



The Anglican Churches of Raunds, Stanwick, Ringstead & Hargrave

BENEFICE PROFILE



Welcome to our Church

Dear Candidate

Thank you so much for taking the time to receive and read our benefice profile. We hope it offers an enticing glimpse of the opportunities to lead our Benefice forwards in ways that connect with our different communities: winning many more hearts and minds for Christ.

As you will read, in our own way we are already “on the move”. The interregnum has proved a goad not a barrier and brought blessings: but now is the time for our next step forwards.

For years, we have remained deeply committed to grow our Christian community across the four local communities within our benefice: through our prayer and worship; by helping deepen our own understanding and that of others; by bringing God’s Word to strengthen faith in some whilst reaching out to others who as yet never really heard of Christ or that He died and rose to offer His saving grace to us all – providing His living water for a thirsty world.

We look forward to meeting you; trusting that you like us, and that we like you; that we understand each other, and want to work together, under your baton.

We simply seek your teaching, your encouragement and your leadership all the better to meet neighbours where they are; to help others more clearly understand the relevance and importance of Jesus our Saviour; so they too finally come home rejoicing that they know God, and enjoy a living relationship with Him forever through His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you are the person who connects with this, who prays for our growth in faith – then we welcome you warmly and wholeheartedly into our midst. We will have many happy, challenging, God-filled years together doing exactly what He asked of us all : making disciples.

God bless you!

May you and we both choose wisely, and thereby be blessed together,

Yours in love and faith

The Four Spires’ PCC’s

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Our Vision and Mission

A significant opportunity to lead strong church growth generated from outreach to create young new Christians, alongside restoring the faith and understanding amongst “nominal” Christians

Worship and Outreach

The four churches enjoy a diversity of worship between them, ranging from traditional Eucharist to informal All-Age worship, with each endeavouring to be inclusive and accommodating in style for the community and congregation they serve.

Our churches work to meet their communities’ spiritual and physical needs. We constantly look for new ways to be relevant to our local town and villages, creating opportunities for us to carry Christ into a rapidly changing world.

We take seriously our responsibility for the spiritual growth of our parishioners, and encourage prayer and study groups to deepen understanding and strengthen faith.

Given the expanding population of the benefice, there is clear opportunity for much greater outreach in each parish, particularly Raunds, in ways that appropriately connect with the nature and age of each community.

Outreach across the benefice in the last five years has been almost exclusively towards children in the local schools and nurseries and limited in impact. There is therefore huge opportunity to do more and reach with equal vigour into the adult and elderly segments of the population as well as the youthful.

This is our journey.

What we can offer you

The Four Spires Benefice in Northamptonshire seeks to appoint a priest who will direct and lead all aspects of ministry in a growing Benefice.

Our benefice is diverse in its community, ranging from the thriving and rapidly expanding town of Raunds (c 11,500 people) to the little village of Hargrave (c.200 people).

We seek a priest willing to lead our diverse Christian community forward: someone who enjoys difference. A person of faith who will teach, encourage and enable growth in our faith, so that we might more effectively bear witness through our lives in our communities, ministering to all our neighbours whether infants and school children or the retired and aging.

Our prayerful desire is to see growth in Christian belief and understanding within our four parishes – blessing our congregations and our wider communities.

The massive growth in population in Raunds Town clearly is providing new opportunities for outreach and growth – perhaps particularly through the children and youth outreach that we already self-funded and ran for eight years now, but also through fresh prayer and action that touches people of all age groups and callings. The significant retired and aging population in our town and villages provides us with opportunity to win hearts and strengthen faith during the later years of people’s lives – reigniting the teaching and faith those people probably enjoyed earlier in their lives. It is never too late to turn.

The ideal incumbent will therefore be someone who, rooted in the Word, is able to lead a team built up across the four parishes, ministering into the communities that we serve.

Our benefice enjoys diversity of worship, prayer and teaching: we recognise the need for “different strokes for different folks”. We are not dogmatic and therefore may at times seem slightly at odds with the “latest new thing” promoted by the Church. We simply like to find and meet people where they are – respectfully, welcomingly, lovingly - with humour and laughter alongside empathy and compassion.

During covid we introduced weekly “virtual” church services, worship and meetings to keep our church communities intact. Now out of covid, but unexpectedly in interregnum once again, we remember the real benefit of face to face meetings; the challenge of pulling together within each parish and body of the benefice as a real “live” team; working to continue church growth and become more relevant to each of our distinctive local communities. There is still so much more work to be done here; so many neighbours to reach - and our approach will no doubt need encouragement, review, adjustment and (perhaps above all) the fuel of lots of prayer.

In the interregnum, our church wardens and their PCCs have done a great job in ensuring that the pattern and quality of our services is maintained (even enhanced). The depth of teaching, worship and prayer brought to us by the many members of retired local clergy, who lead services and pray with us, proves most inspiring. We are therefore hungry: and ready for the next step under a new Incumbent.

After covid, delightfully, we have seen returning numbers in our congregations:

- In Raunds town, where there is a rapidly growing population and new industry, our prayerful funding and employment of a part-time children and families worker for over 8 years now has provided new connections with nurseries and schools, together with the establishment of outreach to youth through a drop-in centre – albeit church attendance remains a challenge.
- In Stanwick village, we have been much encouraged by the local congregation reaching out and establishing vibrant youth mission through Café Church, an active worship leader and evangelist.
- In Ringstead the church has placed itself at the heart of its community with an “open door”; has improved facilities within the church; and is now working through its close ties to its village and rebuild the thriving youth ministry it enjoyed previously.
- Meanwhile in Hargrave village, our main task has been to reignite faith and hope in Jesus amongst our friends and neighbours many of whom are quite elderly: and our weekly church attendance as well as our church roll has grown here too. A recent prophetic word given by the visiting priest taking our harvest festival service indicates that our church will become visibly “fired” by the Holy Spirit and an inspiration that causes others to similarly “catch fire”. Unlikely though this may seem to some, we believe this Godly vision will be fulfilled by Him through our prayers and our actions. We look forward to those days.

May God provide His Light to our path and prove a bright Lamp to our feet as we continue to walk forwards in faith.¹

¹ Psalm 119 v105

Our Benefice

Introduction to the Deanery

The Four Spires Benefice is part of Higham Deanery which is the smallest deanery in the diocese and made up of fifteen parishes grouped into seven benefices. The deanery synod which meets three times per year has a varied programme of speakers and business and is open to all clergy and laity. The stipendiary clergy meet six times a year for breakfast, prayer and mutual support. There is a deanery evensong and twice annual deanery meetings for the support of both churchwardens and parish treasurers. Parishes within the deanery support each other by providing service cover when they are able to do so at times of illness or vacancy; retired clergy and readers have been especially generous in this respect. Our Rural Dean retired last July, and this will now bring new leadership as a consequence. Indeed our Bishop, Rural Dean and Incumbent will all be very new during 2024 – providing an opportunity for bringing renewed vigour to local leadership for us all.

Introduction to the Benefice

Scale and location

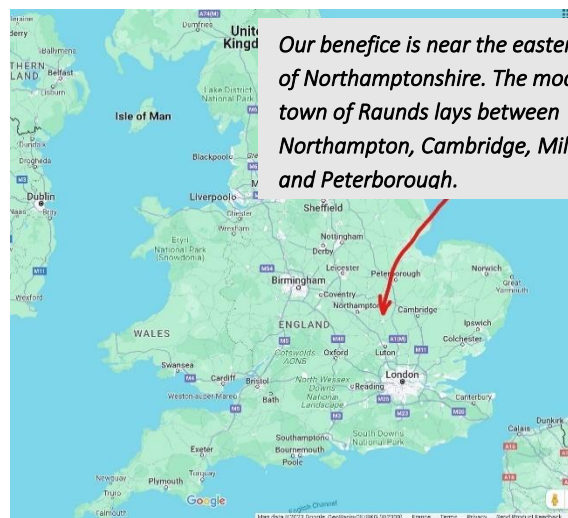
This lively benefice is part of the deanery of Higham sitting within the Diocese of Peterborough, and comprises one industrial town (Raunds) together with three village parishes (Stanwick, Ringstead and Hargrave) which have been working together within this benefice for more than 15 years.

Within East Northamptonshire, the benefice sits close to the intersection of two trunk roads, the A14 and A45, (whilst the A1 and M1 lie a little to the east and west respectively) giving good major road links to Peterborough, Northampton and Cambridge as well as other major towns. There are excellent rail connections too, with Wellingborough, Northampton and St Neots stations all within easy distance from Raunds - strategically straddling the Midland, West Coast and East Coast Main Line express services to London, Manchester, York, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The nearby ‘Rushden Lakes’ retail park with M&S, Fraser, Next and other main stream shopping brands is always busy, and has a good variety of popular restaurants, cinema and other leisure facilities as well as boating and a popular nature ramble around the lakes.

Because of its geographic location, Raunds is rapidly expanding as part of regionally targeted economic and residential growth, with new logistics industries creating jobs and local wealth. Many hundreds of new homes have been built in the last 10 years as part of this planned expansion, and this growth is set fair to continue.

The benefice as a whole encompasses around fifteen thousand people, and is set to increase further. Ethnic diversity is growing, and there is a broad spread of socio-economic grouping.



Our benefice is near the eastern boundary of Northamptonshire. The modest market town of Raunds lays between Northampton, Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Peterborough.



Map showing the relative geography of the Benefice parishes

Housing and People: a Christian Opportunity

The recent influx in new jobs and new people, many with young families, has undoubtedly helped to generate significant wealth and reinvigorated the life and liveliness of Raunds as a town with considerable associated industry: however these changes inevitably also bring some modern social challenges to the town of alcohol and drugs with related poverty and deprivation for those ensnared by these.

Given the changes in economy and population, there is significant opportunity to witness to the increasing population, whether adult, teenage or child, and to meet their spiritual as well as physical needs. There is also a significant community of the elderly, many of whom have lived here most of their working lives, seeing their community change through thick and thin, and not moved away.

Part of the challenge and opportunity for the benefice is to recognise that the spiritual needs of the elderly (who often may have participated in Christian teaching and worship during their schooldays) can be distinctly different from those of the younger children (who may never have been exposed to the core beliefs of Christianity) .

Strong links are in place between the Methodist and Anglican congregations of Raunds (sharing occasional services) and there is also a Roman Catholic congregation and a Praise Community congregation. All four of the Raunds churches join together for a march of witness on Good Friday

and the annual Methodist Covenant Service is usually shared with St Peter's. Ringstead enjoys a good relationship with the 'Shared Church' which is largely Baptist and also shares occasional services. Churches of other denominations in Raunds are experiencing strong growth in their congregations. There is opportunity to work together with the other churches rather than to compete. The benefice is part of the East Northants Faith Group which is very active in areas of social responsibility and need and runs a weekly food bank and community café in Raunds.

Our Four Communities

Raunds Town

Raunds is a rapidly growing town.

Formerly known as a thriving centre for manufacturing boots and shoes, Raunds is now enjoying industrial rebirth as home to a number of major distribution centres, including DPD, Hotpoint, Dr Martens and Howden Joinery. This is bringing significant population and housing growth with two large housing estates currently under construction on the outskirts of town.

Raunds Town has a population of about 11,500 people, with a goodly mix of young and old. Growth is typically from new employment opportunities and therefore typically families new to the town

There are lots of small businesses in the town which offer employment, whilst many other people commute to larger towns and cities nearby for their work.

There is a primary school, infants' school, a C of E junior school (St Peter's Academy) and a secondary school (Manor Sports Academy) which encompasses the junior school. The schools, especially St Peter's School, hold services in church.

The town of Raunds has two doctor's surgeries, also a dentist, osteopath, podiatrist and pharmacies. The nearest major hospital is in Kettering. There are a number of care homes and homes for the elderly.

Raunds High Street has a post office, hardware stores, bakers, chemists, greengrocer and busy supermarkets. With its restaurants, fish and chip shops, cafes and pubs (as well as the ubiquitous McDonalds and KFC) this growing town is increasingly well catered for within the heart of its community. A small market is held on Fridays in Raunds town square.

Raunds also offers easy road access (and bus services) to nearby Rushden Lakes Retail Park, with its associated M&S food and retail stores, a newly upgraded Waitrose, restaurants, lots of clothing and fashion stores, a Boots chemist, kitchen shops, jewellers, stationers and DIY stores.

Raunds is served by an hourly bus service to Northampton, via Stanwick, Rushden, Irthlingborough and Wellingborough. There is also a less frequent bus service to Kettering. Raunds also has easy access to the A14, A45, A6, A1 and M1 and several main line train stations.

Last year Raunds held a large weekend transport festival, and organises annual music festivals. Pre-covid, the Raunds Music and Drama Society (MADS) held several stage performances throughout the year.

The Raunds Temperance Brass Band was founded in 1886 and has a long history in the town. It has won many prizes over the years both locally and nationally, and deserves its place in history because in 1905 the band led the march to London by the Footwear Workers who were fighting for better conditions and working wage. Today it still attends local events such as the march to the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

The town cricket club plays in the Northamptonshire Cricket League. There are active rugby and football clubs, variously providing men's, women's and youth teams. Whilst slightly unusually the town also sports an archery club.

The town holds a Christmas festival in the square which has a bandstand, with a brass ensemble playing carols. Open air services are occasionally celebrated here by St Peter's in association with other denominations.

The modern rectory provides an attractive, spacious, 4-bedroom, family home and office, situated in its own grounds, set back from the street, and close to the town square in the middle of Raunds near to St Peter's church.

Stanwick Village

Stanwick is a rural parish within North Northamptonshire and is home to approx. 2,000 people with c. 750 homes. It is a bustling lively community – one of the largest villages in Northants, positioned tightly adjacent to Raunds and the A45

Within this large village there are a variety of businesses including a post office and village shop, a hairdressers, a public house and a Chinese take away. There is a dementia care home, private pre-school nursery, community pre-school group, football club, bowls club, WI, bellringers and handbell ringers, drama group, an active village hall committee, allotments and a hotel which is a popular venue for weddings.

Stanwick Primary School became an Academy in 2016. It is a mixed school for children aged from 4 to 11 years old. There is also the Acorn Day Nursery for children aged from 4 months to 4 years old, that was rated Outstanding by OfSTED in 2022 together with a non-profit Stanwick Pre-school Playgroup for children aged from 2 to 5 years old.

An annual fundraising event for St. Laurence Church is the Country Fayre, this starts with children's brave Teddy bears zip wiring from the top of the church through the church yard with a volunteer rescue team on hand should any bear get into difficulties. We also have a produce show, live music and lots of tea and cake !

The Stanwick Races Event is held annually on Easter Monday and consists of a 10 km Road Race and a 2 km Fun Run. It is organised by volunteers from the village and the surrounding area. It includes participants from a number of countries in addition to semi-professionals and amateurs from the local area.

The Duke of Wellington Public House is busy and serves good quality food, whilst there is also the Stanwick Club, a village shop with post office, a good butchers, a dog groomers, a cafe and a bistro.

In 2006 Stanwick Lakes country park opened on the outskirts of the village, managed by the Rockingham Forest Trust. It comprises some 300 hectares of former gravel pits and is part of the larger River Nene Regional Park. Located in close proximity to the country park is a selection of fishing lakes and a rural hotel. In 2009 the Parish Council purchased 10 acres (4 hectares) of land, now called the "Parish Fields", at the eastern end of the village to provide a pocket park, wildflower meadow, recreation area and allotments, whilst in 2011 a new village hall was built close to the church. This is a vibrant, active and large community offering lots of energy, engagement and Christian opportunity.

Ringstead Village

Similar to Stanwick, Ringstead is another large busy village with a population of c. 1750 people, with c. 650 homes. This big village lays very close to Raunds town. Ringstead's primary school is situated next to St Mary's Church, with which it enjoys close ties. There is an agreed village neighbourhood plan to direct the future development of the village as the population is set to continue growing.

Amongst residents, there is a fairly even split across age groups and sexes but a low number of ethnic minorities. There is a settled Traveller community sited on the edge of the village which engages well with the village. The village has a mix of owner occupied, rented and social housing.

The main street has shops and a good quality Indian takeaway restaurant. The village boasts a lively social club, and is renowned for its strong footballing tradition - which after 125 years of fielding strong teams has now joined forces with the neighbouring Stanwick Rangers to further their sporting success. There are also two recreation grounds, one of which has a football pitch, changing rooms and outdoor adult gym equipment.

There is a residential facility for adults with learning disabilities, a village primary school, a pre-school group, one public house and a social club, a village store, chip shop, Indian take-away, hairdresser and post office.

The River Nene runs past the village and through a series of locks. Somewhat unusually, Ringstead has a large boating community with more than 250 river craft moored at Willy Watt Marina and Blackthorn Lake Marina – some of whom are regular worshippers, one of whom has on occasion helped lead our Wednesday Worship, complete with his guitar and lovely dog.

Kinewell Lake, a 35.4 hectare nature reserve lies to the west of the village, is owned by Ringstead Parish Council and managed by a Trust. It provides a SSSI wetland site of international importance. Birdlife here includes shovellers, great crested grebes and kingfishers, all living alongside otters and muntjac deer. There is a one and a half mile footpath round the lake which makes for a peaceful ramble. A cycle, bridle and footpath track runs between Stanwick Lakes and Islip, which together with the Nene Way all offering easy leisure walking.

Hargrave Village

By contrast with the other parishes which lie tightly adjacent to Raunds, this small village is further afield, perched right on the boundary where Northants, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire all join. Thereby this village is also right on the edge of our diocese as well as the county.

Our community is tight knit, with the church literally at its centre. The church is well supported and integrated into the village, with a willing hardy congregation, who are already working for growth in Christian ministry and belief within the village.

A rural, largely agricultural community, with a population of c.200 people and c.106 houses, Hargrave nestles adjacent to the B645. The picturesque village has no public transport links or public facilities other than the church and its village hall (which is owned by the church).

There is a lovely network of country walks connecting with adjacent villages, which offer super dog walking, great brambling, sightings of deer, pheasant and lots of red kites.

Nonetheless, rather unusually, over the last decade this little village has organised and run an annual high-quality classical music festival lasting for 3 or 4 days (the Hargrave Music Festival) with stunning professional performances in the church and its village hall from well-known international musicians and opera singers, as well as providing a “Come and Sing” sung mass on the final Sunday afternoon. This stunning series of concerts has been with the full support and assistance of various PCC members over the years, and helped (literally) bring people into our church who would normally never cross the threshold.

In 2023, the PCC also organise a sell-out Gospel Choir concert which not only raised funds for the church, but delightfully was perceived by many present to provide an invigorating “boost” of the Holy Spirit as God’s Name was (very) loudly proclaimed to the rafters and beyond. It somehow unscored our new start.

One of Hargrave village’s other (few) claims to fame is that “Yellow Mellow” cooking oil is produced here on the UK’s first carbon-neutral farm, which is owned and run by one of our farmers and his family.

All Hallows’ constitutes a small active, tight-knit Christian community who love worship, singing, prayer, bible-study and who are encouraging others in our village to take heart and be more active in their faith.

Our Four Spires

Our “Four Spires” within the benefice constitute the churches which serve our four parishes:

St Peter’s Church, Raunds



West End, St Peter's church,



Jubilee preparations in the church

The church as a worshipping people:

At St Peter’s we hope for a priest who will be an active, visible presence in the town. A person able to build up a declining church, dedicated to spiritual welfare and with plenty of “people” skills and a good sense of humour. Current support is given by visiting retired clergy, a Reader, Lay Worship Leaders, Eucharist assistants, a Youth and Children’s worker, two Churchwardens and PCC secretary.

We are a traditional church with a leaning towards catholic but accepting and looking to develop other forms of worship, keeping the Eucharist as the main form of worship. The electoral roll presently stands at 56.

St Peter’s has enjoyed a long-standing musical tradition. Unfortunately, various difficulties (together with covid) have affected this. At present St Peters’ only has a part-time organist, and we have lost some key members of our choir, which has disbanded. We intend to reestablish our choir as soon as we have a full-time organist/ musician to lead it.

We hold regular monthly meetings of a prayer group, and also host Wednesday Worship, a Friday Club and a Messy Church.

St Peter’s has organized and hosted a significant flower festival in the church each year. This draws a good crowd of over 500 people over the main weekend.

Raunds is home to three care homes and two sheltered housing complexes. Holy Communion is held at a care home each month.

At the time of the introduction of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, St Peter’s, Raunds, PCC voted for acceptance.



Wedding in the beautiful setting of St Peter's Church, Raunds



Coffee morning

The church and the community it serves:

The church has recently started a new initiative with collective worship services at St Peter's Academy and all schools are visited by the benefice Children and Families' Worker. The infant and junior schools also attend the church during the year for Experience Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

There is a St Peter's Brownie pack, and we have links with Beavers and Cubs.

There are three other churches in Raunds Town; Methodist, Catholic and a Community Church. We have a good relationship with these and we come together to worship in the town for Good Friday and Christmas.

Adjacent to the rectory, there is the St Peter's Community Enterprise Centre which is run by a Management Committee with about 10 years remaining on the lease. A coffee morning is held in the Centre on the town's market day (Fridays) and a Food Bank (Thursdays).

The church building and its resources:

St Peter's is a Grade 1 listed building and has had major works funded by Heritage Lottery, with plans for extensive reordering. The churchyard is closed and maintained by Raunds Town Council.

A small lending library of "religious" books is located in church.



The Christmas party preparations



The busy carol service at St Peter's

St. Laurence's Church, Stanwick



St. Laurence's family beetle drive in full swing

The church as a worshipping people:

St. Laurence has a forward-thinking congregation with a strong core of regular worshippers as well as a good number of younger members recently attracted and joining the church. We are an inclusive church and extend a warm welcome to all regardless of age, marital status or gender.

We have 40 members on the electoral roll with a core congregation of approx. 15 who regularly attend Holy Communion and an almost entirely different congregation who attend family services.

We therefore now hold a Café Church (both Continental and full English breakfasts!) on the first Sunday of the month which is lovely because it is mixing the two congregations together and welcoming people from within the village who are not regular worshippers.

Home Communion is delivered fortnightly or monthly to those who would like it and can no longer attend church.

The work of the priest in Stanwick is supported by a licenced lay minister and members of the congregation who assist with administration of the chalice, read lessons and welcome worshippers.

The church and the community it serves:

St. Laurence hosts a Youth Club which runs fortnightly for children in the village and is well attended with up to 35 children attending. The Youth Club holds at least one church service a year and encourages children to think about Christian life and the relevance of Jesus in today's world.

St. Laurence holds a "Little Treasures" group every term time Thursday morning. This is for pre-school children and their carers, where they enjoy play, song, prayer and craft with lots of laughs and refreshments.

The benefice children and families worker works closely with Stanwick Primary School. We lead monthly assemblies and they visit the Church several times a year to learn more about matters such as baptisms, weddings, Easter and Christmas.

A variety of activities take place throughout the year to enrich the life of the church and community: Lent Lunches, bell ringing, a book club, a summer country fayre with produce show, a harvest lunch, carols around the firepit and a Christingle service.



Christingles are popular...

... as is aeronautical engineering

The church building and its resources:

The Church building of St Laurence is Grade 1 listed, and is having its quinquennial review in the next couple of months. The building is in generally good order. We are currently investigating the possibility of pew removal which would give us and the village a more flexible and usable space.

We have a working party that meets monthly to keep on top of any maintenance jobs. The churchyard is closed.

Finances are kept in good order by a parish treasurer.



Bellringers' practice – Tuesday afternoons

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ringstead



Church of The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ringstead



Holy Communion

The church as a worshipping people:

As a church community we enjoy a variety of worship services each month: Morning Worship, All-Age Worship, “Big Sing” and a traditional Eucharist. All except the Eucharist are lay led. After a request from children in our worshipping family we are again beginning to offer Sunday School, initially on one Sunday per month. All services are currently held at 10am on Sunday mornings. Sadly the average attendance has dropped to around ten adults and a couple of children.

Although few in number we are actively working to re-engage with those who have drifted away from the worshipping community over the last few years and rebuilding ‘broken bridges’. We run monthly coffee mornings and ‘Tea-with Friends’ afternoons for the older generation.

We believe that the right candidate would be a visible presence in the village helping to engage and build up confidence in the Parish Church as a place of support as well as worship and community.

They would also need to be willing to engage with the leaders of the ‘Shared Church’ and continue



“Make Way, Make Way....”

to work closely with the village Primary school.

Although the parish no longer has any licensed lay ministers the members of the congregation are always willing to lend whatever support is needed. Services such as baptism, marriage and funeral services often involve large numbers of the village community so are very carefully prepared to encourage those occasional visitors to feel welcome and also to make any pastoral follow-up easier.

A ‘Service of Memories’ takes place on All Souls’ Day to allow families bereaved during the previous couple of years to continue their journey of grief in a ‘safe’ environment. This is always very well attended and appreciated.

Our youth and children's work has struggled to regain momentum since the covid lock-down. However, the good news is that Little Angels has now re-formed after covid and is thriving, bringing lively young life into the church each Monday of term time. Sunday School is in the early stages of reforming but already has very keen young members. Young people are involved in the regular reading/intercession rota.

The church and the community it serves:

As well as the Anglican Church there is also a 'Shared Church' which is largely Baptist, the members and leadership of which are very keen to build up a closer relationship. Shared worship is celebrated for the Week of prayer for Christian Unity, Good Friday (outdoor service of witness) and Remembrance Day.



Sunday School

The village Primary School has very strong links with the church, worshipping there once each week and also for celebratory services. Members of a worship team also visit the school on a weekly basis. Secondary schools are accessed in Raunds, Kettering, Oundle, Wellingborough and Kimbolton.

"Tea with Friends" meets monthly and provides a social occasion for the older members of the village to come together to enjoy companionship, and afternoon tea. This is especially valued by those who now struggle to have time away from home or to leave the village because of transport issues. It presents a wonderful pastoral opportunity.



*"Where's Wally?"
Competition*

The church building and its resources:

The building of St Mary's is around 800 years old and generally in good repair. The church is open daily between 8am and 4 or 5pm depending upon the season. This is very much appreciated by the people who visit to spend quiet time there or who just want to visit. There is a set of six bells in good repair which are rung for weddings and national celebrations. There is a large area at the rear of the church which has been cleared to create a social space and which has a servery and toilet and is used for extra seating for large services, especially weddings and funerals. There is also a designated children's' space which is well-loved. There is an efficient sound system and wi-fi is available. The building itself has a lead roof which is alarmed, as is the vestry.

The PCC meets at least bi-monthly. The current parish treasurer is also the stewardship officer for the diocese and so regularly reviews parish giving.

Whilst the parish previously struggled to pay its parish share due to a run of other expenses alongside a reduction in regular givers and a depletion of reserves, nonetheless we have been improving this situation through careful consideration of other expenditure, working hard to

encourage new church members and increasing fund-raising activities. Small successes encourage ever greater efforts.

There is a plot of land adjacent to the church which is used to provide a ready supply of cut flowers for use in the church whilst also providing good opportunities to engage with many people as they walk past while we are gardening there.

All Hallows' Church, Hargrave Village



Aerial View - All Hallows' Church, Hargrave

The church as a worshipping people:

Our small church, All Hallows', is well attended with a faithful weekly congregation of between 10-20 each Sunday, and an electoral role recently increased to 54. The church normal capacity is just over 100.

Our church community, like our village, is warm and welcoming; worship is sung with gusto; we enjoy committed prayerfulness and meaningful teaching. Although we have no formal "mission statement", we consider our calling to be providing witness within our village, particularly to help those at the older end of the age spectrum (much of our village) who learned of Jesus at school, but have since fallen away.

Our congregation enjoy a particularly well attended traditional Nine Lessons and Carols service each year, as well as a Christmas Eve Midnight Mass and a moving Service of Memories each All Souls' day. A solemn Good Friday vigil service is held each year. These occasional services are deeply appreciated in the wider community, and well-attended by the wider village community as well as folk from farther afield. Harvest Festival is also particularly well-attended and generously supported with goods donated for onwards transport and distribution through St Peter's Raunds town food bank.

Our parish took the initiative more than a decade ago to start its own "Home Group" providing in-depth bible study courses with prayers on a Tuesday evenings. The Group is hosted and led by local church members. Courses have included old and new testament studies. These evenings studying and praying together have also attracted Christian neighbours of other denominations to join in and share their faith too. This has become a resourceful vein through which to strengthen our faith and trust in God.



A joyful baptism – All Hallows’ 2023

All Hallows’ church and the community we serve:

This year our church has returned (post covid) to organising fundraising events – A Primrose Tea, a Strawberry Tea, village musical recitals, concerts in the church and the like.

The church runs a free coffee morning for village residents once a month, which is hosted and funded by a variety of residents in their homes. This provides a very welcome social engagement that the older members of the village have really come to appreciate.

In similar vein, (pre-covid) members of the church hosted delightful luncheons for the elderly at the home of a PCC member several times each year, including a special Christmas lunch. These occasions drew in a couple of dozen older village residents, were greatly appreciated and provide a lovely opportunity for fun, delicious food and friendship amongst a community who otherwise become more isolated by age and restricted mobility. 2023 will see this activity resume.

Again pre-covid, the church started hosting a quarterly Men’s Breakfast on a Saturday in the Village Hall. This attracted 2-3 dozen attendees, with a Christian witness/speaker and open discussion after the hearty fry-up. It had a promising beginning providing a useful way to meet the “fringe” and encourage men into faith. The intent is to start this up again from the beginning of 2024.

Our church has lovely acoustics, and annually over the last ten years, the church has hosted a major high-quality classical music festival lasting 3 or 4 days (the Hargrave Music Festival) with stunning professional performances in the church and hall from well-known international musicians and opera singers, as well as a “Come and Sing” sung mass on the final Sunday afternoon (Mozart, Fauré, Haydn Nelson Mass etc) ²

² [2016 Programme – Hargrave Music Festival.](#)

The church building and its resources:

The 12th century All Hallows' church at the heart of Hargrave village recently undertook repairs to the floor and roof, and completely refurbished the vestry. More external works (for which it has a combination of funding and self-help) together with some internal flooring repairs are identified in the latest quinquennial report: these are in hand and the remainder planned for execution in the coming 24 months.



The newly refurbished vestry



The village war memorial

The church enjoys 4 bells which are rung on occasion (and we have new village bellringers in training to enable this to become more frequent), stained glass, very old pews and a fine brand new 3-console organ which is a real delight in support of our prayer and worship. We have a resident organist, who also plays for the benefice services and where possible has supported other parishes' special services.

There is an efficient sound system.

The building itself has a lead roof which is alarmed to deter theft.

Historically (pre-covid) all costs were met through energetic fund raising activities, alongside regular giving from the congregation and consequently All Hallows' has always been able to pay its parish share

In recent years the church was also bequeathed a modest legacy from a village resident, albeit by his request its use is restricted to maintenance and repair of the building. Whilst the covid hiatus in



gatherings (together with poor investment market performance) has now depleted this legacy, the church nonetheless has been able to carry out much of its quinquennial works and put the building into a good state of repair. In recent years the building has enjoyed the addition of toilets, a

small kitchen, a bell ringing platform, new organ, floor repairs and a full refurbishment of the vestry. Latest works in 2023 included sensitive repairs to pointing and stonework, church doors, guttering and roofing. More work has been costed and is being executed in early 2024 in order that we continue to stay right on top of matters as responsible stewards.

Unfortunately in 2022, the church the suffered a robbery during which the historic chalices and other silver wear were stolen - together with the old vestry safe which contained them. These items are currently being replaced and insurers pressed hard for their appropriate recompense.

The church is therefore once again working hard to raise funding from within the local community, whilst controlling costs to the minimum and successfully performing as much building maintenance, repair work and grounds maintenance as it can on a voluntary basis.



The churchyard is in use and well-maintained by the PCC members with voluntary help from our village neighbours. Recent working parties have also helped to clean the gravestones and tombs. All this activity is well supported by the village community who participate and help. There is a delightful sense of village purpose and ownership – an effective and traditional form of “outreach” in fact, that helps draw our small community together.

Tickets sold for a recent Christmas concert organised by the PCC in the church, with performances given by the “Hargrave Singers” choir amongst congregational carolling helped raise several hundred pounds for church funds, as well as a similarly substantial retiring collection for a dementia charity.

Our Worship

Pattern of Services

The pattern of services in a typical month is set out below.

	Time	Service	Place
1 st Sunday	09:30	Café Church (Lay led)	Stanwick
	10:00	Holy Communion	Hargrave
	10:00	Morning Worship (Lay led)	Ringstead
	15:00	All Age Holy Communion	Raunds
	18:00	Evensong (Lay led)	Raunds
2 nd Sunday	10:00	Holy Communion	Stanwick
	10:00	Morning Worship (Lay led)	Hargrave
	10:00	Family Service (Lay led)	Ringstead
	10:00	Morning Worship (Lay led)	Raunds
3 rd Sunday	09:30	All Age Service (Lay led)	Stanwick
	18:00	Praise and Holy Communion	Hargrave
	10:00	Big Sing (Lay led)	Ringstead
	10:00	Holy Communion	Raunds
	18:00	Evensong (Lay led)	Raunds
4 th Sunday	10:00	Songs of Praise (Lay led)	Stanwick
	10:00	Morning Worship (Lay led)	Hargrave
	10:00	Holy Communion	Ringstead
	10:00	All Age Service (Lay led)	Raunds

In months where there is a 5th Sunday in the month, there is a 10am Benefice Holy Communion held at each church by rotation.

On the second Wednesday evening of each month there is a benefice “Wednesday Worship” free-form service, hosted in each church by rotation.

On the first Friday, there is a Benefice service of Compline, *held online* at 19:00 hrs.

Each Parish has volunteers who act as Eucharistic Assistants, Sidespersons, Intercessors, and readers.

Other regular activities include Messy Church, Home Group and prayer groups.

The Benefice Incumbent holds baptism and confirmation classes along with wedding preparation classes. More than one of the churches hold Lent Courses each year, and pre-covid there were a number of quiet “retreats” held outside the benefice for personal prayer, reflection and listening to God.

Our Church Community: Congregation

Parish Statistics

Church	Approx. Population	Latest Electoral Roll
St Peter's, Raunds*	11,500	56
St Laurence, Stanwick	2,000	40
Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ringstead	1,700	30
All Hallows' Church, Hargrave	200	54
Totals	15,400	180

Statistics are estimated at 2023

*Raunds has grown through extensive housing development in the last few years. A trend that continues.

Capacity of our churches significantly exceeds that of the numbers routinely attending our services, providing plenty of room for growth across the benefice.

Our Children, Young People and Families

Youth and children's work.

Children and young people are actively encouraged to become valued members of our congregations and are offered a range of social activities. Two of the churches admit children to communion prior to confirmation, after a suitable course of preparation.

Recognising the growth in population, more than eight years ago All Hallows' church felt called to provide greater witness and outreach into schools and families through its funding and employment of a benefice-wide Children and Families Worker. Pleasingly that ministry continues, with the other three churches within the benefice now sharing this funding responsibility.

Toy bags and children's corners are provided in the churches, although children are encouraged to engage with the worshipping congregation wherever possible.

The three larger parishes all welcome their local schools to use the church. There are events planned to take place during the holidays.

The benefice has four primary schools in Raunds, Ringstead and Stanwick (two are church affiliated and another has good links with the church) and one secondary school in Raunds. There is also an Anglican secondary school in the nearby town of Kettering. There are a number of pre-school groups and small nurseries.

Lay ministry team

There is one lay reader, a licensed lay minister and a number of chalice assistants. Members of the congregation lead intercessions and read the lessons in services. There is one paid children and families' worker post funded by the benefice.

Eucharistic and other sacramental services are taken by the priest (except in the case of communion by extension) with all other services lay-led.

Our Groups

Church groups and activities.

Across the benefice there are various groups dedicated to spiritual growth and encompassing bible study, prayer groups, a spiritual lunch group, a nurture group and also seasonal events such as Lent lunch groups.

There is a benefice prayer cycle and provision for requested prayers to be included in public worship. Home communions are taken as needed and some of the local residential care homes welcome communion visits by a team from the church. A weekly news sheet is available for each member of the congregations, and Hargrave provides an additional monthly newsletter for each household within their parish boundaries.

Each of the parishes holds social events and fayres which welcome in their local community as well as coffee mornings, 'Tea with Friends' social afternoons for the retired and other occasional events such as flower festivals, music festivals and band concerts.

The running of these events is underpinned by a great deal of work by lay members of the ministry team, PCCs and general congregations. The buildings are kept looking their best by teams of volunteer cleaners, flower arrangers and gardeners.

Our Team and How we are Organised

The four parishes are run through their respective PCC's. led by the churchwardens and chaired by the incumbent.

The eight church wardens meet every other month with the incumbent as a single benefice team to remain joined up and work together.

Lay Ministry

Lay Reader
Licensed Lay Minister

Mrs Ginny Pledger
Mrs Nicki Phillips

Church Wardens

Raunds - The Church of St. Peter

Mrs Andrea Haseldine
Mr Mike Turner

Stanwick - The Church of St. Laurence

Mrs Lisa Adair
Mr Sam Chambers

Ringstead - The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mrs Rosemarie Coles
Mr Cliff Harris

Hargrave - All Hallows Church

Mrs Helen Parry
Mrs Savitri Pollard

Children and Families' Worker

Mrs. Ginny Pledger



Our Finances

In terms of funding, the benefice in 2022 only paid 60% of its total share: this after some expensive costs in Ringstead and Raunds, and alongside voluntarily paying the salary of the part-time children's and families' worker (c. £10,800 per annum in itself) to help drive outreach and grow our Christian community.

That outreach began at the instigation of one of the parishes more than eight years ago and now is committed by all parishes benefice wide until the end of 2024, when a review of that activity and funding capability for the role is due.

Although money is tight everywhere, the churches are well maintained and have no significant backlog. Raunds successfully completed a major restoration project only a few years ago; Ringstead reordered part of its nave to provide community facilities; Stanwick is currently planning for changes to provide flexible space and seating; whilst Hargrave completely refurbished its vestry a year ago, after replacing its organ with a brand new instrument three years' ago and now successfully working its way through conducting some external stonework repairs, floor repairs and roof repairs following the quinquennial review last year.

All churches undertake fund raising activities, providing fun and connectivity within (as well as funds from) the community neighbourhoods we serve.

There has been a shortfall in the aggregate share across some of the parishes in previous years. However, there is now intention and commitment to remove (or at the least largely reduce) that significant shortfall within five years.

The table below indicates our current commitment to increase total share paid by the parishes, and also shows where there are the more significant opportunities for growth of Christians who are regularly committed to attending church, as well as opportunity to increase funding per capita from the surrounding neighbourhood.

The PCC's are committed to working together to help each other raise the additional funding.

Church	Community Population	Electoral Roll	Current Parish Share	Paid Share 2022	Likely Paid Share 2023	Current commitment to meet Future Payments £				
						2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
	People	People	£	£	£					
St Peter's	11,000	56	23300	10000	12,300	14,600	16,900	19,200	21,500	23,300
St Laurence	2000	40	17823	12650	13,000	14,000	15,000	16,000	17,000	17,500
Blessed Virgin Mary	1700	30	12013	2000	3,000	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	6,000
All Hallows'	200	54	14695	14695	14,695	14,695	14,695	14,695	14,695	14,695
Total Share	14,900	180	67831	39345	42,995	47,295	51,095	54,895	58,695	61,495
Additional sums paid for CFW			10800	10800	10800	10800	-	-	-	-

Our New Priest Role Description

Benefice Rector for the Four Spires Benefice, Northants

Statement of Need

We are a developing Benefice, with a diversity of worship, continuing to forge closer links between our parishes and moving forward together.

Each Parish within the benefice faces distinct opportunities and particular challenges within the diverse communities we are each called to serve. Together we believe that we need an Incumbent who:

- is a straightforward, forthright priest, rooted in the Word, keen to preach it and encourage us to make a difference in people's lives
- is a capable leader of our small team: someone able to encourage and delegate; someone constructive; able to build up and encourage the PCCs and the different congregations to step out in their faith;
- works easily with all ages and different communities (rural and urban);
- is proactive, enthusiastic and empathetic; someone seeking to encourage all our parishioners to deeper faith and greater acts
- ably operates within the variety of worship styles, leading worship in a creative and inspirational way

With the exciting opportunity of outreach and significant church growth before us, we are seeking a Priest to bring to us the leadership, teaching and encouragement that enables us, the lay parishioners, to bring the knowledge and love of Christ afresh into our local communities.

You will particularly enjoy this role if you are excited by:

- taking hold of this tangible immediate opportunity to deepen and grow faith within our local communities
- opening up God's Word to people, bringing biblical insight that is relevant and inspiring
- teaching and showing others "how", so that they in turn can teach and show others
- spending time in prayer, listening to God's Voice (with the evitable challenge of us acting on it!)
- connecting with all manner of folk across the distinctively differing natures of our four parish communities
- developing and supporting mission in each of the four parishes, led by their PCC's and parishioners, to serve and minister to their respective communities
- building up our congregations in faith and numbers, increasing our love and understanding of Jesus, through the power of His Holy Spirit, serving others to God's glory

- enjoying the respect, responsibility and popular recognition of being “the Rector” – the face of the local church across the benefice, the person who sets the tone.

We are challenging ourselves to grow, and through prayer and hard work provide ‘a compelling community of faith’ across our Benefice that shines Jesus into all corners of our community – for the aging as well as the young; the well-to-do and the hard-up; the churched and unchurched; the resourceful and the resourceless; the faithful and those with no faith at all - creating a ministry that is ‘**simpler, humbler, bolder**’, owned and delivered by each of our parishes within the neighbourhoods that they know and love.

To this end we seek an Incumbent who:

- will provide valuable leadership by example
- enjoys enthusiastic worship (whether traditional or modern) and prayer
- has strong previous experience of working alongside PCCs as a consensual leader who encourages local ownership, clear commitments and transparency
- enjoys meeting with, working with and encouraging people
- provides bible-based teaching to deepen parishioners’ faith and understanding of our God

Key Responsibilities

- To be a trusted principled leader of the benefice³
- To engage fully in team meetings, worship, prayer, training, decision-making and with a willingness to provide thoughtful challenge, creative suggestions and constructive debate
- To be a visible figure in our communities and support Pastoral Ministry across the Benefice

³ Enhanced DBS Disclosure will be required

Opportunities

- Work through us and with us :
 - Encourage and enable wider lay involvement within each of the congregations: there is scope for more regular prayer groups, bible study, worship groups and lay leadership that builds our faith and open us to the voice and work of the Holy Spirit;
 - Increase spiritual understanding and commitment; help us listen to the Lord
- Encourage and enable our Outreach:
 - Lead Christian growth through the organisation of coherent outreach into the rapidly expanding community of Raunds
 - Enable outreach through the other three local church congregations that “breathes Jesus” into the differing needs and age groups in their village communities too.
 - Reach into the new housing communities and population
 - Reach to engage the elderly
 - Reach children in nurseries and schools to spread the Word
- Keep us on track:
 - Support Discipleship and Nurture Groups, including:
 - Baptism, Marriage preparation and services
 - Home Groups (bible study and Alpha Course)
 - Discussion groups

We anticipate that our new priest will be someone friendly and energetic, with a sense of humour and a love of people: someone to whom both “town and village” readily relate and respect.

As an applicant, we are confident that if you lead with a servant heart (and a sense of humour!) you will hugely enjoy leading this benefice and working energetically with the membership of our four churches.

A place to call Home: The Rectory

The Rectory is situated in the heart of Raunds, set back from the road, and accessed off the market square, next to the community centre and a short walk from the church. It has good parking space for visitors and an office for the incumbent. It is a generous, well-kempt modern house as detailed below, maintained in good order with large gardens:

- Modern detached property. Built 1996.
- Close to town centre. Downstairs toilet.
- 4 Double bedrooms. Master bedroom with en-suite.
- One bedroom has door leading to large room over garage.
- Family bathroom with bath and shower.
- Large fitted kitchen adjacent laundry room.
- Large lounge has French double doors leading onto sunny rear garden.
- Separate dining room.
- Large meeting room / study.
- Double garage and paved driveway with visitor parking.
- Attractive gardens to both front and rear well-suited to summertime barbecues (!)





Living Room



Study and meeting room



Kitchen



Back garden and patio

Opportunities and Challenges: A position for you? -

Informal contact can be made with

The Archdeacon of Oakham The Venerable Alison Booker:
archdeacon.Oakham@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

Archdeacon's Office:

Cheryl Cullen (PA)

Tel 01733 887019

E pa.archdeacons@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

An application form can also be obtained from the Diocesan website, vacancies section,
www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/vacancies2