



 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

THE RIVERS RETFORD

Mission Associate (Priest-in-Charge)

Cluster Two



PARISH PROFILE

Led by the desire to share the living hope that is found in following Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3) we are on a mission to grow new disciples with compassion confidence and courage. We are looking for Mission Associates who are excited by the possibility of helping rural churches flourish for a new season. Rooted in the living hope found in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3), our diocesan vision is to grow new disciples with compassion, confidence and courage. We believe this calling is just as vital in our rural villages as it is in our towns and city — and we are convinced that rural ministry holds remarkable opportunities for imaginative, faithful and fruitful mission.

Across the diocese we have seen encouraging signs of growth where churches have built strong relationships with schools, planned resources strategically, nurtured lay and ordained leadership, and developed contemporary expressions of worship alongside treasured traditional patterns. We are drawing on learning from places such as Connect Church in schools, The Potting Shed Church, and the River Idle benefice, where focused work with children, families, young people and wider communities has opened up fresh pathways into faith.

To support this next chapter, we've established a new cluster model that has brought several benefices together around a shared vision for growth. Each cluster is led by a Lead Mission Enabler, working alongside Mission Associates who give focused leadership to individual benefices. This model offers the best of both worlds: the rootedness of local ministry and the encouragement, accountability and creativity of a wider mission team.

In Cluster 2, one Mission Associate has already been appointed and there are now two further opportunities for priests who are ready to lead with prayerful imagination, pastoral warmth and missional courage. The cluster is also being strengthened by an Operations Manager, part-time Children and Families and Youth Workers, and a Worship Co-ordinator — giving Mission Associates practical support as they help local churches turn vision into action.

The Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham incorporates the City of Nottingham, the whole County of Nottinghamshire and five parishes in South Yorkshire.



In 2024 we launched our refreshed vision of Living Hope for the city, towns and villages of Nottinghamshire and beyond. We long to see thriving, growing churches across the diocese so that more people can discover the Living Hope of Jesus Christ and make the best

decision anyone can ever make — to become his disciple. Our mission is to grow disciples of Christ with compassion, confidence and courage, supported by seven areas of focus: inspiring worship, reaching younger, enhancing diversity, growing leaders, enabling commitment, encouraging generosity and nurturing prayer.

It is my hope that every worshipping community in the diocese will grow in its confidence to imagine and inhabit God's future. I pray that our rural Mission Associates will bring the creative leadership, spiritual depth and missional imagination needed to develop discipleship, plan for growth and reach out with warmth and courage to people of all ages who are not yet part of the church.

As you discern whether God may be calling you to this role, I warmly encourage you to reflect on our diocesan vision and to consider whether this might be the moment to bring your gifts, experience and calling to Southwell and Nottingham.

Rt Revd Paul Williams, Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham

We are living through a crucial moment for the church in a changing culture. Yet the good news of Jesus Christ remains as important, beautiful and life-giving as ever. In our rural communities there are many doors open for service, friendship, worship and witness — and many people who have yet to discover the hope of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our rural plan is designed to help clergy and lay teams pursue growth and fruitfulness in their own benefice while benefiting from the shared vision, strategic support and fellowship of the wider cluster. Mission Associates will not be working alone; they will be part of a team committed to prayerful encouragement, practical collaboration and courageous mission.

Each benefice is encouraged to create its own 'Growing Disciples Plan' which in turn will relate to the wider strategic plan for the rural cluster and play a part in the commitment to growing disciples of Jesus Christ with compassion, confidence and courage. I look forward to welcoming new mission associates to lead and implement the vision for these wonderful parishes.



The Venerable Tors Ramsey, Archdeacon of Newark

OUR PARISH

The Rivers Retford brings together nine former rural parishes to the south-east of Retford, stretching from Rampton to East Markham. Now operating as a single parish with one PCC, the benefice serves a beautiful agricultural landscape on the edge of the Trent Valley, while also reflecting the realities of contemporary rural life: new housing, commuting, home working, village networks and changing patterns of community belonging. With the A1 and East Coast Main Line close by, the area offers excellent connections to Lincoln, Sheffield, Doncaster, Peterborough, Nottingham and Leeds.



PRIORITIES FOR THE MISSION ASSOCIATE ROLE

- To identify and develop a centre of strength — likely to be based in one of the existing churches — where a new worshipping community can welcome younger people, build strong links with a local school, become a hub for contemporary worship, and support faith pathways and training across the benefice. To identify a school within each benefice that can host a Connect style after school church as a way of reaching out to children and their families.
- To work with a local school to establish a Connect-style after-school church, creating a welcoming and accessible pathway for children and families to explore faith and belong.
- To lead the discernment and development of new mission opportunities across the parish, supported by the wider cluster team.
- To collaborate with the Lead Mission Enabler in shaping a mission and ministry plan that enables sustainable flourishing across the benefice, helping each village church understand and embrace its part in the wider vision.
- To work with the Lead Mission Enabler and PCC to develop a realistic and hopeful buildings plan, discerning how each church building can best serve its village context while addressing maintenance, repair and long-term sustainability.
- To establish a sustainable pattern of ministry across the benefice that honours the varied traditions of village life while creating space for renewal, growth and new expressions of worship. The Mission Associate will be supported by those with PTO, SSMs, LLMs and LMLs.
- Together with the PCC, lead the parish in appreciating the generosity of God in his provision and ensure the church is on its ten year trajectory towards parish share through inspirational teaching and as part of whole-life discipleship.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

- A priest with a clear track record of helping new worshipping communities grow, especially among children, young people, families and younger adults.
- Confidence in leading contemporary forms of worship while valuing the breadth and depth of Anglican tradition.
- A heart for developing centres of missional worship and prayer that are welcoming, outward-looking and spiritually alive.
- Understanding of rural ministry and the ability to recognise both its challenges and its rich possibilities.
- A creative and hopeful approach to mission, with the confidence to explore new ways of working and the wisdom to bring others with you.
- The ability to encourage, equip and oversee volunteers and lay leaders while holding a clear vision across a number of villages and churches.
- A collaborative spirit, able to work well with the Lead Mission Enabler and cluster colleagues in developing mission and ministry across the wider area.

THE RIVERS RETFORD

The parish was created in 2019 to bring nine rural churches, into a single benefice. They are spread across about seven miles from Rampton in the north to East Markham, the largest community, in the south. Although the transition was challenging, after six years we are working together very effectively.

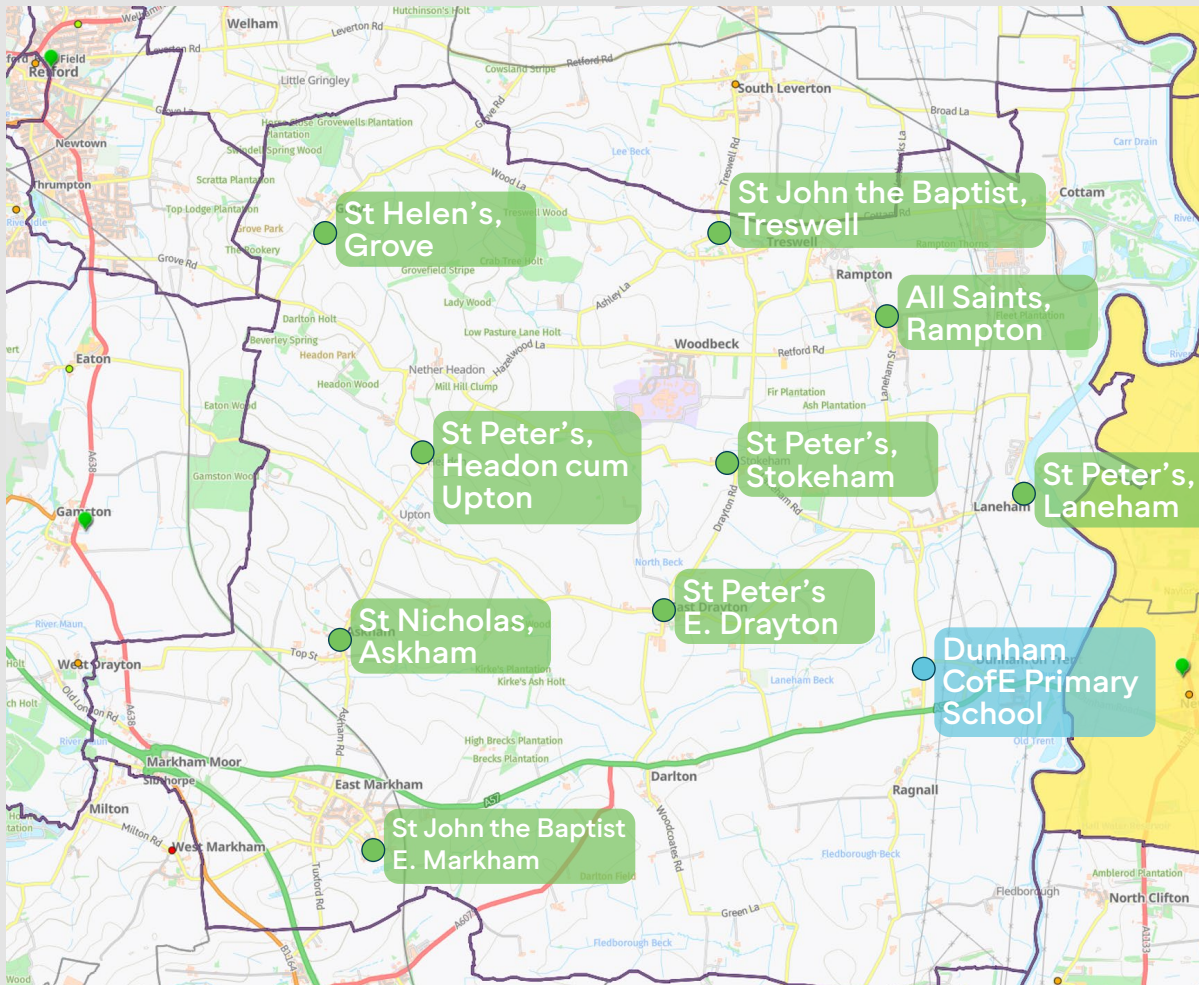
Being without an incumbent has encouraged everyone who represents a church in the benefice to recognise that they must continue to carry the responsibility for initiating and managing the operation of their church and the maintenance of the fabric. The great advantage is knowing that they have active support from other PCC members.

Each community maintains its own identity within the Benefice. We are now ready for full-time ministerial leadership to help it move from consolidation into growth.

There is a modern four-bed rectory quietly situated in East Markham, within easy walking distance of the church, village hall, primary school and bus stops.

OUR CHURCHES

Nine churches in the benefice are open, to serve 21 villages and centres of population. The churches operate as a single parish with one PCC. Eight are scheduled with regular services although some have very small local congregations and depend on travellers from elsewhere in the benefice for most of their congregation. There are also open churchyards in four other locations within the civil parish of Dunham on Trent, Fledborough (Churches Conservation Trust), Dunham on Trent and Ragnall (churches in private ownership), and Darlton (church for sale).



OUR SCHOOLS

Schools are a key opportunity for mission and relationship-building. There is a Church of England primary school at Dunham on Trent and county primary schools at Rampton and East Markham, with most children moving on to Tuxford Academy or secondary schools in Retford. Existing relationships with Dunham and Rampton schools provide a strong foundation, and there are encouraging signs of renewed opportunity at East Markham, including the possibility of monthly collective worship and Time Travelling in the church.

OUR LOCALITY

The villages are changing and growing. New homes can be found in many places, and East Markham has roughly doubled in size over the past decade, with further development planned. Rampton is home to Sundown Adventureland, a popular family visitor attraction, and East Markham church — described by John Betjeman as the “cathedral of the Trent Valley” — offers a striking place of heritage, beauty and potential welcome.

Each village has its own character, networks and gathering places. Many have village halls, clubs, coffee mornings, cinema events, uniformed organisations, Mothers’ Union groups and other community activities. East Markham church already hosts a well-attended weekly Coffee Shop, and facilities at Treswell are being improved. There is currently little specific provision for teenagers, which creates a significant opportunity for fresh youth-focused ministry where leadership and resources can be developed.

The communities include families with deep local roots as well as newer residents attracted by rural life, good transport links and relative affordability. Patterns of commuting and home working sit alongside traditional village life, creating a varied and open mission field.

Inhabitants of the villages embrace a wide cross-section of society. Recent housing development in East Markham has attracted both young couples and retired people. There is evidently a considerable amount of home working as well as more distant commuting. A traveller site is located at Treswell.

New arrivals are warmly welcomed, and the benefice offers an appealing combination of rural living, strong community identity and excellent communications. The developing West Burton power station site is expected to bring additional opportunities and employment, adding to the sense that this is a place with a future as well as a history.



WORKING TOGETHER

Since becoming a single benefice, former members of the individual PCCs have worked hard to build a shared life and recognise the benefits of collaboration. Local leadership is committed and generous, with people in most churches actively engaged in worship, practical support and PCC life. The Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Lay Minister and other volunteers carry significant responsibility with care and dedication, providing a strong platform for a Mission Associate to encourage, equip and develop further local leadership.

GOOD NEWS STORIES

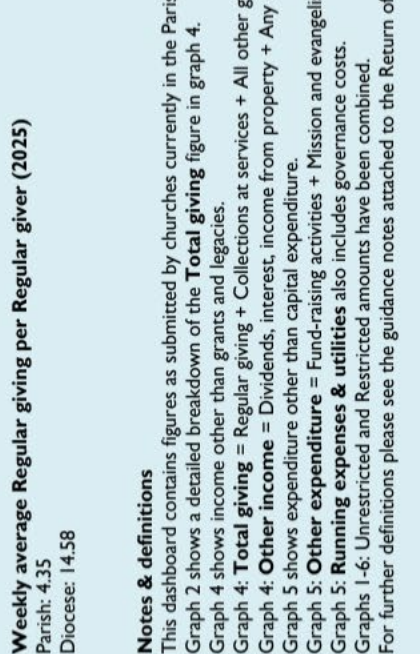
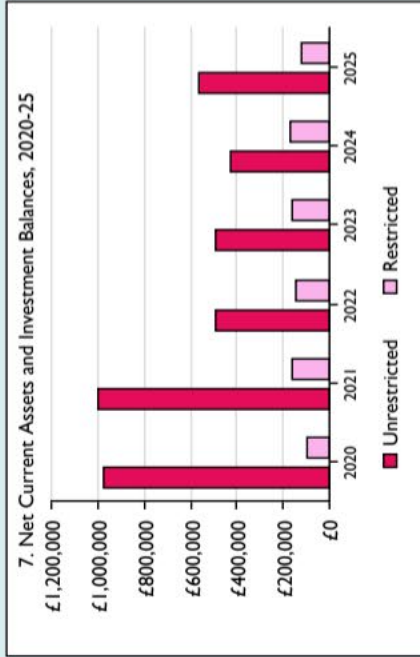
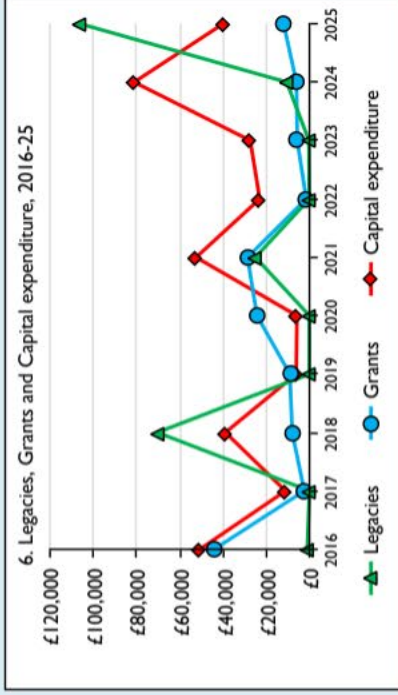
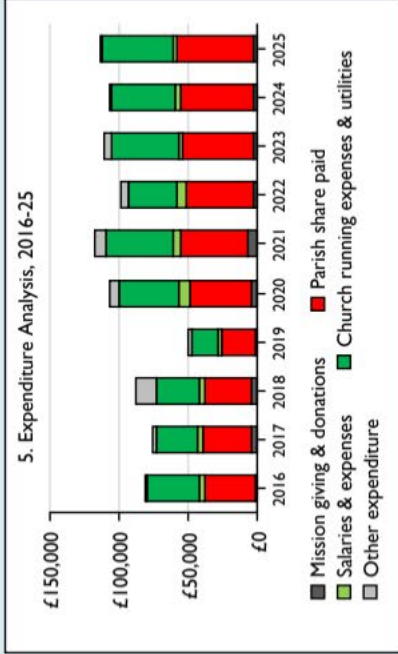
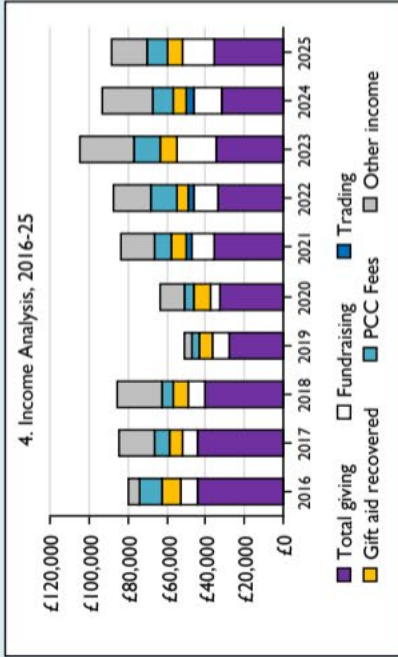
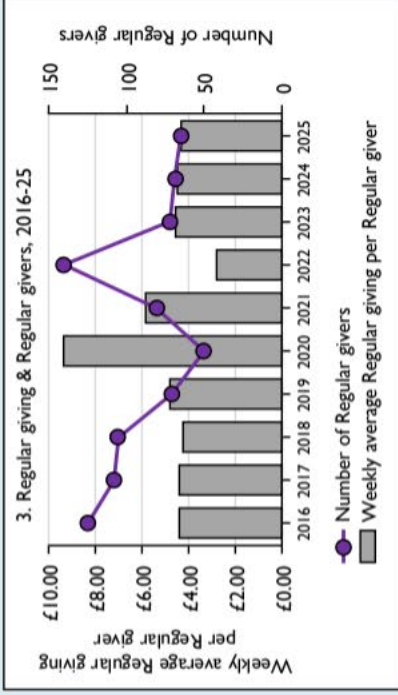
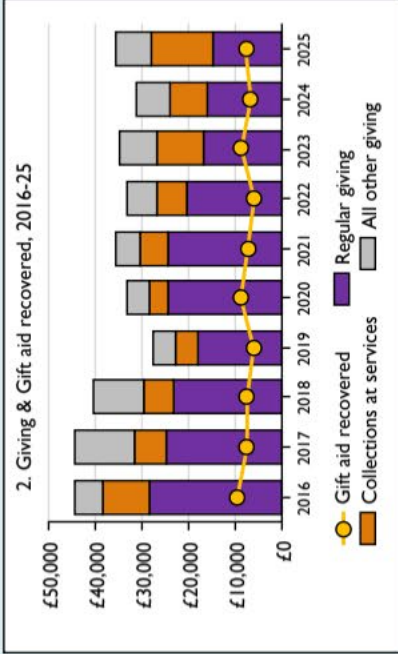
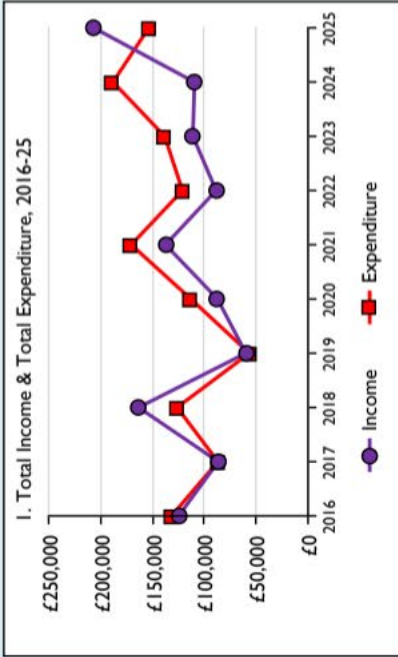
There are real signs of hope to build on. East Markham, which serves around half the population of the benefice, has the largest congregation, and many of its members regularly support worship across the other churches. Services often draw people from several villages, showing that a wider benefice identity is already taking shape.

Encouraging relationships with Dunham and Rampton schools point to further possibilities with children and families. In East Markham, the weekly Coffee Shop has become a valued gathering place for residents of all ages, demonstrating the church's capacity to offer hospitality, friendship and community presence.

Treswell church is preparing for major re-ordering, made possible by a generous legacy. Although there is currently no regular congregation from the village, the renewed building will create a fresh opportunity to reconnect with the community and imagine new forms of welcome and worship.

Grove church, after several quieter years, has recently come to life again and now provides regular worship and a focal point for a village with no other public space. There is also a possibility of restoring the ruined almshouses in the churchyard to create further space for community use.

Finance Dashboard for the Parish of The Rivers, Retford in the Deanery of Bassetlaw and Bawtry



Notes & definitions
This dashboard contains figures as submitted by churches currently in the Parish; gaps may be the result of missing returns.
Graph 2 shows a detailed breakdown of the **Total giving** figure in graph 4.
Graph 4 shows income other than grants and legacies.
Graph 4: **Total giving** = Regular giving + Collections at services + All other giving, including special appeals
Graph 4: **Other income** = Dividends, interest, income from property + Any other income.
Graph 5 shows expenditure other than capital expenditure.
Graph 5: **Other expenditure** = Fund-raising activities + Mission and evangelism costs + Cost of trading + Other expenses.
Graph 5: **Running expenses & utilities** also includes governance costs.
Graphs 1-6: Unrestricted and Restricted amounts have been combined.
For further definitions please see the guidance notes attached to the Return of Parish Finance:



Finance Dashboard for the Parish of The Rivers, Retford in the Deanery of Bassetlaw and Bawtry

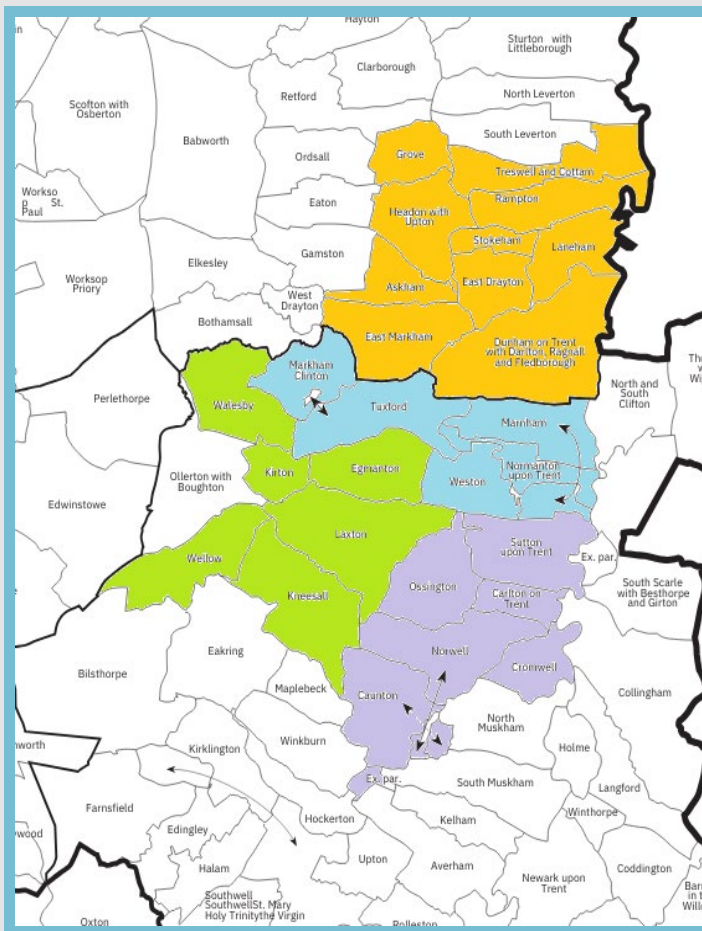
Report	Field	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Total Income & Total Expenditure	Income	£124,776	£86,549	£163,371	£59,931	£87,300	£137,384	£88,607	£110,989	£109,508	£206,639
	Expenditure	£131,559	£86,857	£126,188	£56,616	£112,973	£170,390	£121,044	£138,171	£188,010	£153,491
2. Giving & Gift aid recovered	Regular giving	£28,586	£24,903	£23,216	£17,806	£24,273	£24,552	£20,565	£16,979	£15,940	£14,712
	Collections at services	£9,930	£6,635	£6,459	£5,148	£3,944	£5,971	£6,365	£9,770	£8,188	£13,208
3. Regular giving and Regular givers	All other giving	£5,803	£12,685	£10,823	£4,813	£4,869	£5,048	£6,207	£8,225	£7,079	£7,833
	Gift aid recovered	£9,549	£7,455	£7,427	£6,094	£8,796	£7,317	£5,937	£8,672	£6,650	£7,793
	Weekly average Regular giving per Regular giver	£4.40	£4.43	£4.25	£4.82	£9.34	£5.83	£2.82	£4.53	£4.44	£4.35
	Number of Regular givers	125	108	105	71	50	81	140	72	69	65
4. Income Analysis	Total giving	£44,319	£44,223	£40,498	£27,767	£33,086	£35,571	£33,137	£34,974	£31,207	£35,753
	Fundraising	£8,861	£7,179	£8,632	£9,147	£4,524	£11,167	£12,695	£19,615	£15,201	£16,125
	Trading	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£3,300	£3,340	£0	£3,430	£0
	Gift aid recovered	£9,549	£7,455	£7,427	£6,094	£8,796	£7,317	£5,937	£8,672	£6,650	£7,793
	PCC Fees	£10,848	£7,556	£5,667	£3,755	£4,538	£8,782	£13,365	£13,366	£10,981	£10,219
5. Expenditure Analysis	Other income	£6,151	£17,736	£22,853	£4,118	£12,094	£17,616	£18,637	£28,487	£25,527	£18,669
	Mission giving & donations	£1,034	£4,449	£4,454	£1,228	£4,707	£7,139	£3,249	£3,378	£2,718	£3,027
	Parish share paid	£36,337	£34,217	£33,321	£24,433	£44,433	£48,356	£48,600	£50,500	£52,968	£55,080
	Salaries & expenses	£4,864	£4,911	£4,563	£2,350	£7,763	£5,795	£6,117	£3,524	£3,646	£2,194
6. Legacies, Grants and Capital expenditure	Church running expenses & utilities	£36,864	£29,736	£30,377	£19,184	£43,669	£47,793	£34,606	£47,734	£45,784	£52,229
	Other expenditure	£1,788	£2,455	£14,614	£3,314	£6,604	£8,877	£5,488	£5,655	£1,816	£1,048
	Legacies	£1,000	£0	£70,329	£0	£0	£25,000	£0	£250	£10,500	£106,133
	Grants	£44,048	£2,400	£7,965	£9,050	£24,262	£28,631	£1,496	£5,625	£6,012	£11,947
	Capital expenditure	£50,672	£11,089	£38,859	£6,107	£5,797	£52,430	£22,984	£27,380	£81,078	£39,913
7. Net Current Assets and Investment Balances	Unrestricted					£975,047	£1,001,462	£488,171	£494,282	£430,813	£565,437
	Restricted					£98,845	£161,698	£147,080	£163,624	£172,528	£120,864

LOCATION

Cluster 2 sits in the middle of the diocese, between the market towns of Retford, Southwell and Newark. It brings together four benefices, combining the beauty and rootedness of rural life with good transport links and significant opportunities for fresh mission.

1. **Rivers Benefice** (East Markham, Askham, Treswell and Cottam, Dunham with Darlton, Ragnall and Fledborough, Headen with Upton, Grove, East Drayton and Stokeham)
2. **Beck & Trent Benefice** (Norwell, Cromwell, Caunton, Ossington, Sutton on Trent, Carlton on Trent)
3. **Tuxford Benefice** (Tuxford, Weston, Normanton-upon-Trent, Marnham, West Markham)
4. **6 parishes of the Northwestern group** (Kneesall, Laxton, Egmanon Kirton, Walesby, Wellow)

In addition, the cluster includes **The Potting Shed Church** (a Bishops Mission Order).



PEOPLE

The Lead Mission Enabler is **Revd Alison Jones** (pictured right) who is currently the Pioneer Minister of The Potting Shed Church. She will provide strategic leadership for the cluster, working closely with Mission Associates as they shape local mission, nurture discipleship and encourage growth.



In Cluster 2, we have appointed one Mission Associate: **Revd David Lewis in Beck & Trent**. There are now opportunities for two further Mission Associates, serving as Priest-in-Charge for The Rivers and the Northwestern Group. The wider team also includes an Operations Manager, Children & Families and Youth Workers (part-time), and a Worship Co-ordinator.

There are **29 churches** in this cluster serving a population of **18,562**.

There are **5 C of E primary schools** and **1 secondary academy** at Tuxford.

The villages are home to families who have lived there for generations, as well as those who have moved to enjoy this rural context more recently.

The benefices enjoy **good links to the A1 and the East Coast mainline railway** and because of new housing developments, attract those commuting to neighbouring towns and cities (Lincoln, Doncaster, Sheffield) as well as those further afield (York, Leeds and London).

OPPORTUNITIES

There are already good links with schools and communities, but there is a clear opportunity to develop stronger pathways into faith. Many churches currently have few children or young adults attending on Sundays, yet the relationships, goodwill and local presence are there. A Mission Associate will have the chance to turn these connections into new worshipping communities, deeper discipleship and renewed confidence for mission.

Hospitality is already part of the benefice's life, from the café in East Markham to drop-in opportunities for cyclists and walkers. These points of welcome provide natural bridges into conversation, relationship and faith-sharing, and offer fertile ground for creative mission.

CENTRES OF STRENGTH

Centres of strength will be places where new worshipping communities are planted with a particular focus on reaching younger people and those who are not currently part of church life. They will be spaces of welcome, worship, prayer, exploration and belonging — places where people can encounter the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that are accessible, rooted and life-giving.

These centres will share the following characteristics:

- Create space where people can encounter God and discover the hope of the gospel.
- Focus intentionally on those who are unfamiliar with church, including those who are de-churched or unchurched.
- Develop inspirational worship, likely to include contemporary styles, while remaining rooted in the life and prayer of the wider church.
- Offer clear discipleship pathways, beginning with generous welcome and outreach events, continuing through explorer courses, and leading towards fuller participation in the life of the church.
- Nurture a culture of discipleship that helps people follow Christ faithfully in a rural context in the 21st century.
- Serve as a hub for teaching, training, encouragement and social gathering across the whole benefice.
- A place that can act as a hub for teaching, training and social gatherings for the whole benefice.



TO FIND OUT MORE

Thank you for considering this profile. We hope it has given you a flavour of our beautiful part of the diocese and the opportunities that exist within it, and we would love to invite you to consider if God is calling you to join us here.

If you would like more information, please contact:

Ven. Tors Ramsey Archdeacon of Newark

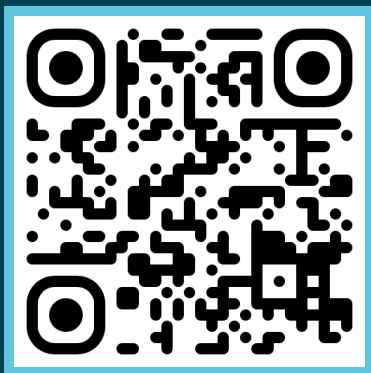
archd-newark@southwell.anglican.org or 01636 817226.

You can also find out more via our A Church Near You pages:

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/17807/more-information/>

MISSION ASSOCIATE ROLE

To hear more about the Rural Cluster Mission Associate role from those already in post, scan or click on the QR code below to watch a video.





**GROWING
DISCIPLES**

COMPASSION CONFIDENCE COURAGE