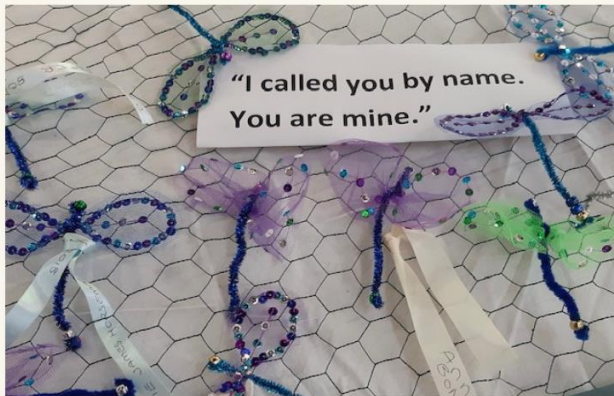


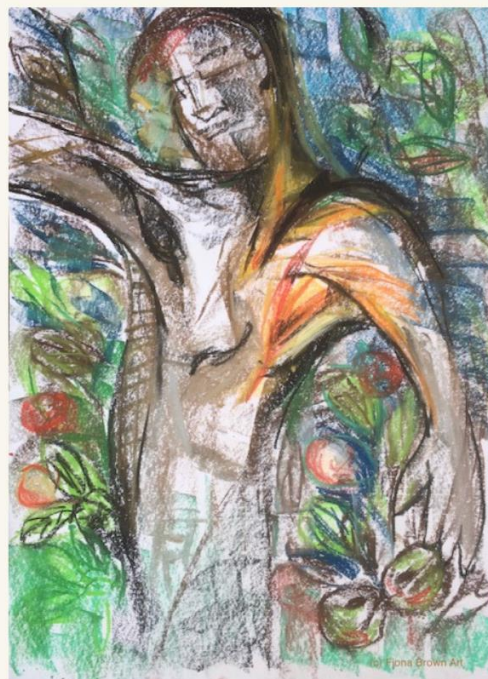
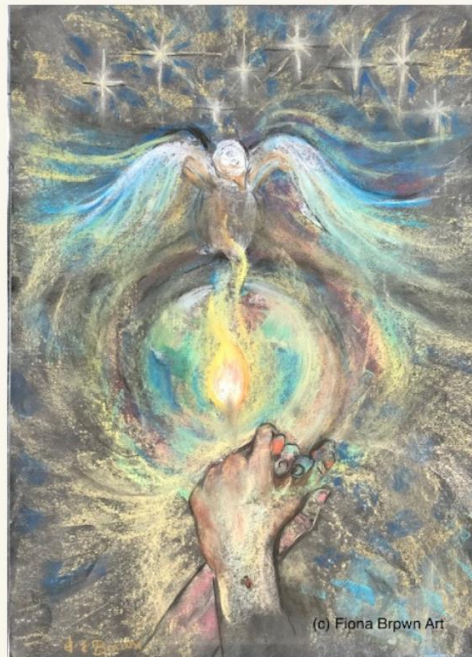
# THE UNITED BENEFICE OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST WELLINGTON WITH ST MARY THE VIRGIN WEST BUCKLAND, SOMERSET



# LEARNING COMMUNITY



Artwork created by Fiona Brown  
- a member of our learning community.  
This ran from 2017 to 2021 and has now  
morphed  
into the busy and inclusive social action  
programmes, led by spiritually maturing  
lay volunteers, as described within the  
pages  
of our Benefice Profile.



## Contents

Welcome.....	4
Our vision.....	4
The Wellington area.....	5
Overview of our churches.....	6
Church Services.....	7
Who you will be working with .....	9
Challenges.....	10
Church activities .....	11
St John the Baptist .....	11
St Mary the Virgin .....	13
Residential homes in the area.....	14
Schools and children .....	15
The wider area .....	19
Churches together in Wellington .....	19
Tone Deanery.....	19
A Message from +Michael, Bishop of Bath and Wells.....	20
Who to contact for more information .....	21
Local places of interest .....	21

## Welcome

We are really pleased that you are reading this document and hope that it fills you with the sense of the excitement and anticipation that is palpable in our two churches, as the new Benefice of St John the Baptist, Wellington and St Mary the Virgin, West Buckland is created.

## Our vision

### Sharing Hope and Joy in the community

Our vision encapsulates the outcomes from our away day in 2022, during which we looked at how we wanted to develop in the future, by building on the pioneering work done over the last few years in both the rural and town settings. The main outcomes of our away day are below.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jer 29:11

	In church	In the community
Building on what we do now	We wish to focus on growing and nurturing the Christian community by improving what we have in place at the moment, building on what we do well.	We want to build a more visible Christian witness in Wellington and West Buckland by improving our existing links with the town, village and parish.
Extending what we could do	We need to be active to increase our church community, including introducing new ways of worshipping in parallel to our traditional services.	Being innovative within the town, village and parish, putting an emphasis on more social action, in these difficult current times.

Since the end of the Covid pandemic, we have started a few new initiatives. Our work in Social Action has given rise to new regular weekly events: the Talking café, Toddlers and babies, Tea@3, Warm spaces, community café, exchange library. Much of this pivots around hospitality which is an area we are good at.

I will seek out the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak. Ezek 34: 16

Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of Joy. The Lord has done great things for us and we rejoiced.  
Ps 126:2

Our worship has not stood still either. A new non-Eucharistic service has been introduced once a month on a trial basis at St John's and new young people have come forward to lead services in St Mary the Virgin, where there is a Reader-in-training.



**As a new united benefice of one town and one nearby village, the seeds of fresh opportunity are ready to be sown.**

We are seeking for a priest who

- **Will cherish our congregations** and guide them to grow in faith and love of God
- **Can work pastorally and inclusively** with all ages, individuals and families
- **Will help us to develop** our outreach effectiveness through new thoughts and actions

We can offer

- **Collaborative and active groups of lay colleagues, PTO status clergy.** Over 90 members of the congregations volunteered in various ways last year.
- **Excellent administrative help** from a salaried administrator working 23 hours per week.
- **Our congregations firmly embrace the central tenets of Anglican liturgy,** but also believe worship as having organic and pragmatic dimensions. Worship and prayer is at the centre of all we do. We have a wide variety of services, including some that are lay led and both congregations are happy to try new ideas.
- **The two parishes want to work together** to their mutual benefit. A combined communications group has already been set up.
- **A well appointed four bedroom vicarage with good local schools.** This is a lovely area to live in, very welcoming, and with local facilities such as a sports centre, many independent shops and a cottage hospital.



## The Wellington area

The parishes of St John the Baptist, Wellington and St Mary the Virgin, West Buckland, are set in beautiful countryside at the foot of the Blackdown Hills, with the Quantocks, Brendon Hills and Exmoor nearby.

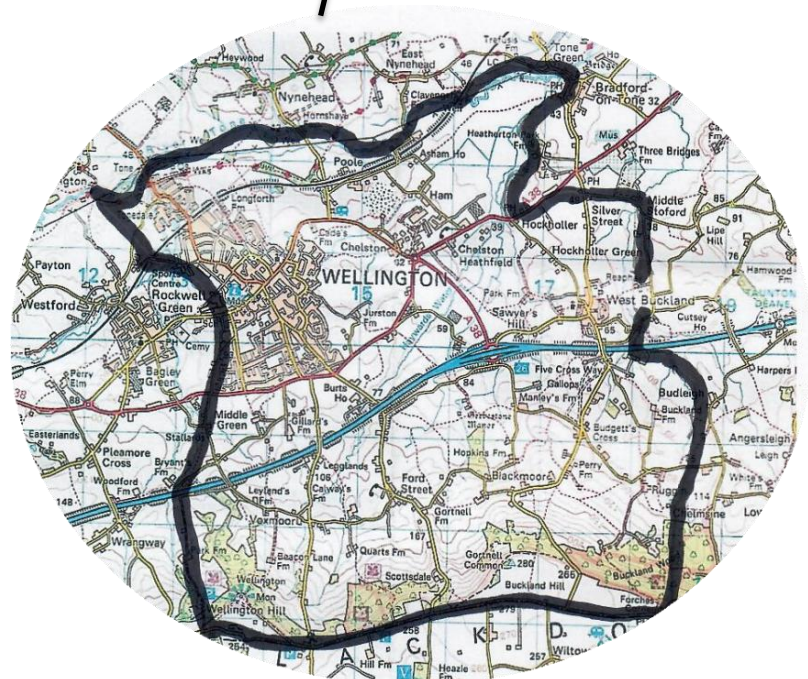
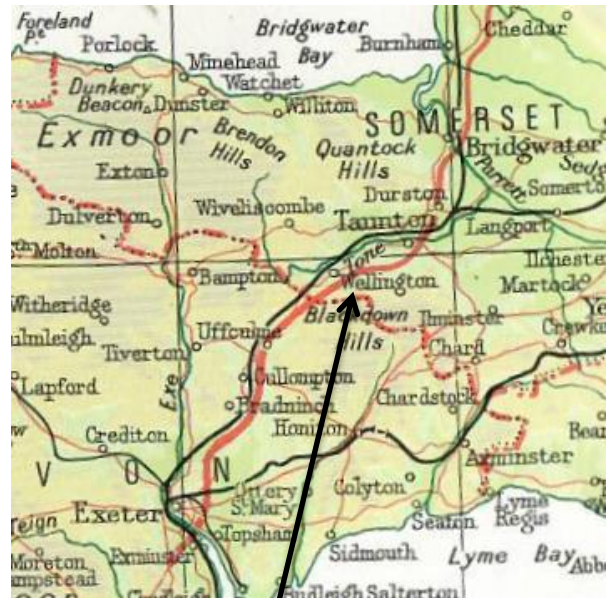
Wellington has a population of 16,000 (2021), and is growing. West Buckland has 1200 residents and dozens of rural micro-businesses. Both town and village benefit from the superb access to major towns, cities and attractions of the South West via the M5 and A38 which intersect the parishes. At Junction 26 of the M5 there is an industrial park.

The area is well served with schools, having five primary schools (one of which is a Church of England school), four pre-schools and two senior schools (one independent and one state school)

There are ten nursing and/or residential homes varying from sheltered accommodation to secure units.

In West Buckland apart from the church, also at the heart of the village is a primary school, village hall and playing field. Within the centre of the village there are several period cottages and there has been more recent expansion, with the addition of several estates. The area around encompasses a great variety of land uses ranging from farmland, plant nurseries and forest, to business parks.

This is a caring community in which to live, as can be quickly seen from the various local social media pages; search on Facebook for Wellington Somerset Community Group; West Buckland (Somerset) Community Group; and St John's Facebook page @stjohnswelly



## Overview of our churches

### Wellington, Church of St John the Baptist, Grade 1 listed



There has probably been a place of worship on the site of the Parish Church of St John the Baptist Wellington, since Saxon times but the present building is mostly in the Perpendicular style of the 15th century.

The church underwent two major restorations in 1848/50 and 1938, and in 1986/7 the Victorian pews were removed and the nave and chancel re-floored. This has enabled us to use the church as a flexible space. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays the chairs are moved and the nave transformed for hospitality.

In the east window of the Lady chapel is the church's rarest feature, a Lily Crucifix carved on the centre mullion, but perhaps its most famous feature is the impressive monument in the north chancel aisle to Sir John Popham who was Chief Justice of England under Elizabeth 1 and James 1.

The parish church is used for civic services and hosts various concerts and special events throughout the year. It has a church hall adjoining the church that is available for community hire.

### West Buckland, Church of St Mary the Virgin - Grade 1 listed



The church is situated atop a knoll beside the M5 motorway and acts as a beacon to travellers motoring to and from the South West, often taking a break from their travels.

The parish also consists of the hamlets of Chelston (which has a well attended chapel), Poole, Ham, Hockholler, Stoford, Ruggin and Blackmoor.

The present church of St Mary the Virgin, with its nave dating probably from the years 1275-1300, stands on the site of an earlier building established in Norman times.

It is thought that the tower was last rebuilt in 1510 and the oldest of the peal of six bells is inscribed AD1606. The font, made from a solid block of Purbeck marble, dates from 1140

Between 1838 and 1891 there was a gallery in the church which accommodated a barrel organ, the church band and the church singers.

## At the heart of the church

## Church Services

### St John the Baptist

Sunday	Holy Communion (Common Worship) An additional once-a-month non-Eucharistic service is being trialled this Summer.
Thursday	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
Daily	Morning Prayer on Zoom and in the church Tuesday and Wednesday

### St Mary the Virgin

Sunday	Holy Communion (Common Worship) or Family Worship
--------	---

### Other Services

Additional services are held at both churches to celebrate major festivals, seasons, school, and child-centred occasions such as the well attended Christingles and Come to the Manger.

### Music

Music has a strong presence and resonance for worshippers of both churches. A substantial repertoire of hymns is known. New hymns are introduced as apposite. At St John's various congregation-sung interpolations are used as part of the Communion Service Order. Both churches use the "Old and New" hymnbook. Periodically services at St John's include a visiting choir. There is no resident choir at either church.

St John's Church possesses a three manual organ last rebuilt in 1997

St Mary's has a two manual organ last rebuilt in 2014

Currently, the Director of Music for St John's is a temporary arrangement between visiting organists. A permanent appointment will be made in consultation with the new Incumbent. St Mary's has a couple of volunteers who play the organ for services.

St John's has a peal of 8 bells rung each Sunday and for special occasions.

St Mary's has a peal of 6 bells but no established team of ringers

### Prayer

The churches are open every day of the week during daylight hours. This presents opportunities to pray privately or with others. Prayer plays an important part in the life of our churches.

At St. John's, informal prayer takes place in the Lady Chapel after Sunday Communion, Morning Prayer takes place every day via Zoom, and concurrently in church on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The outreach groups include prayers at the beginning and end of their sessions, and for individuals if requested.



### **An overview of services in St Mary's**

Our services are very traditional, consisting of a communion (Common Worship) on the first Sunday of the month and two lay-led services on the second and fourth Sundays. Both churchwardens have been trained as Lay Worship Assistants. Tea and biscuits after services encourages the fellowship and friendship within our church community. However we are not “stuck in our ways” and would welcome new ideas through mutual discussion and understanding, with the aim of encouraging other members of our community to give us a try.

16

Average attendance in West Buckland at communion

### **Holy Communion on Sunday mornings in St John's**

The services in St John's use the flexibility of Common Worship to include a high level of congregational participation by incorporating verses from hymns into the liturgy. This varies through the year according to the season and a recent survey of the congregation indicated that this variety is one of the aspects of the service they enjoy. They also value the

70

Average Sunday attendance in St John's

different people reading or leading intercessions, giving different voices during the service.

Music is seen as very important and many of the

congregation look forward to when a new permanent organist can be engaged. We have been holding off on this as it is anticipated that the new incumbent will want to be involved in the choice.

Another valued aspect of the service is the communion itself, setting people up for the week. We are still taking communion with intinction by the presiding priest, but everyone who spoke about this was happy with this method, one saying how coming up in a moving queue to the chancel steps, was like coming to Jesus.

After the service coffee, tea, cake and biscuits are served and the opportunity to meet and talk to like-minded people is appreciated.

### **Holy Communion on Thursday mornings in St John's**

Members of this congregation have expressed their appreciation of this adapted BCP Holy Communion Service. They value its straightforward structure, the dignity of the language, and the familiarity of the words, helpful to those with failing eyesight. Worshippers find the absence of music, the steady but flowing

25

Average midweek service attendance

pace, the greater opportunity to listen and engage in quiet reflection as spiritually helpful. The service is led by

Rev'd Ian Brierly (PTO), whose sermons are described by those attending as succinct and germane. A strong feeling of fellowship and mutual care prevails with post-service coffee and biscuits playing their part. The service brings together communicants from both Wellington and West Buckland.

## Who you will be working with

We have Churchwardens in both parishes with active PCCs. There is one treasurer for the two parishes but separate secretaries.

The benefice has a very competent administrator and PA for the new incumbent. The salaried post is for 23 hours per week. The office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Wednesdays, the PA works all day from home and has a couple of hours on Mondays and Fridays to attend to urgent business. There is additional administration support from the working groups and volunteers.

Within the town of Wellington there are five retired priests who have PTO status, and they have been very helpful over the vacancy. At St Mary the Virgin we have a reader-in-training who lives in West Buckland and is discerning the call to ordination. St Mary's has two additional Lay Worship Assistants, one of whom is exploring further vocation. Across the two parishes there are several Lay Chaplains.

Many willing folk (91 individuals in St John's last year) help with the smooth running of services: sacristans - servers – readers – intercessors – prayer ministry – stewards – refreshments - and also, in many roles for our outreach programmes. These people have been safely recruited.

## At a glance



# Challenges

## Demography

While most of our older congregations are in reasonable health and provide the vital spark to our numerous activities, we do need to manage the complexity of others who still want to be part of the church community but cannot always attend for varying reasons.

## Outreach

At St John's, we have established social activities, such as, Baby and Toddler group and Community cafés, to provide an active foundation of fruitful contact. This initiative requires help to sustain and foster the mission of bringing the message of Hope and Joy to families and younger people. In the village, how do we interact with the community that is now becoming more of a commuter village?

## Specific to West Buckland

West Buckland church still has pews and removing them would enable the church space to be used for a lot more activities.

There are two other challenges that concern our PCC: installing a toilet (currently there is a portaloos) and providing communion on a more regular basis.

## Our Financial challenges

### St John the Baptist Wellington

St John's undertakes a considerable amount of outreach activity. The church is used for variety of events most days, requiring heat and light for lengthy periods. With high utility charges this is a worry going forward. The parish share for 2023 is £73k and currently the giving from the congregation does not cover this, resulting in the need to use savings to balance the books. Measures are in place to try and reduce the dependence on the CBF fund. It is hoped that the full parish share can be paid in 2023 but this will depend on several factors, including giving, lettings, fundraising and concerts.

### St Mary the Virgin West Buckland

St Mary's has a static congregation mainly of elderly widows on fixed incomes and has not been able to attract new people from the village. This has resulted for the past couple of years in the church only being able to pay around 75% of its parish share which currently stands at just over £8k per annum. We also need to spend money on decoration and floor repairs. The church does not have a hall attached and this affects the fundraising that can be done. The village hall is in great demand from local community groups; hence it cannot always be booked for times that suit the church.

Considering the size of our church attendance, the congregation is very resourceful in finding ways of increasing our income and this is a real bonus in managing the finances.

## Church activities

### St John the Baptist

In St John's the weeks are busy with a hospitality programme that has an emphasis on Social Action and Christian witness

#### Talking Café



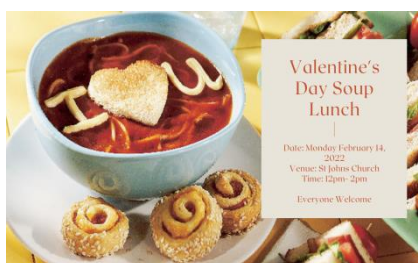
This takes place on a Tuesday morning, and runs alongside the village agents who are present to advise anyone about issues they may need help with. Agents such as Health Coaches, Food Bank, AgeUK, MIND attend where possible to meet people and give advice.

#### Tea @ 3:00



Tea@3 started when we came out of Covid lockdown to encourage our Church family to renew friendships and enjoy each other's company. It has continued to flourish. We also have visitors from the wider community dropping in. Thanks to several regular helpers who enjoy baking, we are able to offer a variety of delicious cakes with tea or coffee in a warm room. New friendships have been made and ideas shared.

#### Soup Lunches



Soup lunches have proved to be a hit with the congregation. They have been organised for special occasions, such as Valentine's day, in support of the Ukraine fund, and to celebrate the life of Queen Elizabeth II. Great thought has gone into the organisation, promotion, cooking and preparation; each event possible with the help of many volunteers.

#### Toddlers and Babies group



Each Wednesday the church is full of toddlers and babies, with their parents/carers. The Health visitors are present in the church hall where the babies are weighed and courses on childcare take place. In the church, the children play, while the adults chat, have mutual support, and partake of refreshments.

## Spring and Autumn Fairs



Spring and Autumn fairs have been a valuable fund-raiser since the covid lockdown. It is also a great opportunity for church members to work together and have a bit of fun. The cake stall is the top favourite. People from the community can rent a table and sell their wares and this is so popular that it now has a waiting list.

## Visual Media and other Events at our churches

In recent years the churches have mounted various visual media-centred events, e.g. the story of Holy Week; Resurrection Dragonflies; Easter Gardens; Christmas-lit tableaux; handmade embroidered banners (on the 'I am' sayings of Jesus) and children's creations.

St John's has wonderful acoustics, so is much in demand for concerts, musical events.

- The Blackdown Community Choir of 70 singers rehearses in the church each week
- The Wellington Choral Society gives two concerts each year of choral works, such as, Bach's Passion according to St John
- Area Chamber Choirs give occasional concerts
- The Wellington Silver Band leads a Christmas Carol Service



It is the largest venue in the town, so has also hosted special exhibitions. The recent Disability Awareness Month featured multi-media sculptures from the work of people with learning disabilities and dementia, in addition to a display about hearing impairment.

On Mondays the lay Chaplain for the Deaf is teaching BSL (British Sign Language) to people in Wellington, West Buckland and the village agents, to enable inclusivity in our churches and community.

## St Mary the Virgin

The activities in St Mary the Virgin are linked to the calendar through the year.



We hold a Remembrance Service both at the village war memorial and afterwards in the church at which some ex-members of the armed forces attend.

The church has an Easter Garden set in the porch and coupled with this the church is opened up to the community for Cream Teas over the Easter weekend.



The church set up a community café within the church, in 2021, with help from the lottery fund.

We also hold Summer Cream Teas during July and August within the church and these are usually well attended.



This corner of the church has been set up as a book and puzzle exchange.



We hold a bring-and-share fellowship after our annual Harvest Service.



We have in the past had a local wind band come and play in the church.



The village hall is used for various activities including a popular Race Nights which is well supported by the local community.



At St Mary the Virgin a number of fundraising activities take place, including the autumn bazaar in the village hall.

---

## Residential homes in the area

Provision for the elderly and/or disabled in the Wellington area ranges from sheltered accommodation and retirement homes, to residential homes, nursing homes and two homes for those with dementia. During the latter half of 2022 we have been able to return to visiting the Nursing Homes and Care Homes surrounding our town with prayer, praise and Communion, to support the residents and staff and to rebuild relationships after Covid restrictions. We bring a simple service of prayers and communion with traditional hymns to a group in their communal lounge. It is a precious thing to see a smile of recognition on the residents faces as we sing familiar

hymns and to hear someone recite the Lord's prayer who would not normally hold a conversation. We also visit individuals in their rooms if requested, to share prayer and conversation.

We have a small Team who are happy to give their time to visiting once a month led by a couple of our retired clergy.



We also have a pastoral companion scheme, whereby each member of the congregation is looked after by a pastoral companion, who will

keep in touch with them and pass on any concerns to the Pastoral Chaplain.

## Schools and children

Out of the five primary schools in the parishes there are three that are worth a special mention

### St John's C of E Primary School

This school is right across the road from the Parish Church and the school comes into the church for services at the end of each term and on other special occasions. They often have whole class visits to the church linked to their curriculum studies. One of our church members is a School and Families Chaplain, and she goes in to the school, working with small groups, on a weekly basis. We have a group of pupil chaplains which she also works with. These are commissioned each year in a special service. They learn more about Christianity in a weekly, hour long session and they regularly lead collective worship. In 2022 they hosted a very successful community tea party at St John's church and had the first ever Pupil Chaplain pilgrimage to Wells.



### West Buckland School

West Buckland Primary School is part of the Richard Huish Trust (a local further education and sixth-form college). The church has established good links with the new Headteacher. At Christmas they held

two nativity productions and a carol service for governors/parents/etc which packed the church with some 200 attending.

The Head recently said, "Just this morning the whole school went on a ramble, ending in the churchyard to reflect and read."



He continued, "The children love performing at Easter and Christmas in this beautiful space. We would like someone (the new vicar) who is fun, kind and caring, someone who talks and supports us and who would be able to spend time with us in school."



### Isambard Kingdom Brunel School (IKB)

This is a new school on the Longforth Farm Estate near St John's, and although not a church school, they are very keen to work with us. 'Open the Book' perform at the school on a regular basis. Classes from the school can often be seen around the church.



## What the pupil chaplains from St John's C of E Primary school thought about a new vicar

- Listen to all the people who are asking questions
- Be kind to people who feel misplaced
- Have a loud voice [good use of a microphone is an acceptable substitute]
- Be clear when reading stories
- Have songs that are based on the theme of the service, that can help people understand, because some people will understand better through songs
- Be somebody who is close to God and believes in God [there was debate on this, some of the children considering that it isn't necessary for the rector to believe in God, because they might start off away from God, but by praying and reading the Bible and taking services etc. they might move closer to God]
- Have variety in services, because otherwise people can get restless
- Be able to relate to people in a flexible way, so that if e.g. they want a special ceremony to celebrate some anniversary, that is possible
- Appreciate and encourage children at communion, in order to encourage those who don't take communion
- Be respectful, including respectful of other religions
- Not to mind babies crying in church, but to be able to carry on regardless
- Be an encourager
- Be somebody who is kind when they meet people out and about



# THE RECTORY

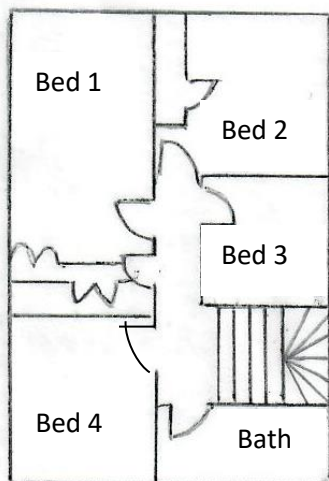


The Rectory is a lovely family home, neutrally decorated throughout, with central heating. It is down a private lane off the High Street in Wellington, directly opposite the church. The centre of the town is only two minutes walk away, where you will find a Waitrose and other supermarkets, as well as a good variety of local shops.

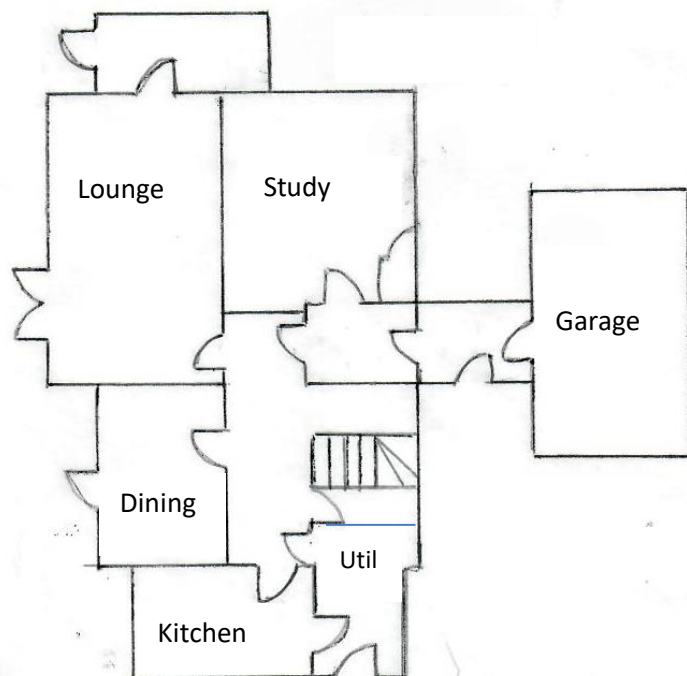
The accommodation is light and airy, there are patio doors coming off the lounge, and there is a large study leading off from the entrance hall, making it self-contained and private. The modern fitted kitchen has an adjacent utility room, and is close to a spacious dining room. Downstairs also has a toilet off the entrance hall. Upstairs are four good size bedrooms with fitted wardrobes and a family bathroom with shower over.

There is a church car park half way down the lane. There is ample parking in front of the Rectory itself, and a garage. To the rear and side is a large garden and there is also an attractive flower bed in the front. The side garden has been used for vegetables in the past, and in the rear garden are some mature fruit trees.

### Floor Plan



First Floor



Ground Floor

## The wider area

### Churches together in Wellington

There is a strong 'Churches Together' in Wellington with many denominations involved and working happily together. We join together on Good Friday for a service and walk of witness through the town and on Remembrance Sunday in the Park. We share in missional work and pray together. The work with children includes Wacky Wednesdays in the school holidays and a year 6 leavers day. Christmas cards were made last year and handed out to all the shops in the town. For one week in Lent, Churches Together manned a pop-up shop in the town giving a visible Christian presence, telling the Easter Story, and raising money for Release International (in aid of persecuted Christians around the world).



### Tone Deanery

The Tone Deanery has 35 places of worship and following our deployment process, we are now made up of six benefices, each with a Stipendiary post. In this rural and urban mix, we are fortunate to have many active and supportive retired priests and experienced Readers, as well as a Reader in training.

This is a deanery committed to Lay training, Lay Worship Assistants, Pastoral Assistants and Chaplains. It is hoped to re-establish the Wellington and District Learning Community and develop this into a 'whole deanery' strategy. As a small Chapter we will share our responsibilities for discernment of calling, and training. It is our intentions to be a close network for supporting each other and sharing our wisdom and concerns. The Deanery regularly has curates in training, and we share opportunities for their development among the six benefices.

At this time of rapid change, new ideas are welcome. There are resources to share, and we invite you to share in the work to recognise and welcome the Kingdom of God in this place.

Helene Stainer (Area Dean)

## A Message from +Michael, Bishop of Bath and Wells

I am delighted that you are reading this profile of St John the Baptist, Wellington and St Mary the Virgin, West Buckland as the parishes seek to appoint a new priest to help lead their mission, ministry and worship.

The parishes' new priest will arrive at a time of change and development. Here in Bath & Wells we are currently bringing to a conclusion a programme of deanery led pastoral reorganisation that has touched almost all parts of our diocese. As the profile makes clear, bringing Wellington and West Buckland into a single benefice marks for these parishes a new beginning. As I have met with their people, I've been hugely impressed by the common purpose and vision that the parishes share for their future and that the profile describes.

*The beginnings that are happening in the benefice, are echoed right across our diocese, as I arrived last year to be Bath and Wells' 80th bishop. This is seeing us think afresh about how we can best live out our diocesan vision to live and tell the story of Jesus. Building on what has gone before, we have identified four priorities that will be central to all that we do. They are:*

- Valuing and cherishing the people and resources we already have
- Developing new Christian worshipping communities
- Sharing in ministry and leadership
- Deepening and growing faith

Our task as the people of God is going to be to work out what it means to turn these priorities into action in the very different contexts that exist across Somerset. When I read this profile, I was so glad that echoes of these priorities are to be found throughout it. And when I met with the people of Wellington and West Buckland, I found a real energy and commitment for taking forward God's mission where they are.

I hope that you'll be excited at the possibility of joining in with the vision, under God, that these churches have. If that's the case, I do hope that you'll send us an application for this post so that we can all discern whether God is calling you to this beautiful part of southwest Somerset. It's going to be an exciting time for a new priest to join them, ready to work with the parishes' communities to identify all that God has in store and then to bring that vision into being.

Yours with every good wish,

**+Michael**

## Who to contact for more information

We hope you will come and visit us in-cognito, and see for yourself our happy and welcoming congregations. If you would like more information though, please contact our administrator Sharon Chorley on [stjohns.wellington@googlemail.com](mailto:stjohns.wellington@googlemail.com) and she can direct your enquiry to the relevant person.

## Local places of interest



Going clockwise from “noon”

Somerset County Hall, Taunton; Somerset Cricket Club, Taunton; Taunton Railway Station; Vivary Park, Taunton; Culmstock Beacon; West Buckland playground; West Buckland Primary School; St Mary The Virgin Church, West Buckland; West Buckland Village Hall; St John The Baptist Church, Wellington; Wellington Park; Wellington School; Courtfields School, Wellington; St John's Primary School, Wellington; Wellington Sports Centre; Oake Manor Golf Club; Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton.