

Onny Camlad Benefice



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2. Welcome
3. Our Benefice
- 6 Our Worship
7. Our Mission
8. Person Specification
9. The Rectory
10. The Wider Diocese - A message from our Archdeacon



Parish Profiles

11. St Nicholas', Churchstoke
13. St Etheldreda's, Hyssington
15. Holy Trinity Church, Lydham
16. St. Peter's Church, More
17. St John the Baptist, Myndtown
18. All Saints, Norbury
20. St Margaret's, Ratlinghope
22. St Mary the Virgin, Snead
23. St Michael & All Angels, Wentnor

Appendix

24. *Notes from the Vacancy Consultation Meeting*

'Where there is no vision, the people perish' Prov 29 v18

We are looking forward to welcoming our new Priest-in-Charge to this beautiful Benefice we call home. It stretches from the grandeur of the Long Mynd in the east to the awesome hills of the Welsh Marches in the west. This is a lovely place in which to live and work and we like to think we are a warm and friendly lot.

Rural ministry can be complex and challenging as well as exciting. The spiritual needs are great, and the challenges facing our churches are daunting. But we believe in a God who can do great things and we have already begun to experience a spiritual momentum in the life of our churches which we find very encouraging. There is also a very good community spirit in all the villages to which the churches contribute and from which they receive.

We are not a Benefice which needs waking up. We recognise that if we do not continue to grow spiritually and begin to grow numerically we will die. We know that for this to happen there needs to be development and change in our individual and corporate lives which will be both thrilling and challenging. Some green shoots of growth have been happening in some of our churches, but we are ready for more.

As you read through this Profile, if you are the one God is calling, we pray that you will be enthused by what you read and that deep within, you will know the gentle but definite push of the Holy Spirit in our direction.

There will be a great welcome for a Priest who is ready to lead, teach and care for us into the next chapter of our life together.



‘Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing’ 1Thess 5 v11

The Benefice is part of the Clun Forest Deanery, in the north west of the Diocese of Hereford. It is made up of nine parishes spanning the border between England and Wales. It is a very rural area, made up of villages, hamlets and remote farmsteads, with arable/livestock farming and tourism the dominant industries. The English parishes are in the Shropshire Hills AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

The priest in charge is supported by a part-time mission priest deployed at Churchstoke.

Benefice	Parish	Church	Population
Onny Camlad	Churchstoke, Powys	St Nicholas	1739 + 45 new houses
	Hyssington, Powys	St Etheldreda’s	278
	Lydham, Shropshire	Church of the Holy Trinity	221
	More, Shropshire	Church of St Peter	150
	Myndtown, Shropshire	St John the Baptist	60
	Norbury, Shropshire	All Saints	136
	Ratlinghope, Shropshire	St Margaret’s	130
	Snead, Powys	St Mary the Virgin	32
	Wentnor, Shropshire	St Michael and All Angels	327

The Deanery covers the south west of Shropshire, west of the South Shropshire Hills, and over the border into the Welsh county of Powys. The area includes the traditional market town of Bishops Castle, with outlying villages such as Lydbury North and Clun typifying the rural tranquillity. The ancient Offa’s Dyke runs north to south through the area, marking the approximate border between England and Wales. A feature of the area is the extent to which residents appreciate, and care for, their environment: a typically British, pastoral countryside, with scattered villages making up each parish. People are self sufficient with many traditional ideas and skills. Attitudes can be surprisingly progressive, however! Each settlement has its individual qualities, while the Long Mynd and Stiperstones hills provide ample walking, cycling and more sedentary pastimes for residents and tourists alike.



Support

Lay leadership within the Benefice is in robust heart. An active Ministry Support Group (drawn from some of the churches) meets monthly to pray and plan events. This year has included a Lent course on Prayer, a Fun Day with an evangelistic edge, a Saints Alive course, a Day of Renewal with our Diocesan Mission Enabler, Prebendary Mark Melliush, and some inter-generational worship at Norbury. The Incumbent is also supported by a Benefice Administrator, paid for by a small levy on each parish. Some services are regularly led by experienced lay people. We look to our new Incumbent to develop and support shared worship and to work with churchwardens to delegate appropriate aspects of Benefice and parish leadership. A lively benefice magazine acts as a popular means of communication of both church and community news.

Challenges faced by Local people

The challenges faced by many people are very real. The effects of the financial crisis are still being felt and many are employed in jobs paying minimum wage. Often young people leave the area to attend university and do not return. The major demographic group is in the 40-70 age range, with significant numbers of young people in some villages. The cohort of older people has implications for social care and the likely effect on viability of the local economy over the next 20 years. Local infrastructure can be challenging. Public services and transport are sporadic, and fibre broadband has yet to reach many of the villages. The picturesque nature of the area attracted many people during lockdowns, and property prices are beyond the reach of many.

Facilities within the Benefice

The community enjoys the benefits of four village halls, at Churchstoke, Hyssington, Lydham and Norbury. All are well-utilised and provide valuable facilities within the community, with The Village Hall at Norbury rebuilt with National Lottery funding in 2015.



Our Village Halls—Lydham, Churchstoke,
Hyssington & Norbury

Churchstoke is noted for its Co-Op supermarket (which includes a petrol station and cafe). There is a convenience store and post office at Wentnor, a health food shop in Lydham, and a number of public houses throughout the area.

Schools

There are two primary schools within the Benefice.

Churchstoke Community Primary School is designated bi-lingual, teaching in English and providing classes in Welsh. A new head will be in post from September 2023.
www.churchstoke.powys.sch.uk



Norbury Primary School and Nursery has been categorised Outstanding in its latest Ofsted report. It is part of the Shropshire Hills Federation with Chirbury CE and Stiperstones CE schools both of which are in the neighbouring Deanery.
www.norbury.shropshire.sch.uk

The nearest secondary schools to the Rectory are in Bishop's Castle and Church Stretton. Transport is available to these. Further Education is available in Shrewsbury, Ludlow or Newtown.

Other local facilities

The market town of Bishops Castle is located about five miles south of the Benefice and provides access to the following facilities:

- Doctor's surgery
- Community College (secondary school) and primary school
- SPARC (Leisure and Arts centre)
- Veterinary surgery
- Small supermarkets and artisan shops
- Sports clubs (e.g. rugby, football, cricket, hockey, tennis, squash, etc)

Bishops Castle is an active community, running a number of annual carnivals, fairs and unique events such as the British Stone Skimming Championships.

Beyond Bishops Castle and the Benefice itself, the nearest towns of significance are Shrewsbury (15 miles north, with the nearest hospital), Ludlow (15 miles south east, with a minor injuries unit), Newtown and Welshpool (each 15 miles away). The nearer towns of Church Stretton and Craven Arms have railway stations on the main Manchester to Cardiff line.



Bishop's Castle & The Community College

'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for these are the kinds of worshippers the Father seeks.' John 4 v23

Over the last few years in our Benefice there is a new spirit of unity developing. It began during Lockdown when many people from all over the Benefice came together every Sunday via Zoom for worship led jointly by the Priest-in-charge and the Mission Priest. This began a new interest in working and worshipping together and we hope our new Priest will build on this. We pray for a person of vision who will encourage congregations to join together in worship.

At present only six of our nine churches have regular Sunday worship and one of those, Churchstoke, (weekly attendance 38) is catered for by its Mission Priest. The remaining five have one to three services a month; congregations range from 6-20 committed worshippers. Two churches, Ratlinghope and Norbury, enjoy lay-led services and have enthusiasm for exploring different styles of worship. Ratlinghope hold family-style worship for special events, Norbury are just about to embark on an experiment with intergenerational worship. Other churches have occasional services. Churchstoke has a programme of worship with different styles, catering for teenagers, children and the elderly. Worship is every Sunday at 10.30am and is led by the Mission Priest and sometimes by other members of the congregation who are training for the new Local Ministry roles. Benefice Services on 5th Sunday, held at the churches in Churchstoke and Lydham and the Village Hall at Norbury, have sought to involve worshippers from different churches. Led jointly by the Priest and Mission Priest these are good times of fellowship with modern songs and well-known hymns. We have two Readers, one of whom regularly leads services.

We hold monthly Prayer Meetings now at both Lydham and Wentnor and weekly at Churchstoke. In February this year we ran Pete Greig's Prayer Course at which 30+ people from all over the Benefice joined together to learn how to pray and deepen their relationship with God. As a Benefice we want to grow nearer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and we are looking for a priest who will lead us in worship which is flexible, attractive and accessible to all and which brings glory to God.



The Prayer Course

'Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.' Acts 13 v15

As a Benefice we take seriously the heart of our Diocesan Vision: 'Proclaiming Christ and Making Disciples'.

Our last Priest-in-charge and Mission Priest drew together a Benefice Ministry Support Group (MSG) to which representatives from all churches were invited. This group has continued to meet every month during the vacancy and has built on the spiritual momentum we have been experiencing.

Last year the group organised a Fun Day and an Alpha Course in Norbury, drawing people from across the Benefice, some of whom then joined with the extra Alpha sessions at Churchstoke. This year this group has organised another successful Fun Day offering prayer activities in line with the Year of Prayer of our Diocese; this time we also provided entertainment and an evangelistic talk. It was followed by a Saints Alive Course in More Church. The Group has also organised a Day of Renewal in September at Churchstoke, led by Preb Mark Melluish, our Diocesan Mission Enabler.



The Fun Day

Our Benefice Administrator ensures good communication between our churches and is part of the MSG. We have two schools at Norbury and Churchstoke and we hope that our new Priest will work in these to bring the Gospel to the children and families.

As a means of outreach: Ratlinghope has a Good Friday witness of three huge crosses on a high hill with a special service; Hyssington has a summer Open Churchyard service event; Myndtown has a Valentine and Pet service; and all the churches have Harvest services. Lydham is a village of 220 on the A488. At the moment it has no services (apart from the occasional Benefice service and monthly prayer meeting) nor PCC. We are hoping to see a new start for the Church in Lydham, as it has a strategic position and potential for growth.

Churchstoke and its Mission Priest have developed a culture of worship and fellowship which has proved attractational to children, teenagers and the elderly residents from the Residential home opposite the church. We have a weekly youth group, Ignite, a monthly children's meeting, Kidz Klub, and intergenerational worship, Sunday Central, which caters for all ages. We run an Alpha Course every year and aim to be missional and evangelistic. We have had five Confirmation services in recent years, with adults and teenagers confirmed at each one.

We believe the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone, including those who live in rural areas, and we are ready and willing to support our new Priest-in-charge in his/her vision for growth here in this beautiful part of the world.

“They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.” Acts 14 v21

The parishes are looking to appoint a person who...

- ◆ Loves the Father, is excited by Jesus Christ and His Mission and is filled with the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Has a commitment to evangelism and spiritual growth.
- ◆ Will perceive the needs and potential of the local churches, develop a vision, prioritise and strategise accordingly.
- ◆ Has good communication skills and a warm and approachable personality who will be able to inspire and deepen faith in all age groups within our communities.
- ◆ Is serious about the preaching and teaching of the Word of God as a major means of growth and renewal.
- ◆ Has a desire to enhance relationships with the village primary schools.
- ◆ Has an understanding of rural life and issues.
- ◆ Is able to relate to all with openness and warmth and be an empathetic listener.



'My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.' Isaiah 32 verse 18



The Rectory is a bungalow situated on the edge of the village of Wentnor, with far-reaching views over the countryside of South Shropshire. On entry into the bungalow there is a large room which has previously been used as an office with a large toilet opposite. This is all separate from the main living area, which is good when inviting visitors into the Rectory.



The Rectory benefits from four large bedrooms, all served by one bathroom. All the bedrooms have integrated wardrobes, with two also being fitted with vanity basin units.

The newly fitted kitchen is light and spacious, giving amazing views over the local countryside. It has room for a dining table.



Off the kitchen is a generously sized utility room with a back door leading to the garden.

It also comprises a dining room and living room, the latter having large French doors to the garden and patio

The Rectory has oil-fired central heating and an open fireplace and there are UPVC double glazed units throughout.

The bungalow has a large parking area and single garage which can also be accessed from the hallway in the bungalow.



The Diocese of Hereford is a place of contrasts. We're geographically large, but our population is small. We straddle six local authorities (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Monmouthshire, Telford & Wrekin, and Powys) and two countries (England and Wales), but we are one Diocese with one Bishop. We are predominantly rural, with scattered communities, but we have a vibrant cathedral city, several historic market towns and post-industrial towns, and serve estate communities as well.

We are all committed, whatever our context, to our calling to make Christ known, to love God, one another and our neighbours, and to work for the common good. We do this not only through our churches but also through our church schools and academies which are an integral part of our Diocese. Our diocesan values are that we are prayerful, Christ-like, and engaged, and we seek to live out those values in our varying settings in a way that is rooted in the local.

We work collaboratively wherever possible, knowing that ministry brings unique demands as well as unique privileges. We are small enough (in terms of numbers) that clergy can get to know one another and the diocesan staff quite easily.

Recognising that, while ordained ministry is a joy and a privilege it can bring challenges too, we've recently launched an "Accompanying" programme where all incumbents in a new post, whether this is their first incumbency or not, are linked with a member of our Mission & Ministry team who will not only act as a mentor for the new incumbent, but work with them and their PCCs to help discern how God is leading them to work out the plans and hopes you'll read in this Profile. This goes hand in hand with our "Servants and Stewards" learning community, which meets once a month for a year, run by external facilitators with input from the Bishop and Archdeacons. There's a new cohort each academic year, and we've found that clergy have not only benefitted from the teaching itself but also from being able to meet and share with peers as they learn together.

Turning to the Onny Camlad parishes themselves, they have a lot to offer a new Priest-in-Charge, much of which is detailed in this Profile. The part-time Mission Priest, whose current licence runs until November 2024, is gifted in mission and evangelism and has led significant growth in Churchstoke, supported by a lay team. She, the Churchwardens, local retired clergy, and PCCs have provided strong and consistent leadership during the vacancy. They have a realistic understanding of the significant challenges facing the churches, alongside a deep trust in the faithfulness of God. It needs to be acknowledged that they have had a fairly high turnover of clergy in the recent past. The parishes are keen to welcome a new Priest-in-Charge who, God willing, will be with them for some time and give the strong leadership and stability they are seeking as they look to the future and discern what it will mean to live out their vocation in this part of the Diocese of Hereford in the coming years.

When a Profile contains the words "Priest-in-Charge", applicants will naturally wonder whether it's likely that there is going to be Pastoral Reorganisation. While there are currently no definite plans, the Deanery is reviewing its current configuration, and a new Priest-in-Charge of Onny Camlad would be involved in those discussions alongside clergy and lay colleagues.

If you would like to know more about life as a member of the clergy in the Diocese of Hereford please contact the Archdeacon of Ludlow on 01588 673571 or Fiona.Gibson@hereford.anglican.org

Fiona

Hereford Cathedral





The village of Churchstoke, population 1700, nestles on the English/Welsh border. We have a Community Primary School (50 children with a new headteacher starting in September), a village hall, two pubs, a Chinese takeaway, a care home, a large spring water bottling factory and several small businesses. There is a Bowling Club, a Tennis Club, Football Club, Mums and Tots and Pre-school. Churchstoke has a unique large supermarket complex with petrol station, post office and launderette. The village is growing with 40 new homes built in 2020 and another 45 due to be completed this year.

Our church building is a Grade 2 listed, substantial stone building situated in the centre of the old village, next to a pub, opposite the care home and very close to the school.

The Mission Priest of Churchstoke (stipendiary, half-time) was appointed in 2014, to have responsibility for the worship, ministry and mission in Churchstoke; she works from the vicarage. Our vision is to be disciples of Jesus Christ, to grow the Church and to extend the Kingdom. Our two Churchwardens and PCC are committed to growth and mission.

All services are at 10.30am. Our normal pattern of Sunday worship:

1. Morning Praise with Kidz Klub
 2. Holy Communion with Ignite Youth Bible Group.
 3. Sunday Central (intergenerational worship)
 4. Holy Communion.
- We have a Prayer Meeting every Friday lunchtime. Over the last nine years we have changed the culture of our worship to make things accessible for everyone and we worship with modern 'New Wine' type songs as well as traditional hymns. We are constantly improving our welcome and consider this to be extremely important. Our teenagers are valued members of our Church Family, are at most Sunday services and are on the rota to read, pray, welcome etc. Our Ignite Youth Group, led by the Mission Priest and another leader, meets every Wednesday evening for games, food, worship and teaching. The teenagers have been taught how to lead a Bible Study and are now doing that themselves on a Sunday morning, the second in the month.



We have held 9 Alpha courses, and these have been a significant factor in the growth of our Church. We also use this as a preparation for Confirmation and 20 people have been confirmed here in the last 6 years. We have sought to be missional and before Covid we organised activities (prayers & blessings stall) in the supermarket, (where our Priest was the weekly Chaplain), in the school and in the Care Home. We also ran a Food Bank. Over the last two years we have worked with the Village Committee in putting on Churchstoke Christmas Festival and an Easter Craft morning. Church members run CoffeeCraft, a weekly support group for women. We have a good relationship with the Care Home and residents are at every church service, some brought in wheelchairs. Last year our mission to the families in the new housing and others produced a take-up of several families with young children who are coming to Kidz Klub once a month, led by three people in our Church Family. We have five people who are currently being trained by our Mission Priest for Local Ministry roles.

In 2021 we completed a major building project in the interior of our building, the funds for which were raised through prayer over three years. We received some money from Christian grant-making trusts but most came from gifts from our Church Family and local people. It was truly miraculous. We now have excellent facilities: a new carpeted dais, a wonderful Coffee Lounge, a large lobby, two toilets and a lovely kitchen area, enabling us to enjoy spending time together, to run our various activities and to live out our hospitality as the people of God in this place.

We enjoy playing our part in the wider Benefice: we have representatives on the Ministry Support Group and work together for mission and community activities in the Benefice; we often host Benefice and deanery events; and we enjoy worshipping with other churches for Benefice services etc.

We have enjoyed blessing and growth over recent years and our weekly attendance is now 38 adults, teenagers and children with an average of 44 once a month when we have Kidz Klub. We have received so much from Jesus and we are looking to extend His Kingdom in this area and beyond.





St Etheldreda's Church has been a focus of Christian worship in the Onny Camlad valley for nearly 900 years. We are one of the Welsh parishes of the Diocese of Hereford.

We have 31 names on our parish electoral roll and between 8 and 12 people regularly worship at our services. Every month we have one service of Holy Communion and a Morning Praise service. This is occasionally lay led.

In addition to our regular monthly services, we celebrate most major festivals; Christmas Eve, Easter Vigil, Ascension Day, and a traditional Harvest Festival. Recently, we have celebrated St Etheldreda's Day. Again, these services are often lay led. In July, we hold an Open Churchyard Service followed by a tea party. We have music at all our services and enjoy singing new and more traditional hymns. These Festival Services and events are popular with our community and often provide an opportunity for mission. This year we have had two adult confirmations.



We respond with enthusiasm to new worship initiatives. We have just set up a 'Prayer Pool' which is being regularly used by our visitors and we include Prayer requests in our services.

We have strong links with our small, scattered rural community. There are few facilities in the Parish. There are no pubs, schools or shops. We have one village hall which we are able to use for Church activities and a Church member sits on the management committee.





The Onny Camlad valley is an area of growing tourism with campsites, holiday lets and many walkers. St Etheldreda's is famous in folk lore circles for the legend of the Bagbury Bull.

Our Church is open daily with drinks and biscuits for visitors and comments in our Visitors Book show how much this is appreciated.

Our Benefice is important to us and we try to worship and work together whenever we can. We play a full part in Benefice and Deanery meetings. Our Church building and Churchyard are in good order and we work hard to meet our financial obligations. Looking to the future, we have just installed a bank card reader in the Church and we are encouraging visitors and regular worshippers to use it.

We have flowers and floral displays throughout the year and our Churchyard is maintained in line with 'Caring for God's Acre'.



We look back with gratitude over our long history of serving Christ in this place and look forward to the future of our Church with confidence and Faith. We are not complacent, however, and know that, in the future we may need to face difficult challenges and changes.

We place mission above all other considerations. We are sustained and upheld by our Faith in Jesus Christ.





The village of Lydham has a mix of private and social housing, with 85 households, and a population of about 221. Holy Trinity Church is situated in the centre. There is no school, post office or pub but there is an organic whole food shop and a village hall in which a weekly market is held supplying fruit & vegetables, meat, bread, cheese, and various crafts. Apart from agriculture and forestry work, motor engineering and metal fabricating work is locally available along with a wood burning stove manufacturer nearby.

Unfortunately our congregation has dwindled to such a degree that normal Sunday Services are no longer viable. We do have a reasonable congregation for an afternoon Memorial Service on Remembrance Sunday, due to the fact that we have a War Memorial at the entrance to the Church. Benefice services can attract congregations up to 40. During the vacancy, the Ministry Support Group have held a monthly prayer meeting in the church.



For various reasons we have been unable to appoint a PCC this year. More Church PCC have taken us under their care with a management committee in place at Lydham. We are currently financially sound and parishioners are willing to keep the fabric of the church and the churchyard in good order. This will entail Insurance, boiler maintenance, cleaning, repairs and upkeep of the churchyard. We do have enough money in hand to cover these commitments for a few years, or until those willing people are unable to carry on.



Aware of the need for regular maintenance and quality repair work on this over 800 year old building, listed Grade II*, extensive repair work was carried out on the east wall and its attractive Georgian window in 2011. Costing £79,000 this was possible because of generous grants plus active community fund raising. Structurally the building is sound and a community centre point.

We hope that the new Incumbent is active, communicative, and one whose mission work will appeal right across the spectrum especially to the younger members of our community seeking the value of Christian worship, prayer and fellowship. Parishioners would welcome new ideas, new service patterns and a different way of doing things.





The church was built in the 12th century and is a grade II listed building. The tower has three bells and the top has a double timber pyramid.

Inside the church are box pews with doors opening onto the aisle. The North transept is a crypt to the More family. Around the font is a mosaic from a 19th century excavation of a Roman Villa near Linley.

The building is in good order.



More is a scattered parish with approximately 160 residents. Our congregation is small with 8 to 12 at regular services. At the moment we just have one Holy Communion service per month. In the future we would like to have a morning or afternoon praise service in addition to the HC Service. At Easter and Harvest we hold a BCP service and they are better attended with 15 to 35 in the congregation. Historically we are the church that holds the Joint Benefice Candlelit Carol Service because we are in a central position for the Benefice and are the largest of the English Parish churches. This is well attended with over 100 people attending. It is a 9 lessons and carols service with the choir singing too.

People are always willing to help with our PCC events and we supplement our finances with coffee mornings, a quiz and taking part in the annual Ride + Stride event. We also like to hold a Christmas event. In 2021 we held a Nativity Festival in the Church, whilst in 2022 we had a stall that we set up at various local markets selling spring bulbs and various homemade Christmas decorations and gifts.



In the future we would like to explore the possibility of having a car park on the Glebe land so that there is better parking for weddings, baptisms and funerals as well as whole Benefice services. We are also keen to work with other neighbouring PCCs to help our churches grow.





Our Building and Our Parish

Myndtown is a rural parish in the foothills of the Long Mynd, on the edge of the Onny Valley, near to the village of Wentnor. It is made up of around two dozen homesteads – about 60 people in total – including a number of working farms, smallholdings, private houses and several holiday homes. The parish includes a full cross-section of people, ranging from retired couples, younger professional couples and families with children. The population includes long standing residents (with several generations preceding them in the parish) and relative

newcomers. Employment within the parish is exclusively agriculture-related, but a number of residents commute outwards to work in Bishops Castle, Church Stretton, Ludlow, Shrewsbury and further afield.

St John the Baptist church is close to Myndtown Hall Farm on the Plowden Estate, and dates back to the 12th Century. In 2016 the church was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant to carry out structural repairs, stimulate visitor numbers and promote community engagement. Work was completed in 2017 and the church is now in good order and attracts a steady stream of visitors and provides a venue for occasional concerts.



Services are now held approximately four times a year, with these being promoted as special occasions that attract congregations ranging from 25 to 40 people. In recent years, these special services have included St Valentines, a summer Pet Service, Harvest Festival and Christmas Carols.

Our Congregation

St John the Baptist church has historic interest and attracts visitors from far and wide. The small number of special services typically attracts support from across the Benefice and further afield. Support otherwise falls to a small number of committed families who, between them, carry out the required duties and take responsibility for raising in the region of £1,500 to £2,000 each year. This, along with the offertory from services and visitor donations, helps to keep the finances stable. Events such as quiz nights, harvest suppers and occasional banquets organised by local families have in recent years maintained the required annual funding.

Our Vision for Growth

As a parish we welcome new ideas, and would support a clear, concise and modern approach to worship that makes the church relevant not just to the current generation but younger people.

Ideally, we would like our new incumbent to share our love of the countryside and have an appreciation of rural issues. An interest in the local (Norbury) primary school is considered important as is an ability to communicate well with a broad spectrum of inhabitants.





Our Congregation

We are an enthusiastic, positive and open-minded lot in Norbury, an average of 11 people come to each of the three services held monthly. The services themselves reflect the range of worship preferred by our congregation- from simple quiet reflection to occasional activity- based worship. We are planning an all- age worship monthly from September - 'Norbury At 11'- and will be devoting considerable efforts to promote it. Both churchwardens have professional leadership experience and lead one of the services monthly.

We have tried to make our space a place where people feel welcomed and respected. Refreshments are provided after services to encourage social interchange and we plan to remove more pews to allow for increased activity in the space we have. We regularly host a number of free events, some based on Christian festivals such as switching on Christmas lights and others like barbecues and concerts, simply a way of reaching out to local people and having a good time together.



The church is well supported financially via the Parish Giving Scheme and offers a credit card facility for congregants and visitors. In essence this is a community in which the church physically and emotionally lies at its heart. The influence of congregation members is substantial and major village events in the past have been planned by and emerged from ideas formed by church members.

Our Parish

The parish consists of a village and two hamlets: Norbury which has a population of approximately 50 and Whitcott and Hardwick which combined add a further 20. The Parish works well as a community. The newly built Village Hall lies within Norbury, and it is used occasionally for Benefice services. The local playgroup operates from the hall as does the WI and numerous activities such as the very successful community choir and Flicks in the Sticks.



The local primary school lies in the parish. It has a school roll of 90 or so and attracts children from a wide area. It is very well supported by parents who run a number of popular fundraising activities, like the Batch Burner mountain bike event and hold services in our building to celebrate Harvest etc. Residents have a very strong connection to both their area and their neighbours; this was evident during lockdown where food was prepared, and support provided for those who were ill or at risk of feeling isolated.

Our Church Building

The church building sits at the heart of Norbury Village and is a Norman chapel restored in Victorian times with a small chancel addition. Only the tower is original being 12th century. It is a simple country church with a magnificent ancient yew in the churchyard.



The interior has a quiet prayerful calm, a sense of Eternity which reflects the care taken over its maintenance and the years of worship it has witnessed.

The churchyard is well cared for by local volunteers, And the tower home to annual visits by numerous swifts.

Our Vision for Growth

Both the building and the Church are ideally positioned for growth; with the new Village Hall and the school's increasing popularity. To take advantage of this, we want to ensure our new rector has experience of and enthusiasm for rural life, capable of supporting lay leadership in worship and action in the community. We look for a person who understands the challenges facing local people of all ages and who will facilitate action to deal with them.



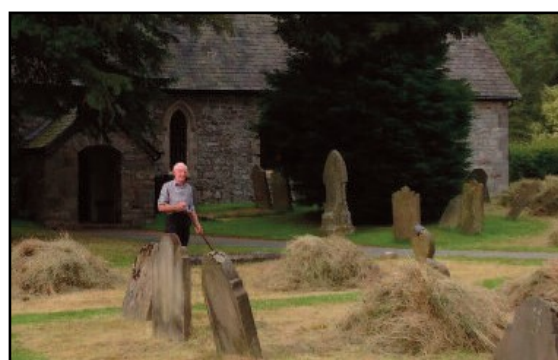


Ratlinghope is located in an "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" and farming is the primary industry in the area. The Church of St. Margaret's serves a scattered rural community with a population of approx. 130, of whom 57 are on the Electoral Roll. The area is mainly accessed by narrow winding lanes. It is particularly popular with walkers many of whom like to visit the church.

Ratlinghope boasts a pub (The Bridges) which is very popular, a Youth Hostel and a busy campsite located adjacent to the Church. A music festival takes place once a year in Ratlinghope, a 3-day, children friendly event where many families come and camp for a

week. Campers at both sites are actively encouraged, and very much welcomed, to attend our services and events.

We have many willing volunteers caring for the maintenance and running of our beautiful, historic Church and we endeavour to keep it all in good repair as we are members of the Shropshire Churches Tourism Group which attracts a number of visitors each year. Also, we are members of 'Caring for God's Acre', the conservation charity for burial grounds across the UK. Recently we have received the Silver Eco Church Award acknowledging how we care for the earth as a key part of our Christian faith.



St. Margaret's modest sized building is most suitable for our small congregation. The regular congregation numbers about 18. However, on some occasions, Harvest, Easter or the Carol Service etc., we are bursting at the seams. We are a thriving, active Church with many events taking place throughout the year. Our PCC is keen, with several younger members, striving to move our church forward. We have our own Facebook page which we use to keep in touch with our local community and friends further afield. Our congregation is open and receptive to new ideas, patterns of service and ways of doing things. We are able, organized, prepared to take on various roles within the church, and there are leaders of worship amongst our congregation.



We are a cohesive, cheerful body, informal, yet respectful of tradition. We strive to offer kindness and concern amongst ourselves, and ensure visitors are warmly welcomed. The support and leadership for special services at Easter, Christmas etc. is good. A small team from our congregation lead a DIY service once a month. This service generally is based on Iona Liturgy. Many members of the congregation have been involved in courses over the past couple of years including Leader's course, Alpha, Prayer course, Lent and Advent courses. Home Communion training, Bible study, and more,





As a church we give a regular monthly donation to support mission work in Moldova through 'Operation Mobilisation', taking the gospel out into villages working mainly with children and young people, through play, craft, Bible storytelling and songs. We also support our local food bank with a donation box in church and give generously to other charities throughout the year.



We see this as an exciting opportunity for a priest who would like to:

- work with us to grow our church within and as part of the community.
- be a spiritual guide to our dispersed, rural community and who will be a visual presence in the life of our community and schools;
- encourage all ages in their worship, ministry and service, and who is able to undertake thoughtful and prayerful worship and preaching.
- maintain and develop the gift of our lay ministry which has grown over the last few years.
- encourage us in our outreach within the community
- communicate with those in our community, by developing links with all families.
- lead worship which is uplifting, spiritual, exciting, informal and informative.
- continue to encourage/develop our spiritual growth in the body of Christ for the benefit of the whole benefice.





Snead is one of the smallest parishes in Wales. The small historical church is in an idyllic rural setting, the location of a 12th century Augustinian Priory. The Church was built on a raised walled churchyard close to the River Camlad, which here forms the border between England and Wales.

Nowadays the building is open daily for visitors. Situated away from the A489 main road between Lydham and Churchstoke, a small grassy parking place on private land serves as a car park, and the layby on the main road at the top of the access lane can be used for parking. A hedged-lined grass path leads across a farm's field to the church.

The building was restored in 1998 and in 2019 a new drainage system around the perimeter of the church was completed. Repairs are currently needed to the roof, the floor in the nave, the south east window and corner wall, where an interior scaffolding support was erected in 2022.

The hamlet of Snead contains agricultural land, scattered household dwellings and some businesses. There are two poultry farms, a Holiday home and Caravan Park, a Furniture Centre, a Wood-turning supplier and Farm Machinery Workshop.

The church has a churchwarden and a PCC with just 13 electoral roll members. Our modest income comes from regular payments from a small number of people, visitors and from occasional special services and events. This year a digital giving device was installed to encourage visitors to make more donations. The small churchyard is cared for by the churchwarden, her family and one PCC member. The drainage ditch surrounding the churchyard has been kept clear by extra volunteers with Shropshire's 'Wild Team' over recent years. The path hedge was recently pleached by a team from the Caring for God's Acre charity .

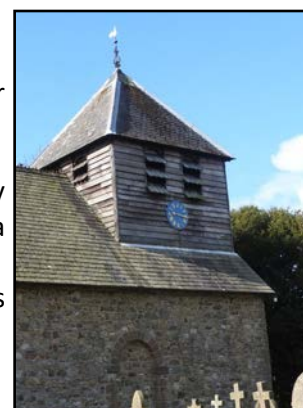


We aim to continue using the church as a place of worship. Efforts will continue to raise the profile of the church through our Facebook page 'Snead Church, Powys', through ongoing membership of Shropshire Churches Tourism Group and the 'Small Pilgrim Places' Network. The church is visited frequently by holiday makers, local visitors and walkers and is well signed at the entrance which attracts passers-by. Special events such as in 2022 a Story-Telling Tea Party through a Facebook Community project and 2023 'Earth Day' have proven to be worthwhile. Short lay-led Morning and Evening special themed prayer services have been held and appreciated. Traditional services, such as Harvest Festival have continued successfully. Other services unique to Snead, such as a celebration of Twelfth Night and Churchyard Celebratory services have been held. We hope that in the future more people will continue to discover Snead Church and enjoy its atmosphere of prayerfulness and peace. We recognise the need to look for additional ways of fund-raising and becoming more sustainable and welcome being part of a Benefice which has plans for increased mutual co-operation and bringing together all nine parishes to extend Ministry, membership and giving in an innovative way.





The church, which dates back to Norman times, lies in the heart of the village of Wentnor. It was restored in 1866 and has immense charm, with individual, locally made, multi-coloured kneelers that characterise every pew. Of the many visitors, virtually all, comment on the beauty and tranquility of this unique place of worship, which is in a good state of repair. It seats around 100.



Recently we restored the church clock by doing a lot of fundraising and applying for grants.

The total parish population is estimated at 327. The average age is higher than many would like, with only a few younger families in the community. The local economy is a mix of hill farming and local businesses which in many cases operate from home. Recent investment grants from Shropshire Council have assisted many households with improved broadband service. However, the principal character of this rural locality remains broadly unchanged adding to its general attractiveness.



The village of Wentnor is served by a village store with 'outreach' post office and two pubs.

This congregation is no different to many others, in having a small group of regular worshippers, in our case averaging eight in number. Historically, worship has largely been traditional in nature, however, more recently the Common Worship version of the Eucharist

(in preference to any new Patterns of Worship i.e. Evangelical) have gained in popularity with the encouragement of the previous incumbents and lay readers. Over the past year we have had a BCP Evensong Service which people from around the Benefice and beyond like travelling to. Importantly, the congregation positively supports worship in the church and has an active core of helpers with cleaning and flower arranging. We hold an annual harvest supper and have previously held a well attended and successful Flower Festival

Our Vision for Growth

The heart and soul of our community is generously minded and willing to provide active support to the new incumbent, and to assist with lay worship to preach and disseminate the Word of God. We look for a person who understands the challenges facing local people of all ages who will facilitate action to deal with these and encourage us in our outreach within the community.



Notes from the Vacancy Consultation Meeting

In the community

1 What are the three things people in your community value most about living here?

- Friendship
- Openminded and welcoming
- The environment
- Good services
- Community spirit
- Good access to Birmingham and other cities
- Less stressful for people moving in
- Good schools
- Safety

2 What are the three main concerns/anxieties of people living in your community?

- Isolation
- Transport links
- Distances to travel, especially for young people to go to College
- Age of community
- Cost of living
- Health provision
- Not back to pre-Covid levels of activity
- Provision for mental health
- Deterioration of infrastructure
- Closures

The church

1. Which aspects of your current worship and church life might attract a newcomer to join the church?

- Relaxed worship
- Lay-led services
- Outdoor worship
- Special services
- Variety of worship
- Open door - encourages people to come in
- Modern songs
- Spirituality and prayerfulness
- Churchyards

2. What might put them off?

- Tiny congregations
- Transport
- Age of congregations
- Boring services
- Uncomfortable pews
- Lack of familiarity with what happens in worship
- Lack of facilities - loos, kitchens etc.
- Lots of other activities
- Timing of services.
- Cold

What would you say is the single biggest challenge facing your church?

- Not reaching out to people
- Being self-congratulatory
- Lack of belief in society
- Getting in people and money

First, think about things that are already happening/under way in your parish which reflect one of the first two priorities

- Different styles of worship
- Using village halls etc.
- Bible classes
- Prayer groups (three held regularly at the moment)
- Benefice services (currently held on fifth Sundays)
- Alpha
- Confirmation (annual service)
- Open air worship
- Ministry support group
- Concerts
- Fun days
- Benefice administrator

Second, share ideas about ways in which these priority areas can be further developed over the coming years

- Holding fewer services and using days other than Sundays
- Working together as a benefice
- Develop lay-led services
- New prayer group
- Looking at potential uses of churches
- Have the choir sing around the churches
- Involvement with the community
- Communicate
- Invite
- Pray

Third, think about the character, gifts, and experiences a clergy person would need in order to lead the people of God in the parishes in taking forward the mission of God in the parishes.

- Mission-minded
- Able to work with all ages
- Approachable
- Down-to-earth
- Superman/woman
- Good preacher
- Ability to delegate, communicate and encourage
- Energy
- Community person
- Experience of multi-parish benefices