

The Parish Profile for the Benefice of

St. Mary the Virgin, Baldock.

St. Margaret of Antioch, Bygrave.

"Building with Christ"



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Benefice Vision Statement – Our Mission and Ministry

- The Benefice of Baldock with Bygrave is situated in North Hertfordshire in the Diocese of St Albans. It offers an exciting blend of ministry in both a town and rural environment in communities that are set to grow.
- We offer a small but enthusiastic ministry team, two separate, supportive PCCs as well as active Friends charities and a sympathetic deanery chapter to work alongside you in your ministry. There are also strong church connections with the civic life of the community.
- As our new Rector, you will lead our traditional worshipping communities to grow in ways we have yet to discover, while continuing to ensure our churches are focal points for the wider community.
- You'll help us to build on the firm foundations that we have forged with the two Church Schools in the Benefice.
- You'll join us in our wider appreciation of the impact of climate change as we discover how, as a church, we can influence and demonstrate to the community we serve, how to live in harmony with God's Creation.
- You will strive with us to make the churches welcoming to all, and together we will offer services, and opportunities to know Christ, that appeal to a wide range of ages.

**St. Mary the Virgin, Baldock.
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The Ministry Team

Our ministry team comprises:

- a Reader, who takes funerals, carries out pastoral visits, takes assembly at one of our church schools once a week, a service in a local care home once a month and is involved routinely in worship.
She enjoys leading non-eucharistic all age interactive services when required, leading prayers on a weekly basis and organises the weekly mid-week Tiny Tots Singalong.

Our Reader is our primary driver for environmental matters, converting part of our churchyard into a 'bee and butterfly friendly' garden. We feel this represents a visual reminder to all who walk through our churchyard of our commitment to engaging in a positive way to preserve God's creation.



- 2 Lay Leaders of Worship, based at Bygrave, who take Morning Worship one Sunday a month, take Communion to the housebound and also lead the service in a care home in Baldock.
- Junior Church Leader at Baldock, who organises Junior Church which runs during the main 09.30am service and organises the Nativity play which takes place in a Sunday service slot early in December.
- Several volunteers are involved in pastoral support, taking Communion to the housebound, and undertaking much appreciated bereavement visiting.
- In services we have a rota of intercessors and people to deliver bible readings which supplements the minister leading the service. We have a crucifer (shared on a rota basis) to lead the procession at the service and a robed deacon or server to support the priest. Other volunteers help set up, provide teas and coffee after the service and run the live streaming for those who can't attend in person.
- Elected PCC Roles include –
 - A Churchwarden.
 - 2 Deputy Church wardens.
 - Treasurer.
 - Secretary.
 - Parish Administrator, who is employed for 2 days per week.
 - Safeguarding Officer.



Our journey to date – what we've achieved and what we're proud of!

The Benefice contains two very different communities, but ones that have grown together during the vacancy through working collaboratively and providing support to each other.

We have benefited from a Rector who has led us through many changes, helping us to discover and grow, balancing the challenges of a large very traditional church in a thriving town community and that of a smaller rural community and church.



During his 18-year tenure, our incumbent inspired a number of wonderful achievements. These include:

- a midweek tiny tots service for babies and toddlers
- a monthly Sunday Messy Church for pre-school and primary aged children
- fostering close relationship with both the Church Infants and Junior Schools in Baldock.
- an amazing music group and a modern 'Praise Be' Band.
- funding of a youth worker for several years, who went on to be ordained.
- supporting a mission family in Argentina through Latin Link. Hazel and Martin Frost were from our Parish and for 15 years we have helped them in development of education through a local Argentinian Church.
- funding and integrating a Syrian family to become resident in our community, continuing to work with them to achieve complete independence.

This work has proven enormously rewarding for those involved and is a good example of the ways in which pursue outreach in its broadest terms.

- fostering spiritual growth from within our congregation, including 3 Readers, 2 ordained priests and supporting 3 curates.

Our hope is to be able to continue to provide a platform for more people to discover and grow in their faith journey.

- significant refurbishment over the last 12 years with more than £1.3 million raised for much needed repairs.

With such an ancient building, there will always be more that could be done, but we are confident that we now structurally sound. The last significant phase of roof refurbishment is due to end in February 2023, leaving the church watertight.

Much of the fund raising has been through our affiliated charity, the Friends of St Mary's and several local charities for which the Church is the beneficiary.

- During the COVID pandemic we discovered new ways of reaching out to and maintaining contact with our church family, these included Zoom services and, when back in Church, streaming our service live to those who were not able to join us in person.

Indeed, we continue to offer a weekly Zoom worship service and still live stream our 09.30 Parish Communion service each week with previous services available via our website.

We also delivered our weekly News Sheets to those who were unable to physically attend church and did not have access to email.



St Margaret's of Antioch Bygrave



In 2022, St Margaret's is a small community (with an average attendance of 10) worshipping twice a month at 11am.

These services alternate between a simple Morning Worship and Eucharistic liturgy with traditional hymns.

Like many churches during the pandemic, we saw changes to people's attendance, and we have not restarted our junior church, opting instead for Family Worship as one of our regular services led by LLW.

Sometimes we host Evening Prayer, welcoming visitors from St Mary's in Baldock.

During the year we have special services, notably the Christmas Eve Service, Easter Saturday Vigil, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Day.

During festival seasons we hold advent and lent groups often collaborating with St Mary's.



The PCC is active in raising money for the church and other charities by hosting events by the Historical Society and a village wide community Harvest Supper.

Several PCC members actively support isolated neighbours and other village community events.



Parish Profile Bygrave

Bygrave is a village and distinct civil parish about 2 miles northeast of Baldock and 2 miles south of Ashwell.

It has a population of around 300 split between the upper and lower village. The upper village was the medieval centre of the village of which only the church remains now adjacent to Manor Farm.

The more populous lower village consists of two streets built in the 1930s.

There is a preponderance of retirees but with some younger families.

The village has no amenities or communal building apart from the church itself.

The Church at Bygrave

The church is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch and originally dates from Saxon times. The current nave is Norman and the chancel dates from the 14th century. The building is constructed from flint rubble and clunch from local pits.

There are traces of wall paintings of which the earliest are from the 15th century.

The church has popular services at Easter and Christmas and is occasionally used for communal activities such as parish council meetings. The layout and ineffective heating have made it a less than ideal venue and the PCC have long grappled with options to improve both.



The Church and its people

We have a strong tradition of eucharistic worship, with Holy Communion being faithfully celebrated at

- 8.00am using the Book of Common Prayer every Sunday and attended by a core group of about 8 parishioners with others joining occasionally.
- 9.30am using Common Worship accompanied by a robed choir almost every Sunday.
- We also enjoy a tradition of Choral Evensong though this has proven harder to maintain at present.

We have a contemplative Silent Prayer group which has run since 2011, meeting once a week. This at one time was affiliated to the Julian Meetings but stopped during the first year of lockdown. Since January 2021 there has been a weekly Zoom Silent Prayer session which continues with between 2-6 people.



All Age Climate Service "Water of Life" August 2022

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee made up of the incumbent, Treasurer, Church Warden, and Deputy Church Wardens and PCC Secretary meets every 2 months, or more frequently if required to set the agenda for the PCC and to make decisions in the day to day running of the church.

PCC

The PCC meets every 2 months with a number of sub committees, such as Worship, Funding Raising and Eco. This band of volunteers are key to enabling many of the critical functions such as funding raising and supporting the wider work of our church.

The catering group

The catering group organises cooked lunch for Messy Church, Harvest, Christmas and Maundy Thursday supper, as well as Fellowship lunches every 2 months or so which enable those living alone to share a roast dinner together.

In December 2021, the church hall kitchen was given a Food Hygiene Rating of 5 (very good) by the North Herts District Council.



Our choir

The Baldock Church is blessed with a long tradition of a robed choir and an active Director of Music who leads them. They practice weekly, to produce high quality anthems, psalms and sung responses in the eucharistic services as well as leading the congregational singing.

They are joined from time to time by a music group and previously by our 'Praise Be' Band. Occasionally, a junior choir (made up of children from the church schools) performs at special services.

Junior Choir

We have encouraged with great success, young singers for many years, complimenting this more recently with the introduction of a more informal group after school on a Wednesday. We aim for the junior choir to take part in an All-Age service once every 2 months, singing an anthem.

The Bell Ringers!

We have 8 bells which are widely loved and heard throughout the town, as well as our church clock which chimes on the quarter during the day as well as on the hour. We have a dedicated band of bellringers of various ages who ring before the 09.30am service and for weddings and special occasions when requested.

The Friends of St Mary's

The Friends of St Mary's (FOSM) exists to support the preservation and restoration of the Church building. The Committee plans and implements a programme of fundraising activities in the local community to raise income to maintain our beautiful building.

These social and fundraising events take place throughout the year and include everything from concerts in the church to wine tasting, from quiz nights to city trips, and from flower festivals to art exhibitions. And we are always looking for new ideas!



Music is important to us and our fund raising – concerts of all types are always on the calendar.



The Church and its Buildings

Our Church

The history of our church dates back to 1150 which is believed to be the date of the original church on this site in Baldock.

Through the centuries the church has been altered and extended leaving us with our seasoned but beautiful building in the heart of the town.

The links below provide a much more detailed history and description of the church building.

Over the past 12 years we have undertaken a substantial refurbishment programme which has included significant work on the tower and roof, completing in February 2023 with lead replacement on the south aisle and nave roofs, as well as replacing much of the stone on the buttresses and stone coins on the walls.

Whilst this has made the outside secure and waterproof, there is always more that can be done on such an ancient building.

The PCC has an aspiration for reordering the inside of the Church to make this more accessible and able to support a wider variety of services as well as potentially restoring the inside of the Church to its former glory.

We will continue to need though, significant fund-raising initiatives, many driven and supported by The Friends of St Mary's.

Our church is skilled and adept at reaching out to our community and beyond to secure the capital we need but we recognise too, that these are difficult times for many, and we will have to set our priorities accordingly.

For further information and to gather additional insights into the church we are, please consider the links below:

Our Church Website is available here:

<https://www.stmarysbaldock.org.uk/>

We have a detailed description of the church and its history which can be access in booklet form here:

<https://www.stmarysbaldock.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Baldock-guidebook-PROOF4.pdf>

A young person's version (Church Trail) is here:

<https://www.stmarysbaldock.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Church-Trail-2017-edited-RevA1.pdf>



Church Hall

Our Church Hall, built in 1984, comprises:

- on the ground floor a large hall, a large disabled toilet with height adjustable adult changing bench
- a smaller hall/coffee bar accessed by 6 steps, but also by a lift
- a small kitchen
- a basement office and modest storage area
- basement male and female toilets.

Both halls are popular lets on a regular basis for community use such as birthday parties, receptions, children's groups and exercise classes.



The hall also supports a small community run food bank which is sadly seeing greater use than ever.

There is an aspiration to install double glazing to help reduce carbon footprint and contribute to lower energy bills.

We hold Junior Church here in term time and before the vacancy, Messy Church once a month (with a cooked meal), as well as Fellowship lunches every 6 weeks.

Whilst the hall is well used, it will need some care and maintenance work over the coming years if we are to continue offering the wide variety of opportunities to support the local community.

The Rectory

The Rector's accommodation is a detached family home in a quiet cul-de-sac. This brick property has quick and easy access to the church via a door in the rear garden. It is in close walking distance of the town centre, mainline station and both primary and secondary schools.

The property comprises on the ground floor:

A fully fitted kitchen, with adjacent utility room with access to the rear garden; two reception rooms, a dining room with double patio doors and a sitting room with patio door, bay window and a fireplace with hearth; a downstairs toilet and a cupboard under the stairs; a door leads off the lobby into a study area.

Upstairs: four bedrooms, two double with fitted wardrobes, one double with fitted wardrobe and dressing room, and a single bedroom; a hatch for loft access; the boiler, airing cupboard, a single toilet and separate bathroom with bath and shower within.



To the front of the property is a single garage with hard standing for two cars and an electric charging point. To the rear is a sizeable walled garden, mostly laid to lawn with some mature trees and a vegetable patch. There is a workshop / storage area at the rear of the garage.

The Rectory needs refurbishment, and we are liaising with the Diocese to get the necessary work done during the vacancy, which we intend will include an upgrade of the kitchen.



What the Area Offers

Baldock is an historic market town set in the beautiful rural surroundings of North Hertfordshire. It has a population of approximately 10,000 and lies close to the borders of both Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It is 33 miles north of London, with excellent transport links to both London and Cambridge via the town's railway station.

Nearby towns include Letchworth, Hitchin, Royston and Stevenage.



There are three primary schools all rated OFSTED good – these are St Mary's Church of England infant and primary schools which have close links with the church, as well as Hartsfield JMI school and St John's Roman Catholic primary school.

Secondary age school children from Baldock and the surrounding villages fall into the catchment area of The Knights Templar school which offers education up to the age of 18 and is also rated OFSTED good.

Baldock has a lively high street with varying architecture including Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

Our church aside, undoubtedly our most striking building is the Art Deco-fronted Tesco super store, which was once a hosiery factory.

There are a modest number of independent shops and restaurants, with plenty of pubs (we're an old coaching town!) and cafes.

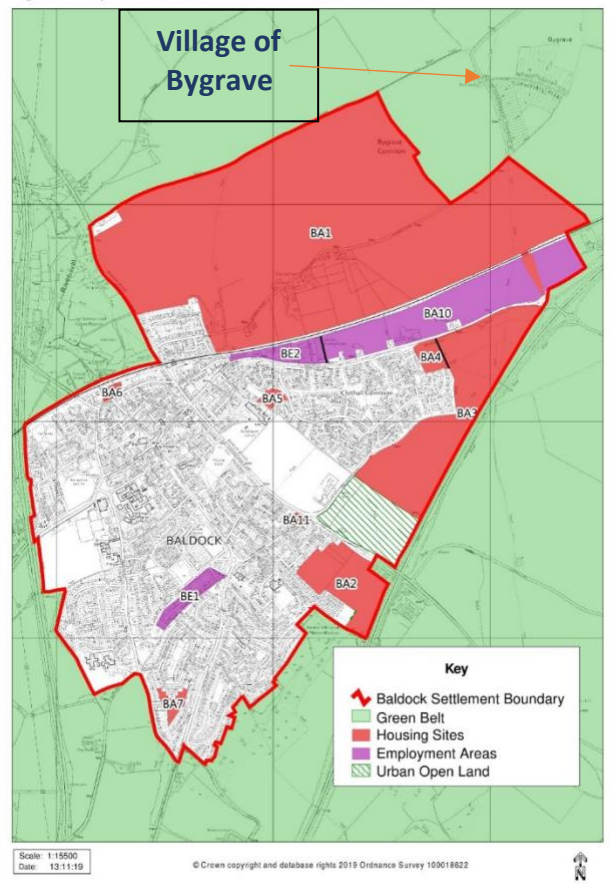
The town is served by other 'standard' amenities which including a doctor's surgery and dentists – both private and NHS.

Being semi-rural it is easy to escape the hustle and bustle of town life. Walk just a few minutes and you can escape to beautiful tranquil areas, including Ivel Springs and the Weston Hills nature reserves.



We are changing size!

Figure 2: Proposals in the new North Hertfordshire Local Plan



Baldock and Bygrave Parish has been chosen to grow in size and to have up to 3500 new homes. Time scale, plans, designs, inclusion, and the environment are in the process of adjustment between Inspectors, Planning Office and our own local Neighbourhood Plan.

We are pleased to have participated in the Neighbourhood Plan, to influence the conservation, enhancement and future development of the area, including proposals that come forward through the District Council's Local Plan. It provides an opportunity to set out what is important about the area, how the development might grow and improve, and specific policies that planning applications need to be assessed against (e.g. design, green space, provision for pedestrians and cyclists, parking, etc.).

Local influence will not override the 'strategic' policies in the District Council's

plan, and nor would we want it to, but it will play an important role in shaping how our lovely town develops to serve future generations.

As the saying goes "watch this space!" and we are....

new schools, provisions for elderly and disabled, community areas and groups, affordable homes, and the environment, both during and after development, are all areas we care about and must take responsibility for as the development progresses.



The Rector we seek

The Rector we seek will recognise the existing strengths of our church community whilst bringing new ideas, inspiring growth, and outreach.

We will guide you by highlighting what we have achieved in the past and by sharing our aims for the future so seek someone with further inspiration to help us continue our journey of growth whilst recognising and not discarding those areas we have focused on in the past:

- a close and supportive relationship to our Church Infants and Junior Schools, as well as supporting non-faith aligned churches in our area.
- a commitment to acknowledge environmental issues and a wish to demonstrate how our Church can live and flourish in harmony with God's wonderful creation.

And based on our current Mission Action Plan, we ask you to help us deliver in the following areas:

- Building with Christ
- Ensuring our congregation reflects the profile of the town and our village
- a congregation with a shared vision of how best to use our building for the glory of God
- a congregation which understands the importance of regular worship
- a Church whose worship and engagement with life affects the wider community
- a Church family which is open and welcoming to all



....which we have translated into our current objectives:

- to work towards becoming carbon neutral as a Church by 2030. During 2022 we will do this by auditing our current position within the A Rocha Eco Church framework, becoming aware of our strengths and weaknesses and drawing up a set of priorities
- continue restoration of the Nave and chancel roof with completion by February 2023
- to maintain the links with Church members (both regular and occasional) following the return to church especially with those unable to return yet
- strengthening and increasing our worshipping base
- making new Disciples

We seek someone with enthusiasm and energy who will embrace what we have achieved, help guide us with our future vision and bring ideas of their own that will inspire and excite.

We see this as a wonderful opportunity for someone to come in and embrace a challenge that they can truly own and enjoy in a church family that will welcome you with open arms.

