

For more case studies, information and resources about Friends visit: [www.givinginGrace.org/friends](http://www.givinginGrace.org/friends)

# Making Friends

Setting up a Friends group to support your church



“ We’ve come up with a new strapline “look after your local!” We think that will get people’s attention! ”

Every group has its challenges. “People think the Church of England is rich, which is hysterical!” explains Jean. “Out here in the rural areas, we have so much to do to keep the building going. As well as occasional vandalism, we have to battle against petty crime. One year, all the eggs for our Easter Egg Hunt were nicked. It’s also hard to get people involved and interested, but we keep at it. We try to get across that the group is not just for the church, it’s for our community of four churches and villages.

What’s next for the Friends of St Nicholas? “We will keep on asking for support and running fun and accessible events to ensure the future of our beautiful church. We have also thought of doing another leaflet drop as there are newcomers to the village, plus we encourage wedding and baptism families to think about joining. We’ve come up with a new strapline “look after your local!” We think that will get people’s attention!”

Even better news is that repairs to the tower started in September 2016 with the Friends contributing over £6,000 to the work. As Jean says, every little helps.



## St Nicholas, Ringwould

The Friends of St Nicholas invite their community to ‘look after their local’, their beautiful 800 year old village church

**Giving  
in Grace**

[www.givinginGrace.org](http://www.givinginGrace.org)

## Helping your Church

As we continue our series on Friends Groups, the focus moves to the Friends of St Nicholas, Ringwould, located in the historic Cinque Ports area of Kent on the Dover coast.

Jean Winn is the Treasurer of St Nicholas and its three sister churches, St John the Evangelist, Kingsdown; St Mary the Virgin, Ripple and St Peter and St Paul, Sutton by Dover, as well as being heavily involved in the St Nicholas Friends Group. Like most of these types of groups, they have their work cut out. "The church is over 800 years old. Our village is relatively small with only 320 inhabitants, so when we formed our group 6 years ago, we had to think carefully about how we would run it and reach out to the local area."

"... We do lots of different and accessible activities to attract as much support as possible. So far, we've run tombstone walks round the churchyard, organised a Christmas tea, a wine and nibbles event and we also tried a bargain safari..."



Some Friends Groups take the decision to register as charities, but St Nicholas decided against it as Jean explains. "You have to have quite a large sum of money in hand in order to register with the Charities Commission and we felt that wasn't the right road to take. I was on the PCC of our church when we started the group, and remain so. That way, all the "friends" income comes into the church accounts and I can claim Gift Aid on it under the church "umbrella."

As with all old and historic churches, the Friends Group face a number of challenges. Their major focus since their inception has been the tower of St Nicholas which needs major work. The total cost is estimated at around £26,000,

## A lasting Gift



no small sum to find in these financially straitened times! However, so far, the group have raised £6,000 towards the work, running a variety of fundraising events to raise the money required to keep this historic church in good shape.

The Friends have been busy. "We do lots of different and accessible activities to attract

as much support as possible. So far, we've run tombstone walks round the churchyard, organised a Christmas tea, a wine and nibbles event and we also tried a bargain safari. That worked really well! Stallholders paid £10 per head and a map was given out to show all the participating households. It was a bit like being at a Boot Fair without the stallholders having to leave home! The church was used for the "tea and cake stop". It was a great success, raising £400. The church also does tea and cakes quite regularly which people love to come to. It all tots up."

Communication is vital for the success of a Friends Group and St Nicholas is no exception. They send out a newsletter by email twice yearly and ensure that their supporters are kept in touch with all events and work carried out on the church. Whenever the vicar conducts a wedding service, she hands out an application form and so far, one couple has joined, bringing the membership to 45.

Since the group began in 2010 they have paid for a number of small repairs. "Our oil tank heater pipe was vandalised which put the church out of action for two months. We paid £1,000 for that to be replaced and the church opened again. We also commissioned a local craftsman to replace the gates just as they used to be. We put up a plaque mentioning him. We think it's really important to give people credit for their good work."

