

**BENEFICE PROFILE**

**Part-time Priest in Charge (Rector Designate)**

**for**

***The Proposed New Benefice of the Upper Chase  
(St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley with Gussage St Andrew; St Rumbold's, Pentridge;  
St Mary's Chettle; St Laurence's Farnham; and St Peter ad Vincula, Tollard Royal)***

***Milton and Blandford Deanery***

***Diocese of Salisbury***



## Introduction 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.

This part-time Priest in Charge (Rector-Designate) post, initially having shared responsibilities across two benefices, has been created because the diocese wants to further invest in Rural Ministry and to create collaborative groups of clergy and lay leaders to reach out to our rural communities. The Deanery Plan envisages the postholder in what is currently the Handley Benefice working also with three small neighbouring parishes to conclude the formation a new benefice of five parishes, of which the post holder will become the Incumbent.

This 'three days plus Sunday' post will enable us to be creative around pioneering and pastoral opportunities within our village communities. It would ideally suit someone who has a passion for rural ministry and has an energy and creativity to share with others, including work with young people and families which are a particular feature of the Handley community.

Rural ministry is always challenging, however sharing good practice is encouraged within deaneries and across the diocese. Here in the Milton and Blandford deanery there is a renewed commitment to encourage the development of Lay Ministry, and local programmes of training to develop Lay Pastoral Assistants and Lay Worship Leaders have recently proved to be successful in giving confidence to those with gifts and a willingness to share them for the benefit of all.

The Deanery will offer a warm welcome to whoever comes to this benefice. The parishes all enjoy beautiful rural countryside yet are within easy reach of Salisbury, Blandford and Shaftesbury. There is also a good road network down to the coast and New Forest as well as via Shaftesbury and Salisbury to the A303.

Once you have read this profile, should you wish to know more about the role please do contact the Archdeacon of Sherborne, the Ven Penny Sayer (01305 269074). We offer this exciting new opportunity, wonderful countryside, supportive colleagues, some deeply spiritual places of worship and retreat and very much look forward to hearing from you.

Bishop Karen

## **THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST IN CHARGE (RECTOR-DESIGNATE)**

We are looking for a Part-Time Priest in Charge (Rector-Designate), to help bring about change and growth, reconfiguring ministry so it meets future needs, particularly around Sixpenny Handley. The post holder will live in Sixpenny Handley Rectory, adjacent to St Mary's Church. The Handley Benefice has for many years consisted of the parish of St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley with Gussage St Andrew and the parish of St Rumbold's, Pentridge.

However, as part of the Deanery Plan, the Handley Benefice has for the past three years been working in close partnership with three small parishes in the neighbouring Chase Benefice (Chettle, Farnham and Tollard Royal), so that they can share ministerial and other resources and support one another. Plans for pastoral reorganisation, now formulated as a Draft Scheme, are aimed at promoting the church's mission across these five parishes within a single new benefice.

With its significantly larger population most work will be based in Sixpenny Handley; however, a key part of the role will be to continue to foster supportive relationships within the Handley Benefice and with the three neighbouring parishes of Chettle, Farnham and Tollard Royal. A united service on the fifth Sundays for all five parishes has been a feature of this growing partnership since 2021 and recently they have begun experimenting with a monthly united service.

The Postholder will give the equivalent of three full days a week plus Sunday duties.

## **PERSON SPECIFICATION**

The ideal candidate for this post will be someone who

- enjoys rural ministry and village life
- is eager and able to help the rural church to flourish
- embraces challenge and change with hope and joy
- is collaborative in leadership with both clergy and laity
- is comfortable with a range of worship styles
- actively promotes discipleship and lay ministry
- engages enthusiastically with the wider community, the villages, the school and local scouts and other organisations.
- can help us realise the mission potential of the particular demography of the benefice

We as a church community can offer support, dedication, commitment as well as a warm welcome.

We understand the scope of this type of post: we have realistic expectations!

We are enthusiastic, 'can-do' people who, with the guidance and direction and care of a local priest, even with limited days of work, can together grow interest and involvement within our parishes to realise our Diocesan Vision of "Making Jesus Known".

## **MILTON & BLANDFORD DEANERY**

Handley Benefice and the three neighbouring parishes from the Chase Benefice are located in the northeast part of the Milton & Blandford Deanery. The Deanery is in the Dorset Archdeaconry, itself within the Sherborne Area of the Salisbury Diocese, and is twinned with the Diocese of Rokon, South Sudan. The Deanery currently consists of 35 Parishes, arranged as 8 Benefices, but this arrangement is changing according to the Deanery Plan of 2021. The Deanery covers a large geographical area with Blandford Forum at its centre, a market town of 10,000; the remaining parishes are rural.

The population of the Deanery is approximately 26,000 and is growing due to significant new housing in and around Blandford Forum, with many now commuting to Poole/Bournemouth and Salisbury. The area is rich in cultural activities such as Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Salisbury Playhouse, concerts, choirs, local museums and the wonderful Jurassic coast for walking and good train services.

Within the Deanery there are: 8 Church of England Primary Schools and 2 local authority primary schools, one of which, Handley First School, is part of the Wimborne pyramid. There is 1 maintained Secondary school in the deanery (in Blandford), 3 Preparatory Schools and 3 Independent Schools (with Chaplains).

The Deanery Chapter meets monthly to offer mutual support, encouragement and prayer to the clergy across the Deanery. The chapter currently consists of 10 clergy including those licensed or beneficed in parishes, and 1 school chaplain. In recent years significant changes have been made in the way clergy are supported and encouraged, leading to a greater sense of collegiality and cross-benefice collaboration.

The Rural Dean, Rev Dr David Miell, who is retiring in July 2024, has been overseeing the implementation of the Deanery Plan at the local level and hopes that the current consultations on the formation of the new benefices will be completed this year.

The present post is one of the outcomes of the Deanery plan for pastoral reorganization and brings together five parishes hitherto distributed between two adjacent benefices, which have both been under the pastoral care of David and his wife, the Revd Henriette Miell, during a period of shared interim ministry. The fact that all five parishes have shared the same clergy, despite not being within the same benefice, has been paving the way for sharing a new incumbent. In addition, for the past two years, all five parishes have benefited from having the same Administrator and have built up useful experience in sharing that resource. In the past three years the five parishes have also been growing new forms of lay leadership and between them, their lay-led services are taken by the seven new Lay Worship Leaders that have been commissioned by Bishop Karen during this period.

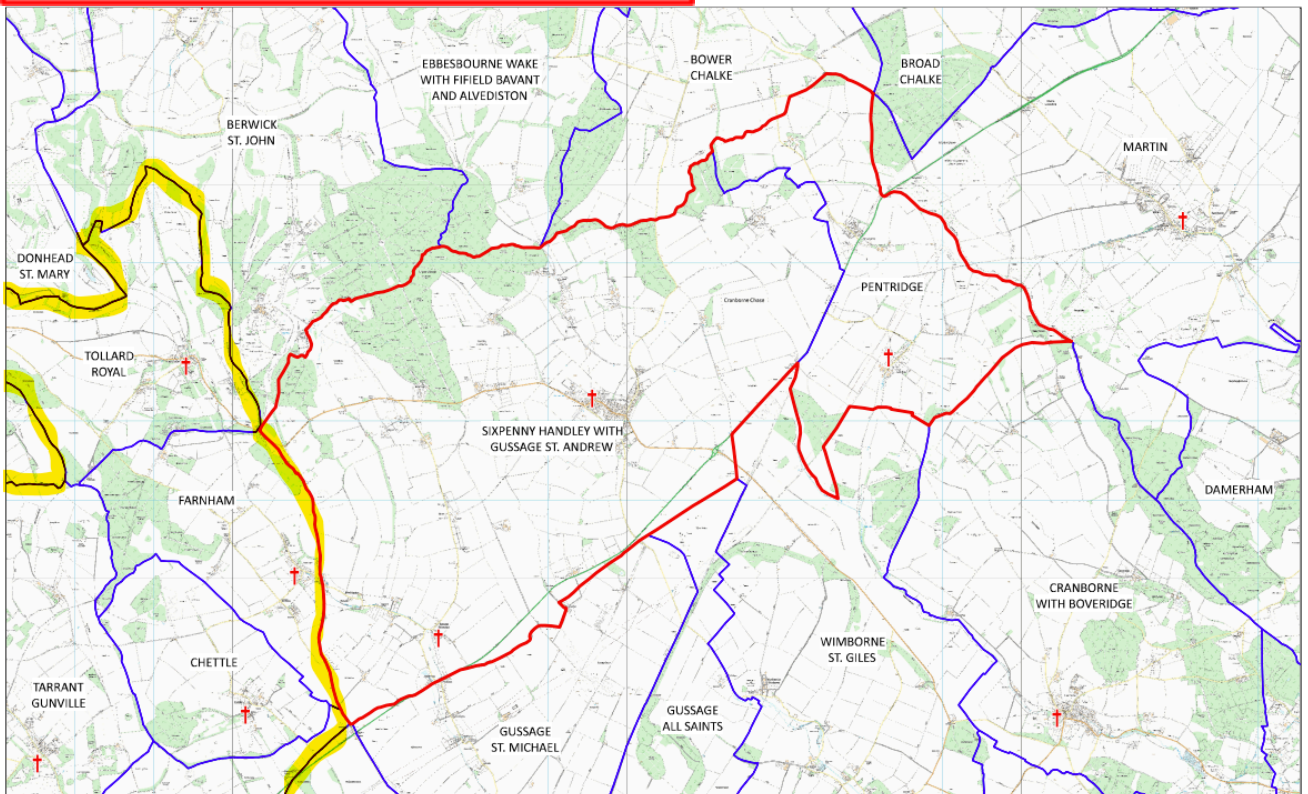
The gestation of this proposed new benefice has also already involved extensive discussion and creative collaboration among the five parishes, with an embryonic 'benefice council' consisting of one representative from each parish meeting over recent months to plan together for the future. Evident throughout this period has been the high level of determination among many committed and gifted individuals from the local churches, not only to make their own churches flourish but also to help one another. This has already created a spirit of resilience and resolve to meet the many challenges and opportunities which now face our rural parishes. We can now look forward to moving on from a period of tentative exploration and pastoral reorganization towards a more confident and joyful engagement in the mission to Make Jesus Known in our local communities.

David Miell  
Rural Dean

Maps showing the Chase and Handley benefices, how they relate geographically to each other

**Benefice of Chase**

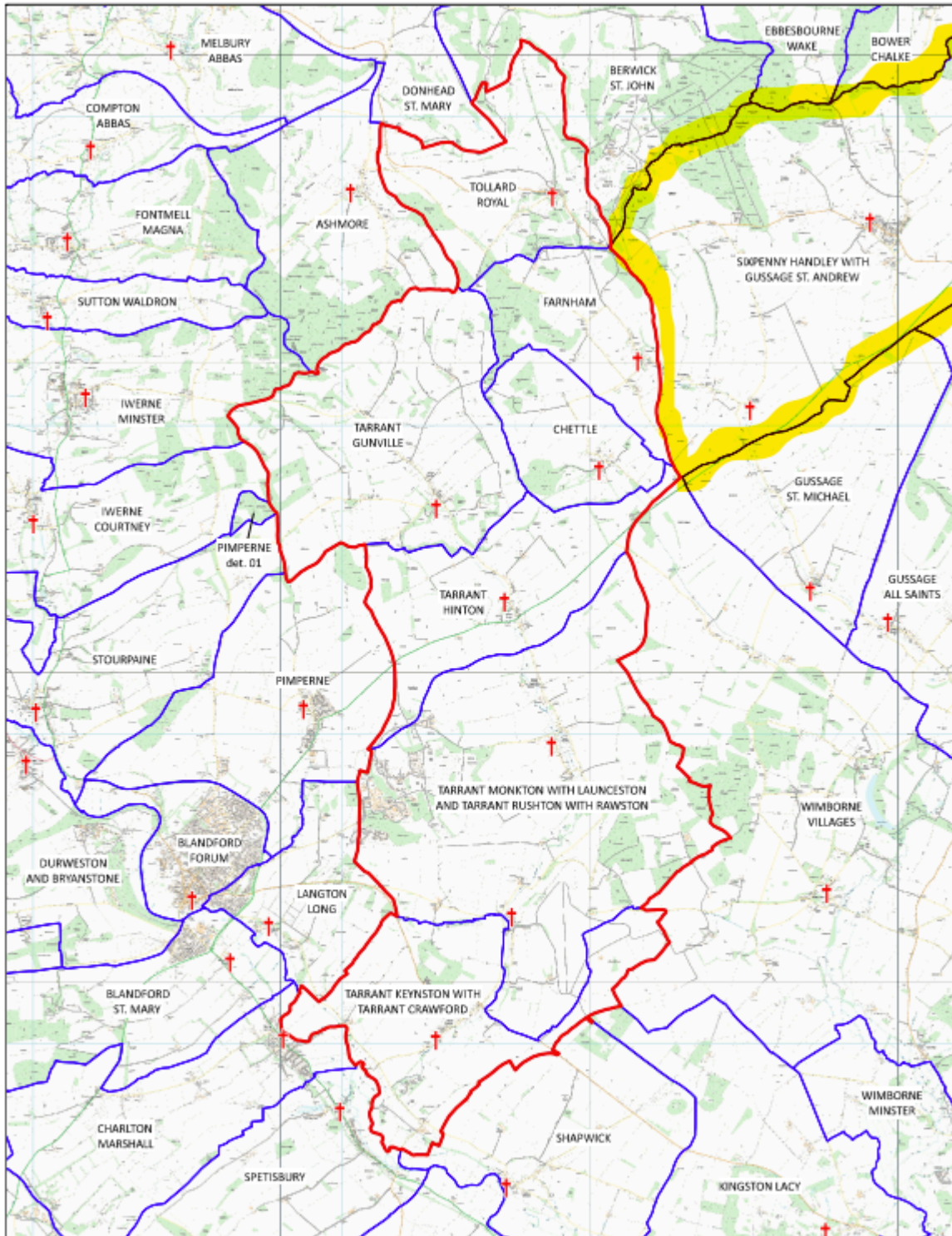
**Benefice of Sixpenny Handley with Gussage Saint Andrew and Pentridge**



This map was compiled for the Diocese of Salisbury by Alistair Sutherland in March 2022 with digital data from Field Dynamics. It contains parish data supplied by the Commissioners of the Church of England, church location data from A Church Near You, and Ordnance Survey data reproduced with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. ©Crown copyright and database right 2022. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licences nos 100040148 and 100019918. Please note that some legal parish names may be abbreviated for clarity.

## Benefice of Sixpenny Handley with Gussage Saint Andrew and Pentridge

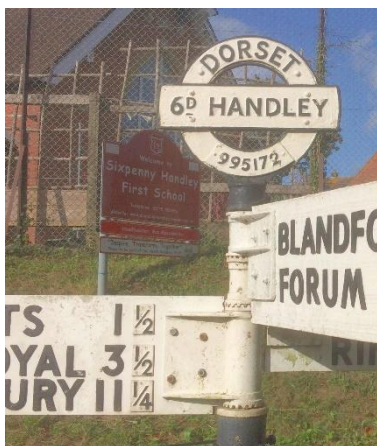
### Benefice of Chase



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## OUR VILLAGE COMMUNITIES

The five parishes of Sixpenny Handley with Gussage St Andrew, Pentridge, Chettle, Farnham and Tollard Royal are all within the rolling downlands of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (formerly AONB), with their villages located within a three-mile radius of the vicarage at Sixpenny Handley. The combined population of this area is almost 1800, but 1200 of these live in Sixpenny Handley, making it the local centre of population, and designated in the East Dorset Corporate Plan Settlement Hierarchy as a Rural Service Centre.

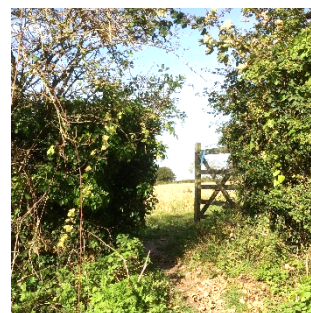


**Sixpenny Handley**, unusually for a rural parish, has a wide range of age groups and its profile is considerably younger than the average for North Dorset. It is a working village (more than half of the population in employment), with a very lively community with many young families and is not a retirement home. It has a good First School & Nursery (designated as Good by Ofsted in April 2023). The 1<sup>st</sup> Woodcutts Scout Group is one of the largest Scout groups in Dorset and has developed a very fine reputation with membership totalling around 130. Over 40 small business are based in the village, as well as a doctor's surgery, a butcher's, and a mini-market shop, all advertised on the community website <https://sixpennyhandley.info/home>

There is a modern Village Hall as well as excellent sport and recreational facilities including a football pitch, tennis courts, bowling green and cricket pitch. There are also two play parks which have equipment for young and growing children. A range of clubs and societies are on offer as well as special events at different times of the year, the annual summer one day Music festival – the Big Session for instance has been a great success. The (civil) Parish Offices offer a small library and a free bi-monthly parish magazine goes out to over 700 homes, including a dedicated section written by the PCC or priest! Weekly coffee mornings, a monthly men's group and Church Sunday Lunch Groups have all been experimented with in the past before Covid and are now reappearing as we get back to normal. In short this is a supportive, enthusiastic community with a strong sense of identity. We believe it therefore offers a wonderful opportunity for church growth in the Deanery.



**Pentridge** is a delightfully tranquil and picturesque gem of a hamlet, straight out of a Thomas Hardy novel, hidden at the end of a lane off the A354 Salisbury to Blandford Road and consisting of a string of cottages that lead to the Church, the Village Hall and Green. Where the road ends, footpaths continue out onto Pentridge Hill with its fine panoramic views. The Village Hall has recently been refurbished and is now being used for events, including the Fayre and Barbeque, at least one of which is held each year. It is also used after major church services. The ecclesiastical parish includes the smaller hamlet of Woodyates and together they have a population of 220 in 100 households.





**Chettle** is a small, very rural village with approximately 100 residents, including many children. The village belongs to the 900-acre estate which has been owned by the Castleman family and their descendants since 1846. The 1710 manor house was sold a few years ago and the new owners undertook an award-winning restoration of the house, garden and parkland. The remaining houses and farmland of the estate continue to be owned by a descendant of the Castleman family. Tenants of the 30 or so dwellings pay less than market rents by contributing to

the estate’s long-term vision for building a sustainable rural economy, balancing biodiversity, food production and the local community. It is a lively community with a successful village shop selling locally sourced and organic food.



**Farnham** is a village of 190 people and about 100 properties. The main part of the village lies in the valley with small settlements of Farnham Newtown and Elham Court on the periphery of the parish. The village has allotments which provide a social focus, as does the Museum Inn, which is named after the museum set up in the village by the pioneer archaeologist Augustus Pitt-Rivers who owned the nearby Rushmore Estate. Some village properties are rented from the estate. Since the village has no community hall, book clubs, sewing and gardening groups are



hosted in larger homes. The main annual events, held in alternate years, are the Open Gardens and Farnham Street Fair, well supported by the church, village and beyond.



**Tollard Royal** is a small village of just over 100 - a friendly place with a great community spirit. The old telephone box has been converted to hold a defibrillator, books to share and maps of the village for the many walkers who visit. In 2017, the village won the Best Kept Village Award. There is a strong Parish Council, a village website <https://tollardroyal.org/tollard-royal> and a very enthusiastic Village Social Committee, arranging a variety of events throughout the

year. The Rushmore Estate owns the Old Cart Shed, which is used for fundraising events for the Church and also for the village’s regular social events. The King John Inn has been part of the village for many years and offers both accommodation and an award-winning restaurant. The Larmer Tree, part of the Rushmore Estate, is a popular wedding venue.





## OUR WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

Our churches are united in their desire to be places of welcome that offer the opportunity to encounter God and be an active part of their respective communities. This is realised in different ways by those involved and there are different approaches to worship and community engagement. Some have a blend of contemporary liturgy and informal services while others are committed to traditional forms of worship or a mix of ancient and modern. Currently all churches have at least one lay-led service and one Holy Communion every month. The services rota is currently under review to make it manageable for one priest working with our generous complement of 7 Lay Worship Leaders.



### **St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley**

**(Pop. 1200; ER 50; Worshipping Community 40; Parish Share £18,328)**

*10am Common Worship Holy Communion service twice a month*

*10am Lay-led informal service twice a month.*

Attendances are usually around 25-30 most Sundays. There is organ accompaniment for the Communion services (sung to the Thorne St Thomas Mass), and a small music group plays for the informal services. One of the lay-led services was also run until 2022 as a breakfast church and this could be revived. There is a monthly rota for readers, servers, intercessors and sidespersons, and for coffee after the service. A Bible Study Group and a Community Choir (which sings in church for festivals) both meet monthly. The PCC meets every six weeks or so, with some business being done in committees (Fabric and Finance). There are two churchwardens and two Lay Worship Leaders.

### **Gussage St Andrew**

**(included with Sixpenny Handley figures above)**

*9am BCP Holy Communion once a month*

*9am BCP Matins once a month*

Usually a congregation in single figures, but faithful and committed to continuing BCP worship. Matins is led by the Lay Worship Leader.



### **St Rumbold's Pentridge**

**(Pop.200; ER 19; Worshipping Community 16; Parish Share £7367)**

*9am Holy Communion once a month (Book of Common Prayer)*

*11.15am Matins once a month (Book of Common Prayer)*

Services are always from the Book of Common Prayer, and from the King James version of the Bible, but with a light touch. The congregation usually approaches double figures, greatly increased for festivals, and is a joyful and loyal congregation who love to sing traditional hymns and who are always accompanied on the organ and for festivals by the local Penwood Band. The PCC meets roughly once a quarter. There are two churchwardens.

### **St Mary's, Chettle**

**(Pop. 100; ER 15; Worshipping Community 7; Parish Share £2025)**

*10.00am BCP Matins once a month*

*6pm BCP Evensong with Holy Communion once a month (BCP)*

Attendance at regular services is often in single figures with a few more villagers attending Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas. The PCC meets roughly once a quarter. There are two churchwardens and two Lay Worship Leaders who share in officiating at Matins. The PCC are currently considering the option of becoming a "Festival Church"





### **St Laurence's, Farnham**

**(Pop.190; ER 25; Worshipping Community 6; Parish Share £3240)**

*10.30 am Family Service once a month*

*6.00pm CW Holy Communion once a month*

Attendance at regular services ranges from 4 to 22, with higher numbers for the Carol Service and Christmas Midnight Communion, the latter regularly having a congregation of 50 plus. There is still a monthly Holy Communion at 6pm, mainly attended by older residents, but the monthly, more informal Family Service attracts the larger congregation, including one or two young people. There is an organ but no regular organist so the congregations have become accustomed to singing to a recorded accompaniment. Harvest Festival is a popular service followed by a shared meal in the church after the service. The small but effective PCC meets bimonthly and there is one Churchwarden, who is also a Lay Worship Leader.

### **St Peter ad Vincula, Tollard Royal**

**(Pop. 110; ER 8; Worshipping Community 5; Parish Share £2126)**

*10.30am BCP Holy Communion once a month*

*6.00pm CW Evening Prayer once a month*

Mostly Book of Common Prayer, with special service sheets for festivals, baptisms etc, but the congregation is open to trying different styles. The small, but loyal, congregation (usually in single figures) is increased greatly and joyfully at the festivals and singing is an important part of our worship.

Our popular Rogation Service is usually held near the Village Pond and the Remembrance Sunday service at the war memorial in the village is shared with Farnham. The flower team do a wonderful job decorating and cleaning the Church during the year, excelling themselves at Festivals when they receive help from willing volunteers. The Bell Ringing Group encourages new members and ring for weddings and special occasions. There is an organ but no regular organist so digital music is the norm. The PCC meets quarterly. There are two churchwardens, one being a Lay Worship Leader.



All the churches face challenges: most have increasingly elderly congregations and declining numbers and this impacts on what can be done as well as on church finances. Similarly, whilst the church is a valued part of the local community and many are prepared to support fund-raising events and assume that the churches will always be there for festivals and life events, those on the fringes are not committed to regular worship or to supporting the day-to-day life of the church. Changing this mindset, particularly amongst the young, is the key challenge. Church growth is thus a target for the future and there is great potential to do this. For example, some parishes are able to use their church buildings for community events in order to extend their

profile in the villages; and Sixpenny Handley wants to develop its informal services to include the several parents and toddlers who attend the weekly cafe in church after dropping off children at the school. Even though Pentridge and Chettle are small communities, children regularly appear in church for the main festivals. While our churches are still mainly run by retired folk, they are amongst the most determined to establish a pattern of growth for the future. Each parish has its own PCC and churchwardens, secretary and treasurer; there are also members of the congregation who take lead responsibility for many other issues such as safeguarding, finance, fabric and the churchyard and in being Lay Worship Leaders. Since 2022, 7 people from across the six churches have completed their training and become Lay Worship Leaders, and in 2023, 4 people from the Sixpenny Handley congregation were confirmed, two adults and two teenagers.

## OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY



We have recently begun working with our new Diocesan Vision of “Making Jesus Known”, and with the five priorities: courageous Christian leadership, working for justice, forming creative partnerships in local mission, championing climate justice, and financing the future sustainably.

We feel that our village churches are all blessed with opportunities to realise the diocesan vision and priorities because we engage with our

local communities in very direct and personal ways, where many of the people who are not regular churchgoers are still well-known to members of the congregations. The boundaries between church and community are permeable and fluid, enabling the church to be thoroughly involved in the communities we are called to serve.



For example, the First School in **Sixpenny Handley**, although not a church school, has welcomed the clergy to lead their assemblies and the school holds its nativity play in St Mary’s with the place packed with parents and grandparents. A similar relationship has been established with the local 1<sup>st</sup> Woodcutts Scout Group through clergy and church members (not only from Handley but also from the surrounding villages) serving as scout leaders as well as being on the School Governing body, a local monthly club for the elderly, and serving on the committee of the Sixpenny Handley Community Fund (Community Charitable Incorporated Organisation). In the

past there have also been “Meet the Vicar” drop-in coffee sessions hosted in the village Parish Office. The congregation is able to run a Christmas Fayre/ Bazaar and a variety of summer events, often linked into wider village activities such as the Scouts annual Bonfire Night or a summer music celebration. The church has set up a community cinema and a weekly pre-school drop-in morning is offered for children and their carers during term-time and holidays as part of our Community Café (see p.12).

All the churches are well-placed to exploit this blurring of the boundaries between church and community to the full in Making Jesus Known! But each of the churches has their own particular sense of mission within their own village setting. For example, **Pentridge and Woodyates** are small communities where people love to get together and the various social and fundraising events held throughout the year are neither recognisably church *nor* community events but *both*. A surprisingly high proportion of the villages are children (16%). Even though St Rumbold’s is committed to using the BCP, the regular congregation finds various ways to welcome youngsters to its festival



services, and the preacher needs to be ready for local children to turn up with their parents almost any Sunday!

¶ Celebration of the Harvest and traditions of the agricultural year in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts

by Susan Smith, BEd (Hons)



Gussage St Andrew's Church  
Thursday 12 October 2023  
7.00 for 7.30 pm

**Gussage St Andrew** has a regular, consistent congregation of between 4 to 8 people, drawn from across the villages within the Benefice and beyond but has been a place of worship since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, having been part of a convent belonging to Shaftesbury Abbey. This sense of history is palpable because of its remarkable 13<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings discovered in the 1950s, and which attracts many visitors who have heard of this Grade I treasure of national heritage. St Andrews thus provides a venue not only for worship but for events of interest to a wider community which celebrate our Christian heritage, such as in 2023, a talk on harvests in illuminated manuscripts.

**Chettle** For years there has been a village rota to clean and decorate the church and more recently an occasional work party to tidy up the churchyard; not all of them necessarily regular churchgoers but people who still see the church as the centre of their community. So, while Chettle normally has only a small regular congregation, for the festivals it increases to about half the village and harvest, Christmas and flower festivals are particularly appreciated by the local community. If there's one village which takes climate change seriously it's Chettle.



In **Farnham** the church has a strong pastoral ethos and members make a point of connecting with parishioners who are in need. As part of social outreach, the church runs First Tuesday Coffee Mornings, which are held in parishioners' homes and charity quiz evenings in the Museum Inn. The PCC supports local and overseas charities financially through church collections at Christmas and Harvest and other social and fundraising events and further donations from PCC funds. Although small in number, the PCC members listen closely to the views of churchgoers and parishioners, many of whom support the church in a number of ways, including fundraising for the grade II\* building which is considered by the community to be a vital part of the local landscape.

Although small, **Tollard Royal** is an active, friendly and welcoming village, and St Peter's is an important part of community life. Tollard Royal attracts an amazing number of visitors throughout the year and the church is open every day to receive them. A popular place for weddings with local couples, and some from further away with connections with the village. The Larmer Tree Gardens close by are a popular venue for weddings and couples sometimes ask for permission to have their wedding in the Church. The availability for rent of King John's House, next to the church is a great bonus for wedding parties. A Village War Memorial commemorates those killed in The Great War, and Remembrance Sunday is always observed both at the memorial and in the church. Always open, visitors from all over the world write of the peace, beauty, and tranquillity they encounter inside the Church. It is often visited by walkers as it is in the midst of some of the finest views on Cranborne Chase.



Of particular importance in Sixpenny Handley is the marvellous Magnificafé pictured left – a community coffee and brunch venue which meets in St Mary's every Thursday morning. Post Covid it has experienced very significant growth. It has established itself as a key



part of the village weekly calendar and young parents with their children are starting to rely on it as a highlight of their weekly calendar as it is 'en route' after they drop off older children at the First School. Working with the Parish Council, it is now part of the successful Handley Hubs initiative to create warm hubs for people last winter. This is seen as a positive step for encouraging greater participation in church life among Handley's higher than average population of pre-school and school age children.



The congregations at all the churches are blessed to have a wide range of skills and experience, whether practical, administrative or managerial, and willing people who give generously of their time and abilities. There is the potential to use these skills more fully across the proposed new benefice of some 1800 souls so that together we can help build resilience for the wellbeing and future flourishing not only of Sixpenny Handley but also of all the neighbouring parishes.



We want to be vibrant, growing communities of faith and worship, financially stable and reaching outwards. We see this as inherent in who we are and what we do. We want to build our existing relationships with the local organisations in our communities, to be seen as a valued partner who makes a practical difference. We want to grow in our own spiritual journey with God, to be prayerful, faithful

and joyful people, guided by God's Spirit and answering God's call to service in our communities. Thus, it is clear to the Diocese that to bring this about these parishes need a priest to be living in the centre of the community in Sixpenny Handley Vicarage.



The questions that we are asking ourselves centre on how best to develop the good links with children and young people in the villages. How can we turn great local affection for the church buildings into regular worshippers so that people are not on the fringes but integrated members of church life? We also want to improve our links among the parishes in the benefice, and with the deanery and diocese.

## BUILDINGS

The buildings where we meet are beautiful and at the centre of the communities they serve. They are old places steeped in history and can tell many stories, yet they are also very much alive with people who wish to meet and worship God.

## OUR CHURCH



### ***St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley (Grade II\*)***



A church has been in Sixpenny Handley since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The first recorded chaplain was Nicholas de Longspee who became a Bishop of Salisbury. It is set within one of the larger villages in East Dorset which was originally two, Saxpena and Hanlege, which were united in 1244. In the late 1800s the church was extensively rebuilt and the Norman font was moved into the base of the tower. In recent years

the font has been restored and located in a more central position; a significant achievement in 2010 was the creation of a much-needed toilet facility! More recently we introduced a state-of-the-art sound and vision system with wireless controls and an improved hearing induction loop. Our most recent project was to equip the church kitchen to cope with the new Magnificafé which is proving a wise investment. Much work is now ongoing to repair various areas of the church that need it for which grants have been obtained and next year we hope to refurbish the organ in St Mary's which whilst working well



needs attention. St Mary's is often used for baptisms, weddings and funerals; the church is kept open during the day by our two Church Wardens to provide a welcome and place of encounter for the local community and passing visitors. The village campsite is located nearby and often brings in additional visitors particularly during the spring and summer months. The clock bells are a well-loved signature of our village and church life – with many complaints if they fail or are out of sync! A small but important sign that the church is known and loved in the community.



### ***St Andrew's Chapel, Gussage St Andrew (Grade I)***

"Gussage" means a small stream or spring and the Chapel at Gussage St Andrews is located on the site of an old nunnery. It is known that a wooden chapel was originally built on the site by King Alfred, as part of Shaftesbury Abbey, and then replaced by the present building in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. There are beautiful late 12<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings which were rediscovered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their condition has been a concern but they have been stabilised. In recent years the Chapel has been well looked after benefiting from new electrics, heating, and an organ as well as continuing to protect the medieval wall paintings.



### ***St Rumbold's, Pentridge (Grade II)***



Pentridge is mentioned in the Domesday Book and St Rumbold's is an ancient designation, but the present church was rebuilt between 1815 and 1855 and modelled on 14th-century style. This was made possible by a grant of "£70 towards enlarging the church upon condition that 140 seats be reserved for the poorer members of the parish". The church is simply furnished, but often gloriously decorated with flowers.

### ***St Mary's, Chettle (Grade II\*)***

The Church is dedicated to St Mary. Excluding the Norman Tower which is early C16, it was rebuilt during Victorian times by the Castleman family. There is a fully restored organ which was recently fund raised for and successfully achieved from village events. The church clock has recently undergone a conversion to automatic and the clock face was restored. The recent quinquennial report shows the church to be generally in good condition.



### ***St Laurence, Farnham (Grade II\*)***



The nave dates back to the 12th Century, the tower is medieval, and the north aisle, chancel and vestry are Victorian extensions. The one external door leads from the porch which is also the bell tower, accommodating two bells which are set to chime. Although cosy in appearance, the church is surprisingly spacious. As a result of the last quinquennial inspection, work was carried out on the exterior of the building. Our focus now is on replacing the heating system, as the oil-fired boiler could fail at any time. The churchyard is maintained according to our wildlife management scheme.

### ***St Peter ad Vincula, Tollard Royal (Grade II\*)***

The Parish Church is a beautiful late 13th Century place of worship surrounded by glorious countryside. It has six bells, most newly installed to ring in the new millennium. The chancel dates from the 14th century and is the earliest visible part. Other extensive works seem to have been done at that time, judging by the windows inserted in the south wall, and traces of painting found in the Chancel. In the 18th Century typical alterations were made to the furnishings. Of the original, only the communion rails remain. In the Victorian period the roof was completely reformed, and alterations made to the north aisle, changing the building considerably. The walls were squared up with lath and plaster set on studding which appears to be from old ships' timbers. A Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in 2023 and we await the Report.



## **PARISH FINANCES**

Our PCCs' finances are handled in accordance with Charity Commission legislation and are independently examined each year. In Sixpenny Handley in the last few years, a small finance team has been established to advise the PCC on all financial matters and provide support to the treasurer. This has been a great success and, after a few years of concern and inability to pay the Share, we are now on a much sounder footing and paying our way. As with many churches, it is challenging for our PCCs to cover the proportion of the Share allocated to us (and increasingly so as church supporters get older) which affects what

contributions can be made as well as supporting funding raising activities. This is an ongoing challenge across all rural parishes and much hope is laid on the new Diocesan Share system. All five parishes have paid their Share in full for 2023 and all intend to do so in 2024. The new Diocesan Share Scheme, which expects all benefices to meet the majority of their ministry costs, is due to be implemented in 2025.

## THE VICARAGE

The Vicarage is adjacent to the church in the middle of the village and provides a large two storey four-bedroom house built in 1962. It is set well back from the quiet High Street in the village with its own private driveway. To the front, the south side, it has a pleasant garden mainly set to lawn with wide ranging views; to the rear it offers a secluded private but also sunny garden offering quiet respite. There is a garage and two parking spaces. The house has undergone major improvements during 2023, and now has modern double glazing, a brand-new heating system with an air-source heat pump, new radiators and insulation, and solar panels to the roof. The property boundary on one side is to St Mary's and on the other offers immediate access to open fields and countryside. In short it is in an ideal position, domestically and pastorally. The pictures below show the house front, the study/office, the sitting room and the back garden. It is currently being fully redecorated and carpeted.

