

The Parish of St John the Evangelist, Highbridge

In the Diocese of Bath and Wells

Living and Telling the story of Jesus
Come and Join Us!



Parish Profile 2026

Church Street, Highbridge, Somerset

www.stjohnshighbridge.org.uk

Contents

A. Diocesan statement – our vision for growth and transformation	2
Introduction.....	2
A vision for growth and transformation.....	2
The outcome we are looking for	3
B. Deanery Statement	5
C. Our Parish Church	6
D. Mission Statement.....	6
E. Our Vision	6
F. Our Strengths	7
G. Our Challenges.....	8
H. Hopes and Dreams.....	9
I. What We Offer	10
.....	10
J. Who We Are Looking For	11
<i>Spiritual Qualities</i>	11
<i>Other Skills and Qualities</i>	11
Key Tasks	11
K. Statistics.....	12
L. The Town and its Location	13
M. The Parish of Highbridge	14
N. Worship.....	14
Our PCC members	14
O. Church Buildings	15
The Parish Church of St John the Evangelist.....	15
The Church Hall	15
The Vicarage.....	15
P. Finance.....	16
Q. Come and Join Us	16

A. Diocesan statement – our vision for growth and transformation



Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Vicar of the Parish of Highbridge in the Diocese of 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 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?

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Michael."

Bishop Michael

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "A. Wells".

Archdeacon of Wells

B. Deanery Statement

Axbridge Deanery is situated in part of Somerset that includes towns and villages along the Bristol Channel, part of the Mendip Hills and an eastern border a few miles from Wells, where the Cathedral and diocesan offices are located. We are mainly made up of rural villages, with the larger centres of population being mostly near the coast; Highbridge is to the west of the M5 and adjacent to Burnham on Sea. Highbridge and Burnham has recently seen significant housing development and population growth. Burnham, together with Berrow and Brean are major tourist areas attracting over 50,000 people in peak tourist season. The deanery is also home to the famous Cheddar caves, another area of significant tourism.

Leaders, both ordained and lay work well together within the deanery and chapter meetings are very supportive as we share our joys and our concerns over lunch and help each other through the often complex demands of parish or chaplaincy life. Every two months we have a 'greater chapter' meeting to include our valued retired clergy with PTO and wardens of benefices in vacancy. Deanery synod gathers around three times a year and we encourage active participation through discussion in groups and in plenary to ensure that each meeting is a good environment for shared learning and encouragement.

Along with all other deaneries in the diocese (and most other dioceses) Axbridge Deanery has undergone significant changes in the last few years when it comes to how we organise ourselves and ensure that together we can creatively resource ministry and mission. St John's, Highbridge is designated a Magnificat parish, the title used in this diocese for those parishes which include areas that are high on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This title reflects what we believe to be God's heart for the poor and marginalised.

Through the deanery mission and pastoral group as well as synod, we are starting the process of discerning a new mission plan that reflects our current identity and the contemporary needs of our communities.

The Area Dean, **Rev'd Joy Hawes** (therevjoy@gmail.com) or Lay Dean, **Mr Gary Orriss** (crookpeak6in1@gmail.com) will be happy to expand on who we are as a deanery or how we work together.

C. Our Parish Church

Welcome

Thank you for taking an interest in our Parish Profile in which we have set out a description of our church, parish and community. We hope this will give you the information needed to help you discern whether we are the church for you.

We are now praying for the person who will lead us into the next chapter of our life as a parish and invite you to consider prayerfully if you could be that person.

We seek to be a warm, welcoming church that includes all and cares for all. We pray that we will continue to do God's work here and be a safe and exciting place that encourages others to want to know the love of Christ.



D. Mission Statement

To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been received by the Church of England by the nurture of faith among the people of the community by word, worship, pastoral care and practical service (PCC December 2025).

E. Our Vision

We began 2026 with 'New Heart for a New Year', a lively Saturday morning spent together considering our context, church and calling.

We reaffirm our intent to be **'people of courage sharing God's love across our community.'** With this vision in mind, six priorities emerge to help us to grow together in worship, to build up the body of Christ, to bring newcomers to faith, to help us to listen and learn effectively, and to share God's love and word across our community and with one another.

- Building on our existing life as church, to see our community of faith shaped by all ages, enabling young and old to feel comfortable in the church space
- Engaging effectively with our local community
- Shaping our worship to reflect congregation and community
- Increasing intentionally our engagement with children and families, including links with Churchfield school
- Improving the effectiveness of our communication both within the church and with the community, by social and other media and, above all, by our church's living presence within its community
- Exploring ways and means, by collaborating with others, to meet the needs of the community.

F. Our Strengths

Strong sense of community within church and town

We strive to offer a warm welcome, underpinned by a desire to show Christ's care for all

Readiness to adapt and be 'agile'

Keeness to seek patterns of worship that 'work' for our church and community

A PCC that has introduced a standing committee and vice chair to strengthen its work

Commitment to safeguarding

An imaginative fundraising group

We want to work together and see the church grow

We want to address and overcome the considerable challenges that we face

A part-time parish administrator, for as long as finance permits

The support of retired ministers –

Revd Preb. Lynne Perry – presiding and preaching as required, including Wednesday service

Revd Preb. Richard Eyre – presiding and preaching as required, also for occasional services

Revd Preb. John Ruffle – occasionally presiding and preaching

Revd Paul Holmes – a Baptist minister preaching and leading as required and serving with the PCC and Deanery

We have one Lay Pastoral Assistant and 1 Lay Worship Assistant in training

A number of our congregation regularly lead intercessions, read the Scriptures and serve

G. Our Challenges

Our context

The Parish has been identified by the Bath and Wells Diocese as being a Magnificat Parish. As such, the Parish faces some unique challenges. We have recently moved from 951st to 662nd (out of 12,000) in the Multiple Deprivation Index of Parishes – a worsening.

Our church and community

Whilst our Church membership is small and congregations attending services smaller still, many in the community see the Church as being important in their lives even if they do not attend on a Sunday. Building and restoring bridges between church and community is a major challenge, we want to rise to.

Much of the property in Highbridge is managed social housing or rented from private landlords with possibly only 20% privately owned. Within the context of a small Somerset town our community echoes that normally experienced on the large housing estates of much more urban areas.

There is farming in the parish, but much of the work lies in the industrial estates, public sector, and tourist industry as well as those commuting to Bridgwater, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare and Bristol. There are also new and existing housing developments that we have not so far engaged with effectively. In particular, the long-established Morlands Estate.

Our church building

Our 2023 Quinquennial Report identified the major requirement for roof and upper-level pointing repairs. Conservation repairs are also required to the masonry and slate pillars on the outside of the east chancel gable, a figure in the region of £20k has been estimated for this work. To fund these repairs, grants will need to be sourced along with finding other forms of fund raising. In addition to this there is also a need to consider a better way to heat the church.

We cannot say that we are a wealthy Parish, but for many years paid our Parish Share on time and in full. In more recent years this has not been so, but we are taking significant steps to change this. Most of our income is raised through the regular giving of members and special fund-raising events.

Churchfield Church of England Primary School became an academy sponsored by the Diocese of Bath and Wells in March 2013. Our previous incumbent was a member of the governing body, and we hope that this involvement can be continued and strengthen links between church and the school.

To demonstrate to Highbridge that St. John's cares for our community and is relevant to it.

To develop the range and reach of our worship and grow a strong sense of team across the church.

To encourage the congregation to explore and extend their ministry, and develop a new confidence that, with the Holy Spirit's helping, 'we can!'

H. Hopes and Dreams

With our previous incumbent we began to explore the possibility of church and hall reordering to maintain and improve its potential for mission and ministry with a written statement of needs, a statement of significance and some funding from the Ark Foundation. We hope to see our building become better suited to our mission and ministry.

To become the body of Christ: each member encouraged, equipped and empowered to play their part.

To see our congregation grow and strengthen our links with the community so that they come to know the light of Christ.

To develop the reach and range of our worship and grow a strong sense of team.

To be a church that reflects our community through all stages of life.

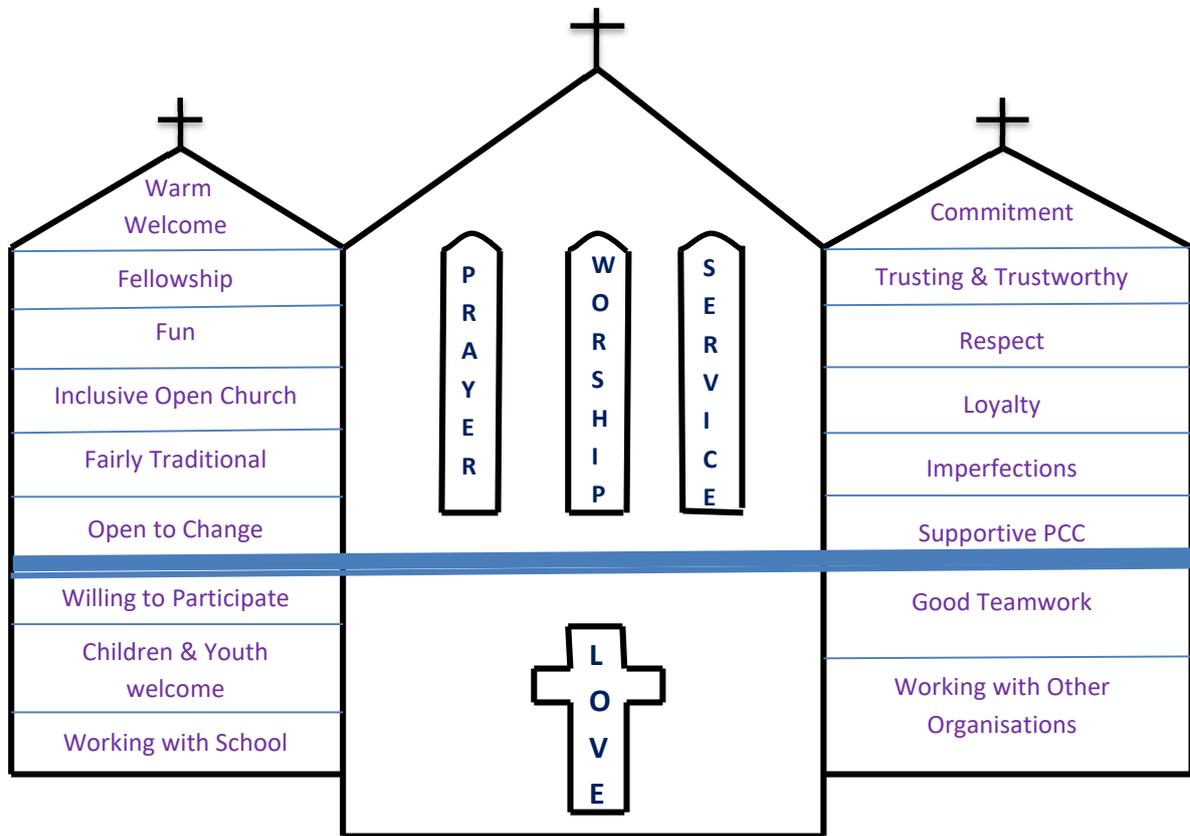
To see a thriving relationship with our schools and a developing ministry to children and families.

To become a Magnificat church in our Magnificat community with a Magnificat priest who will work with us to achieve this.

I. What We Offer

We are a congregation with limited resources that nonetheless seeks to bring the life, light and love of Christ into our community.

This is Saint John's (Bringing the Light of Christ into our Community)



J. Who We Are Looking For

Someone with long-term intent who will come alongside us to work with us, seeking to make a difference with -

Spiritual Qualities

- Prayerful
- Compassionate and supportive
- A disciple of Christ and open to the Holy Spirit
- Prepared for a challenge
- Vision
- Enthusiasm
- Resilience
- A servant of the servants of God
- Courage.



Other Skills and Qualities

- Good leader who collaborates well
- Approachable, good listener
- Discerning and encouraging
- A visible presence who can engage and work in partnership with the local community
- Keen to engage with and nurture children and adults in the faith
- Appreciative of the elderly and all they offer
- Good organisation and administrative skills
- Comfortable with a range of worship styles.

Key Tasks

- Communicating the Gospel to all ages and abilities
- Exploring various forms of worship
- Enhancing school links
- Being a visible presence in the community, engaging with people from all backgrounds to build up the church
- Being a visible link with agencies, both statutory and voluntary, that operate within our community
- Helping to develop our communication
- Encouraging and developing the gifts of our congregation
- Working with the Deanery as it implements its Deanery Mission Action Plan
- To become a Magnificat priest for our Magnificat church in our Magnificat community.

K. Statistics

Highbridge has a population of around 8,000 nearby Burnham, our neighbouring parish, adds approximately 20,000 more (2021 census).

There are currently 43 members on our Electoral Role with a Sunday attendance of between 13 and 68.

2025 Attendance Figures:

Service	Number	Average Attendance	
		<16	>16
Sunday Holy Communion	-	3	25
Wednesday Holy Communion	-	-	6
Number of Funerals	8 + 1 at Crematorium	-	-
Number of Baptisms	4	-	-
Number of Weddings	1	-	-
Number of Occasional services	8	-	-
Number of Additional Christmas Services & average attendance	5	14	37
Number of Additional Easter services & average attendance	4	4	14

2025 Finances:

The table represents our financial situation at the end of 2025

INCOME (2025)	£
Monthly direct giving	22601
Other giving	4508
Gift Aid/small donations tax refund	4335
Fundraising (net fig)	3181
Hall hire rent	3094
Grant received (buildings project)	5000
EXPENDITURE (2025)	
Regular payments (not Parish Share)	15,900
Parish share contribution paid	21851
Parish share request for 2026	30862
79% to be paid as agreed	24576

RESERVES/BALANCE as @ 31.12.25	£
Restricted	3515
Designated	1063
Unrestricted balance	25498

For explanation of financial commitment see section P Finance on page 16.

L. The Town and its Location

Highbridge has a main line railway station and is five minutes from Junction 22 of the M5. Highbridge is situated 17 miles from Wells our Cathedral town and Diocesan Centre.



“Proud of its Ancestors”

Highbridge is in the beautiful county of Somerset. Its railway works and docks are now replaced by out-of-town industrial estates. Highbridge has several new housing developments.

The town is predominantly working or lower middle class. A significant number rely on state benefits. There are many long established Highbridge families and retired people.

The main supermarkets are Aldi and Asda. Neighbouring Burnham-on-Sea has Tesco.

Beautiful Apex Park with its lakes, fishing and peaceful walks nestles alongside the river Brue which links the two towns.

The town has two schools: Churchfield Church of England Primary School and King Alfred Comprehensive School which serves both Highbridge and Burnham. Local children attend colleges in Bridgwater or Weston-super-Mare for further education.



Our Church has traditionally had links with Churchfield Primary School which holds festival and end of academic year services in the church. Churchfield School Choir have sung for special services in the church.

We have worked in partnership with other ministers in the parish to provide weekly collective worship meaning that a representative from St John’s has led worship in the school.



There are community hospitals in Burnham-on-Sea and Bridgwater and major hospitals in Weston-super-Mare and Taunton.

There is also an active Credit Union and Village Agent in the town, a YMCA hostel and community hub on the Morland Estate.

M. The Parish of Highbridge



Most of the community live to the west of railway line.

“We seek to give generously of time and talents and believe that we should give generously to the community.” An aspiration.

N. Worship

Historically, St John’s enjoyed an Anglo Catholic tradition of worship. The first incumbent was part of the Tractarian movement. Today the congregation experiences a service that seeks to incorporate the wonder and joy of our faith without being unduly sombre. We have a Sunday morning service of Holy Communion at 10am and a Wednesday morning Communion at 9.30am which is also live streamed on Facebook. Some services are becoming more creative and informal, particularly those associated with the seasons. The church is open throughout the day for private prayer and worship. We have a pipe organ and a piano for those who wish to play. Candles and a prayer tree are available for those who wish to add something tangible to their prayer. We belong to Burnham and District Churches Together.



Wednesday Morning Worship

Our PCC members



O. Church Buildings

The Parish Church of St John the Evangelist

St John's is a single-parish benefice with one church building, built in the 1850s and consecrated in 1859 with the south aisle being added in 1882. The last reordering was carried out in 1987. Notable from these reordering is the placement of the altar table within the nave. The church building is not listed and does not stand in a conservation area.



The Church Hall

The wooden hall is used by the church, some outside organisations and by families for parties and wakes. Rental charges are kept low as local families predominantly live on a low income.

Brownies and Rainbows use the hall weekly, other organisations monthly or annually.



The Vicarage

The vicarage (built in 1984) is situated adjacent to, and on the North side of St. John's Church. It is a spacious four-bed roomed property with upstairs WC and bathroom

The ground floor has a lounge, dining room, kitchen, WC and utility with plumbing for a washing machine. There is also a study separate from the main living area.

Outside comprises an enclosed walled wrap-around garden which is mainly laid to lawn with patio areas. A garage is situated to the front of the property detached from the vicarage.



P. Finance

The majority of our finance is raised by regular giving, fees, and various fund-raising events. A lesser amount is raised through open plate, card reader. The general running costs of the Parish and buildings is funded by the gift aid tax refund scheme. The final accounts for year ending 2025 are showing a small surplus; a full copy of the accounts can be made available on request.

St John's PCC has boldly and faithfully committed to contribute 10% extra towards the Parish Share in 2026 with similar steps over 2027-2028 as the Diocese wants it to be paid in full within 3-4 years. This is a massive commitment for a Church ranked 662 on the Church of England IMD (ArcGIS.com 2025)*, and financial margins remain very tight. St John's had a small surplus of income over expenditure at 2025 year-end which may help to ease slightly some of the 2026 financial pressures.

**ArcGIS Church of England Parish Map – Parishes with 2021 census and 2025 deprivation data (Nov 25)*

Q. Come and Join Us

We do hope you will be inspired to take up the challenges and joys of parish life here in Highbridge our small Somerset town. You will be welcomed and supported by our friendly congregation and have the beautiful Somerset countryside, with all that it has to offer, just a stone's throw from your door.

