

# St Faith's Lee

The Parish Church of Lee-on-the-Solent

## St Faith's, Lee-on-the-Solent Brief Parish Profile

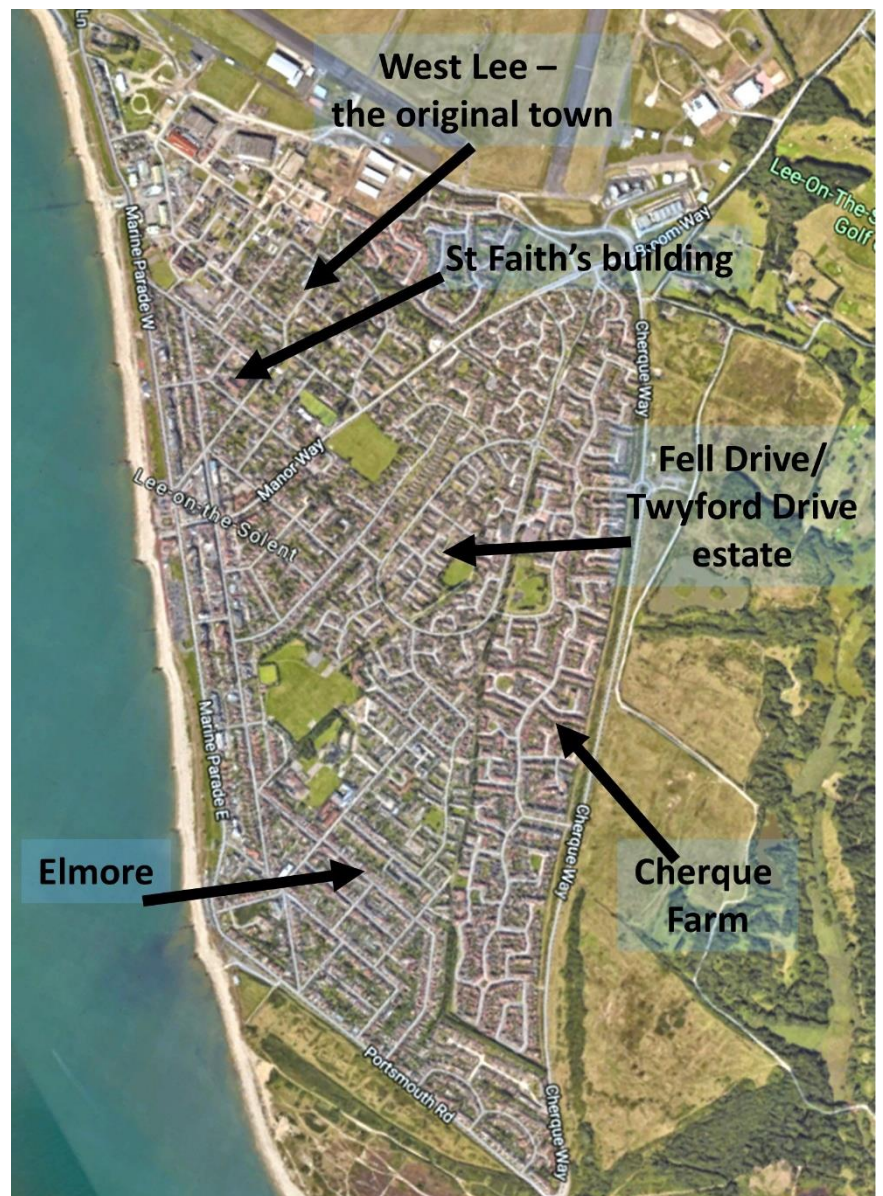
**Our vision is to be a welcoming innovative Christian community of all ages and all stages of faith, nurturing spiritual growth, and representing God's living presence in our town.**

### Lee-on-the-Solent

Lee-on-the-Solent is a pleasant seaside town which faces the Solent with views of the Isle of Wight. The town is within Gosport Borough, close to Portsmouth and about twelve miles from Southampton. There is a shingle beach and an extensive promenade stretching two miles along the foreshore, with the open spaces of Solent Airport, Lee Golf Course and the Alver Valley Country Park.

There are four distinct areas in Lee, each with characteristics which reflect building development. West Lee, where St Faith's Church is located, was developed as a seaside resort in the 1890s and early 1900s. The pleasant Edwardian villas still exist but there has been a considerable amount of residential infill and the housing on the sea front has been developed as apartments.

Elmore, towards the east of Lee, was originally developed at the same time as the west end, but with a higher density of housing. The Fell Drive/Twyford Drive estate was built in the 1970s and included the Lee Community Centre. The Cherque Farm is a recent addition of about 1000 houses and apartments.



Lee's total population is over 10,000 with 4,750 dwellings. The distribution of young and old is by no means uniform and data from the 2010 Census shows some marked contrasts. Just over 40% of the population lives in the more established areas of NW and SE Lee, including the sea front and shopping area, and has a higher proportion of couples whose families have grown up and left home. Almost 60% of the population lives in the more recent developments of Fell Drive/Twyford Drive and Cherque Farm, attracting younger people with young families who form the majority of residents.

The main schools are Lee Infant and Lee Junior, which are very popular, with a number of pre-school nursery facilities. Most secondary children attend Bay House School in Gosport and some attend Crofton School in neighbouring Stubbington. Post-16 education is provided at Bay House School which has a sixth form, with Further Education opportunities at Fareham College and St Vincent's College in Gosport.

Lee Community Centre, together with St Faith's Parish Centre and the Methodist Church, offers a wide range of community activities. Lee Tennis Club has facilities for tennis, squash, and a gym. Lee Sailing Club caters for enthusiastic dinghy sailors and Elmore Fishing Club provides facilities for those interested in longshore and small boat fishing. A large recreation ground in the middle of the town has football pitches, public tennis courts, a bowling club and scout hut.

The town is well provided with shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes. The shop owners of Lee are supportive of the church and community events and also provide a focus of social exchange within the town. There is a large medical centre, while dental care is catered for by two dental practices. There are a number of care homes and rest homes for the elderly and the infirm.

### **St Faith's vision & recent changes**

St Faith's is the parish church of Lee-on-the-Solent. The Anglican community in Lee dates from the foundation of the town in the 1880s, and first met in a "tin tabernacle", before the present church building was erected in the early 1930s.

In early 2015, 73% of the St Faith's community was over 65 years of age, compared with only 21% of our parish. At that time, of an Electoral Roll of over 200, only 23 people were in full-time employment. The PCC recognised that this was a serious concern back in 2013, and addressing this issue was included in the list of actions for a new vicar, appointed in 2014. In 2015, the church adopted a new vision statement (above), to describe the kind of church we want to be. We have made significant decisions in the light of this vision statement:

- Changing our Sunday service pattern (from November 2015) to incorporate a new service, Sundays@11, which aims to engage with younger people and families, while maintaining and developing our more traditional services.
- Recruiting a new Music Director (started Jan 2016), to boost our music at the Parish Eucharist, strengthen our choir, and also help at Sundays@11.
- Holding occasional whole-church joint services (two a year), alongside social events, so that we have opportunities to get to know one another regardless of which service we usually attend.

- Installing a projection system in the church (November 2016), to allow us to be more creative in our worship, using this every week at Sundays@11, and at the Parish Eucharist.
- Starting a regular fortnightly Team Meeting, consisting of the vicar, Church and Centre Manager, the Wardens, and the Pastoral Care Coordinator, to enable planning, communication and discussion.
- Starting a series of house groups, for people to meet for prayer, fellowship and Bible study, and encouraging people to join them.
- Running nurture courses regularly, as an opportunity for people to explore and grow in faith. This has included using modules from Pilgrim, as well as The Way, a course on spirituality and prayer, and The Bible Course.
- Running courses for people exploring faith at least once a year. We have used for this Explore, a course for people exploring faith for the first time, Alpha, and Christianity Explored.
- Forming a team of people to take Open the Book (an engaging way of sharing Bible stories with children) into Lee-on-the-Solent Infant School and Junior School.
- Updating our website and making better use of St Faith's Facebook page.
- Running the Easter Experience – a series of prayer stations telling the story of Holy Week and Easter – for Years 3 and 6 of the Junior School.
- Running two youth groups, for young people in St Faith's and other local churches: KFC (school years 10-12) and TGI Thursday (years 7-9).
- Starting a monthly Messy Church in September 2021, which has an average of 25 adults and 38 children present, many of whom are not connected to St Faith's any other way.

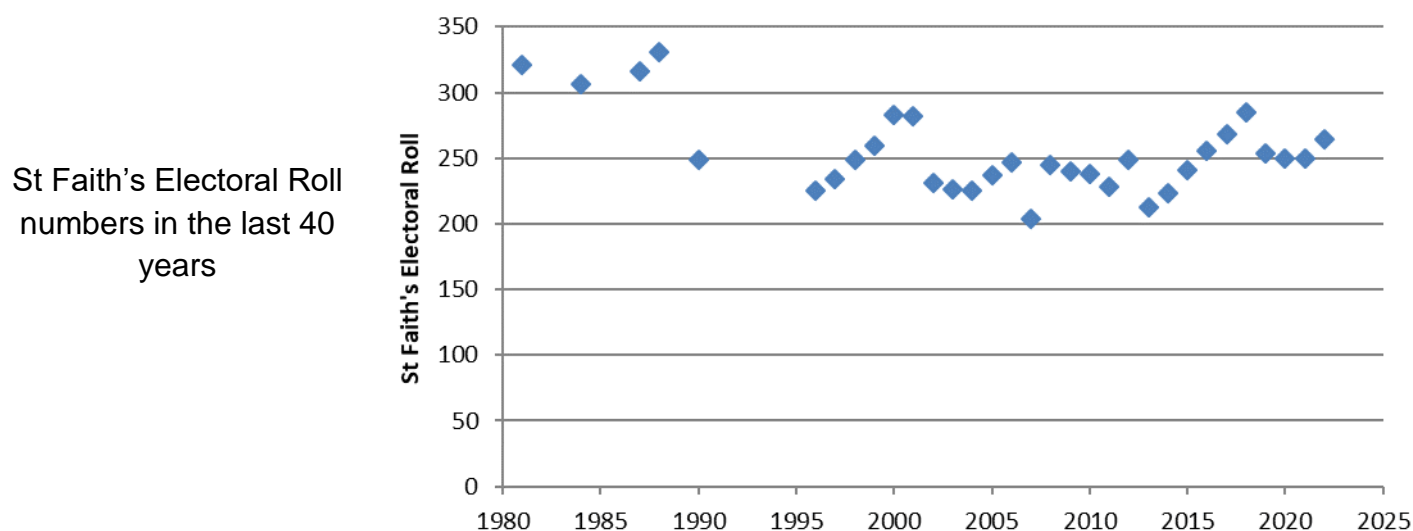
During the pandemic, we operated a 'maximalist' policy i.e. what is the maximum we are allowed to do under the rules. As many churches did, we went online in the March 2020 lockdown. Our more traditional services restarted in St Faith's in August 2020 and only stopped for the November 2020 lockdown. We held Sundays@11 outside in our grounds summer and autumn 2020, and from Easter 2021; from September 2021 Sundays@11 has been back within the building.

## **The St Faith's community**

The Sunday attendance October Count data for 2014-22 is below. Attendance grew when we started Sundays@11 in late 2015, but was significantly affected by the pandemic, with older people not returning afterwards. We continue to work to engage greater numbers of younger people, but we have historically been so 'top-heavy' with older people, it is hard to grow the church at the younger end, to replace those older people who become unwell.

	Adults	Children
2014	159	16
2015	172	14
2016	190	21
2017	195	18
2018	193	16
2019	174	15
2020		
2021	131	13
2022	144	17

St Faith's Electoral Roll currently consists of 263 people. The Electoral Roll over time is shown below. Our Electoral Roll has been stable for the last 20 years, but this is partly because the population of Lee-on-the-Solent has grown by 50% over the same period. Overall, proportionally less people are coming to church than previously, and the demographics of the St Faith's community still do not reflect those of our parish. We will continue to strive to correct this difference. Our actions in this area are mainly around creating opportunities for people to explore Christianity and grow in faith, and creating worshipping opportunities which are easier for younger people, and those with little church experience, to access. We still have to do more to engage with children and young people, and introduce them to the Christian faith.



St Faith's is a large church community, offering a range of worship styles. Our usual Sunday service pattern is:

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| 8am    | Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion<br><i>A traditional communion service using the 1662 order of service. Live streamed monthly.</i>                                     |
| 9.30am | Parish Eucharist<br><i>A formal choral service of Holy Communion. Live streamed every week.</i>  |
| 11am   | Sundays@11<br><i>An all-age service, with a music group, various media, and activities for adults and children. Not live streamed – we want people engaging in person!</i> |

We hold Messy Church monthly on a Friday evening, and a monthly Sunday evening service which has a variety of styles – Choral Evensong, Taizé, and contemporary worship have all taken place recently.

We hold Morning Prayer on Facebook at 8.30am each weekday, and also have a Holy Communion service at 11.30am on Thursdays.

Clergy from St Faith's take an average of 35 funerals a year, there are an average of 14 baptisms, and 4 weddings each year. Paul, our vicar, is a governor in the Lee Infant and Junior Schools, and he and the church contribute to town events such as Lee Victory Festival (celebrating VE Day),



Lee Beacon Festival (celebrating the Queen's platinum jubilee) and the annual Christmas Lights Switch-on.

We seek to be a community which encourages faith throughout the week, so we also offer house groups, short courses, and social events.

We run a thriving weekly group for young children and their carers, Rainbow Toddlers, and a weekly group for people who have experienced loss and change, Cuppa and Company. We have a thriving Mothers' Union branch, who meet monthly during the day.

St Faith's Parish Centre is a well-maintained community facility, and used by locals for various events including fitness, music and community lunches, and art groups. We are trying to do more with the Parish Centre, and have a big screen and sound system to allow us to run a Community Cinema, and have installed a bar to make the Centre a more attractive place to hire.

### **St Faith's vicar**

Rev'd Dr Paul Chamberlain has been the vicar of St Faith's since 2014. Coming from the evangelical tradition of the Church of England, Paul trained at Ripon College Cuddesdon, in order to spend time in other traditions within the church. He served his curacy in Thame, Oxfordshire, before coming to St Faith's, and before ordination training was an environmental scientist. Paul is currently Area Dean of Gosport, and also a member of General Synod. In his time at St Faith's Paul has previously trained two curates. St Faith's, he says, "is a great place for a curacy as it offers experience of a busy parish with good links in the community and a range of worship styles and church traditions".

You can find out more about St Faith's by visiting our websites: [www.stfaithslee.org.uk](http://www.stfaithslee.org.uk) and [www.stfaithsparishcentre.org.uk](http://www.stfaithsparishcentre.org.uk)

And you can also find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stfaithslee> and YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzeb\\_wvWNn88pvplwajoDbw/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzeb_wvWNn88pvplwajoDbw/) (or search 'St Faith's Lee YouTube').

*The St Faith's community at our Joint Harvest Celebration in September 2022.*

