

The Church of England

Diocese of Ely

Team Rector (Designate) for the Benefice of **WISBECH with WALSOKEN** Deanery of Wisbech Lynn Marshland



Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Wisbech



St. Augustine's Church, Wisbech



All Saints' Church, Walsoken

At the heart of the Deanery of Wisbech Lynn Marshland, in the Diocese of Ely, and straddling the Norfolk Cambridgeshire border, lie the three churches which form the newly created benefice of Wisbech with Walsoken.

A market town and working port based on the river Nene, with a proud historic tradition, Wisbech is surrounded by the fertile, productive farmland of the Fens. Despite high levels of deprivation, it is a friendly place with a strong community-minded volunteer workforce.

Within easy travel by road are the historic cities of Ely and Cambridge, some of the country's finest beaches on the North Norfolk coast, the Sandringham Estate and the world-renowned Wildfowl and Wetland Trust at Welney.

Rail links to all parts of the country are just a few miles away in Kings Lynn, Peterborough or Downham Market (travel time to London Kings Cross being a little over an hour from Downham Market).



Foreword by the Acting Bishop of Ely, Rt Rev Dagmar Winter.

Thank you for taking an interest in this exciting post in the Diocese of Ely. The role of Team Rector (designate) in the benefice of Wisbech with Walsoken is a significant post in a newly created team serving the port town of Wisbech at the edge of the Cambridgeshire fens.

This is a strategic post overseeing ministry and mission across 3 parishes that serve over 25,000 people. You will be responsible for leading the development of a new team, building a culture that connects the gospel with the lives of local people, energising church, growing younger and more diverse congregations. It is a big job, but you will not be alone.

In consultation with the PCCs, you will be able to appoint a Team Vicar (or similar) who will share the leadership with you and local SSM clergy, LLMs, churchwardens and other lay leaders. You will have the support of a diocesan central team that is determined to help you succeed. You will have access to a fund for mission that can be used to leverage additional support. You will be expected to become a training incumbent.

To thrive in this post, you will need to be:

- Prayerful and articulate – there is significant desire to communicate the Gospel
- Focussed and resilient – there is a significant workload of pastoral care
- Faithful and gracious – there is significant diversity in the 3 parishes
- Wise and resourceful – there will be more opportunities than you can take alone.

We expect that you will already have significant leadership experience, ideally within parish settings. You will work with, and be able to get the best out of, staff and volunteers, heritage churches, community buildings, civic partners, and other Christian denominations.

We offer you an excellent home to live in (see Appendix), a stipend of £30,000, annual CMD grant, retreat time, clear HR and supportive leadership. As we await a new Diocesan Bishop, we confidently predict that this post will be sustained and supported going forward.

The Deanery has been planning the combining of 3 town parishes that cover the heart of Wisbech, including a part of the town, which is administratively in Norfolk, called Walsoken. Wisbech St Peter and Paul, the civic church, and Wisbech St Augustine were held in plurality by the previous incumbent, who retires in June. They have been working together for 5 years. Walsoken has been in vacancy for 6 months. Now is the time to unite the 3 parishes in shared mission to one of the more deprived towns in the diocese.



You will be Team Rector (designate) until the pastoral scheme is made. You will be building on strong foundations, with parishes that are still learning to work together. The pages that follow will help you understand the strengths and challenges of these parishes.

Enquiries about this post can be made to the Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech, Ven Richard Harlow, on 07415757527 or archdeacon.handw@elydiocese.org

The Challenge

The Deanery of Wisbech Lynn Marshland covers an area of 180 square miles, inhabited by 70,000 people. It is an area dominated by agriculture and some light industry. House prices are affordable, with many choosing to retire here from nearer London. We are surrounded by big skies, open fields,

waterways and the sea, with bird life in abundance. Kings Lynn is a short drive away, Brancaster beach a little further; Cambridge is less than an hour away, London is just an hour or so beyond.

But in many ways the area is quite deprived. Educational achievement is below expectations. Wages are low. Many rural areas have poor infrastructure. Every parish sits in the lowest quartile according to national standards for deprivation. Yet we have some of the most beautiful churches in the country, relics of a former age when the area was rich from exporting wool and other goods to the continent. Now these medieval buildings, whilst serving as pointers to the majesty of God, present us with the challenge of maintenance and heating.

Many of the congregations across the deanery have fallen below a level whereby the challenges of mission, ministry and building maintenance can be sustained. Volunteers are aging and officers are often hard to find. Yet there is a pride and resilience in the people here. Friends' groups have rallied to the support of some churches, schools often look to us for pastoral and religious support, and many local people still want life events and occasional offices to be celebrated in church. There is an openness to the Gospel of Jesus, which is not always evident elsewhere.

In 2023, The Deanery Synod voted to approve a Deanery Plan that created 5 benefices from the 23 parishes that make up the deanery. Generous support from the Diocese has assured us that we can staff these benefices, not just for maintenance, but for mission. Already the Diocese, with the Church Commissioners' Strategic Development Fund, has invested over £0.5m in revitalisation, which continues to make inroads amongst schools & young people. Recently the lottery has funded maintenance and development work in some of the churches.

We are ready to renew our patterns of discipleship, mission and partnership with our local communities. As we build new benefices, including this one, we need to establish a culture of generous orthodoxy and open handedness. We recognise that Wisbech ('The Capital of the Fens') is the market town that holds the centre of the deanery, and it has a chance to lead the culture of the area. We will need the holder of this post to think strategically and work collaboratively.

You will be ably supported by the Rural Dean, Lay Chair and your congregations, as you unite 3 parishes and imagine a renewed church thriving at the heart of the town. There will be a need to unite processes and policies, whilst allowing what is unique about each church to thrive. You will need to prayerfully discern the direction of mission, knowing that you can't do everything. You will build a team of ordained and lay people who will work together to grow the church.

It won't be easy, but it will be worthwhile. You will change people's lives and welcome a diverse community into Christian faith. You will find people of peace in the local community wanting to work with you. You will encounter poverty, hunger and desperation, but you will face it with faith, humility and humour, amongst the team that you have built. God will surprise you, and you may surprise yourself!

Come and meet us and discern with us whether God is calling you here.



Team Rector (Designate) for the Benefice of Wisbech with Walsoken

Are you:

- Inspirational, approachable and non-judgemental;
- Outgoing with drive and a good communicator;
- Able to relate warmly to all ages and work supportively and collaboratively with local Clergy and lay colleagues.

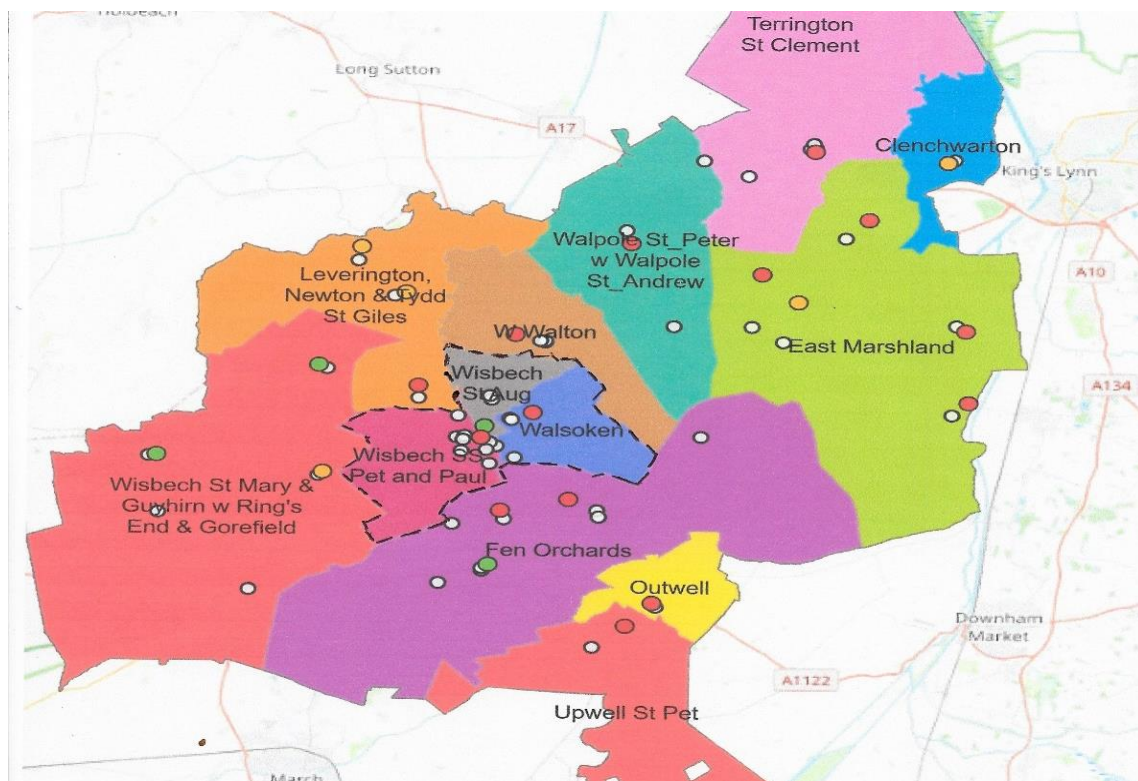
Could you:

- Re-energise us to look upwards and outwards;
- Communicate the Christian message to all levels of society and be an advocate voice for the marginalised;
- Demonstrate a commitment to support the range of theological traditions represented in Wisbech and Walsoken;
- Be actively engaged in church and community life.

Do you have:

- Proven ability to lead and bring everyone with you, through forging strong partnerships.
- Enthusiasm and energy;
- Good pastoral skills and empathy with the disadvantaged;
- Effective management and administration skills;
- A well-developed sense of humour!

Could you fulfil this demanding but potentially very rewarding role within our Benefice?



Wisbech Lynn Marshland Deanery

----- marks the boundary of the Wider-Wisbech Benefice

Our Parishes and churches

St. Peter and St. Paul, Wisbech

The town

There has been a town by the river Nene, which was previously named the Wysbeck, since pre-Norman times. Today Wisbech is a market town and important port with a population of around 25,000, 61% of whom describe themselves as Christian.

Wisbech has a proud history, being the former home of anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson, the philanthropist Peckover family and social reformer and co-founder of the National Trust, Octavia Hill. The town retains some stunning Georgian architecture and a successful town museum.

In recent years the town and local area has suffered from under-investment which is manifested by high levels of deprivation.

A strong volunteer workforce, including the award-winning Wisbech-in-Bloom team, manage the gardens and floral displays around the church and town.

Wisbech has numerous primary schools, including St. Peter's C. of E. junior school, a Secondary Academy, a campus of The College of West Anglia, a purpose-built Special Needs Academy and the independent Grammar School catering for children between ages 3 and 18.

The town has good bus links to the larger towns of Peterborough and Kings Lynn and the possible re-opening of the railway line linking Wisbech to March (and hence to Cambridge and London) is currently under review.

Church Building

St Peter's Church dates from 1111 and retains some of its Norman architecture. It is an open and welcoming space with a rare 'double nave' and fine Victorian and Edwardian stained glass.

In 2017 the church was awarded a £500,000 grant to carry out structural and roof repairs and to provide kitchen and toilet facilities, which have proved transformational in terms of church use.

A new children's area has been created as a safe and dedicated space in the Southwest chapel, with plans afoot to develop activities for children during school holidays.

The church gardens, which form a centrepiece to the town, are beautifully maintained by local volunteers.

The church hall, recently renovated to a high standard, is well used by a plethora of community groups as well as being a venue for church meetings, fellowship and fund-raising.

Church Life

The church follows a liberal catholic liturgy with a sung Eucharist most Sundays and a very popular Healing Mass held each Thursday in the sanctuary chapel, with social gatherings held after every service.

St Peter's hosts a dedicated vigil chapel for occasional Eucharists and regular prayers by the local Eastern Orthodox Christian community. A vigil area has also been created in

the Sacrament Chapel for quiet prayer and reflection.

The church is open every day from 9am to 2pm for private prayer, a facility which is much used and appreciated.

St Peter's has long been used as a training parish for curates, including at least four women, and has a commitment to equality, diversity and the encouragement of women's ministry.

It has an active Mothers' Union, drawing in people from outlying villages who struggled to maintain stand-alone groups and supporting the local women's refuge and 'Baby Bank' through fund-raising and practical help.

The church has a talented team of bellringers who regularly ring quarter and whole peals using all 10 bells and is blessed with an outstanding Harrison & Harrison organ (a sister to the one in Festival Hall, London) admirably played by two virtuoso organists.

St. Peter's hosts a number of large civic services at Christmas and Remembrance Day as well as Wisbech Grammar School's end of term service, the Mayor's Carol Service and an annual Festival of Light service for remembering loved ones, run by the local Hospice.

Outreach in the community

The 'Changing Market Towns' initiative provided funding for a dedicated worker in the local C. of E. junior school and funded a 'Young People's Counsellor' to work in the local Secondary school. The worker, who trained as a chaplain and is now training for ordination, continues to offer secular counselling and support to troubled pupils and has also set up prayer groups within the school.

Working with local schools is a key part of St Peter's mission, with a dedicated band of volunteers enabling large groups of children to visit the church as part of their curriculum studies.

St. Peter's Lay Ministers provide monthly assemblies in local schools and a joint project between the church and St Catharine's College, Cambridge is bringing beautiful liturgical music to the children of a local primary school.

In an area of low wages and at a time when price rises caused real local deprivation, the church started a weekly 'drop in' for mothers and babies in the church hall, offering warmth, companionship and lunch to hard-pressed young families. Initially funded by the Heritage Lottery, industrious efforts by St. Peter's social and fund-raising team have enabled this valuable community service to continue.

Underpinning all the social events held by St. Peter's is the understanding that fellowship and friendship are vital gifts of the church.

Church Finance

St. Peter's expenditure has slightly exceeded its income over the past few years but despite this the church has been able to meet its parish share obligations to Diocese. It has 27 parishioners who donate via either the Parish Giving Scheme or by standing order.

Challenges

- A steady reduction in service attendance due to an ageing congregation;
- Enabling our faith to have resonance with, and relevance to the wider community and in particular its young people;
- Innovating and finding a new pattern of worship across the new benefice while maintaining our tradition of weekly Communion;
- Sustaining our income in challenging times such that we can pass on to future generations this much-loved historic church.

Vision and plans for the future

- Thanks in part to the completed Heritage Lottery Funded refurbishment programme, we hope our new Rector will be able to fully focus on ministry and mission going forward;
- We wish to build on the church's work with children, both in local schools and in our newly refurbished children's area;
- To continue the work which we foster in local secondary schools and to expand the opportunity for faith and prayer for both staff and pupils.

Get in touch:

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The church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Wisbech



St Augustine's Church, Wisbech

The parish and town

The parish of St Augustine dates back to 1869, is wholly within the town of Wisbech, and is entirely residential and industrial. Although there are some affluent neighbourhoods, by all metrics the parish has high levels of deprivation. Despite this the parish has a strong sense of community and demonstrates outstanding generosity towards the disadvantaged.

The parish is served by a GP surgery and has a Church of England primary school, the Orchards Academy, on the nearby housing estate.

Wisbech, and this parish in particular, is well served by local parks, one of which has a new range of public facilities and hosts the family-friendly Wisbech Rock Festival each August.

Wisbech has an active theatre, two cinemas and a multitude of meeting places. The town's football, rugby, cricket, hockey and tennis clubs all thrive and are complemented by a recently refurbished swimming pool and exercise facility. All youth organisations are represented within the town, including Cambridgeshire's only Sea Cadets.

Church building

St. Augustine's church is a Victorian building which has undergone significant repairs in recent years thus ensuring a sound and watertight structure which, although of traditional design, allows for a close, comfortable relationship between clergy and congregation. A well-researched and well-written history of the church entitled 'A Church with a Mission' describes it as being originally built to minister to the poor of Wisbech.

The church is regularly approached by the local community for baptisms and funerals as well as occasional weddings. The attached 'Parish Centre' built in 1997 offers a well-appointed space and comfortable facilities for all manner of community activities and also houses the John Barratt bequest of Christian literature - comprehensive enough to be used as a Diocesan learning resource.

Church life and outreach in the community

A regular congregation of around 30 active and energetic members, from a mix of theological traditions, enjoy a range of services from a simple said Service of the Word through to a Sunday Eucharist with incense at Easter and at Christmas Midnight Mass. The church, being blessed with a highly competent and inventive organist and a concert-standard grand piano, has reintroduced a Choral Evensong service as an occasional treat.

After something of a gap, we are delighted to see some young people attending regularly, prompting us to restart 'Family Services'.

St Augustine's parish benefits from school's work by two Lay Workers funded through the 'Changing Market Towns' initiative: members now extend regular hospitality to local school children, organise a very successful Christmas Tree Festival, and also assist in providing monthly services in local care homes.

St Augustine's congregation is bound together as an inclusive Christian family, meeting through the week for fellowship and fun, such as Knit and Natter and Fun and Fitness. A monthly Bingo evening is enjoyed by around 50 local people and a highly skilled sewing group regularly combine fellowship with fund-raising on behalf of the parish.

Pre-Covid the church enjoyed collaboration with a nearby evangelical congregation, which it is hoped to rekindle and if current talks with Wisbech town council bear fruit, a drop-in facility for the elderly will be available in the parish centre from July.

Church Finances

St Augustine's expenditure has exceeded its income over the past few years, but it has continued to pay over 90% of the requested parish share to Diocese during this time and has 16 parishioners who donate via the Parish Giving Scheme or via standing order.

Challenges

- Growing our congregation and especially bringing in families;
- Effective outreach to those living on the North Ward estate;
- A continual annual financial shortfall which impacts the long-term maintenance of a Victorian building;
- An inability to market St Augustine's exceptional facilities due in part to its lack of available parking.

Vision and plans for the future

- An incumbent fully engaged with both the spiritual and social life of the church;
- An enthusiastic and fun ministry that will help to grow a mixed age congregation;
- Experiments in worship delivery, both traditional and using modern media, to reach a different audience;
- To make full use of our Lay talents in worship and outreach and promote links with other faith traditions;
- To see the return of youth organisations and reinstate a church choir;
- Solvency;
- Most of all, to hear from God the direction we are to take in the 21st century.

Get in touch

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Parishioners and activities at St. Augustine's church

All Saints' Church, Walsoken

The parish and village

The parish and village of Walsoken straddles the Norfolk Cambridgeshire border and, its historic core being now encircled by housing, has become in modern times a suburb of Wisbech town.

The parish has a population of around 9,000, has a good range of local shops and take-aways and is served by several GP surgeries.

There are two schools, one of which is a Church of England junior school and the parish is in the catchment area for both Thomas Clarkson Secondary Academy in Wisbech and Marshland High School in nearby West Walton. There are also two private children's day nurseries and four care homes locally.

Walsoken has a vibrant village hall which holds well-supported community events, including a weekly coffee morning.

Church building

All Saints' Church is a Grade 1 listed building with nave and chancel dating from the late Norman period, around 1146 and the church is crowned by a prominent medieval tower with turrets and spire.

The interior has massive Norman arcades, rich with zigzag moulding and above the chancel arch is a 15th century carving of King David complete with harp.

North and South aisles both have 15th century screens, one with very intricate tracery. The font is over 400 years old and is decorated with sculptures of the crucifixion and seven sacraments.

All Saints' Church is currently on the 'Heritage-at-risk' register, although a proposal has been put forward to the National Lottery heritage fund to replace the nave roof.

Modern additions to the church include a kitchen, a new oil-fired heating system, energy-saving lighting in the side-aisles, and a back projected presentation system.

Church life and outreach in the community

The church has a stalwart and dedicated core congregation, supportive and encouraging churchwardens and an organist and substantive choir who lead the music in worship.

All Saints' currently has two services each Sunday and is open each day for visits and private prayer between April and October. There are reflection days held during Advent and Lent, with frequent Bible study and weekly prayer sessions.

Children between 8-12 years visit at Easter, Harvest and Christmas, when the significance of each festival is explained in interactive fashion.

Walsoken Ringers are active locally, with All Saints' having the only locally-accredited tower for teaching purposes. The church bells are rung on alternate Sundays, with the ringing school held during the afternoon and evening.

The church is in use by the local community for a range of social events and meetings and is proud to have been described by King Charles, (then Prince of Wales) when visiting as 'One of the finest parish churches in the United Kingdom'.

Church Finances

All Saints' church income has exceeded its expenditure over the last few years and it has felt able to contribute around 65% of the requested parish share to Diocese. The church has 16 parishioners who donate regularly via standing order.

Challenges

- An aging congregation and difficulty attracting young people;
- A shortage of volunteers;
- Paying the requested parish share to Diocese;
- Raising sufficient funds to undertake the necessary repairs and maintenance of the church building.

Vision and plans for the future

- To remain orthodox and stand on God's word;
- To reach out to families and children using novel audio-visual presentations;
- To extend ministry to areas of new housing and to nurture newcomers;
- To continue to be a valued part of the local community.

Get in touch

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Inside All Saints' Church, Walsoken



Church events at All Saints'

Appendix
Team Rector (Designate) for the Benefice of Wisbech with Walsoken
Accommodation



St. Peter's vicarage
Love Lane
Wisbech
PE13 1HP

