

The Benefice of South Petherton with the Seavingtons and the Lambrooks



Benefice Profile August 2021



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Welcome to our benefice!

We are three parishes in a beautiful and peaceful part of south Somerset. Since 2014, when our benefice in its current form came about, we have been working together to learn and live out God's love in our communities.

We are praying for a new rector who is approachable, adaptable, has a particular vocation for work with children and young people, and who can help us use our spiritual gifts as we re-equip ourselves for service after a difficult 18 months.

Our benefice aspires to be:

A growing, learning, Christian family committed to serving God and the community.

In five years' time, we want our benefice to look like this:

- ✦ To be **growing spiritually** through **strong Biblical teaching** and by our **fellowship** with each other.
- ✦ To be **closer as a benefice**, developing a culture of **sharing**, while recognising the unique qualities and traditions of each parish.
- ✦ To have a successful and growing mission to **families, children and young people**.
- ✦ For our churches to be at the **heart** of our villages, **pro-actively reaching out** to our communities.

Five reasons to come here:

1. Congregations rooted in responding to need both here and elsewhere, and with an appetite for mission, particularly towards younger generations.
2. Vibrant yet peaceful villages, in a great place to live (and bring up a family).
3. Help available from our extraordinarily committed retired clergy, lay worship assistants and many more.
4. An excellent relationship with our Infants and Pre-School.
5. Over 100 willing volunteers.

We strive for:

Growth by **warmth of fellowship**

Growth by **community outreach**

Growth as a **family** with people of **all ages** coming to faith

What we're looking for

We are looking for a rector who...

- ✚ Is an excellent **team builder**, able to **get new initiatives started** and **sustain them**, giving members of the congregation the **confidence** to offer up their ideas, spiritual gifts and time to benefit our communities.
- ✚ Is **enthusiastic, outgoing** and **approachable**, and comfortable being a **visible figure** in all three parishes.
- ✚ Is **compassionate**, a **good listener**, and willing to do **home visits**.
- ✚ Has a particular vocation for work with **children** and **young people**.
- ✚ Can relate to people of **all ages and backgrounds**, including those with no faith or of other faiths, embracing difference.
- ✚ Is able to lead worship in a **variety of styles**, and is interested in trying out **new ways** of worshipping.

The Infants School's personal specification

As well as asking the grown-ups, we asked the children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 about what sort of rector they would like. They thought it through very carefully, and have come up with the following list. Can you meet their exacting requirements?!

Essential	Desirable
* Kind and caring	* Peaceful
* Funny/has a good sense of humour	* Perseverance/can stay a long time
* Good at story telling/Bible story telling	* Young
* Entertaining	* Plays an instrument
* Loving	* Chooses good books
* Helpful	* Wise/has life experience
* Shows forgiveness	* Has his/her own children
* Trusts/trustworthy	* Has pets
* Likes children	* Sporty
* Gentle	* Knows what they need to do
* Good listener	* Can be like a Mummy or Daddy for the school
* Lights the candle	* Can do magic tricks
* Helps others who are in need	
* Has good eyesight	
* Can teach us about God/Christianity	
* Respectful	

Our vacancy prayer

Our vacancy prayer was written in April 2021, when we started seeking our new rector. We pray it regularly in each of our churches.

Dear God, your love for us is unchangeable.
You have welcomed each of us into the family of your church;
in Jesus, you call us to be His body in this place.
Send down your Holy Spirit upon us at this time of uncertainty and change,
to fill us with vision and energy and faithfulness in prayer,
that we may be true to our common baptism,
and bring new life to our parish communities.
Guide with your heavenly wisdom those appointed to discern the way ahead in selecting a new Incumbent for this parish,
That we may receive the Priest you have prepared for your people;
ready to serve us with joy, to build us up in faith,
and to lead us by example in loving obedience to your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen



Background to the vacancy

Before we get too far into the Profile, we feel that it is important to tell you a bit about the background to this vacancy. It has been a very difficult time for us, and we need a period of healing to allow all of us to regroup before we go forward, united, to do the Lord's work.

Although it formally began in April 2021, the vacancy effectively began in January 2020, when our rector very sadly started long-term sick leave.

The pandemic then hit us three months in. That, and the practicalities of continuing services without a rector, meant that many planned initiatives didn't get off the ground, and also led each of our churches to largely go its own way. If you decide to become our next Shepherd, you will need to help us come back together and make each parish feel equally valued.



Much of what has been achieved in the last year has been done through the selfless love of retired clergy and our recent Area Dean, who have gone above and beyond on our behalf. We are enormously in their debt. They have gifts and experience to offer and will want to support you, but they would like a far less prominent role once you're established in post.

It has been a tough period. But we have come through it with a renewed sense of purpose, at a time when the importance of our local communities has been truly realised. Coming together

to set our vision for the future and write this profile has given us optimism. We feel that this is a brilliant time for a new start, and can't wait to get going.



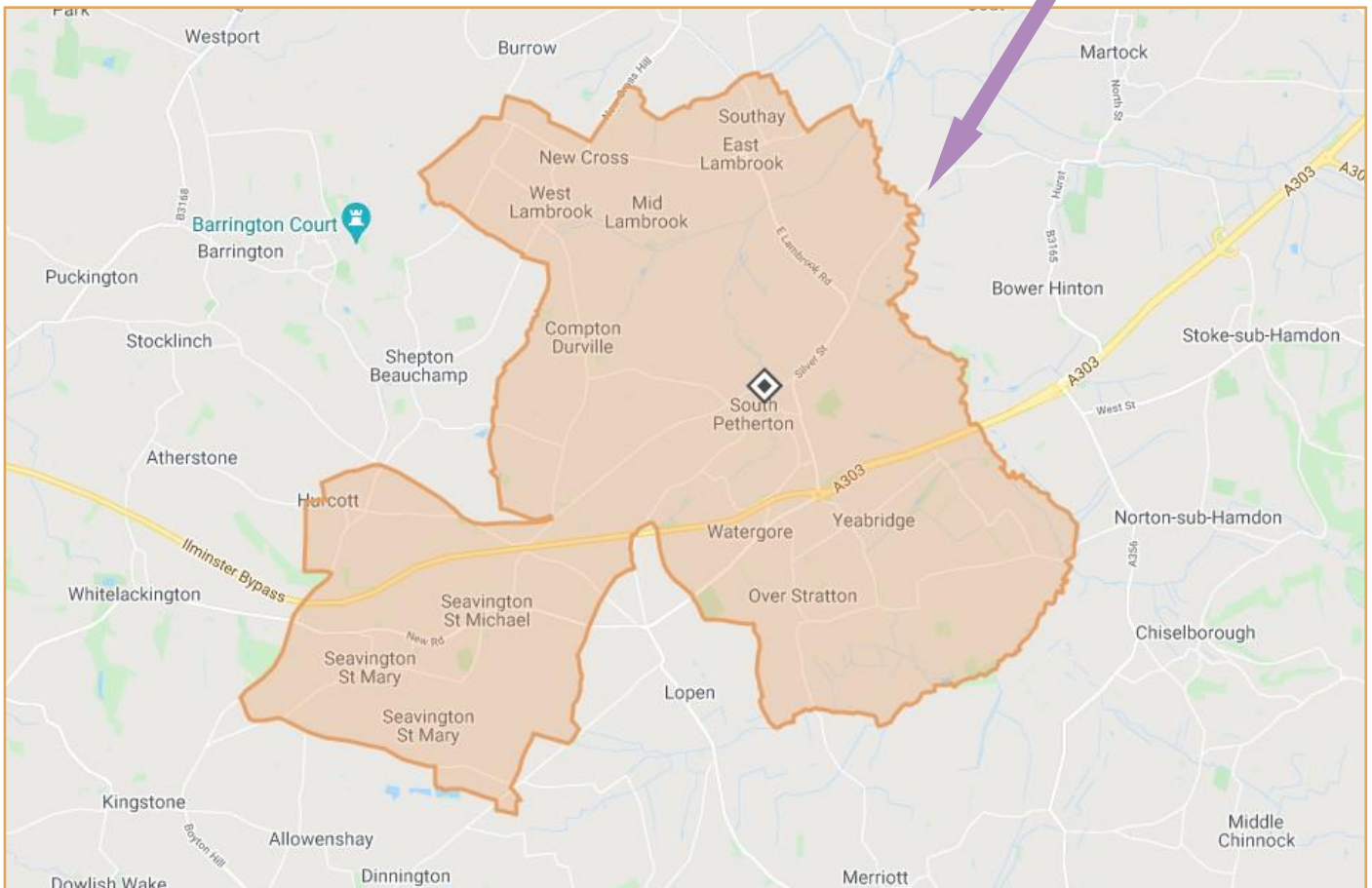
About the benefice

Where we are

We are in south Somerset, bisected by the A303, between Ilminster and Yeovil.

South Petherton isn't sure if it is a large village or small town, and is the local centre. The hamlet of Compton Durville is to the west of Petherton. To the south, Seavington St Michael and Seavington St Mary, once separate villages each with its own church, are now one parish. There is a small village at Over Stratton, across the A303, and smaller settlements at Watergore, Lower Stratton and the wilds of Yeabridge. The Lambrooks are north of South Petherton. East Lambrook, where the church is, is a village; West Lambrook is a smaller village and Mid Lambrook is a hamlet.

In order of size and amenities, South Petherton is the largest parish, with about 5,000 inhabitants; the Seavingtons are next, with about 500 people; and the Lambrooks are the smallest, with about 300.



About the benefice

A very potted history of the benefice

South Petherton and the Seavingtons became a joint benefice in 1988; the Lambrooks joined in 2014, having formerly been part of the parish of Kingsbury Episcopi. Originally, the Seavingtons were two parishes, St Mary and St Michael, each with its own church. In 1983 the two parishes merged and Seavington St Mary's church was closed for regular worship; it is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and occasional services are held there.

Services are held weekly in each of the three main churches, plus a monthly café church service in the excellent Seavington Community Café.

What we do as a benefice

Our churches form the natural focus of village life at important times and seasons – Christmas, Harvest, Remembrance Day, etc. Our secular events (fairs, flower festivals, concerts, etc.) are always very well-attended. There is a lot of support for our churches, both in financial terms and in goodwill, from those in our communities who do not come to church themselves.

Fun fact

The What3words coordinates for our churches and rectory are:

Seavington St Michael: reset.glorified.direct

Seavington St Mary: nods.bouncing.glimmers

East Lambrook: motivate.superbly.procures

South Petherton: strictest.custard.folks

Rectory: thinking.angel.guests

We have a benefice-wide **Pastoral Care Service**, which is lay-led and co-ordinated and grew out of a lay ministry training scheme in 2018. This provides both a non-judgemental listening ear and practical help to anyone in the benefice who needs it.

We have recently started to re-do our old benefice **website**. The new one is at www.southpethertonbenefice.org.uk. We are aware that this needs to be turned into a proper project, and would welcome your input into this. We can provide the technical skills but need some direction!

We have a paid part-time **benefice administrator** (7.5 h/w, largely working from home) and **Director of Music**. Everyone else is a volunteer!

We have volunteer...



About the benefice

Charities

As a benefice, we take part in the Shoebox scheme for Samaritan's Purse; last year we sent 56 shoeboxes, and we usually send over 90. Our individual churches also support their own charities, and many of our congregation members are also involved with other local charities and initiatives. Some of these are South Petherton Lunch Club, Seavington Community Shop and Café, the League of Friends of South Petherton Hospital and South Petherton in Bloom, to name a few.

Safeguarding

We take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Safeguarding training and DBS checks for those who need them are up to date; we are at Level 2 on the C of E Safeguarding Dashboard. Our Safeguarding Policy is kept under regular review, and safeguarding is a regular item on PCC agendas. We operate 'safe recruiting' for our volunteers where their roles bring them into contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. We have an experienced and pro-active Benefice Safeguarding Officer, Sue Harrison.

How many of us are there?

In April 2020 there were 159 members registered on the Church Electoral Roll and 130 in our 'worshipping community' as declared on our Parish Share Survey. Essentially, this is the same as 2019 – gauging the actual level of members who would have come if there hadn't been a pandemic is very hard.

The number of communicants at South Petherton on Easter Day 2019 was 116, and on Christmas Day, 79.

At Seavington St Michael, the number of communicants on Easter Day 2019 was 15, and on Christmas Day, 21.

At East Lambrook, the number of communicants on Easter Day 2019 was 15, and on Christmas Day 15.

The average attendance reported to the Archbishop during the Sundays of October 2019 (including Harvest Festival services on October 6th), was 74 adults and 10 children at South Petherton; at the Seavingtons the average (excluding Café Church) was 8 adults; at East Lambrook the average was 17 adults.

You can see all sorts of other data about our parishes and congregations, for the years 2009 to 2018, on the diocesan [Benefice Dashboard](#).

Our Zambia link

The Diocese of Bath and Wells has had a Companion Link with the Anglican Church in Zambia since 1978. Anglicans form around 2% of the population of 13 million in Zambia – that is, around 260,000 people.

Our particular link is with the Diocese of Luapula (in the area to the north), and the parishes of Chibaya Mulala, Katuta and Museba. We formerly had a Zambia volunteer, who was responsible for maintaining the link through prayer, fundraising and communication between the parishes; we need to revive this. We donate £1,500 a year to the diocese, and South Petherton's tea and coffee donations (usually around £500 a year) go towards the priest training fund.

Back in 2004 the Zambian Diocesan Bishop and his wife visited our benefice, and stayed with us in our houses. In 2018 a delegation from Zambia visited our diocese to mark the 40th anniversary of the start of the link.



Patterns of worship

We haven't had a standard pattern of services since March 2020. Our old pattern of worship was:

Church	1 st Sunday	2 nd Sunday	3 rd Sunday	4 th Sunday	5 th Sunday	Others
East Lambrook	6.00pm Evensong + short Holy Communion (BCP)	11.30am Matins (BCP) – lay led	6.00pm Evensong + short Holy Communion (BCP)	11.30am Holy Communion (BCP)		
Seavington St Michael	11.30am Holy Communion (CW)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) 11.30am Café Church (at Community Café)	11.30am Holy Communion (CW)	11.30am Service of Reflection		Termly: messy café church
South Petherton	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30am All-age worship 6.30pm Evensong	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30am Holy Communion (CW)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30am Holy Communion (CW) 6.30pm Evensong	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30am Holy Communion (CW)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30am Benefice Holy Communion (CW)	Wednesdays 10.00am Holy Communion (BCP) Thursdays 9.10am Infants School service (open to all)

Our former rector did not take all of these services himself! There are retired clergy and lay worship assistants who are willing and able to regularly take services, and who enjoy doing so.

Vestments are usually worn, except for Café Church and the school service. We won't oblige you to Cope, but we do have a nice set of chasubles should you wish to wear one.

A BCP mid-week service of Compline is held at East Lambrook during Lent, at 6.00pm in the evening. Compline services are also held in Holy Week at Seavington St Michael and South Petherton. Ecumenical prayers for a summer's evening have historically been held in the South Petherton churches on Sunday evenings in August.

Services at Seavington St Mary are held occasionally. We plan to increase the number of regular services in a year to six, plus special services including (of course) the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15 August.

Our Rogation services are held out and about, often on a local farm; the Seavingtons' are on a farm or in the new Seavington St Mary orchard. The Seavingtons seem to have a particular penchant for outdoor services, including a Palm Sunday walk. Our Remembrance Sunday services are well-attended community events, often with serving military personnel present.

We are fortunate enough to have six retired Church of England ministers living in the benefice. Three of these help out regularly and, with three other ministers, have kept us going during our long interregnum. Each parish has been assisted and mentored by local priests, who have had oversight of a single church. This has enabled a period of focus, stability and recovery. It was always intended that this be an "interregnum only" deployment; we want our new rector to bring us back to the happy, united Benefice we used to be. On your licensing the priests/mentors will stand down and give you free rein.

Patterns of worship

The pandemic has inevitably put paid to some of our services, so we have slimmed down. We also hope to try some new types of worship during our vacancy. Our current pattern is:

Church	1 st Sunday	2 nd Sunday	3 rd Sunday	4 th Sunday	5 th Sunday
East Lambrook	6.00pm Evensong + short Holy Communion (BCP)	11.30am Holy Communion (BCP)	6.00pm Evensong + short Holy Communion (BCP)	11.30am Matins (BCP) - lay led	
Seavington St Michael	10.30am Café Church (at Community Café)	10.30am Sung Holy Communion (CW)	10.30am All-Age Communion (CW)	10.30am Choral Matins with Holy Communion (BCP)	
South Petherton	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
	9.30am Holy Communion (CW)	9.30am Holy Communion (CW)	9.30am Holy Communion (CW)	9.30am Holy Communion (CW)	9.30am Benefice Holy Communion

We have adapted already, and are happy to be flexible and to experiment further. This has already brought some unexpected benefits – for example, since moving their service from 11.30am to 10.30am the congregation at Seavington has increased. We plan to make the most of these unusual times to try other new things. Our survey responses show that there is an appetite for change, including holding more services outside and trying different forms of worship and music. However, there is a deep reverence and respect for the Book of Common Prayer services, particularly at East Lambrook, and we strongly wish to continue provision for these.

Occasional offices

	Baptisms	Marriages	Funerals
2019			
E. Lambrook	1	0	1
Seavington	0	0	1
S. Petherton	11	2	9
2020			
E. Lambrook	0	2	2
Seavington	2	0	1
S. Petherton	2	1	4



2020's Harvest Festival at Seavington St Michael.

What it's like living here

What's where

Most shops and services are in South Petherton, but nearly every village has its own pub, and Seavington has a fantastic community shop and café, plus a village hall. As well as a pub, Over Stratton has a village hall and an excellent restaurant, and East Lambrook has its famous Manor Gardens.

The nearest town you may have heard of is Yeovil (nine miles away), which has most of the major supermarkets and two railway stations. Crewkerne, five miles to the south, has two supermarkets and a lovely warm swimming pool and gym, plus another railway station which runs regular trains to London and Exeter.



St James's Street, South Petherton.

Taunton, about 19 miles to the north-west, is the county town, with everything you would expect; it also happens to be the headquarters of the English Women's Cricket Team. Taunton is where the M5 links us up to Bristol and down to Exeter, both of which have airports, and the A303 takes us west to Exeter or east along to Salisbury and thence to Andover and the M3. The Dorset coast is quite close.

You may notice that we talk about roads: you need to be aware that public transport is very limited, so you will need access to a car to be able to get about the benefice. A certain careful recklessness about single-track roads would be an advantage.



Bringing in the apple harvest.

Working life

Our communities were founded on farming, and the agricultural land is excellent. Today, less than 10% of local employment is directly linked to agriculture, but it is very visible in our communities, our rolling fields and cider orchards. The benefice has a curious mix of traditional farming and modern innovation. In the Co-op carpark in South Petherton, you will see beaten-up Land Rovers parked next to Porsches and tradesmen's vans, and even the occasional horse.

Most people work in service industries. Over 80% of working people commute to work out of the benefice; Taunton, Exeter and Yeovil are all common work

destinations. The Leonardo Helicopter factory in Yeovil is a major local employer. The NHS is another (there is a large hospital in Yeovil, a small one in South Petherton, and an NHS England office and ambulance station in Yeovil) as is South Somerset District Council. We also have a noticeable number of residents with links to the military: RNAS Yeovilton is nearby, and you will get used to having helicopters circling overhead regularly.

What it's like living here

Population headlines and challenges

Nearly 30% of the population of the benefice is aged over 65. Many of the most active members of the communities are the recently retired – this is a popular area for people to retire to, and many of us are “incomers”. But we are aware that, as well as these relatively affluent retirees and professionals, we also have the sad but common problems of loneliness and rural poverty in our midst. The benefice is rated slightly above the national average level of deprivation.

The Lambrooks and the Seavingtons have very low crime levels, but South Petherton does have some problems with drugs and anti-social behaviour; sadly, the church has suffered vandalism in the past.



The 90th birthday party of one of our worshippers, South Petherton.

South Petherton has a food share, and the ‘Lord’s Larder’ local foodbank is well-supported but sadly necessary. House prices are high, and South Petherton in particular has seen some large housing developments in the past decade. The Seavingtons and South Petherton have Community Land Trusts to try to ensure that genuinely affordable housing is available.

If you can bear it, [South Petherton’s 2018 Neighbourhood Plan](#) will give you a more detailed introduction to that parish, its communities, demographics and priorities.



Climbing the (official climbing!) wall at the Infants School.

Schools and nurseries

South Petherton Infants School and Pre-School are jointly-run and are OFSTED-rated “[outstanding](#)”; South Petherton Junior School is also rated as “[outstanding](#)”. We have an extremely close relationship with the Infants School, which is right next to the church – see page 27. The local Secondary School is Stanchester Academy in Stoke sub Hamdon, rated as “[good](#)”, but some local children attend Huish Episcopi Academy (also “[good](#)”), which has a Sixth Form.

There are also Ofsted “[outstanding](#)” Sixth Form colleges in Taunton (Richard Huish College) and Street (Strode College); Yeovil College is the local

centre for technical tertiary education. For very small ones, South Petherton Pre-School is at the Rec in South Petherton; there is a Montessori nursery at Over Stratton; and there is an excellent nursery/ wrap-around-care provider at nearby Barrington.

What it's like living here

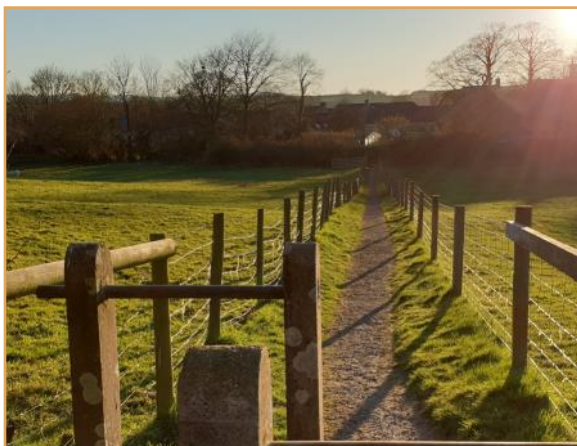
Leisure

In terms of sport, there are cricket, football, bowls and tennis clubs in South Petherton, and exercise classes for all levels of ability and enthusiasm are held locally. Local facilities for horse riding – even polo! – are excellent, and there are swimming pools and gyms in Crewkerne and Yeovil. There are recreation grounds with good children's playgrounds in Seavington and South Petherton, and many more in neighbouring parishes, and there are several children's and youth groups, including a Youth Parish Council. South Petherton has Rainbows, Beavers, Scouts, Brownies and Girl Guides, and nearby Martock Christian Fellowship hosts a Boys' Brigade.

The David Hall arts centre in South Petherton organises the Petherton Folk Fest, which usually happens each June, and some years South Petherton has a small carnival in September. The rest of the time we are firmly in village fête and open gardens territory – in the summer months, there is something happening every weekend in some nearby village. People round here are good at making their own entertainment, and there are myriad local clubs and societies. You can find out what's on via the village websites signposted at the end. You're close enough to get to the Glastonbury Festival, if that's your thing.

If you prefer solitude, it is lovely walking and cycling country, and there are several glorious National Trust properties within 20 minutes' drive. We are blessed with birdsong, and kingfishers have been seen by the stream very close to the rectory.

Clockwise from top:
The South Petherton duck race.
Irish dancers at the Folkfest.
South Petherton carnival.
Stoke sub Hamdon brass band.
A lovely late afternoon in Seavington.



The Lambrooks

About the parish

The Lambrooks comprise two villages and a hamlet, with a total population of about 250. There are a few young families, but many residents are retired. West, Mid and East Lambrook are each quite self-contained. There are several small businesses in the parish, and a number of farms.

The Lambrooks joined the ecclesiastical parish of South Petherton in 2014 when the Parish of Kingsbury Episcopi and the Lambrooks was dissolved. The villages still belong to the civil parish of Kingsbury Episcopi, and the school catchment area is for Kingsbury Episcopi Primary School rather than South Petherton, with Secondary provision at Huish Episcopi Academy near Langport.

Church services and styles

There is a service every Sunday, with the addition of mid-week Compline during Lent. All of our services are from the Book of Common Prayer. This is by choice, and people from other villages often attend St James's because they prefer the BCP services. The monthly Matins service is currently lay-led. Lent Bible study classes have been held in the past.

The congregation numbers an average of 17, a reasonable proportion of the village population, but even those members of the community who do not attend church still offer their support in terms of gardening, key-holding, fund-raising, etc.

Special services and events

We like to celebrate our patronal festival and Harvest with a bread, cheese and cider supper after Evensong. We always mark Remembrance Sunday, and have a well-attended 'Carols by Candlelight' service.

The biennial Flower Festival has in the past been a major fundraiser and community event, as has the Christmas Fair. The benefice's annual Gift Day appeal is well-supported in the parish.

Ecumenical life

Mid Lambrook has a United Reform Church, and occasional joint services – such as Summer 'Songs of Praise' – are held with its congregation.



The Lambrooks



St James's Church

The church is in East Lambrook. It is small and early, dating from 1190. It has been slightly altered over the years with the addition of some windows, a porch and a gallery, but essentially remains the simple building it has always been. It seats about 45 people in the nave and another 20 in the gallery, which is reached by stone steps up the outside of the north wall. It is in good order, having been much loved and cared for during its long life. There are microphones, a hearing loop and a ramp for wheelchair access. The church is kept open during the day. It has a large churchyard, in current use, which is under the care of the benefice.

The Schoolroom

The congregation of St James's is currently going through a period where most are elderly; the Sunday School, which ran for some years, closed down when the children all grew up. But the church owns a building that was built as a Sunday School about 100 years ago, and stands by to re-open it when there are more children in the village.

The Schoolroom is used as East Lambrook's village hall; it has a kitchen, toilets and a store-room, and has a wheelchair ramp. We run a monthly coffee morning there.

Fun fact

East Lambrook Manor Gardens is a Grade I listed garden, famous for its snowdrops.

During the vacancy and pandemic

We have been ably supported by our Area Dean and other ministers in our rector's absence.

Apart from about a month at the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020, St James's tried to keep a semblance of normality – although without our congregations. Prayers were said, alone, every evening of Holy Week, just after the first lockdown started, and after the first month of strict lockdown, prayers or Matins were read aloud every Sunday morning – but always by one of the churchwardens alone until the church was allowed to re-open for services. Flowers and correct frontal colours were maintained throughout the year and the flag was flown when appropriate.

Once public worship was permitted, we instituted a system of marking usable pews with green cards, to maintain social distancing, and we opened the church for private prayer for two days a week.

During the year several services were held outside, to comply with the rules. Our Patronal Festival service on July 26th was followed by a picnic lunch in the churchyard. Remembrance Sunday was marked by a service of Matins, read by the churchwarden, during which the Roll was read by an ex-serviceman and a congregation of two sat on the path outside the open door. Our usual 'Carols by Candlelight' was replaced by a carol service outside, with the minister conducting the service from the porch for the congregation gathered in the lane and churchyard.

Enjoying the best of British weather
at our Patronal Festival picnic!



The Lambrooks

Our churchwardens



Susan Ogilvy

I have been a churchwarden at St James's Church, East Lambrook for a good number of years, and while I very much appreciate that it is a privilege to serve my church and village in such a way, I also know that as soon as someone offers to replace me, I should step down. Meanwhile I love our little church and all it stands for, and its congregation of local villagers, plus visitors from other areas who enjoy worship from the Book of Common Prayer. St James's Church is very small in stature, but huge in heart and friendship. I have lived in Somerset for most of my life, first coming to this area in 1959. My husband and I have three sons, two of whom live locally, and four grandchildren. My work as a botanical illustrator continues, although not at the pace it once maintained.

Mark Stainer



My family moved from Yeovil in 1967, finally settling in East Lambrook in 1974. On leaving school I started work at East Lambrook Manor Gardens, eventually as head gardener. This cottage garden is the creation of Margery Fish. Its dense and natural planting makes a wonderful habitat for wildlife and is a constant reminder of the wonder of God's creation. I joined the congregation at St James about 2012, soon helping out with bell ringing and stepping in when we are without an organist though using only one finger, just sufficient to keep us together and in tune! I also arrange for the maintenance of our churchyard. As deputy churchwarden I have helped prepare for the various services in all their diversity, from the candlelit Carol service when the villagers fill St James and carols ring out across the dark fields, to the peace and beauty of the service of Compline during Lent. When time allows, I love to explore our surrounding countryside, especially the Levels with its distinctive and ancient landscape – though I've yet to try the smoked eels once farmed by the monks of nearby Muchelney Abbey.



The Christmas Eve service, 2020.



The church decorated for the Flower Festival.

The Seavingtons



Seavington has a strong history of neighbourly care and support. We would like this to continue, as we believe the church should have an active role in the community, and members of the congregation are happy to help with this.

The villagers of Seavington would like our next rector to have a visible presence here, whether it is having a (barista-style) coffee in the café, a pint (of real ale) in the pub, or trying out our new zip-wire! You will receive a warm welcome.

About the parish

Seavington is a small linear village, off the old A303. It has a population of around 500 people, from a broad range of backgrounds – longstanding village families, the newly-retired and young and growing families. There are three farms in the village and a family-run building business, but most residents travel elsewhere to work – to Chard, Taunton, Yeovil or further afield. The village school closed in 1968, and children from the village now attend a variety of primary and secondary schools, within a radius of about eight miles. Some residents look towards Ilminster for local services rather than to South Petherton.

The village has a family-run pub (with its own micro-brewery), and a well-used Village Hall, which was built to commemorate the new Millennium. The Village Hall has playing fields and a superb children's playground next to it. At the heart of the village is the Community Shop and Café, mostly run by volunteers. This is well-supported by local people from other nearby villages too, and works closely with the church, promoting and sharing social and fundraising events.

Church services and styles

A service is held every week, with most services being held at St Michael's church. Some of these are lay-led, and they cover a range of worship styles (but mainly Eucharistic): BCP Choral Matins, CW Holy Communion and All-Age Holy Communion. On the first Sunday of every month, a less formal Café Church service is held in the Community Café. This enables less-mobile members of the congregation to attend collective worship, as St Michael's can only be entered by a short flight of steps. We are working to increase these services, attracting more young families, and a termly, more active "Messy Café Church" was introduced just before the pandemic.

Our growing congregation averages about 12 for our weekly services and 20 for Café Church and special services. (It has been described as "small but lively", a not inaccurate phrase!)

We have an active [Facebook](#) page, which is used to advertise regular and special services, events and share photos. We also regularly contribute to *Seavington News*, which is distributed to every household in the parish.



Top left: St Michael's church.
Above: Post-croissant worship at Café Church.

Fun fact

Look out for the flying pig perched on a building on the road between Seavington St Michael and South Petherton.

The Seavingtons

Special services and events

Up to six services a year are planned for St Mary's church, plus special services including several held during Holy Week and her patronal festival. The very special carol service there is regarded as the parish's official start to Christmas. We hold a Rogation service, and have a Palm Sunday prayer walk, a Harvest Festival and a Service of Light at All Saints'-tide. A very well-attended service of remembrance is held at the village War Memorial at the top of the playing fields every Remembrance Sunday. We keep the tradition of Posada: having a set of nativity figures which travel to different homes during Advent and come into church on Christmas Day. There are also popular Christingle and Carol Services.

Ecumenical life

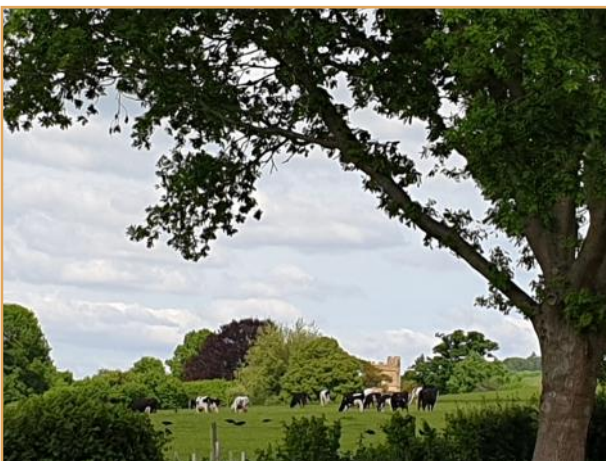
There are no other churches in the Seavingtons, but there is an ecumenical house group, which is led by one of our Lay Worship Leaders.



St Mary's Church

St Mary's church is at the far end of the village, on the old A303. It is under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It was built in the 13th century, but may well be on the site of an even older building. There is limited electricity, not much in the way of lighting and no heating. It has limited wheelchair access; there is one step to negotiate. Its church bells are well-used, the peal being run twice weekly. The churchyard is still in use.

There was sadness and some anger when it was decided in 1983 that this church should close; for some, these feelings persist. We have recently started to work more closely with the Churches Conservation Trust, holding more services in St Mary's and arranging fundraising events, led by the newly-formed Friends of St Mary's.



St Michael's Church

St Michael's church is also early, parts of it dating back to the 12th century. It can seat up to a hundred people and has a small gallery. The churchyard is still in use; a grant from the Parish Council helps to support its maintenance and that of St Mary's churchyard. St Michael's Trust raises funds and makes grants to help maintain the fabric of the church.

The church benefits from enthusiastic and very talented "flower ladies", who provide colour and beauty on a monthly rota (in their flower arrangements!) and also hold flower festivals every two or three years.



The Seavingtons

During the vacancy and pandemic

From an early point in our rector's absence, Canon Ian Gibson has been leading the worship in Seavington. When we couldn't worship together, he videoed a weekly service, which was shared online. There was also a hard copy of worship for those who preferred it. We have held more services in St Mary's, including a Covid-safe adapted Christingle, which was very well supported and very popular.

*Right: He is Risen Indeed - Alleluia! Easter Day 2021.
Below right: The Christingle Service at St Mary's, 2020.
Below left: The Flower Ladies' display for Harvest 2020.*



Our churchwardens

Manda Jagers

Left

I have been a churchwarden in Seavington for 10 years. I am passionate about the important role our beautiful little church plays in village life and the importance of holding weekly services here and keeping the identity of our parish within the benefice.



Anne Shaw

Right

My husband Terry and I moved to Seavington, with our children, Ben and Naomi, in 1999, so in another couple of decades we'll be considered "locals!" I work in Yeovil as a Safeguarding Nurse Specialist. I helped establish our community shop and café. I'm now a fully qualified barista and only have a mini panic attack when asked to do 5 "Full English" breakfasts 5 minutes before closing time - thank goodness my volunteering days are done! (But my barista skills are useful for café church!)

As a Lay Worship Assistant, I look forward to a new incumbent who will teach and encourage us in worship and prayer and continue the great tradition of loving pastoral care enjoyed in Seavington.

South Petherton



About the parish

South Petherton is the largest parish in the benefice, with the largest village. In 2017 it had a population of 5,034. It has a good range of shops and facilities, including a library, Post Office, several food shops including a Co-Op, butcher's, baker's, grocer's and wine shop, a pub and two social clubs, three hairdressers(!), a doctors' surgery and community hospital. It also has the small but lively David Hall arts centre and the Blake Hall, which is South Petherton's unofficial village hall.

The parish has a wide mix of ages. There are enough children for an Infants and a large Junior School. It is a popular place to retire to, and has been named one of the most desirable places in the country to live in. The population has increased a great deal over the last decade.

Church services and styles

Before our rector fell ill, we had two and sometimes three services on a Sunday: a BCP communion, a Common Worship Holy Communion and (twice a month) Evensong. There was also a midweek Communion Service, and a monthly All-Age service instead of Holy Communion. We have a very dedicated organist and a small but loyal choir.

In normal times, our Reader, Geoff, holds a weekly service of communion at our residential home, Burnworthy. Another retired priest leads a weekly Bible Study class there, and several members of our congregation live there. We also usually hold occasional services at South Petherton Community Hospital, including a carol service.

Pre-pandemic, we generally had about 10 at our 8.00am BCP services, 65 at our 9.30am services, 6 at our Evensongs and 10 at our midweek communions. Every so often, the evening service takes the form of 'Hymns of Praise' – favourite hymns chosen by participants with a few words about why they are the favourites of the people who have suggested them.

The Thursday school service, pre-pandemic, was usually attended by about 100 children and 12 staff, plus over 30 parents/family members and some of the school's governors. These services finished with a coffee and chat for the friends and families.

Special services and events

At Easter-time, the Infants School has an Easter bonnet parade around the village. It is also our tradition to bring flowers to decorate an Easter cross. This has been a very powerful symbol of hope in 2020 and 2021. We have sometimes held an agape meal on Maundy Thursday, and usually have a harvest supper. We have a Service of Light at All Saints'-tide. Our Act of Remembrance is attended by the local Brownies, Scouts and representatives from the schools and, if we can, we station a bugler on the church roof. This is a significant village event, usually attended by 150-200 people.

Below: Our Act of Remembrance in 2018, as seen from the church roof.



South Petherton



Advent and Christmas are wonderful. The Infants School decorates our Christmas tree, and holds its Nativity Play here. In the recent years, we have started to adorn our church at Christmas with decorations made by local children and adults. We have a massive craft session running the afternoon that the Christmas lights are switched on, and the church is happily covered with sequins and crayons for the afternoon. In 2019 more than 100 children joined in that day, and we ended up with 250 decorations. We host the South Petherton Combined Arts Choir's carol concert, which for many local people signals the start of Christmas. The Christmas services are very well attended. There is standing-room only at the Christingle service, and the 'Carols by Candlelight' is also extremely popular.

Groups

Until the pandemic hit, we held a successful monthly drop-in café, Open House. This is a "thriving, buzzing, cake-munching, coffee-slurping, chit-chatting hour or more" held on a Wednesday morning. It is a chance for people from all sorts of backgrounds and ages to meet up, and was used as a formal meeting place for our Village Agent and, often, one of the Health Coaches from the GP surgery. This is entirely lay-led, and was not only self-supporting but managed to raise over £900 for different charities during 2019.

We also have a men's group, for gentlemen of all ages and faiths (or none), who enjoy outings to interesting places and sociable food (pandemic allowing). The aim of the group is to encourage men to view church and Christian activities in a positive light. We also have one home group, and there is interest in re-starting more. We ran an Alpha Course in 2017.

We have a small but dedicated Mothers' Union – the Revd Wendy Mitchell, one of our retired ministers, is the Mothers' Union chaplain. A representative from our Mothers' Union sends baptism anniversary cards to each of our baptised children until they reach the age of five, and members knit baptism teddy bears.

We went through a lovely stage of having babies born to our church families. To help new parents, we lent out our "church box" of unisex baby clothes, and also provided a week of meals for the whole family. We are ready to spring into action again when next needed!



Top: A priest's-eye-view of our Christingle Service.
Above: Part of our host of angels.

South Petherton

Our once-thriving Seekers Sunday School formerly met in the Infants School during the 9.30am service. It's fair to say that it now needs some TLC. The number of children attending has rapidly declined over the past three years, and we're now down to only five. In 2019 we were seriously investigating appointing a children's and youth worker, but unfortunately this was not progressed. A new pattern of Seekers and a mid-week messy church was due to start in January 2020, but the rector's illness prevented this. Better planning and resourcing of our provision for non-school children's and young people is a key priority for us.

Community events

Because we have no pews in the nave, which is unusually wide, the building is very flexible. It is a popular concert venue (including during the Petherton Folk Fest), and we have successfully held ceilidhs and quiz nights here. We plan to do more of this sort of thing!

We have two main fundraising events each year: a plant sale in May and an autumn fair in November. Both are great social events as well as being a great financial boost. In 2019 the plant sale raised nearly £1,000 and the autumn fair over £3,000. The autumn fair's Tool Stall, in particular, is a thing of wonder.

The church is the 'home venue' of the South Petherton Combined Arts Choir. It is also one of the two main venues for the South Somerset Choral Society. In 2021 we will host the annual exhibition of the local Photographic Society, and (we hope) an exhibition of needlecraft in memory of a local expert in the art. The church has in the past also hosted weekly practices for a 'dementia choir'.



We collate and distribute South Petherton's monthly parish magazine. Many readers of this do not come to church, and so it is an obvious form of outreach.

Ecumenical life

There is a Methodist Church in the village, whose members are committed but declining in number. We join them each year for their Covenant service. There is also a Roman Catholic Church. We formerly had a close relationship with these two churches, and led the South Petherton Churches Together group. However, in recent years we have drifted apart, and none of the clergy from the other churches lives locally. We do still work together to provide Lent lunches for Christian Aid, and have held "prayers for a summer's evening" in each other's churches each August. We also deliver Christmas postcards (with the service times of all three churches) to every household in the benefice.

*Top: One of our youngsters - an aspiring sacristan!
Below left: A full house at one of our quiz nights.
Below right: Two of our Tool Stall stalwarts at the Autumn Fair.*



South Petherton

Links with charities

We fundraise and support several charities regularly. We are a collection point for our local foodbank, and for stamps for the Children's Society. Our toilet is twinned with one in Uganda. A Traidcraft stand sells all manner of goodies after the service twice a month. Our congregation's Christian Aid week work involves visiting every house in the parish. This year we had a specific Christian Aid week service, and two church members did the Christian Aid Challenge to walk 300,000 steps in May to raise funds for water conservation in Kenya. We also have particularly close links with a charity called Mpongwe's People, which helps an orphan support project and the Mission Hospital at Mpongwe, Zambia, and have raised several thousand pounds for them. Our donations for refreshments after our services always go towards our Zambia Priest fund - for more about our benefice's Zambia link, see page 9. (This is in addition to our benefice's charitable giving. For more about that, see page 35.)



Above: Phil Andrews, fundraiser extraordinaire, on one of his sponsored bike rides.

Below: Our choir in mufti, singing at a Harvest Supper.



The Church of Ss Peter and Paul

The church is right in the middle of the village, and is very visible. The village war memorial is built into one edge of the churchyard, and the main entrance to the Infants School is along another side. It can seat about 200 in the nave, plus about 80 in the chancel and tower crossing.

The nave of the church is pew-less, very wide and open, and chairs can easily be moved around for different types of service. Wheelchair access to the nave, choir vestry, quire and toilet is very good. There is a nave altar, the high altar being rarely used. The lady chapel was formerly used for the 10.00am Wednesday communion service. Its use is somewhat impeded by a spectacularly inconvenient table tomb which sticks out right in front of the altar step.

The organ is in good working order, and the choir have mics. The former side-chapel on the north side was converted to a choir vestry, small kitchen and toilet, with space for our benefice administrator to work and the photocopier to live. There is a priests' vestry in what was originally the south porch. A generous recent legacy allowed us to install a projector and (very unobtrusive) screen, and a new sound system, in 2019.

The Friends of South Petherton Church is a charity which raises funds and makes substantial grants towards the maintenance of the fabric of the church. The rector is normally also a trustee of the charity, as is one of the churchwardens.

South Petherton

The church is undeniably expensive to maintain. This really wasn't helped by some unwelcome visitors in March 2020, who stripped the south aisle roof. Although they abandoned the lead, the damage was done - and very costly damage it has proved to be. We're watertight again, thankfully, but we still need to make good some internal damage caused by this. Our next major building project is to replace our aging boilers. Our windows seem to have a magnetic attraction to footballs, and we were having some problems with low-level vandalism when the church was left open and unattended every day. We also have bats, who are unobtrusive but do not leave the building to go to the toilet. On a more positive note, the votive candle stand is often a welcome focus for people in need of calm and solace, and we get lovely comments about what a peaceful and spiritually refreshing space it is.

The churchyard is closed, except for the interment of ashes, and is the responsibility of the Parish Council; a group of volunteers keep its flowerbeds looking beautiful. There is a cemetery elsewhere in the village, and most cremation services take place in Yeovil or Taunton.

Our bells are in good order; a new peal of twelve was consecrated in 1998. They attract visiting ringers from across the country, and we are a designated teaching tower. To hear our bells (remember, your house will be right next door!) click on [hear the bells!](#)

A team of strong-armed clock-winders do their duty every week, before retreating to the local hostelry for refreshment.

During the vacancy and pandemic

We have held two services a week when permitted – arranging the chairs in a socially-distanced way is easy for us. Sadly our Sunday School had to be temporarily disbanded, as most of the children were too young to be able to engage well on Zoom and each family has a boisterous toddler who wasn't going to social distance.

There has been a weekly emailed service, with links to online services elsewhere, and paper copies have been delivered weekly to those not on email. As well as looking out for each other, members of our congregation volunteered for the central South Petherton Community Support Team, which provided practical help and a listening ear.

We have held virtual plant sales, and managed to raise nearly £18,000 for our roof repair fund. We also decorated the church beautifully for Christmas.

Fun fact

In 2015 the world record for change-ringing was achieved here.

Left: Intrigue among the tomatoes at our Plant Sale.
Right: Industrial quantities of scones for the W.I. fête.



South Petherton

Our churchwardens



Steve Harrison

Once upon a time Assistant Principal at a sixth-form college in Taunton, and occasional Ofsted inspector for post-16 Maths and Science. Now I have a proper full-time job as churchwarden at St Peter & St Paul's church and PCC Vice-Chair. In my spare(?) time I'm secretary and web-manager for the South Petherton camera club and a badminton coach, working mostly with young players and playing just a bit myself when my knees are up to it.



Daphne Woodhouse

I went to church, growing up, but really didn't 'get it'! I had a notion that the Bible had the answers and, aged 18, resolved to 'turn over a new leaf' and begin to read it. I began nurse training and was invited to a church where Bible teaching suddenly made sense and I turned to Christ, understanding, for the first time, why I needed to. I subsequently completed a diploma in cross cultural communication and missionary studies, and worked abroad for a while, before marrying and raising a family near London. Following early retirement from nursing, my husband Chris and I moved to Somerset. I believe in serving the Lord where we are and that, as church, we can pray and work together for God's kingdom to grow here.



South Petherton Infants and Pre-School



Mrs Weston leading collective worship in the school hall.

Under the previous rector, the church and school have worked really closely together and had an excellent relationship. We are very keen to continue this, and greatly value this link.

South Petherton Infants and Pre-School is Church of England Voluntary Aided and the school building is right next to the church. The Infant School has 116 pupils on the roll and some 38 children at the Pre-School, which is up at the Rec.

We have had very strong historical links with the church. The rector has been an ex-officio governor of the school and has led a weekly service in the church for the entire school community to participate in, including parents, grandparents and the wider school community. The Headteacher, Mrs Shan Weston, is an ex-officio member of the PCC, and is keen to support and build upon the positive relationship between both school and church. She promotes further links and is open to challenge and change to continuously improve relationships.

The school is seeking someone who will become a member of the Ethos Committee to further guide its spiritual development and to enhance the already well-established Christian Values within the liturgical calendar. The Infants School has more recently re-visited its vision statement and 'Embracing the Fullness of Life' (*John 10:10*) certainly have been values that the school has really lived throughout the pandemic.

The Year 2 Puppet Nativity, 2020.

The school is outward-thinking and keen to strive for excellence whilst working closely with the community to provide the very best foundations for young children. Mrs Weston, who has been in post for five years, is keen to continue to support and work closely with a newly-appointed incumbent.

Traditionally, the Infants School and church have been intrinsically linked and many of the liturgical events have taken place with both school and church playing major parts. One of the much-treasured events of Infants school life is on Ascension Day each year, when the "leavers" (the top year of the school) are taken to the top of the church tower and are able, under strict supervision, to wave to their friends below. Although a seemingly trivial event it features large in the minds of seven-year-olds!

The school Nativity play is performed in the church for the entire school community to enjoy, as well as the more usual Harvest Festival. At Easter an Easter Bonnet Parade takes place through the village, following the Easter Service held in the church. These are just a few of the wide variety of opportunities to engage with the wider parental and grandparental community that are jointly encouraged.

Although the Junior School is not church affiliated, it also has some links with the church, and there is potential to expand these. Many Junior School events take place there throughout the year, including a very special Christingle Service. There is further room for a new member of the clergy to lead Collective Worship in the school. This would build on the special services at Easter and Harvest times, as well as regular informal supportive contact between the church and the school.



South Petherton Infants and Pre-School

The staff and children of the Infants and Pre-School did their own work to decide what type of skills we should ask for in our new rector, what the relationship between the school and pre-school should be like, and what being a church school means to them. Some comments from the staff are below. You can see the children's personal specification on page 4.

What do you think the church's role in the school and pre-school should be?

Our school is a very special place, and the Christian links have a great part in the ethos and atmosphere of the school.

The church has played a major part in the historical journey of the school and pre-school. The church is deeply embedded within the school and pre-school's visions and ethos. The church should continue to play a major part in the life of the school and uphold the Christian traditions developed as well as provide an extension to school life. The church should be a place where children and staff feel welcomed and can find inner peace.

Welcoming children into God's family, a place for collective worship and for the church to be a familiar, inviting place for all South Petherton children.

What qualities and skills would you like our new rector to bring to the role?

Someone who can communicate with children and adults. Someone who can inspire the children (and adults) to think and embrace the message of Jesus and the church.

Organised, committed to children and families, funny, creative and engaging. A willingness to be part of something special and guide and support the Christian ethos of the school and pre-school. Open, caring, kind and considered. Someone able to relate to young children, providing time to answer questions and listen.

Joyfulness!

Enthusiasm, inspirational, ability to relate to young children and families. A real excitement to be part of the school and pre-school.

What does being a church school and pre-school mean to you?

Having a connection with the church so that it is part of everyday life, somewhere to go to for different occasions, to worship, celebrate or just to sit or play on the grass, look for wildlife, etc.

It means a lot. We feel joined to our church and it feels like an extension of our school. It helps adults and children feel a sense of awe and wonder, a sense of history, permanence, continuity and, importantly, that it is a special place for Christians. Our Christian values are a key part of our school life and permeate what we do. Being a church school makes this a more real, 'lived' experience.

It very much feels like a family to me - and the church is a big part of this. We focus so highly on our Christian values and being so close to the church is wonderful. A really important link.

Who's who

D Fyfe (PTO)



I am married to Alastair and we have two adult children. Having lived in Seavington St Michael for nearly 23 years, we moved to South Petherton seven years ago.

I was ordained in July 2008, having been trained in Salisbury at STETS and in this benefice. I served my title here and later took responsibility for services in the interregnum in 2012. I moved to the neighbouring benefice – Winsmoor – on the arrival of the previous rector, but I did lead services for him on and off during his time here and particularly when he was on sick leave.

I received PTO at the end of February 2019 and have continued working in the Winsmoor Benefice, as well as in this benefice when needed. I currently lead 4 + services a month in this benefice, at South Petherton and at East Lambrook. I am always happy to help out, but probably not a regular basis.

Ian Gibson (PTO)

I retired six years ago from Chichester and came to live in Seavington, to be near to our three sons and their families. I was previously involved in the drinks trade and also spent 16 years as a management training consultant for major blue chip organisations. I studied theology at Salisbury, and still work actively with the Order of St John and their ambulance service. I was Chief of Staff and Episcopal Vicar for the Bishop of Chichester and Canon Treasurer in the Cathedral.



Wendy Mitchell (PTO)

I moved to South Petherton in October 2017, after I retired from my post in Exeter diocese. I quite quickly became a member of the ministry team here, which I enjoy very much. I am also Bath and Wells Diocesan Chaplain for the Mothers' Union.

Geoff Abery (Reader)

I trained as a Reader in the Diocese of Southwark, where I was licenced in March 1979 to the Parish of St Barnabas (Newtown) Sutton. At St B's, I shared in the ministry of Baptism, visiting families and attending the services. With my family, I took part in the life and work of the parish, becoming a governor of a local primary school for eight years.

We moved to South Petherton in September 1999, where during my continuing ministry I have assisted with the funeral duties. During the previous incumbent's Ministry, I have by extension taken the BCP Communion Service at 8am on Sundays and the midweek Wednesday 10am services as requested. I also take a monthly service at Burnworthy Residential Home. I am an ex-officio member of the PCC.



Who's who

Ruth Eden (Director of Music)



I trained at the Royal Academy of Music from age 11 to 21, piano being my first instrument and flute the second. (I always wanted to play the organ but was not allowed to take it up in case it affected my piano touch!) This was followed by a career in music teaching, interrupted by marriage and family. I began playing the organ 50 years ago when the church in Buckinghamshire we attended lost all three of the incumbent organists in a short time.

When we moved to the West Country in the mid-1970s I took on the responsibility for playing organ and directing choirs in various churches when needed until 2005. From that time I shared the duties of organ and choir at South Petherton with a former pupil. When he left for a full-time position at another church, I took over as the Director of Music. I play at all three churches when needed.

Sue Harrison (Safeguarding Officer)

I have lived in the village since 2003 and am immersed in the life of the church and community. I have been the Safeguarding Officer of the benefice for about 8 years and consider this to be a vital role, as it is our duty to safeguard all who attend our church. As a retired Infant Teacher, I use the experience gained over 25 years of teaching in my role as a Foundation Governor at the village Infants and Pre-school, representing the PCC and helping to consolidate links between the school and the church. Music is an important part of my life and I enjoy singing in our church choir and a large local Choral Society.



A Year 2 school-boy on Ascension Day - standing on top of South Petherton church tower, looking into the Infants School playground.



The rectory



The Rectory is a detached, four-bedroom, house, built in the 1970s. It will need some refurbishment and redecoration, which is being organised as this profile is being written.

The house is right next to South Petherton church, but is off the main street in a fairly quiet back road. The road leads to a ford over a chalybeate spring, so your car will get a spa treatment regularly. You can walk to the Infants School in a less than a minute, and the Junior School in about ten.



On the ground floor, the house has an inner hall, a large sitting room, dining room, cloakroom, kitchen and utility room. Upstairs, there are four good-sized bedrooms, a family bathroom, shower room and a separate toilet. It has gas central heating. There is a single garage and plenty of room for parking. There is a large garden, currently mostly lawn, with lots of space for children and animals to run about.

There is a study just inside the front door, which has an office phone line and broadband paid for by the PCC; there is also a separate, private, phone line. It is possible to separate the study from the rest of the house with a lockable door, so that the main body of the house is entirely private. Church meetings can also be held in the Infants School (out of school hours), in East Lambrook schoolroom, in the Community Café at Seavington or in one of the pubs.

How we can support you

We recognise that being a rector can be very demanding. We want to reassure you that we don't expect you to be all things to all people, and that we fully realise that you are one person, and are a human being just like the rest of us!

We are a friendly, willing and (almost entirely) tolerant bunch, and you would be warmly welcomed!

We would like to offer you:

- † The expectation that your day off is a proper day off, and that the rectory is your home, as well as a place for work and, occasionally, meetings.
- † An enthusiastic and nearly complete PCC, with a very experienced Vice-Chair and the full set of churchwardens.
- † Practical help with things like cutting the grass at the rectory.
- † Sacristans so that you can concentrate on leading services rather than setting up and tidying up.
- † A commitment to explore the [Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing](#) with you.



Decorating the Easter cross, 2020.

How did we decide our priorities?

We got each of our congregations, the wider community, the Infants and Pre-School staff and parents, and the residents of Burnworthy Residential Home, to do a short survey. This asked congregation members:

- (1) how they felt the church and benefice should be growing and developing;
- (2) what qualities and skills a new rector could bring to the task; and
- (3) what the church meant to them.

Non-church members were asked what they felt the church's role in the parishes and community should be, and the school and pre-school staff were asked what being a church school/pre-school meant to them.

We had over 80 responses and over 10,000 words to analyse. A clear set of priorities and themes emerged and, overall, there was a remarkable degree of agreement. A small group of PCC members and churchwardens read through every survey, considered our strengths and weaknesses as a benefice, and wrote a draft vision. The draft vision was sent to every member of the congregation for comment, and has been revised in the light of that.

We have not been in the habit of having a Vision Day or anything of that nature, so this is the first time for a while that we have all had the chance to reflect on where we are as a benefice and where we would like to be. Lots of people said that this was all quite exciting and were pleased that we could all get involved. The exercise of setting a vision together was an uplifting task.

There were some wonderful responses to the question about 'what church means to you' and, for congregation members, why they go to church. Here are some of them:

I feel warm and loved when I enter the doors - I celebrate and leave feeling refreshed and very happy.

We have much to be thankful for. We live in a peaceful and generous part of the world and I wish to offer my gratitude for that and my prayers for those less fortunate.

Community. Faith. Everyone supporting each other.

The church should be a beacon of light in the community, and a safe place for those in need.

It is a place of peace and holiness.

The church is a house of hope and understanding especially when life throws some bad times your way. It would be so good to share our feelings with an understanding priest.

The church is beautiful and peaceful and gives out a feeling of tranquillity.

It is part of my life – it is my parish church.

The church is a landmark physically and spiritually for the community regardless of their chosen faith. I would like to see it as a symbol of friendship and collaboration amid this age of division and upset politically, environmentally and spiritually.

It is a privilege to be able to attend services in a building which has seen so many generations of Christians.

I see the church as the hub of the village, which brings together the whole range of inhabitants to benefit from its inspirational building and give a place to quietly sit, pray or reflect.

Somewhere to be able to talk to Christian friends and exchange ideas, news or receive comfort, reassurance or help.

A spiritual and caring base.

I go to be with people I love and respect, to sing and pray.

A place to call 'home' where we can be ourselves, sharing in joy and sorrow with one another. Giving and receiving encouragement and comfort as we grow in faith and love for others.

Community and Friendship.

A source of comfort and reassurance with its familiar, established and traditional religious services in this changing world.

It's a place where I can find help, friendship and a learning of the Bible.

It was quickly made clear to us that the congregation were devoted and Godly people.

The church building is the physical heart of the village.

How might we achieve our vision?

We have some ideas for how we may start to achieve our vision. We don't want to be too prescriptive as you need space to come to your own conclusions. But we wanted to show you the kind of things we were thinking of.

To have a successful and growing mission to families, children and young people

- * Re-address the plan for revamping our Seekers Sunday School and possibly providing a messy church service during the week in South Petherton.
- * Support the new messy café church at Seavington.
- * Look into the possibility of getting a South West Youth Ministries (SWYM) children and families worker (this was looked into in 2019 but the rector's ongoing illness meant that it was not proceeded with).
- * Look into working with other churches in the neighbourhood to share/develop provision for older children and teenagers.

To be closer as a benefice, developing a culture of sharing, while recognising the unique qualities and traditions of each parish

- * Encourage people to go to services that they wouldn't usually try.
- * Have more parties so that we get to know each other!
- * Start the tradition of having an annual vision day/picnic. The parish profile survey work has made many members of our congregations feel more involved and empowered than before, and it would be good to continue to do this.

To be growing spiritually through strong Biblical teaching, prayer and by our fellowship with each other

- * Revitalise the home groups, prayer groups and Bible study groups which have been put on hold due to the pandemic.
- * When the pandemic rules allow, set up a system of making regular home visits, including Home Communion, for those who need them.
- * Review and re-launch our church lending library.

For our churches to be at the heart of our villages, pro-actively reaching out to our communities

- * Make sure our churches are open and welcoming spaces, while keeping them safe.
- * Re-start Café Church at Seavington, the Open House monthly café in South Petherton, and look into going along to other local venues.
- * Better resource and expand the work of the Pastoral Care Service, to allow it to check up on families after bereavements and funerals, and keep in contact after weddings and baptisms.
- * Provide live-streamed services for those unable to attend in person or just wishing to explore. To do this, get South Petherton church connected to broadband. (This will also enhance the use of South Petherton's projector and screen.)
- * Make our website welcoming and a tool for mission as well as information, by re-thinking its purpose and re-vamping its existing content.

Finances

Our finances are, it's fair to say, a cause for concern. 2020 and 2021 have been particularly difficult years, but even before then our outgoings were greater than our income. Until this year, we have consistently paid our parish share in full, and we have held strong to a commitment to donate a tithe from our regular income and freewill offerings to a range of charities. Unfortunately, this has left very little for supporting initiatives and outreach – and, even then, we have seen a steady decline in our reserves year-on-year. Many members of our congregation are living off their pensions and do not have much in the way of disposable income. We are in socio-economic category E, reflecting the social mix in the benefice and the frequently capital-rich, cash-poor situation of many older residents.

Our parish share for 2021 is £63,740. This year we have had to pause payments for six months to make sure that we can afford South Petherton's roof repairs. The repairs to the roof will cost nearly £57k plus probably another £10k in fees. We have covered some of the costs through insurance and from selling the lead (which was left in the churchyard), and have raised over £18k in donations so far. The Friends of South Petherton Church have agreed to cover up to £30k of the costs.

Our next major expense will be replacing the boilers at South Petherton church; we don't yet know the cost of this.

As at 31 March 2021 we had £660 in our General Fund and £32,700 in our Memorial Fund. It has been our policy to keep the Memorial Fund for specific projects.

Our annual income from donors (excluding legacies and fundraising) was £80k in 2019 and £73k in 2020.

Our total income was roughly £112k in 2019 and £137k in 2020 (which included the insurance pay-out for the roof).

Our outgoings in 2019 were £128k in 2019 and slightly less in 2020.

You can see the full annual accounts for 2020 on the [Charity Commission website](#).

Being more optimistic, our annual Gift Days are enthusiastically supported by the wider community. In 2019 this raised about £10k and in 2020 about £12k. We have the generous support of several Friends' groups to help with repairs to the churches' fabric. We are registered for Gift Aid, and in 2020 we received £16,700 in this way.

Charitable Giving

We have a policy of making annual charitable donations of a percentage of our annual regular income to charities suggested by members of our congregations and the wider community. We aim to donate 10% of our annual regular income. In 2020 we achieved this, and distributed a total of £4,400. We try to achieve a balance between local, national and overseas charities, and to benefit a broad spectrum of society - including agriculture, the Armed Forces, children and young people, medical charities, and the elderly.

In 2020 the benefice supported these charities:

Bath and Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers ✪ The Church Mission Society
The Friends of Wells Cathedral ✪ The Churches Conservation Trust ✪ The Bible Society
Yeovil Christian Support Trust (Lord's Larder) ✪ Alabare (Christian Care and Support)
Farming Community Network ✪ Mpongwe's People ✪ Open Doors
Zimbabwe - a National Emergency ✪ Samaritan's Purse (Beirut Emergency Fund)
SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity ✪ Combat Stress ✪ Burnworthy House Amenities Fund
South Petherton Community Shed ✪ Children's Hospice (South West)
South Petherton Scouts Hardship Fund ✪ South Petherton Infants and Pre-School
St Margaret's Somerset Hospice ✪ South Petherton Hospital League of Friends
Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture

Finances

Reserves Policy

The PCC's policy is to keep unrestricted funds from legacies and one-off donations in a "Memorial Fund", principally for use on capital projects. We aim to hold reserves across all our unrestricted funds which are equivalent to four months' general expenditure. The PCC last reviewed this policy in July 2010. The policy of investing fund balances in the Central Board of Finance Church of England Deposit Fund has been standard for at least the past ten years.



Cleaning South Petherton's church clock, 2019.

Boring but important

Governance

We have one PCC, which has a set number of places for representatives from each parish. We have a full complement of churchwardens, two for each parish, together with a PCC secretary, treasurer and Deanery Synod reps. We lack only one lay representative to bring the PCC up to full strength. The PCC usually meets about six times a year.

As well as the PCC in its full glory, we have several smaller committees:

- * The **Leadership Team** (formed in 2020 to help the churchwardens in our rectors' absence) – consisting of our Area Dean, Canon Ian Gibson and the churchwardens.
- * The **Standing Committee** – consisting of the rector, churchwardens, treasurer, secretary and vice-chair.
- * The **Charitable Giving Review Group** – meets once a year to decide which charities the benefice will be making donations to that year.
- * Each parish can also have a **church committee** to discuss matters of particular interest to its church, rather than to the benefice as a whole.

Charity Commission details

Our full name is 'the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the United Benefice of South Petherton with the Seavingtons and the Lambrooks'. Our Charity Commission number is [1128940](#).

Building responsibilities

We are responsible for the maintenance of:

- * the church of St Peter and St Paul in South Petherton;
- * the church and churchyard of St Michael in Seavington St Michael;
- * the church and churchyard of St James' in East Lambrook, plus the schoolroom; and
- * the churchyard of Seavington St Mary.

Quinquennials

The dates of our last quinquennial inspections were:

East Lambrook: November 2016
Seavington St Michael: March 2018
South Petherton: December 2019

Listed buildings

East Lambrook church: Grade II*, and in a Conservation Area.
Seavington St Mary church: Grade II*
Seavington St Michael church: Grade II*
South Petherton church: Grade I, and in a Conservation Area.

About the Deanery

The Crewkerne Deanery, part of the Taunton Archdeaconry, comprises 20 parishes grouped into four multi-parish benefices. Although small, the chapter has been very active, meeting monthly across the Deanery, and has been very supportive of clergy and laity with a successful Deanery Synod.

Our neighbouring Deanery - Ilminster - is only slightly larger (33 parishes in six benefices) and so, at the time of writing, both deaneries are looking at merging to create one larger, but still personal and supportive, group, so that we can better pool, share and deploy the resources God has given us. The two deaneries have recently voted to unite; this is now in the process of being formalised.

The combined group is located in the far south of both the Diocese and Somerset, with one parish, Thorncombe, lying in Dorset. The total population is around 40,000, with around half living in Chard, Ilminster and South Petherton.

Deanery Synod meets three times a year around the Deanery; meetings are open to all.

Ham Hill, in the neighbouring parish of Stoke sub Hamdon.

Each Deanery in the Bath and Wells Diocese has produced a Mission Action Plan which forms the framework for our mission and outreach. Deanery oversight comes through the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group which comprises a small number of clergy and laity chaired jointly by the Area Dean and Lay Dean.

Crewkerne Deanery conducted a thorough review of parishes, benefices and clergy posts at the end of 2020, in response to the diocesan deployment plans. We believe that the South Petherton Benefice is currently properly resourced to meet the mission challenges of the future - although the full impact of the pandemic has yet to be assessed.



About the Diocese

Our Diocesan vision is:

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

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

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

The diocesan strategy is built around three priorities:

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

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

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

Finally....



Well done! - you've finally got to the end (we know it's a long read).

Having got this far, are you excited? Could you inspire us, motivate us, and be like a Mummy or Daddy to the school? Do you fancy being in the middle of life in this beautiful part of Somerset? If so, come and meet us!

The Flower Ladies at Seavington give us the last word. This rather cheerful (if slightly wonky) priest surprised the churchwardens during the dark days of the pandemic. We hope that it gives you a smile, and that you remember and pray for us, as we will do for you - in your search for the right next step in your ministry and in our search for our right rector.

Links - church & school

[Our benefice website](#)
(currently being refurbished)

[The Seavingtons Facebook page](#)

[South Petherton Infants and Pre-School](#)

Links - Parish Council

[Kingsbury Episcopi \(civil\) Parish website](#)
(includes the Lambrooks)

[The Seavingtons village website](#)

[South Petherton Parish Council website](#)

My children, our love should not just be words and talk;
it must be true love, which shows itself in action. *(1 John 3:18)*

