

The Parish of St Andrew's Bolam



Summary

Bolam is an ancient rural parish in mid Northumberland, with a thriving church community. We are looking for a priest who will work with us to achieve numerical and spiritual growth, in particular by supporting and developing the mission and ministry of the laity, working together as the whole people of God.

About the parish community

The 2011 census records the population of Bolam parish as 363 and mainly dispersed within the twelve square mile area. The township of Bolam no longer exists, but there is one village in the southeast of the parish, Belsay, where there is a shop with a Post Office, a garage and the Blacksmith's Coffee Shop.

There is a small Primary School in Belsay which is part of the Pele Trust, a Multi Academy Trust formed in 2019 of six schools, five Primary and one Secondary. The school scored Outstanding in all areas in the 2016 Ofsted inspection. The school hall doubles as the village hall.

Adjacent to the village is Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, where the quarry garden is well worth a visit, especially in Spring. Bolam itself now consists of ten scattered homes and so most of our enthusiastic congregation travel to church by car.

Average income across the parish is just below the national average (Bolam ranks 4978 out of 12599 parishes nationally, where 1 is most deprived). Industry is mainly farming, with a mix of arable, cattle and sheep. Bolam is within commuting range of the county town Morpeth and of Newcastle upon Tyne. 41% of parish residents over 16 year olds have a higher degree or professional qualification, compared to the national average of 27%. The airport is 8 miles away. But Bolam parish is in the most deprived 10% for access to services, owing to the lack of public transport. 10% of over 60s receive pension credit and 1% of working age people receive a key out-of-work benefit. 20% of households with children are lone parent households. There are 37 people on the electoral roll and on average 22 people attend weekly services.

Buildings



St Andrew's church is testament to what was once a significant township and to over a thousand years of Christianity. It is a beautiful Saxo-Norman building, treasured by the local

community and visitors alike. Please see our website for more detailed information about the church buildings.

It has been agreed by the PCC and congregation, to remove the rearmost pews to make more room for socialising and also to build a toilet and renew the facilities in the vestry to include a kitchen. There is no church hall. There is a small stone outbuilding in the churchyard, previously used as a hearse house. This is now used for storage, but could be developed into a toilet. The church and its setting are very beautiful conveying a sense of peace and tranquility. The large churchyard has space for burials for many years.

Pattern of worship

On the first Sunday of the month we have a ministry led Family Service, with average attendance in 2021/22 of 14 and on the fourth Sunday our CW1 Holy Communion is attended by 22 on average. There is no service on the third Sunday at present. In those months with a fifth Sunday, a benefice CW1 Holy Communion is held in one of the four churches on rotation.

Bolam traditional holds a a midnight Holy Communion on Christmas Eve, in 2016 there were 50 people attending.

Church tradition

Our church tradition is middle of the road, but inclusive, as can be seen from our eclectic mix of services. We often hold an annual St Andrew's Day parish lunch. On average in recent years we have had two baptisms, two weddings, no confirmations and three funerals per year. In 2016 a new adult member of the congregation was confirmed.

We have links with Belsay First School, which are gradually strengthening. Bolam has a musical tradition, we have a church choir that sings at Easter, Christmas and other special occasions. In December 2016 we performed in church for the Christmas Special episode of Countryfile for the BBC. In the Summer of 2016 we held a fund raising concert with Colla Voce Chamber Choir and friends. In March 2017 Mowden School Year 8 choir gave a Spring Concert. We also

collaborate with the Methodist community at Scots Gap, which lies 3 miles to the north. In 2016 a joint Harvest celebration was held with parishioners from our benefice, the neighbouring benefice and the Methodist Chapel.

Every Spring and Autumn we hold a church yard tidy up and bonfire which is attended by members of the congregation and volunteers from the school community.



Mission

Whilst nurturing our existing congregation, we are also keen to engage with younger people in the parish. We are working to grow our links to Belsay school and we have a goldmine of heritage to offer in the churchyard and church building. Our initial plans to make St Andrews Church building more useful for the community are developed (see below under Buildings) and form a central plank of our Mission Action Plan. Our deanery representatives are involved in discussions to find practical ways to support parishes to work together. One member of the congregation is Deanery Lay Chair and two are members of Diocesan Synod. There has been strong lay support for a benefice Local Ministry Development Team and this has now been set up with the participation of Reverend Fiona Sample, Interim Minister and Pam Walker, Associate Minister, with guidance from the Diocesan Local Ministry Development Officer. Two members of our congregation attend. We are fortunate to have a self-supporting minister in

the parish: Reverend Fiona Sample's vocational journey, which began over twenty years ago, has been strongly encouraged by the parish and in turn has enabled a new level of lay involvement in mission and ministry in the parish for us all. Pam Walker, Reader in Hartburn parish, is very active across the whole benefice.

Finance

Bolam PCC has sound finances and contributes full parish share. We have been awarded a HLF grant to pay for roof repairs and recently fundraised to build a new war memorial as the parish had none, it was officially dedicated on Remembrance Day 2021. We have a Friends of St Andrew's Bolam (FoStAB), which contributes towards upkeep of the churchyard. The draft accounts for 2021 are available.