

The Benefice of Bisley, Chalford, France Lynch and Oakridge

Benefice Profile January 2013



Our vision

We seek to grow as learning Christian communities with Bible study and a growing understanding of Christian thought and prayerfulness.

We seek to build on our good ecumenical relationships and to enhance those with the communities where we live.

We would like to make ourselves better known to the businesses in our Benefice, a number of which are sole-traders.

We are passionate about our involvement with families and young people, acknowledging that we have work to do, and we seek to enhance our good and growing relationships with the schools in our parishes.

We are open to possibilities for the creative use of our churches' space and have, in the past few years, initiated some new events but we could do more.

The Benefice of Bisley, Chalford, France Lynch and Oakridge

We offer you ...

Our prayers and our commitment to work
with you, sharing the load

Hospitality, a warm welcome, friendship
and a preparedness to move forward

Strong support in all four churches

Some brilliant cake-makers

Churches which are financially sound

Opportunities to be developed and built on

Shared rejoicing when times are good

Understanding when times are darker

A beautiful, peaceful place to live



The Benefice of Bisley, Chalford, France Lynch and Oakridge



We asked our congregations, schools and communities to let us know what qualities they hoped our new vicar would have

We seek a priest who is

- ✓ Prayerful and grounded in the Word of God
- ✓ A teacher who understands the role of story-telling in ministry and can make the Bible relevant
- ✓ A pastor, out and about meeting and visiting people and equally visible in all 4 parishes
- ✓ Passionate about working in schools and with young people
- ✓ A good organiser and communicator, able to build effective relationships with ecumenical and secular organisations
- ✓ Keen to experiment with newer forms of worship/fresh expressions while valuing the established forms of worship in our churches
- ✓ A team player prepared to encourage and value others' initiatives, recognise the ministry of clergy and laity and be an enabler so that individuals and our church communities may grow.

'Someone who makes me want to come to church'

(From a child aged 7)

The Benefice of Bisley, Chalford, France Lynch and Oakridge

The Benefice

The Benefice was formed in 2005 and the links and relationships are steadily growing.

There is a Benefice Eucharist when there is a fifth Sunday in a month and this rotates round the churches, as do the fortnightly week-night services and annual Agape meal. A Meditation Group meets regularly and teams go into schools to Open the Book.

A parishioner belongs to the Quiet Gardens Trust and offers quiet days and retreat space for groups and individuals.

Fabric and Finances

All four churches are in good order and well-cared for in terms of cleaning and maintenance. The finances are sound; the parish share and clergy expenses are paid in full.



Bishop Michael and our friends from Norrbo

The clergy, readers and laity

Stephen Jarvis, the non-stipendiary associate minister, plays a full role in church life and was instrumental in establishing the link with the Parish of Norrbo in Sweden.

Brenda Cox, Benefice Reader, and Judy Howard and Tom Merry, retired active priests, take a number of services, weddings and funerals. Jenny Tann is licensed by the Bishop to preach.

There is a wide involvement of lay people and an active Local Ministry Team in Bisley.



Christmas Collage

Anton Wynn is employed by PSALMS (Active Faith for the next generation) as a Youth Minister funded for 20 hours a week by the four Benefice churches, two partner churches, and personal and charitable donations. He leads Youth Clubs and Holiday Clubs assisted by local Christians, as well as taking school assemblies.

Ecumenical Links

There are long-standing and very happy ecumenical relationships with the other Christian churches in the area.

The Current Pattern of Worship

Clergy and readers officiate equally on a quarterly rota so there is no dominant parish but a partnership of equals.

8am	France Lynch 1 Holy Communion BCP 2,3 4 Holy Communion CW Order 2 Oakridge 4 Holy Communion BCP
9.30am	France Lynch 1 Eucharist CW Order 1 2 Worship Together (<i>Lay led</i>) 3 & 4 Eucharist CW Order 1 Oakridge 1 Eucharist CW Order 1 2 Family Communion/Family Service 3 Eucharist CW Order 1 4 Morning Worship
11am	Chalford 1-4 Eucharist CW Order 1 Bisley 1 Café Church (<i>Local Ministry Team</i>) 2 & 3 Eucharist CW Order 1 4 Family Service & Sunday School (<i>LMT</i>)
6pm 1 st	Bisley Holy Communion

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Community facilities

There are four junior schools in the Benefice, three of which are Church of England Schools that use their village's church for displays of work and services such as Easter, Harvest and Christingle. Teams go into local primary schools to Open the Book. There is a secondary school in an adjacent parish and sixth-form colleges and tertiary colleges in Stroud and nearby towns.

Local services and shops vary between the four villages but for a rural area we are well-served. Stroud, approximately four miles away, offers rail and coach links to all parts of the country as well as a Farmers' Market and the usual selection of shops and supermarkets. There is a strong arts and crafts tradition in the Stroud area.

It is about 10 miles to the M5 and 30 miles to the M4 so we are well placed for many of the larger cultural venues and shopping malls.

Sports, music, dance, drama and creative facilities within the locality are good, as are opportunities for walking, riding, cycling and working an allotment. Each village has a wide range of clubs and organisations.

Concerts, exhibitions and sales of Christian books are occasionally held in all four churches.

Statistics January to November 2012

Bisley

Population c750

Electoral Roll 57

Average weekly attendance 30+

8 Baptisms 1 Confirmation

2 Weddings 10 Funerals

Chalford

Population c2,300

Electoral Roll 24

Average weekly attendance 15

1 Baptism

1 Wedding 1 Funeral

France Lynch

Population c1,500

Electoral Roll 107

Average weekly attendance 55

7 Baptisms

5 Weddings 7 Funerals

Oakridge

Population c650

Electoral Roll 66

Average weekly attendance 31

1 Baptism

1 Wedding 4 Funerals

There is a modern, 4-bedroom vicarage with a large, south-facing garden in Bisley



All Saints' Church, Bisley

About Bisley

Bisley entered recorded history in 896AD and has been connected with various well-known names down the centuries. The Wysis Way and the Wells attract a small number of tourists.

There are many small local businesses, including two pubs, a petrol station, village shop, farm shop and a couple of larger employers. There are around 16 thriving social groups plus allotments, a community orchard and an award-winning Community Composting Scheme. There is an excellent primary school with an active PTA.

Fundraising events for village organisations and amenities, and outside charities, are well-supported throughout the year. Events such as Village Open Gardens for Red Cross and the Flower Show attract many visitors.

The Parish Council offers some financial support to All Saints and in November 2012 the PCC began exploring the possibility of passing the responsibility for the maintenance of the closed churchyard to the Parish Council.

The Feoffees, a mediaeval church charity, also give generously towards church expenses and help support the Youth Minister, as does the Charity of the Ancient Parish of Bisley.



Ascension Day Blessing of the Wells

All Saints and village life

Church, school and village life are closely intertwined throughout the year. **Advent** begins with a lively Café Church when the knitted Holy Family is sent out to find hospitality in a different home each night. The Crib Service and Christmas services are well-attended as is 'Beer and Carols', held in the village pubs.



Ecumenical Worship Group at Marquee Service

There is usually a **Lent** study course and the opportunity to observe the Stations of the Cross and Resurrection with the Roman Catholic Church.

Palm Sunday and **Good Friday** see ecumenical processions through the village and **Easter Sunday** is another occasion when many families come to church, perhaps because of the Egg Hunt (sadly only for children) during the sermon.

On **Ascension Day** the pupils of Bisley Blue Coat School process, through streets lined with hundreds of villagers and visitors, to dress the Wells and receive a Blessing. 2013 is the 150th Anniversary and great celebrations are planned.

The **All Saints Fête**, held in August alongside the village Flower Show, culminates with the popular ecumenical service in the marquee.

On **Remembrance Sunday** around 300 people, led by the Royal British Legion, gather first in All Saints and then at the War Memorial to honour the War Dead.

The church year ends with 'In Loving Memory', a service at **All Souls' Tide** to remember those who have died. There is an important funeral ministry as village funerals draw very large congregations.

The Church Family

All Saints has a tradition of supporting the vicar and many in the congregation offer their time or skills in one way or another. We would like to continue to work as a team under new leadership in outreach to the community, to care for the fabric of the building and maintain its place in our community's life.

If we are to transform our parish and achieve real spiritual growth then we would like it to be a shared responsibility. We consider ourselves blessed, if not in numbers, then in commitment and willing workers.

The **Local Ministry Team** is one resource that we can offer and which seeks to interact with and complement the new vicar's work. The five members of the LMT have a variety of skills and currently provide durable and consistent support.

Two services each month - Café Church and Family Service - are prepared and led by the LMT and are being greatly blessed.

The LMT also leads or assists with special services, such as the Marquee, Harvest, Christingle and Healing Services.



"I love Café Church"

"So many people feel a connection to this church"

"I like the friendship, the fellowship, the inclusivity"

"Lovely variety of styles of Service"



The monthly **Sunday School** is enjoyed by those who attend and the **Children's Corner** is welcoming and well-used. Bisley Blue Coat pupils use the church regularly.

Church members run **Lunch Box** and support **Friendship Club** and **Open House**, which bring together parishioners and where refreshments and conversation are enjoyed.

Rotas organise the **servers, lesson readers, intercessors, welcomers and coffee-makers**. The church is cleaned by eight dedicated **cleaners**, the linen is kept spotless, and there are compilers for the church magazine and pew slips. The ministries of **flowers and music** are much appreciated and the **finances** are tightly controlled by the treasurer. The electronic organ is virtually maintenance free. A free-standing table is used for communion.

The **Bisley Bell Ringers** (pictured) are an accomplished band with a thriving youth group and have won many local competitions. Some of Bisley young ringers rang in the Association team which won the 2012 National Youth Competition. There is also a hand-bell group. An enthusiastic ecumenical choir comes together for the Christmas Carol service.

Christchurch, Chalford

The Parish

The church nestles into the hillside of the picturesque Golden Valley. The parish stretches several miles on either side, along the main road and up the hill behind. The housing consists mainly of privately-owned cottages and houses.

The community, which is known for its friendliness, supports a volunteer-run village shop and pub. In addition, there are a number of flourishing small businesses including a sculpture foundry, computer servicing shop, farm shop and a successful tea rooms. There is a popular recreation ground at the far end of the village.

The former church rooms have been leased to the community under the Albermarle Scheme, and are well used by local groups and for private parties.

The churchyard is closed and maintained by the local council, though there is provision for the burial of cremated remains.

The Church

The church, with its attractive interior and unusual Arts and Crafts fittings, is well-loved by its small but welcoming, supportive and committed congregation; as well as being popular with groups of visitors. What we lack in numbers, we make up for in enthusiasm.



Our Vision for the Future

As a congregation we are a happy, relaxed group of people, willing to pray with, work with and laugh with our new incumbent who, in return, would support, enthuse and inspire us to grow on the journey we have begun.



Church members play an active part in services. Most of the regular congregation are on the wrong side of fifty, but some are much younger.

Services are neither high nor low church, but vestments are worn.

We have excellent organist support and a well-maintained pipe organ. The church rejoices in fine acoustics.



The Chalford Bell ringers

There is a ring of six steel bells, which are rung regularly, though not currently for most services.

There is a well-equipped children's corner and a small kitchen in the base of the tower – we serve refreshments after the service once a month.

To try to attract more people into the church we have recently embarked upon a varied programme of mission and outreach, which includes concerts, an open day, and some quiet, reflective services. The church is warm in winter and well-kept.

Visitors commonly comment on the 'lovely smell of polish' and the flower arrangements.

Special Services

On Remembrance Sunday the congregation swells to over 200, with local uniformed groups in attendance. The joint Parish War Memorial stands at the crossroads, just inside the churchyard.

The Crib and other Christmas services are well-attended.



The annual carol service alternates between Christ Church and France Lynch, as does the Harvest Lunch. We also come together for Lent and Advent groups and services in Holy Week.



We hold occasional Taizé services, which have been entirely initiated and developed by members of the congregation.

The church has recently offered Experience Harvest, Easter, Pentecost and Christmas to the local school, on a rolling programme.



Christ Church C of E Primary School

In an age when materialism and celebrity culture seem to exercise a huge influence on our children, we feel it is vital to nurture spiritual values, a sense of community and empathy. The village school takes pride in all its members and encourages everybody to fulfil their various talents. Because of our small size, we can know our children extremely well and create a supportive, 'family', atmosphere.



We have developed strong links with our parish churches and the diocese, and look forward to the future with a new priest, who will – we pray – become part of our lives, visiting the school regularly to build relationships with the pupils and their families and to partake in other aspects of school life. We hope that a new incumbent would enjoy reinforcing the links that already exist between our school and the other two church schools in the Benefice, Oakridge and Bisley.

St John the Baptist, France Lynch

The Villages

The villages of France Lynch and Chalford Hill grew up in the 17th and 18th centuries, as cottage weavers settled on the hills above the mills which lined the River Frome valley.

Many weavers' cottages survive today, adding to the mix of modern private houses, ex-Local Authority houses, old peoples' bungalows and a small 1970's estate.

The Community

There are varied facilities for all in the village communities. There is a Playgroup and Nursery School, and a state Primary School which is currently seeking to increase its links with the Church.

The Thomas Keble Secondary School is within walking distance and is attended by many of our village children.

The Herald Magazine, circulation of 750, is the main source of information about all the many different clubs and interest groups in the villages.

The magazine is edited by a small enthusiastic team of church members. One of its functions is to publicise church events, and to provide a link between the church and the community.

The Church

Our church is in good order, clean and tidy and the churchyard is well cared for by a regular team of mowers. We have an automatic door locking device, so our church is accessible during the day. We are currently installing a new lighting system in the church.

Our weekly services are attended by an average 55. Parish Breakfast is held in Church on the first Sunday of each month after the 8am BCP Holy Communion.

The Sacrament is reserved at one of these services to be taken out to the housebound during the week.

The 2nd Sunday of each month is our non Eucharistic All Age Worship, usually led by the Reader. Mid-week Morning Prayer is attended by a regular 4 or 5 worshippers.

Compline and meditation takes place on the 1st Monday evening of each month in church and weekly during Advent and Lent.

Regular annual services at All Souls Tide, Christmas and Easter are well attended

A faithful group maintain daily prayer in church throughout Advent and Lent, year by year.

St John's congregation are faithful supporters of the 5th Sunday Benefice Services.

Children in Church

Our families join in with preparations for Festivals.



Family preparing Harvest decorations

Church Life

We have a pastoral visiting team who visit the sick and housebound and the bereaved, as well as trained Baptism visitors.

We take giving to charity seriously. The congregation gives on-going support to the Stroud Food Bank, the Stroud Beresford Group and the Nelson House Trust in addition to national charities.

Church and Community

Members of the congregation organise a monthly coffee morning for the village, and another church member plans regular outings which have become a social meeting place for church goers and non church goers alike.

The Social and Fund Raising Committee organises four fund raising events a year, two in aid of church funds and two for charities. These events are usually well supported and enjoyed by the whole village community.

St John's Flower Arrangers are an active and enthusiastic team, whose efforts enhance the beauty of our worship. The group took part in the Flower Festival in Gloucester Cathedral in July 2011.



Flower arrangers in Gloucester Cathedral

Mothers Union

The group supports fundraising, quiet days, Cathedral prayers, Wave of Prayer, and any fundraising activity throughout the Diocese and Deanery.

The Church Rooms

France Lynch Church Rooms, a former Victorian primary school, is now owned by the PCC and managed by a sub-committee.

The PCC recognises its value as a community building, especially as there is no dedicated village hall in France Lynch.

Regular users from the community are Women's Institute, Friday Evening Group, Bingo, Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, a Zumba keep-fit group. There are monthly films from Screen on the Hill and an annual pantomime put on by the local drama group.

The Church uses it for monthly coffee mornings, harvest and Agape meals; PCC meetings and fundraising activities.

The management committee are constantly improving the facilities and would welcome support from the new incumbent of the Benefice.



The Church Rooms – ready to party

Finally

The congregation at St John's has shown itself to be open to new ideas, willing to try new things and excited by new parish and benefice opportunities. Our church is much loved by the village and the social events we hold seem to be appreciated and enjoyed by many. We are ready to be inspired by our new incumbent.



Christingle

St Bartholomew, Oakridge

The Village

Oakridge, with a total population of some 650, is known for its strong community spirit even though the parish is scattered. Oakridge Lynch is the main village surrounded by the hamlets of Far Oakridge, Waterlane, Bournes Green and Tunley. Oakridge Lynch grew up as a settler community on the edge of common land, so there has never been a “big house” occupied by a large landowner.



St. Bartholomew's is the **village** church and we call ourselves the Church in Oakridge. Oakridge Lynch has a thriving shop/post office, a pub, village hall and recreation ground, a voluntary-aided school as well as the church.

Church members take part in, and often lead, many of the numerous village organisations.

The School

The V.A. Oakridge Parochial School is adjacent to the church and the children come to St. Bartholomew's fortnightly for 'Open the Book', for Achievement Worship six times a year and take part in the services on Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Christingle. However, attempts to involve school families in the 2nd Sunday Family Communion service have been unsuccessful.



The 30 or so children at the school use Church Green as their playground.

The Vicar and Churchwardens are trustees of School House which can be occupied by the Head Teacher if he or she so wishes.

*“ A priest who will visit
our schools and make
sustainable links
with the families there “*



*“ Someone who will listen to
the concerns and problems
of the older members of our
congregations “*

The Church

The church was built as a Chapel of Ease at the instigation of Thomas Keble, then vicar of Bisley. It is very suitable for the regular 30+ congregation but can accommodate up to 150 for village funerals, weddings and the carol service. It is well-maintained, light, clean and warm enough in winter. It is open every day.

The churchyard is closed to further burials and the Parish Council is responsible for its maintenance. Ashes can be interred.

Church Life

The quota has always been paid in full and between 10 and 30% of unrestricted income has been given to Christian charities at home and abroad. Most active members Gift-aid their regular giving.



Oakridge Church

Lay people prepare for services, act as stewards, read the lessons, lead the intercessions, assist with the chalice at communion and make the coffee for after service fellowship. There are rotas for cleaners and flower arrangers and two organists share duty.

Other than Sunday worship, Church activities complement rather than compete with village activities. A Bible Study group meets fortnightly, a Prayer Group meets on Wednesday mornings and Morning Prayer is said every Thursday morning. Lent talks are arranged every year as is a Harvest Supper.

We are known as a welcoming, friendly congregation and, led by a small choir, we sing joyfully and enthusiastically.



Harvest Supper

Ecumenism

Close co-operation with the Oakridge Methodist Church under a Local Covenant ended when the chapel closed and their members joined the St. Bartholomew's congregation.

The Methodist tradition, which predated the Anglican church in Oakridge, is maintained through the Covenant Service, Aldersgate Sunday and a Songs of Praise on Bible Sunday which began in celebration of Charles Wesley's 300th anniversary.

A retired Methodist minister takes our services from time to time.

Our congregation includes those brought up in Christian traditions other than C of E.

"Someone who
will discern and
encourage
the
ministry of others"

The four churches

If you have any questions, or would like to visit us, please contact one of the churchwardens listed below.

May the Lord bless you and us as we seek His guidance.

Peter Thorp, Bisley 01452 770 708 Shirley Bushell, Chalford 01453 883 971 Mike Kent, France Lynch 01453 885 977 Martin Green, Oakridge 01452 770 322

All Saints, Bisley



With Anglo-Saxon tombs and a Norman font, All Saints is a long-standing place of worship. Remodelled by Canon Thomas Keble in 1862 – against vehement opposition from villagers – the interior is a good example of Victorian church architecture. A number of 20th and 21st century changes have been made, including a glazed ringing chamber and a magnificent church loo.

Christchurch, Chalford



This fine 18th century Arts and Craft Movement church is on the main Stroud to Cirencester road and a stone's throw from the Thames-Severn Canal. Inside are many examples of the work of distinguished craftsmen, including Norman Jewson, and some of the stained glass is by Edward Payne. The font features carved fish and reflects the church's proximity to the River Frome.

St John the Baptist, France Lynch



In 1827 Thomas Keble, the younger brother of the more famous John, became vicar of Bisley, and arranged for the building of a church at France Lynch. Keble chose G.F.Bodley as the architect and in 1857 the church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, was consecrated.

Visiting students of Church architecture appreciate its many original features.

St Bartholomew, Oakridge



St Bartholomew's was built in 1837 and sits below the village green, overlooking the Golden Valley. The interior is very simple with lime-washed walls and barber poling decoration. The vestry has been updated so that refreshments can be served in church.

A project is under way to build a toilet and store in the churchyard.

www.achurchnearyou.com/parishfinder for maps of the four parishes

And God said "Leave your home and your relatives and come into the land which I shall show you"