



THREE VALLEYS BENEFICE P R O F I L E



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The Three Valleys Benefice

An introduction to the vacancy from the Bishop of Sherborne



Rural ministry in Dorset is a joy and a delight. In recent years significant changes have been made to the way clergy are supported and encouraged, and lay leaders equipped for local ministry which has led to a greater sense of collegiality in our rural areas. The Three Valleys Benefice is an example of this.

We are looking for a creative Team Rector, in tune pastorally with the rural and extended nature of the large benefice, who is able to delegate and bring out the best in each congregation, each church building and each community. This requires light touch oversight, a vision for rural ministry and the ability to care pastorally for and offer encouragement to the local.

The local team is made up of a Full time Team Vicar, Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) with Permission to Officiate, retired clergy, Lay Worship Leaders, Lay Pastoral Assistants, and administrative support. It has recently been a training benefice for a Curate. Team working is essential to this Benefice, made up of a larger number of villages and hamlets. We are looking for someone who is able to lead the team as well as use their own gifts to further enable the development of lay participation and of new ministries.

The future of the benefice requires pragmatism too, building on the best of what each church can offer, and making use of other local facilities for social events, nurture, worship, and outreach. In recent years this has proved vital as the benefice has welcomed in newcomers, including families and those enquiring about faith. It means grappling with the challenges of rural church, the upkeep of buildings and changing centres of population.

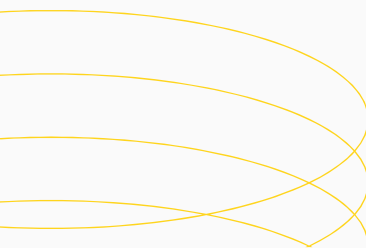
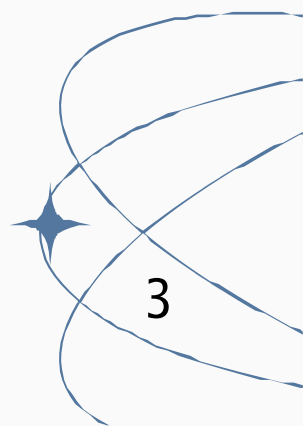
The Sherborne Deanery, in which the Three Valleys Benefice is situated, has been shaped to ensure there is good mutual support and fellowship. There is always a warm welcome amongst this clergy grouping for friends and colleagues.

Three Valleys enjoys beautiful rural countryside yet is within easy reach of Sherborne, Yeovil, and Dorchester. Yeovil and Sherborne stations offer rail connections to Salisbury, Exeter, and London Waterloo. Yetminster also has a railway station.

The diocese itself is committed to its rural benefices and is actively developing ways this ministry can be supported, including giving, church buildings and administration.

Should you wish to know more about this post please contact the Team Vicar or Archdeacon for an informal conversation. We offer great opportunities, wonderful countryside, supportive colleagues and some deeply spiritual places of worship and retreat, including in this benefice Hilfield Friary.

Bishop Karen



Introduction to the Profile

After 10 years as the Three Valleys Benefice, on the retirement of the Reverend Tony Gilbert, we are looking for a Team Rector who will lead us into the next stage of our development. We hope that this profile will help you decide if God is sending you to us. It begins with an outline of the – very high – quality of life to be found in this gorgeous part of rural Dorset. We hope this will make you stop and look further. Next comes an outline of us as a Benefice. This should give you a good idea of what you will find should you be the person to join us.

Lastly, we have put together a simple profile that we hope will make it clear what challenges and opportunities you will encounter here, and what sort of person might be suited to them. At the back of the document, there are a few facts and figures, maps and tables that might be useful. If you want to find out more about individual churches, a download is available. God be with you as you explore this profile.



THE THREE VALLEYS BENEFICE

What's it like around here?

Looking

Straddling the north-west tip of Dorset, the sixteen parishes and twenty or so villages and hamlets that make up the Three Valleys Benefice form a heart-shaped ring around the southern half of the ancient town of Sherborne, and act as the western border of the Salisbury diocese as it reaches the Somerset border by Yeovil. We are also blessed with the presence of Hilfield Friary, foundation house of the Society of St. Francis, within the Benefice. A circular walk of the Benefice covers about 34 miles and takes a whole day to complete, with wonderful views throughout.

The busy towns of Yeovil and Sherborne border the Benefice and are easily accessible. Yeovil, with its population of around 50,000, is well known for the manufacture of helicopters and various light industries. It has much to offer with high street shops and many more local retailers and businesses. Sherborne (about 10,000) has a strong tradition of high-quality education in both the public and independent sectors. There is a very fine abbey church with a strong musical tradition and Sherborne enjoys a flourishing cultural life, as well as markets, specialist shops and excellent pubs and cafes. There are golf courses, sports clubs, gyms, swimming pools and all the other usual amenities.



Living

Several of our twenty villages are served by post offices, small village stores, village and church halls. There is a health centre in Yetminster, and Yeovil and Yeatman (Sherborne) hospitals are just on the doorstep. Sherborne also offers a variety of excellent health centres and other medical practices. Unlike much of the country, getting an appointment with a local GP is no problem. The villages in our Benefice, as well as our local towns, are well known for excellent pubs with real ale and good food."

There are four thriving Church of England primary schools in the Benefice serving about 400 four to eleven-year-olds, most of whom then move on to our excellent The Gryphon Church of England Secondary Academy in Sherborne, with most young people travelling each day into Sherborne on a fleet of school buses.

Our part of Dorset retains a strong rural industry, though many residents commute to local towns for work. Some even commute to London, though with remote working that is less common. The tranquil beauty and quiet rural life also attract many to retire here, so there is an active array of clubs and societies in our villages.



Travelling

Our Benefice covers around 50 square miles of beautiful countryside, with many walks and excellent cycling. It is crossed by two main roads, the A352 Sherborne to Dorchester and A3030 Sherborne to Sturminster Newton, and is bordered on the west side by the A37 Yeovil to Dorchester road and in the north by a section of the A30. There is an extensive network of country lanes, and driving around the area is relatively easy once you get to know your way – with each rise in the road revealing a new vista of fields and farms, trees and hills.

The beautiful ‘Heart of Wessex’ railway line runs through the area between Gloucester and Weymouth and there are halts at Chetnole, Thornford and Yetminster. Sherborne and Yeovil Junction stations are on the main line from Exeter to London Waterloo and a trip to the capital takes a little over two hours.

To the south of us are the Dorset Downs of Thomas Hardy fame and over them lies the small county town of Dorchester, with its quaint shopping centre and many small businesses. The Dorset Coast is a short drive or train journey away, with Weymouth about 40 minutes away. The WPNSA (Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy) at Portland is about a 50-minute drive, with other water sports venues equally accessible. And if a trip to France or the Channel Islands is your thing, Poole ferry terminal is about an hour away for the early ferry, with Portsmouth not much further away.

Who are we?

Team

We are a Team Ministry. We gather every week as a core team of Team Vicar, Team Rector (the vacancy), two retired clergy and one LLM, and every quarter with the churchwardens, working at the challenges of benefice life together. Our PCCs meet frequently, in churches, halls and homes, to work on church business and ministry. We have two small 'Open the Book' teams that prepare and then take Bible stories into two of our four schools. We have a children and youth team that meets quarterly and shares in telling stories and singing songs with one of our two nursery schools. We have many midweek gatherings, some weekly, many monthly, who share together in prayer, reading the Bible, and lots of chat.



Worship

Then of course on Sunday, we gather in our church buildings around the Benefice to share in worship. This is led by our extensive team of clergy, retired clergy, brothers from the Friary, LLMs and the 9 new LWLs, who also meet to support and encourage one another, as well as often to eat together. At onepoint recently, we began to count our volunteers but found that there were so many involved that it was a task almost beyond us. While the core team maybe small, the real team is very large, all contributing to the life of the local church in one way or another.



People

We are sixteen Parishes. Each one is different, with its own character and gifts, challenges and opportunities (see Appendix 5). There is variety in style and culture, but all share in a desire to worship God and reach out to the people who live in their village. We have a wonderful buffet of Common Worship Holy Communion Services, Services of the Word, Festival Services, Book of Common Prayer Services and Fresh Expressions. Some are focussed on the rural community, for example Plough Sunday: others are more for the wider community, like our many Carol Services, Harvest Festivals, Taizé Service and Informal Worship. Often we eat together, even if it is just a biscuit and a coffee, a glass of wine and a nibble.

We are one Benefice. We began as three Benefices about ten years ago, when the Gifle Valley, the Wriggle Valley and the White Hart Vale merged to form the Three Valleys. Since then we have operated as one, and steadily grown more aware of our shared life and ministry together, especially as we have come together for various events and decisions in recent times. There is an extraordinary depth of gifts and talents in the benefice, and, as we work together, we have found joy in getting to know each other better. Our Benefice services have become an event and a celebration.



Growing

We are on the move. In the last five years, we have seen the beginning of two new worshipping communities, one in the east and one in the west, one in a village hall and one in a school. Both are going strong. We have begun new ministries in the schools, care home and nursery, as well as reviving old ones. We have seen new small home groups spring up in all three of our largest villages, as well as a continuing weekly diet of prayer. And, most excitingly, we have seen a few people becoming new Christians as adults, so we have had adult baptisms and confirmations as well as those for children and young people.



Future

We are a place of opportunity. Our ministry in schools is growing, with a new Holy Communion Service planned for example, but the opportunities far outstrip our ability to explore or develop them. While our demographic has a bit of a dip between 18 and 35, our churches have a lull between 0 and 55, so engaging parents and children and adults of working age is a huge challenge.

We desire to make Jesus known, and have led 'Christianity Explored' recently, but there is much to do for anyone who senses God is sending them to us. While we have two nurseries, we are only active with one. Similarly, our care home has a very active congregation yet we can only visit twice a month. Many come to us for baptisms (christenings), weddings and funerals, and this gives us great opportunities to engage with them into the future.



Is this for you?

The key things that we are praying for in our new Rector include:

Personal Qualities

- Putting aside personal time with God in prayer and worship a priority
- Holding confidently to the power of the Gospel to change lives
- Teaching the Bible with assurance whenever the opportunity arises
- Staying calm and measured under pressure, dealing with others with love and tact
- Enjoying variety and diversity in worship, in a multitude of settings
- Valuing the joyfulness of the shared endeavour of building God's church
- Keen to be part of a varied team seeking to serve Christ

Strengths to build on:

- Growing congregations and strong links with the community,
- Active and broadly supported fundraising
- Four schools (six including nurseries)
- A strong core team supported by a large and active number of retired clergy and lay ministers
- Deanery link with the Ezo diocese in South Sudan
- Excellent links with the farming community
e.g. through our rural chaplains

Opportunities to develop:

- Growth – focusing on new Christians, church volunteers and youth teams
- Outreach – especially to our farming community and other ministries outside the Benefice
- Share – increasing our contribution to the Diocesan share
- Management – efficient administration of a large rural Benefice

If you want to find out more or have an informal chat, you can email Andrew Graham, Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod at ajngraham820@gmail.com or Rev Tim Greenslade, Rural Dean at the.greenslades@tiscali.co.uk.

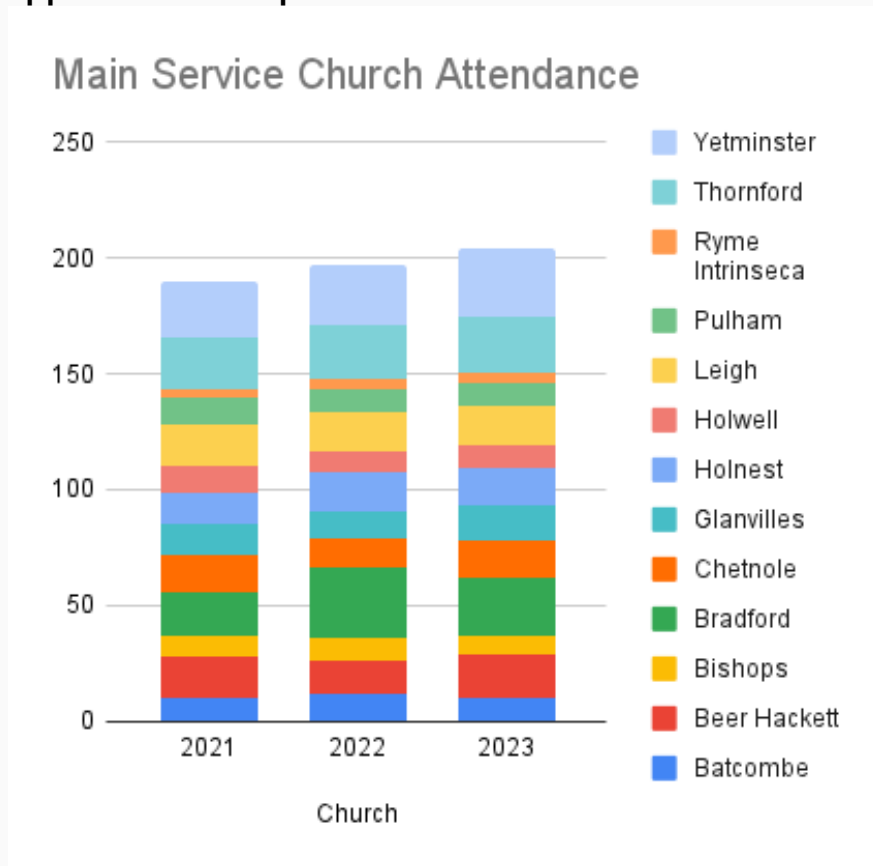
Appendix 1 - Pattern of Services

Pattern of Services - Profile

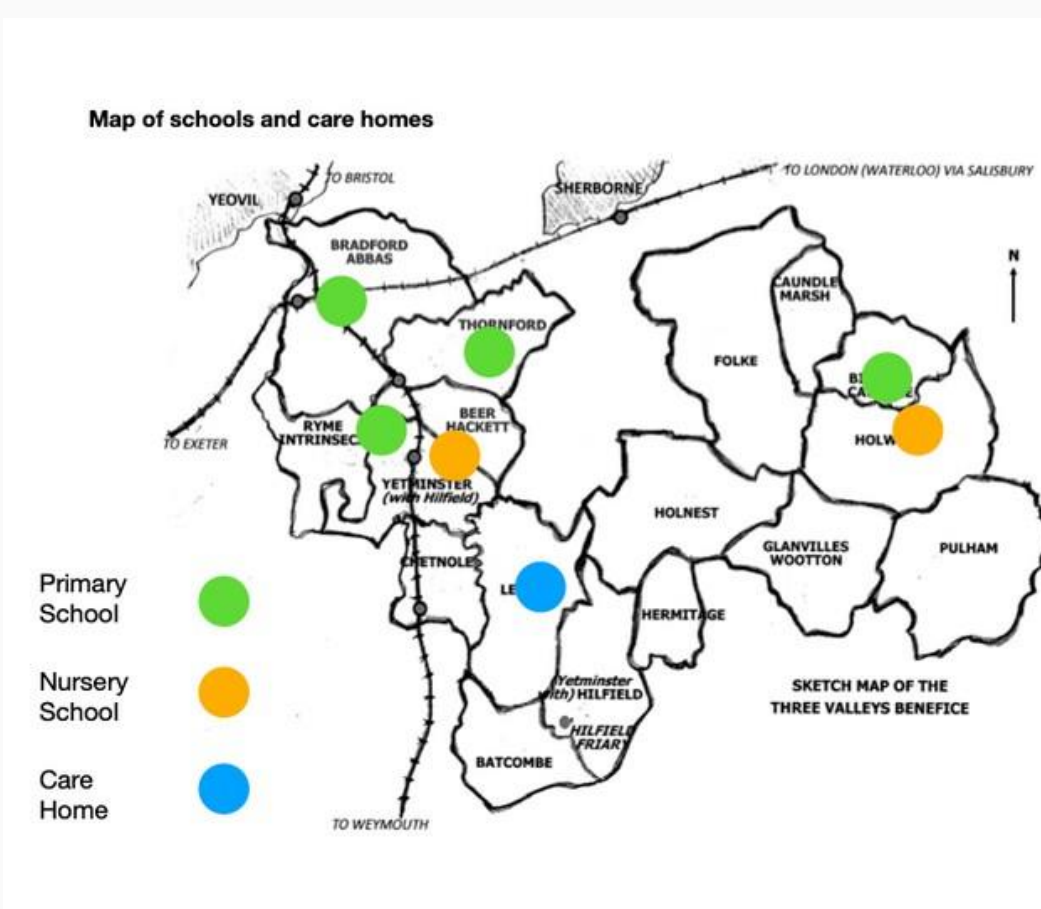
Sunday	Date Month First Sunday	Date Month Second Sunday	Date Month Third Sunday	Date Month Fourth Sunday	Date Month Fifth / Occasional
Zone South					
Chetnole	10am Holy Communion		10 am Morning Worship		
Batcombe		10am Holy Communion			
Leigh	8.30am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)	6pm Evensong (Book of Common Prayer)	10am Holy Communion	10am Community Spirit	
Hermitage			6pm Evening Prayer	10am Holy Communion	
Hilfield					Festival Service
Zone South					
Pulham	10am Holy Communion (odd months)				
Folke	10am Holy Communion (even months)		10 am Morning Prayer		
Holwell	6.30pm Evening Prayer	10am Holy Communion		10am Fourth Sunday (Holwell Village Hall)	
Glanvilles Wootton	10 am Morning Worship		10am Holy Communion		
Bishops Caundle				10am Holy Communion	
Holnest		6pm Evening Worship			
Caundle Marsh					10am Holy Communion
Zone West					
Yetminster	10am Holy Communion	10am Second Sunday (Yetminster School)	10 am Morning Worship/Holy Communion	6pm Taizé	
Beer Hackett		10am Holy Communion			
Bradford Abbas	10 am Morning Worship		10am Holy Communion		
Thornford	10 am Morning Worship	8.30am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)		10am Holy Communion	
Ryme Intrinseca			8.30am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)		

21 October 2024

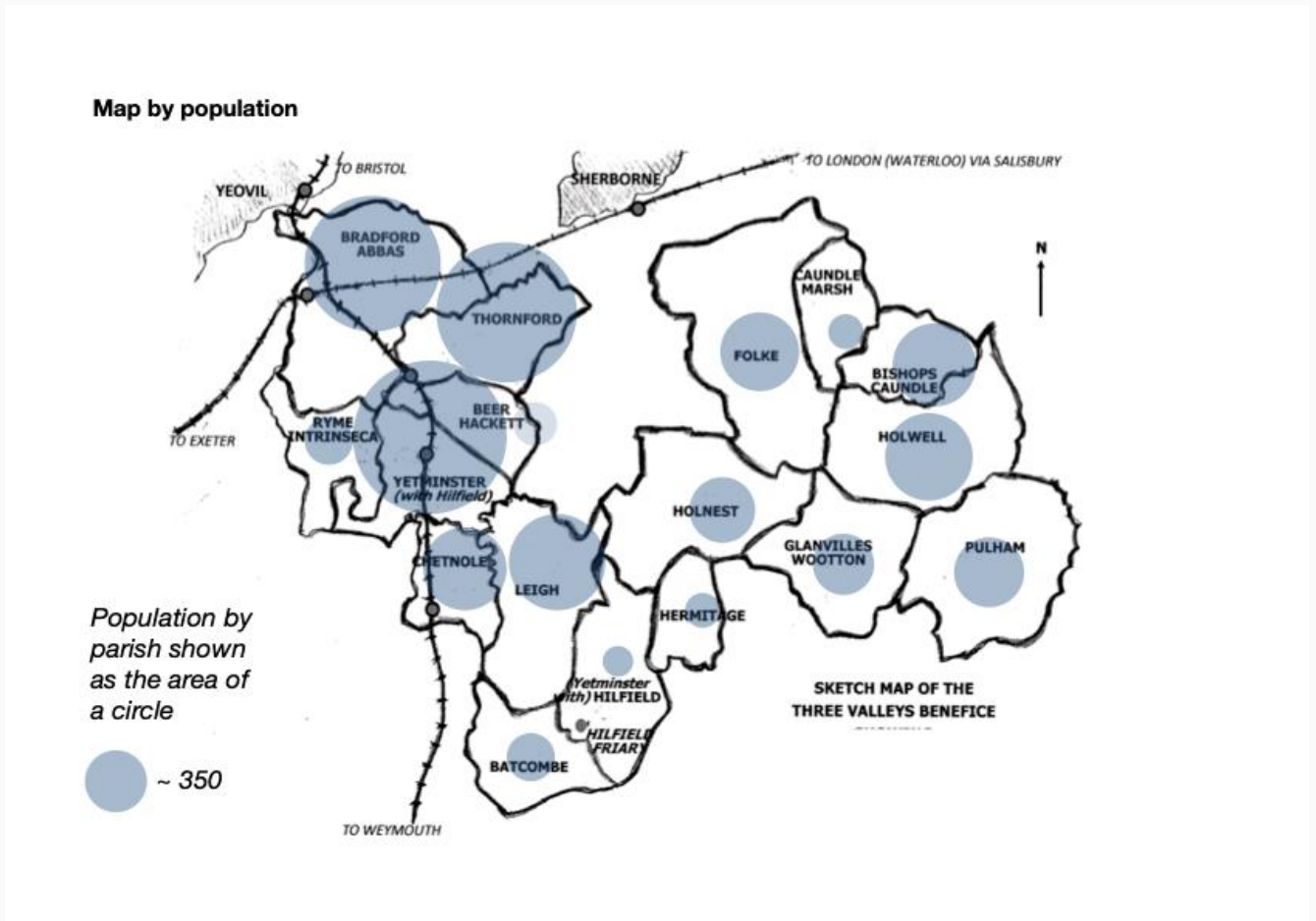
Appendix 2 - Snapshot of Attendance



Appendix 3 - Map of Nurseries, Schools and Care Homes



Appendix 4 - Map of Population



Appendix 5 - Our Churches

Our benefice is blessed with so many churches that we are providing information about them in a separate PDF document

Appendix 6 - Accommodation

Holwell Rectory is a modern detached house with an extensive garden, garage and outbuilding.

On the ground floor the large sitting room opens on to a conservatory at the rear, and there is a separate dining room, kitchen/breakfast room with larder, utility room, cloakroom and a study with its own exterior door. A large west-facing raised patio adjoins the conservatory. On the first floor are four bedrooms, one with a small en-suite shower room, a family bathroom and a separate w/c.



Thank you for your interest in our vacancy.