

St Michael's Betchworth & St Mary the Virgin Buckland Parish Profile



St Michael's Betchworth



St Mary the Virgin Buckland

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Who we are

Our joint benefice, created in 2007, comprises two rural parishes, two villages, two churches both physically in the centre of the village, two village halls, one rectory, two established communities and four churchwardens along with two congregations which are gradually merging into a single body following covid and our development as a truly united benefice.

Both churches are integral to village life and are seen as such by the villages, and we have just started an initiative to draw more people into the church.

Who would not want to live in a village just below the North Downs, surrounded by stunning countryside with beautiful walks on your doorstep? The modern four-bedroomed detached rectory is one of the best in the deanery with a large, enclosed garden – ideal for dogs or chickens or sometimes both.



Although we are in a rural location, nestling at the foot of the North Downs, many people in the villages commute to London and elsewhere and we have the benefits of being between the two lovely market towns of Dorking and Reigate and within comfortable range of Gatwick. The villages are essentially residential with a pub and post office with café in Betchworth and a pub and shop in Buckland. Betchworth has around 1,000 residents and Buckland 600.

What do we love about our churches?



Betchworth's history goes back 1,000 years and each generation has left its mark in the architecture and additions. It is a large church for a village and as a result is often used when smaller local churches are unable to accommodate weddings and funerals. It provides a physical focus and large presence. It is open every day and attracts a lot of passing visitors who really

appreciate the chance to experience a quiet moment - unless an organist happens to be playing. The Four Angels Corner for children is also enjoyed by local children who come in regularly.

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Buckland's church has been there since the 1300's and is smaller and more intimate having been radically altered in the 1860's. It sits in the very centre of the village surrounded by the Village Green, pond and local shop, and a row of cherry trees forming a springtime vista which dominates the heart of the village. It is not currently open each day while organ restoration takes place, but we expect it will again be open every day on completion of the works.



What do we do now?

Our style of worship is traditional and central and services alternate between both churches with 10.00 am Holy Communion. A monthly Iona service is held at Buckland, together with a choral Evensong at Betchworth, every second Sunday. A monthly family service and an afternoon discussion service have recently been attempted but discontinued during the interregnum.

In addition to these and other standard services, we hold between the two churches the following additional services each year:

- Ash Wednesday
- Maundy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Easter Vigil and Lighting of the Easter candle
- Ascension Day
- All Souls
- Nine Lessons and Carols
- Children's candlelight service
- Outdoor crib service (attracting up to 400 people with a newborn baby and live donkey when a well-behaved one is available).
- Christmas Eve Midnight Mass

Music plays a huge part in the life of our churches. The choirs of the two churches have also joined together and provide an experienced lead in Sunday worship. There is a highly regarded new Tickell organ in St Michael's, and a soon to be restored Norman and Beard organ in Buckland overseen by a dynamic new Director of Music with a supporting organist. We have a reputation for prestigious organ concerts



and we have very exciting plans for widening the style of these events in the coming year.

Bellringing Both churches have rings of bells with separate bands of ringers but, mirroring the united benefice, both bands work together to ensure ringing for services, weddings and to mark national events, such as jubilees and royal weddings and funerals. The ringers undertake the routine maintenance of the bells and have an active social side holding annual outings and dinners.



What are our congregations like?

Prior to Covid our two congregations tended to worship separately but now all our services are combined and we find that we have become much more of a united benefice as a result.

A significant number of our congregation come from outside the parishes particularly those attracted to a more traditional style of worship for parish communion and choral evensong.

We like to think of ourselves as being open-minded and willing to change but as with more mature congregations we sometimes need to be nudged into different ways of thinking and doing things.

Like many rural churches our congregations are older with the same challenges as all churches in keeping children once they are involved in other activities on a Sunday. Attendance on a typical Sunday would be around 35+ including some eight choristers but this can rise to 100 in the congregation and twenty in the choir for festival services at Christmas and Easter. Levels are still below the Pre Covid figures which would have typically totalled forty-five attendees.

What else do we do?

Betchworth church is popular for weddings and sadly for large funerals. We routinely host ten weddings and around a dozen funerals each year and we conduct baptisms in our morning service. The Covid restrictions created a very busy year in 2021 as we caught up with many delayed events. Both churches are still technically open for Burials, although most now take place in the Parish Council run Burial Ground, adjacent to St. Michael's

We collect for a local foodbank and have a printer cartridge collection for the local



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WelCare charity. In addition, we aim to annually give 5% of our income to charities both at home and overseas.

There are monthly drop in teas in Betchworth with home baking for anyone passing, as well as regular visitors. This has been going for over 10 years and is a wonderful way of making local connections.

Winter lunches held in Buckland for 25 years are an extremely popular monthly event with a hearty two course meal served.

The Alternative Christmas tree festival gives the opportunity to local groups to demonstrate their talents and has been a highlight in recent years. Another village group knits teddy bears and other items for charity and these are displayed each year in the form of a Christmas tree.

Prior to Covid both churches held weekend flower festivals every 4 years which brought in many visitors and a significant amount of money for the fabric fund.

Both churches now have a flourishing book swap scheme

We have lay wedding co-ordinators in both parishes.



Relationships with local schools The three site North Downs Primary is an all through primary. Previous Rectors have been governors and we work closely with Brockham in supporting the whole school. We would be looking to maintain and strengthen our link to all these activities, and also with the Buckland and Betchworth children's nursery co-located with the school in Betchworth. There is no school in Buckland although a Toddler Group meets in the Reading Room. There are also links with St Bede's Ecumenical School in Redhill.

Relationships with local care homes There are two care homes in Betchworth who look to the churches to visit and support them. Contact has been sporadic in recent times and a more permanent connection would be welcomed.

Local Charity The Rector is an ex officio trustee of the Betchworth United Charities which administer some £11,500 pa to look after the sick and needy of Betchworth. An alternatively constituted charity exists in Buckland. where there is also a Churchyard Fund.

What we have

Parochial Church Councils Each parish has its own Church Council; 13 members for Betchworth and 9 for Buckland. Meetings are held five and four times a year

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respectively, although joint meetings are held when necessary. There are joint worship and education outreach sub-committees and full representation on the Reigate Deanery Synod

The churches' fabric Both churches are listed, sit within their churchyards, and have capacities of 200 in Betchworth and 90 in Buckland. Betchworth is a bronze eco church and aspires to a silver award. Both have had recent Quinquennial Inspections

In both cases, there is an ongoing maintenance programme involving one-off projects: namely the rainwater goods at Betchworth, and at Buckland, completion of the organ restoration, remedying the wall cracks in the vestry and restoring the steeple cross. These projects are all in hand. Crucially, vital support both financially and otherwise is given by two Friends' organisations one in each village. Not only do the Friends provide financial support for the fabric – their main remit- but also hold social activities and money raising events and are seen as essential partners in the churches' role.

The Friends in Betchworth are known as the Pillars of St Michaels which has recently been established. In Buckland, the Friends of St Marys (FOSM) is well established. Application is made for reimbursement for applicable items.

The Rectory Built in the 1990's in Betchworth, it has in addition to 4 bedrooms, 2 reception rooms, kitchen and utility room, a room which can be used both as an office and living accommodation. There is parking for several cars but no garage as this has been converted into storage space.



Financial resources – summary The overall income in Betchworth in 2021 was £79,000 of which £61,000 came from parishioners and other donors. A further £17,000 came from fees and other fund-raising activities. Expenditure was £73,000 including the parish pledge of £33,000. The fabric fund holds £32,000 in readiness for repairs to the rainwater goods. These funds are augmented by £12,000 from National Charities and a recent generous donation of £10,000 which has enabled the work to be put in hand for Spring 2023.

Buckland: In 2021 the income was £41,000 and outgoings £37,000. Income derives from a number of sources; the main outgoing is the parish pledge of £21,000. There will be a need to hold regular fund-raising events to supplement the income which in some years will not cover expenditure. A separate fund for the organ restoration raised the £55,000 required enabling work to commence.

Reading Room, Buckland The Reading Room is Buckland's village Hall and is leased by the Rector and wardens from the local landowner. It is re- establishing itself as a viable entity following covid.

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In addition to its main use as a village hall, it has a separate lockable church office complete with computer etc available only for church use. A local committee manages the Reading Room reporting to the church at each PCC meeting and financially on an annual basis. It contributes a percentage of its annual profits to the Buckland PCC. In Betchworth, the church uses the nearby Hamilton Room which is owned by a local charitable trust and is available for church use with only minor charge.



Parish Magazines Each village has a separate Parish Magazine retaining a tradition of some 100 years which is delivered to every house in each village. The advertising is jointly managed for both magazines. Editorship is quite different with Buckland's produced by a single volunteer, whilst Betchworth is very much a combined effort by a large group of village volunteers.

Why you should come to our joint benefice

This is a great opportunity to practise parish ministry and a collaborative style will yield the best outcome. The United Benefice is supported by a self-supporting resident minister, who works for the Anglican Communion. In addition, the benefice is part of the Upper Mole Group (UMG) of churches comprising, Brockham, Leigh, Charlwood and Sidlow where monthly prayer and ongoing support is available.

What do we want in a new Rector?

A traditional Rector with a challenging preaching style, amazing communication and leadership skills and time to care and guide our busy pre-occupied communities!

But importantly, we need someone to live in and be a visible and active presence in our villages with attendance at Sunday Morning services being a priority. We would also like sermons to serve the worship.

Pastoral skills are essential, but we are realistic about resources and open to different ways of undertaking this key element of the role. We fully appreciate the importance of building relationships and the benefits this can bring to both the Rector and the local population. We view the offices of baptism, weddings, and funerals as being a key part of our ministry.

Both parishes have communities which are affluent and well-educated with high standards and grand expectations – not all of them realistic. There are however small pockets of less well-off parishioners and areas of social housing. The role

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requires someone comfortable in all these settings who appreciates that ultimately, we all have similar needs and desires.

Beyond the normal and regular duties of any rector, we need someone to guide us through our evolving new MAP, and particularly to engage the local people – we have held recent parish meetings to advise the villages of our current situations about our finances and resources and received positive responses. We need to build on those meetings, i.e., more still needs to be done.

A fresh pair of eyes to lead us and challenge us to be the congregations that new people wish to be part of.

A stimulator and educator for our journey in faith and to advance a wish for a stronger prayer life.

Ideally to love music but certainly to embrace the importance of it for us and promote the benefits of what we have to offer.

What Challenges to Expect

- 1 To reinforce the church at the heart of the community and the community at the heart of the church.
- 2 Encouraging and recruiting more people to take on key roles and to support the churches. As part of this to link up regularly with both parish websites, and other established communications channels which supplement the monthly church-based parish magazines.
- 3 Review our current worship and consider additional devotional meetings relevant to all ages.
- 4 Refresh and expand the present teams of sides-people, intercessors, readers, and servers etc.
- 5 Lead us in formalising our MAP to be achievable and challenging; the present vision is of “an inclusive church, which is open to all, relevant to the needs of the community and at the centre of village life”.
- 6 To oversee the financial challenges presented by the ongoing running costs, parish support, fabric demands, and our wish to continue charitable giving.
- 7 Extending our outreach to encompass our local schools, our care homes and newcomers to the parishes.

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- 8 Using the churches more frequently during the week; moving towards the churches becoming a diverse physical facility for the villages – plans for next year include
- A meet the author event
 - Rodgers and Hammerstein concert
 - Come and Sing events.

Appendix

Diocesan information