



**TWO PARISHES...ONE
HEART FOR MINISTRY**

2025

PARISH PROFILES

**ST MARY THE VIRGIN WHICKHAM
HOLY TRINITY SWALWELL**

STMARYSWHICKHAM.COM

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Our Diocesan Vision - An introduction from Bishop Sarah

This is an exciting time to be exploring joining the Diocesan family in Durham Diocese. We are on the cusp of a fresh chapter in our mission and ministry together. We are currently discerning with the National Church who will be the next Bishop of Durham, called to lead as we seek to make real our vision for the transformation we so desire across our Diocese. We are deeply encouraged by the award this year of significant national funding, demonstrating real confidence in our vision.

Our strategy for transformation and missional growth ('Called to Fruitfulness') is an opportunity and invitation for each of our parishes to step out in faith together, responding practically to our priorities to **Challenge Poverty, Energise Growth, Care for God's Creation and Engage with Children, Youth and Young Adults**. Making this a reality it will look different in every community. In some places it will come about in collaboration with others. Nobody is expected to do everything immediately or alone, but we are all invited and expected to find ways to respond relevantly.

In praying for a new Rector for St. Mary the Virgin Church, Wickham, and Holy Trinity Church, Swalwell we are looking for someone excited by and wanting to be part of this vision and new future. Together we pray hopefully:

Loving God, guiding the people of Durham Diocese faithfully through the years:

*We thank you for saints who have marked our path,
young and old, known and unknown, from all places and in all walks of life.
Help us to find your way in our generation:
transformed by your truth, sharing your life, blessing our communities.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen*

We look forward to meeting together and sharing in this with you.

In Christ,

+Sarah
Bishop of Jarrow
Acting Bishop of Durham



Two Parishes...One Heart for Ministry

Introduction

St. Mary the Virgin Church, Whickham, and Holy Trinity Church, Swalwell, are seeking an inspiring and dedicated Rector to lead our two welcoming parish communities. Rooted in history yet forward-looking, our churches offer a unique opportunity to serve two diverse congregations, build on strong community connections, and develop new ways to share faith and fellowship.

About St. Mary the Virgin Church, Whickham

St Mary the Virgin is a welcoming, community-focused parish in the heart of Whickham, committed to worship, outreach, and inclusive ministry. Rooted in Anglican tradition, it offers regular Eucharistic worship, strong musical leadership, and active lay participation. The church maintains robust community links through events, hall usage, and school engagement. With a stable financial base, well-maintained buildings, and dedicated volunteers, the parish is poised for growth. Priorities include re-establishing family ministry, strengthening local partnerships, and deepening discipleship. St Mary the Virgin seeks visionary leadership to help shape its mission, build on its strengths, and lead the church into its next chapter.

About Holy Trinity Church, Swalwell

Holy Trinity is a warm and welcoming church serving the community of Swalwell, a village with a strong industrial heritage, now developed into an area of diverse housing with small to medium commercial outlets. There are areas of extreme poverty contrasting with areas of moderate affluence. The church plays a vital role in the life of the village, offering spiritual guidance, practical support, and a place for fellowship. With a focus on outreach and inclusivity, Holy Trinity is passionate about connecting with local families and individuals, ensuring that everyone feels valued and included.

The Opportunity

We are looking for a Rector who will:

- Provide spiritual leadership across both churches, fostering faith and discipleship.
- Inspire and engage parishioners of all ages through meaningful worship and pastoral care.
- Work collaboratively with our committed lay leadership teams, two retired ministers and a hospital Chaplin, to ensure sustainable growth.
- Strengthen relationships with local schools and community groups, deepening outreach efforts.
- Encourage innovation while honouring the rich traditions of both churches.

This role offers the chance to make a lasting impact in two parishes that are deeply rooted in faith and eager to embrace fresh vision and energy. If you feel called to lead, nurture, and grow with us, we warmly invite you to explore this exciting opportunity further.

St Mary the Virgin, Whickham

Parish Profile 2025

Parish Mission Statement: *Blessing our communities in Jesus' name for the transformation of us all.*

Introduction:

Whickham is an historic parish that has flourished over the centuries, making it a popular residential area of Tyneside. With a population of around 15,700, Whickham blends the warmth of a close-knit community with the vibrancy of a growing area. Once a bustling village during the peak of the coal mining industry, Whickham has evolved into a mix of housing estates, including council estates, ex-miners' cottages, and 1950s homes, with modern developments continuing to complement the area's charm. The village centre remains the heart of the community, with the Parish Church, as a visible, welcoming presence.

The parish maintains a strong sense of unity, encompassing a balanced demographic of all ages, with many long-standing residents deeply rooted in local traditions and St Mary the Virgin Centre serving as a vital meeting point for numerous associations and groups.

Worship:

Sunday

8am Said Holy Communion (BPC / CW) First Sunday of the month. Attendance approx. 15.
10am Sung Eucharist - every Sunday - Attendance approx. 60+
3pm Sung Evensong - 4th Sunday of month - Attendance approx. 15

Wednesday

10am Said Holy Communion. Attendance approx. 20

Occasional Offices (Data 2024)

Baptisms - Saturday (2nd and 4th of month) - 16
Weddings - 7
Funerals - 28

Electoral Roll (updated this year) Approx 167

Gibside Chapel – The Rector appointed will also be Chaplain of Gibside Chapel. The Chapel is located within a National Trust estate 15 to 20 minutes drive from the Parish. On the 1st Sunday of every month there is a sung service at 3pm. The Chapel can also be booked for weddings.

Mission

The parish is committed to engaging with the local community, including, uniformed organisations, and various community groups.

- **Outreach** includes a Service of Remembrance, Community and school Carol Services, and several musical concerts St Mary the Virgin has a long history of community involvement, with initiatives like Coffee Drop-Ins, Tea Dances and "Mary's Place," a weekly drop-in session offering fellowship and refreshments.
- **Play and Praise** for preschool children has run successfully for over 30 years and, alongside Messy Church, is important for nurturing faith in children and young adults. Whilst Play and Pray continues, Messy Church is currently paused during vacancy. Formerly a monthly afternoon All Age service was held, but was replaced by Messy Church.
- The parish also participates in **Planting Up Wickham and Lighting Up Wickham**. Mothers' Union and Group 67 continue to thrive, and various non-church groups, such as U3A, exercise classes, and community music groups, use the church halls.
- St Mary the Virgin has a legacy of **outreach to local schools**, including five primary schools and a comprehensive school. St Mary the Virgin has representatives on the Parochial School board, including the Chairman. with the Rector serving as a governor at the Parochial School.

Though the community connections have diminished, particularly following leadership changes, efforts to reconnect with other Wickham churches and rebuild these relationships are underway. The parish remains focused on mission and growth, especially in reaching younger people and families, and addressing local poverty and environmental stewardship.

Leadership and governance:

St Mary the Virgin is a welcoming and inclusive church, committed to making everyone feel comfortable, safe, and valued. The church maintains a tradition of high-quality music, affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music. We are currently supported by a retired priest, a Licenced Lay Minister, an APA, a Verger, and an Organist/Director of Music. Lay involvement is central to church life, with roles such as ministrants of the chalice, readers, intercessors, Sacristan and Baptismal Ministers. The church has a long tradition of supporting lay ministry, hosting trainee lay ministers and ordinands. Volunteers also arrange flowers and maintain the silver and linen, and groups like the Mothers' Union, Group 67, and Mary's Place contribute to the parish's vibrancy. The church is led by two experienced Churchwardens and a strong and united PCC, who collaborate as trustees. All members bring different skills and viewpoints to discussions, ensuring that everyone is heard, and decisions are made as a group.

PCC and administration

The parish has four paid staff members: a verger, organist, parish assistant, and cleaner. The Parish Assistant handles St Mary the Virgin Centre administration with volunteer support when needed, including managing the Centre's booking diary and maintaining a register of regular users for both St Mary the Virgin Centre and Rectory Hall.

- **The PCC meets bi-monthly**, with Standing Committees convening as needed, and has two sub-committees—Church Life and Events, and Buildings and Hall Management—which report to the PCC.
- The leadership team includes churchwardens, a Treasurer, DBS officer, and Safeguarding Officer.

- **GDPR and Safeguarding are regular agenda items**, with policies reviewed and addressed accordingly. Safeguarding at St Mary the Virgin is aligned with the diocesan parish dashboard and to national standards.
- The church is also well represented on both the **Deanery and Diocesan Synods** and continues to engage with the community through various outreach initiatives.

Buildings ([click this link to Google Maps](#))

- St Mary the Virgin church is located in the centre of the village. It is a **Grade I listed**, stone-built building with parts dating back to Norman times, and a tower and porch added in the 1300s. The church is rich in history, with several notable monuments in the graveyard.
- Adjacent to the church is the **Rectory**, a semi-detached, stone-built house set in approximately 0.75 acres of grounds. The Rectory is a five-bedroom property, comprising an entrance hall, study, dining room, sitting room, kitchen, utility rooms, and toilet on the ground floor, with five bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. It features a detached garage with an outhouse and parking for four cars, offering panoramic views of the Tyne Valley. The Rectory has recently undergone extensive renovations and modernisation.

The parish also owns two fully accessible buildings in Church Chare, the street leading to the church and a domestic property within walking distance of the Church.

- **The Parish Centre** consists of a lounge, kitchen, toilets, parish office, two upstairs meeting rooms, and a large hall with a stage. The hall capacity is 150.
- **Rectory Hall**, opposite, has a single meeting room, kitchen and toilet facilities. Both halls are used by the community as well as the church.
- **St Mary the Virgin House**, a four-bedroom property adjacent to the churchyard is currently rented out to a private tenant. All buildings are in good condition, with a maintenance schedule managed by the buildings committee, who ensure ongoing upkeep and report to the PCC regularly.

Finance

Finances are overseen by the Treasurer who is a qualified accountant, with regular budget reports being sent to PCC members, and year end statements being subjected to annual independent examination.

- The parish has a **stable financial position** and has an agreed balanced budget in place for 2025.
- Most of the regular congregational giving is made by monthly standing order. A **digital card reader** for giving was introduced recently and this has been useful in increasing collections at services such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- There is an active church life/events committee which provides a valuable source of additional income.

We have been able to maintain **our buildings to a good standard** and there is no outstanding maintenance work for which funding has not been identified. In addition, we have an All Under One Roof buildings fund available to support larger works projects should this be necessary.

Covid impacted our ability to meet the Parish Share Guided Pledge requested by the diocese over recent years. However, we did pay in full whatever we pledged. The PCC has committed to pay an increased amount in 2025 [82% of the Guided amount] and will look to see if the full amount requested for 2026, when this is known, can be met.

Prior to Covid the two church halls were self-sufficient with private rentals. However, lockdown closures with consequential loss of customers impacted income levels. The position is gradually improving as new customers are found.

Conclusion

St Mary the Virgin, Whickham is a parish rooted in faith, tradition, and community. We are proud of our long history, active worshipping life, and enduring presence at the heart of village life. Our church is supported by a committed team of clergy, lay leaders, and volunteers who together sustain a warm, inclusive, and outward-looking community. As we look to the future, we remain focused on deepening our faith, strengthening our outreach, and growing in number and diversity.

Holy Trinity Church Swalwell

Parish Profile 2025

Our Mission

We are committed to being Jesus' disciples by living out our faith, showing love for each other and the community, and acting as the Body of Christ on earth.

Parish Mission Statement: *Live, Share, and Spread the Love of God.*

Our Parish Community

Holy Trinity Church serves the community of Swalwell, Newcastle upon Tyne, in the Northeast of England. Swalwell has strong social and geographical ties with Whickham, where residents frequently access shopping facilities and the local health centre. Swalwell Primary School children typically transition to Whickham School and Sports College for secondary education. Housing estates in both communities are closely linked, and recent changes to parish boundaries reflect a more logical alignment of these areas.

This appointment includes the two parish churches of **St. Mary the Virgin, Whickham**, and **Holy Trinity, Swalwell**. While we may occasionally attend each other's events, we are not formally working together as a group or team at this time.

Holy Trinity Church & Local Community

Holy Trinity is the only place of Christian worship in Swalwell, a village with a population of approximately 3,500. The area features a mix of private and rental housing across various financial demographics, with small areas of affluence contrasting with pockets of real deprivation. The racial composition is predominantly white, with a small number of Indian, Asian and Eastern European families.

Swalwell has a well-used **Community Centre**, a **Primary School**, a **Care Home**, and a variety of commercial organizations. The church plays an integral role in fostering spiritual and social well-being within the community.

Worship and Church Life

- **Sunday Worship:** A traditional Holy Communion service is held at 9:00 AM weekly, using a seasonal Common Worship liturgy. Attendance averages 20 people, but currently, no children are part of the regular congregation.
- **Lay Participation:** Members of the congregation actively contribute by leading intercessions, reading scripture, and administering the chalice during communion.
- **Music Ministry:** Hymns are primarily selected from Hymns Old and New, with occasional modern selections accompanied by guitar. The church features a full piped organ and the church is fortunate to have an experienced organist.

Faith-Based Activities

- **Oasis (Tuesday Afternoons):** A lay-led gathering offering peace, fellowship, and spiritual growth through discussion, prayer, and candle-lighting. Recently, informal Holy Communion services have been introduced, led by our Retired Associate Minister.
- **Messy Church:** Previously held monthly, now redesigned into seasonal events (e.g., Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day and Harvest) to encourage wider participation.
- **Prayer Events:** Holy Trinity hosts a yearly, themed prayer event, providing creative and interactive prayer stations in Church for the community. It is also attended by the wider Deanery.
- **Experience Easter and Experience Christmas:** We invite Year 6 from Swalwell Primary School into Church where we tell the story of Easter and Christmas using areas in the Church to depict different scenes. These are well supported and very much appreciated by the school.
- **Deanery Activities:** In the Deanery Plan Swalwell is aligned with the other Churches west of the Derwent river, Whickham, Dunston, Hillside who arrange joint activities such as Lent courses and activity days.

Community Outreach

- **Lite Bite (Monday Lunchtime, Swalwell Community Centre):** A long running, successful social outreach event providing food and home-made cakes and fellowship. Special themed lunches, such as Pie & Peas, Strawberry Tea, and Christmas Buffet, are highlights of the year.
- **Walking Group:** A social walking group (10–12 participants, both churchgoers and non-churchgoers) meets every 4–6 weeks. These walks provide good opportunities for fellowship and conversation.
- **Music Charity Partnership:** Holy Trinity supports [Community Music Whickham and Swalwell](#), hosting rehearsals and concerts, including the William Shield Festival celebrating the local-born composer of Auld Lang Syne.

Mission and Vision

The PCC is dedicated to exploring new mission opportunities, building on **Lite Bite**, **Oasis**, and the **Walking Group**. We have met recently with the Durham Diocese Mission Enabler and acknowledge that we have good contact with and support people and organisations within the community. There are times when these relationships mean we have opportunities to **share our faith** but would love to develop a deeper theological engagement and strengthen our outreach, perhaps by offering a specific course or mission event.

Finance & Stewardship

- A **small but committed congregation** supports the church through regular giving and an annual gift day in late November/early December. The annual gift day is well supported by the wider community.
- Since re-establishing Swalwell Parish in 2021, we have met our full Parish Share pledges for 2023 and 2024, and we are committed to fulfilling our 2025 pledge despite a decline in income.
- While we maintain **healthy financial reserves**, a significant portion is allocated for a **heating system upgrade in 2025**. Our remaining reserves cover 9–12 months of expenditure, aligning with our **Parish Reserves Policy**.

Church Buildings & Facilities ([click this link to Google Maps](#))

Holy Trinity is a **stone-built church with a slate roof**. Recent refurbishments include:

- **New south roof**
- **Upgraded electrics and lighting**
- **New toilet and kitchen facilities**
- **Reconfigured interior with flexible seating and AV facilities**
- **Enclosed garden space**

The church houses a **large pipe organ**, and its prominent **cenotaph and gardens** are maintained by the local authority. We are awaiting **Faculty approval** for a **new gas boiler, 10 solar panels, and a battery storage unit**.

Governance & Safeguarding

- The **PCC meets bi-monthly**, except during the summer, with formal minutes recorded. Safeguarding is one of the standard agenda items.
- Our **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)** ensures compliance with **Diocesan Safeguarding policies**, conducting DBS checks and organizing safeguarding training.
- Policies covering **Safeguarding, Recruitment, Data Protection, and Digital & Social Media** are reviewed annually and displayed in the church.
- We actively promote **Safeguarding Sunday**, integrating it into our Holy Communion service.

Communications & Online Presence

- Our [Parish Website](#) serves as the primary portal for information on baptisms, weddings, funerals, and news. There is also a gallery of photographs.
- [Facebook Page](#): Engages over 200 followers with updates and community interaction.
- [YouTube Channel](#): Used for video content, particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Church Occasional Offices

In **2024**, Holy Trinity administered **4 funerals, 5 baptisms, and no weddings**, all managed by the Churchwardens. We have 3 baptisms booked for 2025.

While there are no formal additional roles for clergy, past incumbents have served as **school governors and charity trustees**. Holy Trinity is represented at **Deanery and Diocesan Synods** and actively participates in **Deanery-led events**, including Lent courses, activity days, and prayer initiatives.

Conclusion

Holy Trinity Church stands as a **warm, welcoming, and mission-focused** parish committed to faith, community, and outreach. While challenges exist, our foundation is strong, and we seek to **grow, adapt, and serve** in new and meaningful ways.