

# **UNITED BENEFICE OF BEDLINGTON, CAMBOIS & SLEEKBURN**



**PARISH BROCHURE 2025**

## **Welcome to the Diocese of Newcastle!**

Thank you so much for your interest in this role, and I hope you enjoy reading the information contained in this brochure and will find it helpful for your discernment. These are exciting and challenging times in the Diocese of Newcastle. Exciting because we are at an early stage of a new season, challenging because like many dioceses we face conversations about our future and how best we use and deploy our resources. Our Deanery Development work has engaged every parish and benefice in renewed conversations about mission and ministry, and we are in a process of entering a new phase in that work, mapping out our renewed strategy and vision. Our outward facing values of 'seeking, sharing, sending' stem from a commitment to be a Church turning outwards in mission and ministry, and younger and more diverse by: SEEKING through being open to God's transforming love; SHARING through being generous with God's transforming gifts; SENDING through being engaged in God's transforming work in the world. I am looking for clergy who are excited about the opportunities and challenges we face, who are happy to work collaboratively and imaginatively with colleagues, and who can inspire communities to roll up their sleeves and get stuck into God's mission, by affirming, enabling, and encouraging lay and clergy together. As your Bishop, I am committed to your wellbeing and development, and I would love to explore with you whether God may be calling you to this role

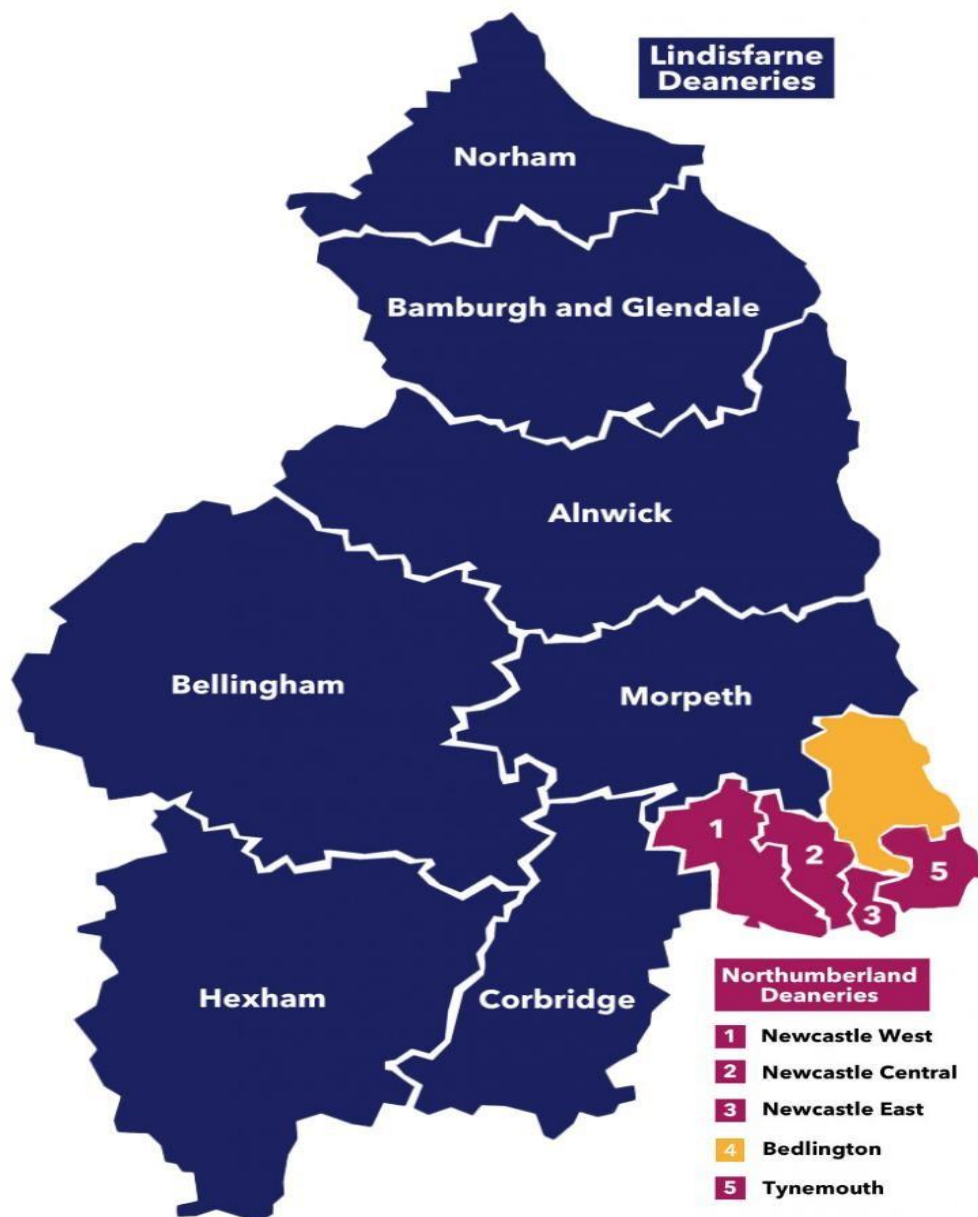


**The Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley**  
**Bishop of Newcastle**

## Diocese and Deanery

The Diocese of Newcastle is the Church of England's most northerly diocese. This Diocese in the 'land of the Northern Saints' was formed in 1882 and comprises **169** parishes across **2,110** square miles. The Diocese covers the local authorities of Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside and also small parts of County Durham and Cumbria. The **12** deaneries within **2** archdeaconries serve a population of about **831,600** people across a variety of communities ranging from sparse rural to large inner-city areas of deprivation.

**Bedlington Deanery**, in which our United Benefice resides, comprises of **19** churches, with its boundaries crossing two counties – Northumberland and North Tyneside. Although there is a small area of rural occupation, the deanery consists mainly of post-industrial villages and towns.





# OUR UNITED BENEFICE

The United Benefice of Bedlington consists of three churches – St Cuthbert’s Bedlington, St Andrew’s Cambois and St John’s Sleekburn. The United Benefice was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2016 bringing together St. Cuthbert’s with the neighbouring benefice of Cambois and Sleekburn.

## Our Mission Statement

Our United Benefice exists to:

- Worship God
- Serve people by speaking and living the good news of the Gospel
- Enable others to do the same

## Our Benefice Ministry Team

We have a committed and hard-working Ministry Team

Licensed Readers:      Mr. Joseph Lawrie  
                                     Mrs Susan Ramshaw

Readers with PTO:      Mrs Jane Clark  
                                     Mrs Anne Wager-Bradley

Reader Emeritus:      Mrs Doreen Johnson  
                                     (who is no longer able to attend church)

Ordinand in Training:   Mrs Arleen Thompson



who in addition to assisting and preaching at all our regular weekly services across the United Benefice have also developed new initiatives to support the United Benefice and its communities. They supported our incumbent in visiting our local care homes, school visits and services as well as home communions. In addition to the formal services, the Ministry Team plan and lead less formal services, such as Celtic themed, reflective sessions, Stations of the Cross, prayer days, and study groups. A member of the team undertakes volunteering as a hospital chaplain, whilst another is an Anna Chaplain.

## Our Liturgical Tradition

The Churches across the Benefice are “middle of the road” Anglican, with the wearing of vestments at our Services and we mark all the major festivals. We do occasionally enjoy a range of less formal worship services and a variety of seasonal services.

# Our Local Parish Areas and More Widely

## Bedlington

Is situated in south east Northumberland and is part of Bedlington Deanery within the Diocese of Newcastle. Bedlington is the fourth largest town in Northumberland with a population of 16,191 (2021 census), situated on the river Blyth, 12 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne; 6.5 miles from Morpeth; 5 miles from Blyth; 5.5 miles from Ashington; and 5 miles from Cramlington.



Originally a market town with a rich mining heritage it is now more of a commuter town with people travelling to work in Newcastle, North Tyneside and the surrounding areas. Following the closure of the mines there is little industry in or around Bedlington, with an unemployment rate of 8.6% and 42.4% of people economically inactive. There is a mixed age spread with 24.7% of the population aged 65 or over. The 2021 census states the Median Age as being 49 years, with 29.2% of the population being one person households and 68% being single family households.

Bedlington is served by West Bedlington Town Council. Local shops include two pharmacies, convenience stores, several beauty/hairdressing salons and barbers, Aldi, Lidl and Morrisons Supermarkets together with a Post Office/Newsagent, several public houses, a small number of cafes/restaurants and a number of estate agents. Local banking facilities are currently available in Ashington, Cramlington and Morpeth.

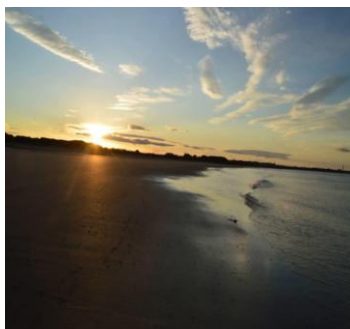


There is a petrol station/garage, medical centre, dentist, physiotherapist, library, two veterinary practices, a community centre and golf club. The police station and South-East Northumberland Law Courts are situated behind Front Street and there are two country parks.

Bedlington has a number of Care Homes and sheltered accommodation within the parish and four primary schools including the Whitley Memorial Church of England Primary School. Secondary education is provided by St. Benet Biscop Academy and Bedlington Academy.



## Cambois



The Parish of Cambois, St Andrew sits mainly to the east of the Spine Road (A189) sandwiched between the rivers Wansbeck and Blyth, and skirting the North Sea. It is situated on the edge of the North Sea and has a very popular sandy beach and walkways, with a fish and chip shop, restaurant, social club, public houses, a cafe and holiday cottages in the area. Along with some outlying properties, there are approximately five hundred dwellings, with further development in progress.

It is situated mostly in five distinct areas of population:

**East Sleekburn (West):** Mixed housing around the Havelock Pub with in-fill modern housing, with new housing currently in construction. The community is close to Bedlington Schools and other facilities, including transport, shops and churches.

**East Sleekburn (East):** mainly ex-council houses, with some investment by the local authority in the area.

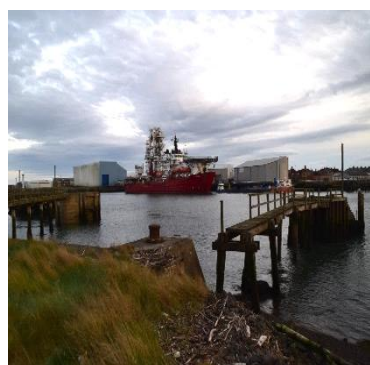
**North Blyth:** Comprises three streets of 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces and a Social Club. It has a goods rail terminal at the nearby Battleship Wharf, part of the Port of Blyth.

**Cambois Centre:** Mainly terraced properties, a Social Club and the Tute (a local community charity in the ex-Mining Institute) as well as a Camera Club. The Church stands at one end of these terraces, near to Cambois primary school.

**Cambois Beach (Brown's Farm & Wembley):** Mixed housing, terraced properties, privately owned or rented, along with semi-detached ex-Council housing with mixed ownership. There are several recent in-fill new builds, along with a popular Pub and Fish & Chip restaurant/take-away (owned by the footballing Charlton family).

Cambois and surrounding area is a former heavy industry area. Some industrial activity continues, including North Blyth deep water, a cabling company and substation in the south of the parish and some industrial units in a trading estate in the north. There are plans for a data centre company, QTS, to open their first UK data centre campus in Cambois with building works starting late 2025; redeveloping land at the former Power Station Site. This investment and their commitment to supporting the community has been welcomed by those within Cambois and the surrounding areas.

Cambois has a good community feeling with strong memories and affection of the area and there are many family connections and descendants still living in the area.





## Sleekburn - Bedlington Station

Bedlington Station is a settlement in South East Northumberland, England, located near East Bedlington and about a mile northwest of Bedlington town centre. It is named after the former Bedlington railway station, which operated from 1850 to 1964. The area's history is also tied to the now-closed Bedlington Colliery. The settlement is now recognised as its own urban area, distinct from the original Bedlington village. Bedlington Station is part of the Civil Parish of East Bedlington.



The Parish of Sleekburn, Bedlington Station is located in East Bedlington, adjacent to the Parish of Bedlington and sharing some facilities whilst having roots in their own rights and is close to the Northumberland Energy Park development site, which is attracting businesses operating in, or related to, the clean energy sector. Bedlington Station has its own distinctive geography with shops, schools, community centre and care homes.

Outlying villages include Bebside to the east, Choppington and Guide Post to the north, and Nedderton to the west. Primary schools in the parish are Bedlington Station Primary School and Stead Lane Primary School and, a secondary school which serves the wider district, Bedlington Academy; the largest school in the town.



Bedlington Academy offers a Community Spaces scheme providing facilities for the public on evenings and the weekend including; 11 a-side grass pitches, 4G football pitch, 9 a-side grass pitches, sports hall, studio and the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).



East Bedlington Community Centres offer live music, dance and theatre events and Gallagher Park's open-air music festival has attracted upwards of 40,000 visitors in the previous five years. Nearby Dr Pit Park offers bowls, sports and play facilities and has a pavilion that provides a meeting room, bowling club room, kitchen and public toilets. Bedlington has a number of services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of local residents, including schools, convenience stores, large chain supermarkets, public houses and social clubs, community centres, care homes and churches.

Bedlington Station is being redeveloped as part of the Northumberland Line project to reintroduce passenger rail services between Ashington and Newcastle. With plans to re-open in early 2026, this will improve connections to the wider area, main town facilities and bring investment in the town. Bedlington Station is well connected by road sitting to the west of the Spine Road (A189), leading to the A19 and A1. With road routes and bus services to the more densely populated services and facilities of Cramlington to the south, Blyth to the east and Ashington to the north and the main city town of Newcastle.



## The Wider Area

Our region is steeped in Christian heritage, with Holy Island of Lindisfarne and the coastal areas of Bamburgh and Seahouses being just over an hour's drive away.



Northumberland is known to have more castles than any other English county. There are also a number of English Heritage and National Trust attractions within driving distance, including Hadrian's Wall – a world heritage site. Alnwick Castle and Gardens, the Cheviot Hills, Cragside House - the first house to be illuminated by hydroelectricity/hydraulics and Kielder Water - the largest man-made lake in the United Kingdom.



We are less than 30 minutes away from the coastal towns and beaches of Whitley Bay, Cullercoats and Tynemouth and 12 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne city centre





# ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, BEDLINGTON

## Our Church

St. Cuthbert's has a prime site at the Centre of the community in this ancient market town of Bedlington. The Church is the most prominent building on the corner of Front Street and Church Lane and is situated within the Bedlington Conservation Area



St. Cuthbert's Church is a Grade II\* listed building with Saxon features. It has a 12<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque arch between the Chancel and the nave with a "dog tooth" decoration. A church has stood on this site since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The monks of Durham fled carrying the body of Cuthbert ahead of the advance north by William the Conqueror – they found sanctuary in the church on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1069. In 2019 we held a number of events celebrating "Cuthbert 950".

The entrance to the Chapel of Remembrance is situated on the south wall of the Nave. The colours of the Tyneside Scottish, presented to St. Cuthbert's in 1920, hang above the entrance. The colours and the Memorial Boards inside the Chapel are of great interest to the public, many of whom have family named on the boards. The Tyneside Scottish Association has a close relationship with St. Cuthbert's and has held a number of special events at the Church. Inside the Chapel there is a WW1 Enlistment Book of the men from Bedlingtonshire. The Diocesan Archivist has advised us this particular Enlistment Book is unusual as it contains information relating to those who returned at the end of the war as well as those who lost their lives.





The building was altered in the early 1800's and again about 1847. In 1868 the current tower was built replacing the Norman tower and the current Clock was placed in the Tower of the Church in 1844. In the early 1900's a large new aisle was added on the north side of the Nave (the Burdon Aisle). The building was again re-ordered in 2002 to provide a Community Space and small Lady Chapel in the Burdon Aisle, improved vestry areas (Vicar's Vestry and Kitchen Vestry), two toilets (one of which is fully accessible), and an audio-visual system. The organ was re-sited at

the rear of the Nave. At the same time two Saxon Carvings were brought into Church from the graveyard to preserve them from further erosion.

The Church is approached by a ramp or via an elevated, narrow path along the church wall on Church Lane. The building is surrounded by a closed churchyard in which there are war graves. Northumberland County Council is responsible for its maintenance. Members of the congregation sweep paths, clear away fallen leaves, plant tubs & planters and maintain a small flower bed beside the main gate.

For major festivals and well attended services the Burdon Aisle (Community Space) is set out with chairs to provide additional seating capacity. The Community Space is also used for all our fund raising and social events, church meetings, school visits, messy church and may also be hired by other organisations.



## Our Services

We believe in and are recognised as being a welcoming and open church engaging with everyone who enters St. Cuthbert's. We encourage strangers to come and join us and welcome all who come seeking occasional offices, regardless of whether or not they attend church regularly. Our services are usually followed by refreshments and fellowship.

### Patterns of Worship:

#### Sunday:

8.00 a.m. BCP Said Holy Communion

*(Although this has been suspended during the Vacancy)*

9.30 a.m. Morning Prayer with Hymns (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month)

9.30 a.m. Common Worship Sung Eucharist (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month)

Fifth Sunday United Benefice Sung Eucharist – time depends on hosting church

11.30 a.m. Baptisms – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month (also at 12.30 p.m. if required)

3.00 p.m. Messy Church – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month

#### Wednesday:

9.15 a.m. Common Worship Said Eucharist

*(During the vacancy the first Wednesday of the month has been Eucharist with Morning Prayer, led by one of our Ministry Team, on the other weeks)*

The church is open every Wednesday and Thursday (10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon) for visitors/private prayer and the booking of Baptisms and Weddings. We have 83 names on our Electoral Roll, 39.8% of whom live outside the parish.

In 2024 we had:

An average Sunday Congregation: 45

Average Sunday Communicants: 40

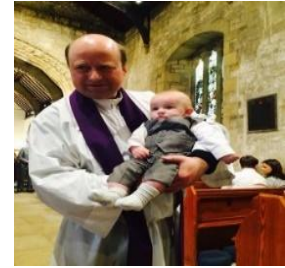
Wednesday Mid-Week Communion, average attendance 10

Baptisms: 35

Weddings: 9

Funerals in Church: 30

Funerals at the Crematorium: 8



We have several members of the congregation involved in leading intercessions, reading lessons, administering the chalice both in Church and to the sick and housebound. A few members of the congregation are part of our Baptism Team and are involved in the regular Baptism preparation meetings held monthly to meet parents and godparents.

## Music

We have two organists who play for our Sunday Eucharistic Services and special services as well as for Weddings and Funerals as requested. Our Music Group provide the music for our services of Morning Prayer. St. Cuthbert's has a choir which meets weekly on a Thursday in Church and has members from both our Church congregation as well as from other Churches and the local community. They support our worship at Easter, Christmas and special occasions, but do not currently sing collectively as a choir on Sundays.

## Outreach and Community Involvement

### Faith Outreach

We have a small number of members licensed to take communion to the sick and housebound, this is an area which needs some development. The Pastoral Care Team produce a quarterly "Thought for the Week" booklet which is distributed widely, with 140 copies being given out across the United Benefice including Care Homes, Bedlington Deanery, Newcastle Cathedral and the Chaplains of Cramlington and Wansbeck hospitals.



Our Messy Church meets monthly on a Sunday afternoon and has its own distinct active congregation (average attendance 8). In 2024 we held "Messy Brick Church", a one day summer holiday event.

St. Cuthbert's hosts regular Bible Study groups, Lent and Advent studies as well as studies on Faith journeys, The Gospels, The Creeds, Living in Love and Faith; as well as film nights looking at faith-based ideology from secular films.



A Pub Group meets monthly in our local Wetherspoons as a pastoral group for support and bible study, and an Outrageous Women's Bible Study Group who meet monthly for Bible Study discussions, pastoral needs, reflective faith sessions as well as charity events and recently hosted a prayer day. Both of these groups have members from all our churches in the United Benefice as well as other Churches.

### **Uniformed Organisations**

We have a well-established 1<sup>st</sup> Bedlington St. Cuthbert's Brownies, who meet each week during term time in our Community Space, and have recently started a 1<sup>st</sup> Bedlington Guides Group. The Brownies do not attend church regularly, but usually join us for our Harvest Festival and Toy Service.



Our local 2522 Bedlington Air Cadets come to St. Cuthbert's for their annual ATC service. They participate as a Squadron in our service of Nine Lessons and Carols and special Commemorative and Remembrance services. Our previous incumbent acted as their Padre and the Squadron are looking to our next incumbent taking on this role.

### **Charitable Support**

We support The Bedlington Food Bank, the Bedlington Women's Refuge, Christian Aid, St. Oswald's Hospice and have an annual Quiz to support a local charity or individual. We have responded to disaster appeals, usually by organising a special fund raising event.

### **Our Ministry to Schools**

We have an excellent relationship with our Voluntary Aided Whitley Memorial Church of England Primary School. The Incumbent is Ex-Officio on the Governing Body and the Parochial Church Council appoints three Foundation Governors, at present we only have one PCC Foundation Governor in post. Our previous incumbent went into school one morning each week and the school would like to see this continue. The children come into church regularly for Eucharist, RE visits and their own seasonal services, especially at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. They also take part in the annual Diocesan Leavers Service at the Cathedral.

We have also welcomed West End Primary and Meadowdale Academy for services and visits at Easter, Harvest and Christmas.



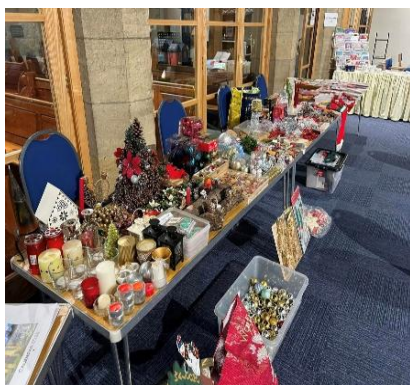
## Ecumenical Relations and Relationship with Neighbouring Parishes

We take part in the annual Remembrance Service held in Bedlington each year, are committed to working ecumenically wherever possible and support the work of Churches Together in Bedlingtonshire, e.g. Lent Lunches, Good Friday Act of Witness, Sunrise Easter Day Service, Advent Carol Service and Walking Nativity. We enjoy good relationships with our neighbouring parishes in the Deanery. We play a full and active part in the life of the Deanery.



## Church Activities

We have an amazing Fundraising and Social Group who arrange a wide and varied range of fund raising and social events during the year – Coffee Mornings, Fayres, Quizzes and Concerts, including annual concerts by the New Day Singers and the Ashington & District Male Voice Choir. These not only contribute hugely to our finances but the events in themselves are well supported by the community and we consider these to be another form of outreach and a means of engaging with the community of Bedlington. We have a small talented Flower Group who decorate the church for services and major festivals and an Eco-Church Group.



Information about our activities can be found on our weekly Pew Sheet and in our United Benefice Parish Magazine (which is produced 10 times a year). We have a Facebook page for Church, Messy Church and Events. We also aim to ensure all special services and events can be found on our “A Church Near You” site.

Church: <https://www.facebook.com/StCuthbertsChurchBedlington>

Events: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?ID=61555884144039>

Messy Church: <https://www.facebook.com/stcsmessychurch/>



## Administration and Finance



The parish has four churchwardens who support the Incumbent and the PCC in their work. The PCC meet approximately six times a year. There is a PCC Standing Committee which currently comprises of the Incumbent, the four churchwardens, the Vice Chair and PCC Secretary. Sub-groups of the PCC include Safeguarding/Responsible Caring, Building/Fabric, Baptism, Fund Raising/Social and Finance.

Many church members are willing to volunteer and assist as and when needed. We struggle to find volunteers to serve as Churchwarden and to maintain a full complement of PCC Members. Following the death of our Treasurer in 2024 it has proved difficult to find someone to take on the role, therefore these responsibilities are currently being shared by the Churchwardens. Our Independent Examiner stepped down after 16 years excellent service and we are in the process of finding a new Examiner.

Safeguarding and Responsible Caring is a serious priority for us and is a routine item on every PCC Agenda. We have a first class Parish Safeguarding Officer who keeps us well informed and ensures all appropriate training requirements are met and Level 3 compliance is maintained on the Diocesan Parish Dashboard.

We have always paid our Parish Share in full (currently £42,500). In 2024 this payment was delayed, due to difficulties accessing funds following the death of our treasurer. We have now paid this shortfall and are on track to meet our commitment in 2025. The parish has no debts and the Incumbent's expenses have been met in full.



We have not participated in a formal Stewardship or Generous Giving Scheme for a number of years, but have had a member of the Diocesan Generous Giving Team preach at a Sunday morning Eucharist. Due to generous benefactors the Vicar and Churchwardens hold a Restricted Church Fabric Fund and have supported requests from the PCC for funds towards the cost of maintenance and repairs to our Church.

Most members of our congregation pay by Standing Order, we also have a weekly envelope scheme and actively encourage the use of Gift Aid. There are currently 45 of our regular givers who Gift Aid their contributions. We also installed a Card Reader at the end of 2023 and this has been particularly welcomed by those attending Occasional Offices.





# ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, CAMBOIS

## Our Church



The Church stands in the centre of the village of Cambois, where there is a Grade II listed War Memorial and Cenotaph (although the Church itself is not a listed building). St. Andrew's Church is a small Church which was built in the 1860s. It was formerly the mission Church of St. Peter's Church, West Sleekburn (Cambois Parish Church) until St Peter's closed in the 1998. It is a red-brick mission hall style church with fixed pews and it accommodates up to one hundred people. In March 2024, the licence to hold weddings was officially transferred from St Peter's to St Andrew's, and we look forward to our first weddings in July 2025.

In around 1960 the choir stalls were removed and the organ moved to the back of the building, the organ no longer works and a keyboard is used for some services, with CDs or music links used as well. The Church has a speaker, microphone sound system which aids those with hearing difficulties. There is a small vestry at the back of the Church, with plans pending for its overhaul and reorganisation, along with the removal of the old organ.

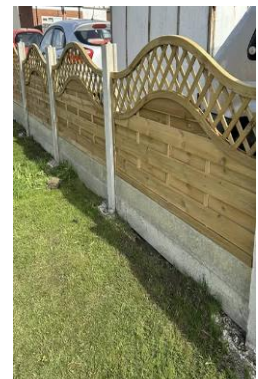


Behind the Church within the Church grounds there is a portacabin with small kitchen facilities and toilet. This is used as the Parish Hall after services for refreshments, monthly coffee mornings and fairs, as well as other events and community space.



The Church is set within large gardens which are nurtured and maintained by our gardening group with the grass cut by a local gardening firm. In April 2025 the old broken fence around the garden was removed by the local community and QTS (a data company) who funded the erection of a new fence.

The Church garden is always available for people to sit in as some of the houses around do not have gardens, so the space is open to them.



The Church building is in a stable state and the recent repointing, painting and roof repairs have secured a good state of repair, there is ongoing work including windows repairs and other alterations, as well as a new portacabin. These and other plans are currently being reviewed by the Diocese after which a faculty will be applied for. St Andrew's is looking to a future of great opportunities within the church, the congregation and the wider community and parish.

## Our services

### Patterns of Worship

Our Sunday services are joint with one of our United Benefice Churches St John's Sleekburn and alternate in location.

#### Sunday:

10.30 a.m.    1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Common Worship Holy Communion (at St. John's)  
                    2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Morning Prayer (at St. Andrew's)  
                    3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Common Worship Holy Communion (at St. Andrew's)  
                    4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Morning Prayer (at St John's)

Fifth Sunday United Benefice Sung Eucharist – time depends on hosting church

#### Wednesday:

10.45 a.m.    Common Worship Said Eucharist

*(During the vacancy Eucharist is held when visiting clergy are available, otherwise the service is Morning Prayer led by one of our Ministry Team)*

When our midweek Wednesday service is a Morning Prayer service led by a Reader or Warden, rather than a sermon we discuss the Bible passage amongst ourselves and share the service .

We occasionally enjoy a range of less formal worship services and a variety of seasonal services; such as Harvest, Sea Sunday service, Christmas Tree Festival, Christmas Sing-along, Christingle services with school and congregation.

The congregation is loyal and loving, and very keen to meet and welcome new people. The Church has a strong faith and core of loyal members who work to see the church grow in faith and attendance, and has some long standing congregates who have rooted heritage within the community and church.



The congregation is open and willing to accept change and to play a role in a community that has a strong heritage but recognises this is hard because of the increasingly transient population. They do, however see this as a priority, and look forward to the pending investment and influx of new employment and people in the area.



## Church attendance

Average Sunday Communicants: 14

Average Sunday attendance: Communion Service (once a month): 16/Morning Prayer: 9

Average weekday attendance: 6

Funerals in Church: 4

Funerals at the Crematorium 0

Baptisms and weddings as required.

We have a United Benefice Confirmation Service hosted in turn, as far as possible, by each of the Parishes

Our churchwarden has a strong faith base, supports services and encourages faith growth and ministry in the congregation and works alongside the Ministry Team.

We have several members of the congregation involved in intercessions, reading lessons and administering the chalice in the church. Some of the congregation have attended earlier versions of the Diocese lay ministry pastoral online sessions and use these skills and gifts within the church and community. We have a sides person on an informal basis to welcome people each service. A few members of the congregation undertake informal pastoral visits and there is a strong sense of connection and keeping in contact and care. Home Communion is undertaken by the Incumbent and Licensed Readers, and a member of the team undertakes volunteering as a hospital chaplain, whilst another is an Anna Chaplain.

## Outreach and Community Involvement

### Faith Outreach

A few members of the congregation undertake informal pastoral visits and there is a strong sense of connection and keeping in contact and care. Home Communion is undertaken by the incumbent and Licensed Readers. The Pastoral Care Team produce a quarterly "Thought for the Week" booklet, which is distributed widely, with 140 copies being given out across the United Benefice community including Care Homes, Bedlington Deanery, and Chaplains of Cramlington and Wansbeck Hospitals.



Our churchwarden visits and connects with the local business, club and community, as well as interaction through the community gardening group and open church.

There are no definite prayer groups, but there has been United Benefice Prayer Days. There is a Mother's Union at Cambois, although the membership is small. There are Bible Study groups covering Lent, Advent, the Gospels, Pilgrimage, and other themes, which are open to the United Benefice and further and are held at the different churches. The Church garden and portacabin have been hired by the Bedlington Hope Church for a pool baptism service, which was family orientated.



## Uniformed Organisations



Remembrance Day Services at the War Memorial are attended by members of the local forces, police, ambulance and fire services, council officers, sea cadets as well as ex-servicemen and community. With a special service attended by the local primary school children.



Other occasional civic services are held in our Church, such as Sea Sunday with Sea Cadets, who are based in Ashington but have links to Cambois and surrounding area.

## Charitable Support

We support the Women's Refuge, Cat & Dog Shelter, Dementia Awareness, Children's Society through the Christingle Services and respond to disaster appeals and any one-off events through special fund-raising events.



St Andrew's have a wood storage for collection or delivery for those who are unable to afford heating as several houses in the area do not have mains connection and are struggling with fuel poverty. The Church garden is always available for people to sit in as some of the houses around do not have gardens so the space is open to them. We often have donations of food, clothing etc. that are available for the community.



## Our Ministry to Schools

Our previous incumbent had a good relationship with Cambois Primary School and the children come to the Church for some services, such as Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas. Our Licensed Readers have aided and led them as well as involvement from the church congregation.



## Ecumenical Relations and Relationship with Neighbouring Parishes

We are part of Churches Together in Bedlingtonshire and work together during the year supporting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Lent Lunches, Market Place Act of Witness on Good Friday, Easter Sunrise service, Advent Carol service, Remembrance Sunday, Walking Nativity and quiz nights.

We enjoy good relationships with our neighbouring parishes in the Deanery and take an active part in the Deanery Synod activities, with members of our United Benefice part of the Deanery Development Group; a Diocesan initiative. St Andrew's have an informal ecumenical contact with Bedlington Hope Church.

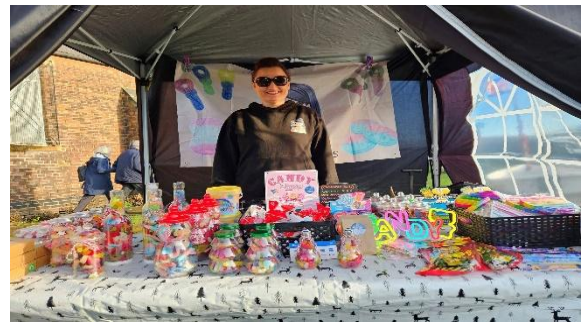


St Andrew's has a close relationship with both the other churches in the United Benefice, with closer connections to St John's (the original United Benefice was Cambois and Sleekburn) with the sharing of services and combined congregation at these services.

## Church Activities

Within the Cambois community St Andrew's has good links with the Tute, the Social Club and Camera Club, which was strengthened in September 2024 with a community event called Hidden Depths in which St Andrew's played a big part. This was an innovative heritage and arts project organised by the Tute aiming to uncover the fascinating history of 'Cambois, a Northumberland coastal village' and was very well attended by not only the local community but people from further afield. This helped bring St Andrew's to the forefront and visibility in the community.

St Andrew's have an enthusiastic and dedicated core team, along with other members of the community, who organise and run various fund raising and social events, the monthly coffee mornings and fairs, Christmas Sing-along, Christingle services. Our coffee mornings and fairs are good outreach as well as contributing to our finances. However, our main aim is to serve and for outreach to, the congregation and community, for those who need conversation and connections.



Our Christmas Tree Festival in December 2024 was a new initiative and although numbers were low throughout the weekend, we developed good relations with the local businesses and social groups who sponsored the trees. The event was opened by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland with singing by children from Cambois Primary School, there were events over the weekend with singing from St Cuthbert's choir. The 1<sup>st</sup> St. Cuthbert's Brownies have visited St Andrew's helping with the rewilding of the garden. We hope to expand this with connections to the school in line with our gardening plans.



Our gardening group has expanded and as well as church members is supported by members of the local community; their work in the garden is invaluable as well as being their outreach group.



Information about our activities is announced at services, through distribution of posters and flyers as well as verbal connections within the community. We also try to keep the school involved.

Regular posts of events, activities etc. can be found on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100070026492125>

St Andrew's is also on the 'A Church Near You' site.

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16143/>

## Administration and Finance



St Andrew's has one churchwarden who supports the incumbent, ministry team and the PCC in their work. The six members of the PCC aim to meet monthly to bi-monthly. Many church members are willing to volunteer and assist as and when needed, however finding volunteers for roles requiring regular commitment is difficult with the small numbers.

The PCC has a skilled Treasurer who does not live locally but has family and faith links to the church and area. Due to his work commitments he attends our PCC meetings through Zoom which works well. We have an efficient independent examiner for the accounts and our 2024 accounts were signed off with no issues.

Safeguarding and Responsible Caring is a serious priority for the PCC and the congregation and is a routine item on every PCC Agenda. The United Benefice has a Safeguarding Officer who is based at St Cuthbert's and supports all three churches, and keeps us well informed and ensures all appropriate training requirements are met and compliance is maintained on the Diocesan Parish Dashboard.

We paid our Parish Share in 2024, which is funded through plate collection at services and events, and our trust fund income. We have a weekly envelope scheme and actively encourage the use of Gift Aid. We have a Card Reader for giving. The Church recently received a large donation from QTS which is being used for the fabric and renovation of the church building and surroundings.



# ST JOHN'S CHURCH, SLEEKBURN

## Our Church

St John's, Sleekburn is an Edwardian church which has a lot of beauty inside its plain exterior. Built in 1906 as a place of worship for the expanding mining community in Bedlington Station. It is a large red-brick building with a church hall and was built with funds from the coalmining philanthropist Miss Emily Easton. There is a house next to the church which was once used as the vicarage but is now rented out. The main United Benefice vicarage is next to St Cuthbert's church in Bedlington centre.



The traditional but homely church hall is the venue for a Faith and Life Group, a weekly lunch gathering, popular social evenings and fairs. St. John's has good links with the two primary schools in the parish which use the church for their Christmas performances, harvest services, as well as singing at church fairs or occasional other events. The Parish of St John's, Sleekburn is situated in the middle of the three parishes which make up the United Benefice of Bedlington; with St Cuthbert's, Bedlington and St Andrew's, Cambois.

## Our services

### Patterns of Worship

Our Sunday services are joint with one of our United Benefice Churches, St Andrew's, Cambois and alternate in location.

#### Sunday:

- 10.30 a.m. 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Common Worship Holy Communion (at St. John's)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Morning Prayer (at St. Andrew's)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Common Worship Holy Communion (at St. Andrew's)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Morning Prayer (at St John's)
- Fifth Sunday United Benefice Sung Eucharist – time depends on hosting church

#### Thursday:

- 10.15 a.m. Common Worship Said Eucharist
- (During the vacancy Eucharist is held when visiting clergy are available, otherwise the service is Morning Prayer led by one of our Ministry Team)*

Baptisms, funerals and weddings as required. The congregation connects to the community with weddings, baptisms and funerals, in which due to the close community links, those attending are known to the congregation also.

We have a United Benefice Confirmation Service hosted in turn as far as possible by each of the Parishes



We enjoy a range of less formal worship services such as Celtic reflection services, and a variety of seasonal services; such as Harvest, All Souls Remembrance services, Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, and Christingle services.

The congregation are loyal and loving, and very keen to welcome new people into the church. The Church has a strong faith and core of loyal members who work and pray for the church to grow in faith and attendance, and has some long standing congregates who have rooted heritage within the community and church.



### Church attendance

Average Sunday Communicants: 12  
Average Sunday attendance (Communion Service): 16  
Average Sunday attendance (Morning Prayer): 10  
Average weekday attendance: 10  
Baptisms: 6  
Weddings: 0  
Funerals in Church: 5  
Funerals at the Crematorium: 2



The congregation is open and willing to accept change and are willing to play a role in a community that has a strong heritage but recognises that this is hard because of the increasingly transient population. They do, however see this as a priority, and look forward to new investment and influx of people in the area with wider commuter connections of the new Newcastle to Ashington train line and the opening of Bedlington Station train station. Our churchwardens have strong faith base, support services and encourages faith growth and ministry in the congregation and works alongside the Ministry Team.

We have several members of the congregation involved in intercessions and reading lessons. Some of the congregation have attended earlier versions of the Diocesan Authorised Lay Ministry pastoral online sessions and use these skills and gifts within the church and community. We have a sides person on an informal basis to welcome people to each service. A few members of the congregation undertake informal pastoral visits and there is a strong sense of connection and keeping in contact and care. Home Communion is undertaken by the Incumbent and Licensed Readers, and a member of the team undertakes volunteering as a hospital chaplain, whilst another is an Anna Chaplain.

## **Outreach and Community Involvement**

### **Faith Outreach**

A few members of the congregation undertake informal pastoral visits and there is a strong sense of connection and keeping in contact and care. Home Communion is undertaken by the incumbent and Licensed Readers. The Pastoral Care Team produce a quarterly "Thought for the Week" booklet, which is distributed widely, with 140 copies being given out across the United Benefice community including Care Homes, Bedlington Deanery, and Chaplains of Cramlington and Wansbeck Hospitals.



There are eight care homes within the parish to which the ministry team have provided pastoral care. During the pandemic and continuing on, St John's congregation have knitted holding crosses for residents of care homes as well as elderly members of the congregation supporting them in their faith.



St John's has a history of membership in the Mother's Union, with some of the congregation still members and have meetings jointly with St Andrew's. However, there are no active meetings currently.



There is a Faith on Thursday group based at St John's, Sleekburn which is attended by members across the three churches as well as other churches, and is open to anyone. The group started exploring their faith through a Faith in Life course and then wanted to expand further in their faith and knowledge, so formed the Faith of Thursday (FOT) group, who meet on Thursday afternoons (hence the name!).







The FOT group have an allocated access WhatsApp group for fellowship and pastoral care, as well as prayers as required. The group have been active in faith discussions as well as visits to Shepherd's Dene Retreat house and to Nether Springs, the home of the Northumbria Community. They have organised visits to Newcastle Cathedral with

services, talks and tours, as well as a group visit to the Laing Art Gallery to see the Lindisfarne Gospels when on tour in Newcastle, and visit and tour at St Thomas' Resource Church, Newcastle. A member of the group is a volunteer at Newcastle Cathedral and arranged a talk at St

John's by Canon Jon Canessa on the Newcastle Diocese's 'Lantern Initiative'. There has been a talk by Reverend Rosemary New from CADA North East, Christians Against Domestic Abuse



In addition to the FOT group, there are Bible Study groups led by some of the Ministry Team, covering Lent, Advent, the Gospels, Pilgrimage, and other themes, which are open to the United Benefice and further and are held at the different churches.

### Uniformed Organisations



Remembrance Sunday Services are usually joint services with St Andrew's at Cambois Church and War Memorial and attended by members of the local forces, police, ambulance and fire services, council officers, Sea Cadets as well as ex-servicemen and community. In addition, a small Remembrance service, held on Remembrance Day, has taken place with an act of silence and reflection before the war memorial plaques within St John's church.

### Charitable Support

St John's support the Bedlington Food Bank, Women's Refuge, Dementia Awareness, Children's Society through the Christingle Services and respond to disaster appeals and any one-off events through special fund-raising events.

### Our Ministry to Schools

Our previous incumbent had good relations with Stead Lane Primary School, Bedlington Primary School as well as Bedlington Academy; The primary school children come to the Church for some services, such as Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas. Our Licensed Readers have aided and led them as well as involvement from the church congregation.



## Ecumenical Relations and Relationship with Neighbouring Parishes

We are part of Churches Together in Bedlingtonshire and work together during the year supporting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Lent Lunches, Market Place Act of Witness on Good Friday, Easter Sunrise service, Advent Carol service, Remembrance Sunday, Walking Nativity and quiz nights.



We enjoy good relationships with other parishes in the Deanery and take an active part in the Deanery Synod activities, with members of our United Benefice part of the Deanery Development Group; a Diocesan initiative.

St. John's has a close relationship with the other churches in the United Benefice, with closer connections to St Andrew's (the original United Benefice was Cambois and Sleekburn) with the sharing of services and combined congregation at these services.

## Church Activities



St John's have an enthusiastic and dedicated core team, along with other members of the United Benefice churches and the community, who organise and run various fund raising and social events; coffee mornings, fairs, weekly Tuesday Lunch and Bingo, Jumble sales, and Soup on Thursday events. With seasonal events such as Christingle, strawberry teas, harvest broth social and Christmas lunches.

Our coffee mornings, fairs and Tuesday Lunch and Bingo are good outreach opportunities as well as contributing to our finances.





In having these events our aim is to serve and reach out to the congregation and community, for those who need conversation.



Information about our activities is announced at services, through distribution of posters and flyers as well as verbal connections within the community.

Regular posts of events, activities etc. can be found on our Facebook page:

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

St John's is also on the 'A Church Near You' site.

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/8033/>

## **Administration and Finance**

St John's has two churchwardens who support the incumbent, ministry team and the PCC in their work. The members of the PCC aim to meet regularly. Many church members are willing to volunteer and assist as and when needed, however finding volunteers for roles requiring regular commitment is difficult with the small numbers.

Safeguarding and Responsible Caring is a serious priority for the PCC and the congregation and is a routine item on every PCC Agenda. The United Benefice has a Safeguarding Officer who is based at St Cuthbert's and supports all three churches, and keeps us well informed and ensures all appropriate training requirements are met and compliance is maintained on the Diocesan Parish Dashboard.

Our Parish Share is funded through plate collection at services and events. We have a weekly envelope scheme and actively encourage the use of Gift Aid.

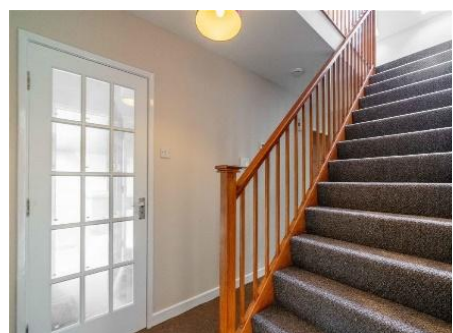


# THE UNITED BENEFICE VICARAGE

The three churches are served by one Incumbent with the vicarage being situated on Church Lane next to St. Cuthbert's Church in Bedlington.

The Vicarage is a brick built detached four bedroomed house with garage, built in 1982. The ground floor consists of a lounge, dining room with French doors opening onto the garden, study, kitchen, utility room and cloakroom. The first floor has four bedrooms, bathroom and separate toilet. There is gas central heating and an open fire in the lounge.

There is a large mature garden together with parking for three/four cars which is bordered by the churchyard and a small housing development.



# THE PARISHES AND THE FUTURE

We look to:



## **Church Growth**

- continuing further engagement with the residents of the parishes within the United Benefice;
- by reaching more people, encouraging them to attend church and to be “Church” in the community;
- in line with the Diocesan values of Growing Younger in the church, increase and strengthen ministry across all age groups and inspire more lay participation;
- growing youth engagement in new opportunities to explore faith by strengthening school relationships and ministry to families;

## **Spiritual Growth**

- re-engage with the local community through creative spiritual outreach to engage newcomers to explore and deepen faith;
- provide engaging discipleship through Bible study, prayer groups and discipleship courses to help deepen faith and walk alongside people whatever their background.

## **Leadership & Lay Ministry**

- build on the progress and “unity” achieved following the creation of our United Benefice;
- a strong innovative leader who is proactive in raising up the laity, equipping and empowering them to take on greater roles in ministry, mission and outreach;
- Good stewardship of our limited financial resources and our volunteers

## **The New Incumbent**

- An experienced priest who can be a training incumbent to our ordinand in training who will serve her curacy with us.
- A person with leadership skills, who communicates well and can work alongside as well as support our Ministry Team, Churchwardens, PCCs and committed congregations as a team within the United Benefice.
- Someone who is experienced in working with children and young people who is confident in school settings as well as with youth ministry.
- A person who can connect with the residents and communities within the United Benefice and is able to build trust with people both outside and within the church demographic;
- Someone who is committed to prayer and guided by the holy spirit, with an awareness of the needs and culture of the local community.
- A person who is an enabler and encourager, willing to be an agent of change and embrace new ways of doing church with a heart for evangelism.
- An enthusiastic person with good listening and communication skills who will provide spiritual growth, pastoral care, offer affirming religious guidance and promote faith.