

IME2 Placement Profile

The Benefice of St. Michael and All Angels, Eastbourne

TRAINING INCUMBENT INTERVIEW

Rev Ben Sleep

Tell us about your ordained ministry to date:

I was ordained in 2018 and served my curacy at St. John's, Meads, Eastbourne. In 2019, my training incumbent and the diocese discussed the possibility of a small transplant to a neighbouring church that had been struggling. Throughout Covid, we partnered with this church and in November 2021 I was appointed Priest in Charge at St. Michael's. The congregation was between 20-25 when we arrived, but God has done amazing things over the last few years. The worshipping community has grown to around 400 and Sunday morning attendance each week is between 150-200. We have around 100 children under the age of 16 as part of the family. God has helped us to build an amazing leadership team, which has grown organically, and has been funded by the church family.



As a result of the growth at St. Michael's, the Central Church of England took an interest in what had happened, and whether there was a replicable model (ie, one that didn't cost any money!) We firmly believe that church growth is not about following a formula, but rather investing in, supporting and trusting leaders. As a result, we developed The Kindling Network – an opportunity for leaders from throughout the country to come and spend a week with us for shared learning, and then to participate in an ongoing relationship with us and others through the Network. This provides ongoing support, encouragement and accountability. The project received funding in October last year and we launch in February 2026. The intention is to work with roughly 120 churches from all over the country over the next three years.

At the heart of everything is Jesus. If you ask anyone at St. Michael's what our job is, my hope is that they would tell you that we're here to share the Unusual Kindness of Jesus. To reach out into our community and to be His hands and feet. Everything at St. Michael's is geared towards making His name known. Every missional opportunity is worth considering, however crazy it may be! Welcome is absolutely essential to making people feel comfortable and at ease when they come through the doors. St. Michael's is far from glossy – we're pretty messy, we make mistakes and no Sunday is the same. But we're a community, and in a world that is so often defined by isolation, we long for people to experience the joy of being part of God's family.

What are your current priorities in ministry?

- To continue reaching our community through missional outreach
- To take the church family deeper into scripture and prayer
- To increase homegroups as we grow bigger as a family
- To increase provision for our 8-13 year olds as our church youth grow older
- To keep growing the team to enable more ministries to flourish

TRAINING CONTEXT

What metaphor would you use to describe the Curate/TI training relationship?

Paul and Barnabas! A relationship with its foundations in the Gospel; partnering through the ups and downs of ministry, but aware that God has a distinct calling for each of us and that curacy is there to lay the foundations for what God has in store next.

What would your ideal ministry team look like?

First and foremost – one that supports and cares for one another. Philippians 2:3 would be the best advice for anyone joining us at St. Michael's: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves*
We have a saying in our staff team: 'Best idea wins.' It doesn't matter whose idea it was, if it grows God's Kingdom then it's the one we'll do. Our job is to serve the church, not be served by it.

What types of people do you find it hard to work with?

I have no issue with different approaches and skills – in fact, I like to surround myself with people who can do all the things I can't! I would struggle to work with somebody who sees failure or being wrong as a weakness. Our job is not to be 'right' – it's to serve God and His people. As leaders, we need to be the first to model admitting our faults, saying sorry and celebrating the gifts and skills of others.





INFORMATION

Church Website: <https://www.stmichaelseastbourne.co.uk>

Service Pattern: Sunday 10am and 7pm (fortnightly) Thursday 12pm BCP. Messy church once a month

Groups, Activities, Mission Opportunities and Schools

- 3 schools in parish (no church schools) and relationships have been deepening over the last 4 years
- Groups: Homegroups; Tea on the Hill; Walk and Talk; Church Football; Crafts and Laughs; Who Let the Dads Out?!; Ember (Women's Ministry); Jellybeans (weekly toddler group); Connect (Youth); DofE; Family Hang Out; Lunch and Laughs.
- Mission: Messy Church (we have over 400 attend our 'Mega Messy Church'; Hillfest (Our Youth festival held in the summer); Alpha (running 2-3 times a year); Arrows (on hiatus, but 40+ youth each week); About to launch a Community Garden and partner with a local homeless charity for meal outreach.
- We also have the hospital and a hospice in our parish.