

Parish profile

Chenderit Benefice

The Benefice is a large group of eight parishes, which covers almost the whole churchmanship of the Church of England, under the leadership of a St Stephen's House-trained Anglo-Catholic priest.

We offer a true house for duty post in that you will have the support of a team of clergy and will only have to work three days a week. This can be either a Friday to Sunday or Sunday to Tuesday or a mix to suit the candidate. The Benefice strategy under the current Rector has been to develop a selection of worship and traditions so that anyone new to the area can find something to make them feel at home.

This was one of only four benefices to be open for public worship on the third national lockdown in 2021 within the Northampton Archdeaconry. Overall, it's a good mix of parishes in a great location, being just an hour by train to either Birmingham or London. The house offered will be in Middleton Cheney, which has a bus service up to 11pm at night into and out of Banbury and which has now been extended to Bicester Village. The Benefice runs a foodbank for the area.

The Clergy

The Rector

Father Nicholas Leggett

has been in Holy orders for 21 years and became Rector in 2018 after serving in a Society parish in Coventry for eight years. He is a training incumbent for the Diocese of Peterborough and it is hoped that a curate will be in post for 2024. Nick serves on Bishop's Council and the Board of Patronage, he is also Chapter Clerk supporting the new Rural Dean. Nick also serves as an Army Chaplain with Warwickshire Army Cadets. He is a priest associate of Walsingham, a rugby, greyhound and horse racing supporter and a real ale drinker.

The retired clergy

Father Philip Ball

is one of two retired clergy who serve in the team. Philip was the Team Rector of Bicester and later, the Rector of Abington before retiring to Brackley and he takes several services each month. He is from the Catholic wing of the Church.

Rev. Celia Parks

is the second retired clergy appointed to the parish and, like the Rector, comes from Coventry Diocese. Celia also takes several services each month. She originally came from Exmoor and has a background in the countryside and country pursuits. She has a passion for pastoral ministry especially within the farming community and is a member of the Agricultural Chaplains Association. She is the Farming Chaplain for the Brackley Deanery.

The Churches and Villages

St Peter and St Paul CHACOMBE



Chacombe is a small village with less than 1,000 people. There is a pub and the bus runs through the village. Chacombe has three services each month, two Communion services and one Informal Worship service and is very 'middle of the road'. One of the Benefice LPAs lives in the parish and helps with communion. There is very good church school in which the Rector regularly takes services. THE MAUNDY THURSDAY WATCH AND GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE ARE HELD HERE. Chacombe has a new extended churchyard and, like most of the benefice, this is an open churchyard. Chacombe PCC runs as a joint council with Warkworth and this is working well. The church itself is behind the Village pub and we are able to use the pub carpark for services; this is a longstanding agreement between the church and the pub and the new landlord has agreed to this continuing. One of the two care homes in the Benefice is in the parish and the Rector takes a Communion service there once a month; the LPA leads further services at the home each month. This church is the base of the foodbank, which is run by the Rector and a small team

St Peter GREATWORTH



This village has an excellent pub (free house), a social club and a shop with post office. It also has a state school, which the Rector visits regularly, with about 60 children registered at the school. St Peter's, which is the smallest of the eight churches, has two services each month, one Communion and another lay lead. It is 'low-church' in style but very formal. Communion is according to Common Worship. The lay lead service has coffee before the service. It should be noted that half of the village is in the parish of Marston St Lawrence (parish boundaries mean very little in urban areas but in country areas there is an odd sense that parish boundaries count) and even though the two have very different churchmanship, they work very closely together with joint PCC meetings. Greatworth has some social housing and has had need for food support, especially over the Covid period. The Methodist church in the village is active and has regular coffee mornings. We have a joint harvest service with them each year. Greatworth is the most easterly of the churches, between Middleton Cheney and Brackley and about and is about a 10 min drive from each.

St Lawrence

MARSTON St LAWRENCE



The Village has no pub and no shop, but it does have a farm shop and a village hall. Village life is centred on its cricket club, which has a good standard of play. The church is fully Anglo-Catholic and is one of only two in the deanery, the other being at Kings Sutton. Incense is used for High Mass once a month. The second monthly service is lay lead and aimed at children. This service was hit hard by Covid lockdowns but is slowly recovering with the number of children attending growing slowly. St Lawrence hosts the EASTER VIGIL MASS. It is seen as the second largest church of the group and has by far the largest building and is therefore used when a large building is needed. In the church are statues of the Virgin Mary and of our Lady of Walsingham and there is a tabernacle in the Lady Chapel for reserved sacrament.

All Saints

MIDDLETON CHENEY



Middleton Cheney has by far the biggest population of the Benefice with around 4.500 people; it has something of a small-town feel, but everyone calls it a village. Being essentially a commuter village, it attracts incoming families due to its two pre-schools, primary academy and secondary school, and the extensive growth and range of new housing. There is a residential home for older people, a sheltered housing complex and a row of Almshouses; there is also a residential home for teenagers. Middleton has a strong working-class core of local born people living in the social housing areas of the village which make up about 1/4 of Middleton, even though a large number of these are now privately owned. It is largely this area of the village which gets support from the Foodbank. The village has an excellent bus service to both Banbury and Brackley with the last bus from Banbury at 11.30pm

Middleton features half-a-dozen shops including a Co-op (with post office), general store, pharmacy and two pubs. The Village Hall hosts a range of community activities and, while the Social Club (Memorial Hall) is not open on a regularly basis, it adjoins playing fields where several sports clubs meet. Middleton also has a community-supported library plus an amateur dramatic group, a community choir, a history society, and a gardening club amongst others. The Primary Academy has about 350 pupils; assemblies are taken occasionally by the Rector and the children come to look at the church as part of their curriculum. The Chenderit Academy (secondary school) in Middleton Cheney is well supported by families in the area and achieves good academic results with excellent student standards. There are good links between the school and the Benefice.

All Saint's Church is the only centre of worship in the village. The Methodist Church closed some 4 years ago, and the Baptist Centre closed due to Covid. The congregation is mixed, about half are evangelical, a few being ex members of the two closed churches, and half more traditional Anglicans. Each month on Sunday's, there are two Holy Communion services, and two lay-led services.

There are well attended weekly services of Holy Communion each Wednesday and Thursday morning and this has been a growth area for the parish, unlike Sunday which has not recovered to pre covid levels and shows no signs of doing so. The church has reserved sacrament next to the high altar. In term time, there is a service for pre-school children and their families (First Steps) on Wednesday

afternoons. The church is also open on Wednesdays from 10.30 – 12.30 when we welcome visitors from the village and beyond. Often people will come to view the windows of this nationally important grade one building. We offer refreshments during this time at 'Jolly Teapot', which serves as a coffee morning for the village with people from the care home attending alongside others. The parish was part of a parish council led program of winter warming where we opened for longer hours on Wednesdays between January and March. This church will be supporting the season of invitation in the autumn and may introduce new services or change existing ones. (The other churches will also take part, but there is no expectation to add or change services at this time)

All Saints has a projector, screen and cameras, which were used extensively during Covid, with services being relayed on YouTube for those unable to attend in person. These are now used for the informal services and occasionally for Holy Communion, as there is no resident organist. There is facility for recording special services (weddings etc) and the church is used for Society meetings and occasional concerts.

All Saints Church is home to an important and beautiful group of stained glass windows by William Morris & Co added between 1865 and 1893 and the church is regularly visited by historians and enthusiasts. A book was commissioned, which was published in 2019, the first dedicated account of the stained glass of All Saints, made possible through support of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

St James the Less SULGRAVE



This is one of two new parishes added to the Benefice in January 2020, the other being Thorpe Mandeville. It has the only pre 9am Service in the Benefice - on the second Sunday of the month. Sulgrave has a pub, a community run village shop and the only church hall in the Benefice. The hall has had a full upgrade due to money from HS2 and, yes, HS2 goes nearby. St James the Less has services every week apart from the first Sunday of the month, when Thorpe has its monthly prayer book communion. The two parishes are less than two miles apart, with Sulgrave being the longest drive from Middleton at 10-15 minutes. Sulgrave has a lively PCC and, like Chacombe, is used to supporting community projects (it has the village library). The Rector added an extra communion service on the third Sunday, and the last Sunday of the month is either a morning informal service during the winter months or evensong in the summer. This village is the home of George Washington and often attracts visitors from America. The weekly services are taken from Common Worship using the traditional order. There are services from time to time for Americans visiting Washington's home and the priest taking the service always gets an invitation to lunch afterwards!

**St Mary the Virgin
THENFORD**



This is one of the two smallest villages in the Benefice, with less than 100 people. It has no shops no pub and the village is super peaceful, not being near any main road. It has one service a month, an East facing Communion Service following Common Worship prayer B, taken in a light catholic style. The owners of Thenford House attend services and support the work of the PCC. The church overlooks the gardens of the main house, which gives a very peaceful feel to worship and people travel for that experience in worship. There is no organ in the church and music is from a music centre that is operated by one of the two churchwardens.

St John the Baptist
THORPE MANDEVILLE



Thorpe Mandeville very near to HS2 and this is a big subject for the small local community. Like several of the smaller villages it has some social housing which has support from our foodbank. It has a very good food pub which the Rector thinks has the best pub food in the wider area. St John's church hosts one Holy Communion service a month, which is BCP with the priest facing east. This church has a good organ and music, and the parish has a well-attended carol service each year in the pub.

St Mary
WARKWORTH



There is no village of Warkworth. It is a hamlet comprising just a few buildings, but the parish contains the small village of Overthorpe nearby. The church itself is in the middle of a field. YES, it is in a field and, apart from a Carol Service does not hold services during the winter months. When the Rector came in 2018 it had a congregation of between 4 and 6. As part of his strategy review it became the Prayer Book evensong church. Today, from Easter until Harvest, we hold a choral evensong service once a month, from the BCP and with a very good choir with a congregation now in the mid 20's each month. Like every church in the Benefice, St John's has a service of Holy Communion on Easter day (the Rector's policy is that all churches have communion on Easter day, therefore the house for duty priest should expect to take at least two communion services on this day). The church has a great view of Banbury and it is likely that a new Community Radio Station will use the building for an aerial, which will provide a small income which will help with parish share.

The Deanery, Diocese, and area



Brackley deanery is one of the most rural in the country. Middleton Cheney with 4,500 souls is the second largest parish with Kings Sutton & Woodford Halse having 3,500. The only other over 1,500. Currently there are only three full time clergy (The Rector, Matthew Robinson at Kings Sutton, and Richard Duncan at Brackley) in the deanery and a house for duty priest at Culworth.

There are vacancies for three other full-time clergy in the Astwick Vale, Astwell and Fiveways benefices. Matthew Robinson at Kings Sutton is Rural Dean. The Vicar of Brackley is full time and there is a new House for Duty priest in the Culworth Benefice. The PTO and licensed retired clergy in Peterborough Diocese must be under the leadership of an incumbent and our Benefice benefits from the support of Celia and Philip. The retired clergy are led by the ex-Archdeacon of Birmingham, John Duncan, who always attends chapter. There is a good group of retired clergy in the deanery. Its worth noting that there is a clergy group called "The South Northants clerical society" which has been meeting on a Tuesday for a very long time and you will be very welcome to join them. The Diocese covers the counties of Northamptonshire, Rutland and most of the city of Peterborough. It has a large group of evangelical clergy who meet together and the smaller group of catholic clergy get on very well. It is a happy diocese and we are lucky to have an excellent Archdeacon – a Northampton Saints supporter. The county is a very strong rugby union area.

The benefice is so far from Peterborough Cathedral, that it would be right to say that there are eight others nearer. Even Gloucester is closer! We, therefore, do see Banbury as our county town and the Benefice is part of "Christians together in Banbury". We may be a rural deanery, but you can jump on the bus in Middleton get to Banbury railway station in less than 20 mins, even faster by car, and can be in Birmingham or London in an hour.

For an informal chat, please phone the Rector Father Nicholas Leggett or the Rural Dean, Father Matthew Robinson.