

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

1. *Name of Parish:* Spittal PCC
2. *Name of Parish church:* St John the Evangelist
3. *Name of other C of E churches/centres for public worship in the parish:* 0
4. *Group of parishes in which you work (formally or informally):* Benefice of Scremerston Spittal and Tweedmouth
5. *Deanery:* Norham
6. *Population:* 2,789
- 7.(a) *Number on Electoral Rol:* 39
- (b) *Date of APCM at which this number was declared:* 26/03/2024
7. *Attendance at worship at each church. St John the Evangelist:*
Average Sunday Communicants: 0
Average Sunday attendance: Sunday afternoon: Tea-Time Church. Adults 6. Children 9.
Sunday morning worship is held at Tweedmouth Parish Church for the whole Benefice. Members of all three parishes are invited. St John's attendees at this service - Average 5.
Average weekday Communicants: 15
Average weekday attendance: 15
8. *Occasional Offices:*
Number of baptisms in the last 12 months: 1
Number of persons confirmed in the last 12 months: 0
Number of weddings in the last 12 months: 2
Number of funerals in church in the last 12 months: 9
Number of funerals taken by clergy not in church in the last 12 months: 2

II. The Local Community

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

Spittal presents as a ribbon seaside development with its old village overlooked by two late 1960's housing estates – Highcliffe and Eastcliffe – and separated by the LNER main line railway. Spittal is the Benefice's most densely populated area: 3,276 people per square mile within 0.7 square miles - the smallest area in the Benefice.

Spittal's population is 98% white, and skewed towards children and families, with 25.6% in the 0-19 age range, and 17.1% for the 30-44 years old. The majority of these families live on the estates where there is a large proportion of social housing, and more new building underway.

In contrast, Spittal has the lowest figure in the Benefice for the 70+ age group. They live predominantly in the village, where they belong to the older tight knit community and represent long standing local families who are homeowners. However, their numbers have been swelled by retiree 'incomers'. Drawn by the cheaper prices and the attractive location, they have been buying property and restoring the Victorian and early twentieth houses. The demography may have also been affected by 'younger retirees' investing in second homes or holiday lets. A small luxury development has recently been built at one end of the village, and a larger one is planned at the other end.

46.% of the population says they have no religion and 47.6% describe themselves as Christian.

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

The skills levels among the working population are lower than the national average, and many find seasonal employment in the local caravan parks and hospitality industry. Many single parent families depend upon benefits and the social deprivation on the two housing estates has resulted in challenging social issues.

2. *Please list:*

Local schools:

Berwick Academy (situated behind the Highcliffe Estate) – not a church aided academy.

Tweedmouth Middle School – serves both Spittal and Tweedmouth.

Spittal Community First School – not church aided. Has a preschool attached to it.

Spittal Day Nursery – privately run.

Youth centres: 0

Hospitals: 0

Nursing/residential homes, sheltered housing: 1 residential home

Places of worship of other denominations or faiths:

Waypoint – Independent church plant - hires Spittal Improvement Trust Community Hall for Sunday services and Friday night worship meetings. Waypoint moved to this location in 2023, having previously rented meeting rooms at the community centre (Northern View) on the Highcliffe estate.

Local businesses:

There are a number of home-run businesses – often father and son – that cover trades such as building, roofing, plumbing, painting, gardening and hairdressing. Although the traditional salmon and herring fishing has declined, a variety of local businesses have replaced it, some of which are long established, such as Forte's family ice cream and two printing works: Shiel and Morrison and Martins. However there are also some newer small ventures including a vegan café and Food Fall – for local produce. There are two pubs and one shop in the village, and one shop on Highcliffe estate.

Tourism plays an important part in the local economy with Spittal boasting a holiday caravan park and camping club, and several holiday homes and lets. The beach, and the prom with its splash park, attract frequent visitors especially during summer months. Cyclists and ramblers take the cliff path out of the village and down the Northumberland coastal route to Holy Island.

Neighbourhood Associations: The principal one is Spittal Improvement Trust. (SIT)

Local associations:

The Improvement Trust Gardening Group maintains a high standard of care for the public flower beds and gardens of Lower Spittal, with volunteers consistently winning a prestigious gold medal from Northumberland in Bloom. The RNLI is central to Spittal's identity, but the community continues to expand its links with the maritime environment, through the creation of a Coastal Trail and through its liaison with the District Wild-Life Group and Northumberland Coastal Conservation. There is also the popular Sailing Club. For locals the Bowling Club also provides a great leisure activity, and young people enjoy playing for the Berwick Rangers Junior League on the school pitch in Main Street. In 2023 The Spittal Improvement Trust took over the defunct 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 the local residents find leisure activities and community welfare and support groups in the newly equipped and refurbished Northern View Community Centre.

Any civic responsibilities of local clergy:

Chaplain for the RNLI. Leading the annual Remembrance Sunday Service at the Cenotaph.

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

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

Half of the Wednesday congregation are drawn from the other churches in the Benefice.
Sunday Tea-Time Church – two thirds come from within the parish.

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

Weekly Wednesday communion - 60+; mainly retirees who are white English or Scottish. Average number is five men and ten women, with half of the attendees drawn from the other churches in the Benefice. The strong core hub of "Spittlers" in the church includes two members from the local housing estate and three who've moved into the area during the past ten years. They enjoy the time for fellowship afterwards.

Sunday Tea-Time Church- 9+. Core attendance is from two or three families and unaccompanied children. Some of these also attend our Monday evening sessions for younger youth. Several have educational needs.

2. *Please describe the tradition of your church and give details of robes/vestments worn by officiants:*

Central Churchmanship. At the midweek communion service clergy wear a white cassock and alb, with stole appropriate for the season

3. *Give details of Sunday services with times and form of service used:*

Tea-Time Church meets at 4:00pm three Sundays per month during term time. It is led by lay leaders and volunteers, mainly from Tweedmouth congregation. It is an informal family service and includes crafts, interactive games, a Bible story, and prayers. It concludes with a shared meal. On special occasions such as Harvest and Christmas, we invite older member of the community to join us.

4. *Give details of weekday services:*

Spoken Holy Communion every Wednesday at 10:00 am. The congregation enjoys the reflective nature of the communion service which follows Common Worship Rite A or B.

5. *List any authorised ministers (e.g. Reader, Church Army Officer, Ordained Local Minister, Non-stipendiary Minister, Curate in training, retired Clergy):*

Licensed Retired Clergy:	Rev Linda Chapman.	Rev. Michael Johnson
Lay Readers:	Mr Phil Rowett	Mr Gordon Chapman
Lay Leaders:	Mrs Jennie Ritchie	Mrs Barbara Donaldson

- 6.(a)** *What is the average weekly giving of those aged 16 years and older, and what proportion of the giving is gift aided:*
Average weekly giving – from standing orders, PGS and envelopes - is £209, with 90% gift aided.
- (b)** *When did the parish last have a stewardship campaign:* 2021
- 7.** *How does each church supplement direct giving in order to meet financial needs (eg fundraising events, hall lettings, occasional offices, investments):*
Hire of Mercer’s room. Annual Christmas Shopping evening. Annual Musical concert. Card machine facilitates donations.
- 8.(a)** *Give details of expenses paid to the incumbent, and state whether this covers them in full.*
No expenses are incurred by St John’s
- (b)** *Is there an annual discussion about the level of expenses as part of the budgeting process:* Yes
- 9.** *What amount of Share has been (a) requested and (b) paid:*
Last year: a) £9,000 b) 100%
Current year: a) £9,600 b) £9,600 will be paid by the end of 2024
Next year: a) £10,368 b) £10,368 agreed
- 10.(a)** *Is there any capital project in hand at the moment:*
Early stages of fund raising for proposed repair of East Window and plastering work in the chancel
- 10.(b)** *If so, please give brief details with costs and state how they are to be met:*
No current estimate. A small fund has been set up. Fund raising would include grant applications; personal donations; special events.
- 11.** *Please attach a copy of the latest statement of accounts.* See attached.

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

- 1.(a)** *What is the general state of repair of the churches:*
Repairing the East Window and replastering the Chancel are serious needs, otherwise satisfactory.
- (b)** *Please give details of any major maintenance needed following the last Quinquennial Inspection:*
(i) Major maintenance required for East Window and replastering work in the chancel. The next Quinquennial is due in 2025
(ii) Since the last Quinquennial a new eco-boiler has been installed (2024) and Wifi is being installed in the vestry which has been designated as an office for the proposed new Children’s and Families Ministry Leader. Four pews have been removed. The pipe organ has been removed (2023) creating more space for children and youth activities at the back of the nave, which was re-carpeted at the same time.
- 2.** *Please give details of church halls and any other ancillary buildings (and an indication of the level of their use).*
The church hall (situated on the other side of the road at the back of the church) is rented out by the diocese to a private nursery.

There is a small shed at the back of the church for storing garden tools. Storage space in the church building is provided in the loft above the kitchen; in the old vestry which now houses the new boiler; and in the small cellar.

3. *Is there a churchyard to maintain and who is responsible for its maintenance?*
St John's does not have a churchyard but does have extensive gardens maintained by the church.

V. Outreach and Mission

- 1.(a) *What are the regular mission and outreach activities of the parish:*
Coffee, Chat and Play for mothers, carers, babies and toddlers takes place every Tuesday morning during term time and has a faith component. St John's hosts and promotes Easter and Summer Holiday clubs for children. St John's Youth Group leaders serve at the 'Renew North- East' summer camps which group members also attend. Volunteers in the children and youth ministries also help at the hugely popular annual "Life Path" event at Brinkburn Priory. This is attended by local schools from Scemerston and Tweedmouth. In 2025 a "Life Path" event for Berwick is planned to take place at St John's. The church Gardens are designed to cater for outreach purposes.
- (b) *What are you doing to help people find out about Jesus:*
'Try Praying' booklets have been displayed on the church railings. Special Invitation services are conducted at Harvest and Christmas. The Sea Sunday event which is hosted for the whole community has a faith sharing component. The Tuesday group invites friends and neighbours to join low key events eg shared meals and well dressing services in the village. By keeping the church open for most of the year we hope visitors and locals will feel welcome and even discover literature about faith. We publicise that people are also welcome to wander in the gardens and enjoy their beauty. The Peace Garden at the rear of the church draws people to sit in a reflective space and 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.
- (c) *What are you doing to help grow people in discipleship:*
The Home Group helps in this process.
- (d) *What are you doing to grow people in leadership:*
Members of St John's attended the three Norham Deanery lay training sessions that were hosted here.
- 2.(a) *Please give details of support for the church overseas:*
There is an annual Fund Raising for Christian Aid.
- (b) *How much is given annually:* Donation
- 3.(a) *Give details of support for home missions and charities:*
(i) The July Sea Sunday celebration in the church gardens is a major publicity and fund-raising event on behalf of the RNLI, enabling them to raise over £800 annually.

(ii) £100 is raised annually for the Children's Society through collection boxes and a Christingle Service.
- 4.(a) *Does the parish have an overseas link:*
No

- (b) *If so, please state where/who*
5. *Is there an organised system of outreach and welcome to new families:*
There is a consistent informal welcome of families with a networking follow up.
6. *What part does the church play in community care:*
Individual church members visit and support older people in the parish.
Church members in the Anna Chaplaincy team visit and conduct monthly services in “Garden House” the local residential home.
A special Harvest Appeal is given to Berwick Food Bank.
- 7.(a) *Are there Lay Eucharistic Assistants who take communion to the sick: Yes*
One Lay Assistant has been commissioned to do this.
The Anna Chaplain takes communion to individuals in their rooms in Care Homes when requested.
- (b) *If so, who are they:*
Mrs Jennie Ritchie (Lay Assistant). Mrs Mary Higginson (Anna Chaplain)
8. *What work does the church undertake with young people, other than in church-based organisations (eg open youth work):*
A St John’s lay volunteer works closely in the community with local guides who meet in the Spittal Improvement Trust building.

VI. Ecumenical Relationships

- 1(a) *Involvement in local Council of Churches*
St John’s hosts Berwick Churches Together for breakfast every Easter Sunday morning following their Sunrise Service on the beach. Members also join other Berwick churches for their Good Friday Walk of Witness, and the annual Berwick Festival Songs of Praise on The Parade. St John’s has hosted and participated in the Berwick Churches Lent lunches. At Christmas 2023 and 2024, the youth group and their leaders joined other churches in the “Shine Your Light” carol singing on the steps of the Town Hall.
- (b) *Is there a formal covenant with any other denomination?*
No
2. *What informal ecumenical contacts are there?*
Largely through Berwick Churches Together networking.

VII. Church Education and Social Provision

- 1.(a) *Name of Church School(s), if applicable: 0*
- (b) *Aided: N/A*
Controlled: N/A
Foundation: N/A
- (c) *Number of pupils on roll (approx.): N/A*
- (d) *If aided, does the PCC support the school: N/A*

VIII. Lay Education and Participation

1. What education and training work takes place in the church for the following (give approx. numbers):

	Safeguarding	Food Hygiene	First Aid	'Renew North-East'	Children & Families Ministry
Children:	6	3	1	1	1
Young People:	6	3	1	1	1
Adults:	6	3	1		

St John's Hosted the Benefice First Aid training in 2024

2.(a) Give details of house/prayer groups:

The Tuesday group meets either in a private home or in church for fellowship, Bible Study and prayer. Meditative night prayer is held at 7:00pm on Tuesdays in church.

(b) Are the leaders clergy or lay: Lay

3.(a) How do you rate the strength of lay leadership: Very Good

(b) To what do you credit this strength:

Encouragement and support from the congregation. A strong commitment to the Lord. People humbly playing to their God given strengths and skills whether practical, administrative, in children's work, or in hospitality etc. and also working smoothly in teams.

IX. Mission

1. List areas of church life which you consider in need of development:

The PCC would like to see a review of the Wednesday communion service to include elements such as music, silence and a greater lay involvement, aimed at deepening worship for every member of the congregation.

The PCC would like to encourage a growing "church eco system" focusing on more invitation events; on more low-key opportunities for building relationships; and training in listening/awareness for making conversations, especially with the needy or marginalised in our community.

2. What are the main areas of mission that you think the new priest should prioritise in their ministry:

To encourage people to move deeper into prayer.

To pursue a vision for building, and then sustaining, a flourishing community of believers in Spittal.

To rekindle outreach to the housing estates, where there is such a lack of spiritual awareness and such a high proportion of young families, many of whom face serious difficulties.

To promote a planned approach to discipleship and growth in the faith, especially among the young, but also those in the 25-40 age group.

To establish an ongoing relationship with our next-door Spittal Community School, hopefully resulting in their welcoming the Benefice 'Open the Book' team

To seek an opportunity for more input into Tweedmouth Middle School and Berwick Academy.

To maintain a collaborative approach across the Benefice, in working together with the proposed new Children's and Families Ministry Leader.

3. *In summary, what are the top three challenges with which you and the new priest need to engage:*

Pursuing an incarnational vision for a strong community of believers in Spittal that will involve us in:

- (i) Rekindling outreach in the housing estates, especially among children and families, whilst also networking and encouraging those with whom we have existing relationships
- (ii) Building a foundation for discipleship especially among previously unreached 25 - 44 years old.
- (iii) Prayerfully and creatively building bridges with next door Spittal Community First School and making faith matters attractive and relevant for the lives of the varied population of Spittal.

X. Additional Information

Please add here, or on another sheet, anything else which you would like the Patron and the Bishop to know about the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish.

As a parish we are privileged to both serve our wider, recently created Benefice and, at the same time, be enriched by its volunteers in children and families work and in sharing services.

We have endeavoured to take an account of environmental impact when installing the new eco boiler. We have tried to maintain a conservation approach in the church gardens with compost boxes, bird boxes, bird baths, a hedgehog home, a willow tunnel, a bugs' village, two small wilding areas and two areas with wild-flowers indigenous to Northumberland.

XI. The new parish priest

List the qualities and skills you would like to see in the new priest:

The Benefice Joint PCC has established a consultative process to answer this question. However, St John's PCC would appreciate an incumbent who would prioritise preaching the gospel and encouraging prayer.

We would welcome someone with a pastoral heart to walk alongside both seekers as well as those new in the Faith. This incumbent would identify the potential in prospective leaders requiring encouragement and training.

A great advantage would be the ability to build teams, and especially to work closely with the proposed Children and Families Ministry leader.

For Spittal Parish, with its mixed communities incorporating the more traditional village (which now includes recently retired incomers) and the two housing estates with their high level of social deprivation, a commitment to work with all sectors of society is desirable. An ability to relate on faith matters with families experiencing a variety of social issues would be a considerable asset.