



# Swaffham and Sporle

Parish Profile 2024

## Welcome to the parishes of Swaffham and Sporle in the heart of beautiful Norfolk.

The two parishes were united into a single benefice in 2014 and since then the two respective church families have enjoyed a strong relationship.

We worship regularly together and share social events, while serving our individual communities.

Both parishes are outward looking and excited to welcome a new incumbent to lead them forward.

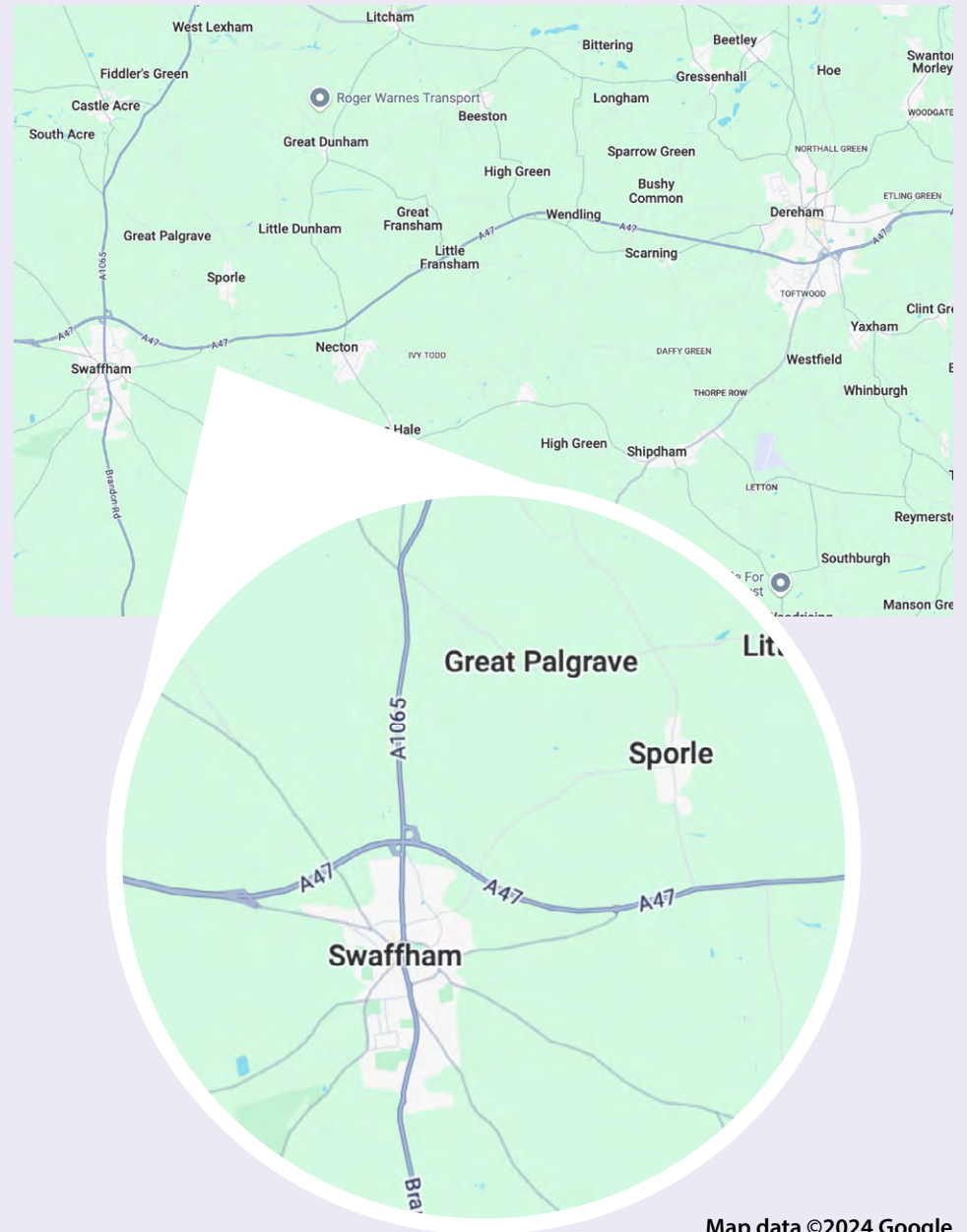




## What is the role?

We are looking for an enthusiastic, inspiring priest to minister in the name of God to the bustling historic market town of Swaffham and the neighbouring village of Sporle. Swaffham is a popular and growing town, with a current population of around 8,575 and with new housing developments which will increase the population further. This means there is an increased opportunity for sharing the Gospel with growing numbers of new residents of all ages.

We seek to work together with our new incumbent to bring the parish churches back into the heart of our two communities. Together we wish to work with someone who will actively involve themselves with community partners, increase our schools work, and represent us in our civic life as we seek to make Christ known to all who live and work here.



## What is the task?

- Build up and encourage both churches to be the focal point of our communities, as a witness to the love of God for all.
- Represent and be an ambassador for both churches to strengthen links in the wider community. We have a great deal of new housing in Swaffham and we need to build a greater presence in these areas.
- Lead and inspire two willing congregations to new activities.
- Discern and encourage new vocations for the building up of our church communities.
- Re-establish and develop teams for pastoral care across the communities.
- Grow our congregations through outreach activities, including greater use of social media.
- Work with us to develop styles of worship that will reach a different demographic – enabling us to become younger and more diverse.
- Develop our work within our schools in Swaffham and the Church School in Sporle, so that we are visible and actively encourage their involvement and understanding of the message of Christ in the world.
- Work with the churches of the deanery and the local ecumenical partners.
- Make connections with the new housing areas and serve the needs of the parishes.





## Who we are seeking

### A Priest who is:

- Approachable, visible with good interpersonal and communication skills
- An inspirational leader of worship and preacher; prayerful and will encourage our own prayer life.
- Able to lead and inspire us to future growth.
- Innovative in their approach to sacramental worship.
- Eager to work with two willing congregations in their communities.
- Excited to grow the congregations of both churches through pastoral care and with the ability to build teams to share the ministry and witness of the church in both rural and town environments.
- Possessed of a pastoral heart, empathetic and encouraging as they lead the congregations forward after the pattern of Jesus.

## Who we are

- Two enthusiastic congregations whose links encourage the participation of the wider communities in activities such as weekly coffee mornings, festivals across the year, concerts and other events.
- We are loyal and support and contribute to events at both churches.
- Waiting for good, experienced leadership to help us in current activities and develop new ones.
- Open to new ideas that stretch us and help us grow in faith.





## Locations

**Swaffham** is a busy market town in the Breckland area of West Norfolk. It has considerable character and history. The town has a historic marketplace at its heart, with a bustling market every Saturday. It is a town that is currently growing with a lot of new housing being built on the east and south of the town.

It has an indoor market on a Friday and a very busy outdoor market on a Saturday. The Saturday market brings people from a thirty-mile radius into the town.

It has opportunities for sporting activities with a Leisure Centre at Hamonds School and a Park Run on a Saturday morning. It has a thriving Rugby Club which has produced a capped player for England. There is a Community Centre which hosts a variety of clubs and activities for all ages. Many members of the congregations have a wider involvement with the community through these local organisations.

There are a variety of small, individual shops. The town also boasts four supermarkets, Asda and Iceland in the town centre and a larger Tesco and Waitrose on the north side. There will be a further, smaller shopping area as part of the new development on the south of the town.





Swaffham is proud of its museum which focuses on the social history of town and the surrounding villages. It houses the Visitor Information Centre, which displays tourist and other information for visitors. It celebrates its most famous resident, Howard Carter, who grew up in Swaffham and developed his interest in Egyptology while visiting Lord Amherst at nearby Diddington Hall.

There is a theatre and theatre group in nearby West Acre. West Acre also boasts a Micro-Brewery and arts and crafts outlets. There is also a beautiful walled garden with coffee shop and plant nursery to the north of the village.

There are beautiful walks around the historic villages of Castle Acre, West Acre and South Acre as well in the Thetford Forest area. We also are close to Lynford, where there is an arboretum and you may also wild swim at Lynford Lake.

Swaffham is on the A47 which provides good road links across the county to Norwich and the Broads to the east and to King's Lynn and the Midlands travelling west. The A1065 runs North and South. As such the town sees a considerable amount of traffic passing through the town during the holiday season to and from the coast.

The beautiful cities of Ely and Cambridge are easily accessible by road or rail. The spectacular North Norfolk Coast, with beaches and areas of unspoiled natural beauty with many nature reserves is only 35 minutes away. The Anglican and Roman Catholic Shrines at Walsingham are about 30 minutes by car.

There are direct rail links to London from both Norwich, King's Lynn and Downham Market all between a 35–45-minute drive. The town is also served by a good bus service, every half hour to Norwich and King's Lynn.



Swaffham has been experiencing a building boom in recent years. We do not have exact figures for the houses already built, but estimates based on Local Authority Information would indicate that 351 have been built in the last 8 years. The town has grown to the East, West and South. The number of new houses yet to be built is around 430 although this may be amended as part of the new Governments Consultation.

The breakdown of the planned building areas is:

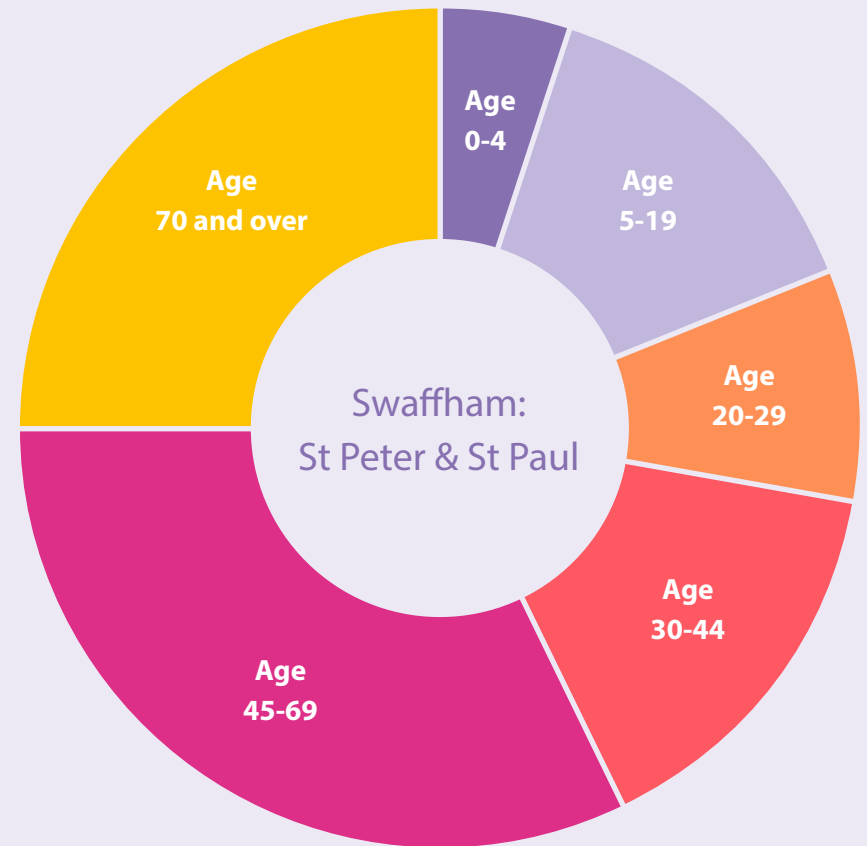
- Orford Road, Crocus Homes development 150 homes
- Days Field which still has to go to planning for 57 homes
- Campingland Development for 12 units of Specialist Housing
- Abels Brandon Road for 160 homes plus 40 assisted living homes
- Plus an appeal in process for 22 homes Watton Road, by Parkers.

96.4% of the population self-define their ethnicity as white.

There are many service sector and light industry businesses providing work in the parish. Many residents work in King's Lynn, Dereham and Norwich while preferring to live in Swaffham. RAF Marham is eight miles away and some service families live in the town.

The population of the town is 8,575.

The age breakdown is:



- Age 0-4 422 / 5%
- Age 5-19 1,166 / 14%
- Age 20-29 820 / 9%
- Age 30-44 1,293 / 15%
- Age 45-69 2,712 / 32%
- Age 70 and over 2,162 / 25%



**Sporle** with Palgrave is situated three miles northeast of Swaffham. It comprises approximately 500 households.

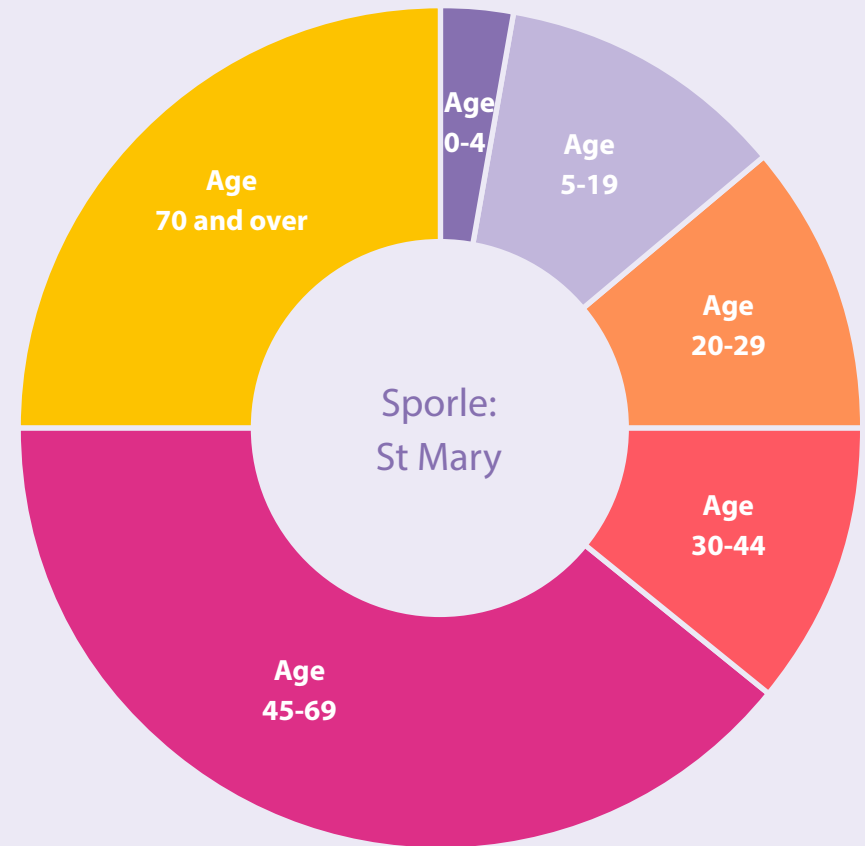
The village attracts many walkers and cyclists who join the nearby Peddars Way footpath dating back to Roman times, which links the Suffolk village of Knettishall to the Norfolk Coast at Holme-next-the-Sea, a distance of 49 miles.

This is a traditional farming village which supports a thriving village shop with post office, a lively village pub and daily bus service. There is a Community Centre in the old church school building adjacent to the Church which hosts a variety of popular village activities, such as an Arts Club, a Monday Café every other week, History Society and Stitch and Sew. It can also be hired for Wedding Receptions and Wakes and the like.



The population of Sporle is 1,051.

The age breakdown is:



- Age 0-4 33 / 3%
- Age 5-19 120 / 11%
- Age 20-29 112 / 11%
- Age 30-44 118 / 11%
- Age 45-69 409 / 39%
- Age 70 and over 259 / 25%



## Our Churches

### Context

There is a ministry team of four active retired clergy and a licensed lay minister. Swaffham has a new Churchwarden to join the existing one and several new PCC members. Sporle also has two Churchwardens, one of whom is also new, and a PCC of five. Both PCCs are committed to the prospect of a new incumbent and the vision, growth and leadership they will bring.

Our new Priest will lead worship across both parishes. The parishes recognise the need to enhance their community relationships, reach a different demographic and increase diversity as part of the ministry in the benefice.

A weekly Pew Sheet covers both parishes and, whilst the diaries are separate, the names of the sick and the departed are integrated as are details of future events. We have recently replaced our website, which contains the information for both parishes.





## The Churches and their communities

### Swaffham

St Peter and St Paul is over 550 years old and is listed as one of the 300 major churches in England.

The nave has one of the finest hammer beam roofs, flanked by carved angels, to be seen in the country. Victorian pews provide seating and will accommodate up to 400 people.

The Lay Rectors for the Chancel are the Church Commissioners.

A fine set of 8 bells are rung by a local team who meet weekly. An open gallery at the west end provides the ringing chamber for the team.

The church has a large vicar's vestry at the northeast corner adjacent to the sanctuary. This is also used for Parish administration and is the location for a computer and photocopier. There is a vestry/porch on the south side where the choir robes.

In 2017 automatic glass inner doors were fitted to the West End doors. This gives a welcoming approach for visitors as well as easier disabled access.





We have a 'Makin' electronic organ which is used for all services. There is an original pipe organ built by Bishop and Son in 1876, which is played occasionally. The PCC is currently exploring the costs of repairs that this instrument needs.

The Church employs a professional Organist and have an enthusiastic four-part choir, continuing a long tradition of providing music to a good standard.

In addition to the choir there is a:

- Bible study group.
- Social Group responsible for events and catering
- Mothers Union branch
- Flourishing flower group.

Swaffham has a small cottage hospital of 24 beds. There is no formal chaplaincy arrangement here.

The Sacrament is reserved and taken to the sick and elderly at home, in the Community hospital and in the residential homes.

There are 84 on the electoral roll. The weekly Sunday attendance is currently around 50 per week.

The Church is open daily throughout the year to visitors and for quiet prayer and reflection. From Easter through to September a team of volunteers provide a welcome, advice and information for visitors.





Coffee and cakes, served every Saturday morning throughout the year, are a key part of our welcome and hospitality to local people and visitors on Market Day. We have a dedicated team of volunteers from the church and local community. This provides an important opportunity to bring people together. The income generates an important contribution towards church expenses.

The church has a recently updated sound system with an induction loop system and mobile microphone, making worship accessible to all.

There are two toilets (one for disabled) and a small kitchen area at the west end. Within the church there is an area equipped with toys and books to provide a welcome for children and young families.

The closed churchyard is maintained by Swaffham town council. There is a garden of remembrance for the interment of ashes. The PCC are in the process of negotiating a contract with the Community Payback Scheme to assist with jobs around the church.

On Maundy Thursday the Pilgrim Cross organisation, walking to the Anglican Shrine at Walsingham, call in and are served refreshments by members of the Mothers Union.

During 2023 there were 7 weddings, 15 baptisms, 13 funerals, 13 at crematoria and 12 interments of ashes in the churchyard. There were 3 candidates for confirmation.

The Remembrance Day service and an annual Civic Service are held in the parish Church. We have a well-attended Christingle service. We actively encourage the local schools to visit the church. The primary schools make educational visits and hold their carol services at the church. Heartwood School attend termly for collective worship.



*Coffee and cake on a Saturday morning*

In addition to the Parish Church there are Roman Catholic, Methodist and Baptist churches as well as a Christian Fellowship group with its own worship centre. There is also the Fountain of Life Church of England network church based at Ashill, about 6 miles away, that holds a Sunday service in the Community Centre in Swaffham. The local 'Churches Together' group recently disbanded. We believe this is in the process of reforming as 'CrisCross'. We would want to actively encourage our new priest to be part of this group, working together with ecumenical colleagues serving the people of Swaffham and Sporle.

## Sporle

Sporle with Palgrave is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1068 but there are traces of a Prehistoric settlement and finds from the Bronze and Iron Age.

There was at one time a small Benedictine Priory next to the church on the site of the present-day playing field. The Priory founded by French Monks was dissolved in the 15th Century and no obvious trace now remains.

The church has a 13th century mural depicting the martyrdom on the wheel of St Catherine of Alexandria. Nelson's grandfather and aunts are buried in the chancel and his father was the vicar. There is a pipe organ played by visiting organists, but music is generally either provided by CD or by village musicians.

The Church has an alarmed roof. The upkeep of the chancel is the responsibility of Eton College, Windsor.

The church holds a special place in many villagers' affections who are not regular church goers, who support the church and churchyard in many practical ways. The churchyard is also a valued village amenity.

St Mary's is an ecofriendly church with an eco-strip for insects and birds on the northern boundary at the front of the church and bat boxes have been installed in the trees.

During 2023 there were four weddings, three funerals, two baptisms and two interments of ashes.



*St Mary, Sporle and the old Church School building which hosts many village activities.*



In addition to the weekly services, we also hold an annual harvest festival (followed by a harvest supper), a pet service, a Remembrance service, a Carol service, a joint Rogation service at a village farm followed by a bring and share lunch.

There is a small Prayer Group in Sporle that meets the first Monday of each month at the Methodist Chapel. It is run by a couple who live in Sporle and who attend Necton Church. They work with Rev Stephen Thorp, the Rural Dean. Currently there are only four members remaining as they have lost members to Oasis, the Evangelical Church in Swaffham. They intend to advertise again in Sporle Parish Magazine, (not a Parish Church magazine). If numbers do not increase meetings will continue at the home of the couple who run the group.

The church has participated in the Norfolk Churches cycle ride both in welcoming riders and participating for over 20 years.

Sporle is presently undertaking a series of church ground refurbishments using the Community Payback Scheme. These have included repainting of all the church railings, floodlight cages and church gates.



## Our schools and youth work

We see this is a key area for development in the two parishes.

Our Licensed Lay Minister, Andy Mash has made efforts to maintain links with the schools during the current vacancy and schools arrange hosted visits to the church. It would be good, though, to have a more structured approach to work with the local schools. We would like to see activities for families which will encourage participation in Church life. The incumbent is automatically a School Governor at Heartwood School in Swaffham

### Swaffham

There are four state schools in the town:

- **Heartwood CofE VC Primary School.**  
Enrolment of 205, age range 3-11, Ofsted rated Good 2023
- **Swaffham CofE Primary Academy**  
Enrolment of 222, age range 4-11, Ofsted rated Good 2023
- **The Nicholas Hamond Academy (not church linked)**  
Enrolment of 656, age range 11-18, Ofsted rated Good 2022
- **Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary**  
Newly opened school, age range 4-11

### Sporle

- **Sporle CofE Primary Academy**  
Enrolment 62, (capacity 90), age range 5-11, Ofsted rated Good 2022

It is a modern and newly extended Church of England Primary Academy with pre-school facility which is part of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust.



The Church and Primary School have close links, the school attending the church at the end of each half term, and for festivals (Harvest, Christmas and Easter) and a service of Remembrance at the war memorial.

The Church congregation runs the Diocesan “Filling the Gap” scheme providing a food parcel during school holidays and half terms to families in need whose children attend the village school.



## Events

Both Parish Churches hold a variety of fund-raising social events throughout the year such as concerts and lunches.

These are valued as social events that bring the congregations together as well as bringing local residents to the churches. Both congregations work hard to make these a success but we also have fun and a sense of humour prevails. Some of these events also make important financial contributions to the needs of the churches.

### Swaffham

- Christmas Bazaar
- Biennial Flower Festival
- Christmas Tree festival
- Saturday Morning Coffee and Cake
- Gift day and other smaller events.
- Swaffham has a 100 club to fundraise
- Concerts

### Sporle

The Church 200 club has run for the last 40 years, raising the profile of the church as well as much needed funds.

In addition it has a number of annual events:

- Joint Rogation Sunday worship followed by a bring and share lunch
- The "Lazy Sunday Afternoon" now in its 21st year
- Pet Service
- A Harvest Supper
- A barbecue and extravaganza.
- A plant swap



*Brass Band Concert at Swaffham May 2024*



*Coffee is served after the 9.30am Swaffham service on Sunday and visitors are made welcome.*



*Sporle Plant Swap 2024*

## Safeguarding

As a benefice, we are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We strive to be safe churches for all. We have two Parish Safeguarding Officers in post, and we are 100% supportive of safeguarding policies and training.



## Finance

The church finances are facilitated and supported by loyal, hardworking, enthusiastic and dedicated people who hold these churches warmly in their hearts.

Both Swaffham and Sporle paid 93% of their elements of the joint Parish Share allocation for the Benefice in 2023 and they are presently targeting to do the same in 2024.

Swaffham Church is fortunate to receive an annual sum of circa £9,000 from the Town Estates which is a charity owning a farm in Swaffham from which the church receives one-third of the annual rental paid by the tenant.

Over and above our commitment to our Parish share, the church in Swaffham has a positive approach to Christian giving, through PCC led financial support of mission bodies and the regular monthly second collection at services. It supports local, national and international causes. The Church also supports, through home collecting boxes, The Leprosy Mission, and The Children's Society.

In both parishes donations make use of both the Parish Giving Scheme and the HMRC Gift Aid scheme.

A copy of both sets of the latest accounts is available on application.



## Sundays at Sporle and Swaffham

Current worship is Eucharistically based.  
The normal pattern is:

### Swaffham

- Sunday 8am Holy Communion (Common Worship Order one Trad Language) said – once a month
- Sunday 9.30am Sung Eucharist (Common Worship Order One) every week with 3rd Sunday of the month being a Joint Benefice service with Sporle
- Sunday 6pm (3.30pm in winter) Book of Common Prayer Evensong first Sunday of the month

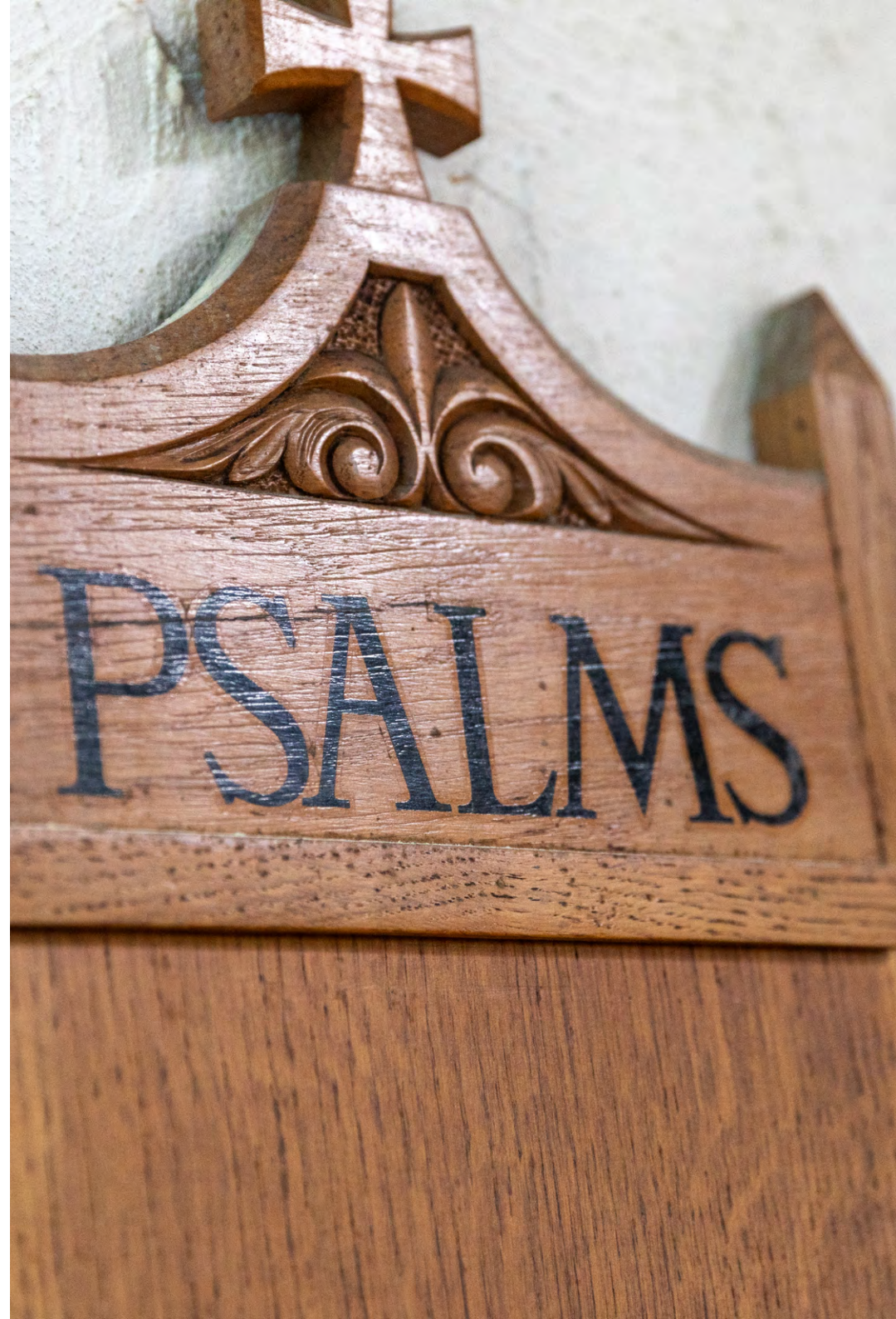
### Sporle

- An 11.30am Eucharist each Sunday for three weeks in the month.
- The service uses Common Worship Order One.
- The third Sunday of the month is a Joint Benefice service with Swaffham.

### During the week

At Swaffham – Wednesday 10am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer

We would be open to new opportunities for worship, prayer, teaching and outreach during the week as well as on Sundays.





## How we will support you

### You will be supported by:

- Two churchwardens at Swaffham and two at Sporle.
- Eight laity who are licensed to administer the chalice in Swaffham and two in Sporle.
- A PCC of Eight members plus two Churchwardens, a PCC Secretary and Treasurer in Swaffham who meet ten months of the year. The PCC members hold various roles including a Safeguarding Officer and Fabric Team.
- A PCC of 5 comprising 2 Churchwardens, Treasurer, Secretary and Safeguarding Officer in Sporle.
- Four active retired priests:
  - Canon Stuart Nairn
  - Canon Neil Crawford Jones
  - Revd John Handley
  - Revd Adrian Bell
- Andy Mash, a Licensed Lay Minister
- RAF Marham whose chaplains have helped out previously.
- Two enthusiastic congregations thirsty for good, experienced leadership who can bring vision to these two attractive parishes.
- Experienced church members willing to give their time and energy to ideas.
- Existing events and initiatives to be developed and built on.





## What we can offer you

A modern, pleasant four-bedroom house about a five-minute walk from Swaffham Church and town centre. It consists of a lounge, dining room, kitchen, utility room, study and cloak room on the ground floor and a master bedroom with ensuite shower room, three further bedrooms and a family bathroom on the first floor. It has gas central heating, a single garage plus parking spaces and good-sized gardens.

We will pay all expenses linked to your work. In addition, we will pay for your landline telephone and any inclusive Wi-Fi provision.

We want to support your wellbeing and will actively enable and encourage you to take regular time off, holidays and retreats and reimburse clergy expenses.

Thank you for taking the time to read our profile. We hope that you would like to come and be part of our future.





THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Norwich

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