



# Parish Profile

SODBURY VALE BENEFICE



 **DIOCESE OF  
GLOUCESTER**

St. John the Baptist, Chipping Sodbury  
St. John the Baptist, Old Sodbury  
St. James the Elder, Horton  
St. Adeline's, Little Sodbury  
[www.svbcofe.org.uk](http://www.svbcofe.org.uk)

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for the Sodbury Vale Benefice

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### KEY DATA AND STATISTICS





We appreciate you taking the time to read this profile with a view to applying to become our new Rector. We are a distinctive and inclusive benefice, community minded and prayerful. Our current focus is on family, our schools and working together. We want to become even more welcoming to all, growing in faith and creating greater connections with God and our communities. As part of that we are, together as a benefice, working towards becoming part of 'Inclusive Church'.

We continue to work to unify the benefice in a more structured way, however the Covid pandemic, whilst having drawn us much closer in many ways has delayed the final development and agreement of a satisfactory long-term structure for joint PCC meetings. There is a united will to make this happen and we hope that this could be a priority for our new incumbent. As part of this process the development of a longer term vision for the benefice would help to provide goal, focus and energy as we move forward.

Our benefice consists of four parishes within ten minutes of each other by car. Each parish has a distinct character with the three smaller parishes being rural and Chipping Sodbury being a busy country town. The benefice enjoys a superb location in the south of the diocese with easy links to the cultural centres of both Bristol and Bath. Our town and villages are close to areas of 'outstanding natural beauty', sheltering on the edge of the Cotswold escarpment. We are also very close to the sister town of Yate which provides major retail, leisure, sports and health facilities.

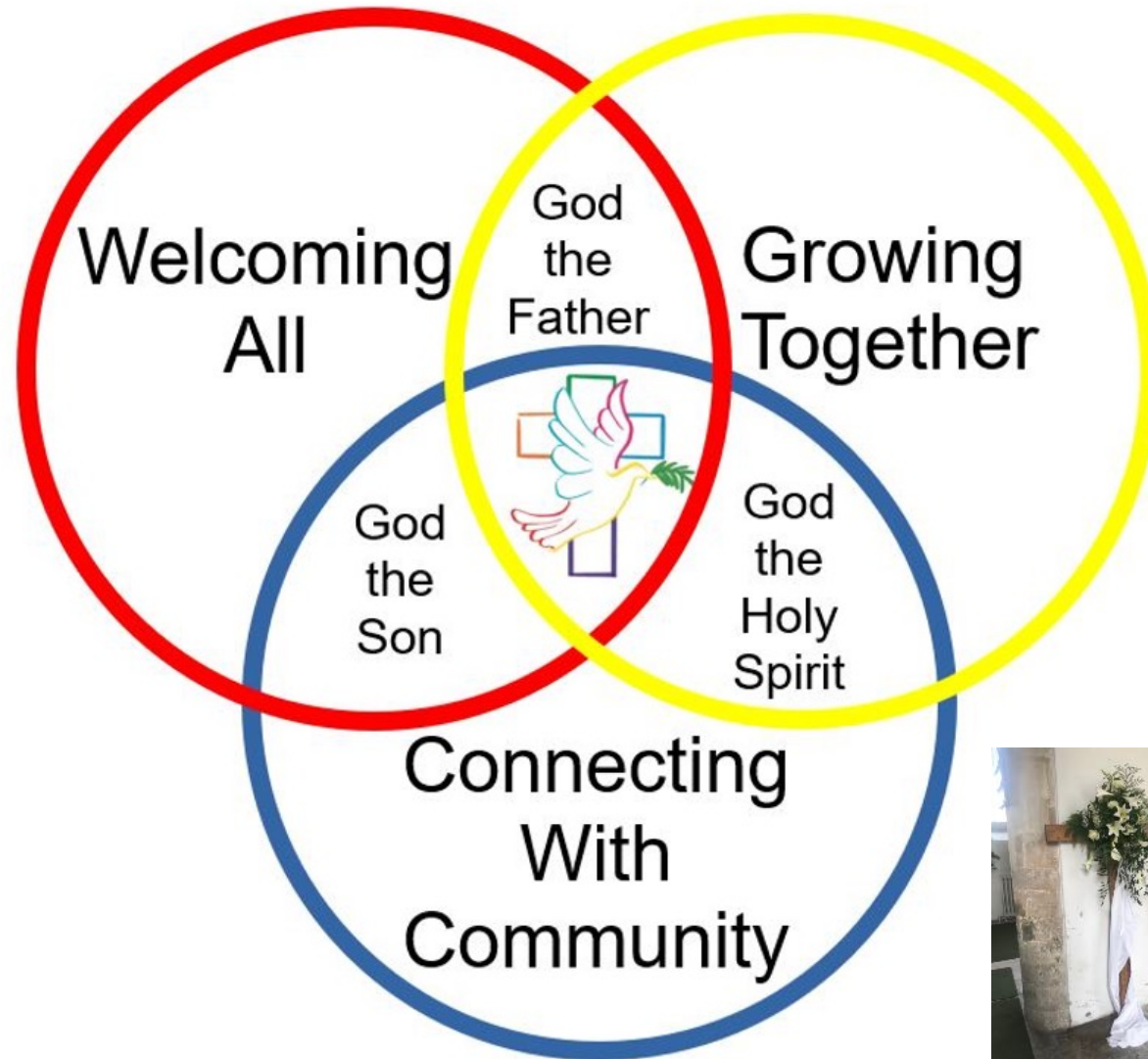
The pandemic impacted our regular worship and outreach. We recognise that we need to consider and contemplate new models for benefice ministry, to be guided and led by our new Rector, whilst at the same time valuing the key identities, traditions and characteristics of our parishes.

As a benefice we have strong links with the three church schools and there is opportunity for further and even stronger engagement. We would like to encourage greater use of our church buildings by the children wherever possible and make them places where children feel relaxed and at home. We want to encourage more lay people to be involved in the school visits so that the children recognise a larger church commitment and that the benefice becomes a regular part of their spiritual life.

Each of our churches is deeply involved within our communities; almost always part of any community event, whether it is village fairs or the Sodbury Festival. We endeavour to show God's love in all.

We hope that this document excites you and explains a little of who we are as a benefice. We appreciate that our 'wish list' for our new incumbent on page 6 may be unachievable in human form, however, above all we are all praying for the right person who feels called by God to lead us; help us and walk with us on our journey.





Our 'Vision Statement' has been recently adopted and describes who we are and what we do.

*'Working, with Christ at the centre*

*we seek to*

*Welcome all through meaningful prayer and worship,*

*Grow together in our love and faith for God and as a Benefice,*

*Connect with our communities sharing the love of Jesus to*

*change lives by the power of the Holy Spirit'*

# OUR CORE VALUES

## Love for God and our Community -

We put God first and seek his will in all things.

## Prayer -

We value prayer, individual and collectively, as our source of strength and communication with our Lord.

## Compassion -

We show compassion and welcome to all. Everyone is loved, accepted and cared for.

## Working Collaboratively -

We work together showing tolerance and respect for each other's opinions and differences.

## Commitment -

We are committed to love and serve the Lord. By the power of his Holy Spirit we seek to be His messengers of love to all we meet.

## Fellowship -

We value hospitality and getting to know each other better

# CORE VALUES and KEY PRIORITIES



## OUR KEY PRIORITIES

We are Praying for an imaginative and engaging priest who shares and will work with us to achieve our Key Priorities



# OUR BENEFICE FAMILY Who We Are

Our benefice was established in its present form in 2009 and over the years we have worked together to become more of a united Christian presence throughout the area. The challenges of being three rural parishes with one town parish are a continuing reality but as a benefice we have come to acknowledge that together we are much more than the sum of our parts and to this end our guiding principle has been 'to do together anything that we can'. Of the four parishes of Old Sodbury, Little Sodbury, Horton and Chipping Sodbury, the latter is by far the largest and as such it contains office facilities and meeting rooms for the benefice.

The world is a rapidly changing place and we do not want to be left behind, or indeed, as these changes emerge, leave those people behind whose lives have been invested in our churches for very many years. Our benefice family is made up of all ages (though we would love more families and children), backgrounds and situations in life. Everyone is valued for who they are and encouraged to use the gifts and talents they have. We do lots of things together and with our communities, however we have a vision to do still more, to do what we already do better and to move forward in faith as one benefice.

The Sodbury Vale Benefice is in a growing area, housing people at every stage of life. It includes people who have lived here all their lives, visiting workers, professionals, retirees, commuters, farmers, newly-weds, young families and those struggling to make ends meet. Some look to the local cities for their stimulation, either cultural or retail, whilst others find that the local environment of Chipping Sodbury and the villages answers all their needs.

We are delighted that we have such good relationships with our three schools, however we really want to build on these to enable the Christian message to become more real to the children and families. We recognise that as more of us become involved relationships flourish as does that sense of community which helps us grow trust and then faith.

There is undoubtedly untapped potential in our local communities, and we would like to provide worship spaces and forms of worship that encourage mutual engagement. We are hoping that a new incumbent will lead and encourage us in fresh ways to approach these exciting possibilities.



"This is my Easter cake that I made and decorated. It was heart shaped because I have a lovely time at Easter. I baked a victoria sponge, covered it in butter icing and decorated it with mini eggs, chocolate fingers and dolly mixtures. It tasted yummy!" - Nancy



# OUR BENEFICE STRUCTURE

## How We Operate

We are delighted that our benefice is blessed administratively with each church having two churchwardens who are leading the benefice through the vacancy process. We are also being enabled by an SSM curate the Revd. Jane Jones-Williams who is in the last year of her training. In addition, we are currently supported by a total of two Readers, eight retired priests and one priest from an adjoining Diocese who has been given permission to officiate. As has been stated previously we had hoped that by now we would have achieved a better structural coherence as a benefice and we see this as an important priority.

We have a number of cross-benefice policies in place including Safeguarding, overseen by a benefice Safeguarding officer. Each church has a Health and Safety policy and undertake regular assessments.

Inevitably the pandemic has meant that the life of our churches has entered a period of marked change. The pattern of worship and outreach was severely disrupted and has now been reconfigured using internet technology and the various options learned from 'lockdown'. We are looking forward, with our new Rector, to consider new models for benefice ministry whilst at the same time valuing the key identities, traditions and characteristics of our parishes.

We are fortunate with the space that the Church Centre offers for an office and meeting rooms, a small kitchen and toilet facilities. This is situated opposite St. John's Church in Chipping Sodbury.

We employ a part-time administrator assisted by helpers from around the benefice.





## We are hoping our new Incumbent will:

- be a prayerful person, an inspiring preacher and teacher,
- be someone of passion for God's word and who will communicate the transforming love of Jesus
- teach, preach and exemplify the inclusion of all in their life
- facilitate and lead a variety of worship styles in imaginative ways, for all ages
- have a vision for the development of our children and young persons' ministry
- help us develop and live out our vision as a benefice and as individual worshipping communities
- recognise and enable the many talents and gifts of the laity
- be willing to listen, trust and delegate bringing collaborative leadership and oversight to our benefice
- strengthen ecumenical links in the benefice
- have a vision for a growing Church
- respect and uphold the traditions of our churches and liturgies
- help our churches become an integral part of daily life despite competing priorities of our communities
- engage with the diocesan LIFE Vision of 'life together' John 10.10.
- share our passion for the environment and our desire to become Eco churches
- help us connect with the communities in the new housing areas in the benefice



**OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE**  
Our New Rector



Daisie has stipulated a 'girl' rector who likes crafts & drawing, Winter says: 'I want them to really believe in God but I want them to be fun and do fun family services. I want them to be organised, use lots of props. I want them to be cheerful and a confident person'. Ralphie says 'Someone who is kind, warm hearted, thoughtful, sociable. Doesn't make church boring or serious. Someone jokey'. Nancy wants someone who is kind and lets children be in the services. Will would like someone who is good with children, includes children in the services and likes football ....



The school children's comments are revealing: Tom has decided they should be a happy person who has a friendly voice and smiles a lot. He thinks they should be funny and make children laugh as well as enjoying having fun themselves.

He also liked when our previous Rector shared his own experiences with them as he felt he got to know him a bit better. Ideas such as being active, riding a bike and doing lots of hobbies were suggested too along with wearing smart jeans, smart tops and fancy shoes as he said our previous Rector always looked smart even when he wasn't wearing his "special church service clothes"

Leo said that he'd like someone who is a confident speaker and makes the talks interesting and challenging, to respect the children as intelligent little people. First, he mentioned to have the Christian qualities of kindness, generosity and patience.

Each of our individual parishes and the church buildings is unique and between them offer an exciting variety of gifts and opportunities. We cherish an appropriate level of independence and recognise each other's' expressions of discipleship as valid. Currently the various patterns of worship are tailored to the particularity of the immediate Christian community. We fully appreciate that these may need to change and evolve to satisfy a rapidly changing environment and hope to work with our new incumbent to explore what this might mean. Our differences, however, mean that what we do share together has a real value and impact – binding us together as the whole people of God.

# OUR FOUR PARISHES

Chipping Sodbury  
and  
Horton



## **St John the Baptist, Chipping Sodbury -**

St John the Baptist church originated as a Chapel of Ease in 1284, ultimately becoming the Grade 1 listed building we now worship in. It is the largest of the churches in the Sodbury Vale Benefice situated in the town of Chipping Sodbury, just behind the High Street, where a great deal of what the benefice engages with is based. We provide and enjoy a rich tapestry of liturgy, a balanced mixture of the Eucharist, Family Communion, and Informal Worship and Praise. Recently children have been admitted to receive Communion, as well as enjoying their Sunday School sessions. Our intercessions and readings are lay led. All our services are followed by refreshments with a time for fellowship.



## **St James the Elder, Horton -**

The parish of Horton is situated to the northeast of Chipping Sodbury. It is primarily rural in nature, having a diverse business and economic life. There has been a church in the village for over 1,000 years. Whilst there was a Norman church at Horton (and possibly a Saxon one) nothing of the original Norman church remains apart from the font. The current structure is medieval in nature, with later modifications, as is to be expected. The church is situated a little way north of the main village adjacent to the old manor house of Horton Court and close to the site of the lost medieval village of Horton. In Norman times the vicar lived in the Vicar's Hall close to the church; it is now part of Horton Court and is thought to be one of the oldest clergy residences remaining in the country. Horton Court is now owned by the National Trust.





### **St Adeline's, Little Sodbury -**

St Adeline's church is situated in a village of approximately 100 people, about two miles from Chipping Sodbury and extending over the Cotswold escarpment. The church sits on both the Cotswold and Monarch's Ways. Our church was re-sited in the mid-19th century from the chapel at Little Sodbury Manor. The church is, we are informed, the only church of this name in England. Adeline was a French nun who lived in the 12th century. Our church has links with William Tyndale who taught at Little Sodbury Manor and we have many visitors from all over the world and our visitors' book testifies to the simple beauty and peace they find here. We offer refreshments on our welcoming table for the walkers, which is gratefully received.



### **St John the Baptist, Old Sodbury -**

St. John The Baptist Church, Old Sodbury is in a commanding position overlooking the Severn Valley. Being in such a prominent position it attracts many visitors and those walking the Cotswold Way, which passes through the churchyard. It is a picturesque church which is a popular venue for weddings and baptisms. The church is much loved and in good order as well as being well equipped with a kitchen and toilet. The village has a population of 450 households and the C of E Primary school next to the church is well supported. The Church family has a good relationship with the village hall committee working together on village initiatives and social events.

To find out more about our four churches click [Find out more](#)



# OUR FOUR PARISHES

Little Sodbury  
and  
Old Sodbury



We join together in the benefice for :

**Midweek Communion** - Is on Thursday mornings at St. John's Chipping Sodbury.

**Morning Prayer** - Around 10-12 of us meet at 8.30am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for Morning Prayer via Zoom. People join as they are, whether that's before work, on the way to other meetings, from their holiday destination, unable to get out and about – whatever their personal circumstances. Everyone takes part either leading, doing responses on behalf of everyone, doing readings or hosting.

**Benefice Pastoral Care Group** – draws parishioners from across the benefice to coordinate and share in the pastoral care of those in any kind of need. The group supports those who would otherwise be isolated and maintains a consistent level of contact with those in residential care, nursing homes and sheltered housing. Eucharistic ministry is offered where it is accepted. The group supports those who have experienced a recent bereavement, organises the annual All Souls Service and arranges regular baptism days. Old Sodbury also have had their own Pastoral Care group which they hope to start again soon.

**Tea and Chat** - is a response to anyone experiencing social isolation meeting one afternoon each month in the Church Centre. Originally conceived as an opportunity for those experiencing memory difficulties and their carers to socialise in a supporting and stimulating environment, it now attracts a variety of people who look forward to a pleasant social afternoon over tea and cake. Up to twenty guests and helpers attend regularly and they are contacted during the week before the meeting as both a reminder and a pastoral check on their general wellbeing. Transport is arranged for those that need it.

**Fellowship / Prayer Groups** - There are various benefice and local church prayer groups which meet regularly either weekly or monthly. There are three fellowship groups two in Chipping Sodbury and one in Old Sodbury. The benefice prayer group meets monthly and prays especially for the needs of the benefice. There is a fellowship group in Old Sodbury called the Together Group which meets fortnightly. Little Sodbury have a Thursday morning cleaning group which has turned into an ad-hoc fellowship group. Both church members and others come along for coffee, cake and company. Another monthly benefice prayer group meets to pray for our mission partners.

**Inclusive Church Action Group** - One of our retired clergy is facilitating the group working towards each of the churches becoming a 'Registered Inclusive Church'.



**Sodbury Vale Mothers Union** - is an active monthly group with approximately 30 members who are involved in many aspects of church life.

We aim to make people aware of the activities the Mother's Union are engaged with at local, national and worldwide levels.

**Lent Course** - The benefice comes together for a weekly course during Lent usually on a Wednesday evening and Thursday morning. The themes have covered a wide variety of subjects from mission to the portrayals of the Passion through art.

**Book Group** - started in February 2021, meets monthly and currently has 8 members. Each member suggests a title for the list which they feel appropriate and is then compiled into a programme for the year.

Everyone is able to contribute their impression and opinion of the books. What makes it fun and interesting is - thankfully - that we don't always agree!

**Church Bells** - All the benefice towers have working bells that are used to call the faithful to worship. Two of the towers have a peal of bells, together with an enthusiastic team of ringers. These bells are rung for every service and for special occasions. There is also a popular group of hand-bell ringers.

**Film Group** - This group started just before the Covid pandemic and we hope that this can start again in the near future.

**Charities Mission Partners** - each of the churches supports a variety of international, national and local missions and charities. These are generally chosen on an annual basis.





**StorKies** - is a weekly parent/carer and toddler group which is held in the church at Chipping Sodbury but supported by the whole benefice. It is run by volunteers who see what they do as an outreach of the church to the communities around us.

Since restarting after Covid there are 87 families on the register although not all attend at once! The group plays a crucial role for parents/carers and their children post Covid allowing children and adults to come together to socialise and play. We have been delighted to see how shy and withdrawn children have become more confident in talking and sharing with others. Now more than ever we see the value of such a group in providing a welcoming and safe place for parents and children to meet.

During our two-hour sessions the children benefit from playing with a wide variety of toys, sharing food, singing, hearing stories (biblical and secular) and praying together. These gatherings are filled with joy and delight as we see children flourish. We value every member and seek to show Christ's love for all through our contacts with them.



**ISingPOP** - Our schools and churches, like many in the diocese, have worked with ISingPOP with wonderful results. The children still sing the songs with joy and as a result know so much more about our faith.



**Schools** - The benefice rejoices in having close connections with three Church of England Primary Schools.

The three schools are :

- St. John's Mead (VC), Chipping Sodbury
- Old Sodbury (VC)
- Horton (VA)

- [St. John's Mead](#)
- [Old Sodbury](#)
- [Horton](#)

Ofsted and SIAMS reports are a credit to the school staff and governors and can be found on their websites. The benefice is proud of the very significant role and contribution of our Foundation Governors, the impact of lay led 'Open the Book' activities and the welcome regular collaboration of our local clergy in all aspects of school life. Together we have a share in communicating a Christian ethos in our schools with joy and fun. Within the parish boundary of Chipping Sodbury is Chipping Sodbury Secondary School and Sixth Form. Chipping Sodbury School. There are also a range of pre-school providers in the benefice.



As a benefice we try to connect with and serve the communities associated with each of the individual churches. The heart of this is the connection between the four parishes that make up the Benefice and this enables us to further reach out and inter-react with the many diverse communities that exist across the Benefice. It is important in these relationships that we strive to 'connect our communities with Christ'. We endeavour to be at every activity, event and celebration that our communities offer, making sure that these relationships become partnerships that are invaluable to everyone. Many of these connections are at a local level in the individual Parishes and have been referred to specifically in the individual Parish Profiles but many of the larger events are inevitably centred around Chipping Sodbury and the church thereof the key

Some of the events are:

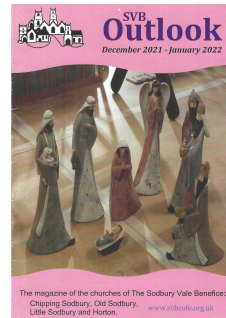
Festival Week and Carnival  
 Crib Festival and Victorian Evening  
 Harvest and Burns Night:  
 The Mop Fairs  
 Barnhill Community Day  
 and so much more

[Find out more](#)



### Communication and Technology -

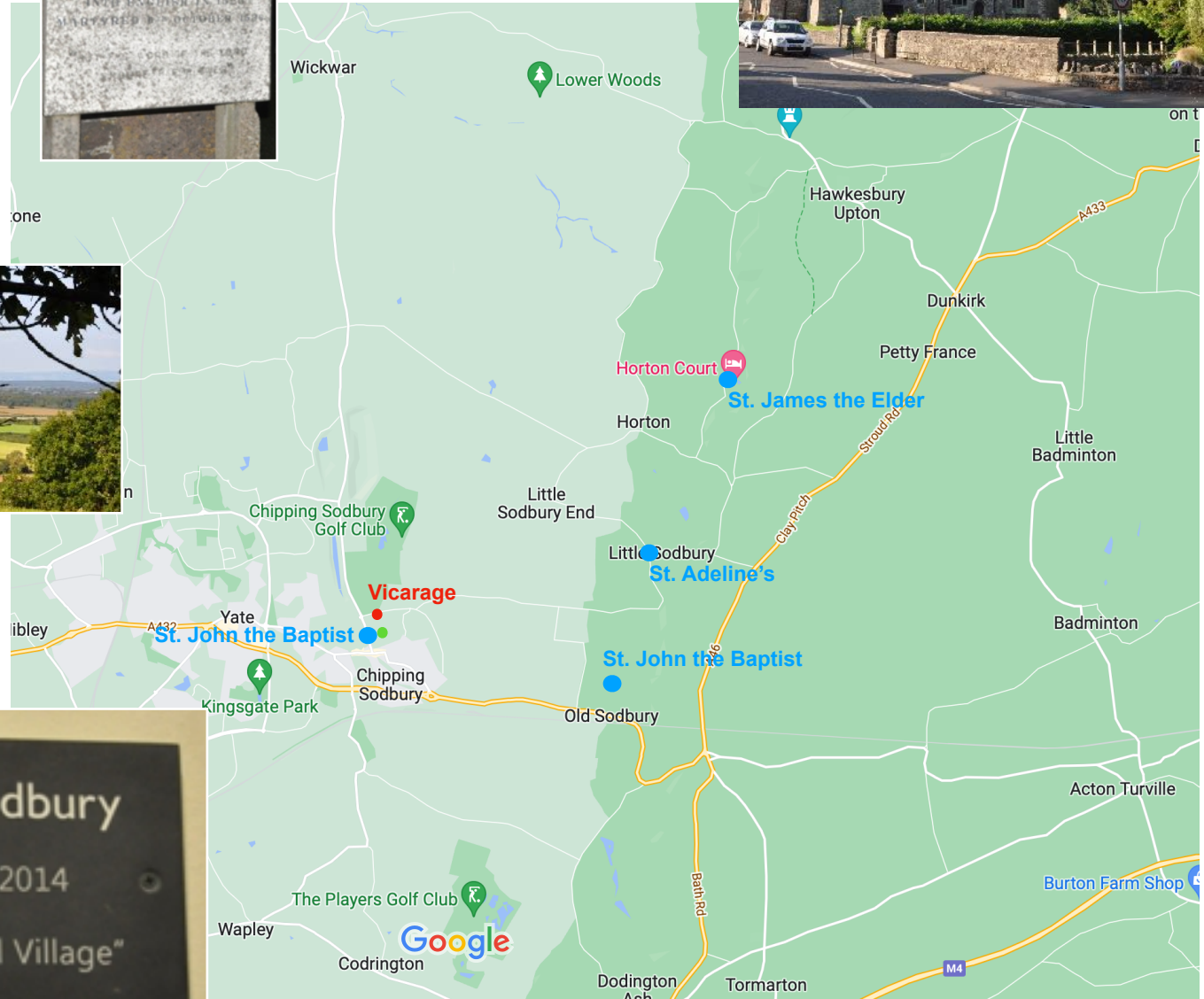
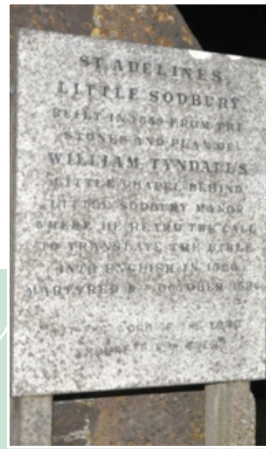
There is a Benefice website, centred around St. John's Chipping Sodbury, with links to the three other churches. (see more on page15)  
 The Zoom services and on-line fellowship meetings that developed because of covid continue to keep us connected, bringing us together as a fifth church for those who may feel unable to join us in person. Sunday Services from Chipping Sodbury are now live streamed and recorded for YouTube. Our audio/visual setup now allows the inclusion of videos and music and the potential to connect with our mission partners during a Sunday morning service.



Link to [Gazette Article](#)

**Ecumenism** - Within the benefice there are a small number of churches from other denominations. Together we provide volunteers for invaluable work and outreach among our communities. Several of these, including Retail Chaplaincy and Street Pastors are not at present functioning following the pandemic but hopefully these could be revived soon. Ecumenical involvement includes the Foodbank, Good Friday Walk of Witness and Remembrance Day Civic Service and Parade. Clergy from CS and Yate meet regularly to discuss issues which affect all the churches.

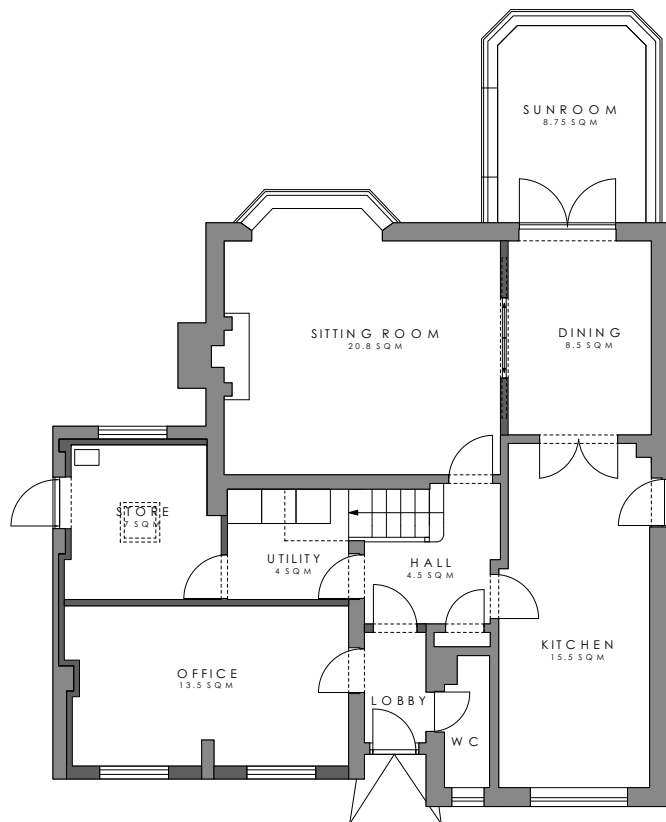
# OUR BENEFACTICE Parish Locations



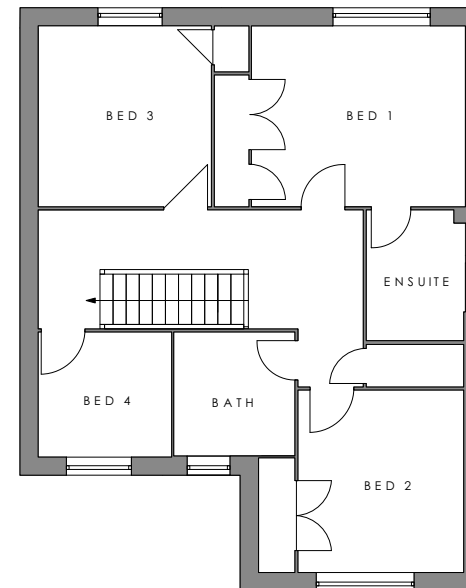


# OUR New VICARAGE

The Diocese have recently purchased a new modern vicarage which is located in Caroline Close just a few minutes from St. John's church in Chipping Sodbury and the main High Street.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
PROPOSED OPTION 2 1:50



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
PROPOSED 1:50



**Services** - A Holy Communion service is held in all four churches. Chipping Sodbury - 3 times a month, twice in Old Sodbury and Horton and once in Little Sodbury. Morning Prayer, All Age Worship and Evensong are held on the other Sundays depending on the church. [See Service Rota](#) There is a 5th Sunday Benefice Service which used to be at a different church on a rotational basis but, since Covid, has been at Chipping Sodbury as it is now live streamed. However we hope that we can return to the original pattern when the new incumbent has been appointed, whilst at the same time being able to 'stream' for those unable to attend.

Special festival services take place in each church. The pupils from St. John's Mead, Old Sodbury and Horton schools celebrate their festival services in church during their school week.

There is a said Holy Communion service on Thursday mornings at Chipping Sodbury. Midweek Morning Prayer is held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. This has been held via Zoom as a result of the pandemic. It has continued online as it has attracted regular parishioners.

**General** - We are blessed with a good number of retired clergy who are willing to offer their support to the incumbent, along with a small team of Readers and a priest who works in Bristol Diocese (DDO) but has permission to officiate with us. The joy of having so many additional clergy on our benefice rota brings variety to the worship in our services.

**Electoral roll and attendance -**

Chipping Sodbury	88	50-60	In 2021 there were
Old Sodbury	42	20-25	9 weddings
Little Sodbury	19	8-15	10 baptisms
Horton	33	12-18	22 funerals/interment of ashes

**Finances -**

The benefice pays its Parish Share in full. Each parish manages its own budget. [see APCM's on individual Church websites Pages 7 & 8](#) Each church makes its own charitable donations. Churches that have made repairs have successfully applied for and received grants from various charities, benefactors and local fundraising.

**Communication and Technology –**

We use technology extensively. Our benefice website is our shop window on the world and reflects who we are and what we consider important. It also links to each of our churches. Facebook pages [found here](#) reach the wider community and a younger age group. SVBMail keeps us connected via e-mail and established itself firmly during lockdown. This augments the benefice magazine SVB Outlook which is produced very two months and is also available on line. Weekly news updates are distributed via the electronic pew sheet or print copies on a limited basis. All channels of communication are monitored by our Editorial Committee that meets every two months. [Outlook Digest](#) [svbcofe.org.uk](http://svbcofe.org.uk)

