

St James' Church Riding Mill Parish Profile January 2020



An invitation to journey with us . . .

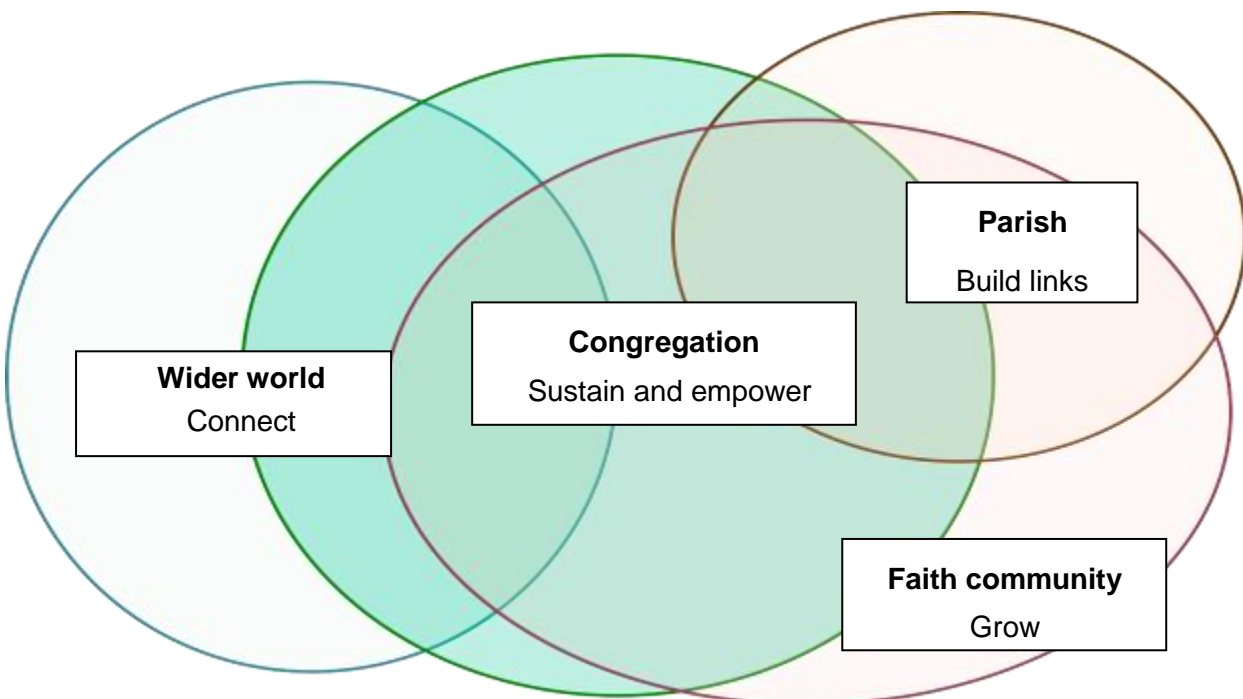
St James' Church Riding Mill Parish Profile January 2020

The Parish of St James' Riding Mill, in the Diocese of Newcastle, lies in a beautiful rural setting of the Tyne Valley, some 20 miles west of Newcastle. The church building is in the heart of the village between a wooded hillside and the March Burn and close to the Church of England First School. Working together the church and village community have enhanced, in a very positive way, the life and strength of the parish as a significant part of Riding Mill village.

The church family is strong and vibrant in its journey of faith. In the current and future strands of this journey we are seeking to:

- ❖ **Sustain** and empower the congregation in their journey of love with God.
- ❖ **Build** on and develop the relationship between the church and the wider parish community.
- ❖ **Grow** the faith community in Riding Mill
- ❖ **Connect** the parish more effectively with the wider world, including the Corbridge Deanery, other parts of the Diocese, and beyond

The following parts of this document set out to develop and expand these strands in the life of the community that is St James Church, Riding Mill, followed by a description of other resources available to support this work and a summary of the invitation. We hope that this will guide a future priest in considering this role.



1 SUSTAIN and empower the congregation in their journey of love with God

The church family meets for worship in three Eucharistic services, two on Sunday and one on Wednesday. These are well attended and broadly representative of the age profile of the parish. Approximately 40% of the congregation comes from outside the parish.

Services of worship:



Sunday services currently comprise:	
08:00 am	said Holy Communion with homily (Book of Common Prayer)
10:00 am	Choral Parish Eucharist with sermon (Common Worship) followed by coffee and fellowship
Weekday Wednesday services comprise:	
09.30 am	said Holy Communion with homily (Common Worship) followed by coffee and fellowship
(Statistics in table below)	

Within the congregation there is a range of backgrounds from different traditions worshipping together. This is reflected in their different aspirations, some seeking intellectual stimulation, others primarily spiritual refreshment, but sharing a common desire for guidance into deeper understanding of and relationship with God. They seek worship that they find stimulating and which enables them to meet with God, and to learn more from scripture. During this and previous vacancies, visiting clergy have commented on the high level of lay involvement in the worship – specifically, in the roles of reading, leading prayers and serving and assisting with the Eucharist. About 20 members of the church family share the role of reading the lessons (including the Gospel) and about 7 people prepare and lead the intercessions.

Music is important and is facilitated by an established robed four-part choir of about 12 members, who sing an anthem whilst communion is served. The current Hymn Book is ‘Hymns Old and New’ and the congregation has varied views on the range and style of hymns preferred.

Sunday School is currently being rested but an experienced team is prepared to re-establish Sunday school during the 10am service should there be sufficient interest. In the meantime, colourful bags of age-appropriate books and toys are available in church to welcome young children.



Work with children in the Parish is maintained through regular contact with Broomhaugh First School and Riding Mill Beavers, Cubs and Scouts group (more details in later sections).

Coffee after church on Sunday and Wednesday provides a valued opportunity for fellowship with visitors and members of the congregation.



The development of collaborative ministry and the sharing of good practice and vision have enabled the lay ministry to grow stronger.

Our church benefited from the 18 month placement of Malcolm Railton in the Parish, he was mentored by the former priest, Rev. Lesley Chapman and ordained as deacon in June 2019. A former member of the congregation, Elaine Ryder, was ordained as priest in June 2019.

Currently, another congregation member, Gwyn McKenzie has entered her final year of Readership training (after being on placement at St Martin's and St. Anthony's, Byker, Newcastle) and is awaiting licensing towards the end of 2020.

Ministry team:

The current informal ministry team comprises:	
Ordained Local Minister	Revd. George Proud (retired, with permission to officiate within the Diocese)
Reader	Dorothy Dryden (active, with permission to officiate, also Agricultural Chaplain to the Farming Community Network, Northumberland)

In addition there are:

Servers: 4

Eucharist Assistants: 9

Acolytes: One

Sacristan: One

Organist and Choirmaster (one retained and organists to cover holidays)

Sidespeople: 19 (male and female) on a rota of once per month

Anna Chaplain: Lynda Padgett

Pastoral Visiting Group: Led by Lynda Padgett, a team of 3 people each of whom visit people individually and who also administer the reserve sacrament to the sick and housebound.

Volunteer teams within the church carry out various responsibilities:-

The *Flower Group* regularly cares for the weekly flower arrangements and donations as well as provide flowers for weddings and funerals by special arrangement.



The *Grass Team* cares for the churchyards.

The *Cleaning Team* looks after the interior of the church

The *Coffee-making Teams* organize refreshments after Eucharist services

Members also care for church linen, the sound and recording system, the provision of weekly pew sheets and the ongoing housekeeping and maintenance duties. In addition, there are many in the church community who offer their skills and talents for the benefit of the church as required.

The *Parish Safeguarding Officer* plays a crucial role in maintaining the Diocesan Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policies.

The church welcomes male or female priests, and has enjoyed the ministry of both in recent years.

PARISH STATISTICS		NOTES
Broomhaugh and Riding Parish residents	966	At 2011 census
Electoral Roll (of whom, those living outside of the parish)	85 33	31 December 2019
Sunday morning attendance	50 adults, 2 young people	2019 average across both services
Communicants, Mid-week Eucharist	14 adults	2019 average
Baptisms	2	2019
Confirmations	0	2019
Weddings (& 1 marriage blessing)	3 couples	2019
Funeral services in church	9	2019
Interment of ashes	3	2019
Funerals at the crematorium	1	2019
House communions for sick or housebound	20 home visits	2019
Communicants, Monthly communion, Wentworth Grange Nursing and Care home	15	2019 average

Within this context, the PCC has an ongoing vision for building the relationships that underpin fellowship, enabling all members to grow in faith and love, and to exceed their expectations in the application of their individual gifts and talents. This includes strengthening and developing the understanding of shared ministry, through participation in the main Sunday service or involvement in the pastoral work of the church within the village. Pastoral visiting may include the administration of Home Communion and is currently undertaken by the authorized members of the Pastoral Visiting Team and the Anna Chaplain.

Other worship opportunities

Mothers Union no longer meets formally but members continue to support the work of the Mother's Union (MU) as diocesan members.

There is occasional contact with neighbouring MU branches when our diocesan members are invited to attend special services.



Other occasional worship services and events are offered for children and young people. The Christingle service, (and preceding workshop), is very popular.

The establishment, in 2017, of the new *Riding Mill Beavers, Cubs and Scouts*, through the efforts of two experienced Scout Leaders who are active members of the congregation, has presented new opportunities for active participation by children in special services. It is hoped to build on this relationship.

St James Church enjoys an ongoing relationship with Broomhaugh Church of England First School. The appointment of a new Executive Head and an Executive Deputy Head at the school, in May 2019, is giving opportunities to develop links between church and school. An *Open the Book* initiative has been operating in the school for more than a year; the team has been expanded to 7 members of the church congregation who have led sessions in the school. These sessions have been encouraged by the staff and much enjoyed by the children.



The Christmas Eve Crib Service attracts a large number of children and their families from throughout the Parish and beyond.

In addition to Sunday worship, a number of church members meet in small groups:

There is an established *house group* that meets fortnightly during term time and draws its members from within the church and from other local Christian traditions. All are welcome and the programme is bible-based and self-determining.

A number of people meet in one *Cursillo group* for mutual spiritual support on a regular basis.

A small *prayer group* (drawn principally from the local engineering businesses) utilizes church facilities to meet regularly to bring God more fully into their work and business lives.

An ecumenical Meditation and Mindfulness Group, led by members of St James has been meeting for nearly two years in the Church Cottage. Meeting for 30 minutes one evening a week, the group attracts between 5 to 13 participants.



Fellowship is extended to all in the village through a group which meets weekly in the Church Cottage, initially as Tea and Chat, then as the Poppy Group which made thousands of poppies for the events marking the Centenary of the ending of World War One. The group is now known as the Wednesday Afternoon Craft Group who knit garments for various charities.

Once a year, St James arranges a service in the Saxon former Parish Church of St Andrews, Bywell (about 3 miles down the river), which is

now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. This has usually been held in summer, and taken the form of sung evensong followed by refreshments.

There is a Book Group which meets monthly and draws its participants from the St James' Church congregation and members of our fellow churches of Bywell St Peter's and St John's, Stocksfield.

St James is an active member of *Riding Mill Churches*



Together, with St Elizabeth Roman Catholic Church (Minsteracres), and Riding Mill Methodist Church. St James' priest is a member of the committee and St James also has two lay members. Regular joint worship and activities include: a weekly study course during Lent, an Ash Wednesday service, a Walk of Witness on Good Friday, an outdoor village Carol Service; a Christmas card is printed and circulated which provides service details for all of the churches.



Churches Together also facilitate occasional events, including responses to international crisis situations. Initiatives have included an installation sited in the centre of the village at Christmas 2017 and 2018 to draw attention to the plight of Syrian children caught up in war.

We are actively developing our working relationship with our Methodist friends to facilitate shared services, for example this year's Harvest Service was held in St James Church and led by the Methodist minister, Rev. Marie Beard.

A highly successful Men's Breakfast Group was started some two years ago, under the umbrella of Churches Together, which provides breakfast and an interesting speaker. The events are attended by men (and sometimes women!) from the length of the Tyne Valley.

Other ecumenical activities, organized by individuals, include Soup Lunches during Lent, the service for Women's World Day of Prayer and the Christian Aid week collection.

Many of our activities are or have been initiated by members of the congregation, supported by the priest and the ministry team. The PCC welcomes new developments that help us move forward in our journey of faith.

2 BUILD on and develop the relationship between the church and the wider parish community

The parish comprises about 440 houses and approximately 950 people. The predominately professional community is focused in a commuter / retirement village in the Tyne Valley, 30 minutes west of Newcastle, and served by the larger village of Corbridge, 5 minutes away, and the market town of Hexham, 15 minutes away, to all of which there are excellent transport links.



A view over Riding Mill village, looking north

The village Parish Council website gives further information on the history and development of the village, and a good flavour of life in and around it. (<http://www.ridingmill.org>)



The initial 1920 – 60 development of large houses has been supplemented by one higher density estate and a number of infill developments since that time. The Parish Council owns amenity land

including wooded areas, children's play park, tennis courts and a cricket/football field. The village benefits from a predominantly wooded setting and is surrounded by green belt and has excellent access to open country.

Sketch map by Peter Ryder

The village is almost entirely residential, including only one main business, OSBIT Power (an innovative engineering design business), which employs approximately 100 people.

There is one privately owned nursing and care home (Wentworth Grange). The village has one large pub / restaurant (The Wellington). Two ladies, resident in the Village, started the small Station Café at Riding Mill station over a year ago. They cater for residents, rail users, walkers, and those who work in the village. They also sell the local newspaper and a few essential food items, such as milk and eggs. There are also a few small businesses/consultancies run from private homes.

Most age groups are represented but the proportion of retired people is increasing as the cost of housing makes entry into the village more difficult for younger families.

The primary form of communication in the village is the monthly Parish News, delivered to most homes in the village, and including both church and village activities, introduced by a letter from the parish priest or another church representative. The church also has a website www.stjameschurchridingmill.com which is regularly updated with details of services and events in the parish, in addition to some of the history of the parish and its buildings.

There is a very wide range of clubs and activities within the village, for all ages. We give examples here of what takes place and of interactions between church members and the wider village.

Children and Young People

An enthusiastic Baby and Toddler Group meets weekly in the Church Cottage, supported by a church member who helped establish and promote this popular activity. This member also distributes Baptism anniversary cards, up to the fourth anniversary of Baptism.

Broomhaugh Church of England First School is located across the road from St James'. There are currently 65 children on role, between the ages of 4 - 9. The Riding Mill Outdoor Preschool is situated on the school site and provides Early Years Provision for children aged 3 years and over. On leaving Broomhaugh most children progress to Corbridge Middle School and the relationship with the feeder school is strong. The school provides before and after school care through the Squirrels Club, which runs from the school hall.



Broomhaugh CE First School was very proud to receive their SIAMS report, in February 2019, which reported the school to be a 'Good' church school. The last Ofsted, back in 2009 graded the school as 'Outstanding'.

In May 2019 the school entered a shared leadership structure and the serving Head Teacher of Corbridge Church of England First School became the school's Executive Head Teacher. An Executive Deputy Head Teacher was also appointed and they now serve both schools with the support of the Local Authority and the Diocesan Board of Education. The ethos of Broomhaugh Church of England First School is characterised by a caring attitude, equipping the children to learn and to enjoy learning across the whole curriculum, including developing their own personal spirituality.

"The living out of the school's Christian vision and distinctive Christian values guides all aspects of school life. Consequently, pupils flourish in terms of both their spiritual and academic development." SIAMS report February 2019.

The school and preschool are encouraged to use the church, with the aim of helping children appreciate the nature of the building and to feel comfortable there. Typically this includes; Easter, Harvest and Nativity services, but has also included ad hoc visits, for example to hear the organ or experience services or traditions being explored during their Religious Education teaching.

The governing body consists of 12 Governors in total - 2 Parent Governors, 1 LEA Governor, 1 Staff Governor, 1 Head Teacher Governor and 7 Foundation Governors; 3 appointed by Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education, 3 appointed by the Parochial Church Council of St James', Riding Mill and 1 ex-officio, holder of the post of The Principal Officiating Minister of St James', Riding Mill. Currently there are 3 foundation Governor vacancies which includes the Principal Officiating Minister.

The school is well supported by the local community and families and continues to be a place for children to thrive and grow in a safe nurturing environment. During the vacancy, one of the Churchwardens, and two members of the PCC, involved with the *Open the Book Group*, are visiting the school regularly to maintain informal links www.broomhaugh.northumberland.sch.uk

Village organisations

Café @ The Foyer is open on Monday and Friday mornings in the Parish Hall and has become a social hub for village life, particularly following the closure of the village shop. Here, there are opportunities for informal discussions and sharing between members of the congregation and others who attend (and many of the volunteers who serve are congregation members). Many church members also belong to the Choral Society, which performs twice a year, and to the Drama Club, which plays to full houses for several nights once or twice a year.

Other clubs include Yoga, Pilates, Badminton, Table Tennis and Indoor Bowls. In 2019, the Parish Hall came under a new management board of the Village Hall Trust and the caretaker post embraced taking hall bookings and presenting invoices, in addition to cleaning and setting up the Parish and Millennium Halls for clients. Two new weekly initiatives started in Autumn 2019 – the Women's Singing Group and the Drop-In Games Session, designed to appeal to those living alone, especially the elderly. There are also well-established societies like WI, photographic society, art group, the Bridge Club etc. Further information about activities in the Millennium and Parish Halls may be found at <http://www.ridingmill.org/riding-mill-village-hall>



The majority of clubs and societies in the village are secular in nature but members of the church are well represented in their ranks.

Wentworth Grange

At Wentworth Grange Nursing and Care Home, the Pastoral Care Team led by the Anna Chaplain, takes Holy Communion to residents and leads a short service monthly.

This benefits residents of various different denominations or of no established faith and visitors and staff members also participate. This is well received and is regarded as a rewarding experience by those leading it.

St James Fundraising

Previous fundraising initiatives have raised funds for work on the church building and have developed excellent relationships between the church and village. These relationships have also provided a platform for actively sharing our faith. Specifically, fundraising events were held to raise restricted funds in support of the refurbishment of the Church Cottage and essential maintenance of St James' Church.

This money is held in the Building Fund and is proving invaluable in addressing the recommendations of the 2018 Quinquennial



Inspection. The first phase of that work to the external fabric of the building was carried out in 2019 and it is hoped that internal decoration of the church will be done in 2020/21. The fundraising events for the Building Fund have been well supported by village people.

St James' Church works well as a great venue for talks, art exhibitions and musical performances. In recent years concerts have been given by Tom McConville, a folk musician, and a chapel choir from University College, Durham. There is space to provide refreshments within the church as part of these events. We are looking at the possibility of expanding the number of cultural events within the church and as part of OUR VISION (see later), developing and using the physical space more creatively.

A very active fundraising group has, over the last two years, raised considerable monies for St James' but in addition has continued the Church's commitment to supporting the work of various charities chosen annually by the PCC. In 2019 the charities nominated were, *Josie's Dragonfly Trust*, *Contact the Elderly* and *Oxfam*.

Fundraising events included a Burn's Night Supper and Ceilidh, an evening presentation entitled "A Glimpse of Japan", the Riding Mill Walkabout, Jumble Sales and a stall taken at the Village Craft Fair. In addition, money was raised through a coffee event and cake sale for the Mozambique Cyclone Disaster Appeal.

As part of the Village events organized to mark the Centenary of the ending of the First World War, thousands of poppies were knitted and sewn by people all over the village, some of whom met weekly in the Church Cottage. The poppies were sited at various points in the Village and attracted visitors from all over the Tyne Valley. St James' organized an Art Exhibition in the church during the Remembrance weekend. Village residents and friends were invited to create 12cm x 12cm poppy- inspired works which formed a display viewed by many visitors.



Shepherds Dene



The Retreat Centre for the Dioceses of Newcastle and Durham, Shepherds Dene, is located in the parish, about 1.5 miles beyond the village on the road to Slaley, and is managed by a charitable trust. The post of Director, who is responsible for the programme and for developments at Shepherds Dene, is currently vacant. The administrator of Shepherds Dene is a regular member of our congregation.

In the past, the parish has played an active voluntary role in improving the house and gardens of Shepherds Dene and has given significant financial support at times of refurbishment.

A number of the individuals and groups that visit and stay at Shepherds Dene join us at St James for worship; annually this includes a visiting choir from Durham University.

There are many opportunities to strengthen links between Shepherds Dene and St James, to the benefit of both organizations.

For further information see: <http://www.shepherdsdene.co.uk>

3 GROW the faith community in Riding Mill

Building on the existing platform of excellent relationships between the church and village there are many opportunities for informal faith sharing, notably through the café and within the various clubs and societies, as well as individual friendships.

Opportunities for encouraging active faith within the School community is an area for potential development, as well as growing links with families through *Open the Book* sessions and special services organized by St James'.

The church is seeking to find ways to communicate faith and would value support in developing appropriate ways of sharing faith in the community in a more structured way. A valuable resource for this is the refurbished Church Cottage which provides an excellent space for small gatherings of e.g. enquiry groups, book clubs, meditation, counselling and similar types of activity.

4 CONNECT the parish more effectively with the wider world, including the Corbridge Deanery, other parts of the Diocese, and beyond

Within Newcastle Diocese there are some relatively remote rural areas with considerable problems of access to services (including parts of the Corbridge Deanery). In other areas, including within Newcastle, there is urban deprivation. Newcastle upon Tyne itself is the vibrant regional capital of the North East of England, and many Riding Mill residents (including members of the church family) have active links with the city's civic and educational institutions, making them well placed to play a role in addressing the challenges and opportunities of the North East. For those in the St James' church family this forms a platform for mobilising this talent as part of our outreach in seeking to meet needs in the wider world beyond the village.

Corbridge Deanery and the immediate area

St James has two lay members of Corbridge Deanery Synod. (The Area Dean is the Revd Canon Dr David Kennedy, of St Andrew's Corbridge.) The Deanery has a Development Group and is currently actively working towards closer relations between churches. Examples include working transparently together to support churches that are unable to meet their full parish share, and meeting together to consider how ministry might change in the future, in response to increasing Diocesan devolution of responsibility to Deaneries. This is an area that can be both a resource and an opportunity for ministry for St James in the future, and it is anticipated that our new priest will have a significant contribution to make in enabling St James to engage more fully.

It is anticipated that in the future St James' Riding Mill will be clustered with the parishes of St Andrew's Corbridge, Bywell, Stocksfield and Mickley.

The St James' Reader supports worship in other churches in the Deanery. One member of the congregation organises and hosts a biennial farm nativity, in which the choir of St James is actively involved.

Newcastle Diocese and North East Region

The church actively and prayerfully supports the Christian *Cornerstone Project* in the Benwell area of west Newcastle where there is much deprivation. Together with the Methodist Church, support is given with festival time collections and gifts in addition to financial support. There is opportunity for developing more active links with Cornerstone <http://cornerstone.btck.co.uk> and building links with other parishes beyond the Deanery.

The church receives regular donations of food, toiletries, clothing and shoes which are delivered to the *West Northumberland Food Bank* in Hexham and *WERS* (the West End Refugee Service) in Newcastle, <http://www.wers.org.uk/>. Our trainee Lay Reader has worked on placement with *Walking With* in Wallsend, <https://www.walkingwith.co.uk> and through her, the church and village make donations to this refugee charity. These projects are very well supported by members of the congregation and the wider village.

The Chaplaincy Role of our Reader connects the parish with the farming community through her work at Hexham Auction Mart, the Farming Community Network and the annual County Show (at which Tynedale Churches Together provide welcome).

Individual members of the congregation already make key contributions to the Diocese and the region, including as Lay Canon of the Cathedral, Member of the Cathedral Trust and Council, Trustee of Together Newcastle (Church Urban Fund) (www.cuf.org.uk/together-newcastle). There are opportunities to embed these individual roles more formally into the life of St James and the village, drawing on experience, particularly that of the Church Urban Fund, elsewhere in the Diocese and the wider Anglican communion, sensitively linking asset rich communities with those in greater need.

The wider world



The *soup lunches* during Lent (organized by church members) raise money for Oxfam and many of those who collect during *Christian Aid Week* are church members. Occasional events are held to raise money for urgent disaster support and individual members of the congregation are actively involved (both financially and through voluntary support) in a wide range of charitable organizations.

Oxfam lent soup lunches
Please volunteer your soup making skills!

Each year, the PCC chooses to support charities beyond the parish. The monies raised for charity no longer come from the church's income (formerly we were able to distribute 10% of the church income) but are raised by the Fundraising Group of the PCC. Fundraising events are also organized to contribute money to St James Church.

RESOURCES

The new priest will find a wealth of resources to support work in the parish.

Church Management – the PCC

The PCC currently has 14 elected members and the 2 Churchwardens (ex-officio), a representative cross section of the adult congregation. St James has been blessed with very committed, able Churchwardens who have brought expertise to the role, and have exercised it in an inclusive way. PCC members have a wide range of experience and skills. It is rarely necessary to hold elections for members, the places are usually filled. Over the years there has been a natural turnover of the elected membership.

The meetings, held monthly at present, are generally good natured and cordial, and decisions are usually unanimously agreed.

The PCC tries to keep God central in all aspects of decision making, whether routine fabric management and statutory duties items, or in seeking to establish and realize the spiritual direction of St James as a church family.

People of the congregation and the Village Community

St James' Church is blessed with a rich resource in the people of its congregation and many other villagers who attend and contribute to our special services and support our fundraising activities.

The church needs strong and decisive leadership to harness the gifts of these people, to listen to their ideas but ultimately to make decisions and sometimes take risks to bring about change.

People are not backward in coming forward but difficulties sometimes arise when new strategies have to be adopted in taking St James's church into the 21st century and working in a very different culture and society.

Church Property

The churchwardens take overall responsibility relating to church maintenance and the fabric of the building and report regularly to the PCC and complete an annual summary of the church property.

The Church

St James' Church is well-signed and sited in the middle of the village. It was first constructed in the late 1850's and has been extended since. The fabric of the building is in good condition and is carefully stewarded. Work has been done in recent years on the roofs, the heating system and the lighting scheme.

In 2019, to comply with the findings of the Quinquennial Inspection, work was carried out on the stonework/pointing of the church to rectify water ingress and after a period of drying out the church will be redecorated internally within the next 2 years.



More extensive details of the buildings and their history can be found on the church website <http://www.stjameschurchridingmill.com>

The Church Cottage



***St James' Church Cottage
viewed from the west***

St James' Church is the owner of and has responsibility for the Church Cottage, the original Village School room, which is a Listed Building and is located next to the church. It is a single-roomed building, full of character, with a simple kitchen and toilet facilities including disabled access.

In 2016 a substantial programme of refurbishment was undertaken resulting in an updated warm, comfortable, secure space for smaller gatherings. Active and enjoyable fundraising events raised money towards the renovation, and these events served as the context for the growing relationship between church and wider village communities.

The refurbished Cottage is now a comfortable, inviting space offering wheelchair access and a disabled toilet. There are a number of regular users including a drystone wallers group, a weekly meditation group and the Parish Council hold their meetings in the Cottage.

Churchyard

The churchyard comprises the land immediately around the church, known as the Old Churchyard and a more recently acquired piece of land across the quiet road, which is the current graveyard and is also the relocated home of the village War Memorial.

The church yards are maintained by volunteers of the parish on a rota organized by a church member.

The Old Churchyard next to the church is full and is used only for the interment of cremated remains. The new Churchyard across the road is currently in use for burials and is steadily filling. In 2018 there was a programme of "tidying-up" which continues, with tree-felling and path maintenance being planned which is made possible by a generous bequest from a recently deceased member of the congregation.

Other buildings

Parish Hall

The Parish Hall is a large and newly refurbished hall with a good outside space, near a small play park. It is sited a few hundred metres from the Church. The facilities include a large reception area, recently refitted kitchen and washing up area, supper room, toilets, stage and recently increased storage space. In 2019 a new building was erected on the site of the old garage. The recent extensions and new building have been entirely funded through voluntary donations by residents and extensive fundraising activities.



The Riding Mill Parish Hall is probably one of the most intensively used village halls in Northumberland reflecting the active social life of the community.

(Note that this hall is owned by Newcastle Diocese, but day to day management is passed by the PCC charity to the Village Hall Trust. The arrangement gives St James free and priority use on Sundays, with six further free events during the year. A PCC member represents St James on the Village Hall Trust management committee.

Millennium Hall

The Millennium Hall is located a short walk from the Church. It is a modern, medium size hall with a small kitchen, toilets and compact outside space. It is used as a venue 2-3 Sundays a month for refreshments which are served after the Parish Eucharist.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage is sited some 50m to the south of the Church building and nestles in a quiet woodland setting on a sloping site. It is a detached house which was built in the 1960's and is of the period. It is well maintained, with the main accommodation on the first floor.

The setting of the Vicarage at the top corner of the Old Playground, provides privacy without remoteness or isolation.

The front entrance and hallway, two reception rooms, kitchen, 4 bedrooms and bathroom are all on the first floor.

The west facing rear view is open and looks onto the school woodland garden and storage. To the north the view overlooks the church, across a wooded spinney, with a panoramic, elevated perspective from the kitchen windows.

The front door and adjacent lounge are east facing.



Riding Mill Vicarage, viewed from the east

The ground floor, with stairs from the hall above, comprises back door, study, cloakroom, utility/storage room and double garage. The house has gas-fired central heating with radiators. The house is set in a sizable garden, which is a balance of lawn, flowerbeds and a vegetable plot. Half the garden is steeply sloped and surrounded to the south with a beech hedge. The drive to the front of the house can accommodate several cars and a gate to the north leads through the spinney to the church.

During the vacancy the Vicarage has been let by the Diocese on a 6 month short term tenancy.

FINANCE

The Parish is in a generally sound financial position and is carefully monitored and informs the decisions made by the PCC. There is a modest reserve in the general fund and there are two historically set up restricted funds, of which appropriate use is made. Other restricted funds include a Cottage fund and a Building Fund.

The Building Fund has enabled us to carry out a substantial refurbishment programme following the recent Quinquennial Inspection and there is a significant balance carried forward to cover any anticipated future requirements.

There are no major debts and a negotiated reduction in our Parish Share will enable us to pay our quota in full.

An envelope Gift Aid Scheme is in place and the Parish Fundraising Group is active in running regular events to supplement Parish income and to support charitable giving.

Provision is made within the annual budget to cover priest's expenses.

The church finances are administered and managed by the Treasurer (working with an informal finance team) who reports to the PCC.

OUR VISION

ST JAMES AND THE COMMUNITY: PARTNERS TOGETHER

This is a new initiative being undertaken by members of St James' congregation.

A small committee was established from the congregation and a colleague, Revd John Sadler, to prepare a "Vision Statement" for approval by PCC. The approved version is as follows

"To see the church and the community in Riding Mill giving thanks for the gifts we have been given by God and engage in using those gifts to make the world a better place, both locally and globally, using St James' Church as both a sacred space and a shared hub for community action/ activity".

It was recognised that the committee needed to be established as a sub-group of PCC. This has been approved and the terms of reference, next steps and project timetable are currently being developed by the sub-group for approval by PCC.

This is an exciting new development which we intend coordinating with other Deanery and Diocesan initiatives such as Churches Together and neighbouring parishes working more closely together, the cluster concept.

Importantly, concurrent with this initiative, St James' has achieved much of relevance already. This has been achieved through engaging with the young in the community and their parents and working closely with other church denominations in joint services and use of resources. Additionally, members of St James' PCC and congregation are now engaging successfully with the wider community through parish initiatives. These include raising awareness on climate change and environmental issues and hosting activities which are attracting those within and outside the church congregation, for example Men's Breakfast, fundraising and open garden events. These actions and activities have proved immensely successful and are making St James' and its resources more accessible to the community as well as establishing trust and friendships. Riding Mill is well placed to network with many people with relevant skills to help carry forward our community partners project and our local County Councillor is a regular member of our congregation.

It is anticipated that the new priest will bring their commitment to this initiative as well as their special skills in engaging effectively with the church and wider parish communities.

We would welcome a priest who:

- ❖ Is a truly spiritual person connecting strongly with God; sharing in, engaging fully with and inspiring us in our journey of faith;
- ❖ Will rejoice with us in our recent history, encouraging and enabling us to build on those firm foundations and past experiences;
- ❖ Will connect with us where we are, and using their experience of managing change will engage us in moving towards an inspirational vision of the future;
- ❖ Supports and encourages collaborative ministry and pastoral care, and as a discerning facilitator will inspire and lead us;
- ❖ Has a firm faith and effective communication skills, which will enable her / him to relate well to people of all ages, of diverse experience and disparate needs, in church, school and village, embracing and nurturing the whole community;
- ❖ Will be our shepherd, giving us confidence to accept God's challenge to go further in carrying his message of love to others and by using our skills, talents and resources to reach out beyond the safe and familiar.

We look forward to meeting the person whom God is calling to join with us and lead us on this journey.

Addendum to Parish Profile
Covering period from 1st January 2020 to 20th September 2020

Between the beginning of January and the start of church lockdown on the 24th March 2020 eucharist services were offered twice weekly on Wednesdays and Sundays. Additionally, 8.00am Sunday worship (Book of Common Prayer) was also offered on two Sundays each month. Services were well attended and although slightly down on the same period of 2019, this was attributed to people who had left the parish, the church or had died. During Lesley Chapman's illness and then resignation we were extremely fortunate in that our lay readers and visiting clergy provided continuity over this time. Our congregation engaged fully with our small cohort of visiting clergy and vice versa.

Then everything changed with lockdown on the 24th March. Since that date we have provided twice weekly communications to all those on our electoral roll, principally by email but also by printed information for those without email access. Each communication has offered worship options for mid-week and Sundays based on material created by us, by other churches in our Deanery and from Diocese and Church of England sources. The communications have also included Churchwarden updates on key events such as progress with the vacancy, advice on donations (regular giving, easyfundraising etc) and more recently progress towards resuming public worship and reopening church for services.

Importantly, at the end of April, early in the process of providing these communications, we conducted a survey to help us decide what material was most valued and invited suggestions. This survey proved invaluable. Many appreciated the links provided to Facebook and zoom services being offered by neighbouring parishes (Stocksfield and Slaley/ the Moorland Group) but a large number particularly enjoyed worship material generated by St James's church members and requested more. This culminated in us offering a range of worship material for mid-week and Sundays including short services, reflections, prayers, meditations, readings, music and hymns recorded or prepared by members of our congregation.

It is noteworthy that some people on our electoral roll, who do not normally attend services at St James's, responded to our survey on worship material. This indicated that our communications forced by lockdown provided worship material which was of interest to others in our community and not just our congregation. Lockdown provided another opportunity for St James's church to work alongside the wider parish community. Riding Mill Parish Council and the Village Hall Trust organised a planning meeting aimed at helping the community and St James's contribution has been to expand the Pastoral Support Service we currently offer to our church community to include others in the Parish who would benefit from such support.

At the beginning of July 2020 we held a PCC meeting by zoom. This meeting updated PCC members on progress with a number of current initiatives including the Vision Group, who continued to meet, and also the Review of Management and Administration within St James's church. Earlier in the year PCC had approved the Review of Church Management and Administration as it was seen as an important means of delegating tasks to both members of the church and the wider community so that the burden is reduced for both the Parish Priest and the Churchwardens. It is envisaged that Operational Teams and Groups will manage routine tasks and report to the Churchwardens and PCC on a regular basis. We already have a great many dedicated volunteers who contribute significantly to the running of St James's but this project is putting structure in place and by spreading the workload more people from the congregation and village are being encouraged to participate.

The pandemic resulted in the cancellation of two weddings that had been booked, for April and May, but one was re-scheduled for 17th July and was the first service held in St James's after the

permitted re-opening of churches. Although the wedding was scaled down to just 8 it was a memorable occasion.

From mid-July careful consideration was given to determining if, and when, St James's could be reopened for public worship. After conducting thorough and detailed risk assessments it was decided that public and church officer safety could be managed but only as long as social distancing and the one-way systems we designed were rigorously implemented in church. It was decided to initially only open church for public worship on Sundays with no mid-week service. We were made very aware of the anxiety many were experiencing at the thought of attending a service in church. We therefore decided that the first two services of worship to be offered would be non-eucharistic and held outside in the graveyard opposite St James's church. These two outdoor services were held on the 23rd and 30th August 2020 and attracted congregations of 31 and 34 respectively. This compares with congregations of 43 and 40 for eucharistic services held in church at the comparable time the previous year. This outcome equates to 72% of the 2019 congregation for our first outdoor service and 85% for the second service on the 30th August; feedback confirmed that the outdoor services were not just successful but helped people feel safe on their return to public worship.

The first two services in church were also non-eucharistic and were held on the 6th and 13th September, attracting congregations of 26 and 25 respectively, equating to 53% and 64% of the congregations achieved for eucharist services at that time the previous year. The in-church service held on the 20th September was our first eucharist since before lockdown and 35 attended; this equates to 78% of the congregation that attended the comparable eucharist service held in 2019.

These figures are very promising and significantly, a growing number of our Methodist friends from the village have joined the worship services we have offered during August and to date in September.

In summary, we have not stood still over the past 9 months. Unexpected opportunities arose and we are now better placed than previously in our engagement with our congregation, neighbouring parishes, other churches in our village and the wider parish community. There is a real opportunity to engage further with those who have found comfort in the worship opportunities that we have offered and especially with those that do not currently have the confidence to venture into our church, for whatever reason.

