

*Do you seek an incumbency with an all-age, diverse membership already in place... or might you consider one with plenty of potential, just needing someone's clear vision and prayerful navigation to nurture development and growth?*



# The profile for the Alfred Jewel Benefice

A benefice of 5 parishes longing to develop and grow, to serve our communities and offer a relevant and accessible faith. We recognise a growing gap between where we are, and where we need to be if we are to 'tell our story' in a meaningful way to our own and future generations.

As with Paul and the Macedonians, might you recognise a call to 'come and help us'?

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**We are named after the 'Alfred Jewel', a unique, priceless artefact, commissioned by King Alfred and found in 1693 in a North Petherton field. Made from many precious metals, in segments, then combined to form the handle of a pointer, its purpose to aid the reading of the Scriptures.**

**Our benefice too, made up of sections, uniting to point the way to a loving forgiving God.**

# Diocesan Statement – Our Vision for Growth and Transformation

## Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Rector in the Alfred Jewel Benefice in Bath and Wells might be right for you. In order to help your prayerful discernment, we want to share a bit about our diocesan vision, within which we hope your own ministry might flourish.

Appointing a priest incumbent is amongst the most significant decisions that any benefice makes. When appointments work out well, they contribute significantly to parishes flourishing and growing in a host of different ways – in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities and in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church. Such flourishing is not, of course, all down to the person appointed as priest. It depends first and foremost upon God. It also depends upon everyone in a benefice being willing and able to contribute their unique gifts, skills, resources and abilities: working alongside their priest and sharing in the ministry of the benefice.

The flourishing and growth of churches always needs attention, but especially now as we come out of the shock created by the COVID pandemic. The impact of the pandemic created a sharp acceleration in the pattern of decline in church attendance that has been seen in our diocese over many years. Thankfully there are some signs that we are recovering from the COVID decline. For example, data showed that average adult weekly church attendance in our diocese rose between 2021 and 2022. Statistics only ever tell a partial story. It is even more encouraging to see churches around our diocese developing approaches that respond to the opportunities and challenges in their local context and enable growth to happen.

## A vision for growth and transformation

Our diocesan context, described above, has convinced us that for our next season at least, our aim across all our parishes needs to be growing our churches, within and beyond our church buildings, in both numbers and depth of faith, so that we can better work for the transforming of our communities and the life of God's Kingdom amongst us.

## Shared priorities

To help us pursue this aim, and following consultation across the diocese in 2023, we are inviting all parishes to focus on four particular areas of our ministry together. It is important for clergy considering working in our diocese to know what these priorities are, even though what they look like in practice will vary in each place.

### **To value and cherish the people and resources we already have**

We aim to ensure each person is well supported and equipped as a follower of Jesus Christ and for any ministries they may feel called to undertake, within the local church and wider community. We are committed to supporting the well-being of all our leaders and church officers, both lay and ordained. We have a fully funded clergy well-being service, the offer of peer support groups, and an excellent team of Diocesan support staff fully focused on supporting our parishes, chaplaincies and schools.

### **To develop new Christian worshipping communities**

Whether it be new forms of worship in a wide variety of settings and times, church revitalisations or church plants, we long to see the good news of Jesus connect with the people in our communities that our traditional offerings struggle to reach.

## **To share in ministry and leadership**

We are committed to the New Testament vision of the church as a vibrant body of people all using their God-given gifts. We are committed to a model of shared local ministry: raising up and equipping lay and ordained leaders able to share together in leading the church and serving God's world.

## **To deepen and grow faith**

This is foundational to all we do. We long to see people of all ages and backgrounds, but perhaps especially children, young people and young adults, having more opportunities to discover, explore and grow in faith.

## ***The outcome we are looking for***

When he talks about his own ministry in 1 Corinthians, Paul captures the dynamic we are seeking to achieve. "I planted," he says, "Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"(1 Cor 3: 6). We know that our churches will only flourish and grow as a result of God's action among us – it is God who gives the growth.

But Paul is also clear that we have a part to play too – in watering and planting, in doing the things that enable the conditions for God's growth to be supported. So, covered by prayer, our confident hope is that if we are intentional in seeking God's guidance in planning and supporting growth, then God will honour that to see his people flourish and thrive - in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities, in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church and in transforming communities locally and beyond.

## ***Local shaping and diocesan support***

There can't be any 'one size fits' all approach to turning the priorities outlined above into action. They always need to be adapted to local circumstances, opportunities and needs. The task of our diocesan support services is to get behind all that local benefices are doing and apart from their general support, there is specific support for exploring how to grow new Christian communities, how to discern and equip a growing range of ministries in your context and how to work well with children and young people. All of these areas of support are grounded in exploring what it means to live out our faith.

## ***What implications does this have for the appointment of clergy?***

It is important for us all to appoint clergy to benefices who are ready, willing and able to pray for and share in the vision we have for the flourishing and growth of churches and Christian life in our diocese. We want to create an environment that could be described as high challenge, high support. This means appointing clergy who will not only value all that already exists but will be eager to work with others to build on and develop it. It means appointing clergy who are committed to learning, being creative, and to starting with the gifts God has given to them, their benefice and the wider community. We are therefore looking to appoint candidates who will

- be committed to praying and intentionally seeking the growth and flourishing of the benefices in their care
- relish and expect to work in an environment that is high challenge, high support
- work joyfully and collaboratively with those who share with them locally in ministry and leadership, with their congregations and with others in their locality, to identify ways to grow and develop their churches with the grain of local priorities, resources, skills and passions
- enjoy working in partnership with deanery and diocesan colleagues

We hope this might be you! We hope that you'd like to join us on the adventure and course we've set for our next ten years. We're praying that God will send us the right labourers for the harvest that God has set before us. Could this be you?

+ Michael Barr & Wells.

**Bishop of Bath and Wells**



Steve Hill.

**Archdeacon of Taunton**



## **A message from our Area Dean.**



The people, parishes and chaplaincies of the Sedgemoor Deanery take seriously our diocesan vision to live and tell the story of Jesus. Like the diocesan priorities we seek to value the people we have while intentionally focussing our resources on mission and outreach. The Deanery has 24 places of worship which are grouped into nine benefices. Incumbents are well supported by Readers and retired clergy with PTO.

Sedgemoor Deanery is committed to training and working with Lay Worship Assistants, Pastoral Assistants and Chaplains, with a part time chaplain at both Bridgwater College and at J24 Livestock Market.

Deanery Synod meets three times a year. Each meeting is café style and is open to all in the deanery (who have an interest in the subject being discussed). We use this as an opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas and to feed into our discussions at DMPG.

Chapter meets six times a year over lunch and is very supportive. We are often joined by our Lay Dean, Assistant Lay Dean and lay chaplain whose wisdom we value. At this time of change in the world and the church we welcome new ideas. We invite you to share in the vision and work of this deanery as we seek to grow the Kingdom of God in this place.

Kirsty Wells

Area Dean of Sedgemoor

## **The Current Ministry Team**

**Rector:** Vacant

**Associate Priest:**

**Retired clergy supporting the**

**Benefice through the vacancy**

Rev. Steve Tancock (3 days)

Rev. Alastair Wallace

Rev. David Barge



*The Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Group has recommended that the 0.5 post is not renewed*

## **Lay Worship Leaders**

Lorna Hasell



Volunteer Chaplain  
At J24 Livestock Market  
& in training for Self-supporting  
Locally-deployed Ministry

Denise Sharratt



David Woolcomb



**Pastoral Care Assistant**

Rita Almond



**Benefice Administrator & Safeguarding Officer**

Mrs Sue Sayer (paid, Part time)



## Our Priorities:

- \* **To deepen our commitment** to corporate as well as private prayer and to grow our understanding of Christian discipleship, so that we may better identify God's priorities in this time of change and challenge.
- \* **To continue to grow together** as members of a multi-parish benefice whilst finding encouragement in our shared faith and experiences.
- \* **To make progress** in fulfilling our financial commitment to the diocese.

## Our Benefice Vision and Hope:

- \* That we may be able to find that confidence in the future and a pathway to enable the growth in our churches that we believe God offers to all his children.
- \* That with a growing and deepening faith, we may develop the skills and confidence to 'live and tell the story of Jesus': a viable, relevant, Christian message to communities that range from small scattered farming settlements to the burgeoning new developments of North Petherton.
- \* That our church membership might come to reflect the breadth of the communities we serve while valuing and cherishing the people and resources we already have.
- \* That as we grow together as a benefice, we may offer mutual support and encouragement to all those sharing in ministry and leadership. A benefice where it is possible to identify and develop in each of our churches those areas of ministry best done independently and those where we might do 'better together'.
- \* That we might be able to continue to offer an effective Christian ministry to the schools in the benefice, supporting the Staff, the children and their families.





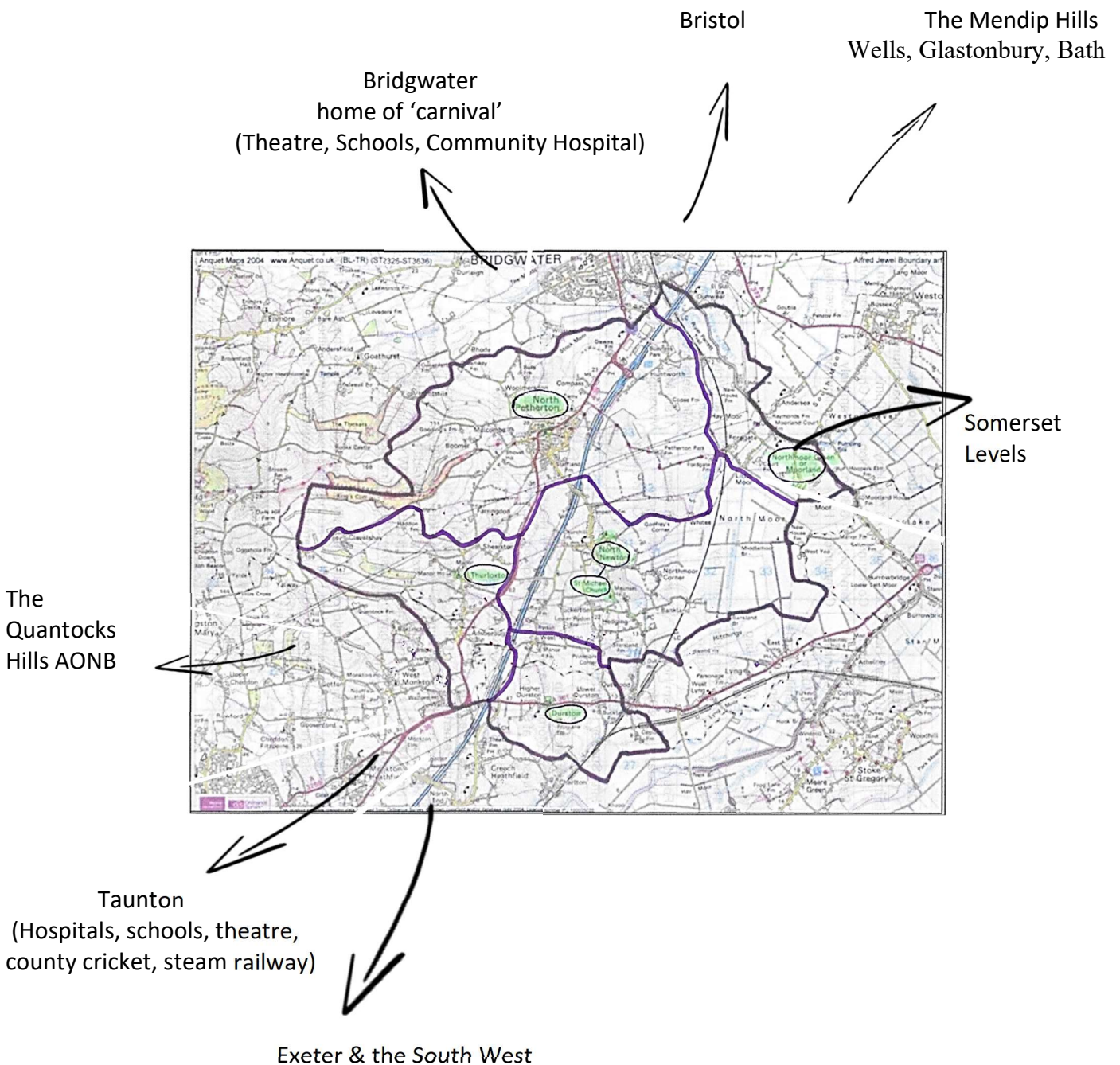
# The Alfred Jewel Benefice

## Location:

The Benefice sits on the A38 between Bridgwater and the County Town of Taunton (3 miles and 6 miles respectively). It spans a largely agricultural area from the edges of the Somerset Levels up into the foothills of the Quantock Hills.

J24 of the M5 is in the Benefice. With Bristol 40 mins north and Exeter 40 mins south, each with their own airport, the area is well connected nationally and internationally.

It is an increasingly popular area in which to live and work, and a valued leisure destination.



## The Parishes:

**North Petherton** is a small - but growing - town is central to the Benefice with the local amenities the surrounding villages need. It has grown considerably in recent years. Small 'infill' developments are now dwarfed by Stockmoor and Wilstock to the north, with over fifteen hundred dwellings. Smaller developments to the south are under way.

### The villages:

**Northmoor Green - also known as Moorland** - is on 'the Somerset Levels', east of the M5 and the Bridgwater Canal and includes the hamlets of Fordgate and West Yeo.

**North Newton**, a mile SE of North Petherton is large enough to host a Primary school and has a combined parish with the nearby hamlet of **Michaelchurch** which has its own church.

**Thurloxtton** is to the South of the benefice, set back from the A38 with several hamlets close by.

**Durston** is a small scattered community to the SE and suffered badly from the isolation of the pandemic. The church is without church officers and the loss of morale is significant. A United Benefice service there in September was well attended and a great encouragement.

- Housing in all the villages is diverse with some very old houses and cottages with some modern infill.
- All the villages retain a core of local inhabitants whose roots are deep in the countryside, alongside those who have opted to live and work, or retire, outside the towns.

## Organisation:

The parishes have their own PCCs, Church Officers and finances. There is a central Benefice Office in the Church Rooms, North Petherton where Sue, as our Benefice Administrator and Safeguarding Officer, works much longer than the hours she is paid for! The Benefice expenses, including the Office and Sue's wages, are shared across the benefice.

Service Rotas and timetabling is done centrally as is the admin for Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms. Sue prints Orders of Service, the weekly pew sheets with benefice and parish news; these sheets are circulated to all Sunday Congregations with a surplus for visitors; an online copy is also available. We use Facebook as a benefice and also individually. A new website with a new host is under urgent construction, and should be up and running by the time you read this and can be found at [www.thealfredjewelbenefice.co.uk](http://www.thealfredjewelbenefice.co.uk) Our parish church notice boards give local information. We make use of a benefice Facebook page.

The monthly 'United Benefice' services enable us to build unity and fellowship across the Benefice and have given our congregations experiences of different forms of worship.

## The Benefice has 3 primary schools:

All of which have welcomed regular ministry from the church.

All the parishes attach real importance to the links with the schools.

Lorna Hasell (Worship Leader) is providing a monthly assembly in each of the schools and we are endeavouring to establish an Open the Book Ministry, much encouraged by the support of the Head teachers.

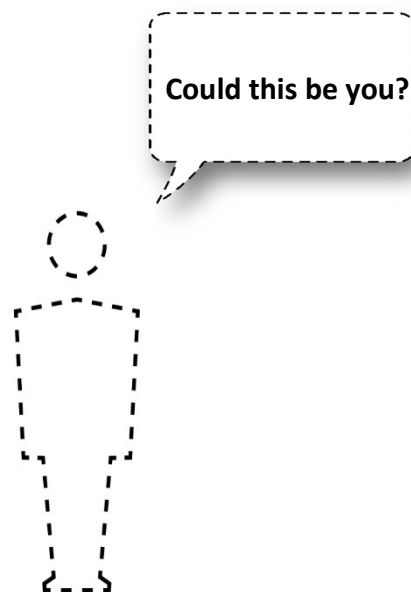
## Job Specification: we are looking for a Minister with the following gifts...

### Professional skills and experience:

- Someone with experience of and / or a love for rural and small-town ministry.
- Someone who knows their own skills and gifts as well as their own limitations.
- A leader who can plot a way for our churches to discover and develop their individual strengths and opportunities for ministry, while identifying those areas where ministry might be 'stronger together' as a benefice.
- Someone able to lead an effective Christian ministry to the schools in the benefice, supporting the Staff, the children and their families.
- Someone ready to become known in our communities, a recognised faith ambassador.
- Someone who can help the benefice further develop our online presence.

### Spiritual Strengths & Personal Qualities:

- Someone with an infectious faith, ready to share it with us and our communities.
- Someone with a maturity of faith, leading by example a life of discipleship and service.
- Someone able to access the resources needed to support and develop their own faith while carrying a public leadership role.
- Someone ready to keep their own learning up to date and to guide us into a deeper understanding of our faith.
- Someone ready to listen, to deal sensitively with those in need, or who fear change, enabling church members and non-members alike to share themselves with confidence.
- Someone ready to engage with our current, mostly traditional, services but to broaden our experience to encompass new and different ways to worship.
- A big heart for the countryside and a willingness to don wellies and lead the occasional service in a field.
- A 'people person' with a sense of humour, who can relate to all ages and backgrounds.



## We are confident we can offer:

- A generous, positive welcome.
- A beautiful part of God's earth in which to live. The Somerset Levels and the Quantock Hills AONB, rich in scenery, wildlife and places to relax and unwind.
- The benefits of rural life with the additional facilities of nearby Bridgwater and Taunton.
- A group of churches ready to listen and think through ways to develop the ministry entrusted to us all.
- A knowledgeable Administrator/Safeguarding Officer who knows the benefice well.
- The expectation that our incumbent will access their full entitlement to days off, annual holiday, retreats, training opportunities and that legitimate expenses will be promptly paid.
- A good Diocesan/Parish relationship. It has been fruitful in the past and remains so.
- Church Officers who are happy to record that we too are people of faith, have a sense of humour, and enjoy meeting together, especially if there is cake.

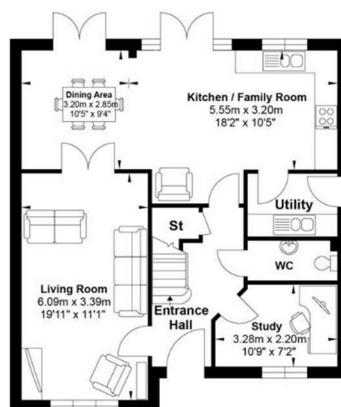
## Your new home:

The diocese made the decision, when the previous incumbent moved, to sell the Rectory and purchase one that was more suitable. A brand-new house in Batts Meadow North Petherton, which will be more energy efficient, is under offer. The purchase should be completed early in 2024.

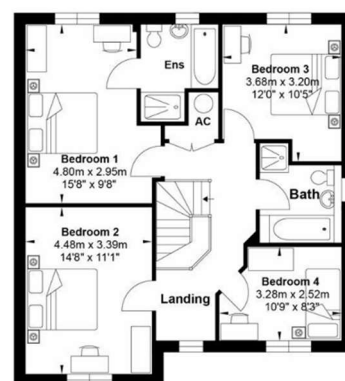
The property is a four bedroom detached house offering a kitchen/family room, dining area, utility, living room, study, WC, family bathroom, master en-suite. There is double garage, parking and good size garden.

[https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/140586464#/?channel=RES\\_NEW](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/140586464#/?channel=RES_NEW)

Please contact the Archdeacon of Taunton for any further queries about the house.



Ground Floor



First Floor

## Community information

Community information	Pop'tion	School Primary Pre-sch	Hall: Church, Village or Community	Pharmacy	shop	Pub/ Hotel	Care home	Service Stations
North Petherton	10000	2 Prim'y	Church Rooms + 2 Community Halls	2	16	7	3	2
Northmoor Green 'Moorland'	450	-	1 Village	-	-	1	-	-
North Newton..	900	1 Prim'y	1 church 1 Village	-	-	1	-	-
...with Michaelchurch				-	-	-	-	-
Thurloxtton	180	-	1 village	-	-	1	1	
Durston	120	-	-	-	-	-	-	

## The Benefice Parishes

Church information	Electoral roll	Average Sunday attendance	Average Festival attendance	Chwrdn Trsrr Sctry	Common Share pd	Open ch'yard
North Petherton	62	25-30	150	2/1/1	35%	No
Northmoor Green 'Moorland'	30	12	30	2/1/1	40%	Yes
North Newton with...	32	6	16	2/1/1	100%	Yes
... Michaelchurch	31	12	12	shared	100%	Yes
Thurloxtton	36	16	43	2/1/1	100%	Yes
Durston	13	4	9	1	0%	Yes

## Services around the Benefice (prior to vacancy)

2023 W, B, F

Service information	1 <sup>st</sup> Sun	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sun	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun	4 <sup>th</sup> Sun	Midweek services	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals
<b>North Petherton</b>	10.30am MP	8am HC 10.30am HC (CW)	10.30am HC (CW)	8am HC 10.30am HC (CW)	Weds 9am MP Thur 10.30am HC	6	16	31
<b>Northmoor Green 'Moorland'</b>	9am MP	9am HC (CW)	9am HC (CW)	9am HC (CW)		0	0	5
<b>North Newton with..</b>		11am HC (CW)		11am MP		4	1	6
<b>..Michaelchurch</b>			11am HC			0	0	0
<b>Thurloxtton</b>	9.30am HC (CW)	3.30/6.30 pm EP	9.30am HC (CW)	9.30am MP	Tues 9am MP	0	2	3
<b>Durston</b>	11am HC (CW)			11am HC (CW)		0	0	1

**The Parishes of the Benefice  
introduce themselves:**

# St Mary's, North Petherton



The Minster Church of St Mary the Virgin, in North Petherton, stands in the heart of the community. The Church is circa 1400. It seats 250 people in a Grade 1 Listed Building. The church has a high profile in the town and is the main venue for civic religion and is open every day. Over the last 20 years North Petherton has developed from a village to a town, the population has increased by 41% since 2011 with consultation on a further 3 more developments within the parish.

The church is blessed with organists, choir members and bell ringers and a 6 monthly rota sheet provides sides-people, readers, intercessors and servers. Liaison with the local schools is good, where opportunities for visits and Christian teaching are welcomed.



Outreach is an important role within our church. This includes a monthly bereavement group, a monthly drop-in day and most recently a welcoming environment for many refugees, who are housed in the nearby Holiday Inn hotel. A number of which have become regular church attenders, having been baptised and confirmed at St Marys by Bishop Michael of Bath and Wells.

## ***Our labyrinth***

St. Mary's faces some challenges, including a reduced Electoral Roll with 62 members, about half of pre-pandemic levels, and an average weekly attendance of 25-30. This has led to difficulties in meeting our full parish quota. However, we acknowledge the extent of our financial challenge, but we have been proactive in trying to address this, having been one of the first parishes to install a contactless giving device, adopt the Parish Giving Scheme - when it was launched within the Diocese earlier this year - as well as signing up to the Ways to Give Tool and resources.

We have engaged with the Local Giving Team at the Diocese for support in accessing capital grants when required and have committed to hosting a Benefice wide meeting to kick-start a Local Giving Review process, reflecting and identifying our key areas for development, as we seek to grow a more generous culture within our churches and community.

We want to maximise the benefits of the tools that we have already adopted, ensuring that the congregation and wider community know about, and understand, the various ways to give and the impact of that giving on the ministry and mission of our churches.

***Toppers Carnival Cart 2022***



We know that people care about their local Church, but we need to share the responsibility for sustaining St Marys within our community. We are actively addressing this through various community-focused initiatives led by the PCC, with a strong emphasis on building a closer connection and engaging with the community.

We would love to continue our spiritual Journey of Faith, Hope, and Love within our church and out into our expanding, diverse community and encourage their participation, but recognise that what we may offer in the future will be a challenge for us and may sometimes be uncomfortable. But we are willing to foster those meaningful relationships of relevant worship, innovation in our parish, teambuilding of clergy and volunteers, enhanced by good communication and empathy using various media to further our message of faith and fellowship.

Our PCC and dedicated team of fundraisers, centred around the annual fete and carnival, play a vital role in supporting the parish and fostering all these links within the church and community.



***Busy Bees stall at Carnival Teas***

**NP School carol service in the Church**





# St Peter & St John, Northmoor Green

By the Parochial Church Council & Congregation  
of St Peter & St John Church, Northmoor Green  
(Moorland), September 2023



Our church is centred around regular weekly worship of God, offered both in our church building, and taken out within the Parish. Our church was built in the 1840's and built in stone lias, it seats around 120 people, it is light and airy with very good acoustics, aided by a sound system and loop. The churchyard is open and maintained to a high standard. The church was flooded in 2014 and since has been completely renovated, this allowed us to move the organ from the chancel area to the back of the church, opening up this area. We also installed a small kitchen. The quinquennial inspection is due this year.



The friendly village of Moorland sits on the Somerset levels four and a half miles from the market town of Bridgwater, home of the famous Bridgwater Carnival, two of the carts that enter the carnival are built in the village. The population of around 500 is within easy access of Junction 24 of the M5 motorway. It still has roots in farming but is also convenient for commuters as well. We have a pub and village hall which is used regularly for an Art Group, Pilates, Badminton, Garden Club and weekly Coffee Morning, sadly we no longer have a primary school or shop.

*Harvest Supper celebrations*

*Toppers Carnival Club 2023*



*Pentathlon Carnival Club 2023*





### ***Cream Tea***

The congregation of St Peter & St John consists of a small committed group of faithful Christians, we hold a regular fortnightly Knit & Knatter and Sew on a Monday afternoon and keep a community book exchange in the Church Porch for use in our community. A collection box is kept at the back of the church for donations towards Bridgwater Food bank. We are a loving family yearning to reach out to the community and grow together in God's love.



### ***Jubilee celebration***



We are in great need of someone to support and realise our hope of increasing our membership and witness to God. A new leader to empower and inspire us in our desire to overcome our financial difficulties, and enable us to be a light and Christian witness to all in our community in the years ahead.

# St Giles, Thurloxtton

\*see photo's

**Overview** St Giles serves the village of Thurloxtton with the hamlets of Adsborough, Clavelshay, Coombe and Shearston. The village community - including the church - is glad to be known as friendly and hospitable. While some have lived here most of their lives, the majority have opted for village life in the last 20 years or so. We are rural, surrounded by farmland - mostly arable - alongside the A38 with large towns nearby providing shops, service industries, and employment opportunities.



Meanwhile, the congregation of St Giles, though lively and committed, is only too aware of its increasing age profile. Our Sunday Services, based on Common Worship, have remained traditional in nature. We need to relate to our community in more accessible and relevant ways and nurture the hope of meeting the spiritual needs of this and future generations with a viable ministry.

**Finance:** We are fortunate to cover a relatively affluent area. Our common share is paid in full and the church building is well maintained, with Quinquennial work up to date.

Covid etc has moved us from an annual surplus (c£1k) to being in deficit though Legacies in-hand soften the impact. We have plans in hand with the DAC to use the remaining legacies to promote accessibility: mains water, an accessible toilet and servery. St Giles hosts a free monthly Coffee Morning\* where 'the village' meets up... voluntary donations raise £1500+ annually for charities beyond the parish.



## Where can we see progress ?

**We are building on a good relationship with the community.** The church has long been opened every day, and we have been able to broaden footfall with exhibitions of wartime life in the village, community choir concerts\*, a Foodbank donation point, Love Your Burial Ground events\* and new churchyard benches. For the many who pop quietly into the church there is now Faith-supporting literature and a Prayer board with copies of 'Try Praying'.

Relationships remain mutually supportive. Many church folk are active leaders in community groups, (eg on the Village Hall and Gardening Club Comms.) while many village volunteers support St Giles: grass mowing, singing with the 'pop-up choir', helping on the church opening, bellringing\* and more.

*Cont'd overleaf*



The PCC is working through 'How Village Churches Thrive', encouraged by what we already do and identifying where we can improve: our festival services have more flexible, participatory liturgy; the next step is to extend this to our regular worship.

**There is a growing appreciation of a variety of service options:** Taize, outdoor worship, midweek lay-led Morning Prayer. 'Carols @ Keirles'\* - at the 'Fruit Farm Shed'- attracted locals we've not seen in the church.

**We have become more physically accessible** by providing a hearing loop and sound system, and by improving the pathway for wheelchairs and buggies.

**We have improved our opportunities to communicate** with the introduction of LOCAL LINK: a monthly 'hard-copy' information sheet delivered to every door. The replacement noticeboard is clearer, brighter and easier to keep up to date. We use the Facebook residents' page to publicise events and engage with the community.

**We are learning** to acknowledge and address problems, encouraged to find a few solutions!



### But we do need help...

We recognise that our services are not 'accessible' to many in our community. We need help to move towards liturgies that will be relevant and understandable to new folk while not needlessly alienating those who are used to more traditional worship.

We would love to see children and families in our church, but recognise Thurloxtton may lack the necessary 'critical mass' to make this viable. We see we might be better supporting a central ministry to the young if this were part of a benefice outreach.

While we understand the need for each of us to reach out, we lack the skills and confidence to take the Christian message into our community or achieve an online presence.

We seek a ministry that would grow our spiritual understanding, helping and encouraging us to go deeper.



### Our local vision and hope:

Our own church vision is that St Giles might play a full part supporting a stronger, united benefice, while praying that this can be achieved without sacrificing an ongoing local Christian presence.

Our PCC's hope is to use the legacy funds set aside in our budget to make our building more accessible to the community around us.





## St Peter's Church, North Newton

There has been a church in North Newton for over 900 years, dating back to Saxon times.

The St Peter's Church building today, is an imposing village landmark. It is over 100 years old, although the tower is thought to date back to Saxon origins.

The congregation is small, friendly and very faithful and swells to larger numbers on feast and special days.

There is a real desire by the PCC to take every opportunity to increase the number of regular worshippers, integrate and serve the community and a willingness to try new things. In particular it hopes to forge closer links with the school.

St Peter's and its church hall are in a good state of repair due to a policy of planned maintenance. The surrounding churchyard attracts many favourable comments for its attractive appearance and is visited regularly throughout the year.

## St Michaelchurch, North Newton

St Michaelchurch is a warm and friendly little church with a small core of loyal, regular worshippers. Services are relaxed and the many visitors are made very welcome.

St Michaelchurch is set in a small rural setting, surrounded by the hamlets of Hedging, Tuckerton and Banklands.

Its origins go back to the Domesday Book and parts of the present structure are 14th century. The church can seat just 40 people and has no mains electricity or water. Although we do have gas heating, candlelight and clip on battery lighting for the readers.

Our little church has a truly unique atmosphere set beside an old farmyard surrounded by open countryside. Although there are attempts to build a large Solar Panel scheme on that land!



### The Village

The village of North Newton lies a mile south of North Petherton and has a population of around 900 people. Historically its roots are deeply embedded in working the land.

Its inhabitants are a mixture of traditional families who have lived here for generations, and those who have moved in over the years to make the village their home.

Although there are fewer farming families today, those who remain continue to give the village its rich rural traditions and agricultural connection.

The Taunton to Bridgwater canal runs along the west side, with the Somerset Levels lying to the east. The village and surrounding area is a popular destination for walkers and cyclists who make full use of the tow path and the nearby Canal centre and cafe.

## **Spirit of the Village and its organisations**

North Newton is flourishing, there is a real sense of community here and the desire to preserve this is strong. At its centre is a longstanding very successful Primary School and the 'Little Steps' pre-school which was established in 1977 and continues to thrive today.

There is a large village hall and a pub. A smaller hall known as the church rooms is adjacent to St Peter's church.

Both of these venues are regularly booked for a variety of classes, functions and social occasions. There is a 'pop up' café once a month and various hobby clubs.

On the edge of the village are communal playing fields with a children's area, a cricket pavilion and a thriving local league cricket club. There is also a skittle team at the pub.

St Peter's church has strong links with community life and hosts several fundraising and social events during the year, mostly involving food and good cheer. The annual Harvest Supper and Summer Flower Show are two traditional favourites which are well supported and bring the village together. The church is popular for weddings and is in a fortunate position with its choice of halls and good parking facilities.

There was a monthly coffee morning and annual Christmas lunch for older people held in the church rooms. The restrictions of the Covid Pandemic and the uncertainty that followed, sadly saw the end of these highly enjoyable occasions.

The church also ran an after-school club, and with fresh ideas and enthusiasm, all of these events could be rejuvenated.

## **PCC and Finance**

St Peter's and St Michaelchurch share a joint PCC. Most business of the two Churches is managed jointly. However, the finances have traditionally been separate and today each church raises its own Common Fund portion.

We have an amazing team of dedicated helpers to keep our churches in good order and welcome any visitors.

We look forward to welcoming our new vicar and assure them of a very warm reception in North Newton.



***Flower & Produce Show  
2023***





## St. John the Baptist Church, Durston

Durston is a small village of 120 inhabitants set in a rural area and surrounded by farmland. It stretches along the A361 Taunton to Glastonbury road and benefits from a bus and library service.

The small parish church surrounded by its churchyard is located in the centre of the village. A pedestrian gate from

the lane leading to Lodge Farm provides access to the church along a concrete path through the churchyard. The position of the church just south of the former manor house suggests manorial origin. Around 1170 the Lord of the Manor gave Durston Chapel as part of the endowment of Buckland Priory. The existing church was subject to restoration in 1853 but still contains all the pews, which have beautifully carved bench ends mostly dating from the mid-17th Century, together with the octagonal sandstone font most likely 15th Century. The tower is a fine example of the perpendicular style and is typical of Somerset. It houses five bells, the oldest dated 1633; we quite often have visiting bells ringers come in to ring them. The organ was built in Taunton, and was refurbished in October 2001.

But the village and its church were hit hard by Covid. The sale of the village hall - next to the church - hit the whole community. Isolation was a difficulty everywhere and Durston felt it keenly. Membership of the church was already at a low ebb and without the technological skills to access the internet, folk were unable to take part in the Benefice online services or the zoom meetings. When later, other rural communities began to wake up, Durston's loss of momentum became debilitating.

We, the 4 remaining members, are trying to hold things together. A community flyer went out from the church inviting a response, sadly with little comeback. A public meeting was better attended but shed little light.

Functioning with only one church officer, it is hard to manage affairs, from church maintenance to finance. But, in the absence of the Village Hall we have now created a space in church so we can serve refreshments.

The monthly United Benefice Service is helping us make contacts across the churches and we are glad to be taking our place in the rota hosting this service.

Determined to keep going, in the faith and hope that the future can bring new life, the members would be so glad to reach out to the new families who have recently moved into the village. But we do need help. Our hope is that we might benefit from the fresh insights and wise leadership of a new incumbent: to find ways to stay in touch, build our strength and help the church back to life and, in the future, to thrive. Perhaps then it might again unite and reinvigorate the village.

