



The churches of
Milborne Port & Charlton Horethorne
with Goathill, Milborne Wick and Stowell

Are you an inspirational and innovative leader who can help us use our strengths to serve our communities, discerning God's will as we journey together?



Diocese of Bath and Wells
www.milborneportchurches.org.uk



Welcome!

Are you an inspirational and innovative leader who can help us use our strengths to better serve our communities, discerning God's will as we journey together?

Thank you for taking a look at our Benefice Profile. We aim to give an honest impression of our benefice and its people as we are now, and our aspirations for the future as we seek to follow God's will for us in this place. This profile has been developed from a huge idea-sharing exercise in October 2021, in which all five churches participated, and the quotations used, where not otherwise attributed, come from the responses given on that day. Please also go to our website: www.milborneportchurches.org.uk.



Section 1: Us

Who are we?

We are a community of Christians worshipping in the five rural churches of our benefice, which is on the Somerset/Dorset border and is a wonderful place to live and work. Although we worship in five different places, we are drawing closer in a variety of ways, and we aspire to work together even more closely. In this way we hope to simplify and reduce the administrative workload, to increase our fellowship as a benefice, and to do God's will more effectively. Our age profile tends to the "mature", but we have faith, energy and a desire to continue growing and developing.



Our Strengths

Our constituent churches comprise inclusive, close-knit communities, with many capable people, expert in all kinds of areas, who are ready to offer their talents and work together as a team. During the pandemic, and now in the vacancy, it has been very heartening to see people pulling together, and also looking to serve the wider community.

Members of St. John's have been instrumental in setting up Milborne Port Foodshare based in Church House, while members of St. Peter and St. Paul's were heavily involved in the setting up and supporting the "Corona Loners" initiative in Charlton Horethorne, centred on the village shop.

*. "Christ has no body now,
but yours. No hands, no
feet on earth, but
yours. Yours are the eyes
through which Christ
looks compassion into the
world. Yours are the
feet with which Christ
walks to do good. Yours
are the hands with which
Christ blesses the world."*

St Teresa of Avila



Worship is at the heart of everything we do, and we have a thriving worshipping community, with good regular attendance. St John's has a strong robed choir and an excellent organist, with a great team of bellringers on its eight bells, dedicated vergers, and teams covering every other practical aspect of worship. While smaller, St. Peter and St. Paul's also has an eight-bell peal with an enthusiastic team of bellringers as well as a fine organist. Throughout the benefice, at the Festivals and other times, special services attract villagers who otherwise do not often come to church.

We strive to communicate well, sending a weekly “Pew News” to our large email distribution list across the benefice, maintaining an up-to-date website, and producing the monthly parish magazines in both Milborne Port and Charlton Horethorne as a service to the community. In normal times we organise many fund-raising events each year; some of these have restarted and are much appreciated in the community at large, while others have been transformed into virtual events. Our hospitality and cake-baking game is strong!



“Worship doesn’t only happen in church”



We work hard on the practicalities of our parishes. Our churches and grounds are lovingly maintained, thanks to the diligence of those charged with their oversight and the volunteers who work regularly on them. Our finances are well managed, with a very active Stewardship Scheme, and up to this point we have never failed to pay our Parish Share, with the larger churches supporting the smaller ones. There are generous givers among our congregations and in the wider communities, especially on annual Gift Days, and we keep on top of necessary repairs.

Our Challenges

Some of our challenges are shared by most rural ministries: an aging and slowly declining demographic, and a struggle to make Christianity seen as relevant to life in the 21st Century. As in many benefices, the organisation is somewhat unwieldy; we have five churches in different villages administered by three PCCs (Milborne Port with Milborne Wick; Charlton Horethorne with Stowell; and Goathill). Among the potential responses to these challenges under our consideration is a determination to streamline this organisational legacy, making it work better for us, for our communities and for you, our new incumbent.

“We pray week by week for the Church: ‘Reveal her unity, guard her faith and preserve her in peace’ ”

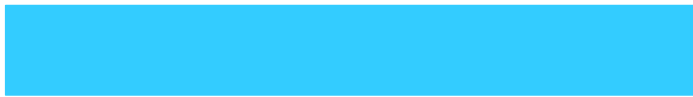


We are seeking to reach out into our communities in a spirit of service and inclusive welcome, demonstrating the relevance of our Christian faith, and making our churches a natural meeting place for all. We are part of wonderful, active, caring communities and seek to be at the heart of them, serving where we are needed and being there for our villages in times of both joy and stress. We need to offer practical help when there are problems and to explore how best this can be done.





Besides going out into our communities, we long to welcome more of the village residents into our churches more often, and we recognise that alongside our weekly and annual worship cycles, we need to be far more creative in the ways we invite people into our buildings and to share our Christian life. We know we have to find ways of demonstrating that our faith is a “seven days a week” faith that is not limited to “church on Sundays”, taking it into the places where people meet throughout the week - the pubs, social clubs, school gates, etc, and addressing the issues that are talked about in these places. If we are to be more open and inclusive, shifting perceptions of what “The Church” is and does, we know that we need to “think outside the box” and be open to change. This is why we are seeking creativity in our next leader.



“This is why we are seeking creativity in our next leader”

Section 2: You

“Someone who smiles, who seems content, who wears their Christianity happily and enthusiastically.”



The leader we long for...

We are optimistic for the future of our church, and we would like someone who is similarly optimistic: We would like to feel that you want to know us as individuals and will make an effort to do so. We hope that pastoral care, under your guidance, will spread out from the church community to all the village residents.

“Someone who will get to know people, listen to their problems, share their joys and sorrows, point them to others who could help and support them, pray with them, be there for them”.

We fully understand that every member of the church is an ambassador for Christ, but inevitably the wider community sees the incumbent as the face of the church, and it is important to us that our new Priest-in-Charge is visible in the community and is a “people person” who can engage with all the parishioners.

Clearly, underpinning such an optimistic, contented, people person will be a person of prayer who will teach us and lead us in nurturing and meaningful acts of worship, with the Eucharist central to that. We pray for a person who has the ability to draw out the key messages of the Christian faith and apply them meaningfully and practically within the context of people’s 21st Century lives.

We want the church congregation and the wider community to engage with each other, and need your help in finding creative ways to do this. We have strong links with both Milborne Port and Charlton Horethorne Primary Schools, and would love you to build on the excellent work your forerunner established with both schools, ensuring that the children see Church as their church, whether or not they attend main services.



From Charlton Horethorne Primary School children:

Our new priest....

- Should be exciting and always fun*
- Always kind to everyone in school*
- Have lots of props to tell stories*
- Know our 6 school values really well*
- Be a great storyteller!*
- Share different types of assemblies with us, including practical activities*
- Have a good sense of humour*
- Be really helpful*



We recognise that our church buildings are wonderful resources, and hope that you will lead us in finding imaginative new ways of using them, whether in the context of a wider range of services, or community-based uses.



Can one person do all the above? Almost certainly not, which is why we are looking for someone who can manage their workload by genuine delegation, allowing the church members to pool ideas and expertise, and giving them the opportunity to grow. We are exploring the Diocese of Bath and Wells' resources on Focal Ministries and finding much food for thought there, whether in Lay-led Services of the Word, pastoral care, or prayer ministry.

...and what you can expect from us

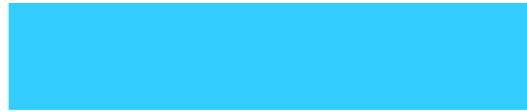
You will be joining us in living in our beautiful benefice and we can assure you of a very warm welcome. Whether you prefer a cup of tea or a G & T, we will be very happy to share a celebratory beverage! Our villages have lots going on and a good community spirit. You can read more about the villages and the general area in Section 4.

. "Please don't expect them to do three or four services on a Sunday" .

In your churches you will find close-knit, committed and hard-working congregations, many of whom have worked together for years, who are very ready to share responsibility. We know that we should not make unreasonable demands on your time and energy, and must share the load with you. We can offer you experienced support in your role, and also understand that you will have a need for professional support and further development.

"Everyone wants the Angel Gabriel!"





“Open minds and hearts - a willingness to change; to be jolted out of perhaps lazy routines”.

We have asked for a leader who can think creatively, and we will respond to this challenge by being open to change in whatever ways God leads us. Most importantly, we will offer you our love, our prayers, and our support throughout your time in the benefice.

Vicarage The 1936 Vicarage opposite St John’s Church has been in use up to and including the last incumbency, but it is over-large, and difficult to heat and maintain. It has now been sold, and the Diocese of Bath and Wells has undertaken to purchase a new Vicarage which will be more suitable and convenient. We will publish updated information on the Vicarage as soon as possible.



Church House (www.mpchouse.org.uk) is a benefice facility and is situated in St John’s grounds. The main hall was completely modernised in 2010, and has been recently redecorated. The kitchen provides catering standard equipment. The heating and toilet facilities have been recently updated. The hall is managed by an enthusiastic and competent committee, and the large garden is maintained by volunteers. Church House and its garden are well used for church events and are hired by a number of local groups. It is the base for the Foodshare, and for the Tuesday Lunch Club for the elderly. The premises are used by private hirers for parties, baptism parties and funeral wakes. Church House also accommodates the Benefice Office.



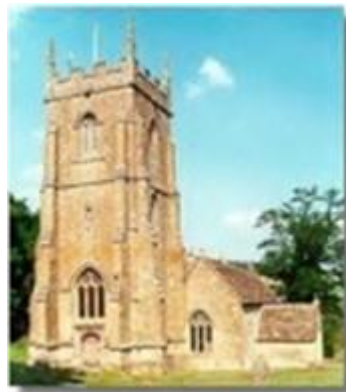
The Benefice Office, equipped with computer and photocopier, is a resource for the whole benefice. We normally employ a paid part-time Benefice Secretary to support the incumbent in administrative work. Although the post is currently vacant, our firm intention is to employ a new Benefice Secretary once our new Incumbent is installed. The office produces the weekly 'Pew News', which, as well as notices, includes copies of the readings and collect for the week. This is currently distributed electronically to church members, appears on the website, and we have recently also started printing it again (post-lockdown) for use during services.

Section 3: Snapshots of our Life as a Benefice

Our Benefice as a Whole

The churches of our benefice have a rich history spanning 1,000 years. The Benefice itself was formed in 2006 when the parish of Charlton Horethorne (with Stowell) joined with the parishes of Milborne Port (with Wick), and Goathill. Since then, there has been an increase in lay leadership of services. We are open to developing new patterns of worship which ensure the sustainability of the benefice, and this is exemplified by our benefice response to the Covid pandemic.

Before the first lockdown of the pandemic in March 2020, each of our five rural parishes strongly valued individual Sunday worship, and over 100 people, of all ages, attended our Sunday services on a regular basis. Two or more Holy Communion services were celebrated in the benefice each week, with the incumbent often taking three services in different places on a Sunday.



With the churches closed to congregations, we had a period of experimentation, with our priest initially videoing some services in church, before we settled into regular Zoom services. The regular 10.30 a.m. Zoom benefice services were very well attended virtually by church members from across the benefice. When we found that some members were unable to join us online, we set up joining by telephone, which enabled us to be more inclusive.



As well as giving us the benefits of interactive worship from our own homes, these services drew us together as a benefice, enabling us to pray together and simply get to know each other a little better. We also participated in a successful Benefice Lent Course over Zoom.

The gradual relaxation of the pandemic regulations has enabled us to start building a pattern of services from the base of a pared-down provision; While we still cherish the distinctive character of worship in each church, we are rebuilding our worship together in new and creative ways, and we are so pleased that our attendance has returned to pre-Covid levels. The main service on any fifth Sunday in a month is normally a Whole Benefice Service, outdoors when practical. We are maintaining some Covid precautions at present. Church music has gradually resumed and is much appreciated by all.



Festival services are an important part of village life, and we look forward to packed churches again when it is safe. The major Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter are very well attended, as are celebrations such as Remembrance Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving, Plough Sunday, Rogation, and a Pet Service.

Regular Services in the Benefice Morning Prayer Mon-Sat in Milborne Port 09.00 Mid-week Communion Every Wednesday St John's 10.30	
1st Sunday in the month	Communion 09.00 Charlton Horethorne Communion 10.30 Milborne Port Evensong 18.00 Stowell
2nd Sunday in the month	Communion 09.00 Goathill Communion 10.30 Milborne Port Evensong Charlton Horethorne
3rd Sunday in the month	Holy Communion 9.00 Milborne Wick Matins (Lay-led) 10.30 Milborne Port Communion 18.00 Charlton Horethorne
4th Sunday in the month	Communion 10.30 Milborne Port Evensong 15.00 (winter)/18.00 (summer) Goathill
5th Sunday in the month	Benefice Service 10.30 Type of service and venue varies

Individual Churches

St John the Evangelist, Milborne Port

We are a warm and welcoming church community. Our main Sunday morning services are at the heart of our Christian life. It is at these services that the dedicated work of so many people comes together: our choir under organist Rachel's direction; our bellringers, led by Sue and Dave; our wonderful vergers, Ronnie and June; lay worship leaders, intercessors and lesson readers, led by our Reader, Pat. We love the living tradition of these services, and nurtured (currently) by retired clergy, we aspire to spread God's love into our community.

St John's attracts typical congregations of 50-60 at the main Eucharist on Sundays, half a dozen very loyal worshippers at daily Morning Prayer, and 10 -15 at mid-week Holy Communion. Attendances over 100 are recorded at most festival services. There are 111 on the electoral roll, including 10 living outside the parish.



Although few children regularly attend, visiting children are warmly welcomed and involved in the services. There is a Children's Corner equipped with toys, books and puzzles. We hope to take further measures to make the church comfortable and suitable for children. Likewise, we aspire to create a more convenient serving area for refreshments, and we are setting funds and legacies aside for this project.



Our Churchwardens, Jacquie and Nicki, and our Treasurer, Robert, are faithful custodians of our organisation, fabric and finances. Our paid Vergers look after the cleaning and housekeeping, as well as supporting services and a thousand other vital tasks

. St John's Church dates from the eleventh century and we can trace the many alterations which reflect the evolution of worship. Our altar under the crossing was set up in the 1960s when the Harrison organ and choir stalls were moved to the west end of the church, bringing minister, organist, choir and congregation closer together. The nave, south transept (St John's or Gethsemane Chapel), and the chancel (Lady Chapel) are regularly used for smaller services. There is an effective sound system with a hearing aid loop. The church structure is mostly in very good condition. The minor works identified during the last quinquennial inspection have all been remedied. Very recently some issues with the roof were noted and will need attention.

The churchyard is closed for burials. Maintenance is supported by the Parish Council, who in collaboration with the PCC, have recently contributed to funding new, much improved churchyard paths; a team of volunteers mow the grass and tend the borders, including the Memorial Border, where ashes are now interred.



The church has a fine peal of eight bells which were taken down, refurbished, rehung and retuned in 2012. The raising of over £60,000 to do this shows the support of the church and the village as a whole for our tradition. The band of bellringers are highly committed and well appreciated in the village community, and their enthusiasm is matched by the dedicated robed choir of twelve and our salaried organist, Rachel.

Some of our church groups have been "on hold" during the pandemic. These include Prayer Group and Bible Study. Pre-Festival children's events have also been paused, but our recent Crib Service attracted 50 children with 30 accompanying adults.

St John's supports a range of charities, at home or abroad, with regular gifts of £300 per month, plus emergency donations in times of great need, through its Charities and Missions Committee. The Christian Aid group runs an annual collection and fund-raising events, typically raising over £2,000 each year. A newly formed Foodshare group, supported by the village Co-op, and by generous regular donations from the congregation, has several church members on the management committee. Lent Lunches have run on Fridays in Lent for many years (excepting 2020/21) and are very popular, as well as raising significant amounts for Christian Aid.

The Milborne Port Magazine went online at the height of the 2020 lockdown but is now back in print, edited and managed by church members as a service to the village. Profits from advertising enable us to support church and community projects. Digital copies are posted on our website, with a fortnight's time lag. A St John's Facebook page is gaining support.



Other Churches in Milborne Port

Fund-raising events are arranged several times a year, including quizzes, talks, concerts and social occasions. In July, the Church Fete attracts a large attendance from the village and surrounding communities and raises a significant sum towards church expenses as well as being a focus for entertainment and meeting friends. Our Annual Gift Day is combined with an Open Day with exhibitions and activities. These hospitable events are always well-supported by the village, as is the Christmas Tree Festival every few years, and really show how the church is still a natural focus for the community at these times as well as in weddings and funerals.

Until recently, there was a highly successful Sharing Agreement between St John's and the Roman Catholic congregation in the village, who shared our church building. This ended only when the Catholic Church was unable to continue providing a priest here. Catholic weddings and funerals are still held at St John's when requested. Although we no longer have a formal Churches Together organisation, we continue to worship and hold activities together. The Good Friday service and the United Carol Service are planned and celebrated jointly, as are the Lent Lunches which take place every year (excluding 2020/21). ReBorne Community Church is an independent evangelical foundation, currently worshipping in Sherborne, which is redeveloping a former clubhouse in the centre of the village. We have collaborated at various times, and good personal relationships with leaders and other members are being used to promote outreach in the village.

St Peter and St Paul, Charlton Horethorne



We are a cheerful and resilient Christian community based in the small village of Charlton Horethorne 3 miles North of Milborne Port. Despite the headwinds encountered by many small rural parishes, and the recent turbulence associated with the various Covid restrictions, our numbers have held up remarkably well, and our rhythm of Sunday worship with services on at least 3 of the 4-5 Sundays a month has continued to run smoothly providing pleasure and nurture to those attending.

Unsurprisingly, we are considerably smaller than our larger neighbour down the road, but we count ourselves very blessed to still be able to call on organist John and pianist Bill for all our services, and while we don't possess a choir, we do have a dedicated and enthusiastic team of bellringers led by our bell captain Catherine. We are able to call on various others to assist with readings and intercessions, and lay members are occasionally called upon to lead services.

While there are no other churches in Charlton Horethorne or Stowell, there is a growing and increasingly fruitful interchange with the wider Benefice, particularly at Festivals. The current vacancy has allowed us to get to know the wonderful retired clergy resident in the Benefice as well as a "moonlighting" boarding school chaplain; their input has been extremely refreshing and is greatly valued by all - possibly further energising the congregation in its desire to welcome a new long term incumbent, and with them, the possibilities of fresh impetus and growth.

Because we offer a mix of both morning and evening services, our congregation numbers vary; we can usually count on 10-12 at our 9 a.m. Holy Communion, while the two 6 p.m. services (an Evensong and a Holy Communion) usually attract 15-25. Alternative services such as the annual Farm service and Churchyard services often attract 30+ and attendances of 50-75+ have regularly been recorded at festival services. There are 54 on the electoral roll.





While few children attend our regular Sunday services, the Village Primary School has traditionally held a weekly school assembly in the church attended by the 40-50 pupils plus some staff and parents. While Covid restrictions brought this to a halt, there are active discussions about restarting this important component to their education during the first quarter of 2022. There is a small Children's Corner equipped with toys, books and puzzles.

Warden Charlie and Treasurer Paul enjoy the constructive support of the other 5 members of the PCC. They along with an energetic and dedicated team of volunteer cleaners, brass polishers, and flower arrangers, keep the church in good order and open every day. We're blessed with a sound roof, and an effective heating system which makes for a building that is comfortably warm and dry for services. We enjoy very good audio-visual facilities incorporating a hearing loop and a concealed screen and overhead projector allowing the use of modern media in our worship. The peal of eight bells, tuned and rehung in 2003, is regularly exercised by an enthusiastic team of ringers (three times a month with weekly practice sessions), and visiting ringers.

Our most recent Quinquennial inspection was carried out in November 2021 and while the final report won't be with us in time for this profile, it is understood by warden Charlie that the architect found nothing untoward during his visit, and we have no reason to believe we face any significant issues.

All of the above is remarkable considering that much of the current building has stood since the early 14th century (based on the first stone church of St Peter and St Paul, dated around 1100 AD), with the chancel being extended and the tower added in the 15th. While there were renovations in 1863 and again in the 1990s, the robustness of the building and churchyard fabric are tribute indeed to the quality of building undertaken by our forebears and an ongoing testament to those currently caring for the building and the wider churchyard, which remains open for burials.



The Charlton Horethorne Parish Magazine, edited by a volunteer member of the congregation, is produced 10 times a year and delivered free of charge to every house in the village, as well as Stowell and the hamlet of Sigwells, with the costs of its production largely offset by a twice-yearly advertising supplement. It is augmented by a Parish Mag Facebook page edited by the same person. A strong ecumenical group organise Bible study courses at Advent and Lent Lunches in the village hall. A volunteer driver Help Scheme operates to give people a lift to the doctors, hospital, etc.



The British Legion is supported by the collection taken on Remembrance Sunday. The Yeovil Night Shelter as well as the Wincanton and Sherborne Foodbanks have received donations at Harvest in recent years. There is usually an annual fundraising event for the Bible Society while the annual “Music For Pleasure” event raises money towards the upkeep of the church buildings, and the PCC is currently compiling a list of Christian charities to which it is planned to donate on a monthly rota.

St Mary's, Stowell

St Mary's became a Chapel of Ease in Charlton Horethorne parish in 2007. It is now the venue for a monthly Benefice Evensong. Special services are well attended. Jane is a very active volunteer parishioner who is in frequent communication with the rest of the benefice and also does much of the caring for the church.



St Peter's, Goathill

At Goathill we have a committed and hardworking congregation, who play a full part in the life of the Church. Churchwarden Trudy has ensured that St Peter's has remained as active as possible whilst following Covid regulations; services have been held at every opportunity. Normally the Milborne Port Primary School Choir takes part in our Rogation and Christmas Services. We do try to make these services appealing to children, whilst still teaching the story. We are continuing to explore stronger links with Milborne Port School.



St Peter's Church dates from the early thirteenth century. It replaced an earlier one, and the font is thought to be 150 years older. The church looks today much as it did when built, with its lancet windows in the early English style. Major restoration work was sympathetically carried out in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including a new east window and the installation of pews. The church is in a very good condition, and the churchyard is open for burials.



.The PCC have some new ideas which are in the in process of being discussed. Ideally we would like to have more people coming to St Peter's. We endeavour to encourage others, and people know they are always welcome. We offer a traditional BCP service, but are discussing more up to date liturgy, and have a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Goathill is known for 'not always getting it right', but things usually work out!

We strove to continue fund raising as much as possible during 2020/21. For instance, holding our Annual Duck Race virtually - the race was secretly filmed and released on Facebook. St Peter's also fund-raises by holding Coffee Mornings, serving refreshments and running fete stalls.

Should you choose our benefice, we can promise that you will never tire of the view from Goathill Church porch, which looks out over the farmland. Whatever the season you will not be disappointed in that, or us, and will have our full support. We are known for always extending a warm welcome at St Peter's Church, Goathill.

Mission Church, Milborne Wick

The congregation at Milborne Wick comes not only from Wick but also from elsewhere in the parish. It has a Pro-warden, Treasurer and Secretary, and although we do not have our own PCC we do have a representative on the Milborne Port PCC and an annual Church Meeting.

The present church was built in 1891 on the site of an oratorium (dating back to 1312), as a Chapel of Ease to the Parish Church, paid for by gifts from Sir Edward Medlycott and from the villagers.



'This is ours, we built it, we keep it, we work it, and best of all, we use it'.

The community enjoys the monthly services that are held both in the church and around the village, e.g. Carol Service in a cow barn, the annual Pet Service, and a walk around the village for Plough Sunday. Children are very much encouraged to take part with bell ringing, helping with events, reading lessons and enjoy interactive sermons. Although our worship numbers are low, the following is strong.



Section 4: Deanery and Diocese

Bruton and Cary Deanery is a large deanery currently comprising 11 benefices in the south-east corner of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. In seeking to place mission and evangelism at the heart of all we do, we are needing to align our ministry resources towards this end. Amongst others, this involves identifying, developing, and using the gifts of all God's people, to live and tell the story within the milieu of the current financial climate we find ourselves ministering in.



This is an exciting time for parishes and the deanery as a whole, as we seek to discern ministry opportunities and creatively resource them with clergy oversight and focal ministers. Within this fluidity you would find a welcoming a supportive group of both lay and clergy with a passion for rural ministry and a love for the Gospel. Our new incumbent is certain of a warm welcome from the Area Dean and the rest of the Deanery Chapter. The clergy chapter meet regularly, and it is a good place for mutual support, sharing of ideas and prayer.

There is going to be an increasing openness to working across parish and deanery boundaries as we creatively resource the changing landscape of ministry opportunities for both lay and ordained leaders. In this context, it is expected that individual clergy are willing to be flexible in their ministry remit as they share their areas of expertise and passions within the deanery.

The Deanery Synod meets three times a year to consider matters of interest to the parishes and to promote the whole mission of the Church in the Deanery. Attendance at deanery synod is a key part of supporting parishes and anyone is invited to come along. The focus of each Synod is very much on mission and evangelism with a speaker and discussion rather than simply a business meeting.



Image: The Guardian

Our benefice is entitled to six lay representatives, one of whom currently sits on the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group. A representative from St John's, Milborne Port, worked on the preparation of the Deanery Mission Plan in 2017, which focused on five areas: Communication, Vocation, Evangelism, Community and Christian Formation to support and inspire parishes as they engage with mission and evangelism in their own particular contexts. This will soon need revision, but details of the plan and a progress report can be found on the Deanery website: www.bruptonandcarydeanery.net.



The Diocese of Bath and Wells is one of 41 Church of England dioceses in the country. The diocese stretches from Portishead in the north to Crewkerne in the south, Minehead in the west to Frome in the east.

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, 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, which has caused the diocese to rely on reserves in the face of a significant financial deficit in 2020 and 2021. 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 gift of people in the parishes in the spirit of Setting God's People Free.

Section 5: The Area

As the estate agents say, this is a very desirable area with good transport links. Our nearest small towns are Sherborne, with its notable Abbey and schools, and Wincanton, adjacent to the A303 . Further afield, Bristol, Bath and Salisbury are within easy reach, as is the Jurassic Coast. There are mainline railway stations at Sherborne, Templecombe and Castle Cary.

Milborne Port

We are a large village with over 1300 homes, including a lot of new housing, and a population of about 3,000 with a good social mix. In medieval times it was an important market and industrial town and until the late twentieth century was a centre for tanning, gloving and wool spinning. There is local employment in farming, printing, laundry and about 70 small businesses such as computers and software, carpentry, catering, and racehorse training. Other residents commute to the surrounding towns or work from home.



There is a large medical practice accommodated in a purpose-built Health Centre, a small library in temporary accommodation, a veterinary clinic and a private integrated therapy clinic. Retail shops, including a Co-op, post office, butcher, newsagent, pharmacy, hair salon, computer business and prizewinning fish and chips take-away/restaurant are thriving. A Saturday morning market is popular. The High Street is still the centre of the village and accommodates one of the two pubs and the Town Hall. A high-end restaurant (The Clockspire) occupies the former village school. There is a garage with petrol station, shop and post office at the western edge of the village.

There are over 20 clubs and societies, covering a wide range of interests; there is a playgroup and two Mums and Toddler sessions. The well-used Village Hall hosts a monthly film screening and live events. We have sports grounds, children's play areas and a skate park. A well-established community organisation, "The Spirit of Milborne Port", puts on numerous fundraising events and provides community enhancements, such as Christmas lights on the High Street. Several church members are involved in running this organisation, and there is mutual support between it and the church

"As with many rural contexts there are very fuzzy edges as to what is church and what is community"

Milborne Wick

Milborne Wick is a rural community comprising 20 families, many of whom are third generation farming families. The community of Wick strongly supports the church in the village as the centre of the community.

Likewise, the Commonalty Charity, which traces its origins from medieval times and still provides affordable housing for rent within the village, has a trustee from the PCC.

The Milborne Port Magazine gives a good impression of the life of the village, and digital copies are archived on the church website.



Goathill

"Just in Dorset by a nanny-goat's whisker"



Goathill lies very close to the County border, and for much of its history (until 1896) lay within the neighbouring County of Somerset. It remains part of the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

It consists of 8 scattered houses and the church, which is adjacent to Goathill Farm, where there is a holiday cottage and two shepherd's huts for visiting tourists. Those not working in farming commute to work in the surrounding district.

Charlton Horethorne



Charlton Horethorne is a thriving village lying a little over 3 miles North of Milborne Port, with over 300 homes, including recent building. A number of younger families with children have recently arrived. There is a small park (the Millennium Green) in the centre, with a children's play area.

Charlton Horethorne has two working farms, and lies in the centre of much actively managed agricultural land, with multiple landowners farming the land surrounding the village. The village is lucky to boast a first-class Village Shop, which during the pandemic enabled village residents to find all the necessities to support day to day life. The village is blessed with an excellent pub cum small country hotel (The King's Arms) with a fine and very popular restaurant. The village benefits from 3 weekly visits from a mobile Post Office and a monthly visit from a council library. There is a fine, recently renovated village hall which is the focal point for a wide variety of activities. It is available for private hire and has been used by the church for hosting Harvest Festival meals, and the "Big Village Breakfast", etc.

There are many active clubs and societies. Amateur dramatic enthusiasts are served by a Pantomime society and a hitherto popular and successful Youth Theatre. Finally, there is an annual November 5th Bonfire and Fireworks display which is hugely popular and raises significant funds for charities.



Stowell

Stowell is a hamlet of around 30 houses of varying sizes and styles, with some new building. We have 4 working farms, 3 of which are dairy farms, including one of pedigree shorthorns which are much admired. Stowell does still have a communal spirit, but it needs to be stirred every so often, as happened last year during lockdown. We had a socially distanced picnic for the VE Day Commemoration, and sang carols around the houses instead of crowding into the church.

Schools and Education

There is a seven class County Primary School in Milborne Port. The incumbent regularly takes assemblies. The school has good links with St John's Church, and the school's Harvest Festival and Carol Service are held in the church. Before the pandemic, selected year groups were coming to the church for an Easter Workshop each year.

The Church of England Primary School in Charlton Horethorne (which has about 40 pupils and is now a part of the Sherborne Area Schools Trust) has the Priest-in-Charge on its Governing Body ex-officio and he or she visits weekly, leading collective worship, as well as whole-day RE sessions with different year groups. Prior to the Covid lockdowns, the school regularly held services in church including a weekly assembly, end of term services including a leavers' service each July, a harvest festival, a carol service, and sometimes a Christingle service, with pupils and teachers joining with parents and some members of the regular congregation at these services.

Most secondary students from the benefice attend one of the two secondary schools which are members of the Sherborne Area Schools Trust: The Gryphon School, a nearby Church of England School at Sherborne, or King Arthur's at Wincanton, and a few attend independent schools in the area. Post-16 education continues at Yeovil College of Further Education or the sixth form at The Gryphon; more distant alternatives are at Bruton, Gillingham, Street and Salisbury. There is a range of high-quality nursery provision nearby, including one in the grounds of Milborne Port Primary School.

