



Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates Benefice Profile

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Foreword by the acting Bishop of Ely, Rt Rev Dr Dagmar Winter

Thank you for taking an interest in this full-time incumbent post in the Diocese of Ely.

Whittlesey sits in the Deanery of March, close to our diocesan boundary with Peterborough. Its 4 churches are loved and valued by the community they serve, and they make an impact well beyond the size of their congregations. We would like the next incumbent to build upon this.

However, this benefice has also been through a time of significant change that has damaged relationships and complicated the missional challenges that face the next Rector. You will need to attend to healing and spiritual renewal, before the churches are able to function as a unified body. The diocese will support you by enabling you to attend training such as a Bridge Builders Course and access supervision and coaching. My senior colleagues will be alongside you in this ministry.



The Diocese of Ely has over 100 stipendiary clergy serving its 303 parishes, 82 church schools and chaplaincies. We aspire to be a diocese marked by excellent support for our clergy, with great CPD, well maintained parsonages, pastoral supervision and flourishing networks as well as deanery chapters. You will benefit from this support.

We have been waiting for a new Diocesan Bishop, and expect an announcement in early 2026, but still we have opened a new diocesan office and set ourselves challenging targets around growing younger, growing congregations in areas of new housing, and supporting multi parish benefices. We are a diocese with deep pockets and significant ambitions.

We are also a diocese that has long cherished the leadership of women priests, with one of the highest percentages of female incumbents. We aspire to grow the number of GMH clergy in our diocese, and welcome applicants from overseas and GMH backgrounds.

I hope that you will come and see what our diocese has to offer, as a place to serve, grow and flourish. If you would like to have an informal conversation about this post, please contact:

The Ven Richard Harlow, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech - Tel: 07415 757527

Email: archdeacon.handw@elydiocese.org

The Benefice

Welcome to the Benefice of Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates. The team was created 1989 between the three churches of Whittlesey and Pondersbridge. Coates joined the Team in 1996. The Churches are, St Mary and St Andrew, Whittlesey, St Thomas, Pondersbridge and Holy Trinity, Coates. The villages of Eastrea, Turves and Kings Dyke are also part of the benefice.

The town is bordered to the north by the River Nene and to the south by Whittlesey Dyke. It is surrounded by lush agricultural land and criss-crossed by the drainage ditches that mark the Fens. The A47 gives access to the A1 and fast travel north or south. The railway station, using the older spelling of the town's name 'Whittlesea', is on the Ely/Peterborough Line with direct trains to Cambridge, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leicester, Ely, Ipswich, Peterborough, and Stansted Airport.

Whittlesey, where the Rectory is based, is a vibrant market town. There are several events that occur around the town, namely the Big Bash (held in June), the Fenland Bus Festival (also held in June), Music on the Square (twice in the summer months), Whittlesey Festival (held in September) and the international and renowned Straw Bear Festival (held in January).

The population within our benefice has grown vastly since the last census, with several new housing developments dotted about the town of Whittlesey, representing an influx of people into our communities. There is also growth occurring in the surrounding villages of Coates and Eastrea. The latest available figures from the County Council, based on the 2021 census, give a population of 17,750 for Whittlesey. Over the next 10 years the Council estimates that the figure will increase to 20,370.

Our Ministry Team

At present the Team comprises our retired associate Priest, Revd. Mike Jones, and 3 Licensed Lay Ministers, John Chrisp, Roger Brown and Jane Randells. The Team meets regularly and has ensured that St Andrew's, St Thomas' and Holy Trinity have at least one weekly service and a monthly Sunday Holy Communion.

St Mary's have their own Worship Team who lead Sunday services with the help of their Focal Minister, Jane Randells, and Authorised Lay Minister (preaching), Charlotte Elliott. During the vacancy, they have done this with the support of a neighbouring church in the New Wine family, who arrange services of the Word and Praise each Sunday,

monthly services of Holy Communion and occasional Baptisms. This is to preserve a more informal style of worship developed during the last incumbency.

Each of the 4 parish churches has a Focal Minister to whom the congregation can relate for pastoral support, information and guidance on a weekly basis: these are Jane Randells at St Mary's, Revd Mike Jones at Holy Trinity, Roger Brown at St Andrew's and John Chrisp at St Thomas'.

Governance

Each parish in the benefice team has its own PCC, and each of the four churches has one representative from their PCC in the Joint Council, along with either of their current wardens. The Ministry Team members are ex-officio members of the Joint Council. The objective of the Council is to make decisions concerning the overall strategy of mission and ministry of the Team Benefice. A full set of accounts for the Benefice Team and each parish is available on request.

Safeguarding

Each PCC has a dedicated Safeguarding Officer, and all PCC members, volunteers and paid helpers are DBS checked, safely recruited and receive continuous training. We strive to promote a safer environment and culture and based on the message of the Gospel; we open our doors to all.

Ministry opportunities across the team:

Occasional Offices

Our Parish churches are highly valued by the community, and this is reflected in the number of occasional offices and opportunities for engagement with the community that these could afford.

The table below presents the stats for occasional offices over the last 5 years, across the benefice.

	2020*	2021	2022	2023	2024
Baptisms	11	25	24	25	24
Marriages	4	8	15	7	12
Funerals	75	32	23	52	47

Residential and Nursing homes

There are three Residential Care Homes (Aliwal Manor, The Hermitage and Keneydon House) and one Nursing Home (Cedar Court). Regular contact is made with them and we look to provide a four services a year Spring/Easter, Summer, Harvest and Christmas. Home Communion regularly takes place at The Hermitage and on occasions at other Homes as required.



Schools

There are four Primary schools, three in Whittlesey and one in Coates and a Secondary school in Whittlesey. Previously we had good links with all the schools, but this has lapsed recently; it is something we would like to see re-established.

The town's secondary school is Sir Harry Smith Community College; it currently has 1094 pupils on roll. The Baptist Church runs a weekly Christian Union meeting at the school to which all are welcome. Our involvement is limited to occasional talks and allowing St Mary's to be used as a venue.

Whittlesey is well served with primary schools, three being situated in the town – Alderman Jacob's, New Road and Park Lane with a further primary school in the village of Coates.

Alderman Jacobs is a stand-alone academy with 674 pupils and is rated by Ofsted as Good. Previously, ministers conducted assemblies at the school, but this has not started again after Covid, we would very much like to see this re-started. There have been ministers attendance at Christingles and Harvest Festivals. There are class visits from time to time to St Mary's.

Park Lane and New Road Primary Schools are part of the Aspire Academy Trust with Sir Harry Smith Community College. They have a joint Headteacher who once was a C of E Primary School Headteacher. Park Lane pays educational visits to St Andrew's Church and New Road to St Mary's Church. At Park Lane the minister takes an assembly for each year group every half term. Park Lane visit St Mary's each year for a Christingle service, Shrove Tuesday celebration and a Leavers assembly. At New Road the Church

leads an Easter activity and Christingle service. Christian outreach to these schools is shared with the local Grace Baptist Church and the Whittlesey Christian Free Church.

Coates Primary School is an LEA school, Ofsted Good with 182 on roll, with a close relationship with Holy Trinity, Coates paying lots of educational visits and holds Harvest Festival and Christingle Services with Carols which in Holy Trinity. Once a month whole school assemblies are delivered by a team minister.

There is an opportunity to increase the Team's input since we have cordial relationships with all 5 schools.

Civic Engagement

The Ministry Team lead the Acts of Remembrance, on Remembrance Sunday, at Coates, Turves, Eastrea and at the War Memorial in St Thomas' church. The Ministry Team lead the open-air service at Whittlesey War Memorial following the afternoon parade and wreath laying ceremony. The Royal British Legion Chaplain (Roger Brown LLM) or another member of the Ministry Team leads the Act of Remembrance at Whittlesey War Memorial on VE Day, VJ Day and Armistice Day. A Ministry Team member leads an Act of Remembrance on Armistice Day at Coates War Memorial.



The Armed Forces Weekend at the end of June takes place in the grounds of St Mary's church with events also held in the church. On the Sunday afternoon an outdoor Drumhead Service concludes the weekends activities.

The Whittlesey Town Mayor usually asks to hold an autumn Civic Service at St Mary's or St Andrew's which the Churchwardens are pleased to accommodate.

Communications

In 2022 we rebranded the benefice as “Pathway Church” to strengthen our common relationship and facilitate communication with those outside our churches. We have a website at: www.pathway-church.co.uk and we have a common domain name for all

team emails. We also have a small collection of social media pages – (Facebook – @pathwaychurch @holyltrinitychurchcoates). We also have a weekly notice sheet in church each Sunday, which includes readings and notices. The notice sheet is distributed via email or by hard copy to those unable to attend services.

Other Churches

There are a number of churches from different denominations in Whittlesey, The Salvation Army, St Jude's Roman Catholic Church and The Queen's Street Methodist/United Reformed Church. These churches, along with ourselves, make up "Churches Together" which meets on a regular basis. Whittlesey Christian Church and Whittlesey Baptist Church are not yet members of Churches Together. A joint service is held during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The well attended procession of



witness on Good Friday starts from Methodist/URC to the Market Square (2 routes) where a 30-minute service takes place led by one of the member churches in front of a large wooden cross. Churches Together also have a presence at The Whittlesey Festival (September) and The Extravaganza (December).

Member churches also raise money for Christian Aid with a cake stall during Christian Aid Week and other individual events. Messy Church is held four times a year and Carols at the Pub is arranged in December.

Missional challenges and opportunities.

As mentioned in the Bishop's welcome, this benefice has been through a time of significant change that has damaged relationships and complicated the missional challenges that face the next Rector. Our patron observed that *"alongside your commitment and passion, I also observed hurt, mistrust, and fractured relationships"*. We accept this assessment and seek your help to heal and unify us.

We commit ourselves to an honest appraisal of ourselves and our responsibility for the damaged relationships. We pray that you will listen without judgement, help us to identify where we can and need to change, pray with us and walk with us on a journey of repentance and renewal. We recognise that we must walk the walk of discipleship before we talk the talk to others. Our desire to share Jesus with our neighbours is not diminished by our brokenness. We hope you will speak to our archdeacon about our history as you consider God's invitation to come and lead us.

We believe that these are the missional opportunities and challenges that you will want to help us address:

- **Rebuilding a sense of team**

Our last incumbent led us through a period of change that has resulted in new members being added to some of our churches, at significant cost to team relationships and cohesiveness. Relationships between the churches and between some individuals are not currently where they need to be, so we seek an incumbent who can first help the community to "love one another as I have loved you." Nonetheless, we hope that our next incumbent will continue to grow the diversity of mission and worship that is needed to share the gospel with the whole of our community, and at the same time rebuild a sense that this is a shared task.

- **Continuing to grow younger and more diverse**

We have grown younger over the last few years: new people have joined and have stayed. New vocations have been discerned and nurtured. We want to maintain this momentum: growing our ministry to baptism families, enlarging Alpha, developing local teams and leaders. Our town is growing fast, and we want to attract and engage new and existing residents. We know that people find faith in a variety of ways, and we are excited by the new activities that we developed under our last incumbent: inter-generational worship, Lego club, Alpha, Trinity Tots and holiday clubs. We want to grow and feed those activities and those coming to faith through them. We also want to

strengthen the sense that we are a body with differing gifts, but where all feel valued and encouraged to grow.

- **Growing Missional Disciples**

We see disciples growing in many different ways: through bible studies in Lent & Advent, LYCIG (leading your church into growth), a weekly bible study group, prayer triplets, mid-week services, Men's ministry, Community breakfast, Women's breakfast, Worship Wednesdays. We seek to back this up with pastoral care, and the support and training that comes via our Diocesan Mission & Ministry team. We recognize that this requires investment of heart and soul.

- **Renewing buildings for mission**

Our buildings are generally well maintained, but only one has a toilet and kitchen. We need to adapt these buildings so that they can serve our mission and speak of our God, who welcomes all. We have big plans for developing 3 of our 4 church buildings and renewing our hall.

Our Future Incumbent

In light of the missional challenges we have discerned we are looking for the following skill sets and aspects of character in our future incumbent.

The Skills of our future incumbent:

- **Change leadership & conflict management:**

We are hoping that you will be skilled in culture change and relationship development. You will have had experience in dealing with conflict either in the church or in pre-ordination work. You will be open to coaching and development in this area of ministry.

- **Team Builder and enabler of others**

We are hoping that you will be able to create the conditions that give us confidence to try new things, and to be able to learn from things we try that don't work, to celebrate and learn from the things that do, so that the congregation's capacity for mission is constantly developed. We hope that you will be able to spot talent, unlock people's gifts and raise up, encourage and instill confidence in others.

- **Leader of missional engagement with the community**

We are looking for an incumbent who can build on the good links that each of our four churches has with our community and one who can involve, nurture and develop the congregations. We are looking for our new incumbent to help us to develop a more outwardly mobile mission & evangelism strategy that helps us to connect faith with people outside the walls of the church rather than relying on them coming to us.

- **Pastorally Sensitive**

We recognise that change requires skillful leadership. Our new incumbent will be able to navigate change in ways that build trust and hope without losing sight of God's call on us to reach the whole of our community.

- **Able to train a curate**

We believe the team Benefice would make a good training post for a curate, and so, we would be looking for our future incumbent to be a good candidate to be teacher, mentor and role model, and believe the skills involved are a good marker for the calibre of incumbent we are looking for as a benefice.

- **A Driver**

Public transport is poor, so being a driver and having independent means of transport is essential.

Characteristics of our future incumbent

- **Emotional intelligence**

You will be confident in God, self-aware and empathic. You will know that conflict is not something that can be avoided, and needs to be acknowledged and navigated without allowing it to define you or your ministry. You will call on help in a timely way, and know when to say "no". You take time for self-care and recreation.

- **Spiritual Depth**

We want you to be, above all, a person of growing faith – passionate about prayer, the holy scriptures, attuned to the Holy Spirit. We want you to be someone who loves Jesus and leads with integrity, hope and love. We want you to be resilient because you have deep roots in God.

- **Energy and Enthusiasm**

There is much to be done, and so we recognize the need for our future incumbent to have the energy and enthusiasm required. At the same time, we also want to ensure that they are wise in their management of time, pay close attention to appropriate rest and whole life balance, and are mature enough in their ministry to develop a range of supportive networks to sustain them.

- **Hospitable faith**

We pray that our next incumbent will have a strong relationship with Christ but also be able to celebrate the many different ways that people encounter God. We are hoping our future incumbent will be able to speak engagingly about their own faith and help others explore faith and celebrate the diversity of Anglican spirituality.

What we can offer you

- We have an experienced and hard-working ministry team. The key offices in each PCC (Churchwardens, Treasurer, Secretary, PSO) are filled. We have a team of LLMs, a retired priest and expect to have an administrator in post by the time you join us.
- We are growing new leaders to serve new areas of ministry and outreach. They are building our capacity and bringing new gifts and insights.
- We have good relationships with other churches, civic leaders and many in our communities. Our town looks to us for leadership, and you will inherit relational capital in this respect.
- We have good schools, with enough places for new students. If you have children to place in school, you will find good opportunities. If you want to build relationships, you will find open doors.
- We are generous in support of the Children's Society, Historic Churches England (Ride and Stride), Children in Need, providing toilets in Africa, Unicef - providing cold packs to move vaccines, Water Aid; to Kigali we sent bikes and to China we sent bibles. Given that these communities experience deprivation, we are proud of our habits of generosity.
- We can also offer expenses and a modern, spacious rectory, with a private garden. Our town is only a short distance from Peterborough, where there are cultural and entertainment venues in plenty. Or if you prefer fishing, bird watching or walking, then the banks of the river Nene or nearby coast beckon.
- Our diocese and deanery recognise the potential and the challenges for growing the church in this benefice. We expect that alongside support for you, as you need, there will also be opportunities to draw down resources that can support areas of deprivation. We expect that this will include funding to enable us to employ an administrator.
- We have links with the local New Wine network, who both pray for us and help with resources.

The individual churches

St Thomas Church – Pondersbridge



Who we are – Pondersbridge's population is 250 including those in farm dwellings. Central to the village, St Thomas' consecrated in September 1871, still has an open churchyard. We are a friendly church and encourage people to seek and forge good relationships.

Social events are very well supported, and our Sunday services have a committed congregation. We believe in making full use of the facility which the Church offers our village. We genuinely see God at work in our building and community. Encouraging signs motivate us to believe that we are progressing God's will for us. We are an enthusiastic, friendly, willing, faithful, encouraging, open and committed group of people.

Our Community - The village population is now made up of young families. However, there is no school, shop or public house. Children travel to schools in three different directions by school bus or other means of transport and therefore do not always meet up. With no communal play area and limited access to walks, the open main roads are uncomplimentary to village life and subject to speeding. We are able to use the village hall, to hold functions and toileting purposes.

Our Church Building St Thomas is now in need of some structural repairs beneath floor level within the chancel and organ area. The fens have caused some movement in parts of the foundations and investigations have been finalised. Consultations have taken place with our architect, our Engineer, the DAC and Heritage at Risk. We now have Drawings for proposed works. Fortunately restoration carried out beneath the floor between 1969 – 1972 (church closed) remains stable. Apart from the addition of electrics, a new pipe organ in 1995 and the installation of two new wood burning stoves in 2014, (which has increased footfall) the building remains in original condition.



We regularly turn our church into an open area, as our photograph shows, by moving the pews around, for games afternoons, utilising the space for carpet bowls, table tennis, pool etc. It becomes a market space for bazaars and fairs. The acoustics complement concerts. Toilet facilities and mains



water would be of benefit, especially regarding Safeguarding, when it is necessary to escort parents with youngsters down to the village hall. It would be much easier to have amenities on our own premises.

Our Style of Worship The regular pattern of service is, 1st & 3rd Sunday - Evening Praise 2nd & 4th Sunday - Morning Praise or Holy Communion. We are flexible and like our services lively and meaningful, but with an eye to tradition.



St Thomas' hosts the Saturday Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Dawn service.



Children and adults from within our church family and community, take part in our Nativity Tableaux, playing to a full house. There is no Sunday school but we have gradually introduced services for Children and Families which local families attend. Lent and Advent course bible study groups are held each year.

Engagement with the community

St Thomas has a “can do” attitude leading to a good reputation in organising events, even at short notice. Our Special Services, Breakfast Gatherings, Afternoon Teas, Suppers, Games afternoons, Barbeques, Scarecrow Festivals, Half Term Activities, Concerts, Bazaars and Walks, are all part of our Mission in serving others. The photos below illustrate and confirm our relationship with our community.



Afternoon Tea



Breakfasts



Bazaar

BBB



Christingle Service



Bar-B-Qs



Charity Concerts

Caring for the churchyard is a joint effort and allows time to forge friendships, benefiting many, within the village. Our activity sessions have seen confidence building for both adults and children and helpful in developing skills and conversation.

St Thomas' Church don't expect our new incumbent to do everything, we are used to using our own initiative and "getting on with it". We would like a Rector who will stand alongside us, give us their support and encouragement in continuing to look enthusiastically at new ideas in our mission to grow the church family.

PCC – Our PCC is made up of a group of individuals all with the same spirit of believing they are being guided in what God wants us to do, a good reason we are still here. We strongly believe in God's presence both in the church and around our community. The present PCC have years of experience and loyalty behind them, each having the same values and willingness. We have our own identities and blemishes but together we have a great work ethos, giving generously of our time, money and working as a team. We have no financial assistance from any outside bodies, and do all of our own fund raising and organising of events which has allowed us to pay our parish share in full until recently. However, we continue to pay bills, willingly support the other team churches and various charities every year. We see our church as very much having a future, with much more to offer, and look forward to the challenge of bringing this to fruition.

Holy Trinity, Coates

Holy Trinity, Coates joined the Whittlesey and Pondersbridge Benefice in 1995. We are a small but welcoming congregation, supportive of those, whether regular church attendees or members of the community.

Our Community



Coates is an expanding village with many new houses being built and a proposal for another 200 homes waiting planning permission. The village school uses the church building for the celebration of festivals and takes part in village services. We also have a Public/Village Hall and other amenities in the village.

Our Church Building- The Church has a feeling of peace and welcome on first entering the building. It is light, with some stained glass. The church was built in the middle of the 19th Century with the first incumbent being installed in 1840. It was reordered in the early part of this century with the addition of a toilet and small kitchen. A full history is provided on the website www.coatesstudy.weebly.com

Inside, the front part of the church there is a large area where the traditional pews have been removed which is used for a variety of purposes, as the chairs may be moved or removed. There is a small children's corner which has a variety of resources. The Remembrance Table and area holds a significant meaning to many members of the congregation and other villagers. There is a balcony above the west door, however this area is not used at present. The heating has been updated in June 2025.





The churchyard is still open but with restricted space remaining for burials and cremated remains. We have achieved the bronze award for Cambridgeshire Churchyard Conservation Scheme. The Churchyard also contains a number of war graves. A commemorative stone is situated



near the south door.

Our Worship style - We have been accustomed to having one traditional Sunday Holy Communion service a month and another Holy Communion on a Wednesday morning. Morning Praise is held on the other Sundays. The majority of the congregation are prayerful and are happy to follow the recognized Order of Service. We have a small pipe organ, a smaller electric organ and a talented organist. The children's corner is used for Trinity Tots, held on a Monday morning during term time, for pre school age children and their parents/guardians.



The congregation size has gradually diminished in recent years with an average of 12-15 regular Sunday worshipers and 5-8 on a Wednesday morning. The Wednesday morning service is attended by members of the other churches in the Parish. Most of our congregation are aged 65+. Other events are presently well attended by non-church members. Christmas and

Easter special services are very well supported and are shared with other churches in the Benefice.

Engagement with the community- Coates Primary



School regularly uses the church during the year and currently one of the LLM's assists with monthly Assemblies in school. Holy Trinity holds regular 'Rake and Bake'

mornings well supported by non-church going members of the community to help keep the churchyard neat and tidy. Some church members are also members of the WI and/or the Silver Lining Club. The church is open for refreshments and a display area for the Village Fete on the Green and hold regular coffee mornings as fund raisers and welcoming other members of the



community into the church building. Villagers also join our 100 Club which is a valuable fund-raising group.

Trinity Tots - We started this parent and toddler group in 2023, and it draws children and their carers from across the benefice. We have seen growth in numbers and in those seeking baptism through this ministry. In 2024 Trinity Tots received a donation from the Mayor of Whittlesey, which marked the local support for this initiative.

A number of groups use the church for their meetings and villagers are invited to special events throughout the year. Some of these are:

- Book Club
- Cocaine Anonymous
- Film nights and Tribute Bands
- Lent and Harvest Lunches
- Pet Service
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Posada at Christmas followed by a Christmas Eve Service with Carols
- Remembrance Sunday Service at Coates Memorial
- 11th November Service at Coates Memorial attended by children from Coates School
- Mothering Sunday Intergenerational Service
- Environmental Group from the school installed a bug box in the churchyard.
- Advent Intergenerational Service with a theme of travel. Children put the three Kings, Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds on the window cills and at the Christmas Eve service they travelled to the crib at the front of the church
- Petanque was played in front of the church during the Village Petanque tournament.



St Andrew's Whittlesey



St Andrew's is an active parish community and benefits from:

- A beautiful Norman Church building.
- A busy, well-managed Hall.
- A lively Friends group.
- An excellent outreach, The Thursday Club, established in 2018, extending the hand of friendship and hospitality to people in the community who are lonely and/or socially isolated.
- A burgeoning LyCIG group full of ideas.
- A recent endeavour to create an Eco Church concentrating in our Churchyard.
- A Carols by Candlelight service, held annually.
- A Wild Worship service aimed at children, held bi-annually.
- A children's area in Church recently regularly occupied.
- A busy monthly Coffee Morning.
- Plans for a toilet, kitchenette, and replacement of pews with comfortable chairs, making the Church space more flexible.

Our Church Building

The interior presents a light and airy atmosphere. The stepped Chancel lends itself for use as a stage and has been the site for brass band and other musical concerts in the past. Looking to the future, it is hoped to exchange the 19th century fixed pews for comfortable chairs – enabling a large space to be made available for other activities. A Faculty is currently in place for this. An additional Faculty is in place for a toilet and kitchenette, and our Architect is in the process of drawing up designs to house both. In the meantime, our own well equipped and well-used church hall is close by. The churchyard is now closed to burials, but a designated area is available for the interment of the cremated remains of regular attendees and/or their immediate relatives.

Our Worship style

Regarding worship St Andrews identifies as having moved from a very Anglo-Catholic style in the past – which has shaped some of the congregation's thinking around worship - towards a more open approach that feels more adaptable. We have introduced the use of screens and more modern hymns and, overall, the congregation has embraced these. We have been blessed by the regular use of our children's area during services.



A warm welcome awaits everyone attending our services and there is a happy relaxed vibe. Our congregation is encouraged to stay for fellowship after the Sunday service. In our designated Church coffee/meeting area, a generous Church member provides tea, coffee, and biscuits. This is popular and the kettle requires refills!

Wild Worship is held bi-annually, within the Churchyard of St Andrew's and is popular with some of the younger members of the congregation. Our last service saw the children creating a wildflower garden and setting plants underneath the rose bushes.



Congregation/Friends participation



Left and Centre - St Andrew's Easter displays of Crosses and Easter eggs – all crafted by members of the congregation and Friends of St Andrew's. Right – The 2019 Friends of St Andrew's tree, "We Wish Ewe a Merry Christmas", in St Mary's Tree Festival. After the Festival, the tree is then reassembled in St Andrew's to complement the Church tree.

The Friends of St Andrews holds afternoon teas within the Church on a regular basis.



St Mary's Whittlesey

This document summarises some of the life of St. Mary's and the community we serve. We are a people of faith who see in Jesus the purpose and direction for our lives, worked out through celebrating worship, praying together and giving joyful service to those whom God puts in our hearts.

We are an active congregation, and we face both challenges and opportunities for further growth and transformation. We have changed our Sunday worship style from solely traditional to a more informal worship style where Jesus and His Gospel are central, a service that is Spirit-led and reaches out to the wider community. This change has meant a real change in the age range which has reduced considerably. Younger families now attend which is vitally important for the continued existence and growth of the church.

Prominent in the marketplace, St. Mary's is recognised as a community resource and is used as a venue for various concerts and civic events throughout the year. St Mary's congregation has voiced a real desire to connect differently with community, using the church as a space for people, wherever they are on their faith journey. We would love to re-order the building so that it is a genuine resource for worship and community, open throughout the week. Inviting all groups to use our magnificent building.

In the past few years, we have been encouraged by the energy in our congregation for thinking about things differently. We have shown ourselves to be open and flexible to new ideas whilst still celebrating the past. Our previous incumbent has enabled and empowered us to use our gifts and serve. Some are now growing as leaders and we have a Teaching Team. We believe that God is wanting us to thrive in our own town and we want to share the love that Jesus has for us with everyone.

Our Church Building - St. Mary's location ensures it is a prominent physical presence in the town centre. For an ancient building, it is remarkably light and airy inside boasting large, pew-free spaces which can be used for engagement with the community e.g. the Christmas tree festival, craft fayres, concerts and charity coffee mornings. There is a large children's area which is well stocked and is used by children whenever they are in church and especially encouraged during weddings and baptisms. There is a dedicated but moveable refreshments area.



Building assets are the Tower (tower trips), the Bells and Carillon, large Pipe-Organ along with an accomplished organist (generally though, music is played through the use of screens) and a large, closed churchyard which is used by the community and to host church and community events.



Our Worship style and Values - At the heart of our life as a church is worship, prayer and enjoyment. Our aim is to provide a varied and inclusive inter-generational pattern of worship which appeals to all age groups at whatever stage they are in their Christian journey. Prayer is at the heart of all our activities, and we are a people connecting with Jesus and making him known.

Sunday services follow a teaching series and we offer a modern, informal style of worship based on Bible teaching which is relevant to everyday life. Sunday Worship/Praise is led by members of St. Mary's Teaching Team, a newly accredited ALM and members of the congregation,



Holy Communion is planned with a visiting reverend from a neighbouring, charismatic evangelical Anglican church. Our songs tend to be more modern, although some traditional hymns are sung. There is a more traditional Thursday morning Holy Communion service which has a hymn and short talk. Monthly, there is a 'Worship Wednesday' praise which has an informal, spirit led feel.

Although services are largely informal, all major festivals are still celebrated. St. Mary's plays an important role in the town's Good Friday Procession of Witness with Churches

Together. At Christmas we hold an extremely successful interactive children and families service, and an All-Age Service on Christmas Eve which has grown in successive years.

Children are extremely important to our church family and they add greatly to the mission of the church. Services always include activities for children and their families. The creche area is fully equipped for younger children and the older children help with IT during the services, join the welcome team and serve refreshments. Baptisms are now conducted within Sunday worship and these provide an incredible outreach opportunity. They have resulted in new people joining us on a regular basis. A number of adults and older children have come to faith and been confirmed.

St. Mary's plays a major role in running Alpha courses, which are open to all of our churches. This has drawn new people into attending Sunday services and joining in with the mission of the church.

Engagement with the community - St. Mary's is a community resource for concerts and civic events. We encourage the use of the church as a means of outreach to the secular community. The church is used by all the schools in Whittlesey for their Christmas and Easter services, leavers services and educational visits. 2025 saw a Shrove Tuesday service followed by pancake races!



The Fund-Raising Committee holds events during the year which are not solely for raising funds but for outreach and raising awareness of 'church'. Events include the Christmas tree festival, craft fayres, various concerts from Big Bands, tribute acts and cultural events. We are host to many community-based festivals such as the Straw Bear, Bus Festival, Armed Forces Weekend and the Whittlesey Festival. We provide refreshments, a safe place for all and the building and land for community use.

Accommodation

The modern rectory lies in Whittlesey within easy walking distance of both St Mary's and St Andrew's churches, and next to the market square and shops, down a quiet street.

It has 4 bedrooms, and large reception rooms and a study separate from the main part of the house. It has a good sized, walled garden. It has been maintained to a high standard and provides good accommodation to a couple or family.



Appendix 1: Attendance Figures across the Benefice

	Numbers attending	2023	2024	2025
St Thomas Pondersbridge	Adults ASA	12	12	10
	Children ASA	1	1	1
	Christmas Day - no services			
	Easter	18	31	26
	Special Christmas services	150	108	N/A
St Andrew's Whittlesey		2023	2024	2025
	Adults ASA	27	27	31
	Children ASA	2	1	1
	Christmas	98	30	-
	Easter	34	60	72
	Special Christmas services	54	70	-
	Civic events	-	-	-
Holy Trinity Coates		2023	2024	2025
	Adults ASA	12	12	13
	Children ASA	0	0	0
	Christmas	53	48	-
	Easter	24	23	20
	Special Christmas services	-	-	-
	School Christmas Services	-	-	-
St Mary's Whittlesey		2023	2024	2025
	Adults ASA	28	24	23
	Children ASA	3	4	4
	Christmas	73	94	-
	Easter	106	72	55
	Special Christmas services	265	229	-
	Schools Christmas Services	927	660	-