

'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'

- John 1.10 -

OUR STORY

One Church, One Family

We are on a journey towards being a healthy church: a growing and nurturing Christian presence based in the communities of Ubley, Compton Martin and Blagdon with Charterhouse.

Please share our journey and renew our church life

*Father God,
you love us so much;
fill our hearts with love for you
so that we have enough to share
with the people we meet every day.
May your name be blessed.
Amen.*

Our Kairos Prayer
*God of all time,
God beyond and behind time;
may we know what is too late and what is too soon.
May we always recognise the right time
in the light of your timeless love.
Amen.*

THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY IS THE PEOPLE



Our buildings are symbols of our Christian faith in our community

What we share

As a Benefice, we share the beautiful geography of the North Mendip Hills and benefit from a shared social infrastructure - the shops, local businesses, schools, clubs and societies that are sustained by our villages. Many have formed close friendship groups between our villages and are used to visiting each other either regularly or for special occasions. Specifically, our churches also share both larger open forums and more intimate groups for growing faith, such as Emmaus, the Lent forums, Contemplative Prayer and the Marriage Preparation Course.

There is a history of our three communities gathering to worship together which has been steadily increasing over the past three years, but more specifically since summer 2020. The pandemic necessitated worshipping collectively online and helped us to get to know one another, breaking down existing barriers. Many enjoyed sharing and strengthening the community through meeting with other Christians in neighbouring villages. Worship in all our church buildings is enriched by our choir and Director of Music and enjoyed by all. Our worship is led by a team of Priest, Readers and Laity who provide a varied pattern of online and in person services that are accessible for all.

Being a benefice means that we currently need to do many things in triplicate; we have to process three sets of parochial fees and statistics, pay three parish shares and maintain three electoral rolls, however our Parochial Church Councils already meet together each month for a joint Benefice Partnership meeting. They are used to cooperating and discerning collectively the way forward for our community. We all share a church office, administrator and bookkeeper and share the cost of financing administration. As part of the same Diocese and Archdeaconry, we are also guided and seek guidance from the same Mission and Pastoral Group and legal and administrative team in Wells.

The Pathways Project encourages us to work collaboratively and grow our relationship with God together, so that we have more people, time and energy to devote to mission and helping God's church to flourish.

What will change

- Three parishes will become one parish.
- The name of the one parish will be 'All Saints, North Mendip', however there will be no 'mother church'.
- Three PCCs will become one to lead and administer the whole parish: there will be one set of minutes and one APCM.
- There will be one electoral roll for the whole parish not one electoral roll for each village.
- One Parish Share.
- All our buildings have their own strengths which we will maximise by hosting different styles of worship and events in them.

What is yet to be decided

The structure of the new PCC will comprise Churchwardens, Clergy, Readers, Secretary and Treasurer, and up to 12 elected lay members. Over the coming months the three PCCs will debate:

- The model of finance - funds restricted for particular purposes cannot be used by the PCC for anything else and will remain restricted when finances are reorganised, however there will also be a common fund for mission. The PCCs will consider the whole structure of finances, how many bank accounts are needed, and the designation of unrestricted funds.
- The PCCs will discuss how best to encourage people to give to create a sustainable financial future for the one parish.
- Each member of the new PCC will have a specific area of responsibility, either administrative or missional. These areas will be decided by the PCC in consultation with the Healthy Church Project.
- We want to foster relationships with other Christian communities, and are currently beginning to cooperate more closely with The Harptrees and Hinton Blewett. The Diocesan move to Focal Ministry will impact upon the structure of the parish system and what we share with our neighbours.

Some Contextual Thought

Simon Lewis

It is no longer so easy to assume that Britain is a Christian country. It is difficult to predict how long churches will be expected to go on providing the public service of religion in a society which is increasingly pluralist in its beliefs. Prayers before council meetings in the town and county halls are deemed no longer relevant. When will the Christian coronation of our monarch come to be regarded in the same light? Many kinds of 'priest' are available today, ranging from psychiatrists and counsellors to online-witch doctors. The role of Christian clergy as the natural priests of society is much reduced or misunderstood. Nevertheless, the majority of the population still look to Christianity for guidance on life and death matters.

In this environment, with these challenges, the institution called The Church of England, must prioritise God's mission and people above status and reputation.

I know it's easy to set mission and maintenance against each other. But we must avoid spending all our energies on what might be described as 'propping up the existing structures'. The parochial system is historic and embedded in the unique character of the Church of England and the life of the nation. But it is a tool and not a weapon – because history has shown time and again that other creative forms of ministry are required as well. I'm thinking here of the preaching of the Franciscans in the Middle Ages, often in their own Churches, which were independent of the parochial system (and could be a source of friction); in more recent times, school and higher education chaplaincies; pioneering, café churches, and fresh expressions are all keeping the possibility of God alive in people's lives.

How do our Pathways address this?

We want to become a healthier church which listens to God and each other. We are using the The Seven Marks of a Healthy Church as a framework for transformation, allowing us to strategically plan how to grow and nurture an inclusive Christ-like community through love of God and love of our neighbour.

Timeline

- 1971 Pastoral Scheme passed uniting the parishes of Compton Martin and Ubley into one benefice.
- 1980 The Revd. Charles Hadley set up the Pastoral Scheme for uniting Blagdon, Compton Martin and Ubley into a single benefice.
- September 2017 The Parish Profile prioritises Benefice cohesion, outreach, discipleship and the need to use our buildings better in the service of our wider communities.
- September 2018 Model for Ministries' presented to the PCCs and congregations by Simon Lewis, introducing the Healthy Church Pathway for growing a sustainable spiritual community.
- Spring 2019 The Priest's report to the APCMs outlined the One Church One Family Project.
- July 2019 Our Benefice 'Vision for the Future' was presented to the PCCs at the Benefice Partnership Meeting and outlined the role of the Healthy Church Pathway in plans to restructure our Church.
- October 2020 Presentations by Simon Lewis and Nigel Crocker at the APCMs made explicit the intention to unify the three church communities as one legal parish. This was favourably received by each of the parishes.
- November 2020 A resolution was passed unanimously by all three PCCs:
"As representatives of our respective parishes, we the PCCs of St Andrew, Blagdon with St Hugh Charterhouse, St Michael, Compton Martin and St Bartholomew, Ubley agree to the launch of the Pathways Projects that will result in the formation of One United Parish incorporating the current Parishes within our Benefice."
- February 2021 The PCCs unanimously supported the submission of The One Church One Family document to the Chew Magna Deanery Mission Pastoral Group (DMPG). In March, this was supported and passed to the Bath Archdeaconary MPG.
- April 2021 Following discussion amongst all PCC members, a name for the new parish was voted upon and a resolution unanimously passed. On the advice of the DMPG, the PCCs agreed to amend the name to 'All Saints, North Mendip'.

Three Pathways towards One Parish

PATHWAY 1

“Healthy Church Project”

The following seven marks are identifying features of a Healthy Church. They will be the benchmarks for the life of our Church family; they will ensure we focus on God’s mission.

1. **Energised by faith.**
2. **Outward-looking focus:** the local community, local justice and faith in daily living.
3. **Seeks to find out what God wants:** What is our calling?
4. **Faces the cost of transformation and growth.**
5. **Operates as a community:** listening to and caring for each other.
6. **Makes room for all:** Our church is inclusive.
7. **Does a few things and does them well.**

We began our Healthy Church Project in July 2021, and look forward to our next meeting in the Autumn.

PATHWAY 2

“One Church One Family Project”

We are all the Body of Christ. Gathering as one parish is a collaborative ministry. Jesus’ own ministry was collaborative and thus was the community that he taught as his ‘body’ on earth - the Church.

This is about a holistic agenda for the future. Church leadership will connect individual leaders with other individuals, and teams working with others’ teams. There has to be a lot more sharing of the work. Instead of all parish ministry coming through a priest, there is space for everyone to fulfill their own calling.

This must not be interpreted as the first step towards closing church buildings. Quite the opposite is the intention. The purpose of being one parish is to try and secure the future of our four churches as living places of worship and service by ensuring that we all take ownership and responsibility not just of our own church, but for the other three as well.

We are a relatively small, but still significant faithful worshipping community who work together, whilst at the same time treasuring uniqueness and individuality. We believe the One Church One Family Pathway does this.

PATHWAY 3

“One Church Business Project”

We will establish a team to address sustainability and stability. We need a business plan for the One Parish which will decide how we finance the missional activities, staffing, resourcing and maintenance of our buildings. We expect to look outside our current church community for the expertise and experience necessary to achieve this.

Opinions and Ideas Expressed

From the Healthy Church Profile Day (24 July 2021)

‘We need to honour the past as well as look to the future. What we had was valued and we need to make use of our existing strengths in the future.’

‘We must attract younger people to engage with change and enact change.’

‘People believe in lots of different ways. We need to reach out to all.’

‘We should focus on the connection between the environment, climate change and God’s creation. Younger people understand this and it is an important way we can reach out to people and gather together.’

‘What is our commitment to the Church of England? Are we open to every denomination or do we hold a separate identity?’

‘Churches are places for people to go when they need them. They should be kept open and used - for everyone.’

‘What lacks in my church-life is small groups and it feels very isolating. We need more relationships and more sharing so that we can become more confident in sharing our faith.’

‘Our communities have changed a lot in the last five years with new houses and younger families. We should be expressing an interest in them.’

‘Life has changed and we must reach out and change and evolve.’