



# WANTAGE PARISH PROFILE

JANUARY 2022

wantage parish

God, our Shepherd and Guardian,  
Call to your church in this Parish a priest  
after your own heart, one who has vision,  
wisdom and love for all people.  
Prepare them for ministry among us and  
make us ready to welcome them with  
affection, joy and prayer.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

*Our Interregnum Prayer*



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(Separate Document)

**Wantage Parish Annual Report December 2020**

**Parish Mission Action Plan**

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## FOREWORD FROM THE BISHOP OF DORCHESTER

I am delighted to write a foreword to this profile for a Vicar for the benefice of Wantage, giving leadership to the churches of St. Peter and St Paul, Wantage and Holy Trinity, Charlton. I hope and pray that you may consider applying for this important post in the Oxford Diocese. This is a vibrant and friendly benefice, serving the historic market town of Wantage, and with a deep and rich spiritual heritage that continues to the present, with the benefice's close ties to the Community of St. Mary the Virgin Convent, helping to make the town a thriving base for spirituality. The benefice is now at a key stage of its life and growth, having seen its previous Vicar feel called to leave the Church of England, and consequently as a church and PCC rightly taking time to consider the benefice's own spirituality and calling, resulting in a redoubled commitment to the Church of England, to the Diocese and, most importantly, to providing faithful worship, witness and service to the community of Wantage. The benefice are now looking for a Vicar who will build on their deep spirituality and lead them, pastor them and care for them as they work through together what worship and mission will look like in the next stage of their life together.

A benefice like this offers a wonderful opportunity for a fulfilling ministry that makes a real difference to its community and enables more people to encounter the love of God. With the sense of a new chapter in the church's life about to begin, this is a fascinating time to join this team. The benefice are particularly looking for someone who is a team-worker and who has energy and will inspire and encourage a vision for the future for the benefice, encouraging and nurturing the gifts of those in the churches. The benefice is looking for a person with warmth, empathy and patience.

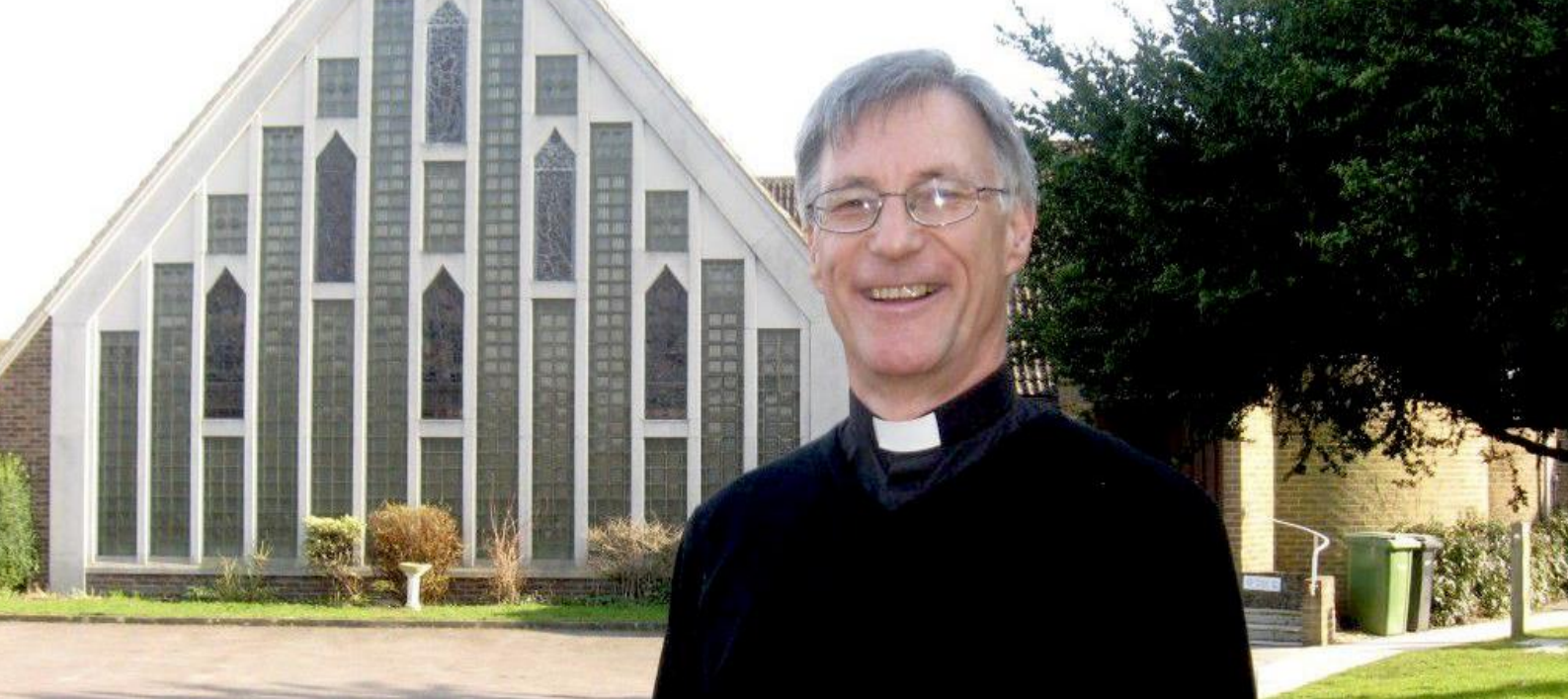
I myself arrived in Oxford Diocese earlier this year, and have loved joining this dynamic, Christ-focused, outward-looking Diocese. As a Diocese, we seek to be contemplative, compassionate and courageous in all that we do. Anyone taking up the post will, I hope, wish to engage with our vision as it develops, and to offer their own insights, ideas and energy as we explore what it means to be a Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world.

The Wantage benefice is situated in a beautiful part of Oxfordshire with good links to the M4, and with good local schools. I do hope having read this profile that you will consider applying for this post.

With every blessing,

+ *Gavin*

**Rt. Revd Gavin Collins**  
Bishop of Dorchester



## MESSAGE FROM THE AREA DEAN

Wantage Deanery consists of the market town of Wantage, the housing development in Grove and the rural villages surrounding them. All are in the district of the Vale of White Horse.

There are four Benefices with 12 parishes and 17 church buildings where worship is offered, with five stipendiary clergy and, currently, three training curates.

The Deanery's Mission Action Plan has three main thrusts:

- New Housing, where a positive welcoming ministry has been very effective.
- Schools work, where a Wantage Deanery Schools Chaplaincy Partnership Lead had just started work.
- Social Justice.

There are good relations with other Christian denominations. A Food Bank, Street Pastors and the local Cornerstone Café are all supported jointly by the Wantage churches.

The Deanery is going through a period of change, but since I have been here the clergy have been supportive of each other and congregations work hard to pay the Parish Share. The people of God offer faithful, Christlike witness to the area and it is a real pleasure to work and serve with them.

**Rev. John Durant**  
Wantage Area Dean



# WELCOME!

Thank you for your interest in our Parish Profile.

In this document we describe our parish, its mission and our aspirations for the future. We hope this will help you to discern whether God may be calling you to be our next Vicar.

Wantage is an ancient market town, southwest of Oxford, nestled under open downland in the Vale of White Horse. We have the privilege of ministering from two church buildings: the Parish Church of Ss Peter and Paul in the heart of the town, and the recently refurbished and versatile Holy Trinity Church in Charlton, an established and growing residential area.

In recent times, the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the sudden resignation of our previous incumbent have been painful and difficult. But they have prompted prayerful reflection about our future. The experience has helped us to prepare this profile, which reflects extensive parish consultation, supported by the Diocese.

Our previous incumbent helped us to articulate a new Vision (“Encountering and sharing God’s transforming love”). A Mission Action Plan was drawn up, just as the pandemic arrived, addressing worship, prayer, discipleship, welcome, outreach and care. Mission Action Groups were set up in Spring 2021 to help implement this. If we are to fulfil our mission, this is a time for honest appraisal of our challenges, embracing significant opportunities for constructive change and growth.

We have experienced many years of ministry that is powerfully sacramental but (it has been observed) not always easily accessible. There have been relatively few new Church members in recent years although, pleasingly, some new people have joined post-lockdown.

Our recent Parish Consultation, undertaken as part of this appointment process, showed that we wish to bring balance, openness and breadth to our engagement with others. We seek a vicar who will build on our strengths to engage our local community and those we hope will come to church, by:

- Empowering the social and pastoral mission of our church to the parish community, through welcome, outreach, service and care: living the Gospel in our relationships.
- Building on our sacramental and musical strengths with a wider range of services that are warmly welcoming, relevant, accessible and inclusive, for people of all ages and stages in their faith journey.
- Drawing on Holy Scripture, through nurture, study and fellowship, as well as Sunday sermons.
- Revitalising work among families, children and young people.

We trust that our new Vicar will be a priest and pastor for the whole Parish community, leading by example and working compassionately and collaboratively with us to fulfill our mission to the people of Wantage.



# ABOUT WANTAGE

Wantage is a growing town in the Vale of White Horse in southwest Oxfordshire, close to the Wessex Downs and The Ridgeway. It is an historic market town dating from Roman times.

Wantage experienced a time of rapid development in the 1950s, as a dormitory town for the research centre at Harwell. A second wave of expansion is now in progress. The town has a population of around 13,000, which has grown by approximately 11% since the 2011 census due to housing developments on the outskirts of the Parish, most notably between Wantage and Grove; and to the northeast of the town, near the church of Holy Trinity, Charlton. This rapid growth continues to put pressure on the town's infrastructure.

In addition to local employers, there are large science and technology business centres at Harwell and Culham; and a major business park in Didcot. Swindon, Oxford, Reading and Newbury provide significant employment opportunities relatively close to Wantage; and there are fast rail connections to London for those willing to commute greater distances. A significant number of people now work from home.

Statistically the parish is one of the safest and wealthiest in the country. However, this affluence is not the lived experience of many members of our community, where both the Foodbank and "Community Fridge" are in increasing demand. Some 15-20% of children are eligible for free school meals. In recent years, Wantage has lost facilities such as its cottage hospital, cinema, and police station, as well as seeing the widely experienced decline in High Street retail. However, the pandemic has catalysed the growth of a thriving "café culture" in the market square, making use of newly pedestrianised areas.

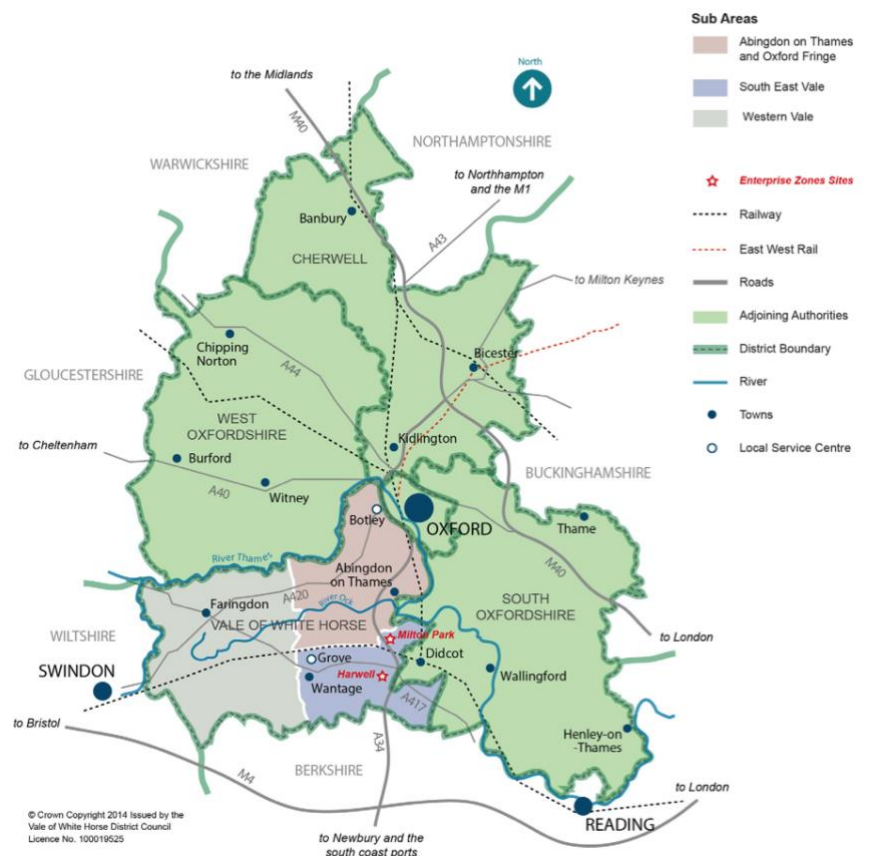
Wantage has four primary schools, a secondary school and a Special School. Wantage C of E Primary school, King Alfred's Academy and Charlton Primary School are part of The Vale Academy Trust, a family of schools providing education in Wantage and further afield. The Trust includes both Church and community schools, and a number of its directors are nominated by the Diocese. There is close collaboration between the Trust and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education.



The Vale Academy Trust has won a Free School Bid to open the new “all through” academy, a Church of England school to be built on the Grove Airfield Development and scheduled to open in September 2023. Planning for this is already underway. The Parish enjoys a close relationship with the Church of England Primary School, involved not only in governance, but through volunteers, who provide reading support, Open the Book, and Prayer Space.

As well as several blocks of retirement flats, there are five significant care homes in the Parish: Elmbrook Court (opened 2021), Framland (Pilgrims’ Friend Society), OSJCT Stirlings, St Katharine’s, and Wantage Dementia and Nursing (Sanctuary Care). Ministering to the residents of several of these homes has been paused during the global pandemic, but previously included acts of worship and communal singing organised for the residents. Home Communion is administered to some; others have been provided with transport to services within our churches. In recent times, live-streamed services have been available to care home residents and are appreciated by them.

Wantage is a vibrant community, with many creative and musical groups, amateur dramatics, sports clubs, and uniformed organisations, which enrich the lives of residents, but also provide competition for peoples’ time on Sundays. The Beacon civic centre hosts exercise classes, workshops and shows. There is a leisure centre with sports facilities and a swimming pool, an award-winning museum of local history, an open access community youth centre (“Sweatbox”), and a community space “the Mix” run by Sustainable Wantage.



# SOME RECENT HISTORY

In 2018, our then incumbent retired after 25 years in Wantage and we welcomed a new incumbent in 2019. Together we developed a new Vision Statement, Mission Action Plan and Mission Action Groups, as well as a new Pastoral Team. Our new Vicar appointed a parish administrator, modernised our administration, attended town council meetings and led an “Everybody Welcome” course. This time also saw a reinvigorated Trinity Tots toddler group, run by volunteers from our

congregation with weekly Bible story themes; and approval to recruit a Children and Families worker (on hold due to the vacancy). There were Messy Church events, and plans for a Mothering Sunday outreach service.

Much of this was inevitably impacted when the first lockdown hit us in March 2020. The pandemic has obviously been extraordinarily difficult for us all. With reduced numbers and few activities, it has been a challenge to sustain our sense of community. Many of our shielding congregation did not have the IT skills required to access streamed services or email, with telephone contact the only option.

**Reflection:** The Parish Consultation, prompted comments about the isolation and disconnection many have felt as a result of the pandemic, and the need for our new Vicar to work with us to re-energise the Parish.



However, we have done our best to sustain parish life. At the start of the pandemic, many in the congregation signed up to form prayer, phone and email groups to support each other. Live-streaming of services began promptly at the beginning of the first lockdown, and remains popular with the church and wider community. After-church coffee sessions took place via Zoom, as did meetings of the Parochial Church Council and a Julian prayer group, re-established by our new curate. Some of our work with children was successfully taken online, including ‘Open the Book’<sup>1</sup>.

Our Mission Action Groups continued their work quietly, behind the scenes and online. Our new pastoral care team has yet to start operating face-to-face due to the pandemic,

<sup>1</sup> <https://vimeo.com/568965119/7820a09a67>



but its members have facilitated phone and prayer groups, and reviewed the Electoral Roll to check that everyone has some pastoral contact, especially those who are isolated or have not yet returned to church.

In the midst of this, we welcomed a new curate, priested in July 2021, who has brought talent, warmth and creativity. He has demonstrated a passion for engaging people, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

“TBar”, an afternoon social gathering at Holy Trinity, has continued to meet whenever possible, at first in the church’s garden. This opportunity for social interaction is valued by those members of our congregations who continue to feel nervous about returning to church.

As restrictions have eased, we have carefully increased the use of the church buildings, with seats rearranged to provide social distancing, and almost all services are taking place again. As soon as we were permitted, the Parish Church opened the Lady Chapel for private prayer; two prayer leaflets were produced. In recent weeks, we have enjoyed a return to singing in church, and have really appreciated being able to gather in greater numbers for some special services (including Harvest Festival and a moving service to remember those who have died during the pandemic). With great joy, we were able to re-establish children’s corners in both churches and have seen our toddler group, Trinity Tots, reopen its doors.

Our Vicar’s sudden resignation In July 2021, on his conversion to Roman Catholicism, although a shock, has prompted much prayer, reflection and consultation about our mission.

“The Covid period has given us time to think about the future of the church and the direction of our own lives.”

Parishioner comment from the parish consultation



**Reflection:** *Once more we have an opportunity to grow, and are keen to find the right balance in our liturgy between tradition and innovation, to build on our strengths and engage more effectively with our community’s needs; to broaden what is offered, using Word and Sacrament to welcome and nurture those exploring faith.*

# ENCOUNTERING AND SHARING GOD'S TRANSFORMING LOVE

## **Encountering**

through

Inspiring, uplifting and enriching worship  
Faithful and compassionate prayer

## **Sharing**

by

A generous, open and embracing welcome  
Courageous and relevant outreach  
Compassionate care

## **Transformed**

through

Committed discipleship  
Nurturing spiritual growth



# THE PARISH TODAY

The Parish of Wantage has an Anglican catholic tradition, stemming from the catholic revival of the nineteenth century.

Both churches offer two regular Sunday Eucharistic services (CW). At Holy Trinity these take the form of a vigil service of Holy Communion on Saturday evening, and a Sunday morning service with settings for congregational singing. At the Parish Church of Ss Peter and

Paul there is an early said Eucharist, and a mid-morning Eucharist, supported by altar servers and choir. Holy Communion is offered daily, although weekday services typically have low attendance. Previously, the Monday service of Holy Communion has seen higher attendance, perhaps because it was immediately followed by “Men’s Breakfast”! We look forward to being able to offer this again soon.

We provide some variety of worship styles across the parish, principally through variation between the two churches, while maintaining our liturgical tradition. In addition to the regular Eucharistic services, we have a monthly choral Evensong (BCP) at the Parish Church.

We recognise the need to work on our welcome, nurture and outreach, underpinned by worship and scripture. Just before the first lockdown, in November 2019 and March 2020, we held our first Messy Church Saturdays, which were extremely well attended and enjoyed by children, parents and helpers.



It is Parish practice to use the word Mass to describe services of Holy Communion. We propose to review the way we describe Eucharistic services, to ensure that we engage potential worshippers with accessible language.

Sunday readings are printed on the service sheet and notice sheet for people to follow. During the pandemic we held successful discussion groups online for Lent and Advent. The recent Parish Consultation has highlighted a desire for more Bible study, prayer and fellowship groups that would help us deepen this aspect of our church life.

**Reflection:** Our congregations are increasingly varied in liturgical background and preference. People choose to attend our churches for a variety of reasons, and from a range of faith backgrounds. Many worship with us because these are the Anglican churches in Wantage and they happen to live in the Parish, or they have had contact through a baptism, wedding or funeral. A number are attracted by the strong choral tradition. Many value our sacramental focus and High Church liturgy, but many, too, are from other traditions; and some question the terminology, complexity and relevance of our worship in a changing world.



We rejoice in the richness and diversity of humankind, modelling an inclusive approach to every aspect of the church's life and ministry including fully welcoming all those who identify as LGBTQ+.

We aspire to make our services as welcoming and accessible as possible, and there is openness to explore a wider range of service types. In the future, we recognise the need to broaden participation and church membership which could include family-focussed and non-Eucharistic services that may connect with a wide range of people of different ages and at different stages on their faith journey.

The Parish Choir celebrates the Anglican choral tradition and is held to be among the best in the Diocese. It has 35 choristers and has deputised in cathedrals at home and abroad. The choir plays a part in attracting new members to the congregation and offers a number of concerts and fundraising events each year. Most members of the choir are parishioners foremost, fully integrated in the broader life and mission of the church. A separate Trust supports the musical education of young people, including choral and organ scholarships. There is monthly choral evensong and there are carol services for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. On Sunday evenings during Lent we travel the Stations of the Cross with musical accompaniment.

**Reflection:** Our consultation has highlighted a need to consider the balance between high quality choral 'performance' of beautiful ancient music (often in Latin), and congregational participation, across what we hope will be a wider range of services employing a wider range of musical styles.

We are committed to sustainability, in energy usage and other ways, for example through a policy on sustainable church flowers.



Our congregations are predominantly middle-aged to elderly and, in truth, we are struggling to attract families and young people. This will be a key challenge for our next Vicar. However, we are pleased to see our congregations gradually rebuilding in number since the summer, with the principal Sunday service at Holy Trinity now attracting 18 - 25 worshippers, and that at the Parish Church 60 - 70 worshippers, including a steady trickle of newcomers. Others continue to worship at the smaller services. The Electoral Roll numbers 160, and many of these members have now returned to in person church attendance at some time in the week. Services at Easter and Christmas attract larger congregations, with the Christmas Eve crib service being especially popular and drawing large numbers of families. In 2017 this congregation was over 500.

Before the pandemic the Parish family enjoyed a varied and vibrant social programme, with regular quizzes, suppers, concerts, and other social gatherings, such as the "Wantage Wassail", a lively annual Christmas party, held in church. Guests often commented that this was a Parish that knew how to have fun. We are beginning to revive this. There will be a Wassail this Christmas and a Panto is planned!

We have a warm relationship with the Community of St Mary the Virgin in Wantage, singing occasional services in their chapel and valuing their prayers for us. Their convent, founded by the renowned Vicar of Wantage William John Butler, is one of the oldest orders of Women Religious in the Church of England and has recently been undergoing exciting redevelopment, including modernised guest accommodation. The order was founded with a commitment to education, so it is good to see the complex now housing the Vale Academy Trust and Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust Offices.

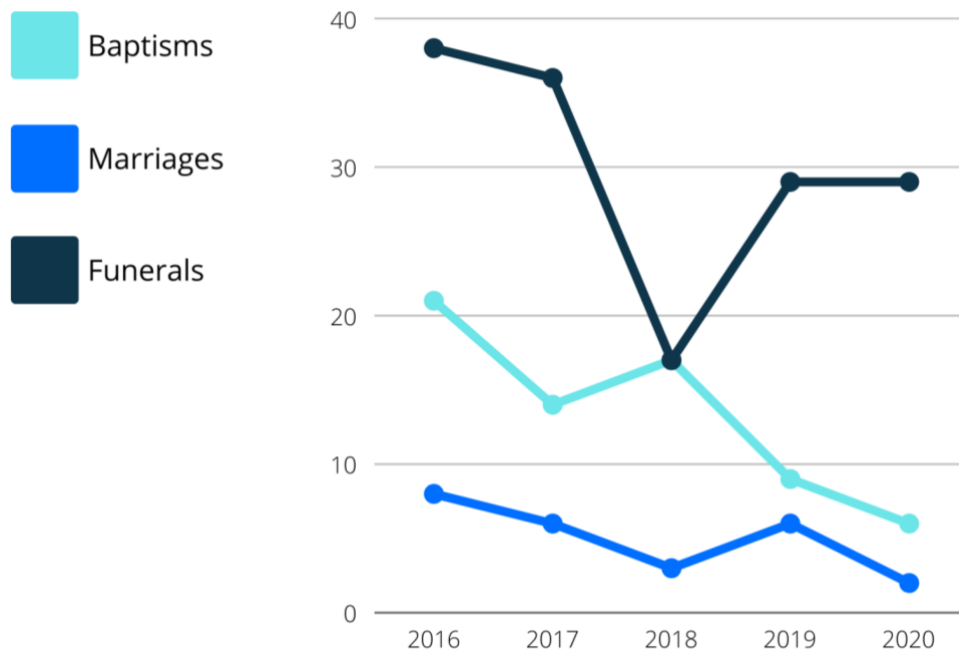




# ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY

The Parish Church is open every morning, allowing both parishioners and visitors the opportunity to look around our lovely building, sit quietly, light a candle, and pray.

We aim to serve our community, in the conscious presence of the love of God, and in a variety of ways, including the sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, and Funerals. Some service statistics are presented in the chart here, with those for 2020 naturally swayed by the pandemic.



The parish clergy conduct regular assemblies and school services to mark major festivals, both in the Church of England primary school and in the Parish Church. We are working alongside the new Deanery Schools Chaplain. Members of the congregation are in their eighth year of “Open the Book”, presenting a weekly programme of Bible stories to children of the Church School. Children from Charlton Primary School occasionally visit Holy Trinity and this relationship is developing well since the refurbishment.

Parishioners also support Greenfields Primary school in Thokosa, a township south of Johannesburg in South Africa. Funds are raised throughout the year by selling various homemade items in the Parish church, and normally by Lent soup lunches. Our support is practical: hundreds of jumpers and breakfast supplements have been provided for the children at the school.

The parish has a significant profile in the local community. We welcome the town to the Parish Church for important civic occasions such as Battle of Britain Sunday, Remembrance Sunday, the Scouting and Guiding Movements' St. George's Day parade, and the Mayor's Carol Concert. The town's annual Christmas festival, Dickensian Evening, can bring upward of 1,500 visitors into our building and is a major fundraising event, as well as providing a dedicated 'Prayer Space' for people to pause, reflect and pray on a rambunctious evening!

Holy Trinity was recently fully refurbished which has given us the opportunity to welcome several community groups, such as the Women's Institute, Art Group, U3A, Yoga and Pilates classes, drama productions and concerts.

Following many months of not being able to meet, Trinity Tots now meets again in Holy Trinity Church. The group welcomes and reaches out to non-church families and is well regarded and appreciated by the families who attend. Some children have come to baptism via the group, but none so far have become regular worshippers. From March 2020 until October 2021 while the sessions did not run, contact was maintained with the families via a closed Facebook group.

In the 1990s a major refurbishment in the Parish Church was largely funded by Arts Council England, in recognition of the building's role and potential in supporting the arts in our community. Local organisations such as Wantage Orchestra, Wantage Choral Society, and Wantage Welsh Male Voice Choir regularly hold concerts in the church. We have also welcomed smaller concerts, theatrical productions, and other events into Holy Trinity, including concerts by the world class Wantage Silver Band.



# THE CHURCH MISSION IN PARTNERSHIP

The Parish of Wantage does not exist in isolation as a faith community, but as part of an ecumenical ecosystem.

Locally, Wantage Parish is one of nine churches which form the Wantage and Grove Church Partnership. This ecumenical group offers a number of events

and support services each year, which have included an open-air Palm Sunday service in the Market Place, Christians Against Poverty, debt counselling, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and a church leaders support group. In response to the pandemic, in 2021 two Easter walks were created using QR codes to lead people through the Stations of the Cross and around our town. Similarly in December 2020, there was a popular and creative Advent Trail around the town, organised by our church.

Since 2009 we have been actively involved with the local Street Pastors, along with 13 other churches from Wantage, Grove and neighbouring villages. This has been in the form of members of our congregations taking part in the patrols, offering prayer support, serving on the Committee and financial giving.

The Parish supports the Wantage Foodbank and the “Community Fridge”, to which our fresh Harvest Festival gifts were donated in 2021.

As part of the Wantage Deanery we have been working on “church without walls” evangelism. Together with our neighbouring parish in Grove, we deliver Welcome Packs of information to all the new housing developments in Wantage and Grove.

In 2021 we made a new Deanery appointment of a schools’ chaplain. It is hoped that once Wantage Parish achieves its ambition of appointing a Children’s and Families worker, these key roles will complement each other.



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Our new Vicar will join a Parish family filled with a desire to move forward from the setbacks created by the pandemic and the sudden, early resignation of our last Vicar. These challenges have prompted much prayer, reflection and wide

consultation about the future. We have used a range of media to ensure that as many people as possible have been able to have their say, offering us more nuanced insight into our challenges and opportunities. Some clear themes emerged, informing this profile, particularly this and the next section, and summarised in the annexed “Wordles”.

We look forward to taking the next steps in our journey, in partnership with our new incumbent. We will move forward with faith in a caring God, hope for our future, and love for each other.

But we are realistic about the challenges.

We are a relatively ageing congregation. Both of our churches lack significant numbers of families, children and young adults: people who will bring new energy and ideas to the life of the Parish and its outreach in the wider community. We need to be re-energised to attract young families into our wider Parish Family.

“I want to attend a church where I am outnumbered by much younger, committed people; where there is a variety of church activities both secular and religious, where the services are relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and where it is a joy and pleasure to be part of the worshipping community in the Church of England.”

Parishioner comment from the parish consultation

The rapid current growth of Wantage presents an evangelistic opportunity. Before the pandemic we were fully involved in a number of outreach initiatives, as discussed in previous sections, many in partnership with other Christians in the town. Some of these activities

have been heroically sustained though the pandemic and most are now under way again. But some momentum has inevitably been lost and we are struggling to be heard in our community, which is bruised and dislocated by the events of the last few years. We need clear, compassionate communication with an increasingly secular world.

In Spring 2020 we agreed a Mission Action Plan to help implement a new Vision. Within the last eight months we have launched Mission Action Groups, covering: ministry to children and young people; worship; adult Christian formation and pastoral care; development of our buildings and infrastructure; communications and finance. These are led by a mix of enthusiastic parishioners and clergy and have begun to develop exciting plans. The Groups have been adapting their activities to focus on immediate needs during the pandemic and the vacancy. But we will need to prioritise as we are struggling to find enough people to enact these plans - and even to maintain some of our long- established day-to-day activities. Vibrant leadership is required to inspire and motivate lay involvement and action; to realise our potential under God.

Our heritage, rich in sacrament, holy ritual and the Anglican choral tradition, is a blessing that allows us to bring before God much that is beautiful. However, we are becoming more aware that new potential members of our Parish family may sometimes find our ways confusing, even off-putting. We would like to build on our strengths, while increasing the breadth of appeal in our church services. We recognise the need to blend tradition with an open, welcoming culture that offers diversity of expression, new forms of worship and accessibility. The variety of worship styles in our two churches goes a little way towards this, but we seek to do more, offering a wider range of service types, some of them non-Eucharistic, catering for all ages and those less familiar with church.

**“My plea is that we question everything we stand for and the way in which we carry out our mission, so as to convince ourselves that we offer a wide appeal...and satisfy a wide range of need, whilst still worshipping the Lord in a dignified manner.”**

Parishioner comment from the parish consultation

We wish to fulfil our mission wholeheartedly within the policies and practices of the Anglican Communion, sustaining our role as a place where curates are trained and equipped to become inspired and inspirational pastoral leaders in the Church of England.

So, we are a Parish family reviving post-lockdown and full of yearning to grow and flourish as a Godly people in this place. We have many of the foundations in place, but know we cannot achieve this without fresh, energetic and engaging leadership, infused with the love of God and inspired by His Holy Spirit.

# OUR NEXT VICAR

Addressing our next incumbent personally....

You are an outstanding and passionate pastor, someone who leads with love and warmth in worship and outreach, underpinned by the depth of your own spiritual life. You understand how to foster personal, spiritual and institutional growth.

As an ordained priest within the Church of England, you honour the policies of our Church and the precepts of an Anglican vocation.

You are committed to bringing beauty to worship and prayerfully embrace the sacramental life, recognising that sacred rites, music and creativity offer powerful gateways into God's Kingdom. But you reject show and ritual for their own sake.

You know how to make worship, scripture and other aspects of church life comprehensible, accessible and engaging for those who are new to them; and are not afraid to innovate in furthering God's Kingdom.

You are energetic, outgoing and (whatever your age) possess a youthful enthusiasm and sense of fun that connects with those around you, whatever their faith, or lack of it. You can demonstrate proven success in uniting a parish family and engaging a wider civic community – especially in communicating with young people.

You enable and empower others to give of their best, to realise their spiritual potential and become involved practically in Parish life, recognising that the latter demands a collaborative working style and well-honed management skills. And you listen well.

You are committed to training and developing those with a vocation; and to maintaining the role of Wantage as a Training Parish.

Your preaching touches hearts and minds, helping your listeners to stretch their understanding and grow in faith, but never at the cost of personal engagement and empathy.

You are committed to openness and inclusivity, recognising the ministry of all who are called to Ordination within the Church of England and are keen to work in partnership across Christian denominations and other faiths.

And finally...while having all of these wonderful qualities, you somehow manage to retain your humility!

## **Some civic responsibilities...**

As in many parishes the position of Vicar of Wantage brings with it many ex-officio responsibilities across the community.

In Wantage these include the role of governor at our large Church school; membership of Wantage and Grove Church Partnership; being a Friend of Sweatbox (the Town's primary youth centre); and trusteeship of the Butler Trust, which oversees some of our Grade 2-listed Victorian legacy for public benefit.

# SUPPORTING OUR NEW VICAR

Our current curate came to us in 2020 and was priested in July 2021. He is a gifted and energetic priest, who is ministering to the Parish with great dedication through the interregnum.

There is a strong team of officers in the Parish, including the

churchwardens, treasurer, PCC secretary, members of the Parochial Church Council and safeguarding officer. We employ a verger at the parish church, and a caretaker/manager at Holy Trinity. A part time administrator works out of the parish office in the Butler Centre and is responsible for most of the routine administrative duties. There is a director of music and an organist: both are professional musicians.

We are committed to good governance, for example in Safeguarding, Data Protection, finance, Health & Safety and in our role as employers.

We are committed to using effective Safeguarding measures; a Safeguarding report is reviewed at every PCC meeting and we have now adopted the Diocese's "Parish Dashboards" facility to ensure our Safeguarding status and Action Plan have focus and visibility.

We have recently withdrawn a successful application for a grant to fund employment of a children and families worker, pending the arrival of a new incumbent. We did so on advice from the Diocese, with the suggestion that we apply again once a new Vicar is in post, to enable them to shape the appointment.

The parish has always benefitted from dedicated teams of volunteers, to support worship and other aspects of Parish life. These include servers, choristers, bell ringers, church watchers, flower arrangers, intercessors, livestreamers, musicians, readers, sacristans, servers of refreshments, and welcomers. Others have planned and run our social events and the church's involvement with civic life. Unfortunately, the pandemic has had a disruptive effect and there has been some difficulty in refilling roles. A renewed involvement of people in Parish life will be a foundation stone for future outreach.

There is an exciting opportunity to shape our Mission Action Groups to offer continued support to the Vicar and Parish. Their scope embraces: maintaining and exploring new ways to use our buildings; working with children and young people; communications; finance; worship; adult formation; and pastoral care.



We want our Vicar to enjoy a sustainable work-life balance and will do all we can to support their quality of life, including a weekly protected day off. We believe, too, that personal development never ends, so the parish will actively support the incumbent's continued spiritual and professional development, releasing the time and funding needed for personal growth. The parish will, of course, meet all travel and other expenses reasonably incurred in carrying out the role.



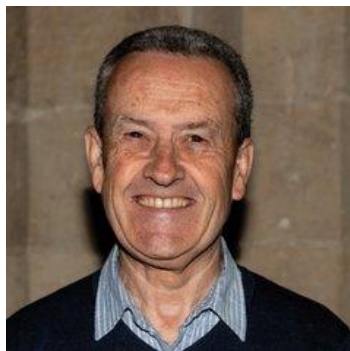
**The Revd Benji Tyler**  
**Assistant Curate**



**David Richardson**  
**Churchwarden**



**Jan Ralston**  
**Churchwarden**



**David Law**  
**PCC Treasurer**



**Bob Chaplow**  
**PCC Secretary**



**Matt Godfrey**  
**Safeguarding Officer**



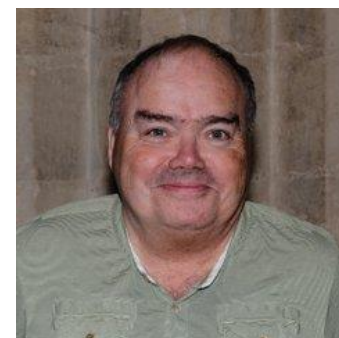
**Pamela Allen**  
**Parish Administrator**

**Phil Johnson**  
**Director of Music**



**Flora Hobden**  
**Verger**

**John Ridgway**  
**Organist**



# FINANCE

We are in the fortunate position of having financial reserves which the PCC can target at mission and outreach priorities, as well as keeping the church buildings in good order.

At the end of 2020, the parish had unrestricted reserves of £160K and restricted reserves of £701K, which are mostly held in CBF investment funds with CCLA. In very recent years the parish has sustained deficits on unrestricted funds, though in 2020 this was covered by the receipt of a significant legacy.

The operational position, reflecting the balance of monthly giving and expenditure, is more challenging and the parish is currently operating a deficit budget of around £50k per year. The PCC has commissioned a

**£50K**

Current yearly operating deficit

Finance Mission Action Group to explore how the parish could become more financially sustainable in the future, looking at how income might be increased in the three areas of People, Buildings and Investments.

**£861K**

In restricted and unrestricted reserves

We will be looking to the next incumbent to provide inspirational teaching on generous giving and Christian generosity. The PCC adopted the Parish Giving Scheme at its November 2019 meeting and there are now 60 contributors to the scheme with an income including gift aid of £56K per year. The number of donors who continue to contribute by direct debit and other methods is steadily reducing.

**£90K**

Current parish share

For many years the parish has met its Parish Share in full, with a 2021 commitment of just under £90K. There is strong commitment by all churches in the deanery to meet their requested share allocations.

The annual report and financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2020 provide a more detailed picture of the parish and its finances. They are included as an appendix to this profile.

In addition to the PCC funds, the Butler Trust, a charity of which the Vicar and Churchwardens, plus one other member of the Parish, are Trustees, manages funds which are available to support projects related to the fabric of the Parish Church and Holy Trinity Church. Grants of £187K have been made to the PCC in recent years. The Butler Trust funds currently amount to some £450K (October 2021).



# OUR BUILDINGS

The Parish seeks to care for the fabric of its two churches in an efficient and effective way, so that they support mission, enhance worship, and serve the local community. We are committed to sustainability in building management and use. We endeavour to make our buildings accessible and welcoming to all with wheelchair access. We try to ensure that our buildings serve the church, rather than becoming its focus, which is a risk especially with buildings that are part of the national heritage.

## **The Parish Church of Ss Peter and Paul**

The church stands in the centre of town, just off the Market Place, a beautiful and visible Christian presence at the heart of Wantage. Parts of the building date from the 13th century, but the site is known to have housed even earlier places of worship, including the church in which King Alfred may have been baptised following his birth in the town. The historic nature of the church has resulted in a Grade I listing.

The church has a large and impressive interior, with movable pews and a sizeable central tower crossing offering an attractive space for gatherings and social interaction. A nave altar has been in use for many years for the principal services; and the organ was rebuilt in the 1990s at the west end of the nave, with the choir seated in front of it. Weekday services of Holy Communion are generally held in the Lady Chapel, and the Early Sunday Eucharist in the chancel. Disabled access, toilets and a kitchen area were all added in the 1990s.

The church is in good condition structurally. The outstanding points of the 2020 Quinquennial Inspection are all relatively minor and are gradually being addressed. However, it is more than 20 years since the interior was updated. The Buildings Mission Action Group is developing initial ideas for reordering and making improvements to the décor, lighting and sound systems. We hope an initial consultation can take place once our new Vicar is installed. The church has the potential to play a much larger role in the life of the town, and this will be one focus of the consultation, as will ways to improve our energy efficiency.

More immediately, work is in hand to improve the external appearance of the church and the churchyard. The churchyard was closed as a place of burial in the 1850s and it, and the footpath going past the church building, is maintained by our local district council. Floodlighting was installed in 1999, as part of a Millennium project, but is now in poor condition, providing an opportunity for replacement with more energy efficient alternatives.

## **Holy Trinity Church, Charlton**

This red brick church lies in the northeast part of Wantage. The church is set within an attractive well-maintained walled garden with war memorial. The present building, which dates from 1907, is of an old Berkshire barn design befitting this former agricultural community. It replaced an earlier church which had been built on the village green in 1848.

The church was comprehensively refurbished in 2018, with a kitchen extension, new toilets, new vestry and furniture, completed by the rehangng of cleaned and retuned bells in 2020.

The reordering created a flexible, open space, with stackable chairs, which is used in a variety of ways, for a range of activities. There is significant potential to develop different styles of worship within this versatile space. The Parish welcomes community groups, with whom bookings are now back to pre-Covid levels and set to increase. The Parish uses Holy Trinity as a setting for its own toddler group, Trinity Tots, which was thriving at the start of the pandemic and has recently been able to re-start, and for many social events such as Harvest lunch and quiz evenings.

### **The Vicarage**

The Vicarage is set next to the Parish Church, in one of the quietest and most beautiful locations in the town, with a substantial private garden running down to Letcombe Brook. It is a four-bedroomed family home with two large reception rooms and large kitchen, with a utility room leading through to a single garage, a large parking area, and garden. There is a study/office and cloakroom on the ground floor, accessed from the front door and separated from the living accommodation by a doorway. There are four bedrooms, a family bathroom and shower room on the first floor.

In 2019 the house was fully refurbished, redecorated and recarpeted throughout. At this time the bathroom and kitchen were refitted and doors and windows replaced. A presentation on the property, supported by Green and Co, including floorplans and multiple photographs is available in the appendices.

### **The Butler Centre**

As trustees of the Wantage Church of England Primary School the Vicar and Churchwardens own the Butler Centre. This is close to the Parish Church and was originally a nineteenth century school building. The Centre is currently let to the Vale Academy Trust, which houses a pre-school on the ground floor, and meetings and training on the first floor. The Parish Office is located on a mezzanine floor.

### **Curate's House**

The Parish also owns a four bedroom house in the Charlton part of Wantage, which it uses to accommodate curates in training.



# OTHER INFORMATION

Other relevant information about the Parish of Wantage, the town, and relevant organisations is available here:

Wantage Parish

<https://wantageparish.com/> provides information about the Parish of Wantage, including copies of the weekly newsletter.

Wantage Parish Events (Facebook page, site of live-streaming)

<https://www.facebook.com/WantageParishEvents/>

Wantage and Grove Church Partnership

<https://www.wgcp.org.uk/>

Wantage Deanery

<https://wantagedeanery.org.uk/>

Diocese of Oxford

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/>

Wantage Church of England Primary School

<https://www.wantagece.org/>

King Alfred's Academy

<https://www.kaacademy.org/>

Vale Academy Trust

<https://www.vale-academy.org/>

Community of St. Mary the Virgin, at Wantage

<https://csmv.co.uk/>

Wantage Town Council

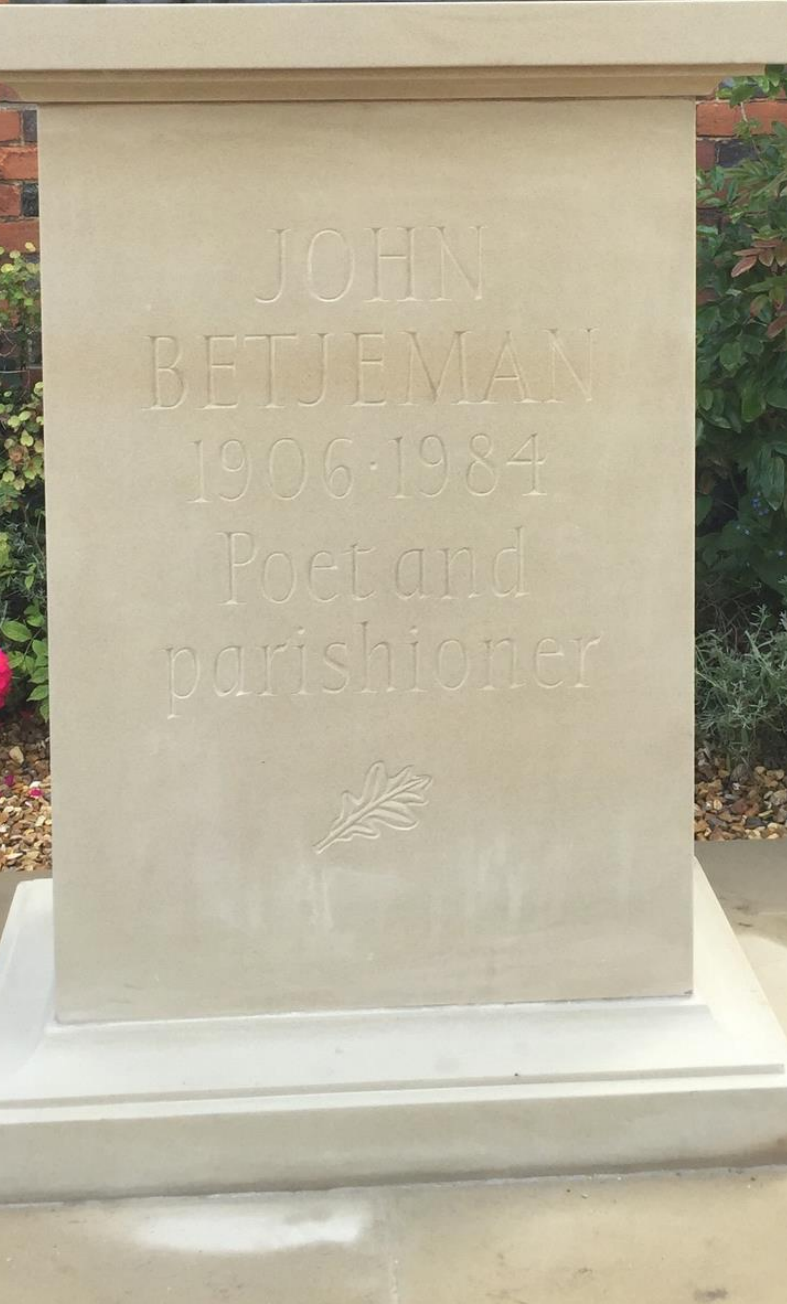
<https://wantagetowncouncil.gov.uk/>

## **The addresses of the Vicarage and our churches are:**

- Vicarage, The Cloisters, Wantage. OX12 8AQ
- The Parish Church of Ss Peter and Paul, Church Street, Wantage. OX12 8BL
- Holy Trinity Church, Charlton Village Road, Charlton, Wantage. OX12 7HW

## **Appendices**

- Wantage Parish: annual report and unaudited financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020
- Mission Action Plan
- Parish Consultation Wordles
- The Vicarage – additional information leaflet



## *Wantage Bells*

*Now with the bells through the  
apple bloom  
Sunday-ly sounding  
And the prayers of the nuns in their  
chapel gloom  
Us all surrounding  
Where the brook flows  
Brick walls of rose  
Send on the motionless meadow the  
bell notes rebounding.*

*Wall flowers are bright in their beds  
And their scent all pervading,  
Withered are primroses heads  
And the hyacinth fading  
But flowers by the score  
Multitudes more  
Weed flowers and seed flowers and  
mead flowers our paths are  
invading.*

*Where are the words to express  
Such a reckless bestowing?  
The voices of birds utter less  
Than the thanks we are owing,  
Bell notes alone  
Ring praise of their own  
As clear as the weed-waving brook  
and as evenly flowing.*

**Sir John Betjeman**  
Former Poet Laureate,  
Churchwarden and parishioner.



# wantage parish

**The Parish Office**

Butler Centre  
Church Street  
Wantage  
OX12 8BL

[WANTAGEPARISH.COM](http://WANTAGEPARISH.COM)

