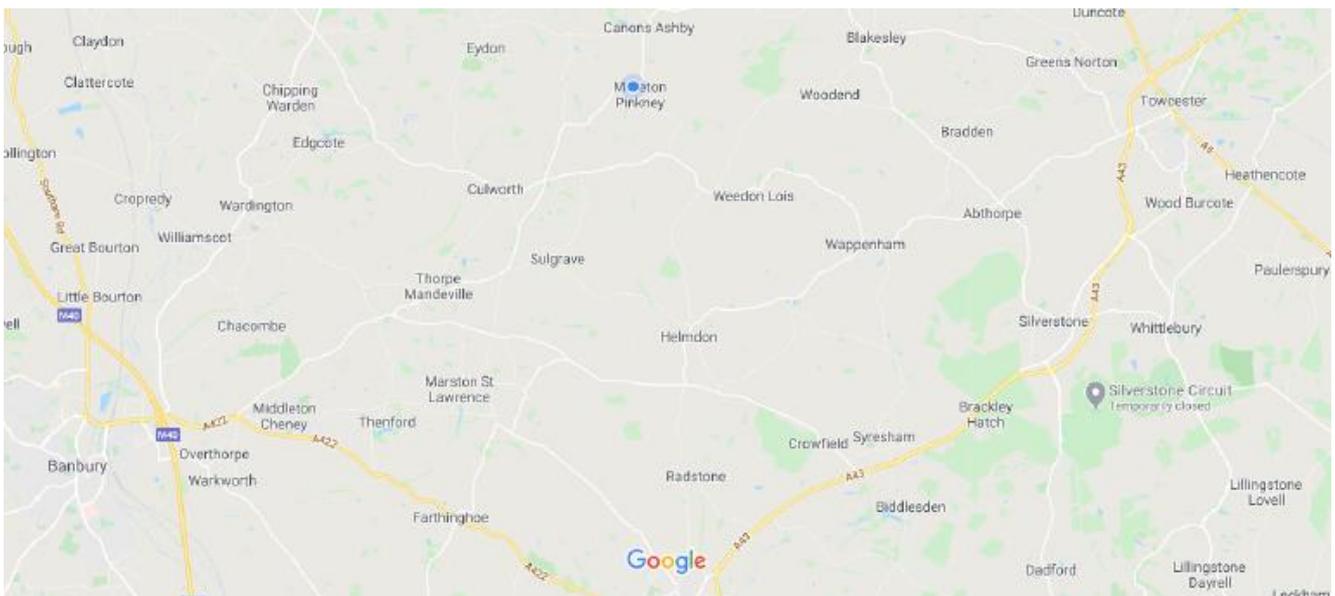


THE CULWORTH BENEFICE DIOCESE OF PETERBOROUGH

The parishes of Culworth, Chipping Warden, Edgcote and
Moreton Pinkney

The Benefice



In glorious open country in the heart of England, the Culworth Benefice embraces three villages and one hamlet. The Benefice is in the Diocese of Peterborough, and under the immediate care of the Archdeacon of Northampton and the Rural Dean of Brackley. The parishes work well together and are happy to support each other. There is always one Benefice Holy Communion a month, and often two. The Benefice's Rectory is in Culworth, which has the one Church (CEVA) Primary School in the Benefice; the other Primary School is in Chipping Warden. South Northamptonshire is one of England's little known treasures and is markedly rural, with ancient villages in addition to market towns. The county has historical links spanning the Romans and Vikings to the Civil War and onwards. The houses in the villages are predominantly constructed from stone and often feature banding, a Northamptonshire tradition of alternating bands of dark and light stone.

The inhabitants in the Benefice villages are a mixture of people working locally, commuters to towns in the area, a few weekenders, and many working from home. Helped by the two schools, the villages are lively communities seven days a week, 365 days a year. The total population is around 1600. The villagers are warm and hospitable. They view the Rector and the Church and its rites as essential parts of the fabric of life. Even those who do not come to church will still be eager to know who the new Rector is. Initially, at least, it is important that she/he should identify her/himself by wearing a clerical collar.

Opportunities

The principal opportunities for the new Rector are:

- To get to know those who profess themselves to be Christian and to encourage their support by attending services and assisting with the pastoral care.
- To foster the interest and commitment of the teenagers and the young working population who have children, encouraging families to come to Family Services or the recently-introduced Messy Church services and use them as springboards for coming to other worship; and to foster the growth of the churches in the Benefice through life-long membership.
- To reach out to all others in the parishes through leading by example: being visible and available and playing a full part in the lives of the four communities.
- To bring back the lapsed.
- To manage creatively the demands of a dispersed but well-disposed Benefice, reconciling the needs of the Benefice and its individual parishes, and helping it and the parishes to grow.
- To maintain an active participation in Culworth School, including its services and other events in Culworth Church, and to support Chipping Warden School.

It is essential that she/he is genuinely happy at the prospect of living and working in the country: there is no urban anonymity. She/he will need to be energetic, tolerant and imaginative. We shall welcome someone who will respect other people's feelings and ways of behaviour, someone confident and at peace in her/his faith and daily life as a child of God, and ready to take a full part in village and benefice life (including being seen at local events), without hesitations about taking the opportunity of a full load of services (including appropriate extra services on feast days and holy days), and eager to think innovatively about how the Benefice can grow — and act in the same spirit.

The parish profiles that follow illustrate the diversity and the strengths of community that are enjoyed. There are plenty of opportunities to create lively Benefice Eucharists as the core of Benefice worship, but it is also important to maintain the use of all four churches for worship. Despite attendance figures that might appear disappointing, the four churches are and will remain the essential focus for their individual village communities.

The lay teams who lead services (Mattins, Evensong and Family Services) will provide a considerable strength to the new priest. All parishes accept Common Worship, but some prefer to use 1662. All are thoroughly aware of the need for spiritual growth and for some changes to the way the church carries out its mission and will be receptive and understanding.

Living in The Rectory

The Rectory is a well-appointed 4-bedroom 1970s house in Culworth, close to the church. Culworth is a pretty village and offers a butcher, pub, coffee shop, milk and newspaper deliveries, allotments, a handsome cricket ground and a popular primary school.

Looking ahead

The Benefice looks forward to welcoming a new leader who enjoys life and is excited to work in a rural part of England and who will energise her/his flock in new growth and fellowship. We are all eager to do our part.

The sections below describe each parish.

If there are any questions about the Benefice or its parishes, the following people will be glad to help. Please get in touch with any of us.

Chipping Warden – Barbara Bartlett thebartletts2003@yahoo.co.uk

Culworth – Jenny Howse jenny_howse@hotmail.com

Edgcote – Ronald Hewison ronald.hewison@btinternet.com

Moreton Pinkney – Simon Shephard-Walwyn sswalw@hotmail.co.uk

ST MARY THE VIRGIN CULWORTH



Culworth CEVA Primary Academy, established in 1789 has approximately 90 pupils, seven full and part time teachers and seven teaching assistants. There is also a pre-school for 2-4 year olds and a breakfast and after-school club. The school still uses the original buildings. Led by Sandra Prewer, Culworth is part of an Academy Trust, which includes Boddington CE Primary Academy and together they are part of the Evolve Church Academy Trust. There has long been a solid co-operation between school and church. School services are regularly held in church. At the moment the rector leads regular worship at assembly.

Culworth Garage is a thriving repair and MOT centre; milk and newspapers are delivered. The Red Lion, the local pub and restaurant, attracts customers from far and wide – booking is essential.

In the 2011 census, the population (0-100) was 445. The population is now reduced by at least 30 because of the closure of the nursing home; 25% of the population was aged over 60 and 20% under 18, 98% were white and 65% classed themselves as Christian.

Besides the church and school, life is centred round the old village hall, built in 1938 and used regularly for coffee mornings, village cafes, film and supper nights, Pilates, parish councils' meetings and children's parties. Plans have been approved to build a new Community Centre on Hill Field, home of the Culworth Cricket Club. The cricket club has a thriving youth division which also attracts youngsters from neighbouring villages to their practices and matches.

The new sports facility/village hall/cricket pavilion, will provide much needed club facilities as well as being a hub for the village. The cricket field itself, opposite the church, is on a wonderful site, providing superb views of the countryside to the south.

There is a strong community spirit in the village and this showed itself to be particularly strong during the coronavirus crisis. Through the Parish Council, volunteers to help the vulnerable were recruited. Nobody was made to feel isolated.

The church of St Mary The Virgin remains at the heart of the village and physically dominates the centre of the village. We had the privilege to be included in the 100 best churches in Northamptonshire on the Visit Northamptonshire website. The church dates from the 12th Century with Victorian remodelling. To the north of the church is 'Culworth Castle', a late Saxon/early Norman 'ringwork' mentioned in the Domesday Book and now a scheduled ancient monument. New burials take place in the adjacent churchyard extension, administered by the Parish Council. The churchyard is maintained by volunteers who mow and trim on a fortnightly basis during the growing season using the church mower and trimmer. There is also a conservation area which is cut once a year by volunteers, grass collected and which over the years has produced a wonderful display of Spring flowers.

We have unfortunately experienced two lead roof thefts in recent years. In the first in 2010, the lead from the chancel was replaced with Welsh slate and the second, in 2018 the lead from the south aisle, was replaced with terne-coated stainless steel. Both these thefts have proved a considerable strain on our resources but with the help of a few grants and the considerable generosity of present and past parishioners and fundraising events, we have managed to find the money to pay for the new roofing without having to apply for loans. The church also houses the village library.

There are several villagers who, if rarely in church, give generously to the fabric fund. Some donate as 'Friends of Culworth church' and others give with standing orders. We have just started to introduce the Parish Giving Scheme. Fundraising events throughout the year and the annual summer fete have meant we have always been able to pay our parish share in full.

We also have charity events which in the past year have raised money for Water Aid, The Children's Society, the Local Food Bank, The Hope Centre, Macmillan Nurses, and The British Legion.

There is a peal of 5 bells, which until recently were regularly rung for benefice service, Christmas, Easter and weddings. There are only 2 regular ringers in the village and others need to be recruited for weddings etc. Culworth is part of the Culworth Branch, one of ten branches of the Peterborough Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers.

The pattern of services, as for the other churches in the Benefice, aims to balance the demands of worship as a benefice with the desire to maintain spiritual life in each of the communities. The non-Eucharistic services are lay-led from within the village. The present arrangement is as follows. It is not cast in stone.

Lay-led services:

Sunday 1 Evensong (BCP) alternating with the rector 6pm

Sunday 2 Family Service (contemporary) 11am

Holy Communion services requiring a priest are:

Sunday 1 Benefice Holy Communion (rotating among the four churches) 9.30a.m.

Sunday 3 Mattins (BCP) 10am

Sunday 1 Benefice Holy Communion (rotating among the four churches) 9.30a.m.

Sunday 4 Holy Communion 9.30 a.m.

Sunday 5 Benefice Holy Communion (rotating as for Sunday 1) 11a.m.

In 2021/2 there have so far been two baptisms, two weddings and three funerals.

ST PETER AND ST PAUL CHIPPING WARDEN



St Peter and St Paul, Chipping Warden, stands in the centre of the village, a mainly farming community with a village Primary School, now Chipping Warden Academy, with approximately 90 pupils. There is the added bonus of a very popular Kindergarten within one wing of the school that works closely with the school.

The village population is approximately 750 from 250 dwellings. Residents requiring medical attention go to surgeries in Byfield, Cropredy and Banbury.

There are two public houses in the village, the Rose and Crown and the Griffin, the latter catering for hot meals. There is a thriving Women's Institute and a Sports Club with an active cricket team. For the children, there is a lively Brownies group and a new Play Area that hopefully will be opened August 2020.

The Village Hall offers one large hall and a second smaller one that are much used by the residents for various events and also by the Sports Club, Brownies, W.I., Church and Academy.

Allotments are a valued part of the village and are owned by the Church.

To maintain the village spirit, the Parish Council has tackled many problems over the years. It is currently heavily involved with many aspects of the new relief road which will by-pass the village by altering the route of the A361 due to the imminent start of the HS2 rail link that will pass on the outskirts of the village. Again, this is another issue that the Parish Council has taken a very active part in, providing the residents with a hard-working team behind the scenes.

THE CHURCH

The Church is in the heart of the village and is in general received with affection, even by those who are not regular worshippers. They have generously supported our fundraising endeavours during the year, examples being pancake races, coffee mornings, cream teas, ride & stride, auction, produce show, Lent Lunches, Harvest Supper, Easter egg hunt, Christmas tree Advent light up night with stalls, Christmas draw and lunch for 90 and the Annual Spring Fete with the Sports Club (our main event of the year). Many of these events are held in the Church and are with children and families; they are all well supported by the village. We have recently started a monthly Messy Church service, which is attracting new families.

This fine medieval Church is situated off the main road adjacent to the seventeenth century Manor House. Elements of an earlier Church can be discovered but the overwhelming effect is a grand building from the time of Edward III, 1327-1377.

The east window has stained glass by Christopher Whall. In 1903, the Church underwent an Arts & Crafts readjustment carried out by G Christopher Carter and Owen Little, earlier features being preserved, including the raised tier of pews at the west end and the Hanoverian painting of the Royal Arms.

The tower houses the clock and five bells dated 1674, now fully restored. A small band of ringers ring when possible on Festival days and weddings.

The Churchyard is maintained with tree care and grass cutting.

The Church, organ and bells are in general good repair, although money is very tight. The PCC works well with seven members and two Churchwardens.

SERVICES

The Rector takes two services a month, Holy Communion on the 2nd Sunday and Messy Church on 4th Sunday. Our pattern of services is as follows:

1st Sunday — Benefice

2nd Sunday — Holy Communion with Rector

3rd Sunday — Mattins, lay-led

4th Sunday — Messy Church

5th Sunday — Benefice Holy Communion rotating among four Churches.

During 2019 there were two baptisms and two weddings. Retired clergy are called upon when the Rector has been unable to cover all services, i.e., holidays, Easter, Christmas and Remembrance.

We have a small choir that can be rallied for services, weddings and funerals.

The school, although not CofE, come to services at the Church for end of term, Christingle, Carol Service and Harvest. The Rector, Churchwardens and members of the Church all provide regular input to the school.

OPPORTUNITIES

The principal opportunities for a new Rector are:

- To encourage families to come to Messy Church
- To mix in the community
- To reach out to teenagers and others in the Parish by leading by example
- To support Chipping Warden Academy with input. We have for many years provided Bibles for Children to all children. All the children receive a Rainbow Bible upon their entry into school; this is for them to take with them when leaving and it is presented by the Rector from the Church.
- Looking ahead — To help reconcile the benefice now we are four and to establish how this may grow in spiritual fellowship.

We extend a warm welcome to a new Priest and her/his flock will look forward to new growth with a happy fellowship and a new energetic leader.

ST JAMES EDGCOTE



Edgcote is a small, very rural parish with a population of about 60 (including 10 young children) in 21 dwellings. It is unusual in that the whole village belongs to Edgcote Estate with Edgcote House as the main dwelling. Therefore everyone who lives in the village is either connected with the estate or rents their house from it. The Church is the only community facility. Children usually go to Chipping Warden or Culworth Primary Schools.

The Estate is run from Edgcote House and includes two commercial racing stables: Ben Case Racing at Wardington Gate and Alex Hales Training at Trafford Bridge Stables.

The Church

Our beautiful church is next to Edgcote House and was built in the 13th century. In 2018 it was included in the list of Northamptonshire's best 100 churches. The list of Rectors dates from 1224. There is an outstanding group of monuments to the Chauncy family, lords of the manor for some 240 years, including a bust of Sir Richard Chauncy, who rebuilt Edgcote House in the 18th century. The bells are not ringable at present. The acoustics of the church are acknowledged to be excellent. The organ, dated 1860, is an outstanding example of the work of Holdich of London and includes a barrel mechanism, currently inoperable. An organist is nearly always available.

External maintenance and repointing work were carried out on the south wall in 2008, and internally the church was rewired and redecorated in 2010. The organ and bells are next on the list for restoration; we are looking into grants for the work and for conserving the Chauncy monuments. The churchyard is well maintained and is still used for burials.

Services and congregation

At present, the Rector takes one service a month on the 4th Sunday, alternately Holy Communion or Mattins (1662 for both, with hymns). The average congregation on a normal Sunday is about 13 and is made up of people from the parish, ex-residents and visitors from other parishes in the Benefice and beyond. It frequently includes a small choir. We have tried to specialise in sung Prayer Book Services with a view to attracting a wider congregation. The Benefice Holy Communion comes in rotation on 1st or 5th Sundays. Attendance at special services last year was:

Christmas Day 21
Carol Service 25
Easter Day 19

In the past year there has been 1 baptism.

There are 10 on the Electoral Roll, all of whom are also on the PCC. The PCC meets as often as is deemed necessary. Two members of the PCC are licensed to assist at Communion. Several members of the congregation read the lessons.

We look forward to welcoming our new Rector and hope that he/she will accept us for what we are and will continue the tradition of services at Edgcote as well as ensuring that every church in the benefice continues to have a service at Christmas and Easter (taken by visiting clergy, if need be).

Finance

We have £31,000 in the General Fund (£30,000 of which is reserved for the organ restoration) and a further £3,000 in the Fabric Fund. In the past we have paid our Parish Share in full but, but as ever, it is always a challenging target.

ST MARY THE VIRGIN MORETON PINKNEY



St Mary's Moreton Pinkney has a reputation for being a friendly, welcoming and warm church in which to worship. The Churchwardens and PCC work well together and with the Rector in a relaxed but efficient manner. The villagers tend to be generous in supporting the Church, and much thought is given to ensuring that it is recognised as an integral part of the village. This was particularly demonstrated by the support we received for fundraising from across the community following the theft of lead from the church roof in 2015.

Moreton Pinkney is an ironstone village, with a population of around 350, set in farmland which also supports a considerable local recreational horse population, and midway between Canons Ashby (National Trust) and Sulgrave. The one large house is now divided into apartments. The rest of the village is mostly made up of private houses and two small areas of council housing.

Villagers mainly work on the land or in the local towns; some commute further afield while, in recent years, more are working from home. There are a few weekend commuters, but houses are changing hands more frequently now with a more mobile population.

The village has a garage and a mushroom farm that also sells eggs, and a very active village hall which hosts weekly bowls, table tennis and Pilates sessions, a monthly film night and occasional "pub night" (the village pub has been refurbished, but is currently not operating), as well as popular annual events such as the garden club dinner and the harvest supper. Children go to Culworth or Lois Weedon Primary School and to Chenderit Secondary School at Middleton Cheney. There is no shop or medical centre. There is no public transport, but a voluntary car lift service operates to take people to the doctor etc.

The Church

The Church dates from the late 12th century with a Victorian rebuilt chancel. It is in good condition. With extra chairs from the village hall, the Church can seat about 150 for weddings, concerts etc. We are fortunate in having an active team of volunteers to clean maintain the church and churchyard.

Its six bells were re-cast and re-hung from five in 1997, and we have our own (sadly dwindling) team of bell ringers. Our old organ was recently reconditioned.

The Patron is Oriel College Oxford, which also has a responsibility towards the upkeep of the chancel.

Services

Sunday 1 Benefice Communion (rotating among the four churches)

Messy Church

Sunday 2 Morning Prayer (CW, lay-led)

Sunday 3 Holy Communion

Sunday 4 Mattins (BCP, lay-led).

Sunday 5 Benefice Holy Communion (rotating as for Sunday 1).

Two of our four services per month are lay-led from within the parish. Attendance for Mattins and Holy Communion is recovering following the pandemic but has remained remarkably stable at 15-20 over the past decade, though many in the congregation are elderly. Prior to the arrival of our current Rector, family service numbers had dropped, but the introduction of a monthly Messy Church service has attracted a number of new families: attendance tends to average about 15. We have begun to introduce some new (to the village) services, such as 'Hymns and Pimms' in the summer and a Christingle service. At Christmas or Easter, the congregation can reach 100. An amateur (very) choir sings at our Christmas Carol Service. In 2018, parishioners revived a Christmas entertainment in church after a lapse of several years, which has been extremely popular.

In a 'typical' year there might be one wedding, one baptism and one funeral.

The Rector also has a responsibility for the souls of the National Trust's Canons Ashby Church, originally an abbey.

Parochial Church Council

8 people are on the PCC (and 30 on the Church's electoral roll). Its mission statement reads: To assist and support the Rector of the Benefice in the administration of her/his ministry in the Parish.

- To assist the Rector in pastoral work.
- To maintain the Parish Church property.
- To administer the Parish Church accounts.
- To raise funds.
- To encourage participation in Church affairs and provide parishioners with a warm, friendly and welcoming environment.
- To represent the views of the parishioners to the Rector and Church authorities and to act as a conduit for communication between the Church authorities and the Parish.

The PCC's views tend towards the traditional, tempered with a willingness to accept change.

Finance

The PCC has about £20,000 in savings and pays its Parish Share. There are no current capital projects.

The annual income of some £10,000 is raised substantially from planned giving and collections. Events raise a further £4,000, and an annual Gift Day generates some £1,000 — from some 25% of the houses in the village. We contribute around £750 a year to charities.

Christian Witness

Moreton Pinkney has a diverse and active population that, in common with most villages, uses the church on high days and holidays and appreciates its presence in the village in a typically under-stated manner. The active members of the Church are not demonstrative about their Christian faith but bear witness to their beliefs through their daily activities. In the opening paragraph it is stated that Moreton Pinkney is a welcoming village, and this is very true. The PCC reflects the parish from which it is drawn: friendly and supportive; innovative, with an understanding of the importance of history's lessons; non-judgmental, and with a great sense of humour. Individual spiritual paths are followed privately, but not alone.

Appendix: a snapshot of parish life



