

PROFILE



Welcome!

Thank you for looking at our material and for considering whether you might be called to be the priest of these parishes.

This is an unusual and interesting group of parishes, with scope for further development, following 14 years of caring and imaginative ministry by the previous incumbent in Sowerby and Sessay, joined in plurality seven years ago with Thirkleby, Kilburn and Bagby.

There is close sharing between the parishes, whilst each place has its own distinct identity. Each interfaces in some way with the area beyond. The community, economic and civic life of Sowerby itself is interwoven with Thirsk, the two together forming the whole market town footprint. Sessay has very much the feeling of a 'vale village', and our church primary school there is federated with another in Husthwaite to the south. Thirkleby and Bagby are at the foot of the Cleveland hills, with Kilburn having a distinctive 'hillside' character.

The congregations are welcoming and friendly: there is some nuanced difference in the usual worship style from one church to another, but always well-ordered without being over-formal. There is good lay leadership in the parishes, and a strong record of looking strategically to the future and of investing resources for mission.

There is a significant quantity of new building and it will be an essential part of the next incumbent's ministry to 'know and be known' among people who have recently settled into the parishes, and foster the good influence of the Gospel in society as the ethos of the growing communities is established. A readiness to work in partnership with ecumenical colleagues – mainly Methodist, Salvation Army and Roman Catholic – is important.

Ministering in these parishes will need to be based on the Church of England's long-standing way of involvement in local communities, whilst being attentive to the changing needs of 21st-century society, and having a real desire to help people for whom faith has not been an explicit part of their lives to discover a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

As parishes and the diocesan family, we are holding the process of this appointment in prayer. May God bless you as you reflect on whether this might be the next stage of ministry for you.

+ Paul Whitty

Note

This appointment is made subject to a satisfactory enhanced DBS disclosure, and eligibility to work in the UK.

The patron of Sessay is the Viscountess Downe: the Archbishop of York is patron of the other parishes and the Bishop of Whitby acts on his behalf.

Sessay and the White Horse Parishes

Introduction

Sowerby, Sessay, Thirkleby, Kilburn and Bagby are villages to the south and south-east of the attractive market town of Thirsk in North Yorkshire. The area is famous for the 'Yorkshire Vet' and, before him, 'James Herriot'. Thirsk has good transport links (both road and rail) to the rest of Yorkshire, the north-east and down to London. It lies in the Vale of Mowbray between the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. It is therefore an excellent place to live and work. The five church buildings are all historic places of worship and together have a rich heritage that needs constant care, appraisal and updating. As a plurality of churches, we are increasingly seeking to work together and to support each other in our mission. All five churches have open churchyards. Please refer to the table at the end of this document for statistical information.

St Oswald, Sowerby (www.stoswaldsowerby.org.uk, www.facebook.com/stoswaldsowerby)

Sowerby is a vibrant, historic and beautiful village, attached to the market town of Thirsk. Within the parish there are three primary schools and Thirsk School & Sixth Form College, as well as Thirsk Farmers' Auction Mart, Thirsk Garden Centre, a community-run cinema, supermarkets and many other amenities. There are several residential homes for older people. There is significant potential for growing mission in 'Sowerby Gateway' – a large, growing development of 925 new houses, plus a new development of 64 extra-care apartments and 32 bungalows, a new supermarket and Premier Inn. Elevate Multi-Academy, in which the Dioceses of York and Leeds are partners, operate two of the primary schools.

The congregation is spread across a full age range but our average age is older than that of the parish around us. We therefore particularly seek to make children, young people and families feel welcome. We employ a part-time Children & Young People's Worker and activities for children and families currently include Messy Church, Kids' Club, Pram Service, Toddler Group, Youth Groups and an annual Holiday Club. There is an active lay involvement in these ministries. We have a strong link with Sowerby Primary Academy and 'Open the Book' is held there (and at Sessay CE Primary School) four times a term. We have a close connection with Sowerby Methodist Church and many of our children's activities are run jointly. We see significant opportunities for growth amongst families and we are starting to work closely with the '20s-40s' Minister (for the Thirsk area) and also with the local Salvation Army pioneer ministers. Ministry to older people include a monthly lunch club, coffee hour, home visits and a monthly 'Sing for Joy' session in the extra care complex.



St Oswald's is an active member of Churches Together in Thirsk & District. In recent years the five parishes (of this plurality) have participated in the Leading Your Church Into Growth (LyCiG) programme. As a result, we are increasingly supporting each other and working much more collaboratively together. A key aspect of this is lay involvement.

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There is a church choir and the church often hosts concerts. Small groups for prayer, study and fellowship are held regularly throughout the year. We have links with CMS, Jigsaw Kids Ministries in the Philippines, The Clock and several other charities/mission organisations.

Our church building is medieval with many 19th-century additions. We keep it unlocked during the day. We have a well-used Parochial Hall near the church with a newly refurbished Annexe

for use by groups and a custom-made Godly Play Room. Fundraising events and social events for both church members and the local community are held throughout the year.

Our main Sunday morning services (Common Worship) currently include two Holy Communion services a month (one often celebrated by our House-for-duty Assistant Priest). The other two services are usually, but not exclusively, lay-led (Morning Praise and "Worship for All" - preceded by 'Breakfast for All!'). This arrangement assisted in giving the incumbent the opportunity to conduct services (including Holy Communion) in the other parishes where appropriate. Additionally, there are currently early Sunday morning and occasional Evening Prayer services (BCP). We also have a mid-week Common Worship Holy Communion. A variety of music is used, including organ, piano, music group and CDs.

Churchwardens: David Tucker and Simon Birkbeck

St Cuthbert, Sessay (Village website: www.sessay.org)

The parish of Sessay is made up of the two villages of Sessay and Hutton Sessay, together with associated hamlets. 25% of the residents are older people, but there are also families with children. The church is situated at one end of Sessay village, next to the C of E Primary School; both were designed by William Butterfield and built at the same time. Some of the houses in Sessay were also designed by Butterfield. The school's pupils come mostly from the surrounding villages. Church and school enjoy a good relationship: a PCC member is a school governor (and joint chair). 'Open the Book' takes place four times a term and both school services and Collective Worship are held weekly in the church. *The new incumbent will become an ex-officio Governor of the school.*



Sessay and Hutton Sessay are lively villages with a wonderful community spirit. There is a Sports & Social Club in Sessay, with a variety of community activities and sports (including cricket and bowls). Annually the church holds an Open Gardens Day, which is very well supported by all members of the community. There is also a monthly coffee morning and monthly prayer group and an annual Lent Lunch and Harvest Supper.

Many parishioners consider the church to be an important part of village life. There are currently two Communion services (9am and 6.30pm) and two Morning Prayer services (9am and 10am) each month. All services are Common Worship.

The Viscountess Downe is patron of Sessay

Churchwarden: Pat Bee

The White Horse Parishes (United Benefice of Thirkleby with Kilburn & Bagby)

All Saints, Thirkleby (Church website www.allsaintsthirkleby.org.uk)

All Saints is a small but active rural church, with committed members whose vision is for church to serve and be at the heart of the village community. Most of the residents of Thirkleby parish live in either Great Thirkleby or Little Thirkleby. There are some outlying farms and hamlets, including Islebeck and High and Low Osgodby.

The church was built in 1851 and is an attractive listed building which can be seen from the nearby A19.

We have a Parish Hall belonging to the church, where both church and village events take place. There is a monthly pop-up pub in the Hall. Both villages are very friendly.



Over the past ten years, in response to a diocesan course about using buildings to enhance worship, church members have made a number of improvements to the church, including a lighting upgrade, installation of a sound system, organ restoration, addition of toilet and kitchen facilities, restoration of tower windows, augmentation of the bells and installation of lights on the church drive. We feel an important part of our mission is to make the church welcoming and accessible to the whole community, and welcome its use by parishioners. The church has good acoustics and is a

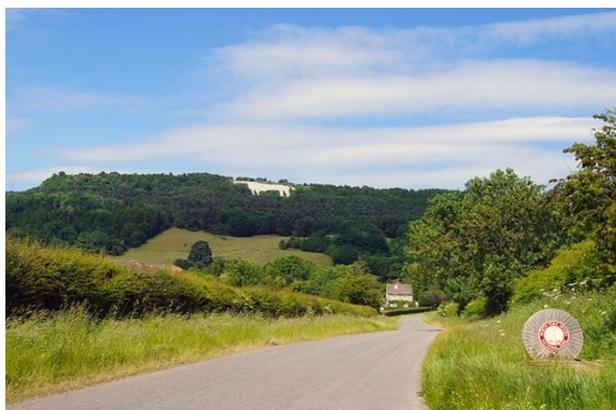
good concert venue.

There is currently a service of Holy Communion on the second Sunday of each month (joint with Kilburn and Bagby) and a service of Morning Praise on the fourth Sunday of each month. All services are Common Worship and are supported by a small and enthusiastic choir.

Churchwarden: Doug Gillanders

St Mary, Kilburn

Sitting under the famous 'White Horse', the parish is also well known as the home of woodcarver Robert Thompson, the 'Mouseman of Kilburn'. It comprises four settlements: Kilburn, High Kilburn, Oldstead and Hambleton.



The church, which stands in the village and is surrounded by the churchyard, dates from 1120 and is in very good repair. Maximum capacity is about 100.

The parish forms a united benefice with two adjacent parishes, Bagby and Thirkleby. The united benefice is known as the White Horse Parishes.

There is currently a service of Holy Communion on the third Sunday of each month (joint with Thirkleby and Bagby) and a service of Morning Prayer on the fourth Sunday of every other month (joint with Bagby). Services alternate between Common Worship and BCP.

The tradition of the church is central. There are usually a few occasional offices each year.

Amenities within the parish include pubs in Kilburn and Oldstead and a village hall in Kilburn. Children attend school in local villages, or in Thirsk or Easingwold. Kilburn has a strong sense of community. The annual Kilburn Feast (www.kilburnfeast.uk) in July brings villagers and visitors together and raises a large amount for local charities, including the church.

Churchwardens: Patrick Gibson and Ali Miles

St Mary, Bagby

Bagby is a small village three miles from Thirsk, rising above the A19 towards Sutton Bank. The parish stretches from the hamlet of Balk and across to the business parks on the edge of Thirsk. The village is made up of some 220 houses, with a sixth of these less than 18 years of age.



St Mary's has a small but committed congregation, who have recognised that they no longer have the resources to run two significant buildings. They are seeking to sell their church hall, and hope to develop the church building as a community resource. Several social and fundraising events are held each year and church members have a desire to reach out into their community, recognising that there is scope for growth and development.

There is currently a service of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month (joint with Kilburn and Thirkleby) and a service of Morning Praise on the fourth Sunday of every other month (joint with Kilburn). Services alternate between CW and BCP.

Traditionally of middle-of-the-road churchmanship, St Mary's has welcomed clergy from all areas of the ministry spectrum and been equally comfortable with a wide range of worship styles.

Churchwardens: Robin Clough and Amanda Dowson

Current Ministry and support

We have a House-for-duty Assistant Priest, Revd Pauline Percy, who works across all five parishes in this plurality. We have two Readers. At Sowerby there are also three Recognised Parish Assistants (RPAs) and our Children & Young People's Worker. Two of the RPAs are engaged in pastoral work and the third is engaged in mission (and children's work). We employ a part-time administrator to help with the work across all the parishes.

Aspirations for new incumbent

We are looking for the new incumbent to be a person of vision and insight who will inspire and work with the existing leadership to grow the mission of each church within its community. We need a committed, godly teacher, pastor and leader who will share the gospel faithfully and help us all to reach out in ministry to each community. We all need to be encouraged and energised in our prayer lives, discipleship, service and mission. The new vicar needs to be a team worker who is willing and able to work not only within the context of the five parishes of this plurality, but also collaboratively with the other churches of the Thirsk area, encouraging and equipping all to work together for the kingdom of God.

There are many challenges facing ministry in rural areas. The new areas of housing also represent a big challenge (and an opportunity) as the population grows and many of the new residents have very little experience or contact with church. We need to work out together new ways of reaching out beyond the traditional services and discover effective ways of serving both existing and new communities.

Deanery Context

This group of churches sits within the Mowbray Deanery which includes Thirsk, Northallerton and surrounding villages. As a group it mirrors the make-up of the Deanery as a whole; with larger villages or market towns surrounded by small and deeply rural villages. As a deanery we value the wider Diocesan family of which we are a part as we actively seek to be “a local network of churches, inspiring, influencing and leading mission and ministry”; increasingly looking for ways to work across our boundaries – parishes helping each other or working together on common aims. We are also proud of our ecumenical relations, especially with the Methodist Church with whom we are in covenant, this shows itself in a number of different aspects of working together, both in this group and parishes across the deanery.

The Deanery Leadership Team is currently working on a plan for the deanery with the aim that our mission and ministry be not just sustainable but flourishing in the years to come based around the following objectives

- transforming the world
- teaching the word of God
- facilitating services of worship

We recognise the challenges of a changing context both within and beyond our churches. With a substantial amount of new housing both planned and projected within the Sowerby/Thirsk and Northallerton/Brompton nuclei we are encouraging clergy and parishes to work together in welcome, blessing and ministry across the Deanery but particularly in these areas. We have recently welcomed two '20s-40s' Ministers into the deanery whose focus is on pioneer work among this age group that is often missing from our church life.

<https://mowbraydeanery.org.uk/>

Statistical information and existing services

Parish and church building	Population	Electoral Roll	Schools	Services	Other
Sowerby (Listed 2*)	Was 4200 but is rising	112	4 non- church schools (3 primary, 1 secondary)	2 each Sunday (am), 1 midweek and 2 per month (pm) ASA 70 adults + 13 children 21B /3W /30F (2018)	Some joint services with Sowerby Methodist Church
Sessay (Churchyard wall listed grade 2)	<400	18	CofE primary	3 am & 1 pm services per month ASA 14 1B /6F (2018)	
Thirkleby (Listed 2*)	250	34		2 per month ASA 14 1B /2W/ 1F (2018)	
Kilburn (Listed 2*)	300	31		2 per month ASA 23 1B (2018)	
Bagby (Listed 2)	560	34		2 per month ASA 16 3B /1W/3F (2018)	