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Brompton Regis
Brushford
Dulverton
Skilgate
Upton
Withiel Florey

Dulverton
Benefice
Profile

THE BENEFICE OF DULVERTON, BRUSHFORD, BROMPTON REGIS WITH WITHIEL FLOREY, UPTON AND SKILGATE

Welcome.

We are a group of five rural parishes and six churches located on the south-eastern edge of Exmoor and a part of the Exmoor Deanery in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Each parish has its own character. Since the last vacancy, we have become aware of the advantages and pleasures of working together. So we have started our journey and we are looking for somebody to walk alongside us on that road.

Our vision is

- ★ To have a benefice united in the Spirit and led by an active and enthusiastic Rector, supported by a strong team of committed Christians.
- ★ To expand and broaden our outreach to further integrate and strengthen the church presence in our communities.
- ★ To serve all, taking our community to where God is leading us and seeing God in all whom we meet.
- ★ To seek ways of telling God's story in new places in both traditional and fresh forms.
- ★ To value spaces and places in our worship for prayer and stillness.

We can offer you the support of an enthusiastic ministry team, experienced lay worship leaders and the chance to live in an attractive rural part of the country.

If these objectives appeal to you we would love to hear from you.

In this Profile:

The benefice and worship sections focus on themes common to all parishes. Finance, fundraising and events are covered in the parish sections.

For further information, please contact:

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The office is open Monday-Thursday afternoons and Friday morning.



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OUR BENEFICE

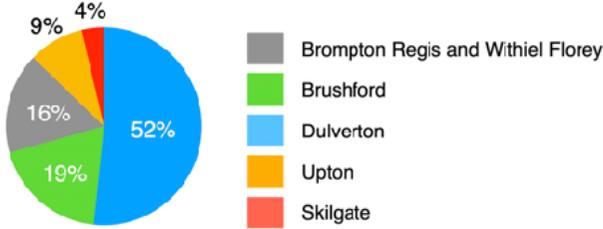


The Five Parishes

Dulverton is the only town within the Exmoor National Park boundary. Brushford is 2 miles along the Barle Valley to the south and Brompton Regis, 4 miles to the northeast, lies high up in the Brendon Hills. Skilgate, Upton and Withiel Florey are further to the east.

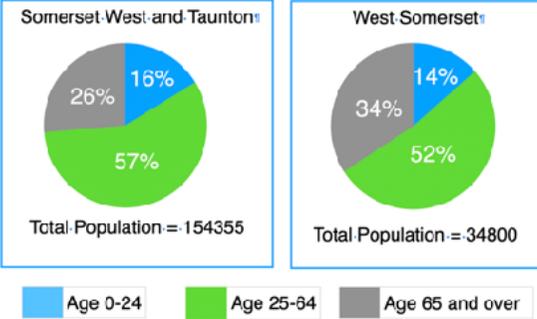
Parishes cover large areas. Outside the village boundaries, the land is thinly populated, made up of areas of heath and woodland, a few small hamlets, isolated dwellings and numerous farms.

Population



Total population = 2726

Demographic



Transport

Local bus services run on weekdays only at infrequent intervals. Apart from Dulverton and Brushford, villages have no regular public transport service. There are community bus schemes and school buses between the villages and Dulverton. Many elderly and disabled people rely on voluntary lift schemes for hospital visits and the like. (Currently not running.)

OUR BENEFICE

The Economy

The local economy is largely based on agriculture (mostly sheep farming), micro-businesses and tourism. Very few companies have more than 10 employees, full-time or part-time.

Some people travel outside the area to find work. Some young adults move away from the area to seek new opportunities

Retailers in Dulverton saw a downturn in business following the closure of the

one remaining bank. Most of the big supermarkets now offer free deliveries in the area. The increase in on-line shopping has accelerated owing to the lockdown.

Low population density brings pressure on public services. In 2010 there were threats to bus services, the recycling centre and the library: so far they have all survived.

Average incomes are below the national average. The pandemic has hit low-

income families and the self-employed hard. Dulverton now has its own food bank, covering the whole benefice, with collection points in Dulverton, Brushford and Brompton Regis.

If growth in the practice of working from home is sustained, it may affect the way in which people shop and have access to religious, recreational and sports facilities.

| | Electoral Roll | Worshipping Community | Baptisms | Weddings | Funerals |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dulverton | 51 | 38 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| Brushford | 50 | 32 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Brompton Regis with Withiel Florey | 32 | 18 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Upton | 20 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Skilgate | 18 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

Church Membership

Our church memberships have a high proportion of retired people but few younger families.

Ecumenical

We have warm and mutually supportive relationships with the Roman Catholic and Congregational churches in Dulverton.

OUR BENEFICE



Brendon Beacon photo © Dale Cherry

Music



Gary Cooper is Director of Music at Dulverton and currently the only employed organist in the benefice. His appointment has been a Godsend.

Benefice Choir

Before lockdown, the choir sang at the occasional Choral Evensong in Dulverton and at united benefice services. We hope that the choir will grow with time, sing more regularly and in all our churches.

Communication

The benefice has its own website, dulvertonbenefice.org.uk, which is currently being reconstructed.

Pew News carries transcripts of the Sunday's readings, collect and prayers and notices, is available for collection from our churches. Since lockdown, it has been expanded to cover a broader readership and content and is now available on-line.

Our two parish magazines, **Dulverton and Brushford** and the **Brendon Beacon**, are published monthly.

We view communication as an important tool in our mission and community relations work. We keep it under review and are now making wider use of the media.

Administration



Debbie Gale is the paid administrator and treasurer, employed by Dulverton PCC. Before lockdown she also carried out secretarial work for the Rector.

Safeguarding

We have adopted the diocese's policy on safeguarding and are part of the Equal Opportunities provision.

THE MINISTRY TEAM

WORSHIP

The Rector (Post vacant)

Martin Collett
Assistant Curate



Jane Rees
Reader



Louise Southgate
Reader



Juliet Gosling-Brown
Ordinand in training



Steve Ford
Churchwarden (Dulverton)
LWL*



Frances Nicholson
Churchwarden (Brushford)
LWL*



Ian Trusler
Churchwarden (Skilgate)
LWL*



The Ministry Team is a close and busy group, led by our Curate Martin, and two Readers, Louise and Jane, and Juliet, an ordinand in theological training, with a good number of trained lay worship assistants who will lead a Service of the Word in many forms. We were brought together in the previous vacancy, developing a clear understanding of everyone's abilities and preferences, and encouraging some who were initially a little reluctant to stretch their reach to begin to lead worship in more adventurous ways.



David Wood
Churchwarden (Upton)
LWL*

Ed Thomson
Churchwarden (Dulverton)
LWL*



Jane Erith
(Brushford)
LWL*

Roz Roberts
(Dulverton)
LWL*



Andy Jeffries
(Dulverton)
LWL*



Edward & Sylvia
Luxton
(Withiel Florey)
LWL*



Ginny Brown
(Dulverton)
LWL*

*LWL = Lay Worship Leader

WORSHIP

Lay-led worship is now well accepted and routine, with a range of new forms of worship. Our congregations welcomed the new services, and people are being trained as worship leaders who were once happy to be passive in regular Sunday worship.

This is an exciting opportunity to lead a church set in a stunning part of the world, where we sing God's glory in a place where His beauty is all around us. At the same time, we are aware that behind any door is the possibility of pain, loss, loneliness, fear and distress where support is needed. We have a lot of residents who rely on the food bank, and we work for those in need in practical ways as part of our ministry

On Exmoor we find it easy to enjoy solitude and prayer, and we very much hope that our new incumbent would find the opportunity to meet God in the silence, to find opportunities for deep spiritual refreshment and empowerment in our special places. Our churches are loved and cared for, but we relish the wild places too. We can offer both.

Our homes are welcoming, and our doors are open to the Rector; we are a hospitable community. But we also pledge to allow our new priest time to develop their prayer life, and to read and study, in time off which is respected.

Dulverton Area Churches COVID 19 Response (DACC19R)

This ecumenical and lay-led initiative now operates a regular Sunday evening service which goes out on Facebook. Membership extends beyond our own churchgoers. The group plans to continue after lockdown and we hope its work will grow into an important part of our mission development.

I started attending church regularly two or three years ago. Before this I had not really thought about God or church and pushed worship to the back of my mind. Regular attendance was one step but I think becoming a churchwarden and helping with the daily running of the church has really changed my priorities in life. It has helped me to find myself and to become part of a close knit community of friends.

I enjoy taking an active part in our online worship group and look forward to being part of the church and God's plan for Dulverton and Exmoor.

*Edward Thomson
Churchwarden (Dulverton)
Member of the Ministry Team*

TYPICAL SUNDAY SERVICE PATTERN (Prior to Lockdown)

| | 1st Sunday | 2nd Sunday | 3rd Sunday | 4th Sunday |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Dulverton | 0800 Eucharist BCP (R) 0930 Eucharist (R) 1800 Evensong (LWL) | 0930 Eucharist (AV) 1800 Evensong (R) | 0800 Eucharist BCP (AV) 0930 Eucharist (R) 1800 Evensong (LWL) | 0930 Eucharist (AV) 1800 Evensong (R) |
| Brushford | 1100 Eucharist (R) | 1100 Eucharist BCP (AV) | 1100 Matins (R) | 1100 Eucharist (AV) |
| Brompton Regis | 1100 Eucharist (AV) | 1100 Eucharist (R) | 1100 Eucharist (AV) | 1100 Eucharist (R) |
| Skilgate | | 0930 Eucharist (R) | 1500 Family Service (AV or LWL) | 0930 Eucharist (R) |
| Withiel Florey | | | 1500 Family Service or Eucharist (AV) | |
| Upton | <i>Festival services only</i> | | | |

R = Rector AV = Associate Vicar LWL = Lay Worship Leader

WORSHIP

On the fifth Sunday of the month we have a united benefice service at either 0930 or 1100, hosted by each parish in rotation.

Eucharist is said at Dulverton on Wednesday mornings.

Vestments are worn in all churches.

Spiritual Growth

- ★ **Contemplative Prayer**
- ★ **Advent and Lent Courses**
- ★ **Bible Study Group**
- ★ **Home Groups**

All are taking place despite the pandemic which has encouraged the use of on-line methods where practical.

The **Ministry Team** plans the monthly Sunday and major festival service schedules.

Before the pandemic, Compline was said during Advent and Lent and we welcomed the risen Christ at dawn on Easter morning. We have introduced an evening service to remember the departed on or close to All Souls Day. This year, we managed to get it in just before the second lockdown

The team co-ordinates all services across the benefice so as to avoid clashes and encourage a wider participation.

Compline, morning and evening prayer are said regularly. New styles of worship such as Taizé and Celtic Worship are being introduced. Greater use has been made of lay worship leaders since lockdown.

Three main areas have been identified.
They result from a recent community-wide survey:

THE KEY AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

1

Improving and reinforcing our mission work and looking out towards the wider world

The Exmoor Federation: Our involvement with the schools in the benefice is described in the box right.

The Exmoor Deanery Youth Project: We are a substantial contributor to this and actively support its work in our schools. We also support the **Dulverton Youth Club**.

Exmoor and King's Brompton Young Farmers: These two important organisations for young people are given encouragement by the churches.

Dulverton Gardening Club Schools Project is supported by assisting it to receive and manage a substantial grant from a local charity and providing it with fundraising opportunities.

The Exmoor Music for Youth Fund: Similarly assistance is provided for this and no charge is made by churches for the group's concerts and fundraising.

Dulverton Food Bank (as described on page 5): This was formed in 2020 prompted by response to a coronavirus related increase in demand. For many years we have supported the **West Somerset Food Cupboard** where the collection and delivery of goods involves a round trip of 40 miles.

We try to respond to requests for help from local charitable groups rapidly and generously. We would like to be much more proactive, both within our local communities and looking outside, nationally and beyond.

We want to maintain and strengthen our links with local trades people and our town and parish councils.

The Exmoor Federation

We are made up of All Saints C of E Infant School, Dulverton Junior School and an on-site nursery. The Rector and lay volunteers have supported us by:

- * Planning and delivering weekly collective worship, held in the school for both infant and junior children, linked to our Christian Values and the Christian calendar
- * Services held in All Saints church for harvest, Christmas, Easter and end of the school year
- * Supporting learning of RE through church visits / learning opportunities
- * Providing leavers bibles for Year 6 pupils
- * Providing training for staff eg spirituality
- * Supporting our 'Monday Clubs' – a fun after school club for younger children where children enjoy crafts and activities linked to different bible stories; and a lunchtime club for our junior school children, in liaison with youth workers, Jess and Lyn.

The Rector has also been part of our Ethos and Vision group, supporting the school for our SIAMS inspection and I know the Governors would welcome the new Rector onto the Governing Body as foundation governor. This would be really important to help steer the futures of the schools and their part within the community.

Carly Hatch, Executive Headteacher

THE KEY AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

2 Moving towards a Benefice Church Council and rationalising systems, administrative and financial.

Our aim is to make sure that there is a good balance between doing God's work and the day-to-day business of keeping things going and maintaining our buildings. As our congregations get older and smaller, there are fewer people coming forward to take on responsibility. Some parishes have struggled to find a churchwarden or a treasurer, most have vacant places on their PCC.

Previously, the incumbent has had to manage five PCCs, each of which meets regularly, produces its own accounts, purchases its own supplies, etc. Our aim is that, in a unified system, each church would retain control but do so through a central administration. The goal is to streamline the effort and expenditure needed for administration so as to spend more of our effort on the long-term needs of mission and development for future generations.

3 Reversing the trend towards ageing and diminishing congregations by encouraging and nurturing new ways of worshipping God so as to attract a wider cross-section of people.

We have introduced a broader range of worshipping styles such as Taizé and Celtic Worship. These have ecumenical support but, apart from family services, our current forms of worship may have little attraction for younger generations. Messy Church was introduced some years ago but those children have now moved on and it has ceased. We would very much like to re-introduce this provision, particularly for non-church families. We believe it is time to review the whole range of worship opportunities.

Perhaps we could reduce the number of Communion services held each Sunday to one or two and encourage more members of our congregations to visit different churches, organising transport where needed. This would both reduce the load on our clergy and open the way for introducing new styles of worship. We are looking for ways to support the values of our existing worshippers but also to encourage the acceptance of new ideas.

Our very proactive director of music has introduced several innovations including community music, a Saturday music club, the Music for Youth Fund and sessions for mums and toddlers, Rhythm and Brews.

THE RECTOR'S ROLE

We trust that you will:

- ◆ Be able to lead us in a deeper understanding of the faith and scriptures, through preaching and supporting our house groups, bible study and Advent and Lent courses;
- ◆ Be our pastoral leader, our rock in times of trouble and in the shifting sands of an uncertain future;
- ◆ Understand and respond to the needs of a rural, thinly populated community;
- ◆ Walk alongside us in our aim to further unite our communities, grow in numbers and expand our mission work;
- ◆ Take an active and leading part in our work with young people's groups and a full role in the development of our schools;
- ◆ Enjoy the rich and varied social life of the benefice.

So good communication, organisational and leadership skills and the ability to relate to people of a wide variety of backgrounds are all needed. **A car is essential.**

It sounds a lot. But we can, and do, promise our full support. We have a well-established and hard-working ministry team who, with the members of our PCCs, are active and fully supportive. There is a strong desire to see this benefice continue to flourish.

So we are seeking a Rector who feels enthusiastic about our aims and is able and willing to inspire, guide and support us through this period of change. We know that the journey will not always be easy. But with God's help, and by working together, we will get there.

We look forward to welcoming a Rector who will lead us in the Spirit, with a zest for preaching the Word, an understanding of the rural way of life, and a keenness to engage with the community.

We are praying for you already

WHERE YOU WILL LIVE

The Vicarage



The Vicarage is situated in Dulverton, at the top end of the town and close to the church. It is a spacious house: on the ground floor there are two large reception rooms, a dining room, a modern kitchen, a utility room, a large hallway and a downstairs cloakroom. Upstairs, there are five

bedrooms, a bathroom and a shower room. The large garden is secluded and lies mainly to the south and east of the building. There is a double garage which faces the entrance from the High Street. To the front of the property there is parking space for four or five cars.

Town Facilities

The Public Library, Post Office, Exmoor Medical Centre, and Exmoor Dental Practice and local shops, including a Co-Op store, a pharmacy, a butcher and a greengrocer, pubs and cafes are all based here. The nearest hospital is in Tiverton, 14 miles to the south. The Exmoor National Park Authority has its headquarters here. There are pubs and cafés, sports clubs, music activities, a number of choirs, art groups, a film club, U3A and amateur theatre, sadly curtailed at the moment.

Our Schools

The schools which form the Exmoor Federation are all on one site, about 10 minutes walk from the vicarage. Children up to the age of eleven from across the benefice attend school there. Older children are taken by bus to Wiveliscombe and Minehead.



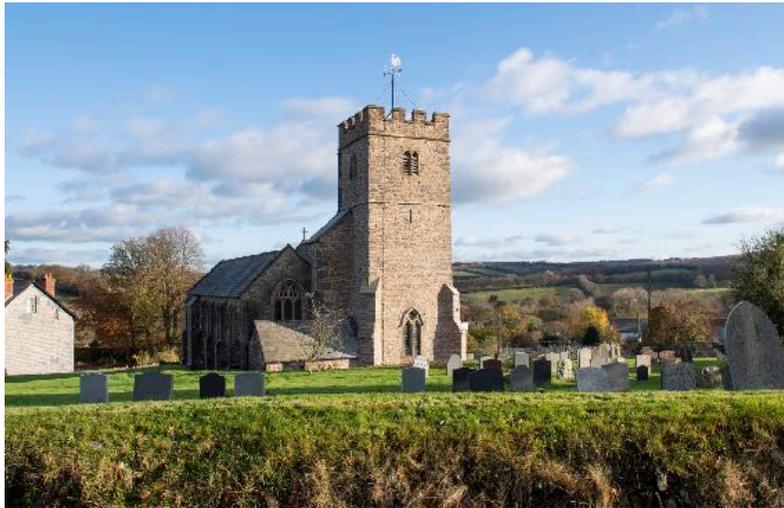
Transport

By car 15 minutes will take you up onto the moor itself or into the Brendon Hills. You can reach Lynmouth on the North Devon Coast in an hour. Taunton, Barnstaple and Exeter are all under 30 miles away (50-60 minutes). The M5 motorway is 20 miles away (30 minutes).

The nearest rail station is Tiverton Parkway, close to junction 27 on the motorway. There are day-time bus services between Dulverton and Minehead, Tiverton or Taunton. Three of our parishes have no regular bus service.

BROMPTON REGIS WITH WITHIEL FLOREY

Got a pair of wellies? Like a piece of cake? You'll fit in well here!



*Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Brompton Regis
Photo: © Dale Cherry*

Our Parish

The parish (popn. approx. 400) lies within the National Park, with 80 households within the boundaries of the village and more in surrounding hamlets and farms. The surrounding countryside is beautiful. The rural economy is important here, but some of the local population travel a distance to work; there is no local bus service, except for a volunteer-run community bus once a week. Several young working families have moved into the village recently; most children travel into Dulverton on the school bus. We also have a healthy number of lively retired people who contribute to the life of the community.

Our Churches

We have two churches in the parish:

Brompton Regis is a substantial Norman building in the middle of the village. We have just celebrated the restoration of the tower, with substantial help from the National Lottery, National Churches Trust and others. There is a keen team of bell-ringers for the six bells.

Withiel Florey is a small, well-kept church set in a farmyard, surrounded by fields and animals. We have no electricity or water in the church, so we have our monthly services at 3pm and for our Carol Service we light the antique oil lamps, giving the church a very special atmosphere. We have 3 bells and a harmonium for music.



St Mary Magdalene, Withiel Florey

BROMPTON REGIS WITH WITHIEL FLOREY

About Us

Our PCC is small but friendly and effective, and we will embrace positively a move to a united Benefice Church Council if that is the outcome of current thinking and discussion. We hope that a new incumbent would support and guide us prayerfully through that process. Our congregation is involved with every committee and initiative, of which there are many. (See the village website: www.bromptonregis.com).



Photo: © Dale Cherry

Worship

We say Morning Prayer and Compline regularly. In addition, we celebrate Christingle on Christmas Eve. We have Taize, Celtic, Contemplative services and Songs of Praise, and an annual Remembrance service. These draw in people beyond our regular congregations. Some of us join benefice groups for Contemplative Prayer, and to study in House Groups.



Finances

We pay our Parish Share in full, and just about break even with support from the 100 Club, the Lunch Club, the Parish Council and the Brendon Beacon, our profitable community magazine. We are fortunate to have legacy reserves to fund the upkeep of the building.



Wimbleball Lake

BROMPTON REGIS WITH WITHIEL FLOREY

More about Withiel Florey

The Bale family has been involved in looking after and attending services for over 115 years! They fought to keep the church open in 1958 when the door was locked and the Bishop said it should be demolished! After lots of talks and a court case which the church won, a restoration project and fundraising were put in place and the church was finally reopened in November 1961.

Rogation Services

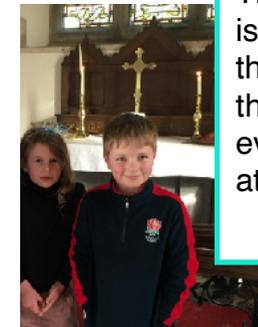
In the 1990s we started holding Rogation services where we walk from church through the tiny village and up to the Bale family farm for a shared tea. These are very popular, with lots of visitors coming for the experience. We also started holding harvest suppers which are very lively social events and are well supported by the benefice. The funds raised keep the church going.

Our Congregation

Our congregation's age span is very wide, ranging from babies to 90-year-olds. Most live outside the area but have connections to the church or family. But they all enjoy the friendly welcoming atmosphere.

Visitors

Increasing numbers of walkers are visiting the church on their journey from Wimbleball Lake as the footpath passes through the churchyard. Visitors say the church's charm is its simplicity and they are moved by the quiet appeal.



The church is fun. Everyone is nice. We get to take part in the services. We like taking the collection. We love everyone going back for tea at Burrow Farm.

Ben and Isabelle, 9 and 7

We would welcome a priest to join us in our village and family churches. But be prepared, as in the past we have had vicars involved with helping out at the harvest suppers, lambing, hedging, cutting the grass, playing cricket, abseiling down the church tower to name a few!

Looking forward to meeting you.



Our Church

The church of St Nicholas is a small medieval Grade 1 listed building and includes a memorial chapel designed in the 1920s by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The 100-year-old organ has been restored but there is outstanding repair work needed on the tower roof. The tower has a ring of 6 bells and there is a band of ringers.



Our Congregation

There is a regular, weekly congregation of around 17 people. The electoral roll currently stands at 50. Each year, pre-Covid, the church organised a number of social events which served both to draw the community together and also raised funds for the church. We have no Treasurer or Secretary on the PCC, although we do now have one Churchwarden. Congregations have fallen in number as some regular members are shielding.

Worship

Vestments are worn and services are from Common Worship, with one BCP service each month. We also have occasional services in Taizé or Celtic style, and Compline.



Photo ©Tony Keene



BRUSHFORD

ORGAN RECITAL by DAVID HALLS

Director of Music, Salisbury Cathedral,
to celebrate the restoration of the organ



**SATURDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER
at 7.00 PM
ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, BRUSHFORD**

Tickets: £5 from The Tantivy, Dulverton,
from 1st August; or Jane Erith (01398 323879)
To include refreshments afterwards in
Brushford Parish Hall where parking is available

Finances

We've been hit by Covid-19 with lower income and no fund-raising possible. The previous year-end saw them as break-even. We have temporarily suspended paying the Parish Share; however the new (small) PCC is now considering whether it will be possible to pay some at least of the amount outstanding.

Our Parish

Although only two miles from Dulverton, Brushford is a distinct community of 500+ people including a number of scattered farms. There is a mixture of old traditional, modern and housing association homes, with planning permission for a small, private development. Bus services run (roughly every two hours) through the village to Dulverton, Taunton or Tiverton. There is a modern Parish Hall. Children from the village mostly attend the schools in Dulverton; then move on to Wiveliscombe or Minehead.

We look forward to welcoming and working with our new Rector.

DULVERTON

Our Church

We are proud of our church which sits on a small hill overlooking the town. It is a large, predominantly Victorian, building with a seating capacity of about 250. There is wheelchair access right up to the altar rail and we have introduced a buggy service for the Sunday morning service, collecting folk from the retirement homes in the town and anyone who wants to hitch a ride from the lych gate.

We get a number of visits from tourists and from the caravan sites at Dulverton, Bridgetown and Exebridge.

The churchyard is now closed and is maintained by Dulverton Town Council. We have recently funded the conversion of a small triangular plot of waste ground on its east side into an attractive memorial garden.



Candlemas

Our Congregation

The average attendance at our principal service (prior to lockdown) is about 35. Sadly, this rarely includes young families. Messy Church, which used to meet once a month on Saturdays, made up for this although it is currently inactive. Our community includes teams of bellringers, clock-winders and flower arrangers. After morning service, we meet for coffee, except for the third Sunday in the month when we visited Abbeyfield or Hanover Court.

Worship

Sadly, Remembrance Sunday, the Crib and Carol services, Midnight Mass and visits from our schools are all affected this year.

Our Choir

We now have one junior member and another bass to make a total of 2. We would welcome more members, both young and old.



Remembrance Sunday



Messy Church

DULVERTON



Johanna Harrison
and Gary Cooper



Summer Fete

JAZZ ON THE MOOR 2019

Friday 6th September at 7.30
All Saints Church, Dulverton

Le Jazz with Music Deco

Andrew Daldorph
Chris Gradwell
Mike Thorn
Carol Walker

Tickets £12
Advance booking
Dulverton PO, Tantivy,
or phone 01398 322965
or www.allsaintsdulverton.org.uk

Events

We hope our hard working team will be back in business next year. They organise events for fundraising, promote and host concerts, including visits from the Two Moors Festival, and link with Dulverton by Starlight.



Barle Singers



Dulverton by Starlight

Around the Town

We are represented on the Parish Rooms Committee which owns and manages the building and also gives charitable donations to those in need. The rooms are let at affordable rates, currently to the Dulverton Players and to Dulverton Gym.

We own one of the cottages in Church Lane which we let to start up families.

We maintain a small Parish Office, the basement of which is let to 'Printing at the Vicarage', originally established by the PCC but now privately owned.

Finance

We have continued to pay our parish share in full during lockdown by calling on our reserves to supplement a shortfall in income. In recent years we have had to do this in order to maintain our giving. Further financial information can be obtained from the parish dashboard.

We are looking forward to welcoming our new Rector.

SKILGATE



Our Church

The church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, has been here since the 14th century and still has the original tower which houses five historic bells. The nave and chancel were extensively rebuilt during the mid-Victorian era. We now have a Tower Captain for the new local band of ringers who will be coming regularly to Skilgate as well as Brompton Regis. We are pleased that we shall be able to welcome visiting bell-ringing teams.

Our Parish

The Parish covers an area of approximately 3.5 square miles on the edge of the Exmoor National Park, the Brendon Hills and the Devon border. Skilgate currently has a population of 90.

Our congregation

Our community spans a wide range of age groups farming families, those who travel away from Skilgate to work, young people mostly of school age attending local schools and those of an older age. Our Electoral Roll now numbers thirteen. The average attendance is between 7 and 9.



SKILGATE

Worship

There are two monthly Holy Communion services and a regular monthly Family Service followed by tea and cake, instigated and led by our Churchwarden. A monthly Matins service, led by our Churchwarden, has now also been introduced for when the Incumbent or Curate is engaged in other parishes in the benefice. We would generally expect about forty at our special annual services such as Harvest Festival and the Christmas Carol Service.

Finance

The PCC constantly strives to maintain the fabric of our lovely church. Over the past eight years we have successfully raised funds to replace an aged central heating system and had the five bells rehung in the newly refurbished tower.

As a church, we support the Food Cupboard with regular donations and make charitable donations from some of our fund-raising events. Fund-raising is actively pursued and PCC members, with the support of others in the village, enthusiastically hold a variety of events.

The church is opposite the Village Hall where church visitors may use the car park and make use of the toilet facilities. We are also represented on the Village Hall Committee.

The PCC actively supports village events. We consider ourselves a small but effective team, dedicated to keeping the church's presence felt and appreciated here in our village community so they know their church is here to support them in every way, come what may.



St James Church



Service at Upton Old Church 2015

Our Church

St James Church was built in 1865 replacing the old church which is in a remote corner of the parish. The church is quite large and can seat 125, but is light and cheerful with a red carpet and a lovely small Victorian organ which is in good tune. The church is heated electrically and has undergone considerable repairs in recent years including re-roofing the vestry. The current quinquennial survey was good and recommendations in it are now mostly achieved. The active churchyard is kept tidy and well mown and is full of wild flowers in the spring.

We are currently a Festival Church due to the small number of regular congregation from our parish of just over 120 souls.

UPTON



Tea for the Church

Worship

We have been having five services a year. Nevertheless these are well attended with over 40 at both Harvest and Carol services. We very much hope to return to more regular services with any increase of new residents in the parish in the near future.

Every five years we have an outdoor service and picnic at the old ruined medieval church nearby. In the past this has been taken by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, our archdeacons, and visiting clergy and on two occasions has had a Brass Band to accompany the hymns.

Our Congregation

We have an active PCC keen to keep our church alive, who, prior to Covid-19, organised fund raising and social events including Open Gardens, Bingo, Harvest suppers etc. We have 16 on our Electoral Roll.

Our Parish

Upton is fortunate in having a well-liked Inn with Caravan Club site, and an active coach and garage business. It is a small community, well spread out, of farming families, retired folk, and those who commute to other areas to work. Country sports are much enjoyed by a large proportion of the village with the local hunts often meeting at the Inn.

The disturbing pandemic has shown that our community is caring, especially for those who are lonely or isolated, with collections and deliveries of shopping and medicines to those self-isolating and a pop up shop run by our Inn.

We may have small congregations, but we have much good Christian love and will give a warm welcome to a lively and active new incumbent.



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

Our Diocesan vision is:

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

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

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

The diocesan strategy is built around three priorities:

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

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

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

The Ven Simon Hill, Archdeacon of Taunton

EXMOOR DEANERY

29 Churches - 7 benefices.

Our vision:- 'start where people are and discover together where God would have us be'.

We support the Food Cupboard & the Exmoor Youth Project in an area of low social mobility and mixed need.

The Dulverton benefice, with its hard-working team of ministers, contributes significantly to deanery life. The Parish MAP is part of the deanery MAP with its A4 leaflet.

The Ministry for Mission leaflet is available from the Diocesan website.

Chapter is warmly welcoming; we enjoy time together in different parts of the deanery. We meet monthly for a Eucharist and business with some social occasions. We are mutually supportive, encourage one another and seek to build up discipleship in the deanery.

Rev. Caroline Ralph – Rural Dean

A Prayer for our Benefice

Loving Lord, we pray for our benefice,
that in this time of vacancy
we should learn still more confidently
to be your hands and your voice,
living and loving
as you would have us do.

We pray that you would send us a preacher,
a shepherd and a friend
to draw us even closer to your will,
and to encourage us
in the work you ask of us.
Amen.

