

Seven Sowers Benefice Profile 2026



Beercrocombe - Curry Mallet - Hatch Beauchamp
Orchard Portman - Staple Fitzpaine
Stoke St Mary (with Thurlbear) - West Hatch

Contents

- 01 Welcome**
- 02 Vision**
- 03 Children & Families Worker**
- 04 Benefice Administrative Assistant**
- 05 The Ministry Team**
- 06 Lay Worship & PCCs**
- 07 Round & About - The Benefice**
- 08 Seven Sowers Parishes**
- 09 Finances**
- 10 Services**
- 12 Music & Church Groups**
- 13 Links to Schools, Children & Families**
- 14 Messy Church**
- 15 Schools**
- 16 Other Activities for Children & Families**
- 17 Churches & Buildings**
- 18 Church Activities & Fundraising**
- 20 Areas of Development & Gaps in our Mission**
- 21 Diocesan Statement**
- 24 The Somerset South Deanery**
- 25 Appendix - Questionnaire Responses**
- 29 Appendix - Thoughts from Benefice Children**



Welcome

We offer a warm welcome from the Seven Sowers Benefice, comprising seven rural churches in beautiful countryside, with loyal congregations. We are committed to seeing God's work grow and develop, both within the church and wider community. We are keen to explore new ideas to strengthen the appeal of worship within the rural community and the diverse needs of our congregations.



St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine

Each of the churches in the Seven Sowers Benefice provides a focus for Christian worship and outreach in that community.

The Ministry Team, comprising an Assistant Curate, Lay Reader, Children & Families Worker and Administrative Assistant work closely together and with the Church Wardens across the Benefice. We offer a rich variety of worship across the Benefice with a ever growing and enthusiastic lay involvement.



Vision

Our Vision is for those in our communities to experience love, joy and fellowships through relationship with God and His Son. As Christians our purpose is to find ways to develop our own faith, whilst sharing our experiences with others, allowing his Kingdom to come.

Our logo shows our purpose to **grow** in faith as we **embrace** our communities, enabling God's work to **break through**.



We seek to further develop our care for God's wonderful creation in our beautiful rural benefice.

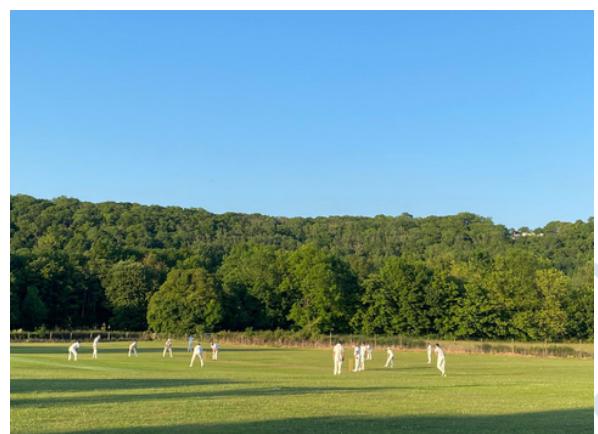
Who are we looking for?

In our new Rector we are looking for someone:

Who is able to share their faith with local people of all ages in our communities.



Who is able to seek out, encourage and utilise the talents and gifts of church members, bringing their own experiences to build on the work being done in the Benefice.



Who enjoys the richness and variety of village life.

Children & Families Worker

By employing a Children & Families Worker the Benefice is able to work closely with schools and families in the area, offering a variety activities both within the school setting and outside. The Children & Families Worker is employed for 20 hours a week.

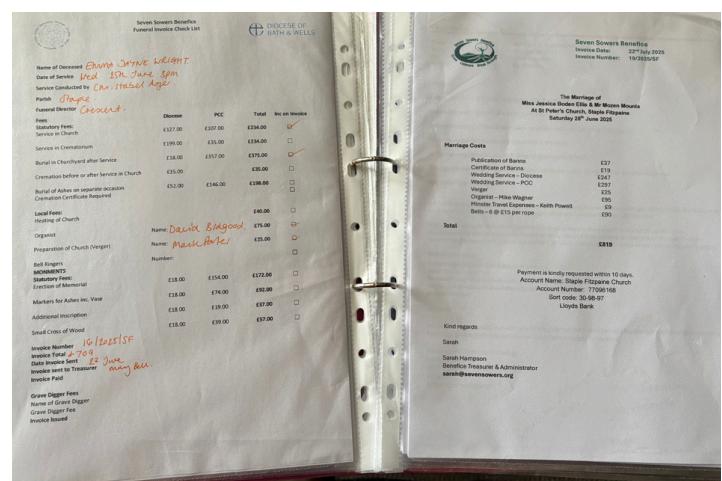


The Seven Sowers Charitable Trust

The Trust was formed in 2004 after the Benefice recognised the need for a centrally funded charity to which church members could donate to fund Benefice-wide projects. Since 2011 it has funded the role of the Children, Schools & Families Worker and remains the Trust's main project. The post is funded from a combination of PCCs, church members and other parishioners who give generously.

Benefice Administrative Assistant

The work of the Benefice Administrative Assistant ensures consistency and support across the Benefice, including the use of Social Media to encourage community engagement. The Assistant is employed for 5 hours a week.



The Ministry Team

We are blessed with a dedicated Ministry Team, the members of which include:



Revd Julie Kimber, Assistant Curate

“Hello! I’m Julie. I had a career as a Youth Justice Worker with SCC, studied Theology with the University of Exeter & Sarum College and I’m a Companion to the Society of St Francis. I love this verse ‘and now these three things remain, faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love.’ (1 Corinthians 13:13)”

Sue McKen, Lay Reader, Licenced in Autumn 2018

“I am a retired Physics Teacher, married with two grown-up children and three granddaughters. I am a Reader and Church Warden in the Benefice and enjoy working with local children in Hatch Beauchamp Primary School. I love mountain walking and sailing with family and friends.”



Holly Stevens, Children’s Schools & Families Worker (20 hours a week)

“I have the privilege of leading the children’s work across the benefice. I am an ex primary teacher, and I use these skills in my work with the schools. I love the variety of my role from Collective Worship to Open the Book and Messy church to Little Stars. My family and I have lived in Somerset for 10 years now, which has been an amazing change from Yorkshire. I am mummy to 2 little boys, which keeps me busy! But if I get five minutes to myself I love nothing more than doing something creative.”

Sarah Hampson, Benefice Administrative Assistant & Treasurer (5 hours a week)

“My role encompasses administrative tasks across the Benefice, maintaining A Church Near You and social media alongside monitoring and managing the central finances of the Benefice, including settling Ministry Team expenses and recovering those from Parish Treasurers. I am self-employed working as an Executive Assistant for various clients alongside the daily juggle of being a mum to two active Thurlbear schoolboys. I am also PCC Secretary for Stoke St Mary.”



Lay Worship Assistants

There is lay involvement across all the churches and several churches also have intercession leaders. Additional training for Lay volunteers has been provided through the 'Lay Worship Assistant Course'.



Mark Porter



Nicky Baxter



Alison Horsey

Church Wardens & PCCs

There are eight church wardens who work closely together and support the ministry team. All seven churches have fully-functioning PCCs.

The Benefice is blessed in that the relationship between the Church Wardens is one of mutual warmth, respect and support.

The Ministry Team, Churchwardens and PCCs work well together, collaborating together, supporting each other, sharing responsibilities and friendship. There are good relations between the Benefice, the Deanery and the Diocese with help and support available at all levels.



Safeguarding

The Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. Every church member should know safeguarding is the responsibility of us all, not just the Rector and Ministry Team. Information is displayed and discussed so that everyone can see how to go about reporting any concerns they may have. We have a Benefice Safeguarding Officer whose latest report is discussed at each PCC meeting. Each of the parishes is safeguarding compliant and their Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually by the respective PCC.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...defend the rights of the poor and needy
Proverbs 31 v 8a & 9b

Round & About

Stoke St Mary is ten minutes from Taunton Town Centre with easy access to the M5 and trains to Paddington (1 hour 45 minutes away). By car, Exeter is 30 miles to the south and Bristol 40 miles to the north. Both offer excellent airports, shopping, theatre, music and sporting attractions. Public transport across the rural parts of the Benefice is poor and residents are reliant on their own mode of transport.

For the outdoor enthusiast Exmoor National Park is 40 minutes away and Dartmoor about an hour. The Jurassic coastline of Dorset and the North Devon coast are both about 45 minutes away. As a rural environment there is the full gamut of countryside pursuits right on the doorstep.

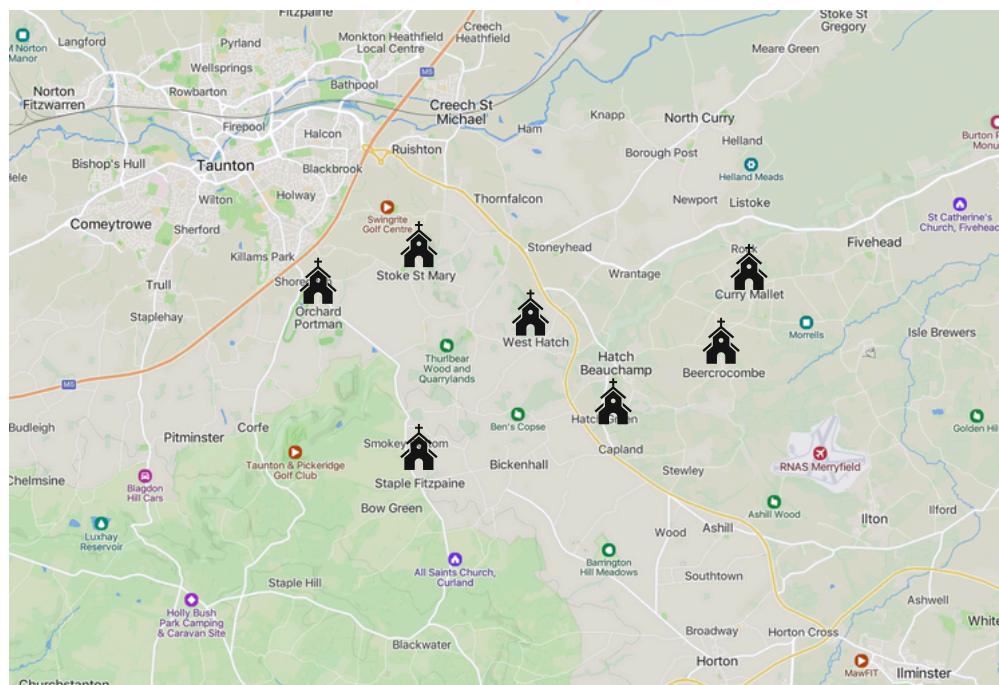
The Rectory in Stoke St Mary lies in the catchment area of Thurlbear C of E Primary School which is always well subscribed and was rated as Good by Ofsted in the most recent inspection held in May 2024. Taunton itself is well-served with educational establishments at both primary and secondary level as well as a dynamic college of further education.

As the county town, Taunton has a broad range of shops and local services including Somerset NHS FT (Musgrove Hospital). It is also home to the Somerset County Cricket Club and has thriving rugby, football and hockey clubs. The town has long associations with the military, witnessed to great effect in the County Museum. The Royal Marines 40 Commando is based north-west of the town.

Farming plays a vital role in shaping the local landscape.

The Benefice

Geographically, the Benefice covers 27 square miles and it is bisected by a major trunk road linking the M5 and the A303, with three parishes to the east and four to the west. Whilst the only viable means of transport is car or bike, the distances are not great. From the Rectory at Stoke St Mary there is no part of the Benefice which is more than fifteen minutes away (horses and tractors permitting!).



The Seven Sowers Parishes

Our eight ancient parish churches, seven of which are always open, provide places of peace in a troubled world.



For more information please visit the following:

www.sevensowers.org.uk

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/benefice/01-034CH/>

Beercrocombe (Pop. 152) www.beercrocombe.org.uk

A small community with no shop, pub or school. The church is the only public building in the village.

Curry Mallet (Pop. 350)

A Duchy of Cornwall village with three working farms. It has a village hall shared with Beercrocombe and a VC Church of England Primary School with 58 children on the roll.

Hatch Beauchamp (Pop. 626) www.hatchbeauchamp.com

An active village with a pub, hotel, a small school and village hall.

Orchard Portman (Pop. 60)

St Michael's is set in this small village on the edge of Taunton Racecourse and Polo Club.

Staple Fitzpaine (Pop. 536)

Staple Fitzpaine is located in the Blackdown Hills in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Mission Hut in the graveyard has recently been renovated and is available for the community to use.

Stoke St Mary (Pop 483) www.stokesmaryparish.gov.uk

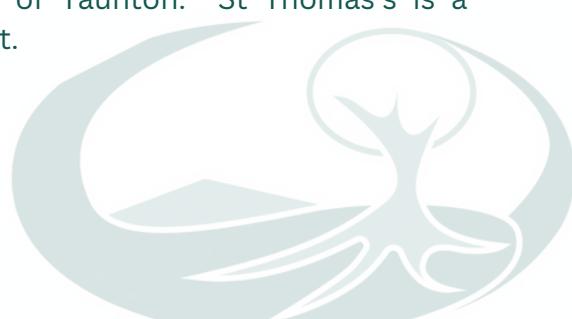
Stoke St Mary is a compact village within easy reach of Taunton (2 miles). There is a congregational chapel, an inn and a village hall with an excellent playpark adjacent.

West Hatch (Pop. 313) www.westhatchparish.gov.uk

A welcoming village mainly made up of three collections of houses; Slough Green and the centre of West Hatch are west of the A358, and Meare Green is on the east of the A358. The well used village hall is adjacent to the church.

Thurlbear

Thurlbear is a scattered village just under a mile from Stoke St Mary with a large church primary school (210 pupils), which draws children from the outskirts of Taunton. St Thomas's is a redundant church in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust.



Finances

The Benefice is financially stable and is currently preparing for the changes recently put in place by the Diocese. A major fundraising campaign was launched across the Benefice at the start of December.

Key Statistics in Summary 2025

	Electoral Roll	Members	Income £	Expenses £	Reserves £	Parish Share Paid?
Beercrocombe	18	8	8,637 (u) 1,586 (r)	9,547 (u)	98,718 (u) 12,095 (u)	✓
Curry Mallet	26	13	18,067 (u) 2,929 (r)	16,871 (u)	17,019 (r)	✓
Hatch Beauchamp	29	15	16,029 (u) 5,661 (r)	16,109 (u) 9,667 (r)	2,746 (u) 41,800 (r)	✓
Orchard Portman	20	11	8,615 (u) 11 (r)	10,430 (u) 120 (r)	1,823 (u) 10,261 (r)	✓
Staple Fitzpaine	22	18	25,934 (u) 1,735 (r)	22,688 (u) 784 (r)	27,287 (u) 1,705 (r)	✓
Stoke St Mary	30	14	19,140 (u) 5,054 (r)	21,373 (u) 8,519 (r)	17,180 (u) 23,647 (r)	✓
West Hatch	33	9	12,540 (u)	10,653 (u) 96 (r)	35,570 (u) 497 (r)	✓

Copies of the Annual Report & Accounts for each PCC can be found on the Seven Sowers Website www.sevensowers.org.uk/annual-reports/



The Pattern of Services

A typical monthly rota showing the range of services:

	Saturday 6 th Dec	Sunday 7 th Dec	Sunday 14 th Dec	Wednesday 17 th Dec	Saturday 20 th Dec	Sunday 21 st Dec	Wednesday 24 th Dec	Christmas Day	Sunday 28 th Dec	Sunday 4 th Jan
Beercrocombe		8.30am SH BCP Communion	10am AE Communion	6pm JK Carol Service				10am SH Family Communion		
Curry Mallet					6pm Carols in the Barn Rob Walrond/ JK	8.30am SH BCP Communion				10am AE Communion
Hatch Beauchamp						6pm SM Carol Service		10am SM Morning Worship		10am SM Morning Worship
Orchard Portman		4pm Team Crib Service						10am S. Hill Communion	10am JK Communion	
Staple Fitzpaine				7pm Team Carol Service		10am JK Communion	11.30pm JK Communion			10am TBC Morning Worship
Stoke St Mary		10am JK/ The Bishop Communion				6pm Team Carol Service	4pm HS Crib Service			
West Hatch			2pm JK Baptism 4pm HS Christingle							
Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall	3.30pm HS Messy Church									

Revd Susan Hounsell (SH), Revd Julie Kimber (JK), Revd Alan Ellacott (AE), Revd Stephen Tudgey,(ST), Bishop Michael, Revd Simon Hill, Archdeacon, Sue McKen, Lay Reader, (SM), Holly Stevens (HS), Alison Horsey (AH), '10am Communion' is in contemporary language from Common Worship, '8.30am Communion' and 'Evensong' are in traditional language from the older Book of Common Prayer; 'Morning Worship' is shorter and a more informal act of worship ;'Messy Church' uses crafts and other activities to involve children and their families.

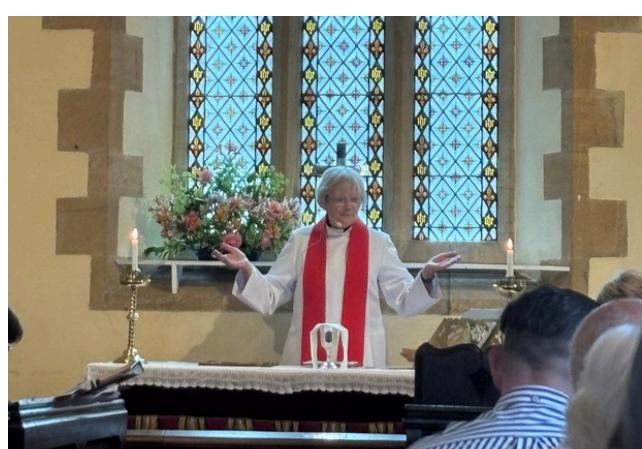
Church Services

The service pattern enables people to worship in their preferred way whilst offering new opportunities for the spreading of the gospel.

A pattern of church services across the Benefice has been adapted to take account of one ordained priest and a retired priest with PTO available for occasional services. This has been continued into the vacancy with the newly priested curate available for services and occasional offices.

The 10am Benefice Communion rotates around each Parish on a seven-week cycle, the only exceptions being Remembrance Sunday and Easter Sunday.

An 8.30am BCP Communion is held monthly at four churches at present.



A Lay Led 10am service of Morning Worship is held at Curry Mallet, Hatch Beauchamp and West Hatch monthly, and a Lay Led service is held regularly at Staple Fitzpaine which takes different formats.

Sung Evensong at 6pm happens monthly at Orchard Portman and occasionally at Staple Fitzpaine.

Messy Church is held on the first Saturday of each month at 3.30pm at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall or outside at West Hatch.

In January there is a Plough Service at Curry Mallet and the Royal Engineers Rorke's Drift service at Hatch Beauchamp.

Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services rotate on an eight-year cycle as do Easter and Christmas Day Communion Services.

The Easter outdoor Sunrise Service takes place each year in the Scout field, Slough Green.

Each church has a Harvest Celebration of some kind, usually Lay Led.



In November both Stoke St Mary and Staple Fitzpaine hold Remembrance Services in church. In Hatch Beauchamp the service is held at the War Memorial on the playing field, attended by many from Beercrocombe, Curry Mallet, Hatch Beauchamp and West Hatch including the local Scout Groups and families, and representatives from The Royal Engineers, Tidworth Barracks.



The Benefice Advent Sunday Service at 4pm is held in the redundant church at Thurlbear and attracts a good congregation, well wrapped up, holding candles and torches as there is no lighting or heating!

December sees a Carol Service in each parish, mostly in the churches but also in a cowshed in Curry Mallet, in addition to a Crib Service in Stoke St Mary, a Christingle in West Hatch and carol singing in the pubs in Hatch Beauchamp and Staple Fitzpaine.



Music

Music plays a vital part in worship with organs in all the churches along with sound systems in several. Our regular organists support the weekly benefice communions and lay services as far as possible. The singing groups and the Badger Street Band are encouraging people to join Sunday worship and other events.



Prayer Group

The Benefice is built on prayer with an online prayer circle, a fortnightly prayer meeting and home groups in addition to the weekly services.

Home & Groups

There are two home groups in the Benefice which meet regularly. Other groups which meet regularly include the Round Window Club (for the elderly in Curry Mallet) and the St Peter's Singers (Staple Fitzpaine). Children's Groups are covered in a later section.

Alpha Course

We aim to run the Alpha Course each year, usually hosted in someone's home within the Benefice.

The Lent Course

During Lent there is a five-week course held on a Wednesday morning followed by a light lunch. The course has taken a variety of themes for discussion over the past few years including 'Science & Faith', the 'Bible Course' and 'The Heart's Time' book of poems by Janet Morely. A group of 15 people gather in discussions with enthusiasm and enjoy the fellowship and food.

The Men's Group

The Men's Group meet on the second Monday evening of each month in one of the village pubs. The aim is to explore some current issues or sometimes a pre-prepared topic in convivial company and a relaxed atmosphere.



Links to Schools, Children & Families

Integrational Worship Services

We have families in church for **Baptisms** and '**Thanksgivings for a Child**' and we encourage families to have these in the regular Sunday morning worship service so church members and family members can interact. Alongside the minister taking the service the Children's Worker plays a vital role at Baptisms, leading the story and prayers so they are interactive and sensory.

Christmas Services for Families



The **Christingle Service** at West Hatch attracts between 80 and 110 and the **Christmas Eve Crib Service** at Stoke St Mary has, for at least 30 years, attracted a full house of around 130.



Curry Mallet has recently held **Carols in the Barn** - in a large, modern cattle shed on the farm next to the Church. Around 150 people attended in 2023 rising to over 200 in 2024.



Messy Church

We have a thriving Messy Church meeting monthly on a Saturday afternoon, usually in Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall, but importantly going 'on tour' twice a year, e.g. Spring and Harvest, when we use the natural beauty and wonder of our surroundings, often in St Andrew's Church Field using the field, the church and the facilities of the village hall.



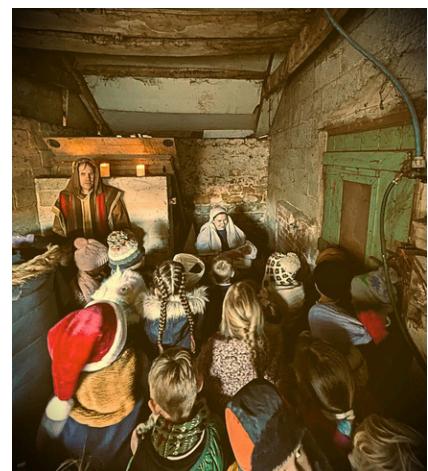
Schools

We are blessed with three primary schools in the Benefice:

- Curry Mallet (58 pupils, VC)
- Hatch Beauchamp (31 pupils, VC)
- Thurlbear, just outside Stoke St Mary (210 pupils, VA)



- The **Open the Book Team** goes into all 3 of our schools almost every Tuesday during term time, presenting a bible story, reflection, prayer and often a song as well to the staff and children.
- The Ministry Team leads **Collective Worship** in all 3 schools every fortnight.
- **Experience Days.** Once a year the Children's Worker, assisted by volunteers leads a day at Thurlbear School and half days at Curry Mallet and Hatch Beauchamp, with a particular focus or theme.
- **Festival Services.** A member of the Ministry Team attends and often takes part in the Schools' Festival Services (Christmas, Easter and Harvest).
- **Diocese Leavers Day Celebration Service** - organised by the Diocese for Year 6 pupils including those at our schools. Held in Taunton Minster our Children's Worker is on the planning and leadership team for this all day event which aims to help Year 6 students prepare for their journey onto secondary school. The Benefice also gifts each of our Year 6 leavers with a bible.
- **School Governing Bodies** - the Rector and Ministry Team have a good relationship with our schools and we support governors where we can e.g. SIAMS inspections. The Rector is welcome at Governors Meetings and has the option of joining one or more governing bodies. Sue Mcken, Reader, is a Foundation Governor at Hatch Beauchamp Primary School.
- **Journey to Bethlehem.** Organised in 2023, 2024 and 2025 by volunteers from our Open the Book Team, saw parts of a local farm transformed into areas of the Nativity Story. Groups of Key Stage 1 children embarked on a Journey to Bethlehem starting with the shepherds and finishing in the stable with the 'real' baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
- The **School Choir**, Thurlbear routinely participate in services across the Benefice such as Advent and Christingle.



Church led events held at the school, open to the school and public:

- **Tea Time at Thurlbear School** (TT@T) a monthly, hour long coffee morning hosted by the Children's Worker at the school where families can come along and catch up with each other.
- **Little Stars** in Curry Mallet a monthly toddler group run and resourced by the Benefice.

Other Activities for Children & Families

Annual Holiday Club

The Children's Worker, assisted by our volunteers, organises and leads an annual Holiday Club for primary aged children, taking place over two days in one of the Village Halls. These have a biblical theme and are very popular, with around 20 children attending.



Christmas Trail

Elements of the Christmas Story are stationed in 6 of the 7 churches throughout December with displays and activities for all ages to engage with and help them gain a better insight into those events from 2000 years ago.



St Peter's Festive Craft Sessions Easter, Mothering Sunday & Christmas

A very popular morning or afternoon led by gifted volunteers, where all ages come into the church to create a festive church decoration.



Notes on the Churches & Buildings

The only buildings under the management of the PCCs are the seven churches plus the churchyard at Thurlbear. All of the churches are listed, being either Grade 1 or 2*. The Mission Hut at Staple Fitzpaine has recently been renovated by a Church Warden and now provides a useful space for a wide range of activities accessible to anyone across the Benefice.

Quinquennial Inspections dates:



2025

Staple Fitzpaine

2026

West Hatch

2027

Hatch Beauchamp
Orchard Portman

2028

Beercrocombe
Curry Mallet

2029

Stoke St Mary.

There are no major works outstanding from the previous Quinquennial which will not be addressed before the next inspection is held.

Most of the churches have undergone major works of repair or re-ordering in recent years but all the costs of these works have been met and there is no overhang of expenditure for future periods.

The Rectory



The Rectory lies in the heart of the village of Stoke St Mary. It is a detached and spacious five bedroom family home built in 2004. It comprises a large entrance hallway, cloakroom, kitchen, utility room, dining room, office, study, sitting room, large walk-in storage cupboard, five bedrooms (of which two are ensuite), dressing room and family bathroom.

The property benefits from oil-fired central heating, ample driveway parking with double garaging, an enclosed rear garden and Broadband connection over 30Mbps.



Church Activities & Fundraising

There is a wealth of activities outside worship engaged in by the seven churches - social, fundraising, outreach - and typical of what one would expect in country parishes; plant sales, flower shows, scarecrow competitions, bazaars, carol singing, concerts and so on.



Clockwise from top left:
Festive Lunch (Neroche), Somerset Day (Stoke St Mary), Wassail (Stoke St Mary), Neroche Lunch

The Hub @ Hatch & Pop Up Cafe at St Peter's

Popular weekly coffee morning are held at both Hatch Beauchamp and Staple Fitzpaine with both run entirely by volunteers. They provide an opportunity for members of the community to gather.



The Parish Magazine

PARISH MAGAZINE

for the Seven Sowers Benefice
www.sevensowers.org.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/SevenSowersBenefice>



October 2025

The Magazine for the Communities of Beercrocombe,
Curn: Mallet, Hatch Beauchamp,
Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine,
Stoke St Mary with Thubbear and West Hatch

Priced £1.30 £8 by subscription (12 issues)

Each month 750 copies of a 72-page Parish Magazine are printed and distributed. The magazine covers the seven communities that make up the Benefice and is a major source of information on both church and village events and services.

Letters and articles from church members help make this an excellent source of outreach, reaching into homes and community spaces in addition to the churches.

Local people feel an allegiance to their local parish church even though they may only visit occasionally.



Areas of Development & Gaps in our Mission

Although the Benefice has good relationships with young families and older people, there is little engagement with people between 12 and 40 years of age. This is an area that we need to address imaginatively, exploring their needs and what the church can offer and support.

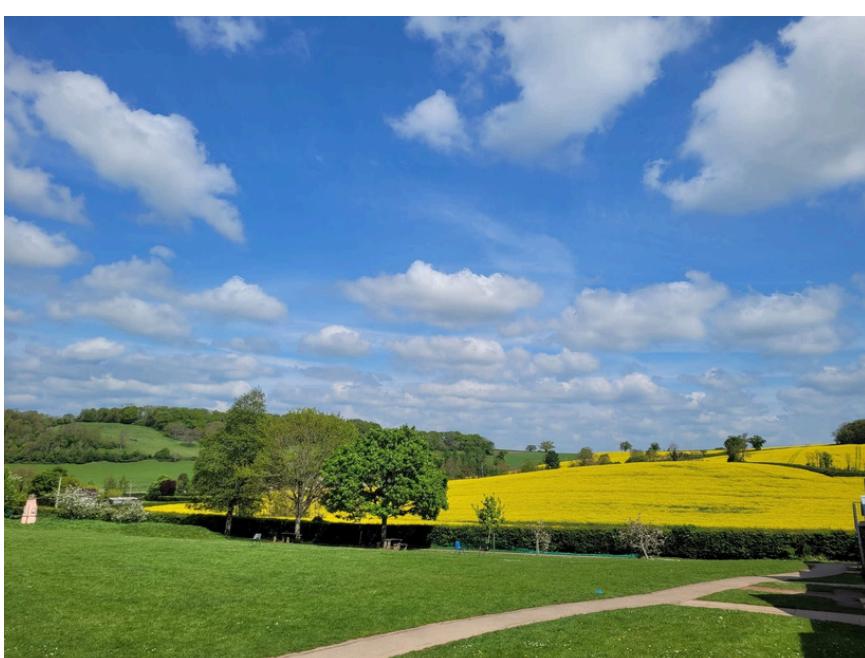
Encouraging involvement with the early retired is an area not fully explored.

We need to develop the green agenda and work towards eco church status with at least one church. There is little scope to reduce our carbon footprint at present without investigation and investment.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find church wardens, secretaries and treasurers for each church and other models will need to be developed in the future.



Recently refurbished Mission Hut in St Peter's Churchyard, Staple Fitzpaine



Seven Sowers Countryside

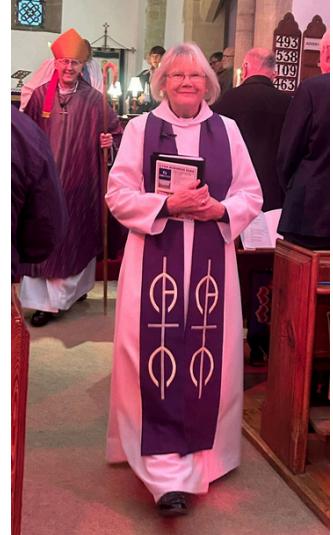
Diocesan Statement

Our Vision for Growth & Transformation

Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Rector of the Seven Sowers Benefice might be right for you. In order to help your prayerful discernment, we want to share a bit about our diocesan vision, within which we hope your own ministry might flourish.

Appointing a priest incumbent is amongst the most significant decisions that any benefice makes. When appointments work out well, they contribute significantly to parishes flourishing and growing in a host of different ways – in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities and in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church. Such flourishing is not, of course, all down to the person appointed as priest. It depends first and foremost upon God. It also depends upon everyone in a benefice being willing and able to contribute their unique gifts, skills, resources and abilities: working alongside their priest and sharing in the ministry of the benefice.



The flourishing and growth of churches always needs attention and it is encouraging to see churches around our diocese developing approaches that respond to the opportunities and challenges in their local context and enable growth to happen.

A vision for growth and transformation

Our diocesan context, described above, has convinced us that for our next season at least, our aim across all our parishes needs to be growing our churches, within and beyond our church buildings, in both numbers and depth of faith, so that we can better work for the transforming of our communities and the life of God's Kingdom amongst us.

Shared Priorities

To help us pursue this aim, and following consultation across the diocese in 2023, we are inviting all parishes to focus on four particular areas of ministry together. It is important for clergy considering working in our diocese to know what these priorities are, even though what they look like in practice will vary in each place.

- **To value and cherish the people and resources we already have**

We aim to ensure each person is well-supported and equipped as a follower of Jesus Christ and for any ministries they may feel called to undertake, within the local church and wider community. We are committed to supporting the well-being of all our leaders and church officers, both lay and ordained. We have a fully funded clergy well-being service, the offer of peer support groups, and an excellent team of Diocesan support staff fully focused on supporting our parishes, chaplaincies and schools.



- **To develop new Christian worshipping communities**

Whether it be new forms of worship in a wide variety of settings and times, church revitalisations or church plants, we long to see the good news of Jesus connect with the people in our communities that our traditional offerings struggle to reach.

- **To share in ministry and leadership**

We are committed to the New Testament vision of the church as a vibrant body of people all using their God-given gifts. We are committed to a model of shared local ministry: raising up and equipping lay and ordained leaders able to share together in leading the church and serving God's world.

- **To deepen and grow faith**

This is foundational to all we do. We long to see people of all ages and backgrounds, but perhaps especially children, young people and young adults, having more opportunities to discover, explore and grow in faith.

The outcome we are looking for



When he talks about his own ministry in 1 Corinthians, Paul captures the dynamic we are seeking to achieve. "I planted," he says, "Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Cor 3: 6). We know that our churches will only flourish and grow as a result of God's action among us – it is God who gives the growth.

But Paul is also clear that we have a part to play too – in watering and planting, in doing the things that enable the conditions for God's growth to be supported. So, covered by prayer, our confident hope is that if we are intentional in seeking God's guidance in planning and supporting growth, then God will honour that to see his people flourish and thrive – in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities, in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church and in transforming communities locally and beyond.

Local shaping and diocesan support

There can't be any 'one size fits' all approach to turning the priorities outlined above into action. They always need to be adapted to local circumstances, opportunities and needs. The task of our diocesan support services is to get behind all that local benefices are doing and apart from their general support, there is specific support for exploring how to grow new Christian communities, how to discern and equip a growing range of ministries in your context and how to work well with children and young people. All of these areas of support are grounded in exploring what it means to live out our faith.



What implications does this love have for the appointment of clergy?

It is important for us all to appoint clergy to benefices who are ready, willing and able to pray for and share in the vision we have for the flourishing and growth of churches and Christian life in our diocese. We want to create an environment that could be described as high challenge, high support. This means appointing clergy who will not only value all that already exists but will be eager to work with others to build on and develop it. It means appointing clergy who are committed to learning, being creative, and to starting with the gifts God has given to them, their benefice and the wider community. We are therefore looking to appoint candidates who will

- be committed to praying and intentionally seeking the growth and flourishing of the benefices in their care
- relish and expect to work in an environment that is high challenge, high support
- work joyfully and collaboratively with those who share with them locally in ministry and leadership, with their congregations and with others in their locality, to identify ways to grow and develop their churches with the grain of local priorities, resources, skills and passions and
- enjoy working in partnership with deanery and diocesan colleagues.



We hope this might be you! We hope that you'd like to join us on the adventure and course we've set for our next ten years. We're praying that God will send us the right labourers for the harvest that God has set before us. Could this be you?

+ Michael Bath & Wells.

Sue Hill

Bishop of Bath & Wells

Archdeacon of Taunton



The Somerset South Deanery

Somerset South is a relatively new deanery, which was formed in November 2021 when Ilminster and Crewkerne deaneries merged. We are geographically large – stretching from Haselbury Plucknett in the east to Churchinford in the west, Tatworth in the south to Stoke St Mary in the north. We have great transport links with the M5 and the A303, and mainline train-stations nearby in Taunton and at Crewkerne. South Somerset is a beautiful part of the world, with fantastic countryside walks and close enough to the south coast to nip out for an evening swim. People still tend to have lived in one place for generations, but whilst our communities are tight knit, they are also welcoming of newcomers. The church remains an important part of the lives of many of our towns and villages.

We're a diverse deanery made of 55 churches, with many small rural communities but also sizeable and growing towns like Ilminster, Crewkerne and Chard. As churches and as a Chapter we represent a breadth of church traditions, but we work together with generosity and warmth. As a deanery we hope to be a learning community, where ideas are shared and where we encourage experimentation and imagination, as together we seek to make Christ known to this generation.

Shared local ministry is something we are wholeheartedly committed to. We're the first deanery in the diocese to have in place a formally recognised local ministry team, and equipping and enabling all God's people to grow in their discipleship is at the heart of what we're about. We aim to model this at all levels in the deanery.

If you've got any questions about this exciting role, please do get in touch. It has huge potential, and we know that you will be working with people on the ground who are equally excited about this new adventure. You'll also be working with deanery colleagues who will support you and pray for you. We look forward to exploring this post with you further and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you in your discernment.

Rev'd Philip Albrow and Alison Cruickshank
Area and Lay Dean

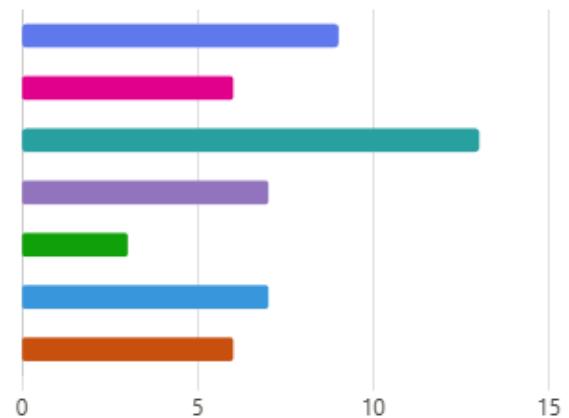


Appendix

Church Members Questionnaire Responses

1. Which Parish are you associated?

Beecrocombe	9
Curry Mallet	6
Hatch Beauchamp	13
Orchard Portman	7
Staple Fitzpaine	3
Stoke St Mary	7
West Hatch	6



2. Thinking about The Seven Sowers Benefice, please score each of these qualities from 1-4, with 1 being MOST needed in the new Rector.

A Rector who is gifted in....

● 1 Most important ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 Least Important

Communicating the good news of the gospel



Teaching the essentials of our faith, making it relevant to today



Inspiring and managing a team



Building teams and equipping us for all service of different sorts in the Benefice



Being open to change



Identifying gifts and stretching our capabilities



Relating well to individuals and families at a personal level



Engagement with schools and children



Encouraging stronger links between churches in the Benefice



Widening our horizons to look beyond the Benefice and Diocese



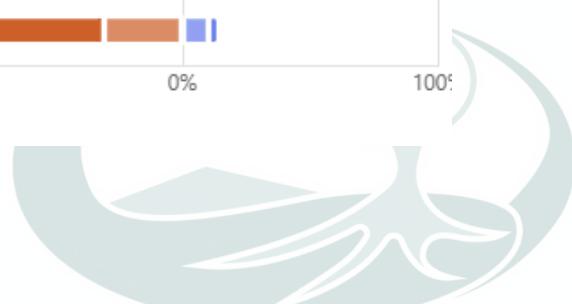
Demonstrating Godly wisdom and discernment



Building strong links with the local communities



100% 0% 100%



3. If you regard any other gifts/qualities/strengths as essential please give more detail here.

[More details](#)

19
Responses

5 respondents (26%) answered parish for this question.

parish benefit
services
minutes max
multi parish
regular churchgoer
supporter of the parish

parish church
rector

parish
parish

schools - People

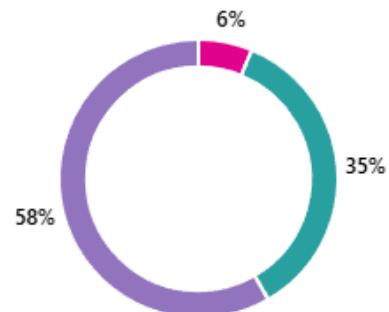
sense of humour
important

local community
rural parish
sort
People to People
good
experience as a vicar
churches have their own identity

male priest

4. It would be helpful to our understanding of the responses to this survey if you would please show which age group you are in.

● 16-25	0
● 26-45	3
● 46-65	17
● 66+	28

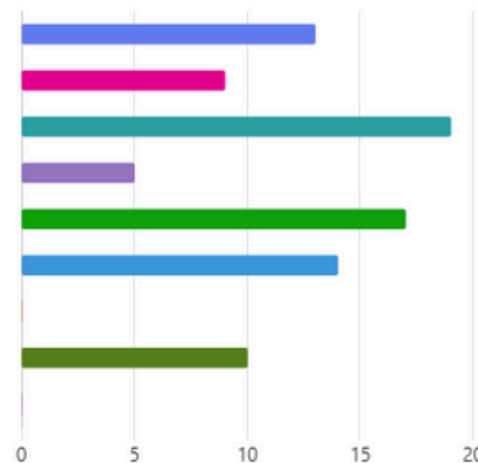


Vision Questionnaire Responses

1. With which Parish are you associated?

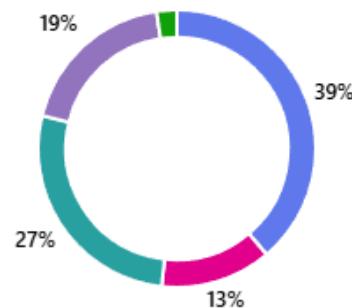
[More details](#)

● Beercrocombe	13
● Curry Mallet	9
● Hatch Beauchamp	19
● Orchard Portman	5
● Staple Fitzpaine	17
● Stoke St Mary	14
● Thurlbear	0
● West Hatch	10
● Other	0



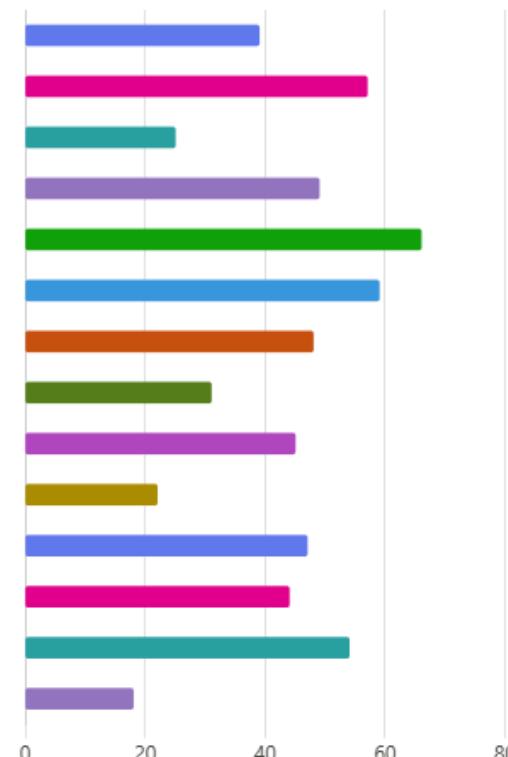
2. How often do you attend services at a church in the Benefice?

● Once a month	33
● Less than once a month	11
● At Festivals	23
● Rarely	16
● Messy Church	2



3. Please tick all the things that you personally value most about your parish church or might encourage you to get more involved with it

● Services provide spiritual support	39
● A peaceful, spiritual place for quiet contemplation and prayer	57
● Provides practical help where needed	25
● Promotes Christian Values	49
● Part of our culture and heritage	66
● A beautiful historic building	59
● A focus for village events	48
● Music	31
● Provides a sense of stability in a changing world	45
● Offers opportunities to explore issues of faith	22
● Promotes a sense of belonging	47
● Friends and family fellowship	44
● A warm welcome	54
● Other	18



4. In what ways do you think your church could better serve the village community?

[More details](#)

32

Responses

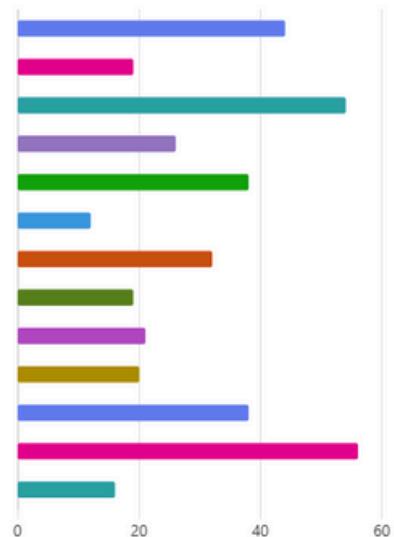
13 respondents (41%) answered church for this question.

local communities quieter churches isolated church
messy church people local service
church attendance community parish churches
churches should have a plan

church hierarchy
works village events
events views
coffee mornings carol service
church is already very involved

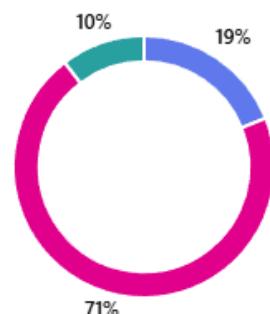
5. Have you ever had involvement with your parish church in any way? Please tick all that apply.

● Sunday Worship	44
● Sides Person	19
● Attendance at fund raising events	54
● Flower arranging	26
● Reading	38
● Bell ringing	12
● Cleaning	32
● Organising fund raising	19
● Choir member	21
● Maintenance	20
● Churchyard tidy-up	38
● Attended a funeral, wedding or baptism	56
● Other	16



6. Would you like to be more involved? If yes please do contact a churchwarden, details of which are in the Parish Magazine.

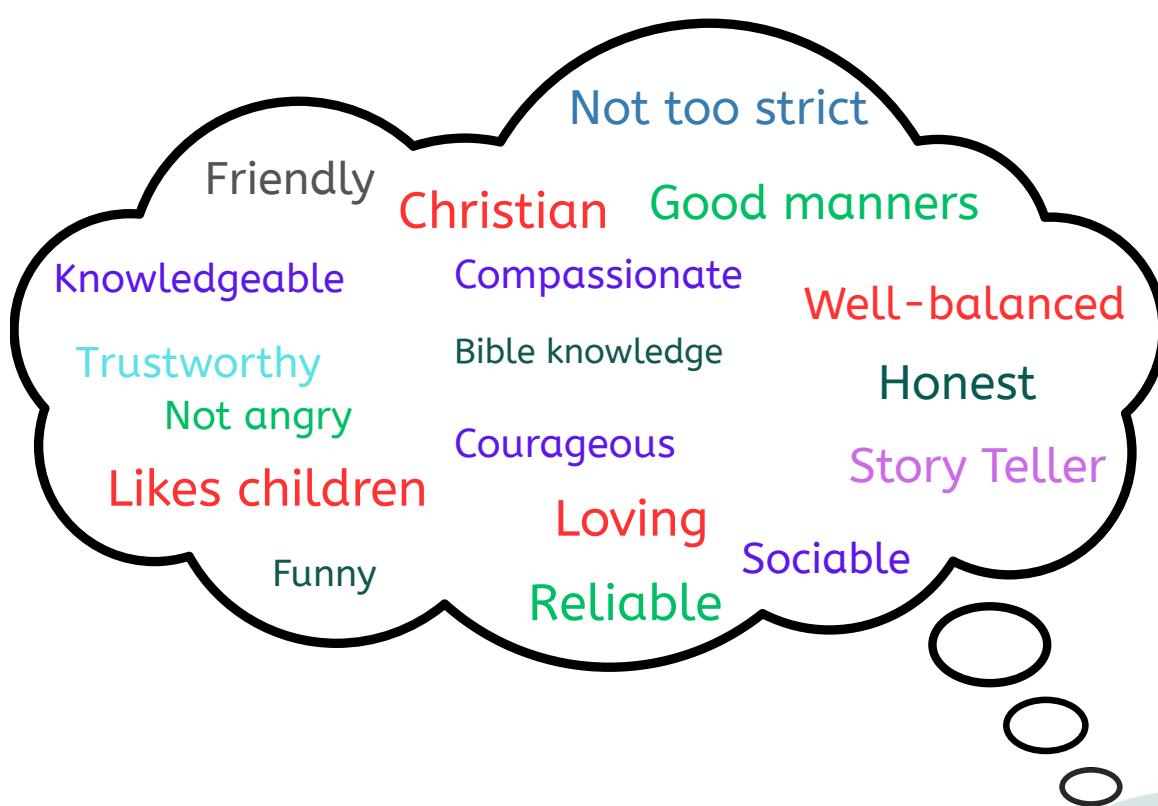
● Yes	11
● No	41
● I would like to find out more	6



Thoughts from Children in our Benefice Schools



What do you think a Rector does?



What qualities & skills should the Rector have?

How can the new Rector make Church better for Children?

- Bell ringing lessons
- Competitions e.g. colouring and then display in church
- Activities for children/ children's church
- Kid friendly
- Children involved in service - chance to do readings
- Choir for children to be involved
- Better communication of what is on for children
- Less boring - too much sitting!

A Recipe to Make a New Rector



A Pinch of Politeness
A Dash of Smiles
A Large Spoonful of Respect
A lot of Happiness
A Bucket of Compassion
A Large Tablespoon of Trust



A Dash of Uniqueness
A Dollop of Kindness
A Huge Heap of Humour
A Tablespoon of Creativity
A Smiling Face

Interview Questions for our new Rector



What do you like?
Do you have any hobbies?
What is your favourite Bible story?
What do you like about coming into schools?
How would you strengthen the church profile in the community?
What are your recent experiences in school?



**Thank you for reading
our Benefice Profile**