

The United Benefice of St Nicholas Ribby-cum-Wrea, St Matthew Ballam and St Michael Weeton



St Nicholas Ribby-cum-Wrea



St Matthew Ballam



St Michael Weeton

Parish Profile for the United Benefice - April 2026

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Letter from the Bishop

Thank you for showing an interest in a post in the Diocese of Blackburn.

Our Diocese is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. We have a profound belief in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and communities and expresses a firm commitment to maintaining clergy numbers and investing in the mission of the local church. We therefore seek clergy with a personal faith fiery enough to make new disciples for Christ, with a sincere commitment to the Parish as the heart of the church's mission and with the resilience and courage to bring growth and renewal to local churches. We don't want superheroes. Rather we are seeking authentic, prayerful priests of all traditions who share our passion for confident proclamation and generous service.

What's more, you would be coming to the Diocese at a fascinating time of our Centenary in 2026 themed "All for Jesus". We are in the midst of a major process of listening to God and listening to our County as we discern where God is calling us next, a process that will result in a new strategic vision that will last until 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the Resurrection.

We have also recently been successful in obtaining a grant of £25.5m from the Diocesan Investment Programme run by the national church. This will enable us to:

- Offer a transformed pattern of ongoing training and support to clergy, including sabbatical leave as an expectation for all rather than a treat for the few
- Deploy 30 'Ignite' youth and children's workers to parishes around the Diocese
- Invest in urban areas through expanding the M:Power course for urban leaders, employing 18 Urban Pioneers and re-imagining Christian life in areas of particular challenge.
- Expand our Diocesan Renewal Programme which has led to an average of 6% growth in RWA in participating parishes.

We are a Diocese that is united in defying the declinist mindset that has taken hold of so much of Western European Christianity. Through a firm belief in the power of Jesus Christ to change lives combined with strong pastoral ministry and imaginative developments such as new local congregations, we are seeing growth in churches of all traditions. Strong relationships with our amazing family of 191 schools (95% of whom benefit from practising Christian Headteachers) provide another springboard for mission.

As a Diocese we do all we can to love and treasure our clergy. Our programme of Annual Conversations means that every licensed priest has a 90 minute conversation with a Bishop or an Archdeacon every year about their vocation, wellbeing and spiritual life.



*The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Philip North*



*The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff*



*The Bishop of Burnley
The Rt Revd Dr Joe Kennedy*

We have appointed an Assistant Archdeacon to advise on clergy wellbeing and we work hard to create networks that enable clergy to belong and find mutual support.

Those in their first incumbency are offered especially focused support. This includes participation in a two year Start of Ministry course, advice and care from a mentor and the oversight of our two outstanding Start of Ministry officers.

Lancashire has been described as “The World in One Diocese” and we can offer a vast diversity of parishes. We serve the most deprived communities in the United Kingdom on the Fylde coast and in East Lancashire as well as remote countryside. We are not immune from the particular challenges to ministry provided by an increasingly secular culture and a divided Church. But what brings us together is a profound and shared love of Jesus Christ and a passionate desire that all should know him, and in knowing him find life.

We really hope you enjoy reading this profile and that it provides all the information you need. If this particular post does not feel quite right, please do get in touch about other parishes in the Diocese that are vacant. Most importantly of all, please be assured of our prayers as you discern the will of God for the next stage in your ministry.

Executive Summary of Our United Benefice

- Our United Benefice is situated in a lovely part of the Fylde Coast in Lancashire, close to the seaside resort of Lytham St Annes.
- We have 3 Churches, with distinctly different styles of Worship and vibrant and active Congregations with many associated activities.
- Each has a stable congregation, growing slowly.
- Our Worship covers the broad spectrum of evangelical, catholic and liberal without giving any priority.
- The largest Church is St Nicholas in Wrea Green, which is the base for the Vicar
 - Wrea Green is a quintessential English village, with the Church, School, Pub and duck pond, with cricket on the Green during the summer
 - The village is expanding with considerable recent development.
 - Originally a farming community, now more a commuter village for Preston, Blackpool and Lytham St Annes.
 - Wrea Green has a primary school which is very much part of the Church family.
- St Matthew Ballam, the Mission Church of St Nicholas, is 2-3 miles west of Wrea Green, and supports an essentially farming community
- St Michael Weeton is a similar distance north of Wrea Green. Whilst still substantially a farming community, new housing developments have brought different types of people into the village of Weeton. The village has a small primary school, which shares the same grounds as the Church.
- St Nicholas has a modern (2007) Parish Community Centre attached to the West end of the Church; the village of Weeton has a similar, larger, facility.
- The Vicarage is a modern (1992) 4-bedroom detached house in Wrea Green situated a very short walk from both the Church and the village centre.
- Our new Vicar will be expected to:
 - respect the current broad nature of worship in the 3 churches, whilst helping and challenging us to explore new ways of spreading the Gospel
 - develop and grow the cohesiveness of the United Benefice
 - recognise the differing nature of the communities: rural through to suburban
 - help us to grow our congregations, addressing:
 - the challenge of attracting those who live in our many new housing developments,
 - the current “age gap” in our congregations, who are mainly 50+ with some families with young children
- Personally, our new Vicar will
 - Be a spiritual, prayerful person who will help the whole Benefice and Parishes to grow in their faith
 - Wish to be a central, active part of our Church communities, and of our Parishes.
 - Be an empathetic, supportive leader.

Welcome to our United Benefice



Our Church family, across the United Benefice, offers a warm welcome to our new vicar, to be with us on our journey as we work and worship together trying to fulfil our aim of connecting people to Jesus Christ and each other.

We are looking for a spiritual leader who can help us realize what we are able to achieve in our vision to be vibrant Christians.

We are eager to progress to the next chapter in the life of our churches across the United Benefice, and although there is respect for tradition, we have always been very willing to try new ways of realising our ambition to reach out and be witnesses to Jesus Christ, for all those we serve across our wider community.

Our United Benefice has three Churches with distinctly differing styles of worship and congregations. The largest church and the one where our new Vicar will be based, is St Nicholas in the village of Wrea Green, details about the parish of St Nicholas and the School can be found at Appendix 1.

The mission church of St Matthew, Ballam is a converted school situated in the hamlet of Ballam, in what is very much a farming community. Currently Sunday services are held there fortnightly at 11am, with Holy Communion on the first and third Sunday. They have their own management committee, but it would be expected that the incumbent at St Nicholas would continue to lead services there and maintain 'the cure of souls.' More information about the church of St Matthew can be found under Appendix 2.

The third church in the Benefice, St Michael, is situated in the village of Weeton and has its own Church of England Primary School. It operates independently, having its own PCC. More information on the Church of St Michael can be found under Appendix 3.

The lovely village of Wrea Green is expanding, encouraging new families with young children to live here, giving us opportunities to grow our congregation and spread God's word. We try to make all new residents feel at home with welcome packs and information on village activities and, more importantly, what we do as a church. It is our hope that you would enjoy living amongst us and sharing in our welcome to all who visit or come to stay and share with us in new ways of spreading the Gospel.

The village school is high achieving, and the children enjoy a service in Church every Thursday morning, where adults are also encouraged to join in at that time of worship.

We offer many social events and activities for the young, and the not so young, all led by volunteers. These events are held both in Church and in the Community Centre and are well advertised as we offer a welcome to the wider community. We want our Churches to be places of fun and laughter as well as places of worship. Our main goal for the future is to reach out into our community and swell our congregations through God's power and the Holy Spirit.

Our strength is our united benefice approach through dedicated pastoral care, prayer and encouragement, which has led to increasing attendance and helped to draw our communities closer together, particularly by warmly welcoming families

and young people. We balance tradition with more contemporary worship, encourage wider participation, and inspire creative outreach including open air services and closer links with our church.

We hope you will enjoy reading our Parish Profile and feel that joining us here at our United Benefice of St Nicholas, St Michael and St Matthew, would help to fulfil your own ambitions.

Wrea Green and the Wider Community

Wrea Green is a village in the Fylde Borough of Lancashire, located between Preston and Blackpool, within five miles of the Ribble Estuary to the South and the Irish Sea to the West.

The seaside resort of Lytham St Anne's on the Fylde coast is six miles away, with the adjacent town of Lytham enjoying its large green promenade, iconic windmill and boutique shops. There are supermarkets within easy reach in the adjacent towns of Wesham, Kirkham, Lytham and Marton on the outskirts of Blackpool. At Kirkham, two miles away, there is a weekly market on the ancient market square. Bus and train services link the village to nearby towns, good road access to the M55 and M6 Motorways exist, and both Preston and Blackpool can be reached within 20 minutes. Avanti Trains West Coast links allow access from Preston to London in just over two hours. The airports of Manchester and Liverpool are both one hour away by car. The Fylde Coast is an excellent base for exploring the surrounding countryside. The Lake District, North Wales, the Lancashire Bowland Fells and the Yorkshire Dales are all within a one-hour drive.

There are many excellent restaurants and specialist eating places within the Fylde and in the village itself there is the popular 'Dizzy Ducks' tearoom. The Village also hosts an excellent Thai restaurant and popular local village pub 'The Grapes', villagers are also served by a small convenience Spar shop and local post office.

Agriculture was the main source of employment in and around Wrea Green until after the Second World War. In 1891 the population of the village was 401; in 1951 it was 697; and in 1981 it was 1464. Following recent expansion, the population level is now close to 2000. This provides our Church with new opportunities for outreach and mission. Only a small proportion of the village population now depends on agriculture for their livelihood, the majority being employed in the surrounding towns and cities, mainly in manufacturing and service industries. BAE Systems is a large source of employment in the area, with two major sites within 15 miles of Wrea Green.



The Village Green is the largest in Lancashire and up to the middle of the twentieth century, it was a common grazing space for cattle and horses. Historically there were three ponds on the green, but over time two were filled in and levelled at the request of the cricket team. One pond remains, known as 'The Dub', which is occasionally used by fishermen, and it is home to quite a community of ducks.

Wrea Green remains a charming village and has won the Lancashire 'Best Kept Village' 15 times.

The Green is used by the local Cricket Club - which caters for adults and juniors. The local school uses it for sports

activities, and the Green is also the site of the “Field Day” activities held each year at the beginning of July. The Green also houses many other activities like historic car shows and other charity events throughout the summer.

There is a tennis club in the village with courts and a club house. Within a short walk from the village is Ribby Hall Holiday Village; with gym membership available and luxury spa facilities, restaurants and other amenities which are enjoyed by villagers and holiday makers.

Social centres in the village include the Chef & Brewer ‘Grapes’ Public House and restaurant, situated between the Church and school, they kindly allow us to use their car park on Sunday mornings. The Institute is another social centre in the village, enjoyed by members and providing a larger venue for our church hiring a room for occasions such as a Harvest Family Lunch. There is an area of allotments in the village, with a lively association overseeing activities, an associated orchard and children’s playground.

The Village has a Church of England Primary School with strong links between Church and School, and a Pre-School Nursery. There are very good secondary schools locally, in both Kirkham and Lytham. In Kirkham there is also the highly regarded Kirkham Grammar School. It is an independent school with some scholarship entries based on both academic and sporting achievements.

‘Spotlight’ information compiled by the Church of England, provides information on areas such as Christian affiliation; population; age and ethnicity profiles; household structures; deprivation; employment, schools and qualifications alongside church statistics such as attendance and giving. This can be found by following this link: <https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/Kirkham> (Kirkham Deanery) for the Parish of Ribby-cum-Wrea St Nicholas.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage was built in 1992 and is situated in a cul-de-sac with a 3-minute walk to the Church. On the ground floor there is a large study and two reception rooms together with kitchen, utility and cloakroom. On the first floor there are four good bedrooms, a family bathroom and a shower room. There is a detached double garage to the side of the house. To the rear there is a good-sized garden with lawn and several trees, and the small patio area that enjoys the evening sun; there is a small lawned area to the front. The Vicarage has recently had new double-glazing and a new kitchen fitted.



The Vicarage is close to St Nicholas Church – Wrea Green

Wrea Green Parish Church Community Centre

The Parish Church Community Centre was opened in 2007, providing valuable accommodation for Church and other social activities. It is located to the West end of the nave and provides safe, inclusive accommodation for our regular functions. The use and maintenance of the Community Centre is overseen by the Centre Committee, who meet quarterly. The Community Centre is available for hire to private individuals and organisations when it is not being used by the Church. The monies received from external hirers helps to service the maintenance costs of the building.

The Community Centre offers two spaces: a downstairs room and an upstairs room. The ground floor room has capacity for 40 people and includes a kitchen area. There is also a disabled toilet, and our downstairs space is therefore fully accessible. This downstairs space is the location for refreshments after our Church services, hosts

PCC and sub-group committee meetings/functions and is the home of Nicholas Bear Club.

The upper room can be accessed by stairs or a chairlift to enable our members with difficulties climbing stairs to be able to access this space. The room itself has capacity for 50 people and there is a further toilet on the first floor. The upstairs space is the location for JAM each Sunday and is used regularly by members of our church and wider local community, with activities taking place here including yoga, pilates, table tennis and meditation, amongst many others.

More information about the Community Centre can be found on our website: www.wreagreencentre.co.uk

Ribby-with-Wrea Endowed CofE Primary School



Wrea Green Primary School



School leading Harvest Festival

Ribby-with-Wrea is a small Church of England Primary school situated at the heart of the village of Wrea Green. We have a history stretching back to 1693 and are very proud of the important role we hold in the life and work of the village.

We are in very close proximity to Church and attend a short service each Thursday morning in Church and enjoy special events such as Harvest Festival, held on the Village Green (weather permitting), a termly Eucharist, our annual Carol Service and Confirmation Service (biannually), which is shared with the children from Weeton. We currently have 152 pupils in school with our capacity of 154.

Our pupils come from the Village and other areas on our periphery such as Kirkham and Warton. We were visited by Ofsted in February 2025 and rated Good in all areas. Our last SIAMs inspection was 2019 where we were Excellent in all areas. We expect to be in the SIAMs window again 26/27.



Our school values are *Friendship, Creativity, Respect* and *Hope* and these underpin all the work we do. We see ourselves as a school family and work closely with all stakeholders. We are outward looking and contribute to the local and global networks. Our HALO (Healthy Active Little Ones) group has a partnership with St. Stephens school in Preston. As the Headteacher is retiring from her post in July there will be a new Headteacher in place.

We love our Fischy Music songs as well as more traditional music and our Worship time is lively and fun. We also have an excellent relationship with BSYW who come into school regularly to lead Worship and Workshops. The Vicar is a member of our Trustees and our Governing Body. The Vicar is part of the life of school, attending our Leavers Service and Carol Service. We are well supported by our Trustees and Governors. The behavior of our pupils is excellent, and this is because of our hard-working and dedicated staff team. Ribby-with-Wrea is a wonderful school and our teamwork with St. Nicholas' Church is highly valued.



Appendix 1 – The Church of St Nicholas Ribby-cum-Wrea

Church Buildings



St Nicholas Church was consecrated in 1855. A tower was added to the south elevation in 1885 and the Lychgate was erected in the early 1920's as a WW1 memorial. The Church is regarded as one of the most attractive in the area and is open each day of the year for visitors. The Church has a heritage Grade II listing. The building is in an extremely good state of repair with continual maintenance being achieved. The last quinquennial report was November 2025 with no major problems or repairs highlighted. Our church bells were renovated 2 years ago and we installed a new PA/sound system at the same time.



Rear of Church with the Community Centre to the right

Church Grounds: The grounds are extremely well maintained by a paid gardener. The 'Best Kept Churchyard' category of Britain in Bloom continues to be won on an annual basis.

Church Organisation

The PCC consists of: The Vicar as Chairperson and 10 PCC members, including the 4 Churchwardens and 3 Deanery

Synod representatives - one being a Diocesan Synod member representing our Deanery.

There are several PCC sub committees:

The Standing Committee - prepares PCC agendas, transacting business between meetings if necessary.

The Finance Committee - oversees general finance by budgeting and monitoring our income & expenditure.

The Social Committee - organises a wide variety of events. Some are to raise funds to assist church finances, some to contribute to charitable causes, but all are to encourage a growing fellowship within the congregation whilst seeking to draw more people into our church family.

The Stewardship Committee - is responsible for organising our stewardship campaigns, for managing our Stewardship scheme and, when appropriate, inviting new people to join in with financial giving.

SNAPs (St Nicholas Action People) - is responsible for Mission - communicating with all households is one of their regular tasks. Before Christmas and Easter, cards detailing services are hand-delivered to every home, along with a letter giving information about church organisations, activities and events. An especially important SNAPs task is to co-ordinate the personal delivery of a welcome pack to every new arrival in the village. SNAPs also organise the biennial Parish Weekend away and as ideas arise, plans other faith-enriching or outreach events with the intention of seeking to discern God's will for our church. All activities are rooted in prayer and SNAPs produces regular "Share a Prayer" sheets which are distributed to PCC members and are made available for everyone at the back of church.

The Building Committee - is responsible for maintaining the Church building and the grounds.

The Parish Community Centre Committee organises the use of the Community Centre for our regular functions and use of the facilities by outside organisations.

Worship

At St Nicholas we provide a 'menu of services,' aiming to meet the various needs of all our church members. In addition to worshippers from the local community, our congregations include people who regularly travel from outside of the village. When asked why they come to our church, newcomers often answer:

"It's not just the style of worship but also the friendliness of the welcome plus the provision for children".

Our churchmanship isn't pigeonholed with tight labels. At St Nicholas we have a strongly Christian community outlook, caring greatly about welcome and outreach; valuing sound Biblical teaching and wanting newcomers to quickly feel comfortable with our services. With an impetus for mission, we occasionally arrange creatively focused services and are open to fresh opportunities to present solid Christianity in new ways.

Communion Services include hymns but not sung responses. We seek to reach out to families, children and young people but we also greatly value the more senior members of our church family who appreciate some tradition. Our vicar has worn robes for most services.



Christingle



Springtime Rogation Service

Music within St Nicholas Church: Music is an important part of the life of St Nicholas Church. Our hymn book is currently “Hymns Old and New” but we sometimes use a drop-down screen for new songs. Unfortunately, our organist has decided to resign through the pressures of work and this will present a problem for music going forward as he used to accompany our guitars and flautist on the keyboard. Many regular members of the congregation are part of the choral St Nicholas Singers, with performances throughout the year, within the Church and some members of our St Nicholas Singers, not robed, assist our worship from the choir stalls. With a desire to continually grow our faith and to keep our worship fresh, we value both traditional and new worship material. As an addition to the organ and keyboard-led hymns on Sundays (when we have an organist), over recent years a wider spectrum of accompaniment has been encouraged and introduced; this now includes guitars and wind instruments. This development has facilitated a wider scope of material for worship including more contemporary hymns and choruses, which have proved popular, particularly for elements of the service aimed at young people.

Assistants: The parish has been run by the Vicar; however, support in the shape of an ALM has been warmly welcomed. The Vicar is supported by our 4 churchwardens and one of the wardens keeps all the parish records up to date and is the contact point for funerals.

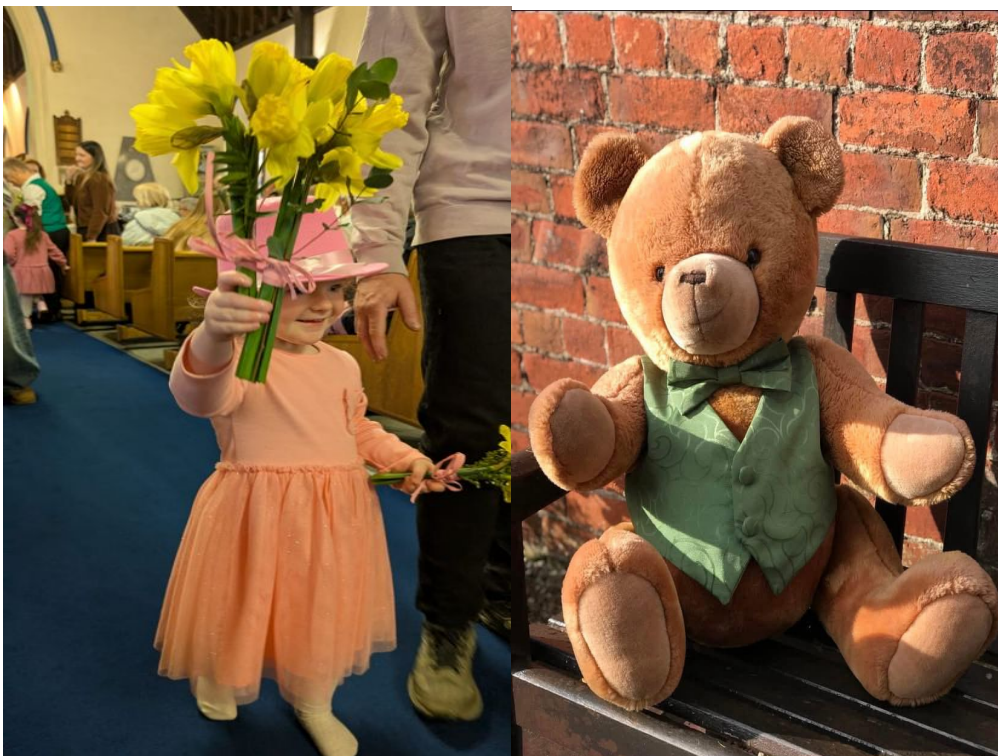
Children’s Work

Children’s Work is given a high priority within the Church and we’re grateful for the dedication of lay leaders who are very much involved. In addition to the school service each week, we offer several different opportunities for children and mums and dads/care givers to hear Gods’ word:

- **Time at the Front:** Each 9:30 Sunday service, when JAM have met, ends with a dedicated children’s interactive talk where the children discuss their teaching in JAM.
- **JAM says ‘Jesus and Me’:** Is our junior church or Sunday school. We assemble in church at the start of the 9.30 service and go into the upper room of the Centre during the first hymn. We are an all-age gathering and spend some time together sharing news and exploring the theme for the day. There may be a game and there is usually an action song. We then split into a younger group and an older group. The young ones have a craft activity whilst the older group look at theme-related material in greater depth. We return to Church to receive communion or a blessing. We share our activities with the Church congregation before the final hymn. JAM have been pleased to organise all age services on Mothering Sunday and for the Nativity. JAM also organises a

celebratory service in November to recognise its inception in the present form in 2007. JAM has a small collection each time they meet and in the last 12 months, JAM has donated £150 to the Marie Curie Cancer Care Daffodil Appeal and £150 to the local Memory Clinic in Kirkham.

- **Nicholas Bear Club:** Meets fortnightly on a Tuesday afternoon between 2.15 and 3.15 in the lower room of the Community Centre. Absolutely everyone is welcome at Nicholas Bear Club sessions, and we are very fond of pre-school children (any age, we love babies) and whoever is looking after them. It is a special time for children and their carers to share and have fun together and to learn a little more about God and the World God made for us to enjoy. The sessions include songs, usually with live music, a story, and a craft activity. There is also time to play with toys and enjoy a drink, a snack, and a chat before finishing in time for those needing to collect older children from school. Nicholas Bear Club provides effective outreach, as those who first start attending may not be people who would go to a Sunday service.



Communion & Blessing: Children in church during communion services are invited to come to the Altar for a personalised blessing. Confirmed youngsters receive communion. Children who demonstrate maturity of faith and have attended a course with their parents, are admitted to Communion before Confirmation.

Other Activities

Parish Weekends Away:



Rydal Hall

St Nicholas have held a parish weekend away at Rydal Hall, Ambleside in alternate years since 2001. Rydal Hall is the retreat centre for the Diocese of Carlisle and is a place of Christian hospitality, tranquility and renewal, set within 30 acres of stunning gardens, woodlands and waterfalls in the heart of the English Lake District. We can't find a better place to visit. The weekend is planned to include worship, fellowship, lots of fun and laughter, but also allows some free time to enjoy the scenic surroundings. We have been blessed with wonderful leaders over the years, including several Bishops. The next weekend away is planned for 10 – 12 September 2027.

Housegroups: There are currently four, lay-led Housegroups meeting in homes regularly to pray and study Bible based courses together. These are an important element in the life of the Church, facilitating deeper knowledge of the Bible and closer fellowship.

St Nicholas Social Committee: Organises a wide variety of events, which raise funds to assist church finances or contribute to charitable causes. Functions encourage a growing fellowship within the congregation and seek to draw more people into our church family. Popular and regular events are the church afternoon tea, hopefully, weather permitting, hosted in lovely gardens and the church BBQ. The social committee also supports many special services with refreshments such as Rogation, Christingle and the Carol Service.

Ladies Christian Fellowship (LCF): Grew out of our long-standing Mothers' Union. The group meets monthly and offers fellowship and friendship to people of all faiths and none. The meetings start with a short act of worship followed by a speaker, then refreshments & social time. Members organise the Christingle Service and Flower Gifts

for Mothering Sunday. The Church, together with charities, receive monetary gifts every year from the funds. Membership is usually around 30.

The Parish Magazine: Is published each month containing details of services, and events with articles provided by both clerical and lay people from all the churches in the United Benefice - including the Roman Catholic Church of St Anne Westby Mills. We see the magazine as both an outreach tool and a service to the community. The content is not all 'churchy' but conveys the open, inclusive church welcome we consider of great importance. It also demonstrates what a lively, active village community St Nicholas is keen to be a part of. In addition to 'spares' being available in church, our team of 23 distributors deliver 350 copies each month to subscribers in the local communities.

Wednesday Get-Together: Was set up to answer a need expressed at a Parish Weekend Away. The group evolved from the 'Pew Runners,' who for many years met to do sterling work creating cushions to improve the beauty and comfort of sitting in Church. Now this friendly group has widened to be a fortnightly 'crafts and conversation' afternoon held in the Centre. It is enjoyed by ladies from various churches or none.

Happy Mondays: A free soup and sandwich outreach project every 4th Monday of the month. We also have tea/coffee, biscuits and a quiz. In December, we hold a free Christmas lunch for our regulars. We place a donation plate out and thanks to the generosity of our guests, donate around £500 annually to the Church and local communities.

Prayer Meetings within Church: Monthly prayer meetings have been recently established. These are lay-led and provide a monthly opportunity for the Church to gather informally to pray, hear Bible passages and to be quiet before God.

Focus @ 4 meetings: Focus @ 4 sessions are led by lay members of the Church and occur quarterly for about 45 minutes in the Community Centre. These sessions provide opportunities for informal contemporary worship, prayer and reflection focusing on a Bible theme and a chance to pray and reflect together.

St Nicholas Singers: Are an independent group and are very important to us. They use church facilities for weekly practices and regularly provide vocal support for major occasions, including the Nine Lessons and Carols Service and they also organise carol singing around the Parish. The Singers also use the church for 2 or 3 choral performances each year, attracting large numbers of people into our building.



Men's Breakfast: Men meet for a simple breakfast in homes for fellowship and discussion on a topical subject.



Ambling and Rambling Groups: There are two organised walking groups, meeting monthly: The Amblers and The Ramblers. The Amblers enjoy leisurely local walks around Lytham and Wrea Green. The Ramblers' walks are a little longer, enjoying the varied countryside and villages within Lancashire. New walkers are always welcome.

Services of the Church of St Nicholas

Sunday Services

Main Sunday Service at 9.30am

These rotate between Holy Communion, three to four times monthly and 'Worshipping Together', usually monthly. Average attendance is between 50-70 adults and around 12-18 under 16's but the church is crowded for festival services. Worshipping Together is prepared and led by various lay people. The list has included: our ALM, our House Groups and JAM.

Midweek Services

Weekly School Service (term-time) is Thursday morning at 0930. The children of our school love coming into church with all the staff for this lively service led by the Vicar. Parents, siblings and grandparents are also encouraged to come along as is anyone else.

Thursday 1030 spoken Holy Communion and is attended by between 12 and 20 people and their refreshments often include cake.

Annual Pattern of Festival and Celebratory Services

Plough Sunday: An evening service hosted by St Matthew Ballam. As the farming year begins, we join them, to ask God's blessing on the land, animals, and crops and on the work of the farming community.

Unity Ecumenical Service: St Anne's RC Church and the churches in our benefice come together to worship followed by refreshments. The host church varies each year.

Lent: Our services & activities during Lent start with a simple Ash Wednesday evening Service.

Mothering Sunday: At the 9:30am Family Service, Ladies Christian Fellowship provides posies of flowers.

Holy Week: Special services have included:

- **Palm Sunday:** Starting at 9:30 on the Green, Palm crosses are given out before we process around the Green then head into Church to continue with the Service, which includes Holy Communion.
- **Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday:** A short Morning Prayer Service, usually led by the Vicar but in certain cases, the ALM can step in.
- **Maundy Thursday Service:** Is always held, said Holy Communion Service in the morning then a Holy Communion Service in the evening, including Stripping of the Altar.
- **Good Friday:** The Hour by the Cross – led by the Vicar or the ALM.
- **Easter Day:** Communion with everyone going outside to decorate the Cross with flowers

Rogation: A springtime peripatetic service hosted by one of the benefice churches. We travel in cars around the Parishes, visiting farms so that farmers can tell us about their work. We pray together, sing and listen to readings, we then enjoy a celebratory supper at the end.

Civic Sunday: On the Sunday following Field Day, a special service is prepared for the 9:30 service, with the Parish Councilors, Rose Queen and her retinue joining us.

Harvest Service with special fruity refreshments afterwards

JAM's Birthday is celebrated in November with children's prize giving and special refreshments afterwards. The service is prepared and led by JAM, leaders, but sometimes the older children have been given most of the responsibility.

Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving: An evening when invitations are sent to people bereaved during the last year, extended to all who wish a dear one to be named.

Christmas

Christingle: The first Sunday of Advent, this is a popular afternoon service for all ages. Monetary gifts collected in the previous weeks are brought to Church to be given to the Children's Society.

Service of 9 Lessons and Carols: with the St Nicholas Singers.

Family Crib Service: Involves a 'Posada' (a wooden box with an egg-shaped Mary and Joseph). Before Christmas, people who took part kept the Posada in their homes for one night, symbolising the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Thus, the Posada travelled onwards through our church community, to be returned to Church at the crib service.



'The Midnight': First Communion of Christmas, an 11:30pm service

Christmas Day: Holy Communion Service at 10:45am



Palm Sunday



Service on the Green



Music on the Green to support our Services

Ecumenical Activity

The Church enjoys good relations and links with the local Roman Catholic Church of St Anne Westby Mills, their priest being Fr Stephen Pearson who is based at Holy Family Church, Warton. The congregation of St Anne held their services at St Nicholas during the replacement of the roof at their own church building. They share our Parish magazine, reporting in it each month. We hold an annual 'Unity Service', taking it in turns to organise the service and we also come together on occasions such as Rogation. It is seen as important to maintain and develop these links.

Overseas Links

St Nicholas Church has links with several overseas groups. There is a direct link with MAFF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) through a family within the Church – several of our congregation continue to maintain financial support for the organisation. Additionally, a member of the congregation raises funds and equipment to support the International Aid Trust in support of Ukraine.

The SNAPs chairman keeps us abreast of churches and people abroad who are persecuted for their faith. He ensures we include emergencies and injustices in our prayers, updating us with the results of specific prayer.

Through specific appeals and fund-raising events, St Nicholas has assisted with the Toilet Twinning Scheme, supported other overseas charities and responded to emergencies

Finances

The following statement is an excerpt from the 2025 Annual Report:

During the year we have incurred a surplus of £8,990 for the year, made possible with a £5,000 legacy and a single gift of £3,000. Both receipts were unanticipated resulting in an increase of cash resources to £54,604. The cost of Ministry is £62,607, including a contribution of £54,000 to the Diocesan Parish Share, which largely provides for the stipends, pensions and housing for the clergy. We continue to pay an amount of Parish Share that St Nicholas church can fund at present.

The “fixed” cost of ministry at £62,607 is 70% of our regular annual expenditure of £89,679 incurred in the cost of running and maintaining the church, leaving £26,072 as “variable” costs and there is little margin to reduce this expenditure. These costs include the Quinquennium Architects fee of £1,410. The Churchyard deficit of £2,696 was also included in these running costs.

We report that the Parish Church and Community Centre made a deficit of £2,979 in 2025. This was largely due to maintenance expenditure of £3,930 but the rise in Income from the hire of the Centre mitigated some of these extra costs. The Centre has reserves of £7,807.

It is PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (if possible) which equates to approximately 12 months’ unrestricted payments, to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time. The balance of £55,688 on unrestricted funds at the year-end compares with an expected unrestricted expenditure of circa £90,000 in 2026.

In December an application for Charity Commission registration was completed and the process provided our unique registration number **1216323**. This will be used in all PCC communications. The PCC will comply with the requirements of the Charity Commission in terms of financial control and reporting.

Our Vision, Our Faith – St Nicholas Consultation

We are looking for a Vicar who will be able to lead us in developing and growing the three congregations of St Nicholas Wrea Green, St Michael Weeton and St Matthew Ballam. We have an aspiration to grow in both faith and number and we also want to continue developing our close relationships across the parishes of the Benefice.

The congregation at St Nicholas have responded to a month-long consultation regarding their views and opinions as we search for a new vicar. They have looked at: What they particularly like about Ministry and Worship at St Nicholas Church (our Strengths); What they would like to change about the way the Ministry and Parish works (our Weaknesses) and finally What Religious and Pastoral Aspirations they have going forward. Whilst there was an expected wide range of views expressed, the following notes are a summary of the consensus opinion.

Our Strengths: There is unanimous agreement that our church is a warm, welcoming and relaxed place that genuinely embraces everyone from the whole spectrum of the Anglican Faith – we really are a broad church, and we are proud of that! We have a very hard-working but small group that supports children’s work and, through the children, the young families in the village. The children literally bring joy into the Church as they join us towards the end of the services, and the families are very much at ease in Church. We have a great number of parishioners who support one another and give up their time, talent and gifts to run extra-curricular activities, which are widely enjoyed – some of them designed as Outreach Projects where they are very popular. We are fortunate to be able to occasionally enjoy services on the Village Green and this allows us to take our fantastic family atmosphere to a wider audience.

Within the church family, our house groups are reasonably well attended, although potential exists for wider membership. Many parishioners join in with the additional prayer and worship groups, throughout the month,

that allow them to expand their understanding of the Bible beyond the traditional Sunday and Thursday services. Music plays an important part in our worship although we have recently lost the services of our talented resident

organist. We do have guitar players and a flautist who support our services with more modern worship songs, which we very much enjoy, although we are in the process of searching for an organist/pianist/keyboard player to support them. As an expanding village, we have had a recent influx of young families into the area, this is viewed as a source of potential growth within the Church although we seem to struggle to convert the numbers into regular parishioners. With this in mind, we accept the changing world of today and the need to move with the times as outdated and overly-traditional views may alienate the children and their parents who are, of course, our future.

We have many talents within the Church both in practical skills and in the presentation of the Gospel. The leading of our house groups is shared by people who read through the scriptures and pass on their understanding to others within that group. We have very good attendance numbers for children and offer opportunities for the spreading of the Gospel to them and, as the older children move towards confirmation, we want to take them and their families beyond that point and into further studies through worship courses and youth-focused programmes.

As part of the consultation process, there was an alternative vision/opinion voiced, that wanted us to move into a stricter version of religious teaching where the authority of scripture was absolute. This was not the consensus view and there was a significant and vocal backlash that reinforced our desire to remain broad in appeal and accepting of the changing face of society. The consensus is that our congregation embrace the Evangelical, Catholic and Liberal traditions without prioritizing one above the other – this broad approach has proved very effective over the years and is a cornerstone for us.

Our Weaknesses: Due to the time constraints placed on an incumbent with such wide responsibilities, many wish that the Vicar could be more ‘visible’, for example joining us for coffee after Holy Communion rather than having to leave for another service within the Benefice. Alongside strengthening our personal relationship with the Vicar, it is felt that this would also help to establish stronger links with the young people and their families. Along the same lines, there is widespread support for more in-depth bible studies, possibly through an Alpha or Emmaus course that would encourage younger people to grow their faith. There is also a desire for closer links and spiritual guidance between the Incumbent and the house groups.

The issue of young families is significant because we recognize that we have a gap in our congregation between early teens and the fifty-somethings. This is potentially fertile ground where many in this age group are looking for something outside of the Internet/online contact. Addressing this weakness will be key going forward as we look for leaders of our church in the future as well as broadening support generally across our worship and church community activities. In line with this weakness is the fact that we do sometimes struggle to find ways to engage and communicate with this wide age group without putting them off by appearing to be too traditional or formal. However, many of our parishioners very strongly support Holy Communion services – they want and need to share Communion. This means that converting Holy Communion services to more relaxed family services, which we do once a month, (appealing to the young families) will always be a fine balancing act that we must address.

Our Religious and Pastoral Aspirations: Of course this question generated the outliers of opinion from right across the spectrum; again, a consensus is summarized below.

In our new vicar, we are looking for someone who is able to take us out of our comfort zones and into new aspects of our Christian lives, challenging us in our thinking, inspiring us, keeping us on our toes and giving us a thirst for more.

The Vicar will help us to discover what God has planned for us, improving what we do well and developing the great potential that exists for spreading his word into our community through delegating and empowering lay members.

Going forward our focus must be outward and on the whole parish, to touch everyone in our community: those that join with us in our worshipping and all those, the greater majority, who have yet to find the love of Jesus. In

doing so we must find new ways to take the spirit of Christ out beyond our traditional focus on services and events in our church buildings, and with God's help to find relevance to the lives of everyone.

We have prayed together as a Church and continue to do so asking for guidance in finding the right person. We believe our new Vicar will have the following attributes:

- Be a spiritual, prayerful person with a desire to help the whole parish and United Benefice to learn more about God.
- Be someone who recognises where we are as a Church and has enthusiasm, energy and drive to help us move forward to grow God's Kingdom.
- Be able to encourage and lead the Church in spreading the Gospel in new ways in our parish with confidence but also respect our traditions and forms of worship – someone who can help us find the right balance.
- Be someone who can manage their time well and who recognises the need to look after their own spiritual growth, health and welfare.
- Be a person who can help and encourage others to grow and become lay leaders.
- Be a person who takes the time to get to know the people in our Church community and is sensitive and responsive to their needs.
- Someone with a sense of humour and a love of music, traditional as well as modern.
- Someone who encourages Weddings, Baptisms and Church Funerals.
- Be able to develop youth-focused programmes.
- Have the ability to continue growth through encouraging new activities that will have wide appeal and bring together people of all faiths within the Community.
- Someone with a ministry for children and young people. They are important to us and the growth of our church and community. We asked our young people several years ago for their input and this is what they said they wanted from a new Vicar – it is still applicable today!!

Our New Vicar – What qualities would you like to see?

CHILDREN'S SUGGESTIONS

Fun, good with children but make the adults laugh too – willing to make changes in the church, teaches the Bible in a fun way

Forward thinking

To be able to be silly with the smaller children but great at getting the message across

Kind, loving, funny, jolly and understanding

To like Music

*Not like a teacher
-Not like a headteacher*

Charismatic (in a good way)
Good with children, fun, passionate about the

Inclusive of all ages and abilities

To be like a Mummy, a Daddy and a Sister

Very kind, Fun, Wiling to make changes, Teaches the Bible in a fun way

Young - a lady

Friendly, Fun and Accept all Children

Be Warm and Caring

To Be Happy ~ To Like Children

Great at talking and Confident

Jolly good fun

Godly, Trustworthy Peaceful and Friendly

Take Time for Families

To be like a Leader

Fun - Kind
-Like children - Energetic

Trusting and Faithful

Appendix 2 - The Church of St Matthew, Ballam

A Parish Profile (2026)

Welcome to our Parish Profile. We hope that the information contained within helps you form a clear picture of St Matthew's, where we came from, who we are now and what we hope for in the future.



Past

St Matthew's has a proud history. Our church building dates back to 1881 when it was first handed over by Lady Eleanor Clifton as a school for the children of the Ballam area. The opening school register showed an intake of 74 pupils. The school - also in use as a mission church - remained an integral part of the local community for close on a century before closing in the mid-1970s. However, an extraordinary meeting unanimously decided to retain the building as a church, and it became a dedicated place of worship.

The name St Matthew's, directly connected to the founding fathers of the village, was assigned. No other building in the Deanery was named after St Matthew. On June 29th 1985, a service was held at which the Bishop of Blackburn delivered the licence to officially give the building its name as a church.

Present



St Matthew's is managed by a Church Committee and a Board of Trustees and our congregation (mainly middle-aged or elderly) has a long and faithful association with the Parish. Our Sunday services attract an average attendance of 18/20.

We are situated in an agricultural area and many of the farming families involved date back through several generations.

Some of our most popular services include 'Plough Sunday' and 'Harvest' (which attract visitors from neighbouring churches and include renowned refreshments provided by our parishioners). On the annual 'Rogation Sunday' we either host or join with other local parishes for a hugely popular event which sees up to a 100 people visiting local farms to listen to stories/lessons and sing hymns/songs.

In the past six years we have organised a series of Charity Concerts which have proved extremely popular.

We have been entertained by Shanty Singers, Sixties Bands, Youth Theatre, Guitar and Keyboard vocalists and Folk Musicians. Attendances averaged 60 and we now have more than 80 names on our database.

The concerts have attracted people from across the Benefice and further afield ... including a significant number who had never been to the Church before.

The profits have been shared between the Church and many local worthy causes, and the contribution has helped keep St Matthew solvent throughout recent years.

We have also re-introduced the famous Garden Party, complete with marquee on the lawn, and hosted many other events and meetings.

In an ideal world, we would like to increase use of the Church premises through more community events (coffee morning's, exercise classes, children's clubs etc), but we rely on a very small team of people to share the workload involved in such matters. Therefore, we are looking to expand our long-standing social committee and continue to look at ways of utilising the building.

Our local Parish Council hold monthly meetings at St Matthew's, and we also serve as a venue for local and national elections.

There is a new housing development within and close to our parish boundary, and we continue to strive to attract new people to our church. These potential 'new people' are our future, and everyone is committed to extending the hand of friendship.

In terms of finance, our main outlay is the regular monthly contribution (Parish Share). We also have the additional burden of on-going repairs and renewals, but we have always managed to pay our way.

However, in more recent times we have shown a deficit in our accounts, leaving us to dip into our general fund and money we have inherited via gifts from parishioners. The success of the charity concerts has helped to offset this.

For our Sunday services, we have a rota of dedicated sidesmen, flower donators, readers and a first-class organist. Our church building is in excellent order, clean and compliant with all matters of health and safety (complete with

car parking for around 20 vehicles, toilets and kitchen facilities) and our external gardens and paths are tended to

by parishioners.

We may not be many in number, but we always seem to find someone ready to step up to the plate when the need arises!



Future

From our small but solid platform, our loyal parishioners are committed to working alongside our new Vicar to help to create a St Matthew's capable of taking on (and overcoming) the many challenges which lie ahead. We accept that this is a time of uncertainty for the church family at large and we hope the next incumbent will take time to understand the specific needs of our people and our parish; someone sympathetic to our agricultural

roots, who will help to protect and try to grow our parish and also strengthen links with the expanding local community.

There is a firm Christian base at St Matthew's and a heartfelt belief that we can look forward with confidence, but also a realism that we must unite behind a positive outlook.

A continuing Sunday service (currently bi-monthly) is of paramount importance and, of course, the basis for everything we do.

Here are a selection of comments from parishioners across their personal preferred 'profile' for a Vicar:

- "Someone aware of rural life and the demands of farming, willing to deliver more than just the Sunday service and prepared to engage with our community."
- "Pastoral care - especially when people are ailing/bereaved or unable to attend Sunday services. Someone who interacts to ensure everyone feels part of St Matthew's."
- "As this is a farming community that has stood the test of time; we would like a vicar with an understanding and knowledge of our heritage."
- "The future of St Matthew's lies in the new (and younger) people we can attract. We have a strong foundation, but like most rural parishes it is imperative that we grow through the next generation. We need a minister with a modern outlook, someone who can recognise the past but, more importantly, relates to the here and now."
- "Someone who is committed to protecting the continuing presence of St Matthew's."





Appendix 3 – The Church of St Michael, Weeton

The Church

The church dates from 1842 and is the daughter church of St Michael, Kirkham whose Vicar is the Patron. It is situated in between Weeton and Great Plumpton, overlooking a wood to the east and green fields to the west with Blackpool in the distance. Villagers are proud of, and visitors often comment on, the simple country beauty of the church and the well maintained churchyard.



Under the leadership of Rev Philip Chew, St Michael's membership of the United Benefice has gone from strength to strength. There has been cooperation and sharing of events between the three churches, one example being the joint Good Friday services shared at the three church sites. We have also moved forward in the technological world, having purchased an Audio Visual system, which together with a new music system allows us to have a full variety of music to accompany our singing. We have installed a new heating system, which can be remotely controlled. All these innovations have been largely funded by Community Charity grants which we have been fortunate to receive recently. We are known as a warm and welcoming church.





The congregation of St Michael is mainly made up of retired people, but we are delighted to see that the

numbers of younger adults and children are increasing; so much so that we are in the process of starting a Sunday school and also finding other ways to encourage the congregation to participate in the services. Our main weekly service is on Sunday at 11 am. Two people are authorised to assist in the administration of communion and we look forward to the new incumbent leading us in more new ventures. There is a variety of churchmanship in our congregation, which is happily accepted and accommodated.

Finance

The accounts for 2023 and 2024 showed a surplus of income over expenditure. We have joined the Parish Giving Scheme and nearly everyone who previously contributed by Gift Aid envelopes has moved over to this which is proving to be much more efficient. We have further modernised our giving by the purchase of a card reader. We are fortunate that we have supporters who are willing to contribute to our upkeep even though they are not regular churchgoers.

The Schools

The aided primary school is next door to the church and is going from strength to strength; there are presently 59 pupils on roll. They enjoy weekly visits from the Vicar to take an assembly. It is important that the incumbent is on the board of governors. The pupils use the church on many occasions and there is a close bond between school and church enhanced by a path from the school to the church. The pupils take the lead in several services during the year much to the delight of the congregation. We are very pleased that the Headteacher is a member of the PCC.

YEAR OF PRAYER



Today, we are praying for

Weeton
St Michael's C of E
VA Primary School





Weeton Barracks also has its own primary school. The Barracks has its own Padre.

There are popular secondary schools close by to which the children move.

The Community

Weeton joins with a larger village nearby called Staining, to form a Ward of Fylde Borough Council, served by two councilors. The parish church covers the local authority parish councils of Weeton with Preese, Westby with Plumpton, and Greenhalgh with Thistleton.

Whilst the area is very much a farming community, the number of farms has decreased as in the rest of the country, and farm buildings have been converted into private residences, occupied mainly by professional people who have moved into the area.

90% of housing is owner occupied. There have been three housing developments in recent times, some of which has provided social housing that increased the number of properties owned by a Housing Association and provided the opportunity for families with young children to remain in the area. Another recent building application has been made for a further 49 houses. We are very encouraged to see people from these new houses becoming members of our congregation.



Weeton Village Centre

Although there are no shops in the village, there are many supermarkets within easy reach and the nearest post offices are approximately two miles away in Wrea Green or Wesham. Doctors' surgeries are in Kirkham, which is three miles away. The nearest hospital is Blackpool Victoria. A mobile library visits Weeton and Great Plumpton

and a book exchange has been established in the redundant telephone kiosk.

Each summer the Church organises a Garden Party and Rose Queen Festival. This is a lovely traditional community event for which everyone, no matter what religion, works hard. A band accompanies a procession round the village and this is followed by teas, stalls and children's amusements at the village hall.



We were very fortunate that a housing developer also built a new village hall, which is a tremendous asset. It has two large rooms and a smaller committee room. It is very well used and run by an active committee that also puts on events to provide entertainment for the village.



There is a very popular pub/restaurant in the village. There is also an Indian restaurant in Greenhalgh.

Two bus services go through the village every hour to link with nearby towns and villages, and the railway station is only two miles away. Junction 3 of the M55 is just outside the parish boundary.

The village police officer has been withdrawn and the area is now patrolled by an officer and a community support officer who cover other areas as well.