

THE PARISH OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

OXFORD ROAD, READING RG1 7NQ

*in the Deanery of Reading,
the Reading Episcopal Area
of the Diocese of Oxford
& The See of Oswestry*

PARISH PROFILE

January 2025



A Living Tradition of Faith

*A Parish Under the Patronage
of the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith*



FOREWORD



Oxford Diocese has a vision to be *Courageous, Compassionate & Contemplative* and to reflect a more *Christ-like Church in the world*.

This vision is at the heart of Reading Deanery's plan for the Oxford Road area of the town and Holy Trinity, Reading is essential to this mission and ministry.

Working with neighbouring churches, and forging local partnerships, Holy Trinity Reading will reach out to local communities, meeting them where they are, develop a ministry of social action and evangelism.

This is a great opportunity for a missionally-minded priest, who longs to work collaboratively with Deanery colleagues to reach out to God's people in a key parish in Central Reading

The Reverend Canon Liz Jackson
Associate Archdeacon of Berkshire



The parish of Holy Trinity, Reading is at a crucial stage of its mission and ministry. Sitting on the western boundary of Reading town centre, it is the only Church of England church building located on the Oxford Road, one of the main arteries into Central Reading. Alongside the neighbouring Anglican parishes and other Christian churches, each with a different tradition and history, Holy Trinity needs to rediscover its mission and ministry to serve the whole of its parish and the wider needs of those who live on and around the Oxford Road. This is now the time for Holy Trinity to look outward and engage with its parish and partners in God's mission.

As part of the preparation to fill this vacancy, the Bishops of Oswestry and Reading commissioned Fr Gary Ecclestone and me to scope the ministry and missional needs of the Oxford Road. We have consulted with all the neighbouring parishes. Further work will be needed to test out our findings with the ecumenical church partners and para-church groups who are very present in the local community. We hope the new parish priest will help us in this work. In our consultation we heard of exciting opportunities for ministry and mission in the following areas:

1. *Children and young people's ministry.*
2. *Health and wellbeing.*

3. *Older people.*
4. *Social justice issues, including homelessness, deprivation, asylum seekers and refugees, racial justice, and ministry to sex workers.*
5. *Using the church building as the heart for missional outreach, including partnership working with other churches.*
6. *Inter-faith engagement.*

These now need to become the priorities for the parish and its new parish priest.

Reading Deanery is very excited that it might at last be possible to appoint a parish priest to Holy Trinity. We are ready to help the chosen candidate explore what a mission plan for Oxford Road might look like. We are praying for the person the Lord has chosen for this appointment, and have assured the parish that we will do whatever we can to make this appointment a success.

With its twenty-nine parishes covering twenty-four benefices, the Deanery has one of the largest Synods in the country, despite covering a relatively small geographical area focused largely on the town of Reading itself. We have an active and well-attended Chapter, which meets regularly throughout the year. We work closely with churches from all denominations. The concentrated nature of Reading provides many opportunities to work together to bring God into the day-to-day lives of the town and the 250,000 people, for whom it is home. We are in the process of forming a new *Mission Action Plan* as a Deanery, which will place the diocesan priority of ministry to Children, Young People & Families ministry at its heart.

Recognising the size and variation in the Deanery, we operate a dispersed leadership model, dividing the Deanery into four operational zones (north, west, central, east/south). The Area Dean and Deanery Lay Chair have assistants to help resource these zones. Each pair of Associate Area Dean and Associate Lay Chair provides frontline support to clergy and parishes and oversees vacancies in their zone. They also take their share of cross-deanery work. Holy Trinity is in the Western Zone of the Deanery.

The Reverend Canon Mike Smith
Area Dean of Reading

THE APPOINTMENT

Following wide and careful consultation, involving the congregation, local clergy as well as the Bishops of Reading and Oswestry and careful consideration of the opportunities and need for ministry and mission on the Oxford Road in Reading, **we now seek a new committed, energetic, collaborative and entrepreneurial parish priest** to enable the revitalising and strengthening of the existing congregation and the putting in place of a clear mission-plan for the parish in the first year of appointment. The neighbouring incumbents are eager to work with the new parish priest on this plan.

Funding has been secured to authorise a time-limited appointment of a *Priest-in-Charge*, initially for three years, with a further term of three years available. By the end of this funded period, it is hoped and expected that Holy Trinity will be able to pay for its own priest in the normal way.

The Parish has been in both vacancy and suspension since our last full-time stipendiary Priest-in-Charge left Holy Trinity in March 2011 to join the *Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham*. Since that time, Holy Trinity has been served by a number of committed clergy, some of whom come a distance to help us, when our two retired *PTO* priests are unavailable. We are very pleased indeed that the Bishop of Oswestry himself has made two recent visits to Holy Trinity to meet and encourage parishioners, to celebrate Mass and to see the parish for himself.

We are delighted that we now have the opportunity to recruit a new Parish Priest and thus begin a new and exciting chapter in our life and mission along the Oxford Road in Central Reading.

Holy Trinity is situated close to Reading Town Centre. Geographically, the parish is quite small, though densely populated with approximately 7,500 residents. Despite its small size, the parish is, in reality, a disparate set of communities, divided ethnically, religiously and in several other ways, for example there are an increasing number of new inhabitants moving into apartments in adjacent *new-builds* and in repurposed office conversions.



Since its inception as a parish in 1870, Holy Trinity has always striven to be a beacon of Anglo-Catholic worship and for this reason attracts people to the congregation from within the parish and surrounding neighbourhood, but also from some distance away. While we recognise and value this feature of our life and ministry, we are clear that, in the main, the future of Holy Trinity lies in serving the needs of the immediate locality along the Oxford Road and in the residential streets adjacent to it.

Our distinctive worship style with its emphasis on *noble simplicity*, which includes use of the Roman Rite, focuses on the Eucharist, good liturgy, sound teaching and appropriate music. This is supported by prayerful observance, a very important aspect of the life of the church. While Holy Trinity would once again aim to proclaim the best in catholic sacramental liturgy and thus draw people to that distinct style of witness and worship, the new priest will need to be firmly committed to urban mission and so 'work the parish' from the beginning of his time here.

The aims of Holy Trinity are:

- *To proclaim the catholic faith as the Church of England has received it.*
- *To be a faithful and lively house of prayer, praise, teaching and sacrament.*
- *To respond generously to issues and needs at home and abroad.*
- *To be a church that is safe, open, friendly and accessible to everyone*
- *To engage, effectively and collaboratively, with the wider Church of England, both in the Deanery and the Diocese of Oxford and under the pastoral oversight and sacramental care of the Bishop of Oswestry.*

We value the catholic tradition that has been handed down to us over the years and we are trusting that the liturgy which sustains our Services will continue to play a central part in the life and worship of Holy Trinity. We are aware that we need to review, consciously and constantly, how we can be more inclusive and accessible to those within the parish and neighbouring areas, as well as those seeking a church that provides catholic worship and teaching.



We are committed to our membership of *The Society* and have welcomed the support and interest taken in us by the Bishop of Oswestry, since his appointment in early 2023.

Despite difficulties, frustrations and setbacks, our small congregation has carried on courageously. There is a firm resolve to work together with our new Parish Priest to re-build and re-develop a vibrant Christian community once again in this part of Reading.

We also wish to be an active witnessing community. What particularly binds us together is the sense of a family aiming to share the love of God in thanksgiving, worship and outreach.

We much look forward to welcoming a Parish Priest, with whom we can pray and work to achieve these aims.



THE PARISH

Tradition

The ethos is modern catholic with Mass currently offered at least three times a week. The atmosphere is relaxed and devout. The congregation is mixed, coming from all age groups, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic origins and currently includes a small number of children (though not yet enough!). The Electoral Roll currently stands at about 23.

According to the most recent data supplied by the *Church Urban Fund*, Holy Trinity Parish is among the most deprived in the country. See: <https://cuf.org.uk/parish/270453>

A parish of the Romanian Orthodox Church has used Holy Trinity on Sundays and at times during the week since March 2018. For various reasons, there is, as yet, no formal agreement concerning this use, though steps are being taken to rectify this matter.

Population

The demography of the area has changed rapidly in recent years, though according to the most recent *National Census* figures, just over 50% of the residents regard themselves as Christian. Historically, the local population has found employment in light industry and in Reading itself. The expansion of Heathrow Airport and the influx of other cultural communities from Asia, the Caribbean, North Africa and the former Eastern European bloc, have engendered considerable degrees of change along the Oxford Road and the streets on either side over the last decade. As a result, the local population tends to be somewhat transitory in part, though there is now much potential with planned regeneration of the area, refurbishment of some of the existing housing stock and the construction of new flats.

Buildings

Holy Trinity was built in 1826. It is a grade 2* listed building. Over the last two years, thanks to generous legacies received in the past from parishioners and placed in the care of the *Number One Trust*, whose Trustees normally respond positively to approaches for appropriate funding, major and much-needed work on the electrics and internal decor has been carried out. That said, there is work still to be done to the exterior of the building and repairs need to be made to the tombs in the crypt.

The vestry complex, the meeting room and small Hall (known as *the Undercroft*) have also been fully redecorated, though some further work to renew the kitchen and alleviate ingress of damp is still needed. The absence of mains drainage in that part of the building means that the Hall is not as widely used, either by parochial or community groups, as it could be. Work to try to rectify this problem is ongoing.

We have recently arranged a fortnightly visit from the local *Community Payback Team* to enable the overgrown church grounds to be cleared and subsequently maintained in a presentable condition.

Our Neighbours

Our near Anglican neighbours along or near the Oxford Road include the Parishes of Greyfriars, S Mary's (the Civic Church), S Giles-in-Reading, All Saints' & S Mark's and S George's (the former Garrison Church). The local Roman Catholic community is based at The English Martyrs' Church in Liebenrood Road (RG30 2EB), which is a bit further away. Within the parish boundaries are the *Lifespring* Church, located in the former cinema opposite Holy Trinity, Carey Street Baptist Church, the Central Reading Salvation Army Citadel adjacent to the Inner Distribution Road, the Reading Spiritualist Church at the end of Baker Street, the Christadelphian Church along the Oxford Road, the Synagogue of the Reading Hebrew Congregation in Goldsmid Road and the Central Jamme Mosque in Waylen Street. There is a much larger mosque serving the wider Muslim community along the Oxford Road just outside the parish near to the former Battle Hospital site.

We anticipate that positive working relationships with the leadership of the Romanian Orthodox congregation, which currently uses the church building on Sundays and at times in the week, will be rapidly established and that collaborative links, however tenuous, with other local ecumenical partners, as well as with the other faith traditions represented along the Oxford Road, will be formed with a view to bringing these disparate groups together as far as possible, in order to form a sense of an *Oxford Road community*.



The Presbytery

The priest's house is located some 200 yards from the church at 32 Baker Street, Reading RG1 7XY and its close proximity to Holy Trinity is very definitely an asset.

This fine four-bedroomed late-Victorian property has been the benefice house since at least 1904. It stands on the corner of Russell Street and Baker Street. At the rear is a

moderately-sized garden with off-street parking; there is a large kitchen and utility room, a separate dining room, sitting room and a large study. The bathroom is on the first floor and there is an additional WC on the ground floor. There is also cellar space available. A security alarm system and smoke detectors have also been installed.

The property is now vacant having been let out and is now undergoing a programme of works ahead of the new appointment.

Funding & Money

In terms of weekly income, Holy Trinity is not a wealthy parish (a copy of the most recent (2023) accounts is available on request). Fortunately, the PCC owns a property known as *the Mission House* in the vicinity of the church. This is maintained and let out by the Churchwardens and the income thereby derived helps us to pay our *Parish Share* to the Diocese of Oxford. In recent years, the Diocese has asked Holy Trinity for some £5,000 annually as *Parish Share* and this has been paid in full.

In the absence of a suitably-qualified parish Treasurer, we have our book-keeping and accounts kept by a professional book-keeper, which enables us to keep a much better grasp of our financial situation.

PRESENT PATTERN OF WORSHIP

There used to be a daily Mass, but this has proved to be unsustainable during the long vacancy.

Sunday

1000 Sung Parish Mass

1800 Low Mass

During the week

Tuesday 1200 Low Mass

The PCC recently authorised the purchase and installation of a new notice board, so that details of our Services and other events of interest to the wider community could be displayed for passers-by and updated on a weekly basis.



NUMBERS ON THE PRESENT ELECTORAL ROLL AND COMMUNICANTS

- There are currently twenty-three names on the Electoral Roll. Not all are resident parishioners.
- The average number of Sunday Communicants over three months (February/April 2024) is 17, including two or three children.
- The average number of Communicants over the whole year (including festivals) is thirty.
- The average number of Communicants at the Tuesday morning Mass is presently six.

OCCASIONAL OFFICES

Average number *per annum* over past three years:

- Baptisms: 6
- Confirmation Candidates: 0
- Marriages: 1
- Regular house Communions: 6
- Funerals in church: 3
- Funerals in crematorium: 4

The present statistics do not make for encouraging reading, but they underline the nature of the task ahead. That said, new people have joined the congregation over the last three years and have stayed with us.

LAY MINISTRY

One of our Churchwardens is a licensed Eucharistic Minister.

SAFEGUARDING

Our other Churchwarden is our Safeguarding Officer. We understand entirely that Safeguarding is everyone's concern and aim to ensure that all who join us understand and support this policy. Steps are currently being taken to organise the appropriate training for the churchwardens and all members of the PCC and others as we embed a proper culture of keeping people safe at Holy Trinity.



THE PARISH AND DEANERY

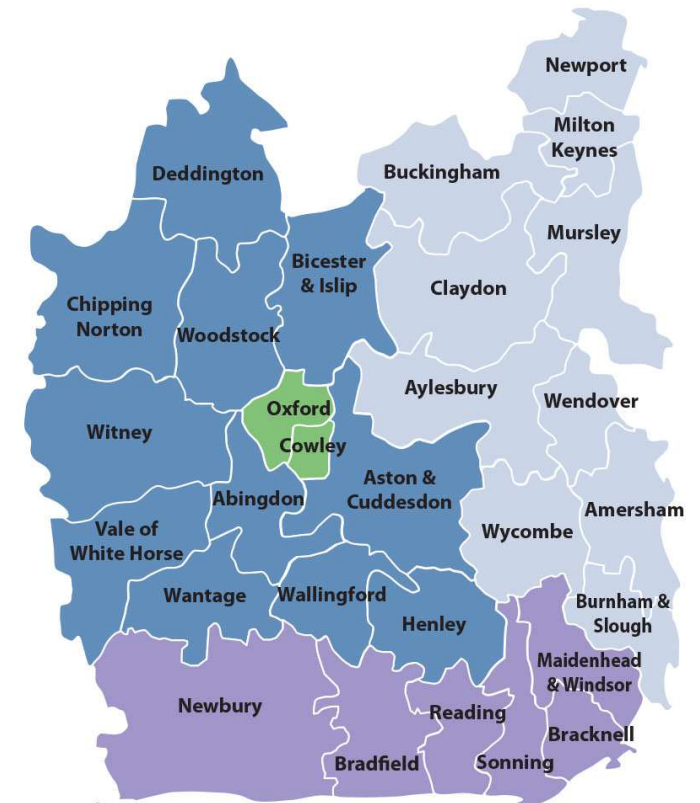


Reading Deanery is in the Archdeaconry of Berkshire.

The Diocese of Oxford is made up of the counties of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and five churches from neighbouring counties.

The Parish lies on the immediate western side of the town centre either side of the Oxford Road.

The triangle is the link between the Bristol to Paddington and the Southampton to Birmingham railway lines.



ASPIRATIONS

Short Term Goals

- To develop a new Mission Action Plan for the parish, jointly with S George's Tilehurst and S Mark's & All Saints' (the two Oxford Road parishes), that focuses on our local shared priorities.
- To complete the improvement of the church building, both inside and outside.
- To serve coffee after the Parish Mass and so encourage more people to interact socially and build friendships
- To raise the profile of church activities in the local community and within the worshipping community, especially among families.
- To enable the wider congregation to benefit from the opportunities to socialise and to work together.
- The re-introduction of parish pilgrimages to such places at Walsingham, trips and other fund-raising events

Mid Term Goals

- To review our church life by engaging with the See of Oswestry's *Healthy Churches' Project* and the *NCD Church Health Survey*, to enable us to develop a coherent sense of our shared vision for the future mission of Holy Trinity, as a *whole* congregation exercise.
- To re-focus the priorities of the PCC and congregation onto the missional priorities established in the Mission Action Plan and to work with neighbouring parishes and ecumenical partners in its effective delivery.
- To increase the involvement of Holy Trinity in the wider life of the church. More members of the PCC should be encouraged to serve on Synod at Deanery and Diocesan levels.
- To enable the parish to meet all its financial obligations, not least in terms of the Diocesan



Parish Share.

- To train the laity to undertake pastoral *rôles* in the church and local community. The training of laity in the areas of youth work and pastoral visiting is an area that is in need of development to allow the church to grow and continue to proclaim the Gospel of Christ

Long Term Goals

- To be a church and community that ministers to all parts of the parish, the wider Oxford Road and playing a clear and effective *rôle* alongside other churches and stakeholders in the up-building the Kingdom of God in West Reading.
- To be a parish that is energised about mission and, through its worship, discipleship and pastoral ministry, contributes to the life of the Deanery as a flourishing parish.
- To complete the development of the Hall/*Undercroft*. This could become of our strongest links with the wider community and these links need to be fostered and developed. The future use of the Hall needs careful consideration. It is hoped that we can offer facilities more appropriate to the present and future needs of the congregation and the wider parish community.
- To find ways and means of increasing lay participation to assist in the expansion of the church's ministry to the wider parish and to children in particular. However, we recognise that Rome was not built in a day...



THE PRIEST WE NEED

Qualifications/Training

- Is a Priest affiliated to *The Society of S Wilfrid & S Hilda*.
- Has satisfactorily completed Initial Ministerial Education.
- Will have Enhanced *DBS* clearance.
- Has already been in charge of a parish operating in the same tradition or is able to demonstrate a clear capacity for this.

Experience

- Is entirely committed to the Anglo-Catholic tradition.
- Is able to engage with and give pastoral support to people of all ages.
- Can demonstrate priestly ministry involving nurture, encouragement and vision-setting.
- Is able to lead traditional worship with sensitivity and care.
- Active engagement with local schools.
- Experience of successful work in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural environment.

Knowledge/Skills and Competencies

- The ability to preach in a variety of styles to a broad range of listeners including those for whom English is not a first language.
- The ability to identify and respond to opportunities for mission
- the ability to identify and develop the skills and gifts of others.
- The ability to make and build on links with individuals and community organisations whose involvement with the Church is limited.
- Deep knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the Tradition of the Church
- Good communication skills.
- Is able to manage change confidently.
- Collaborative working especially with volunteers and other churches.
- Ability to manage resources effectively.

General Attributes

- Places Christ at the centre of everything that is done.

- Shows evidence of a deep prayer life and ability to draw on a wide range of spiritual resources and traditions.
- Plays a full *rôle* in the life of the Deanery, Diocese and the See of Oswestry.
- Reviews our church life by engaging with the See of Oswestry's *Healthy Churches Project* and the *NCD Church Health Survey*, to enable us to develop a coherent sense of our shared vision for the future mission of Holy Trinity, as a whole congregation exercise.
- Will work with the Parish Safeguarding Officer to create a Safe Church for everyone, offering personal leadership, commitment, ambition and drive in this vital area of Church and community life.
- Is IT competent and social-media literate.
- Is open to new ideas and opportunities and prepared to take some risks
- Will take care of his own wellbeing and will ensure that he takes his weekly time off as well as his annual holiday entitlement.

SUPPORT

Our new parish priest will need appropriate support, which could include:

1. The Parish's existing two *PTO* Clergy.
2. S Giles-in-Reading, the other (and neighbouring) Society-affiliated parish in the Deanery.
3. The wider Deanery and Diocese.
4. The Bishop of Oswestry and its Vicar-General.
5. Membership of the local Chapter of the Society of the Holy Cross (SSC).
6. The Oswestry region and its Regional Dean Father Toby Boutle based at S Luke's in Swindon.

PRELIMINARY VISIT

Prospective applicants are warmly encouraged to contact the Parish Representatives through Churchwarden Mr Ron Cutting to arrange an informal visit (with spouses also, if applicable) to the church and the parish or to talk informally with him about the post: Telephone: (0118) 961 3706; e-mail: roncut107@gmail.com

