Anston, Woodsetts and Firbeck with Letwell

Joint Parish Profile 2024

Statement from Bishops Pete and Sophie

Dear friend,

There is no denying it: these are challenging times in the Diocese of Sheffield. But by the same token, these are exciting times for us. No-one has any doubt that in 2029 the Church of England in South Yorkshire and the East Riding will look very different from the way it is now — but equally no one is yet very clear about the shape it will take. Our plan is an ambitious one and we are hungry for change. We are asking tough questions: Will the whole people of God be mobilised for the whole mission of God? What will morale be like, among key lay and ordained leaders? Will attendance figures be in decline or growing? Will there be more stipendiary incumbents or fewer? Will there be more congregations or fewer? Will we raise up a dynamic community of 'Lights for Christ'? Will we grow a praying community of 2025 by 2025? These questions were already pressing ones for us before the present pandemic: they will surely be even more urgent for us now.

In this Gospel adventure for the sake of the coming kingdom of God, the leadership of these church families is going to be vital. It will require someone who is able to exercise an enabling oversight, with a passion for teamwork, for developing leaders and for empowering the whole people of God for the whole mission of God. It will require someone able to raise up leaders to take on responsibilities as 'focal leaders' in every congregation and someone who understands that overseeing the ministry of the body of Christ does not mean doing everything personally, but releasing the gifts and ministries of others.

We are praying that the Lord will bring to us a person with a strong sense of vocation to this task at this time; a person of faith and hope and love in God; a person who laughs easily and has a zest for life in Christ; a person with a sense of adventure, unafraid of failure and reliant on the grace of the Holy Spirit. If that might be you, we would love to explore with you the possibility that the Lord is calling you to this role.

With every blessing

+ Pete Sheffield

The Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox
Bishop of Sheffield

+ Sophie Doncaster

The Rt Revd Sophie Jelley
Bishop of Doncaster

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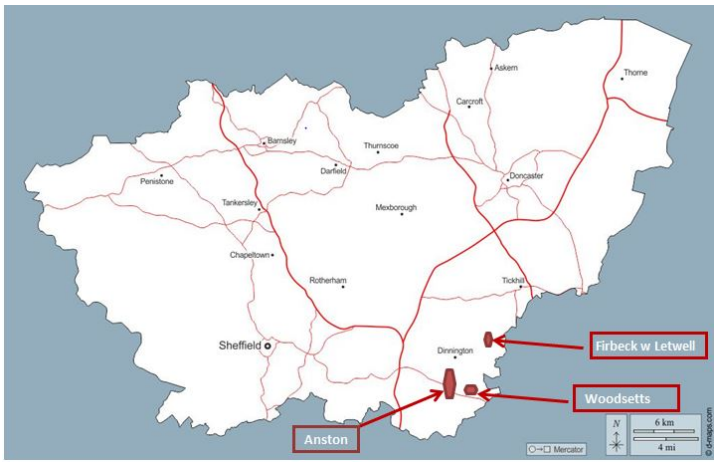
Introduction

A warm welcome to Anston, Woodsetts and Firbeck with Letwell. These parishes form part of the Living Stones Mission Area and we are delighted that you are interested in finding out more about us.

As you may not be familiar with this very beautiful corner of South Yorkshire, we will show you where we are:

In the UK



In the Diocese of Sheffield

and in the rural Deanery of Laughton, which is comprised of:

St James **Anston**

All Saints **Aston** with Christ Church **Swallownest** and Holy Trinity **Ulley**

St Leonard **Dinnington**

St Martin **Firbeck** with St Peter **Letwell**

St John the Baptist **Wales** with All Hallows **Harthill & Woodhall** and St Peter **Thorpe Salvin**

St Bartholomew **Maltby**

All Saints **Laughton**

St Simon & St Jude **Thurcroft**

St Peter & St Paul **Todwick**

St George **Woodsetts**

The oversight of our parishes offers a great diversity of experience, the three being very disparate in size and demographic (details in the Appendices) and, we feel, requiring different approaches to mission.

A message from the existing Oversight Ministers in our Mission Area

As the two existing Oversight Ministers in the Living Stones Mission Area, we regularly meet together and offer one another mutual support. In developing shared initiatives and mission priorities, we are really looking forward to welcoming a new colleague to work alongside us and our very capable and dedicated self-supporting minister, Revd Barbara Cushing,

We feel very blessed to be living and ministering in an area with such wonderfully committed and able lay leaders. It is a joy to witness, and be a part of, the deepening relationships between the parishes; for the last 18 months we have had termly lay-led meetings to share experiences and encouragement, and these have proved fruitful and positive. On 5th Sundays we come together in worship, and these offer further opportunities to build up our fellowship with one another, grow links, and celebrate our unity and diversity - they have been joyful and uplifting occasions!

As you will read elsewhere in this profile, there are undoubtedly challenges to meet, but you would be assured of a welcome, and a wholehearted desire to work together, using gifts and skills in the most effective ways to further God’s mission here.

Revd Beth Langner and Revd Canon Miranda Hayes

Please continue to read and see if what we offer is what God is calling you to.

Our Aim

Our objectives are:

- to make effective use of our church buildings for mission in the 21st century.
- to be active in our outreach to the community, supporting the sick and troubled
- to engage with the local schools, building relationships with teachers, pupils and their parents
- to support our parishioners in the significant events of their lives by providing baptisms, weddings and funerals that meet their needs in a way that leaves a lasting impression of church as attractive and welcoming.

Our Mission

Our mission is to obey the calling of Christ to spread the word of God's love to the people of our parishes, encouraging them to be active, praying, praising members of his kingdom.

Our new Oversight Minister

Our three parishes are looking for an Oversight Minister who is rooted in prayer and open to the Holy Spirit, who is called to the position here, hearing from God and acting out of obedience to Him.

We value Bible teaching and are hungry for the Word to be brought alive in a way that is relevant to our lives, through sound preaching and an ability to communicate truth in teaching, actions and by example.

We are a varied family at different stages of life, with a range of viewpoints and levels of involvement, requiring nurturing and opportunities to grow as followers of Jesus. Our new Oversight Minister will understand the need to listen carefully with compassion and humility and be able to help us grow our pastoral ministry and discipleship.

We are open to our gifts being recognised and encouraged, and developing leaders in the church. Our new Oversight Minister will be able to work effectively with clergy and reader colleagues, supportive of the changes that the new Focal Ministry format offers and be interested in working collaboratively.

We have been looking to strengthen links between St Peter's, St Martin's, St George's and St James' and others within the deanery as we see the value of learning from one another. We would expect our new priest to continue this process.

Our new priest would have to be a very adaptable person, able to recognize and value equally the very different parishes within his or her responsibility.

Although our aims and mission are the same, each parish has different approaches. There follows an extract from the original thoughts on requirements from each parish:

Anston

We are always looking for ways to engage in mission in the local community and to speak of God's love. Our new Oversight Minister will wholeheartedly support our church outreach, encourage further missional groups and will bring creativity to the use of our church buildings.

We recognise the challenge we face to hold onto all those who come to St James'. Our new Oversight Minister will help us to learn how to fully welcome newcomers and to build lasting and discipling relationships.

We also recognise the challenges of being a busy fellowship. We need a confident leader with the skills to develop us further, the courage to try new ideas, the wisdom to sometimes say 'no' and the willingness, at times, to accept the decisions of others.

Firbeck w Letwell

We are looking for a priest who is open to the changes that the new Focal Ministry format offers; someone who can support both the Focal Ministry team and the wider congregation, but can equally guide us all in our faith journey.

We hope for someone who will play a part in the building of relationships with the community, offering pastoral guidance and support that can develop and strengthen the connection of the families who come for life events. Previous experience has led us to believe that visits to the sick and troubled by a locally-based priest do more to raise the profile and reputation of the church than any other initiative we have tried.

Our new minister would join us to face the challenges that our parish has. The need to grow our fellowship is paramount. We pray for more and younger people to become part of our church as a continuing witness to God for years to come. We look to our Minister to help introduce innovation and creativity, especially in the field of modern technology.

We would like a minister who can help us as a church family, spread the word of God and the joy of following Jesus, giving us the support and guidance to encourage younger age groups to attend church and explore their own faith. We are small villages and although our congregations have not diminished in size, we have noted an increase in average age of our congregations over recent years.

Woodsetts

We are hoping our new priest will be able to liaise between the four churches under his or her oversight ministry. Having had no stipendiary priest or oversight minister since 2016 we welcome being once more joined with Anston. We have worked very closely with Firbeck and Letwell, as we were joined as 2 parishes held in plurality since the 1970s. We understand the problems of multiple churches requiring services but have worked out solutions amicably in all situations.

We hope our new minister will be able to help us further Christ's message within the community, as well as being a visible presence. We would welcome the chance to work with

him/her in their work and will support them with and in prayer.

We look to our Minister to:

- *Respect the traditions and values of the Church and its liturgy.*
- *Support the Focal Minister, Outreach group and PCC to inspire new ways to reach out to grow our church*
- *Work with our lay teams to support the Messy Church, Messy Vintage and Food and Faith services*
- *Visit the local school and confirm the established links*

A serious frustration is in technology and social media and we really would like someone to lead us out of the 20th century in these fields.

As you can see, we have different priorities and concerns, but we are unanimous in looking for the best person available, irrespective of gender, age or marital status.

What do we offer?

We will

- Welcome you to our church families
- Welcome you to all our activities so you can get to know us
- Be interested in your previous experience and how we can all learn from it
- Expect you to take proper holidays and days off and take up opportunities for further training, reading and personal development
- Try to give you any feedback in a positive and constructive manner and to be loving and generous as you find your way amongst us
- Look forward to hear you teach and preach
- Support you in involvement in the community beyond the parish boundaries
- Pray for you and love you

Appendix 1 Our Parishes

Firbeck w Letwell

Our parish is composed of two rural villages and smaller hamlets with two Parish Churches - St Peter's Letwell and St. Martin's, Firbeck. We are situated in South Yorkshire but are close to the borders of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, which offer some great places to visit. Down the road is Roche Abbey which is a 1147 monastery of the Cistercian order, the valley is beautifully landscaped by Capability Brown.

Roche Abbey

The nearest town is Dinnington, which has several shops and supermarkets. Worksop town is also near, which is much larger in population and has several amenities.

Our parish is small with a population of approximately 350/400, but there has been significant growth over the past few years, especially in the renovation of Firbeck Hall which now offers residential homes and apartments.

Both villages have mainly older, older-style and expensive housing and Firbeck also has a mix of mainly more affordable housing, including some council houses. However, both the housing and the demographic being very mixed in Firbeck, the community is very diverse and, although there is no destitution or obvious poverty, there are still some families that are far from affluent. There is a large proportion of retired people in both villages, but in Firbeck also many young families.

Both villages have an active village hall, hosting many groups; fitness classes, table tennis, monthly film nights, concerts and social evenings. They are also hired out for birthday parties and other events.

There is a village pub at Firbeck called the ‘Black Lion’, a 17th century pub that serves food and real ale. The pub hosts a weekly quiz night and special seasonal events.

Woodsetts

The village of Woodsetts has grown considerably in the last fifty years. This is due mainly to its easily accessible routes to the M1, M18 and A1 and as such has become a desirable residential area for commuters, whilst offering a fairly secure environment for families and a much sought after infant and junior school.

The village also contains a doctor's surgery which dispenses its own medicine, post office, Local History Archive building and rural outlooks. At the western edge of the village is the Lindrick golf course, which spans the A57, and the other 3 aspects are covered by farm land, making it an enclosed village.

Post Office

The nearby town of Dinnington is about 3 miles away whereas the larger town of Worksop is about 5 miles distant. The village is actually in South Yorkshire despite the postal address being Nottingham.

The population is still very mixed with some families having been born and bred in the village, others came in the expansion in the seventies while the new smaller developments have brought in more new families. There are now 835 homes in the village. The village has a Village Hall, hosting many varied activities, but since the church was refurbished in the early 2000's our back room and upstairs room are often hired for smaller meetings, especially since we had a new heating system at the end of 2022.

The village pub, the Butchers Arms, has had a chequered history of late, but has just reopened and is already hosting events. The new owners have also given us permission to continue using their car park.

Anston

Anston is a large village or perhaps is better described as a small township. The present population is between 10,000 and 12,000. Anston has its own Parish Council but most local services are provided by the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham in the County of South Yorkshire. Anston is located 13 miles east of Sheffield, 10 miles southeast of Rotherham and 7 miles west of Worksop. The A57 trunk road passes through South Anston. Although Anston is a single parish there are two distinct areas called North Anston and South Anston, with the River Ryton (known locally as Anston Brook) at the bottom of the valley with North and South Anston on hills to either side.

Historically, North Anston appears in The Domesday Book (1086) as Anestan and South Anston as Litelanstan. There is some debate as to whether this Saxon name might refer to a local feature known as "One Stone". The local limestone rock was ideal for buildings and used not only in Anston, but also at a much later date for the Houses of Parliament and the Geological Museum in London in the 19th century.

The best local example is our parish church of St James in South Anston. Its commanding position makes it readily visible to the approaching traveller.

Although the ancient church building of St James is located in South Anston, our separate Church Hall is located in North Anston. There are five primary schools within the Parish, one in South Anston and four in North Anston.

There are two small shopping areas, two post offices, two chemists, four pubs and a social club. There are Uniformed Groups for young people based in the village, associated with St James'.

The village continues to increase with new houses being built and people commuting into Sheffield, Rotherham, Worksop and Doncaster. There are a few residential homes for the elderly in the area, including one in North Anston.

There are several green areas and parks in Anston with popular play areas for children. There are football pitches, a bowling club and a cricket club. Other leisure facilities are nearby at Worksop, Aston and Maltby.

Anston also has an area of natural beauty and scientific interest called 'Anston Stones'. In North Anston there is a Tropical Butterfly House with exotic butterflies, wildlife and a Falconry centre.

Anston has easy access to the Cathedral in the centre of Sheffield and Minsters in both Rotherham and Doncaster. Anston is located on the edge of the Peak District with beautiful views of the outlying area. The M1 and M18 are located approximately 5 miles away allowing easy access to various towns and villages within the location.

The main local theatres, cinemas and shopping areas are in and around Sheffield, Rotherham and Worksop.

Within the village we have small Tesco and Morrison stores, as well as larger Tesco and Aldi supermarkets in the adjoining conurbation of Dinnington.

Appendix 2 Our Churches

Firbeck w Letwell

We have an average congregation of 10-20 on a Sunday morning at both churches, only about a third of which attend at both. There are 51 on our electoral roll, but some of these only attend major festivals.

We hold a Holy Communion service at 9.30am twice a month at St Martin's in Firbeck. The remaining Sunday is Morning Worship or All-age Worship, locally led. At St Peter's, Letwell a Holy Communion service is held once a month. This means that we have a service at 9.30am every Sunday morning in the parish. We are currently looking at different forms of worship when priest cover isn't available for Holy Communion.

Most Wednesday mornings, also at 9.30am, we hold Morning Prayer at St Martin's, which attracts a group of 5-9 people. If there is a fifth Sunday, we join with the other Mission Area churches for a joint Eucharist.

We are open to trying new times and formats to help grow the numbers of the church. Creativity and innovation are prayed for so we can bring the Word of the Lord out into our communities.

Our regular congregations expect worship in accordance with the Church of England liturgy, to teach us through scripture and enrich our understanding, however they are not opposed to other changes, as is evidenced by their enthusiastic enjoyment of family services and acceptance of our Focal Ministry Team.

Our Focal Ministry Team

As mentioned earlier our Focal Ministry team is Christine, Nicky and Enid, who regularly conduct morning worship and the midweek prayer group. We also have an accredited Worship Leader, Rachel, and lay members of the congregation are involved in reading and intercession.

Matthew, a young student organist, supports us for some services and for Morning Worship, we also have a small worship music group with a keen guitar player and recorder player (and occasional bassist). In between we use digital download to assist with hymns.

We do not conduct many weddings, but we have some baptisms and a small number of funerals each year.
Christmas is a busy season at both churches, including Christingle, Carol services, a Crib Service, Midnight Holy Communion and Christmas Day Holy Communion.

Christingle at St Peter's

Crib Service at St Martin's

Considering the size of our villages, our churches are fairly well supported financially.

St Martin's has benefitted from a number of bequests, some of which provide help with some of the churches expenses e.g. heating oil, stationery.

St Peter's has fairly low outgoings and its offerings and Gift Aid receipts usually cover these. Letwell Street Fayre donates a significant amount from its proceeds every year to an account reserved by St Peter's for repair and restoration of the building.

Since Covid (which seriously impacted the finances of both churches), our funds have recovered sufficiently for the two churches to contribute to the Common Fund:

	Firbeck	Letwell
2022	£2,500	£1,800
2023	£3,500	£1,900
2024	£4,000	£1,900

Although it is always difficult to fund projects, the day-to-day finances of both churches are not a cause of concern for the PCC.

Woodsetts

We have one Focal Minister who is also the Churchwarden and organist, she is also one of two Worship Leaders. We have a Lay Reader who unfortunately has not enjoyed good health, a very capable Outreach group, and a very supportive PCC. We have an excellent verger and a very helpful maintenance man. Our main problem is age - so many are over 70 and of those, half are over 80.

Jean authorised as a Focal Minister

Messy Church

One of the Worship leaders is also the Children's Minister and runs Messy Church. We take safeguarding very seriously and have a Safeguarding Officer and participate in the one line system for all DBS checks.

Our pattern of services over the last few years has been Holy Communion for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays at 10:45 and since the start of this year (2024) we have introduced a 'Food and Faith' morning worship starting at 10 a.m. on the first Sunday of the month. This has been subtitled depending on the subject and food on offer. We started with Croissants and Crowns for January, Pain au chocolat and Praise for February and Toast and Temptations for March. Easter cake and Easter will be the theme for April.
There is also a Taizé service on the second Monday of each month in church and Zoomed again in the evening. The church service attracts regular attendees from Dinnington and Anston. There are a couple of regulars at the Zoomed service - one a former parishioner who now joins us from Northern Ireland.

The first Messy Vintage May 2023

Last year we began a series of Messy Vintage as there are many retired people in the village. This inter-denominational gathering includes prayers, hymns, a talk and a craft activity, as we hoped to draw all Christian villagers together, especially as the Methodist chapel has closed and the nearest Roman Catholic church is in Dinnington. This has been going from strength to strength, although the afternoon tea we serve may have a bearing!

We have an average congregation of between 18 and 25 but the Messy Vintage draws in about 40. There are only 50 on our electoral roll due to some members moving to be nearer family and some departing this life. The 'Messy' services run between 3 and 4 times each

a year, with Messy Church picking up again after the Covid break. Messy Church began again last autumn with a dedicated team of 12. It welcomes families we do not see in church on Sundays. We currently have about 18 children and 11 parents attending, though new families appear each time. Our concern is what we can offer these families to develop their faith if the Sunday service does not appeal to them.

After Covid there was a surge in Baptisms but last year we had none and none so far this year. We had 2 marriages last year but that was unusual as we rarely have any.
Funerals unfortunately are more numerous, ten in 2023 and four so far this year. We still have a churchyard so interment of ashes is often required even without a church funeral.

Our main service is Sung Eucharist as we have a good church organ and organist. We celebrate our Patronal Festival by inviting our partner parish of Firbeck w Letwell to join with us in April and we join with them in June for their joint Patronal Festivals. This year their Sunday falls on a 5th Sunday so the whole Mission Area will celebrate together at Firbeck.

In previous years we have joined in the Lenten series of meetings run by all the churches in the area, taking our turn to host and lead one of the sessions. Unfortunately this was not possible this year, but hopefully this was just a blip. Holy Week sees Maundy Thursday Holy Communion and foot washing, while on Good Friday we take a service to Firbeck for 12 noon and then repeat it back here in Woodsetts at 2.00 p.m. We mark Harvest on the 1st Sunday in October and organise a Harvest Supper the following day.

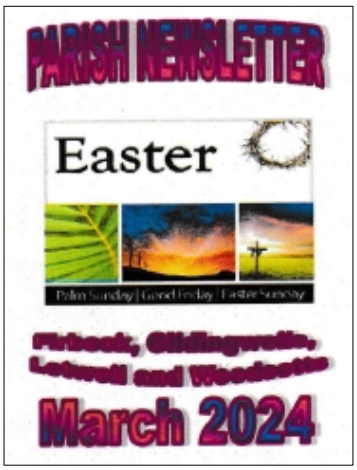
A Lenten Labyrinth

On All Souls Day we hold a Memorial service in the evening by personally inviting all families who have lost loved ones during the previous year. The service is not exclusive and anyone may attend, but if they want a candle ready named they need to tell us in advance.
Christmas is always busy with Christingles, Carol and Crib Service.

The Christmas Altar

The School in Church

We have a hard working PCC with a smaller group called the 'Outreach' group who organize events approved by the PCC, including social evenings for anyone in the parish to attend (limited by ticket numbers) fund raising events like the Birthday Fayre in September and refreshments or just bodies needed for various events.



We publish a pew sheet weekly for our churches and a magazine 11 months of the year which goes into about 220 homes and covers Firbeck, Letwell and Woodsetts.
Despite Covid, which obviously impacted our finances, our Parish Share contributions were:

2021 - £21,936.00 Parish Share

2022 - £22,200.00 Parish Share

2023 - £22,754.75 Parish Share

Anston

We are an evangelical community, friendly and welcoming, and we aim to nurture all members of our church family. We look outwards to our local community and actively engage in mission.

We share a Mission Partnership with 6 other churches in our area and have 87 members on our Electoral Roll; members are from a range of age groups. We currently employ a part-time Families & Children's Worker who runs a toddler group and liaises with schools and uniformed groups. Our PCC is committed, enthusiastic and pro-active in our approach to mission.

Our church, like many, is full of unsung heroes in a variety of roles. A few are shown here…

Church Warden/

Safeguarding Officer:

Mrs Pat Bradey

Self-supporting

Ordained Minister:

Rev Barbara Cushing

Lay Reader:

Mr Richard Ayling

Lay Reader:

Mr Chris Hall

Finance Officer:

Mr Peter Howard

Safeguarding Officer:

Mrs Julie Tedder

Verger:

Mrs Anne Wildgoose

Assistant Verger:

Mr David Little

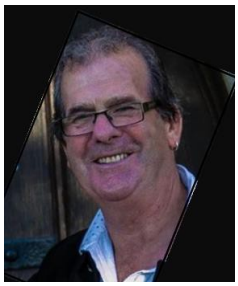
Families and

Children's Worker:

Mrs Tracy Winfrow

Bell Captain:

Mr Trevor Morris



Pastoral Worker:

Mrs Hazel Coates

Pastoral Worker:

Mrs Janet Cooke

Churchwarden/

Church Hall Manager/

Pastoral Worker:

Mr Ron Cushing

Sundays

We usually have two Sunday services, at 10 am and 6 pm. We currently have a self-supporting assistant priest and two lay readers. We also have three worship leaders, two pianists, a guitar player and a violinist to enhance our worship on rotation. We are a 'child friendly church', and have recently started a family friendly All Age Brunch service on a monthly basis.

Our 10 am Service is Holy Communion, Morning Worship or All Age Brunch Service.

Every three months on the fifth Sunday we share our service rotating with all our Mission Partnership Churches. We serve refreshments in the adjoining meeting room following the morning service.

Our 6 pm Service is Evening Prayer,
Said Communion or Evening Praise.

Once a month at 8.30 am we also have 1662 Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion.

Baptisms and Thanksgiving Services are arranged on demand, usually after the Sunday 10 am service.

Healing Ministry & Pastoral Work

At St James' we believe that the church's ministry is for everybody and that through this ministry, Jesus Christ meets us at our point of need. We are very fortunate to have a good Pastoral Team who offer Home Communion and prayers for those with special needs. We have three Licensed Pastoral Workers: Hazel Coates, Janet Cooke, and Ron Cushing.

Prayer Chain

We have a team of 6 people in our Prayer Chain, committed to pray for our church, our village and our community.

Children's Ministry

Currently we have a monthly All Age Brunch Service where we welcome families and children of all ages on the fourth Sunday of each month. This is a relatively new initiative, and is designed to encourage more young people and families to worship with us. So far it has been well attended.

Small Groups There are some home groups that meet on a regular basis, providing Bible-led nurture and exploration within small groups. We are hopeful that these will grow.

Advent & Lent courses We usually join forces with other local churches in the area to run midweek evening bible study courses throughout Advent and Lent.

Social Occasions We have several social occasions throughout the year, including events at Christmas, Harvest Festival, and St James's Day at the end of July.

Bells We have a peal of eight bells and a team of bell ringers. Regular practices are held Thursday evenings in the Bell Tower.

Our annual income to the General Fund in 2022 was £50,500, 77% of which was provided by regular giving of the congregation. We have about 60 individuals who either give by standing order or envelopes. Those who can, Gift Aid their donations.

In addition, the Church Hall raised £8,800 which including the Natter café, is a vital means of outreach into the community.

Our contribution to the Common Fund of the Diocese in 2022 was £29,000, with another £12,500 paid for charitable giving, staff costs, and other expenses relating to the Church building and services.

We also have other Designated and Restricted Funds, including a Fund for our Children's and Families worker.
Reserves totalled £66,000 at 31 December 2022, most of which is

held in the Designated and Restricted funds mentioned above.

Our finances, budgeted and agreed annually, are regularly tracked by the Treasurer and the PCC. As with many churches, we face the challenge of “ageing money” and how to attract new younger givers.

St James Church currently supports the following charities:

- **Charis Ministries** run by our Missionaries in Mozambique, Mandy Hunter (Midwife) and Mel Welch (English Teacher). Their aim is to share the Good News of Gospel through both word and action, to the marginalised poor in rural Mozambique
- **Rothacs** - a Rotherham-based domestic abuse charity
- **Bluebell Wood** - a local children’s hospice offering much needed residential / respite / day care to children and families dealing with terminal and life-limiting illnesses

Christian Aid is supported by various events organised through the year such as sponsored walks and swims.

We also raise money for **The Children’s Society** at our very popular Christingle Services that attract a large number of additional families and worshippers to the two services held each Christmas Eve.

We periodically contribute with other local churches to fundraising events for **Smile Train** in their transformative work for children born with facial deformities across the globe.

Appendix 3 Relationships between our Churches and their Communities

Firbeck w Letwell

Firbeck holds a biennial Scarecrow Festival during August, when residents display scarecrows around the village (often with a themed approach). The church contributes to this event with organ music, local folk musicians, children's events and a scarecrow in the church. There are fun activities, such as maps and treasure finds, craft and raffle stalls. Refreshments are also offered by the Parish Council and Village Hall Committee. The festival attracts both young and old and offers some wider outreach into other communities. This is much loved by the residents of Firbeck and is supported well.

Letwell is also renowned for its famous annual 'Street Fayre' which takes place each July with food stalls, arts and crafts and a brass band; plus an array of activities for everyone. It sees the tradition of dancing around the maypole, bringing communities and generations together.

Both churches host an annual Harvest Supper auction. We also hold a Rogation service and picnic on Park Hill Farm, where members of the congregation and community can walk or have a ride on the tractor. We are surrounded by many farming families and this is a great opportunity to thank them for the work they do come rain or shine.

A Parish Picnic was held in the churchyard at St Martin's for the Platinum Jubilee of the Queen in the summer of last year and it is hoped that this could become an annual event, as it was so popular and attracted many families.

Parish Picnic

On the first Sunday of Advent carol singing is held at St Martin's church, on a day that sees the community gathered together to sing and welcome Father Christmas on his sleigh to switch on the lights on the village Christmas Tree, and several smaller trees that are sponsored and decorated by local people.

Christmas Tree Festival

St Peter’s also organizes carol singing throughout both villages, reaching out to those who may not be able to attend church anymore and to spread festive cheer to all.

Woodsetts

We have very strong links with our Local History Society who hold all their meetings in the church. We hold a joint Christmas Fayre – held in the school, and they support our Birthday Fayre in September.

A recently formed group - TARA (Tenants and Residents Association) have started using the church and have asked to make it their 'home venue' as they felt really welcomed there. We hold a very well attended coffee morning each week supported by church and 'non' church villagers.

The school is not a church school but has encouraged us to read Bible stories to Y1 and, when we had the numbers, to do 'Open the Book' as an Assembly. Recently Y1 was invited into church to be shown around and given very basic information as to the different parts of the building.

We try to organize an event to match each special occasion - ie, the Queen's 90th birthday, Platinum Jubilee, Burns Night and of course the Harvest Supper. Our team have quite a reputation for their Pie, Peas 'n' Pud, suppers. We organized the Condolence book for our late Queen for the Village a year last September and in previous years have organized carols, mulled wine and mince pies in conjunction with the local pub.

We have been very fortunate with our links to the local school in that they have welcomed us to read Bible stories to Y1. They are keen to foster new links under their new head teacher, so we hope to build on this.

Anston

St James' has always had a heart for Mission, seeking to disciple people to come to know God's love and follow Jesus, both within the church and in the community.

Special Times

St James', Anston is a place where many people still look to the church to help them mark times of celebration and also sadness. In 2023 we conducted 8 baptisms, 4 weddings and 24 funerals, which is about half the numbers from pre-Covid times. We support these through wedding and baptism preparation and post-funeral bereavement visiting. With the help of a new Oversight Minister we hope to be able to offer more again in future years.

We have an annual memorial service on All Saints Day for those who have been bereaved in the last year. During this service we invite the bereaved to place a lighted candle on the cross at the front of church to remember their loved-one.

Our Christmas services of Community Carols, Carols by Candlelight, and Christingle are always very popular with the wider community and very well attended.

Outreach Communities

These reach out to welcome those who would not necessarily attend traditional church and include:

The Natter Café is a vibrant group of volunteers and attendees, meeting at the Church Hall every Thursday morning. It provides easy and informal access to company and community to anyone wishing to attend, alongside the Community Prayer and Bible Natter activities offered before and after the Café opening period.

We also have a group of volunteers who meet at the Church Hall alongside the café to perform general building maintenance and gardening tasks. They are much appreciated, as many are not regular members of our church congregation, but are happy to volunteer their time and skills in this capacity.

The Ark Toddler Group meets at the Church Hall every Tuesday morning during school term time, led by a qualified and experienced Children's and Families' Worker, and supported by a rotating team of volunteers from our congregation.

Uniformed Groups

Anston, St James has an affiliation with the 35th Rotherham Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, who have approximately 75 young people

attending their groups in their Scout Hut in North Anston. They are invited to attend special services in their uniform, like our Royal Jubilee Service and for our joint Remembrance Day Service every year with our South Anston Methodist Church neighbours.

Schools

In Anston we have five Primary schools where our clergy and Children's Worker have the opportunity to take assemblies in school and host activities for the children at the church for special occasions and significant festivals throughout the year.

Appendix 4 Our Church Buildings

Firbeck w Letwell

St Martin's at Firbeck (Grade II listed) is large for such a small village and is generally thought to be very beautiful, although not ancient (the present building was erected under the guidance of Mrs. Gally-Knight of Firbeck Hall in 1820).

The church windows are almost entirely of stained glass, including a modern, industrial design window made by Harry F. Stammers in 1953 and in the south wall of the chancel there is a fine nativity window by H M Barnett.

There are four hatchments in the church, relating to the Gally-Knight, Jebb and St.Leger families.

In addition to a single bell, there is an octave carillon chime by James Harrison, Dalton Foundry 1821, operated by an Ellacombe apparatus. On the outer South Wall of the church is an interesting vertical sundial.

Having no access to mains gas supplies, an oil boiler provides heating. A few years ago more efficient radiators were installed that reduced oil consumption and made the church warmer.

There is a PA system with a hearing loop installed in the church.

The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in January 2024 and no significant issues were found.

The beautiful little stone-built church of St Peter’s, Letwell, is situated in a peaceful location at the end of the village, overlooking open countryside.

It is Grade II Listed, with a C15 Tower, housing a single bell. The nave, chancel and vestry were re-build in 1869 after an earlier fire which destroyed most of the original Norman building.

It seats 70 comfortably, in traditional wooden pews.

The acoustics are exceptional, due to the domed ceiling above the altar, painted a delicate pale blue.

The churchyard is an SSSI, and is renowned for its wild flowers throughout the year, and its birdlife, including Little Owls and Tawny Owls nesting in the mature trees surrounding the church.

The church has no water or toilet facilities, but we do provide coffee and biscuits after services, or refreshments at concerts.

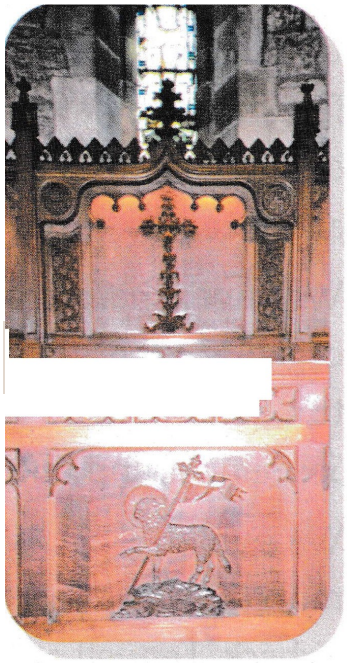
Heating is a modern oil-fired system, keeping the small church warm and dry.

There is a PA system with a hearing loop.

The QI was carried out in January 2024 and no significant issues were found.

Woodsetts

The original St. George's church was a simple, square structure with plastered walls and a gallery and was consecrated on 18th September 1841. Originally the Church was dedicated to *St* Mary the Virgin, but this was changed some time after 1909 to *St* George. Apparently, "it sounded too Catholic!"

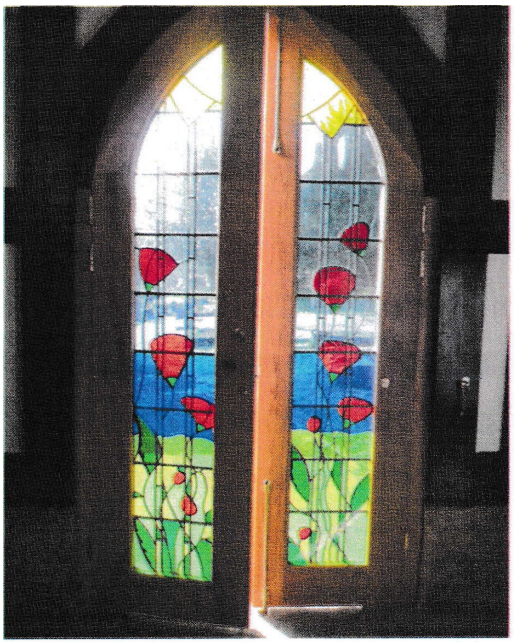


The Church was extended in 1923 when the East wall and roof was removed, as was the gallery. The North and West walls were extended and by adding an apse, the total length was increased by 24 feet. The altar and reredos were carved by local craftsmen and feature 'The Lamb of God' in the centre, with seven small carvings above representing the instruments of Jesus' suffering. They include a crown of thorns, whip, and hammer and nails. It seems strange then, that with a lottery grant and much fund raising, the balcony was restored in the early 2000's.

Along with the balcony the vestry was refurbished, two new rooms and a kitchenette created at the back of the church.

More recently the pews have been removed from the church and comfortable (padded) chairs have been installed as replacements. The original 'blue' colour has been changed to red, both in the carpet and the seats and, with the modern stained glass windows, makes the building look and feel very warm and welcoming.

The village war memorial is actually the Church porch which was added to the church by local donations. We refurbished the porch in 2012 and changed the old doors. Our new external door has a beautiful stained glass design in keeping with the new windows.



Anston

We take the view that our buildings are a great asset, rather than a burden, and a source of outreach, by encouraging the local community to share what we have been blessed with.

Church Building

The church is a Grade1 listed building, founded in 1174 when the existing Nave was constructed. The church is built of magnesium limestone probably taken from local quarries. Subsequently, the Chancel was added in the 14th century with the two aisles in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Tower and Spire were constructed in the 15th century. In Victorian times, the vestry and porch were added. In the last few decades, internal re- ordering work moved the organ from the Chancel to a balcony next to the Tower and a sizeable extension was added to provide a meeting room, kitchen and toilets. Internally, there are many fixtures common to many historic churches, including an 18th century Reredos screen behind the altar and a curious ancient effigy.

Churchyard and Lawn Areas

The churchyard and lawn areas have a beautiful view overlooking the village and surrounding area.

The graveyard is now closed so cremated remains are interred in the lawn area of the churchyard although this will shortly be closed as well. We do, however, have an area where ashes can be scattered, should families wish to do so.

We also have a lychgate at the entrance to the churchyard constructed after the First World War, commemorating the local members of the armed forces killed in that war. Subsequently, the names of those killed during the Second World War were added.

Our church also has its own block paved car park with space for about 12 vehicles and traditional outside lighting in keeping with the church building.

Church Hall

Our church hall is situated on the main road in North Anston and is within walking distance of the Church.

It has a car park, main hall, kitchen, toilets and a smaller hall. It is used extensively for church and community activities which include occasional church meetings and celebrations, our regular Ark Toddler group and Natter Café, slimming groups, dance schools and private functions.

Appendix 5 The Vicarage

The Vicarage which is owned by the Diocese, is situated on Rackford Road, North Anston. It is a four bedroomed family house, built in the 1970s, with separate study and a double garage. It has a large garden, which is well stocked and well maintained.