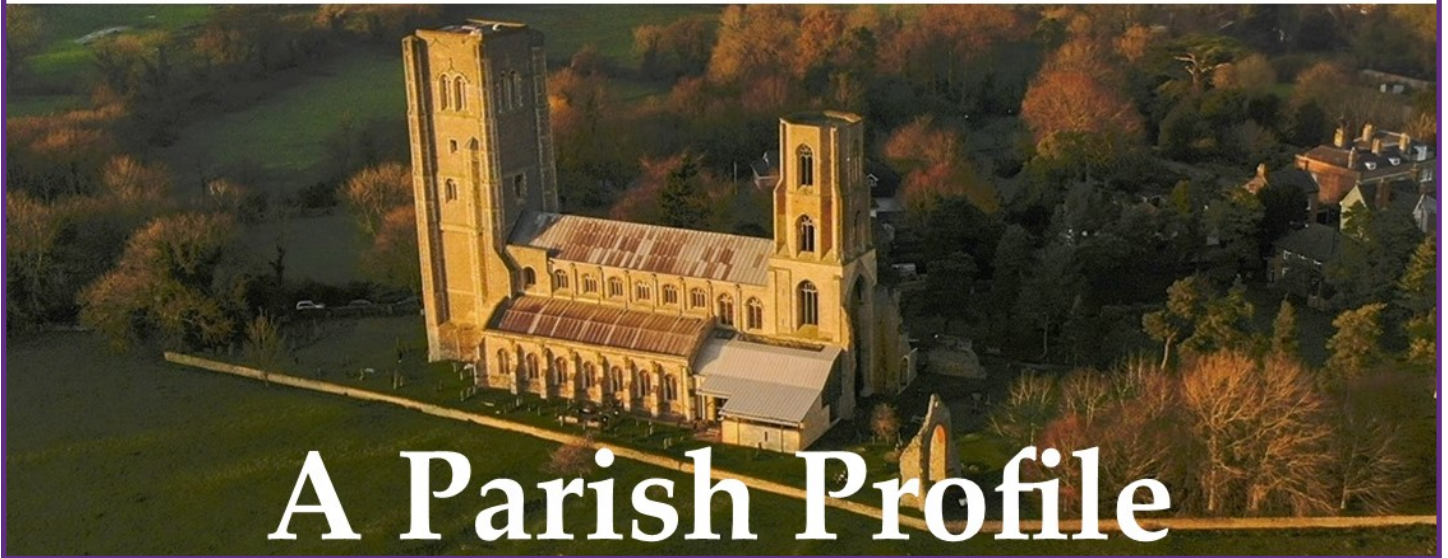




Wymondham Abbey

A place of Welcome Worship & Wonder



A Parish Profile

1. Foreword by the Bishop of Norwich

Wymondham Abbey is becoming a flourishing congregation again. An interim Priest-in-Charge has brought much healing and stability after a challenging period. The congregation sees a need to reach out to its neighbours through being rooted in prayer, scripture and the sacraments. There are now firm foundations in place from which the next vicar can build, including governance, finance, safeguarding, music and worship.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges of the recent past, there is now a real desire and eagerness to move forward and continue to grow both in discipleship and numbers.

The congregation and lay leaders are a good group of people, looking to work with and support their new vicar. They have many gifts and are generous with their time and finances. I have valued getting to know many of them and am grateful for their grace and commitment.

The new incumbent will need the skills and aptitude to lead a church that has many facets, as well as being a place that draws many visitors and hosts a wide variety of events. Holding a balance between the choral parish eucharist and different expressions of worship will be crucial to sustain the existing congregation and to welcome new people. The links with the wider town, and the church at Spooner Row, will need ongoing attention so that the Abbey resources both and there is a greater sense of ownership of both places of worship within the wider community. Combined with this is the significant new house building in the benefice and the opportunities that affords. In time, an incumbent with the right skills ought to be a training incumbent.

The Diocese of Norwich shares a common vision to be Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic. This vision is worked out in different ways in different places through nine key priority areas and more detail can be found on our diocesan website.

The Diocese is committed to flourishing and fullness of life for all its clergy. We have formally adopted the CofE Clergy Wellbeing Covenant and are committed to building on its recommendations – for example, as well as a weekly day off, clergy are encouraged to take an additional day off each month ensuring a regular pattern of two consecutive days off, and in offering generous holiday grants for couples and families with a low income.

As Patron, if you sense God may be calling you to be the next Vicar of Wymondham, I would love to hear from you.

+Graham Norvic:

2. Introduction



The last few years have witnessed change, upheaval and renewal at Wymondham Abbey. The previous incumbent resigned rather suddenly in June 2022. Under the leadership of our Interim Priest-in-Charge we are moving forward and once more beginning to fulfil our role as the parish church for the town of Wymondham. The Abbey is once again being recognised as an important focus for varied community events in our growing town and prides itself on being a warm (in the winter, literally!), welcoming and beautiful place for residents and tourists alike.

This document is necessarily quite brief, but more details about the Abbey and its work within the town can be found on our new website.

www.wymondhamabbey.org.uk

3. About Wymondham and Norfolk

Wymondham is one of Norfolk's ancient market towns. The town is located around ten miles south west of Norwich, adjacent to the A11 and on the Norwich to Cambridge railway line. There are excellent road, rail and bus links to Cambridge and London (and the world - the Stansted Express now stops at Wymondham Station!). It has a population of around 16,000, and has been growing rapidly with a lot of new housing.



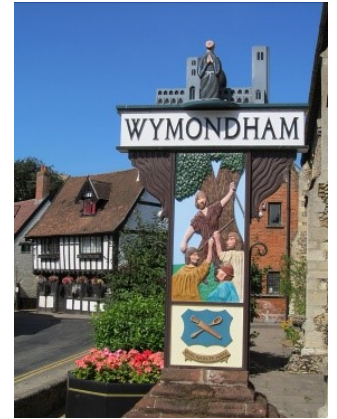
Norfolk is renowned for its wonderful, varied countryside including attractive coastline, heathland, forests, nature reserves and the famous Broads National Park. Norwich has recently been named one of the top places to visit in the UK (Timeout). It's well known for its cultural offerings including the world famous Norfolk and Norwich Festival, the Theatre Royal and several art galleries. It is also becoming a leading destination for food lovers. Its quaint streets with their independent retailers, combined with all the major branded stores, makes it a great place to shop.

The bustling market town of Wymondham has witnessed a long and fascinating history. It boasts an attractive town centre with a good range of independent shops, restaurants, teashops and pubs, including a 15th century inn. The Market Place is host to a weekly charter market and a monthly Farmers' Market. There are a number of Primary and Secondary schools, all of which have excellent reputations. There is first class healthcare provision, a modern library and a leisure centre with pool and gym. Wymondham is a desirable place to live, with many thriving clubs and societies catering to sporting, cultural and general interests. Not surprisingly, Wymondham is a popular tourist destination, boasting its own Tourist Information Centre. Many of the buildings are of historical interest, and a heritage railway line attracts many visitors. It is easy to access the picturesque riverside walks from the town centre. The town was named in 2018 by the Sunday Times as one of the best places to live in Britain.



There has been a lot of house building around the town recently which is presenting a number of outreach opportunities, including the potential for growth in our church. Under the surface, though, there is a range of social issues that remain generally unacknowledged and inadequately supported. This is an area for which the Abbey is looking to increase its support as part of our outreach work.

Spooner Row is an attractive village four miles south of Wymondham. It has its own primary school, a village hall, a popular pub and a thriving and supportive community.



4. Wymondham Abbey



Formally described as the Church of St Mary and St Thomas of Canterbury, it is referred to locally as 'the Abbey' because it was once attached to a community of Benedictine monks, and the name stuck! Wymondham Abbey is the Anglican Parish Church of the town of Wymondham. The monks have long gone, but our church remains committed to their vision of Christian witness, daily prayer and service in the community.

The church was founded in 1107, and has had many additions and changes over the last 900 years. In 2015, a development project was completed that gave us two modern multi-purpose spaces and included toilets, a new vestry and a servery for refreshments.

The closed churchyard is large and very popular with local people. There are a number of picnic benches, a replica medieval herb garden and an award winning conservation area. We have recently achieved an Eco-Church Silver award, thanks mainly to the conservation work in the churchyard.

We are a friendly and inclusive church community with a warm welcome for everyone, whatever their age, background or previous experience of Christianity. We are an outward facing, affirming catholic church with a congregation of mixed worshipping experience. The church is open almost every day of the year, with volunteers on a rota to welcome visitors and operate our shop. Visitors come from near and far, with many from distant shores. Some join us for worship or come to find the peace and stillness of private prayer. Others marvel at the beauty of the 900 year old building in its setting of unspoilt meadows along the Tiffey valley.



Services and Liturgy

Sundays: 10:30 Sung Eucharist with choir and incense. Children are involved throughout.
17:00 Evening prayer with hymns;
1st Sunday Choral Evensong with choir

Weekdays:

Monday to Friday: 10:00 said Morning Prayer
16:00 said Evening Prayer (15:00 in winter)
both services are Common Worship

Tuesday: 10:30 Centering Prayer

Wednesday: 10:30 said Eucharist

Pastoral Care

The Priest-in-Charge is supported by three lay assistants who each month take Home Communion to around 20 housebound individuals, and lead monthly services in a number of local care homes. Members of the congregation also do ad hoc personal visits to the sick and needy. There is a prayer space/tree where visitors can leave prayers. These prayers are removed and prayed for weekly.



The refectory area provides an open, safe and warm space where visitors can make themselves tea or coffee and have a biscuit. Several dementia sufferers and their carers now use this space regularly. The space is also well used for other group activities and meetings. It can be used for the occasional private function (eg small wakes or drinks receptions following a wedding).

Mission and Outreach

Our mission is to spread Christ's message to the people of Wymondham by providing all ages with the opportunity to find and

grow in faith and relationship with God. With the large number of new housing estates being built in the town, we have a major challenge to reach out and bring the welcome to these new communities. It is, by the same count, a wonderful opportunity.

We have been given a sizeable bequest specifically for "Outreach". We are looking to appoint a part-time Families worker, and are also planning to appoint a Parish Nurse to work in collaboration with the appropriate agencies in

the town.



We currently have a weekly term time Toddler and Carer's group of over 50 families with a long waiting list, run by a church Volunteer, and we host a monthly "newborns" group organised by a local midwife.

Children are included in our Sunday Eucharist service; we have a Bible story/Godly Play midway through the service before the children move to the North Aisle to continue with related craft activities. We are developing a children's choir alongside the well established adult choir.

Despite our attempts at attracting children, the majority our congregation is fairly elderly, and we feel it very important to attract more families, particularly those with older children.

There are several other church denominations in Wymondham and we are represented at regular Wymondham Churches Together meetings. Collaborative working helps us to coordinate shared aspects of our respective missions.



The Church of Holy Trinity, Spooner Row



Spooner Row is a small village about four miles from Wymondham. The church, a Grade II listed building, started life in 1842 as a schoolroom. It is home to a small but active congregation with two services a month – a Eucharist and a lay-led service of prayers and hymns. The Eucharist is taken by a retired priest. The church is used for rehearsals for a couple of local music groups, and offers various entertainment activities during the year.



Our challenge is to try and integrate the Spooner Row church more closely with the activities and worship within Wymondham Abbey, and to give the congregation the support they deserve. We are currently restricted by a lack of support priests at both churches.

Parish Safeguarding Policy

We believe that making our church safe for all is everyone's responsibility and is at the heart of our Christian faith. To this end we follow the policies and practices laid down in the C of E guidelines. Our aim is to make our church a safe place for everyone.

We have a commitment to safeguarding all children, young people and vulnerable adults when within the church. We have a dedicated Parish Safeguarding Officer, who works closely with the Norwich Diocese safeguarding team.

5. What we are looking to do

1. Grow the congregation both in number and spiritually; maximise the opportunities for outreach and growth in our fast-growing town;
2. Develop our family and children's work; reach out to existing church families, schools and other local groups and activities;
3. Take the "Gospel" in word and deed to the surrounding community; develop our liturgy to meet the needs of all church members;
4. Work collaboratively with other churches and organisations to focus on the marginalised and those in need;
5. Maintain the Abbey as a centre of history, music and culture;
6. Continue our path towards putting robust financial and administrative systems in place.

6. Can you help us?



We are prayerfully hoping for a Vicar who:

1. brings enthusiasm and energy, rooted in prayer, scripture and sacraments, to help us further our life together under God at Wymondham and Spooner Row;
2. has the ability to take the lead while working collaboratively with others;
3. will want to develop a clear vision with us for the future;
4. has excellent interpersonal skills particularly as a listener, facilitator, teacher and enabler;
5. will encourage individuals to recognise, develop and use their God-given gifts through prayer and action;
6. will share the value we place in our liturgy, worship and prayer, and seek to develop it to reach more people;
7. can relate to and work with a range of ages, opinions and spiritualities;
8. is prepared to challenge long established perceptions and stimulate and encourage new and innovative practices, while recognising the value placed by some on tradition and stability;
9. will delight in our choral tradition while understanding the importance of a varied musical diet;
10. will enjoy holding together the demands and opportunities of a growing, thriving church, as well as being a place that welcomes many visitors and is a centre for music and culture.

7. What we can offer



1. A small, experienced and dedicated leadership team.
2. Over 100 willing and able volunteers - welcomers, shop assistants, servers, choristers, bell-ringers, concert stewards . . .
3. A loyal and enthusiastic congregation.
4. A part time (20 hours per week) experienced parish administrator and a part time paid Musical Director.
5. A church building that provides the flexibility to accommodate a wide range of activities.
6. A limited number of activities appealing to different ages.
7. A number of independent supporting charities:
 - Wymondham Abbey Preservation Trust has a large financial reserve and pay for all fabric-related repairs; no fund-raising required for roof repairs!
 - Friends of Wymondham Abbey is a group who provide financial support for beautification and up-keep of the Abbey's fittings and furnishings.
 - Reverend William Papillon's Charity owns the meadow to the south of the Abbey. They provide financial support for religious educational activities within the parish.

8. The way forward

Strengths

- A close-knit and effective leadership group;
- The building, its modern facilities and location;
- A large number of dedicated volunteers;
- “The warmth of the fellowship”;
- Committed financial support from local Trusts.

Challenges and opportunities

- Further development of the children’s and family work; bring the teachings of Jesus to the local schools;
- Extension of outreach to new estates;
- Development of varied worship styles to suit a wider range of worshipper;
- Nurturing and encouraging faith;
- Partnering with local social agencies;
- Inspiring the regular and committed congregation;
- Uncovering and maximising the strengths that already exist;
- Increasing the influence and effectiveness of the Abbey within our rapidly expanding town.

9. Wymondham Abbey in numbers (2023)

- **Baptisms:** 19 (inc 3 adults)
- **Weddings:** 7 (15 already booked for 2024)
- **Funerals:** 23
- **Average Sunday attendance (2 services):** 154
- **Easter communicants:** 194
- **Christmas communicants:** 340
- **Home communions (monthly average)** 21
- **Number on Electoral Roll:** 167
- **Visitors through the doors:** 33,000

10. Brief Financial summary

The PCC was re-established in its present form in the second half of 2022. Since that time, the focus has been on rebuilding a sound financial footing by securing reliable and long-term income without reliance on savings to meet ever-increasing annual costs.

Income in 2023 amounted to £385,900 which included reserved gifts of £92,400 and grants of £126,000 from two of our supporting charities. The ‘sustainable’ balance of £166,300 was from regular giving via the Parish Giving Scheme, visitor donations, gift aid, events and the Abbey shop.

The sister church of Spooner Row has sufficient regular income to meet essential annual expenditure.

After inheriting two consecutive years of substantial losses, we turned an important corner at the end of the 2023 financial year by enjoying a small surplus of about £3-4,000 based on what we view as sustainable income. This included, for the first time in several years, the Parish Share being fully paid. With this increasing from £65,000 to £70,420 in 2024, we forecast to again pay in full and return a modest surplus.

A complete Financial Activities Report for the year ending December 2023 will be presented at the April 2024 APCM.

11. What do you like about Wymondham Abbey?

Comments collected from a quick survey of a range of Abbey worshippers:

"This church is more child friendly than any church I know"

"A constant place in a rapidly changing world - a haven of peace" (local resident)

"I felt I was walking into the house of the Lord" (new church member)

"I love the standard of worship - where the Lord is worshipped in the beauty of holiness"

"Feels like I am part of something that has been here for millennia"

"Its my 'Rock' in my life - since I was christened"

"It's like having an extended family"

"I come for genuine worship and warm community spirit"

"I feel drawn to the Abbey"

"It's my Parish church and I am lucky enough to have such a splendid place to worship"

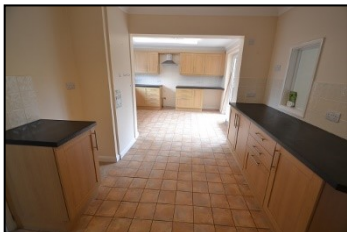
"The beauty of the place - it is so peaceful"

"I feel great comfort and solace here"

"This place is timeless - I feel I am in a different realm when I set foot in here"

12. Vicarage

The Vicarage, which is the responsibility of the Diocese, is a modern four bedroomed house located in a cul-de-sac approximately seven minutes walk from the Abbey. It includes an office/study with a separate external access. The property has recently been updated and modernised, both inside and out.



**The Parish of St Mary and St Thomas of Canterbury, Wymondham,
with Holy Trinity, Spooner Row.**

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