

## What Is A Parish

Within the Christian Church, a parish is an administrative district or sub division of a diocese, having its own church with a priest or rector.

A civil parish is the smallest unit of local government constituted only in a rural area.

A parish is also the area surrounding the parish church and the people therein. This includes churches of other denominations other than Church of England, businesses and residents.

### Other Related Terms

**Parish Chest** - a secure chest, often kept in a concealed compartment in the floor of the church for fire/security reasons or under lock and key in a cupboard, where a priest or parish clerk stored important letters and documents relating to the church, i.e. parish registers, church plate, log books, poor relief accounts, bastardy and removal examination documents, etc. Copies of parishioners wills were often hidden away in the chest, especially if the Rector/Priest was named as an executor or if the church were to benefit in any way.

**Parish Church** - the main church. Usually Church of England, within a parish district. Some larger urban areas may have more than one parish.

**Parish Clerk** - the person designated to assist with church duties (not to be confused with an on-line parish clerk who is a self-appointed volunteer who 'adopts' a parish and works on-line.)

**Parish Council** - the administrative body of a parish whether it is parochial or civil.

**Parish Log Book or Vestry Books**- often kept (but not mandatory) as a diary of parish events. Most no longer exist.

**Parish Pump** - an item of local interest whether civil or parochial.

**Parish Register** - a book kept by the Rector/Priest to record baptisms, marriages and burials.

**Parish Relief** - (also 'on the parish') a welfare benefit handed out to the poor of the parish to enable them to live from day to day and administered by the church under the poor law rules. Only people born within the parish could apply for assistance. Occasionally, the parish would help a non-parish born resident but only if their birth parish reimbursed the cost.

**Parishioner** - a person living within the parish boundary or, for poor law jurisdiction, someone who was born within the parish boundary.

Parochial - related to the church of the parish.