

# The United Benefice of South Petherton with the Seavingtons and the Lambrooks



Benefice Profile  
March 2025



# Welcome

We are a united benefice with a single PCC, located in the beautiful countryside 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 heart for work with people of all ages, and who can help us develop spiritual gifts for service.

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We strive for:  
Growth by warmth of fellowship  
Growth by community outreach  
Growth as a family with people of all ages coming to faith

# Overview

In five years, we hope and pray our benefice will have maintained what it does well but nonetheless changed. We pray that it will be **growing spiritually**, guided by scripture and supported by our **fellowship** with each other. We hope that it will be **closer as a benefice**, developing a culture of **sharing**, while recognizing the unique qualities and traditions of each church. It is calling out to have a successful and growing mission which is inclusive of all, from **children, young people and families**, through all the stages and conditions of life to the **elderly**. Traditionally our churches have been at the **heart of our villages** and the lives of their people; we are called to carry that light in new times, **pro-actively exemplifying God's love to all** and **growing the Kingdom** in our communities.

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## What we can offer:

- Three **thriving** and very **distinct** village communities with equally distinct churches.
- Faithful and regular congregations.
- A dedicated ministry team: churchwardens, committed retired clergy, lay worship leaders, lay pioneer in training, volunteer verger, and many other committed volunteers.
- Nearly full complement of wardens and officers in a **united benefice PCC**.
- A range of flexible and **useful spaces** in or near our churches.
- A self-employed Benefice Administrator.
- A well-appointed rectory, ideal as a family home.

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## What we are looking for in a new rector:

- Faithful in **prayer** and **commitment** to ministry among us, and who will value and cherish the people and resources we already have.
- Able and willing to lead **worship** across a **range of styles**.
- **Visible** presence in the three **churches, schools, and communities**.
- Confident to develop our work with people of all ages from the **young to old**.
- **Collaborative** and prepared to call on others to help and lead.
- A **confident manager of change** who will lead us to explore **new** ways of being church whilst valuing **traditional** patterns.
- Committed to **pastoral care** and who will draw others into this ministry.
- Able to preach and teach; **rooted in scripture** and showing us how our faith is relevant today.
- **Approachable** and **open**, with a sense of humour and a lightness of touch.
- Has **good self-discipline** in managing the complexities of ministry and the boundaries between public and personal life.

# What we are looking for

## Our Benefice Discernment Workshop

On what turned out to be one of the coldest days of the year, we still managed to bring together over 60 members of our parish communities to discern what mattered to us, what we are looking for, and what we have to offer, as a benefice. We captured a lot of thoughts, hopes, and challenges that day, and the list below is a summary of the key qualities and gifts that we hope to find in our new rector.

### We need the leadership and care of a priest who is:

- An experienced, spiritual leader and team builder, able to build on the strengths and abilities of others, encouraging and enabling members of the congregation to offer up their ideas, spiritual gifts, and time to benefit our communities.
- Comfortable and respectful with a wide range of churchmanship and worship styles, enabling the *new*, and treasuring the *old*.
- Willing to be a visible figure in all three churches and communities that make up the parish.
- Willing and able to be involved in our CofE Infant and Junior Schools.
- Willing and able to further develop our work with families, children and young people, and beyond.
- Prayerful, discerning, sensitive, and pro-active to other's needs, living the Word.
- Compassionate, a good listener and communicator, and willing to do home visits.
- Committed to the provision of pastoral care in our benefice, seeking to enable and encourage others into this ministry.
- A confident manager of change who will lead us to explore new ways of being church whilst valuing traditional patterns.
- Able to preach and teach, rooted in scripture and showing us how our faith is relevant today.
- Can relate to people of all ages and backgrounds, including those with no faith or of other faiths, embracing difference, and integrating themselves into our wider community.
- Able to manage the complexities of ministry and the boundaries between public and personal life but is not afraid to ask for help.



# What we can offer you

As part of our discernment workshop, we identified a number of things that we feel are strengths we can offer our new rector:

- Faithful and regular congregations in each of our three lively churches.
- Support from our committed retired clergy, lay worship leaders, lay pioneer in training, volunteer verger, and benefice administrator, who is herself an ordinand!
- A very nearly full complement of wardens (5 out of 6!) and officers in a united benefice PCC that meets regularly and works together.
- A range of flexible and useful spaces throughout the benefice, in or near our churches, and used for a variety of religious and community events.
- Established groups, engaged within and beyond the church.
- Established Cloud infrastructure for the management and operation of the benefice.
- A well-appointed rectory, ideal as a family home. See page 23 for more details.

In addition, we would like to offer you:

- The expectation that days off and leave really are a time for your relaxation and refreshment.
- Respect for the Rectory as your home as well as a place for work.
- Dedicated time for study and personal development.
- Practical help (if wanted) with things like cutting the grass at the rectory.
- A commitment to explore the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing with you.
- Full reimbursement of expenses.
- Prayerful loving support, for both you and your family.

Here are a few more things that we have established in the benefice in how we love and serve the community:

Nur-chur Yurt	EcoChurch Silver Award	Hosting of community events
Open House	Communion Prayer Ministry	Coffee mornings
Foodshare	School "Open the Book"	Prayer and Prayer Tree
Pastoral visits	Christmas Shoebox	Village "Welcome Pack"
Home communion	M.U. Baptism Support	Always-open churches

# Our vacancy prayer

Our vacancy prayer was written in December 2024, when we started seeking our new rector.

We pray it regularly in each of our churches and include it in our Connected weekly news sheet.

O God, you are constant in love and faithfulness; encourage us and strengthen us in this time of change; open our hearts to your Word and your ways.

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you and be light to the world; draw us deeper into fellowship with one another; keep us faithful in our worship and our witness; unite us in common purpose to serve you.

Holy Spirit, you pour out your gifts upon the church; move among us and draw to our villages and communities a priest who will lead us and inspire us to build the Kingdom; prepare our hearts and minds to work with them; give us all the gift of discernment.

So, may we journey on, embracing the future, to the glory of God, in the company of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit.

*Amen*



# About the benefice

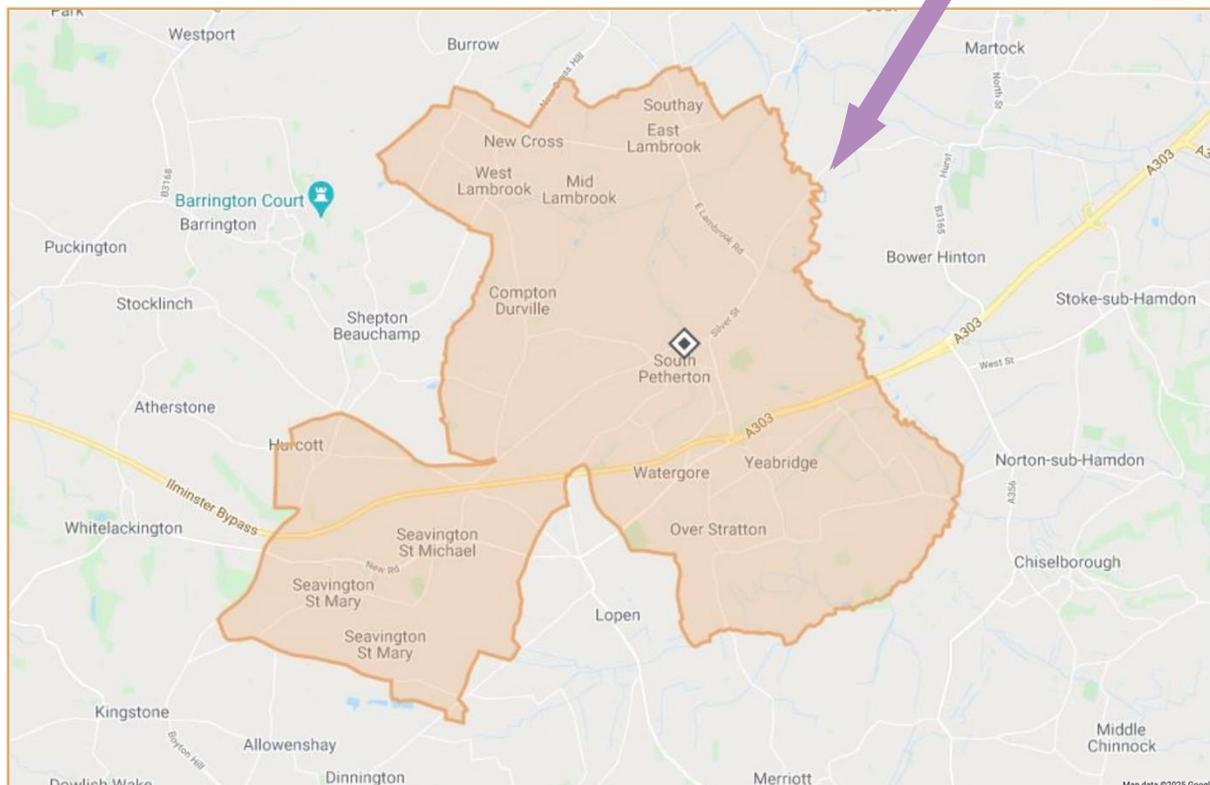
## Where we are

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

South Petherton, once a market town, now a large village, is the local centre. The hamlet of Compton Durville is to the west. There is a small village at Over Stratton, across the A303, with smaller settlements at Watergore, Lower Stratton, and the wilds of Yeabridge.

To the south, Seavington St Michael and Seavington St Mary, once separate villages each with its own church, are now one parish.

The Lambrooks are to the north. East Lambrook, where the church is, is a small village; West Lambrook is even smaller, and Mid Lambrook is a hamlet.



# 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 St Peter & St Paul's, South Petherton, and the excellent Seavington Community Café.

## What we do as a benefice

Our churches are the natural focus of village life at important times and seasons – Christmas, Harvest, Remembrance Day, etc. Our secular and fundraising events (Folkfest, flower festivals, fairs, 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.

## Pastoral care

Pastoral care is an important aspect of living our faith in each of our communities. A small group supplements pastoral care given by clergy and congregants for one another, including home visits for those no longer able to get to services. This includes some in Burnworthy House Care Home in South Petherton.

Additionally, a small team offers personal prayer during communion in two services each month at St Peter & St Paul's Church

## Benefice administrator

Since our last rector left, our self-employed administrator, who works mostly from home, has reduced her hours from 15 p.w. to 'as needed'.

Our administrator collates our Benefice's monthly parish magazine which we distribute widely. Many readers do not come to church, and so it is a vehicle to send information about events and messages of welcome and encouragements to faith.



# About the benefice

## How many of us are there?

As of May 2024, there are 156 on the Electoral Roll, with the number of worshippers (Benefice Share calculation May 2024) at 112.

## Our commitment to a greener future

Members of Greener Futures embrace the calling *to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*. The group lobbies the PCC, works in and around St Peter & St Paul's Church and informs the parish through services, articles and events. St Peter and St Paul's Church has attained the **EcoChurch Silver award** with the PCC formally acknowledging a commitment to Net Zero by 2030.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding is very important in the benefice. The PCC is very supportive in maintaining its high profile and ensuring the churches of our benefice are safe places to be. Safeguarding Sunday has been marked across the benefice for the last two years, which has helped maintain the focus and increase the congregation's awareness of the fact that safeguarding is everyone's business. We have a dedicated safeguarding email and telephone, and all the safeguarding information is publicised widely.

We look for a new rector for whom safeguarding is a priority and who appreciates its importance in all parts of our benefice, within and outside the walls of our church.

## Living & Loving in Faith

Our previous rector was in support of blessing of those in a same-sex relationship, and as a PCC we supported this decision, although this never actually arose in practice.

Sensitivity to people's beliefs and showing God's love is important to us, and we look forward to exploring this issue with our new rector.

## Charities

We fundraise and often share the proceeds with charities, and partner with South Petherton Foodshare by hosting the store of donated and purchased food and providing the access point for those needing to use it. People drop off stamps, which a church member then sends off for the Children's Society.

We partner with the Community Council for Somerset, hosting the South Petherton Carers Group. The carers benefit from the free hospitality of our monthly Open House, with optional donations to a charity. These donations form part of the church's charitable giving and last year raised close to £1300.

Our toilet is twinned with one in Uganda and the Rectory toilet is also Twinned. Our congregation's Christian Aid week work involves Lent Lunches, delivering to every house in the parish and the local coordinator is a church member. One year we had a specific Christian Aid week service, and two church members did the Christian Aid Challenge to walk 300,000 steps.

Each year we participate in the Christmas shoebox appeal, with members of our communities giving generously and preparing these boxes for children in less privileged countries.

We also had particularly close links with a charity called Mpongwe's People, which helped an orphan support project and the Mission Hospital at Mpongwe, Zambia, raising several thousand pounds for them. A proportion of our benefice income provides small grants to a number of charities each year.

# Patterns of worship

Church	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday
St James East Lambrook	18.00 Evensong and Holy Communion (BCP)	11.30 Matins	18.00 Evensong and Holy Communion (BCP)	11.30 Holy Communion (BCP)
St Michael Seavington	11.15 Café Church in community café	10.30 Sung Eucharist (CW)	10.30 All Age Communion (CW)	10.30 Holy Communion (BCP)
St Peter & St Paul South Petherton	8.00 Holy Communion (BCP)  9.30 Holy Communion (CW)	8.00 Holy Communion (BCP)  10.30 Café church	8.00 Holy Communion (BCP)  9.30 Holy Communion (CW)	8.00 Holy Communion (BCP)  9.30 Family Communion (CW)  17.00 Celtic worship

Mid-week Communion/Morning Prayer is also held at St Peter & St Paul's at 10am on Wednesdays.



# The Lambrooks

The Lambrooks comprise two villages and a hamlet, with a total population of about 220. 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

At St James's we have a service every Sunday, with the addition of mid-week Compline during Lent. All our services are from the Book of Common Prayer. This is by choice, and people from our villages within and outside the parish

often attend St. James's because they prefer the BCP services. The monthly Matins service is currently lay-led. Lent bible studies have been held in the past.

The congregation can number between 8 and 18, with a reasonable proportion of the village population (even those who do not attend church) still offering their support in terms of flower arranging, key-holding, and fundraising.

## 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 on Christmas Eve.

The Christmas Fair held in the Schoolroom is a major fundraising community event, and the benefice's annual Gift Day appeal is well supported in the parish.

## Ecumenical life

Mid Lambrook has a United Reformed Church, and we have had a friendly association with the congregation there for some years and sometimes join each other for festival services.



# 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 when the children all grew up. But the church owns the building (and is responsible for its upkeep) 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 wheelchair access. There is a very active Schoolroom Committee who have been successful raising money for various ongoing projects such as improved wheelchair access and disabled toilet, improved heating and insulation and during 2025 new kitchen fittings. There is a regular coffee morning each month and the Committee has organised regular quiz night, soup lunch and cream tea events.



# The Seavingtons

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 pub, and a well-used Village Hall, which was built to commemorate the 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): CW Holy Communion, BCP 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. Our growing congregation averages about 14 for our weekly services and 24 for Café Church. We would like to encourage more families to join our formal worship, while respecting the importance of tradition to some of our established congregation.

# 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, the Community Café in the shop would be an ideal place to work, with free WiFi and good coffee. There is a small group of former members of our congregation who regularly receive home communion and they and others would appreciate visits from the Rector.



## Special services and events

Up to six services a year can be held at St Mary's Church, plus special services including several held during Holy Week and her patronal festival and a Christmas service. We hold a Rogation service and have a Palm Sunday prayer walk and a Harvest Festival. 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 Eve. There are also popular Christingle and Carol Services.



## St Michael's Church

Parts of St Michael's Church date back to the 12th century. It can seat up to a hundred people and has a small gallery, with a Medieval window. The churchyard is still in use.

St Michael's Seavington Church Trust was established to raise funds to help maintain the fabric of the church. In 2020 and 2023, the south and west walls were re-pointed using traditional materials as the first stage of repairing internal damage caused by the elements. Our next fundraising goal will be to similarly restore the north and east walls.

## 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. We now have a link volunteer who liaises with the CCT and the Parish. The church 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 rung twice weekly. The churchyard is still in use.

We have recently started to work more closely with the CCT, holding more services in St Mary's and arranging fundraising events, led by the newly-formed Friends of St Mary's.

# South Petherton



South Petherton is the largest community 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, several food shops including a Co-op, butcher's, baker's, grocer's (no candlestick makers!), wine shop, a CAMRA award winning pub and two social clubs, three hairdressers, a doctors' surgery, pharmacy and community hospital. Sadly, the Post Office closed in 2024, and the bank before that, reflecting the challenges for local businesses currently.

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

Over the last few years, we have developed a wider range of services, maintaining the traditional BCP at our Sunday 8am service. This has been possible with the help of several retired clergy who are greatly appreciated.

We introduced a Café Church once a month, mirroring Seavington, to encourage families and unchurched people with its informal, relaxed and interactive approach. A small team of lay leaders, including our Community Volunteer, has grown into the planning and delivery of this over a period of time, under our last Rector's guidance. The Family Holy Communion service alternates with that of Seavington to enable all age worship every week in the Benefice. We have two Common Worship services each month at which personal prayer ministry is offered during communion by a trained lay team working in pairs.

A mid-week Holy Communion service or lay-led Morning Worship is held in church and, until recently, a monthly service was taken in Burnworthy House Care Home by our Anna Chaplain and a team of volunteers. We like to provide occasional services at South Petherton Community Hospital, including a carol service most years. Our dedicated organist/pianist and small choir serve faithfully at our church services. Our monthly Celtic Worship has gathered a following in church, too. We hope to resume the weekly school assemblies in church, followed by coffee and chat for the families, which have paused this school year.

## 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 recent years. We sometimes hold 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.

# South Petherton



## Advent and Christmas

Advent and Christmas are wonderful. The Infants School holds its Nativity Play here. We adorn our church at Christmas with decorations made by local children and adults, which stems from a massive craft session running the afternoon that the village Christmas lights are switched on, and the church is happily covered with sequins and crayons for the afternoon. When our church boilers were being replaced, we held this in the Blake Hall with other activity groups and more than 100 children joined in resulting in 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

For seven years we have held a successful monthly drop-in café, Open House. This is a "thriving, buzzing, hour or more" run by a team of church bakers and is held on a Wednesday morning. It is a chance for people from all sorts of backgrounds and ages to meet up, including the Carers Group, and residents and care staff from Burnworthy House.

We have a dedicated musical director/organist and choir who rehearse in the church weekly, perform anthems on special occasions, and has joined other church choirs in various RSCM events.

We have the 'No Name' men's group, for gentlemen of all ages and faiths (or none), who enjoy outings to interesting places and sociable food. The aim of the group is to encourage men to view church and Christian activities in a positive light.

We also have two Home Groups where folk find closer fellowship and learn and grow together. One includes our Community Volunteer who is currently taking up the CMS Pioneer Training Course, so this group is part of the church's support for her and this initiative.

There is also a group of young families and others who use the church on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday monthly for informal worship, food and family time; led by participants, seeking to follow where the Holy Spirit leads, learning and experiencing together, exploring questions such as *'What does whole-family discipleship look like?'* and *'How do we all practice the gifts of the Spirit in whole-family corporate worship?'*

# South Petherton

## Mothers Union

We have a small but dedicated Mothers' Union who faithfully support families in prayer and by sending baptism anniversary cards to each of our baptised children until they reach the age of five, and by knitting baptism teddy bears.

## 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 have two main fundraising events each year: a Plant Fair in May and an Autumn Fair in October. The Plant Fair became an opportunity last year to engage with **TWIG**, the local Trees & Wildlife Group and our church's Greener Futures Group, to raise awareness of the many ways gardeners can assist nature for biodiversity and sustainability. The South Petherton Community Shed, a local woodworking and hobby group, also sold their products, donating a proportion of the day's proceeds to church funds. Hand made cards by two of our church artists also yielded a donation. Both this and the Autumn Fair are great social events as well as being a helpful financial boost.

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.



Each year we host the annual exhibition of the local Photographic Society, and now host a wonderful exhibit of needlecraft in memory of a local expert in the art.

## Ecumenical life

The Methodist Church in the village closed last year and is deeply missed by our older residents and the many community volunteers who ran a weekly lunch club there. We welcome some of the few remaining worshippers to our services and general life of the church but will miss joining in with their annual Covenant service.

We would like to provide an alternative form of Lunch Club in our church with the help of the same team of volunteers, and talks are in progress.

There is also a Roman Catholic Church. The local members of both these churches still join us to provide Lent Lunches, raising funds for Christian Aid, but our former close relationship with the RC church has dwindled.



# South Petherton

## The Church of St Peter and St 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 used occasionally for small weddings. 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 is due for its 25-year clean and overhaul for which fundraising is in progress. The former side-chapel on the north side has been 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. Broadband Internet access has recently been installed.

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.

The church is undeniably expensive to maintain. In March 2020, some unwelcome visitors stripped the south aisle roof. Although they abandoned the lead, the damage was very costly. Although fundraising was complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a generous donation from the Friends and an amazing response from the community at our Gift Day, the damage was repaired and the necessary upgrades made to renew the insurance. Since then, we have completed the essential replacement of our boilers and had new light fittings throughout when one third had failed completely.

Our windows seem to have a magnetic attraction to footballs, and, as the church is always open, dawn to dusk, we have had some problems with low-level vandalism and theft when the church is unattended. This led us to re-instate and expand the CCTV coverage. 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 nearby Prayer Tree is also well used – the needs are lifted in prayer in Sunday intercessions and at other times by passing members. 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, with a new peal of twelve consecrated in 1998. It is a designated teaching tower and we have a fine team of local dedicated ringers. Visiting ringers are attracted from across the country by the number and quality of the bells.

# South Petherton Infants & Pre-School



The church and school over time have forged a close and excellent relationship, which we greatly value and are eager to continue. South Petherton Infant School and Pre-School, a Church of England Voluntary Aided institution, is conveniently located next to the church. The Infant School has 97 pupils, and the Pre-School, situated at the Recreation Ground, accommodates 38 children.

Our connection with the church is steeped in history. The rector has served as an ex-officio governor of the school and has led a weekly service at the church, attended by the entire school community, including parents, grandparents, and others. The Headteacher, Mrs. Shan Weston, is an ex-officio member of the PCC. She is dedicated to fostering and enhancing the positive relationship between the school and the church. Mrs. Weston actively promotes further links and is open to challenge and change to continuously improve this valuable partnership.

The school is outward-thinking and strives for excellence while working closely with the community to provide the best foundations for young children.

Mrs. Weston, who has been in her role for nine years, is keen to continue supporting and collaborating with a newly-appointed incumbent.

Traditionally, the Infant School and church have been deeply intertwined, with many liturgical events involving both institutions.

One of the most cherished events in Infant School life is Ascension Day, when the "leavers" (the top year of the school) are taken to the top of the church tower. Under strict supervision, they wave to their friends below—a seemingly trivial event that looms large in the minds of seven-year-olds!

The school Nativity play is performed in the church for the entire school community, along with the more customary Harvest Festival. Although the Junior School is not church-affiliated, it also maintains some links with the church, with potential for further expansion. Many Junior School events are held at the church throughout the year, including a special Christingle Service.

There is further opportunity 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 the regular informal supportive contact between the church and the school.



# South Petherton infants & pre-school

The staff and children of the Infants and Pre-School have thoughtfully considered the skills we should seek in a new rector, and what being a church school means to them.

Below are some comments from the staff.

You can see the children's personal specification on page 21.

What do you think the Church's role in the Infant and Pre-School should be?

The Church's role in the Infant and Pre-School could be multifaceted and deeply impactful, fostering a sense of community, providing spiritual guidance, and supporting the holistic development of young children.

**Pastoral Care:** The Church can provide pastoral support to pupils, staff, and families, offering a listening ear and guidance during times of need. This can create a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and cared for.

**Spiritual Nurturing:** The Church can offer spiritual support and nurture the faith of both children and staff through regular assemblies and religious education.

**Moral and Ethical Guidance:** By supporting our well-established vision and Christian Values, the Church can help instill a strong moral foundation in the children. Lessons on kindness, Perseverance and Trust can be reinforced through the Church's involvement.

**Educational Support:** The Church can support the school's educational mission by providing resources, guest speakers, and enrichment programs that complement the curriculum and broaden the children's learning experiences.

**Community Building:** The Church can act as a hub for community activities, bringing together families, staff, and parishioners. Events like family services, social gatherings, and volunteer opportunities can strengthen the bond between the school and the wider community.

**Cultural and Liturgical Events:** The Church can collaborate with the school to celebrate important religious and cultural events, such as Christmas, Easter, and Harvest Festival. These occasions can be meaningful and memorable experiences for the children.

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

**Educational Support:** Understanding the importance of education and supporting the school's vision and values.

**Empathy and Compassion:** A genuine care for the well-being of others, demonstrating empathy and compassion in their interactions.

**Leadership:** A strong and compassionate leader who can inspire and guide the congregation and the school community.

**Community Engagement:** Active involvement in community activities, building strong relationships with both church and school members.

**Pastoral Care:** Providing pastoral care and support to individuals and families in times of need.

**Collaboration:** Strong collaboration skills to work effectively with the headteacher, staff, and parish council.

**Inclusive Education:** The school aims to provide an inclusive education that respects and values diversity while maintaining its Christian identity.

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

**Role Models:** The presence of church leaders and clergy in the school provides positive role models for the children, reinforcing Christian values and principles.

**Spiritual Foundation:** The school incorporates Christian values and teachings into its curriculum and daily activities, helping children develop a strong moral and ethical foundation.

**Community Connection:** The school fosters a close relationship with the church and the wider community, encouraging a sense of belonging and mutual support.

**Ethos and Culture:** The school's ethos and culture are rooted in Christian teachings, promoting kindness, compassion, and respect among pupils and staff.

# What the school is looking for

## The Infants School's personal specification

In addition to consulting with the adults, we also sought the input of our well-established Infant School Council. They carefully considered what kind of rector they would like to see and provided us with the following list of qualities. Do you think you can meet their high standards?

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unselfish</li><li>• Kind</li><li>• Trustworthy</li><li>• Happy/Fun</li><li>• Demonstrates perseverance</li><li>• Is 'Child' friendly</li><li>• Playful</li><li>• Gentle/Peaceful</li><li>• Helpful</li><li>• Good communication skills</li><li>• Patience</li><li>• Offers friendship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funny</li><li>• Inclusive (for example uses sign language)</li><li>• Musical</li><li>• Has good voice control (not too loud or too quiet)</li><li>• Is true to themselves</li><li>• Has own thoughts/ideas</li></ul>



# Who's who



**Steve Harrison**  
Churchwarden,  
St Peter & St Paul's,  
Vice-chair, PCC



**Daphne Woodhouse**  
Churchwarden,  
St Peter & St Paul's



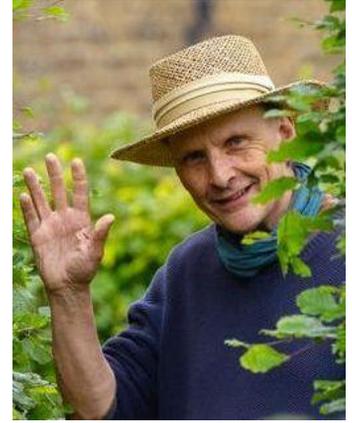
**Sandra Robinson**  
Volunteer Verger,  
St Peter & St Paul's



**Anne Shaw**  
Churchwarden,  
St Michael's  
Lay worship Leader,



**Amanda Jagers**  
Churchwarden,  
St Michael's,  
Lay worship Leader,  
Safeguarding Officer



**Mark Stainer**  
Churchwarden,  
St James'



**Sam Lloyd**  
Lay Worship Leader, Lay Pioneer-in-training CMS cert  
Community Volunteer

Here are a few names and faces of people in our benefice that you may meet when you come to visit us!

# The Rectory

The Rectory is a detached, four-bedroom, house, built in the 1970s, and was refurbished in 2022.

The house is right next to South Petherton church but is off the main street in a 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.



*Driveway and front aspect*



*The Kitchen*



*Approx. 1867 sq.ft.*



*The Sitting Room*

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.

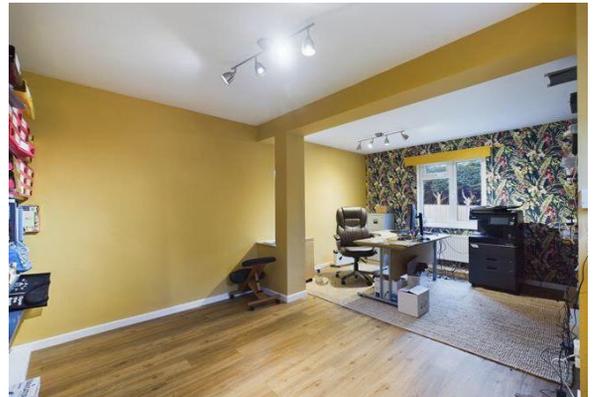
# The Rectory

## The Study/Office

At the previous rector's request, the study was furnished by the PCC as a joint office for herself and the Benefice Administrator to work in.

During the vacancy, the rectory has been rented out and so the office equipment has been removed, largely to St Peter and St Paul's church. The Administrator now works mostly from home.

We absolutely support there being effective administrative support so that our rector can focus on those crucial things that only the rector can do. We recognise that improving the current arrangements will be high on the priority list of the appointee – as indeed it will be on ours.



*The Office*

## The Nur-chur Yurt



*The Nur-chur Yurt at Easter*

One of the previous rector's initiatives was the acquisition of a yurt. The initiative was enthusiastically supported by our congregations and wider village community, both financially and prayerfully. At the rector's request it was situated on purpose-built decking in the rear garden of the Rectory. Its purpose was meeting space (for the church and community) and quiet space for contemplative reflection in times of individual need. Part of the rear garden was also occasionally used by the Infants School as a mini-forest experience.

For the duration of the tenancy of the family renting the Rectory, the Yurt has been removed and placed in storage. There is a strong desire that it can have a future role both in the community outreach of the church to the village community and in the spiritual life of the church.

The previous rector sited the yurt in the rear garden of The Rectory. We really hope the yurt can be used somewhere in the benefice in the future and would want to discern with a new incumbent where and how best it may be used in the future.

# Finances

The good news is that we have a very capable and experienced treasurer who maintains a close watch on our finances. The other bit of good news is that for all but one of the last 10+ years we have paid our parish share in full – and that one year was only because of the theft of lead from St Peter & St Paul's church. That record is despite being without a serving rector for 3+ years out of the last 5.

However, most years have seen an income/expenditure deficit on ordinary matters. We have been very fortunate to receive some generous legacies and grant funds. Those along with some project fundraising tend to obscure an underlying slow but consistent decline in financial health. At the time of writing, our 2024 accounts are not yet finalised. The year 2023 is summarized by our Independent Examiner as follows:

*"For the current account, the total receipts on the unrestricted funds were £120,477, with £29,347 for restricted funds and reinvested interest of £1,071 during 2023. The total amounted to £150,895, which was made up of a decrease of £27,275 in general funds and an increase of £10,753 in restricted funds during 2023.*

*"On the current account the total expenditure amounted to £119,124 from unrestricted funds and £84,655 from restricted funds during 2023. The total amounted to £203,779, which was made up of a decrease in spending of £10,980 from general funds and an increase of £81,059 from restricted funds during 2023."*

As of 31st December 2023, our free reserves stood at £65,793 which represents about 6 months of general expenditure. Our Reserves Policy requires us to maintain our free reserves at a minimum of 4 months of general expenditure.

You can see the full annual accounts for 2023 on the [Charity Commission website](#) and search for Charity Number: 1128940.

## Benefice Share

We continue to pay our Benefice Share in full, despite increases. Our calculated Benefice Share using the new funding methodology in 2025 is £83,058k (reduced £76,425 with 'transitional relief' over the next five years). In 2023 it was £64,820. Thus, in a 3-year period we have faced an 18% increase (based on the reduced rate) or 28% increase (based on the full rate) without increase in number in the 'worshipping community' on which our share is based. These figures exceed the wage/pension increases of most in our community.

## Challenges

Meeting parish share *and* maintaining three ancient buildings is costly. The cost is most evident in missed opportunities for outreach and for presence in our community. The relentless need to invest so much of our time and energy into fundraising simply to stand still is overburdening on our volunteers. We would dearly like to provide our rector with more administrative support than we are currently able to. We would dearly like to employ a children's and families' worker. We have expensive works to do to buildings. While some of these issues are slowly being addressed (we have reserved funds for the children's worker), we are constantly driven into an unambitious mindset due to resource constraints that conflicts with our desire to be a light for God and a benefit to our neighbour.

## Friends and Trusts

We have two registered charities (*Friends of South Petherton Church* and *St Michael's Church, Seavington Trust*) established as important fundraising organisations to support the fabric of our churches. The trustees have a long history of making significant grants on which we are utterly dependent, and the Rector is a key member.

# What's it like living here

## Amenities

Most shops, cafes, and services are in South Petherton (see p.15). Within easy walk the surrounding villages of Over Stratton and East Lambrook also have their own pubs, village halls, and East Lambrook's famous Manor Gardens.

Crewkerne, five miles to the south, has two supermarkets and a lovely warm swimming pool and gym, plus a railway station which runs regular trains to London and Exeter.



The nearest major town you may have heard of is Yeovil (nine miles away), which has most of the major supermarkets and shops, a cinema, theatre, and two railway stations, connecting to both the SWR and GWR main lines connecting us to London, Exeter, Bath, Bristol, and Salisbury.

Taunton, 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 Stonehenge, Salisbury and thence to Andover and the M3. The beautiful Jurassic coast is 24 miles away at Lyme Regis, in Dorset.

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. Be prepared for encounters with single-track roads which form a network of lanes criss-crossing the countryside between the villages.



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, with tractors regularly rolling through the villages.

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.

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). 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 overhead regularly.

# What's it like living here

## Population demographic

Nearly 30% of the population of the benefice is aged over 65. But there must be something in the water, as there are an extraordinary number of nonagenarians, so despite age, there is much energy!

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” who have been welcomed by the local Somerset people, many of whom run retail and service businesses in the area.

But we are aware that, as well as these relatively affluent retirees and professionals, there are also those suffering from loneliness and rural poverty in our midst. The benefice is rated slightly above the national average level of deprivation.

St Peter & St Paul's in South Petherton hosts the local charity “Foodshare”, supported by the Co-op and individual contributors, providing relief to a number of people and families finding themselves in need.

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.

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 not been exempted, experiencing occasional vandalism.



## Schools and nurseries

South Petherton Infants School and Pre-School are jointly-run, and OFSTED assessed the school as “...full of sparkle and joy. It places the utmost importance on pupils’ happiness and enjoyment”; South Petherton Junior School has also been judged favourably.

The local Secondary School is Stanchester Academy in Stoke-sub-Hamdon, rated as “good”, but some local children attend Huish Episcopi Academy, 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 the very young, 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's it 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 Majorettes, Rainbows, Beavers, Scouts, Brownies and Girl Guides, and nearby Martock hosts a Boys' Brigade.

The David Hall arts centre in South Petherton is a venue for many music and arts events, and the regular Petherton Picture Show community cinema. The parish council organises the annual Petherton Folk Fest each June, and South Petherton has a well-supported 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 Parish Magazine and village websites signposted at the end.

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;  
NT Montacute House.*

# About the Deanery

## 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 lay local minister and local ministry team. 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.

We have 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 pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you in your discernment.

**Rev'd Jo Stobart and Alison Cruickshank**

**Area and Lay Dean**



# Diocesan Statement

## Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Rector of the Benefice of South Petherton with the Seavingtons and the Lambrooks in the Diocese of Bath and Wells might be right for you. Thankfully, help your prayerful discernment, we want to share a bit about our diocesan vision, within which we hope your own ministry might flourish.

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

The flourishing and growth of churches always needs attention, but especially now as we come out of the shock created by the COVID pandemic. The impact of the pandemic created a sharp acceleration in the pattern of decline in church attendance that has been seen in our diocese over many years. Thankfully, there are some signs that we are recovering from the COVID decline. For example, data showed that average adult weekly church attendance in our diocese rose between 2021 and 2022. Statistics only ever tell a partial story. It is even more encouraging to see churches around our diocese developing approaches that respond to the opportunities and challenges in their local context and enable growth to happen.

## A vision for growth and transformation

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

## Shared priorities

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

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

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

# Diocesan Statement

## **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.

# Diocesan Statement

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

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

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

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

+ Michael Barr & Wells.

Bishop of Bath and Wells

Simon Hill.

Archdeacon of Taunton

# And finally...

Well done! You've finally got to the end!

Having got this far, are you excited? Could you inspire us, motivate us, and help to heal us?

Do you fancy being in the middle of life in this beautiful part of Somerset?

If so, come and meet us!

<https://www.southpethertonbenefice.org/>

[South Petherton Infants & pre-school](#)

[South Petherton Parish Council](#)

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)

