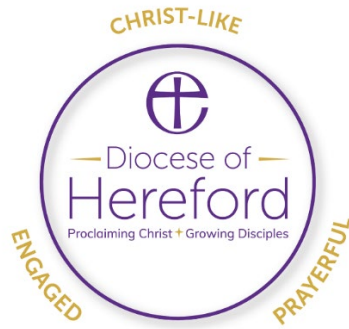




The Ashfords Benefice

South Shropshire

Priest-in-Charge
(Full time)

Benefice Profile
and
Statement of Needs



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A Message from Bishop Richard

Thank you for your interest in this post and in the Diocese of Hereford.

The Diocese of Hereford is the smallest in the Church of England in terms of population, and we believe that our parishes are at the heart of diocesan life. We are committed to supporting local ministry and enabling ministers to thrive. Being a small diocese means we place a high value on relationships. While we offer proper structures - such as Ministerial Development Review (MDR), and access to confidential wellbeing support including accompaniment and counselling - we also know that informal support is just as important. The accessibility of senior staff and a rich diocesan social life contribute significantly to the sense of community here. I also have access to a discretionary fund to provide emergency financial support when needed.

Our Benefices are diverse - socially, economically, and theologically. We are fortunate not to experience the kind of aggressive partisanship found in some other places. On *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF), I have always affirmed that clergy will be supported to act according to their conscience, within the proper order of the Church.

We have a diocesan strategy, but it is intentionally light-touch. Our purpose is core values - Christlikeness, prayerfulness, and engagement. These values have been explored in diocesan-wide 'Years of Prayer, Discipleship, and Engagement,' but their local expression is left to the discernment of each parish. In areas where there is limited relational connection - particularly with young people - we are working alongside the national church on creative outreach initiatives. Thanks to our total return accounting policy, we are also able to fund innovative local projects.

I hope you will find the Diocese of Hereford to be a happy, supportive, and enriching place in which to live and minister. I look forward to receiving your application.

Yours in faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ Richard'.

The Rt Revd Richard Jackson
Bishop of Hereford



LIFE AS A MEMBER OF THE CLERGY IN THE DIOCESE OF HEREFORD

As you will read, 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.

We are small enough (in terms of numbers) that clergy can get to know one another and the diocesan staff quite easily.

In the Diocese of Hereford, we want to appoint and work with clergy who are excited by the demanding and exciting common task of “**Proclaiming Christ and Growing Disciples**”. Our Diocesan Values encourage all of our church members become more **Prayerful**, more **Christ-like** and more **Engaged** with God's mission in the wider community.

This means that we seek church leaders committed to equipping and releasing the whole people of God, empowering them according to their unique gifts, inspired by the vision in Ephesians 4. These leaders will inspire and enable others to actively participate in God's mission locally, focusing on growing leaders and developing teams rather than doing everything themselves - a collaborative approach often called Oversight Ministry.

Recognising that this model can be challenging, we provide comprehensive training and support through Ministry Development opportunities and the Accompanying programme - a mentoring scheme for all clergy new in post, whether this is their first role post-curacy or a new appointment.

The Accompanying programme pairs each new incumbent/priest-in-charge with an experienced priest who serves not only as a mentor but also collaborates closely with the minister and their Parochial Church Councils (PCCs). Together, they discern how God is guiding them to fulfil the plans and hopes outlined in the parish profile.

Clergy who have participated in the Accompanying programme have praised it as “one of the strengths of the welcome offered by Hereford Diocese.” They highlight how it creates a safe space where clergy can nurture one another, share knowledge, and build supportive relationships marked by good humour and growing trust. Participants also value the programme's focus on relevant topics that address the challenges of adapting to new responsibilities. Crucially, it offers space for reflection on God's vision for the Benefice, helping clergy deepen their understanding and commitment as they settle into their roles.

OUR DIOCESE - THE FACTS AND FIGURES

Our worshipping community is made up of people of all ages and backgrounds. We are responsible for 406 churches, 12 Deaneries, 86 Benefices, and 344 parishes, serving approximately 326,000 people - we are the Church of England in Herefordshire, south Shropshire, and parts of Monmouthshire, Powys, and Worcestershire. We were founded in 676 AD and cover roughly 1,650 square miles, with many of our church buildings of historical importance.

Nearly 12,000 children attend one of our 78 schools and academies, although 40% of these schools have fewer than 100 pupils; there are more pupils in our C of E schools than regular attendees at Sunday services. In 2022, we maintained over 110 properties across the Diocese which are occupied mainly by our stipendiary clergy and curates. We have the fewest stipendiary ministers but the highest clergy level per person simply because we're a rural diocese.

SUMMARY FROM THE RURAL DEAN

The Deanery fills the south-eastern corner of the county of Shropshire, bordering with Worcestershire, and then its southern flank runs along the border with Herefordshire, which is the border between the two Hereford diocesan archdeaconries, and then extends across the A49, which is the axial road down the north-south spine of the Diocese. Geographically and geologically it is dominated by the mass of the Titterstone Clee (533m). There is a subsidiary A road running east-west from Bewdley to Ludlow.

Settlement is concentrated in three towns of diminishing size on the edge of the Deanery. Ludlow is the historic capital of the March of Wales with a fine castle and large parish church. The conservation area is a tourist attraction and home to many independent businesses. The other half of the town, literally across the tracks is a good place but with a history of social problems. Tenbury at the southern point is a sturdy market town, but its life has been recently plagued by a set of disastrous floods. Cleobury Mortimer is a smaller market town, historically on the edge of the old East Shropshire coalfield and with a history of light industry. The three towns are all benefices and have secondary schools and other facilities. The fourth biggest settlement is Clee Hill village itself, which has an industrial and farming history – the hill is said to be in continuous industrial use since the Bronze Age. Clee Hill has sometimes perhaps lacked the missional and pastoral attention it has deserved. The remaining three entirely rural benefices, are the Corvedale to the north, Bromfield along the A49 north of Ludlow, and the Ashfords group flowing from the summit of the Clee down to the A49 south of Ludlow.

Our villages differ widely in nature, some are essentially commuter or retirement settlements, some are still preponderantly agricultural. There is a mixture of wealth and (sometimes hidden) rural poverty. Through the whole area the Church of England is still very prevalent in communities, partly through schools but also through high attendance at seasonal festivals, and demand for pastoral offices. By and large our ministry is welcomed and appreciated. It is enabled by the hard work of many lay people.

Deanery Synod is a friendly group that sees its role principally as one of mutual support and information sharing. Chapter and Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committees have been active sources of strategy, support and fellowship, especially for clergy. The Deanery is adaptive and imaginative, conscious that its ministry is exercised in an environment which looks rather like an older England, but really isn't. It is an exciting place.

Rev. Ashley Buck
Rural Dean

Profile of the Post

Introduction

Our Benefice is a family of five churches '*united in Christ for the service of all God's people*'. That is our prayer, our duty, and our joy.

The post of Priest-in-Charge of this Benefice has become vacant following the retirement of the previous Rector.

We are seeking a Priest-in-Charge rather than a Rector as consultation is underway currently to move one parish, which up to now has been part of the Ashfords Benefice, into the neighbouring Ludlow Benefice. That parish has therefore not been included in this profile.

It may also be possible that, at some point in the future, we shall consult about moving one parish from another Benefice in the Deanery into the Ashfords Benefice, but those discussions have not yet formally begun. Therefore the right of presentation has been suspended in order that the necessary legal processes and consultations around pastoral re-organisation may take place. The pastoral re-organisation around moving a parish out of the Ashfords Benefice may not be complete by the time the new Priest-in-Charge is appointed but is well under way.

The new Priest-in-Charge will care for the five rural parishes that comprise the Ashfords Benefice; namely Ashford Carbonel, Ashford Bowdler, Caynham, Knowbury, and Richard's Castle. They are all within a four-mile radius of the historic market town of Ludlow, grouped together on the southern side of the town.

The new Priest-in-Charge will arrive at a time of continuing evolution in the life of the Ashfords Benefice when we are seeking ways of working together on shared mission and witness in the area it covers, and to find new ways of expressing our unity and diversity.

The new Priest-in-Charge will chair each of the five PCCs.

The Priest-in-Charge will also be an *ex officio* governor of Bishop Hooper CE VA Primary School, which is in Ashford Carbonel, and will be involved in the life of the school.

The Priest-in-Charge's home will be The Rectory (formerly The Vicarage), Ashford Carbonel. This is an attractive, modern, four-bedroomed house surrounded by manageable gardens with fine views over the surrounding countryside. It has recently undergone comprehensive upgrading and repainting.



The Rectory in Donkey Lane, Ashford Carbonel

The Benefice

The Deanery

The Benefice belongs to Ludlow Deanery within the Archdeaconry of Ludlow. The Archdeacon is The Venerable Dr. Fiona Gibson. Ludlow Deanery, under the Rural Dean Prebendary Ashley Buck, consists of the Benefices of Ashfords, Bromfield, Cleobury, Corvedale, Ludlow and Tenbury.

The Deanery has established a Mission Action Plan aimed at working together to achieve the three key aims of the Diocese: to grow numerical and spiritual discipleship; to work for the common good; and to re-imagine patterns of ministry. Practically, the Deanery is engaged in working with relatively disadvantaged groups, both rural and market town, and deploying clergy and lay workers effectively at points of contact with the community.

Churchmanship and patterns of worship

Churchmanship is broad church across the Benefice, although historically there have been some differences in tradition in the village parishes. The Eucharist is the heart of our worshipping life, and the blessed sacrament is reserved in St. Mary Magdalene, Ashford Carbonel. Both BCP and Common Worship rites are used, together with a variety of services of the word, again using both traditional and modern forms. Parishes are open to developing and exploring means of worship that speak to the current generation, including the unchurched.

Ministry in the community

The Benefice has formal responsibility for one Church of England school, namely Bishop Hooper CE VA Primary School, which serves the villages of Ashford Bowdler, Ashford Carbonel and Caynham. We enjoy close links with this school through governorships, visiting, and leading assemblies and other acts of worship. The last Rector was closely involved in leading assemblies and worship.

*Right: Bishop Hooper Primary School
built on the edge of Ashford Carbonel village*



Clergy and laity from Ashfords Benefice go to Ludlow Hospital and a number of care and nursing homes in the area through visiting, leading worship, and administering Holy Communion.

The Benefice as a community

The Ashfords Benefice churches continue to look enthusiastically at what is needed to enable us to function more effectively as a team; in particular, exploring areas in which we can co-operate more closely, such as sharing worship and festival events, working with children, collaborating on projects, developing mission action plans, setting up Bible study and teaching groups, helping each other out in times of need, and generating income. We are also aware of the need to continue communicating effectively across the Benefice. For a list of current and proposed shared initiatives, please see Appendix A.

Other community involvement

Members of the various congregations give much time and energy to many of the Christian and secular activities going on in their own or nearby communities.

The Clergy

The new Priest-in-Charge would be a person committed to regular public prayer and to engage actively with the work of the Deanery Chapter and Synod.

Retired clergy

There are a good number of local retired clergy who assist regularly in leading Sunday worship in the Benefice's churches, and sometimes also with occasional offices.

Inclusive Church

Some of our PCCs and lay leaders have subscribed to the 'Inclusive Church' declaration, and some PCCs would like their churches to be available to offer the Prayers of Love and Faith. Others have not yet formally considered the question. It would be important for us that our new Priest-in-Charge would be willing to allow the Prayers of Love and Faith to be used in those churches where the PCC would like them to be offered, even if that meant inviting another minister to take the services where the PLF were to be used. We would also want our Priest-in-Charge to work positively with all of us across a spectrum of views on Living in Love and Faith.

Lay Leaders of Worship

There are several Lay Leaders of Worship who take services in the Benefice's churches.

Staff

The Ashfords Benefice's administrator handles bookings for occasional offices, distribution of rotas and weekly pew-sheets, and the administration for Benefice meetings.

The Ashfords Benefice Office was formerly in The Rectory at Ashford Carbonel but has been relocated temporarily to Ashford Carbonel Village Hall for three hours each Wednesday with the Administrator working also from her own office.

The current Benefice Treasurer is the Administrator who is overseen by a nominated Churchwarden.

Parishioners

The people of these rural communities, in common with country people everywhere, are generally resourceful and resilient, and believe in the maxim that "the Lord will help those who help themselves". Where there is a clear need for self-reliance, they are proactive and will get on with the job as best they can, instead of waiting passively in the hope that help will arrive from somewhere. Agricultural life is tough in the 21st Century, with isolation, bureaucracy and financial pressures creating a high risk of depression and suicide. Many village inhabitants come from this background and understand the importance of both self-help and a supportive community, although the demographic is constantly changing and we must embrace this change.

A high proportion of parishioners are over retirement age, as are nearly all PCC members. Accordingly, although there may be ample enthusiasm for church schemes, projects and initiatives, there is often the inevitable problem of having enough people with time, energy, and ability to carry them through.

The parishioners favour communication in good, plain English, and are largely unenthusiastic about jargon!

Profiles of the Parishes

Ashford Bowdler

Ashford Bowdler is the smallest parish in the Benefice, the village having 20 dwellings with another 15 farms, houses and cottages on the West side of the busy A49. The adult population of 58 ranges in age from 18 – 87 together with a small number of teenagers under voting age. There are 31 on the current church roll.



The main village is a cul-de-sac ending at St. Andrew's Church, the only communal building. The Grade II* listed church stands on the west bank of the River Teme and is a simple and tranquil building dating back to late Norman times. Early in the 20th Century the east wall collapsed into the river Teme and, when a similar fate was threatened at the beginning of this century, this very small community sourced almost £300,000 in grants and raised just over £45,000 (over a period of six years) in order to stabilise the river bank and carry out other essential repairs.

Community facilities are limited to visits from a mobile shop, with the occasional welcome appearance of a pop-up pub beside the church. Social and fundraising activities include coffee mornings, book club, pop-up Brunch, Flower Festivals, and parties to celebrate occasions of National importance, most recently the Coronation and VE Day.

Worship is usually BCP and a warm welcome is extended to those from other parishes who come because they prefer this form of service. We have services on the second, third, and fourth Sundays of the month: Evensong 6.30pm; Holy Communion 11.15am; and Matins at 11.15am. Recent average attendance is around 10 per service. Our well-attended special services include Compline on Good Friday, Harvest Festival, Patronal, and Carol Services.



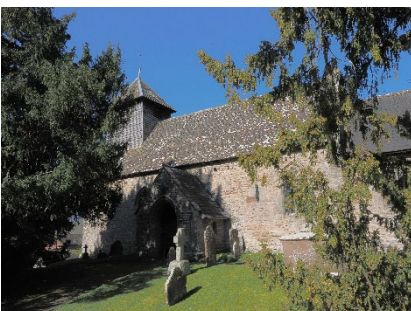
Ashford Carbonel

The parish of Ashford Carbonel comprises a number of small communities spread over a one-mile radius, and a larger village; in total around 300 people. There are a number of arable and livestock farms in the parish. At one time a village of mainly retired people we now have many families with young children or grandchildren.

Ashford Carbonel is a conservation village with no through roads, which adds to its attraction, and it is also fortunate in having a school, village hall and parish church situated in the village. The village hall is an excellent facility that is very well used by the community; it regularly hosts coffee mornings, afternoon teas, Flicks in the Sticks, Quiz Nights, as well as local clubs, groups and entertainments. The church PCC and the village hall committee work well together and often hold joint fundraising and social events. There are regular visits to the village from the mobile library and mobile Post Office and, in tandem with our social Friday evening 'pop-up' social events, we have visiting food wagons in the village hall car park, such as pizza, burgers, fish and chips, etc.



Above: Community Farm Walk

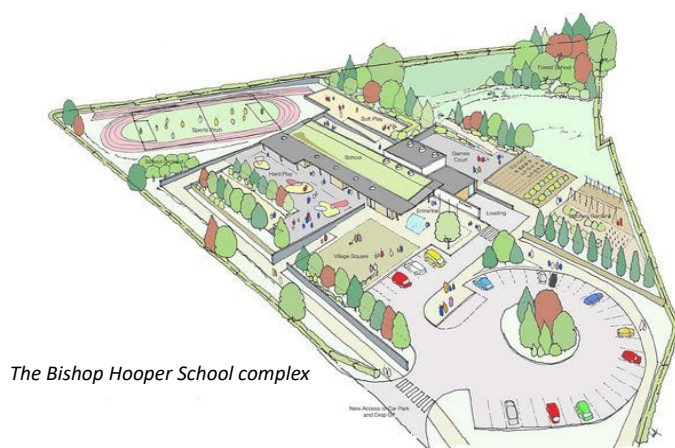


The parish church of St. Mary Magdalene is Grade II* listed and is of Norman origin. It was restored in the Victorian era. It is welcoming and well supported, with attendance ranging from 9 to 90, depending on the type of service. Normally there is a service most Sundays as well as some weekday services of Morning Prayer and Compline. Much restoration has been carried out in recent years and we have an active social committee continually raising funds for the running of the church and also the churchyard. The church also hosts very popular village Music events and is support by the local community regardless of their church attendance. The churchyard is still active with vacant plots for burials and the interment of ashes.

Bishop Hooper CE VA Primary School

Bishop Hooper CE VA Primary School was opened in November 2011, replacing two separate primary schools in Ashford Carbonel and Caynham that amalgamated in 2009. It is now considerably larger than in 2011 having 100 children on the roll together with an additional 30 in the Nursery. As a result of increased numbers, there has been an increase in staff. In part, this has been driven by the requirement to provide 1:1 support for pupils with additional needs. Some of the intake is from Ashford Carbonel and neighbouring parishes within its catchment area, whilst others come from Ludlow.

Recently the school had an excellent Ofsted Report. There is a thriving 'Open The Book' connection with members from the village community. It is hoped the incoming Priest-in-Charge will provide active pastoral and mindfulness support for both staff and pupils.



The Bishop Hooper School complex

Caynham

The village population of about 150 has a good community spirit and is spread across the entire range of ages but with a bias towards the older element. Housing is mainly along the road from Ashford Carbonel to Knowbury. There is no recent new housing. There are several working farms though most residents work outside the village or are retired. There is no pub or shop, but there is a village hall. The village supports a range of leisure groups including a Book Club, Gardening Club, and WI. We have a village website and village newsletter.

The 12th Century parish church of St. Mary is Grade II* listed. The church is welcoming and the churchyard well-maintained. We have parking for about 15 cars in the church carpark with additional parking in 2 adjacent lay-bys. Seating about 100, the church has both pipe and electric organs. It also has the benefit of a Portaloo.

Congregations usually reflect the older age group but, sadly, we no longer have any young families. We have two churchwardens plus four lay members of the PCC. The 2025 electoral roll is 20.



Currently our two main fund raisers are a Strawberry Tea in the Summer and a Christmas Tree Festival at the beginning of Advent culminating in a Christingle service.

Being a Festival Church, we have about 6 services annually, normally at 11.15 a.m. The nature of the services varies. There is an attendance of about 8 at Holy Communion increasing to 30 or more for Festivals. The PCC has approved the use of Prayers of Love and Faith.

Left: Strawberry teas on a Saturday in June

Knowbury

St Paul's Church was consecrated in 1840 and extended in 1881. It is Grade II listed with excellent facilities. Whilst off-road parking is limited and the churchyard nearing capacity, the church itself is spacious and ideal for joint services with neighbouring parishes as well as for festivals, weddings, and other large gatherings. The recent Quinquennial inspection identified several challenges, some of which are being addressed through grant aid. Financial sustainability remains a concern and an ongoing focus for the PCC.



St Paul's operates currently as a Festival Church holding intermittent services throughout the year. It hosts an annual Remembrance Day service (jointly with Caynham) and occasional Benefice services. Regular services are held approximately 8 times a year with average attendance of 14. Festival and special services attract larger congregations. Having a large kitchen and ancillary facilities, it is possible to offer refreshments after services.

Left: Looking towards the West window and the exceptional Triptych

Our church offers a compelling mission opportunity to re-invigorate and rebuild the congregation. After a period of uncertainty, with no churchwardens since 2019 and the church facing potential closure, 2025 has marked a turning point. Two newly-elected and enthusiastic churchwardens are working closely with the small PCC to maintain a visible Christian presence in the parish and ensure the church remains open for worship. The current electoral roll stands at 14.

Knowbury lies on the south-western slopes of Titterstone Clee Hill encompassing a wide area from Farden on the West to Collybrook on the East. The parish enjoys commanding views and is very popular with walkers, especially as the Shropshire Way passes directly by the church with many walkers pausing at the church for a moment of reflection or prayer. The church facilities are open to all and welcomed by many.

Knowbury Memorial Hall is a hub of community life and hosts many groups including dance classes, table tennis, a monthly Quiz, and many other social events. In addition, the local pub the 'Bennets End', has reopened recently with the new proprietors keen to encourage involvement with the church.

The village has approximately 250 properties with the majority occupied by those in the retired age-group; however, the demographic is changing as new families are moving in encouraged by the advent of new affordable housing. Newcomers are welcomed warmly; as will be our new Priest-in-Charge.

Richard's Castle

The population of this parish, which straddles the Shropshire/Herefordshire county boundary, is approximately 670 with approximately 320 dwellings. In addition to the main village there are several local hamlets which make up the village, so generating a community spirit is difficult. The main cluster of housing is around the local pub, 'The Castle Inn'. There is an excellent village hall, which hosts a wide variety of activities as well as attracting outside bookings. The village hall is in use every day; often several times a day. There is no shop or school. Children in the village attend schools in Orleton, Ludlow, Wigmore and Tenbury Wells. There is a local, six times a day bus service, Monday to Friday, to both Ludlow and Leominster.



The church regularly contributes to the monthly village magazine and approximately 250 copies are delivered in the village. A 'welcome pack' is delivered to anyone moving into Richards Castle and this includes a welcome card from the church. Because the village is split between Shropshire and Herefordshire there are two civil Parish Councils who meet bi-monthly.

The ratio of employed/retired parishioners is delicately balanced, as long-time inhabitants have aged and stayed put. There are still several active farms in the parish. Currently the leisure activities in the village include a weekly coffee shop, monthly pub and grub night aimed at families, a Big Breakfast morning held occasionally on Sundays, U3A group, The Shire Choir, Bridge Club, and numerous fitness clubs, all of which are held in the village hall. There are no regular activities in the village for children, but the renowned annual Village Soap Box Derby is a great family day out. It raises thousands of pounds for charity and the church takes part by running a stall for children at the event.



The parish church of All Saints (1892) is a Grade I listed Norman Shaw designed building attracting many visitors. It has seating for approximately 160, a well-appointed kitchen, and toilet facilities. There is an excellent pipe organ and electric Clavinova piano. The large tarmac car park accommodates 22 cars with additional space in an adjacent lay-by. Currently there are 49 on the new electoral roll. Average attendance at services throughout last year was 36.

All Saints was built to replace the mediaeval parish church of Saint Bartholomew. Standing at the top of Castle Road, this church is redundant and in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Services continue to be held twice a year during the summer months and these are well attended by both locals and visitors.

Left: Agape Supper in the South Aisle

Following consultation, the PCC decided in 2020 it could no longer keep All Saints open due to financial considerations, dwindling congregations, and lack of resources. The PCC was set to resign with plans put in place to close this large and beautiful Arts and Crafts church. However, two village worshippers came forward and, with strong support from the community, submitted plans to the Diocese to make All Saints a Festival church. With new vision, strategies were put in place, including a realistic financial budget. The new way forward was accepted and supported fully by the Diocese. New churchwardens and PCC Secretary were appointed, together with new PCC members, and Festival church status was adopted in 2021. In the main, our Vision and plans have come to fruition; however, we have been frustrated by diminished clergy support. It is our fervent hope and desire that, with the help of a new priest, we will capitalise on the potential for the parish and Benefice.

The Churches Collectively in the Benefice

All the churches hold Harvest Festivals, Patronal Festivals, and Remembrance Sunday services, and they are all used for secular activities such as concerts and festivals. The church buildings themselves, and their churchyards, are certainly valued by their communities – and not only by those who worship in them.

These parishes collectively offer an excellent quality of life. The area is tranquil and safe. There is a strong sense of family identity across the generations particularly amongst established local families. A very wide range of leisure and sports activities together with organisations for all age groups is available in Ludlow town, about 10 minutes' drive away. There are opportunities for tennis, football, golf, and swimming; there are 'Arts-based' societies and opportunities for further education; several food-related festivals are held annually; and there are several clubs and organisations aimed at the younger generation.

Our parishes enjoy the sense of community that comes from all working together, particularly following the creation of this Benefice in 2017, and during the current interregnum. We are confident this collective relationship will continue to grow and develop for mutual benefit on all fronts.

The Rectory is in the heart of Ashford Carbonel village, and this is something which that village as a whole feels is important.

The excellent Bishop Hooper CE VA Primary School is very close by, so a Priest-in-Charge with a young family should be very well catered for.

The Administrator's remuneration and running costs are met by the Benefice (not the Diocese). Until the start of this vacancy the Ashfords Office was in the Rectory but is currently and temporarily in the Administrator's home and weekly each Wednesday morning in Ashford Carbonel Village Hall. The need for an appropriate long-term office space will need to be addressed once the new Priest-in-Charge is appointed.

Communications

A weekly pew-sheet for the Benefice is prepared and distributed digitally to parish representatives by the Administrator. The individual parishes produce/maintain their own printed/online material:

Ashford Bowdler & Ashford Carbonel

- Joint parish magazine which is also secular
- A Village Hall website
- Facebook page¹, of which we would like to develop and make more use
- Ashford Carbonel has information on ACNY, but not Ashford Bowdler

Caynham

- Internet newsletter
- Section on the village website²
- Information on ACNY

Knowbury

- *Knowbury News* is a joint church and village magazine
- Information on ACNY

Richard's Castle

- The church contributes to the village magazine
- Information on ACNY

All the parishes enjoy good communications within their congregations, with their communities, and the wider world, but are ever open to further improvement and expansion.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Ashford-Carbonel-St-Mary-Magdalene-924264164274292/>

² <http://www.caynham.eclipse.co.uk/church.html>

Statement of Needs

The Nature of the Post

This post offers significant opportunities and challenges to provide leadership in developing the life, ministry, mission and witness of the parishes of the Ashfords Benefice.

Key elements of the role include:

In relation to the Benefice Ministry

- Being the spiritual leader of these five rural parishes, providing pastoral care when and where needed.
- Guiding and teaching the congregations to help them strengthen their faith and come to a better understanding of God and of themselves.
- Guiding and supporting the lay leaders of worship so that they can develop and improve their ministry, and fulfil their potential.
- Working with the PCC members to improve and streamline administration and management of the parishes, strengthen parish finances, and build a secure foundation for the work of the churches.
- Working with the parishes as a Benefice on development of co-operation, collaboration and mutual support for the benefit of all.
- Being an active member of the secular communities in the parishes.
- Encouraging as much joint activity as possible between the churches and their communities, for mutual benefit.
- Inspiring parishioners, individually or collectively, to use their abilities for God's work in church and community; including developing their confidence to carry out that work.
- Inspiring and encouraging new initiatives for evangelism in the parishes, in order to increase congregations, and to increase enthusiastic participation of those congregations in the many aspects of Christian life, including Bible Studies.
- Being open to initiatives brought forward by parishioners.
- Promoting and engaging in ecumenical activities with groups from other denominations in the area, particularly through Churches Together Around Ludlow.
- Making faith in these parishes a joyful experience.

In relation to Bishop Hooper CE VA Primary School

- Being an *ex officio* governor of the school.
- Active participation in the life and work of the school.
- Working with the head teacher and staff on faith-related activities in the school.
- Providing confidential support for parents and staff if/when necessary.

Generally

The Diocese will wish the new Priest-in-Charge to support and promote the Diocesan Shared Priorities.³

The person appointed will have the opportunity to be involved with overseeing other aspects of ministry, according to the candidate's particular experience, skills, enthusiasm and individual vocation.

³ <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/missionprioritiesvalues/>

The Person We Seek

We are open to consider all those who feel that God has called them to lead and serve these parishes, but we trust that the person appointed will possess the following qualities:

- Godliness
- Leadership
- An understanding of and empathy with rural life
- Positive thinking
- Patience
- Determination and ability to solve problems and overcome obstacles – and to help others do so
- Enthusiasm for working as part of a team with laity and other clergy
- Good communication skills in preaching, liturgy and administration
- A sense of humour
- A pastoral heart
- A willingness to join wholeheartedly in the lives of the communities which he/she serves
- A willingness to be part of a broad church, due to the variety in services and congregations, from traditional to informal
- The ability to engage with people of all ages, from toddlers to the old and frail on pastoral visits
- Management skills.

Other factors

Given the rural and dispersed nature of our Benefice and Diocese, the ability to travel quickly and independently on narrow rural roads in all weathers is essential. A driving licence and access to own vehicle is desirable.

Conclusion

This post offers a fine opportunity for the new Priest-in-Charge to exercise a wide-ranging and fulfilling ministry, working together with friendly and supportive colleagues in a beautiful part of the Welsh Marches, among communities who are keen to support their new priest.

Application Process

All applications should be made via Pathways, following the link on the Diocesan website vacancies page or Pathways itself.

If you would like an informal conversation about the role, please contact the EA to the Archdeacon and Assistant Archdeacon of Ludlow, Debbie Venables, on 01588 673571 or via Debbie.Venables@hereford.anglican.org and she will be pleased to arrange that for you.



Appendix A – Shared Initiatives

The following initiatives are either already in place within the Ashfords Benefice, or have been proposed at Benefice meetings as desirable and of interest to some or all of the parishes. In respect of many of those already happening, there is a wish to develop them further. All of them involve a degree of co-operation between the churches and thus will help to forge a closer relationship between the five parishes.

Worship

- Offering a wider range of liturgy; e.g. Compline, Taizé, Contemplative Prayer, Iona
- Benefice services to celebrate patronal festivals
- Special services; e.g. Pets service.

Young People & Families

- Open the Book
- Christingle
- Family Services
- Continuing close involvement with Bishop Hooper CE VA School.

Outreach

- Welcome packs for new residents in some of the parishes
- Carers' services
- Agricultural Year services
- Use of secular venues and spaces; e.g. Community Breakfast
- Secular use of church buildings; e.g. Concerts
- Ministry in sheltered/care/nursing homes and for parishioners in Ludlow Hospital .

Nurturing

- 'Thank You' services:
 - For those who work within the churches
 - For those in our communities who support the churches, even if not worshippers
- Pastoral visiting; to private homes, care/nursing homes, Ludlow Hospital
- Organised lifts/taxis to church, and to hospital, etc.
- Most of the churches are collection points for Ludlow Food Bank, which is overseen by Ludlow Baptist Church.

Enjoying

- Social events and entertainments – including fund-raising events
- Pop-up Pub (at Ashford Bowdler)
- Christmas Tree Festival, Flower Festivals, etc.

Appendix B – Ashfords Benefice people in their communities

Many Ashfords Benefice people do a lot to help individuals and organisations in the local communities. This is a summary of parishioners' involvement. Naturally the opportunities available in some parishes are much greater than in others.

Ashford Bowdler

- A variety of charities are supported
- Strong parish-wide volunteer culture.

Ashford Carbonel

- A variety of charities are supported
- Ludlow Hospital League of Friends
- Open the Book
- Parish Councillors
- School Governor
- Village Hall – Trustees and committee members
- Women's Institute officers.

Caynham

- Footpaths Officer - volunteer
- Parish Councillor
- Women's Institute President.

Knowbury

- A variety of charities are supported
- Ludlow Hospital League of Friends
- Open the Book
- Parish Councillors
- School Governor
- Village Hall – Trustees and committee members
- Women's Institute officers.

Richard's Castle

- Several and various charities are supported including: Richard's Castle Educational Charity, Edward Smith Charity, and Soap Box Derby.