



THE BENEFICE EMBRACING
**SCREMERSTON, SPITTAL
AND TWEEDMOUTH**
IN THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE



BENEFICE BROCHURE
2025



WELCOME TO THE BENEFICE EMBRACING SCREMERSTON, SPITTAL AND TWEEDMOUTH



WELCOME TO THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE!

Thank you so much for your interest in this role, and I hope you enjoy reading the information contained in this brochure and will find it helpful for your discernment. These are exciting and challenging times in the Diocese of Newcastle. Exciting because we are at an early stage of a new season, challenging because like many dioceses we face conversations about our future and how best we use and deploy our resources. Our Deanery Development work has engaged every parish and benefice in renewed conversations about mission and ministry, and we are in a process of entering a new phase in that work, mapping out our renewed strategy and vision. Our outward facing values of 'seeking, sharing, sending' stem from a commitment to be a Church turning outwards in mission and ministry, and younger and more diverse by: **SEEKING** through being open to God's transforming love; **SHARING** through being generous with God's transforming gifts; **SENDING** through being engaged in God's transforming work in the world. I am looking for clergy who are excited about the opportunities and challenges we face, who are happy to work collaboratively and imaginatively with colleagues, and who can inspire communities to roll up their sleeves and get stuck into God's mission, by affirming, enabling and encouraging lay and clergy together. As your Bishop, I am committed to your wellbeing and development, and I would love to explore with you whether God may be calling you to this role.



The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Newcastle



The Diocese of Newcastle is the Church of England’s most northerly diocese. This Diocese in the ‘land of the Northern Saints’ was formed in 1882 and comprises **169** parishes across **2,110** square miles.

The Diocese covers the local authorities of Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside and also small parts of County Durham and Cumbria. The **12** deaneries within 2 archdeaconries serve a population of about **831,600** people across a variety of communities ranging from sparse rural to large inner-city areas of deprivation.

INTRODUCTION

In 2021 our three parishes became the Benefice embracing Scremerston, Spittal and Tweedmouth (BeSST) and began the process of collaboratively establishing and developing new ways of loving God, serving our neighbour and deepening our community engagement in this spectacular part of Northumberland.

Our three parishes are all located to the south of the River Tweed, in the north-east county of Northumberland; our neighbour, Berwick-upon-Tweed, is on the north bank of the river.

Scremerston, population 509 (2021 Census) is a strong, well-established village between Berwick and the A1 where working people generally have to commute for employment. The village is surrounded by farms down to the coast, while the lime kilns and colliery cottages reflect the village’s industrial past. St Peter’s Church, with its pattern of worship, is seen as a significant hub for the community throughout the year both for activities and groups, but also for reflection.



The Churchyard is open and regularly visited by local families tending family graves.



The seaside Parish of St John the Evangelist, Spittal, has attracted visitors for over a century to enjoy its beautiful beach, promenade and coastal pathway down to Holy Island. The name *Spittal* derives from a medieval leper hospital situated near the Tweed Estuary. Today the older village is overlooked by two housing estates dating from the 1960s to 1970s, population 2789 (2021 Census). The church serves the wider benefice in hosting weekly communion services and children and families' activities. Throughout the year its extensive beautiful gardens offer a quiet, reflective space, welcoming both locals and visitors to enter and enjoy.

The Parish of Tweedmouth overlooks the historic Elizabethan walls of Berwick-upon-Tweed. It is joined to Berwick by three iconic bridges with a fourth, later bridge, carrying the A1 and the Berwick bypass to Edinburgh. Tweedmouth, population 6113 (2021 Census) comprises Tweedmouth, Ord and West End – originally three distinct villages. Tweedmouth has grown enormously from the original small village sited on the south bank of the Tweed, to incorporate extensive areas of housing, a retail park, care homes, schools and many businesses, including The Tweed Dock. The church of St Bartholomew and St Boisil, centred in the old village, looks outwards to the ever-growing community around.



The Mission of our Benefice

Our benefice, although still relatively new, has much to celebrate. Our attendance is growing – now above pre-Covid levels. Similarly, giving is above pre-Covid levels. Also, we have been in receipt of several exceptionally generous additional gifts which are enabling us to be bolder in our mission; we continue to meet our Parish Share and have been able to increase our offer as requested by the diocese. The three congregations are energetic in support of our vision and mission. The eclectic mix of people from a range of Christian backgrounds brings experience from previous contexts which enriches our church communities. Formal and informal lay involvement is a significant strength both in worship and mission. All three churches have valuable additional spaces used effectively to connect with the wider community in various ways. There are aspects of mission (local, national and international) which are common across the benefice and others which reflect the distinctiveness of each parish.

Children and Families. The benefice has a heart for mission in this area, hosted principally at St John's Spittal, but staffed by members from across the benefice. Regular activities include: our weekly Coffee, Chat and Play for mothers, carers, babies and toddlers; *Open the Book* visits to our local schools (extended now to include other services and events in schools and in church); weekly Youth Club and Teatime Church.



Relationships have been further deepened by the 'ministry of cake' – a wonderful offering of cakes is taken into all our schools in the last week of each half term to express our love and appreciation of the staff. Seasonal events include Easter and Summer holiday clubs and support for the hugely popular annual *Lifepath* event at Brinkburn Abbey. The benefice is in the process of recruiting a full time Children and Families Leader, for which three years of funding has been generously donated.

Our communities. Mission to our communities takes many forms, including:

- Regular warm hub meetings at St Peter's Scremerston, combined with pastoral care within the village and a presence at the annual village fete, have fostered strong bonds between the church and the community.
- The Peace Garden at the rear of the St John's church, Spittal draws people to sit in a reflective space whilst the small Nature Area encourages children to discover that church surroundings can be fun and environmentally friendly, as well as displaying the beauty of Creation in their locality.
- A dedicated *Anna Chaplaincy* team reaches out to our local care homes within the benefice, where fruitful relationships are being established with residents and staff.
- Our relationship with the sea is very important to us; our annual outdoor Sea Sunday service is a very special event and has resulted in good relationships with the RNLI locally.
- Meanwhile, advances have been made in establishing missional links with the Seafarers at The Tweed Dock – located directly opposite the church.
- Our churches are members of Berwick Churches Together.



Prayer Life. Prayer underpins all we do. Weekly prayer meetings are held in all the churches, while there is a Benefice Prayer chain, women's prayer breakfasts every other month and a monthly Benefice Prayer Calendar. The Try Praying Campaign has also been used here.



Homegroups. These are located in all our parishes with weekly opportunities to pray, worship and study together whilst deepening our fellowship.

Ministry Team. During our vacancy, a committed team is ensuring continuity, supported where appropriate by informal lay volunteers:

Revd Michael Johnson (Retired Clergy – PTO)

Revd Linda Chapman (Retired Clergy – PTO)

Phil Rowett (Reader – Licensed to Officiate)

Gordon Chapman (Reader – PTO)

Barbara Donaldson (Authorised Worship Leader)

Jennie Ritchie (Authorised Worship Leader)

The priorities of our Benefice

Looking to the future over the next five years, we aspire to pursue an incarnational vision for a strong community of believers in all three distinctive parishes that will involve us in:

- Further developing the spiritual life of the church – leading, equipping and encouraging the congregation to be a power for Christ in the community.
- Continuing to build the fellowships established through our homegroups and prayer groups – an important aspect of our spiritual development.
- Building on existing mission and outreach in our schools, care homes and with children and families... being present and approachable in our communities.
- Networking with and encouraging those with whom we have existing relationships.
- Engaging the hard-to-reach in our communities, whilst bridging the gap between incomers and local people and across class boundaries.
- Building a foundation for discipleship especially among previously unreached 25 to 44-year-olds.
- Developing our environmental presence.



The Role

We are looking for an incumbent who will:

- Lead our three distinctive congregations into greater unity, with grace, wisdom and clarity.
- Help us deepen our faith and become a more Christ-like Church.
- Lead us in mission and ministry in our diverse communities.
- Recognise, encourage and support gifts of ministry and vocation in others.
- Support and challenge us to build on our links with our schools, care homes and seafarers.
- Support our environmental aims.
- Participate in all aspects of the lives of our parishes.



The person we are seeking

Our prayer is that God will send us a person who:

- Feels called to this role in this place.
- Is a person of vision, able to develop the gifts of the body of Christ in each of our parishes and with an infectious passion for mission that reflects that of our Lord Jesus.
- Leads in a confident, collaborative style, encouraging and enabling people's gifts and working with us to form a collective vision of how God's Kingdom can be built in this place.
- Will engage actively with our local communities beyond the churches and be a visible presence in these places, building relationships with the wide range of people therein, including those in areas of social deprivation and those of every age and stage of life.
- Has vision, spirituality and creativity that will inspire and energise our parishes, whilst also recognising that each church and community has its own distinct context and character.
- Has a down to earth sense of proportion and humour and can maintain a sustainable work/life balance, managing their time effectively, delegating appropriately, communicating clearly and operating efficiently.
- Is an accessible 'people person' who conveys a sense of God's love through their character and ways of relating.
- Will support, lead and collaborate with the Children and Families Leader once appointed.



What we are not seeking

We are not looking for:

- Someone on whom we can load all our challenges
- Someone to administer or project-manage the various schemes/initiatives under way in the different churches
- A heritage conservation officer
- A fundraiser
- A miracle-worker

What we can offer you

You can confidently expect the following from us:

- Shared commitment to meeting the challenges identified.
- Prayer, friendship, fellowship.
- A committed team of volunteers, including retired clergy, lay readers and authorised worship leaders.
- Encouragement to maintain a sustainable ministry, including days off, holidays, retreats, opportunities for learning and development, adequate time for family life, friendship and recreation...all in one of the most beautiful parts of the country.
- Financial support for retreats and ministerial development.
- Support in many forms from our patrons, The Mercers' Company.
- A range of audio/visual equipment across the churches to support worship.
- A lovely home 200m from Tweedmouth Church (see below).



The Vicarage

Tweedmouth Vicarage is a fine Victorian house two minutes' walk from the church with sufficient reception rooms to provide a study, a sitting room and a dining room. There are four large and one small bedroom. The kitchen is also large and has excellent storage facilities. A downstairs lavatory supplements the bathroom upstairs with a separate shower. There is an excellent enclosed garden with mature fruit trees and a number of sheds for outdoor storage. Beside the house there is a garage and parking (off street) for two cars.

OUR PARISHES

The three parishes in the benefice all have different histories, patterns and styles of worship, contexts, characters and challenges.

What follows aims to give you a flavour of each of them and of how they set out to welcome, support and encourage residents and visitors.

SCREMERSTON

The Village

Scremerston is a village situated on the north-east coast of England in the county of Northumberland. It is about 3 miles south of Berwick-upon-Tweed and adjacent to the busy A1 Newcastle to Edinburgh route. Originally this road passed through the village. The church of St Peter stands beside it.

Popular Cocklawburn Beach lies on the eastern edge of the parish, a wonderful place to visit for long, windswept walks, or to admire the big, open sky and beautiful seascapes.

On clear days it is possible to see Holy Island and Bamburgh Castle to the south. This beach is enjoyed by wildlife enthusiasts and surfers as well as walkers and families who come to explore the sand and rock pools exposed at low tide. Consequently, Scremerston attracts high numbers of visitors, especially in the summer months.

Nowadays the chief use of the land is agricultural, but in the past there was also a thriving coal-mining industry here. The last pit closed in the 1960s; however, those links are not forgotten and the church and churchyard are full of reminders of those days.

Scremerston supports a population of around 500, occupying about 245 properties. Some are old pit houses, but most are houses

and bungalows erected since the 1930s and arranged in compact estates. There is a retirement housing complex, Armstrong Court, built in 1974 and consisting of 28 dwellings.

Scremerston lies within the 20% most deprived parishes in the Church of England: about 30% of the population are under the age of 30 and 21% over 65. Almost all are of white ethnicity. Two thirds would describe themselves as Christian with the rest either 'no religion' or left unstated. There is a strong sense of community.

Scremerston First School caters for around 35 children, 6.6% of which receive free school meals. There is a small community room at the school and a nursery school, Lucky Ducks.

There are plans afoot for changes to all the state schools in the area (middle schools are being phased out). In Scremerston our first school is expected to become a primary school for Years 1-6.

There is a Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses here.



Scremerston has some self-catering holiday accommodation, and at Borewell Farm there is *Pot a Doodle Do*, a centre for camping and 'glamping' holidays, with a restaurant and craft activities for children nearby.

Berwick Rugby Club has its pitches and premises in Scremerston.

Scremerston is well supported by its association with Ancroft Parish Council. (Previously Scremerston Church was in Ancroft Ecclesiastical Parish, hence the link.)



The Church of St Peter, Scremerston

The cockerel adorning the spire of St Peter's can be seen from all over the village. Every December, an illuminated cross, funded by our community organisation, lights up the tower for all to see. A Christmas Tableau is also part of the display. Together they demonstrate the high regard the village has for its church, placed as it is in the centre of the community.



The Church itself is Grade II listed, built in 1842-43 in the Early English Style. It was provided for the benefit of the coal-mining community which was established around the same time.

In recent years there have been several improvements to its facilities; a number of pews and the decaying organ have been removed, allowing the provision of a generous dais for leading worship, a kitchenette, spacious social areas near the entrance and a toilet in the vestry. Major works included the replacement of rotting floor supports, the installation of better underfloor ventilation, an

effective heating system, new floor coverings and two beautiful bespoke entrance doors.

The entrance area of the church has been designated as a community hub which holds regular community events, including a fortnightly Coffee Morning and Flower Club on occasion. Church members are involved in all of these. Several times a year the church is used for community fundraising events, some of which benefit St Peter's directly. At Christmastime the church is full of families and children who have toured the village with Santa and come to us for refreshments.



A Summer Fete in the village has given us the opportunity to set up a 'Psalm-Reading' stall and share our faith with many of the folk who come for an afternoon out.

There is an extensive churchyard which is nearly full and much valued and visited by local people. The church itself is also much loved and valued by its community.



The usual Sunday congregation is steady at about 18. Folks come in larger numbers to the festivals especially Remembrance Sunday. There is a Common Worship service every other Sunday (Holy Communion or Morning Prayer) and a further service on fifth Sundays. There is always plenty of time for fellowship and refreshment after worship.

We have approximately 2 baptisms, 2 weddings and 4 funerals a year. The school brings its pupils three times a year for seasonal services and at the end of each term. An *Open the Book* Team from the benefice churches visits the school on a regular basis.

The church is open every weekday as a community hub and resource. Passers-by often drop in to admire the building and to pray. On alternate Thursday mornings the church bible study group, *Oasis*, hosts 'Thursday Extra' – an opportunity for anyone to pop in for coffee and chat, which is especially appreciated during the winter months.

Our vision for the future

There is much to encourage our congregation as we look to the future of our parish.

We seek to build on our well-established community links. We have made a number of practical improvements in recent years, all designed to make our church a comfortable, warm, and welcoming space. We are very pleased that the community is responding and that our beloved worship space is used for a wide variety of village events.

Naturally, we are looking to continue to build on the modest increase in regular attendance during the past year. We hope to become more and more confident in sharing our space, our faith and our love for God and each other with those amongst whom we live. With these ambitions for mission in mind, we look forward to a new incumbent who will support the following developments over the next few years:

Firstly, a return to weekly Sunday morning services, perhaps with a benefice service every fifth Sunday, rotating between the 3 parishes. We feel that to include a dedicated monthly Family Service in Scremerston would be most beneficial, as we seek to reach out to the modest number of families who live in the parish. To support this, the vicar will need to encourage the training of more lay leaders.

Secondly, our vicar will be a person of vision, someone able to develop the gifts of the body of Christ in each of the parishes, and with an infectious passion for mission that reflects that of our Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, our vicar will strive to enrich our spiritual lives with sound teaching, inspiring preaching and loving pastoral care, setting us all an example to follow. We look for a vicar who will support us faithfully in these, our hopes and dreams.



SPITTAL

The Local Community



The Parish of Spittal presents as a ribbon seaside development; visitors and holidaymakers for over a century have enjoyed its beautiful beach, promenade and coastal pathway down to Holy Island. The old village is overlooked by two housing estates: Highcliffe and Eastcliffe. The East Coast Main Line railway separates the estates from lower Spittal village. Of the three benefice parishes, Spittal is the most densely populated in the smallest area – 0.7

square miles. It has a mainly white population with 25.6% in the 0-19 age range, and 17.1% for the 30-44 years old. Some on the estates face many social issues and a further challenge is that only 47.6% describe themselves as Christian and 46.8% say they have no religion, which is higher than in Scremerston or Tweedmouth. This presents us with both challenge and opportunity.

Whilst the estates have a high proportion of social housing, with more new building underway, the village has seen a lot of restoration work on its Victorian and early twentieth century houses. This is the result of more incomers buying property. They are mainly retirees drawn by cheaper prices and the attractive location. A small luxury development has recently been



built at one end of the village, and another is planned at the other end. The skills level among the working population is lower than the national average, and many find seasonal employment in the local caravan parks and hospitality industry. Nevertheless, Spittal does boast a number of longstanding home-run businesses, often father and son, whilst there are also a number of newer small ventures emerging. There are two pubs and one shop in the village with one shop on Highcliffe estate. Tourism plays an important part in the local economy with Spittal boasting caravan parks, a hotel and several holiday homes and lets. The quality of life for locals is also enhanced by the location, including the beautiful, award-winning flower beds and gardens of Lower Spittal.

The RNLI is central to Spittal's identity, but this is a community which continues to expand its links with the sea and maritime environment, through its creation of a coastal nature trail and its liaison with the District Wild-Life group and Northumberland Coastal Conservation. There is also the popular Sailing Club.



For locals the Bowling Club provides a great leisure activity and young people enjoy playing for the Berwick Rangers Junior League on the school pitch on Main Street.

Promoting enthusiasm about Spittal's heritage is also a key feature for the village. Although the old salmon shiel is now privately owned, it is occasionally opened for group visits. Spittal Improvement Trust (SIT) has commissioned books on the secret history of Spittal. In 2023, the Trust took over the former URC building on Main Street, utilising it as a heritage centre, as well as a thriving community hub for local groups and for concerts.

On the estates, local residents find leisure activities and community welfare and support groups in the newly refurbished and equipped Northern View Centre. The whole area is serviced by a regular bus service to Berwick and the supermarkets.

Spittal Community First School, though sited next to the church, is not church aided. It has a pre-school attached to it, and there is also a private day nursery in Spittal.

The Church of St John the Evangelist, Spittal

At **Wednesday Communion**, the congregation is predominantly aged 60+ with 2/3rds drawn from the other churches in the benefice. The strong core hub of 'Spittalers' in the congregation represent longstanding local families who are homeowners and belong to the older tightly knit village community. They share common interests such as the bowling club and SIT groups such as *Knit and Natter*. Two members come from the local housing estate and three have moved into the area during the past 15 years. They enjoy the traditional form of the service, with its reflective nature and the time for fellowship afterwards.

At **Teatime Church**, the core attendance is from two or three families, plus unaccompanied children. Most of these children come from the local housing estate and also attend our Monday evening Youth Group. Several have special educational needs. Lively and informal, Teatime Church meets at 4pm two or three Sundays a month during term time. It is led by lay leaders and volunteers. Meetings include crafts, interactive games, a Bible story and prayers and ends with a shared meal. On special occasions such as Harvest and Christmas, we invite older members of the community to join us. This is a joyful service. Leadership is mainly provided by Tweedmouth congregation.



We would value additional help from a new incumbent to care for these families and to keep family worship relevant and accessible to more families in this parish and across the benefice.

Our Church Building

The Church of St John the Evangelist was licensed for worship in 1867, although it remained part of Tweedmouth parish until 1873. It was originally envisioned by a group of Anglican 'Spittalers' who had experienced a strong sense of revival whilst worshipping in a local stable loft. The nave walls once displayed four large tablets, one of which read "Mine house shall be called a House of Prayer."

In 2000 a substantial internal restructuring was undertaken to create a new kitchen, toilet, vestry and small meeting room.



In 2018 four pews were removed, followed by the removal of the pipe organ in 2023, all aimed at creating more space for community and youth activities. The back of the nave was then totally recarpeted. A new eco-boiler was installed in 2024, and a fund has now been launched for the restoration of the East window. Wifi has been installed in the vestry which has been designated as an office for the proposed new Children and Families Leader. The next Quinquennial is due in 2025.

St John's does not have a churchyard but does have extensive gardens which are maintained by the church. The church hosts activities in them during the summer months and they are open year-round for locals and visitors alike to wander around, enjoying their beauty. The Peace Garden at the rear draws people to sit in a reflective space. There is also a small nature area for children at the back of the church.



The church promotes eco-friendly approaches including composting, wildlife habitats, bird feeders and Northumberland wild flowers.

Our Church Activities

In addition to Wednesday Communion and Teatime Church, the following activities currently take place:

Tuesday Group meets in a private home, or in church, for fellowship, bible study and prayer. The group invites friends and neighbours to join low key events, such as shared meals and *well-dressing* services in the village.

Meditative night prayer is held at 7pm on Tuesdays in church.

The Youth Group for the younger age range, 10-14 meets on Monday evenings in the church for games, activities, meals and bible study. Numbers vary, up to 12 young people supported by 3 or 4 adult helpers from across the benefice.

Coffee, Chat and Play for mothers, carers, babies and toddlers takes place every Tuesday morning in school term time. This is a very popular activity within the community. A simple craft activity and bible story lie at the heart of this regular event.

Easter and Summer holiday clubs for children are hosted and promoted. Youth group leaders serve at the *ReNEw North East* summer camps and members of the youth group also attend.

The annual Sea Sunday celebration, held in July, in the church gardens supports the RNLI.



Administration and Finance

The PCC, supported by members of the congregation, ensures the smooth running of the church with duties ranging from financial and general administration to hospitality and cleaning. Members coordinate with the volunteer gardeners and also ensure the church building is always open and welcoming for visitors to enjoy a space to reflect.

After a successful fund-raising campaign, boosted by a generous grant from the Mercers' Company and support from the local councillor, a new boiler has been installed recently. Meanwhile, the Parish Giving Scheme is being used in the parish and our Parish Share is paid regularly and in full.

Community Involvement

St John's hosts a Berwick band concert annually along with a Christmas Shopping Night for the community. The local councillor holds their quarterly surgeries in the Mercers' Room and the church is also available as a polling station. The church shares its accommodation and equipment with the Spittal Improvement Trust when requested.



Church members in the benefice *Anna*

Chaplaincy team hold a monthly worship service in the local care home.

The church participates in, and sometimes leads, local events and services such as for Remembrance Day and VE Day commemorations.

We host *Berwick Churches Together* for breakfast every Easter Sunday following their sunrise beach service and members join the other Berwick churches for the Good Friday Walk of Witness and the Berwick Festival Songs of Praise on the Parade. St John's has hosted and participated in the *Churches Together* Lent Lunches. At Christmas 2023 the youth group and leaders joined other churches in the *Shine Your Light* carol singing on the steps of the Town Hall, repeated in December 2024.

TWEEDMOUTH

Our community



On the north side of the Tweed, Berwick sits firmly within its Tudor walls, a result of it having been fought over and changing hands repeatedly in the Middle Ages. On the south side of the river is the more peaceful and much less fought over area of Tweedmouth. Although it is now part of its northern neighbour, Tweedmouth has a character and identity all of its own. Tweedmouth is made up of the old village centre, the West End, Prior Park estate and the farming land around East Ord. This has created an interesting mix of inhabitants and employment. There are about 6,000 people living in a roughly triangular area.

The population is predominantly white and has a wide range of socio-economic groups including some social deprivation. In common with a lot of the rest of the area there is a large proportion of older people, while 21% are children. Approximately half the population identify themselves as Christian, with the remainder either no religion or unstated in the last census.

There is a wide mix of housing, with older stone-built houses, housing estates, 20th century bungalows and modern housing. As elsewhere in the benefice, the estates have more social housing. The modern developments are geared more to owner-occupier and include some aimed at the higher end of the market. This includes some Airbnb as well as retirement housing.



The East Coast Main Line runs conveniently through Berwick on its way north to Edinburgh and south to Newcastle and London. The old A1 still carries traffic through the town though it is easy to join the modern A1 on the bypass.

Sited within the parish there is a shopping park, recently refurbished on the opening of Lidl. There are also two industrial estates housing a number of enterprises with Simpson's Malt being the largest. The parish is well supplied with large shopping stores including Asda, Tesco and Lidl. There are comparatively fewer smaller shops other than in Tweedmouth Main Street. There are a few food outlets in Tweedmouth Main Street but there is only one remaining pub (in the West End), the others having closed and been converted into housing. The Garden Centre at East Ord provides another popular meeting place and café venue.



The Tweed Dock is increasingly important to the economic life of the town and attracts shipping from across Europe – we have recently started to form stronger links with the Mission to Seafarers group. There is a modern sports and leisure centre which offers a wide range of activities that is well used by people from all over the surrounding area. There is a bowling club in the West End and Shielfield Park is home to three football clubs including Berwick Rangers FC, as well as Berwick Bandits Speedway team.

By the stadium there is a social club which is well used. However, there are few other opportunities for young people's entertainment in the parish.

Many of the working population are employed in retail or industrial premises but not all of these are on the south side of the river. Tourism is smaller than elsewhere in Berwick, but there are now greater efforts to draw people's attention to the south side of the Tweed.

Education within the parish is moving to a two-tier structure by September 2026. That will mean in the parish there will be three primary schools: Tweedmouth West, Tweedmouth Prior Park and St Cuthbert's (RC). The primary schools all have nursery provision and there are also two private nurseries and a family hub. These educate a large proportion of the local children. Senior education is supplied by Berwick Academy but there is at present limited scope for vocational training in the town. Like many other areas, a falling birth-rate has caused some smaller schools to close.



We have close links to a number of schools through our *Open the Book* scheme, plus special services and *Lifepath*, a scheme involving large numbers of children from Northumberland schools. Our congregation has supported a number of our local schools, financially and otherwise, to attend *Lifepath* and are hoping to host this event in the future. The Grove School caters for pupils of all ages from a wide area, who have complex needs and is rated as Outstanding.

Longridge Towers is a non-selective, co-educational independent day and boarding school for children between the ages of three and eighteen just outside the parish, but with a very wide catchment area.

We have a very positive relationship with Rascals Nursery which operates from our Church Hall; Rascals recently received an Outstanding grading from Ofsted.

St. Bartholomew and St. Boisil

The Parish Church is situated in Church Road and is the only church in the country dedicated to St Boisil. Boisil was the prior of Melrose Abbey, and he received Cuthbert when God called him out of the fields into His service. As a young man, Cuthbert accompanied Boisil on his journeys – it is likely they both came to Tweedmouth to preach and take communion in the fishing village. Boisil died of the plague in 661, and Cuthbert became abbot, in the next step to becoming the Patron Saint of the North.



While the first written record of “the church of Boisilius at Twedemuthe” is dated 1145, the archaeological evidence suggests an existence from before 700. The earliest part of the present building dates back to 1783 when earlier ruins were removed and the tower and nave built, possibly using some earlier fabric. Over the years, a chancel and transept were added.



The church is in generally good order and has benefitted recently from the installation of a servery in the transept, thanks to the generosity of the Mercers’ Company. This has increased the ability of the church to offer hospitality after services and for other events. A benefice lunch is held here after the Eucharist on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Our recent Quinquennial report revealed no major issues, and we are working through the various minor items raised.



In addition, a modern A/V system has been installed which has enhanced services considerably. A small team use this to display liturgy on screens within the church as well as play videos and worship songs. This has allowed our worship leaders a wider range of approaches in order to maximise impact.

The churchyard is no longer active and is maintained by Northumberland County Council. A team of people from the congregation maintain borders within the churchyard and conduct an annual biodiversity survey. There are a number of grave markers that are of particular local interest. The recording of these has allowed us to meet family history enquiries from as far away as Australia.



Church Events

Currently, we have Morning Worship services every Sunday except the fourth when we have Holy Communion. We have also held a number of weddings, funerals and baptisms. A number of prayer groups meet in the church, including the benefice-wide Monday morning prayer group. These are supplemented by the three homegroups hosted in the parish which meet for bible study, prayer and fellowship. As part of the local Tweedmouth Feast, we hold a special Salmon Queen service.



We hold a number of special services for schools in the run up to Christmas and Easter and our congregation and PCC are always looking for new ideas to improve our links with the local community.

In addition to services, we have held several concerts in the church, some faith-based and others not. Our good links to other groups in the community have led to an increasing interest in using the church as a venue. We hold a number of fundraising events for charities such as TEAR Fund and Mission to Seafarers. The local pipe band meets and rehearses in the church and our councillor holds quarterly surgeries in the church.

Governance

Our active PCC meets to organise administration and other matters, usually bi-monthly. Our three wardens, secretary, treasurer and one other member form a standing committee which meets on an *ad hoc* basis as required, to act on issues which need more rapid attention. Wardens act at funerals and other events and also take particular responsibility for areas concerning the fabric of the church, heating and maintaining a rota of individuals for hospitality.

Groups of people from the congregation take care of hospitality, banners, flowers and many other aspects of running the church. Support from funds raised through the renting of our Church Hall has meant we are in good financial health – we have been able to broaden our mission giving, fund necessary works and more than pay our parish share. Additionally, the enduring generosity of the Mercers' Company has meant we have been able to carry out a number of major improvements in Tweedmouth and across the benefice. Supporting the other parishes within our benefice is always a priority and we have begun to hold regular joint PCC meetings to discuss issues of importance. We are an active, welcoming parish whose worship is underpinned by the Gospel. We are committed to being open and generous in our path to growth in faith. As a (fairly) mature congregation from diverse faith backgrounds we are open to new initiatives.



SAFEGUARDING IN THE BENEFICE

As a benefice we want to welcome all those who come through the doors of our churches. We are all grateful for the time and effort that our volunteers commit on behalf of our parishes in our benefice, to make life richer for those whose lives we touch; however, we need to make sure, in the best way we can, that we are a people who create a safe and respectful place for all who come to us and all those with whom we come into contact.

Through the training that many of us have undertaken, we are aware that being a safe place and safe people may also mean having the courage to report to the appropriate individual or agency anything we notice that does not seem right or when someone appears to be at risk.

The Parish has an appointed Safeguarding Officer; clear policies are in place and safeguarding is a standing item on the PCC and Standing Committee agendas.

NORHAM DEANERY

The Deanery has many things to offer a potential incumbent. Although it is the furthest away from Newcastle, the Deanery is probably the liveliest in terms of church organisation, as it knows how to cope on its own. Across the Deanery, attendances are above pre-Covid levels, as is giving, which is not the case in most rural areas. The Deanery Synod is very active, meeting at least three times a year, with interesting speakers and discussions. The Deanery Development Group has set both the model for collecting Parish Share across the Diocese but has also led the way in developing Deanery Action Plans which have recently been rolled out across the Diocese.

The history of this area is closely tied to that of the growth of Christianity in the North. Here you can find Lindisfarne, the cradle of Northumbrian Christianity and today the centre of Celtic worship and calligraphy. Many of our churches show ancient roots and the scars of Border conflicts. Norham has musket-ball holes in the walls and Ancroft has a defended tower built onto the church.

It is said that the noble dead from the Battle of Flodden were buried in Branxton's churchyard, while Berwick was the only parish church built in the time of Oliver Cromwell.

The area is much more peaceful now; the only invasion we have is from tourists. Lindisfarne has over 800,000 visitors a year and the Area Dean is working with the local community (of less than 200) to make this a sustainable model. Others come to go bird-watching or to escape the bustle of everyday life by venturing into the even quieter interior. Just over our Deanery borders are the walking areas of the Cheviot Hills or the wide beaches of nationally-acclaimed Bamburgh and the Farne Islands.



The area is centred around agriculture and small industries as well as tourism. However, there are still the usual problems of coastal communities, with low-skilled, low-paid and seasonal work for some. There are also generous benefactors and vibrant village communities, such as those on the Ford and Etal estate. There's even a narrow-gauge railway!

The Deanery stands on a geographical border but it also stands on the edge of an unknown future; please consider taking up a post here to help us take our next steps forward.

CONCLUSION

We look forward to working with our new incumbent. If we have excited you with the prospect of joining us in engaging with the challenges and joys of discovering what God wants to do in the lives of our community here, we encourage you to consider becoming our new incumbent. We can assure you of a warm welcome and a varied, rewarding ministry in this beautiful area of northern England.

