

# A Rector for the Knowlton Circle Benefice



Cranborne, Edmondsham, Gussage St Michael,  
Woodlands, Wimborne St Giles, Gussage All Saints

# The Knowlton Circle Benefice

## *The Knowlton Circle Benefice Introduction to Vacancy by the Bishop of Sherborne*

Rural ministry in Dorset is a joy and a delight. In recent years significant changes have been made in the way clergy are supported and encouraged, leading to a greater sense of collegiality in our rural areas.

The Knowlton Circle Benefice enjoys beautiful rural countryside in the Cranborne Chase, yet is within easy reach of Salisbury, Wimborne, Ringwood, Shaftesbury, Blandford and the coast. Salisbury station offers rail connections to Southampton, Exeter and London Waterloo.

We are seeking a new incumbent who enjoys parish and rural ministry, but who is also keen and has the energy to develop outreach to newcomers, villagers and visitors alike, and to work with the local schools, where there is much enthusiasm and a warm welcome. There is also the opportunity to develop partnerships with neighbouring clergy and further encourage the strengths of each of the individual church communities. We are looking for a collaborative leader, and teacher of the faith, whose own spirituality will help continue to offer meaningful worship and encourage others to join and play their part in the ongoing Christian story.

The benefice has been on a journey as parishes have come together and, with a new name, is now ready for the next stage of its life. Each community values their village church, and a keen team of lay and retired clergy will support the new Rector in making the most of each place, playing to their strengths and bringing out the best. The Wimborne Deanery, in which the Knowlton Circle Benefice is situated, includes not only the town of Wimborne but other more suburban churches who appreciate the rural hinterland. The deanery chapter includes a variety of ministers including training curates, associate clergy and experienced clergy all committed to working together across a wide area.

In the deanery and neighbouring deaneries there are also a number of retired clergy who can be called upon to help out and a commitment amongst clergy and lay leaders to support one another in covering for holidays and sickness.

The diocese itself is committed to its rural benefices. There is a commitment to encourage the development of Lay Ministry and there are local programmes of training to develop Lay Pastoral Assistants and Lay Worship Leaders which have been very successful.

Should you wish to know more about ministering in Dorset please do not hesitate to contact me. We offer great opportunities, wonderful countryside, supportive colleagues and some deeply spiritual places of worship and retreat. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to know more.

**Bishop Karen (01747 811960)**

## ***A message from the Rural Dean***

Wimborne Deanery spans beautiful East Dorset, villages in the North and towns to the South. We are a close-knit team of some thirty well-resourced churches, organised in eleven benefices. Synod meets three times per annum (winter meeting on Zoom) and Clergy Chapter (c18 members) also meets three times. Our deanery is active in the life of the diocese and well represented at all levels. Come and minister with us!

## ***The Rev'd Canon Andrew Rowland***

Rector of Wimborne Minster, The Wimborne Villages and Kingston Lacy & Shapwick  
Rural Dean of Wimborne

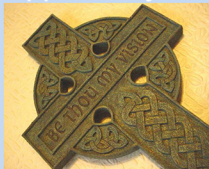
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## Opportunity



### One God One Benefice Five Parishes

The Knowlton Circle Benefice sits in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (formerly AONB) and is part of a very ancient landscape here in east Dorset. It is a place of great pastoral beauty – yet within striking distance of our diocesan centre Salisbury, the Jurassic Coast, and within easy reach of market towns around us.

We are looking for a parish priest who will help us to explore where God is leading us, and to work with us in our rural communities through the 2020s and beyond. We all share a strong desire to see the rural church flourish through faith in Christ and commitment to His vision.

## The person we hope to find

We pray for a priest who will lead us and help us in these challenging times, helping us to embrace change as followers of Jesus Christ. We look for someone who knows and is comfortable with rural community life, and by example will lead and encourage our lay teams.

This priest will help us grow in faith and action to face new challenges with grace, and will see ministry as being a visible and active pastoral presence in our communities, representing the presence of Christ in church and community life.

### Person profile: Priest – Leader – Friend

- Has a deep and well rooted faith and a desire to share the gospel of Christ
- Is ready to share Scripture with us through teaching and preaching
- Can lead us in discerning God's vision for our benefice
- Enjoys liturgy and leading worship in all its forms.
- Sees a happy and rewarding challenge in leading our teams and living in our midst
- Is lovingly ready to encourage and support us



# Our Vision

## Hopes for the future

- To be led by a priest who can lead us to Christ through word and example
- To be a church firmly rooted in its communities
- To become ever more aware of the strengths of belonging to our benefice, and to continue to strengthen the ties between the parish churches
- To grow our outreach to our communities and beyond
- To encourage our churches to be open and accessible, welcoming all generations in our witnessing life

## The Challenges/Opportunities

- Rural churches face a variety of challenges which we endeavour to address pro-actively
- As with most rural churches, our congregation demographic is predominantly retired
- We know that we need to increase our active church membership to ensure our Christian future.

## However...

- We are learning to diversify our worship while respecting existing practice
- We have two very good C of E First Schools, both members of the Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust
- Our lay leadership is committed and experienced
- Our churches are in good order and welcoming, and we strive towards full accessibility and inclusivity



Knowlton Circle landscape



## What is The Knowlton Circle Benefice?

Our benefice has only been in existence since 2022, when a local reorganisation brought The Gussages into the then Quintet Benefice. The diocese asked the parishes for a name, and we agreed 'The Knowlton Circle'. This recalls the ancient parish of Knowlton, whose ruined church forms such a clear landmark in our midst to this day. It stands within an even more ancient circular earthwork, and is a popular spot for tourists and archaeologists alike. We hold an annual open air service there, with our Woodlands Methodist friends, in July.

The greater part of benefice land falls under the ownership of our three Patrons. Viscount Cranborne, the Earl of Shaftesbury and Mrs Julia Smith are the proprietors of the three great estates which date back through the centuries. Our Patrons are active in their communities and strong supporters of their churches. They too are very keen to see a new incumbent in post.

We are still growing together as a benefice. The formation of the Benefice Council is helping our church leaders to work together and to tackle the challenges which we all face.

## Benefice worship

Our worship pattern is centred on a weekly Benefice Holy Communion service which rotates across the parishes and which is attended by a dedicated group of worshippers. The monthly High Mass attracts members from a wider area. We are very pleased that our worship is so varied, moving as it does from high ritual through traditional Communion and BCP Evensong to fresh expressions ('Elevenses'), breakfast church and services of the word. We are fortunate in our support from retired clergy, and are blessed to have two LLMs to lead our non-eucharistic services.

Musically, we are especially fortunate to have an outstanding benefice organist (who is also our interregnum administrator) who leads the benefice choir and supports as many of our services as he can. He also leads a group of benefice musicians known as "The Knowlton Philharmonia." We have an enthusiastic serving team of all ages and a great band of bell-ringers. In addition to a PCC in each parish, the Benefice Council is also registered as a PCC and is responsible for all whole-benefice policy and administration. Our PCCs have lay chairs during the interregnum.

We very much look forward to welcoming a new incumbent, who will enjoy living and ministering among us, and being a lively, visible and active pastoral presence in our midst.



## The church in our communities

We have a good record of active church life in our communities. We are well attended for the major festivals of Easter and Christmas, with a wide range of services and events for both, including a full Holy Week. Woodlands church is dedicated to the Ascension, so we celebrate on that day too. The rest of the year includes Lent Lunches, an Animal Service, and Songs of Praise accompanied by a visiting local band or our own "Philharmonia." There are also prayer hubs and a weekly Bible Study, and we are always open to ideas for spreading the Good News.

We have a benefice Safeguarding Officer, a monthly free magazine delivered to all, and a website [www.kcb.org.uk](http://www.kcb.org.uk).

We have two Church of England voluntary aided first schools in the Benefice, one at Cranborne and one at Wimborne St.Giles. Both belong to the Diocese of Salisbury Multi-Academy Trust. They incorporate nurseries and provide for children until the age of eight when most go on to Cranborne Middle School and thence to Queen Elizabeth's Upper School C of E VC. Previous incumbents have joined the governing bodies of both schools. The new Rector would be invited to lead some collective worship. The children are regular visitors to their local church to celebrate festivals and school milestones. Our Open The Book team is active in both First Schools, which are led by Heads with strong personal faith.

**Cranborne First School** ([www.cranbornefirst.dsat.org.uk](http://www.cranbornefirst.dsat.org.uk)) "has a deeply embedded Christian vision and this small school has a big impact." Leaders ensure that all decisions are rooted in the vision so everything is "done with love." SIAMS April 2024. The Ofsted inspection of this school in 2023 judged it as Good overall with the Early Years provision judged as Outstanding. The inspectors reported that the pupils "enjoy good relationships with each other and staff" and that pupils know well the school's distinctive values of 'love, learn, fly.' The school hosts a monthly popular breakfast church in its hall, facilitated by the head and church community.

**Wimborne St.Giles First School** ([www.wimbornestgiles.dsat.org.uk](http://www.wimbornestgiles.dsat.org.uk)) This school was inspected by Ofsted in May 2023 and was also judged to be Good. Inspectors reported that the school's values of "Love, Hope and Joy can be found in abundance." The school has the benefit of extensive outdoor space and has developed a range of "Forest School" activities, including beekeeping. Ofsted said "Pupils treat other people and the environment with compassion and respect. They understand their place in the world and try to make it a better place."

We support our rural communities with coffee mornings, a monthly lunch for those who might eat alone, and a fledgling WhatsApp to highlight those in need. We host many weddings in summer and offer support to couples and their families as they prepare. We have good links with diocesan charities and support local ones through our Charity of the Month programme. We supported an Afghan refugee family living in Cranborne for a year. Our communities support us through our fund-raising activities across the year, which all give opportunities for social gathering as well as financial aid to our churches.



## The Parishes



**Cranborne**  
(St Mary &  
St Bartholomew)

Cranborne (St Mary & St Bartholomew). It is Grade 1 listed and was an early monastic foundation which retains much of its earlier character including rediscovered medieval wall paintings. There is fine ring of eight bells. 21st century innovations include a new lighting system, kitchen units and lavatory. It is the largest church in the benefice as befits its place in the largest parish. A recently started Breakfast Church attracts mostly young families and takes place in the First School.

We have about 700 villagers of all ages in traditional and newer housing. The parish has a Church of England First School (66 pupils) and a Community Middle School (320) plus the Independent Aurora Boveridge College and Aurora Beeches school for young people with special needs. Cranborne Manor, home of Viscount Cranborne, has nationally known Gardens and a Garden Centre and is the location for the biennial fete and is one of the 14 gardens participating in the open gardens event. There are two pubs, a restaurant and village shop with post office, a medical practice, a fire station, a veterinary practice, village hall and sports association and lunch and coffee opportunities for the single elderly.

There is also an Ancient Technological Centre which is an outdoor education centre and experimental archaeology site which benefits both schools and community ([www.ancienttechnologycentre.com](http://www.ancienttechnologycentre.com))



**The Ackling Dyke**  
(Roman road)  
near Gussage All Saints

## The Parishes



### Edmondsham (St Nicholas)

Its origins are 12th century and is a Grade 2 listed building. It is a traditional, characteristic Dorset parish church, set next to Edmondsham House. There are both traditional and contemporary services, and community events such as Snowdrop Sunday, with a family service and refreshments. Edmondsham House gardens are open. We are a small but scattered community with a population of approximately 200, which treasures its parish church.

There is an outdoor nursery and kindergarten which takes place in the woods of Edmondsham House.



### Woodlands (The Church of The Ascension)

Our church is an 1892 Grade 2 listed building in this rural community of about 500. Many families have a long association with the church, which was gifted to the parish by the then Countess of Shaftesbury in memory of the 8th Earl. The gothic design has interesting architectural features including a large Saxon font, wall murals painted by the first incumbent, and stained glass windows. Our PCC works diligently to preserve the building and, by keeping its door open daily (as do all our churches), encourages visitors to enjoy this beautiful space.

We are outward looking and seek to make Jesus known in our community. There is a weekly Bible Study. We host a mid-week Holy Communion service, and the benefice Communion by turns on Sundays. We have a monthly non-eucharistic service and a 'fresh expressions' form of worship which has a growing attendance with a good mix of ages. We work collaboratively with our Methodist neighbours, hosting monthly joint services. We also work with the village hall to provide social events such as Festive Fun at Christmas and fund-raising activities like our Flower and Arts Festival.

## The Parishes



**The Gussages (All Saints and St Michael)** These two churches are situated about one mile apart. They now work as one worshipping community, two churches with one congregation, one PCC and separate District Church Councils (DCCs). Our services are traditional and contemporary, with a thriving monthly Breakfast Church held alternately in our village halls.

**Gussage All Saints.** A 13th century church (Grade 2 listed) accommodating about 150 people. There is a strong sense of community with good support for the church. The community has about 250 villagers, with all age ranges from young families to retirees. It is surrounded by working farmland with ancient walks and bridle paths. We benefit from a community owned pub and a village hall.



**Gussage St Michael.** A small church with early Norman origins (Grade 1 listed) and Victorian restoration. Seating about 80, we value its intimacy and its simplicity. There is a kitchen unit which enables refreshments after services. We have a 100 Club and varied activities across the year which keep us in the public eye. We have just piloted The Great Gussage Tractor Run, with 50 entrants and successful fundraising. The village has a population of about 200, with a similar mix of young and older. The village hall (leased by the church to a committee) holds a range of daytime and evening activities.

## The Parishes



### Wimborne St Giles

The church (Grade 1 listed) faces the village green and adjoins a row of fully occupied 17th century almshouses. Ten generations of the Earls of Shaftesbury have been buried here including the famous 7th Earl, the great Christian Victorian philanthropist and reformer. The interior was reshaped by Ninian Comper after a disastrous fire in 1908, and is much admired. There is an eight bell peal, and the church is a popular wedding venue. Our monthly 'Anglican High Mass' attracts a large gathered congregation, which includes young people on the servers team.

This is a small community with a population of about 300 villagers. We have a C of E First School with strong connections with the church. There is a shop and post office, and a village hall which hosts charity cream teas on Sundays. St Giles Park hosts many activities including wedding receptions, music festivals and charitable events.

### KNOWLTON CIRCLE BENEFICE – INTERREGNUM SERVICE PATTERN

	CRANBORNE	EDMONDSHAM	GUSSAGE ALL SAINTS/ GUSSAGE ST MICHAEL	WIMBORNE ST GILES	WOODLANDS
FIRST SUNDAY	6.00pm Evensong BCP		9.30am Breakfast Village Hall LL (alternating)	11.00am High Mass BCP with incense	9.30am Service of the Word LL
SECOND SUNDAY	9.30am Benefice Communion CW		11.00am Morning Worship CW LL (alternating)	11.00am Elevenses LL	
THIRD SUNDAY			9.30am Benefice Communion CW (alternating)		11.00am Elevenses LL
FOURTH SUNDAY	9.00am Breakfast Church First School LL  11.00am Mattins BCP	9.30am Benefice Communion CW (alternating with Woodlands)  11.00am Elevenses LL (alternate months)			9.30am Benefice Communion CW (alternating with Edmondsham)  6.00pm United Evening Worship (alternating Methodist/ Parish Church)
FIFTH SUNDAY	9.30am Benefice Communion CW (alternating)				

EVERY WEDNESDAY: WOODLANDS - 10.00AM HOLY COMMUNION (CW)

BCP = BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER CW = COMMON WORSHIP LL = LAY LED

# The Rectory

Cranborne Rectory is a detached four bedroom house in the village with a pleasant south facing aspect. Built in the 1970s, it has sizeable and bright rooms and a terrace with south views over the village and its church. There is a separate study beside the front door with its own external entrance, and a downstairs cloakroom off the front lobby. Upstairs, there is a family bathroom, and the main guest bedroom has its own shower room.

The heating is by oil boiler in the utility room. Beyond the kitchen there is a separate pantry. The kitchen has spaces for installing appliances and utility units.

The double garage at the front of the house connects directly into the utility room.

There is internet connectivity from Wessex Internet and a landline.

The gardens are mainly south-facing, with grass and shrubs. The front of the house has hard standing for several cars, with the remainder down to grass.

The Rectory is a well-designed parsonage house, very suitable for family life.



**The Rectory**



**Cranborne Summer Fete**

## Figures from 'Statistics for Mission Return 2023'

Parish	Average Attendance		Baptisms	Marriages	Funerals	Share £
	Adults	Children				
Cranborne	23	2	3	9	3	18,777
Edmondsham	15	7	0	1	2	5,154
Gussage All Saints	15 Combined congregation		1	1	1	2,821
Gussage St Michael			0	0	0	2,835
Wimborne St Giles	30	2	0	8	2	14,104
Woodlands	15	1	0	1	2	6,228

Note: 2023 Share paid in full





**Send us out in the power of your Spirit,  
to live and work to your praise and glory**

**Ascension Day at Woodlands.**