

CHURCHES OF ARDEN

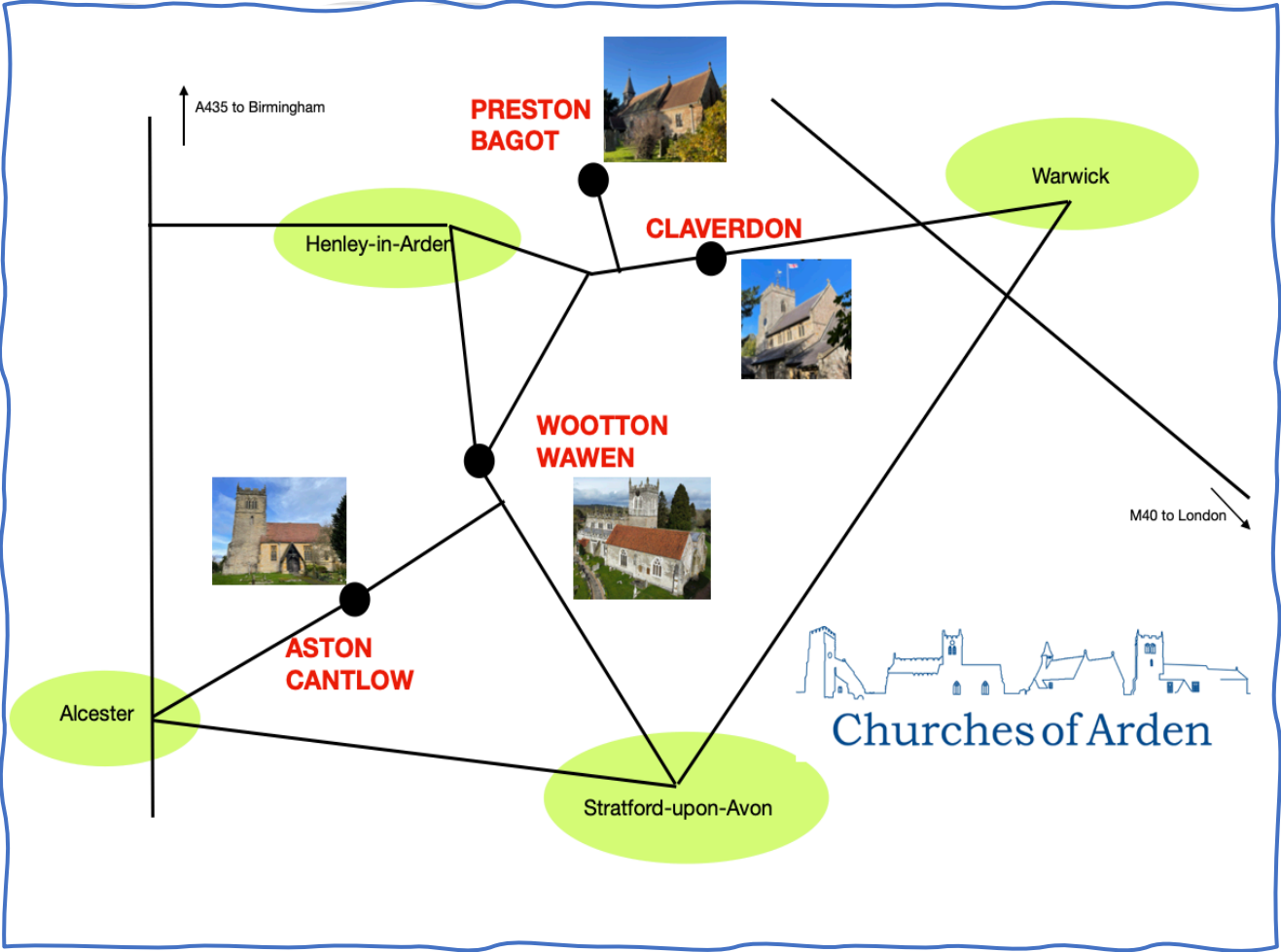
St Michael and All Angels, Claverdon
All Saints, Preston Bagot
St Peter, Wootton Wawen
St John the Baptist, Aston Cantlow

Profiles of four Warwickshire churches seeking and praying for a new Minister to lead them...



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Welcome to the Alcester Deanery!

The Churches of Arden group forms part of the Alcester Deanery – a very beautiful part of rural Warwickshire and a deanery with over 30 churches. Alcester, Studley, Bidford-on-Avon, and Henley-in-Arden are the largest population centres. We currently have a planned deployment of 6 full-time incumbents, and 3 House for Duty priests, supported by many helpful and valued retired clergy. Alcester Minster benefice is a Coventry Diocesan Mission Hub with a rural focus and has an additional Associate Minister to support this initiative.

We can offer you a very warm, supportive Deanery Chapter where we enjoy good relationships, meet regularly for prayer, fellowship, and mutual support, and share a common heart for the growth and flourishing of the mission of our churches across our Deanery and beyond. All our recent appointments have been clergy who enjoy working collegially.

We have been exploring radically new ways of sharing ministry across ecclesiastical boundaries to develop a truly Deanery-wide approach, incorporating the existing clergy and those yet to be appointed.

We are looking for the next Priest-in-Charge of the Churches of Arden to be a Rural Pioneer who enjoys working with clergy colleagues, who will be both rooted in the benefice, and also take a lead in enabling a particular aspect of mission across the wider deanery as well as in their own communities. There is plenty of scope for the person appointed to offer an aspect of their ministry skill set which they particularly enjoy. This aspect of the role is outlined in the Deanery Prospectus. We trust that this added dimension will enrich ministry in the parish as well as benefitting the wider deanery.

We look forward to welcoming a creative colleague who enjoys variety and will lead the Churches of Arden into a new season of growth and flourishing through their shared aim of being welcoming communities journeying together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to their villages. This will involve prioritising ministry among children and young people and encouraging the development of natural links across the parishes.

Rev Katie Cross – Area Dean



The Churches of Arden group was formed in 2003 when Wootton Wawen joined forces with Claverdon and Preston Bagot, under the leadership of a full-time priest-in-charge based in Wootton Wawen. In 2020 the adjacent village of Aston Cantlow joined the group.

Our four churches have different yet complementary worship styles, sharing the common aim of being welcoming communities, journeying together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to our villages at large. A variety of services are held across the group, ranging from BCP at Preston Bagot, through to Café Church and more contemporary forms of worship and teaching at Claverdon. We are blessed by having the services of two non-stipendiary ministers and a lay reader, plus some experienced lay worship leaders.

As a group, we have combined services on 5th Sundays; Claverdon PCC employs a part-time parish secretary based in Claverdon Church Centre who is shared with the rest of the group; we have a Churches of Arden website (churchesofarden.org.uk) and presence on social media.

We currently have ten house groups meeting within our four parishes. These groups usually meet weekly or fortnightly, some in the daytime others in the evening. We have women's groups, men's groups and mixed groups, and all of them welcome new members. Two new groups started in 2024, following a very successful Alpha Course in Claverdon.

A priority for us is the ministry to children and young people – in Wootton there is a CoE Primary school which has close involvement with church members; in Claverdon with our youth worker we run Messy Church, a youth club, services for pre-schoolers, and a baby and toddler group, and we regularly welcome Claverdon Primary School to church for special services. We are aiming to restart Open the Book in our schools.

We aim to be open, welcoming and relevant to all the people in our parishes, meeting them where they are, encouraging them to come and see what our churches and our faith have to offer, to find God's peace in today's confusing world.

Overview

Welcome to the Churches of Arden!



Bible Café at Claverdon

Overview



Taking a breather after work in Wootton Wawen churchyard

Our vision as a Group is:

- to grow the Christian presence within our communities through friendship, involvement in local activities, collaboration with other churches, and by offering opportunities of worship, prayer and discussion for people of all ages.

Our immediate aims as a Group – with the leadership and encouragement of our new incumbent! – are:

- to continue re-building our church communities after the hiatus of recent years
- to build on our youth and families ministry
- to continue being outward-looking to the wider community, placing our churches in the centre of the lives of our villages

There is no joint leadership team for the Group, but we recognise the benefits to be gained from closer working. Claverdon Church members are organising a pilgrimage to Holy Island in May 2025 – some 30 people from across the Group have signed up.

Our buildings – which include Warwickshire’s oldest church at Wootton, and our modern Church Centre in Claverdon – are all well-maintained. While there are always bills to pay for their upkeep, the financial resources of each parish are generally sufficient, albeit often challenging.

Each church has its own PCC which typically meets every 2–3 months; we do not expect our incumbent to be able (or need) to attend every meeting, especially those dealing with the more day-to-day matters of PCC business.

We are praying for a priest to focus us on spiritual growth and to help discern God’s plan for us in our challenging world, leading us with wisdom and grace into that future.

Person specification

We are looking for a person who:

- will invigorate us spiritually as a church and as individuals, inspiring and challenging us to deepen our faith
- likes to collaborate and to work with teams
- is an encourager, and can bring forth the gifts and talents of people
- is comfortable with a wide variety of worship styles
- is creative and forward-looking, while sympathetically understanding the past
- can communicate effectively with people of all ages, especially children and young adults



The Parishes of the Churches of Arden – *in brief*

CLAVERDON

- Population c1300
- Suburban/professional community in a rural setting
- Electoral roll 90
- Range of worship styles from Common Worship Communion to informal all-age services
- Alpha courses since 1994
- Modern Church Centre
- Well maintained Church
- Part-time youth worker
- Find us at CV35 8PD, or swift.ecologist.variances



PRESTON BAGOT

- Population c150
- Mainly farms and scattered houses
- Electoral roll 23
- Most services BCP
- Beautiful well-maintained church in idyllic setting
- Popular with walkers, cyclists
- Venue for concerts
- Find us at B95 5EB, or became.staked.hillsides



WOOTTON WAWEN

- Population c1400
- Social mix – farmers, commuters, artisans. High proportion of elderly and widowed
- CofE primary school
- Electoral roll 41
- Common Worship services and Café Church
- Grade 1* listed church – the oldest in Warwickshire, with Saxon sanctuary
- Find us at B95 6BE, or retail.violinist.stays



ASTON CANTLOW

- Population c430
- mainly agricultural village, with commuters to nearby towns and cities
- Electoral roll 15
- Before joining Churches of Arden, was in vacancy for several years
- Historic church with Shakespeare connections
- Find us at B95 6JB, or scouts.gives.dreamers



St Michael and All Angels, Claverdon



Our location

Claverdon is situated five miles west of Warwick. With good transport connections (we are a few miles from the M40 motorway, Warwick Parkway Station and Birmingham Airport), Claverdon is an ideal location for those whose jobs require them to commute. While located in an attractive countryside setting with several working farms, our village has a suburban professional community feel to it.

There are two nurseries, a popular primary school, two village halls (one of them the Church Centre), a doctors' surgery, a community shop, two pubs and a wide variety of sports clubs, some with their own facilities. Nearby there is a 4* hotel, spa and leisure centre, which is also a popular wedding venue.

Our church

Claverdon Church (listed grade 2*) has origins in the mid-14th century, but most of the building was reconstructed in the 19th century. More recent additions have been toilet facilities and a small kitchen. We aim to keep the fabric of the church in excellent order. No major problems were found in last year's quinquennial inspection.

The church is open daily to the public. The churchyard is close to full capacity, and there has been a recent extension consecrated in part of the adjacent Glebe field.

St Michael and All Angels, Claverdon

Our church – continued

The church has up-to-date audio-visual equipment, and we streamed services on our YouTube channel in the pandemic. We have a two-manual organ, keyboard and a choir of some 20 members, plus an enthusiastic band of bellringers who ring our six bells every week.

Church members take part in a 'West Gallery Band' of about 10 instrumentalists, who play for occasional services and other events.

The Church Centre

Near the Church we have a purpose-built Church Centre which opened in 1981 and plays an important role in both church and community life. It is a modern facility with a large hall with excellent audio-visual equipment, syndicate rooms, a kitchen, extensive car parking space, and is the home of the parish office for the Churches of Arden. It is also the venue for our Stepping Stones nursery, monthly cinema evenings with 'Flicks in the Sticks', hosts many village social events, and is often used for Deanery and Diocesan meetings.

We hold more informal Sunday worship services, such as Bible Café, once a month in the Church Centre. It is also where our Youth club meets, and where Messy Church events such as the Easter workshop are held, bringing Jesus to young people and their families in a relaxed setting.

We have advanced plans to install a new heating system using heat pumps and solar panels as part of the church's aim to be net zero carbon by 2030.



Coronation celebrations at the Church Centre



The Church Centre from the church tower

St Michael and All Angels, Claverdon

Church life

- Alpha courses have been successfully run in Claverdon over the past 30 years and have transformed many people's lives – with three becoming ordained. We ran an Alpha course again in 2024 with around 40 attendees, and the 2025 course starts in February.
- Our children's ministry is a key priority – we have a baby and toddler group, services and events for pre-school children, a youth club; we regularly welcome Claverdon Primary School to church, and run occasional Messy Church activities. The Easter Workshop – telling the Easter story to 70 children, with craft activities – has been a highlight for many years.
- Last Summer we said farewell to our full-time youth worker of the past five years, and have recruited a part-time replacement who is concentrating on growing our youth club.
- Outreach to our village has always been an important feature of church life – we deliver 'welcome packs' to newcomers and organise welcome parties for them; we host big commemorative events, such as the Platinum Jubilee. For the Coronation we arranged a weekend of events, including a barbecue outside the Church Centre for 400!
- For several years church members have hosted a Christmas Day lunch for people who otherwise would have been on their own.
- Over the years we have arranged several successful pilgrimages and away weekends, including to Holy Island, Iona and Canterbury. We are returning to Holy Island in 2025, with a party of some 30 from across our four parishes.
- We routinely raise funds for charities at home and abroad – usually about £6–7k a year. We recently raised over £3500 for a Christian school in Bethlehem
- Our Pastoral Group of members of our Claverdon and Preston Bagot congregations meet regularly to offer prayers and support for those who are sick, bereaved, lonely or in any kind of need.



Alpha 2024



Easter workshop with 70 children, 2023

St Michael and All Angels, Claverdon



Throughout Advent a decorated window in a village house was lit each night, followed by a blessing, carol singing and refreshments. Hundreds of villagers joined in!



The West Gallery Band



Children's games on the Glebe Field. (Church Centre on the left)



Christingle

At the Harvest lunch

All Saints, Preston Bagot



Our location

Preston Bagot, first mentioned in the Domesday Book, lies midway between Claverdon and Henley-in-Arden, consisting mainly of farms and scattered houses. The church occupies one of the highest points in the locale and commands panoramic southerly views towards the Avon valley and the Cotswold hills beyond. The Stratford-upon-Avon canal passes through the parish and the area is popular with walkers and cyclists.

Our church

The church of All Saints – listed grade 2* – was built in the late 11th or 12th century and remained largely untouched until major restoration took place in 1877–79. The interior is stunningly beautiful in its simplicity with a fine 15th century font and enhanced by five William Morris and Burne-Jones stained glass windows taken from the old Meeting House in Birmingham which had been destroyed by bombing in the Second World War.

The 2024 quinquennial inspection revealed no major issues. The churchyard still has spaces for burials.

The church is open daily to the public.

Church life

Our small faithful congregation hold services on at least three Sundays every month, and our Patronal Festival, Harvest Festival and Carol Services often fill the church. We also host fund raising concerts – on a balmy summer evening, with our glorious views over leafy Warwickshire, there are few places better!



St Peter's, Wootton Wawen



Our location

Midway between Henley-in-Arden and Stratford-upon-Avon, Wootton Wawen is a typical old rural Warwickshire village situated in the heart of the Forest of Arden. The population of approximately 1400 is made up of a mix of farming community, commuters, artisans and families with young children and a community of Park Homes within Wootton Hall. The village has a high proportion of older people and this is therefore a key area for our ministry.

The Stratford canal runs through the parish with both Anglo Welsh and Hill View Farm marinas attracting leisure activity and tourists to the Village. Yew Tree Farm is a centre for artisan craft, antiques, and food shops; there are two general stores, one with a post office. Amongst other amenities are allotment gardens, a bowling green, The Bull's Head and Navigation pubs, restaurants – Field to Fork and The View, two social clubs, and a good village hall. We have an excellent Archive Centre in the village hall, wonderful for research into the history of our village, free of charge and run by voluntary members of the village and church members.

We have a Church of England primary school – attracting children from the village and across the Redditch border. St Peter's is represented on the governing board by two foundation governors nominated by the PCC and a third governor being the vicar who in the past has played a key role in the life of the school.

There is an active Roman Catholic church and community within Wootton Wawen.

Our church

St Peter's is thought to be the oldest church in Warwickshire with a charter from AD723. Grade 1* listed, the church is well known for its Saxon Sanctuary, and is included in *England's 1000 Best Churches* by Simon Jenkins.

St Peter's, Wootton Wawen

Our church – continued

With such a rich history, our church attracts many visitors and tourists. We have recently refreshed the Saxon Sanctuary exhibition and refurbished the prominent turret clock. In the 2023 quinquennial report, areas of maintenance were identified as expected for a 1000-year-old church. Funding has been identified to start the work and an ongoing schedule of restoration and funding applications is in development. We are blessed to have the Wagen Trust charity who help support the preservation of our historic church for Wootton Wawen and environs for the benefit of the population at large. The ancient churchyard is still open for burials, and a new area for the burial of ashes has been created in a 'Garden of Memory'.

Church life

- St Peter's has an active, if somewhat older congregation who meet every Sunday to worship in a cycle of Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and Café Church largely following a Common Worship style. We also hold a weekly Wednesday morning service which is either Holy Communion or Celtic Worship and is attended by an average of between 8–10 people. Services are currently led by our lay reader, our two non-stipendiary clergy and members of the congregation.
- We have two homegroups that meet fortnightly, and members of the congregation join with Lent groups run across the parish.
- Members of the congregation have attended an Alpha course in the Churches of Arden group.
- An enthusiastic team of bellringers ring the bells every Sunday, at festivals and weddings and on national occasions.



Confirmation service with the Bishop of Coventry



Ringing St Peter's 6 bells

St Peter's, Wootton Wawen

Church Life – continued

- We organise an annual harvest supper for the village, and Christmas fayre and participate in village events such as celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee for the late Queen Elizabeth II and Coronation of King Charles III, as well as the summer of fun in Wootton Hall.
- St. Peter's serves as a vibrant venue for a wide range of musical and theatrical events. In recent years, we have welcomed performances by the Riding Lights Theatre Company, Armonico Consort, and the Alcester Silver Band. In 2024, as part of the St Peter's Proms concert series, we hosted a recital featuring music for two violins and piano, along with a return performance by the Alcester Male Voice Choir. Upcoming events will include organ recitals and performances by choral ensembles.
- We have a close relationship with our Lady and St Benedict's RC Church and each year St Peter's attends the Stations of the Cross during Holy Week while the congregation of St Benedict's joins us for our annual Christmas Carol Service. We alternately host the annual World Day of Prayer (2024 in St Peter's).
- Twice a year villagers and members of the congregation team up to tidy up the churchyard. This work is rewarded by a convivial ploughman's lunch with cider!
- Organised guided tours of St Peter's Church and Saxon Sanctuary take place every month exploring the oldest church in Warwickshire and reveals many secrets that lie hidden in our wonderful place of worship.



The new Saxon Sanctuary exhibition



Alcester Male Voice Choir – giving one of many concerts at St Peter's



World Day of Prayer 2024

St Peter's, Wootton Wawen



Christmas at St Peter's



Remembrance Day



Harvest Supper



Christingle

St John the Baptist, Aston Cantlow



Our location

Aston Cantlow, midway between Wootton Waven and Alcester, is a small village with a population of about 430. There is a Holiday Caravan Park in the village which has a well-stocked shop and café and is much used by the whole village. There is also a pub and a thriving Village Club which is run as a cooperative by the village. The village as a whole is always extremely supportive of all church activities and fund raisers.

Our church

St John's has been a place of worship for hundreds of years and is of historical interest, with connections to William Shakespeare's family. Our recent quinquennial inspection revealed items that needed dealing with sooner rather than later, which have now been done, although maintenance of such a building is an ongoing project.

Church life

As a small congregation we would welcome ideas and help in becoming a more integrated church community, working with the other three parishes. We are also in the somewhat older age bracket and would like to bring younger families into church. We have a reputation as a friendly and welcoming congregation, and hope our new incumbent would be able help us strengthen our relations with the wider village.

We would like to work more closely across the whole group with mutual respect for what has gone before but with eyes and hearts open to the possibilities ahead, whilst always aware of God's presence and His plans for us all. Pastoral care and a passionate desire to help us work more closely together across all four churches would be among our top priorities.

Our previous minister was only with us for three years and we were in an interregnum for two and a half years before that so we would welcome some continuity. We would also welcome some encouragement, to inspire and equip us all as we seek to enlarge our church community and grow in faith.

Wootton Wawen vicarage

The Priest-in-charge of the Churches of Arden has been housed in Wootton Wawen since the Group was formed in 2003. The then Vicar of Wootton Wawen took on the parishes of Claverdon and Preston Bagot, and the vicarage in Claverdon was sold.

The vicarage was built in 1960 with four bedrooms, dining room, lounge, kitchen and study, bathroom and downstairs toilet, and an associated garage with parking space for visitors. In recent years changes were made so that there are now three bedrooms and an additional shower room.

The garden has some prolific apples trees.

Access is via a private lane off the Stratford Road which leads on into the Wootton Hall Park Homes estate. A short walk through the churchyard leads from the Vicarage to the church.



Services

A typical monthly service rota is shown below. This is not set in stone – we keep the rota under review for what works best.

| | 1 st Sunday | 2 nd Sunday | 3 rd Sunday | 4 th Sunday | 5 th Sunday |
|---------------|------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Claverdon | 11am All-age service Lay-led | 11am Holy Communion (CW) | 11am Bible café in Church Centre Lay-led | 11am Holy Communion (CW) | Joint service rotating between churches |
| Preston Bagot | 9.30am Holy Communion (BCP) | 9.30am Morning Prayer (BCP) Lay-led | | 9.30am Morning Prayer (BCP) | |
| Wootton Wawen | 11am Café Church Lay-led | 11am Holy Communion (CW) | 11am Holy Communion (CW) | 11am Morning Prayer Lay-led | |
| Aston Cantlow | 11am Morning Prayer | 11am Morning Praise with coffee | 11am Morning Praise | 11am Holy Communion (CW) | |

There is also an Act of Worship at Wootton Wawen at 10:00 every Wednesday, and Evening Prayer on Tuesdays in Claverdon Church Centre.

Numbers of baptisms, weddings and funerals in 2024.

| | Claverdon | Preston Bagot | Wootton Wawen | Aston Cantlow |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Baptisms | 6 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| Weddings | 6 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Funerals | 8 | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| Burial of ashes | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 |

Administration and communication

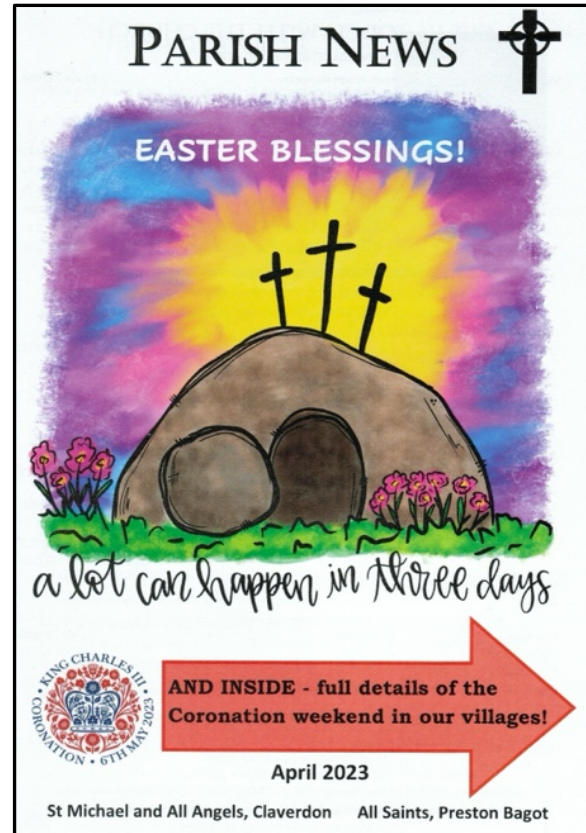
The parish office is in the Church Centre in Claverdon. This is the base for Barbara Lord, our part-time Parish Secretary, who also works from home, and is employed by Claverdon PCC. Barbara provides valuable support for our incumbent, including arrangements for life events.

Claverdon PCC employs a part-time youth worker, who also operates from the Church Centre.

The Churches of Arden has a dedicated website, www.churchesofarden.org.uk

Other communication channels include a weekly newsletter, Facebook pages at www.facebook.com/church.claverdon/; and YouTube videos at www.youtube.com/user/claverdonchurch.

In Claverdon and Preston Bagot we produce a monthly parish magazine which is distributed free of charge to every address in the villages. In Wootton Wawen the church plays a major part in producing the monthly village magazine.



Finance and Stewardship

The pandemic placed strains on our finances, from which we are still recovering. Some difficult decisions have been made to constrain costs, with opportunities taken for enhancing our income. Full accounts for each parish are available on request.

| From 2023 accounts | Claverdon £ | Preston Bagot £ | Wootton Wawen £ | Aston Cantlow £ | Group total £ |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| General income | 32,437 | 13,689 | 34,851 | 7,799 | 88,776 |
| Planned giving | 57,432 | 5,716 | 11,791 | 2,100 | 77,039 |
| Gift aid | 12,333 | 2,275 | 8,086 | 1,072 | 23,766 |
| Fundraising | 1,283 | 605 | 2,985 | 5,577 | 10,450 |
| Grants | 3,000 | 600 | 1,500 | - | 5,100 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 106,485 | 22,805 | 56,228 | 16,458 | 201,976 |
| General expenditure | 74,111 | 10,157 | 17,580 | 17,680 | 119,528 |
| Parish Share | 37,600 | 12,000 | 18,402 | 4,700 | 72,702 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 111,711 | 22,157 | 35,982 | 22,380 | 192,230 |
| SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) | (5,226) | 728 | *20,336 | (5,833) | 10,005 |
| Unrestricted reserves | 133,366 | 9,976 | 55,053 | 56,158 | 254,553 |
| Restricted reserves | 92,402 | 151,047 | ‡219,497 | 119,378 | 431,277 |
| Notes | | | | | |

All parishes paid their 2023 parish share in full.

* Exceptional recovery of back-dated gift aid, recovery of overpaid electricity and a bequest represent approx £18,000 of the surplus for the year.

‡ Includes £161,562 in a restricted fund solely for the purpose of funding concerts.

How to contact us

For informal conversations:

Archdeacon Missioner – The Venerable Barry Dugmore

Email: barry.dugmore@coventry.anglican.org

Tel: 07487578311

Area Dean – Reverend Katie Cross

Email: rector@alcesterminster.org

Tel: 01789 764261

For further details and an application form please contact:

HR Officer and Archdeacons' Administrator – Debbie Niblett,

Email: Debbie.Niblett@Coventry.Anglican.org

An application form can be downloaded from the Diocesan website:

<https://coventry.anglican.org/about/vacancies/clergy-hr.php>

Enhanced DBS disclosure is required for this post.

churchesofarden.org.uk