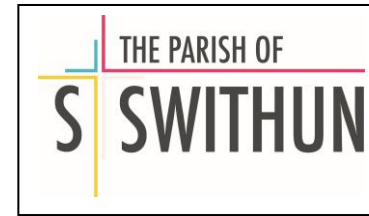


PARISH PROFILE

ST SWITHUN'S WITH ST
LUKE EAST GRINSTEAD



Preface by our Patron, The Right Reverend Dr Martin Warner, Bishop of Chichester

Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith

In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Sisley. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin



INTRODUCTION

The parish of St Swithun's with St Luke's is situated in the heart of East Grinstead and we are a church community based on faith, service and love. As a church family we are supportive of each other and always look to witness to God's love for everyone no matter who or where they are through prayer, worship and acts of loving service. We recognise the importance of growing God's church here in East Grinstead and that it is the task of each and every one of us to play our part in this. Our Vicar will be an inspirational, outgoing, yet prayerful, individual who will grasp this incumbency as an opportunity to inspire and guide us in growing God's church by encouraging parishioners to continue to give generously of themselves both financially and of their time and talents, and by making changes that are necessary both to the liturgy and to the buildings to ensure the parish continues to be a centre for Christian worship in East Grinstead for generations to come.

Although we have tried to make this document give a flavour of what the parish has to offer, and what we see our current challenges to be, we are aware that you may well have questions which we have not answered, so do feel free to contact either of the Churchwardens via the Parish Office

(admin@swithhq.org.uk)



OUR NEW VICAR

We are seeking a Vicar who is a confident and energetic leader and is:

- an inspiring minister of both the Word and Sacrament. An excellent preacher who is Spirit led and who will help us to apply God's word to our daily lives.
- willing to work collaboratively with a large team of active volunteers inspiring us by their example of what it means to love God, imitate Christ and be a mission-focused people;
- experienced at expanding and diversifying the church, who can enthuse others with their vision and fresh ideas, and who can help us take practical action towards achieving our vision for growth.
- an effective communicator to all age groups, keen to engage with all members of the local community, whether or not they are members of the congregation;
- a warm and friendly individual who openly demonstrates their faith and has strong pastoral skills;
- who values both Eucharistic and other forms of liturgy; and is willing to introduce a variety of styles of worship
- willing to work with our Churches Together partners in East Grinstead to serve the whole town.

Our PCC look forward to sharing ministry with you.

As one of our children said: 'we want somebody who is "happy, helpful and kind".'



Our Town: East Grinstead

Set on a sandstone hilltop 400 feet above sea level, East Grinstead stands about halfway between London and the South Coast and is located on the Greenwich Meridian. East Grinstead is an ancient market town with a wealth of architectural heritage. The High Street contains one of the longest continuous runs of 14th century timber-framed buildings in England, as well as Sackville College, the sandstone alms-house built in 1609 funded by the Will of Robert Sackville, Earl of Dorset. Here the Victorian hymnologist, the Revd. Dr John Mason Neale, who was College Warden from 1846 to 1866, wrote many well-known hymns and carols, including “Good King Wenceslas”. Dr Neale founded the first Anglican sisterhood, the Society of St. Margaret, and was one of the leading figures in the Oxford movement, which endeavoured to revitalise High Church institutions. The grave and memorial to John Mason Neale is situated in the southeast corner of St Swithun’s churchyard..

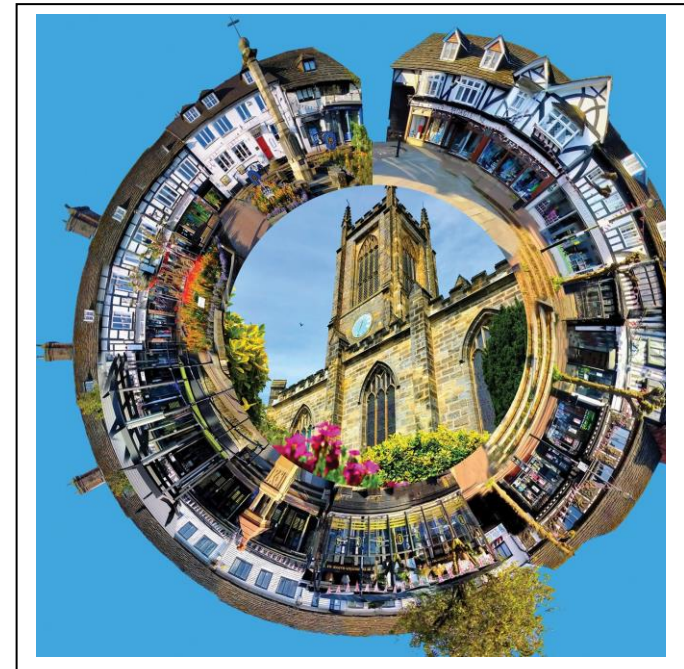
Today, East Grinstead town centre is a hub of activity with a range of independently owned shops and some well-known brands. The market tradition continues with farmers’ market stalls in the High Street every Thursday morning.

The population of around 28,000 (of which 18,000 are in our Parish) is well served with amenities including a theatre, cinema, library, a railway station, (with trains to London Victoria or London Bridge taking about an hour via East Croydon, as well as some direct Thameslink trains to St Pancras and beyond), a variety of sports facilities including a leisure centre with pool, and the world-renowned Queen Victoria Hospital which is a regional centre for plastic and reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation. There is one Church of England primary school, one Catholic primary school and four other primary schools in the town. There are also two secondary schools, both of which have a Sixth Form, as well as a number of independent schools in the locality.

Some local firms offer employment opportunities within the town. However, many residents take the bus or drive to work in Crawley, Gatwick Airport, Tunbridge Wells or commute by train to London.

On the outskirts of the town is Standen, a country house now belonging to the National Trust, containing a notable collection of Arts and Crafts movement furnishings and fabrics. Travel a further six miles and you will come to Wakehurst Place, the country estate of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Other local attractions include the Bluebell Railway, a preserved heritage line with steam locomotives which run from East Grinstead station, and the Ashdown Forest, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from where the tower of St Swithun’s can be seen prominently on the skyline



The Parish of St Swithun with St Luke

The Parish church of St Swithun is a large town centre church with a hall and parish office set within a closed churchyard, with the vicarage adjacent. The parish office is open every weekday morning and is staffed by our Parish Administrator and supported by volunteers.

Our daughter church, St Luke's, worships in the Community Room in the part of East Grinstead known as Stone Quarry.

There are currently 340 members on the Parish electoral roll and average attendance at weekly services across our two churches is 120 at St Swithun's and 12 at St Luke's.

During the interregnum our services have been led by our two self-supporting priests, supported by our three Readers.

St Swithun's has two Churchwardens who are well supported by the PCC, by previous Churchwardens within the congregation and a volunteer Works Team who can be relied upon to carry out minor works and organise contractors etc when required. There are also other groups and individuals working behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of the parish: our Parish Administrator, a team of Lay Sacristans, Church Cleaners, the Gardening Group, our Confidential Giving Secretary and the Outward Giving Committee to name but a few.



Worship & Music

St Swithun's

On the 1st Sunday of each month there is an 8am Said Eucharist and 10am all-age Worship Together service is held at 10am with an average of 90 adults and 15 children attending. The service is informal and the music is led by our music group. The children are invited to participate in the sermon and teenagers get involved with reading the lesson and leading intercessions. This service is an opportunity to welcome to our church family those who have new-born babies and children who have recently been baptized. We maintain links with families inviting them to Family Worship each month as well as to festivals such as Easter, Harvest and 2 Crib services on Christmas Eve.

BCP Choral Evensong is held at 6.30pm on the first Sunday of the month with an average attendance of 25.

On all other Sundays of the month there is an 8am Said Eucharist and 10am Sung Eucharist with music led by the Choir with an average attendance of 110 adults and 8 children, who, if they are primary school age, attend The Good News Club in our hall joining us for a blessing at the distribution of the sacrament. Evening prayer is said by the Clergy at 5.30pm in the winter and 6.30pm in the summer months.

We continue our fellowship after all our 10am services over coffee and biscuits in the hall.

There is a said Eucharist on Wednesdays at 10am. The congregation on Wednesdays has grown to an average of 25 adults.

Our congregational numbers swell considerably for our Easter and Christmas services and for other festivals throughout the year.

To grow God's church here in East Grinstead we recognise that it is vital to reach more families. We have tried to appoint a Children and Family worker but, sadly, to date, we have been unsuccessful, although the funds for this post are still available. We look forward to working with our new Vicar to develop relationships with families across the Parish.



Occasional Offices

Baptisms: 16 in 2023 and 13 booked already in 2024

St. Swithun's has an open baptism policy.

We have baptisms at our main act of worship at 10 am and in groups of families at 12 noon as required.

Weddings: 10 in 2023

Funerals: 55 in 2023 both in church and at local crematoria.

The Choir

Our choir numbers 13 adults, all experienced amateur musicians. They enhance our worship with anthems from an extensive repertoire, leading the weekly congregational Eucharist, and the monthly full choral Evensong. We miss the choir in our worship when they take their annual break during August but it is a joy to hear their voices amongst us in the pews at this time. On the first Sunday of the month our Music Group supports the all-age Worship Together service at 10am. Our choir and musicians are led by our Director of Music, who is a professional organist and singer, and who is also a Reader.

The Organs and Piano

The large and impressive three manual west gallery pipe organ (Morgan and Smith, Brighton) has recently been upgraded and there is a versatile digital chamber organ for use with the choir at the east end of the church. There is also a splendid Bechstein Model B grand piano. These instruments improve the appeal of the church to outside groups and outreach via music. The annual St Swithun's Festival of the Arts is central to this outreach, building our visibility in the town, and bringing schools, professional musicians and a local audience to St Swithun's.

Bell Ringing

St Swithun's has a long history of prominence in bell ringing in Sussex and its old magnificent ring of eight heavy but demanding bells was replaced and augmented in 1983, becoming the first church in Sussex to have a ring of 12. As such it attracts a lot of visitors. We have a small loyal band of local ringers who practice every Wednesday evening and ring for the main 10am service each Sunday as well as for all the major festivals. Additionally, the band will ring for weddings upon request.



Children and Young People at St Swithun's

Sunday Activities for Children

The Good News Club for primary school age children is currently led by a member of the clergy and a team of enthusiastic volunteers every Sunday except for the first Sunday of the month when there is Family Worship in the church. We have an average of eight children per week.

TRAX youth group is held on the second Sunday of each month at 5pm for a small group of young people aged 10 years and over. It is led by two dedicated volunteers.

Children are admitted to communion if they are regular attenders at around eight years old.

We do not currently have crèche facilities at St Swithun's on Sundays but we will be improving our children's area to make our church more welcoming for families with babies and pre-school aged children



Easter Holiday Club is open to Junior school age children and is an opportunity to reach out to families to provide activities and games for their children culminating in our Good Friday family service with the children acting out the Easter Story.

Toddler Groups On Wednesdays and Friday mornings we run two thriving toddler groups in St Swithun's Hall.

We plan to reintroduce a toddler group at St Luke's Community Room when we have identified suitable leaders.

Guides, Brownies and Rainbows

There is one Rainbow group, two Brownie packs, and one Guide unit attached to the church. They are invited to parade three times a year: Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Christingle, although sadly very few parents support this.



St Swithun's Congregational Activities

Men's Relax meets every Monday night 8pm in the Church for an hour to listen to music, followed by a drink in a local pub.

Open House Tea and Talk Club for those of retirement age meets once a month on the last Tuesday in St Swithun's hall with about 30 members.

Solace offers support and friendship for the bereaved. Meetings are once a month on the first Wednesday in St Swithun's hall. About 25 people attend this group.

The Julian Prayer Group meets weekly at the leader's home.

Housegroups we have three regular groups in addition to Lent and Advent groups.



The Saturday Coffee Shop is staffed by volunteers every Saturday between 10am and 12 noon in St Swithun's Hall serving coffee, Danish pastries and the ever popular bacon sandwiches. This attracts some customers who are not part of our regular congregation.

The Mothers' Union currently has 43 members, including two 'indoor' members. There are evening and afternoon meetings once a month. Activities include fund-raising for various charities.

The Flower Arrangers make sure the church flowers are always beautiful.

Local schools regularly use St Swithun's Church for key Festivals and also invite our team into school to take assemblies. A number of our parishioners are Governors at schools within our Parish and at St Mary's School in our neighbouring parish.



ST SWITHUN'S IN THE COMMUNITY

Our engagement with those who live and work in our Community and wider world is important to us

It is one of our strengths that St Swithun's Church continues to play a significant role in the town; many schools and organisations choose to hold events here. We hold an annual Festival of Arts, where local schools and other local art groups exhibit art work and musical performances are given by both professional and amateur musicians.

We host the East Grinstead Choral Society for weekly rehearsals and concerts, and other choral societies and musicians also use our church.

There is an annual town May Fair and St Swithun's is open with activities in church and refreshments in the hall. St Swithun's holds an annual Christmas Craft Fair.



We regularly host the Mayoral Civic Service and our Clergy, supported by the choir, lead the town's annual Act of Remembrance in the High Street in November. The parish works closely with its Churches Together partners in East Grinstead and it was particularly pleasing that the newly appointed Minister of the local Methodist Church supported our Clergy at the Remembrance Parade in 2023 for the first time.

We are sent out from church each week to "love and serve the Lord" and many members of our congregation do this by being involved with a wide variety of voluntary organisations in the town. With our Churches Together partners we run a foodbank, CARE which helps the elderly and Street Pastors.



OUR CHURCHES

ST SWITHUN'S is a large church Grade II* church situated in a closed churchyard off the High Street. There has been a church on this site since the 11th century and following a lightning strike in 1772 it was rebuilt by James Wyatt. The tower is a landmark that can be seen from afar.

Over the years the church has undergone various re-ordering projects notably with an extension to the nave platform in late 1990's. In recent years the PCC has striven to implement the Diocesan strategy to encourage all to "know, love and follow Jesus" and to further our mission to be a more welcoming and inviting church. In 2022 we completed Phase One of a re-ordering project with the installation of glass doors at the South and West doors making our entrances more welcoming and the prospect for visitors and newcomers entering our church for the first time less daunting. The font was also relocated to create a new, more spacious baptistry.

Plans are under way for Phase Two of our re-ordering project: the improvement of our children's area. We recognize that it is vital to grow our congregation across all ages, especially to welcome more families and young people and a more comfortable, generous children's area will play an important role in achieving this. We look forward to working with our new Vicar to bring these plans to fruition. We are working hard to improve our green credentials with a view to becoming carbon neutral. We have an array of solar panels installed on the roof, we have recently achieved the Bronze Eco Church award and are now working on achieving the Silver award

St Swithun's church is open every day for visitors and locals to spend time viewing the many historical monuments, have some quiet time of prayer and reflection and to light a candle. Adjacent to the church is our Hall and Parish Office. The hall is regularly used by church and some community groups. There is a view amongst the congregation that the hall is no longer fit for purpose and consideration should be given to developing this area for more use by the wider community. The PCC welcomes the opportunity to work with a Vicar with vision and drive to pursue future capital projects.

ST LUKE'S COMMUNITY ROOM is on the ground floor of a development of flats in Stone Quarry. Services have only fairly recently resumed here following the departure of the East Grinstead Community Café to alternative premises. The PCC is keen to hire this room to other community groups for the benefit of local residents at a nominal cost.



THE VICARAGE is a large four bedroomed detached house to the side of St Swithun's churchyard within its own walled garden. It was re-built in 1965. The ensuite bathroom, family bathroom and kitchen were all installed within the last 10 years. A double garage and large gated driveway are to the front of the property. In the past Vicars have invited everyone to a garden party on St Swithun's Day to continue our celebrations after the service.



Safeguarding for children, young people and vulnerable adults

At St Swithun's we take safeguarding very seriously and ensure that all leaders are DBS checked and fully trained to the required level. Statistics show that perpetrators are less likely to focus on a church with an evident safeguarding culture. We have achieved Level 1 of SQP (Simple Quality Protects – the Diocesan Safeguarding Toolkit) and adhere to national safeguarding policies and guidance. This includes maintaining registers to ensure DBS checks and safeguarding training are up to date where relevant. Safeguarding is a standing item on our PCC agenda and the Church observes Safeguarding Sunday. We encourage people to come forward if they have a concern and material is displayed throughout the premises to explain how issues can be raised and to easily identify our Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Financial Position

We are fortunate to have a healthy balance sheet. St Swithun's with St Luke's is in a stable position financially.

A significant number of our church family give through the Parish Giving Scheme.

Due to parish member generosity and careful financial management we were able to remit £94,000 to the Chichester Diocesan Board of Finance in 2023, some, £13,000 more than the requested Parish Contribution.

In 2023 Missionary and Charitable giving to Home and Overseas missions totalled £16,758

Our financial records are computerised using SAGE accounting software

Full accounts and budget are all available on request

Parish Communications

We have made a video for people find out more about our parish which can be found on our parish website <https://www.swithun.org.uk> which holds details of all upcoming events and is used to share news within the parish community

Traditional methods of face-to-face communications and Church noticeboards are well used. We offer a printed service sheet for Sunday worship as well as a printed notices sheet. The notices are also sent out by weekly email to a list of around 200 subscribers.

There is a well-used Parish Facebook group and a Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/StSwithunsEG>

The very informative East Grinstead town Council website is here: <https://www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk>