

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

PATRONAGE (BENEFICES) MEASURE 1986

Statement prepared by the P.C.C. describing the Church's ministry and mission within the parish

This form is designed to give an overview of a parish to be used in a vacancy for the appointment of a new parish priest. It will be accepted as the 'statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish' required by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. Additional information may be given by way of printed documents or written submissions.

I. Parish Information

1. *Name of Parish:*
Sleekburn
2. *Name of Parish church(es)*
St John
3. *Name of other C of E churches/centres for public worship in the parish*
None
4. *Group of parishes in which you work (formally or informally):*
Benefice of Bedlington, Cambois and Sleekburn
5. *Deanery:*
Bedlington
6. *Population:*
7,134
- 7.(a) *Number on Electoral Roll*
8
- (b) *Date of APCM at which this number was declared:*
22 May 2025
7. *Attendance at worship at each church:*

Average Sunday Communicants : **12**
Average Sunday attendance : **Communion (1st Sunday of month) : 16**
Morning Prayer (4th Sunday of month) : 10
Average weekday Communicants : **10**
Average weekday attendance : **10**
8. *Occasional Offices:*

Number of baptisms in the last 12 months: **6**
Number of persons confirmed in the last 12 months: **0**
Number of weddings in the last 12 months: **0**
Number of funerals in church in the last 12 months: **5**
Number of funerals taken by clergy not in church in the last 12 months: **0**

II. The Local Community

- 1.(a) *Briefly describe the population in terms of any predominant age and/or social groups, the ethnic mix etc:*
The age, ethnic group, religion profile etc are broadly in line with the other parishes in the benefice. However, as measured by the ONS in 2021, of the three parishes Sleekburn has

- the greatest proportion of people under 44 years of age
- the poorest health
- the highest socio-economic classification i.e. the 'least skilled'
- highest proportion of people with no qualifications
- highest level of social rented properties and lowest private ownership
- highest proportion of lone parent families
- highest proportion of households without availability of a car
- highest population density
- most deprived in terms of LSOA, the highest number of deprived children and young people, and in the bottom 9% of the country
- highest level of income deprivation

- (b) *Are there any special social problems, e.g. high unemployment?*

The parish hasn't recovered from the closing of the pit in terms of aspirations or opportunities resulting in a high level of social housing and much use of the local foodbank, a narrative for many of the ex-mining towns in South-East Northumberland, where little investment has been made in employment or community.

Sleekburn has some of the most deprived areas of the benefice and the parish is in the bottom 9% of parishes in the country (995). The parish has a mix of elderly people in social housing and families. The parish has the highest proportion of lone parent families and those of working age are the least skilled within the benefice.

The train station at Bedlington Station is reopening in 2025 which will provide regular train links to Newcastle and may help in raising the aspirations and investment in the area.

2. *Please list:*

Local schools:

- Bedlington Station Primary School – Community School with 232 pupils (32% free school meals)
- Stead Lane Primary School – Community Scholl with 236 pupils (39% free school meals)
- Bedlington Academy Secondary School – Academy with 810 pupils

Youth centres: None

Hospitals: None

Nursing/residential homes, sheltered housing:

There are 8 care homes in the parish

- Hirst Villas
- The Willows
- Highfield Residential Homes
- Victoria House
- Holmside
- Sleekburn House Assisted Living
- The Gables Care Home

- Grange Park Assisted Living

Places of worship of other faiths:

- Bedlington Colliery Methodist Church
- Hope Church (meet in the East Bedlington Community Centre)

Local businesses:

The parish has a small commercial centre characterised by public houses, takeaway food shops, betting shops and a few small convenience stores.

Neighbourhood initiatives:

Local associations:

The East Bedlington Community Centre was renovated relatively recently and provides many varied spaces to support the local community. The parish council operate from the community centre and hold monthly public meetings. The local foodbank has an outlet there each week along with services from Citizens Advice.

Any civic responsibilities of local clergy:

The vicar is welcomed at the monthly East Bedlington Parish Council meetings. Other civic responsibilities include the Remembrance Day Service and other occasional civic services. The Air Cadets meet in the parish and have been well supported in the past (albeit mainly at St Cuthbert's).

III. The Church Community (please give details for each church)

- 1.(a) *What percentage of the congregation lives outside the parish?*
c10%
- (b) *Describe the congregation in terms of age, employment, culture, ethnicity and gender:*
An elderly congregation with only one person under 59 years, only two males, all are White British, only one of the congregation has paid employment and the majority are single and retired.
2. *Please describe the tradition of your church and give details of robes/vestments worn by officiants:*
Our tradition was high church but over the last 10 years has become traditional Anglican "middle of the road". Our tradition has been that officiants wear vestments of a chasuble and stole, colour according to season, although our last incumbent often preferred cassock alb & stole. All our licensed Readers and Ordinand in training robe.
3. *Give details of Sunday services with times and form of service used:*
Our Sunday services are joint with one of our United Benefice Churches St Andrew's, Cambois and alternate in location.
1st & 4th Sundays at St John's – 1st Sunday Holy Communion Common Worship, 4th Sunday Morning Prayer @ 10.30am
2nd & 3rd Sundays at St Andrew's. – 2nd Sunday Morning Prayer, 3rd Sunday Holy Communion Common Worship @ 10.30am.
Fifth Sunday is a United Benefice Eucharist – location is rotated between the three churches in the United Benefice.
4. *Give details of weekday services:*
Thursday mornings at 10.15am. When clergy officiant is available holy communion service is held, the other mornings are morning prayer service.

5. *List any authorised ministers (e.g. Reader, Church Army Officer, Ordained Local Minister, Non-stipendiary Minister, Curate in training, retired Clergy):*
Two Licensed Readers, Two Readers with PTO, One Ordinand in Training who work within the United Benefice. One member of the team undertakes volunteering as a hospital chaplain, whilst another is an Anna Chaplain. One retired minister with PTO.
- 6.(a) *What is the average weekly giving of those aged 16 years and older, and what proportion of the giving is gift aided:*
Average weekly giving is £65, c50% is gift-aided
- (b) *When did the parish last have a stewardship campaign:*
In 2024 we had a United Benefice Generous Giving service in which one of our Readers preached on Generosity in faith, spirit and financial.
7. *How does each church supplement direct giving in order to meet financial needs (eg fundraising events, hall lettings, occasional offices, investments):*
Primarily through fundraising events (e.g. fairs) and occasional offices (the previous vicar had a very strong funeral ministry). Whilst we have a small church hall, lettings have largely ceased as there is a modern, multi-purpose community centre within 400 metres). The PCC has no investments.
- 8.(a) *Give details of expenses paid to the incumbent, and state whether this covers them in full.*
As a United Benefice we pay our share of the incumbent's expenses and in full. St John's contribute 30% of the costs.
- (b) *Is there an annual discussion about the level of expenses as part of the budgeting process:*
There is an annual item on our PCC agenda, which includes a recommendation that expenses are claimed in full and as regularly as possible. Monthly income is discussed at regular PCC meetings.
9. *What amount of Share has been (a) requested and (b) paid:*
 Last year: **Requested £1,200, Paid £1,200**
 Current year: **Requested £1,000, Paid £500**
 Next year: **TBC but £1,100 expected**
- 10.(a) *Is there any capital project in hand at the moment:*
On going repairs with the Church: roof repairs. Other work is required but there are insufficient funds.
- 10.(b) *If so, please give brief details with costs and state how they are to be met:*
£3k needed to patch the roof – plaiing to apply to the Minor Repairs & Improvement Fund.
11. *Please attach a copy of the latest statement of accounts.*



APCM 2024
Report.docx

IV. Church Buildings (please give details for each church)

- 1.(a) *What is the general state of repair of the churches:*
The Church is in a stable state but roof damage through recent storms and general "wear & tear" have led to some water ingress and localised damp. The planned repairs should address this but the roof is probably needing replacement. The heating is via (old) gas boilers which are working but the heating system is inefficient and is due replacement with a more efficeinet NZ system.

- (b) *Please give details of any major maintenance needed following the last Quinquennial Inspection:*
Roofing repairs, gutter and drain clearance.
2. *Please give details of church halls and any other ancillary buildings (and an indication of the level of their use).*
There is a separate (small) church hall in a good state of repair. There is little community use with the newly refurbished nearby community centre.
3. *Is there a churchyard to maintain and who is responsible for its maintenance?*
N/A

V. Outreach and Mission

- 1.(a) *What are the regular mission and outreach activities of the parish:*
**School connections and services, links with the local the schools for assembly and other lessons.
 Engagement with local community through occasional fund raising and social events.
 Weekly bingo where local residents are provided with a warm welcome, a meal and a game of bingo.**
- The Christam services with local schools see up to a thousand pupils and parents in church for nativity plays, and the Christmas Eve Christingle service welcomes over 120 people to church.**
- (b) *What are you doing to help people find out about Jesus:*
- **There is a Faith on Thursday group which welcomes people from across the benefice. This has been transformational for those who attend.**
 - **Thought for the Week Booklet published quarterly, with reflections upon the lectionary bible readings, again this is a United Benefice venture and is distributed across the Benefice, the community and wider in the deanery and local hospital chaplaincy.**
 - **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. There is also a women's group (Outrageous Women) who meet monthly within the United Benefice and hold Bible Study discussions, pastoral needs, reflective faith sessions as well as charity events.**
 - **Baptism visits by the incumbent.**
- (c) *What are you doing to help grow people in discipleship:*
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. There is also a women's group (Outrageous Women) who meet monthly within the United Benefice and hold Bible Study discussions, pastoral needs, reflective faith sessions as well as charity events.
- (d) *What are you doing to grow people in leadership:*
- **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.**
 - **The Sunday and Thursday Bible readings are read by members of the congregation and have a rota for intercessory prayers.**
- 2.(a) *Please give details of support for the church overseas:*
Children's Society through the Christingle Services
- (b) *How much is given annually:*
£250
- 3.(a) *Give details of support for home missions and charities:*

Women's Refuge, Foodbank, Children's Society through the Chringle Services and respond to disaster appeals and any one-off events through special fund-raising events.

(b) *How much is given annually:*

Donations to the Foodbank and Refuge are as goods rather than financial gifts.

4.(a) *Does the parish have an overseas link:*

No

(b) *If so, please state where/who*

5.(a) *Is there an organised system of outreach and welcome to new families:*

Yes

(b) *If so, please describe:*

We have a sides person to welcome people each service. A copy of the United Benefice Parish Magazine is distributed to the community as well as the Thought for the Week. We have a Facebook page informing of services, events, community links, and the Thought for the Week is published on the page, the page has a good following. Our fairs and weekly lunch and bingo give us the opportunity to welcome and support the local residents.

6. *What part does the church play in community care:*

We have pastoral care visits where and when needed which includes home communion.

The Ministry team support the incumbent in care home visits, and a member of the team undertakes volunteering as a hospital chaplain, whilst another is an Anna Chaplain.

7.(a) *Are there Lay Eucharistic Assistants who take communion to the sick:*

Yes

(b) *If so, who are they:*

The Licensed Readers administer home communion which has been previously consecrated.

8. *What work does the church undertake with young people, other than in church based organisations (eg open youth work):*

Our previous incumbent had good connections with the two local primary schools 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.

Whilst we have no direct church youth work activities at present, this has been identified as a priority and one of our wardens is training to be able to offer such activities.

VI. Ecumenical Relationships

1(a) *Involvement in local Council of Churches*

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.

(b) *Is there a formal covenant with any other denomination?*

No

2. *What informal ecumenical contacts are there?*

A member of our United Benefice ministry team works at Bedlington Salvation Army and this connection has resulted in donations to Annual Toy Service and Food Bank.

VII. Church Education and Social Provision

- 1.(a) *Name of Church School(s), if applicable:*
N/A
- (b) *Aided?*
Controlled?
Foundation?
- (c) *Number of pupils on roll (approx.):*
- (d) *If aided, does the PCC support the school:*

VIII. Lay Education and Participation

1. *What education and training work takes place in the church for the following (give approx. numbers):*
- Children:* **Local primary school children come to the Church for festival events – approx. 600.**
Young People: **No regular activities although we have previously collaborated with the local High school on events & mission.**
Adults: **Weekly discipleship course on Thursday afternoons supplemented with Benefice wide Bible Study groups during Lent and Advent**
- 2.(a) *Give details of house/prayer groups:* **None**
The Faith on Thursday group meets weekly and is open to all across the benefice.
- (b) *Are the leaders clergy or lay:*
Mostly led by Licensed Readers but is often shared with some of the lay members of the groups. Faith on Thursday group is mostly led by lay members of the congregation.
- 3.(a) *How do you rate the strength of lay leadership:*
Strong, active and given the opportunity could further extend their reach and impact.
- (b) *To what do you credit this strength or the lack of it:*
Our Ministry Team comprising our Licensed Readers, Ordinand in Training are committed to providing first class worship/study groups etc. within the whole United Benefice and in furthering and supporting the gifts of the lay members of the congregation.
St John's has a small congregation for services support but are dedicated and faithful in all they do in their faith, for the church and community and have good skills.

IX. Mission

1. *List areas of church life which you consider in need of development:*
- Growing a youth ministry, creating new ways for young people to explore faith. Strengthen school engagement and families ministry.**
 - Reengage with the local community through creative outreach to those disconnected from church life. Consider Enquirer programs to engage newcomers, encourage spiritual growth, and deepen faith.**
 - Spiritual Growth and Discipleship: provide engaging opportunities for Bible study, prayer groups, and discipleship courses to help deepen faith and create a deeper connection between the church and the local community**

d. Leadership development: Create a collaborative leadership culture that equips and empowers lay leaders to take on greater roles in ministry, mission and outreach.

2. *What are the main areas of mission that you think the new priest should prioritise in their ministry:*
- Church growth & reaching new people**
 - Youth & families**
 - Community Outreach and Evangelism**
 - Prayer & Spiritual renewal within our church family**
3. *In summary, what are the top three challenges with which you and the new priest need to engage:*
- Reengaging with a community disconnected from the church**
 - Growing a younger (more diverse) church family when in numerical decline**
 - Enabling the above with limited resources i.e. volunteers and financial resources**

X. Additional Information

Please add here, or on another sheet, anything else which you would like the Patron and the Bishop to know about the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish.

XI. The new parish priest

List the qualities and skills you would like to see the new priest:

- **Spiritually Grounded and Contextually Aware:** Committed to prayer and guided by the Holy Spirit, while fully engaged with the needs and culture of the local community.
- **Missional Vision and Energy:** a person with a heart for evangelism - a strong passion for outreach, able to share the Gospel in relevant and engaging ways in a place of social challenge. Sees the parish as a mission field, not just the church building as the base.
- **New ministries:** Proactive in developing new mission initiatives that connect with unchurched individuals and families and those communities facing multiple social challenges. Willing to take risks and embrace new ways of doing church.
- **Strong Youth and Schools Engagement:** Experienced in working with children and young people. Comfortable and confident in school settings and with youth ministry.
- **Focus on community transformation:** Sees the church as an agent of change in the local context—socially, spiritually, and structurally. Seeks revival and spiritual renewal in the parish.
- **Leadership and Team Building:** A collaborative leader who raises up lay leaders and volunteers, especially from within each parish and shared across the benefice. Builds networks with the parish council, schools, local organisations and businesses to increase the church's reach.
- **Pastoral Sensitivity:** Has empathy and resilience and is able to walk alongside people from diverse and broken backgrounds, who are facing poverty, trauma, and social challenge. Is approachable and down-to-earth, able to build trust with people outside the traditional church demographic.