

# Diocese of Bath and Wells

## Benefice Profile



St Mary, Bridgwater



Holy Trinity,  
Chilton Trinity



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## Overview

We are seeking to appoint a vicar to serve the United Benefice of St Mary, Bridgwater and Holy Trinity, Chilton Trinity. The vacancy has arisen as a result of the previous incumbent retiring after serving the benefice for 5 years.

St Mary's is the parish church of Bridgwater, in the centre of the town, and Holy Trinity is in the rural setting of Chilton Trinity. Both churches have small, mostly elderly congregations and face significant challenges. At St Mary's, following the major reordering in 2017 we have not advanced mission and ministry in the way we had hoped; at Holy Trinity we have struggled to engage with the growing community in the village.

Despite the difficulties, we have a small, but enthusiastic, team who are prayerfully optimistic. Although the challenges are huge, there are great opportunities for our churches to grow given the right leadership.

## Our Vision

**“To love, serve and welcome all, as a nourishing community, passionate and energised by our faith”**

## Our Hopes

We will work with our incumbent who, recognising the gifts and talents of our people, will lead us to meet the challenges facing our Benefice.

Our churches will be at the spiritual heart of our communities and we will strive to achieve our Vision, furthering mission and ministry, and shining as lights for Christ.

*“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12.*

## Could you be the one we're looking for?

We are looking for someone with energy, enthusiasm and good leadership skills who will:

- Take on the significant challenges associated with a large town-centre church, that has recently been imaginatively reordered, and a small village church
- Inspire, motivate and work with us as, learning from the pandemic in traditional and new ways, we seek to realise our Vision
- Develop us as a prayer-based worshipping community so we grow in faith and use our God-given gifts for the benefit of everyone
- Understand the needs of the wider community helping us to reach out, engage with them and serve as Christ call us to do
- Work with us to develop our links with our church school

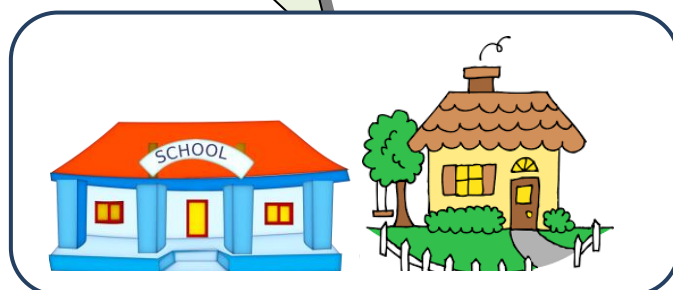


Your home will be a modern, spacious 5-bedroom house on the west side of the town.

**We asked our community what they wanted in our churches -**

**This is what they said!**

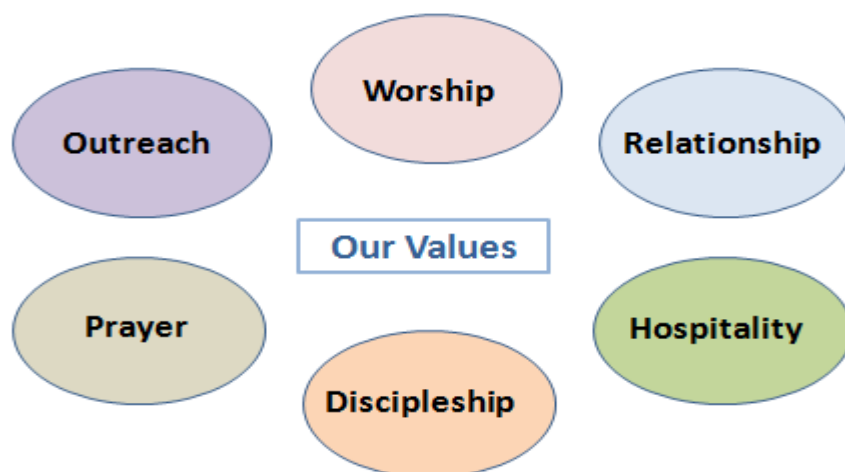
More up-to-date services – youth services  
need to attract young people – use church  
more for non-worship activities – changes must  
be prayer-based – seek what God is calling us to do  
leadership that values talents & contributions of all  
seasonal activities – children’s craft corner & display area  
bring younger & older generations together – flowers  
Women’s Fellowship – church open and welcoming  
to all – bell ringing – online services – school  
collective worship – Thursday café – Family Services  
concerts – Home Communion – Zoom meetings  
dementia-friendly café – Messy Church



## Our Vision

“To love, serve and welcome all, as a nourishing community, passionate and energised by our faith”

Our Vision is supported by our Values



### Mission

To proclaim and live out the good news of the kingdom, and to be a community hub which is at the heart of town, not simply as a building but because we exist for those outside the walls. To be a church which is God-centred and sent, outward looking, growing in faith and nurturing those around us.

### Strategy

We have many ideas for engaging with the community when restrictions permit. We have a small but enthusiastic church community which will work with our incumbent to drive towards our vision.

Although our vision is primarily aimed at St Mary's Church, we are exploring, with our sister church of Chilton Trinity, how the two churches can benefit from a closer working partnership by sharing resources and supporting each other. In this way our vision can become a **Vision for the United Benefice.**

During the Covid-19 restrictions we have discovered new ways of keeping in touch through on-line services and Zoom. We will explore how some of these tools can be used to maintain contact with our worshipping community and engage with the wider community.

In June 2017 we completed a major reordering of the interior of Mary's Church, the most significant changes since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. We refurbished a sample of the

Victorian pews and supplemented the seating with contemporary chairs to create a flexible space for worship and community use. We levelled the floor throughout the nave, north transept and chapel to ensure this area could be accessed by all. We installed underfloor heating, new led lighting, a new kitchen and café area and a new audio system and projector. These improvements underpin our vision to serve our worshipping community, the people of our town and visitors.

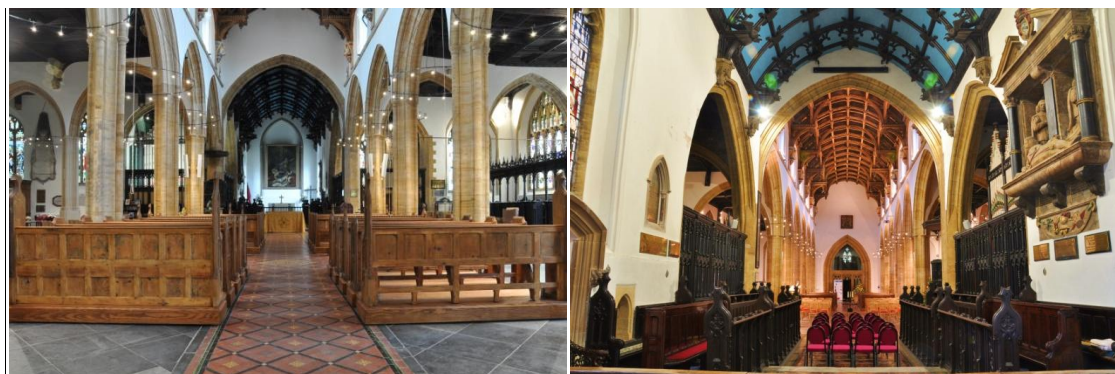
## [Saint Mary's Church](#)



The church has historical connections with the Monmouth Rebellion and the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685 and with Admiral Robert Blake who was born in the town and baptised in the church.

The interior of the church is in very good order but the recent Quinquennial Inspection showed that significant external work at the roof level is required within the next 5 years.

Further information on the church can be found on our website.



*Views of the reordered interior*



*Wells City Band performing on Carnival Day*



## **Our response to the Covid-19 pandemic**

Our churches have been closed for worship for most of the last year, although St Mary's has been open for private prayer when conditions allowed. St Mary's has held [recorded services](#), with contributions from church members, accessible via our website. Through lockdown we have also recorded a weekly collective worship for St Mary's School.

Coffee mornings on Sundays have been via Zoom as have PCC meetings and home groups. Our weekly bulletin, with a reflection, readings and news, has been distributed electronically or by hand for those without internet access.

## **Services at St Mary's**

St Mary's is rooted in sacramental worship and has a lively vision for the future. Vestments are used and the sacrament is reserved. Our principal service is CW Order 1 Parish Communion at 9.30 am with BCP Holy Communion at 8.00 am. Weekday Worship (BCP Holy Communion) is held at 11.00 am on Thursdays. Services throughout the year are sometimes shared with Holy Trinity Church Hamp, Chilton Trinity Church and the Baptist Church.

We have held informal Café Church, combining worship and breakfast, and are open to exploring new ways of worship.





*On the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month we hold a Family Service for young children and their families which is led by Frances Webb*

Saint Mary's is used for civic services such as Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Sunday. We are also privileged to host the annual 'Light up a Life' service in aid of our local hospice.

### **Occasional offices at St Mary's**



	<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>Weddings</b>	<b>Funerals</b>
2017	5	8	15
2018	5	5	23
2019	10	8	26

We also host services for our local primary school of St Mary's. Encouraging children and young people into our church is a key priority for us.

## Our Ministry Team



Our Curate, Revd Suse Osmond and Assistant Priest, Revd Dr Jonathan Trigg

*Supported by our Churchwardens (r) and PCC members (l)*



We have informal links with Saint John's in the town. We also share some services with Holy Trinity Church and our neighbours at the Baptist Church.

## Our Church Community

Prior to the pandemic church membership was 81 with 56 on the Electoral Roll. The majority are over retirement age, but we have been pleased to welcome some younger worshippers in the past few years. Average Sunday attendance in 2019 was 38.

## Community links

We have strong links with our local primary and secondary schools, Bridgwater College, town and district councils, Bridgwater Choral Society and local care homes. The church is used on a regular basis for services, ceremonies and concerts by St. Mary's and Haygrove schools, Bridgwater and Taunton College and Bridgwater Choral Society. We also host the the Town Carol Service. Our flexible space is ideal for concerts and exhibitions and in recent years we've hosted a range of performances by brass bands, choirs and theatre groups.

We take Communion to some of the local care homes and offer Carol Services to them at Christmas.

Building stronger community links is at the heart of our vision. In order to achieve this we will recruit volunteers to work together with our church members to offer a wide range of events and activities. We have an excellent link with Somerset Volunteering and have good communication links through our church website and social media.

## Our Church School

Prior to lockdown our Curate was leading two acts of collective worship (assemblies) each week and also a lunchtime prayer room once a week. She has also held class sessions on baptism and the Trinity and done some teaching on understanding the Bible at staff meetings.

We plan to build on enrichment opportunities with each class and give them the opportunity to spend time with us in the church. We believe there is great potential to develop the excellent link we have established with staff and pupils at the school.



Further information about the school can be found on the school website.

## Finance

Our financial position is somewhat precarious due in part to overspend on the reordering budget as a result of unforeseen archaeological problems. Income is supported by the generous giving of our church members but we do rely on legacies and other donations and grants to support major expenditure. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic our income over the last year has been significantly reduced and we have not been able to pay our Parish Share in full.

When Covid conditions permit we have ambitious plans to re-establish our café as a community hub and to once again let our flexible space for concerts, exhibitions, meetings and community activities. These will provide much-needed sources of income. As soon as our financial position allows we will resume paying our Parish Share in full.

## Safety

We have up-to-date and comprehensive policies for Safeguarding and Health and Safety and have responsible persons appointed for each of these areas.

## Activities at St Mary's Church

We have a wide range of activities that support our church community and the wider community of Bridgwater and beyond:

- **Thursday Lunches** Every Thursday we have a team of volunteers serving coffee, tea, home-made cakes and light lunches. Intended primarily to provide a social hub, it has the potential to generate significant revenue for the church. Our café is also available for community events.

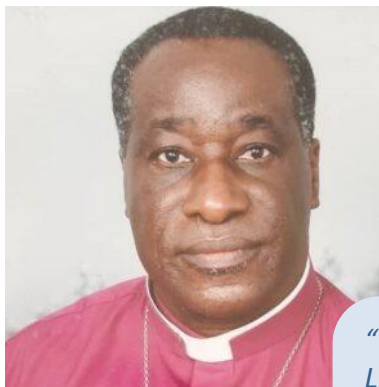


*Volunteers busy in the kitchen*

Once a month we host a dementia-friendly coffee morning in association with one of the local care providers.

- **Zambia Link**

We have an active and flourishing link with a large rural parish in the Diocese of Eastern Zambia. As well as being linked in prayer and sharing information about life in our parishes, St Mary's raises funds for sustainable projects in Mawanda Parish including support for a new church building.



*"What I like about the Zambia-Bath and Wells Link is the life of prayer. It gives me a lot of joy knowing that there are friends across the waters who pray for us and we pray for them. Depicting one humanity despite our different culture." **Bishop William, Eastern Diocese***



*The Parish Priest, Fr Emmanuel and his wife, Hilda and Sunday School in Mawanda*

- **Home Groups**

We have an active lay-led Home Group with around 12 members running courses during Advent and Lent.

- **Women's Fellowship**

This long-established group has met every 2 weeks with talks, outings and other social events. We hope to grow membership from its current low level.

- **Bell ringing**

St Mary's has the newest ring of 12 bells in the country having been augmented from 8 in 2020. The Tower Captain, Margaret Lee, says, "We are a team of 18 ringers at various stages of learning, have a mixture of



experience and are enthusiastic and always try to have fun. St Mary's Bridgwater is also home to the Sedgemoor Ringing Centre. As a team we have an annual ringing day out to visit other towers. We also celebrate St George's Day, Bridgwater Carnival, Heritage Day, and the Quayside Festival giving

ringing demonstrations and guided tours of the tower to show the bells and historic clock to the public. Before the pandemic we would have 8-10 ringers on a Sunday and many more from the area on our Monday night practice."

St Mary's Handbell Ringers began in 2019 as a fun activity to bring new people into the church. It will resume, when allowed, after the pandemic and will be open to all. Prior to lockdown there were 16 members and we hope to recruit more when conditions permit.

- **Craft Group**

This group welcomes people in friendship, fellowship and fun from the complete beginner to the more experienced crafter. The group was established during lockdown but when restrictions allow we will be holding sessions in church sharing knowledge and skills.

- **Fund-raising.**

This includes our 200 Club, Gift Days, Craft Fairs, Bridgwater Food Fair and having our café open and offering tower tours on Carnival day.

- **Fairtrade**

St Mary's is a registered Fairtrade Church.

- **Social events**

These include parish lunches and coffee mornings.



Lenten Lunch

- **Music**



*There is a long tradition of music and choral singing at St Mary's. We are unable to maintain a choir at present but we hope to be able to attract musicians and singers to take part in our worship in a creative way. We have had several successful joint services with the Baptists during which we have shared our musical talents. We have a fine Father Willis organ and employ an organist.*

## **Our location**

[Bridgwater](#), situated within a mile or two of junctions 23 and 24 of the M5, is a busy, thriving town with a distinctive character.

The town has a reasonable range of shops and retail parks, an arts centre, sports clubs and rugby and football teams. It is famous for its annual fair and the carnival, for which people come from all over the country. The county town of Taunton is less than 30 minutes away.

[Our local councils](#) have ambitious plans for the regeneration of Bridgwater and St Mary's Church is well-placed at the heart of the town to play an important role in this.

The population of [St Mary's parish](#) is around 7,500 while that of Chilton Trinity is around 500. We have a largely indigenous white population with few ethnic minorities although, in recent years, a number of Eastern Europeans have settled in the town.

Chilton Trinity is a rural village about 2 miles to the north of Bridgwater. There are few amenities apart from a village hall and the church. Recent housing developments in the area have the potential for engaging with more people.

## Rural environment

The Somerset Levels and moors contain a rich biodiversity of national and international importance. Much of Exmoor National Park is contained within the County of Somerset and, to the north, we have the Mendip Hills. The coastline is equally varied, with large beaches at nearby Burnham-on-Sea and Weston-super-Mare, while further west it gradually becomes more rugged towards Exmoor.



*The countryside around Bridgwater is varied and beautiful. Close by are the Quantock Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where wild ponies and deer are frequently spotted.*

## Employment in the area

One of the principal employers in the area is EDF Energy at the Hinkley Point B Power Station, situated about 9 miles from Bridgwater. The new Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, which is under construction, has brought a welcome boost to the area. Other areas of employment include: local government (Sedgemoor District Council has its head office in the town) retail, banking, health care, teaching, administration, care homes, legal, manufacturing, food processing, agriculture, building, light engineering and distribution.

## Schools and Further Education

There are several primary schools within the town, but those in Saint Mary's parish include Saint Mary's (C of E), Saint Joseph's (RC), Westover Green (County) and the new Northgate Primary.



The four secondary schools are: Haygrove School, within St Mary's parish; Chilton Trinity School, within Chilton Trinity parish; Bridgwater College Academy and Robert Blake Science College. Bridgwater and Taunton College offers a wide range of A level, NVQ, BTEC and university-level courses as well as adult learning. It has recently been rated as Outstanding in several key areas.



*Bridgwater and Taunton College Graduation Ceremony in St Mary's Church*

## Health and Wellbeing

Bridgwater has a modern hospital with a minor injuries unit. Major hospitals are located in Taunton and Weston-super-Mare.

Sports facilities and fitness centres are widely available in the town. Some of the local secondary schools and the YMCA have good facilities. There are many sports clubs including cricket, bowls, lawn tennis and badminton, sailing at Durleigh Reservoir two miles from the town centre, and two golf clubs within easy reach of town. There is an excellent 6-lane swimming pool at Chilton Trinity School.

## Holy Trinity Church, Chilton Trinity



### Overview

A church has been on this site for around a thousand years. Chilton Trinity Church is a small well-maintained building which has Saxon foundations. The present building is 13<sup>th</sup> century with later additions.

Its simple construction makes it reasonably easy to maintain.

In 2019 the electrical system was upgraded and new heaters installed. We have recently had our quinquennial architectural survey and we are awaiting the report. The open churchyard is maintained and the burial ground managed.

With a very small number of people to manage the administration and finance it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate. Sadly, we feel the church may close within the next ten years.

Its church community has worshipped and ministered to the village throughout this time. Today we continue to place the church at the centre of the village and of village life. It is much valued by the parishioners although few regularly attend services.

## Services



The ecclesiastical tradition is central/traditional. The principal service is BCP Holy Communion at 11.15 am on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays. The average attendance is 6.

Special services include Trinity Sunday/Rogationtide, which are also attended by members of St Mary's church; the Harvest Festival and Christmas Carol Service are better attended and well-supported by the local community.



*In 2019 we held a 'Nativity on a farm' involving two local schools and members of two other churches, St Mary's, Bridgwater and St George's, Wembdon. This was greatly enjoyed by all who attended*



*Social events are usually held in conjunction with the Village Hall committee, in particular Harvest Supper*

We have held Messy church in the Village Hall. However, due to low attendance we no longer hold these meetings. We have a fund which helps to facilitate children and family outreach. When we are no longer restricted by the Covid regulations we are hoping to arrange further similar events.

As a church we feel we must meet people where they are and engage with other groups to achieve this aim.

Our new incumbent needs to understand the traditional needs of the present members of the church but to also embrace the outreach that is required. This person should have energy and imagination and be open to new ideas of church.

New housing developments within the parish may enable us to engage with more people in the community.

### **Occasional offices**

Details for the last three years are shown in the table below:

	<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>Weddings</b>	<b>Funerals</b>
2017	5	2	3
2018	1	1	0
2019	2	0	2

### **Finance**

In common with many other parishes, the financial position is precarious with little hope at this time of improving the situation. We do pay our Parish Share in full.

### **Our Church Community**

Chilton Trinity Church is very traditional with an ageing congregation. Church membership is currently 7 with 17 on the Electoral Roll.

There is a ring of 5 ancient bells that are in reasonable condition. They are rung on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays and for special services throughout the year.

## Summary of services across the Benefice

The usual pattern of services to date is shown in the table below:

	St Mary's	Chilton Trinity
<b><u>Sundays</u></b>		
8.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)	
9.30 am	Parish Communion (CW)	
11.15 am (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	-	Holy Communion (BCP)
11.15 am (4 <sup>th</sup> )	-	Holy Communion (BCP)
<b><u>Thursdays</u></b>		
11.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)	

## Our Diocese

Our benefice is within the Diocese of Bath and Wells and is a part of Sedgemoor Deanery. The Diocese is centred on the beautiful medieval city of Wells, the smallest city in England, where the Diocesan Office provides a wide range of support, services and resources to the diocese.

Our Diocesan Vision is:

**In response to God's immense love for us we seek to be God's people living and telling the story of Jesus.**

The vision speaks of the story of Jesus; his life, teaching and work, his death and resurrection; the story which is the context of our faith and the content of our message.

We seek to live this story as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world and to tell it, both in sharing the good news and by the way in which our lives speak about Him.

The diocesan strategy is built around three priorities:

1. To place mission and evangelism at the heart of all we do.
2. To re-align our resources towards mission.
3. To identify, develop and release the gifts of all our people.

The priorities provide a framework for decision-making and planning at parish, benefice, deanery, archdeaconry and diocesan levels.

As a diocese in the months ahead we will be having to ask many questions and seeking God's way as to how we can support one another in living this out in the light of the ongoing impact of coronavirus. We will seek to appoint clergy who are able to take forward what has been learned during this time, are flexible in their approach and able to help develop the gifts of people in the parishes in the spirit of Setting God's People Free.

The people, parishes and chaplaincies that make up Sedgemoor Deanery are seeking to take seriously the diocesan vision to live and tell the story of Jesus. Like the diocesan priorities we aim to put mission and evangelism at the heart of all we do, realign our ministry resources towards mission and, in all these things seek to identify, develop and use the gifts of all people. With information provided by all the parishes we created a mission action plan in September 2018. This has identified particular things for our deanery focus:

1. To provide opportunities for regular prayer together (which includes our ecumenical partners).
2. To look at ways that we may be able to respond more effectively at deanery level with regards to ministry to men and to youth & children.
3. To offer deanery-wide opportunities for training, e.g. lay worship assistant courses.

Our Rural Dean, Revd Jane Haslam says, "We see this appointment at St Mary's, Bridgwater and Holy Trinity, Chilton Trinity as very important strategically given the re-ordering of St Mary's in particular and the space it provides at the heart of the town. Here are numerous exciting opportunities for mission and ministry to be explored!"

## The Vicarage



The present vicarage is a spacious detached house located in Vickery Close, off Durliegh Road on the west side of town, and within comfortable walking distance of the town centre and St Mary's Church.

On the ground floor there is a study, living room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, utility and cloakroom/toilet. On the first floor there are 5 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms. The house has full gas central heating.

Outside there is a double garage, ample parking and a good-sized garden.



The church is the people. The people are the church.

### **A Prayer for the Vacancy**

*God our Father, at this time of uncertainty and change,  
Fill us with vision, energy and faithfulness in prayer,  
That we may be true to our calling to bring new life to our community.  
We pray that you will give us wisdom as we choose our new incumbent,  
As we pray for those who may be called to lead us in faith and serve us in joy.  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*