

Parish Profile

For

The Benefice of: St Mary's, Sullington & St Mary's, Thakeham With Warminghurst

Diocese of Chichester,
West Sussex



Thank you for starting to read our profile. We really hope that you feel inspired by what we have written, and by our promise to be lively churches that are committed to supporting our priest. We believe that our good work together, as an interregnum benefice, can be built upon.



“Everyone has been so welcoming and friendly, a real breath of fresh air for us having been spiritually homeless for a few years now.”



Our Parishes in Summary

Who and Where We Are

- We are two parishes, 3 miles apart, lying in a beautiful rural part of West Sussex, close to towns including Brighton, Chichester, Horsham and Worthing and the coast.
- You will live in a brand new, attractive four-bedroom house.
- We are blessed with well-regarded schools and good local amenities.
- Our villages offer great opportunities to build on previous and existing ministries, caring for and reaching out to a multigenerational community.

Our Church Structure

- Our congregations are very committed, cheerful and supportive.
- Both parishes have experienced and efficient churchwardens and treasurers.
- We employ a part-time administrator.
- We are fortunate to have a selection of retired clergy and an Authorised Lay Minister (ALM), who are pleased to be asked to lead services.
- Our church buildings are generally sound.
- Our benefice pays its full parish share.

The New Priest that We Hope to Attract

- We pray that we will be blessed with a priest who really enjoys being a loving pastor, who will encourage and develop the talents of others, so that we can all work together, brilliantly, as the body of Christ.
- We hope that you will be diligent in preparing for worship, open hearted and welcoming to all. We hope your vision and ability to teach from the Bible will be appealing and motivating.

Our Vision

We would love to have a leader who really inspires us. We know that our well-established churches need further encouragement, to build church growth and the sharing of the good news of the Gospel of Christ.

Our Diocese



In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Selsey. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin



The following is a description of the personal qualities, gifts and skills we feel you would need in your ministry at Sullington and Thakeham.

Personal Qualities

We are looking for someone who will seek a Godly vision for our two churches.

You will need to be willing to understand and enjoy the rewards and challenges of contemporary rural life. There will be many opportunities to enjoy our beautiful countryside and we hope that you will be nourished by the landscape.



Gifts and Skills

We are praying for a leader who is proactive, with an ability to recognise, encourage and develop gifts in themselves and others. We would like you to preach in an engaging manner, encouraging our congregations to grow in faith and to reach out to our wider communities.

You will demonstrate sound judgment in seeing the 'bigger picture' and be courageous. You must have good organisational skills and be supportive as you delegate. We feel that our busy benefice needs someone with energy and stamina and are ready to offer our own energies to support you.

The Benefice Villages

The area around Thakeham and Sullington is a wonderful place to live and worship! It is a most beautiful part of England.

Both villages are recorded in the Domesday Book. The churches draw their congregations from the villages of Sullington and Thakeham, from Storrington and the surrounding area.

The benefice is well connected and in easy access (approx. 30 min) of the coast and cultural centres. The M25 is approx. one hour north, Pulborough rail station is 10 mins drive away and Gatwick airport is 40 minutes' drive.

Storrington is close and has schools, medical centre, library, bank and independent shops. Children of the benefice are likely to attend Thakeham Primary School or Storrington Primary School and Steyning Grammar School.



The Priest's Home

The benefice parsonage, a new, detached 4 bedroomed house, is close to Thakeham Village Hall, the playground, the village café and shop and in walking distance of the White Lion Pub.



[Click here](#) to watch a video about the housing development in Abingworth Fields, Thakeham. See "Video Gallery" The priest's new home is in the area marked 'under construction'.

Although the new parsonage is in Thakeham, the post covers both parishes equally.

The Parish of St Mary's Sullington (pop. 2919, UK Census, 2021)



St Mary's Sullington is located in a truly lovely situation at the mid-point of the South Downs Way, a national trail which is popular with walkers from all over the world. The church is open daily, to all.

The church building is surrounded on all four sides by Sullington Manor Farm, and the church congregation value the good relationship enjoyed with the Kittle family who farm at Sullington. We offer a monthly service at the Care South *Sussexdown* residential home.

The Parish of St Mary's Thakeham with Warminghurst* (pop. 3022, UK Census, 2021)

The population of the village of Thakeham has increased by approximately 30% as a result of developments in the past 10 years. These have also included construction of a new children's nursery, a village hall with adjacent café and shop, playground and playing fields. The village hall's flexible spaces are used regularly for church events and activities.

The recently refurbished and re-ordered church of St Mary's, Thakeham stands on a hill overlooking farmland with superb views of the Sussex Weald and the South Downs. The church owns land across the lane from the church, where there are some *Church Rooms* and a car park.



**The beautiful church at Warminghurst comes under the care of The Churches Conservation Trust. This former church is located within the parish boundary of Thakeham.*



Further Church of England Data and Publications can be referenced [here](#)



About the Church

The Churches as a Worshipping People

As sister churches we aim to offer a variety of services with a reasonably wide appeal, there is communion each Sunday in at least one of our benefice churches. Below is a schedule of the services we offered when we had a Priest-in-charge in post:

		Sullington	Thakeham
1st Sunday	8.30am	BCP Communion	
	10.30am		Joint "Church for All" Family Service
	6pm (Summer) 3pm (Winter)	Evensong	
2nd Sunday	8.30am		Celtic Communion
	10.30am	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
3rd Sunday	8.30am		Celtic Communion
	10.30am	Joint Holy Communion	
4th Sunday	8.30am	Celtic Communion	
	10.30am	Morning Prayer	Family Communion
5th Sunday	8.30am	Alternating Celtic Communion	
		'Something Completely Different' Sullington and Thakeham take turns to host	
Wednesdays	10.30am	Holy Communion	
Monthly Saturdays	9.30-11am	Messy Church Breakfast	

“Thank you for the wonderful welcome, so homely and kind. St Mary’s church is really beautiful and a delight for your local community of parishioners in addition to passing visitors.”

A Team Approach

Over the last couple of years, we have developed a monthly Benefice Service Leaders’ meeting of churchwardens, key individuals and leaders to plan services. This has strengthened the links between the parishes whilst allowing each parish to remain distinct.

During the interregnum we have been tremendously well supported by retired clergy in our deanery and neighbouring deaneries and have managed to maintain most of the services. In spite of this, services and pastoral care have at times proved challenging to deliver without the leadership of a priest.

Some members of the congregation would like to have the incumbent to lead a service in each parish on most Sundays. In future, our new Incumbent, in consultation with the Wardens and PCCs, may wish to review the patterns of worship and ministry across the Benefice. The churchwardens and service leaders would be delighted to discuss fresh ideas and opportunities for mission and ministry in the benefice.

Teams and individuals from the churches are involved in a variety of community activities.

Members of our church family undertake routine cleaning and maintenance of the buildings and the churchyards.

Both parishes have several homegroups that meet regularly.

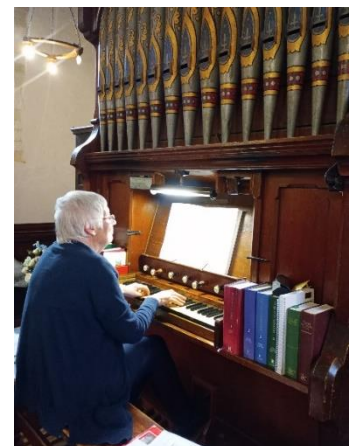
The Sullington Congregation



Most of the congregation are over 55 years old, with the majority being over 75. Services welcome 25-30 people to the main Sunday service (midmorning or Evensong), different faces at different times, representing a wide congregation. Services are based on traditional Church of England liturgy, intimate and not overly concerned with ritual but conscious that the setting and the church buildings are recognised as important to those that attend. God brings a great cross section of people to this church.

We have a small but beautiful 19th century organ which is regularly serviced. Our organist died recently. We have a temporary organist from the congregation, and we continue to explore a long-term solution. Hymns chosen are well-loved and tend to be traditional.

There is a strong ethic of scripture and faith with a desire to look outward and help where we can. Recently we have not been able to do as much as we would like to help others as we work to maintain services and keep the church doors open.



The Thakeham Congregation



The age of the regular congregation for Sunday services ranges between 40 and 85 years old but includes some families with young children. Attendance consists of 30 - 50 regulars.

On the first Sunday of the month our service is called *Church for All*, and is an opportunity to be innovative in worship. This service is often led by our ALM.



Music, led by a worship group, mixes traditional hymns and contemporary songs.

The monthly Messy Church Breakfast at the Thakeham Village Hall, on a Saturday, often welcomes over 30 people; around 40 families are registered. Messy Church families also particularly enjoy Christingle Services, the Christmas Eve Nativity service with donkeys, and the Easter service and egg hunt.



The Churches and the Communities They Serve

Thakeham and Sullington churches are proud to support home and overseas missions and charities. Sullington has recently been pleased financially to help our sister church, Thakeham.



A very popular *Flower Festival* is held annually, based in turn at Sullington and Thakeham. It attracts large numbers of visitors and is a great opportunity to engage with local communities. It is also a major fundraiser. Here is a link to a short video of our 2024 flower festival. [Please click here.](#)

Community Activities in Sullington

Most of the residential housing is approx. 1 mile to the north. Roughly half of those on the electoral roll live in the parish.

The church building is surrounded by Sullington Manor Farm and we have a good working relationship with the Kittle family who farm at Sullington.

The ancient agricultural buildings of the farm have found a new, diversified life and Sullington Great Barn is now a wedding reception venue. Some couples, having established a qualifying connection, use the barn and choose to be married in Sullington church: a wonderful arrangement offering the couples all they need, plus linking Sullington church with a momentous life event which we hope strengthens their Christian faith. Several couples subsequently have had their babies baptised at Sullington. Naturally, the church welcomes local people who wish to get married or have their children baptised and many parishioners choose to be buried here.

The church is delighted to host a *Pop-Up Preloved* clothing sale in the café at Sullington Manor Farm; the church is well supported by the provision of farm facilities for fundraising events.

Using alternate 5th Sunday services to reach out to local residents with a 'different' service in the parish hall has worked in the past and we hope to continue this.

The church is proud of a long history of regular fundraising events which are outreach and social occasions as well.

We provide financial, spiritual and prayerful support to:

- *New Growth Ministries*, an orphanage in Zimbabwe.
- *Family Support Work*, which helps families in Sussex to overcome their difficulties and to prevent crisis.
- *Splash!*, a Christian charity which works in schools and local communities.
- Sullington church would very much like to connect with other churches, denominations and organisations.

Community Activities in Thakeham

We hope and pray that occasional invitations to lead religious assemblies at our local primary school could be built upon.

The church hosts a monthly *Knit and Stitch* group in the *Church Rooms*.

A young church family took the initiative to partner with the food waste charity *Fareshare* to provide a *Community Fridge*, which is freely accessible to all local residents. This has built new relationships and a reputation as a source of support.

Like Sullington, we support local charitable groups:

- *Family Support Work*
- *JubyLeeBakes*, a local business which trains and employs adults with learning disabilities.
- *Compassion UK*, we sponsor a child in Uganda.
- *Link to Hope*, to whom we send shoeboxes at Christmas.

Further Opportunities

Thakeham has large new housing developments and there are many residential homes in the north of Sullington. Here we see strategic opportunities for growth. We look forward to exploring with you, in a prayerful and strategic way, potential growth by building on our strengths and exploiting our past and present activities.

We would love both churches to grow with disciples, not necessarily church goers, though we fully recognise that we need regular attenders and the physical, thoughtful and financial support that they generate. Giving is an expression of our thankfulness and praise to God. It comes from a heart of worship that recognizes everything we have and give already belongs to the Lord.

Church Buildings and Resources

The benefice employs a part time administrator and is blessed to have dedicated volunteers. Each parish has an appointed fabric officer and the benefice has a designated architect.

Both parishes expect to cover legitimate clergy expenses and to encourage proper holidays and days off, training and retreats. We are particularly concerned for the health and well-being of our priest. We know that this has a direct impact on the health and well-being of the church and all of its people.

A set of most recent accounts for both churches is shown here.

Sullington Accounts: [Please click here](#)

Thakeham Accounts: [Please click here](#)

St Mary's Church, Sullington

The church building has Saxon origins and one thousand years of worship and history oozes from the building in warmth and welcome. The very walls are infused with prayer.



It is Grade I listed and generally acknowledged to be in very good order but we must not be complacent. A Quinquennial inspection report was received in 2024. [To view report, please click here](#)

The church has met 100% of its requested parish share for the last 15+ years but in the last few years, has operated at a day-to-day deficit. The church is blessed by substantial legacies most years which enables bills to be settled without drawing on investments. Sullington church has a reasonable sum invested but should significant work be required on the church fabric, in particular the roof, it could be used up quickly.

St Mary's Church, Thakeham

It is Grade I listed and was recently closed for 9 months for substantial re-ordering, with no depletion in attendance. This has given the beautiful old building a new lease of life, with additional opportunities for use.

Our latest quinquennial report tells us that the roof in one section of a corner of the tower, yet to be refurbished, has timbers showing some rot, requiring external scaffolding and repair. Internal wall surfaces will need further painting. [To view report, please click here.](#)



Our church organ is electronic and of high quality, it needs little maintenance.

The churchyard is well kept and the *Church Rooms*, although in need of some maintenance, make a good home for after service coffee. We are paying our full parish share, albeit with some support from Sullington Parish. A generous legacy enabled much of the recent building work but we still have an 'Archdeacon's Loan' which we are steadily repaying.



Conclusion

As a benefice, we pray for future blessing and growth in our churches and are thankful to have the wonderful legacy of two buildings with a rich history of worship for nearly a thousand years.

Like the rest of the Church of England we have many challenges, and we remain excited because we see so many opportunities within our benefice.

We look forward to exploring these with you.



Please do visit our websites using the links below

<https://www.stmarysthakeham.org/>

<https://www.st-marys-sullington.org/wp/>

