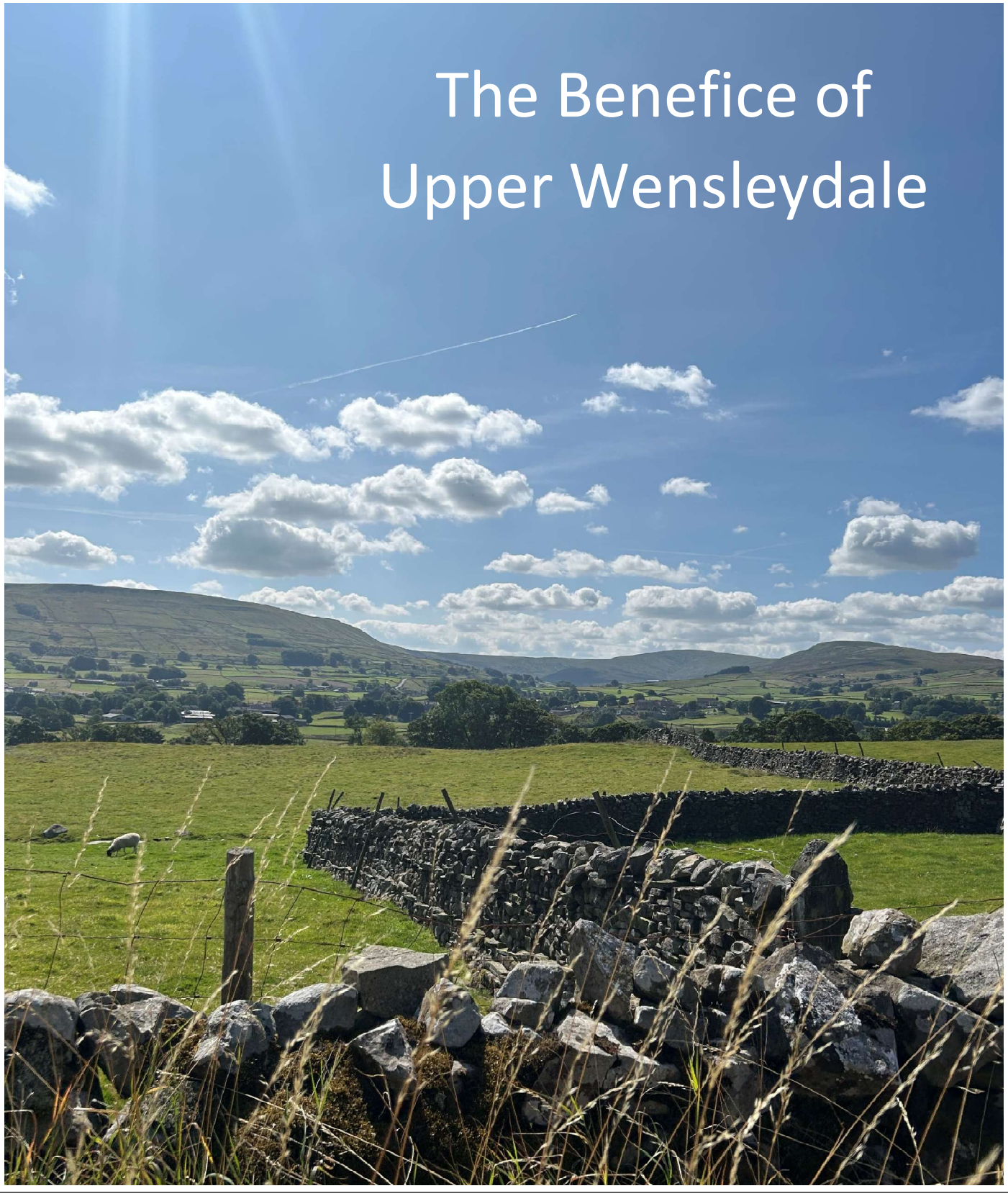


THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Leeds

BENEFICE BROCHURE

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Welcome

Welcome to our Benefice Brochure and thank you for taking the time to read it. We hope it gives you a clear sense of life and worship in our community.

The Benefice of Upper Wensleydale is a deeply rural benefice in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. Formed in 2015, it covers around 90 square miles within the Yorkshire Dales National Park, including a small market town, villages and hamlets where farming, tourism, local businesses, schools, hospitality and heritage shape daily life.

The Benefice comprises four parishes serving dispersed communities across this wide and beautiful dale: St Margaret's, Hawes; St Oswald's, Askrigg; St Mary and St John, Hardraw; and St Matthew's, Stalling Busk.

Each parish has its own history, traditions and character, and is rightly proud of its identity. Over the past decade, however, we have increasingly discovered the strength of shared ministry. What began as practical co-operation has grown into a genuine sense of shared purpose and mutual encouragement.

Together we seek to be a worshipping, welcoming and outward-looking Christian presence, rooted in faith, prayer, pastoral care and the life of our villages.

Upper Wensleydale is known for its striking landscapes and strong local identity. Its beauty draws visitors throughout the year, while its remoteness brings challenges such as transport, winter weather, housing pressures, ageing demographics, limited services and the need to build community across distance. Ministry here calls for patience, visibility, practical wisdom and a genuine love of rural life.

In preparing this profile, we spent time reflecting together on who we are, what we value and where we believe God is leading us. Throughout the brochure, you will find quotes from our discussions with members of our fellowships, included so you can hear the voices of those who make up our Benefice.

As you read on, we hope you will see a Benefice looking forward with confidence to the next stage of its life.



Our Vision

Our clear vision is to discover more of God in our lives and to share that life generously with others. We seek to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, deepen our worship and prayer, strengthen pastoral care, and share the Christian faith naturally and confidently across Upper Wensleydale.

Who We Are Looking For

As a Benefice, we look forward with hope to discovering God's plans for our future and welcoming the person called to serve among us. We are praying for someone who can build on the foundations already laid here: a priest rooted in Christ, confident in the gospel, prayerful, and able to minister with warmth, resilience and imagination in a rural benefice.

Because ministry is shared across four churches, our next priest will need to enjoy working collaboratively. They will find experienced churchwardens, lay ministers, worship leaders and volunteers already carrying significant responsibility and eager to grow in confidence. We are looking for someone who delights in encouraging others, recognising gifts and helping people flourish.

Life in Upper Wensleydale is wonderfully varied. A single day might include a school assembly, a visit to the Auction Mart, pastoral visiting, worship preparation, conversations with visitors in one of our churches and a PCC meeting in another village. We hope our next priest will enjoy that variety, embrace rural life with enthusiasm, and recognise that ministry here happens as often over a cup of tea as it does in church.

We are looking for a priest who values the richness and breadth of Anglican tradition while welcoming creative opportunities for worship; someone who plans carefully, responds flexibly when circumstances change, and understands that safeguarding, pastoral care and a visible community presence are not additional tasks but integral to ministry.

'We are not simply looking for a priest. We are seeking the person whom God is already preparing'

Above all, we hope to welcome someone who shares our conviction that the Church's best days are not behind us.

If you are excited by the prospect of building relationships, encouraging others, and helping people and churches flourish, we believe this is an exceptional opportunity for ministry.

We can offer you the full support of our lay ministry team and wardens, along with an administrator to help with workload and a commitment to meet expenses incurred in carrying out the role. We also expect our priest to take the 36 hours off each week recently agreed by Synod, as well as their full holiday entitlement. Our support extends to any family who comes with them.

Given the nature of Wensleydale, considerable car travel is involved, so the successful applicant will need a driving licence and reliable vehicle.

For further information, please see our person specification, role description and Appendix 2 of this document.

Worship and Spiritual Life

We value worship that is reverent, accessible and rooted in the breadth of Anglican tradition, while remaining welcoming to those new to church or returning after time away. We recognise that a multi-parish rural benefice needs sustainable worship patterns, shared planning, lay participation and good communication. We are open to fresh approaches that help people encounter God, build community and grow in discipleship.



On the first Sunday of each month, the churches come together for *The Gathering* at St Oswald's. This all-age service includes a mix of hymns and more modern worship songs, supported by organ and keyboard, with words displayed on a projector and screen. The service concludes with communion.

On other Sundays, St Oswald's, St Margaret's and St Mary & St John's each hold a weekly service, which may be Morning Prayer, Holy Communion, café-style worship or a family service.

'The greatest strength of the Benefice is not its buildings or its traditions, but the quality of the relationships that bind its people together'.

Each week, there is always one Holy Communion service in the Benefice led by our priest, and an additional one in Hawes each month led by retired priest, Vera Sinton, who lives in the parish. She has permission to officiate within the Diocese and takes other services from time to time. She also works in person and online to give spiritual direction and pastoral supervision. Remaining services are led by our experienced team of lay leaders. St Matthew's, serving a smaller community, holds two services each month: one communion service and one afternoon prayer. When there is a fifth Sunday, St Oswald's hosts Forest Church. Outside the winter months, this gives us the opportunity to worship outdoors in some wonderful local settings. Our other churches also host a variety of services, including BCP services, Songs of Praise and Morning Prayer.

Whilst we take our faith seriously, we also believe church should be a place of friendship, laughter and fun.

During Covid, we began holding Sunday Evening Prayer by telephone conference call, and this has continued ever since. It is particularly valued by those who are housebound.

During the week, both St Margaret's and St Oswald's host Tuesday prayer meetings, and each also has an associated home group.

In recent years, the Benefice has hosted well-attended Lent courses, Exploring Christianity courses and *Alive in Christ* through ReSource Ministries. We have also held a Sanctuary Day, recognising the need for those in church leadership to have time for reflection and renewal.

Our Leadership Teams

The priest will be supported by committed churchwardens, PCC members, lay leaders and volunteers who contribute to worship, music, buildings care, welcome, pastoral support and prayer. We value collaborative leadership and want to continue developing lay confidence, shared responsibility and clear communication across the four churches. Details of these teams can be found in Appendix 3.

'The Benefice recognised early on that lay leadership is invaluable. It is what allows us to have services across the Benefice each week in the different churches – but above all they enrich our church life'

Each PCC has a secretary and treasurer, and the Benefice is represented at Wensley Deanery meetings.

We recognise the significant administration involved in coordinating life across the Benefice. To support this work, we employ a paid administrator for a total of eight hours per week.



Community, Mission and Outreach

The churches of Upper Wensleydale are deeply woven into the life of their communities.

Our ministry includes pastoral visiting, work with schools and families, funerals, weddings, baptisms, civic occasions, festival services, hospitality, practical care and support for those experiencing loneliness or hardship.

Current areas of mission include:

Schools, Families and Young People

We see ministry with children, young people and families as central to the life of our Benefice. We value the relationships we have built with the two primary schools in our parishes and recognise the opportunity they offer to share faith with new generations. Hawes School has a particularly close relationship with St Margaret's Church. In the Yoredale school, we lead collective worship, singing and seasonal celebrations for Easter and Christmas in both the Askrigg and Bainbridge sites. Both schools visit our churches regularly as part of the curriculum.

Yoredale Schools are proud to enjoy a strong and valued partnership with the Benefice of Upper Wensleydale. Working closely together, we help children develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally while strengthening their understanding of Christian values and the important role the church plays within our local community.

Scott Greenaway, Acting Headteacher

We are committed to helping children and families feel welcomed, valued and encouraged, so that the children know this is "their church". As such, they are an integral part of our worship, and we make provision for their learning and growth. Young children have dedicated areas in St Oswald's and St Margaret's, with resources available during services to help them engage with shared themes. They often help lead worship and take part in the family focused Jubilate service at St Margaret's on the third Sunday of each month.



Two groups meet monthly at Stalling Busk: Explorers for children aged over three, and Pathfinders for those aged over eleven. Explorers are given a Bible when they join and are encouraged to find their way around Scripture and continue reading at home. For more information on Children and Young People's work, see Appendix 4.

Life Events

The beauty of our surroundings means that we host a good number of weddings in our churches: six in 2025, eight in 2026 and seven already booked for 2027. We also have good relationships with local hotel venues where receptions are often held.



We can't thank the church family enough for making our wedding so special

The past year has been encouraging for baptisms, with twelve since last summer, including six adult full-immersion baptisms in Semerwater, including one on Easter morning. Baptisms have taken place both as part of the Sunday morning services and on separate occasions.

The high proportion of over-65s within the Benefice also means we conduct a relatively high number of funerals, with fourteen in the past year held in our churches, with graveside services and those taken in a crematorium adding a further four.

Coffee Mornings

Hospitality is another important expression of our faith. We also recognise that rural isolation can be significant, especially during the winter months. St Oswald's hosts a regular coffee morning on the first Saturday of the month for ten months of the year, offering not only a warm space but also companionship and conversation.



Open Pantry & Financial Help

St Oswald's hosts an Open Pantry, available to anyone without referral. It is open every day and is well used. At Christmas, extra food hampers are prepared for families in need in partnership with the Good Life Project. St Margaret's also has a clothes bank, offering good-quality second-hand clothing, particularly school uniforms, to those who need them.

In addition, the Benefice has a Community Fund to support those facing financial difficulty. In the past, this has helped with prepaid electricity cards, petrol costs for someone struggling to attend appointments, and a carpet for someone moving into sheltered accommodation.

Visitors

Throughout the year, people from across the country and beyond come to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of the Dales. Many find their way into our churches, drawn by their history, architecture and the opportunity for quiet reflection as well as to worship with us in Sunday Services. Hawes and the surrounding villages offer a wide range of accommodation, including hotels, campsites, hostels, B&Bs and self-catering properties. Askrigg also has a Holiday Property Bond establishment with around 25 cottages.



We recognise the movement towards Pilgrimage and all our churches are registered nationally as Pilgrim Places through Faith in the North. Wensley Deanery has also developed a Pilgrimage Trail, and our churches also feature in this https://www.wensleydeanery.church/

Courses

Each year we run courses for those exploring faith and for those wishing to deepen it, alongside our usual Lent course. This year we have offered a SHAPE course on spiritual gifts and the *Alive in Christ* course. We also value our relationship with ReSource, both through using their courses and through their support in facilitating our Sanctuary Day.

Auction Mart

Hawes has had a livestock market for centuries. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, it moved to its present site on the edge of the town, close to the current Vicarage. The Auction Mart remains very active, drawing buyers and sellers from across the North of England. Farming can be a lonely and fragile way of life, and the Benefice priest has had an informal chaplaincy role at the Auction Mart and the Benefice and the Mart would like this arrangement to continue in the future.

Sycamore Hall

Within the Benefice, Sycamore Hall in Bainbridge provides housing for older people. This attractive building contains 42 self-contained apartments, a cafe, shops, a hairdresser and a library. The Benefice holds a monthly communion service in the Activity Lounge, usually attended by eight to ten people. It's communal rooms and café are also good meeting venues for small groups.



Churches Together

The Benefice works collaboratively with other churches and denominations across the Dale. Penhill Benefice, led by Rev Tom Ringland, shares the Yoredale schools with us. In Hawes, we hold joint services with the Methodist church for occasions including Remembrance, the Easter Walk of Witness, Harvest and Christmas.

Concerts



Our churches make excellent concert venues for local communities and visiting musicians. Alongside classical concerts, including events linked to the Swaledale Festival and performances by musicians such as Resound, we have hosted the Askrigg Ladies Who Sing for Pleasure, East Witton Male Voice Choir, Askrigg Handbells, The Ayrton Family, and events such as Midsummer Music, Music from the Movies, Music for Christmas and The Magic of Christmas. We have also hosted family film nights.

FOUR CHURCHES, ONE BENEFICE:

'The Benefice is stronger because each parish brings something different'.

St Margaret's, Hawes

At our joint PCC day, the overall impression from the Hawes team was one of renewal. They described a church rediscovering its confidence through a cohesive PCC, wider community involvement and an increased willingness to take on new ideas. There was a wonderful quiet optimism throughout their discussion – not because every challenge had been overcome, but because there was a growing confidence that positive changes were already taking place.

St Margaret's Church occupies a central, elevated position in the heart of Hawes, serving the civil parishes of Hawes and High Abbotside, which together have a population of approximately 1,145 residents. Twenty-eight people are listed on the 2026 Electoral Roll, most of whom attend worship regularly.

Except on the first Sunday of each month, when the Benefice Gathering Service is held, St Margaret's holds services at 10.30 am every Sunday, along with a 9.15 am prayer meeting each Tuesday. The congregation enjoys a variety of worship styles, including Holy Communion twice a month, an informal family service and lay-led Morning Prayer on fifth Sundays. *Mission Praise* (30th Anniversary Edition) is the hymn book most commonly used.



The church has strong links with the local primary school. Alongside activities in school, we host a range of school events, including Christingle, Harvest and other services. Bibles are presented to school leavers, and we also support Christian educational activities, such as the All Hallows pumpkin-carving event on a Christian theme, "Carve Your Pumpkin Happy".

The church is involved in Churches Together in Upper Wensleydale, a partnership with Gayle Methodist Church, St Mary & St John's, Hardraw, and the local Society of Friends. Annual shared events include the Good Friday walk of witness, Harvest Celebration, civic Remembrance Service and Christmas Toy Service.

We have strong and growing links with members of the wider community who are not regular worshippers. Some are part of "St

Margaret's Angels", a group of more than twenty people who provide practical support in many ways, including locking up the church, serving refreshments at events and fundraising.

Because of the fixed pews, the church space is not sufficiently flexible for varied community use, but we regularly host concerts and other seated events.

'We're good at making people feel welcome'

The challenges facing the church are familiar to many congregations. We have an ageing congregation, new members do not arrive frequently, and finances remain difficult. A small core of members provides most of the funding, and paying the parish share is a continuing struggle. As Hawes is a holiday destination, Sunday attendance is often boosted by visitors and holidaymakers. We also have a strong range of skills across the membership.



St Oswald's, Askrigg

During their discussions, participants spoke naturally about their active church life, strong organisation and an impressive programme of events. However, there was no self-congratulation – the focus remained on service, stewardship and trying to make the church more accessible to both the local community and the many visitors passing through each year.

Our beautiful fifteenth-century Grade I listed church stands in the centre of Askrigg. We would love to say that it is also at the heart of community life, but over the years that connection has weakened. One of our main priorities has therefore been to rebuild those links and help the church become once more a natural part of village life. Encouragingly, this is now bearing fruit. Many people who are not regular worshippers willingly support events, join rotas, help care for the building or contribute their time and skills in other ways.

'I think that Askrigg gets more visitors than the rest of us put together!'

St Oswald's holds a service every week, offering a varied pattern that includes Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and café-style worship. The church also hosts *The Gathering*, our monthly Benefice service, as well as Forest Church on fifth Sundays. Attendance has grown steadily in recent years, and our electoral roll now stands at fifty-three.



The recent restoration of the tower has transformed both the building and the PCC's confidence in managing complex building projects. Alongside an active bellringing team, the church hosts several weddings and funerals each year, maintains a regular prayer meeting and house group, and continues to develop a programme of events welcoming both local people and visitors.

Hospitality has become one of the defining features of St Oswald's. During the past year, we have welcomed people to monthly coffee mornings, a week-long Christmas Tree Festival, concerts, soup lunches, our Maundy Thursday meal, a conservation study day and an alternative All Hallows' Eve event. Visitors frequently comment on the warmth of their welcome, something we value deeply.

Like many churches, we continue to face challenges. Caring for a large historic building, sustaining our finances and responding to an ageing congregation all require careful stewardship. Our Parish Share remains a concern. After covid, we used our reserves to continue paying our full share. We have worked hard to rebuild them and continue to contribute faithfully as much as we can.

Looking ahead, our priority is to remain mission-focused and reach out to our community. We want to strengthen our relationships with Bainbridge, whose community can too easily feel separate despite being part of our parish. We also want to continue hosting and facilitating visits for children from Yoredale School, build on our growing links with visitors, particularly those staying in local holiday accommodation, and keep developing a church that is visible, welcoming and increasingly woven into the everyday life of the village.

We have a strong, united PCC and organised teams



St Mary and St John, Hardraw

The team from Hardraw spoke with great honesty. They acknowledge the challenges that they face – an ageing congregation, the practical demands of maintaining a rural church and the desire to encourage wider participation. These concerns were balanced with the genuine affection felt for the church, the pride in its place within the village and their quiet determination to ensure that their ministry continues. Their church is deeply rooted in village life, and warm relationships exist not only within the church but with the wider community too.

The community is incredibly supportive of our church

We are a small, positive-minded congregation, gathering at 9.00 am three times a month. In months with a fifth Sunday, we hold a special service in which people are invited to share a text that has inspired them and a favourite hymn. On the first Sunday of each month, we join the Benefice service, *The Gathering*, at 10.30 am, in Askrigg.



St Mary and St John's, Hardraw, stands set back in the Centre of the village, just a short distance from the picturesque Herne Beck. Entering the church offers a sense of peace and restoration, shaped by the lives and faith of those who have gathered here over many generations. The church is a strong stone and timber building, nearly 150 years old, and until recently was in good repair. However, work to repoint part of the vestry wall has revealed a structural problem that may require significant rebuilding of the vestry area.

Like many churches, we find it difficult to attract new and enthusiastic regular worshippers. However, our church serves a seven-mile area across High Abbotside and is the community church for people living in small villages, hamlets and scattered farms.

The church and local community are closely connected, not least through the large churchyard, a tranquil resting place for local people and visitors, past and present. As we introduce the Parish Giving Scheme later this year, the PCC will contact families with loved ones buried in the churchyard, inviting them to support the church and help share the financial pressures caused by rising costs and parish share.

Up to and including 2023, we met all our maintenance and running costs as well as the annual share. We hope to continue doing so, helped by the Parish Giving Scheme and the recent installation of card payment facilities for visitors and worshippers. The Pennine Way passes through Hardraw, so walkers and people visiting Hardraw Force often visit the church too.



In addition to regular services, which are usually attended by around ten people, we hold several special services throughout the year when the congregation is larger, including Easter and Harvest. Our Christmas Day service, for the whole Benefice, is often attended by around one hundred people.

The church's simple style gives wedding congregations a clear view of the service and helps them feel closely involved in the day. Its physical and spiritual beauty makes it a popular wedding venue, and its setting offers attractive opportunities for photographs.

Funerals, Churchyard Day and concerts, including two in 2025, are all important occasions for bringing the local community together in remembrance, fellowship and enjoyment of music.

In Hardraw and the surrounding villages, most residents are not regular churchgoers, but they are supportive of the church at special services and show interest and commitment in maintaining the church and churchyard, offering both practical help and financial support.

Although we have no kitchen or toilet facilities, one member of our congregation runs a welcoming café just over the bridge, which we use each week for coffee and social time. When the church is used for services, concerts or other events, toilet facilities are available at the nearby Green Dragon Inn and at the Cart House café. For concerts and functions, the PCC has portable equipment that enables us to provide refreshments in church.

We hope this gives a clear picture of our church in Hardraw: its strengths, its close community connections, and the concerns we share about attracting new people and securing the financial viability needed for its long-term future.

St Matthew's, Stalling Busk

At the joint PCC day, the discussions from the Busk team showed St Matthew's possesses a gentle confidence. Participants spoke less about what they do, but more about what it feels like to belong there. They spoke warmly about a sense of belonging, neighbourliness and the importance of everyone feeling valued. It is clear they offer great hospitality, to church family and the community alike.

We are a small, deeply rural church, with a usual congregation of between two and eight people and a 2026 Electoral Roll of thirty.

We hold fortnightly services. On the second Sunday, a soup lunch is followed by an intimate Communion service. On the fourth Sunday, we hold Afternoon Prayer with reflection and discussion.

'We want the church to feel like family'.

Our worship is informal, with a mix of traditional and more modern elements. Our small, intimate services create real opportunities to share thoughts, ask questions and grow in faith and understanding. We enjoy singing, but as we have no organ, we rely on recorded accompaniment.

Pathfinders, for those aged 11–15, and Explorers, for children aged 3–10, meet monthly for prayer, activities, Bible study and fellowship, ending with hot chocolate and toast. Last year, activities included a sponsored walk that raised £700 for Papyrus, tree planting and a sleepover in the church. These groups are attended by children across the Benefice.

Throughout the year, we hold a number of well-attended events, including:

- Pancake lunch on Shrove Tuesday.
- Good Friday Walk of Witness from Semerwater, with prayers at the old, ruined church followed by hot cross buns in church.
- Sunrise Service on Easter morning at Semerwater.
- Flower Festival.
- Pathfinders and Explorers activities.
- Semerwater Service with Hawes Silver Band on the August bank holiday.
- Harvest bread sale and produce auction.
- Christmas Eve service and carols.



You can feel God's presence in Busk. Our building is always open, and its small, welcoming and friendly character helps people feel able to come in. There are close friendships within the congregation and wider community, and we have recently welcomed new people from the Dale following the closure of Marsett Methodist Chapel.

Though the congregation is small, the wider community is very supportive, helping with events, cakes, flowers and cleaning. Strong Christian values are evident across our community, and all permanent residents help and support us, even though relatively few attend services regularly. The monthly soup lunch is a valued social and community

occasion, well attended and offering opportunities to strengthen relationships, catch up and enjoy companionship. Not everyone then stays for the service that follows.

We bring different personalities, views, gifts and abilities, and we celebrate and learn from those differences. Within the PCC there is a strong sense of team spirit, unity, cohesion, love and respect, which supports good problem-solving and decision-making.

We are liberal and forward-thinking. We try to be realistic about the needs of our population today so that we can minister effectively and remain relevant. We are deeply engaged with our faith, eager to listen, learn and continue growing in our personal relationships with God.

We manage our finances carefully and pay our full share every year.

However, we also face several challenges:

'We'd love to develop the church as somewhere people can simply come and rest in the presence of the spirit'

- Low numbers on the PCC and in the wider community.
- The same small group of people giving time, money and energy.
- Financial stress and long, unpredictable working hours within the farming community.
- A remote location, with winter access and parking challenges.
- A small full-time population, an ageing population and relatively low regular church attendance.
- The building, which requires ongoing resources, has rising regular costs and has no toilet facilities.
- Finances: expenses are relatively low, but the small population limits income; farming income is irregular and unpredictable, making regular giving difficult; there are many second and holiday homes, very few families and a high retired population. Expenses have exceeded income for the past three years.

Looking to the future, we want to become more visible and relevant. We are currently exploring improvements to our kitchen facilities, with funds already ring-fenced for the project.



We are keen to promote St Matthew's as a destination for church, work and social groups seeking a retreat venue, making the most of what we can offer: the beauty, warmth, peace and tranquillity of the building; the beauty of the Dale; the spiritual atmosphere of the old church and Semerwater; and the School Room facilities, which provide space for meetings and breakout sessions, as well as toilets.

Buildings, Heritage and Stewardship

'Ancient buildings but a living faith'

Our church buildings are both gifts and responsibilities. They are places of worship and memory, as well as places of welcome, beauty, heritage and community gathering. They call for wise stewardship, realistic planning, careful maintenance, imaginative fundraising where needed, and a missional vision for how they can serve both church and community. Across the Benefice, we have worked hard to ensure that our buildings speak of love, life and hope. We are part of the Wensley Deanery Maintenance Collective and have representation on the Working Group.

St Margaret's, Hawes

This Grade II listed church stands on a hill in the centre of Hawes. Built in the mid-1850s to replace a smaller chapel that stood closer to the road, it seats approximately 250–300 people.



In recent years, toilets, a kitchen and a meeting space have been added. The pews have been removed from the side chapel, creating a flexible area with tables and chairs, and a children's area has been created on the opposite side of the church. Last year, the ageing boiler was replaced by two new oil-fired boilers as the first phase of a scheme to improve the heating of the building. Two further projects are currently underway: *Illuminate*, which is raising funds for new lighting, and a separate project for the maintenance of the organ.

St Margaret's quinquennial inspection report highlights the need for work to the tower, where water ingress has affected both the clock and the wooden floor joists. The churchyard in front of the church is closed and maintained by the Council. The Upper Churchyard is currently the responsibility of the church, but steps have been taken to begin the formal closure process. When this has been completed, the church will not have an. open churchyard. The churchyard contains war graves.

St Oswald's, Askrigg

St Oswald's, the oldest of the Benefice churches, was built in the mid-1400s and is Grade I listed. It seats around 250 people in Victorian box pews. The PCC has an active Fabric Committee and, following the re-rendering of the tower in 2024–25, the church is in relatively good condition for a building of its age. The lighting was replaced in 2024 with a programmable LED system that allows different colours and levels of brightness. The pews

have been removed from the north aisle and replaced with tables and chairs, creating a flexible space used for café-style services and coffee mornings.

The tower project took more than ten years to progress from the quinquennial inspection report to completion and cost just under a quarter of a million pounds. It required considerable fundraising and grant-writing by the PCC. The completed work received an architectural prize and has been the subject of several academic papers, as well as a study by Historic England, which has installed damp monitors in the tower.



The church has two churchyards, both of which are full. The larger churchyard is closed and maintained by the Council. The smaller one cannot be closed because of the way it was originally opened and remains the responsibility of the church. It contains two war graves.

The Fabric Committee's current active project is the repair of the Hearse House, a barn formerly used to store the village hearse and now housing the church boiler and oil tank.

St Mary & St John's, Hardraw

The church was built around 1880 with money donated by Lord Wharncliffe, owner of nearby Simonstone Hall, in memory of his brother. It replaced an older church that stood slightly closer to the road. Built of simple dressed stone with a stone-flagged roof, the church has a flagged chancel and central nave aisle, while clear-glazed windows fill the interior with good natural light. The church is Grade II listed, seats 100 people and has no toilet or kitchen facilities.



A large churchyard surrounds the church, bordered by the Green Dragon public house on one side and Hardraw Beck on the other. It remains open for burials and is a lovely tree-lined space.

The church has electric heating and some issues with bats. Last year, the organ was overhauled at a cost of £20,000, securing it for the future. The PCC's next project will be work to the west wall, which is affected by damp because of its proximity to the beck.

St Matthew's, Stalling Busk

This Grade II listed Arts and Crafts-style church was built in 1908 to replace the earlier church further down the hill. Its simple lines and wonderful setting make it a popular place for visitors. The church seats 40 people in wooden pews. It has no churchyard or toilet facilities, but there is a small kitchen. Responsibility for the old church ruins and churchyard has passed to the Diocese.





The PCC is currently seeking quotes to replace the kitchen and will submit a faculty application once the costs are known. No major issues were highlighted in the latest quinquennial inspection report.

The Vicarage, Hawes

The vicarage is located on the outskirts of Hawes. It is a substantial detached stone-built house with a lawned front garden, several trees and ample parking. To the rear, there is a sheltered, sunny garden bordered by land belonging to the Auction Mart on one side and a field on the other.



Downstairs, the entrance hall leads to a large study, a kitchen/diner with a hatch through to the formal dining room, and, at the rear of the house, a

spacious sitting room with a log burner. There is also a downstairs cloakroom and a utility room off the kitchen, with access to both the garden and the garage.

Upstairs, arranged around a generous landing, there are four double bedrooms, one with an en-suite shower room, as well as a family bathroom and separate toilet.

Heating is provided by an oil-fired boiler, which was replaced in 2025. The property has large double glazed sash windows throughout.





Conclusion

Upper Wensleydale is a place of beauty, faithfulness and possibility. We are grateful for what God has already done among us and hopeful for what lies ahead. We are not seeking a priest who will rescue us, but we look forward to welcoming one who will walk with us, pray with us, challenge and encourage us, and help us live out the good news of Jesus Christ in the Dale.

We do not expect our next priest to arrive with all the answers. Rather we hope that they will bring wisdom, curiosity and a willingness to discern with us where God is leading. We hope that he or she will come to love Upper Wensleydale – not simply for its landscape or its churches – but for its people, inside and outside of our fellowships.

We hope that as you have read this brochure, you have gained a sense of who we are, our churches and our community. Whether you feel God is calling you to ministry with us or not, we bless you as you seek your next appointment.



The Benefice Office
The Vicarage
Burtersett Road,
Hawes DL8 3NP

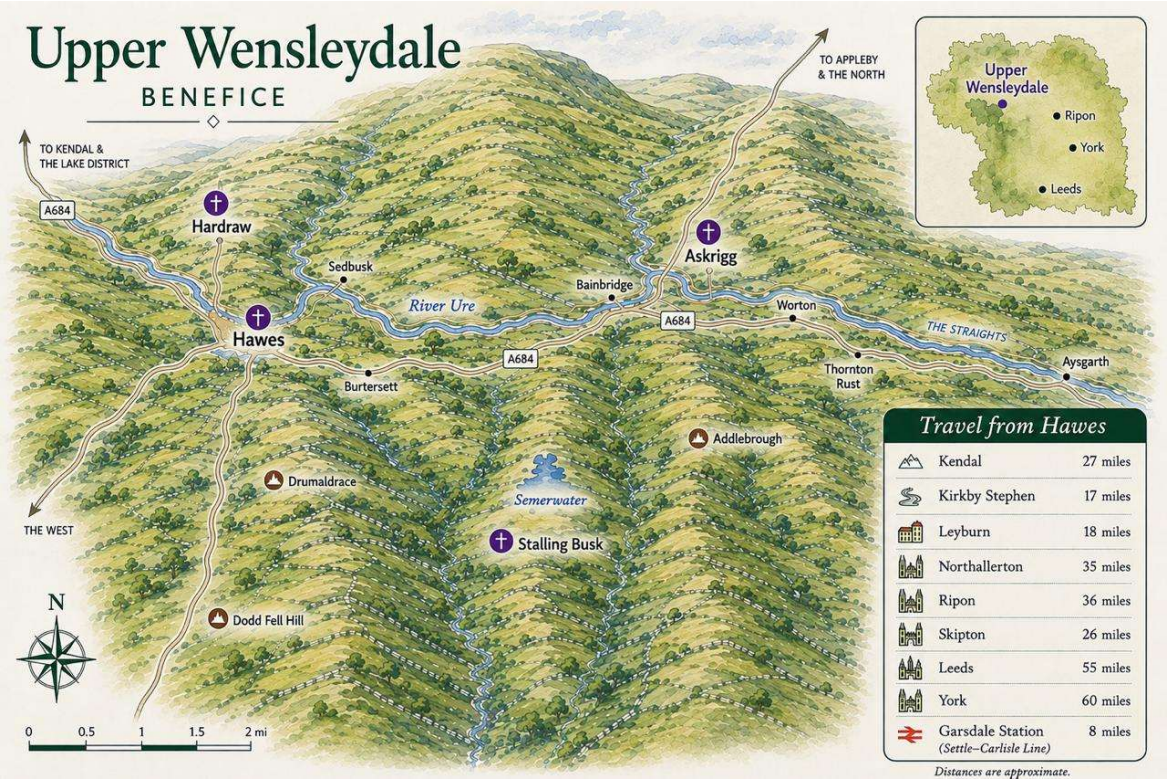
Website: https://upperwensleydalechurch.org
Email: office@upperwenben.org



APPENDIX ONE

Our Benefice Area & Beyond

The Benefice is situated at the head of Wensleydale and reaches as far west as the Cumbrian border at Garsdale Head. To the east, Woodhall and Worton are the villages that border the Penhill Benefice, also within the Wensley Deanery.



Hawes is the main market town in the Benefice, and its Market Hall hosts regular markets, fairs, local events and gatherings. The town combines the character of a working Dales community with the welcome of a place that receives visitors throughout the year whilst still serving its local populace. Its independent shops, cafés, pubs, accommodation, local businesses and public services make it an important centre for the surrounding villages and farms. There is a Tuesday open air market in the main street, and the Hawes Auction Mart on the edge of the town is a thriving livestock market, attracting buyers and sellers from across the country.

Hawes is also known for Wensleydale cheese and for attractions such as the Wensleydale Creamery and the Dales Countryside Museum together with many walks, waterfalls and routes across the surrounding fells. Alongside tourism, farming and small businesses remain central to the rhythm of daily life. This gives the town a distinctive blend of rural rootedness, seasonal busyness and a strong local identity.

Hawes also has a primary school, rated Good by Ofstead and the Dalesplay Nursery, which takes children aged 2-4 and offers after school care too. The town has a variety of

accommodation, from pubs, hotels, bed and breakfasts to the Youth Hostel, situated on the corner of the Ingleton Road.



Part of the popularity of Hawes is its position on the Pennine Way, and the many spectacular walks, of varying length, in the locality. The Yorkshire Three Peaks route is a short distance away, Great Shunner Fell, another of the Top 10 fells is visible from the town.

From Hawes, the road to Ingleton leads past the red squirrel woods at Snaizeholme, through Widdale to Ribblehead and its famous viaduct, carrying the Settle and Carlisle railway. The road west (A684) leads over the Cumbrian border into Garsdale and on to Sedbergh, home of both the private Sedbergh School and Settlebeck School both providing Secondary education. Carry on along the A684, crossing over the M6 at junction 37, and you arrive in Kendal, one of our closest large towns with all the facilities and gateway to the Lake District. It takes around 50 minutes to get to the centre of Kendal from Hawes.

'Life here is shaped by the rhythm of the countryside and the farming year'.

North of Hawes, and over the River Ure is the picturesque village of Hardraw, home of the famous Green Dragon pub, a centuries old inn and the waterfall. Hardraw Force is England's highest single drop waterfall, made famous by Kevin Costner because of 'that' scene in Robin Hood Prince of Thieves where Maid Marion spies Robin Hood bathing under the waterfall! Close by is the deeply wooded Shaw Ghyll, which gives beautiful waterside walks passed little cascades and lovely wild swimming pools. Shaw Ghyll can be accessed from Simonstone on the well-known Buttertubs Pass, which climbs over Lovely Seat and Stags Fell and down into Swaledale, close to the villages of Thwaite and Muker.



Nearby are two lovely Wensleydale hotels, Simonstone Hall and the Stone House Hotel, both of which have beautiful views across the valley to Hawes.

Askrigg is perhaps best known for two reasons. The first is that many of the

scenes from the original All Creatures Great and Small TV Series were filmed here, with many of the locals as extras! The second is for the church tower, which hit national headlines in 2025 when it was re-rendered. Askrigg was once the main settlement in Upper Wensleydale, before the coming of the railway and the expansion of Hawes. There is a well-regarded primary school, the Yoredale School based across two sites – here and in Bainbridge. For such a compact village, Askrigg supports three pubs and a brewery and other useful amenities. Just over a mile away on the other side of the Ure is Bainbridge, another village within the parish of Askrigg. It is set around a large village green, which is often the site of car shows and other fairs, and also a stopping point for the travellers on their way to the Appleby Horse Fair in Cumbria each June. It is quite a sight to see their bow top caravans and piebald horses grazing on the green. The Yorebridge Hotel is another beautiful Wensleydale hotel, just outside the village and beside the River Ure. Bainbridge is also the home of the headquarters of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

The road south from here winds its way into Raydale, following the course of the River Bain. The Bain is England's shortest river at just 2 miles long. Just before it enters the Ure,



there is an Archimedes screw, which produces hydroelectric power for the village. The head of the river is Semerwater, one of only two natural lakes in the Dales. This is truly a magical place, and it was immortalised by JM Turner on one of his painting trips to the area. The beach area can be busy in the summer with wild swimmers and paddleboarders, none of which detract from the beauty and tranquillity of the location. This is also the location for some of our outdoor services, baptisms and walks.

Driving past and beyond Semerwater brings you to the village of Stalling Busk, a collection of farmsteads, barns and cottages. The ruins of the old St Matthew's Church lie between the settlement and the lake. The ethereal beauty of the ruins cannot be overstated, surrounded as they are by the green fells and the view across the lake below.

Back on the A684 at Bainbridge, the road east leads to Leyburn and then on to the A1. Another secondary school, the Wensleydale School, is in Leyburn. Further good schools are available in Richmond and Settle.

Whilst Wensleydale can be seen as remote, there are nevertheless good connections for those with transport:

- The historic town of Richmond, with its castle, Georgian Theatre and shops – 24 miles (45 mins)
- Ripon with its Cathedral; Harrogate with its elegant streets, shops and RHS Garden and Knaresborough with its castle and waterfront are 36 miles (1 hour), 48 miles (1hr 28) and 55 miles (1hr 17) respectively.
- Further afield York (66 miles, 1hr 30) Lancaster (35 miles, 1hr), Leeds (78 miles, 1hr 42) Newcastle (75 miles, 1 hr 40) and Durham (59 miles, 1hr 25) are also within a day trip distance.

'This part of Yorkshire is a fantastic place to live and work!'

Train connections can be made to all parts of the country.

- The East Coastline to London (Kings Cross or Liverpool Street) and York, Newcastle and Edinburgh can be made from Northallerton (35 miles, 1hr 5). Journey times to London are around 2hrs 30.
- Garsdale or Ribblehead Stations on the Settle and Carlisle line give the opportunity to travel on a picturesque and historic line south to Settle, Skipton and Bradford or Leeds, or north to Appleby or Carlisle.
- Oxenholme Station, just outside Kendal, (34 miles, 1hr) gives access to the Western side of the country. Trains here go into London Euston, Blackpool, Liverpool and Glasgow. Journey times to London are around 3 hours.

Hawes has two grocery shops – SPAR and Elijah Allen and Askrigg has a 'corner shop' Sykes. For supermarket shopping, Leyburn has a medium-size Co-op store and Campbells Stores. For large supermarkets, Catterick Garrison has a Tescos, Lidl and Aldi or Kendal has Asda, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Lidl, Booths and Marks & Spencer. Home delivery by Morrisons, Tescos, Asda and Sainsbury is available to Hawes.

The Central Dales Practice in Hawes provides GP services to the Benefice area and is highly rated. Hospital facilities are available in Northallerton (Friarage Hospital), Darlington (Memorial Hospital), Middlesborough (James Cook) and Newcastle (Royal Victoria) and Lancaster's Royal Infirmary. There is a pharmacy in Hawes, and the Leyburn Dental Practice holds a surgery in Hawes once a week

APPENDIX TWO

Thoughts from our Joint PCC Away Day

At our recent Joint PCC Away Day, we considered both our thoughts on our current church position, our strengths and our challenges, together with the sort of Priest we feel we need. Here are some of the comments and observations made. Throughout the day, people spoke with honesty, humour and generosity about their churches, their communities and the shared life of the Benefice. Some contributions were carefully considered, whilst others were spontaneous observations made during discussions. Together they revealed so much more about our fellowship than minutes ever could. These discussions formed the basis of this brochure. Transcribed here are some of the themes that came up during the day – they should not come as a surprise to you as many have already featured in the pages you have read.

We need a priest who will live among us, lead worship faithfully, care pastorally, encourage discipleship, and help us discern where God is calling the Benefice next. The role requires someone able to hold together the needs of four churches, travel across a wide rural area, work collaboratively with lay people, and balance continuity with fresh vision.

Key Priorities

- Lead worship and prayer across the Benefice with theological depth, warmth and accessibility.
- Build up lay leadership, pastoral care and shared ministry teams.
- Encourage mission with children, families, schools and younger adults.
- Be visible in village and market-town life, including civic, agricultural, educational and community settings.
- Help the Benefice maintain sustainable patterns of worship, governance and communication.
- Support good stewardship of buildings, finances and volunteers.
- Enable the churches to grow in confidence, hope and faithful witness.

Our Challenges

- Maintaining sustainable worship and leadership across four churches and a wide geographical area.
- Demographics - Ageing congregations and the need to engage younger generations.
- Rural isolation, transport limitations and seasonal pressures.
- Financial pressures and the ongoing care of historic buildings.
- Fitting the distinct identity of each church into a shared Benefice vision.
- Ensuring people are supported, encouraged and not overburdened.
- National Church policies impact community trust.
- Lack of ordinands

- Expectations – community see church as the vicar. Need to educate on shared ministry.
- Geography – distances involved in hospital visits and time needed/costs.
- Second homes/decline in school numbers
- Always the same few people doing the work.
- Rural deprivation
- A feeling that the Diocese does not understand or support rural ministry.
- Concern over the Resourcing Deanery plan
- Management of clergy time

Our Strengths and Opportunities

- Four churches with deep roots, committed people and real affection for their communities.
- A remarkable rural setting that attracts visitors and offers natural opportunities for welcome, pilgrimage and reflection.
- Strong local identity, village networks and community goodwill.
- A united Benefice, with friendships across the churches

'Our tables were bending with the weight of cakes and scones!'

- Strong, united leadership team with confident congregations beside us
- Great variety of different services
- Good links with local primary schools.
- Great new website and Facebook presence but scope to strengthen online presence.
- Buildings with heritage value and potential for wider community use.
- Good lines of communication between the churches and individuals
- A large, dynamic and growing fringe in all churches
- Growth in discipleship
- The Gathering service
- Good Inter-denominational links
- Opportunity to extend our welcome by creating welcome packs/hampers for people who move into the area.
- Our new website
- Quality relationships developed across the Benefice. There is a good sense of belonging in the Benefice, whilst still valuing the different characters of the parishes.
- Active in mission
- Known for our hospitality.
- Faithful, committed and appreciated lay ministry team.
- Sense of great hope for the future
- A growing sense of confidence built on experience.
- Opportunity to develop a stronger mission to visitors.

APPENDIX THREE

Shared Ministry Team

Based at St Margaret's:

Rev Vera Sinton
Retired priest & Spiritual Director

Graham & Julia Di Duca
Joe & Ann Pilling
Mike & Pauline Hirst
La*y Worship Leaders*

Based at St Oswald's:

Stephanie Durrant
Authorised Lay Minister

Elizabeth Fawcett
MaryRose Kearney
Lay Worship Leaders

Based at St Mary & St John's

Jennifer Fawcett
Margaret Iveson
Susan Foster
Lay Worship Leaders

Churchwardens

St Margaret's, Hawes:	Samantha Amsden & Graham Di Duca
St Oswald's, Askrigg:	Stephanie Durrant & Liz Hayle
St Mary & St John's, Hardraw:	Allan Fawcett & Jennifer Fawcett
St Matthew's, Stalling Busk:	Miriam Cloughton

Parish Safeguarding Officers

Jennifer Fawcett	St Margaret's and St Mary & St John's
Elizabeth Fawcett	St Oswald's and St Matthew's

Benefice Administrator (Paid)

Stephanie Durrant

APPENDIX FOUR

Children and Youth Work

Schools Work

The Benefice is proud of the work it carries out in and with our local schools. Below is a message from one of the schools:

Yoredale Schools are proud to enjoy a strong and valued partnership with the Benefice of Upper Wensleydale. Working closely together, we help children develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally while strengthening their understanding of Christian values and the important role the church plays within our local community.

Throughout the year, pupils take part in a number of special services and celebrations at our local churches. These occasions provide meaningful opportunities for reflection, worship and community participation. Key events include our Harvest Festival, where children give thanks for the food we receive and support local charitable causes; Christmas celebrations, which help pupils explore the story of Christ's birth; and Easter services, where children learn about the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. We also enjoy taking part in the annual Christingle Service, which helps children understand Christian teachings about hope, light and caring for others.

The Benefice plays an active role in school life through regular collective worship, led by members of the clergy and church community. These worship sessions encourage children to reflect on Christian values such as kindness, compassion, courage and respect, helping them to make connections between faith and everyday life.

Our partnership extends beyond worship through a range of exciting activities and competitions. Children look forward each year to taking part in the popular Decorate an Easter Egg Competition, showcasing their creativity while exploring the Easter story, and the much-loved Pumpkin Carving Competition, which encourages families to come together in support of a community event organised by the Benefice.

These opportunities help strengthen the links between school, church and community, ensuring that children experience faith as a living and active part of life in Upper Wensleydale. Together, we are committed to nurturing confident, caring and respectful young people who understand the values that underpin our local community.

Scott Greenway, Acting Headteacher, The Federation of Yoredale Schools



Sundays

Whilst most of our services cater for children, we do have several services which are either all-age worship or specifically aimed at our younger folk. These include our Gathering Service, which is a one a month service, where all the congregations of the four churches get together. This is a time of celebration, teaching and fellowship.

I love spending time with people who believe the same as me and everyone gets to join in when we do fun things.
Emma, aged 10

Every third Sunday at St Margaret's is Jubilate! This is designed for children and is usually well attended. In addition, on fifth Sundays St Oswald's hold Forest Church, where we worship in the open air. This has included a baptism by a local waterfall, a climb up Addlebrough, and a walk to Mill Gill.





Explorers and Pathfinders

Whilst the children and young people play a full part in our Sunday services, they also have their own groups which meet on a Sunday afternoon, usually at Stalling Busk.

Their programmes involve bible teaching and discussions, together with fun activities and always include food!

The Pathfinders group followed the new Youth Alive in Christ course last year.





Below are some photographs of some of the activities that they have undertaken.





Stalling Busk makes an excellent base for the groups as there is immediate access to open countryside and the opportunities it affords.

The school room, not far from the church, offers flexible, warm accommodation with kitchen and toilet facilities, which is ideal for both teaching and crafting activities.

Both groups have regularly been involved in worship on a Sunday from singing during communion to performing in the nativity story.

