home communion.
- We believe in collaborative ministry so lay members play an active role in all aspects of the life of the churches.
- Each church has two very supportive churchwardens and affirming PCC members who take active roles in the life of each parish.

- In Wadhurst lay members are also involved in the Fellowship Group, the Pastoral Group, in facilitating Alpha courses, in marriage preparation & marriage support, in visiting, children's work (J-Club, Sunday J-Club, Jelly Beans, 'Who Let the Dads Out'), Grid (young people's group) and in working with the elderly (Afternoon Fellowship, Senior Lunch). Guest Breakfasts, offering a hearty breakfast at a local golf club – along with a range of excellent speakers – are organised throughout the year.
- All three churches benefit from the talented work of flower arrangers and Wadhurst enjoys the skill of bell ringers.
- Tidebrook church runs monthly community events such as coffee mornings in homes, men's lunch in a local pub and a tapestry group. The annual church fete is a highlight of the local calendar and there are occasional jazz evenings, wine tasting evenings and talks in the church, which continues to be the hub of this small community. A recent generous bequest enabled the establishment of Tidebrook Elderly Action, to assist older folk to continue to live in their homes.

Annual Tidebrook Fete



Churches Together in Wadhurst, Tidebrook and Stonegate

This was established about 25 years ago when there was a Methodist Church in Wadhurst. It now consists of the Catholic and three Anglican Parish Churches. Annually a number of events are held ecumenically – such as the Good Friday Walk of Witness and service, the service on Remembrance Sunday and the Advent and Christmas Carol Services.

Other joint ventures include the Week for Christian Unity, Lent groups, and collecting for the Nourish food banks. Members of the RC Church serve as volunteers in Carillon Cottage and some belong to the Anglican homegroups.



The Focus magazine, published monthly, is the magazine of Wadhurst, Tidebrook and Stonegate Churches. It is considered to be an essential resource for information about the church services and church activities but it also includes information about community activities and local businesses. It is delivered by a team of volunteers to houses in all the three parishes.

5. Our resources

Finance. All three parishes have adequate reserves. Copies of our annual reports can be provided for shortlisted candidates. However a summary is provided below.

The congregation at Wadhurst gives to the church in 3 ways – through the plate, some members using yellow Gift Aid envelopes, by planned giving and by the parish giving scheme (PGS). The church's principal expenditure is usually around £150,000. This is for parish share, staffing and administration costs, supporting outreach programmes, mission and maintenance of the church.

In Tidebrook more than half of all Parish income is covered by 'Planned giving with Gift Aid'.

As would be expected in an affluent area the parishes are financially secure. The levels of regular giving enables the three parishes to contribute to the diocese 135% of costs, at the same time giving approximately £22,000 per annum to missions and charities. Large sums have also been raised by donations for significant projects such as the purchase of Carillon Cottage, the reordering of Wadhurst Church and the restoration of the spire, and the building of Tidebrook Parish Room.

Most members of the congregation at Stonegate give regularly through the Parish Giving scheme. The annual income is supplemented by a churchyard fund to which worshippers and people living in and around the village contribute annually. The fund is available for the maintenance of the churchyard and exterior fabric of the church. The churchyard is maintained by a local contractor who visits a day each week to carry out necessary work.

6. Other information

- Many people subscribe to daily reading notes from Scripture Union, Bible Reading Fellowship and CWR.
- Members of the congregation are actively involved in Christian summer holidays and support Christian study days held at Ashburnham Christian Centre.
- The three churches actively support Christian Aid and members are part of the 'Street Pastor's team' in Tunbridge Wells

St Peter and St Paul, Wadhurst



St John the Baptist, Tidebrook



St Peter, Stonegate



St Peter and St Paul, The Church Office: Carillon Cottage, The High Street, Wadhurst, TN5 6AA Telephone: 01892 782141, Email: wadhurst.church.office@gmail.com, www.wadhurstparishchurch.org Registered charity number 1132389