

West Downland Benefice Parish Profile Overview Summer 2022



The background image shows a church building with a prominent steeple and a large window. Scaffolding is visible around the church, indicating ongoing work. In the foreground, several people are sitting on folding chairs on a grassy lawn, suggesting an outdoor event or service. The text is overlaid on this scene.

We are looking forward to welcoming an
Associate Minister into the
West Downland Benefice.

*The most rural Benefice in the Newbury Deanery, West Downland Benefice offers the opportunity for a person with **energy, drive and enthusiasm** to take the next steps in their ministry by joining our friendly and supportive communities as we seek to **share the love of Christ in each of our villages.***

The Benefice consists of six parishes with eight churches, as well as two churches held by the Churches Conservation Trust.

Reverend Miri Keen

Our new Associate Minister will be joining us at a turning point in the life of our benefice.

The pandemic has 'taken the roof off' our church buildings and stirred our imagination and ingenuity as we've found new ways to worship together, built new friendships and reflected on the place of faith in our lives. We hope that all those experiences will help us as we seek to rebuild our congregations, support the mission of every parish in our 'family of churches' and explore new ways of blessing our communities.

We are looking for a priest with energy and flexibility, equally at home with BCP and All Age Worship, who will help us to deepen our faith and enrich our prayer lives. Ministry across six rural parishes is physically, mentally and spiritually demanding but we offer comfortable housing in inspiring countryside with opportunities for outdoor pursuits and excellent central support from our Benefice Administrator & Treasurer.

We hope that you enjoy reading about our churches and will consider whether God is calling you to work with us in the West Downland Benefice

What makes the West Downland Benefice:

- The People
- Community
- Stunning rural setting



A photograph of a church building with scaffolding around it, indicating renovation work. In the foreground, a group of people are sitting on a lawn, some in chairs and some on the grass, suggesting an outdoor gathering or event. The church has a prominent steeple and a large window with a cross. A sign on the scaffolding reads 'PRIMETER CONSTRUCTION' with a phone number '0845 4102 999' and a website 'www.primeterconstruction.co.uk'.

The parishes have worked together to identify our shared priorities. We hope to:

Bring more life and energy into our communities by sharing God's love in our words and actions

Find new ways to use our buildings to build on the foundations laid in the past

Re-shape our parochial organisation so that we have more capacity for 'ministry outside meetings'

Utilise the energy and skills of all God's people, offering training and opportunities for development and leadership.

The Benefice

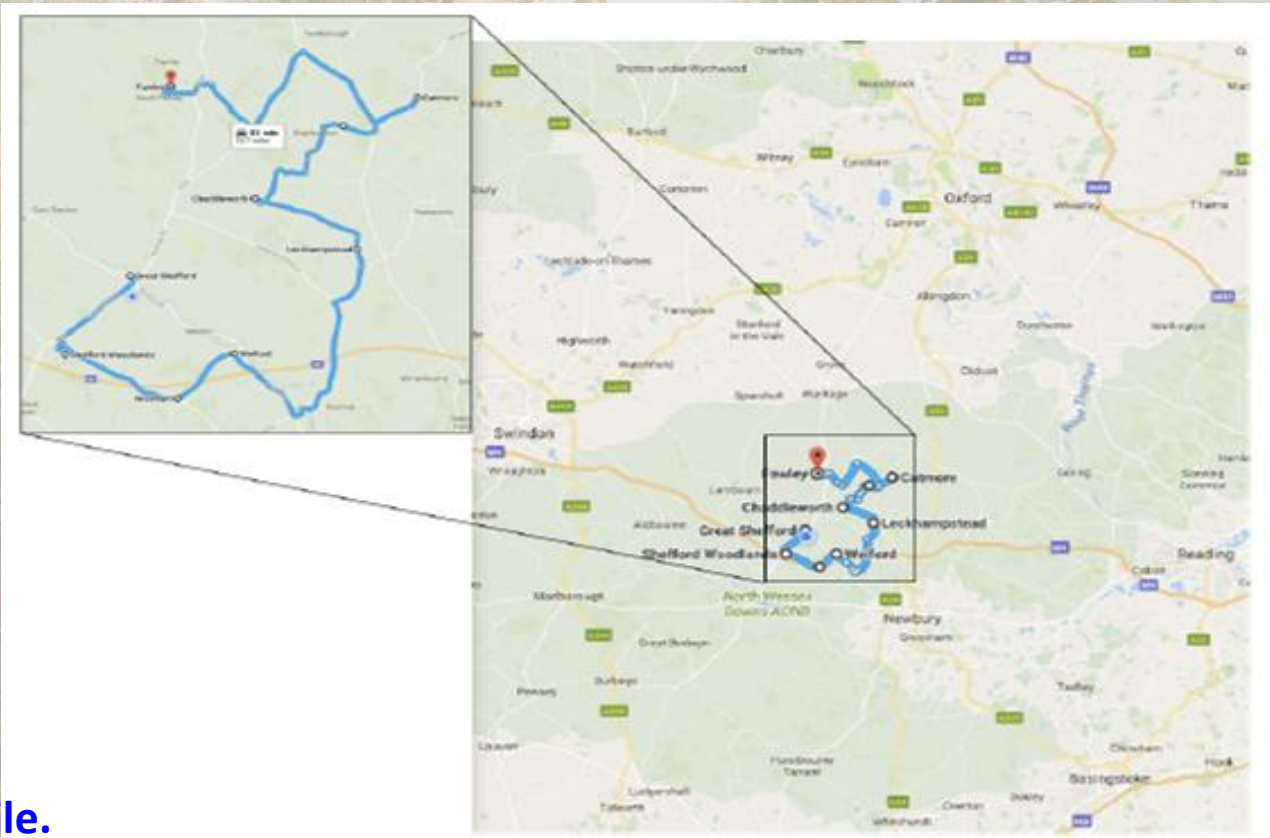
*The West Downland Benefice came into being on 1 July 2010 with the existing group of Parishes of **Brightwalton with Catmore, Chaddleshworth, Fawley and Leckhampstead** being **joined by the Parishes of Great Shefford and Welford with Wickham**.*

The Benefice works in a group with the East Downland Benefice.

Covering an area of 50 square miles, the Benefice is bounded by the A338 in the west, the B4494 in the east, the Ridgeway to the North and the A4 to the South.

The 8 villages lie in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are surrounded by farmland.

Learn more by clicking [The Benefice on Parish Profile.](#)



Our Churches



St Mary's
Great Shefford



St Stephen's
Shefford Woodlands

Great Shefford with Shefford Woodlands

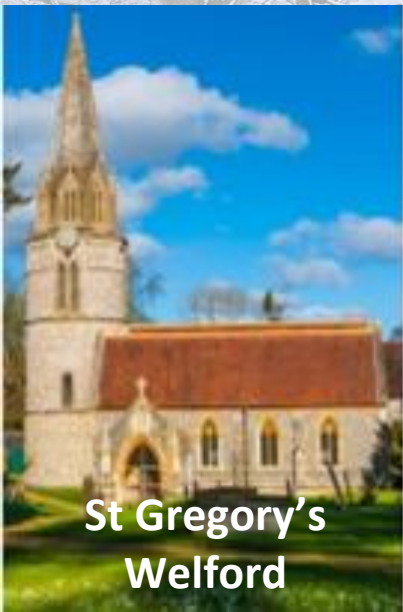
Population c. 940

Strengths:

Enthusiastic lay involvement in introducing new service styles
Church open all day every day and well supported by active groups
Well supported festival services held in St Stephen's church, including a popular outdoor nativity complete with donkey!

Hopes:

Develop support for the Pre-school and the Primary school
Attract younger people to be involved in church life
Meet the needs of the older parishioners



St Gregory's
Welford

Welford with Wickham

Population c. 515

Strengths:

Enthusiastic and dedicated PCC
Both churches in beautiful surroundings

Hopes:

Increased involvement of the local school in use of the church
Major repair programme to secure the future of our churches
Greater capacity for pastoral visiting



St Swithin's
Wickham

Our Churches

Brightwalton with Catmore

Population c. 330

Strengths:

Increasing attendance at village carol service and harvest celebration

An enthusiastic Aspire Project committee who are working closely with the Parish Council and wider community to re-order the church and recruit a part time community worker.

A fine church in the heart of the village

Local school that wants to use the church more

Hopes:

Transforming itself from a place of only worship to a range of new uses for the community

Encouraging more people into the church - re-invigorate regular church attendance



North & South Fawley & Whatcombe

Population c. 165

Strengths:

A beautiful church building which is in good condition and well maintained

Small rural parish with a vibrant community

An active PCC good at fundraising

Hopes

To reach out to more members of the community

To ensure the future financial stability of the church



Our Churches



Leckhampstead

Population c. 375

Strengths:

The church is open at all times, to all faiths, to everyone in the parish and is an important part of the local community and village life, with the village defibrillator being kept in the church.

Supported by keen and enthusiastic PCC and active Friends of St James' group
Clear vision and plans for the future.

Hopes:

Church building – following replacement of the roof in 2021 plans are now in place to install central heating and a toilet.

Committees – to maintain the goodwill and enthusiasm created through the project and build on community engagement and support within the parish

St James' Leckhampstead



www.stjamespcc.com

Learn more by clicking on Section 5 of the [Parish Profile](#).

Our Churches

Chaddleworth

Population c. 490

Strengths:

A well heated church that is popular for festival services and was well used during the pandemic restrictions

A small dedicated group of parishioners who keep things running

Bellringers from the village and surrounding churches

Members of the community who take their turn at flower arranging, brass cleaning and also cleaning the Stained Glass Windows.

Hopes:

Bring in a wider group to join the small dedicated PCC.

Greater engagement with all the community.

The development of greater activity with young people.

The restarting of the Afternoon Club a monthly gathering that offers tea, cake and conversation to anyone in the village who is free to attend.



Learn more by clicking
on Section 5 of the
[Parish Profile.](#)

Our Churches

The Benefice also includes two Norman chapels held by the Churches Conservation Trust; St Margaret's church Catmore and St Thomas' church East Shefford.

St Margaret's and St Thomas' are held in great affection by local people and are supported by local enthusiasts. Both may be used up to four times a year for services. There has been a regular pattern of Christmas Carols in both churches with a Whitsun Evensong and Harvest Festival at St Margaret's Church.

The burial ground at St Margaret' Church remains open for burials and marriages by Special Licence are permitted in both. The pandemic has disrupted the usual pattern of use and fundraising so a Summer Songs of Praise is planned for St Margaret's Church this year.



St Margaret's Catmore



St Thomas', East Shefford

Schools

Schools work is a very important part of the mission of the United Benefice and is seen as a chance to engage not only with the children and staff in the schools but also with the parents of the children. There are 4 church primary schools in the Benefice:

Chaddleworth St Andrews & Shefford C.E.(V.C.) Federated Primary schools

(both sites are used but the majority of the day to day teaching takes place in Shefford School)

[website](#)



Brightwalton C.E. (V.A.) Primary School

[website](#)



Welford with Wickham C.E. (V.A.) Primary School (part of The Kite Federation with Stockcross Primary School which is in the East Downland Benefice).

[website](#)



Welford and Wickham CE (VA) Primary School

'Where the children come first'

The clergy are warmly welcomed into all of the Benefice schools with opportunities to lead Collective Worship as well as offering pastoral care to the whole school community.

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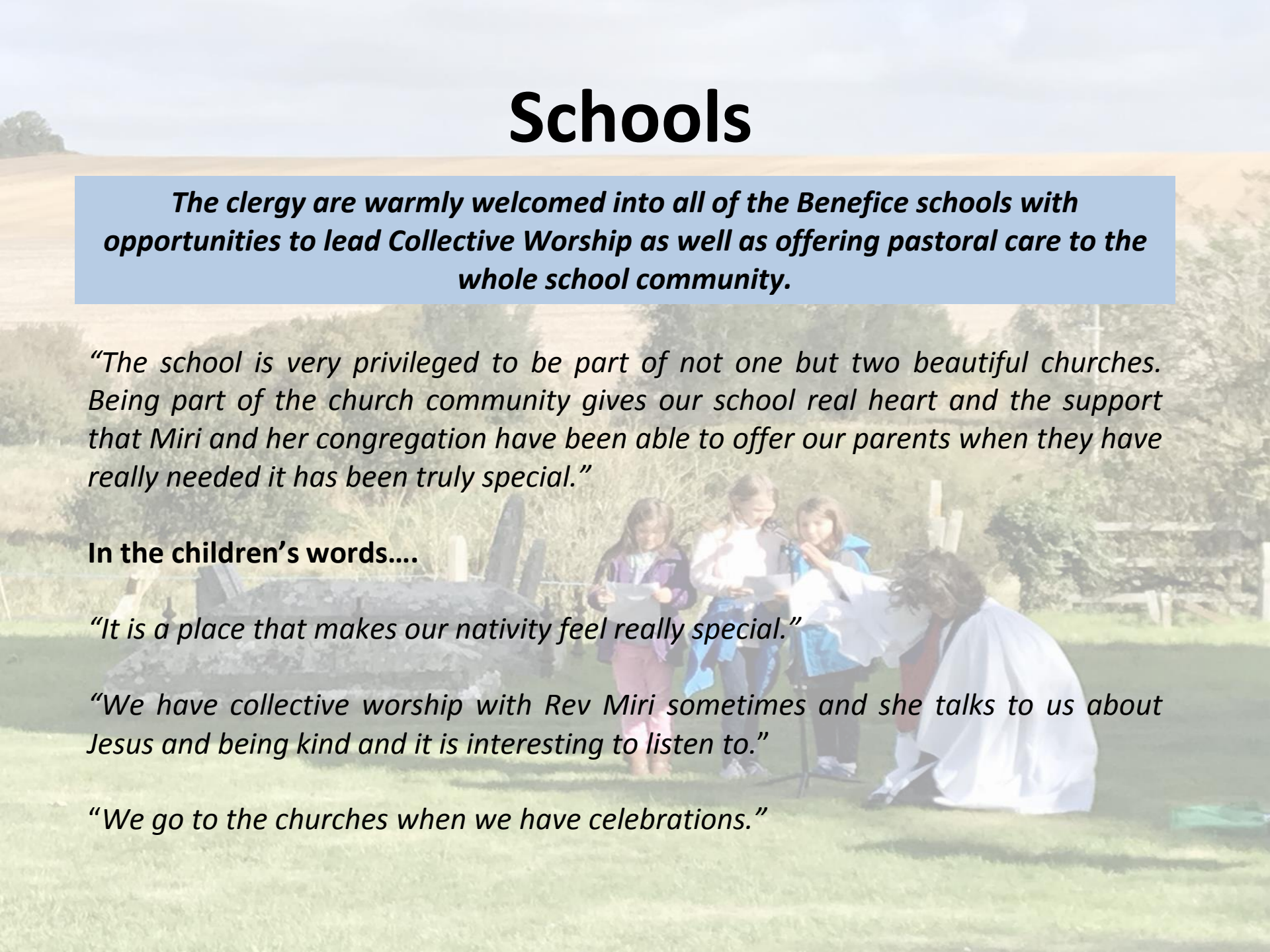
“The school is very privileged to be part of not one but two beautiful churches. Being part of the church community gives our school real heart and the support that Miri and her congregation have been able to offer our parents when they have really needed it has been truly special.”

In the children’s words....

“It is a place that makes our nativity feel really special.”

“We have collective worship with Rev Miri sometimes and she talks to us about Jesus and being kind and it is interesting to listen to.”

“We go to the churches when we have celebrations.”





Strengths & Challenges

Strengths

- Committed and enthusiastic volunteers
- Service available every Sunday
- Good and welcoming primary schools
- Beautiful and inspiring rural countryside
- Determination to maintain church buildings - keeping them at the heart of each community

Future Challenges

- Streamlining the governance structure of the Benefice
- Recruiting sufficient officers for each PCC
- Developing lay leadership and participation so that skills are utilised across the Benefice
- Growing the United Benefice services into occasions that people look forward to attending
- Building on the work done in primary schools and in Café Church through further engagement with children and young people
- Involving whole village communities in the life of the church
- Continuing to develop our use of technology so that each parish is confident and capable.

Learn more by clicking on Section 2 of the [Parish Profile](#).

Hopes for the Future

Improve and develop the pastoral care we offer within our communities

A truly United Benefice supporting each other through joint organisation, pastoral work, events and services.

Increased youth involvement in church activities

Improve and develop the church buildings to be of greater use to the wider community

Would you like to be part of making our Hopes for the Future happen?

The Rectory

A beautifully modern and spacious property situated in the centre of the village of Great Shefford.



This newly purchased rectory benefits from 3 double ensuite bedrooms, 3 reception rooms plus a large open plan kitchen dining room. Garage, gravel driveway and an enclosed garden.



*Situated with the Lambourn Valley, Great Shefford offers a **village shop/post office, primary school, traditional pub** with riverside terrace and garage all within walking distance. **You are surrounded by wonderful walking and cycling within the Lambourn Valley**, and a vibrant community. The village also benefits from excellent transport links with the M4 junction 14 within 2 ½ miles and trains from Newbury and Hungerford to Reading and Paddington, London.*

Learn more by clicking on Section 4 of the [Parish Profile](#).

What Next?

Thank you for taking the time to read about our Benefice, please see the Associate Minister job description within our Parish Profile for further details.

We would welcome an informal chat to answer any questions you may have.

Please contact Miri on 07954 117093

[Link to Full Benefice Profile](#)