



STATEMENT OF NEEDS

Wye Brooks Benefice

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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 clear: to proclaim Christ and grow disciples. We shape our churches around three 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,



The Rt Revd Richard Jackson
Bishop of Hereford





ABOUT OUR DIOCESE

Our worshipping community is made up of people of all ages and backgrounds. We are responsible for 407 churches, 12 Deaneries, 86 Benefices, and 344 parishes - 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. Serving 326,000 people, we are part of the Church of England, which itself is part of the wider Anglican Communion.

We are blessed to be in such a beautiful part of the country, where produce is grown, and livestock reared. We are also home to some internationally renowned brands (Tyrrells, Bulmers, Heineken, Avara and Westons Cider) and many small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, tourism is an essential part of our local economies. However, holidaymakers do not dominate, as accommodation and attractions are spread across a wide geographical area. Our diocese often has a lasting impact, and many past visitors return to settle here during retirement. We have strong connections to the military in the diocese, and we are supporters of the Armed Forces Covenant.

There's something very special about the Diocese of Hereford. God is clearly at work in our parishes. Congregations may often be very small, but they are deeply embedded in their contexts and draw on the support of people of goodwill in the parishes. Rural isolation is a reality, with the challenges that brings, but the church is often at the forefront of initiatives to bring people together – all in the name of Jesus. We live out the paradox that places and people who seem small, hidden, and lonely are often the places where God is at work. We show that doing the 'old things' well alongside new initiatives is a key to growth, and that patient endurance over the long term often bears fruit. Above all, the churches in our diocese are rather good at 'getting on with it.' We are proud that we are usually able to disagree well with one another, not allowing our differences to intrude on our three core values and our desire to be people who seek faithfully to love our God and one another and to proclaim the good news of Christ not just in our words but also in our actions towards those in our communities.

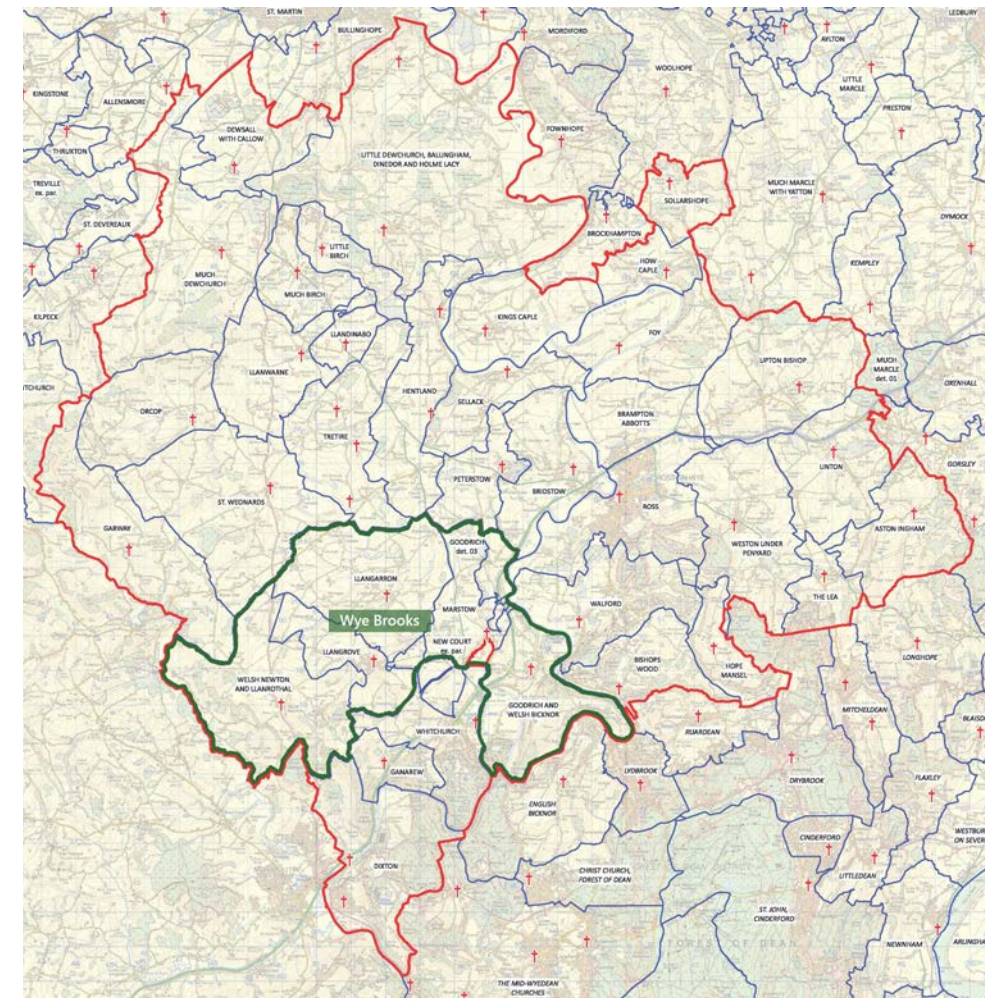
SUMMARY FROM THE RURAL DEAN

Wye Brooks Group Benefice is one of the eight benefices which make up the Deanery of Ross and Archenfield. The benefices include 36 churches supporting a total population of around 30,000 spread across no less than 135 square miles.

We have a Chapter which meets regularly and have welcomed a number of new clergy over the last few years as others have retired or moved on.

The Deanery Leadership Team of Rural Dean, Treasurer and Secretary meets with Chapter to prepare the agenda for Deanery gatherings which supports the PCC Secretaries, Treasurers and Ministers and parishioners across the Deanery. The Deanery gathering meets three times a year. We invite relevant speakers and discuss matters pertinent to all; we share 'good news' and advice for queries; we pass subjects on to the Diocesan Synod; we encourage mutual relationship and support between the churches and the benefices, valuing their different strengths and traditions.

We have recently produced a Deanery Pastoral Plan and are exploring ways to take this to the next stage.



The Deanery will provide a warm and supportive welcome to the new incumbent of the Wye Brooks Group Benefice, and we look forward to welcoming you to our area soon.

OUR BENEFICE

We are a group of five warm welcoming parishes scattered over a beautiful part of rural Herefordshire, comprising several small, village communities.

The benefice comprises the parishes of St. Giles Goodrich, St. Deinst Llangarron, Christ Church Llangrove, St. Matthew Marstow and St. Mary Welsh Newton with St. John the Baptist Llanrothal.

We are located in rural Herefordshire close to the Welsh border, it is an area of outstanding natural beauty, full of history with good access to transport networks connecting us with Wales and to larger towns and cities in the West Midlands and South West.

Each parish has provided details of the current situation, historical aspects of the buildings and details of worship, service, opportunities for development and financial statements.

In a rural diocese, identity is deeply rooted in the individual places and people of local communities.



PARISH OF GOODRICH AND WELSH BICKNOR



COMMUNITY AND HISTORY

The village of Goodrich is set in the beautiful Wye Valley. It is home to around 550 residents, who range from young families to a larger group of retired and semi-retired people. Goodrich is a well-established village with many community facilities and activities, including [cricket](#) and [tennis](#) clubs, two [public houses](#) and two cafes. It has a two-hourly bus service to both Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth. Welsh Bicknor is a sparsely populated neighbouring hamlet with its church closed some years ago, now in private ownership, the subject of recent extensive renovation.

The most obvious feature of the village (apart from the church!) is the [castle](#), a tourist attraction of international importance. St Giles' Church, which dates from the 13th century, served the people who worked for the castle. Today, many visitors to the castle find their way to the church as well. Also significant are the 14th Century [Flanesford Priory](#), a former Augustinian monastery, now run as a self-catering accommodation business and café, as well as several notable historic homes in private ownership.

The parish covers a rural area within the Kerne Bridge Ward in South Herefordshire, to the south of the market town of Ross-on-Wye. It borders Gloucestershire and the Forest of Dean, along its eastern edge.

Goodrich Church of England Primary School, together with its nursery, Goldcrests, has over 140 children on roll and over 20 staff members. It is a thriving school with excellent parent and pupil feedback and good recent reports including a recent [SIAMS report](#). There is lots of interaction between the school, the Church and the village. Pupils make regular visits to St. Giles Church, Collective Worship and 'Open the Book' are delivered in school by Ministers and a lay team each month. Secondary age children mostly attend [John Kyrle High School](#) in Ross on Wye. There are also private sector [boys and girls schools](#) in Monmouth.

WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

There are currently 25 people on The Electoral Roll. The church building has many interesting features and is an essential tool for mission both to tourists and our neighbours. Generally, the building is in good repair and our most recent Quinquennial inspection highlighted only a very few minor items all of which have been addressed or are in hand. We have some plans, which we are currently working through, to reorder parts of the church to provide kitchen and hospitality areas and are looking into the possibility of working together with the adjoining community garden to share toilet facilities. Churchyard maintenance, church cleaning and flower arranging are undertaken by a band of volunteers. Our churchyard is open to new burials and interments although space is becoming limited. We feel it is important that we remain available for burial to our community and have passed a resolution to permit the re-use of ancient graves within Diocesan guidelines. We work hard to maintain a good relationship with our local Funeral Directors.

We currently have two services each month, on the second and fourth Sundays. Both are services of Holy Communion following Common Worship, conducted by robed clergy. Average attendance is 15. We have a strong and valued musical tradition with an excellent organ and equally excellent organist. Additionally, we have a monthly service of Compline using traditional language and, should resources permit it, would like to add one further service to our monthly pattern, preferably using the Book of Common Prayer.



OCCASIONAL OFFICES

	2025 (to August)	2024	2023
Baptism	3	5	0
Weddings	1	1	3
Funerals	3	1	1

A number of significant church services each year draw in larger congregations. Average attendance at our Christmas Carol Service is over 50, Easter Sunday 35, Harvest 40, Remembrance 40, Patronal Evensong 60. We hold services in conjunction with our Church school each year at Easter and Christmas with average attendance from parents and families of 50. The church holds on average two fundraising / social events each year. Recent examples include a murder mystery evening, musical concerts and theatre events.



ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

Our PCC has 6 members and meets 4 times a year. For 2025 our Parish Offer is £8,000. In 2024 our income was £19,111 and expenditure £17,494. We have 15 regular givers through the Parish Giving Scheme.

MINISTERS

There are 3 Associate Ministers in the Benefice, each of whom works across the parishes where required and as available. One of these lives in the parish, whose ministry is primarily focused on St Giles, but he also leads services across the Benefice when possible and Collective Worship at our Church school.

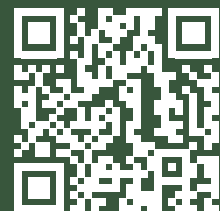
OPPORTUNITIES

The congregation at St Giles connects with our community and makes a difference within it. We have a good relationship with the excellent modernised village hall and with many of the clubs and societies which meet there as well as with the other interwoven networks and groups that characterise village life. We have a mission plan characterised by three essential elements. We have few young people in our Sunday worship, so we have to reach the next generation by another route. Goodrich Church of England School has good and developing links with St Giles, and the children participate in assemblies, services, visits to the church and events but also using facilities offered by the school. We are developing our link with the school through the church festivals—for example, by displaying the children’s seasonal artwork and their prayers. We have a dedicated children’s area in St Giles church for all visiting children. Children from Goodrich school visit the church yard to study the natural environment. We see ever deeper engagement with the school as a key factor in our missional growth. Our active role in village life makes it possible to share our spiritual inheritance with our neighbours. St Giles offers support in many different ways but at its heart is a desire to engage with the local community in whichever way we can. St Giles provides a peaceful haven in times of need, a more formal setting for major family events, a venue for fund raising, a collection point for the local food bank, a source for help and advice to parishioners, and a central point for village life. By increasing St Giles’ presence within the community, we hope to increase the size of the congregation and become an even more integral part of parishioners’ lives. Just as the church building is geographically central to the village so we see our role missionally as bringing the whole village together. The third element to our mission plan is around our worship, its style and emphasis.

A reverence for sacrament is important to us, as is our ecumenism and inclusiveness. Among our regular congregation we have a significant number of Roman Catholic worshippers who, along with others, value the ‘style’ of St Giles. We feel it is important to maintain a distinctiveness in our worship which we know is valued by those who attend. We have seen some signs of growth as a result of a reputation we are keen to see more widely known. The PCC is open to the blessing of same sex marriages and is a member of *Inclusive Church*. We are also listed as a church within *The Welcome Directory*, declaring ourselves open to the welcome of prison leavers to our congregation.



PARISH OF LLANGARRON



COMMUNITY AND HISTORY

Llangarron is a large parish covering about 5,400 acres in the heart of scenic rolling countryside. The settlements within the parish boundaries are scattered but with strong established links to the Village Hall and the Garron Centre which enable the community to be drawn together at regular times throughout the year. The church stands at the heart of the parish, a network of lines radiating out from it in all directions, creating a network that since time immemorial draw people in from every part.

Just over one thousand people call the parish of Llangarron home. This sounds crowded for such a rural community but within the parish there are several townships that make up the greater part, principal of which are Llangarron, Llangrove and Llancloudy. Despite the names, the parish lies within England but has strong historic connections with Wales. Three quarters of residents live in a family home made up of at least two people and most of the people who live alone are aged over 65 years. Over 70% of the housing in the parish is detached, either owned outright or with a mortgage in place. The style of housing varies enormously, from 2-bedroom cottages up to 10-bedroomed mansions. Most households are therefore not deprived in any dimension although the 2021 census did identify that 34% were deprived in terms of either overcrowding, having to share a property, or not enjoying the comfort afforded by central heating. Given its rural nature it's not surprising that 44% of the workforce use their home as their office. Those who do travel to work drive no further than a 20km. radius of the parish. Although Llangarron is centred on a network of narrow lanes the A4137 is only a five-minute drive away, leading to easy access onto the A40 and beyond to the M50. Most residents in employment are either professionals or employed in skilled trades work. Those who have retired tend to have enjoyed a professional career. The parish is blessed with opportunities to socialise. Community groups at Llangarron include short mat bowls, yoga, and bellringing. A coffee morning is held on a monthly basis at the [Garron Centre](#). There is a strong environmental ethos in the area. [Archenfield Community Environment Group](#) (ACEG) organises an array of activities throughout the year to encourage residents to value and protect the natural environment from the pressures of climate change. Other occasional events such as music evenings, ceilidhs, a progressive supper, and harvest festival all enable residents to come together. Each September, for nine days, the Garron Centre is used by the county-led '[h.Art](#)' to showcase the talents of local artists. Local children are able to attend a nursery and a [CE primary school](#) at Llangrove. Those aged over eleven years travel by car or bus to either Ross or Monmouth to receive a secondary education. Outside of school there are some activities for younger children to enjoy such as Beavers and Rainbows, but no specific activities are available for older children. However, many local children do enjoy activities organised by the ACEG. Parish Council meetings take place on a monthly basis, predominantly held at Llangarron Village Hall, with the occasional outreach meeting arranged at Llangrove and at Llancloudy. The Council employs a Lengths man to ensure all drains are kept clear, road signs are visible, and assets are kept in good order. The Ward Councillor acts as an essential conduit between the Parish Council and the County Council. Residents are encouraged to attend Parish Council meetings but rarely do so unless concerns arise about a particular planning application or the state of the roads.



WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

At Llangarron, according to the 2021 census, 54 %of residents identify as having Christian beliefs; 39% stating they have no religious beliefs at all. Sadly, these figures bear little reflection on the numbers who attend church services (an average of 10 per service). A communion service takes place on the first Sunday of each month, with a popular contemplative evening service being held on the third Sunday. This variety in style recognises the many facets of faith within our community. The eleven people listed on the electoral roll all attend church on a regular basis. Currently there are just three members of the P.C.C. who’ve served for varying lengths of time. The quest to attract new support is essential, albeit a rather daunting one. However, those who serve on the Council do so wholeheartedly and with a strong commitment to the church and its community. The P.C.C. is indebted to our acting treasurer who has kept the finances in order whilst the search for someone to permanently manage the books continues.

Apart from the P.C.C. there is a small force of volunteers who support the day-to-day care of the church building and churchyard: cleaners; flower arrangers; bell maintenance engineers; grass-cutters; drain cleaners. Once a year the wider community is invited to give the churchyard a tidy up which this year saw 22 people come together. There is a strong sense that everyone is working with one common purpose, to care for this holy site in order to secure its long-term future.

OCCASIONAL OFFICES

	2025 (to August)	2024	2023
Baptism	0		
Weddings	1		
Funerals	4 and 6 Burial of Ashes		

It has been an honour to learn that in January the evening service will be led by the Bishop of Hereford.

Support from the Diocese has always been essential to ensure minds as well as the fabric of the church are well cared for. Apart from church services, members support other events which aim to draw people into the church. For several years a Nativity Festival took place, attracting visitors from a wide area. This year an exhibition to highlight the lives of those who were killed serving their country during WW2 took place in May; a similar one was held this November, focusing on those who lost their lives during WW1. During the summer a guided walk around the churchyard and church gave some insight into the depth and breadth of history that this site has witnessed. A series of leaflets sharing some of the histories have proved popular with visitors.

There is a strong movement in this area to protect and promote the natural environment. To this end, during the summer a bat survey was organised by the Archenfield Community Environment Group which drew in visitors to the churchyard, naturally generating questions about faith as well as history whilst waiting for the bats to emerge from their roosts.

BUILDINGS

THE CHURCH

There has been a church at this location since Saxon times. The proximity to the Garren Brook and the promontory on which the church stands suggest that this may have been a place of worship long before any building was erected. The stone carved figure on display inside the main entrance is believed to date from 5th-6th century; perhaps a representation of St. Deinst himself. During the reign of William the Conqueror the church was reconsecrated by Bishop Herwald of Llandaff. This was probably the moment when a stone church replaced the oak-timbered one. Stone from this era was eventually recycled and forms part of the present-day church. In each century since the 11thcenturythe church has been renovated and/or extended, benefitting from the patronage of gentry who chose to live in the area. In 1966 the church was Grade 1 listed for its ‘special architectural or historic interest. Due to regular investment the church is in remarkably good order. The 2025 Quinquennial Report highlighted minor repairs which are already being addressed and the electrics will be renewed and enhanced in January 2026.The ring of six bells weighing between 5cwt. and 9cwt. date from the 18thcenturyand are said to be one of the sweetest sounding peals in Herefordshire. Each bell bears an inscription including peace and good neighbourhood and we were all cast at Gloucester by A. Rudhal. The bellringing band practises once a month and rings for the evening service on the third Sunday.



THE CHURCHYARD

The original boundary of the churchyard (delineated by three yew trees) was circular, a strong indicator that the site was adopted as a place of worship by early Christians. There are thirty Grade II listed memorials but surprisingly the list does not include a cigar-shaped memorial incorporating the emblem for Archenfield and the Harris family, namely a hedgehog. In 1942 the churchyard was extended to the north and in 1968 Church Cottage was demolished to create a car park for visitors. On average two visitors per day visit the churchyard to pay respect their loved ones. The churchyard is also an important environmental haven for wildlife. The Archenfield Community Environment Group has installed bat boxes on several trees, areas of grass are left to grow long during the summer months, and banks where ground nesting bees live are protected.

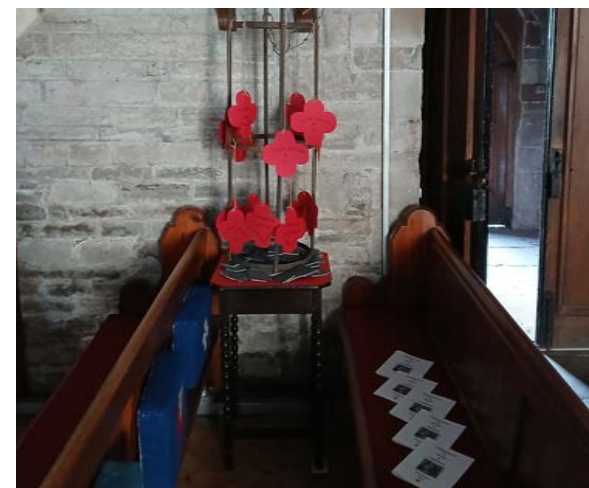
THE GARRON CENTRE

During the summer months of 2001 the initial idea to create a community space out of the north aisle was proposed. It would take another 13 years for the project to come to fruition; the Garron Centre officially being opened in 2014. The Llangarron Community Association, a registered charity (1157 992), oversees events at the Garron Centre and is responsible for managing the bookings, generating a range of activities for the community, and ensuring that the centre is financially viable. Two members of the P.C.C. attend their committee meetings so that at least some community events can be shared and supported. In 2024 the 10-year lease on the Centre was due to be renewed. This has taken far longer than anyone anticipated. There has been an impetus now, with 2025 drawing to a close, to find an agreement and the P.C.C. has pursued this with renewed vigour. A final draft has been agreed between the LCA and the PCC and it's hoped that the new license should therefore be in place by the new year.

ORGANISATION AND MINISTERS

The list of ministers stretches back to beyond the first recorded incumbent, William Thomas, in 1569. Since then, there have been over eleven curates (during the period when Llangarron was a chapelry of Lugwardine) followed by at least 15 vicars. The most well-known vicar was the Rev. Edward E. Cunningham (1852-1942) who, as well as translating the King James' bible (1919), wrote books about playing chess! Currently, the Rev. Penny Powdrill from Monmouth is ably supporting the community by leading services during the interregnum.

Since Churchwarden Ron Tubb retired in 2019, the post has fallen vacant. Likewise, currently there is no named Parish Safeguarding Officer but Wendy Price, a church warden at Llangrove, acts as the officer for the Benefice.



OPPORTUNITIES

The parishioners of Llangarron have traditionally been conservative in outlook. However, there is a recognition that times are changing and that there is a need to adapt. The era when large numbers attended church on a regular basis has ebbed away and today just a handful of parishioners worship in a church designed to accommodate much larger numbers. That being said, people belong before they believe and so every year the PCC organises Progressive and Harvest Suppers. These events each draw in upwards of 50 parishioners and are an important and great cause for celebration. The monthly coffee mornings, jointly organised by the PCC and the Llangarron Community Association, provide a further opportunity for the wider community to come together. Border News, an award-winning magazine distributed to all the households in the Benefice, regularly includes news from the PCC., thus keeping all interested parties well informed and ensuring everyone is aware of the warm welcome that will always greet them at the church. The church is open seven days a week, 9.30am – 5pm, and attracts not only tourists but locals seeking a quiet moment to reflect upon their daily lives and events that have affected them deeply. It is a place of solace; an essential oasis of calm needed more than ever in the world in which we find ourselves living. Our mission is therefore to enhance awareness of this haven as well as to welcome all those who wish to share their faith and to worship God.

PARISH OF LLANGROVE



COMMUNITY AND HISTORY

Llangrove is a growing, rural, peaceful community with a population of over 500 and yet we are 2 miles from the dual carriageway leading to Monmouth and Ross. We are a community where neighbours are known by name, and where the rhythms of the land and seasons shape our days as much as the liturgical calendar.

Our primary school, *Llangrove Church of England Academy* set in beautiful surroundings, has a Christian ethos and close connections to the village community. School values the world we share and aims to work together as a family to achieve. Children are encouraged to express themselves as individuals through achievement, creativity, opportunity, resilience, nurture and service. The school is going through the process of setting up a Nursery for 2 yr. olds which will hopefully be up and running in September.

Llangrove Leapfrogs is a community run childcare setting, Ofsted registered and managed by an elected committee of parents and professionals, open throughout the year. They provide attentive and enriching childcare for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, as well as wrap-around care for primary school children.

Llangrove Village Hall is the meeting place for a variety of groups such as Village Singers, Art Classes, Gardening Society, W.I., Llangrove Community Productions (annual panto put on in March with all ages on stage and in the audience), Craft and Chat, Yoga sessions and the church helps to run Warm Welcome sessions on Friday mornings and supports a *Talk Community* get together session for parents and youngsters on Friday afternoons after school. Brownies, Rainbows, Beavers, and Cubs meet in the village hall with Guides, Scouts and Venture Scouts nearby. We have a Repair Cafe, once a month, and a Juicing Day in the Autumn, helping our community to become more sustainable for the future along with regular talks run by Archenfield Community and Environment Group. Many of these groups have church people as their founder members or as members of committees who add the Christian perspective to organisations.

Monthly Coffee mornings are held in the Village Hall providing an opportunity for people to get together as well as a way to boost funds. In recent years, our church has linked with other groups in the village, to fundraise together. Llangrove May Fayre now attracts people from far and wide. It has been financially successful, provides an enjoyable day out and helps groups in the village to work together.

The Royal Arms, our country pub, is full of rural charm and rustic character with picturesque surroundings providing the perfect backdrop for savouring the hearty, seasonal pub-food and the carefully nurtured cask ales and fine wines. There is a monthly Quiz night and numerous other events throughout the year.

Challenges to the community are an increasing number of houses being built, the increasing amount of traffic on narrow roads, supporting an ageing population and declining services in the form of infrequent local buses, no shop, no mobile library. However, local resilience and ingenuity now means we have a telephone box full of books to borrow, a Milk Shed providing fresh milk from a local farm with other produce produced locally in a vending machine, Community minibus trips four times a year organised by the Parish Council etc.



WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

Christ Church stands at the centre of our village - both geographically and spiritually. With its stone walls weathered by centuries of prayer, and its churchyard alive with birdsong and memory, it is a place of peace, belonging, and quiet joy: a constant reminder of God’s beauty and unchanging love for us all.

Sunday services are intimate and spirit-filled, where a smile or gentle nod from a fellow parishioner carries the weight of shared time and hope. We gather for worship, yes, but also for cream teas, carol services by candlelight, harvest suppers, and the many community groups at the village hall - all reminders that we are never alone.

There are currently 28 people on the Electoral Roll.

Christ Church was the first complete church to be designed by George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907) who took his inspiration from fourteenth-century English Gothic. Bodley was a friend and sometime business partner of William Morris, the radical Socialist, designer, painter and writer, and cooperated with him in the planning and production of church furnishings, decoration and stained glass. The east window, a typical mid-Victorian style, was probably by Thomas Baillie (1815-83). The possible date of manufacture and fitting was 1856, which suggests that it could have been commissioned specially for Christ Church in time for the opening.

The World War I memorial inside the church is a typical Arts and Crafts piece, with the simplicity of the sheltering tree and the freehand lettering.

The painted screen behind the altar, with its panels of angels, is considered to be a worthy Pre-Raphaelite work. It can be attributed to Charles Lane of Amberley, Sussex, but it is not clear whether he painted the whole screen or just the centre panel.

The screen, dated 1898, commemorates Mrs. Catherine Marriott, Lady of the Manor of Goodrich and resident at Sellarsbrook, who endowed the church by giving the land and meeting the overall cost of £1500. It was built between 1854 and 1856 by Roberts, a Monmouth firm. Mrs. Marriott paid for the adjacent school and master’s house which opened in 1875.

The organ was built by Arthur Caldwell (1895-1924) of St Helens, Lancashire and came to Llangrove in 1970, bought for £525 from Childwall Methodist church in Liverpool. It has a past connection with Sir Thomas Beecham’s family firm.

We currently have weekly Sunday services generally held at 10a.m., Holy Communion services on the first and third Sundays of the month and lay led services on the second and fourth Sundays.

There are weekly Zoom Prayer Meetings and Prayer meetings in church. During Lent last year we worked through the Bible Course and looked at inspiration from carols in Advent. We joined in with the benefice Lent lunches. We want to grow in our faith and discipleship and also to draw others in.



OCCASIONAL OFFICES

	2025 (to August)	2024	2023
Baptism			
Weddings	2 and 1 blessing		
Funerals	3 and 4 Burial of Ashes	2 and 1 Burial of Ashes	1 and 1 Burial of Ashes

A number of significant services each year draw in larger congregations. Llangrove Academy goes in to church at Festival times, putting together services to which parents and friends are invited.

BUILDINGS

The Church is generally in good condition with minor repairs required.

Our churchyard is open to new burials and interments although space is becoming limited.



ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

Our church is supported by an Associate Minister who takes one Holy Communion Service a month; a Local Minister who leads two services a month; two Church Wardens; a number of the congregation help with readings at services; various people help with young peoples activities, church cleaning and flowers and there are four members on our PCC. We have a capable Treasurer who manages our finances so we are able to pay our bills but we do not have huge reserves as we feel that the growth of God’s Kingdom needs our money now.

OPPORTUNITIES

We want to grow in our faith and discipleship and also to draw others in. We want to help children and their families feel at home in church and to help them realise their place in God's Kingdom.

Christians form a significant part of the Governing Body of the village primary school, making a significant contribution to the upbringing of our children. Open the Book takes place once a month and the Vicar and other Christians lead Collective Worship when invited. The school has a Collective Worship group of youngsters who help to link the church and the school by welcoming their peers to Collective Worship and having an input as to what should be on their special table.



Christians from the area are keen to share their faith with young people and have run a lively Church Holiday Club in the summer and, more recently, at holiday times throughout the year. Local Christians, also, help out with uniformed organisations where youngsters are invited to think about their faith as part of the promise.

We live out our Christian faith, helping our non-church going members to become aware of God's presence in the world and of His love for them with the ultimate aim that they will accept Jesus as their Saviour and become part of God's Kingdom here.



PARISH OF MARSTOW



COMMUNITY AND HISTORY

Marstow is a rural parish comprising four distinct hamlets: Marstow, Glewstone, Pencraig, and Brelston Green where St Matthew's Church is located. The parish lies to the north of the A40, between Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth which are both good centres for shops and services. It is fifteen miles south of Hereford. Much of the parish is in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The parish population is 403. Within the parish there is one hotel, a Caravan Club site and various B&B or AirBnb establishments. Children in state education are bussed to Goodrich, Whitchurch or Llangrove for primary education at the C/E schools. Older children attend the comprehensive schools in Ross-on-Wye or Monmouth.

The nearest medical services are in Ross-on-Wye, three to five miles away: Ross has two large well-run GP practices and a community hospital (there is a general hospital and maternity unit in Hereford). There is a weekly bus to Ross-on-Wye and a high level of car ownership. To address the lack of public community facilities, St. Matthew's has recently been re-ordered to provide a community space for both religious and social activities. This amenity is popular and well-used. For larger events, Marstow uses the Memorial Hall in Whitchurch, which is two miles away. In addition, regular social functions are held in the homes of local residents. Marstow residents support the church Holiday club and organizations such as Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Cubs and Scouts in neighbouring parishes. We are also involved with the team taking Open the Book into the two church schools within the Benefice.

WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

Developing worship in St Matthew's. The benefice has a lay worship group with two lay ministers and three lay worship leaders, one of whom is responsible for non-eucharistic worship at Marstow. Our two services each month include Holy Communion and all age worship. There are also occasional 5th Sunday special services for the benefice. Average attendance 12; for special services 70 (20% of the population). Sharing faith in the community. There are 25 on the church electoral roll.

We have a full PCC of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, two further members and two churchwardens, one of whom is a licensed lay worship leader. One of our members also represents us at the Deanery gatherings. We meet formally four times a year and use email or WhatsApp for day-to-day matters.

OCCASIONAL OFFICES

	2025 (to September)	2024	2023
Baptism			
Weddings			1
Funerals	1	2	1



BUILDINGS AND ORGANISATION

St Matthew's is a much loved and well cared-for building, and the community focus for the parish. It is a good example of a simple Victorian country church, and is Grade II listed, with two bells.

The church was built in 1856, replacing a 14th century church nearby. This site has been used continuously for worship for hundreds of years. Major renovations, including an effective heating system, were completed in recent years. When a Quinquennial Report in 2016 highlighted the need for urgent additional repair work, a Heritage Lottery Fund application was submitted for re-ordering the church and creating a community space in a parish where there is none. We were successful in securing an HLF award of £105,000, with a further £70,000 in grants from the Marstow community and other charitable institutions. Considerable repairs were made to the exterior bathstone, the font was moved, the pews from the west end were removed, kitchen units with counter tops installed, tables and chairs purchased and a fully accessible WC installed to the west side of the church, with suitable fencing and screening. The beautiful alabaster reredos under the east window was cleaned and conserved. A hearing loop and sound amplification system were also installed. A car park has been secured very near to the Church and traffic signage purchased.



These renovations and additions, completed in 2019, have helped future-proof St. Matthew's, making it more fit for purpose as a place of worship and providing a multipurpose centre with facilities for the wider community to enjoy. We are all the family of God.



FINANCE

Our Parish Offer is always paid in full. The successful introduction of Stewardship in 2012 and the Parish Giving scheme have enabled us to cover this cost with predictable income rather than relying totally on ad hoc fund raising. We are currently in a reasonably comfortable financial position and are covering our other annual running costs.

There is also enthusiastic support—both financial and personal—from the wider local community, who organise and support regular fund raising and community events focussed on the church. A strong Christian fellowship is at the heart of what we do. We are the only community centre in Marstow and are central to the vigorous community life of the parish.

OPPORTUNITIES

Our events attract many people, with the offer of good food and fellowship. Events include Lent lunches, Harvest Supper, social gatherings, talks and craft evenings. Refreshments are served after services. The Parish Council uses the church for their regular meetings and are financially supportive of our social activities. We show ingenuity in enticing residents to the church for festivals and other special services. We make use of these wonderful opportunities to show the love of God by bringing the whole community together.

All information and schedules are shown in our Benefice local monthly magazine, the Border News: www.wyebrooksbenefice.wixsite.com.

Our church website: <https://www.marstowchurch.org> is regularly updated with information about services and events.

We can also be found on <https://www.visitherefordshirechurches.co.uk>.

We intend to maintain the momentum started by our previous incumbent. Although the number of openly committed Christians is relatively small, we would like to encourage and grow our parish, and the benefice, with the good news of Jesus Christ. It is our ambition to bring more and more of the people to realize the love and peace of mind that God can offer. It is our ambition to connect spiritually with the other parishes of the benefice.

PARISH OF ST MARY'S WELSH NEWTON

COMMUNITY AND HISTORY

The parish of Welsh Newton & Llanrothal is a vibrant and beautiful rural parish right on the border between England and Wales, in picturesque countryside. Our aim as a parish is to be a place of prayer, worship, comfort, peace and community.

As the name suggests, there are two churches in the parish: *St Mary the Virgin, Welsh Newton* and *St John the Baptist, Llanrothal*. St Mary's is the main parish church where nearly all of our services and activities take place, and St John's has been in the care of the *Churches Conservation Trust* since 1985. In due course we would love to reopen it.

We are a small but lively and dynamic church: what we lack in numbers we make up for in commitment and in a passion for the gospel. The best place to find out about us and what we do is via our [website](#) (where you can also sign up to our newsletter). You can also find us on [Instagram](#) and on [Facebook](#).

The parish is divided into three main villages:

- Welsh Newton (home to St Mary's), in the centre of the parish on the A466, between Monmouth and Hereford (about four miles north of Monmouth);
- Welsh Newton Common (about a mile and a half above the village of Welsh Newton, and a 20-minute walk across fields); and
- Llanrothal, one and a half miles to the west, in a valley by the river Monnow (home to St John's).

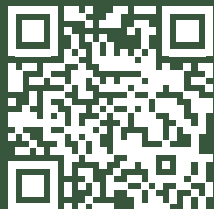
The parish is quite spread out and sparsely populated. The total population is 350, made up of 130 households. 56% of the population of the parish is over 45, and there is a higher proportion of older people than the county average. That said, there are young families in all three areas, well served by the primary school in Llangrove and the various schools and nurseries in Monmouth and Hereford, both state and private. There is a regular bus between Hereford and Monmouth which passes through Welsh Newton.

Despite the average age, the parish remains a working community: there are very few second homes here. A small number of the working population are employed locally, but the majority work from home or outside the area.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

We are not overwhelmed by facilities - none of the three villages has a shop, post office or school, and the nearest shops are in Monmouth and St Weonards, each about 10 minutes away by car - but people tend to look after their neighbours. There are neighbours' WhatsApp groups and Facebook groups that enable people to keep an eye out for one another, and these have come into their own during crises such as the "Beast from the East" (when Welsh Newton Common and Llanrothal were completely cut off) and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Welsh Newton has an active village hall with a social club, which operates at weekends and hosts occasional weekday activities, and which hosts well-attended events such as charity Big Breakfasts and a Christmas Fair. The village hall is a separate entity to the church, but we hold our annual harvest supper and other events there.



OUR SERVICES

We have a service of some kind at 9am every Sunday. On the second and fourth Sundays of the month we have a Holy Communion service which we try to make as family-friendly as we can whilst following a recognisable liturgy (usually Common Worship and sometimes a Celtic liturgy or similar). These are attended by a fairly small but committed number of people – usually anything between four and 12, some of whom do not attend the less formal, lay-led services and activities - although we have seen numbers growing in recent weeks. We feel it is important to maintain a regular Holy Communion service in the parish. We do not currently have an organist; we arrange a visiting organist for occasional services but otherwise make do with recorded music. We have just started serving refreshments after this service.

On the first and third Sunday we have a rather different offering. We start with a lay-led Christian meditation in the chancel: the person leading the session says some brief prayers and then we sit in silence for 20 minutes before ending with a short prayer. This is usually attended by between eight and 12 people, some of whom don't tend to come to the Communion services.

After meditation we head outside for breakfast and Outdoor Church, again lay-led. Our numbers for this are slightly higher as some families only come for this element. We start with breakfast of pastries and hot drinks and time to socialise. There is then a time of worship with contemporary worship songs. We gather around the firepit for a brief introduction to a passage from the Bible. After this the children (and some adults) head off for activities around the churchyard exploring the passage or theme, while the rest stay around the firepit for an in-depth discussion about the passage. At the end we all meet again for a quick chat about what we learned and some prayers. We meet in all weathers, all year round, but if it's raining we'll stay indoors.

Four times a year we hold a special "Outdoor Church Goes Wild in the Woods" event at a camp in the nearby Buckholt Woods run by Buckholt Bryngaer CIC, with bushcraft, crafts, food, Bible stories and songs. We held the first one very successfully in August and have dates planned for the next three.



We have other services during the year:

- a Compline service during Holy Week;
- a Good Friday afternoon service
- a harvest festival service (followed by supper in the village hall);
- a lay-led "Remembering Our Loved Ones" service on or around All Souls;
- a brief Remembrance Sunday service at the memorial cross;
- a lay-led Advent Service of Light;
- a Christmas carol service;
- Christmas and Easter services usually attract 50+ people.

During Advent and Lent we have started holding a daily Morning Prayer service in the church, Monday to Saturday (mostly lay-led), which is not widely attended but is a great blessing to those who do attend.

At St John's Llanrothal we also have an atmospheric, candle-lit Christmas Eve service just as it is getting dark, followed by refreshments. This is very much a community event and often includes poems and secular readings as well as carols and Bible readings. In June, for the feast of St John the Baptist, we have a midsummer patronal service there followed by a picnic in the churchyard.

OUR PEOPLE

We currently have 32 on the electoral roll, and about 20 people who attend the church regularly (not all at the same services) – more on that below. Unsurprisingly, we have no paid staff, but the small team of regulars shares the tasks of keeping the church clean, basic maintenance of the church and churchyard, providing catering at services, running and publicising events and communicating with the Diocese.

OCCASIONAL OFFICES

Approximately six funerals and five interments (unfortunately not all of them have been recorded).

	2025 (to September)	2024	2023
Baptism	1 infant and 1 adult		
Weddings		1	
Funerals			

BUILDINGS

St Mary's is a grade 1-listed medieval building, about 800 years old. The fabric of the building is sound, subject to some minor work to the porch to address woodworm and a possible leak. We anticipate doing work on the roof and guttering in the coming months or years.

In common with many old churches, it has only very limited facilities. The only water supply is a water butt behind the church. We do have an electricity supply, but no kitchen or toilet facilities other than a compost toilet in the churchyard. The only heating is via electric pew heaters; these are effective if you sit in front of them but produce little ambient heat. The PCC has considered various heating and flooring alternatives but has not (yet) come up with a better solution, at least with finances as they currently are. Rather than devote our limited time to fundraising in the past few years, we have dedicated ourselves to growing the life of the church.

Despite our limited facilities, with a bit of ingenuity we manage to produce refreshments both after our twice-monthly meditation (see below) and at special services and events. Although we would love to improve the heating, and to install a kitchen and toilet, we do not let these limitations stand in the way of gathering to worship the Lord and inviting others to the church.

We have a small, freestanding shed at the back of the church where we keep gardening equipment, vases and other assorted items, and a compost toilet in the churchyard. There are no other buildings associated with the church.

St Mary's is open 24/7 and is never locked (our rather limited valuables are locked in the vestry). We encourage people to come in at any time of the day or night to worship, pray, to light a candle or just to sit quietly, and are very grateful to be able to do this.

The church has a [rich history](#) with some notable 13th and 14th century features as well as a fine 16th century roof. In the medieval period it belonged to the Knights Templar and later the Knights Hospitaller.

The remains of a Roman Catholic martyr, [St John Kemble](#), are buried in the churchyard, and his grave is a place of pilgrimage for Roman Catholics. There is an annual pilgrimage from Monmouth to St Mary's each August. We have good relations with the Roman Catholic Church (also called St Mary's) in Monmouth and have held two joint services with them in recent years; we would like to continue this tradition.

The churchyard at St Mary's has regular visitors from people tending graves. We try to strike a balance between keeping the churchyard tidy, safe and well-maintained, allowing visitors to access graves and ensuring that we respect the environment and encourage wildlife and biodiversity. With that in mind we mow specific areas of the churchyard and leave others to grow wild during the summer months.

St John the Baptist in Llanrothal is a grade II* listed medieval building, again with interesting historical features. It has no water or electricity supply (which makes for very atmospheric services!)

ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

Our PCC is made up of six people plus a treasurer. We all still work either full or part-time (several commuting long distances) and have considerable family commitments so are extremely time-stretched, but do our best to serve the needs of the church. The PCC meets about every six weeks, and keeps in touch via WhatsApp and in person in-between times.

We recently appointed a new treasurer who has been reviewing the parish's finances (this is a work in progress as he has not had full access to all the records). For the last few years we have given more than £8,000 p.a. in parish share, but this has been more than we have been receiving in regular giving so we voted this year to reduce our parish share to £4,396. We are working on increasing regular giving so that we can have a mission and hospitality budget (neither of which we have had in recent times) and in due course to increase our parish share again.

We do not take a collection during services, but have a Good Box at the back of the church and a secure box for cash donations in the wall by the door.

We do not take a collection during services, but have a Good Box at the back of the church and a secure box for cash donations in the wall by the door.

Financially, we are a small but healthy Church with sufficient finances to support the running and growth of the church. We have sufficient income from regular donations and services to support our running costs and our desire for mission-driven activities.

The majority of our income comes from a set of dedicated regular givers who donate via the Parish Giving Scheme. In addition, we also collect regular income via interest earned by a number of reserves invested with CCLA. In 2026, we expect our regular running costs (insurance, electricity, safety, etc) to account for around 40% of our planned income. We've recently revised our contribution to the parish share to be more suitable for our small church and expect this to account for around 50% of our planned income in 2026. We also receive funds from ceremonies and occasional unplanned giving and use this predominantly to support our mission to grow the Church.

All in, we are a small but well supported Church with modest but sufficient headroom in our finances to invest in growing the church community in 2026.

MINISTERS

Among the regular worshippers are:

- three licensed local ministers
- one licensed local worship leader
- several others with long experience of leading worship, small groups, children's church and Bible study both in the Anglican church and other denominations.

We are also fortunate enough to have the services of Revd Penny Powdrill, Associate Minister, and

Revd Prebendary Mark Melliush, Associate Minister, who each lead a Holy Communion service once a month.

SAFEGUARDING

We take safeguarding very seriously. The PCC recently resolved to make safeguarding more of an organic part of parish life and is currently carrying out an audit on structures and power dynamics as well as formulating a safeguarding protocol for prayer ministry. It is our intention for every member of the PCC to receive safeguarding training over the course of the next year. Our Benefice Safeguarding Officer is based at Christ Church, Llangrove, but we are hoping that a member of our parish will take over a PSO role for Welsh Newton in the near future as we feel it is important that the PSO be a familiar face to those attending the church.



OPPORTUNITIES

At St Mary's we want, first and foremost, to ensure that our mission is led by God – not just to pay lip service to the idea of *missio dei* but to live it out. We want to be a place where people can discover the depth of God's love for them, to grow in their faith, to feel part of a community and to be welcomed and supported in all the challenges of life. What form that takes has evolved over the eight years of Revd Ben's incumbency, and may well continue to evolve according to where God leads us.

St Mary's has changed considerably in the last eight years. At that time, there were two services per month: a BCP said Holy Communion and a BCP Evensong, and congregation numbers were dwindling. With the resignation and retirement of most of the PCC around 2017, the new PCC spent time in prayer seeking God's will for the direction of the church.

It was felt that continuing to do the same thing and simply hoping for change would not work. There followed some experiments with different forms of lay-led worship – an evening "Service of Discovery" and the introduction of Christian meditation. The former lasted for several years and has now been replaced with a morning service. The Christian meditation proved a great success, attracting people who would not normally attend a regular church service.

In 2022 we once again spent time asking God where he wanted to take us. One phrase that emerged was, "feed my sheep". Although we did not feel this was to be taken too literally, it chimed with our belief that meeting over food can be a powerful way to connect with others (and prompted the institution of a voucher-free food bank in the church, which is supported by many members of the community who do not attend church). Soon, breakfast and a Bible study were added to the Christian meditation. With the arrival of a young family in the village, it was decided that a monthly "outdoor church" might be a good way to engage the children, and as other families started to attend this became a twice-monthly event.



We believe that Outdoor Church has the potential to draw in families who might not otherwise attend a traditional church service, as well as catering for those who are neurodivergent, and we have high hopes for its recent expansion to a three-monthly event in Buckholt Woods, based on the Forest Church model, hoping that this will draw in yet more who have a yearning for God but an aversion to church.

Engaging with the natural world is important to us at St Mary's. We believe that not only is this a vital part of caring for God's creation, but is also a wonderful way to draw in people who might not otherwise attend church. We have carried out annual wildlife surveys in the churchyard (which revealed an encouraging level of biodiversity) and involved expert conservationists who normally only attend very occasionally.

We are aware that there are many in our community who are open to finding out more about Jesus, but who associate Christianity and church with rigidity and dry formality. These people are unlikely to come to church services, no matter how welcoming we are and no matter how many social events run by the church they attend. We believe that it is important to engage candidly with people's questions, doubts and thoughts about faith.

One other thing that our time in prayer yielded was a feeling that the church should be a place of sanctuary. Prompted by this, we hosted an afternoon retreat in the church in 2022, attended by several non-churchgoers, and hope to do this again at some point. We have also held several prayer vigils, again attended by several people who do not attend church.

PRAYER AT ST MARY'S

Prayer is at the heart of everything we do at St Mary's. We have open prayer at every service and are currently working on forming a prayer ministry team with a view to having more regular one-to-one prayer ministry.

In the last few years we have held two 24-hour prayer vigils and several day-long ones in the church. Despite our small numbers we have managed to fill all the slots and they have been a huge blessing to everyone who participated, with everyone reporting that the time flew, and some reporting some powerful experiences of God.

We have a prayer group and invite prayer requests, both via a box in the church and via email. These are shared in confidence for prayer in a prayer WhatsApp group.

A good number of the church attended the New Wine festival this summer, and many have already booked for next year's festival.

HOPES FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES

We have many ideas for initiatives we would love to explore (our main obstacle being time: our small team is already stretched to its limits). These include:

- Hosting a course exploring the Christian faith (such as *Christianity Explored*, *Alpha*, *Saints Alive*, etc.)
- Being more intentional in our outreach to the bereaved whose loved ones have died in the parish and/or are to be buried in our churchyard.
- Hosting retreat days (we held one in 2022 at the church which was a great success).
- Organising a craft group as a form of outreach, especially to older members of the parish.
- Activity packs for the church and churchyard.
- Offering the church as a pilgrimage and/or champing venue (subject to having suitable facilities).
- Twinning with an urban church (we did briefly have an association with a newly-planted church in Bristol but it fizzled out as they needed to focus their resources on their new church plant).
- Hosting a bereavement course.
- Reviving the coffee mornings we used to host at the village hall

We are praying for more people to join the church who might share responsibility for these initiatives; we really need a larger team than we currently have to do everything we would like to do.

THEOLOGICAL ETHOS

Our parish is a warm and vibrant community rooted in the evangelical tradition. We are deeply committed to the authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, seeking to live out our faith through biblically-grounded worship, preaching and mission. We value the breadth of perspectives and personalities among our members and strive to create a welcoming environment where all are invited to explore and grow in faith.



ST MARY THE VIRGIN
WELSH NEWTON



PERSON SPECIFICATION

We are looking for a new incumbent to be a champion who will move us forward positively to meet a changing future, respecting the wide mix of theological views held within the benefice, including evangelical and liberal.

Our minister will:

- Be someone full of the Holy Spirit who will deepen our faith, encourage our witness and have discipleship at the heart of their ministry
- Be inclusive and embrace a variety of styles and flexibility of worship and music, encouraging us to be involved in different styles of services
- Be a good communicator and time manager, with an awareness of parish financial needs and problems; oversee the running of the Benefice efficiently, including identifying volunteers of all ages with the skills to help in this task.
- Show leadership and authority to draw the Benefice parishes together. We want to grow our churches through sharing Jesus with our neighbours and friends and are looking for a leader to inspire us in this. This is very important if the church is to survive in this part of the world.
- Be visible, out and about visiting and caring for parishioners and engaging with parish life and those locally in need. Engage with our schools, using this as an opportunity to draw in children and families.
- Be comfortable in a rural multi-parish setting
- Lead, encourage and expand our team of lay ministers and worship leaders

To anyone with a heart for mission, committed to prayer, open to the Holy Spirit's Ministry and excited about sharing faith who is considering stepping into this sacred role; know that you would be joining a community ready to welcome you with warmth, open hearts, and a shared love of God.

We are open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and desperately want to grow and become a model for the rural church.

This is a place where ministry can be deeply rooted in the community, the schools, the village halls and community spaces, among hard working families, and within the ordinary lives of all its residents.

Here, faith is not only held in tradition and liturgy but lived out in the very heart of modern daily life. We await you with anticipation, and with the quiet confidence that God is already preparing the way.



—Diocese of—
Hereford

For an informal conversation about anything you've read in this profile, please do not hesitate to contact the Archdeacon of Hereford, Derek Chedzey.

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Email: d.chedzey@hereford.anglican.org

We hope to meet you soon!