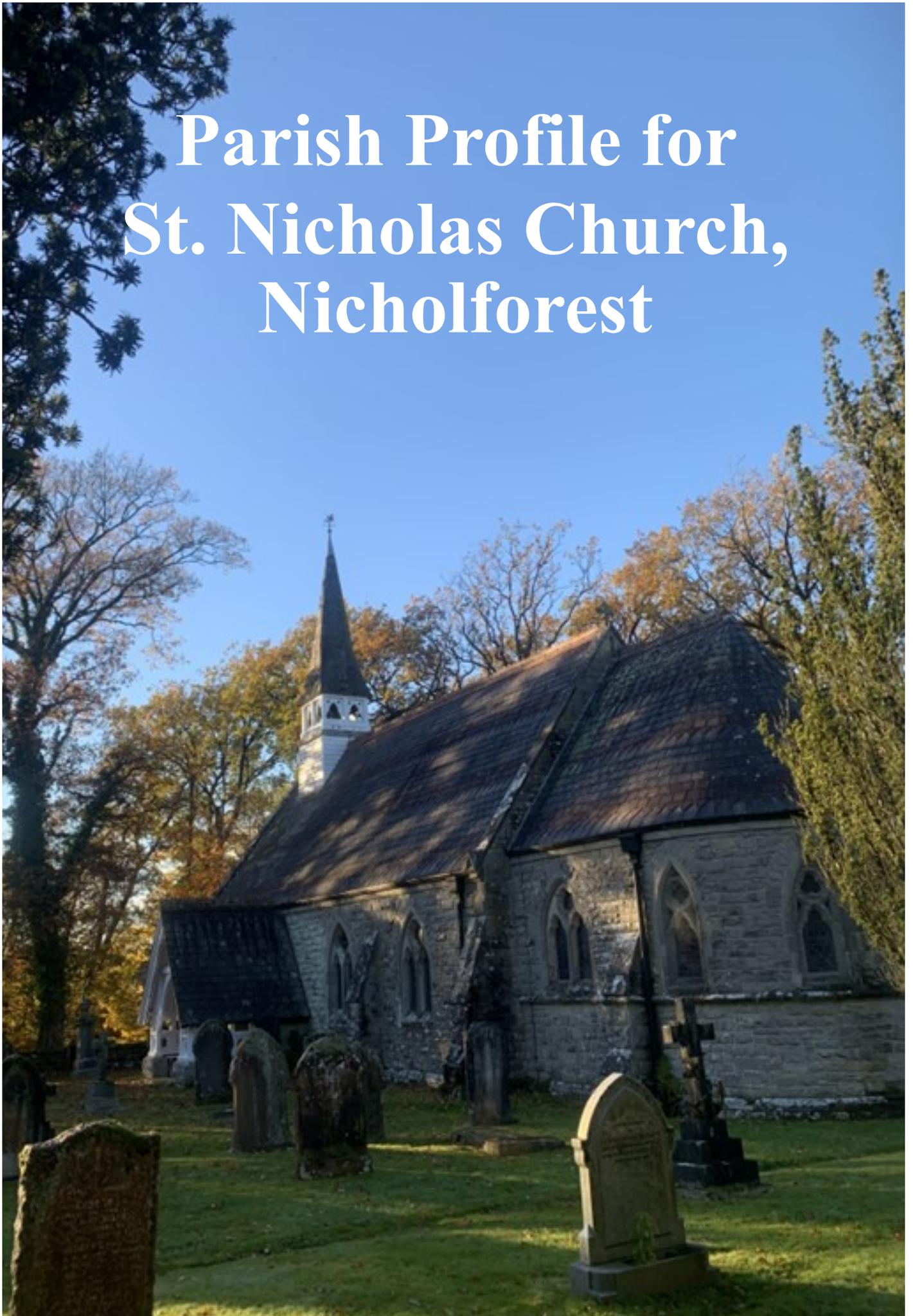


Parish Profile for St. Nicholas Church, Nicholforest



1: Summary of the profile

Who we are:

Nicholforest is a small, friendly, inclusive and deeply rural church community with a mainline Anglican churchmanship. We believe in being a constructive body within the community, accepting to all and in getting on with things with minimal fuss.

Nicholforest is part of the Benefice of the Esk Parishes and, whilst each church has its own distinct identity, we share our Rector and ministry team with the other two churches in the benefice, work well with them and regularly share services and other activities, particularly with Kirkandrews on Esk with which we have strong historic ties.

“Serving the parish of Nicholforest has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The location along the English-Scottish border is stunning. The community, mainly of farming stock, are welcoming, and friendly, working in close harmony to enhance and cement community relations. They are also a people of faith, shown in church attendance and a determination to maintain the faith among young and old for future generations. The future priest will know great blessing in ministering here.”

What we offer you:

- ◆ A dedicated and energetic PCC, church, and volunteers from the wider community.
- ◆ A church that is well integrated into the community.
- ◆ A supportive local community.
- ◆ An attractive historic building, suited to the size of its congregation, comfortable and in good repair.
- ◆ Sound finances.

What we are seeking from you:

- ◆ A pastoral heart that will listen and get to know the church and wider community and work with us. Historically we have learnt the importance of this and will be sensitive and responsive to this gift.
- ◆ To enable us to discern the gifts of all our members and help us to develop them and so equip us for greater outreach and growth.
- ◆ A love for, and use of, the Book of Common Prayer in services.
- ◆ Flexibility.

Our vision for the future:

Our Mission Action plan is currently in preparation.



Coronation Day 2023

“Our church provides a sense of security and reassurance in an uncertain world. It is a place where, as the years go by and one generation gives way to the next, people can find solace, joy, companionship, spiritual nourishment and a feeling of belonging.”

“As an incomer I love the acceptance the church has shown me and how people just ‘muck in’ when something needs doing. I have grown very fond of Nicholforest during my short time in the area.”



Christingle Service 2023

2: The broader context :

We are part of the deanery of Brampton within the Diocese of Carlisle which is currently in the process of organising its 31 churches into a single Mission Community around three hubs, one of which is in nearby Longtown. The current benefice is to be joined with the neighbouring benefice of Rockcliffe and Blackford in the near future, creating a five parish hub. The opportunities and challenges that this will present have yet to be experienced, but are clearly a source of concern for many.

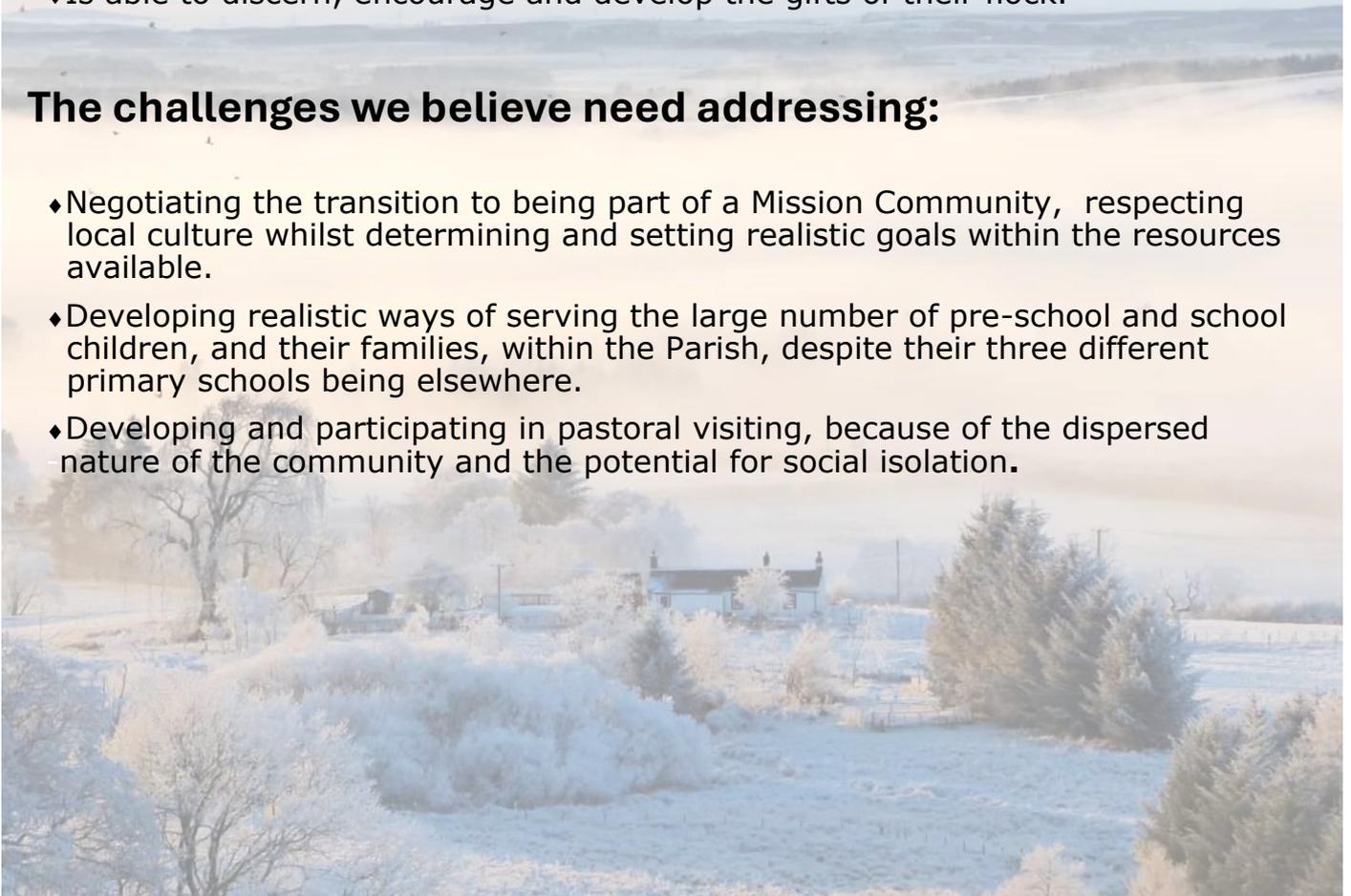
3: The vicar we need:

We believe that we need someone to help us recognise and develop our gifts and fulfil our potential in Christ. We therefore look for someone who:

- ◆ Is a person who is led by God in prayer but who also has the humility to test and refine their vision through the contributions of others.
- ◆ Is good with people and comfortable with them across a wide range of backgrounds.
- ◆ Is familiar with the particular demands of and opportunities offered by a dispersed rural ministry.
- ◆ Is patient, taking time to observe how things are done and what works, but then having the courage to suggest improvements and the creativity to spot new opportunities.
- ◆ Is able to discern, encourage and develop the gifts of their flock.

The challenges we believe need addressing:

- ◆ Negotiating the transition to being part of a Mission Community, respecting local culture whilst determining and setting realistic goals within the resources available.
- ◆ Developing realistic ways of serving the large number of pre-school and school children, and their families, within the Parish, despite their three different primary schools being elsewhere.
- ◆ Developing and participating in pastoral visiting, because of the dispersed nature of the community and the potential for social isolation.



4: About the parish

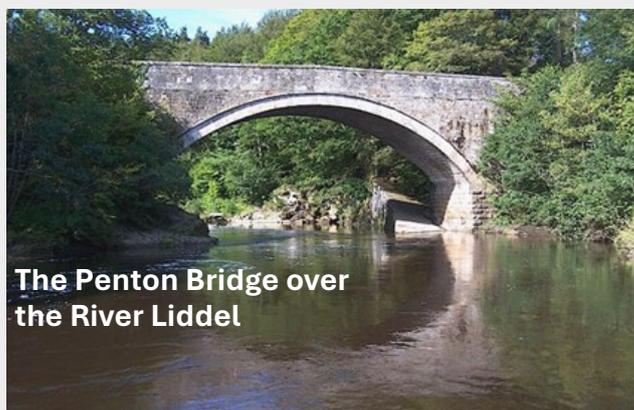
Nicholforest parish is located on the Scottish border in beautiful rolling countryside in an area known as Penton. The parish borders the parishes of Bewcastle, Stapleton, Arthuret and Kirkandrews on Esk.

The community is highly dispersed and the economy largely agricultural with a long tradition of helping one another out and of ignoring the border.

Carlisle, 17 miles south, is the nearest city and Longtown, 8 miles away, the nearest town. Alongside farming and forestry, there is tourism, hospitality and light industry. There are also a few entrepreneurial businesses which have started, or are in the process of being set up, such as a distillery and a micro-brewery. A new development is underway at Haithwaite Farm, it is hoped that it may bring further local employment. A significant number of parish residents work in Carlisle.

“Nicholforest Church has been part of my life for the past forty years. For thirty two years I was a member of the PCC, twenty of them as a Church Warden.

I have now retired and no longer live in the parish but I cannot keep away! I attend most services and feel at home and at peace in this beautiful rural church.”



The Penton Bridge over the River Liddel



The first Christingle after Lockdown

“We came to Penton from outside the area four years ago and received a warm welcome from the Nicholforest Church community. It has been a joy to make friends and be a part of the life of the Church.

As the local councillor for these rural parishes, I see firsthand what an important role all three Esk Parishes Churches play in our local area.”

“My take on this verse and what I hope our new vicar brings:

Jeremiah 29:11

God declares

‘I think of you and

I have plans

For you;

Prosperity and a

Future filled with hope.”



5: About the church

The church as a worshipping people:

The current electoral roll is 52.

The number of attendees at services during the past year has ranged from 9 to 33 for normal services, and 66 to 72 for special services such as Christingle and the Carol Service with the Lamb Service at the Village Hall also attracting 72 adults and children.

Our congregation includes a variety of ages, from a variety of backgrounds, including agriculture and associated industries, although many are retired.

We believe in being open and welcoming to all in Christ's name, not believing gender to be a barrier to ministry, divorce a preventative to remarriage, or that any child or adult believer should be denied baptism.

We use the BCP and Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised in our services.

There is a weekly Sunday service, with the fourth service each month being shared with Kirkandrews. We are able to do this because of the contribution of our Esk Parishes' Ministry Team to parish life and we look forward to seeing how this team develops when we join with Rockcliffe and Blackford and their team. Fifth Sundays have a joint benefice service, revolving between the churches of the benefice.

Refreshments and an opportunity to chat and mingle are provided after the Sunday service.

In the past year there have been one wedding, three baptisms, three funeral services with burial, and three interments of ashes.

Special services are well attended, are part of local tradition and include:

- ◆ The Lamb and Farmer thanksgiving service in the village hall – a very popular event.
- ◆ The Harvest Festival. A harvest supper and auction are held in the village hall.
- ◆ Saint Nicholas day services.
- ◆ Remembrance Day service.
- ◆ Easter week services.
- ◆ Christmas services, Carol service, and Christingle.

Implementation of the Diocesan Safeguarding policy is well underway and the dashboard is being populated to aid this process.



Fell ponies, Cumbria's native pony, born and bred in Penton.

The church and the community it serves:

Despite its roughly 400 inhabitants being dispersed over an area 10 miles by 2 miles there is a strong degree of community engagement within the parish including events such as the annual international sheepdog trials, the monthly Nicholforest Exchange and the soft play group, a pop-up bar twice a week and activities such as the Women's Institute, a discussion group, keep fit, badminton and Scottish dancing.

Many of the above events are held in the village hall which is a hub for the community and a frequent venue for the many fund-raising and social events which are such a large part of the church's outreach into the wider community.

Community support for the church building and grounds is strong and the maintenance of both churchyard and fabric is largely carried out by unpaid volunteers who do not attend services but value the peace that the building and grounds provide.

"I'm too busy to go to church regularly, but I love how welcoming everyone is when I do bring the children to the special family services like the Lamb Service, and the carols and Christingle. We're really made to feel at home and I regard Nicholforest as 'my' church, even though I don't go there very often."



The building and resources:

The church of St. Nicholas is a cosy grade 2 listed building, with many attractive features. It was built in 1866, and is in good repair having had much work done on it recently and there being no major issues identified in the most recent Quinquennial Report (April 2021) that have not been addressed. It seats about 170 It has an effective central heating system, wheelchair access and a loop system together with a single manual pipe organ with a pedal board.



The churchyard is well maintained and kept open. Plans are in progress to create a garden of remembrance, open to all, for the interment of ashes.

There is no church hall, the church preferring to use the nearby modern village hall for larger events, attracting a greater proportion of the local community.

Finances are sound and we have always contributed our full portion of the Parish offer. We raise our funds through our regular offerings, occasional offices and a variety of fundraising events. Christingle and Remembrance day collections go to the respective charities.



Harvest Auction 2023



Nicholforest Lamb Service 2024



Our resident peacock



Harvest Supper 2023



Blessing the lambs 2024



Penton Annual International Sheepdog Trials



Tractor & Quad Show 2023



Nicholforest Lamb Service 2024



Decorating the church for Christmas 2023

