

The Profile of

the Benefices of

Leigh on Mendip with Stoke St Michael

and

Postlebury

Summary

We are a group of eight churches set in the beautiful Somerset countryside. Our churches are physical and spiritual signs of God's presence in our rural communities, and we have a developing team of lay people who are the dedicated foundation of how we live and tell the story of Jesus Christ in this place.

Across the churches and through our rota of services we enjoy a diversity of worship styles.

As well as Churchwardens and PCCs, examples of our Christian commitment come from the embedding of children's groups, the Sunday Stokers and Little Saplings in two of our villages. We also have a recently formed team of Lay Pastoral Assistants.

Our vision is to build on these successes through greater visibility and engagement in our respective communities as we tell the Good News of God and His Kingdom. The variety of local mainly non-church volunteer groups offer a significant opportunity for increasing that engagement beyond the successful links that have already been established. Personal engagement with schools will be important.

We look to our new vicar to provide us with the spiritual and practical leadership in achieving our vision through his/her own personal work and by fostering the qualities and skills of our developing teams. Crucial to this will be to help us grow in our own lives of discipleship.

This could be the place for you if you are energised by rural ministry, have a pastoral heart, a vision for outreach, and skills in developing strong teams. We hope for an approachable priest who will love us in our scattered diversity; who is seeking to be involved in our lives and our communities and is willing and able to lead and enable us, the members of our churches in each place, to more fully become the Church for each of our communities.



This document expands on the above by:

- describing who and where we are;
- saying more about our strengths, challenges and aspirations;
- describing what we seek and what we offer

It also includes Diocesan and Deanery Statements, and appendices with facts & figures, buildings & fabric and useful contacts.



About Us

We comprise two benefices, three parishes and eight churches.

1) The Benefice of Leigh upon Mendip with Stoke St. Michael ([Leigh and Stoke - A Church Near You](#))

This benefice covers the parish of Stoke St Michael and the parish of Leigh-upon-Mendip with Downhead. Each of the two parishes has its own PCC. There are three churches, which lie within the Mendip Hills, and a stone's throw from the towns of Frome, Midsomer Norton, and Shepton Mallet. They are to the North-West of the Postlebury Benefice. Wells is a short drive away. The churches and villages share a monthly community magazine, prepared by the church.

2) The Benefice of Postlebury (postleburychurches.org)

The Parish of Postlebury is named after Postlebury Wood which lies in the middle of the parish. This rural parish includes the villages and hamlets of Nunney, Wanstrow, Witham Friary, Cloford, Trudoxhill and Marston Bigot, all located south-west of the attractive and vibrant market town of Frome. The Parish was formed in 1984 by the merger of three parishes. There is one PCC for Postlebury and the five individual churches each have their own church committees which meet regularly to discuss services, upkeep and fundraising. The churches share services and communications – including a website, an Annual Guide to Postlebury, and a monthly Postlebury Churches e-newsletter. They also work together to hold joint social and fundraising events.

Services take place amongst the eight churches on a rota basis (see Appendix A).

The Future

It may make sense for the two benefices to become one. It is felt that considering becoming one benefice will be a matter for discussion after our new priest has begun his/her ministry here.

Where we are

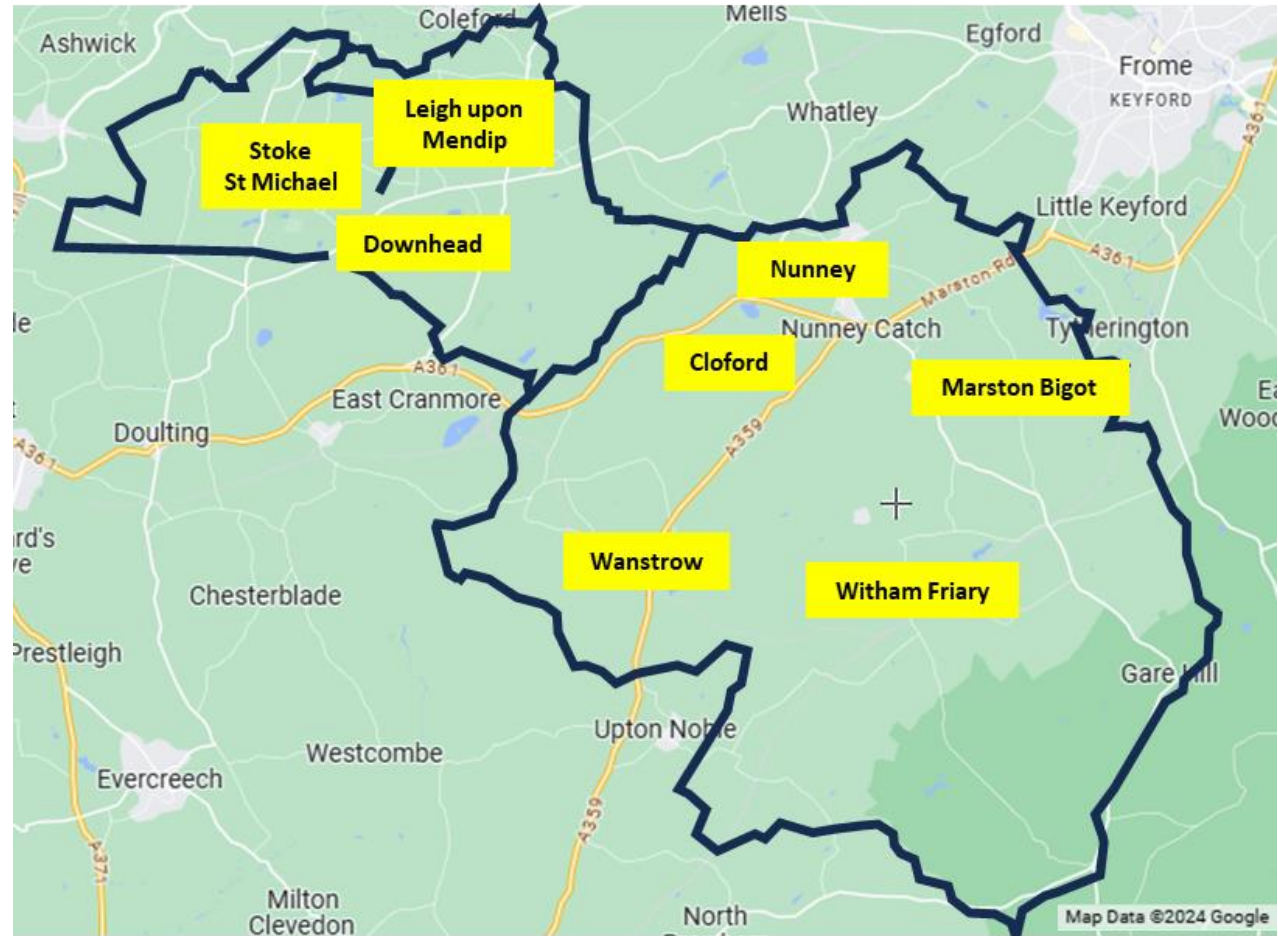


Leigh on Mendip with Stoke St Michael

- St Michael and All Angels, Stoke St Michael
- St Giles, Leigh on Mendip
- All Saints, Downhead

Postlebury

- All Saints, Nunney
- The Blessed Virgin Mary, Cloford
- St Leonard, Marston Bigot
- The Blessed Virgin Mary, Wanstrow
- Witham Friary



Populations: Stoke – 993; Leigh – 562; Downhead - 88; Nunney – 1003; Wanstrow – 489; Witham – 419; and Trudoxhill (no church) which covers Marston and Cloford – 439.

Our Strengths - I

Consultation

We undertook extensive consultation with our congregations and wider communities in August and September 2024. This has helped us to develop our understanding of our strengths and challenges, particularly how we are perceived by our communities, and to articulate our aspirations. These form the context which defines what we seek from our new vicar.

Our Team

Our churchwardens, PCCs and other volunteers have a wide range of skills and experience. During the vacancy, a cross-churches “strategy group” has worked very effectively in a spirit of collaboration and constructive debate.

There are five clergy (with PTO) and a Reader who live in the benefices. There is also a newly formed cross-churches team of experienced individuals who have been trained as Lay Pastoral Assistants. They offer bereavement care, general support through home visits and prayer support.

We have a part-time paid administrator, who worked from home and in the Rectory office until the vacancy, freeing up time for the vicar to be out and about.



Pet Service

Worship

There is a wide range of forms of worship across the eight churches, meaning there is always something for everyone (see Appendix A).

Though regular churchgoers may take Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals and major festivals for granted, the fact that we provide them is greatly appreciated by the community at large.



Baptism

Our **Welcome** is valued for example through church-based coffee and chat sessions.

Our Strengths - 2



Leaders of the Stokers

Young Children's Groups

These are Sunday Stokers in Stoke St Michael, a lively monthly Sunday morning children's group, and Little Saplings in Nunney, a popular weekly carers and tots group with a clear Christian message. They have both been running for about three years, and provide a foundation for widening what we do across the churches for our children and families. We have a very strong relationship with Nunney First School, where a lay team have run popular "Open the Book" assemblies for many years. We are keen to build similarly strong relationships with the other schools in our benefices.



Little Saplings



Nunney Bellringers

Home Groups

We have two growing Home Groups, meeting regularly in church members' houses to deepen faith and fellowship, including some people who are not regular church attenders.

Other Affiliated Groups

These include bellringers and some "Friends" organisations.



Home Group Passover Supper

Our Challenges

Visibility

The visibility of our vicar in each village/community around our eight churches was the stand-out concern from our consultation.

Physical Links

What complicates addressing this is the geographical layout of our communities. There is a lack of natural links between villages and hamlets, and the busy A361 forms a barrier between the north and south of our benefices.

Community involvement

Some of our communities feel alienated from the church, including those who have had an upbringing therein. There is a clear need to build on positive improvements within villages to enhance the churches' direct involvement with community activities. Many within our community feel we could do more by way of home visits to the vulnerable etc.



Young, their families and schools

We have developed some good activities for children, but there is still much to be done to become fully engaged with these vital subsets of our communities, including activities for teenagers. There are First or Primary schools in Nunney, Leigh and Stoke, which are not Church schools. However, children in Wanstrow and Witham go to a Church school in Upton Noble, outside the benefice. Middle and Secondary schools are located in the different towns that surround our area.

Wider Use

Our community consultation suggested that much could be achieved by making wider use of our church buildings. This could be an area of exciting development.

Our Aspirations



As we seek to live and tell the Good News of God and His Kingdom in our rural area, we hope to:

- Maintain a diverse portfolio of Christian worship within our various churches by celebrating, capitalising on and developing the wide range of styles already in use, so that all people feel welcomed
- Become more visible in our communities, including through the physical presence of our vicar as often as possible
- Engage positively with our communities, especially by
 - Strengthening community ties
 - Interacting regularly with our schools, including but not limited to assemblies and services within the relevant churches
 - Providing activities for children of all ages which in turn will support families
 - Making face to face pastoral visits to people in need, whatever that need might be.

We know that this cannot be a task for just one person, our vicar. So additionally, we have further aspirations which are to

- Develop our spiritual lives and discipleship and build teams who can minister across the eight churches under the leadership of our vicar
- Ensure we provide the “back office”/administrative support necessary to free the time of our vicar to take this leading role from the front.

In all this we also are aware that we need to allow time for the vicar’s own study, preparation and prayer, as well as necessary time off for their own well being.



Is this You?

We are looking for a vicar who will:

- Get to know and love us all in our churches and wider communities, especially by being visible and engaged
- Be a godly, prayerful and approachable leader with a heart and open mind to reach out with the Good News of Jesus to our communities
- Encourage and enhance our discipleship and ministry through spiritual leadership and good teaching/preaching
- Inspire, lead and enable from the front, delegating where appropriate and necessary to the dedicated volunteers, and by helping us to better discern and grow the gifts which we have to offer
- Encourage and help us to develop our diverse forms of worship
- Connect to young people and families, especially by building relationships with each of our schools.



Part of our Consultation Process!

The Support We Offer

Skills & experience

PCC members and other volunteers across our eight churches have a wide range of skills and experience. Many bring important local cultural and community knowledge. Others have held senior positions in education, health care, finance, commerce and the third sector, with useful and relevant skills.

As noted above, there are five clergy (with PTO) living within the benefices as well as an experienced reader and an ordinand.

Administrative and other support

Our churches (and vicar) are supported by an Administrator, who has been based in a purpose-built office at Nunney Rectory. The post is funded by the churches to provide administrative support for the vicar and the parishes 12 hours a week, of which 8 hours have been spent in the Rectory office. The Postlebury churches also pay for a part-time virtual bookkeeper to support the Treasurer.

We have two Parish Safeguarding Officers covering the three parishes.

Churchwardens across Group of Churches



Parish PCC	Members	Comments
Postlebury,	11	including the church wardens of each of the benefice's five churches
Leigh on Mendip with Downhead	7	
Stoke St Michael	5	

Housing

Nunney Castle & Church



The Rectory was built in 1984 in the garden of the mid-19th century Old Rectory. It lies in the heart of Nunney above the Nunney Brook and has a private but good-sized garden and plenty of parking space. It is within 200 m of the church, pub, cafe, Village Hall, School and Pre-school and shop.

The 4-bedroom house has been renovated during the vacancy with additional insulation, solar panels on the roof, an Air Source Heat Pump, new family bathroom and redecorated throughout. There is a garage, good-sized kitchen and separate utility room, dining room, sitting room and Parish Office/study which can be accessed from the front porch. The main bedroom has an ensuite shower room and there are three more double bedrooms and family bathroom.

Our priest will live in the Rectory in the village of Nunney. Nunney is an attractive and popular village centred on a medieval castle, with a lively community and good local amenities including a Pre-School and First School.

Nunney Rectory



Frome Deanery Statement

Working together across the Deanery, we seek to be a transforming Christian presence in every community where more and more people catch God's love and choose to be Jesus' disciples.

We would expect the new incumbent to link in with the shared Deanery wide vision for working across the Deanery collaboratively to catalyse, release and enable work amongst children, families and young people.

We as a Deanery, seek to give God the glory and draw people to Christ in all that we do, with clergy and non-clergy alike, sharing in building God's kingdom in ways that are affirming and energising for all involved.

We see ourselves as a pioneering deanery returning to the values of the early church as described in Acts 2:42-47 – fellowship based on love and prayer.

This is all underpinned by four strands

- **Planning** - which is fundamental to making our vision succeed
- **Resourcing** - so that initiatives are cross-deanery and include both the rural and the town churches working together
- **Communicating** - sharing our successes and struggles, supporting each other and using social media to communicate well with the wider community
- **Supporting** - we appreciate that our vision is challenging, but we are confident that that we can succeed if we have the right mind set and support each other.

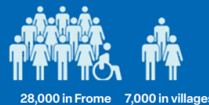


Facts and figures

28 churches 9 benefices

19 parishes 35,000 people live here

1,090 active members*
*from the electoral roll 2018



Diocesan Statement

Our Vision for Growth and Transformation



Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Priest in Charge of the Benefices of Leigh on Mendip with Stoke St Michael and Postlebury 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.

Diocesan Statement

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 I Corinthians, Paul captures the dynamic we are seeking to achieve. "I planted," he says, "Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"(I 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.

Diocesan Statement

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?



Bishop Michael



Archdeacon of Wells

Appendices

- A. Facts and Figures
- B. Buildings & Fabric
- C. Links for Our Communities

Facts and Figures



GENERAL SERVICE PATTERN

Day	Time	Where	Service
1 st Sunday	930	Wanstrow	Holy Communion
	1100	Leigh on Mendip	Family Communion
	1800	Stoke St Michael	Evensong
2 nd Sunday	930	Stoke St Michael	Holy Communion
	1100	Witham	Holy Communion
	1800	Stoke St Michael or Nunney	Soul Food – Informal worship
2 nd Thursday	1800	Wanstrow	Compline & Meditation
3 rd Sunday	930	Marston	Holy Communion
	1100	Stoke St Michael	Family Communion & Sunday Stokers
	1800	Downhead	Evensong
4 th Sunday	930	Nunney	Morning Worship or Holy Communion
	930	Leigh on Mendip	Holy Communion (BCP)
	1100	Cloford	Matins (BCP) or Holy Communion
5 th Sunday	1000	Various	Joint Benefice Service
Every Friday	1000	Nunney	Holy Communion (BCP)

Helping deliver this schedule are the five clergy (with PTO), the experienced reader and an ordinand.

STATISTICS (2023)				
	Leigh with Downhead	Stoke St Michael	Postlebury	TOTAL
Electoral Roll	40	17	63	120
Sunday Avg. Attendance	12	13	25	50
Baptisms	0	0	4	4
Weddings	1	0	6	7
Funerals/ Memorial Services	3	6	11	20

FINANCES (£) 2023	Leigh with Downhead	Stoke St Michael	Postlebury (5 churches)
Unrestricted Income	12,725	12,900	59,490
Unrestricted Expenditure	12,425	12,220	62,097
Parish Share *	6,014	5,329	26,389
Restricted Funds	7,402	432	167,766
Unrestricted Funds	12,967	32,176	30,644

*Review underway as Diocese moves to a Benefice Share approach

Buildings & Fabric

Church	Recent Achievements	Upcoming Projects
Cloford	The church has been redecorated, the Horner monument restored, and the Bates pipe organ installed.	Quinquennial review turned up nothing of importance. There are currently no more maintenance / projects.
Downhead	Restoration of the church bells Provision of lighting for outside and the approach to the church Refurbishing of noticeboards in church and village	The November 2023 Quinquennial stated that major work is required on the ceiling and roof.
Leigh on Mendip	Lead roofing relayed on chancel and nave with associated repairs; repairs to high level masonry and provision of kitchen and toilet facilities to increase community usage	The latest Quinquennial Inspection was March 2021 and all significant recommendations are covered in the next major project for window and masonry repairs.
Marston Bigot	Installation of a WC, rebuilding of churchyard walls and restoration of four stained glass windows	No major concerns in most recent quinquennial report.
Nunney	Recently, augmentation (from 6 to 8) and restoration of bells in Nunney Church, including renovation of clock.	No major concerns in most recent quinquennial report. Installation of a WC, improved disabled access and re-fitted kitchen.
Stoke St Michael	Internal redecoration “Dove” window repaired after Storm Henk.	Two phases envisaged following recent quinquennial report: 1) weather related work: windows, repointing, vestry & porch roofs and chest tomb repairs; 2) major work to the Tower, including clock and bells.
Wanstrow		Restoration of clock No major concerns in most recent quinquennial report.
Witham Friary (plus Dovecote)	Recent and ongoing work updating the churchyard by a core group of volunteers	No outstanding work until the next Quinquennial survey next year

Links: Our Communities

Schools

Stoke St Michael Primary School
(<https://www.croscombstokefederation.co.uk/>)

Leigh on Mendip School
([Home - Leigh on Mendip School](#))

Nunney First School
([Home - Nunney First School](#))

Upton Noble (for Wanstrow & Witham)
(www.uptonnoble.org.uk)

Churches websites

Postlebury
(postleburychurches.org)

Leigh upon Mendip
([Leigh - A Church Near You](#))

Stoke St. Michael
([Stoke - A Church Near You](#))

Church Facebook pages

- <https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsnunney>
- <https://www.facebook.com/StokeStMichaelChurch>

Village websites

www.nunneyparishcouncil.com

www.nunneycommunityassociation.com

www.facebook.com/Nunney

www.withamfriary-pc.org.uk

www.wanstrowparishcouncil.gov.uk

[www.Facebook.com/Wanstrow Green](https://www.facebook.com/WanstrowGreen)

www.trudoxhill.org.uk (Marston Bigot and Trudoxhill)

[Village Information - Stoke St Michael Parish Council](#)
(stokestmichaelpc.org)

[Leigh on Mendip Village Website](#) (leigh-on-mendip.org.uk)