The United Benefice of Bowland
United Benefice of Bowland

GOD’S BEAUTY WITHOUT AND WITHIN

St. Peter & St. Paul Bolton by Bowland

St. Ambrose Grindleton

St. Mary the Virgin Gisburn

[June 2019]
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Dear Friend,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this Parish profile and this comes with the assurance of my prayers as you consider whether God is calling you to be the next Vicar of Bolton by Bowland, Grindleton and Gisburn.

The Ribble Valley is one of the great undiscovered gems of England: a place of stunning natural beauty with wonderful countryside and an absolute delight for anyone who enjoys fresh, local food. It is no surprise that the Ribble Valley always comes near the top of surveys that seek to measure the happiness of inhabitants. These villages, whose nearest market town is Clitheroe, are thriving places with a powerful sense of community and served by excellent local schools.

These three parishes are being combined for the first time to make a new benefice and I have been really impressed at the open and receptive way that the PCCs have accepted a new arrangement. The people of Gisburn are in particular need of care following the tragic and very sudden death of the House for Duty priest last Summer. Grindleton and Bolton by Bowland have had much more stable ministry in recent years but are keen for the energy and fresh thinking that a new priest will bring.

The benefice brings a variety of opportunities to the priest. There are two very good Church schools and there have also been strong links for many years with a nearby community secondary school (the response I received from the Year 9 children in an RE class I once visited was one of the most thrilling and engaged I can remember). Rural ministry is strongly relational and this is a Parish where a hard-working, loving pastor who has a high profile in the villages and who gets to know their people well will make a big impact.

My visit to the PCCs of Bolton by Bowland and Grindleton for me sums up the Parishes. The people were wonderfully welcoming, the conversation was engaging and realistic, the passion people have for the life of their church was sincere and all is this was accompanied by fine wine and delicious nibbles (not a treat for the Bishop – that happens at every meeting)!

Serving three villages and being equally present in each will not be an easy task, and a new priest will need to be hard-working and efficient. But if you come here, you will find people who are really keen to reach out with the Gospel and play a full part in serving their communities.

I hope you enjoy reading this profile. Make sure you also watch the film that the PCCs are making. I hope that God will make it clear to you whether you are being called to apply and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours

The Rt Revd Philip North
Bishop of Burnley
Diocesan Vision

The year 2026 marks the centenary of the formation of the Diocese of Blackburn. Vision 2026 is our strategy to turn around the long-term trend of gradually declining church attendance. Our vision is to develop healthy churches which transform their communities, a vision in which making disciples for Jesus Christ and pursuing social justice sit side by side. In 2015 we spent time in prayer with Vision 2026 as the focus. 2016 saw over 80% of parishes appoint lay Vision Champions whose role is to gently nudge /encourage parish leaders and congregations to plan and deliver activities that make disciples of Jesus Christ, be witnesses to Jesus Christ, grow leaders for Jesus Christ and prioritise work among children, young people and schools. We also hosted the Crossroads Mission, with visiting northern province bishops and their teams leading over 400 mission events over an autumn weekend. In 2017 we held a series of study days providing an opportunity for clergy to think about how they engage contextually with Vision 2026 and actively supported Thy Kingdom Come and promoted opening our churches as a place of welcome (and not just on a Sunday). For 2018, we are encouraging parishes to transform their communities through words and deeds, and are holding a diocesan conference focussing on apologetics in late November. 2019 will be a year focussed on encouraging all of us to be effective disciples. As a diocese, we are willing to face the cost of change; and in prayer we see the grace and power of God which can alone bring renewal and growth. We are committed to work together (clergy, laity, church schools, diocesan staff and the cathedral) to deliver Vision 2026. Our Diocesan Vision Prayer is: Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses and to grow leaders. Give us the eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit and courage to follow in the footsteps of Your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

You can find out more by visiting the Vision 2026 pages on our website: www.blackburn.anglican.org
We look after you

If you come to the Blackburn Diocese we will look after you...

We have a great property department, who will do their best to ensure your house works for you and your family and is well maintained.

We encourage all clergy to take their full annual leave entitlement, and also to use creatively the overtime we all put in to take an extra day off once each month, to enable you to have a midweek ‘weekend’ away.

We have a beautiful diocesan retreat house in the grounds of a ruined Cistercian abbey, where clergy are welcome to have personal reading days without charge (bring your own lunch).

Whalley Abbey Retreat & Conference Centre

We encourage all parishes in vacancy to consider how they will ‘pastor’ and support their new priest. The diocese has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy.

We have a unique pattern of peer-led Ministerial Development Review, designed by the clergy for the clergy.

We are setting up a pilot reflective practice group for clergy new in post, in partnership with St Luke’s Healthcare.

If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor we have networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.

We are always looking for ways for clergy to mix apart from work – including reading weeks, regular hospitality, and a clergy walking group. Further suggestions are welcome.

Bishop Philip leads a clergy walk
Introduction

New Benefice of Bowland

Our new benefice comprises the three parishes of St. Peter & St. Paul Bolton by Bowland, St. Ambrose Grindleton and St Mary’s Gisburn. They comprise a mainly rural area, much of which is in the Forest of Bowland, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Bolton by Bowland and Grindleton have been a United Benefice since 1983 and it has been decided, with the agreement of the three PCC’s, to include Gisburn to form the new United Benefice of Bowland.

The three villages are diverse in nature. Bolton by Bowland (population 499) is a more traditional farming community with some executive houses, St Ambrose serves the two adjacent villages of Grindleton and Sawley. While Grindleton once relied on weaving and spinning, as well as orchards of damsons, it is now primarily a residential village of 772, (plus Sawley 345) with a rich mix of ages, backgrounds and employment. Gisburn, (population 1,405 ) is situated on the busy A59, the road between Preston and Skipton, but also includes the villages of Rimington, Paythorne and Middop. It is largely an agricultural area but includes quite a number of professional people who commute daily to larger towns and cities. It has a busy auction mart which is an excellent focal point to meet, talk and understand the rural community.

Total population for the new Benefice will be approx. 3022.

All the parishes were formerly in the Bradford Diocese and moved to the Blackburn Diocese in 2014. While Bolton by Bowland and Grindleton have always had an Incumbent (apart from brief interregnums) Gisburn has been without a full time Incumbent for some years.

Bolton by Bowland and Grindleton both have their own Church of England Primary Schools (with one headmaster) and Gisburn has its own primary school but is not affiliated to the Church.

The villages and the neighbouring town of Clitheroe are great places to live with an active and engaged population. Our challenge as Christians, must be to grow roots for our mission in the energy of the lively communities we serve. We look forward to the leadership of a new Incumbent and fresh ideas that he or she will bring.

We hope that different patterns of worship and outreach in the three parishes will help to meet the varied spiritual needs of our neighbours. Each Church has its own distinctive quality and a lively sense of its own identity. We accept that we will have to adapt our patterns of worship in a three-church benefice, but we are looking forward to exploring together the ways and means of developing the new Benefice for the benefit of all.

The Services have historically been

- Grindleton Holy Communion 9.30
- Bolton by Bowland Holy Communion 11.15.
- Gisburn Holy Communion 10.30.
In July/August Grindleton and Bolton by Bowland often hold joint services of Holy Communion at 10.30 am alternating between the two churches. However, during the interregnum the times of the services have changed to adapt to the availability of the clergy.

The villages and hamlets that form the Benefice of Bowland lie to the eastern extremities of the Ribble Valley Local Authority and are predominately rural in nature but do include various industrial undertakings and home-working professionals. The River Ribble flows through all the parishes on its way from the Yorkshire Dales to the Irish sea at Preston. It is a well-known salmon and trout river and is also known for its ability to rise and fall very quickly. There are flood plains to cope with abnormal rainfall and much has work been done to reduce the risk of serious flooding.

Another major landmark visible from all the parishes is Pendle Hill, which dominates the landscape of the Ribble Valley. It is well known for its historical association with the Lancashire Witches and it is also where George Fox had his vision in 1640 and subsequently founded the Quaker movement. In Sawley there are the ancient ruins of the Cistern Sawley Abbey.

The opportunities for walking, cycling and all kind of outdoor activities are everywhere and also there are very active Village Halls in all the Parishes where many diverse activities take place on a daily basis.

The villages are all below Pendle Hill and are 3-5 miles from the market town of Clitheroe and served by excellent transport links – the A59, M6 and M65, buses to Clitheroe, Skipton and Preston, and an hourly train service from Clitheroe to Blackburn and Manchester. Clitheroe has 5 supermarkets, independent shops and a market on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

There is also a state-of-the-art Clitheroe Community Hospital, built in 2014, a large Health Centre, a leisure centre, swimming pool and tennis centre. The Grand, built in 2008 and now one of the North West’s best loved mid-sized live music, performance, film and arts venues, and Holmes Mill has been refurbished into a unique celebration of Lancashire food, drink and entertainment, with Bowland Brewery, a Food Hall, a boutique hotel, bistro and café, and plans for cinema and leisure complexes.

The area also boasts myriad outdoor activities, with golf courses, walking, fishing, horse-riding, cycling and running, and is within easy reach of the west coast (Lytham, Blackpool, Morecambe), North Yorkshire and the Dales, in particular the Three Peaks. There are many celebrated inns, pubs and restaurants.

Our Vision

Our vision is to work with the people to build healthy Churches and a strong Community; to be relevant to all in the 21st Century and to be sustainable for future generations.

We want to

- Re-awaken the spiritual passion in people and encourage them to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ through their words and actions.
- Adapt and change, in order to promote growth in our Churches and be more relevant to people in our community with particular emphasis on children and young people.
- Continually challenging ourselves, raise our own expectations and to be aspirational in our plans for growth and our future sustainability.
- Gain credibility and a reputation for serving the needs of the wider community by putting our words into actions and showing ‘we aren’t afraid of getting our hands dirty’
- Have an incumbent who can provide leadership, stability and continuity of presence for worship, prayer, outreach work and future planning.
Our new Incumbent

This is an opportunity to develop and structure a new benefice in a vibrant and beautiful rural area in the Ribble Valley of Lancashire. The present benefice of Bolton by Bowland and Grindleton is amalgamating with the neighbouring parish of Gisburn.

The main Sunday service for the parishes is a Eucharist service, during the year we all have differing services such as the lambing service at Bolton by Bowland, the "Born in a stable" service at Gisburn (Christmas) and the traditional harvest services. At Grindleton and Bolton by Bowland we celebrate the festivals of the church with bespoke services. Congregations are fairly well attended, but we hope that the arrival of a new Incumbent will help us refresh our efforts to meet the spiritual needs of our communities.

There is great scope for new thinking in the varied ecology of our three parishes. Strong community spirit is alive in the villages and we have an impressive tradition of volunteering and civic action. Villagers enthusiastically support our fund-raising events and big celebrations at Easter and Christmas. We need to find better ways to reach out, particularly to young people and families. There is a great opportunity to do this through our two Church of England primary schools and the primary school at Gisburn.

We look forward to helping the next Incumbent build a more dynamic relationship between our churches and the villages they serve. At the core, of course, is the church’s Gospel Mission. We believe that a vital bridge to our communities and for our churches is to have an energetic role in the local cultural and community life. Our beautiful churches belong to everyone and exist to enrich our lives seven days a week not just each Sunday for a loyal group of church goers.

It should be remembered that, as in urban areas, there are areas of the rural community that suffer from economic hardships and the struggle to bring up families in the modern era, these may not appear as obvious as in urban areas and are often more difficult to detect. In addition, there is the problem of rural isolation. These are significant on-going challenges for the church communities and ones which we wish a new Incumbent to lead and encourage us to meet, by engaging with our community and interacting with all age groups.
Some qualities we would appreciate in our Incumbent

- Energised by faith, makes room for all
- Warm-hearted, open-minded: encouraging, approachable
- Visible in the community, makes an impact
- Enthusiasm for ministry: committed to growth
- Confident collaborative leader to navigate the path to growth
- Committed to continue the spirituality of our services
- Committed to growing school links and those with our young people.

One of our main goals is to ensure that we work with the new Incumbent to relieve him/her as much as possible of the administrative side of his/her job.

Our promise to a new Incumbent is simple: a wholehearted welcome from three loyal and hard-working congregations and one mission shared, by aspiring to put our churches where they should be, at the centre of the spiritual and cultural lives of our villages.

**Summary of the United Benefice Finances.**

<table>
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<th>By by B</th>
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Map showing the United Benefice of Bowland
The Village and Parish

Bolton by Bowland is a very picturesque, traditional English village. It lies on the edge of the beautiful Forest of Bowland in the Ribble Valley. The population at the last census was 499. The village consists of traditional cottages dating back to the 1600s, as well as new housing, outlying hamlets and farmsteads. The village has two greens, one with the remains of a cross and ancient stocks.

The newly refurbished pub, The Coach and Horses, is a well frequented focal point; there is also a village shop and tearoom. In the vicinity of the village are two garden nurseries; one is the very successful Holden Clough Nursery in the nearby hamlet of Holden.

The village hall is well used for social activities by the church and numerous clubs and groups, including the Drama Club, Young Farmers, Ladies Club [FANS], Cricket Club, and Rounders’ Club. We are a very active village and the many activities attract the local and nearby community.

The village has good road links, being approximately seven miles from Clitheroe, nine miles from Settle and thirteen miles from Skipton. There are three good secondary schools; Ribblesdale High and Clitheroe Royal Grammar School in Clitheroe and nearby Bowland High School where our previous vicar forged good links with the RE department and pupils.

Gisburn Forest is three miles away and is a renowned mountain bike venue, as well as having miles of walking tracks, wildlife and bird watching hides. The Yorkshire Dales are easily accessible from the village as is the Lake District and the beautiful Bowland Fells are on the doorstep.
The Church of St Peter and St Paul

A beautiful and historic Grade 1 listed church, St Peter and St Paul has many interesting features including a marble tomb made for Sir Ralph Pudsey which depicts his three wives and twenty five children! The ancient font has a cover carved by Robert Thompson aka 'The Mouse Man'.

The church also has a ring of six bells. The bell ringers have regular practice nights and are part of the Ribble Valley Bell Ringers Association. We also have a full set of hand chimes. Both parishioners and locals join together to form a scratch choir at our very popular ‘Carols by Candlelight’, and Easter Sunday Service.

We have an electoral roll of 53 and a regular weekly congregation of 30. We have two church wardens, a PCC and treasurer, as well as a Sunday School. At the moment we have a weekly 11.15am Sunday service with Holy Communion.

Throughout the year we have tried a number of informal services both outdoors, such as Rogation Sunday and a Lambing Service and in the village hall at Harvest Thanksgiving with an auction of fresh produce, the proceeds of which went to charity. We have very well attended Remembrance and Carol Services with congregations well in excess of two hundred.
Our parishioners work together to produce a varied social calendar; past events include Burn’s Night, Mayday celebrations, an annual Barbecue and Treasure Hunt. A biennial Open Gardens’ Weekend with Grindleton is a major fund raiser.

The accounts are solvent and we pay our full share to the Diocese. We support several charities, including ‘JOY’ (Jubilee Outreach Yorkshire) in Bradford as well as supporting the Bishop’s Appeal each year.

The church is open between dawn and dusk.

**The Primary School**

We have a thriving school whose motto is Belong, Believe Blossom with a head teacher committed to Christian values. The school holds regular services in church and welcomes the Rector into school for assemblies.

There are two members of the PCC on the Governing Body and two others who volunteer to hear readers on a weekly basis. In particular, we have tried to forge links with the school, parents and children by forming ‘The Link Club’ in 2016. It meets regularly for five weeks each term and is well attended and run by a great team of parishioners. A presentation of the Link Club’s activities is shown at the end of term school service in church.
Our Strengths

- We are a friendly and welcoming church who support and involve new members;
- We try to reach out to young members through Sunday School, informal services, the Link Club and involvement of children in our services;
- Most services end with refreshments when people can chat and get to know one another;
- Talented and resourceful volunteers;
- A sense of fun and loyalty to maintain our church and support the community;
- Volunteers who assist in the smooth running of services ie readers, sides people, intersessions, chalice administers, flower arranging, refreshments, cleaners, year’s mind remembrance, church wardens and deputies;
- We are open to change and willing to embrace the new without abandoning the old faces and traditions.

Our Weaknesses

- While on the surface all this sounds idyllic there are all the usual problems that affect all rural communities;
- There is a lack of affordable housing for locals;
- Social and actual isolation can lead to loneliness and mental health issues;
- We have an ageing congregation and need to attract the under fifties;
- A Grade 1 listed building, although beautiful, is costly to maintain, run and heat;
- A loyal but small congregation;
- A need to explore spirituality and faith;
- A need to improve our communication with both the local community and other churches.
Our Hopes

To retain a truly beautiful church in stunning surroundings with a vibrant congregation that will attract the local community. To welcome a leader who can interact with village life and help us bring our three parishes together as a united and outreaching benefice.

Each PCC is willing to oversee the daily running of their church but needs guidance and strengthening of faith; someone who will lead and encourage us, engaging with the local community and interact with all age groups.

There is potential and longing to grow the church in both numbers and faith.
St. Ambrose
Grindleton

The Church and Rectory
The Parish

St. Ambrose serves the two adjacent villages of Grindleton and Sawley. On the fringe of the Forest of Bowland, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and perched on a hillside terrace above the River Ribble and sitting among rolling pastures, Grindleton has commanding views of the picturesque Ribble Valley. While it once relied on weaving and spinning, as well as orchards of damsons, it is now primarily a residential village of 772, with a rich mix of ages, backgrounds and employment. The two pubs are both currently closed but the Pavilion (village hall), opened in 2012, is an outstanding facility and a very active community hub, with an adjoining children’s play area, tennis court and recreational field.

Grindleton CE Primary School shares an Executive Headteacher with Bolton-by-Bowland CE Primary School and has a growing roll, currently 51. There is also a small secondary school, Bowland High, an Academy Trust, with a standard admission number of 575; in recent years the Incumbent has established some links with the school.

Sawley is a ribbon village just off the A59 and on the banks of the Ribble, with outlying farms and residential properties and a population of 345, which like Grindleton’s is of mainly white British background. There are the ruins of a Cistercian Abbey, a renowned wedding venue and restaurant in The Spread Eagle, and an active village hall.

Both villages, below Pendle Hill where George Fox is believed to have had his vision in 1640 and founded the Quakers, are 3-4 miles from the market town of Clitheroe.
The Church Community

The Context for Ministry at St Ambrose
Grindleton

Churchwardens

There are 2 Church Wardens in our Parish who meet regularly with the Incumbent. They seek to fully support the Incumbent and provide communication links throughout the Parish. Their responsibilities include building, finance, clergy housing and importantly see their role as both spiritual and pastoral.

PCC and Other Committees

The PCC consists of the Churchwardens, and Treasurer and 12 members elected over a three-year rolling period. Under the present organisation we have a Standing Committee of the churchwardens, vice chair, treasurer and secretary who meet with the Incumbent to prepare the agenda for each PCC meeting. We have 4 PCC meetings in a year and the APCM.

The Social Committee plan events for the whole year and is instrumental in fundraising. Events include Quiz night, Fashion Show, Garden Party, Coffee Morning, a stall at the Village Christmas Fair in the Pavilion, and this year for the first time we have two events organised with the Ribble Valley Music Festival Concerts to be held in the Church.

A biennial Garden Weekend is held which is organised in conjunction with St Peter & St Paul Bolton by Bowland.

The Parish Room, recently refurbished with Lottery funding and small grants, is used by a sewing group that meets weekly; Brownies (though not affiliated to the church) meet weekly during term time. The PCC meetings are also held in the Parish Room. The Grindleton Parish Council use the Parish Room for their meetings.

A new venture of a Soup Lunch takes place once a month at lunch time and is open to all residents of the parishes. As the Parish Room is connected to the school it is also used during the day by the school as an extra room for one to one/small group sessions when needed. There are good links with the school with representatives from the PCC on the school governors.

The Bible Study/Christian Mediation group meet once a month in church taking advantage of the newly created space around the war memorial. The church is open Sunday to Friday all year round from dawn to dusk. There are facilities at the back of church for visitors to make a cup of tea or coffee. Special Services are held; the Remembrance Service is important to us and for the children and families, also Christingle & the building of the crib on Christmas Eve. Healing services are held once or twice a year with input from parishioners.
Each year we support a number of specific charities chosen by the PCC as well as charities that are promoted by the Bishop of Blackburn. A group of lay people lead the intercessions on alternate Sundays and there are a number of people who help administer the wine at the Eucharist service.

Refreshments are served at the back of church after each Sunday service and this enables the congregation to mix and chat after the service. Members of the congregation volunteer for varying roles: serving refreshments after church services, cleaning the church and brasses, reading at Sunday services, sides persons, flower arranging, mowing the graveyard.

The joint church Parish News, St Ambrose with St Peter & St Paul has a delivery of 350 copies across the two parishes of Grindleton and Bolton by Bowland. There is a small charge and many households who do not attend church on a regular basis do take the Parish News. It not only contains information relating to the two churches but also promotes activities and events in both villages. The Parish News is well produced and publicises services and events across the benefice. It also promotes activities and events held by other organisations in both villages. A member of the congregation is the editor of the Parish News.

**The Church Buildings**

We believe the Church is in good condition and we have maintained the fabric consistently over the last 20 years. We are in the middle of our Quinquennial Inspection with a report expected soon.

It has a modern gas heating system and we have recently had the sound system updated. Last year we had a faculty to enhance the war memorial and remove some pews to allow a more convivial area for socialising after the service and allows us to more easily have meetings prayer groups in the Church.
The Graveyard

We have an extensive graveyard with additional consecrated land which adjoins the Rectory and the existing graveyard. It is well maintained by volunteers from the congregation. Last year it became a War Graves Commission graveyard and within the graveyard there is hut which houses all the cutting equipment and is used for storage. It needs certain repairs to keep it windproof and watertight; these should be finished in the next month.

Parish Room

This is a building within the existing Primary School which belongs to the Church. The school uses the room from time to time during term time and we also use some of the school buildings for certain events for which the Parish Room is not large enough.

We received a Lottery grant to refurbish the room and the grant has been spent and the room completed. We also have a toilet which adjoins, but is separate from the Parish room, with its own external entrance and is open for all the services etc.

Rectory

The Rectory is a substantial stone-built building with beautiful views over the rural countryside.

It has four bedrooms, one bathroom, a large study downstairs and lounge, dining room, kitchen and utility buildings. It has a good-sized easily maintainable garden.

Staunces Field

The Church owns a substantial field adjoining the Rectory and the Graveyard. It is let under an agricultural tenancy to a local farmer.

The Church Finances

Church finances are in a reasonably healthy state. We have always paid our Parish Share in full and, taking one year with another, generally manage to break even or better. 2018 was an exceptional year when we recorded a surplus of £7,000 due to legacy income of £5,000 and an exceptionally good Gift Day.

The Church has unrestricted reserves of £62,000 and an endowment fund of £39,000, which produces annual investment income of £2,700.

We pay the incumbent’s motor, travel and telephone costs. We also pay the Incumbent’s Council Tax and Water Rates. All these expenses are presently shared 50/50 with Bolton by Bowland.
CHURCH FINANCES

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Our School

The church continues to have a close relationship with Grindleton CE Primary School, particularly through the Incumbent (a school governor), the Chair of Governors, the RE Nominated Governor, and the 4 other Foundation Governors. Both the Incumbent and Chair have led worship and it is intended to develop this further, with the Incumbent taking more regular worship. The RE governor has been into school monitoring the RE curriculum, and two of our congregation also go into school on a weekly basis to hear children read, and we look to build on this relationship, with members of the congregation supporting the curriculum and other extra-curricular opportunities.

The school uses the church and its grounds for curriculum work and comes into church to lead worship on Wednesday mornings during Lent, when we welcome a number of parents as well as some of our own congregation and offer refreshments. The school also holds mid-week services in church at the end of the school year, when the Year 6 leavers received Bibles, before Christmas, and for Mother's Day, and take part in the Posada. It is however disappointing that no child or parent has joined us for any Sunday services, and this must remain a key aim.

Our Vision

St. Ambrose continues to flourish, but we see our challenge as one to grow our mission within our communities and further develop outreach and patterns of worship that meet the varied spiritual needs of our villages. The rural church faces big challenges, not least the ageing population, expensive housing, rural isolation, and declining social care. The villages are in danger of becoming less effective as a functioning unit as pubs close, rural transport continues to be cut leaving people often isolated and lonely. The church has an important role to play in combating these problems and there is a real potential for growth in the ministry. We have an enthusiastic and multi-talented congregation and a team of churchwardens, PCC, members and willing volunteers eager to help the new incumbent to build on this strong foundation.
There is a strong community spirit and though many villagers join us for social events and special services, far fewer attend Sunday Services. We would like the new incumbent to lead and encourage us in engaging with our community and interacting with all age groups.

What We Offer

We offer:

- A welcoming and proactive congregation;
- Fun! - our glass is always half full;
- A flexible view on how the new Benefice can work for all;
- We appreciate that there can be no ‘red lines’ and we must look forward constructively and optimistically;
- To relieve the new incumbent of as much of the administration as possible;
- We are confident of fund-raising for things which will enhance the mission of the Church and this has been shown to be consistently the case over the years.
The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin Gisburn

Working with the people to build a healthy Church and a strong Community.
Welcome to St Mary the Virgin

Welcome to our Church and our Community at St Mary the Virgin, Gisburn.

You will find us very welcoming and friendly, open to everyone and with links to many other groups in the Parish.

We are looking for the right person to build on the successes of the past few years and guide us in the coming years to serve God and our Community.
Our Parish

Our Church Parish comprises the Civil Parishes of Gisburn & Horton-in-Craven, Rimmington & Middop, and Paythorne & Newsholme. There are 504 households with a population of 1254 — 954 of whom identified as being Christians. (Census 2011)

The Parish is largely rural and covers an area of 4756 hectares. As such, farming and agriculture-related work is one of the main economic activities. Gisburn has a thriving Auction Mart which attracts hundreds of people to the village at its Thursday market.

The area has a large number of professionals who work outside the parish and commute daily to the larger conurbations but there are also a number of small local businesses that offer limited employment opportunities.

There is a wide range of age groups in the Parish with young families, retired people and youth all being well represented.

More information on the demographics of the area can be found by following this link (*Hold Ctrl and right click mouse*)

The Church is situated in a prominent position in Gisburn on the A59 and so is highly visi-
ble to residents, visitors and passers-by.

There is a bus service through Gisburn on the main Preston to Skipton route, although res-
idents in other villages are dependent on the private car for transport.

Gisburn’s newly refurbished pub is a great attraction for locals and visitors alike and the
village also offers an award winning Italian restaurant; a café and delicatessen; a part-time
post office; a village shop; a unisex hairdressers; and a petrol station that also sells news-
papers, magazines and a range of food and other goods. There is a hotel, conference and
wedding venue on the edge of Gisburn village and links established with the management
have led to more couples wanting to get married in our beautiful Church. There is also a
pub in the village of Paythorne.
Gisburn has a County Primary School with around 120 pupils. Its last Ofsted report in October 2019 classified the school’s performance as “Outstanding”.

Although not a C of E school, the Priest-in-Charge maintained links with the school and pupils have engaged with the Church in various activities and services, in particular the Remembrance Day service and Christmas Nativity.

The Ribble Valley is also highly regarded for its secondary schools and many people look to move into the area in order to get their children into these schools.

Both Gisburn and Rimington have village and community halls. Gisburn Festival Hall hosts many user group activities such as Rainbows; Brownies; Guides, Beavers; Cubs; Women’s Institute; Mothers’ Union; Line Dancing; exercise classes; Monday Club (seniors meeting group); Toddlers’ Playgroup; Young Farmers; and the Bowland Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers. Coming soon are badminton, volleyball and table tennis. The committee is also active in promoting social and fundraising events.

Rimington Memorial Hall hosts bowling, table tennis, whist and dominoes, Women’s Institute; a luncheon club and other social events.

The Church has good links with both halls and is represented on the management committees.
Our Church History

Although we consider our Church to be progressive and forward-thinking we are rightly proud of its history and traditions.

It is believed that the church was dedicated in 1135 and that Norman de Rimington gave a ‘carucate of land to the Blessed Church of Saint Mary the Virgin Gisleburne’. Other early documentary evidence for a church at Gisburn is a charter reference that mentions a priest at Gisburn between 1140 - 1146, called ‘Renulf’.

In 1147 there is a reference to a priest from Gisburn being present at the laying of the foundation stone for nearby Sawley Abbey. The architectural history of St Mary’s is difficult to untangle. What is certain is that there is a long history to the site and it is also clear that at several stages the church has been extensively rebuilt reusing materials from earlier phases or incorporating materials from Sawley Abbey after its dissolution. The evidence suggests that the most intact early elements are the tower base, porch and south west doorway.

The ‘She’ Bible

The great historical event recently was the discovery of the rare 400 year old ‘She’ Bible in the Church. Printed in 1611, it is one of the earliest known copies of the famous King James Version.

The find sparked-off massive media attention and subsequently more than 1200 people visited our Church to see the Bible.
Where are we now?

We recently reflected on ourselves as a Church and our rôle in the wider community. The results are summarised in the following pages showing where we think we are now and what we need to do to improve in the next few years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Progressive-open to new ideas</td>
<td>• Not enough outreach work in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Friendly, welcoming, caring and inclusive</td>
<td>• Not sufficiently visible in the whole of the Parish area</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Wide range of talents &amp; expertise</td>
<td>• We don’t cater for the youth (13-18 years) of the Parish</td>
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<td>• Good pastoral care—visits to those in need</td>
<td>• Don’t have sufficient courses for faith development</td>
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<td>• Wide age range of congregation</td>
<td>• Don’t link in with other Churches</td>
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<td>• Lay people encouraged to develop faith, be readers and lead prayers</td>
<td>• Could still improve our communication with wider community</td>
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<td>• Well organised festive services</td>
<td>• Don’t market ourselves as a Church and the good things we are doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Family friendly</td>
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<td>• Resourceful volunteers</td>
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<td>• Good Bible study groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Socialising after services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Links with school and community</td>
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<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Housing development will bring new families / talents to the Parish</td>
<td>• Building maintenance costs</td>
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<td>• Large number of tourists</td>
<td>• Failing to build on recent successes</td>
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<td>• 75% of Parish population identify themselves as Christian (Census 2011)</td>
<td>• Another lengthy interregnum</td>
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<td>• Relatively wealthy area</td>
<td>• Limits to volunteer time available</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Availability of grant funding</td>
<td>• Failure to attract new people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marketing—Church &amp; ‘She Bible’</td>
<td>• Failure to find funding for projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technology</td>
<td>• Any resistance to change</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School and Community organisations</td>
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