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Interim Priest in Charge – Middlewinch Benefice

Dear Friends in Christ,

Benefice and Role

Thank you for inquiring for details for this post. You will find much detailed information about the benefice in the profile, and this letter supplements that with further information about the diocese and the background to the post. If you are exploring this role from outside the diocese, and especially if you do not come from a rural background, let me encourage you to continue in this discernment. Norfolk people don't shout about themselves or their county or their diocese, but we are a warm and welcoming diocese and those who do come from elsewhere remark upon the positive reception they have received, including the excellence of the Parish Support Team (property, mission and ministry, safeguarding etc). If you are considering this post as a first incumbency, I hope very much that you will join the roughly termly meetings I have with those in that role so that learning and good practice can be shared and relationships built.

The Middlewinch benefice combines much of what is good about the county by being relatively rural yet within easy striking distance of the urban centre of King's Lynn. The Church Urban Fund tool (<https://cuf.org.uk/shinealight>) highlights the deprivation present in the parishes of the benefice, and a new priest will want to be aware of the church's role, in partnership with other local agencies, in relieving this.

Approximately 4,000 new homes are planned to be built in the parishes of North Runcion and West Winch in the next decade. The next parish priest will therefore be someone who is able to accompany people on their faith pilgrimage and who actively seeks opportunities to draw others into the household of faith. The Bishop and Archdeacon expect to include starting at least one new worshipping community within three years and we would welcome a new priest who will discern how this is most appropriately done.

We do, however, recognise that this amount of new housing presents challenge as well as opportunities. Early conversations have therefore happened with the Methodist church and with other Anglicans in the Deanery as well as with the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk although these have not, as yet, involved the benefice. We would like to look at a partnership of churches to run one of the three proposed community hubs in the new housing, so that there is a church footprint, a place for worship and activities and a clear sense of partnership. Similar relationships, through the government's Pride in Place programme, are being explored on the North Lynn Estate and in Gaywood. We would like to see a new priest able to work collaboratively with these programmes especially with Gaywood, from which we are at the very early stages of thinking whether a plant into the new housing/Middlewinch benefice might be possible. Gaywood is in the modern Catholic tradition and is an inclusive church in a long standing LEP with the Methodists and it will therefore be important that the new parish priest in Middlewinch is in sympathy with this ethos.

Diocese and Deanery

The Diocese of Norwich's vision (2021 – 2026) is to be Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic. You can find out more information about this at <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/vision/> and you can see the priorities agreed by the Diocesan Synod at <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Diocesan-Vision-and-Priorities-agreed-by-Diocesan-Synod-March-2021.docx>

We are now in the process of creating our new mission and ministry strategy for a sustainable and flourishing future. This will involve areas of investment but also looking at what is in our hand already. It will include a new vocations strategy and enhanced opportunities for lay ministry. The Diocese has various ways in which lay people can participate in pastoral care and in leading worship, including as LLMs but also as Authorised Worship Assistants, Authorised Pastoral Assistants, and, relatively recently, Rural Chaplaincy. We hope to develop training and support in these areas.

The Benefice falls within the Archdeaconry and Area of Lynn and within the Lynn Deanery. The Rural Dean is the Revd Canon Karlene Kerr. The Rural Dean writes:

‘During the vacancy, it has been very encouraging to see the Church Wardens and PCCs from the four parishes develop a greater sense of purpose and commitment to working together as a Benefice, rather than mainly being focused on their individual parishes. Four joint services including Remembrance and a community carol service were held last year. In addition, the Church Wardens and PCC members have started meeting informally to share news, to encourage and support each other and to pray. The congregations and laity have been faithful in maintaining the worship and life of the Benefice, and there is a real sense of wanting to see what is on God's heart for this new season. The new priest-in-charge will of course be integral to this’.

The Bishop of Lynn's area of oversight is coterminous with the archdeaconry and both the Venerable Catherine Dobson and the Rt Revd Dr Jane Steen are committed to the flourishing of rural benefices.

There are 8 posts of incumbent status in the Deanery and 7 Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs). There are 5 Authorised Worship Assistants (AWAs) across the deanery, enabling laity to lead services of the Word. Attendance at Deanery Synod and Chapter is an expectation, and all diocesan clergy are encouraged to give some part of their time and energies to the wider life of the Diocese.

Housing

The accommodation provided is described in the profile. Questions about the house should be directed to the Archdeacon of Lynn, the Venerable Catherine Dobson at archdeacon.lynn@dioceseofnorwich.org.

Patronage

The Bishop of Norwich

The Lord Chancellor

Elizabeth Bostock & Catherine Mackay

William Lancaster

The closing date for applications is 09:00 on Wednesday 18th March and interviews will be held on Tuesday 28th April. The post is subject to a Genuine Occupational Requirement and a satisfactory enhanced DBS disclosure.

If you would like to have an informal discussion before deciding whether to apply, please contact Ann Whittet (PA to the Bishop and Archdeacon of Lynn) at ann.whittet@dioceseofnorwich.org or phone the office on 01362 709200. It is usually better to direct inquiries to Ann but alternatively, you are able to contact one or other of us at: bishop.lynn@dioceseofnorwich.org or archdeacon.lynn@dioceseofnorwich.org.

With grace and peace as you discern the role to which God is calling you,

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane Steen".

The Rt Revd Dr Jane Steen, Bishop of Lynn