



PATRONAGE (BENEFICES) MEASURE 1986

Parish of St Michael and All Angels, Felton and

Parish of Longframlington St Mary the Virgin with Brinkburn St Peter and St Paul

# PARISH PROFILES



## **PREFACE**

**Framed between the great rivers of Tyne and Tweed, the Diocese of Newcastle is the Church of England's most Northerly Diocese. It is a great gift that the Parishes of Felton and Longframlington with Brinkburn are located in the County of Northumberland, the land of the Saints. It is a land of rolling farmland, wild moors, forests and the most beautiful coastline. These parishes have also seen widespread housing development in very recent times.**

**The two churches of St Michael and All Angels, Felton, and St Mary the Virgin, Longframlington are located 4 miles apart, linked by the B6345 highway. Brinkburn Priory is three miles to the south-west of Longframlington. The St Oswald's Way, a long-distance walking route, also passes close to the two churches and to Brinkburn Priory. St Oswald's Way links some of the places associated with St Oswald, the King of Northumbria in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, who played a major part in bringing Christianity to his people.**

**Like those who lived before us, we seek to bring the teaching of the Gospels to our communities through creativity and faith. We are at a significant moment of change throughout the Diocese. This, together with the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic, presents us all with many challenges, but we face these with faith and a strong wish to rebuild our congregations and to reach out to our communities.**

**The two churches have been linked with a single incumbent for many years and it is a further blessing that we enjoy a close relationship with each other. The congregations of the two churches are, however, different, with St Mary's enjoying a more traditional approach to worship, whilst St Michael's enjoys a mix of traditional and contemporary worship styles. These differences are refreshing, allowing the interchange of worshippers between the two churches.**

**We are seeking a new incumbent who would be excited to continue to develop and grow the congregations of these two beautiful churches, to work with us both with equal measure and to help to extend the good news of the Gospel to our communities. We long to see God transforming more lives, churches and communities. We want to be:**

- ***open* to God's transforming love;**
- ***generous* with God's transforming gifts;**
- ***engaged* in God's transforming work in the world.**

**If this is something that excites you, we hope that you will join us.**



Parish Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Felton

# OUR PARISH PROFILE



Parish Church of St. Michael and All Angels

# OUR PARISH PROFILE

## OUR INVITATION TO JOIN US

The Parish of St Michael and All Angels is centred around an historical Grade I Listed building, set in a conservation area on the south-western edge of the village of Felton. The church plays an important role in the life of the village and its community, and generates a sense of warmth and peace to all who visit it. We are privileged to be able to open our building every day for parishioners and visitors to enjoy.

Our incumbent moved in April 2021, after more than six and a half successful years, to take up the position of Priest in Charge of two churches – St. Cuthbert's & Holy Trinity, Darlington. We are a warm, friendly and progressive congregation, eager to continue our journey of faith and to welcome all those who wish to be a part of this journey. We have benefitted from good practical and spiritual Bible teaching, and we enjoy worship, music and fellowship, all of which has helped our church to grow.

We are looking to welcome a new energetic Leader who can guide us on our continuing journey. Are you that person?

We hope that this Parish Profile will resonate with you and that you will wish to know more about us. If so, please get in touch, come and visit us, and talk to us about how we can move forward together in faith. Visit Felton and our neighbouring village Swarland and meet the villagers to see what a thriving community we have.

## **OUR VISION AND MISSION ACTION PLAN**

St. Michael's has adopted the Diocesan five-year vision, "Growing Church, Bringing Hope" and shares the desire to see our worshipping community growing in numbers, prayer and discipleship, in serving our communities and in making a difference, and sharing the hope we have in the power of God to transform us and our world.

The way we will do this is set out in our Mission Action Plan, and based on the following 3 areas of growth: Growth in mission, growth in numbers, growth in spiritual depth. These objectives are then supported by key actions: prayer, building capacity and communications needed to underpin the plan.

The emphasis is on growth in families, children and young people and inclusion, especially by going out to the people in the community who have limited or no contact with the church and to the isolated, vulnerable, elderly and people with dementia. To underpin these objectives developing church leaders among children, youth and younger adults and providing training and opportunities to lead and serve is seen as critical to our mission, along with deepening spirituality, encouraging a greater sense of belonging and prayer.

The Mission Action Plan was last reviewed in January 2020, days before the first Covid cases notified in the UK in Newcastle. The Covid pandemic, church and society lockdowns and the departure of our last incumbent at Easter 2021 shifted the focus to survival and inventing and maintaining the best way of functioning for our church in our community. The Mission Action Plan is a substantial document and a sound basis for reviewing our plans as we emerge from Covid restrictions and welcome a new incumbent and leader. Copies of the existing Mission Action Plan are available.

## **OUR BACKGROUND – WHERE WE COME FROM**

Over the years, St. Michael and All Angels has experienced change, but it retains its deep roots in the community. Until the restrictions necessarily imposed by Covid-19, numbers attending services had grown steadily and other events organised by the church were well attended.

Our journey has been driven by a number of factors:

- Our last two incumbents who have had a charismatic, spiritual, driving and energetic personality.
- Worship that is both reverent, joyful and inclusive.
- Respect for the tradition of the church (central Anglican – open Evangelical) combined with a willingness to embrace contemporary and new styles of worship.
- A congregation consisting of many who have come to the Church of England from other denominations and have witnessed other styles of worship.
- A congregation that has embraced change, understanding that innovation to encourage a wider and younger congregation was both desirable and necessary.
- Children and young people have been encouraged and are seen and heard at our services.
- An emphasis on reaching children, young people and their parents, not only church families but also in the wider community. Our last two incumbents were employed part-time (approximately one third) as members of Newcastle Diocese Children's and Young People's Work Development Team, which had a significant influence on our vision and approach to worship and outreach.
- Church members who have been willing and able to contribute generously to the financial needs of the church and parish.
- Church members have been encouraged to lead and participate in services to a greater extent.
- A very positive attitude to innovation and change as we seek to implement our 'mission' priorities and commitment to providing the necessary resources to get things done.

## OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

We want to develop our ministry in this growing and hospitable community in a broadly open and evangelical tradition.

Our Mission Plan commits us to looking for ways to develop our experience of prayer, worship and learning and take it into the community. We want to raise interest in worship in the community and that means considering accessibility, for example, formats, times and places.

We want to find new ways of working with the village to provide a place of solace, peace, healing, support and friendship to those in need. Also, to be widely recognised as being at the heart of the community and responsive to need.

Working with children and their families, and with young people, is critical to the future sustainability of our witness in Felton. Prior to Covid-19 and the various lockdowns, the Church operated a weekly “Fun and Food” lunch event which was open to pre-school children and their parents and carers, many of whom come from outside of the Church membership. We are hoping to reconvene this again from Autumn 2021. Similarly, prior to Covid-19, we also held a very informal, largely lay led, Sunday evening contemporary service once a month for all, but particularly encouraging of younger people. We have recently restarted this service (post Covid-19 restrictions). We are resolute in our wish to grow our congregation across all age groups and the interaction of the incumbent with village life will be essential to this objective. We welcome fresh ideas, direction and leadership.

Lay ministry is already important within the worship and life of the church, and we have a strong, enthusiastic and very committed Ministry Team. We see this as a real strength of our church which we are keen to develop further. We also want to do more to encourage young people and adults to take on leadership roles and to provide appropriate training and mentoring. We want to create and develop a sense of ownership and responsibility throughout the whole of the church life.

We need to ensure that our roots are firmly and deeply established, especially those that are newly planted. We also recognise the need to continue to provide differing styles of worship to satisfy the spiritual needs of a mixed and varied congregation.

We see ourselves as custodians of a wonderful material and natural heritage in our church building and churchyard. Both are open to people in the village, walkers and pilgrims on the St. Oswald's Way, and to visitors. The churchyard is a place of tranquillity and beauty where we have been able to encourage a wide variety of wildlife. In making changes and additions in the church we have invested in high quality contemporary design and materials. We are also conscious of our responsibility to manage our use of both to enhance sustainability and reduce our impact on the climate. We are signed up to A Rocha's Eco Church scheme and active members of the Alnwick Deanery Environmental Group.

We believe the environment in which our church community works and worships is important and want to increase access and interpretation for our visitors and the number and range of cultural and social events that take place. The church has hosted choral concerts, the annual visit of Classical Guitar recording artist, and friend of Felton, Giulio Tampalini, social events and quiz nights. The church is currently providing weekly rehearsal space for our local amateur choir, The Bridge Singers

## OUR NEW LEADER

As well as being the leader of our congregation, the successful applicant will play an important role in the life of the wider village community. In order to fulfil the needs of this position, we feel the ideal candidate would exhibit most or all of the following qualities:

- A committed Christ focused Evangelical Christian
- Enthusiastic and committed to Church growth
- A leader who wants to work with the local community (school, clubs, businesses, etc)
- A leader, pastor and faithful teacher of the Bible and proclaimer of the Gospel
- A passion for developing the prayer life of the Church and a believer that prayer is the Powerhouse of the Church
- Be approachable and friendly, a “people person” who is a good listener too
- Eagerness to develop children’s and youth involvement and activities.
- Willingness to explore alternative service styles whilst maintaining the church tradition and maximising the potential of the different styles and forms of worship that St Michael’s has to offer.
- Excellent presentation skills – orally, written and through IT
- A good Team Builder and developer of people’s skills and confidence, and external relationships
- A sense of humour always helps!

The Leadership Team is there to support our Leader - the Leader is not expected to do everything within the church or parish. Our previous two incumbents joined us as their first substantive Parish roles. We like to think we helped play our part in supporting and developing them in their journey in the Church.

We also recognise that St Michaels will be only a part of our new Leader's role and so have realistic expectations about the amount of time the new Leader will have to spend with us. We are blessed with many talented members of the congregation who are actively playing important roles in the life of the church and community.

We have instituted several new initiatives over time of which the congregation has been supportive. This has involved, for example, introducing more contemporary songs and music through our Worship Group and the use of digital media alongside traditional hymns using our organ, lay-led worship and an emphasis on our children at the beginning and end of all our main services. Unfortunately, since the onset of Covid-19, our Worship Group had neither met nor rehearsed, but we are pleased to report that they are once again leading worship in St Michael's.

We recognise the balance between continuity and change; as we continue our journey, we are keen to fully embed the changes made to date. We hope that a new incumbent will continue our development in faith, as well as helping us nurture what we have begun and to bring forward their own thoughts and ideas.

Leading our worship is a key role at the heart of our life as a church. Worship is centred on the traditional Eucharist and follows the service of Common Worship. However, we find that we have grown as a congregation by involving members of the church in all aspects of services and this is discussed later in this Parish Profile. Similarly, we enjoy an alternative worship style, being willing to be light-hearted at times whilst not detracting from a strong Christian message. Our Leader, therefore, should be a good communicator who is capable of delivering the Gospel message to a variety of people of all backgrounds, both young and old, and who is keen to teach us in the ways of biblical truth. We want people to come to our services, feel welcome and comfortable and to enjoy the experience, hopefully spreading the message, not only of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also of their positive experience at St. Michael's.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, Felton was a parish that had 'bucked the trend' and had experienced a growth in congregation numbers. As a result of the effects of Covid-19, our congregation numbers have declined. In order to maintain contact with all of our church members, we have until recently provided an on-line service which is available through our church web site and YouTube. This on-line service began as a fully pre-recorded service made up of segments specifically curated for this purpose by our incumbent and members of the congregations of both ourselves and Longframlington. They were of a good quality and attracted a healthy following both in and out of area during the height of lockdown. Latterly in the interests of available resource (and recognising the gradual return to face to face), we switched to providing a selection of pre-recorded music and prayers accompanied by a recorded sermon in voice only. The numbers of those joining these on-line services have gradually declined and the decision was made to end the on-line provision from 31 October 2021. Whilst we recognise that the effects of the pandemic were to be expected, we earnestly hope and pray that these effects will be reversed in the months and years to come.

We look to the future in hope and optimism, and we remain confident that, supported by the right leader, we can work together to continue our previous trend of growth.

## **OUR PARISH**

The picturesque Parish of St. Michael and All Angels, Felton covers an area of 12,382 acres in the county of Northumberland. The Parish is situated about 10 miles to the North of the town of Morpeth and about 9 miles to the South of the historic market town of Alnwick, the seat of the Duke of Northumberland. It is a rural parish consisting of both arable and livestock farming.

### **Felton and West Thirston**

The main centres of population are the villages of Felton and the adjacent West Thirston, joined by two bridges that form the vital link between the two communities. Felton and West Thirston historically provided hospitality to weary travellers and a change of horses to the coachmen on the main turnpike from London to the borders and onward into Scotland. Hospitality remains a key feature of the communities. The Northumberland Arms provides accommodation, food and drink to villagers and travellers. The Running Fox is an artisan bakery and coffee shop, which has become famous throughout the County for its high quality food. There is also a general store and post office, a garage providing motor servicing and repairs and a hairdressing and beauty salon.



Gallery 45, in the middle of Main Street is an art gallery, gift shop and home to a number of craft production and teaching studios. A recent addition to the village is a craft market on the old bridge over the River Coquet. There is a dispensing doctor's surgery within the village with a new surgery and dispensary being planned. Many local organisations, including the WI, Wine club, Film Club, fitness groups, kids' martial arts class and carpet bowls make regular use of the Village Hall. In the middle of the village the Recreation Field has football pitches, a fenced-in artificial surfaced basketball court, children's playground and is the venue of the annual Felton & Thirston Village Fair. A plaque on 6 Main Street commemorates the stay of Oliver Cromwell in the village when the property was an old coaching inn called The Old Angel.

## **Swarland**

The other main centre of population is the village of Swarland. The village was established by the Fountains Abbey Settlers Trust in 1936 to provide housing and work for people from the major conurbations during the recession. At that time, 77 houses were built but it is now a modern village with significant affluent housing development. Within the village, there is a golf club and large holiday park (Percy Wood Golf Club and Country Retreat), a sports club, village hall and working men's club.



Swarland Hall was the home of Alexander Davison, a friend of Horatio, Lord Nelson, who, in 1807, erected a memorial to Nelson in the parkland. Many of the street names are related to Nelson including Nelson Drive, Admiral Close and Lady Hamilton Drive. The Hall was demolished in 1930 but Swarland Old Hall, a Grade II\* castellated building, remains and is a successful livestock farm with self-catering holiday pods for rental. Nearby is the monument to William Haslerigg, who, it is believed, refused to be buried in consecrated ground and was buried in his own land.

In addition to those villages noted above, there are a number of small hamlets, remote dwellings and farms within the parish. It is an area of significant landscape interest.

## **Communications**

The A1 highway, the trunk road between Newcastle and Scotland, formerly ran through the village of Felton but is now bypassed about 1 mile to the West. This provides relatively easy communication between the village and other parts of the country. Preparatory work has started to upgrade by dualling much of the northern route of the A1 including the section south of Felton and to provide safer access from the village. The railway station at Alnmouth, some 8 miles distant, provides access to the national rail network. During daytime, Felton and West Thirston have an hourly bus service to Alnwick, Morpeth and Newcastle. Newcastle International Airport, with its scheduled and holiday flights, is about 30 minutes' drive from the village.

## **Schools**

There are two schools within the parish. Felton Church of England Primary School provides education to about 100 children and about 80 children attend Swarland Primary School. The schools have been welcomed into the faith community and into the wider lives of the two villages and they look forward to further developing the close link with the church. Previous incumbents provided assemblies for the children relating to the teaching of Jesus, and also in respect of social issues, friendships, love and caring. Many of the school children knew the previous incumbents through Junior church. The schools hope that the new incumbent will bring the same warmth, enthusiasm and sense of humour that allowed the previous incumbents to develop such positive relationships with staff, parents and children. Some members of the church have also been involved in 'Open the Book', bringing bible stories to life in a school setting. After attendance at the Primary Schools, children transfer to schools in Alnwick or Morpeth. Several church members have previously been involved in the annual Life Path event at Brinkburn Priory for First Schools throughout the county.

## **Demography**

We estimate the population of the parish to be around 2,000. There has been a fresh injection of younger families with children with the development of a new 80 house private housing estate at the north end of Felton. Otherwise the population tends to be of an older demographic, with many moving to the village with their families then not moving away.

The working population tends to travel to the major conurbations for their employment whilst the area also supports many retired people. In Felton, there is a significant area of local authority housing, though most is now privately owned. Social housing, 'affordable' homes and rental properties are very limited and generally housing is quite expensive, though a number of the older houses are still owned and occupied by elderly retired people. There is no provision for purpose-built housing for older people.

## **Northumbria Community**

Situated at Acton to the North of Felton is 'Nether Springs', the Mother House of the Northumbria Community. The Community is a diverse worldwide ecumenical network of approximately 3,000 people from all seams of the Christian faith and is actively involved in supporting people from all denominations in the development of a contemplative and missional spirituality, inspired by the lives of the Northumbrian Saints and the monastic traditions. As well as being 'home' for the Community, Nether Springs is a place of welcome and retreat for anybody who needs it, and ministers to a large number of clergy and laity throughout the year. The Northumbria Community has a good relationship with the church.

## **OUR CHURCH**

A new Electoral Roll was made in 2019. The number of members enrolled on the New Electoral Roll in April 2019 was 89. The number of electors on the Electoral Roll on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 was 95.

## **Church Services**

The typical pattern of services at St Michael and All Angels is a service of Holy Communion at 8.00 am plus either Holy Communion or lay-led Morning Worship services at 11.00 am. Prior to Covid-19, typical congregation numbers were between 11 and 15 at the 8.00 am service and between 55 and 70 at the 11.00 am service. Whilst the congregation numbers at the 8.00 am service have remained relatively stable since the Covid-19 pandemic, attendance at the 11.00 am service has declined to between 20 and 45 people. We hope and pray that, with our new incumbent, we can reverse that trend.

This pattern of services continued until the first Government lockdown when social distancing measures were initiated within the church and the pews marked accordingly. Hand sanitising stations were provided at points within the church. On 15th March 2020 St Michael's held its last Sunday services and the church closed. From 13th July 2020, services of Morning Prayer were held on Mondays and Evening Prayer on Fridays. From 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020, our normal pattern of two services on Sundays resumed with the 8.00 am service held in church and the 11.00 am service live streamed. Our online services on YouTube in lockdown were well-received, however an experiment with live streaming of services as we came out of lockdown was fraught with technical



challenge. The equipment required was graciously provided by a church member, but it suffered from age-related issues and the natural advancement of technology. Live streaming was not universally liked by members of the congregation. However, pre-recorded services were successful, reaching out not only to our own members, but also to people in distant parts of the United Kingdom and abroad. Having switched to a scaled-back version with voice-recording of sermons take up of viewers fell hence the decision to end these on 31 October 2021.

The main service of Holy Communion follows the order set out in Common Worship and includes four hymns. Recent tradition has been that both traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs are used to provide an appealing balance

of music to all members of the congregation. During the service (before the pandemic), Junior Church took place in the Community Area at the West end of the church, providing teaching and activities for the younger members of our congregation. In addition, creche facilities were available. We hope and pray that we will be able to attract these younger members back to church and this will be a priority for our new incumbent. Members of the congregation read the scripture and lead intercessions.

This service of Holy Communion is held on alternate Sundays and led by visiting clergy. In recent months, we have been delighted to welcome the Bishop of Newcastle, the Bishop of Berwick, and the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne to our Sunday services. Their support during the vacancy has been uplifting to us all. We are also extremely grateful to Revd. Gabby Llewelyn, our SSM Minister

with PTO, who has provided guidance and support to us all throughout the vacancy as well as taking a number of services and maintaining our pastoral work. On remaining weeks, services of Morning Worship are taken by our Ministry Team.

The number of people attending the 8.00 am service of Holy Communion has remained buoyant through the pandemic with 10-15 people regularly attending this service. The 8.00 am service of Holy Communion follows the order set out in Common Worship and is without music. A reflection is included within the service.

Throughout the Covid-19 restrictions, the Coffee Plus and Outrageous Women home groups have continued by Zoom meetings on a weekly basis. Whilst there has been no Junior Church in the building, the younger members of the church have had Zoomerang! online on Sunday morning and outdoor church and activities when the weather was suitable. Junior church, including some of the younger children have contributed to our pre-recorded online services and our 'Lockdown Nativity' film drama and village wide happenings.

More information can be found on our church website: <https://www.stmichaelsfelton.co.uk/>

### **Lay Ministry Team**

One of the unusual features of St Michael's Felton has been the emergence and increasing involvement of our lay ministry team. Today we have a small group of non-ordained people willing and able to lead all aspects of non-eucharist services - fronting worship, preaching, teaching or leading public prayer. Currently we have two such services each month at 11.00 am on Sundays, plus a more informal monthly service at 5.00 pm that is overtly family oriented and 'all age' in content. For the past three years, the lay ministry team has also helped to lead a summer sermon series that has not been based on the lectionary readings. Instead, a biblical theme has been chosen and followed for the three summer months - the latest in 2021 being a series on the Psalms. As referred to above, we see this as a real area of strength in our church and one we would be keen to continue to develop.

## Parochial Church Council

The church benefits from a strong and enthusiastic Leadership Team. There are currently 13 members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). This well-attended meeting takes place 8 times per year. It is a lively group of people and all the meetings are business-like, effective and good-humoured. Each member of the PCC shares the common goal of growing God's work in the community. The work of the PCC is supplemented by a number of sub-groups covering the Deanery and Finance. A Standing Committee deals with business between PCC meetings.

## Children and Young People

When we last made a review for the PCC of children and young people's work, in June 2019 the following statistics applied to 0-16 years provision:

Fun and Food	0-4 years	Up to 20+ children representing 27 families the majority being non church families, 3 leaders and 7 helpers
Junior Church	0-5 years	Creche + Seeds 7 regular children but very variable, 5 helpers
Junior Church	5-11 years	Shoots and Roots 20 children, mostly church families, 6 leaders and helpers
M630 youth	11-13 years	Monday 6:30pm, 16+ young people, 4 leaders
Youth Cell	12-16 years,	with Alnwick Baptist Church and Ignite on Tuesday evening in Alnwick 10+ young people, 4 leaders
Open the Book	4-12 years	full school assembly each Tuesday for Felton Primary School, 90 children, team of 5 from St. Michael's
Holiday Club	5-11 years	3-day holiday club in July (2016, 2017, 2018) 35-40 children, team of 15+ incl. St Mary's and YFC-NE

We produced a 9-minute video showing our children's and young people's work for the same review in June 2019 and recommend that you view it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/-UFRGNk9Dxo>.

The children and young people are an essential part of St Michaels. Prior to lockdown, many children under the age of 16 years could regularly be expected at Family Communion and Junior church (see above). Two successful youth cells were regularly meeting, together with Ignite Alnwick, and young people from the Alnwick churches. This enables our youth to engage with other young Christians from across the area and creates a good ecumenical working relationship between the helpers and leaders, which is important in our rural area. Throughout lockdown, children's and youth groups for secondary age children met online on Zoom and have since restarted meeting in-person in Alnwick. Although inevitably children's numbers have reduced, there are approximately 9 children from the parish attending these groups, with the intention of starting another group for younger children in the New Year.

Pre covid-19 we ran a range of junior church groups, crèche, and up to teens with good attendance, but these have been affected by covid and we moved our junior church online with Zoomerang, a short Sunday Zoom session of music, story and activity mainly for primary school age. Then, over the summer 2021, we met outdoors on a Sunday teatime. We have just restarted our junior church group during the 11am Sunday morning service, with mixed attendance in the Community Area, which enables activities to take place during services without too much noise leaking into the adult service. As an important part of our congregation, Children remain in the main area of the building for the start of the service, including some worship which is aimed at melding the modern and traditional.

As a church, we regularly hold all-age services, which seek to involve and engage both children and adults in both worship and sermon content. Monthly 5.00 pm services are also popular with the children and youth of the church, which seeks to build community with time for learning, sharing and fellowship.

Prior to lockdown, the church hosted a very popular weekly lunch and play session for parents, babies and toddlers of the village and surrounding area (Fun and Food); this is to restart in November 2021.

We see a need for investment in the children and young people of the church and consider them to be the Church of tomorrow. We have parishioners who commit regular giving for this purpose. We hope that our new incumbent will share our passion and focus for the development of children's and young people's work. It is also our intention to support this by appointing a youth worker on a

part-time basis to help us re-engage families in the area and grow the provision we are able to offer. This may include a re-launch of our very successful summer holiday club.

## **Pastoral Ministry**

As well as working with children and young people, we do of course have a significant element of our congregation and community who are elderly and who we wish to focus on too. We have a small group who support the incumbent with pastoral visiting for the lonely and sick, as well as regularly keeping them in our prayers. We also reach into the community in more normal times with a Seniors Lunch and Seniors Afternoon Tea for those in the village (see Community Involvement section below). We would like to work with our new incumbent to explore further what we can do for this part of the congregation and community, and how we develop a more explicit ministry to the elderly, and also those with long-term conditions such as dementia and their carers.



## **Music and Presentations**

There are no paid musicians of the church. Those who lead the worship by music are drawn from the congregation; the two organists are past normal retirement age. Some years ago, the church introduced an organ scholarship. Following this success, the Parochial Church Council agreed to continue the bursary. We believed that we were the only church in the Diocese that introduced such a scheme. After an initial success, there have been no further young people wishing to learn to play the organ and this is a concern for the future. However, the church has the benefit of a high quality sound system in the event that accompanists are not available. The church uses mainly Mission Praise, supplemented from time to time with other songs made available through the internet.

A number of presentation techniques are used in church. A remote-controlled projection screen and high-quality projector enables more modern songs to be used during worship, accompanied either by the Worship Group or the installed sound system, as well as other visual material. This equipment also enables presentations to be made at Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs)

where the successes and joys of the previous year can be displayed to the members. This equipment has also been used at times during Sunday worship for showing extracts of film, YouTube clips and PowerPoint slides. Another remote-controlled projection screen is available in the Community Area for use at meetings and smaller groups.

### **Activities and Groups**

Other activities held in the church have included a Snowdrop Walk through the churchyard, a Flower Festival, and music concerts. Christmas flowers have been spectacular. Previously the Churchyard was awarded a Gold Medal for three years in succession by Northumbria in Bloom. The churchyard is tended by church members. Some areas are uncultivated and this, together with the choice of flowers, encourages wildlife. The churchyard is a tranquil place to reflect, meditate or mourn. For information, the churchyard is a 'closed churchyard' and no burials are undertaken within the church grounds; an attractive cemetery is situated at the Northern side of Felton village.

Home Groups were established some years ago to further bible study prayer and mutual support. Two long-standing, successful, informal groups meet in different people's houses every week and these are good opportunities to study bible passages, pray and share ideas. These have survived the effects of Covid-19.

A prayer book is available in church in which people can write prayer requests. A meeting held in late Autumn 2019 to call the Church to prayer was very well attended and as a result of this, regular prayer evenings commenced at the beginning of 2020 in Church. This was very much seen as the power-house of the Church. Unfortunately, with the start of Covid-19 in the Spring of 2020 and the departure of the incumbent, these meetings were suspended but we are pleased to report that these have now recommenced.

The church has also organised a week of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost as part of the Anglican Bishops' prayer initiative "Thy Kingdom Come". This has involved activities inside and outside the church in the village, including prayer stations in church and in the schools made by home groups and other groups from the congregation and culminating in 24 hours of prayer on the eve of Pentecost.



## **Mission Giving**

The Parish Church of St. Michael and All Angels is active in its mission work. Last year, we gave £1,000 each to our three named charities, African Mission - Berega (International) through Tearfund, Christians Against Poverty (National) and the Newcastle Street Pastors (Local). We also gave £350 to Wansbeck Food Bank. In addition to our Parish Share, which has been consistently paid in full, in 2020 we gave an additional contribution of £1,700 to the Diocese in support of those other churches that were unable to meet this financial commitment. The mission and giving of additional Parish share by St. Michael's amounted to 10% of total receipts into the General fund in 2020. Our income into the General Fund for 2020 was £52,729 and was comprised of 66% planned giving (e.g., by standing order), 9% by collection plate giving and the remainder by gift aid recovery and fees for weddings and funerals. The church is committed to paying the Parish Share in full and it achieves this.

## **Community Involvement**

Our church is open daily to give members of the community and visitors the opportunity to view our beautiful, old building and to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the place for private prayer and meditation.

Following the introduction of Stage 4 measures of the coronavirus guidance measures, we have been pleased to have held 3 weddings in St Michael's and have welcomed 3 children into the church family by Holy Baptism.

As part of our mission work, together with members of the community, we provide Senior's Lunches in the Village Hall twice per year and a monthly afternoon tea. We are very conscious that many people may feel distanced from the church and the community life of the village. The lunches and teas, organised by the community and assisted by the church, have not taken place during 2020 or 2021. Together with the community group, it was therefore decided that afternoon teas would be delivered to all of the attendees

at the lunches and teas on VE Day, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020. This was followed by the delivery of Christmas treat boxes during the week before Christmas; 120 people were reached by these means and the gesture was greatly appreciated. These were followed by the delivery of Easter treats and Palm Crosses, and an Easter postcard was sent by post to everyone on our mailing list.

Whilst outwardly the area appears to be quite affluent, there are still some people who are currently affected by the world financial situation and some are facing extreme difficulty. The Felton Relief In Need Charity was established many years ago to provide financial assistance to those facing hardship. The charity, which is available to all those living within the ecclesiastical parish of Felton, lay fallow for many years but is now operational again and is administered by the church.

### **Our Strengths and Weaknesses**

The above notes show that we have significant strengths as a church. We have bucked prevailing trends as a church who has been growing in numbers, missional activities and in our children and youth work. We have also been able to pay our Parish Share in full (and indeed even make an additional contribution last year), as well as to generate the funds needed for building maintenance and other running costs, and donate 10% of our income to our mission partners (see above). We are aware though that we also have some weaknesses.

Like many churches, much of the workload depends upon a relatively small number of key people. There are many within the congregation who can undertake such roles and perhaps the invitation and challenge to step up is required. The parish is served by two Churchwardens, both of whom are due to retire from the posts in the Spring of 2023. There are also both a Deputy Churchwarden and an Assistant Churchwarden who are similarly due to retire in September 2023. These two new roles were created at the 2020 Annual Parochial Church Meeting as a means of providing some succession planning for St Michael's and with the intention that the current post holders may consider taking over the Churchwarden roles and responsibilities in 2023. However, this is not certain at this juncture. The people currently undertaking the Churchwarden roles are both beyond retirement age and we need to encourage younger people and develop them into the roles. We know that we rely upon willing amateurs to provide church music, but we need to develop and inspire people to join the organ rota.

Our aspiration for the future is to continue to develop and grow as a church and extend our mission to the whole of the parish community and beyond. In this respect, we acknowledge that we need to attract more young people to join our congregation.

## OUR CHURCH BUILDING



The 12<sup>th</sup> century Parish Church of St. Michael and All Angels is situated at the top of Church Bank on the south-western edge of the village of Felton. The church is located in a Conservation Area and the grid reference of the church is NU18210022.

On first sight, the church looks as though it has no roof and may be a ruin. However, closer examination reveals the low-pitched roof over the Nave hidden behind a low parapet wall, which contrasts with a steeply pitched Victorian roof covered in Lakeland slates over the Chancel. The Chancel was rebuilt by Alexander Davison in 1823 (see Swarland Hall above). At the west end of the Nave is a projecting stair turret supporting a bell cote with two bells. Another notable external feature is the 14<sup>th</sup> century porch with stone slates and a rib vaulted structure beneath. The impressive rose window, the head of which is carved from a single piece of stone, is over the Lady Chapel in the South Aisle.

William Bertram II, the grandson of William Bertram I who founded Brinkburn Priory, gave the church of Felton 'to Almighty God, St. Peter, and the Canons of Brinkburn' shortly before his death in AD 1199. The structure of the church is chiefly of two dates. The

earlier work is to be seen in the Chancel and Nave, the latter having originally been without aisles. The aisles were added in the fourteenth century.

A pipe organ is situated in the Chancel. The organ was refurbished about 25 years ago and is maintained and tuned on an annual basis. The church has access for disabled persons and a moveable ramp was installed for wheelchair users. There is an induction loop system for those with impaired hearing and large-print hymnbooks are available for those with impaired vision.

The church does not benefit from having a church hall, this being demolished and the land sold many years ago. Therefore, Junior Church was held at the rear of the church during Sunday services. In 2010, a Community Area was created by the erection of a full-height glazed screen and Junior Church is now held in this area. A new kitchen and disabled toilet facilities were also provided. This £220,000 development was considered to be an exemplar of sensitive development at a Diocesan seminar. The Community Area provides a comfortable space that can be used by other groups during the week. This space is available to other members of the village community in addition to church members, although the church does not seek to compete with other available facilities within the village, such as the Village Hall and the school. A number of churches have also used the Community Area for PCC and leadership 'Away Days'.

## **Maintenance**

Whilst historically there has been much slippage in undertaking repairs to the church fabric and fittings, these are now being addressed. Of particular note are repairs to the church roof, particularly over the vestry, organ loft and the old baptistry where rainwater permeated into the building. All roof repairs have been successfully completed but the scale of the refurbishment required to the vestry has resulted in this work continuing. Whilst contractors were on site, we took the opportunity to address many of the items raised in the Quinquennial Report of 2020, even though they were not considered urgent.

The condition of the West Windows was raised in the Quinquennial Report of 2015 and again in 2020. Once current works are completed, we will direct our attention to the West Windows and have some funding set aside for this work.

The long York stone external path leading from Church to public highway has recently suffered from the effects of freeze-thaw delamination of the surfacing making it treacherous to walk on in wet / icy weather. As the Church Yard is closed, responsibility for maintenance and upkeep is the responsibility of Northumberland County Council. They have just begun to undertake the necessary work to relay this.

A new remote controlled projector screen and audio-visual equipment were installed in 2019.

There was a cash surplus at the end of the 2020 financial year for maintenance works.

## **OUR VICARAGE**



The vicarage is located at 1 Benlaw Grove (NE65 9NG) on the northern edge of Felton and is part of an attractive housing development. It is a four bedroomed detached dwelling dating from 1984 with gas-fired central heating. The dwelling has the benefit of a fully fitted kitchen, utility room, dining room, living room and study. There is an integral garage and ample parking. Following the recent departure of the incumbent, the vicarage became vacant and has been leased out on a short-term basis by the Diocese.

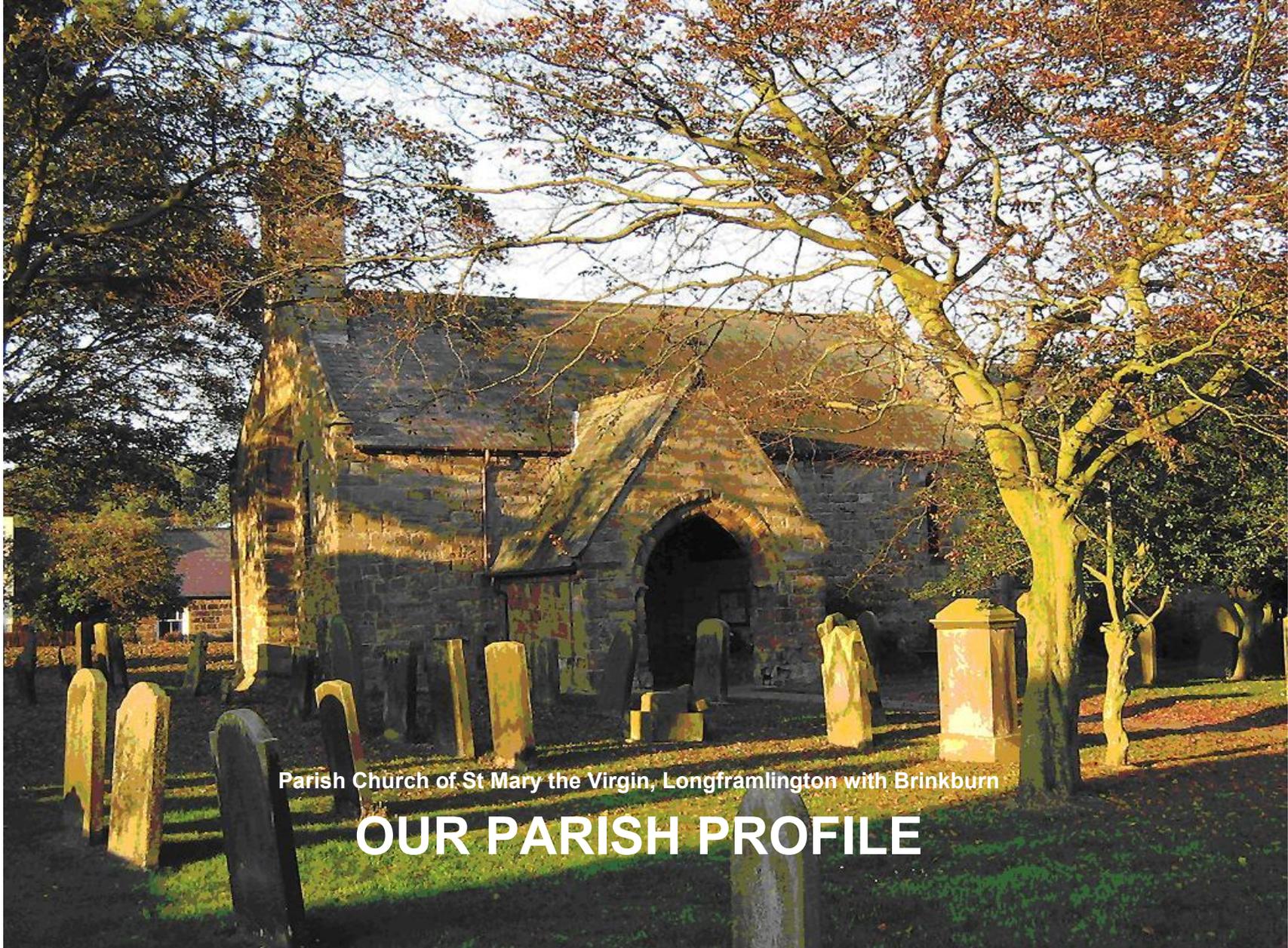
## **WHAT NEXT?**

We hope having read this you will think that St. Michael and All Angels could offer you an exciting position and opportunity to thrive. If so, we encourage you to contact us to find out more and to visit so that you can experience our warm welcome for yourself and meet our Ministry Team.

Please contact our Archdeacon, The Ven. Dr Catherine Sourbut Groves if you have questions or to request further details and an application pack for this appointment:

**The. Ven. Dr Catherine Sourbut Groves, Archdeacon of Lindisfarne**  
**email: [lindisfarne@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:lindisfarne@newcastle.anglican.org)**





Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Longframlington with Brinkburn

# OUR PARISH PROFILE

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## The Local Community

The village of Longframlington is situated 11 miles North West of Morpeth in the midst of the Northumberland countryside. An ancient settlement on a drover's route from Scotland, with hints of Roman and Iron Age occupation, it grew to being a substantial village in the early 1900s with many more shops than there are today, several public houses and a thriving village school. Employment was mainly agricultural, with quarrying and iron smelting the main industries until the commercial mining of coal in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Today, Longframlington is a friendly residential village that continues to grow in size. Several new housing estates were built in the 1970s and 80s and many more have been built in the last ten years. Construction continues and when all those currently in progress or with planning permission are completed the village will have grown from 430 properties in 2013 to over 750 by mid-2022. There are several small businesses in the village, while a well-established caravan park and some holiday cottages provide accommodation for visitors throughout the year, enhancing the accommodation offered by the Village Inn and the Granby Inn (an old coaching inn). A referendum held in January 2022 on a proposed Village Neighbourhood Plan for new development for the years ahead overwhelmingly approved the plan by 94%. The plan provides a well-researched and independently verified comprehensive description of the village and the views of its residents.

In addition to the Church of St Mary the Virgin, there are some notable buildings, including a fine United Reformed Church at the north end on the main road, Embleton Hall, and several fine domestic houses.

The village Post Office closed in 2016, and there is now only a mobile Post Office for two hours once a week. However, our family-run village shop, family butcher, a branch of the Running Fox coffee shop, welcoming public houses and community facilities are the envy of many other locations in Northumberland. The village school closed in 1953. Educational provision for children from the village has since been provided by Swarland Primary School (within our neighbouring parish of Felton – see also the Profile of St Michael's), Dr Thomlinson's Middle School in Rothbury, and King Edward VI High School in Morpeth. Since Swarland school changed from First School to Primary School four years ago, children from the catchment area for the Duchess's High School in Alnwick remain there to Year 6, and most children from Longframlington continue to move to the Middle School in Rothbury after Year 4 and then travel to King Edward VI High School in Morpeth (KEVI's). All the school buses depart from and return to the bus stop outside the main church gate.

The age profile of the resident population of around 1,500 matches that of the County of Northumberland as a whole. There is a spread of young people, younger and established families, older couples and older people living alone. Much of the new housing has been purchased by young families who can commute to Newcastle easily. This reflects the popularity of Longframlington with both retired and working people. However, there is concern about the lack of affordable housing for younger people and couples who wish to remain in the village in which they were raised. Some low-cost rental housing options were built about six years ago to address this need, but recent developments focus on larger (more expensive) properties.

In demographic terms the population is almost exclusively White British with 82% declaring themselves to be Christian.

- 68% of the population is Economically Active with a higher-than-average element of part-time and self-employed people.
- Of the 32% Economically Inactive, the bulk are retired but there are small numbers of people with disabilities and a significant but small number of people acting as family carers.
- Unemployment within those Economically Active is only 1.7%

These figures were confirmed in the 2011 census, but the new housing would not appear to have materially affected the percentages.

Limited public transport facilities (hourly daytime bus service to Morpeth and Rothbury. Two-hourly on Sundays and Bank Holidays) mean that the car per household figure is very high. However, even with the increased mobility this brings, there are a large number of social groups, societies, activities and community groups that meet within the village – badminton, indoor bowls, 5-a-side football, keep fit, the Longframlington Pipers (small pipes), a local History Group, quilters etc. A village magazine – *The Fram News* – gives details of all of these as well as containing many articles of historical, social and community interest. This is published every two months and circulated free of charge to all homes in the village.

With over 90% of the village describing their health as “good” or “fairly good”, Longframlington is not only a good place to live but a healthy one, too! Medical input is from a branch surgery in the village from the main complex in Rothbury, 5 miles away. The main surgery is a purpose-built facility beside the river in Rothbury. The upper floor initially held some inpatient beds used for rehabilitation/respice care. These beds were withdrawn in 2016 but a decision has recently been announced to reopen them by mid-2022 for respice care, rehabilitation, or end of life care on a flexible basis in conjunction with a private company. This decision has been warmly welcomed by the local communities who otherwise have to travel 25 miles to the nearest hospitals.

### **The Church Community**

The congregation at our 9.20am Sunday morning service is predominantly of an older generation, including many who are retired. In the past we held a Family orientated Simply Worship service on the first Sunday of the month to attract younger families as well as the regular congregation but after an initial interest the young family attendance fell away. One or two of those families attend the Christmas midnight service, but do not otherwise engage with the church. As the children have grown older, they have developed interests linked to their High Schools and the newer families have not taken up the baton. The Simply Worship service has now been re-introduced on an occasional basis, due to lack of clergy during the vacancy. A Christingle service was arranged before Christmas by some parents (at their instigation) as an outdoors event, led by Michael Hepper.

During the last 7 years our Priest in Charge started a monthly Messy Church, which attracted a good number of younger families, with parents and children of a wide range of ages attending. This was a successor to Tea Time Church which had been held for 5 years. Lay leaders within the congregation, as well as members from St Michael’s and the URC, supported these monthly services, where the numbers fluctuated, but were generally healthy. The PCC recognises that there is insufficient integration of the Messy

Church and Sunday morning congregations, and is very aware that help is needed to engage with young families who may be discouraged when they come into church and see the age profile of the regular worshippers. The URC has now appointed a Youth leader to work across all churches in Longframlington and neighbouring villages.

The vast majority of those attending services at St Mary's are resident within the parish. However, the wedding ministry at Brinkburn Priory, which is part of the parish, sees many couples attending services as part of the preparation for their marriage and to hear their Banns being read. Already 46 weddings are booked for Brinkburn in 2022. All those who attend services speak of the warm welcome they receive and many continue to attend on occasions after their wedding (we have also had two couples who have brought their first babies for Baptism). Congregations over the month of January 2022 have averaged 30 people, split evenly between wedding couples and village residents.



### **Church Buildings**

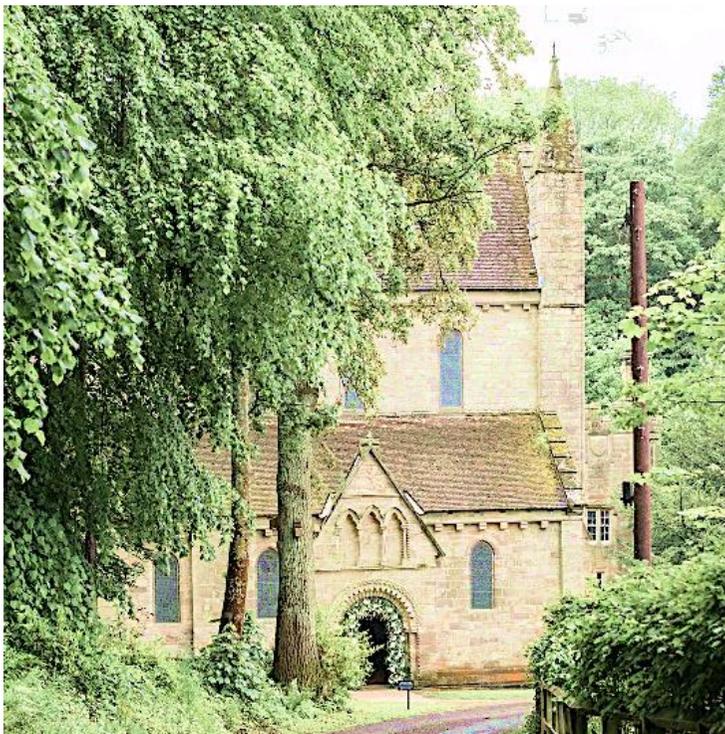
The church of St Mary the Virgin, at the centre of the village, was established in 1190 as a chapel of ease to Felton, and the present parish was set up in 1891. The church was restored in the late 19th century, when the vestry was also enlarged. A Grade 1 listed building, it retains many of its original features, including a fine Norman chancel arch, but most of the furnishings are Victorian or Edwardian. In the 1990s, an excellent custom-built Wyvern digital organ was installed, and there is an amplification and loop system for voice and other inputs as well as Wi-Fi availability.

During 2011 and 2012 as the focus of our “Opening Doors” project, a superb, well-equipped, new community room was built adjoining the north side of the church, with direct access from the church. This provides an informal meeting space for after-service coffees as well as a venue for a variety of church and community activities throughout the week. It is also used from time to time for Deanery and Diocesan meetings and training events.

The diocesan architect's quinquennial inspection of the church buildings was last undertaken in November 2018. Work recommended for attention has mostly been accomplished. In 2020 we acquired a large screen to facilitate hybrid services and the screening of music and hymns during pandemic restrictions. This is to be fixed to the wall in the near future.

The church stands within the original churchyard, and there is also a detached churchyard on the south side of the village. Both are now closed to new burials, and maintained by Northumberland County Council.

The church is opened on weekdays between 9am and 4.30pm so that anyone who wishes to can spend quiet time there, or light a candle in memory of a loved one.



**Brinkburn Priory**, now in the care of English Heritage, was founded in 1135 and lies within the southern boundary of the parish. Following restoration in the 1860s, it is recognised as one of the finest Gothic priory buildings in the country, with superb acoustics and a lovely situation. As a consecrated building, it is used for occasional services including an annual Ascension Day Eucharist, and is a very popular venue for weddings and blessings. Brinkburn is also much-loved by many in the wider church, from all traditions, and has been the venue for a prestigious annual music festival as well as amateur performances most weekends through the summer, and Lifepath in June for school children in the area (more information later in this document).

## **Patterns of Worship**

The current pattern consists of Eucharist on Sundays at 09.20 a.m. each week following the order in Common Worship, which is included in a parish service booklet.

On the first Sunday of the month, at 6.00 pm, there is a said service of Evensong according to the Book of Common Prayer. Before the pandemic restrictions, there was a service of Evensong held in the Swarland Club as an outreach mission. This had to stop when services were suspended. However, in October 2021 the service was resumed in St Mary's church. It is led by our Reader, Sam Palin, with a small but loyal congregation.

An informal Prayer Group on a Wednesday morning has now become a Morning Prayer Service using liturgies from Common Worship, the Iona Community or the Celtic tradition. This is held in church and is led by a rota of members with an opportunity for others to tune in via a Zoom link. Again, numbers are low but consistent with 9 or 10 in church and another 4 or 5 on the link.

There are no other regular mid-week communion or other services except at special seasons such as Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day. We have regularly celebrated Ascension Day Eucharist in an evening service at Brinkburn Priory, when we are joined by many visitors from across the Deanery and Diocese. There is no shortage of clergy or choristers volunteering to assist in this service in such an iconic building. Brinkburn can also be used for other services in the summer, and although this has been very occasional in recent years there is scope for the parish to work with English Heritage to develop the use of this popular venue for more services.

During Lent and Advent we support and participate in evenings of Reflection led jointly by clergy and members of both St Mary's and the URC.

At All Souls tide, a Reader-led service remembering the departed has been much appreciated by the bereaved. We have three people licensed to take communion to those who are housebound. In the last few years we have focussed attention on several "special" topics during the year:- Environment Sunday; Sea Sunday; Lammas; a Lambing Service (with live lambs); Pet Service (bring your own pet); Healing Service; Thy Kingdom Come; Celebrating the Countryside; Remembrance. In 2019 we held a

peripatetic service of “beating the Bounds” with prayer stations at several points of interest around the village. We also joined with St Michael’s for a pilgrimage across the sands to Lindisfarne.

### **Church Tradition**

‘Middle of the road’ Anglican tradition which is complementary to the approach at St Michael’s, Felton. Vestments are available but recently celebrants have worn alb/cassock and stole. We welcome visitors and members from a variety of Christian traditions within and outside the Church of England. Services have, in the past, been sung, whenever possible, to a simple setting devised by one of our former organists, with strong congregational participation. At the moment, we only have an organist on occasional Sundays who has played for hymns. In other weeks, hymns have been uploaded from the internet to give backing to our singing. We look forward to being able to develop our services further once pandemic restrictions and anxieties are eased.

The hymn book in use is the Anglican edition of Hymns Old and New, which contains a wide range of traditional and modern hymns, but we do have copies of Mission Praise and the congregation is also happy to sing other hymns and songs from a printed sheet, and to sing with organ or guitar accompaniment. We have an experienced organist twice a month, who is able to train a small choir to lead occasional services such as the Nine Lessons and Carols, and another member able to accompany services when required.

## **The new Priest in Charge**

Among the qualities and attributes we hope to find in him or her are:

- Outgoing and friendly, able to relate to the whole church and village community.
- Facilitator, keen to develop our abilities as individuals and as a congregation, and give us the confidence to apply them.
- A leader with energy and vision, yet the patience to work with a congregation of differing backgrounds and churchmanship.
- Despite not being resident in the village, keen to be seen around the village and not just at church events, e.g. previous incumbents have been invited to present prizes at the Village Show.
- Enthusiastic about working with all ages, including older members, and helping them to further realise their gifts
- A person grounded in their own Anglican tradition but open to teach and put forward new ways of Christian outreach where applicable, and enable the members of the congregation to have the knowledge and ability to put forward new ways of their own personal Christian faith and commitment.
- A teacher with a heart for the Gospel.

## Church Activities

In the past, we have been happy to welcome to our services, when their care schedule allowed, residents based in local supported accommodation for those with physical and learning disabilities.



We have consistently held a **Messy Church** once a month. This has drawn support from families within the village and from further afield when children (and parents) speak to others when meeting the school bus at the church gate. This was popular with children and parents and we would like to coordinate its re-instatement with St Michael's and the URC.

While a variety of youth activities were held in the Community Room in its early days, we were never able to develop our own leaders and were always dependent on external leadership. There may be an opportunity to establish some Christian youth activity in conjunction with the URC, who have recently appointed a specialist youth worker in our area.

The **Community Room** was used regularly by a number of adult organisations, mainly for retired people, including the Fram Club, a Wednesday morning coffee group, a whist club, and exercise classes. At the present time it is unknown how many, if any, of these groups will resume. Recent initiatives have been to form a Supper Club with film once a month during the winter; a Lunch Club for those living alone; and the venue was used as a hub to supply a Christmas meal to those living alone at Christmas 2020 during lockdown. Our location in the centre of the village, and the facilities available make the Community Room an ideal venue for village activities, though larger events have more facilities in the village Memorial Hall approximately 100 yards along the road towards the west. We have held Burns Night suppers and Quiz nights for several years, and some of our members organised a Cream Tea fundraiser in 2019 in the Memorial Hall which drew support from outside the village as well as very many families in the village.

Although the congregation was focused for several years on fundraising (£340,000) for the new Community Room, it continued to support a variety of missions and charities, including the Children's Society, Macmillan Cancer Fund Annual Coffee Morning, and Christian Aid, for all of which funds are raised jointly with Longframlington URC. A total of £2,000 was raised for charities in 2019. The congregation supported a Fair Trade stall for a number of years, but the PCC later decided to discontinue this in view of the success of the Fair Trade campaign and the much greater availability of Fair Trade products in local shops.

Our principal focus in faith sharing has been through Messy Church and Christian youth activities. While not directly sponsored by the church, a monthly Men's Breakfast is arranged by the local committee of Christian Vision for Men. They meet at the Angler's Arms at Weldon Bridge a mile or so south of the village, but still within the parish. The breakfast is supported by the men of the church and wider area.



We have a box in the church porch as a village collecting point for donations to the Alnwick Food Bank, and we also organise a collection of milk bottle tops which can raise funds for Cancer charities by being sold for recycling into coverings for fibre-optic cables. Both are supported by residents of the village as a whole. In the last two years we have used these facilities to attract extra donations for the Food Bank as part of our Harvest appeal and at Christmas with donations of money and items of food and toiletries.

There are no local parochial charities but the PCC has agreed to support North Northumberland Hospice Care for the current year, and we have also committed to supporting mission outreach in Botswana, our linked Diocese in Africa.

## **Ministry**

The parish has one licensed Reader, a Reader Emeritus, and two members licensed to perform home communion, although under the previous Priest in Charge they did so very infrequently. At present we do not have a formal Local Ministry Group, but several members, including our Reader, have undertaken training in bereavement care, and hope to become part of a pastoral network spanning a number of parishes. We believe this will become a significant part of our ministry within the parish. Although there are no formal arrangements for this, two or three members visit elderly and housebound members. The village has an excellent community support ethic comprising members of the churches and other residents to help in times of need.

St Mary's has no authorised Ministers resident within the parish, although the surrounding area has many retired clergy who are happy to conduct services during the vacancy and to cover absence of the Priest in Charge on leave or for other reasons.

Members of the congregation currently lead the non-sacramental Wednesday morning prayer group meeting, and have been supported by Rev Michael Hepper during his time as Honorary Associate Priest. Members of the congregation also read the lessons, lead intercessions and assist with administration at Communion. Our lay leadership team is small, but very committed, and many of us are well known in the village as being members of the church and approachable for support whenever needed.

Baptismal preparation and follow up has been the role of the Priest in Charge but, with a much-increased number of weddings and blessings in the two parishes, Felton and Longframlington parishes have sponsored Saturday morning marriage preparation

classes, which have been taken up enthusiastically and well received by participating couples. The classes are led by specialists from elsewhere in the diocese.

An A4 pew sheet is prepared weekly to include notices and the collects and readings for the day. This is emailed to members on the Electoral Roll who have requested it and printed copies are made available for those attending services. St Mary's has its own website which is accessed via <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16291/>, and also has its own Facebook page as a communication aid to the local community. St Mary's has a printer on site, but other equipment is held by a joint committee between the two parishes and based at Felton.

The PCC is indebted to a former Church Warden who continues to act, in a voluntary capacity, as Parish Administrator and key holder for the Community Room, seeing to all the necessary administrative details. She also undertakes regular Sacristan duties on Sundays and at other times as required and as verger for funeral services in the church. She is known as a contact person by local Funeral Directors.

## **Finance**

The congregation has a number of members giving by standing order, most regular giving being under Gift Aid. Although we have lost some regular givers in recent times, we are encouraged that several newcomers have signed up for regular donations through their bank. Our accounts always show a surplus at the end of the year.

It is PCC policy to pay the Parish Share in full every year, and recognising that diocesan expenses have to be paid all year we endeavour to pay regular amounts throughout the year.

The congregation has no outstanding financial liabilities. The PCC recognises the importance of a professional approach to youth provision, which was initially funded externally, and is wrestling with maintenance of a professional approach at an affordable cost.

All listed expenses are paid in full to the Priest in Charge, generally via the Felton/Longframlington joint account, to which St Mary's contributes monthly. We expect our Priest to take the full holiday entitlement and to record a weekly planned day off on the pew sheet.

## **Community involvement**

As stated above, there is no school in the village. The previous Priest in Charge played an active role in chaplaincy at Swarland First School, which children from both parishes attend, by taking part in Assembly. Children from the school have, in the past, visited St Mary's to learn about the different parts of the church building. (Please refer also to the information from St Michael's, Felton).

Members of the PCC and congregation play an active role in village life, including involvement in the Parish Council, village show, Fram News, sports clubs, etc.

Now that we have the Community Room with its full facilities, the church is able to host village events, with scope for further development of this role as part of our "Opening Doors" approach. Although we have started many new initiatives for young people in the Community Room, these have not proved to be sustainable, and we do need to address this for the future. New initiatives for the older generations include our twice-yearly Quiz nights with supper, our monthly Supper Club during the winter months, and a Lunch Club which commenced early in 2020 with support from Community Acton Northumberland (which, unfortunately, had to be suspended after only two months but is planned to recommence later this year).

There is an occasional meeting with representatives of the Parish Council, the URC and the village Memorial Hall Committee, to ensure that we coordinate and work together for the good of the village without competing for bookings in our respective meeting rooms. The Parish Council is in the process of setting up an Emergency Group to offer support in emergency events like Covid 19, the potential damage from storms etc and St Mary's PCC has agreed that our buildings should play an integral part in this initiative.

## **Relationships with neighbouring parishes**

The parish is part of Alnwick Deanery, but naturally, for reasons of history and our sharing of a priest, the closest relationship is with Felton, with occasional joint events and services, and some members of each congregation occasionally attending services in the other parish. There is a tension in terms of geography in that our transport links for public transport are via the A697 to Morpeth, to the south, rather than Alnwick.

With the excellent facilities now available in the Community Room, we occasionally host meetings of the Deanery synod and committees. We have also hosted evening and Saturday diocesan meetings and training events, including the Diocesan Advisory Committee and a PICA event.

We are aware of the planned reduction in the allocation of priests within the Deanery over the next few years, and recognise that continued future change in ministry patterns is almost inevitable. We also recognise that the role of a non-resident priest is different from the traditional role of a vicar resident within the parish. We are very committed to our continuing involvement with the Weddings Ministry which is growing year on year as Brinkburn Priory is such a desirable venue for couples. We have used many priests from the area to support this work, especially during the summer months.

## **Ecumenical Relationships**

Members of St Mary's have for many years worked closely with our friends within the URC, with occasional joint services in both buildings, praying together during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and at the Women's World Day of Prayer, joint fundraising for charities such as Christian Aid and Macmillan Coffee morning, and generally mutual support of each other's events. Good Friday usually sees a joint Walk of Witness from the URC along the main road to a brief open-air service at the centre of the village, followed by hot cross buns at St Mary's. As well as Messy Church, the two congregations, together with St Michael's, have arranged a holiday club for a week during the summer for several years, with the active participation of both ministers as well as members. We also produce a joint village Christmas card for residents with details of all Christmas services.

We are delighted that in recent years the URC Minister, who also covers Felton, Glanton and Upper Coquetdale, has been able to work very closely together with our Priest in Charge. They live very close to each other in Felton which has helped their links.

We played an integral part in the village celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee in 2012 starting off the day's celebrations with an ecumenical service in church, and we would anticipate that we will be similarly involved in some way with any arrangements being made to celebrate the coming 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in the village. In February 2021 we set out **100 candles** in recognition of the 100,000 people who had died from Covid and invited village residents to come in to light one or more and spend some quiet time in the church.

The monthly CVM Men's Breakfast, held at an inn at Weldon Bridge within the parish, is well supported by our members. The Breakfast provides an opportunity for men to meet with others from the wider area.

A well-supported ecumenical Remembrance Day service is held in the Memorial Hall, with leadership shared among the Priest in Charge, the URC Minister, and the local Roman Catholic priest. In 2021 the service was held outside the Memorial Hall in line with restrictions on numbers meeting together indoors.

Brinkburn Priory hosts a Lifepath event arranged each June by Scripture Union for schoolchildren in years 3 and 4. Members from both Felton and Longframlington have assisted at these events and St Mary's PCC has contributed financially towards the costs of the event. In the course of a week, up to 500 children attend for a day, and the success of Lifepath is attested by the return of parties from the same schools year after year.



## The Parish and the future

The PCC has a Mission Action Plan, with the aim of continuing the development and growth of the congregation during the interregnum and beyond. In light of changes following pandemic restrictions, this will need to be reviewed. During our previous MAP we recognised the need to be open, engaged and welcoming to our local community, and our principal project, entitled “Opening Doors,” was to raise the funds to replace an old inadequate church room with our new community room. This was dedicated by the Bishop of Newcastle in September 2012, and is now the venue for a variety of church and community activities for all ages.

In the MAP for the next few years, we plan to:

- Encourage the development and strengthening of the faith of all, bringing those on the fringes into the faith community, largely by continuing and developing existing ministries, but including development of the capabilities of lay members in the leadership of worship, such as Messy Church, and in pastoral ministry. We hope many of those who come with their children to Messy Church will, in faith, become active members of the church.
- Make full use of the Community Room for the whole local community as well as the local and wider church, making full use of available human, financial and other resources. The church and community room are in the centre of the village, while many of our members are actively involved in other streams of village life, so there are plenty of opportunities. We hope to continue to offer monthly supper evenings, a lunch club with speakers, offer refreshments when needed at events including our coffee morning and after the morning service. Amongst the new ventures that we would like to explore are a computer club for young people and a concert programme, perhaps twice yearly.
- Continue to develop our environment group, beginning in September with a programme of planting bee-friendly plants, providing bird boxes, benches for recreation etc.

- Develop our community outreach through our welcome packs, songs of praise, and special services that take us out into the village such as beating the bounds and the Good Friday Pilgrimage, plus a range of Festival services (see our history in Section 4 – Patterns of Worship).
- We are conscious that humanly there is a limit to what a small congregation can do ourselves, so prioritisation, and development of the skills of lay members, will be important.

### **Vicarage**

The vicarage is located at Benlaw Grove in Felton, within a modern housing development. The details are noted in the Profile for St Michael's, Felton.

Longframlington lies on the main A697 road which is an alternative route to Scotland when the A1 is blocked for any reason, and links to the A1 both northbound via Newton on the Moor, and southbound at Morpeth and then on to Newcastle. These main routes are kept open during winter weather with regular gritting, though cross-country roads can be tricky at times.

The parish office is mainly in the home of the Administrator and her address and telephone are used as contact points for people applying for weddings, baptisms and funerals etc. Parish records are kept in a safe in the vestry and old records are kept in a metal cupboard in the church for six years before destruction or being taken for long term storage to Woodhorn Museum (the Diocesan archive).

## Statistics

Village Population	1500 approx.
Electoral Roll	44 (APCM 2021)
Average Sunday Communicants	20 (Dec 2021)
Average Sunday attendance	23 (Dec 2021)
Average Baptisms per annum	3 (Dec 2021)
Average Confirmations per annum	0
Average weddings per annum	25* (Dec 2021)
Blessings per annum	1 (Dec 2021)

*\*Note: there has been increased demand for weddings and blessings at Brinkburn since 2012 as a consequence of its promotion as a wedding venue. The figures above were for the year 2021 i.e. partly affected by pandemic restrictions). There are currently 46 bookings for 2022.*

Average funerals per annum	4 (2021)
Average house communions for the sick or housebound	Not recorded