

The United Benefice of
St Peter East Blatchington



and
St Andrew Bishopstone



Parish Profile 2024

Introduction from the 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 Selsey. 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*

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Is God calling you here?



The United Benefice of East Blatchington and Bishopstone comprises two equally beautiful but distinct church communities and buildings. The Parishes are both bracketed by the East Sussex coastline and the South Downs; each benefits from the beauty of these locations and the life that comes with living close to the amenities and services offered within the small town of Seaford.

We are seeking a Rector to join our church family, to lead our ministry team, to encourage our congregations, and to help us continue to be a beacon to the presence of Christ. We believe this is an exciting and joyful place to minister, helped by an Associate Vicar, a Reader Emeritus, several retired clergy and a faithful and committed church laity. Both churches have a commitment to liturgical worship and are passionate about being the Anglican Church for the people with us and around us. We recognise that God is already at work within our local communities and over the past few years each church has developed their own ways of reaching out and being Good News in their locality . We long for a priest who will inspire us to continue and develop His work and calling, enabling the living Church of St Peter's and St Andrew's to be a beating heart in our parishes as we share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Person specification

We are hoping for a priest who ...

- .. is faithful in prayer and worship
- .. has a commitment to the sacraments
- .. is inclusive in their welcome of all people
- .. is able to lead, and enthuse, a team
- .. delights in pastoral ministry
- .. can balance tradition and vision
- .. has a heart for outreach and nurturing faith
- .. has energy and creativity
- .. has some technological skill

Who we are

The ecclesiastical parishes of East Blatchington - St. Peter and Bishopstone - St. Andrew, lie within the diocese and jurisdiction of the Lord Bishop of Chichester, the Archdeaconry of Lewes and Brighton and the Deanery of Lewes and Seaford. In 2008 the parishes became a United Benefice with the Rector based at St. Peter's Church and a house for duty priest based at St. Andrew's Church. This is currently Revd. Elizabeth Jinks, Associate Vicar, who ministers three and a half days a week and works within the Benefice clergy rota.

St Peter's Church, Parish of East Blatchington
population circa 9,000 Patron: Bishop of Chichester

The Community and Parish

The parish of East Blatchington serves the densely populated western side of the town of Seaford and straddles the A259. The parish of St Peter is mainly private housing, with a few shops and one pub/hotel, The White Lion. There is a significant number of nursing and care homes within the parish and one primary school within a short distance of the church. We work closely with the homes and school, and these are areas we would like to develop. The congregation reflects the local population of predominantly retired and elderly people, although in recent years we have been blessed by younger folk joining us. We are keen to maintain and develop relationships with those of working age within our congregation. As a result of the varied churchmanship of the Seaford parishes our congregation (as with the other churches in the area) is drawn from a much wider base than the parish.

St Andrew's Church, Parish of Bishopstone
population circa 3,000 Patron: Bishop of London

The Community and Parish

The parish of Bishopstone lies on the western edge of Seaford, approximately two miles from the town centre. The parish encompasses the village of Bishopstone and the hamlet of Norton, with the two modern housing developments of Hawth Hill and Harbour View which are separated by the A259.

The village itself is not served by public transport. Within the parish are three farms and two seasonal caravan parks, the Sailing Club, Tidemills and many popular and busy walking routes - some walking right through Bishopstone churchyard as part of their route. The Parish Hall, which is owned and administered by a trust, is adjacent to the churchyard and its toilets are made available for church use.

Our churches – services and numbers

	St Peter's	St Andrew's
Electoral Roll 2024	128	86
Baptisms per year	Between 4 and 10	Between 2 and 4
Funerals per year	Approx. 12-18	Approx. 8-12
Weddings per year	Between 1 and 3	Between 2 and 3
SERVICES and PRAYER	<i>Average in-person attendance</i>	<i>Average attendance</i>
Sunday Eucharists and Choral Matins 2 nd Sunday at St Andrew's	Saturday 5.30pm: 20 Sunday 8am: 12-15 Sunday 10am*: 52	Sunday 8am: 15 Sunday 10.30am: 20
Evensong	On Feast days: 15-20	First Sunday: 12-15
Mid-week Mass	Weds. 10.30am: 6-10	Weds. 10am: 6-10
Morning Prayer	Tue., Thu., Fri., Sat. 9.30am: 5-6*	n/a
Evening Prayer	Sun. 6pm: 4-6	Weds. 5.30pm: 4-8
Compline	Monday and Wednesday 8pm**	n/a
Rosary Group	2nd and 4th Tuesdays 6.15pm: 5-12	n/a
Breathing Space	Every Mon. 6pm: 5-10	Last Fri. 5pm: 4-6

* 'Hybrid' worship both in person and online

**Online only



The Chancel, St Peter's

Our ministry as a United Benefice

Following the formation of the United Benefice of East Blatchington and Bishopstone in May 2008 the congregations have found a degree of working together, while maintaining the distinctive nature of each church.

The Ministry Team

We have a friendly and collaborative team of Associate Vicar and retired clergy who work well together to support and maintain the life of this United Benefice. We also have a Reader Emeritus who is at present our Pastoral Lead. As a benefice we are committed to training curates and nurturing new vocations. We would be open to welcoming someone looking for a first living or someone looking for a new challenge.

Our Common Ground

We are blessed to have a Benefice Administrative Assistant based in the St Peter's Chapel Rooms office. Although she works for just 16 hours a week, taking care of the financial paperwork for funerals, baptisms, general enquiries, the website, posters, e-newsletters and social media, this enables the clergy to focus on the ministry to which they were called. This post is financed by a 50% contribution from each PCC.

Benefice Pastoral Team

With seven care homes in the parish of East Blatchington, (that serve both parishes and the wider town) and an increasing number of people who find themselves housebound, we have developed a pastoral ministry to include the provision of home communions, pastoral visiting, and 'Prayer and Praise' services in our care homes. We recognise that this ministry could be stronger if we worked across the benefice, although this is still aspirational at present. A pastoral team of clergy and lay ministers takes communion to housebound individuals in their homes and in care homes, and the sick and lonely are visited. This is an area that is ripe for further development. Many people in the parishes also look out for one another on an informal basis.

Learning and Praying Together

Members of our United Benefice appreciate coming together to learn and pray and we find crossover and fellowship in our prayer and study groups. We were delighted when, in May 2024, Bishop William Hazlewood confirmed nine adults from this benefice, the preparation classes having been shared across the parishes. We have a well-attended and lay-led weekly Bible Group, regular courses and lectures. We look to strengthening this relationship with opportunities for shared worship and socialising.

Baptisms

We have an open, affirming and inviting approach to baptism for people who live in both parishes. We believe that baptism marks God's gracious welcome while trusting that He is already at work in the life of the family in ways that may not yet be acknowledged. Our Children, Young People and Families work has partly emerged out of our baptism ministry and we long to create stepping stones and opportunities into the faith for the

families that God brings to our church doors. In recent years we have also had several adult baptisms.

Children and young people

As a Benefice we have built up a focused, and careful relationship with key families and young people in our two parishes. We have been honest about our capacity and recognise we have a call to nurture the faith within small numbers. Embracing this has been key to the growth we have seen in this area.

Little Fishes



This group currently meets monthly and offers a fun afternoon of faith and friendship for 0-8's and their parents/carers. Rooted in a theology of forming relationships, activities and story-telling (including Godly-Play) this is a group to which we invite all of our infant baptism families. Its growth, and subsequent widening of the age-range, present new challenges and our children's ministry is a distinct area needing further development.

Lighthouse

This fellowship of 11-16-year-olds meets monthly in St Peter's Chapel Rooms and includes members from both parishes. We spend time crafting, playing games, learning about our faith and eating together. It is very small in number but often deep in our journeying together and is an essential safe space for our teenagers to explore their thoughts and feelings. We regularly celebrate the Eucharist within the group.



*Benefice
confirmation
2024*

St Peter's East Blatchington

The Church building

The Church of St Peter is a grade II* listed building and lies within the East Blatchington conservation area. Evidence suggests that the church building dates from the early 12th century, but that this was a sacred site in pre-Christian times. It is built mainly of flint with a tiled roof and shingled spire, topped with a gilded weathercock which was erected to mark the Millennium. In February 2022 four pews were removed and the floor levelled mid-nave. This has created a flexible and welcoming space for young families and offers accessibility to people with mobility issues. This Lady Chapel space is now used for small prayer groups and activities. A ramp enables easy access up the single step into the chancel. One of the glories of the church interior is the beautiful blue and gold chancel ceiling surrounded by angels

Our Worship

Prayer and the worship of God are the foundation-stones that allow us to live in the joy of the Gospel and to make known the presence of Christ in our community. We have opportunities to pray together, in various forms, throughout the week. In our worship we value a modern Anglo-Catholic liturgy with the Eucharist being central to our worship. Incense is commonly used to enhance our worship on Sundays and festivals and these services are also live streamed. The livestreaming equipment has recently been totally reimagined to make it very efficient and easy to operate. The Saturday 5.30pm mass is a said Eucharist, with a small faithful congregation who appreciate a quieter service. At present the first Saturday of the month includes prayers, and anointing, for healing and wholeness and the third Saturday includes some Taizé music.

St Peter's: open to God, open-hearted, open minded, open to all.

St Peter's has long been a parish that seeks to be friendly, inclusive and welcoming to all. In the past few years we have seen growth and development in many aspects of our parish life, not least an increase in our life of prayer, the arrival of new members and collaborative involvement with community groups in delivering projects. It is impossible to make an assessment of these years without taking into consideration the impact of the COVID pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine. Our response to these challenges has contributed to our life together, not least in the provision of online worship, and English classes for Ukrainian refugees. We are committed to growing in our openness and are working to fulfil the 2021 Mission Action Plan.

Open to God

We are committed to our life of prayer and ensuring that others are able to enter our doors to connect with the presence of God. Regular morning prayer services have created a rhythm of prayer in our parish along with the twice-weekly Compline services (online). Regular prayer groups meet to keep silence ('Breathing Space') or to pray the Rosary, and our occasional Quiet Days open the church up with prayer stations, Taizé and other ways of praying.



We keep the church open every day (without stewards) between the hours of 9am and 6pm and we know this is greatly appreciated by the wider community. We often meet people seeking peace in our church and churchyard, helped by the many benches now available. We are committed to our Eucharistic worship and to enabling people to study and engage with their faith and the scriptures.

Open-hearted

We are keen to see a greater diversity in age, gender and ethnicity within our congregation and with this in mind we have registered with the Inclusive Church Network of churches and the Welcome Churches Network for refugees. The PCC is made up of a diverse group of people and is committed to inclusivity. They have passed a resolution to allow the blessing of same-sex relationships, and would support and encourage a priest in using the proposed prayers of love and faith. Alongside *Lighthouse* and *Little Fishes* we have reached out to other children and families through seasonal Messy Church afternoons and a half-term Churchyard trail, and would like to develop more activities of this nature.

A recent development of seasonal Services for All, run in partnership with Forget-me-knot, the primary school and care homes has enabled many of our older and vulnerable parishioners to rediscover the joy of coming into church for inter-generational worship.



Like many churches, we have discovered that the live-streaming of services has been a boon to people, both within and outside our parish, who can no longer attend in person, helping them to feel more included. We have recently upgraded our sound system and live-stream facility to enhance the worship for both our in-person and online congregations. A bright and interesting parish magazine, *Cross Keys* is produced about six times a year. Recent back issues can be viewed on the website. Copies of *Cross Keys* are delivered to people who are unable to get out and about.

Open-minded

There is a weekly Bible Group with special courses being held for Lent and Advent. We recently held a guided mass in each of our parishes connected to a confirmation preparation course. We encourage opportunities for learning through lectures and engagement with other courses. We have a small parish library from which the congregation can borrow spiritual reading books. It is our goal to further review the environmental impact of our behaviours as a church and make changes where we can to reduce our carbon footprint.

Open to all – every day



Friendship between young and old!

Whilst our ancient building is beautiful, it does create challenges to welcoming and accommodating families with young children, people with disabilities, and those who are vulnerable – and for this reason the Lady Chapel was created for greater access. However, we now find that the space created is insufficient for those needing to use it and further development will need to be explored. There are large print versions of the weekly bulletin and hymn books and children's toys and books available. We have been blessed by the arrival of new parishioners, some finding us online, some by word of mouth and others by moving into the area

We have discovered the joy and strength of working in local partnership including working with Seafriends in enabling a weekly Forget-me-Knot Café, for those living with dementia and their carers, in our Chapel Rooms. Members of our congregation run this alongside other Seafriends volunteers. It has also been our joy to welcome children from the local primary school into our church as part of their RE curriculum. The school is keen to maintain a relationship with the church, and there are opportunities for further development in this area.

Our People and Activities

St. Peter's has a supportive laity and PCC, and a very efficient serving and sacristy team, Members of the congregation are active within eucharistic services in administering the chalice, leading the intercessions and giving the readings; they also share in leading daily prayers. A monthly Parish Prayer Diary is produced as a resource for those participating in the life of daily prayer. Music is under the direction of an accomplished organist and our choir, led by a young and enthusiastic teacher, leads the congregation in singing hymns and seasonal settings for the eucharist. We are active members of the inter-denominational Churches Together in Seaford.

An art and craft group, and a crochet circle meet once a week and we host a community lunch once a month. A hard-working fund-raising committee has brought in significant amounts of money for the ministry of the church through a programme of lectures, concerts, open gardens, quizzes, wine-tasting and flower festivals and fêtes.

Finance and giving

We are blessed with an excellent Treasurer and a generous congregation. The recent astronomical rises in heating costs hit us hard and left us carrying a deficit. However, we have now invested in new control systems to try and be as efficient as possible. We pay our parish share contribution and full clergy expenses.

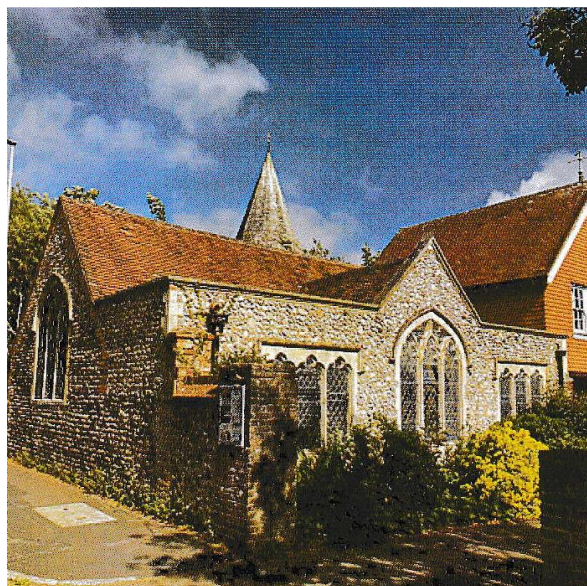
Our charitable giving is usually raised through specific collections at events, Christmas services and Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeals.

The Churchyard

The churchyard is closed for burials, but cremated remains are interred in a 'Remembrance Garden' area. Recent years have seen the addition of several benches, which are well-used, including a curved bench in a community memorial garden for those who died during the COVID pandemic.

Lewes District Council is responsible for basic maintenance of the churchyard – mowing and repairs to boundary walls, paths, etc. – and we look after other aspects of its maintenance and enhancement. Floodlights have been installed to illuminate the church and churchyard.

The Chapel Rooms



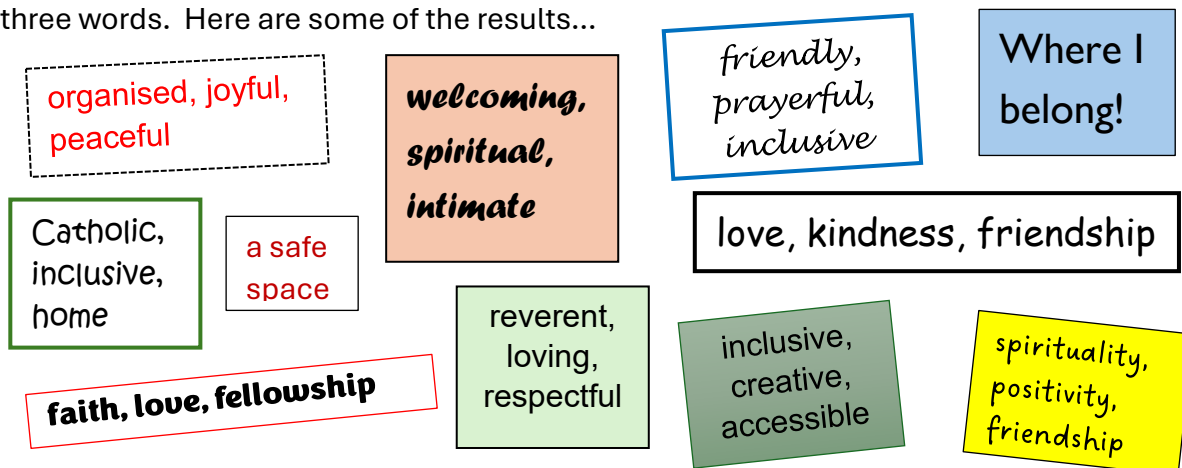
The Church hall, known as the Chapel Rooms, which is adjacent to the church, offers a main hall, parish office, kitchen, upstairs room and toilets. There is car parking space outside the hall. The whole building was completely refurbished inside during the summer of 2023. The hall is in almost constant use by our church and members of the community, including various fitness and dance groups, a Marine Training Corps, Brownies and the Forget-me-Knot café. It is also available for hire for private parties.

The Rectory

The rectory is a five-bedroomed detached house, built in 1992 adjacent to the church hall car park. There is a double garage and hard-standing for two cars.

Just three words

We asked members of our congregation to say what St Peter's meant to them – in just three words. Here are some of the results...



St Andrew's Bishopstone

The Building and Churchyard



St Andrew's is a very important Sussex church with a history beginning in the 7th century and being added to over the subsequent generations. Primarily of Anglo-Saxon and Norman architecture she is a very special church. Standing in the village of Bishopstone, approximately one mile north of the main A259 coast road, it is a Grade I listed building and is the only place of worship in the parish. The Church was built between 600 and 800 AD and is perhaps the oldest Saxon Church in Sussex.

A programme of restoration following our Quinquennial in 2023 is in hand. We greatly benefit by having as Fabric Officer a retired surveyor who is a member of the congregation. The church provides seating for about 130. We have an open churchyard which is well maintained by contractors and volunteers, and overseen by our Fabric Officer, with memorials and burials by agreement with the Rector. Many folk visit to tend graves and appreciate its sacredness. Its peacefulness is much appreciated by local people and many ramblers stop and find a bench while they eat their lunch. It is a very special place indeed. We hold a much-appreciated annual Open-Air Service in the churchyard each August in memory of those 'At Rest' here or elsewhere.

Our Worship

St Andrew's maintains its distinct identity with its worship which is based on the Book of Common Prayer and 'Hymns Old and New'. We lean towards being Prayer-Book

Catholic, but while we value tradition, we also acknowledge that within the congregation there is a wide variety of Christian backgrounds. We have a Director of Music and Choir Master with a choir of eight adult members which we would like to build up again. The Eucharist is central to our worship with two services on a Sunday and a service midweek. The last Wednesday of the month we incorporate 'Wholeness and Healing'. Matins on the second Sunday of the month becomes our main service, with Sung Evensong on the first Sunday of the month. There is a tremendous feeling of 'family' within the congregation, which has come about by the desire to see the life and mission of St. Andrew's alive and active within the Parish and community.

St. Andrew's, Holy and Historic Heart of the Parish

We are committed to growing as the Holy and Historic Heart of the Parish by delivering our Mission Action Plan (MAP): More Open, More Converted, More Generous, More Engaged. Our MAP has been written after a consultation through which we listened carefully to our wider community, our existing congregation and younger members and all held in a faithful process of prayer and discernment. One of the outcomes of this process was for the PCC to form two sub-groups, one looking after the Fabric and Worship aspects, and the other an Outreach group incorporating all social and hospitality events throughout the year. In addition, there is Arts @ St. Andrew's promoting concerts and talks in the church.

More Open

We look for opportunities to engage with our parish community. In December we hold a Christingle Service, and Outdoor Carols, as well as keeping our traditional Nine Lessons and Carols. It has been traditional to mark Sea Sunday every July with a special service supporting Mission to Seafarers. Our Fête/Open Church events are well supported by the local community. This year we held a joint Fayre working with the Parish Hall committee. We acknowledge our Patron Saint's Day with a lunch and a Gift Day Appeal which raised £2,400 last November. Having recently benefited from a wonderful legacy, we are pursuing the possibility of creating toilet facilities within an enlarged vestry. Currently we have use of the facilities in the parish hall. To have our own facilities including a tea making area would open even more possibilities for the future.



*Bishopstone
fête*

More Converted

We give a warm welcome to newcomers and visitors. Our Eucharist service books have been reprinted with a modern feel and we have recently joined the Prayer Book Society. We offer learning and growth, through lectures, and hopefully quiet days in the future. Cultural events such as talks and concerts are promoted through our 'Arts @ St. Andrew's'. We are always delighted by the support that our events are shown by members of our local community, and we are committed to building up the relationships that will break down any barriers to people coming to be with us. When we have the church open on Wednesdays and Saturdays there is always a steward on duty to welcome visitors. We are working towards our goal of having the church open on other days, unattended.

More Engaged

As the parish church we wish to ensure that we make it easy for people to engage with our church with appropriate communications and the nurture of relationships over time. We hope to continue pro-actively building up our e-newsletter distribution list and using both print and online methods to communicate, and to maintain our visibility.

The things people say:



from our visitors' book ...

"How great to find a church so well-maintained, well-used for the Mass and so well loved."

"An absolute treasure. So well worth visiting. Tranquil, ageless, beautiful."

"A beautiful church which is peaceful and settles the spirit."

"Very lovely church and helpful steward on duty. Keep going."

from our congregation ...

"A safe and friendly haven filled with the peace and prayers of people past and present"

"I find this a special place for prayer, reflection and solace. Very much a church family, being friendly, helpful and supportive."

"A very special place, perfect for prayer and contemplation by the statue of Our Lady where I sit. I absolutely love it!"

More Generous

We recognise that giving is far more than money. We wish to nurture the spirit of generosity towards our wider community and to respond to the needs of the wider world by actively engaging with other parish charities, groups and organisations. We are a member of Churches Together in Seaford, who have a strong Ministers' Fellowship. We support the local Christian Aid committee with their appeal week, and annually organise a fundraising Cream Tea in the parish hall. All the churches work together with other agencies in times of crisis.

Finance

We, like many other churches, suffered financially during 2020 due to COVID and its restrictions. However, we weathered the storm and have been blessed by the generosity of our present congregation and those who have passed away bequeathing to St. Andrew's wonderful legacies. We are grateful for an excellent treasurer who has helped us to steward our resources. We have kept pace with the ever-increasing costs of our parish share contribution £30,000 for 2024, as well as maintaining our annual charitable giving, housekeeping commitments, and keeping up with the demands of health and safety regulations and safeguarding. We are proud of our stewardship in maintaining our Grade I listed building.

Charitable Giving

Our charitable giving is reviewed each year by our Charities sub-committee. The sum of £2,100 was distributed In 2023 as follows:-

Dande Stravani- the education of a young Indian girl. This is a continuing commitment.

Computers for Charities + shoe boxes

Family Support Work – Diocese of Chichester + Monthly food donations

Mission Aviation Fellowship. Friends of the Holy Land. Akwarda charity in Ghana.

DEC appeal for Gaza. Local Seahaven Food Bank.

Livability - Helping disabled people

HOMELINK - Lewes District Council and CTS working together for the homeless.

‘Sea Sunday’ service donating the collection to The Mission to Seafarers.



*Sea Sunday
at
St Andrew's*

Seaford – as a place to live

The town of Seaford is on the south coast between Brighton and Eastbourne. It has a compact and vibrant shopping centre with a variety of small shops, supermarkets, cafés, pubs, restaurants, a library and various offices. There is a small industrial estate on the eastern edge of the town. Four primary schools and an 11-18 secondary school cater for children and young people up to the age of 18; colleges of further education are in the county town of Lewes, a short train ride away, and at Eastbourne. The main campuses of Sussex and Brighton Universities are quite close by at Falmer, between Lewes and Brighton.

The town has many sports and recreational clubs, a swimming pool and leisure centre. The seafront and the South Downs National Park are popular locations for walking and cycling, and the beautiful Cuckmere Haven and Seven Sisters cliffs are close by. Public transport is good, with buses every few minutes to Brighton and Eastbourne and two trains an hour to Lewes and Brighton. There are good connections with London trains at Lewes, and the Seaford – London Victoria journey takes around 90 minutes. There is a passenger and freight ferry between Newhaven and Dieppe. The population of Seaford is about 24,000, and it is the largest town in the Lewes District.

And finally ...

Thank you for taking the time to read our Parish Profiles and prayerfully consider whether this might be the next place you are being called to serve. We are praying for a priest after God's own heart, someone committed to leading worship with a depth of prayer, and who will help us to look outwards and inwards to discover the Kingdom of God within ourselves, our churches, and within our world. Warmth, honesty, humility and a genuine love of Christ and people are what we need in these parishes.

We will offer you, and your family, a warm welcome, delight in worshipping with you and be willing to work with you to further God's work in this place. We hope that, in return, you would love and care for us and lead us deeper into the ways of God. We would expect you to take a weekly rest day, and regular holidays and retreats.

You might also like to visit our website, social media pages and YouTube Channel which will give you even more of an insight. Please know that we are praying for you, and we hope that you will pray for us too. If you have questions, want to know more, or would like to quietly visit us, please contact the Churchwardens who will be delighted to chat with you.

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