



# CLUSTER TWO

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Rivers Benefice  
Beck & Trent Benefice  
Tuxford Benefice  
Northwestern Group  
The Potting Shed



RURAL RENEWAL

# CONTENTS

Background	3
Location & People	5
Opportunities	6
Centres of Strength	7
Benefice Profiles	8



# BACKGROUND

**Led by the desire to share the living hope that is found in following Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3) we are on a mission to grow new disciples with compassion confidence and courage.** We believe that this vision is as relevant in the rural villages of our diocese as it is in our other contexts. We are also aware that there are some particular challenges in our rural parishes and we have spent time developing a plan that we hope will enable the church to grow and flourish into the future. While we understand the challenges in rural ministry, we are excited and motivated by the many opportunities that we see. However, the church needs to reach out to people outside of its usual congregations, grow younger and be future focused. As a diocese we are committed to supporting and developing ministry in our rural communities. We have spent time reviewing our learning and have identified several things that work well, including a focus on schools, strategic planning of resources, and the development of contemporary styles of worship, alongside the more traditional forms and styles.

We are drawing on examples of good practice in the rural where we have seen growth – Connect Church in school (Farnsfield, Aslockton); The Potting Shed Church (work with schools, children, families and youth); River Idle benefice (multi-parish benefice, with a focus on children's and families work)

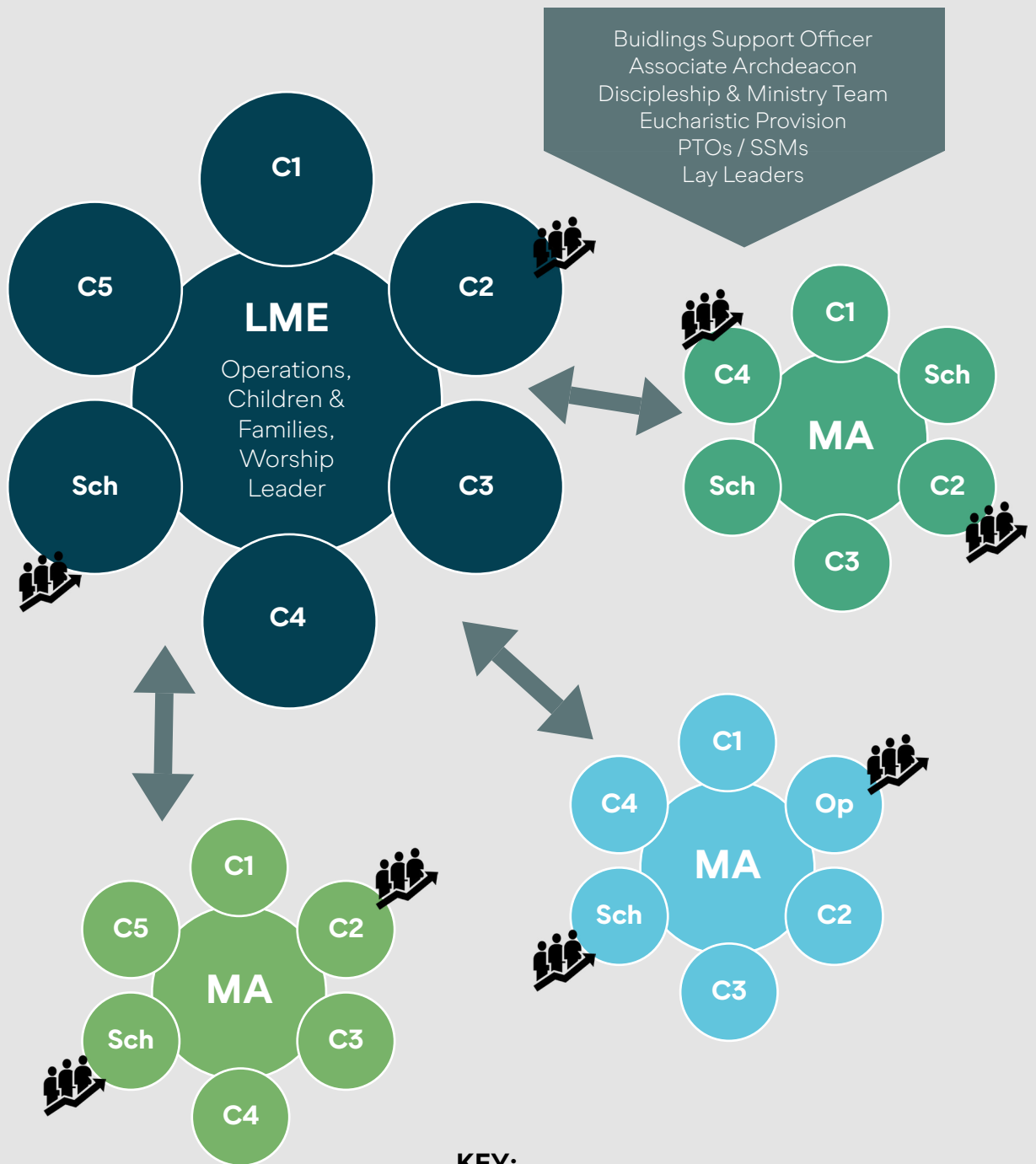
We are proposing a new model that draws together several (likely 3 or 4) benefices into a new cluster. Each cluster will have a priest who will act as lead mission enabler (LME) who will lead the strategy and vision for the cluster, and priests who will be mission associates (MA) focusing on leading one of the benefices. In addition, we have proposed a combination of other roles that can support the cluster (this may include an operations manager, children and family's leader, contemporary worship pastor). These roles will be funded by our successful bid from the national church through the diocesan investment programme.

We are looking for several mission associates to come and help us deliver this innovative vision. These posts will be time limited (initially for 3 years with a 3-year extension) with the hope that they can become permanent posts beyond this point.

**We are piloting three clusters. This pack provides the information for Cluster 2.**

# RURAL CLUSTER PILOT MODEL

The model below demonstrates how this pilot will work.



**KEY:**

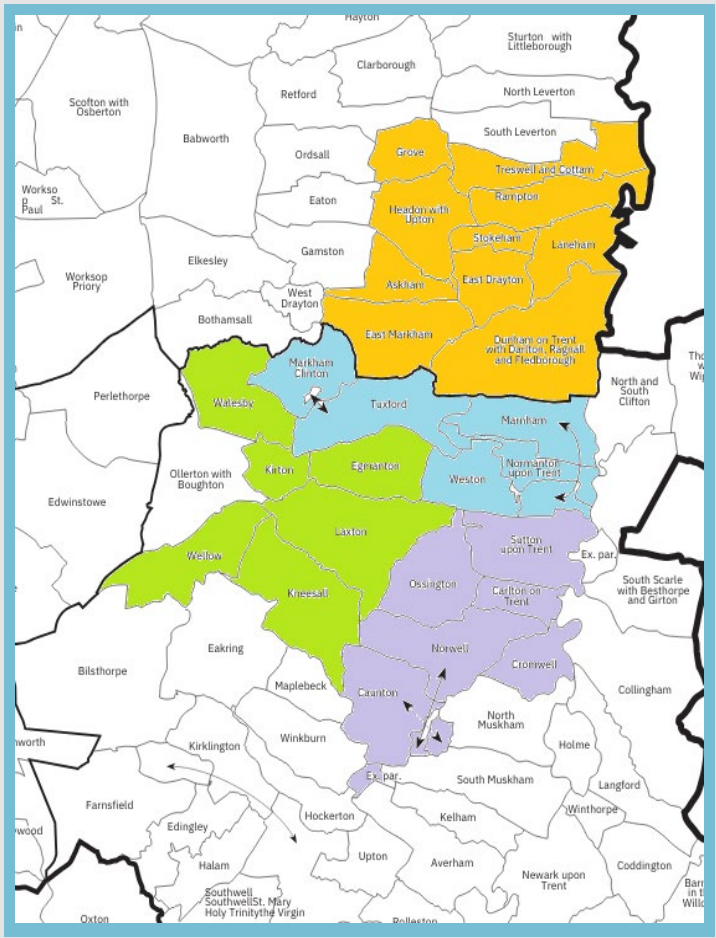
- LME = Lead Mission Enabler (ordained)
- MA = Mission Associate (ordained)
- C1 = Church 1
- Sch = School
- Op = Other Opportunity
- = New Worshipping Community

**LOCATION**

Situated in the middle of the diocese, between the market towns of Retford, Southwell and Newark cluster 2 is comprised of 4 benefices:

- 1. **Rivers Benefice** (East Markham, Askham, Treswell and Cottam, Dunham with Darlton, Ragnall and Fledborough, Headen with Upton, Grove, East Drayton and Stokeham)
- 2. **Beck & Trent Benefice** (Norwell, Cromwell, Caunton, Ossington, Sutton on Trent, Carlton on Trent)
- 3. **Tuxford Benefice** (Tuxford, Weston, Normanton-upon-Trent, Marnham, West Markham)
- 4. **6 parishes of the Northwestern group** (Kneesall, Laxton, Egmanton Kirton, Walesby, Wellow)

In addition, the cluster includes **The Potting Shed Church** (a Bishops Mission Order).



## PEOPLE

The proposed Lead Mission Enabler is **Revd Alison Jones** who is currently the Pioneer Minister of The Potting Shed Church.

**We have opportunities for 3 mission associates (Priest-in-Charge roles)** for The Rivers, Beck and Trent and Northwestern benefices. The MA role at Beck and Trent will also work with and provide some additional support to the Lead Mission Enabler and Tuxford Benefice.

There are **29 churches** in this cluster serving a population of **18,562**.

There are **6 C of E primary schools, 5 county primary schools, and 1 secondary academy** at Tuxford.

The villages are home to families who have lived there for generations, as well as those who have moved to enjoy this rural context more recently.

The benefices enjoy **good links to the A1 and the East Coast mainline railway** and because of new housing developments, attract those commuting to neighbouring towns and cities (Lincoln, Doncaster, Sheffield) as well as those further afield (York, Leeds and London).

## OPPORTUNITIES

We have some good links with the schools, these need to be developed with more effective pathways to faith. Many of our churches have few or no children attending on a Sunday and few young adults, but we have good relationships that can be built on to enable greater connections.

We consider that in this cluster, initial opportunities can be found with the schools at Tuxford, Sutton, Walesby, Dunham, Norwell and Kneesall.

## CENTRES OF STRENGTH

These will be places where a new worshipping community is planted, focusing on reaching younger and to new people - those who are not currently part of a worshipping community (the de-churched or un-churched), with the gospel of good news that faith in Jesus Christ brings. [As recent research suggests](#) new things tend to reach new people.

These centres will share the following characteristics:

- Create a space where people can encounter God
- Focus on those who may be unfamiliar with the church (outreach)
- Desire to build a place of inspirational worship (likely to be contemporary worship style)
- A clear plan around discipleship pathways, beginning with a generous welcome, outreach events, explorer courses and pathways that enable a clear route from initial contact to full participation.
- A culture that understands what it is to be a disciple of Christ in the rural context in the 21st Century.

A place that can act as a hub for teaching, training and social gatherings for the whole benefice.

We envisage that in this cluster, potential centres of strength could be developed at Tuxford, Sutton-on-Trent and East Markham churches.

### **Location (residence) of mission associate posts:**

- Norwell (Beck and Trent Benefice)
- Dunham (The Rivers Benefice)
- Walesby (Northwestern Group)

## OUR BENEFICE

Tuxford Benefice is situated between Newark and Retford, comprising of five parish churches and three schools. Each parish having its individual characteristics and personalities with one belief, Jesus Christ as Lord maintaining a Christian presence within our parishes and schools, being a definite priority.

As there is a relatively close proximity between the parishes, we do try to work together to help and support each other and share resources when necessary.



## OUR CHURCHES

### ST NICHOLAS CHURCH TUXFORD

St Nicholas is a Grade 1 listed building at the centre of the Benefice, once being a thriving market town with large numbers attending church. As with many churches the numbers over the years have declined. Saying that, Tuxford is a growing community with the new Ashvale estate bringing many young families to the area although at present not many attending church.

The local attractions are the Tuxford windmill, Sally Mitchells art gallery and museum of the horse, The 'Walks of life' museum, several coffee shops, along with general stores and a doctors surgery.

Tuxford also has two schools. Tuxford Primary Academy, and Tuxford Academy. Both in the past benefiting greatly from regular assemblies and support from the church schools.





## ALL SAINTS' CHURCH WESTON

All Saints' is approximately ten miles from Newark and three from Tuxford and is home to 125 houses. Originally a farming community, new builds have attracted newcomers to the village with younger families and their children.

There was a church at Weston at least since 1086 when it was recorded in the Domesday Book. In 1182 the church was granted to the Benedictine monks. It has the remains of a Saxon cross and a recorded war memorial to the fallen in WWI.

During Covid, All Saints' church was the first church in the Benefice and one of the first in the Diocese to re-open its doors to the public. All Saints' Church has welcomed church family from not only Weston but Tuxford, West Markham, Carlton on Trent, Sutton on Trent, Newark, Worksop, Retford, and also online to include Austria, together with Alaska. Beginning with 3-5 attendees increasing to 15-20 regular.

Weston regularly hosted two Holy Communion a month along with informal/café church, and Saturday open church, all with refreshments. Weston has also hosted three charity collections a year for the "Newark & Tuxford" food bank and the Emmaus Trust, which had a fantastic response from all around the Benefice with 456kg of produce going to the foodbank, on just one occasion. Truly a good news story.

## ST WILFRID'S CHURCH MARNHAM

Marnham is a delightful small farming community divided into Low and High Marnham close to the River Trent. The grade I listed church situated in Low Marnham, is under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust, and is still used with the archbishop's permission for weddings.

A number of couples married in the church have remained within the community with young families who are encouraged to attend the services which take place in the old school room opposite the church that follow the agricultural year. This starts with "Plough Sunday" and ends with the Harvest Festival. In addition, there is a Christingle and informal family services throughout the year.

Marnham has a public house, a fishing lake, a number of rental properties, a park home site, and two long stay caravan sites. This does have an effect on the fluidity of the community which makes it reliant on congregations from neighbouring villages with an affiliation to the parish.

Marnham is a charming village with a farming community that has a strong neighbourly bond, with the purpose of keeping a true Christian presence alive within the parish.

## **ALL SAINTS' CHURCH WEST MARKHAM**

The village of West Markham close to the A1 can be found in the Domesday Book in 1086 although there is no accurate date for the church, although experts have found evidence that it dates to the Saxon period. The church receives considerable visitors due to this heritage.

The church now has a toilet and a small kitchen area.

Currently, the church hosts one Holy Communion service a month with more informal family and pet services planned for the future.

In 2022/23 a community group was formed. The internal floor had a platform fitted to enable the church to become more functional, and now is home to an art group, keep fit classes, quizzes, and coffee mornings.

There are not a lot of children or young families living within the village but does have a good relationship with the Tuxford Academy who recently performed a concert in church that attracted many people.

West Markham has recently had a Baptism with another planned for the end of September, with encouragement to attend future services.

## **ST MATTHEW'S NORMANTON-ON-TRENT**

Normanton is a small but growing village with quite a few young families having moved into the area. It benefits from Church of England primary school (St Mathews) and a church owned village hall, both of which are well attended.

The village also gets a mention in the Domesday book in 1086, then being known as Norsemen but there was no mention of the church until the 12th C. None of the original church appears to have survived in the present structure (18th C) but the Norman font (a shallow bowl) appears to be that all remains in the church yard.

Normanton is a small church and has not always had the manpower to take part in activities within the Benefice, although they have received support from our other parishes. However, the church comes to life when the school holds regular festival services in church, showing what could be possible with a lot of hard work.

**OUR BENEFICE**

The Rivers Retford comprises nine former rural parishes to the south-east of Retford, stretching from Rampton to East Markham. This is predominantly an attractive agricultural area on the edge of the Trent valley but very few of the inhabitants remain engaged with agriculture. Communications are relatively good with the A1 and the East Coast mainline allowing easy travel north and south. Lincoln, Sheffield, Doncaster, Peterborough, Nottingham and Leeds are all within commuting distance.



**OUR CHURCHES**

Nine churches in the benefice are open, to serve 21 villages and centres of population. Eight are scheduled with regular services although some have very small local congregations and depend on travellers from elsewhere in the benefice for most of their congregation. There are also open churchyards in four other locations within the civil parish of Dunham on Trent, Fledborough (Churches Conservation Trust), Dunham on Trent and Ragnall (churches in private ownership), and Darlton (church for sale). After a difficult start, exacerbated by Covid, the benefice now works well, although it requires some full-time ministerial engagement in order to progress.

**OUR SCHOOLS**

There is a Church of England primary school at Dunham on Trent, and County Primaries at Rampton and East Markham. The majority of children progress to Tuxford Academy or to secondary schools in Retford. The Benefice has contact with Dunham School through our Lay Minister who is also a Foundation Governor. There is regular contact with Rampton School, but it has not been possible to maintain the former regular contact at East Markham, particularly since the building of a school hall which has removed the need for using the church for major events. Recent contact suggests that there may be an opportunity for monthly communal worship, and the possibility of Time Travelling in the church.

## OUR LOCALITY

New residential building can be found in most of the villages and East Markham has roughly doubled in size over the past ten years with further development scheduled. There is a popular visitor attraction for families and small children at Rampton, Sundown Adventureland. East Markham church was described by John Betjeman as the ‘cathedral of the Trent Valley’ but this does not attract hordes of visitors. Most of the churches have some architectural or historical interest.

Each of our villages enjoys its own characteristics. Most have a village hall with facilities for a variety of activities. Examples are indoor bowls in Rampton, regular coffee mornings in East Drayton, village cinema at Headon, Laneham, and East Markham. The only church at present which has toilet facilities and a basic kitchen is East Markham, which allows a regular well attended weekly Coffee Shop; similar facilities are currently being worked on at Treswell. Within the group there are many clubs and groups targeting particular sections of the community – mothers and toddlers, uniformed organisations, Mothers’ Union and so on. Each church has its own arrangements for providing flowers, cleaning, bell-ringing. There is at present no activity or provision specifically for teenagers, which has led East Markham to begin to think about the possibility of creating some sort of youth club, if money and leadership were to become available.

Inhabitants of the villages embrace a wide cross-section of society. Recent housing development in East Markham has attracted both young couples and retired people. There is evidently a considerable amount of home working as well as more distant commuting. A traveller site is located at Treswell.

All our communities are very friendly towards new arrivals who are always warmly welcomed. The benefice provides the opportunity for rural living combined with excellent communications. It has the reputation for being one of the lowest cost areas to live. Nearby West Burton power station development is expected to bring additional opportunities and employment.



## WORKING TOGETHER

Since becoming a single benefice the former members of the individual PCCs have come together well to recognise the benefits of working together. None of the churches has a churchwarden although there is at least one person in each church, bar two, who is fully engaged in worship and the PCC. The Chairman, assisted by the Secretary, administers the PCC and Standing Committee and provides advice and support to the individual churches as and when required. The Treasurer has consolidated all the bank accounts and maintains the books saving the need for nine individual treasurers which had become very onerous for many – he provides a service of inestimable value. The Lay Minister arranges the service rota in consultation with the PCC and individual churches and agrees clergy support for sacramental services; she also administers baptisms and funerals throughout the benefice. A lay volunteer deals with all the weddings in the benefice, liaising with the couples involved and the clergy, organising the reading of banns and the provision of the necessary paperwork.

## GOOD NEWS STORIES

East Markham which, with about half the population of the whole benefice, has the largest congregation, many of whom travel regularly to attend services in the other churches. Services are invariably attended by people from different villages.

The best news comes from Dunham and Rampton schools where a heightened level of engagement has been possible, and from East Markham where the weekly Coffee Shop in the church has become a welcome gathering point for many residents, very old and very young.

Treswell church is about to undergo a major re-ordering made possible through a generous legacy. The sad thing is that there is no regular congregation from the village of Treswell, but once the project has been completed there will be an opportunity to engage more fully with the population.

Grove church which had been more or less neglected for several years has recently come to life and now provides regular worship and a focal point for the village which has no other public space. There is a possibility of restoring the ruined almshouses in the churchyard to provide more public space.

## OUR BENEFICE

The Beck and Trent Benefice is part of rural Nottinghamshire north of Newark on Trent and south of Tuxford. Its eastern boundary is the river Trent. It extends westwards across the A1 and the LNER railway. The parishes are relatively close together linked by country roads.



## OUR CHURCHES

There are six villages, Carlton on Trent, Caunton, Cromwell, Norwell, Ossington and Sutton on Trent. Each has its own parish church. Five of the churches are medieval full of character and of varying capacity, and one, Ossington, is a Georgian gem. In addition there is a Methodist Chapel in Sutton on Trent where the Methodists and Anglicans work together and worship together ensuring that there is a service in the parish every week, and also arranging social events together. The Potting Shed, a pioneering Church of England church, is currently based in Norwell and is a resource church for the Benefice and for other rural parishes. Between them the churches offer a mixture of styles and types of worship from the traditional (BCP) and familiar (CW) to a more modern approach for all ages.

## OUR VISION

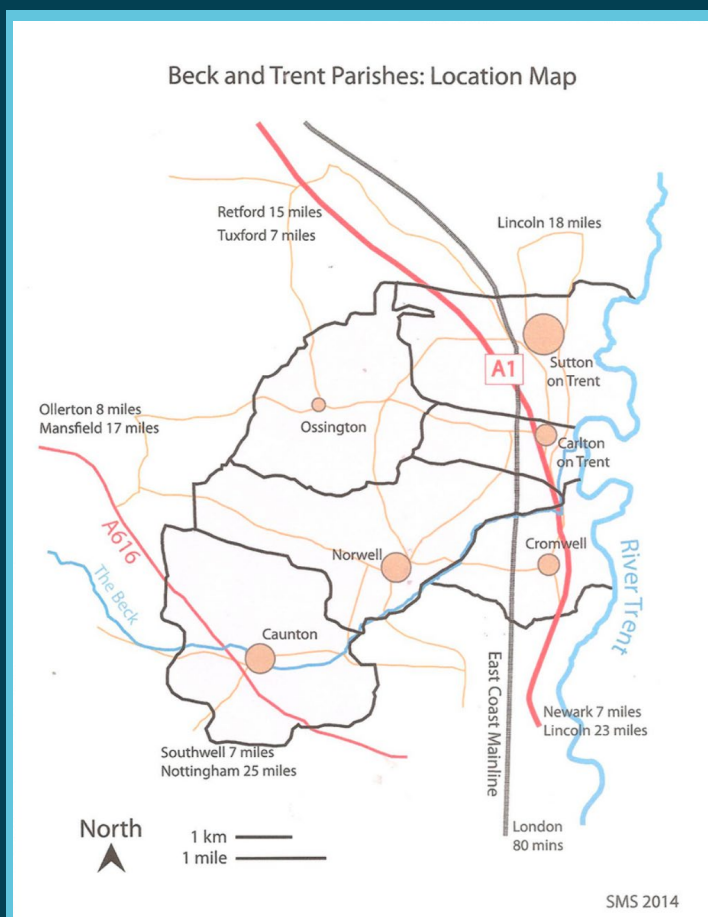
The benefice has worked together successfully since it was formed. The last few years have been particularly challenging with the departure of the incumbent vicar. This has been overcome by a willingness to co-operate in Christian unity to maintain the existing congregations, whilst reaching out to new groups of all ages in new and innovative ways. The aim moving forward is to build on these initiatives to encourage growth in faith in the wider population.

## OUR SCHOOLS

Caunton and Norwell each have a small C of E Primary School. Norwell has an executive head who also leads the C of E Primary School in Normanton on Trent. Sutton on Trent has a primary school whose head works enthusiastically with the Parish Church. The schools draw pupils from across the Benefice and all have close links with the parish churches. Pupils from these schools largely go on to Tuxford Academy and the Minster C of E School in Southwell.

## SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Where possible the churches are kept unlocked during the day, and if locked the location of the keys is displayed. Casual visitors turning off the A1 visit the churches. There are camp sites and caravan parks in Norwell, Cromwell and Carlton on Trent. This also brings visitors, who come for the architectural features such as the 16thC rood screen in Sutton on Trent; and to trace their ancestors. Children with parents are welcome to use the children's corners in the churches which have them. People also come for a peaceful space to sit in the church or walk the grass labyrinth in Norwell churchyard.



## MISSIONAL FEATURES

The facilities and features of the churches encourage people to visit the buildings. They also enable the churches to organise events in the church such as harvest suppers, concerts and talks which draw people in to the church communities. In addition the churches work with parish organisations in other spaces in the parish to celebrate or raise money. The churches have a recognised Christian presence and are much loved by parishioners who support the church financially even though they do not attend regularly. The presence of the Potting Shed in the benefice inspires and facilitates missional opportunities.

Other than Cromwell and Ossington, all of our churches have toilets and catering facilities.

Each of our churches has a Village Hall or similar space which can be used for community events. In Norwell we have also used the local pub, gardens and churchyard for events, and in Sutton we have a village field which we have used for events. The Vicarage is located in Norwell.

Each of our churches has bells, although in Cromwell these are not currently rung. Each of our churches also has an organ.

## OUR LOCALITY

Each village has a range of ages, socio-economic status, and occupation. The balance is towards the retired with a smaller number of families with young children. There are some families that have been lived locally for generations, but newcomers are welcomed and encouraged to join in with parish activities. Some of those of working age travel to Newark, Lincoln, Nottingham and London, others work from home. There are a number of small businesses providing local work.

Other attractive things about living in the benefice include:

- Peaceful surroundings for reflecting on the spiritual
- Friendly welcoming people and a strong community spirit
- Attractive area on the edge of Sherwood Forest and the Dukeries
- Proximity to local market towns (Newark, Southell, Tuxford, Ollerton) and cities (Lincoln and Nottingham).
- Connectivity by East Coast Mainline to London and Edinburgh, as well as near the A1.



## WORKING TOGETHER

Here are some examples of how our parishes work together:

- Timing of services (a service of Holy Communion in the benefice every week)
- Shared services such as Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday & Remembrance
- Service booklets in common across the benefice
- Shared skills, resources and expertise
- Parish Magazines (two but with shared Christian content)
- Benefice website
- Benefice Administrator
- Group council
- Bell ringers move between churches

## GOOD NEWS STORIES

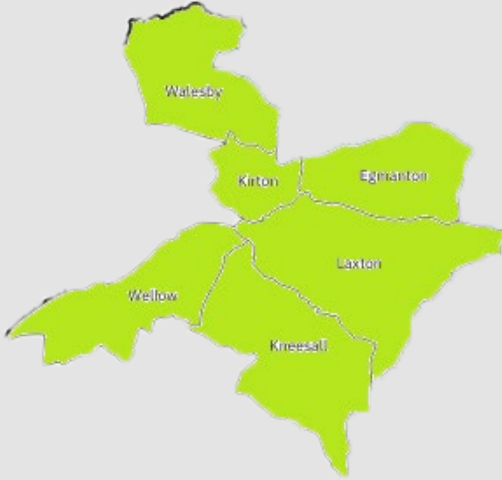
- A fellowship group has been established and is growing in Sutton
- New services are being introduced in Norwell
- The Embryonic Pilgrimage walks based in Beck & Trent are being extended to neighbouring benefices
- Working with a supported by The Potting Shed church
- We have more volunteers that are willing to help

## THE LOCATION

The group is slightly north of the geographical centre of the diocese, between the A614 and the A1, adjacent to the town of Ollerton.

Mansfield, Newark, Retford and Southwell all 10-12 miles; Lincoln 20 miles, Nottingham 22 miles, Sheffield 28 miles.

M1 (j29)18 miles.



## OUR CHURCHES

### KIRTON

Kirton is a community supportive of the church. We produce a monthly village newsletter and have a good relationship with the local pub, The Fox. We are nearby Boughton Industrial Estate and the Clay quarry and brickworks.

The church is very visible throughout the village. We have an organ, and use the Lady Chapel for refreshments. There is limited disabled access and we don't have a hall or toilet (although we can use The Fox Pub nearby).

Special services are very well attended, especially at Christmas. Every eucharistic service is well supported.

### WALESBY AND HAUGHTON

The Walesby & Haughton parish has a mix of elderly people and young families, as well as some professionals. There is lots of new housing. The church has an organ, and the Church Institute opposite has a hall, toilet and kitchen.

The church has lots of occasional offices, and the church and its worship have been well maintained throughout the vacancy.

There are two local pubs, a small grocers, Post Office, village hall and Walesby Forest Activity Centre all nearby.

## EGMANTON

Egmanton is a small agricultural village with a pub (currently vacant) and village hall. Many of its residents are agricultural or self-employed, families with older children, or of retirement age.

The church is a medieval (and current) place of pilgrimage with a shrine. There is spectacular gothic revival decoration throughout. It also has an organ.

Our relationship with the Society of Our Lady brings many visitors. Congregations at pilgrimage services are growing.

## KNEESALL

St. Bartholomew Kneesall, again based in a small rural village (pop circa 221) is a 'festival church' where the main body of the space has been decommissioned and is used as a community space, and the sanctuary maintained for worship. Kneesall has a Church of England primary school located adjacent to the church.

## WELLOW

St Swithin, Wellow is also a church based in a small rural village (pop circa 480). The parish church dates from the 12th century.

## LAXTON

St Michael, the Archangel Laxton. Laxton is best known for having the last remaining working open field system in the United Kingdom. Its name is recorded first in the Domesday Book of 1086. It is also the site of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre. The church of St Michael stands in a prominent position in Laxton and is a landmark for some way around.

## OUR SCHOOLS

There are three schools across the group:

- **Walesby CofE Primary** (organises its own festivals in the church building)
- **Kneesall CofE Primary** (Good links with church visitors to school and use of church building)
- **Wellow House** (Private, age 3-16) uses Wellow Church for events. In the past Ollerton vicar was chaplain.

Children from the parishes often attend schools outside the benefice, including primaries: Tuxford, Norwell, Lowes Wong (Southwell), Ranby House (private school); secondaries: Tuxford academy, The Dukeries Academy, Southwell Minster, Worksop College (private).

## WORKING TOGETHER

Some of the churches have grown closer during the vacancy and many people attend more than one church in the group. There is a co-ordinated service rota. Each parish has a separate PCC.

While the wider group is of broad churchmanship, Kirton, Walesby & Haughton and Egmanton have a strong history of Anglo-Catholic Eucharistic worship. None have passed resolutions excluding women priests.



**GROWING  
DISCIPLES**

COMPASSION CONFIDENCE COURAGE