



**THE BENEFICE
of
CHARLTON MUSGROVE, CUCKLINGTON
AND STOKE TRISTER with BAYFORD
in the Diocese of Bath & Wells**

Introduction

This delightful rural Benefice of three villages sits comfortably on the borders of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire on the edge of the beautiful Blackmore Vale and close to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is part of the Deanery of Bruton and Cary, in the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

Although three very different villages, in terms of social mix, age range and character, we are united in a common aim of fostering our Churches and developing the Christian spirit. Hence we want to continue to offer a range of services, from traditional to modern. We have active and supportive PCCs and our Churchwardens meet regularly, having established a close working relationship.

There are five places of worship in the Benefice, St. Lawrence Church in Cucklington, St. Andrew's Church and Bayford Chapel in the Parish of Stoke Trister, and St. Stephen's and St. John's in Charlton Musgrove.

Our Vision

Although three separate Parishes, we share the same goals:~

- Making the Church more accessible and meaningful to our communities
- Maintaining the growth of our congregations
- Securing our finances
- Preserving the heritage and fabric of our places of worship

THE NEEDS OF THE BENEFICE - THE CANDIDATE

Priest-in-Charge (Half Stipend)

The nature of the role, given its half time commitment and the varying styles of the Parishes and their parishioners, all mean that we are seeking a flexible priest-in-charge, who is willing to adapt and who is comfortable with officiating at a range of services. Equally we seek someone who is prepared to try innovation and to move the thinking of the PCCs forward such that we can do better at attracting the young villagers and their children to attend our services and help us develop and grow as a Christian community. There is also scope to encourage more lay members of our congregations to do more in our acts of worship. The position would seem ideally suited to one seeking opportunities for further study, writing, artistic pursuits or perhaps part-time teaching, provided there is no undue conflict with the parish duties.

The ideal candidate will therefore have commitment and enthusiasm for this role, which in turn will inspire, energise and enthuse those with whom he or she interacts. The following characteristics are sought:~

- An outgoing, warm and approachable individual with deep personal integrity.
- Able to provide inspirational and visionary leadership.
- Strong inter-personal skills and the awareness needed to provide influential, enabling and unifying leadership.
- Strong communication and presentational skills, able to interact with people of all ages.
- Enthusiastic, energetic and with an engaging style backed by a good sense of humour.
- An understanding of and empathy with rural communities and their issues, and a willingness to support and participate in village activities.

In return the Benefice can offer:

- A rewarding, interesting and, in some aspects, challenging opportunity to minister to a varied and engaging group of parishioners, to broaden the congregational base and to widen participation.
- Scope for developing more lay leadership in all three Parishes.
- A range of Services, traditional and modern with some enthusiastic singing and music.
- A good range of cross Benefice activities linked to the churches, ranging from Gift days, to Harvest Lunches, Concerts in the Churches or Carol Singing around the villages.

- Supportive Wardens, PCCs and a helpful Parish Office.
- An embryonic but developing concept of a Benefice Local Ministry Team and a Wincanton based Local Ministry Group.
- Several local retired clergy willing to take services when necessary.
- A comfortable, modern, four bedroomed Rectory, ideal for a family.
- A very tranquil and beautiful rural environment but with some major artistic and cultural centres near at hand, including Sherborne, Bath, Salisbury and Bristol.

The Rectory



The Rectory is in Cucklington – a comfortable, modern, easy to maintain, four-bedroomed family house with a conservatory and an excellent office over the detached garage block. It is a short 3-4 minute walk from St. Lawrence Church, a 5 minute drive from Stoke Trister and Bayford and within a 15 minute drive of St. Stephens and St. John's in Charlton Musgrove.

The nearest towns are Gillingham, just over the border into Dorset (4 miles) with a main line railway station to London Waterloo (2 hrs), and Wincanton (4 miles) which has a non-stop coach service to London Hammersmith. Both towns have good primary and secondary schools, supermarkets, banks and numerous other shops and offices. Wincanton, where the Rural Deanery formally meets, has a very helpful Parish Office. The A303 is approximately 2 miles away.

There are three Village websites:

Cucklington	www.cucklington.org.uk
Stoke Trister	www.stoketrister.co.uk
Charlton Musgrove	www.charltonmusgrove.org

THE CHURCHES

The Parish of Cucklington



St. Lawrence Church, Cucklington

Cucklington is a small, picturesque hilltop village from which there are spectacular views of the Northern Blackmore Vale. The little Church of St. Lawrence is set in a tranquil position on the side of a hill and there is an especially beautiful and peaceful outlook from the Churchyard.

The earliest records of our Church date from 1291 and it still retains some fine early features such as the Norman font and some mediaeval glass. The Church was greatly restored in the 1880s after major storm damage. The organ has a lovely tone and we are fortunate in having a dedicated and accomplished organist. Our last quinquennial inspection took place in 2007, and the resulting work was completed quickly and efficiently. The Church Architect in his report noted that it is "An interesting and beautiful church.....well cared for and in generally good condition." Over the last year and using grant money from the District Council some of the more ancient tombs have also been restored.

Regular church attendance is somewhere between 15 and 20, with a very high attendance at Christmas and Easter. There are 82 households, several working farms, a population of 200, and 71 on the electoral roll. We have a good proportion of residents who are Somerset born and bred, several retired couples and also some who regularly commute to London. However, a number of young families have moved here and are making a positive impact. Over the past 2 years we have conducted several weddings and baptisms and it

is our greatest wish that we attract the young families with their children to become regular churchgoers.

In addition to our Diocesan Quota of £10,000, normal annual expenditure amounts to some £5,500, though in 2008 an additional £15,000 of costs were incurred, mainly arising out of the quinquennial inspection. Gift Aid forms part of regular giving by our congregation, which with fundraising events and our annual Gift Day generated an income of £18,000, leaving a small surplus for 2009.

Although we have no pub in the village, there is a modern and much used Village Hall which is shared with Stoke Trister and Bayford and which has excellent facilities and playing fields. A number of village properties offer holiday accommodation and there is a good selection of pubs and restaurants locally.

Our PCC has 10 active members, and meets formally four times a year. Its members get on extremely well, having a mutual care for our church and community. Upkeep and running of the church are shared among us, and several other members of our community are involved in the flower arranging, cleaning, bell ringing, daily church opening and so on. We are also lucky in having a community that, whether it attends church regularly or not, is very willing to help with fund raising and with special events such as Harvest Festival. There are two Church Wardens.

As we have a number of elderly residents, we are most anxious to continue the tradition of regular home visits started by our retired priest during the last vacancy, and continued by our present retiring rector over the past 4 years.

The Parish of Stoke Trister with Bayford



St Andrew's Church, Stoke Trister



Bayford Chapel

Stoke Trister is located about one mile in a north westerly direction from Cucklington, The original mediaeval church was sited in the village adjacent to the Manor House, however, it burnt down in the early 1800s. The land remains in church ownership and the graveyard and crypt are still visible. The replacement church of St Andrew was built at the top of the hill in 1841 and remains in use today. It is a Grade 11 listed building and is in a good state of repair. The organ was replaced in 2009 and the entrance area is to be enlarged early in 2010. The parish is financially sound and has adequate reserves, with a provision being made to complete works recommended in the quinquennial review. Thanks to excellent fundraising and generous charitable giving the parish share is paid in full each year.

Regular church attendance at St Andrew's averages 12 with other members of the parish attending at Christmas and Easter. The number attending Bayford Chapel is similar and the village residents have a genuine affinity for the building.

Bayford lies about one mile north west from Stoke Trister on the original A303 road. It is not picturesque in a traditional country sense but the residents are proud of their village. They take care to maintain its distinction from Wincanton but work closely with the town in social and cultural activities. The Unicorn Inn is at the centre of the village and across the road the owners of the old Post Office continue to offer B&B accommodation. Bayford Chapel was built in the 1890s. Also called the Mission Hall, it remains in use today as a place of worship, a focus for village activities and the formal meeting place for the Parish Council.

The parish population is around 300, with 27 on the parochial church roll. The residents have a variety of occupations covering the professions, agriculture and service industries. There is a strong core of people born in the local area who treasure its rich mix of beautiful countryside, the rural way of life and the community spirit that sees them through good times and bad. They are joined by people from other parts of the country who have retired to this area. The two groups mix well together and there is an excellent spirit and sense of camaraderie in both villages. All that said, the average resident is of mature years and there are, sadly, too few children in our midst.

We are a dedicated and caring parish whose church members take comfort in worship and praising God. We encourage others to join with us and to recognise the values of the community coming together in a spiritual sense. Whilst many of our residents have respect for and are comfortable with the more traditional forms of worship, we recognise our duty to embrace change and to pass on to those that follow, a thriving Christian spirit within our churches.

We are blessed with two distinct but valued places of worship and each is important to us. We wish to continue, as now, to worship in both places and to support other parish

churches within the Benefice. We will also support and encourage those members of the parish who wish to have a greater role in the ministry of God's work, and in particular we offer encouragement to a young member of our congregation who is a Communion Server.

We have an active PCC which meets at least four times a year. There are two churchwardens who also take on the duties of Secretary and Treasurer. The members bring many skills to the benefit of the parish and organise various fundraising and social events in the year. They also pay close attention to the form of service in each place of worship and consider new ways of reaching out to our village communities, the benefice as a whole, and beyond.

The Parish of Charlton Musgrove



St. Stephen's Church



St. John's Chapel

Charlton Musgrove, a scattered country parish a few miles from Wincanton, is lucky to have two churches in different parts of the village: St Stephen's is the mediaeval parish church and St John's is a Victorian chapel-of-ease. Both churches are loved and have been well maintained. St John's belongs to the parish, and we have recently re-ordered it inside to make a special children's area, which is a great asset.

We are a welcoming parish whose members are committed to praising God through worship, fellowship and prayer. We value the traditions of the church and the countryside. We hope our new priest-in-charge will help us continue to grow in our spiritual life both within the parish and beyond. We would like to continue our pattern of worship in both St Stephen's and St John's, as well as supporting the other churches within the Benefice, trying to reflect the wishes of our

congregation through both traditional and more contemporary services. Special services are held for the children several times a year, including a Mothering Sunday service and a crib service; and the children are encouraged to take part in many other activities linked to the Church, such as the Palm Sunday walk. We are open to new ideas and welcome those members of our community who wish to play a more active role in the ministry of the parish. Since the formation of the Benefice Local Ministry Team two years ago some of us have been learning to lead services and to write intercessions.

The village is close to the A303 and the main-line station of Castle Cary (90 minutes to London Paddington) is a few miles away. Bath lies 25 miles to the north east, Bristol 35 miles to the north, and the Jurassic (Dorset) coast is about 35 miles to the south.

There are about 150 households in the village, with an increasing number of families with young children. Agriculture is still very important in the area. There are several working farms in the parish, some equestrian establishments and a garden centre. There is a wide variety of houses, from a one-time mediaeval priory, to modern detached homes, farmhouses, cottages and council houses, the large majority of which are lived in all the time. We have a Farm Shop, village Pub and Wincanton racecourse lies within our boundary! Work is about to start on a new village hall after a very successful fundraising campaign.

Regular church attendance is somewhere between 10 and 15, with many more at Christmas and Easter.

We have always been able to pay our share of the Common Fund in full, thanks in no small part to the villagers' support of social and fund-raising events such as the Shrove Tuesday pancake party, Harvest Supper and auction of produce, and concerts in the church. We have specific funds set aside for the fabric of each church and have recently replaced the organ and refurbished the bells at St Stephen's. There are 41 people on the Electoral Roll, and the nine members of the PCC meet regularly to deal with the business of the church.

FEBRUARY 2010