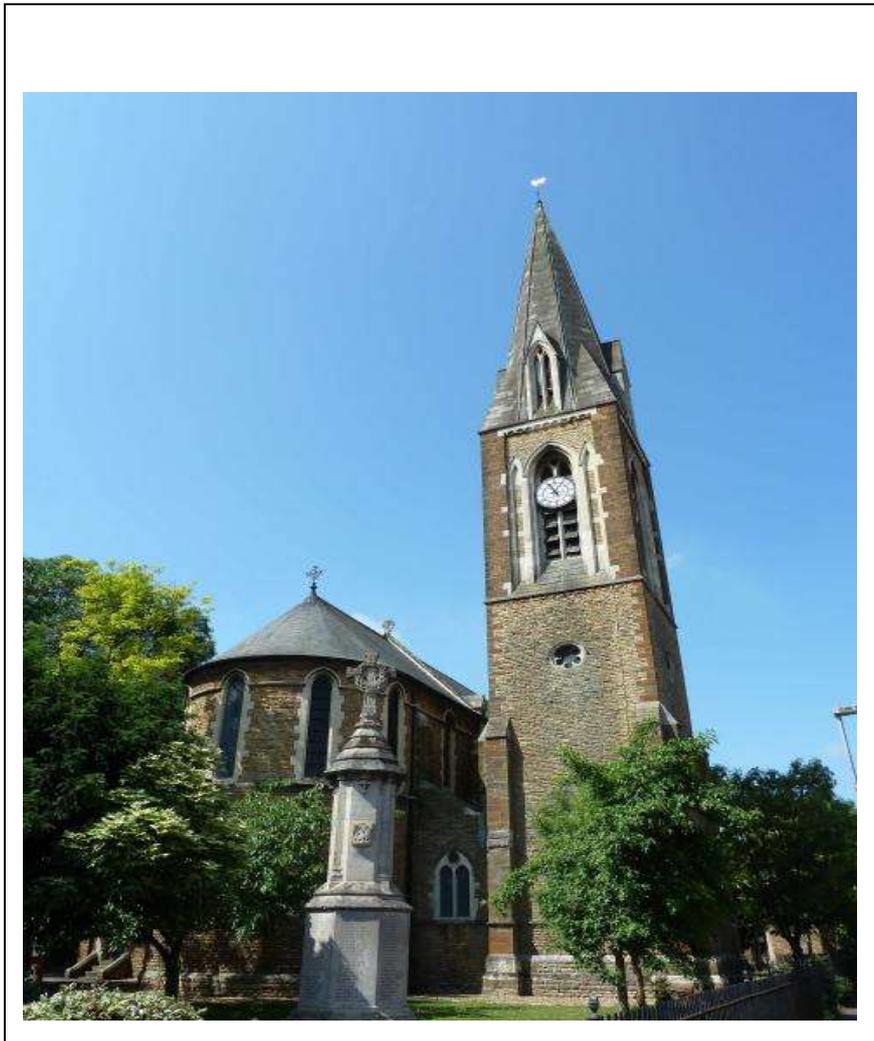


# Parish Profile

**St Mary the Virgin, Towcester Road,  
Northampton.**



**We wish to welcome and empower everyone with the love of Jesus and to  
grow the whole community at St Mary's; everyone matters.**

# 2021

## Welcome

Welcome to St Mary's!

We are a small congregation with a big job to do!

We need somebody with lots of enthusiasm and energy to lead us into a new chapter of development and growth.

There is plenty of potential in this church to make a difference to many people's lives.

## Contents

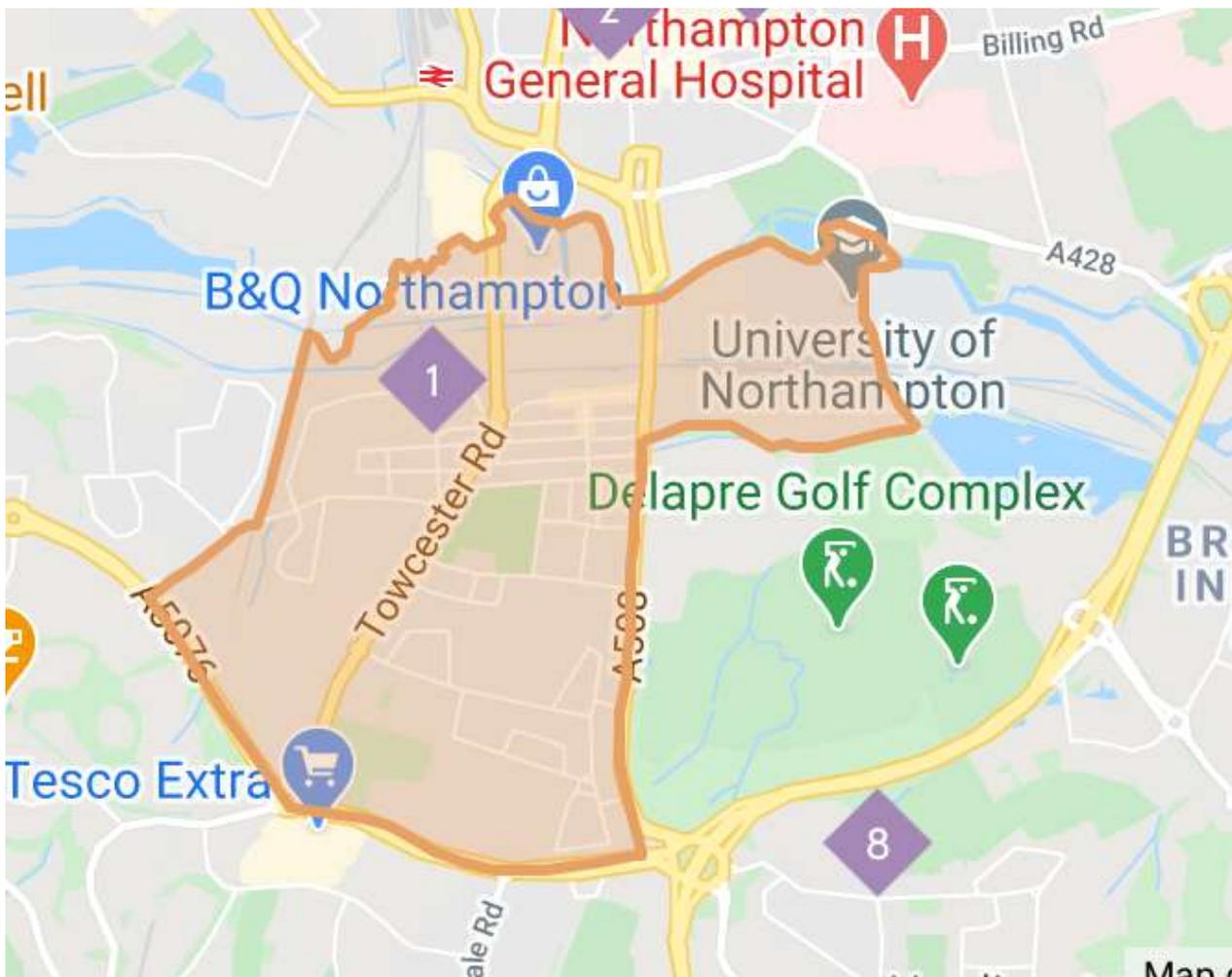
St Mary's Far Cotton	1
Welcome	2
Contents	2
St Mary's and Surrounding Area	4
Vision and Mission	7
Future Direction	9
Church Buildings	11
Sunday and Weekday Services	13
Other Services	15
Support Available	15
Youth and Children's Work	16
Church Groups and Activities	17
Finance	18
Person Specification for St Mary's	
19	
A position for you?	19



# St Mary's and Surrounding Area

## The Parish

The parish of St Mary's is located immediately to the south of Northampton town centre and is part of the Greater Northampton Deanery. The town has a population of 215,000 and is growing. The population of the parish is about 12,000



Key; 1 = St Mary's Church      8= St Edmund's Church, Hardingstone.

## Northampton Town

Northampton is ideally located close to M1 motorway and is equidistant between London, Birmingham and Nottingham (all approx 50 miles away) There is easy access to Milton Keynes, London and Birmingham via main line railway.

Although, like many other midland towns, the retail heart of Northampton is struggling, there is normally plenty going on; there are two successful theatres, three cinemas and a wealth of vibrant restaurants. In addition to an outstanding sporting offering (premiership rugby, first class cricket, a football club and Formula 1 racing), Northampton has some interesting cultural and historic places of interest close by.

## Character

The parish of St Mary's is densely populated and situated between the southern edge of the town centre and the town's ring road. It consists of Victorian terraced housing, interwar family housing and modern infill estates.

The parish is ranked 2266 out of 12425 in terms of deprivation (IMD 2015).

In 2018, the University of Northampton relocated to the Riverside site which is within the parish. This is an important development in the area. Over the last 2 years we have seen the demographic profile of the North-Eastern part of the parish change to a younger, more transient, demographic group. There has also been an increase in houses of multiple occupancy. It is hoped that the presence of students in the locality will add to the vitality of Far Cotton and St Mary's. Whilst we are keen to develop links with the university, much of our present work is with non university residents.

## Commerce & Industry

Historically, the commerce in Far Cotton was based around the railway industry. Now, the parish's industry includes the Carlsberg brewery and various smaller light industries located in two industrial estates.

St Leonards Road is a traditional secondary retail street, it has many independent traders, including opticians, hairdressers, takeaway, dry cleaners, off licences, betting shops, convenience stores, fancy dress shops and charity shops. Lidl, Aldi, Asda and Co-op have outlets within the parish.

There are also two retail parks and a neighbourhood parade of shops on Gloucester Avenue.

## Schools & Education

Abbeyfield School is the only secondary school within the parish boundary. The school has recently benefited from refurbishment works and has a growing reputation.

Three primary schools are located in the parish; we have strong links with Queen Eleanor Primary School and good relations with the other two. These links have been developed mainly through our foodbank work. At the right time it would be good to build on these links with school visits and assemblies.

## Health Care

A doctors' surgery located in Delapre serves the parish and Northampton General Hospital is within walking distance (or a short drive) of the parish.

## Other Churches in the Parish

Towcester Road Methodist church is situated opposite St Mary's Church. Although there are no formal links, there has been some co-operation in the past. Indeed, some years ago, when they

were undergoing building works, the Methodists used St Marys for their worship. St Mary's PCC have discussed the possibility of building stronger links between the two churches and would like to pursue this again in the future.

There may be the opportunity to join the South Northamptonshire Group of Churches which holds meetings across the Christian denominations (includes the local Baptist, Methodist and Anglican churches)

## Vision and Mission

Everyone matters. We welcome and empower everyone to grow with the love of Jesus. We are committed to increase the influence St Marys has on the whole community in Far Cotton and Delapre.

We are a 'down to earth' church and are always open to new ideas. Our mindset is to welcome all into the church community and not wish people to 'stand on ceremony'.

Although the congregation is small, we have a desire to be active and help in the community; to be an important part of people's lives. Whether it is providing childcare, social care, friendship or simply a place to meet, we would like the local residents to see the church as a community centre and not only a place of worship.

We have plenty of vision and physical space to provide many services for the community.

Over the last 18 months, we have started this work by opening the Towcester Road Community Cafe (which unfortunately is closed at the moment) and opening up Food Aid Far Cotton; a food bank operating from the church. We are also in consultation with our PCSO and NAYC as we plan to open a youth club for vulnerable local children in the church.

### [Towcester Road Community Cafe](#)

This cafe opened in the church in October 2019 to provide free food and drinks to all its customers. We opened on Tuesdays between 4.30pm and 6pm. The aim was to encourage parents and carers to drop in after school for food, social interaction and playtime. We also provided a craft activity each week for anyone to take part in. All the food and drinks were sourced from supermarket surpluses. By February 2020 we had built up a core customer base of about 15 people each week. Unfortunately this had to close temporarily in March 2020 but we hope to reopen as soon as possible.

The cafe's expansion was hampered by the limited catering resources in the church, and the lack of heating and restricted access to toilets. We dream of remedying these issues when we re-open!

The vision is to reopen the cafe, perhaps two or three times a week to provide free hot food and social interaction. We would also like to develop a community food larder and drop in surgeries for the local PCSO, community law representative, and benefits advisors, these would run in tandem with the cafe.

### [Food Aid Far Cotton](#)

FAFC is a foodbank which was set up in June 2020 by an initiative between the church, the residents' association, a local councillor and Queen Eleanor School. We are now part of the Food Aid Alliance (West Northants) and work closely with the Hope Centre, Re;store and other food banks in the area. The foodbank is well supported with food and financial donations from local residents and businesses.

The operation provides food parcels which are delivered to local families in food poverty as well as for callers to the church on a Thursday afternoon. We also arrange ad hoc deliveries when the need arises. Since Christmas FAFC have set up a collection point at Briar Hill Community Centre on Saturday mornings.

At present the food storage, packing and collections happen in the church and have rather taken over the back section of the church. In the longer term we would like to look at the possibility of either moving this work into one of the church rooms or 'tidying up' the operation to sit more comfortably in a multi-use church building.

### [Church refurbishment](#)

Currently the church building has very little heating and lighting.

The gas boiler and radiators are obsolete and we are currently working on a project to replace them with electric heating. The PCC decided to go for electric heating to comply with The General Synod's aim for all churches to be carbon neutral by 2030. We have a Faculty to remove the old system and the associated pipework and replace it with electric radiators. Hopefully work starts on site in mid February and it is hoped that it can be completed by May 2021. The heating scheme will cost approximately £60,000. We have restricted funds to cover this amount, however we have several grant applications pending to help with this cost.

The second phase of refurbishment will see the replacement of the old lighting which is inefficient and insufficient. A scheme has been drawn up for a completely new LED system that will include emergency lighting. A faculty application for this phase is currently being drawn together and it is hoped that we will be able to secure some more grant funding to pay for this. (total cost will be approx £30,000)

## Future Direction

We are focusing on making St Mary's more relevant to people in the parish, we have made a good start but there is still a long way to go.

We see serving our community as one of our priorities as we move forward, to be more outward looking and provide our neighbours with what they need rather than staying within the four walls of the church.

The foodbank is open once a week, we would like to expand this limited opening and eventually move to a community food larder model.

We believe that the Community Cafe can also act as a base from which many community projects can develop.

Initial meetings have taken place with Northampton Association of Youth Clubs to discuss the setting up of a youth club in the church. As soon as our renovation works are complete we hope to be able to open our doors to a new section of the community.



# Church Buildings

St Mary's benefits from an extensive range of buildings: the main church; a large church hall currently divided into four main rooms, large old vicarage and a modern four bedroomed vicarage. Both vicarages are administered and maintained by the diocese and not the PCC.

## The Church

The church building is 135 years old and has a capacity of up to 150 people. Approximately 20 years ago, the orientation of the seating was temporarily reordered to allow for remedial masonry works. On completion of the works, the layout was retained permanently as the congregation preferred it. We therefore operate with five rows of about 25 chairs arcing around the altar on the 'long' side of the Nave, this allows the congregation to be closer to one another and more interactive. Smaller, mid-week congregations are accommodated in the traditional choir stalls close to the original altar.

A war memorial is located in the church grounds and some remains are buried under the grassed areas to the front of the church.

## The Halls

The hall complex was built after the church approximately 80 years ago. It consists of two large hall spaces, which are separated by a folding partition, and two smaller classrooms. Most of the space is used daily by St Mary's Day Nursery (see separate section) The hall is also normally let out for community use to several users, however there is potential to increase the number of hall hires in the future.

Currently the halls are complemented by a kitchen, large stage, office, storage area and toilets. As the accommodation is dated and not efficient in terms of layout and energy consumption, we have renovation plans but they are on hold at the moment.

## The Grounds

Gardens surround the church. To the front there is a war memorial and there are some ashes interred in the borders and lawn area. A small Peace Garden has been developed on the northern side of the church by volunteers from the congregation. The south side of the church is flanked by the main drive, vicarages and old vicarage garden.

# Sunday and Weekday Services

## Monthly Service Structure

The following pattern of services was followed until the March 2020 suspension of church services.

When we reopened at the beginning of September 2020, it was just for a 10 am Holy Communion service on Sunday mornings and we streamed each service on our Facebook page. Since January 2021 we have reverted to on-line services only.

Pre Covid, the size of our Sunday morning congregations averaged 30 people. Our online services are viewed, on average, by about 50 ( 115 people viewed the Christmas Eve service). We are keen to continue live streaming the services even when normal in church services can resume.

First Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion CW – Said service	10.00am Holy Communion sung - all age		
Second Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion CW – Said service	10.00am Holy Communion Sung service		
Third Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion CW – Said service	10.00am Holy Communion Sung service		
Fourth and fifth Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion CW – Said service	10.00am Holy Communion Sung service		
Tuesday				7.00pm Holy Communion CW – Said service
Wednesday	12pm Holy Communion CW – Said service			

## 2019 attendance figures

<b>Service</b>	<b>Children &amp; Youth (0 – 16 yrs)</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Sunday 8am	0	8	8
Sunday 10am	8	30	38
Tuesday 7pm	0	4	4
Wednesday 12 pm	0	6	6

## Other Services

Our nursery holds their Nativity play in the church each year. In recent years, a Christingle on Christmas Eve has proved popular with young families. Christmas Midnight Mass is also well attended.

The Stations of the Cross are celebrated on Good Friday.

Harvest is marked on the first Sunday in October. In 2019, instead of donating food to the Hope Centre, we collected clothing to donate to Project 16:15 homeless charity.

In 2019, two local schools held carol services in church. We would love to encourage more school use of the church in the future.

On average, there are one or two weddings held in the church each year, the occasional baptism and about 12 funerals.

## Support Available

At St Mary's, we are lucky to have two retired priests in the congregation.

The PCC consists of 2 elected members and two ex officio Churchwardens.

We have an excellent music leader, and a number of choir members who are happy to play instruments when required. The church owns an electric keyboard, drum kit and music system.

Although we have no directly employed staff, the day nursery employs a part time cleaner and gardener and we make a fair contribution towards their costs.

# Youth and Children's Work

## Day Nursery

With a successful day nursery attached to the church, we are well placed to develop our children's work. The nursery works with up to 70 families who have children between the ages of 2 and 4. The nursery is run on a not for profit basis and is managed by a small group of nursery managers, which includes church members.

The nursery has suffered financially during Covid and this has had an impact on the rent they have been able to pay to the PCC. We trust that 2021 will see the nursery bounce back and remain an important source of income for us.

The strict regulations needed to keep the nursery Covid safe have meant that no other group has been able to use the halls since June 2020. Obviously this has had a negative effect on our income and ability to use the halls even for church use. As we come out of Lockdown, we will be presented with an ideal opportunity to 'renegotiate' the nursery's use of the spaces.

In the past St Marys has done a large amount of work with young people, however this has dwindled in recent years and we are keen to re-energise this important role of the church.

Four units of the GirlGuiding organisation met in the church halls until lockdown 12 months ago. It is still unclear if and when they will be able to re-open. One leader is an active and valuable member of the congregation; it would be lovely to encourage closer links between the organisation and the church.

Over the past ten years we have tried to rekindle Sunday School several times but with limited success.

# Church Groups and Activities

At present all groups have stopped and it is unknown whether they will reopen given that some key people have moved away or become less active.

Before Covid, St Marys had a Mothers' Union group, bible study group and a choir and music group.

# Finance

The church's main sources of income are the day nursery who pay 10% of their turnover to the church as rent. This is approximately £24,000 per year. ( Although this is much reduced for 2020)

We also receive a rental of £5,768 pa for a telecommunications mast situated in the church tower.

Following the sale of a small house that was bequeathed to the parish, we have reserves of approximately £57,000 which are in a restricted fund reserved for building refurbishment.

The day nursery's administrator arranges many of the joint day to day expenditure (such as waste disposal, photocopier costs, cleaning, maintenance) and sets half the costs against their monthly rental payment. This eases the load of administrative jobs on the treasurer. These costs have reduced over the last 12 months due to lockdown.

Unfortunately we have been unable to pay 100% of our parish share since 2016. We are keen to address this issue in the future. With a closer eye on costs the situation should start to improve.

A copy of our draft accounts for 2020 are attached to this document.

# Person Specification for St Mary's

The job in the parish of St Mary's is all about realising the potential of an underused set of buildings and the enthusiasm of a small bunch of people in an area of changing demographic to produce growth.

The right person for us is therefore likely to be:

- Able to engage with different groups of people
- Energetic
- Organised and a relatively efficient administrator
- Good communicator
- Realist
- Someone who is happy to be 'hands on'.

## A position for you?

Should you wish to learn more about St Mary's please have a look at our facebook pages (St Mary's, Far Cotton and Towcester Road Community Cafe)

Food Aid Far Cotton also has a Facebook page.

We also have a page on the Church Near You Website.