

**THE BEAMINSTER AREA TEAM MINISTRY**  
**ANNUAL CLERGY REPORT TO THE PARISHES 2026**

This is my sixteenth Annual Report to the Parishes of the Beaminster Area and I would wish to record my deep appreciation to all those who work tirelessly in all of our churches. Holding any office in the church is an onerous task and I thank all Church Wardens, Treasurers, PCC members, Deanery Synod and Team Council members for their tireless work throughout the past twelve months. I would also like to thank all those who have given their time as Lay Pastoral Assistants, Bereavement Visitors, Messy Church and Lay Worship Leaders. Further thanks go to the many often unseen people who do so much to keep our churches worshipping and functioning; musicians and singers, bell ringers, flower arrangers, sidespeople, cleaners, church yard keepers, office volunteers, caterers, fundraisers, - the list is endless so please accept my apologies if I have missed you off the list.

Two years ago in my report I said that I would be inviting parishes to join together for joint PCC business meetings. Finances will still be held at a local level as will the upkeep of their buildings and social activities. This began during this past year with members of Drimpton and Seaborough being invited to join with Broadwindsor, Burstock and Blackdown and I feel that this has been very successful and helpful to both sets of churches. I would hope to encourage this further over the coming months. The Church Representation Rules 2020 allows for PCCs to form Joint Councils within teams and contains the rules and legal agreements that can be made between PCCs and I genuinely believe that this will help to give longer term security to all of our parishes, not just those that are struggling to keep going.

Over the past few months there has seemingly been much interest and chatter about my demise towards retirement and I am sorry that I am unable to confirm the date and time of this at this time as my first discussion will be respectably with my employer, in this case The Bishop of Sherborne. This meeting has been postponed twice due to her recent secondment to London

Diocese in an acting capacity as Bishop of Stepney. A new appointment will be made in due course and when appropriate I will inform you all of my plans. However perhaps now is the time to outline the process that will take place when this occurs. Firstly the appointment of a new Rector is in the gift of the two Patrons. These are the Bishop of Salisbury and the Diocesan Patronage Board and New College Oxford who are sole Patrons of Stoke Abbott. It is important to note that the Team Rector of The Beaminster Team is appointed by all the parishes in the Team and not by Beaminster. All parishes have an equal part in the final decision. The Team Council will be asked to appoint two representatives from each parish and they will form the body who will meet with the Bishop or Archdeacon during the process. I suggest that we discuss this at the autumn meeting of the Team Council. This group will be asked to start preparatory work on the Team Profile which will be sent out to candidates. I have the last profile which I will give to the elected chair of the group for reference.

To allow for a smooth transition I would greatly expect the Bishop to speak with Jo to ask if she would be willing to act as Interim Rector during the vacancy. This would give her the full role responsibilities that I currently hold as Rector to all the parishes. Jo already has many of these responsibilities as Incumbent in her own right and I would hope that you would give her the same level of support that you have afforded myself these past sixteen years. However, this is all in the future and we have a great deal of work to continue to do, none more so than Making Jesus Known in all the activities that we are planning over the coming months.

Finally I would like to say a huge thank you to Jo, Barbara and Charlie and all of our Partner Priests for their help and support over the year and to Harry for all of his support with our media and communication platforms. To Amanda for continuing to develop the service that is offered to the parishes through the Team Office and last but not least to Emma for the flying start that she has made in role as Team Family and Community Outreach Worker.

**Revd Canon David Baldwin**

Reviewing the year means looking at my photos and my diary to remember the many different activities that we have engaged in and I echo all the thanks that David has written for the many people across the team who have worked so hard.

Primarily our focus has been on worshipping God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we continue to do that with organ, guitar, acapella, choirs, up a hill, in the church, outside in the churchyard, in Drimpton Village Hall, in the Strode room, online, in our homes and in our schools. We continue to lead baptisms, weddings and funerals. We have celebrated births and mourned deaths. New things have sprung up, breakfast church was resurrected, we hosted the deanery confirmation with six candidates from our team, we appointed Emma. There is much to celebrate.

Our involvement in the Mission Hub project with the Diocese of Salisbury was discussed at Team Council in 2025 and was publicised through the diocese, not least because we are the only rural team to be invited and currently I am the only woman incumbent involved in the project. There has been little forward momentum for us in terms of money. However, we have identified our priorities for the team as prayer, vocations to leadership and discipleship, work with children, families and community, working better together as a team and managing our buildings. Regardless of any external investment, we hold these aims as our focus for the next five years.

We are holding steady in terms of numbers attending church on a Sunday across the team. Emma's work reaching out into our communities is already having an impact with new connections, an increased attendance at Messy Church and increased pastoral support for our schools. Making Jesus known is at the heart of all we do across the team and that continues to be our priority. Sharing the love of Christ in word and action, serving our communities, caring for the environment and working to transform the unjust structures of society links our work across the team to the five marks of mission and to the Diocesan Vision.

We are moving into a time of change and I wholeheartedly support the aim to work more collaboratively across the team. I believe there is much we can do to simplify our governance whilst also ensuring our compliance. This in turn should relieve the burden on our volunteers and release time to engage in new things. We can work to communicate better, to be better connected to the needs of our communities and work together to strengthen our financial resilience.

There are two parables in Matthew 13:31-33 that offer me a framework for growth of the Kingdom of God.. They are the parable of the mustard seed and the yeast. As we look back across 2025 and look forwards towards the future I ask myself two questions. What small things are we planting that God will transform into much bigger things? And how is our faith transforming our lives and the lives of the community?

**Revd Canon Jo Neary**