

The TOVE BENEFICE

comprising



St Augustine, Caldecote

St Bartholomew, Greens Norton



St Lawrence, Towcester

St Mary, Easton Neston



St Michael, Bradden

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Contents

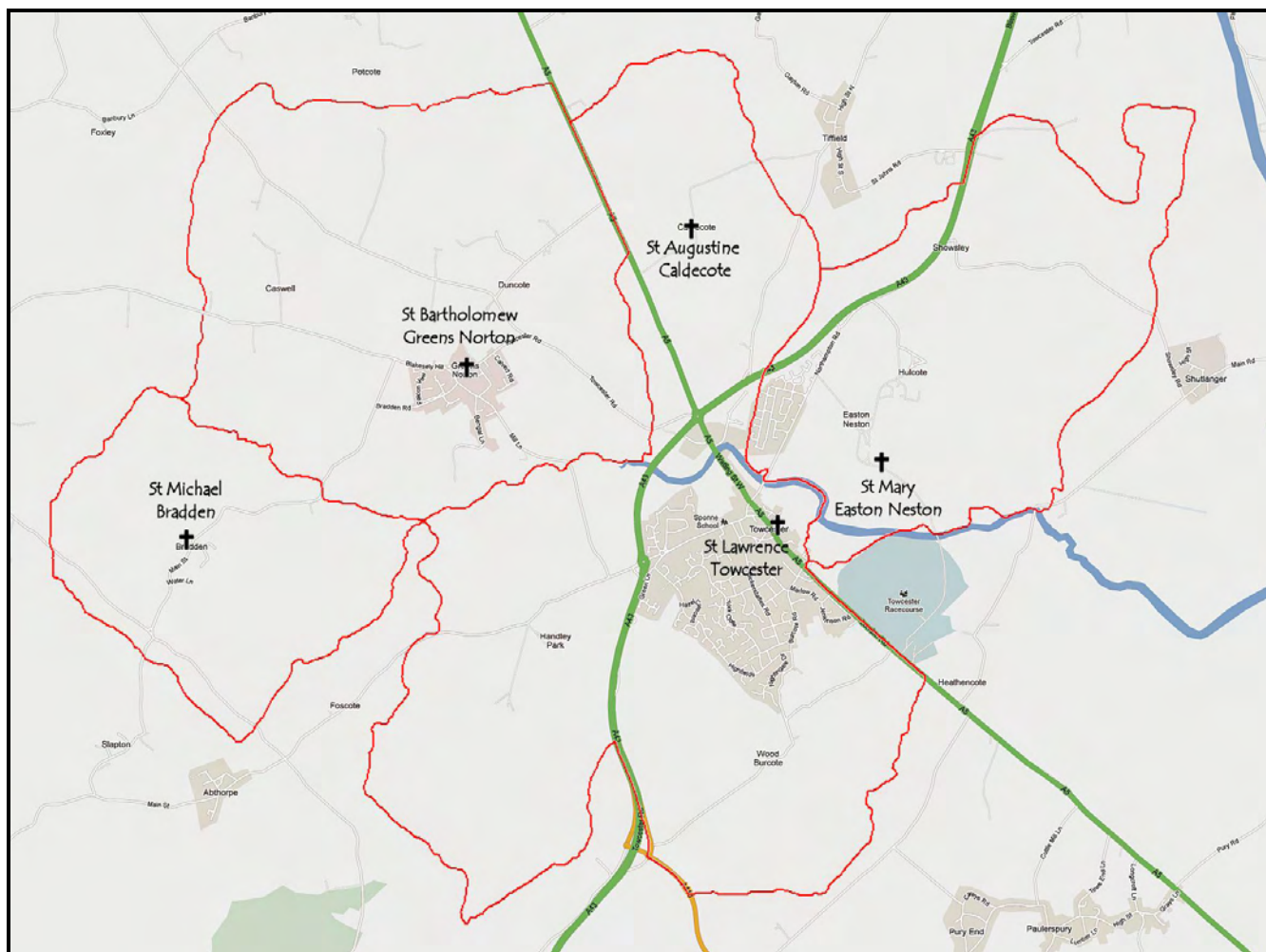
	Page
Contacts	2
Introduction	4
Location	4
Statistics	5
The Benefice	6
The Vicarage	7
Buildings	8
Administration and Finances	8
Services	9
Schools	10
Ministry	10
Deanery	10
Chaplaincy and Community Involvement	10
Opportunities and Challenges	11
Statement of need	12
Parish Profile – Towcester with Caldecote	13
Parish Profile – Greens Norton	15
Parish Profile – Easton Neston	17
Parish Profile - Bradden	19
Links to useful information	21

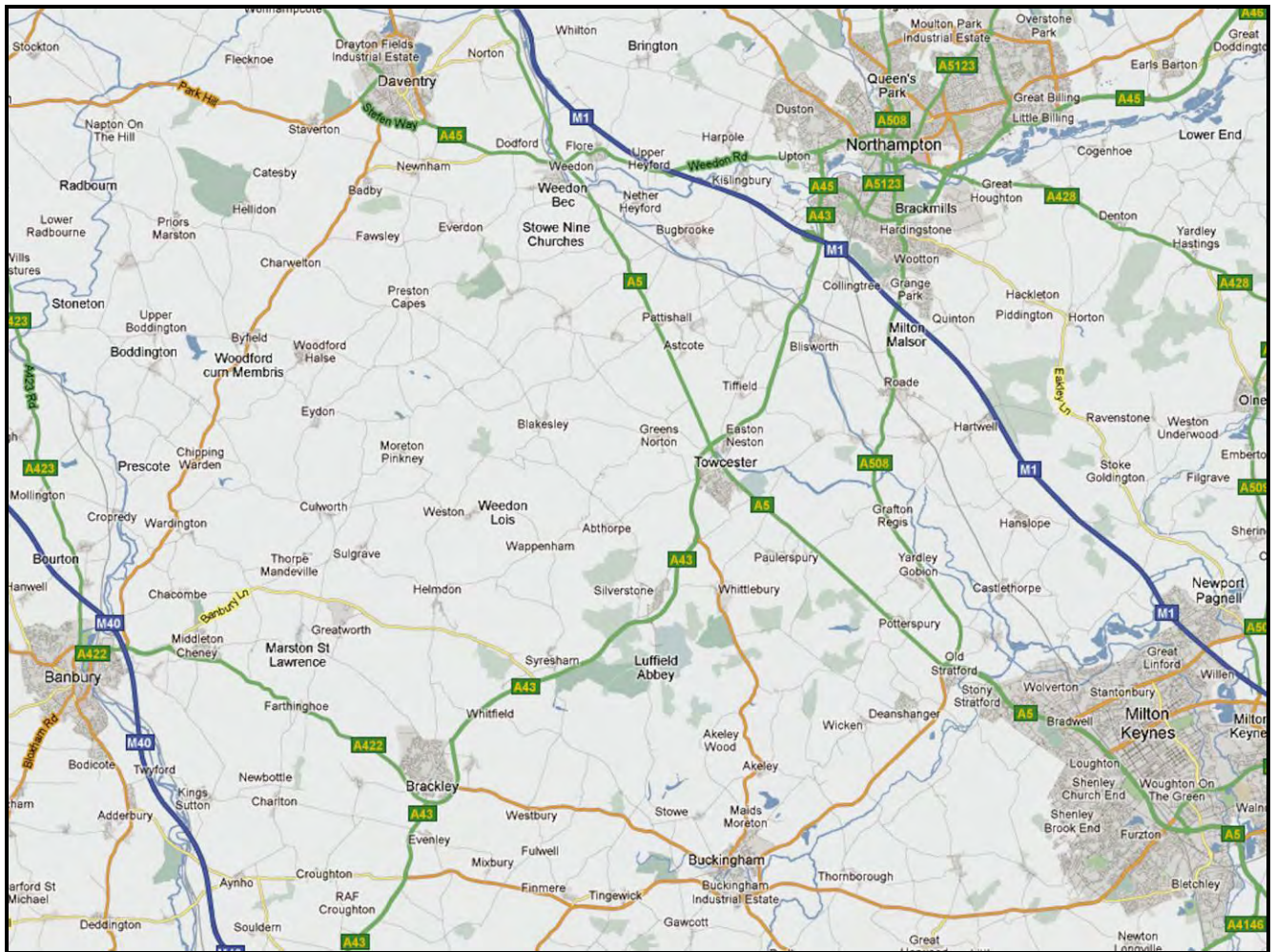
Introduction

The Tove Benefice was created in March 2007 when the Parishes of Towcester with Caldecote and Easton Neston were joined with the Parishes of Greens Norton and Bradden, in the care of Reverend Tony Bryer as Rector, who had been Priest-in-Charge at Towcester and Easton Neston since 2004. Towcester with Caldecote and Easton Neston parishes have been linked for many years although serving very distinct congregations. Bradden and Greens Norton have long established links and were included in a Benefice by a previous Deanery re-organisation. The current structure has been confirmed in the recent Deanery plan so is unlikely to alter in the near future.

We are a recently formed Benefice and are still finding ways of working together to build the Kingdom as one Benefice. Our intention is to work as a Benefice to serve the community and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Location





Statistics

Parish numbers as of 2010 (approximately)

Church	Population	Electoral Roll	ASA
St Lawrence, Towcester with St Augustine, Caldecote	7292	140	66
St Bartholomew, Greens Norton	1634	64	39
St Mary, Easton Neston	1365	23	6.5
St Michael, Bradden	183	16	3.97
Totals	10474	243	115.47

Occasional Offices (approx. number per year since 2007)

Church	Baptisms	Confirmations	Weddings	Funerals
St Lawrence, Towcester with St Augustine, Caldecote	33	5	13	34
St Bartholomew, Greens Norton	5	1	3	5
St Mary, Easton Neston	7	0	3	1
St Michael, Bradden	1	0	2	1
Totals	46	6	21	41

The Benefice

The Tove Benefice, in South Northamptonshire, consists of the churches in the town of Towcester, where the Vicarage is situated, and those in the villages of Greens Norton, Bradden, Easton Neston and Caldecote.

Towcester is the oldest town in Northamptonshire and is surrounded by many beautiful rural communities. Although a mainly affluent part of the country with a low crime rate, there are pockets of rural poverty that are generally hidden and frequently forgotten. Towcester itself has a long and varied history which is reflected in the many Grade 2 listed buildings which line Watling Street, its main commercial centre.

Watling Street is now more commonly known as the A5 and Towcester is sited at its intersection with the A43. This makes the area an ideal place to settle with easy access to London, Birmingham, Oxford, Milton Keynes and The North. Both the M1 and M40 are within easy reach as are main line rail services, can be accessed from Northampton, Milton Keynes and Banbury. Although public transport to the villages is limited, many local inhabitants commute to London, Birmingham and Milton Keynes, whilst others work in a variety of small local industries and in farming. It is also ideally located for longer journeys with easy access to Luton, London Heathrow and Birmingham Airports.



The community around the Tove Benefice is well supported with three G.P. surgeries, two based in Towcester and one in Greens Norton, private and NHS dental practices and two veterinary practices. Full hospital services are available in Northampton, Milton Keynes and Banbury and there are several local care and residential homes for the elderly.

Supermarkets and petrol stations serve the town and villages and Towcester has a Post Office and a variety of independent shops around the Market Square. It is home to South Northants Council, whose offices are about 10 minutes walking distance from the town centre. Greens Norton has a busy village shop cum Post Office and an independent butcher's. Both Towcester and Greens Norton have public houses offering good food and a variety of entertainment. The most notable of these is probably the Saracen's Head Hotel in Towcester where Charles Dickens is said to have stayed and which is mentioned in "Pickwick Papers".

The surrounding countryside is used as pasture for sheep and cattle, with some arable farming, and it is criss-crossed by many foot and bridle paths. There are also extensive Forestry Commission woodlands in neighbouring villages and many interesting and beautiful properties including Easton Neston Estate, along with others belonging to the National Trust.

Towcester Race Course holds races throughout the autumn and winter which are complemented by year round activities at Silverstone motor racing circuit, the highlight of which is the British Grand Prix. Both organisations have a significant impact on the economy of the surrounding area. The community has active Rugby, Hockey, Tennis and Cricket Clubs on the Greens Norton Road linking Towcester and Greens Norton and there is also a local Junior Football Club. There are several good golf courses in the area and a Leisure Centre in Towcester which has extensive facilities including a swimming pool and fitness centre.

For those whose interests lie more with the arts, there are multiplex cinemas and theatres which offer excellent productions in Northampton and Milton Keynes. Towcester Studio Brass Band and Towcester Choral Society, each of which has been established for approximately 100 years, often hold concerts in St Lawrence Church.

The Vicarage

This is a detached centrally heated ironstone building dating from the early 17th Century. It comprises two large reception rooms, one with an inglenook fireplace, a good sized study, recently modernised kitchen with utility room and a downstairs cloakroom. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, a master, with wash hand basin, one double and two large singles with built in cupboards. There is a separate bathroom, shower room and a W.C.



The Vicarage

Buildings

The five Benefice Churches are of various sizes ranging from Towcester with a seating capacity of 400, to Braden and Easton Neston which can both hold about 120. Greens Norton's capacity is about 200 and the Mission Chapel at Caldecote is the smallest, seating about 40. They are all in good structural order and all have up to date Quinquennial reports.

One of the most useful assets to the Benefice is the Chantry House, a Grade II* listed building in the centre of Towcester. It was built by Archdeacon Sponne in the 15th Century to house a school and in the 19th century became a private house. It was bequeathed to the "Vicar and Churchwardens" of St Lawrence Church in the 1980's so making available a facility for both the Church and local community. Each Friday and Saturday mornings refreshments are available in the downstairs room (Jenkinson Room) for the local community.



The Chantry House

This room and the Sponne Hall (upstairs) are regularly let out to non profit-making organisations and although hire charges are modest the income allows the Chantry Committee to keep the building in good repair.

Additionally the Diocese owns and maintains a four bedroom property in Towcester for use by a Curate in the Benefice. In Greens Norton a new Rectory was built in 1986 but it is now let on a commercial basis by the Diocese.

Administration

The Benefice has centralised administration based in the Chantry House. The office hours are from 9:30 am to 12:00 noon and 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm Monday to Friday and the work load is shared between three part-time paid staff, whilst other tasks are carried out by volunteers throughout the Benefice.

In 2007 a Benefice Committee was formed comprising the Treasurers and one Churchwarden from each Parish along with the Clergy and Lay Ministers. It normally meets quarterly in order to discuss services, events and the apportioning of benefice share between the Parishes. Each Parish contributes towards the running costs of the Benefice, clergy expenses and the Benefice Share. The share is consistently met in full with all parishes contributing to it. Each Parish organises separate fund raising activities and also runs Gift Aided planned giving schemes.

Services

PATTERN OF SERVICES FOR THE TOVE BENEFICE PRIOR TO THE VACANCY

Sunday of Month:	Time:	Service:	Place:	Order of Service:
1st Saturday of every Month	6.00 pm	Eucharist	Easton Neston	CW Traditional
1 st Sunday	8.00 am	Eucharist	Towcester	CW Modern
	9.30 am	Family Eucharist	Towcester	Informal
	11.00 am	Holy Communion	Greens Norton	CW Modern
2 nd Sunday	8.00 am	Holy Communion	Greens Norton	BCP
	9.30 am	Parish Eucharist	Towcester	CW Modern
	9.30 am	Holy Communion	Bradden	CW Traditional
	11.00 am	Morning Praise	Greens Norton	Lay-Led
	11.15 am	Matins	Towcester	BCP
	11.15 am	Eucharist	Caldecote	CW Traditional
3 rd Sunday	8.00 am	Eucharist	Towcester	BCP
	9.30 am	Family Eucharist	Towcester	CW Modern
	11.00 am	Holy Communion	Greens Norton	CW Modern
	11.15 am	Sunday Special	Towcester	
	3.30 pm	Holy Baptism	Towcester	Blue
4th Sunday <i>Except July and August:</i>	9.30 am	Parish Eucharist	Towcester	CW Modern
	11.00 am	Morning Prayer	Greens Norton	BCP Lay-led
	11.15 am	Matins + HC	Towcester	BCP
	6.00 pm	Evensong	Bradden	BCP Lay-Led
5th Sunday	8.00 am	Eucharist (if Benefice service NOT in Towcester)	Towcester	CW Modern
	10.30 am	Benefice Eucharist (moving round parishes)	Towcester, Greens Norton, Easton Neston, Bradden	CW Modern

Weekday Services at St Lawrence

Wednesday to Saturday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
Monday to Saturday	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer
Tuesday	8.00 am	Eucharist
2 nd Tuesday of the month	11.15 am	Holy Communion
Wednesday	10.15 am	Eucharist
As appropriate	7.30 pm	Solemn Eucharist

Schools

We have three primary schools within the Benefice, two in Towcester and one in Greens Norton. The Primary School in Greens Norton and one in Towcester are Church schools (these are more fully described within the separate parish profiles). Towcester is also home to Sponne Academy, a large secondary school.

Ministry

Within the Benefice we have an Assistant Priest, a Reader, two licensed Lay Pastoral Ministers and a Licensed Evangelist. We are also fortunate to have several active retired Clergy and a number of Lay Leaders. Also each Parish has regular volunteers who act as Eucharistic Assistants, Sidespersons, Intercessors and Bible Readers. At St Lawrence there is a Director of Music and there are choirs in both Towcester and Greens Norton. All our Churches have regular Organists available to play for services. Bradden does not have its own Organist, but sometimes uses pre recorded music.

The Benefice holds adult baptism, confirmation and Lent courses annually. The parishes cooperate together with other activities such as Messy Church and Oasis4Women and there are marriage preparation classes twice a year.

Deanery

The Tove Benefice is part of the Towcester Deanery with Rev'd Paul McLeod as Rural Dean. As a Benefice we are well represented at Deanery Synod meetings and have a representative on the Diocesan Synod in our Reader. We have developed excellent working relations with our neighbouring Benefices and a mutually supportive Chapter meets regularly.

Chaplaincy and Community Involvement

At the request of the then Council leader and the Chief Executive, the previous incumbent established a Workplace Chaplaincy at the South Northamptonshire Council offices at Springfields and at the Tove depot in Old Tiffield Road (both in Towcester). This has taken the form of a weekly visit of an hour and a half to these workplaces, usually around the lunchtime period, once a month at the Tove depot and the other weeks at the offices (where the majority of staff are based).

The council officers and members are very keen that this Chaplaincy should continue with the new incumbent.

The previous incumbent was also a member of the South Northants Local Strategic Partnership, and was very involved with the local authorities and other organisations concerned with the proposed expansion of Towcester. Although the timetable for this has slipped due to the recession, it is likely that things will begin to develop in the near future and the continued involvement of a new incumbent is likely to be invited.

Opportunities and Challenges

There are a number of target areas that are key to the further growth of the Benefice which we hope the new incumbent would foster:

- to grow the spiritual understanding and commitment of the Benefice family through, for example, home and study groups,
- to increase lay involvement to build a cohesive group in both services and social events and to encourage more hands on organisational involvement,
- to maintain the inclusive and welcoming policy of baptism and marriage,
- to support baptism families through Anniversary visits, Sunday Special, Messy Church and First Steps,
- to improve the work with children and young people (it should be noted that all PCCs feel that their long term goal should be to aim, possibly with the wider deanery, to appoint a Youth Leader to cement further the relations between Church and young people),
- to maintain and further develop our outreach through schools, civic, other secular networks and social events,
- the PCCs in the Benefice have agreed in principle to admit children to communion (permission from the Bishop is yet to be requested and the preparation course for admittance is to be developed),
- to maintain the role as a **training benefice** and support the incumbent and the trainee priests through the process.

Statement of Need

We are a developing Benefice, with a diversity of worship, which wishes to forge closer links between its Parishes and move forward together. Each Parish faces its own distinct challenges but together we feel we need an incumbent who is willing:

- to continue our tradition as a training Benefice,
- to enthuse, encourage and support individuals into lay ministry,
- to work with the very young, teenagers and the elderly,
- to be a visible presence in all the parishes thus helping us to embody the Church into our communities,
- to encourage new members and children into our Churches, whilst appreciating and supporting the existing congregations, and
- to help the parishes of the Benefice to share their resources.

We wish our new incumbent:

- to be a patient, thoughtful listener and good communicator,
- to be outgoing and energetic, and
- to have a clear vision to help us form the next phase of our development as a Benefice and a Christian community.

St Lawrence Church, Towcester with St Augustine Church, Caldecote

Introduction

St Lawrence Church sits in a closed Churchyard in the heart of Towcester within sight of the Chantry House, Town Hall and Vicarage. The buildings are ironstone and date back in part to 1200.

There is a regular congregation attending mainly Eucharistic services and a number of visitors are also welcomed, thanks in part to a number of baptism, parade and special services. Some feast days are normally celebrated with a Solemn Eucharist.

As with many places there are a small number of active fundraisers and event organisers who can call on others to assist with the calendar of annual events. The proximity of the Chantry House provides a very useful space for Church activities and outreach into the community. This building is managed by a committee who keep it well maintained through its own pattern of fundraising, room letting and by the letting of a three bedroom property in Towcester which was purchased with money from the original bequest.

The PCC has always been keen to keep the building open as much as possible and the number of visitors in any one week, be they historians looking at the actual architecture or those looking for some time to pray or reflect, is generally as many as are seen in the total Sunday attendance. St Augustine at Caldecote is a Mission Chapel attached to St Lawrence and serves a small farming community holding one Holy Communion service per month.

Parochial Church Council and Lay Leaders

The Parochial Church Council meets bi-monthly and is supported by Worship, Fabric, Chantry, Social and Standing Committees.

Church Activities

There are a number of groups meeting in the Church and the Chantry House, including: Care and Prayer, House Group, Mothers' Union, Flower Arrangers and Oasis4Women (an ecumenical group from the 4 Towcester Churches). In addition to this the Good News is taken out to a number of residential and nursing homes with visits and communions and to the local Primary Schools (Towcester CE Primary and Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary) with assemblies and visits to the Church.



Messy Church

We also undertake to provide Home Communion whenever possible for the house bound and regularly visit Duncote Hall Residential Home and Supported living units for the Elderly.

Areas of Cooperation

Churches Together in Towcester meets six times a year and comprises members from the Baptist, Catholic, URC and Methodist Churches and St Lawrence. Through the year there are a number of joint services including Good Friday, Women's World Day of Prayer and a Town Carol Service. Annual services that are hosted at St Lawrence by South Northants Council include a

Civic Service and the Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols. All are well supported by the wider community.

There is also enormous support from the Town and its Uniformed Organisations for our annual Act of Remembrance. As the largest Church in the Towcester Deanery the Parish Church often hosts Deanery Events.

Areas of Outreach

The Church has a number of important links with the local community, but at this time is conscious that more focus and determination is required to deepen these links. Some of the interfaces with the community are through the Patronal Festival which centres around a 3 day Flower Festival, which this year was supported by over 40 organisations and individuals, weekly coffee mornings in the Chantry House, an Annual Fête, which is held in and around the Church, Vicarage and Chantry, and a Chantry Fayre.



Flower Festival

The Church maintains a strong bell ringing tradition and, since 1989, has enjoyed a peal of 12 bells which encourages a number of visiting bands to our community. Although there is currently no link with Sponne Academy (secondary School) Towcester CE Primary have eight to ten services a year in Church and Nicholas Hawksmoor makes class visits and attends special events services. St Lawrence also provides 3 foundation governors to Towcester C. of E. Primary School. St Lawrence is represented at Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School on the governing body by one of the Church members who is a Community Trustee and there is a tenuous link with Sponne Academy with a Church member a parent governor there.

We participate in the Annual Historic Cycle Ride and Heritage Weekends.

St Lawrence also plays host to a variety of concerts throughout the year welcoming in the wider community.

Summary

There are targets specific to the parish that will be required for successful growth:

- to further deepen the links that have developed between the churches in the Benefice, thus ensuring that we are a positive force within both the Benefice and in our own communities for the good of all,
- to review all aspects of the use of music in the Church both in services and as a venue for events,
- to continue with the plans to reorder the building so that it is ready to be a place of worship and fellowship for all areas of the community in the 21st century.

The congregation at St Lawrence has grown in confidence and knowledge over the last seven years. There is much more to be done to enable all the Church members to be empowered to share the gospel, but there are many areas of outreach and service that enrich the Church, its family and community. Many members give their time and energy to the life and worship of the Church and would welcome a new incumbent to share the next part of our journey of faith together.

St Bartholomew's Church, Greens Norton

Village History

The manor was acquired by Sir Henry Green and Thomas, his son, in the fourteenth century from which the name "Greens" Norton is derived. In the early 1700's the estate devolved to the Duke of Grafton and until the 1920's was part of the extensive Grafton estates.

Village Activities and its Community

Greens Norton is one of the liveliest villages in the Towcester locality. In addition to the Church it has a Methodist Chapel, a pre-school playgroup, two nursery schools, a Church of England Primary School and benefits from a large number of activities and clubs run by villagers. These include The 50+ Club, British Legion, Cricket Club, WI, an Art and Craft group, Guides, Brownies and Cubs. There is also a playing field, a substantial "pocket" wildlife park, a village hall and a community centre.



Stride and Ride

The village is classed as close to "least deprived" in terms of employment, health and education (ONS indices of deprivation). While there are pockets of relative poverty here, the village is seen as a 'sought-after' place to live and housing is always in demand.

The Church of St Bartholomew

St Bartholomew's Church is sited in a prominent position on the Towcester Road and its spire is a notable landmark. It is Saxon in origin, retaining its Saxon nave, while the side aisles are said to date from the mediaeval period. There are a number of interesting mediaeval artefacts although extensive restoration work was carried out in Victorian times. A recent Quinquennial has indicated a few modest repairs that need attention, but the fabric of the Church is, in general, in sound order. Though ageing, the heating system is still efficient. Seating in the Church is by way of late Victorian pews. The DAC has agreed in principle that the PCC should look further into a proposal to remove the pews with a view to greater flexibility of use, at the same time updating the heating system. Currently the Church can seat about 200 people reasonably comfortably.

The organ is fully operational but some work will be needed on it over the next few years. We have a growing fund, aiming to reach £15,000, to carry out full restoration work.

The tower hosts six bells and we benefit from a long-standing and stalwart team of bell ringers who also ring at Bradden Church.

Some PCC members and villagers are currently collating details of the monumental inscriptions for the Northamptonshire Archives. A new Rectory was built in 1986 but is now let on a commercial basis by the Diocese.

Parochial Church Council and Lay Leaders

The PCC meets at least quarterly. Sub-committees are created when needed but there is Standing Committee and a permanent Worship Committee which plans services. One of the Benefice Lay Pastoral Ministers and the Licensed Evangelist are based in the village and we are blessed with five Lay Leaders who take two services a month.

Church activities

We have a regular house group, a small Wednesday evening prayer group and an ageing but faithful Mothers' Union. As part of our outreach we hold a free coffee morning in church every Saturday. We also take the Good News out to Duncote Hall, a residential care home in the parish, with visits and Communion. The Evangelist works and exercises her ministry here. We maintain contact with baptism families and visit the bereaved, the sick and the lonely, providing Home Communion on request. We hold various fund-raising activities each year including a fête and this in particular is an important village social occasion.



Church Barbeque

In recent years it has been organised jointly with the school and school children provide a centrepiece for the occasion with Maypole dancing. We hold an October Craft Fayre in the Church. We also have a number of special services in the year including Mothers' Day, Harvest Festival, a Memorial Service for the Bereaved, a Shoebox Service, Christingle, Carols by Candlelight and a Christmas Crib service.

Areas of co-operation and outreach

We hold about six Sunday services a year jointly with the Methodists, including Remembrance Sunday, which is very well supported by the community, as is a service and event for Christian Aid. Other outreach services held together with the Methodists include an informal monthly service at the local sheltered housing complex, Women's World Day of Prayer and Songs of Praise either on the green or in the Pub, to be augmented this year by Christmas Carols in the Pub. We are affiliated to the Christian Motorcyclists Association (CMA) and have hosted two biker services which were well received.

Greens Norton C of E Primary School currently has about 90 pupils. The Church provides three foundation governors and the school holds termly services at the Church. With help from our clergy and retired ministers, we take school assemblies fortnightly. We hold a lunchtime course for pupils once a week during Lent. We would like to help develop the children's love of Jesus through strengthening Church links with school and would welcome a minister with expertise and enthusiasm in this important area.

Ethos

Our mission statement is "To know Christ, to show Christ, to share Christ."

Our ethos may be described as 'middle of the road', with varied services catering for the differing needs of the worshippers. The congregation welcomes thought-provoking, informative, Bible-based preaching (laced with humour is good!), is open to inter-active services and enjoys both traditional and modern hymns as long as they have a profound message and good tunes. We believe that Church should be a place of outreach, care and hospitality, giving a warm welcome to all comers.

Summary

Greens Norton is a popular village with a lively schedule of activities and a real community spirit. We wish to play our part in the development of the Benefice as well as maintain our role within the village. Like many churches our congregation is ageing, but is lively and committed. Our financial standing is sound and despite the current economic situation giving remains good. We annually donate at least 10% of our income to benefit charities both local and global. The opportunity for someone to join us, care for us, lead us forward as a Benefice member and develop the church building and congregation of St Bartholomew will be a challenging and rewarding task.

St Mary's Church, Easton Neston

Introduction

St Mary's Church sits in the parkland of the Easton Neston House and dates from the 12th Century. Until 2005 it was used by the Fermor Hesketh family, who were resident at Easton Neston, as their family chapel. Many local people did not know of its existence although it was always an Anglican parish Church. The Church has a wealth of tombs, memorials, hatchments and an impressive collection of stained glass windows showing the family's heraldry. It is notable for its box pews with that of his Lordship being the largest and lined in velvet! Since the sale and break up of the Easton Neston estate in 2005 people are gradually becoming aware of this gem on their doorstep and we are having more visitors with more couples choosing to be married here.

The Parish

The parish of St Mary extends to the village of Hulcote, consisting of 24 unusual houses and a letter box, the hamlet of Showsley, consisting of just 5 houses, and the modern housing estate of The Shires along Northampton Road on the eastern side of Towcester. Sitting as it does some distance from the village, the Church does not naturally nestle within its congregation and reaching parishioners can be seen as a challenge.

Services and Congregation

Our congregation is usually around 28 people, largely retired. We have a monthly service at 6 pm on the first Saturday of each month, as well as Easter, Christmas and Benefice services. Recently we have tried to encourage younger parishioners to a more informal service on Mothering Sunday and for Christingle. The Church of St Mary, Easton Neston, is the traditional outpost within the Benefice, offering a said Eucharist with hymns. We have no choir but do have a good Henry Willis organ and active bell ringers.



Benefice Service

Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council consists of the Churchwarden, Secretary, Treasurer, Lay Reader and five others.

Stewardship Scheme and the Friends of St Mary

In 2011 the PCC introduced a Stewardship Scheme which raised sufficient pledges to cover our parish share. Financially we are able to cover our running expenses with the generous support of Mr Max, who now owns Easton Neston house, and pays for all our oil and electricity.

We also have a healthy reserve account for emergencies. Several years ago we created the Friends of St Mary to help with fundraising and to bring more people into the community of the Church. This has enjoyed an extremely active couple of years raising sufficient funds to install a hearing loop and amplification system and is supported by enthusiastic members.



Harvest Festival

Areas of Outreach

The Church is involved with the Heritage Open Weekend each September, which coincides with Ride and Stride, encouraging people to visit this beautiful Church. We encourage visiting bell ringers and engage in fund raising activities

Summary

Over the past seven years we have reaped the benefits of a well-respected Rector bringing in a succession of Curates, and would not like to lose this facility.

We are looking for someone who will:

- continue to support our traditional monthly services,
- be able to help encourage new members of our congregation,
- support the older members of the congregation,
- be able to encourage younger people into the services,
- be used to a rural community,
- not be put off by the wildlife in and around the Church, which includes bats, mice, pheasants, muntjac and sheep,
- will appreciate St Mary's for what it is: a charming, unique country parish Church.

St Michael's Church, Bradden

Introduction

Bradden is a village of 65 houses, ranging from farmhouses, cottages, converted barns and new houses. For 350 years, Bradden House, several of the houses in the village and several hundred acres of agricultural land were in the ownership of the Grant-Ives family. Bradden was essentially a farming village, with the Rector occupying the Old Rectory. In 1991 the family sold to Keith and Maggie Barwell, who continue to live in the village. Today, the village has a population of about 180, consisting of retired people, some working at or from home and others travelling elsewhere, including to Towcester, Northampton, Milton Keynes and London.

The Church

The Church is dedicated to St Michael. It is a grade II* listed building. The tower and two lower arches on each side of the tower date from the 14th century. A record of rectors since 1231 is displayed in the Church. In 1858 a part of the roof broke through the ceiling. On examination, the roof was discovered to be in a state of complete decay. The north and south walls were then found to be unfit to carry the new roof and Chancel arch and the arches nearest to it on each side were giving way.

Consequently, the Church was rebuilt in 1859, except for the two lower arches on each side of the tower. William White, born in Blakesley, was the architect.



St Michael's Church, Bradden

In 1997 Keith and Maggie gave generously for redecoration and floor repairs. The most recent Quinquennial survey, completed in November 2010, highlighted some minor problems only, which were quickly resolved. In September 2011 a new electrical heating system was installed. The Churchyard is mown and largely maintained thanks to the generosity of Keith and Maggie. There are rotas for providing and arranging flowers and for cleaning the Church and working parties for major cleaning, gutter and roof maintenance and for weeding and pruning in the Churchyard.

Services and Congregation

The Church has a robust core of support in the village. The congregation varies between 10 and 20 and has increased over the past five years thanks largely to the way each of the two recent curates, Neil Warwick and Peter Boyland, have lead the Church team. The PCC believes that, with exemplary leadership and pastoral care, such as they have both given, there is potential to attract both higher attendance and younger people. In 2005 a survey of the village showed that, although many of the population do not attend regularly, most place much value on the presence of the Church.

Special services and Festivals are attended by more than 100 people. Regular and loyal support is given by bell ringers, led by Jim Linnell, and the tower is used by local ringers for tuition. Evensong is led by lay people from Bradden. As the village lies in the Tove valley, there is a strong sense of unity with the other Churches in the Tove Benefice, particularly Towcester and Greens Norton. Bradden children generally attend the primary school in Greens Norton and the Sponne School in Towcester.



Baptism

At Christmas, the Church holds a children's crib service. The Church has started to host an annual Christmas village gathering with food and wine in the Parish Room and carol singing in the village with a local brass band.

Parochial Church Council

In recent years, the Parochial Church Council has worked hard to restore the financial position of the Church and will keep this effort up, so far as possible, to ensure the good state of the fabric.

The PCC organises fund raising, including an annual musical event, a Christmas raffle and Christmas memorial flowers. The Church is a beneficiary of a Bradden charity, the Town Land Charity, which pays for the annual insurance premium and contributes towards non-recurring outgoings, such as recent expenditure on the new heating system. Each year, the PCC considers which charity to give a donation.

Summary

The Parochial Church Council is looking for a person who can lead with confidence and humour and who:

- is prepared to make regular visits in the village and is able to lead the Church in reaching out to our parish,
- will consider the needs of the parish and community as a whole,
- is called to village ministry,
- is a compassionate minister, able to provide all important pastoral care, and
- is a talented preacher and communicator.

Useful links

Our Benefice

www.stlawrencechurch.org.uk – St Lawrence, Towcester
www.eastonneston.org.uk – Easton Neston
braddenvillage.wordpress.com – Bradden Village
www.greensnortonvillage.org – Greens Norton Village
www.hugha.co.uk/StMary/Index.htm – Easton Neston Church

Rural Dean: Rev'd Paul McLeod – revpaulmcleod@btinternet.com
Deanery Lay Chair: Mr Richard Yeates – RichardWYeates@hotmail.com

Tove Benefice Office: parishoffice@stlawrence1.mail1.co.uk

Schools

www.towcesterprimary.northants.sch.uk - Towcester C of E Primary School
www.greensnortonschool.co.uk – Greens Norton C of E Primary School
www.nicholashawksmoor.com – Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School
www.sponne.org.uk – Sponne School

Ecclesiastical

www.lambfold.org.uk – Lambfold Benefice
www.whittlewoodparishes.org.uk – Whittlewood Benefice
www.threeparishes.org.uk – Collingtree w Courteenhall & Milton Malsor Benefice
www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk – Peterborough Diocese

Local Organisations

www.aboutmyarea.co.uk/Northamptonshire/Towcester/NN12 - Local Area News
www.mkheritage.co.uk/tdlhs - Towcester History Society
www.northamptonsaints.co.uk – Saints Rugby Club
www.nffc.co.uk – Northampton Town Football Club (The Cobblers)
www.towcester-racecourse.co.uk – Towcester Racecourse
www.royalandderngate.com – Royal and Derngate Theatre
www.mktgc.co.uk – Milton Keynes Theatre and Gallery.
www.southnorthants.gov.uk -South Northamptonshire Council.
www.towcester-tc.gov.uk – Towcester Town Council.
www.wndc.org.uk – West Northamptonshire Development Corporation
www.silverstone.co.uk – Silverstone Motor Racing Circuit
www.stokebruerne.org.uk – Stoke Bruerne Canal Heritage
www.southnorthantsleisure.com/towcester - Towcester Centre for Leisure

Compiled by the members of the Tove Benefice Committee
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