The Benefice of Barnwell, Hemington, Luddington in the Brook, Lutton, Polebrook and Thurning

Benefice Profile
2016
Our vision is to be a meaningful and active family of local church communities who, through our relationship with our living God, connect with and meet the needs of all who live in our benefice.
Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to read about our benefice.

From our profile you will find that:

- We don’t have our future together already mapped out.

- We don’t have a long list of “must haves” we expect from you or rules to adhere to.

- We don’t have super skills that guarantee success, and we don’t expect that from you either.

But as you read through this brief, we hope you see specks of light that with love, prayer and vision can kindle a fruitful and rewarding relationship.

We are ready to look afresh at the work and life of our benefice.

Are you looking for an exciting new challenge and are you the one to walk with us on this journey?
Our Vision and Mission

Our vision is to be a meaningful and active family of local church communities who, through our relationship with our living God, connect with and meet the needs of all who live in our benefice.

We aim to do this broadly through:

• Exploring new ways to develop a deeper Christian faith through our services and other meeting groups.

• Developing opportunities to share and explain the “good news”.

• Providing practical support in times of need.

• Developing a closer connection with the younger people throughout the benefice.

We want to show that the church and the message of Jesus Christ is as relevant today as it has been in the past, since, whilst we like to think our villages are close knit communities, we know there are those in our community who do feel very alone or feel content but at times are looking for some deeper answers to life’s questions. Sometimes the answer is not found just in a cup of tea or a pint.

We believe our church has a responsibility to play a key role in the lives of the 1,500 people in our benefice as well as contributing to building up the community as a whole. We want to develop a caring church which is open when called upon and can speak in a relevant way to all those in our benefice. We want to bring the bible alive, apply it in our everyday situations and find comfort and inspiration in Jesus’ teaching.
We recognise the need to change and assess how we do things. We want to develop a bold vision and a Christ centred plan with our new Rector that will embrace our benefice and redefine our place in the community.

Here are just some of the areas that we may want to take a look at together:

- The structure and format of our services across the benefice
  - This could involve creating new services, scaling down current services and maintaining others.
  - This may include updating the style and timing of some of our services.

- The way we all spend our time and resources
  - We recognise that with six parishes our Rector cannot be everywhere all of the time.
  - We may need to stop doing some of the things we have previously taken for granted and look at how our time can best be spent to meet our vision.
  - We recognise we need to provide practical assistance and moral support to accomplish a growth plan.
  - We recognise there is a need to develop ministry support within the parish and to forge closer links with the deanery.

- The strategy for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and deepening our faith
  - We acknowledge the need to look outside of the Sunday services and current groups in order to explore new ways to share our faith and develop stronger fellowship within our benefice.

- The organisation of our PCCs
  - This could involve having more benefice meetings rather than separate parish meetings.
Our benefice is made up of six parishes which lie in the attractive Nene Valley, close to the market town of Oundle in Northamptonshire.

The churches were brought together as one benefice in 2005. The churches are all close to each other and bordered by the A605 which runs up to Peterborough. We are an eclectic mix of folk who care passionately for our community, whether we have been living here for many generations or recently moved to the area.
Here’s a brief summary of each of our villages. If you don’t know the area you will be pleasantly surprised.

**The Parish of Barnwell**

Barnwell lies just two miles from Oundle, and is a busy working village with a Post Office and general store, a pub and restaurant, bed and breakfast accommodation, and a number of small businesses.

There is a small business park (great pizza takeaway!) on an estate owned by the Duke of Gloucester. Within the parish boundary is Barnwell Country Park which neighbours on to the town of Oundle.

Housing in the village comprises a mix of private dwelling, almshouses, and new developments including Housing Association property. The village has close to 400 residents evenly balanced between young, middle aged, and elderly. A thriving playgroup meets in the old school opposite the church, and a youth club. There are many activities that are carried out in the village and there is a strong community bond. An excellent modern village hall is used throughout the year for events held within the village and for external events such as parties, wedding and interest groups. There is a large playing field attached to the hall which is also used for summer events and weekend campers. Regular events are also held on the village green by the Barnwell Community Group.

The main parish church is St Andrew’s, however there is also an additional place of worship at the other end of the village, namely All Saints’ Chancel, which dates back to the thirteenth century and where Evensong is held monthly in the summer, with occasional services by candlelight.
The Parish of Hemington

The following quotes have been extracted from the book published by Joan M Welch in 2001, “Hemington – still here”. “The village consists of about 16 houses [now over 30] spread along 3 roads from the junction at the western end but for most purposes the whole parish functions as the village. The area is agricultural, mainly arable today, but more mixed in the past. The only ‘industry’ is farming.” In addition to farming, there is now a thriving livery stable yard. Also, employing today’s technology, there are several residents who work from home. With fewer than 100 residents, Hemington is one of the smaller parishes. Housing in Hemington is a real mix of large and small, privately owned, housing association and rental property.

The village church is dedicated to St Peter and St Paul and dates back to the seventeenth century. Hemington has an active village hall which lays on a number of events during the year and provides an excellent venue for our annual harvest supper.

“Our first experience of the hall was in 1973 when a Beetle drive was arranged. The vicar explained that they no longer held whist drives as they led to too much ill-feeling and quarrelling. We attended this and thoroughly enjoyed it as we did the harvest supper and sale later. Being newcomers we bid freely not realising that it was sort of tradition for the vicar to get the sack of potatoes as they were grown on the farm and no one else was interested as they were allowed up to half a ton free. We got them by outbidding the vicar.”

Regrettably, the auctions or produce are no longer held but, if reinstated, we will make sure that the Rector wins the potatoes!

Joan’s book lists the names of 67 priests dating back to 1149! Will you be the next one?
The Parish of Luddington in the Brook

Luddington is the smallest parish in the group with a population close to 40. Although small, the village has a broad age range, from a number of young families through to the active retired. The village fosters a close sense of community. There is limited immediate local employment so most travel daily to their places of work, with quite a high proportion of professional and business people. Reflecting the rural nature of the parish, there are a number of equestrian properties and a farrier living in the village. Virtually all of the properties are privately owned.

As the only communal space in the village, the church is a focal point for any community activities, including parish council meetings and fund raising / social events. The village is famous locally for the “Luddy Games” which are organised each year.

St Margaret’s is a small and attractive thirteenth century church, with intricately carved gargoyles and grotesques, surrounded by a tranquil churchyard. The church building is set apart from the main village and the casual passer-by would be forgiven for not even realising that there was a church there.

At the time of writing, the PCC is finalising a detailed second round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a very large grant to cover the cost of urgent fabric repairs and a new heating system. The grant, if successful, will also provide funds for a range of activities to encourage more people to visit St Margaret’s.

The church is well supported by the village, and a number of the regular congregation come from further afield. Social / fund raising events are invariably well attended.
The Parish of Lutton

Lutton is predominantly a farming community but is home also to a number of other smaller businesses. We have residents in fields of employment from travel to teaching, lawnmowers to building, farming and music to name just a few. The village is also home to many animals and it is not unusual on a walk to encounter horses, alpacas or even reindeer. For a large part of each year the population is more than doubled by students and workers both from this country and abroad who come to pick and pack the fruit for Lutton Farm. Many of these workers come from Eastern Europe and we have in the past occasionally held Catholic Mass.

The village has a large and recently renovated hall where there are monthly coffee mornings and pub nights, and this is also where we have church meals for Harvest and Rogation (preceded by a tractor and trailer ride around the parish with a brass band for hymns, and prayers). The hall also hosts an Advent fair, village parties and other fundraising events such as Race Night and proves to be a place where the whole community can come together.

We try to involve the local children either in reading lessons, prayers or poems, taking gifts to the altar, building the crib or playing music at the advent service and on more than one occasion building live tableaux of the nativity in costume. We have also tasked the older children with both choosing and making presentations on different charities for harvest gifting. Many villagers and children came to take part in a Mothering Sunday and clypping service where we managed (with very good humour on a grim, cold and murky day) with extra scarves and a jumper, to embrace the church from outside at the East end round in through both the South and North doors.
The Parish of Polebrook

Polebrook lies three miles from Oundle and has something of a residential character. It has a lively pub – the Kings Arms and a well regarded voluntary controlled primary school with up to 100 pupils.

Polebrook also has a purpose built residential care home for the elderly with 52 residents and with which the church has a close relationship, the Rector and others providing home Communion there. Polebrook has a population of some 450, with a balanced age structure. In commercial terms, there is a large farm enterprise based at Armston which is well known locally for the production of asparagus. Robert Brothers Circus is quartered in the village and there are a number of businesses within the parish but located outside the village including The Olive Grove, a retail café/restaurant built around a garden nursery.

All Saints Church is an attractive, well maintained building at the heart of the village. The church has a small but very active regular worshipping community and a tradition of singing both in the choir and the congregation! There is a Eucharistic basis to our worship, communion being prepared at a nave altar, though we acknowledge a need to provide a range of services to meet our community’s needs. A newly introduced family service called ‘Good News at 10’ on third Sundays is led by a lay team under the guidance of the Rector.

The church enjoys the support of many villagers who do not regularly attend church.
The Parish of Thurning

There are about 80 people living in the village of Thurning. The village has a useful church hall which is used for a variety of activities.

It holds a well known annual music festival called “Thurning Feast” in July which has grown significantly over the years and is a major church and village hall fundraising event. The festival is normally opened by the Rector or one of the lay ministers.

St James the Great is a small thirteenth century church. In 2011, £50,000 was raised to restore the church organ. The church has connections to the Arts and Crafts movement, with pieces by William Morris and Christopher Whall, whose father was a former Rector of Thurning. The church has Anglo Catholic tradition, which still play a part when possible.
We are blessed with some beautiful buildings which can provide a sense of peace and calm, and establish a sense of our history and tradition.

We acknowledge our duties as custodians of buildings that are frequently the focal point of main events in the villages. We want our church buildings to primarily attract people due to what goes on inside them as opposed to them just being historic buildings. Changes have been incorporated over time to various degrees to make them more welcoming, comfortable and ‘user-friendly’.

Several of the churches are Grade 1 listed and all are generally in good condition. Funds and donations have been used to both maintain the general state of the structures whilst also upgrading the internal comfort to enhance the welcome through, for example, improved lighting, carpets and heating. The churches offer appropriate disabled access and some have toilet facilities in the church or nearby. Some of the churches are kept open outside service times.

The current eighteenth century rectory is located next to the church in Polebrook. The use of the building is to be reviewed by the Diocese. Should a new rectory be provided, it would need to be central and accessible to our community, located in the benefice and meet the normal standards for a rectory. The rectories in the other parishes have been gradually sold as the villages have been consolidated into one benefice.

If you have a particular interest in the buildings you will find many historic and surprising features to explore in our churches.
Our Current Services

We currently provide services at all of the parish churches, the frequency depending on the size of the individual congregations in the parishes. The services are shared between the Rector, retired clergy, lay ministers, and a number of members of the congregations.

The largest congregations are seen at Barnwell and a number of alternative service styles have been used. Barnwell has a regular monthly family service and a more informal themed monthly service. Polebrook has a more Eucharistic pattern of worship. Hemington church holds a monthly Celtic Communion.

We have special services for all the main festivals and, as you may expect, we see more villagers come to these than the regular services. After most services coffee and refreshments are served and congregations stay to chat.

The churches hold Christingle services which are particularly popular and on Palm Sunday there is a donkey walk connecting churches within the benefice. Also at Easter, a First Fires service is held at sunrise in Hemington church followed by a hearty breakfast and the flame is taken to all the churches in the benefice.

We have held a number of special services, for example on Remembrance Sunday, which have been very popular in attracting greater numbers. There are monthly themed services which have been well received. A number of lay people are involved in the planning of the services and they also look to include members of the congregation in the participation of the services.

For Ascension Day, Ash Wednesday and Holy Week we have benefice services and these are currently shared amongst 4 of the 6 churches. On a 5th Sunday we have a benefice service in which a number of the churches take part.
The current regular service details and average attendees are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Pattern</th>
<th>Barnwell</th>
<th>Hemington</th>
<th>Luddington</th>
<th>Lutton</th>
<th>Thurning</th>
<th>Polebrook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Family Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.30 Morning Prayer (BCP)</td>
<td>11.00 Holy Communion (CW)</td>
<td>9.00 Holy Communion</td>
<td>9.30 CW Holy Communion (Choral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Holy Communion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.00 Morning Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.30 CW Holy Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Themed Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.30 Holy Communion (BCP)</td>
<td>11.00 Holy Communion (BCP)</td>
<td>9.00 Holy Communion</td>
<td>10.00 “Good News at 10”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Morning Prayer</td>
<td>9.30 Celtic Communion</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.00 Evensong</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.30 Morning Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Morning Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.00 Benefice Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.30 Benefice Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6pm Evensong at All Saints’ in the summer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter Services</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Services</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Normal Services”</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are a number of retired clergy and lay ministers who assist with or lead services. They have built up good relationships with the congregations and have shown willingness to be flexible to our changing needs.

We have a small number within the benefice who share ministry activities but we would be greatly encouraged by finding more lay people within the benefice who could be trained in ministry to provide support in leading the services, as well as assisting in other ministry areas (for example pastoral ministry). One person has been on a worship leader course. There are several people licensed to take communion to the housebound.

Each of the PCCs has a secretary who assists with the administration of the day to day work of the PCCs. The PCC Treasurers all deal with the general finances for their respective parishes. Currently each parish has a separate PCC which meets regularly during the year. Each PCC has one or two Churchwardens and in the case of the smaller parishes some PCC members wear a number of hats in this respect!

The churches have operated relatively independently in the past. More recently the Churchwardens and Treasurers across the benefice have held joint meetings on specific issues that have proved fruitful and we would look to build on this going forward and to look for ways in which this can minimise duplication and help develop a more cohesive and aligned direction. We are keen to actively encourage and support members of our benefice where they feel called to lay reader training or other ministry.
The Deanery of Oundle is a largely rural deanery that lies within the Archdeaconry of Oakham in the Diocese of Peterborough. It comprises 36 parishes that are organised into seven benefices with eight stipendiary clergy and many active and supportive retired clergy. It is roughly bounded by the A43, the A6116, the A14 and the A1. The River Nene and the A605 run approximately north-south through the deanery. There are two larger centres of population: Oundle (c6000) and Thrapston (c7000). The population of the villages range between c1200 (King’s Cliffe) and c50 (Pilton). The Rural Dean is the Reverend Stephen Webster, who is based at St Peter’s in Oundle.

The Deanery has a long-established culture of close partnership and common working between clergy and lay ministers. All clergy and lay ministers belong to the ‘College of Ministers’, our equivalent of a clergy chapter, which meets monthly for, amongst other things, bible study, prayer and discussion. In addition there is a well-attended weekly College of Ministers communion service at 8:30am on Tuesdays. An annual quiet day is also part of our programme as well as social gatherings. As we pray together and share together so we look to support and encourage one another in outreach and ministry. We want to work together to see our churches grow in numbers as people come to faith in Christ and then grow in that faith.

The Deanery is successfully responding to the diocesan strategy of moving towards an entirely cost of ministry based share system by 2020. Though this is a challenge for smaller parishes we are excited to be in a diocese where there is a heart to see church growth and a strategy to fund it.

We are committed to keeping our current benefice boundaries – not creating larger benefices – and seeking patterns of ministry which suit each setting. When it comes to paying parish share we have a history of helping each other, when needed, across parish and benefice boundaries.
The deanery schools are experiencing the pressure that comes with change. In September 2015 the ten Lower Schools all became Primary Schools as East Northamptonshire phased out middle schools and became ‘two-tier’. Prince William School became a Secondary Academy with a Sixth Form Centre. In addition the independent Oundle School and its feeder prep school Laxton Junior are a strong presence in Oundle town.

The Oundle Churches’ Youth Association (OCYA) works with young people in schools across the whole Deanery – which is also the Prince William School catchment area. A monthly Youth Worship service for young people across the Deanery, and across denominations, takes place in Oundle and we benefit greatly from the support of the Archdeaconry Youth Missioner, Steve Chadwick.

St Peter’s, Oundle has a CYM (Centre for Youth Ministry) intern, working within the town, local schools and the deanery. All Saints’ King’s Cliffe actively supports a Youth Worker who runs an Underground Youth Club with over 150 members from the north of the deanery. This venture is now being repeated in Thrapston and in Oundle.

Two voluntary deanery support visitors work in all the primary schools encouraging and supporting head teachers and taking assemblies. The clergy support this work and are active within their benefice schools. A Candlemas service is held in February. Every Year 4 child in the deanery – from every school (state and independent; Church and community school alike) - attends as together we celebrate Jesus the Light of the World.

The Deanery has a strong identity, a supportive college of ministers and a common desire to see our churches grow.

Rural Dean: The Revd Stephen Webster
All our churches are keen to do more to welcome and attract children and young people and hope that through the ministry of the youth worker new ways can be found to better connect the churches with them.

**Polebrook primary school**

The school has recently been expanded to provide education for children aged 4 to 11 years as part of a local reorganisation from three tier to two tier school education. Its official catchment area is Polebrook, Hemington and Lutton but in practice many of the state educated children in the benefice attend, as do a number of children from Oundle and further afield. At its last OFSTED inspection it was judged “good with outstanding features”. The Rector is currently a governor of the school and enjoys a good relationship with the headmistress and the children. We would expect the new Rector to maintain and develop the contact and outreach opportunities with the school.

**Barnwell preschool**

Barnwell preschool has made trips across the road to St. Andrew’s on special occasions. The preschool leaders are supportive and help provide children’s activities at the Barnwell Community Group events. The preschool acts as a feeder to the Polebrook & Oundle primary schools.

**Barnwell youth club**

The Barnwell youth club has been running for nearly twenty years and meets weekly at the village hall for children over the age of 8 years old. It is not run by the church but does receive support.
Benefice part–time children’s worker

We have been exploring the opportunity to employ additional part time resource to work within the benefice. They would potentially work with the school in Polebrook with the intention of strengthening ties between school and church and they will also run (with local volunteer help) a club for benefice children once a week after school. Currently we are discussing the precise location of the club which at the moment might be in one of three venues. We have children in Lutton of all ages from newly born through to sixth formers and will get attendees from across this range at our bigger services, the vast majority of whom are willing to be involved in some way in the services.

Children at our services

There are a number of regular family services in the benefice and the churches have made efforts to get the village children involved in services across the church year. We acknowledge that it is difficult to get many to come on a regular basis because of other commitments on Sundays. It might be that we have to look at being flexible on the timings of such services - perhaps moving them from a Sunday to a more easily accessible time, perhaps early evening on a weekday, which is food for thought.

During the Barnwell and Polebrook family services, families and children take an active role. The sermons are more child friendly and may involve a treasure hunt or word game. There is a permanent children’s corner in Barnwell church with activities for babies and young children at all the services.

Barnwell Community Group

Outside of the family services at Barnwell, through the work of the Barnwell Community Group, the church supports the work of the Barnwell village youth club, holds a children’s Christmas party (around 50 children attend) and a number of community events through the year focused on the children – a sunflower growing competition, pumpkin carving competition and a village fun day (involving bouncy castles, wild animals and Minions).
Church Groups and Activities

The benefice has a free monthly church magazine called “Inspire” which includes a letter from the Rector and updates from each parish on church and non-church events. It is delivered to all households in the benefice.

There is a plethora of church linked events held throughout the year and here are just a few of them – in essence each of the villages is pretty active and could hardly be described as “sleepy”!

- Music in quiet places
- Friday fellowship in Barnwell
- Bible study group
- Church coffee mornings
- WAGS group & WI
- Jazz band concerts
- Historic churches ride & stride
- Village fayres & quizzes
- Summer Christian children/youth camp (Chattabox – Oundle)
- Summer music evenings
- Friends of Polebrook church

- Brownies
- Dog shows
- Barn dances
- Safari suppers
- Luddy games
- One hundred club

The Barnwell Community Group has been active for over three years and is a church sub group with the aim of holding events that will bring the community together whilst also raising funds. It has obtained some grants to help run some of the events. The events have ranged from pudding clubs, quiz nights, food festivals to village fun days, “Pie, Pint & Auction of Promises”, and various competitions. The events are well supported by the village.

The friends of Polebrook church raises funds for the church through a monthly pub quiz at the Kings Arms, a number of social events throughout the year and, for the last four years, an annual Polebrook Christmas Card.
Finances

Each of our parishes has a PCC treasurer, who is supported by other members of the congregation.

The parish share and other expenses have been paid in full for many years but, like many churches, this continues to be a challenge and a focus for prayer. In addition to regular giving we hold a number of fund raising events during the year.

We support a number of charitable organisations with special collections, for example; Shelter and The Royal British Legion.

We are committed to developing a long term plan for growth and this includes reaching a position of being able to financially support the diocese-calculated cost of a full time Rector.

The churches are generally in a good state of repair, and we balance investing in keeping the churches open and welcoming whilst ensuring that the longer term structure of the buildings remains in good health. We have applied for, and been successful in obtaining, a number of grants in the past and are currently applying for additional grants for work required.
How About You?

We are looking for someone who would relate strongly to the following:

- Has the energy, vision and leadership qualities needed to develop fresh ways of communicating the gospel to all those in the benefice.
- Is a prayerful pastor, with a Biblical outlook which they can apply to the modern world.
- Is sympathetic to a variety of old and new worship styles and not afraid to try new things.
- Is able to deal with the day to day issues whilst having a clear long term strategy for growth.
- Is young at heart and able to easily relate to families, young people and children whether churchgoers or not.
- Is a warm and good communicator, who will enjoy and wish to be involved in all aspects of village life.
- Is excited about a role where they can have a real impact through further co-operation between the six parishes.
- Is willing to embrace further development and collaboration with other clergy in the deanery.
- Is sensitive, compassionate and committed to pastoral care.

Our commitment to you:

- To provide practical support as well as love and prayer.
- To be open to change.
- To recognise our own failings.
- To look for ways to reduce administration so more time can be spent on the mission.
- To share the washing up but you will need to do your own ironing!
Taking the Next Step

Over the years we have been encouraged by seeing God at work in many different ways in our parishes. There is a strong bond of faith, passion and energy to see our communities nurtured in love for one another through the power of the Holy Spirit, joyfully sharing God’s love as shown in Jesus Christ by word, thought and action.

We are enthusiastic, but realistic, about the future and feel strongly that our community benefits from a local church fellowship being here to support one another. As such, we are committed to walking together on this journey.

If you feel that God is calling you to join us then please obtain an application form from the Archdeacon of Oakham ([archdeacon.oakham@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:archdeacon.oakham@peterborough-diocese.org.uk)) Tel: 01733 887017. To further discuss the role please contact our Rural Dean, The Reverend Stephen Webster on 01832 275631 or email stephen.webster@yahoo.co.uk

And why the use of a dandelion when we could have chosen a strong oak tree, wheat ready for harvest, or a beautiful flower in bud? To us it represents delicacy, a childlike joy, a sense of freedom and hope and a wonder of God’s design. As God looks down on us, we know he handles us with such tenderness and we await the breath of his calling.