

# Bath

## St Saviour's Larkhall with St Mary's Swainswick and All Saints Woolley



ST SAVIOUR'S CHURCH

Transforming lives in Jesus' name

2024



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# Diocesan statement – our vision for growth and transformation

## Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Priest-in-Charge of St Saviour's Larkhall with St Mary's Swainswick and All Saints Woolley in the Diocese of Bath and Wells might be right for you. In order to help your prayerful discernment, we want to share a bit about our diocesan vision, within which we hope your own ministry might flourish.



Appointing a priest incumbent is amongst the most significant decisions that any benefice makes. When appointments work out well, they contribute significantly to parishes flourishing and growing in a host of different ways – in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities and in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church. Such flourishing is not, of course, all down to the person appointed as priest. It depends first and foremost upon God. It also depends upon everyone in a benefice being willing and able to contribute their unique gifts, skills, resources and abilities: working alongside their priest and sharing in the ministry of the benefice.

The flourishing and growth of churches always needs attention, but especially now as we come out of the shock created by the COVID pandemic. The impact of the pandemic created a sharp acceleration in the pattern of decline in church attendance that has been seen in our diocese over many years. Thankfully there are some signs that we are recovering from the COVID decline. For example, data showed that average adult weekly church attendance in our diocese rose between 2021 and 2022. Statistics only ever tell a partial story. It is even more encouraging to see churches around our diocese developing approaches that respond to the opportunities and challenges in their local context and enable growth to happen.

## A vision for growth and transformation

Our diocesan context, described above, has convinced us that for our next season at least, our aim across all our parishes needs to be growing our churches, within and beyond our church buildings, in both numbers and depth of faith, so that we can better work for the transforming of our communities and the life of God's Kingdom amongst us.

## Shared priorities

To help us pursue this aim, and following consultation across the diocese in 2023, we are inviting all parishes to focus on **four** particular areas of our ministry together. It is important for clergy considering working in our diocese to know what these priorities are, even though what they look like in practice will vary in each place:

**To value and cherish the people and resources we already have**

We aim to ensure each person is well supported and equipped as a follower of Jesus Christ and for any ministries they may feel called to undertake, within the local church and wider community. We are committed to supporting the well-being of all our leaders and church officers, both lay and ordained. We have a fully funded clergy well-being service, the offer of peer support groups, and an excellent team of Diocesan support staff fully focused on supporting our parishes, chaplaincies and schools.

**To develop new Christian worshipping communities**

Whether it be new forms of worship in a wide variety of settings and times, church revitalisations or church plants, we long to see the good news of Jesus connect with the people in our communities that our traditional offerings struggle to reach.

**To share in ministry and leadership**

We are committed to the New Testament vision of the church as a vibrant body of people all using their God-given gifts. We are committed to a model of shared local ministry: raising up and equipping lay and ordained leaders able to share together in leading the church and serving God's world.

**To deepen and grow faith**

This is foundational to all we do. We long to see people of all ages and backgrounds, but perhaps especially children, young people and young adults, having more opportunities to discover, explore and grow in faith.

**The outcome we are looking for**

When he talks about his own ministry in 1 Corinthians, Paul captures the dynamic we are seeking to achieve. "I planted," he says, "Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"(1 Cor 3: 6). We know that our churches will only flourish and grow as a result of God's action among us – it is God who gives the growth.

But Paul is also clear that we have a part to play too – in watering and planting, in doing the things that enable the conditions for God's growth to be supported. So, covered by prayer, our confident hope is that if we are intentional in seeking God's guidance in planning and supporting growth, then God will honour that to see his people flourish and thrive - in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities, in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church and in transforming communities locally and beyond.

## Local shaping and diocesan support

There can't be any 'one size fits' all approach to turning the priorities outlined above into action. They always need to be adapted to local circumstances, opportunities and needs. The task of our diocesan support services is to get behind all that local benefices are doing and apart from their general support, there is specific support for exploring how to grow new Christian communities, how to discern and equip a growing range of ministries in your context and how to work well with children and young people. All these areas of support are grounded in exploring what it means to live out our faith.

## What implications does this have for the appointment of clergy?

It is important for us all to appoint clergy to benefices who are ready, willing and able to pray for and share in the vision we have for the flourishing and growth of churches and Christian life in our diocese. We want to create an environment that could be described as high challenge, high support. This means appointing clergy who will not only value all that already exists but will be eager to work with others to build on and develop it. It means appointing clergy who are committed to learning, being creative, and to starting with the gifts God has given to them, their benefice and the wider community. We are therefore looking to appoint candidates who will:

- be committed to praying and intentionally seeking the growth and flourishing of the benefices in their care
- relish and expect to work in an environment that is high challenge, high support
- work joyfully and collaboratively with those who share with them locally in ministry and leadership, with their congregations and with others in their locality, to identify ways to grow and develop their churches with the grain of local priorities, resources, skills and passions
- enjoy working in partnership with deanery and diocesan colleagues.

**We hope this might be you! We hope that you'd like to join us on the adventure and course we've set for our next ten years. We're praying that God will send us the right labourers for the harvest that God has set before us. Could this be you?**

+ Michael.

**The Rt Revd Michael Beasley  
Bishop of Bath and Wells**

Adrian

**The Venerable Dr Adrian Youngs  
Archdeacon of Bath**

## Diocesan statement

Bath Deanery comprises the city of Bath and the surrounding villages. It is made up of 21 traditional parishes which comprise 39 church buildings. In addition, Grace Church is a Fresh Expression of church reaching out to families and those interested in sport and a pioneer minister is working in the South of the city to imagine what expressions of church might be appropriate. Readers, retired clergy, self-supporting and stipendiary clergy contribute to the senior leadership of churches, working with Churchwardens and other lay ministers. Deanery Synod is a vehicle for mission and learning together and Chapter's focus is building prayerful partnerships and learning from one another. It has an active WhatsApp group for communication, prayer and building relationships. The emphasis for the Deanery is threefold:

**Prayerfulness:** valuing our different church traditions and the way these manifest themselves in the ways we pray. Seeking to understand, respect and value different ways of praying – from the liturgical to the charismatic. Encouraging ecumenical prayer and together discerning God's vision for mission around the Deanery.

**Hospitality:** understanding that we are one in Christ, our Christian hospitality means that nobody is in ministry alone, but we are all called to work together because (and not despite), of our differences. Partnership working over parish boundaries and between leadership and ministry teams is vital for enriching the life of the church, treasuring giftedness, and providing resilience through change. Ecumenical hospitality and working through the outcomes of local, Diocesan and national conversations around same-sex marriage and civil partnerships are priorities.

**Innovation:** the model of church most visible around the Deanery is the traditional one of church based around Sunday services, a building, and a Vicar. We are committed to innovating new ways of being the church. Apart from Grace Church and the Whiteway Pioneer mission, the Deanery supports chaplaincy in Bath College, at both Universities, at the RUH Hospital and elsewhere. We work in partnership with other churches for youth ministry and many churches are operating a 'hybrid' model of on-site and on-line worship, connecting with broader audiences.

As part of the Diocesan strategy for 2022-2027 the Deanery is having to reduce from 22 stipendiary clergy to 17, to make cost savings; transitioning to higher levels of shared ministry, lay and ordained, paid and voluntary. The Deanery has committed to achieve this reduction in stipendiary clergy by developing partnerships between benefice incumbents and senior leadership teams and pioneering new ways of being the church. This is a demanding and exciting time to be part of Bath Deanery as we seek to follow God in His mission, to prayerfully work in partnership with him and with others in the city.

**Revd Stephen Girling – Area Dean**

**Mrs Pippa Page – Lay Dean**

## We are looking for someone:

- **Who looks first to Jesus**, listens to the Holy Spirit and loves the Bible. Who possesses a deep personal faith in God that they love to share.
- **Who loves the church** and seeks to see it grow and develop, guiding people as their faith is established in Christ.
- **Who is ready and eager to** strengthen community roots, equipping the congregations to be mission-focused people.
- **Who loves to work with our committed congregations** to support, encourage and enable ministry in community.

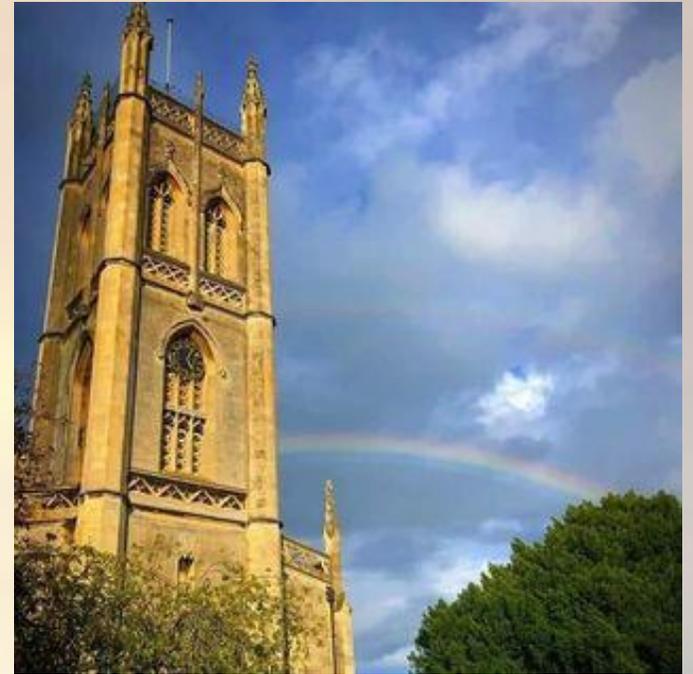


### What is special about us?

- Congregations with a heart to share the love of Jesus.
- Committed lay ministry teams and Readers.
- Church of England secondary and primary schools
- Churches with attractive outdoor and indoor community spaces.
- City, village and semi-rural ministry in beautiful Bath and the Cotswolds.
- A gathered church, attracting people from the benefice as well as beyond

## What we would like our new Priest-in-Charge to do:

- **Build up the churches** through Bible teaching, sharing the Eucharist, pastoral care, discipleship and prayer. Living our vision to transform lives in Jesus' name.
- **Develop strong relationships** in our communities and schools
- **Grow family connections** - we would love our churches to be a home to many families where everyone feels welcome and children are encouraged to fully participate.
- **Empower the congregation** to come together, to serve, to live life together and grow in our faith.



# Prayers of Love and Faith

## St Saviour's with Swainswick and Woolley

### Joint statement from the PCCs of both parishes

As the two parishes have worked together on this profile, it has become increasingly apparent that the two PCCs have a very different approach to the use of Prayers of Love and Faith. St. Saviour's would not be able to support the use of the prayers, as the majority of the St. Saviour's PCC believe that this approach is not in keeping with their understanding of Biblical teaching. St Saviour's still very much desire to be a church where everyone is loved and welcomed and all can be encouraged in their faith journey. Swainswick and Woolley unanimously support the use of Prayers of Love and Faith in the blessing of same sex relationships, believing that God blesses all loving and faithful relationships regardless of gender.

In our discussions together, it has become increasingly clear that St. Saviour's would wish to appoint a Rector who would not support the use, whereas Swainswick and Woolley wish to appoint a Rector who would wholeheartedly support their use, and to enthusiastically lead them in their desire to be an Inclusive church. Both parishes genuinely celebrate the fact that our discussions have been constructive and amicable, seeking to honour one-another, and we long for each other's flourishing.

In discussion with our Archdeacon and Patrons, we are proposing and working towards Swainswick and Woolley receiving oversight from another church and, in the longer term, becoming part of a different Benefice, who can fully support and lead them in the direction they feel called to.

Therefore, although initially the incumbent we appoint would be offering oversight and ministry to both parishes, we are seeking someone who, whilst holding a more traditional position of human sexuality, would care for and minister to the parish of Swainswick and Woolley in the interim, whilst we continue to explore a future pastoral reorganisation. Please contact the Archdeacon to find out further information, detail and timescales of the reorganisation of the Benefice, overseeing the transition and eventually becoming Rector solely of St Saviour's.

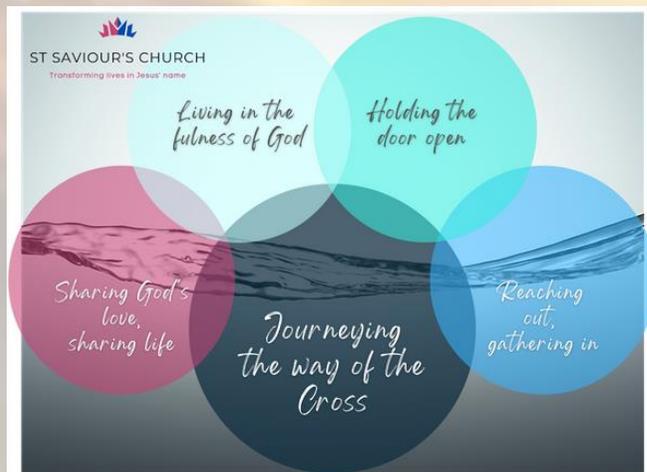
**The PCC of St Saviour's, Bath and the PCC of Swainswick and Woolley**

**25th April 2024**

## Benefice Vision

***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’***

**[Matt 22 v38-39]**



## St Saviour's Church

**Transforming lives in Jesus name.**



## Swainswick and Woolley

***“Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you”  
Open hearts, open minds, open doors***

# The Benefice

## Larkhall Bath

- Located within Bath, a world heritage city with wonderful facilities and 2 universities
- Larkhall is a mile Northeast of the city centre close to the Cotswolds, the Avon River, canal and beautiful parks
- Locals describe the place as a “village” as it has independent shops, cafes, pubs and a theatre
- It is an active social community with an annual Larkhall festival
- Home to Larkhall Football Club and Bath Rugby training ground
- Infant, Junior and Senior Church of England schools and several care homes
- It is home to about 7000 people, both families and elderly
- Both owner occupied housing and some social housing



## Swainswick and Woolley

- On the southern edge of the Cotswolds, population 1200, Adjacent to Larkhall
- Upper Swainswick village, Woolley and Tadwick (hamlets), part of Bailbrook (hamlet) and Middle & Lower Swainswick (suburbia)
- Most houses are owner-occupied with some social housing
- Swainswick Church of England Primary School
- A small home in Upper Swainswick for people with learning disabilities, two of whom attend Swainswick Church
- Two care homes
- Two sheltered/supported housing schemes



## Bath Wider Church

Bath is a world heritage city of 84,000 (with over a quarter being students) with beautiful facilities including museums and theatres. Bath Spa to London Paddington is approximately 90 minutes. A great location to explore the Cotswolds. See <https://visitbath.co.uk/>

- About 70 churches work together across the city supporting many social-action projects, none of which would be sustainable by any one single church e.g. Genesis Trust Bath, Bath Foodbank, Make Lunch, Street Pastors, Homes for Good, Julian House
- Twice a year we pray for Bath in the Abbey and in January the church leaders prayed together in the Council Chamber for the City leaders hosted by The Mayor
- Easter 2024 there was a united church Easter Adventure in the Central Park
- Many Christian conferences are held in Bath
- With 2 Universities, the 18 to 30 age group is very active and Bath hosts a Southwest youth conference
- Church leaders meet together monthly to support one another



Pioneering city-wide initiatives that have originated from members of St Saviour's Church include: Pray for Bath and Lent prayer booklet, CHOP, Central Alpha course, 24/7 prayer room, Ffald-y-Brenin Blessings Course, Precepts, School of Prophecy and Bath Christian Apologetics

# St Saviour's Larkhall

We're on a mission to serve all who come through our doors. St Saviour's is a Holy Spirit driven, Jesus Christ centred church family. We're dedicated to seeking the heart of God in everything we do. We view all of our neighbours as a blessing and we thrive on seeking out the good news of God's love all around us.



Every Sunday we have a 10.45 informal service (average attendance 40-50 adults) which can include cafe style church, sharing & prayers. Twice a month we have a traditional 9.00 am Communion service (average attendance 20). We have an electoral role of 98 and a part time administrator.

Prayer is our heartbeat, and we hold a fortnightly prayer meeting and host an active WhatsApp prayer chain.



We hold special event days and run courses e.g. *Apologetics*. In our recent **Day of Refreshment** we looked *The Power of the Holy Spirit, Forgiveness, Love and Encouragement*.



**Worship & music:** We love worshipping together and have a gifted set of musicians who lead our Sunday services, with ribbons and dancing. We believe that we...

*"...become as we behold"*

...and we invite the Holy Spirit to transform us through our worship.



**Small groups:** We have six Life Groups which meet weekly to study the bible, encourage and support one another.



**Facilities & features:** Our building is a beautiful listed building. A building project was completed in 2016 to create a “Community Hub” which means we now have disabled access, with rooms available for group meetings, study and social activities.

**Finances:** Our financial turnover is approximately £95,000 pa with most income generated from planned giving. We have electronic payment facilities onsite. We give 10% of our net income away as Outward Giving to local, national and international Christian charities and our Church schools.



## Hopes and Challenges

**Well of Healing:** We have had a number of prophetic words about a well of healing at St Saviours and we feel called to further develop a healing ministry.

**Interregnums:** In 2019 our Rector moved on after 20 plus years. Following an interregnum a new Rector was appointed and stayed for only two years. It has been difficult, but we have grown together over the last months, stepping up to the challenges. It has been a time of consolidation and we are praying for a harvest.

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.  
Isaiah 43 18-19*



**Open Door:** There is a desire to keep the church open more so people can just drop in.

**Care Homes:** We have links with two care homes in Lower Swainswick who have requested monthly communion. Since COVID we have not been unable to undertake this.

## Leadership & Ministry Teams

The ministries at St Saviours are supported by members of the congregation in the following ways:

- An engaged PCC with fourteen members that meets 3-6 times a year, as well as representation on the Deanery Synod.
- Dedicated wardens (two) and lay readers (two)
- All services are supported by the Worship Team
- A qualified safeguarding lead supported by officers
- Diligent and committed part time Administrator (paid position)
- A team who give talks and lead the services
- A Schools assemblies Team



## Younger Church



Currently, we have a handful of children but believe God will add to our number as we love our children and encourage them. At our 1045 informal service there is a short All Age activity and the children stay in church but have their own bible story. Children are encouraged to actively participate during worship, dancing with ribbons and flags. The Pop up Nativity Service welcomed 20 families and 30 children.



## Local schools

The Lay school teams regularly lead assemblies, nativity and Easter trails at St Saviour's infant and junior schools. Each school has end of term services in the church including St Mark's senior school.



The School Chaplain of St Mark's has said:

*"We would love to welcome the new Vicar to come to School for some Collective Worships and our optional termly Communion."*

From the infants and juniors:

*"We would love to have the Priest-in-Charge involved in planning our Collective Worship cycle and be part of it; to work with school at seasonal points (e.g. Christmas and Harvest) to either lead Church celebrations or plan them. We are open to developing the school and Church relationship for the benefit of both."*

We are starting to form partnerships with World Sport ministries and Lux youth movement who both have children and families activity in Larkhall and would like to develop this further

Until 2023 we have had a Children and Families Leader for 15 hours a week.



## Community

### Food Larder

Our Food Larder project has been running since 2022 and in March 2023, we received a grant to enable us to buy in equipment and non-perishable food to offer without charge.

We now open the Food Larder on a Tuesday morning and it has developed into a 'Grace station' whereby we offer free hot drinks and biscuits/cake inside the church. This has enabled us to engage with people in conversation and offer prayer if appropriate.

St Saviour's  
Community Food Larder



FOOD, LOVE & PRAYER

A Christian food cooperative with a passion for community



Here are a couple of comments from our guests...

*"It really helps with food and I enjoy speaking with the ladies there. The friendship helps me recover from depression so that I can return to work."*

*"The joy of my day, it puts a smile on my face because of the kindness of people. I really appreciate it."*

The volunteers see this outreach as part of our ministry to local people. We hope to expand this outreach to perhaps include a community lunch as we get more volunteers.



## St Saviour's Toddlers Group

St Saviour's hosts a weekly Toddlers group on a Wednesday morning during term time. We have a dedicated team of volunteers, and between 15 and 25 toddlers and babies attend with their parents and carers.



Here are some of the comments we hear from parents/carers:

*"A really friendly, community-minded playgroup; always very welcoming to everyone. We look forward to Wednesdays!"*

*"It's lovely here; there are lots of different toys. The atmosphere is great, it's a great place to meet other parents and children"*

*"Lovely feeling of peace and calm".*



## Other

In addition, we have led outdoor Services in both the church garden and our local park, hosted a Christmas Gathering, sung carols and supported the Larkhall Festival.

Brownies and other community groups, including AA meet in our church.



# St Mary's Swainswick & All Saints Woolley

We are a small, inclusive Christian community meeting in the beautiful **12<sup>th</sup> century church of St Mary the Virgin Swainswick**. We live out our faith as part of our local community, offering a place of sanctuary, prayer and celebration.

The church is always unlocked and it is rare to spend any time in the church or churchyard without meeting someone looking round, praying or having a picnic.



As well as St Mary's, the PCC is responsible for the even smaller **18<sup>th</sup> century church of All Saints in Woolley**. All Saints is valued and cherished by many generations of local families. It is open during the day, supported by its Friends and provides a home for community events and occasional services.

There are 35 people on the parish electoral roll, though not all attend church.

## Worship, Prayer and Pilgrimage

**Worship and music:** We meet every Sunday at Swainswick. Our worship is liturgical and relaxed, combining deep faith with a light touch. The Eucharist is important to us; we love singing and have an excellent organist.

Children and teachers at Swainswick School gather in church every week for Collective Worship and use the church for special services and events.

At Woolley, there are Festival services at Easter, Christmas, Remembrance, Mothering Sunday and Harvest - all aimed at the growing number of families and children in the village community. We have not been able to sustain most of these during the interregnum. However, Christmas carols were well supported (about 40 people) and the Woolley community is keen to revive more Festival services.



**Peace and prayer at Swainwick:** We provide prayers, reflections and poems and allow the space to speak to people of God's love even when we are not there. Conversations and comments in the visitors' book show that the church is a real sanctuary:

*"Grateful to have a space to come and reflect in peace. Thank you for keeping it open for us."*

*"This is a beautiful place. A sanctuary. A holy spot."*

*"Thank you for keeping this place open for private worship. It means lots to lots of people and brings peace."*

**Sitting in Peace** is a new monthly group for silent meditation/contemplative prayer aimed at people of all faiths and none.



**Swainwick Pilgrimages:** There is a **"Muddy Boots Welcome"** sign outside, free tea and coffee and tables and chairs in the churchyard. People are incredibly appreciative of this small act.

The church is close to **St Adhelm's Way** and we are developing some local **pilgrimage walks**. We plan to offer overnight accommodation for pilgrims as part of the **British Pilgrimage Trust's** Sanctuary network.

*"Beautiful church and a lovely place to stop on my pilgrimage from Plymouth to Avebury and back. Very much appreciated the tea and coffee, water refills and toilet. A lovely place to sing in. Thank you!"*

**Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals in 2023:** Swainwick had 4 weddings (more than usual!) and 4 funerals. Woolley had 2 baptisms, 2 funerals and 1 service of thanksgiving.

One of our LWA's works as an independent funeral celebrant and can lead memorial services and interments of ashes in the churchyard.



## Church buildings and finances

**St Mary's Swainswick:** a 12<sup>th</sup> century Grade II\* listed church with kitchen and outdoor toilet. In 2021 we removed most of the nave pews, creating a flexible space. The Lower Churchyard is closed and has been handed over to the local authority. The Upper Churchyard is open.

**All Saints Woolley:** a Grade I listed church designed by John Wood the Younger. Tower repairs have recently been completed, funded through grants. The church has electricity but no water supply. The churchyard is open.

**Finances:** Swainswick is in a reasonably good position financially thanks to the support of the congregation and wider community. We give away 10% of our unrestricted income to selected charities each year.

All Saints Woolley has almost no money. However, the Friends of Woolley church (a separate charity) is very supportive and makes regular donations towards the upkeep of the building.

## LWA's, PCC and more

A number of us have several roles, but between us we support the churches in the following ways:

- Lay worship Assistants (x 2)
- Churchwarden (x 1)
- Professionally experienced Safeguarding lead
- Swainswick School governor
- PCC members (x 7) who meet 4 or 5 times a year, take responsibility and get on well
- Volunteers for administration; setting up services; organist; building maintenance; trust fund applications
- Volunteers from wider community lead/help organise community events



## Community



10,900 people entered Swainswick church in 2023. Many will be regulars/repeat visits, but it shows how well the church is used.

**Pub Swainswick** is a monthly fixture. The church is the village's only meeting place. A special gathering place for wide-ranging conversations.

**Swainswick Harvest Beer Festival** attracts around 400 people. Both Pub and Beer Festival also raise money for the church.

**Annual Apple Day** and occasional exhibitions and talks.



**Friends of Woolley Church** organise an annual tea for the Julian House sponsored walk and a concert in partnership with Kingswood School.



We produce **The Mag** three times a year - a church magazine with a difference, beautifully designed, informative, funny and aimed at people who are not members of our congregation.

We encourage visitors by researching and communicating the **history** of the churches and parish.

**Swainswick Church of England Primary School:** a former vicar of Swainswick is a parent at **Swainswick School** and informally provides spiritual support/leads worship.

## Hopes and Challenges

We want to continue with our current worship and community activities, all of which fit well with our vision.

Our major challenge is that the congregation is very small and running two churches rests with only a handful of people. The future feels uncertain, although we are adaptable and remain in good heart

Our hopes are that:

- We sustain our ministry and encourage others to join us
- We build a pilgrimage/outdoor ministry
- The Sitting in Peace group will flourish
- Our commitment to inclusivity will attract others
- Festival services are re-established at Woolley, involving local families with children.

And that our new minister will help us by:

- Taking Communion services and attending occasional LWA-led services
- Reviving the Festival services at All Saints Woolley
- Supporting our commitment to being an inclusive church
- Attending community events
- Supporting pilgrimages/an outdoor ministry
- Attending occasional PCC meetings
- Fostering a good relationship with Swainswick School.



## The Rectory



A spacious, refurbished 4 bedroomed semi-detached property with a family friendly lay out and 2 bedroomed lower ground floor annex.

It has amazing vistas of the surrounding countryside.



It is a five minute walk from St Saviour's Church and walking distance to local shops, cafes and pubs. It is a ten minute walk to the Kennet and Avon canal towpath and walking distance to the city centre.

The property has a large drive with a garage and a good sized enclosed garden with mature shrubs.

The property is centrally heated and has a gas boiler.



***Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people [Mark 6 41]***

**We are looking for someone to give thanks for what we have and help us to distribute it to our community knowing that God will multiply what we have as we step out in faith together**



**Further information:**

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