

Thirsk Parishes Benefice Profile





"We are Christians in & near Thirsk who worship God in Jesus Christ as part of the Church of England.

We welcome everyone and seek to serve God in caring for each other and for our communities"

Celebrating

"Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today and forever Hebrews 13:8"



Contents

1	Introduction from the Diocese (Bishop Barry)	3
2	Introduction to Thirsk, the Benefice and Mowbray Deanery	4
3	Our hopes for a new Rector	10
4	Appendix A St Mary's Church, Thirsk	11
5	Appendix B St Lawrence's Carlton Miniott	15
6	Appendix C St Leonard's Sandhutton	17
7	Appendix D St Wilfrid's South Kilvington	20

You are





1 Introduction from Barry, the Bishop of Whitby

I am delighted you are exploring applying to be the next Rector of Thirsk. Be assured of my prayers and those of Archdeacon Amanda and our colleagues as you do.

The Benefice is in good heart and with much reason to be. A creative, welcoming and outward-focused culture is held within Christ-centred, caring and entrepreneurial leadership – lay and ordained. Across and within the



churches exist the range of styles and traditions needed to reach the town and villages, so as to offer each of the 6,000+ parishioners the opportunity to know the difference being a follower of Jesus Christ makes in their life. Even in my short time as Bishop of Whitby, I have found the benefice and deanery to be a beating heart of prayer, and have no doubt the communities will be a blessing to an incoming Rector.

A beautiful and thriving market town, Thirsk is one of two more sizeable conurbations within Mowbray Deanery. The deanery has been working closely together to support one another in mission and ministry, with supportive relationships being a hallmark. These partnerships have been relational, prayerful and strategic. This includes the 'grass roots up' plan to reorganise deanery-wide structures to best serve local need and vision. I have no doubt colleagues will offer the new Rector the support and care essential to thriving in ministry. In moving to Cleveland Archdeaconry you will find a wider archdeaconry team keen to support and serve you, led by a bishop and archdeacon for whom parish ministry is at the heart of who we are called to be and a diocesan staff team committed to your care and support.

This is a post for a priest who will flourish in leading in a season of opportunity, building on work that has been gathering momentum, not least intergenerationally and through Multiply (multiplyreach.org/thirsk). A key priority for the new Rector is ensuring these works of God both further develop and are embedded, not least as the externally funded role to get Multiply ministries started approaches its end. As a diocese, all parishes are working together to invite the 1.5 million parishioners we serve to know the joy of Living Christ's Story. This means each church focusing on what it means to:

- **Become more like Christ** knowing we are God's beloved children, that Jesus came to seek, serve and save, and actively participating in worship and witness Monday to Sunday;
- Reach people we currently don't living and telling the story of God with cultural humility and faith-filled confidence, inviting our classmates and colleagues, neighbours and friends to know the love, purpose and hope which has blessed us;
- · Grow as churches of missionary disciples which are younger and more diverse knowing we are sent to every place and person to which we go, but being a 'community of the sent' is most effective and best reflects the Kingdom of God when everyone is known and needed, honoured and participating.

May you know the surrounding and upholding of the Spirit of God in the vulnerability of discernment,

+ Barry Withy

For an informal conversation about this post, contact the Bishop of Whitby, Barry Hill (bishopofwhitby@yorkdiocese.org or 01642 593273) or the Archdeacon of Cleveland, Amanda Bloor (adcl@yorkdiocese.org or 01642 706095).

Applications to Mandy Robinson, PA to the Bishop of Whitby via Pathways: mandy.robinson@yorkdiocese.org

This post is open to Anglican priests who are eligible to work in the UK, subject to satisfactory episcopal reference and enhanced DBS.

2 Introduction to Thirsk, the Benefice and Mowbray Deanery

2.1 Welcome from the Area Dean

Thirsk is a really thriving Yorkshire market town, with a bustling and friendly community. Thirsk Parishes play a really significant role in our Deanery. Mowbray Deanery is one of six deaneries in the Archdeaconry of Cleveland, Diocese of York. We are a 'happy Chapter', with great working relationships between us and also ecumenically.

We are at a really exciting time here, in the middle of an ambitious pastoral reorganisation to orientate ourselves geographically into 2 teams, north and south of the deanery. We are looking to work together creatively and dynamically to resource and equip each other, play to each other's strengths and provide sustainable ministry to all our churches, large and small. We are looking forward to welcoming a co-partner in the Gospel at Thirsk Parishes to join a well-established and fruitfully functioning team and contribute to the ministry in the Deanery, as well as this benefice.

Blessings and prayers, Rev Mary Rolls, Area Dean, Mowbray Deanery.



2.2 Introduction to Thirsk and Thirsk Benefice

Thirsk is a medieval market town with a twice-weekly market and thriving Auction Mart. Thirsk is a popular destination with visitors from both the UK and internationally. The town has a friendly atmosphere, a community spirit, and lots of independent local businesses of which the community is supportive. It is the home of "James Herriot" and "The Yorkshire Vet". The Racecourse and Sculpture Park also attract people to the town.











There is a population of ~6,000, growing as additional housing is being built. There are good rail links to London, York, Leeds, Northallerton, Middlesbrough, and Scotland via the East Coast Main Line, and the A1 is 7 miles from the town centre. Thirsk lies between the National Parks of the North York Moors National Park and the Yorkshire Dales with easy access to both.

https://visithirsk.uk/ "Thirsk Tourist Information: Start here for everything about Thirsk"

The five-bedroom Rectory stands behind St. Mary's church, close to the town centre. It is a modern detached family home built just over 20 years ago.

Thirsk Benefice comprises of four communities each with their own Parish and church building. The three parishes



of South Kilvington (population 250), Carlton Miniott (population 1,105) and Sandhutton (population 300) lie within five miles of Thirsk Town Centre.



2.3 Introduction to the various parishes

The four parishes within the benefice are

- St Mary's, Thirsk
- St Lawrence's, Carlton Miniott
- St Leonard's, Sandhutton
- St Wilfrid's, South Kilvington. With a Church of England primary school academy.

The parish profile for each parish can be found in the appendices.

2.3.1 Church of England statistics

Information is available regarding the demographics of the four parishes from the national census in 2021 covering

- Age
- Religion
- Ethnic group
- Range of deprivation
- Tenure
- Household composition

These are in the form of 1 page per parish and produced by The Church of England Statistics Unit which can be contacted at their email address: statistics.unit@churchofengland.org.

2.4 Working with others

St Mary's has long been associated with our local ecumenical **Churches Together** group. Work focuses on collaborative services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, an annual World Day of Prayer service, a Good Friday Walk of Witness around the market square and recently a project to support a refugee family moving into the area. **Joint Alpha courses** have been run in different church venues.

Since 2004 there has been a formal **Covenant** between the **Mowbray Deanery** and **Northallerton Methodist Circuit** with outdoor Easter Activities for children and focused Art Groups at different seasons of the church's year providing opportunities to work together.

Community Works is an organisation working for the benefit of those in need in the Thirsk Area. This organisation was born thirty years ago through Thirsk and Sowerby Churches together and undertakes much of the social action in the town. The Benefice is an active supporter of the Food Bank, and several church members volunteer with Community Works.



2.5 Multiply Ministry

'Multiply' is a project in the Diocese of York aiming to reach out, grow faith and build new worshipping communities for those in their 20-40s. We have Rev Mary Rolls, licensed as an Associate Curate to the parish who has been helping us over the last 5 years to build links in our local community. Mary has started a number of new initiatives to make connections with people, such as our post-natal group 'Nurture' and, alongside our curate Richard, our weekly Renew wellbeing cafe at St Mary's. Working with the leadership team, Mary has broadened our worship, aiming to create space for more people to find home in our Church family. This includes our monthly Family Communion and moving our evening contemporary worship to weekly.

More information about Multiply, and a page on Mary's work in Thirsk, is available at https://multiplyreach.org/

2.6 Benefice-wide team, initiatives and missions

Each parish within the Benefice has its own identity and local initiatives. However, we seek to work Benefice wide whenever appropriate and possible. Our new Rector will be able to lead and work with the current leadership team comprising the Multiply Associate Curate (who is also the Area Dean); a Curate in training who started their training here in 2022 (the Benefice acts as a Clergy training parish); an Ordinand in a mixed mode training placement with us; a non-stipendiary Curate, a Deacon and Lay Reader, as well as a number of licensed retired clergy. The Church Wardens and Children's Work Leader attend team meetings.

The Benefice mission statement was derived through a joint PCC away day. These away days have continued annually (Covid years excepting) where we have shared opportunities to develop the mission at each of the churches. More recently we have sought to align our mission action plan within the Diocesan vision for **Living Christ's Story** using the **Rhythms of Life** framework.

Joint PCC meetings are held three times per year. Benefice services are held on $5^{\rm th}$ Sundays, rotating around the four churches.

Other Benefice wide activities include:

- Weekly Morning Prayer via Zoom
- Work within each of the schools in the Benefice (assemblies, church visits and festival services, informal classroom visits and staff support)
- Pastoral visits and Holy Communion at several Care Homes and Supported living in the Benefice and town, alongside local visiting and home communions in each parish
- Lent study group

Our priority as a Benefice and as individual Parishes is to develop the mission action plan and continue to seek new ways to reach out to the communities we are part of as appropriate to each.



2.7 Mission statement and key verse (see below from 2018). Living Christ's Story.

Our Benefice Mission statement is:

"We are Christians in & near Thirsk who worship God in Jesus Christ as part of the Church of England. We welcome everyone and seek to serve God in caring for each other and for our communities"

A key verse for us is

"Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today and forever Hebrews 13:8"

2.8 Safeguarding (provided by our Safeguarding Officer)

Over this last year, we have not had any serious safeguarding issues in any of the 4 churches.

Any local disputes have been sorted out and resolved by the local teams or group leaders.

Let us continue in this way, keep thinking of each other and talking through any problems,

Don't sit and hide from them, talk them through.

Any of the clergy_team and myself are always ready to listen to you.

And talk through any problems/ concerns.

Don't forget there is always someone willing to listen.

2.9 Communications and databases in use etc.

We stream our 10am services from St. Mary's and some evening services on Facebook and YouTube, with each receiving around 40 views. We also get good engagement with Facebook posts, with around 750 followers.

Our Facebook and YouTube channel are both found @thirskparishes

Our website can be found at www.thirskparishes.org

We currently use Churchsuite for our internal communication, and the Life Events Diary to manage our occasional offices.



2.10 Patterns of worship

Current pattern of Sunday Services

Week	St Lawrence Carlton Miniott	St Leonard Sandhutton	St Mary Thirsk	St Wilfrid South Kilvington
1	10:00 Morning Prayer Joint service	-	10:00 Holy Communion 18:00 The6 Agape	9:00 Holy Communion B.C.P.
2	-	10:00 Holy Communion Joint Service	10:00 Welcome Service 18:00 The6 Engage: The Spirit & The Word	9:00 Holy Communion B.C.P.
3	10:00 Holy Communion Joint Service	-	10:00 Holy Communion 18:00 The6 Contemporary Worship	9:00 Holy Communion B.C.P.
4	-	10:00 Morning Prayer Joint service	10:00 Family Communion 18:00 The6 Still Waters	9:00 Holy Communion B.C.P.
5	Benefice Service rotates around the parishes			



3 Our hopes for a new Rector

Our main hope for our new Rector is someone who will lead and work in partnership with the Leadership Team and help us build on our mission to be disciples of Christ in the Benefice and the parishes where we live.

Our new Rector will help us to

- grow (numerically) as congregations and as a witness to the community
- grow as disciples at whatever stage in our Christian life we are
- move forward and develop our mission action plan

We are looking for a Rector with experience of

- multi-parish benefices, particularly in a rural or semi-rural setting
- leading an ordained and lay ministry team
- officiating and enabling a diverse range of service styles and traditions



4 Appendix A St Mary's Church, Thirsk

In response to the Benefice Action plan put in place in 2018, the various areas of ministry have been developing as detailed below

4.1 Prayer and Worship



Sunday Worship is central to who we are. We love to welcome all to our services, whether regular congregation or visitors, to provide a safe friendly place where we can all seek to worship.

St. Mary's is a place to meet together and with God. We welcome all ages to our morning services, with a creche available in the side chapel and activities for older children. Our regular Sunday morning congregations number around 50 adults and children.

The monthly pattern of Morning Worship includes Liturgical Holy Communion, Family Communion, and a Welcome Service.

There is a willingness to try new things, whilst also appreciating the need to provide more traditional forms of worship. We appreciate shared testimonies, particularly from the older members of the congregation.

Our services use AV technology and, since COVID, have been live streamed whenever possible. A small, dedicated and gifted team manage this facility.

Refreshments are served after each service, offering time to meet and share, especially with newcomers and visitors.



"The6", (our Sunday evening service) follows different patterns of worship styles and formats, encouraging us to go deeper with God. Due to the Fantastic engagement, we now offer "The6" services weekly.

During 2024 we have had the pleasure of celebrating 16 baptisms and 5 weddings at St. Mary's, and have supported bereaved families through 19 funerals.



4.2 Welcome and Outreach

St Mary's is open during the week for worshippers, visitors, and meetings. Thirsk is a popular holiday destination and welcomes visitors from around the world to the James Herriot Museum. Over 7,500 visitors passed through the church during the summer months. A **Ministry of Welcome** operates between April and October, encouraging visitors to pray, to celebrate St. Mary's history of faith and learn about our ministry today.

Other regular group meetings which take place in St. Mary's provide opportunities to engage and share fellowship:

Renew Café – A Renew Wellbeing group runs weekly offering a safe and welcoming space and serving soup lunch

Weekly **Lite Bite** lunches at East Thirsk Community Hall Occasional **Craft and Art** groups meet Monthly Saturday **Coffee Morning**



4.3 Children and Young People



St. Mary's welcomes and celebrates families. In addition to the Sunday activities, we offer:

Little Ark – a weekly play session for preschool children and their carers.



The **Nurture Group** is hosted monthly for mothers and their newborns in rotation with other churches in Thirsk.

We also run an **Activity Club** every half term holiday at East Thirsk Community Hall, and during the holidays work with other local churches to plan events for children and their families.

Many young families attend St. Mary's Christmas Services (Christingle and the Crib Service).



4.4 Pastoral Care

Pastoral links: Working within the Benefice-wide plan, communion is taken regularly as requested within the parish to housebound and a regular communion service takes place at a local retirement complex.

Our small groups provide opportunity to deepen fellowship and provide mutual support and care.



4.5 Discipleship and Fellowship

How do we grow as disciples?

Small groups meeting regularly together following a programme of Bible study and prayer

A Men's Group meets once per month

Lent Groups offer a focused opportunity to go deeper into God's Word Regular Alpha Courses are run providing an opportunity to learn about faith Cake and Jam: An opportunity for musicians to make music together (and eat cake!)

Social Events including quiz nights, ceilidh events and meals together





4.6 Leadership and Communication

PCC: St Mary's currently has two church wardens and a PCC which has 10 members in addition to cleray.

The Electoral Roll for 2024 is 122.

The word cloud is made up of some of the things our congregation (young and old) appreciate about St. Mary's.

We seek to keep in touch with those on our mailing list using weekly emails and via Social Media platforms.



We encourage lay ministry within worship, in small group leadership and in all areas of outreach. 2 members of the congregation have just completed the Diocesan Deepening Discipleship programme, and are already contributing to worship.

Members of our congregation offered important leadership qualities we hope for in our new Rector, including

- Values all ages old too
- Compassionate
- Supportive



4.7 Finance and Stewardship

Managing the ongoing costs presents a challenge, whether it is in supporting ministry or caring for the church building. We are currently without a treasurer and so are working as a financial team looking at ways to spread the load of this responsibility. This is to be achieved in part by updating our bookkeeping platform and our bank accounts.

We are updating our financial giving scheme to be aligned with Generous Giving input from the Diocese. Our Free Will Offer for 2025 has been set at £3,370 per month.

4.8 Building





St. Mary's is a magnificent 15th Century church which is central to the Town of Thirsk. It's commanding position and Grade I listing makes it an attractive church for visitors to the town. It serves as a place to come together for important occasions and remembrances, and is considered to be the "civic church" for the town.

St. Mary's is a great place for concerts, and is used by the church family to host occasional Sunday afternoon concerts. It is also a venue used by the local De Mowbray Music and Ryedale festivals.

The building is wheelchair accessible and has an accessible toilet. All services offer a T-loop.

St. Mary's building presents the many challenges of a medieval building, and with no church hall the church building must provide all the facilities we need. Small improvements and changes have occurred incrementally.

We aim to work and act in a responsible way towards our impact on the environment.

There are draft plans in place to propose significant reordering to the building to support services, welcome and outreach, improve access, reduce our carbon footprint.

In so doing our wish is to continue to be a vibrant Christian community within a facility fit to serve the people of Thirsk.



5 Appendix B St Lawrence's Carlton Miniott



Situated on the busy A61 leading westwards from Thirsk is this attractive brick church built in its present form in 1895, designed by Hodgson Fowler a pupil of Pugin. Fronting the main road is the Robert Thompson (Mouseman) lychgate and behind a large well-kept graveyard.

Beyond are open fields with a public footpath to the nearby village of Sandhutton.

The church has an attractive interior, lovely stained glass, and a rare Grade 2 listed decorated ceiling. The building has an accessible WC, entrance ramp and a good-sized modern kitchen area, which make the building suitable for wider community use. We aim to make this a welcoming space for everyone in our community.

There are excellent links with Carlton Miniott Primary Academy and although not a Church of England school the Head teacher actively welcomes regular visits from the clergy team. Reception class have recently visited the church and enjoyed



taking part in a 'pretend' Baptism, valued by staff and pupils alike. St Lawrence's is also used each year for the school Christmas carol services.



This is a small church with a small but enthusiastic congregation, who are open to trying different styles of worship. Presently there are two services per month Morning Prayer and Common Worship Eucharist. Alternate weeks are shared with St Leonard's in Sandhutton.

The church's mission is to be a living Christian presence in the village, and this is lived out in the Sunday services, the ever-popular monthly coffee morning, and a regular home Bible study group.

The church is faithfully paying a Diocesan fair shares contribution of £4,000 each year.

The church is supported by an Ordained Deacon and a Licensed Lay Minister who are actively offering Pastoral care in the village and building valuable relationships with the wider community.



The church would welcome an incumbent who they could get to know well and who is committed to supporting the church's mission so that the building becomes fully used to God's glory and be an integral part of the village.



6 Appendix C St Leonard's Sandhutton

Sandhutton is a small village located about 3 miles from Thirsk, with a growing population of around 300. We have a lot of new homes (mainly on brownfield sites) which has increased our population from 260 (in the 2011 census) up to the present number. According to the 2021 census, we are an entrepreneurial bunch with a larger than average concentration of self-employed residents.

The attractive, Grade 2 listed, church was built in 1875, replacing churches which had been on the site from the 13th century. It is a well-cared for building containing beautiful stained-glass windows over the altar depicting Faith, Love and Hope (made by J Knowles and Sons). The



village war memorial stands in the graveyard and is the focus of our Remembrance Day events.



Our congregation is small but enthusiastic and we have been steadily growing in number over the last two or three years. This is mainly down to the dedication of our curate, who has oversight of the two more rural parishes within the benefice. We are all very keen to grow the church and to develop our own faith. Whilst rooted in the traditional we are open-minded about trying new forms of worship to complement our existing services. Over the last couple of years we have held Reflective services and taken our worship out of church and into the village with a Palm Sunday walk.

We aim to provide a visible Christian presence, holding fortnightly services (alternating Morning Prayer and the Eucharist), along with special services for Christmas, Easter, Harvest and other occasions. In recent years, we have held some very successful special occasion services and our traditional style (with a twist) Christmas Carol Service involves as many villagers



as possible (whether they come to church regularly or not). At last year's service we almost ran out of seats and we had a dog in attendance as well!



The congregation and the PCC feel very strongly that we have a role in providing worshipping opportunities for the village and that the church should be one of the focal points for village life. We are never going to be a big church - it's a small village – but we want to be a healthy church and we are happy to welcome worshippers from various Christian traditions.

We are very fortunate to have a retired Anglican priest and a former Methodist Minister living in the village and both are very supportive of the church.

Sandhutton is a village with a strong sense of community. Frequently, there are community activities held in partnership with the Kings Arms, such as quiz nights, and special lunches (many of which raise funds for the church and the village

hall). A village friendship group has recently been established.

The Village Hall hosts many events and activities and we have a regular village newsletter highlighting activities and St Leonard's contributes to that. We also have an e-mail group for more immediate notices which can be very helpful when problems arise (such as someone losing or finding a dog!).





The village is friendly and welcoming and there is significant scope for widening the church's ministry within it. We have our very own 'Fresh Expression' started by our SSM curate which is a monthly coffee morning, held in the pub, where a few stay behind at the end to have a short time of prayer and fellowship.

When the church building had some structural problems a few years ago, many in our village rallied round to support fundraising events, resulting in rebuilding the bell tower, rewiring, repointing, redecorating, maintaining and cleaning the church and church grounds. We would like to capitalise on the goodwill in the village and grow our congregation. We are keen that the village really feels that St Leonard's is their church so we try to hold events that are not too



intimidating to the unchurched and which are not always focussed around fundraising but are our 'offering' to the life of the village. One such event was a talk we held in church about the unusual, and very beautiful, stained glass in St Leonard's followed by cheese and wine.



Two young people from the village have cleaned the church regularly as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award (one is still doing this).

Our challenge is to bring those who support us so well in fundraising, and come to occasional services, to also come and worship with us more regularly.

We are a giving church and often choose to donate collections taken at special services, such as Christmas, to local charities.

We have taken a leap of faith this year and increased our Freewill Offering by 5% (to just under £3,000 pa) - we hope to be able to sustain this level of giving. However,

our finances are tight and we need help structuring a Stewardship campaign. We have made a start by signing up to the Parish Giving Scheme and now need help promoting this.

The congregation and villagers are looking for a priest who will value the distinctive differences of each parish - even as we work together as a benefice. We would like someone who visits the village - not just at Christmas or other services, but who joins us at coffee mornings, quiz nights and other village events; someone who will get to know us <u>all</u> as a community – not just the members of the congregation.



7 Appendix D St Wilfrid's South Kilvington

South Kilvington is situated approximately 2 miles from the market town of Thirsk and has a population of approximately 220. With good links to the A19 and A1, the village has many residents who commute to work but it also has a high percentage of retired residents. Within the village are a primary school, a pub, a garage and a woman's hair & beauty salon.



The Church was built in its present form during the 13th century and is situated in the centre of the village, north of the village green. One of the Church's rectors was W. T. Kingsley who served for 59 years and is reputed to be the longest serving rector in the country. He considerably embellished the church by carving an altar rail, a set of pews and a Bishop's chair.

In 2016, with the support of a very significant HLF grant, the Church underwent extensive internal and external restorations. It is hoped that this will sustain it for the next 100 years although, at the time, it was noted that the roof may need work in the non-to-distant future. Additional facilities, included in the renovations, have enabled the Church to be used regularly by the local school, and occasionally by village and local small groups, and village meetings and activities.



For many years the Church has paid in full its contribution to the Diocese of York; in fact it has increased its contribution above the rate of inflation in the last few years. Currently the church contributes £9,250 per annum which equates to approximately 60% of its annual income. The Holy Communion service on Sundays at 9am, with hymns on the third Sunday of the month, follows the Book of Common Prayer. The congregation have expressed a wish for this to continue and to continue to use the readings (Collects Epistles and Gospels) from the Prayer Book. The Church has an electoral roll of 22 with an average attendance of 12 at Holy Communion.

7.1 Church of England school

The village primary school's vision is rooted in the Christian Values of courage, compassion and respect.

We are a fully inclusive school that nurtures and develops children academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally. We are very proud of the inspiring teaching that takes place here, along with the nurturing relationships and a relentless determination to support the needs of all children. Children come to our remarkable school to learn, develop skills for life and experience exciting opportunities within our curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Children really are at the heart of every decision we make as a school. They leave here ready to take on the world.

The school has close links with St Wilfrid's and St Mary's Churches and the surrounding area, and is extremely proud of our community, parents, governors and Elevate Multi Academy Trust. All visitors to the in school remark upon the vibrant atmosphere and the interaction and involvement of the children in their learning.



Inspired by Jesus' teaching in the gospel of John 10.10: "I came that they might have life - life in all its fullness.



The school's ideal rector would be:

- someone who enjoys coming to lead our collective worship regularly and is good at telling stories;
- helps us when we visit St Wilfrid's and St Mary's to learn about the church or hold services;
- would like to come into school and get to know us;
- is keen to take an active role on the school's governing body;
- will involve the school in planning events for the Thirsk benefice.



