

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

PATRONAGE (BENEFICES) MEASURE 1986

Statement prepared by the P.C.C. describing the Church's ministry and mission within the parish

This form is designed to give an overview of a parish to be used in a vacancy for the appointment of a new parish priest. It will be accepted as the 'statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish' required by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. Additional information may be given by way of printed documents or written submissions.

I. Parish Information

We are an exciting, large, and diverse parish in the urban West-end of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Our four churches make up a genuinely inclusive and authentic community who work tirelessly to share the love of Jesus Christ in Benwell and Scotswood and collaborate with many partner organisations to care for the community, whatever their background or belief. It is a place where ministry makes a real difference to people's lives each and every day.

The parish began in the 1830s and in 1985 St James, St John, and the Venerable Bede came together to form the Benwell Team. Saint Margaret's Scotswood then joined in 2015 to create Benwell and Scotswood Team Parish.

We are one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse parishes in the Diocese. We have seen significant growth and change in recent years, with many people of all backgrounds joining the worshipping community. We proudly welcome and offer pastoral support to asylum seekers and refugees and this is reflected in the Sunday 'Hub' service (Parish Eucharist) which is always translated into Farsi with the help of dedicated volunteers.

Our buildings are in use almost every day with hundreds of people coming through our doors. Over the years we have initiated several local projects, and now work closely with them as partner organisations. In particular, we are the home of Newcastle Foodbank; started by the congregation of the Venerable Bede it is now the UK's largest foodbank and operates in two of our churches several days a week.

St James is the home of the Something Wonderful project which aims to strengthen the local community and tackle poverty and isolation with a whole range of activities, including a burgeoning art club, gardening, pay-what-you-feel meals, and asylum support. We also host the foodbank's 'Pathways' project with multi-agency sessions to help people out of chronic poverty. The Something Wonderful team are also fundraising to renovate the large grade II listed building, replace the heating system, and secure its future for the community.

Although parts of our parish are amongst the most deprived 1% in the country, we don't want to be pitied or saved; rather we want the people of Benwell and Scotswood to have the chance flourish as the wonderful, strong, and beautiful community we know it to be.

1. *Name of Parish:*
Benwell and Scotswood Team
2. *Name of Parish church(es)*
St James, Benwell
The Venerable Bede, West Road
St Margaret of Antioch, Scotswood
3. *Name of other C of E churches/centres for public worship in the parish*
St John the Baptist, Benwell Village
4. *Group of parishes in which you work (formally or informally):*
N/A
5. *Deanery:*
Newcastle West
6. *Population:*
22,568
- 7.(a) *Number on Electoral Roll:*
126
- (b) *Date of APCM at which this number was declared:*
19th May 2024
7. *Attendance at worship at each church:*

Statistics for mission across the parish 2023:

Usual Sunday attendance – 144
Adults - 127
Children - 17

We have a transitional community and Sunday attendance fluctuates:

Worshipping community – 189
0-17 congregation – 35
18-69 congregation – 106
70+ congregation – 48

Joiners – 67
Leavers - 28

St James Benwell / Ven Bede parish eucharist - Attendance fluctuates from 50-100
St John's Benwell Village – 15-25
St Margaret's Scotswood – 6-15
Ven Bede weekday – 6-15

8. *Occasional Offices:*

Numbers for 2023:

Baptisms - 37
Confirmations - 14
Weddings - 2
Funerals - 10

II. The Local Community

1.(a) Briefly describe the population in terms of any predominant age and/or social groups, the ethnic mix etc:

- Benwell and Scotswood is one of the most diverse parishes in the Diocese. There are strong communities of Iranian, Kurdish, West African, Roma/Eastern-European, Indian, Bangladeshi, Ethiopian and Eritrean and others. There are many faiths represented in the community, but churches are well supported with 41% of people identifying as Christian.

(b) Are there any special social problems, e.g. high unemployment?

- The parish is in the bottom 1% on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. There is a significant poverty and health and social issues as well as extensive housing for asylum seekers. The church engages positively with all these issues, it works with many partners and community relations are strong.
- There is a large new estate (The Rise) being built in Scotswood to replace much of the area that was demolished. This will bring a large new community to the area.

2. Please list:

The Projects in the Parish:

- Newcastle Foodbank – originally created as the Venerable Bede Foodbank, now one of the UK's largest foodbanks. The last Vicar of the Venerable Bede was the Chair of Trustees and the Bishop of Newcastle is Patron.
 - Pathways out of Hunger – this is a project of the Foodbank that works with multiple organisations to offer welfare advice and support to hundreds of people every week. It operates from St James and Venerable Bede. Organisations can help with debt and benefits, safeguarding/social care, housing, mental health, immigration and asylum, doctor appointments and health checks, education, food vouchers and more.
- Something Wonderful – the project at St James encompassing community work and the renovation of the building for this work. There is an Artist in Residence based at St James' and a contracted caretaker to help manage the hall bookings. This is led by the Team Vicar for Mission. Currently Something Wonderful reaches hundreds of people each week, including Art Club, lunch club, multi-agency welfare advice and support, asylum seeker and refugee support.
- North Benwell Youth Project (NBYP) – charity created by the Venerable Bede particularly (but not exclusively) working with Roma Youth. Members of the congregation are on the trustees.
- Pendower Good Neighbour Project – charity created by St James, community centre working with families on the Pendower Estate. The Team Vicar is on the Trustees.
- Cornerstone - Christian community centre formed jointly between St James and local Methodist churches in an especially deprived part of south Benwell. They formerly had a part time school worker and a stipendiary priest. The former Rector was chair of Trustees.
- St James Heritage and Environment Group – local history charity that maintains St James' graveyard and organises publications, exhibitions and tours, currently the Team Vicar for Mission is honorary chair of trustees, in the past it has always been the Rector.
- Mothers' Union – there is a strong MU group in Benwell. They hold a monthly coffee, cake and craft group for women, and a monthly meeting. St James hosted the Diocesan Festival this year.

Local schools:

1. Trinity Academy - secondary and post 16 for those with additional social, behavioural, emotional and mental health needs.
2. Hadrian - SEN primary
3. Excelsior Academy - large secondary and primary (plus nurseries)
4. Atkinson Road –primary
5. Bridgewater- primary
6. St John's - primary
7. Canning Street - primary

8. West Newcastle Academy - primary
9. St Bede's - RC primary
10. St Joseph's - RC primary
11. St Cuthbert's - RC secondary boy's school
12. the Bahr Academy - Muslim school

In addition to this we have a nursery full time in St Margaret's church and other schools in neighbouring parishes that members of the community attend

Youth centres:

Patchwork Youth Project – working with youth in Benwell
 NBYP (see projects above)

Hospitals:

The old General hospital, now the 'Campus for Ageing and Vitality' is just outside the parish, on the West Road
 The Marie Curie Hospice is also just outside the parish

Nursing/residential homes, sheltered housing:

Care Homes:

Allan Court
 Ferguson Lodge
 Brooke House
 St Catherine's
 Orchard Mews
 Tyne Grange
 Westwood Lodge

Supported Housing:

Addison Court Sheltered accommodation.
 Hospital of St Mary the Virgin
 Riverview Lodge

Homeless hostels/supported accommodation/probation housing

Changing Lives – Elliott House, plus several others in the area
 Ozanam House

Places of worship of other faiths include:

Mosques and Islamic centres:

Newcastle Central Mosque
 Newcastle Bangladeshi Association Jame Masjid and Community Centre
 Turkish Community Association and Kotku Mosque
 Tawheed Newcastle Islamic Centre
 Newcastle Muslim Centre
 Masjid Darul Arqam
 Al-Raza Mosque
 Newcastle Masjid Jamia
 Bahr Academy

Other religions:

Technically just outside the parish, but because of the Ven Bede's location there has been strong interfaith links with other places of worship on the West Road:

Newcastle Hindu Temple
 Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha
 ISKCON

Other Churches:

Broadmead Way Community Church
St Joseph's 'Anglican'
St Bede's and All Saints RC church
Denton Burn Methodist Church
Gateway Church
Mountains of Fire and Miracles

(various other small denominations and free churches have also hired our buildings recently)

Local businesses:

There is a large area of industry along the Tyne including the Armstong Works

Shops include:

Asda
Lidl
Many Asian supermarkets
Many takeaways and restaurants

Other Local organisations

Riverside Community Health Project (based next to St James)
Search – older peoples support (they often use the church for activities)
West end Library (Your Homes Newcastle base)
The John Marley Centre, Scotswood – Home of Breeze Creative artist studios and Scotswood Community Garden
The Beacon – supporting supporting local businesses and charities
West End Women and Girls Centre
Changing Lives - project working with sex workers based in the offices at St Margaret's
Dialogue Society – interfaith and intercultural organisation that has strong links with our churches and has hosted events and exhibitions.
Tabitha's place – baby clothing and supplies run by gateway church

Any civic responsibilities of local clergy:

- The Rector and Vicar have been chairs of the various projects and this occasionally means engagement with the press.
- There are close links with local councillors and MPs and we have hosted many events for the council.
- An annual 'Peace Walk' took place in the west end stopping at different places of worship for different faiths, including the Venerable Bede. This included many faith, community, and political leaders and officials. Although this has not restarted since covid, there is significant potential and need for interfaith dialogue.

III. The Church Community (please give details for each church)

1.(a) *What percentage of the congregation lives outside the parish?*

- Most people live inside the parish and do not drive to church. As the area becomes more and more transitional, particularly with asylum seekers, there is quite a bit of flux. More and more asylum seekers who are moved out of the area continue to travel by bus or walking to us for church on Sundays.

(b) *Describe the congregation in terms of age, employment, culture, ethnicity and gender:*

- St James/Venerable Bede – this has essentially become one congregation due to the Parish Eucharist ('hub' service) happening at St James' in Summer months and Venerable Bede in Winter months. The intention is for this to be permanently based at St James once renovated. Congregation numbers fluctuate massively and is usually majority not white, but still with a significant amount of white working-class British with a sense of history of the area. The biggest groups are Iranian asylum seekers who have converted from Islam and West African families, but there are many more groups represented including:

international students, those with learning difficulties and other disabilities, and there are many who have struggled with mental health and addictions. The congregation is therefore relatively young and male compared to other churches. There are currently about 12 children, but real potential to grow this further. There is real life and excitement with this congregation and potential to stabilise and grow it.

- St John's – there is a strong group who are mostly from the west end, it is mostly retired people though there are some younger people. There is one family with three children and often grandchildren attend. St John's have a very active social life together and this has brought in new people through their dance classes, ukulele group, and socials.
 - St Margaret's – St Margaret's has a core group of dedicated members mostly over the age of 50 who have spent much of their lives in Scotswood. There have been young families involved very recently and there has been significant work done with children and youth here. There is a strong Scotswood identity, but the demolition of much of the area has had a severe impact on the community. Since a member of the congregation was recently ordained and their family have moved on, the work with children and young people has not been sustained. The construction of the Rise development may have a big impact on the area but also present opportunities for growth and engagement.
2. *Please describe the tradition of your church and give details of robes/vestments worn by officiants:*
- Our worship is not slick but it is considered. It is frequently described as 'authentic' and 'full of heart'.
 - Worship is primarily sacramental and liberal catholic in tradition. Chasubles and cassock-albs are worn.
 - At the Parish Eucharist there are usually 3 servers (Crucifer and acolytes) from a range of backgrounds, ages and abilities, at the other churches there is usually one server.
 - Major feasts and holy days are kept. Holy Week services and the Easter Vigil are deeply valued and the full liturgies are followed.
 - Because of the wide range of cultures, languages, physical and mental abilities in the parish, projectors are ordinarily used with Farsi translation.
 - The Sermon is translated into Farsi every Sunday at the Parish Eucharist.
 - Musical styles vary with a mixture of organist, worship band, and pre-recorded music.
 - There is a genuine openness to new forms of worship and music, and a real mix of church backgrounds.
3. *Give details of Sunday services with times and form of service used:*
- St John's - 9.30am (Eucharist, Common Worship Order I, Prayer E)
 - St Margaret's – alternating 9.45am (Eucharist, Common Worship Order I, Prayer E) and 4pm (Common Worship evening prayer/evensong)
 - St James – 11am (Parish Eucharist, Common Worship Order I prayer E with Farsi translation). N.b. this moves to the Venerable Bede during winter months until the heating is replaced)
 - Venerable Bede – Parish Eucharist during Winter (otherwise, Thursday morning eucharist weekly)
4. *Give details of weekday services:*
- St James Farsi Bible Study (Fresh Expression) – Tuesday at 4.30pm
 - Venerable Bede – Thursday at 10.30am, eucharist Common Worship Order I
 - Monthly Morning Prayer (common worship) led by Mother's Union at Venerable Bede
 - The Team Vicar currently says the daily office in church at the following times:
 - Tuesday – 9.30am Morning prayer at St Margaret's
 - Wednesday – 4pm evening prayer at St John's
 - Thursday – 9.30am Morning prayer at Venerable Bede
5. *List any authorised ministers (e.g. Reader, Church Army Officer, Ordained Local Minister, Non-stipendiary Minister, Curate in training, retired Clergy):*
- Team Vicar for Mission (full-time stipendiary) - The Revd Chris Minchin
 - The deanery plan includes provision for a House for Duty Vicar and a 0.5 Community Missioner.
 - Retired Clergy with PTO - The Revd Anne Marr

- Licensed Reader - Kathleen Germain
- Anna Chaplain - Shirley Irving
- Authorised Lay Ministers for Worship - Grace Thomson, Timothy Ohanaka, Chris Libby
- Authorised Lay Ministers for Pastoral Care - Carol Davison, Christopher Foskett, Shirley Irving

- 6.(a) *What is the average weekly giving of those aged 16 years and older, and what proportion of the giving is gift aided:*
- We have just finished a generous giving campaign and do not have the statistics for this yet, but signs are hopeful.
 - In 2023, we had 42 planned givers and an unknown number of unplanned givers. If we assume that we had 20 unplanned givers, that makes a total of 62 givers altogether.
 - The voluntary receipts were £28,200. The average annual giving of all givers is therefore around £450 and the
 - Average weekly giving of those aged 16 years and older who give is approximately £9. No account is made for people who attend but do not give.
 - A rough estimate of how much is Gift Aided is about 50%

The SCOTT LEGACY stood at a total of £22,200 at the end of 2023

- (b) *When did the parish last have a stewardship campaign:*
- September 2024
7. *How does each church supplement direct giving in order to meet financial needs (eg fundraising events, hall lettings, occasional offices, investments):*
- St John's are active with fundraising via fayres and socials.
 - St James' apply regularly for grants for their community projects and have received funding from the lottery and others, they also hire their hall to other groups. There has been various other fundraising activities including a music festival and an art auction by the art club.
 - The Venerable Bede hire their hall and they are currently in negotiations with the Foodbank to lease the hall to them long-term (the intention is to put a kitchenette in the church to enable this to be hired also).
 - St Margaret's had their building re-ordered about 20 years ago and now leases offices under license to Changing Lives upstairs and rooms downstairs to Scotswood Village nursery.
 - The Venerable Bede was left a legacy by Gladys Plewes. This is held by the Diocesan Society and is used for mission across the whole Parish. The bequest stood at a total of £147,000 at the end of 2023.
 - St James was also left the Scott Legacy for music across the whole parish, held by the Diocesan Society. This stood at a total of £22,200 at the end of 2023.
- 8.(a) *Give details of expenses paid to the incumbent, and state whether this covers them in full.*
Water, council tax in full. Travel, phone, and internet, in part.
- (b) *Is there an annual discussion about the level of expenses as part of the budgeting process:*
Not formally.
9. *What amount of Share has been (a) requested and (b) paid:*
Last year: £18,000 paid in full
Current year (2024): £19,000 (on track to pay in full)
- 10.(a) *Is there any capital project in hand at the moment:*
- St James is in the early stages of a renovation project and it is likely to be significant. This is being led by the Team Vicar for Mission and is part of his role description, so the new Rector would not necessarily have to take on much of the leg work, though they would be very welcome to be involved and shape the project if they wish.
 - The Venerable Bede also intends to lease their hall to the Foodbank long term, the church therefore hopes to install a kitchenette and improve facilities inside the church.

10.(b) *If so, please give brief details with costs and state how they are to be met:*

- Full costs of the renovation of St James have yet to be calculated, but they will be in the hundreds of thousands, if not more. Work has begun on applying for grants including the National Lottery and Northumbria Historic Churches Trust, National Churches Trust, Benefact Trust etc.

11. *Please attach a copy of the latest statement of accounts.*

IV. Church Buildings (please give details for each church)

1.(a) *What is the general state of repair of the churches:*

- St Margaret's, St John's and Venerable Bede are all in a good state of repair with minor improvements and repairs to be made.
- St James is a fine and beautiful building but it is generally in a poor state of repair. The hall (the former south aisle which has been partitioned off) has been renovated to a high standard with a separate heating system and is in use every day by community groups. But the main church itself has no functioning heating system and most of the electrics do not work, a beam above the vestry needs replacing and there is significant work to be done to the roof and redecorating inside.

2. *Please give details of church halls and any other ancillary buildings (and an indication of the level of their use). Hall bookings are generally managed the volunteer administrator/PCC secretary.*

- St James – hall integral (converted south aisle) in use almost every day for community activities.
- Venerable Bede separate church hall – used several times a week by the Foodbank, occasionally used by other groups for kilo sales and events, hopefully soon to be leased long-term to the foodbank.
- St Margaret's – offices leased by Changing lives, integral hall and other rooms leased by nursery.
- St John's – multi-use church/community space, used throughout the week for dance classes and socials.

3. *Is there a churchyard to maintain and who is responsible for its maintenance?*

- There is a closed churchyard at St James which is the responsibility of the local council, but day-to-day gardening has been delegated to St James Heritage and Environment Group (an independent charity which the Rector has been chair of in the past).

V. Outreach and Mission

1.(a) *What are the regular mission and outreach activities of the parish:*

The Parish is very active with mission and outreach and engage with hundreds of people every week. This was one of the reasons it was discerned that the second stipendiary post for the Team Vicar should be focused on mission and outreach. Just some of the activities include:

- Foodbank
- Asylum and refugee support
- Welfare support and advice
- Pay-what-you-can lunch clubs
- Art club with artist in residence
- Bible study with Farsi Translation
- Dance classes
- Ukulele group
- Creative writing group with New Writing North
- Gardening and local history group
- Interfaith and intercultural community events
- Tours, talks and exhibitions.
- Links with local organisations.

(b) *What are you doing to help people find out about Jesus and grow in their faith*

- There is much done to help people do this. Everyone is welcome at community groups without pressure, but clergy and lay members are always present at activities and we regularly offer pastoral support and prayer, which leads to genuine ongoing relationships and spiritual development.
- The weekly Bible Study with Farsi translation has grown into a Fresh Expression of church and, although it is translated into Farsi, it is open to everyone and has become a place for people to encounter Jesus, develop faith, and be led to baptism and confirmation.
- In Lent 2024 we created a weekly 'Exploring Faith' group. This was open to all, with about 20 people attending, some new to church and others not. This led to several baptisms and confirmations for both adults and young people.
- Sumer Holiday club – at St Margaret's we have held a holiday club using Scripture Union materials for 1 week. This has had 20 to 40 children attending. Due to lack of volunteers, this summer we could not manage a full week, but we did a day trip to the coast with a small group. Developing volunteers and work with children is a key area for growth.

(d) *What are you doing to grow people in leadership:*

- In 2023 six people trained for Authorised Lay Ministry in worship and pastoral care, they are now exercising their calling in various ways visiting care homes and hospitals, and leading evening worship and music.
- Two of the congregation were ordained deacon 2024:
 - Claire Lewis, trained at Cranmer Hall, Durham, now curate at St Mary's Monkseaton.
 - Abigail Harris, first joined us on a Ministry Experience Scheme, trained at Westcott House, Cambridge, and now Curate at Hexham Abbey.
- There are three people in the congregation who have expressed a potential call to ordination. They recently met the DDO. Two are from Iran and one is from Nigeria.
- We regularly host ordinands on placement from Cranmer Hall, and have done so every year for the last few years. This has been a very positive experience for all and has led to students seeking curacies in this Diocese.
- We encourage all members of the congregation to active in reading, leading intercessions, altar serving, hospitality, children's work and more.

2. *Please give details of support for the church overseas:*

- There are also strong links to many other countries through the congregation.
- The Team Vicar for Mission is also the co-chair of the Diocesan Link with the Diocese of Botswana, and the Bishop of Botswana and other clergy have visited.

3. *Is there an organised system of outreach and welcome to new families:*

- Many new families are asylum seekers and there is much activity to make people feel welcome and part of the church.
- To maintain connections we also invite all christening families to a Candlemas celebration, and all funeral families to an All Souls' service.
- We also encourage people to sign up to our e-newsletter and keep our website up to date.
- In the past there have been parent and toddler groups, but we are short on volunteers.

VI. Ecumenical Relationships

1(a) *Involvement in local Council of Churches*

- The local Churches Together has not met since Covid, but it was a very positive and healthy group involving Roman Catholics, Methodists, and a local free evangelical church. A Good Friday 'walk of witness' took place before Covid and there is potential for it to be revived if someone wished to take a lead on organising it.

(b) *Is there a formal covenant with any other denomination?*

- No, although St James did go some of the way down this route when the Bond Memorial Methodist Church closed. Many longstanding members came from this congregation, but there was no formal covenant.

VIII. Lay Education and Participation

1. *What education and training work takes place in the church for the following (give approx. numbers):*
 - Weekly Bible study
 - Exploring Faith Group (Lent 2024)
 - Confirmation classes at least annually
 - Adult baptism classes several times a year
 - Children's tables in church and holiday club
 - Authorised Lay Ministry classes have happened in the church.
 - Volunteer training for Something Wonderful
 - Ordinands and trainee readers on placement

- 2.(a) *Give details of house/prayer groups:*
 - We have had house groups for Lent and Advent led by our reader Kathy.
 - Lent Groups led by clergy in the churches happen most years. Advent groups happen some years.
 - There have been various prayer groups and bible studies in the churches in various forms and there is interest in this continuing.
 - There is a monthly 'Coffee, Cake and Craft Group' for women, led by the Mothers' Union, which is followed by Morning Prayer.

- 3.(a) *How do you rate the strength of lay leadership:*
 - Lay leadership is growing and getting stronger and a disproportionate amount of people have discovered, and continue to discover, their vocations here.
 - With the beginning of the Authorised Lay Ministry course in 2023, 6 people trained in worship and pastoral care.
 - Shirley Irving, Churchwarden at St John's, is now an Anna Chaplain, and Grace Thomson has flourished into an able lay minister able to assist with liturgy and lead evening prayer on Sundays.
 - There are challenges in the parish with poor education or lack of English, but there is also real potential to encourage and build teams of people who have traditionally been overlooked.

- (b) *To what do you credit this strength or the lack of it:*
 - The burgeoning of lay vocations has come from a sustained investment in a community of people who are generally under-represented in the Church of England.

IX. Mission

1. *List areas of church life which you consider in need of development:*
 - Children and Youth – we do not struggle to reach children and young people, but we struggle to sustain this ministry. We have very few volunteers and need a vision and resources.
 - Music – the quality of our music is variable and needs improvement. A worship band plays sometimes, there are two pianists/organists, and we use pre-recorded music. There is no obvious person to take the lead at the moment.
 - Finance – we have a better grasp on our finances than ever before. Our congregation is growing but many cannot afford to give financially.
 - Foodbank – the former Vicar of the Venerable Bede was the Chair of Trustees. There is need to re-establish formal links with this for it to continue as the Venerable Bede Foodbank.
 - Team work – with four churches and so many projects it is important to bring together all the various elements of our ministry and have an eye on governance and structures to steer the ship into an exciting new future.

2. *What are the main areas of mission that you think the new priest should prioritise in their ministry:*
 - Asylum/immigration and diversity.

- Tackling poverty and strengthening and celebrating the local community.
 - Children and Youth
3. *In summary, what are the key challenges with which you and the new priest need to engage:*
- Asylum and immigration
 - Poverty and community strength
 - Children and Youth
 - Team work
 - Finance

XI. The new Team Rector

List the qualities and skills you would like to see the Team Rector:

- Someone who sees our strengths and the amazing potential of this community, and who will work with us to help us to grow.
- Welcoming, inclusive, and non-judgmental. Someone who will love the people here in all their diversity.
- Someone prayerful who is prepared to help us improve our worship.
- A confident but kind leader.
- Someone who can bring together all the various elements of our ministry and steer the ship into an exciting new future.