



St Alban's Church, Wickersley
and The United Benefice of



St James', Ravenfield



St James', Braithwell



*St John the Baptist
Hooton Roberts*

Parish Profile

Contents:

Our Parishes 3

Who are we looking for?4

St. Alban's Wickersley 5

Our Parish Community6

Who we are & Weekly Services7

Our Special Services.....8

& Children and Families: All-Age

Music & The Choir9

Church Groups 11

Communication, Social Media 12

& Social Events

The Church & The Community 13

Church Buildings..... 15

Church Finances 16

St. James' Braithwell17

Our Parish Community 18

Who we are & Weekly Services 19

Special Services & Mission20

The Church & The Community21

The Church Building22

Church Finances23

St. James' Ravenfield24

Our Parish Community25

Who we are & Weekly Services

Worship & Music26

The Church Building

& Strengths and Challenges.....27

Church Finances28

St. John the Baptist.....29

Our Parish, Services & Community30

St. Alban's Rectory31

Additional Information.....32

Our Parishes

Together, our churches make two benefices: St Alban's Wickersley as one benefice and St James' Braithwell, St James' Ravenfield and St John's Hooton Roberts (a festival church is being considered) as the other benefice. We hope that this Parish Profile gives you a feel for what our churches are about: who we are, what we do well, and how we want to develop our faith and our churches. Indeed, we hope and pray that you might even decide our benefices are to be part of your own vocational journey of faith; one in which your gifts, skills and efforts can complement ours for the greater glory of God, and the further development of Jesus's work on earth.

A broad range of gifts, experiences and liturgical traditions are enjoyed across the three parishes. Each church's individual identity and tradition is important to us, as are the quality of worship and teaching, the celebration of the church's yearly cycle of festivals and occasional offices. The wide range of services on offer across the Benefice is valued. We see ourselves as offering stability and constancy within our communities, and see our life celebrations and seasonal festivals as opportunities for different generations to gather together in worship.

Wider Mission Area (Silverwood Mission Partnership)

The Silverwood Mission Area embraces the churches of St Leonard's Thrybergh, St Francis Bramley, St Alban's Wickersley, St James Ravenfield, St James Braithwell and St John's Hooton Roberts, one of six such Mission Areas in the Deanery of Rotherham (in the Archdeaconry of Sheffield and Rotherham). The plan is for the ordained and lay leaders, working collegially to oversee mission and ministry across the Mission Area, providing vision, direction and leadership for a cluster of existing and new congregations. The intention is to grow, making disciples, with congregations working together to release the whole people of God for the whole mission of God. Revd Helen Terry (Priest in Charge of Bramley and Thrybergh) is the Oversight Minister in the Mission Area.



Who are we looking for?

A lively person who has an infectious enthusiasm for Biblical teaching, the Church and its heritage, its people, and its mission in our diverse communities.

.. values the rich choral and musical tradition which enhances the worship at St. Alban's, and can help build on this through working closely with the Director of Music.

.. has strong communication, listening and leadership skills, and can inspire and nurture these skills in future lay leaders within our churches.

...is able to work with the other ministers in the Silverwood Partnership to manage the workload so that all churches have a fair proportion of minister support.



...shares our concern to grow our churches through better interaction with the community in each parish, including families, and with a vision for a brighter Christ-centred future.

...can work with all the schools in the parishes to strengthen the link between church and school, particularly our church school, St. Alban's Primary, seeking to involve pupils and staff in worship both in school and in church.

...is prayerful and pastoral, celebrating the place that sharing Holy Communion together has in our individual and collective lives together, as well as in our mission to grow as a Church family.

.. is able to identify and encourage people's gifts, and appreciate, support and develop those who share in the work of the church and its mission in our communities.



St Alban's Wickersley

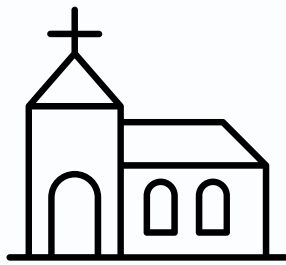


Our Parish Community

Wickersley is the largest village in our group of churches and has existed as a community for many centuries, dating back to the Domesday Book in 1086. It lies in the Rotherham Borough, an important industrial area since the Industrial Revolution. For most of its history, Wickersley was predominantly a farming community, with quarrying also historically a significant local industry. During the twentieth century, and especially since the Second World War, the village expanded substantially as a suburb of Rotherham and its population continues to increase. Wickersley spreads over both sides of Bawtry Road and includes social and non-social housing.

There are four schools within the parish, comprising one secondary school and three primary schools, two of which are part of Sheffield Diocesan Academies Trust, St. Alban's C of E Primary and Flanderwell Primary. Within the village, there are a variety of amenities:

- Shops
- Restaurants
- Pubs & Clubs
- Library and community centre
- Local nature reserve known as Wickersley Gorse and other areas of woodland
- Winthrop Community-run Garden Centre
- Bowling and Cricket Clubs



Who we are



Church Wardens



Parish Administrator



Director of Music



Treasurer



Verger



10:45am Leader



Parochial Church Council & Deputy Church Wardens



Safeguarding Officer

Weekly Services

Pre-COVID Service Pattern

Sunday Services	Time	Service	Average Congregation
1 st Sunday	8.30am	Said Holy Communion (BCP)	20.3
	10.30am	Family Holy Communion	84.8
	6.00pm	Choral Evensong (BCP)	44.5
2 nd Sunday	8.30am	Said Holy Communion (BCP)	20.3
	10.30am	Family Service	84.8
	6.00pm	Holy Communion (CW)	44.5
3 rd Sunday	8.30am	Said Holy Communion (BCP)	20.3
	10.30am	Family Holy Communion	84.8
	6.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	44.5
4 th Sunday	8.30am	Said Holy Communion (BCP)	20.3
	10.45am	Family Service	84.8
	6.00pm	Holy Communion (CW)	44.5
5 th Sunday	8.30am	Said Holy Communion (BCP)	20.3
	10.30am	Family Service	84.8
	6.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	44.5

Current Service Pattern

Sunday Services	Time	Service	Average Congregation
1 st Sunday	9.15am	Holy Communion (CW)	26.9
	10.45am	All-Age Service	38.9
	6.00pm	Choral Evensong (BCP)	26.7
2 nd Sunday	9.15am	Holy Communion (CW)	26.9
	10.45am	All-Age Service	38.9
	6.00pm	Holy Communion (CW)	26.7
3 rd Sunday	9.15am	Holy Communion (CW)	26.9
	10.45am	Holy Communion (All-Age)	38.9
	6.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	26.7
4 th Sunday	9.15am	Holy Communion (Choral)	26.9
	10.45am	All-Age Service	38.9
	6.00pm	Holy Communion (CW)	26.7
5 th Sunday	9.15am	Holy Communion (CW)	26.9
	10.45am	All-Age Service	38.9
	6.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	26.7

Weekday Services	Time	Service	Average Congregation
Thursday	10.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	19.6
Friday	8.30am	Morning Prayer (no liturgy)	

Weekday Services	Time	Service	Average Congregation
Thursday	10.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	10.4
Friday	8.30am	Morning Prayer (no liturgy)	

CW - Common Worship BCP - Book of Common Prayer

10.00am Combined Service

On festival Sundays, we hold a 10.00am combined service (usually Holy Communion) which is an opportunity to join together all of our congregations to celebrate the feast day. These are still relatively new services and we are looking for ways to grow this service.



Our Series of Special Services



Over the liturgical year, usually at 6.00pm, we host a series of special services celebrating the feast days of the Church of England. These services are something we are especially pleased to offer and see as opportunities to bring visitors into the church. These services feature high quality liturgy and music that offer an experience for spiritual refreshment and to bring people closer to God. We are looking for ways to further these services and help them to continue to grow.

Current series of services include:

- Advent to Candlemas
 - Advent Procession (Light in the Darkness)*
 - Carols by Candlelight (Nine Lessons & Carols)*
 - Epiphany Carol Service*
 - Candlemas Service (Light of the World)*
- Festival of Remembrance
- Festal Evensongs (Harvest & Easter)
- Pentecost Eucharist
- Music & Readings for St. Alban
- Music & Readings for Easter
- Liturgy of Ash Wednesday
- Palm Sunday Music & Readings
- Liturgy of Maundy Thursday
- Good Friday
 - Olivet to Calvary /*
 - The Cross of Christ*



'What a lucky bunch of people you are to have this glorious sound being made to the praise of God and for the inspiration of our hearts in this most wonderful season.'

Revd Stephen Edmonds
(Associate Archdeacon)

Scan me



Children & Families: All-Age



The second morning service at 10.45am (average attendance 35) has a small, loyal cohort of older attendees along with families of mostly pre-school age children. This service, although not its primary function, allows families to attend church to meet St. Alban's School's admissions policy criteria, although this policy is now under review by the Diocesan Trust. The service is child-friendly, but not aimed solely at such young children. We use PowerPoint presentations to provide meaningful illustrations for the service's theme and to enable the use of YouTube music videos (these are sometimes accompanied by children playing percussion instruments or with actions). During the service, the children also have an activity: an individual colouring/craft or a collaborative display of the theme.

During Advent, we have a Christingle service (150 attendees in 2023), a toy donation service for a local charity, and a Children's Carol Service on Christmas Eve (over 200 attendees in 2023).

I want my children to grow up in faith

10.45am Congregation Member



Music and The Choir

I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.
1 Corinthians: 14:15

'The choir truly brings the service alive. Their music sends shivers down my spine'

6.00pm Congregation Member

Overview

Choral music is very much an important and valued element of our worship style at St. Alban's - there has always been a strong musical tradition ever since the 1880's, when the chancel was built to house a choir and organ, and this has gone from strength to strength under the committed and ambitious leadership of our Director of Music. The church enjoys a good deal of musical content in most services, especially our special festival services, and a high level of musicianship from its people. The Director of Music is responsible for choosing and preparing music for services, in collaboration with the incumbent.

Before COVID-19, the choir and musicians sang/played on feast days at the family service; however, more recently the change from 10.30am to 10.45am all-age service as well as the introduction of hymns at the 9.15 service, has resulted in the use of pre-recorded online accompaniments. We continue to develop the music at St. Alban's for the future of our church and a project to maintain our junior choir in these changing times was launched in 2021 through the introduction of 'Make a Cheerful Noise'. Our organ was augmented in 2017 and plans are in place to continue the improvement of the organ. Most recently, in 2022, we introduced a new hymn book to our worship: 'Ancient & Modern Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship.'

Instruments

The original Brindley & Foster Pipe organ was replaced in 2007 by a digital Phoenix Organ. Many visiting organists have been amazed at the quality of the sound of the organ and often don't realise that the instrument isn't pipe. A number of organ recitals are given on the organ over the year and it is used in concerts. The organ remains central to our Sunday worship. We have the use of a piano as well as our organ. The piano is used in conjunction with the organ to provide flexibility with hymn and other music accompaniment.



The Choir

St. Alban's choir is a lively, social and inclusive 4-part (SATB) choir. Encouraging uplifting worship and a spiritual heart is at the centre of everything we do. Our 9.15am and 6.00pm services are accompanied by a robed, RSCM-affiliated choir, occasionally including our junior choir which we are striving to reintroduce. Our choir which is around 20 strong, meets weekly, working hard to rehearse music for the liturgical year. We sing anthems and hymns from a diverse range of sources. This is part of an effort to make the music accessible and relevant to both the choir and congregation, and to encourage participation of both; the choir are loyal and valued members of the congregation. The music which our choir leads is well-loved by our congregation who comment upon the way it lifts them in their worship.

Involvement in singing in other local churches has always been important to our choir and they have recently led services at Sheffield Cathedral. As well as visiting other churches, St. Alban's has hosted a good range of events to welcome visitors to make music and participate in worship in Wickersley. In addition to this, the choir participates in two or three Royal School of Church Music events each year, in recent years singing in Kings College Chapel, Cambridge, York Minster and Lincoln Cathedral. In addition to their music ministry, some of our choir members have already completed or are completing RSCM medal examination awards.

Domino ('To The Lord')

Domino is our instrumental group which plays at some of our special services. Our instrumentalists are exceptionally well-trained musicians, playing a wide range of styles and instruments. As well as providing music at services, Domino has also played as part of other social and community events in Wickersley and Rotherham. Part of 'Make a cheerful noise' includes teaching the children how to read music and play the recorder as part of developing the future of the music at St. Alban's. As they develop, children will have the opportunity to join and play in Domino.

Make a Cheerful Noise

Make a Cheerful Noise joins together twice each month to enjoy art, craft and music together. This was an initiative that began in 2021 as a way of ministering to children through music. Children who attend this group are given the opportunity to join the church choir or Domino. MACN is successful and is offering the children who attend a good musical and religious education, focusing on scriptural texts and music over the church year, and members who sing in the choir have already progressed in the RSCM Voice for Life medal scheme.

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Church Groups



Confirmation Classes

Each year, the church offers confirmation classes using Christianity Explored and its junior version (Epic Explorers) for adults and Year 6 children respectively. Take-up is varied, but our last confirmation service held at St. Alban's was in 2022 when 6 children and 5 adults from the Parish were confirmed. A Year Six confirmation class began in February 2024.

Moving forward, we would like to reinstate a youth group for our new young confirmees and any other young people in the parish.

Beta (Bible Study Group)



Beta meets twice a month and takes the form of study of a specific passage or biblical subject, with discussion of the passage or related issues. In addition to these meetings, other courses are held from time to time, including Christianity Explored, Discipleship Explored and Lent study courses, which are often held in conjunction with other churches in the Mission Partnership.

Flower Team

The flower team consists of 7 members who decorate the church to celebrate the main festivals of Easter, Harvest and Christmas. They are involved in Candlemas, Patronal Festival and Remembrance Day celebrations. Fresh Altar flowers are always displayed and members of the congregation are welcomed to sponsor flowers in memory of loved ones which are purchased and arranged on their behalf by a member of the flower team.



Servers & Lay Assistants

Our servers and lay assistants are a dedicated team of 12 members, 6 of whom fulfil both roles of serving and lay assisting. The Head Server is responsible for:

- ensuring new members are trained and supported in their role and producing a quarterly rota to cover all Sunday services of Holy Communion
- informing members of the team of any changes
- ensuring Servers and Lay Assistants are available for special services of Holy Communion such as Midnight Communion at Christmas, Ash Wednesday...
- liaising with Church Wardens and Director of Music to ensure continuity



CVM (Christian Vision for Men)

CVM meets every other month and takes the form of a meal prepared by some of the members, followed by a (light-hearted) quiz or other entertainment, and a short address by a Christian speaker with time for questions and discussion.

SALs (Saint Alban's Ladies)

SALs was formed to give women an opportunity to enjoy coming together in faith and in the spirit of Christian fellowship. Our monthly meetings aim to provide a varied programme of talks, visits and social events.



Bell Ringers

Our bell ringing team of 9 members ring each Sunday for our 9:15am and 6:00pm services and rehearse on a Wednesday or Friday evening under our experienced, long-serving tower captain.

Communication & Social Media

At St. Alban's we have a range of communication methods used by our dedicated team:

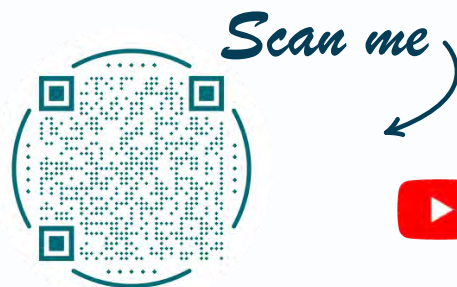
- notice sheets
- weekly emails that replaced our parish magazine during Covid and have remained
- a notice board outside of church
- our church website / social media pages
- A church near you webpage
- delivering of postcards to the parish by our volunteers prior to our Christmas event
- personal invites for our memorial service
- Rotherham Advertiser (Local Newspaper) / Wickersley News magazine

Being able to take part in the service from home when I was unwell was very helpful.

Congregation Member

During Covid, we began Zoom services, for which our dedicated musicians recorded individual tracks for hymns that were then sequenced and archived on our choir YouTube channel. The channel received a surprising following and we continue, at times, to add to the collection. However, it is our main church YouTube channel which is now the most utilised as we continue to stream two services per month and our festival services. YouTube has proved an invaluable way for people to worship when ill or unable to physically be in church and is very much appreciated.

Moving forward, we would like to explore new ways of reaching out to members of the parish as well as our worshipping community, making use of the many ways of communicating in the modern world to encourage people to visit St. Alban's.



Click to view

Social Events



St. Alban's has historically had a strong tradition of social events including harvest and Christmas meals, barn dances, fairs, visits to the seaside, pantomimes, deanery pilgrimages and much more. However, some of these have lapsed in recent years and we are working hard on rejuvenating our social offerings.

Over the last couple of years we have held a number of charity fairs and our Christmas Extravaganza with Carols in the Churchyard; our choir have run their annual fundraising car wash and cafe; and we have hosted jubilee and coronation events as well as regular concerts and recitals, all of which bring visitors in to church as well as providing enjoyment for our regular congregation. Church members joined our choir on their trip to Cambridge, enjoying a delightful day exploring the city before attending King's College Chapel for evensong. We have also resurrected our harvest supper and enjoyed a wonderful pie and pea meal and harvest quiz.

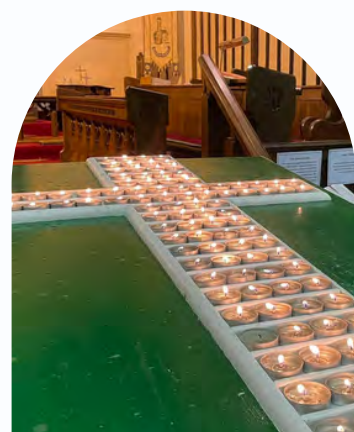


The Church & The Community

Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals

In 2023 there were 2 weddings, 24 baptisms, 21 funerals in Church and 5 funerals at the Crematorium. We have been fortunate to hold baptisms every month in 2023. Baptisms take place on the 4th Sunday of the month at 12.30, and we can accommodate two families in Church. Two members of the Ministry Team meet with parents and Godparents at a preparation evening in the week prior to the baptism.

We have a very good relationship with all the local Funerals Directors.



A special Memorial Service, which the family of those whose funerals took place in church are personally invited to, is held once a year at a 6pm service.

Remembrance Sunday at the Wickersley War Memorial

We join with members of Wickersley Methodist and Blessed Trinity Catholic Church, as well as from the general community for our act of remembrance at midday on Remembrance Sunday, where we are joined by local Rainbows, Scouts, our choir, local councillors and veterans.



Churches in Wickersley

We join with other churches in Wickersley on Good Friday for a march of witness around the village.

Home Communion

We offer home communion for those not well enough to attend church.

Stepping Stones

Our parent/carer and toddler group meets weekly during term time and is open to all the community, not just church members. Currently, about 8 families attend with around 15 babies and toddlers. The session starts with a simple short talk usually based on the theme from the Sunday before, involving puppets and other props, and we sing one or two action songs. There is usually a craft/colouring related to the theme. Plenty of toys, snacks and nursery rhymes fill the rest of the time.



Open the Book

A small team take 'Open the Book' (from The Bible Society) into St. Alban's Primary School for collective worship once a month; children are eager to participate in the dramatized telling of the Bible stories. Before 2020, we also went to one of the other schools in the parish, but have not yet re-started this due to limited team numbers.

Links with local schools

All three primary schools in the parish had visits by, or visited, the church for Advent and Christmas celebrations in 2023.



Pupils from St. Alban's School attend church for Holy Communion services at the end of each half term and for Harvest, Christmas and Easter festivals. Year 6 attend on 3 occasions during Lent. In 2023, there was also a Bible Presentation service when pupils in Years 2 and 3 received a Bible that will remain with them throughout school. Further links with St. Alban's school come through 3 church members who are Foundation governors and part of the School Board.



Other Community Groups using our buildings:

- Pilates
- Art Workshop
- Parties
- Rainbows
- Wickersley Probus
- Rother Valley retired teachers' association

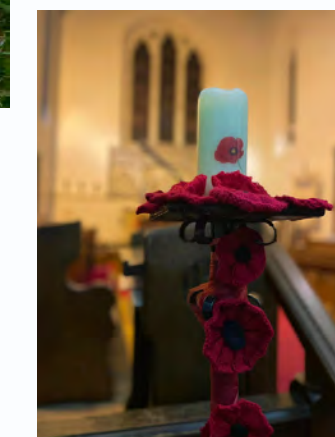
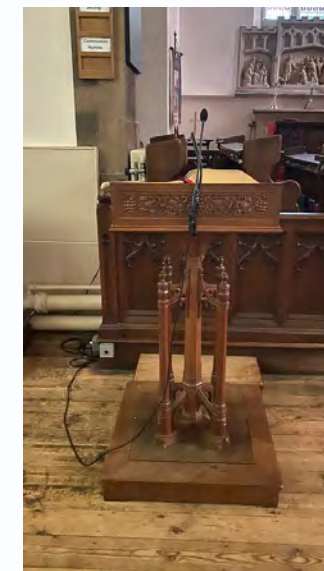


Coryllion Choir

One evening each week, Coryllion Choir, a Wickersley based choir of 40 members, rehearse in the church and perform concerts each year. Members from our own church are also members of Coryllion Choir.

WING

The Wickersley Neighbourhood Group ("WING") meet in the Barn on Wednesday afternoons, 1.30 - 3.30pm, in term-time. This is a group of local elderly and/or isolated people who come together to socialise, and the members are drawn from Wickersley, Flanderwell, Bramley and Sunnyside. The helpers are mainly volunteers from St Alban's Church, as the group was originally started by members of a church housegroup who identified a need for a social group for the elderly in Wickersley. We have a varied programme of activities: bingo and table games, speakers, music from local artistes, meals together and themed parties. Transport (with a WING helper as escort) can be arranged from members' homes to the Barn, using the Community Transport buses, though some members walk to the meetings, or are brought to the group by car by relatives. Refreshments are served. We currently have an active membership of 15-20, though before covid the group was larger.



Church Buildings

The Church

St. Alban's is situated at the heart of Wickersley, near to the 'The Tanyard' shopping area, and is visible from the main road, through the locality, and from longer distances in some directions. There has been a church on site since 1150. However, the oldest part of the current church is the bell tower, dating from 1470, with the nave being rebuilt in 1836 and the chancel added in the late 1800s. The church building is Grade II listed, containing pews capable of holding around 300 people.

Our church has stunning stained-glass windows, crafted by the famous York artist Henry Mark Bennett in the 1800s. They depict several saints, including St. Alban in the porch, the 12 apostles in the 12 nave windows and St. Cecilia and the Te Deum in the chancel. The beautiful East window shows Christ on the cross, the Virgin Mary and St. John on either side and Mary Magdalene kneeling. The Reredos, which shows Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, is crafted from stone, is from Oberammergau. The church furnishings comprise of a carved wooden communion table, lectern and pulpit depicting St. Alban, all in Victorian or early twentieth century style. Within the church, as well as war and rectors' memorials, is the oldest and most interesting gravestone/memorail – Roger de Wickersley's, in the centre aisle.

Our tower contains three bells: the lightest 'Treble' and 'Number 2', which were originally installed in the late 1700s, but recast in 1952; and the heaviest 'Tenor', which was cast around 1450. They can be heard throughout Wickersley depending on wind direction!

The church has a carpark which has space for approximately 50 cars.



Churchyard

The churchyard has developed over its 800-year history, with additions of land during the 20th century, covering approx. 2.8 acres and includes five war graves as well as several people who played a significant part in local history. The churchyard is available to everyone who lives within the Ecclesiastical Parish of Wickersley. The area now being filled was consecrated in 1999. Having numerous old deciduous trees, many with preservation orders, and being situated within a mile of open countryside, our churchyard is a favourable environment for wildlife. A churchyard work party monthly work mornings are social meetings held for the maintenance of the churchyard grounds by volunteers attending St Albans Church.

Our Building Challenges

Our next Quinquennial Inspection is due this year. Overall, our building is in good condition. Over the last year we have had to address a few major problems: a leaking roof and resulting replastering; and painting and underpinning of vestry foundations. We are in the process of addressing some further concerns. St. Alban's has a fabric committee.

The Barn

Our church hall, known as 'The Barn', is located adjacent to the car park where there is an enclosed garden space. Built in the early 1800s as a tithe barn, it is now regularly used for both church activities and other community groups, and it is financially self-sufficient. It contains a full kitchen, toilets, storage and a meeting room.



Church Finances

St Albans' PCC seeks to operate to an annual break even budget and to maintain sufficient reserves to meet any unexpected expenditure. At the end of 2023 we had reserves of approximately £46,000.

Most of the parish's income comes from regular donations from members of the congregation and from service collections. With associated gift aid reclaims, this has averaged about £56,000 per annum over the past 4 years.

The church encourages 'targeted giving' for specific items of annual expenditure such as candles, communion wine and wafers etc.

The church also benefits from the regular letting of the church hall which is in use most days of the week and occasionally at the weekend for parties.

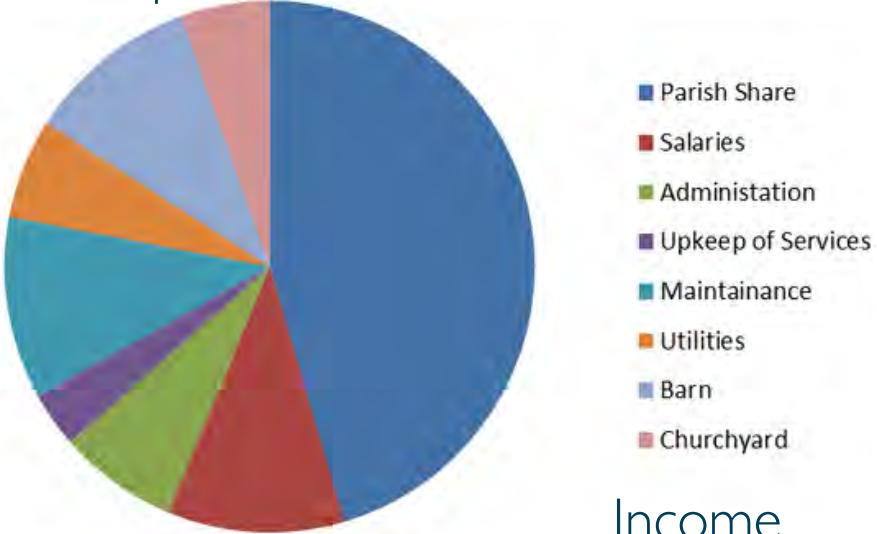
A Diocesan common fund donation of approximately £37,000 has been paid in each of the last 4 years, the single largest item of expenditure for the church, with staff salaries usually being the next most significant regular cost.

The church has fund raising events throughout the year and gives away the proceeds to charities international, national and local. In 2023 £4,400 was donated to 13 different charities.

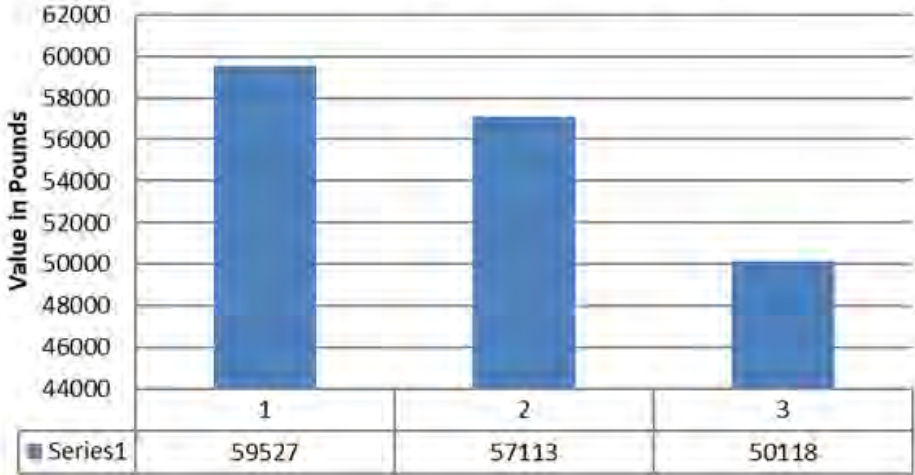
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Regular Giving	78253	58668	59527	57113	50118
Fee Income	11758	12307	11761	9318	14454
Other Giving	2009	1500	3511	6488	3553
Barn	8481	2045	2144	8906	7429
Churchyard	4768	4705	3481	2580	6285
	105269	79225	80424	84405	81839

Parish Share	75060	36612	37000	37000	38000
Salaries	7538	8076	8140	8814	9015
Administation	4369	5313	5905	5032	6101
Upkeep of Services	1464	993	1637	2051	2819
Maintainance	5862	13174	5470	5557	9278
Utilities	5280	5791	5169	4858	5098
Barn	2970	2018	2667	4349	8764
Churchyard	4435	5018	7129	4225	4530
	106978	76995	73117	71886	83605

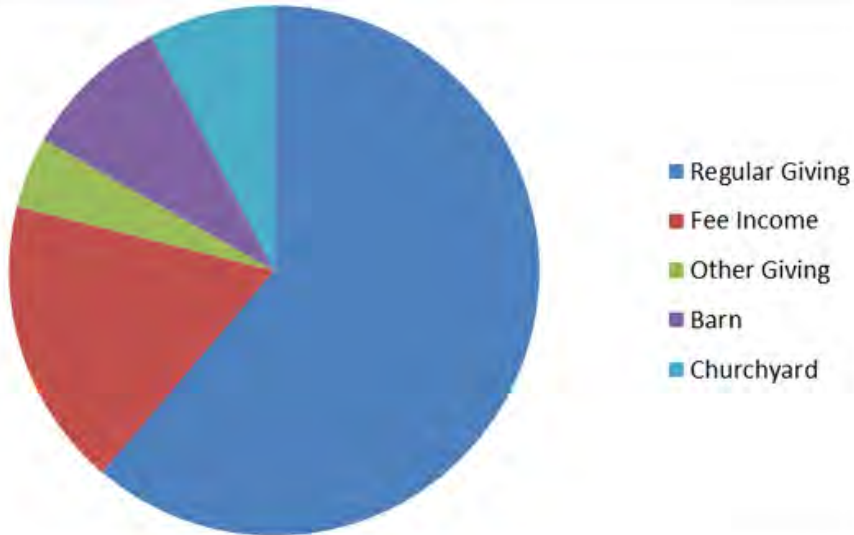
Expenditure



Regular Giving in last 3 years



Income



St James' Braithwell



Our Parish Community

The population of the Civil Parish of Braithwell (which includes Micklebring), according to the 2021 census, is 1,096 divided almost evenly between males and females, approximately 630 of whom are of working age and 300 are of pensionable age. Almost 28% of the population are 65 or older. 159 inhabitants (14.5%) are under 18. The population has increased only slightly since the 2001 census when it was 1,056. The census also states that in the village there are 680 inhabitants who categorize themselves as Christians (64.9%) and 353 inhabitants of no religion. The data also specifies other religions, Muslims (8), Buddhists (9), Sikh (1) and those of Other Religion (4). The population is 97.4% UK born and 95.7% of white ethnicity. Regarding the villagers who are economically active, 78.3% are employees, 19.7% are self-employed and 2% are unemployed. 62.7% of working residents travel to work by car or van and 28.8% work from or at home.

This is a small church in a traditional farming community where farming families play a prominent role in the life of the village and church. The community and church also benefit from the support of the Good Companions, the Wheelbarrow Committee, the Village Memories Group and the Parish Council of Braithwell and Micklebring. We are very grateful for all their support be it monetary, work to help maintain the church and churchyard or their attendance or participation in church services and events.



Who we are



Church Wardens



Organist



Lay Reader



Treasurer
(based at Ravenfield)



Parochial Church Council & Deputy Church Wardens

Weekly Services

Sunday Services	Time	Service	Average Congregation
1st Sunday	10.00am	All-Age Service (with Brownies)	20 – 27 with adults & children
2nd Sunday	10.30am	Morning Worship	10 -15
3rd Sunday	10.30am	Morning Worship	10 – 15
4th Sunday	10.30am	Holy Communion	10 – 15
Occasional Special Services			30 +



Special Services

At Christmas:

- Carols at the Cross – a popular service around the village’s ancient cross usually with a brass band.
- Carol Service- joyful and atmospheric service accompanied by a brass band and extremely well attended this year.
- Christingle – oranges are donated by a village greengrocer and prepared by Braithwell brownie leaders or brownies.
- Crib Service – principally for youngsters but nowadays they are outnumbered by adults.
- Holy Communion – on Christmas Eve night or Christmas Day morning.

Other special services:

- Plough Service – members of the farming community are invited to share in blessing the plough and praying for the harvest.
- Mothering Sunday – daffodils are distributed.
- Palm Sunday – we are accompanied by Stevie the donkey as we process through the village from the cross to the church
- Maundy Thursday – St James’ hosted the service last year.
- Good Friday – Walk of Witness through the village stopping and reading at stations of the cross and finishing in church.
- Easter Day – Easter eggs are distributed.
- Lambing Service – not celebrated since Covid but it is intended to restart it.
- Remembrance Sunday - a well-attended ceremony at the village war memorial and in church. Usually accompanied by a band if available.
- Brass on the Grass – Well-attended event in the church grounds accompanied by a brass band. Villagers bring their own chairs and a picnic if they wish.
- Harvest Festival – Proceeds are donated to a local food bank or auctioned for charity and the church.

How do we carry out our mission?

We endeavour to make our church a warm and welcoming focal point of Christian faith for our community and others and to encourage their presence and participation in worshipping Christ.

We have shared our priest, until his retirement, with St Alban’s, Wickersley and St James’ Ravenfield, meaning that we have not been blessed with his presence as much as we would have liked i.e. once a month for our Holy Communion and at other times for special services. We also have a lay reader who thankfully keeps our church running during the interregnum and more recently he has been assisted by a member of the congregation who also leads some services. During the pandemic we sadly lost our other lay reader.



Our Church & The Community

Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals

In 2023 there were 3 baptisms, 1 wedding, 5 funerals with burial and 2 funerals with cremation in Church and 1 funeral at the Crematorium. Baptisms take place on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 12.00..

A special Memorial Service takes place once a year, where families of the recently bereaved are invited to remember their loved ones.

Other regular events

Heritage Open Day – Starts with a coffee morning and is assisted by the village memories group and a local expert who gives a guided tour.

Coffee Mornings – On the first Saturday of alternate months.

Christmas Coffee morning – Includes live Christmas music and a craft stall

Brownies

We are joined by a small number of our local Brownies for our 1st Sunday of the month all-age service as well as for our Christingle.



Ruddle Community Centre

Pre- and post- Covid sketch:

Prior to Covid-19, numbers in our congregation had been dwindling. The average then being 17. During and since that time several stalwarts of the church congregation have either sadly passed away, have been too ill to attend or have left the area to reside in care homes. Several years before this our infant and junior school closed, resulting in children travelling to schools in the surrounding area. Following the school closure, our Post Office also closed. In both cases the buildings were replaced by dwellings but because of a lack of amenities the village is no longer appealing to many families as a viable place to set up home. As a result we now have fewer young people in the village than in the past.

As a consequence of all of this, our Children's Group which ran for many years was no longer able to continue, neither was our annual Nativity which required the assistance of the children and our already overworked Church helpers. Also, our well-loved church fair ceased with social-distancing rules but despite a return to "normality", it is not likely to recommence.

Challenges:

Our greatest challenge is improving attendance. We realize that we have to make church more appealing. There is a great deal of keenness for the continued existence of the church but very few who wish to lend a hand in helping to do this. Also, as the church is very old, suggested changes to update the fabric are not usually met with enthusiasm. Also, the church tower is in dire need of repair and this will cost a good deal more money than we have in our account.



The Church Building

Exterior

St James' Church, a Grade II* listed building, is situated in the centre of the historic village of Braithwell. The village and her church were mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Its construction began in the 11th century with extensions between the 12th and 21st centuries, the most recent of which was a toilet on the north side. The churchyard has been extended twice, most recently in 2022 occupying land formerly used as a car park to the east of the church. In addition, the churchyard has two areas for consecrated remains. The church is also illuminated at night, the lighting having been recently upgraded to energy-saving LED and is supported financially by the donations of caring villagers. On the exterior wall of the south aisle is a 12th century mass dial.

Interior

The visitor to St James' Church is usually struck by its beauty and character. Built of sandstone and limestone it has many notable features – over its door, a Norman tympanum; its traditional font and the devil's door (blocked up); its Mouseman cupboard with bookcase; a wooden screen to the tower vestry also by 'Mousey' Thompson; the Royal Coat of Arms of George I; its 15th century tower with three bells; a 14th century south aisle with piscina; its pulpit with panels and text taken from the original Elizabethan three decker pulpit; its late 19th century eagle lectern; an Easter Sepulchre; an ornate reredos of Austrian oak behind its altar; beautiful stained glass windows; an Aumbry; the organ has been present in the church since 1844 and was relocated from the tower to its present position near the chancel and a priest's vestry added in 1894. In 2004 a small kitchen area was incorporated in the tower vestry. The church also has a sound system.



Church Finances

Regular (Planned) Giving	15 people
Average Weekly Giving	£163
Common Fund Contribution	£4,000 (2023)
General (Unrestricted) Funds <i>(as of 31 December 2023)</i>	£7,365
Restricted Funds <i>(as of 31 December 2023)</i>	£64,961



Braithwell War Memorial



St James' Ravenfield

Our Parish Community

The parish has a population of approximately 2,500. It is divided into two distinct areas: Ravenfield Common, where most of the population live and is the location of a primary school, the parish hall and a few amenities. One mile away is the 'old village', with a significantly smaller number of properties and where the church building is located. Also nearby is the beautiful Ravenfield Ponds, a popular area for fishing and walking,

The name Ravenfield is of Norse origin and means 'raven's open field'. There was a medieval chapel on this site which was replaced in 1756 with the present church, designed by the York architect John Carr (Famous for building such as Harewood house, Wentworth woodhouse, Buxton Crescent to name but a few). for Mrs. Elizabeth Parkin (of Ravenfield Hall) it is built in the Gothic style of Ashlar sandstone with a Welsh slate roof. It is a 3-bay single cell with a tower rising above west gable entrance and has an apsidal east end. The prime reason for its existence has always been as a place for the people of Ravenfield to meet with God. Over its 250 years, many have drawn closer to him in the light and peace of this space.. We hope you do too.



Who we are



Worship Leader & Treasurer



Worship Leader



Safeguarding Officer



Secretary to the PCC



Parochial Church Council

Weekly Services

Sunday Services	Time	Service
1 st Sunday	10.30am	Family Service
2 nd Sunday	10.30am	Holy Communion
3 rd Sunday	10.30am	Service of the Word
4 th Sunday	10.30am	Service of the Word

Worship and Music



Our average Sunday attendance is around 12 adults, with slightly higher numbers and some children attending our all-age worship.

Festival services for Mothering Sunday, Easter, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas (Christingle, nativity and carol services) see slightly higher numbers, although numbers at our Christingle service are significantly less than pre-covid.

In the past 18 months we have begun to use choral backed tracks to bolster our singing, and words to hymns are displayed on the wall using PowerPoint slides. We use a mixture of traditional hymns and modern worship songs. We still rely on printed orders of service using Common Worship liturgy. Our worship style could be described as having a relaxed/informal atmosphere.

Our church building



The church building itself is Grade II listed and dates from 1756. Despite its remote location, the church building benefits from kitchen and toilet facilities, and is warm and welcoming.

Tower & Bells

The tower houses a set of six bells; four of these were founded/cast by Joseph Ludlam who had a foundry near the Grammar school in Rotherham. These bells were fitted when the Church was built in 1756. Two further bells were added in 1797 and these were founded/cast by Thomas Hilton of Wath. Our bells are now fixed and are operated by one person using the Ellacombe mechanism at gallery level. Three of the bells are also used by the clock for striking the hours and the quarters. All the bells were originally framed, and are still sat on English oak trestles.

The Clock

We have a rare one-fingered clock on the tower. Possibly one of only a dozen of its kind in the country. The clock is wound by hand using the original winding handle and is accessed via a wooden ladder to the clock chamber from the gallery level; it is wound once per week. Our clock is a turret (or birdcage) clock and is an interesting mixture of makers and periods. One part is signed William Smith and is a complete mid-18th century clock in its own right, with a 'going' or timekeeping train of wheels and a striking train, to strike the hours. This part of the clock was most likely fitted when the Church was built in 1756 and fits with the dates that Smith was working. Smith worked in Upper Moorfields in London between c.1749 and c.1778. The second part is signed by Andrew Crawshaw of Rotherham and is a chiming train - to chime the quarter hours - and is an early 19th-century 'add-on'. This part of the clock has the date 1812 engraved on a brass plate and it is probably at this point that the two distinct parts have been fitted together - the finished assembly being reconditioned by William Potts & sons of Leeds in the 1956. In late 2019 the planned restoration of the movement, quarter chimes and a full dial restoration began. The work was carried and was completed in February 2020. We also had the clock winding mechanism fitted with an electric motor for automatic winding and automatic regulation, the cost of the work came in at £16554.

Our strengths and challenges

Strengths

- We are welcoming, friendly, and have a strong desire to reach out to those in our community
- We actively participate and support local events such as the village fete, art exhibition etc.
- We are open to exploring new styles of worship .
- We are committed to paying the Common Fund pledge that we make every year.

Challenges

- Increasing the size of our modest congregation
- Engaging with young families and those who come to us for weddings or baptisms
- Maintaining the church building and the surrounding churchyard.

Website: www.ravenfieldchurch.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ravenfieldchurch



Church Finances

Regular (Planned) Giving	11 people
Average Weekly Giving	£95
Common Fund Contribution	£3,000
General (Unrestricted) Funds <i>(as of 31 December 2023)</i>	£38,587
Restricted Funds <i>(as of 31 December 2023)</i>	£14,047





St John the Baptist Hooton Roberts

Our Parish, Services and Community

The parish of St John the Baptist has been a place of worship since the 12th century. It is part of the Silverwood Mission partnership and joint benefice of St James, Braithwell, and St James, Ravenfield.

There have been many joint services and friendships forged within the benefice and the mission partnership to meet the needs of family fellowship today.

The church building is situated just off the A630 in a semi-rural farming community.

The village has a population of 170 (according to the 2021 census data).



Services

Regular Sunday worship was suspended at the church during 2020. With the full and enthusiastic support of the local community, a Festival Church model is being considered. Since 2022 we have enjoyed many successful regular services to mark key festivals, all of which have been well attended.

Community Involvement

In addition to the festival services other events to support fundraising and encourage community involvement have included: - Christmas Fayres, harvest auctions, social craft groups, maintenance sessions, music nights and history talks.

Our church is steeped in history e.g. historical links to the Earl of Strafford and musical links to great composers. In 2023 we marked the anniversary of Vaughn Williams, who was a frequent visitor in the village and the area is said to have been inspired him to write 'Linden Lea'. It was befitting that his 150th anniversary, be celebrated by evensong with the Steel City Choristers.

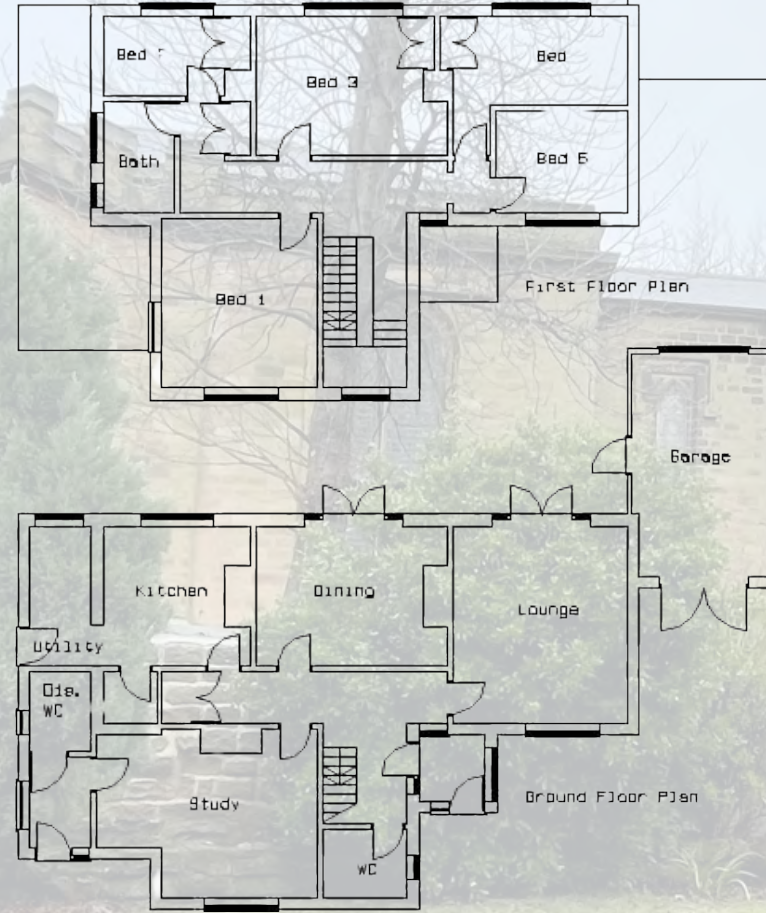
Future, plans include a village collaboration with benefice partners at Ravenfield for D day. A summer charity event held in the Pingle including traditional old village fun and games. Musical evenings supporting local choirs and musicians who are giving their time and talent in support of the church.

The Archdeacon and members of the diocesan Mission Area Support Team are assisting the PCC in their exploration of becoming a Festival Church and establishing a supporting 'Friends' group, to secure the long-term future of the church at the heart of the rural community.

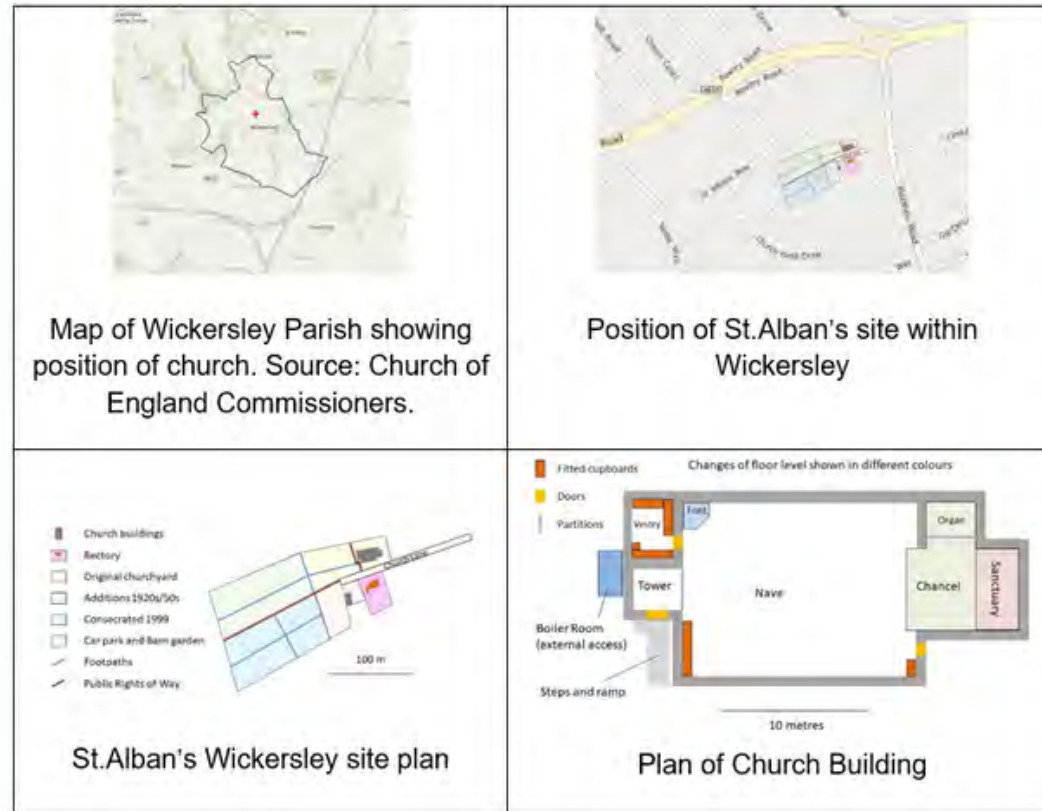


St. Alban's Rectory

St. Alban's Rectory is a modern building situated on Church Lane, Wickersley, opposite the church. It has living and office space downstairs, and five bedrooms upstairs. A separate office and disabled access entrance is available on the left side of the building. There is a substantial garden both front and rear, and a garage, with parking space at the front of the building.



Wickersley Plans



Wickersley Christmas Service Attendance

Christmas							
Christmas Service attendances							
	Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Christingle	U16	61	45		37	54	54
	16+	86	84		62	82	93
Main carol service	U16	17	12		3	3	5
	16+	190	229	27	58	112	131
Children's carol service	U16	127	98		48	57	85
	16+	202	193		88	83	126
Midnight communion	U16			2	1		
	16+	83	69	29	42	46	66
Chr.Day 10.30	U16	8	11				1
	16+	45	40	17	19	30	19

Benefice & Partnership Map

