



THE SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE SEVEN BENEFICE

In the most southern part of rural Warwickshire, in the Diocese of Coventry, we are a group of seven beautiful Cotswold village churches, joined together in one Benefice administered by a Joint PCC. These churches share one vision and their congregations join together in worship and outreach. Our aim is to know Jesus Christ, and to make him better known, as we seek to serve our local communities. Will you join us as Associate Minister of this Benefice, to help lead us in fulfilling our vision?



OUR VISION

Our vision for the next five years is to grow as churches by rediscovering God's wonderful love for us in Jesus as revealed in the Bible. Specifically, we want to grow in three ways:

- **Building-Up** – we want to grow spiritually by building each other up in our faith in Jesus as our amazing Lord and Saviour, and equipping one another to serve him in specific roles and ministries. We want to continue to meet together to learn from the Bible, pray to God, and praise and worship him.
- **Uniting Together** – we want to grow relationally as one church family across our seven parishes. We are thankful for the fellowship in the Spirit which we already enjoy. Our

hope is that, as we build each other up in our faith in Jesus, we will grow in our love for one another, and in our dependence upon our Heavenly Father in prayer.

- **Reaching Out** – we want to grow numerically as people are drawn to faith in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. We want to continue to share the good news of Jesus, and serve our communities through practical care as needs arise. We want to attract more young adults, youth, and children. We want to grow in confidence in sharing our faith.



The Cross at the Lych Gate, Long Compton, Easter 2020 (during Covid closure of churches)

ABOUT THE SW7 BENEFICE

1. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Joint Parochial Church Council (“JPCC”)

In 2019, in response to an initiative by the Benefice, the Bishop's Council approved the establishment of the SW7 Joint Parochial Church Council (JPCC). The JPCC is led by the Rector and includes representatives from each of our seven parishes, to take strategic decisions about ministry and mission, including outreach, service patterns and family and youth work. The JPCC

meets quarterly, chaired by the Rector. Finance and church buildings remain the responsibilities of the individual PCCs. This has not only streamlined the administration of the Benefice, it has also encouraged fellowship and the sharing of a common purpose across all seven churches.

The Ministry Leadership Team (“MLT”)

The Ministry Leadership Team of clergy and laity working voluntarily, has been pivotal to the life of the Benefice for the past twenty years or so, supporting the Rector. The team currently includes our Rector, a retired Canon, a Lay Reader, and an Outreach Co-ordinator. It has sought to give priority to the pastoral care of the sick and recently bereaved; Benefice prayer and Bible study groups; the encouragement of outreach amongst men, women, young people and children.

Benefice Officers

There is a paid Benefice Administrator, who works nine hours a week from her home undertaking work as required for the incumbent and the Benefice. She acts as secretary to the JPCC. There is also a Treasurer to oversee the Benefice account to which each PCC contributes annually to cover clergy expenses, Benefice office expenses, Benefice printing, website etc.

2. WORSHIP

Three types of service are offered, to meet the varying needs of the Benefice: Prayer Book, Common Worship and Modern Informal. The current pattern is as follows:

- Every Sunday at 9am a service of either Holy Communion or Morning Prayer, according to the Book of Common Prayer, always including hymns and a sermon;
- Every Sunday at 10.30 a Morning Service usually including Holy Communion following the 2000 version of Common Worship, always including hymns and a sermon;
- Fortnightly (except in school holidays) an informal service known as GAP (“God and People”) which has a kids’ group for primary aged children. For adults, the service includes prayers, a Bible talk, and worship songs. Sometimes a short Communion is included. Food and refreshments are served afterwards.

The morning services rotate around the seven villages and the congregation at each is around 20-30. The poetry and tradition of the Prayer Book is highly valued in the Benefice, but the simplicity and accessibility of Common Worship is also very popular. Most worshippers are now in the habit of attending churches outside their own village, and appreciate the fact that there is always a service according to the rite they prefer. Some older worshippers still only attend the service when it is in their own village.

The GAP service always takes place in Long Compton church as it is the only church in the Benefice which has break-out rooms, as well as a kitchen, WC, electronic music and projector. Attendance is usually around 15-20 adults and 5-10 children/young people.

Additional services are held for special occasions including Remembrance Sunday and Good Friday. Christmas Carol Services are held in every village, with help from retired and visiting clergy; Christmas and Easter Day services are held in as many villages as clergy resources permit. From time to time other services will be held such as an outdoor Songs of Praise, a family service in the bluebell woods, or an Evensong at Barcheston with a visiting Oxford choir.



The bluebell woods after the service

Midnight Communion at Barcheston



Songs of Praise in a marquee at Burmington

3. BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

In an average year around three or four weddings take place across the Benefice. The Rector or Associate Minister meets with every couple for wedding preparation; likewise, couples wishing to have their child baptised in one of our churches will undertake a short course of baptism preparation and are expected to come to church beforehand. sometimes a service of thanksgiving for the birth of a child will be held instead. Funerals are held in every church, which may be led by the Rector or another member of our ministry team, and may be followed by a burial with accompanying rites, or cremation and subsequent interment of ashes in dedicated areas in our churchyards.

4. MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP

Events and Courses

In order to fulfil our aims of reaching out and making Jesus better known, the following events and Bible Study groups take place across the Benefice:

- Five Home Groups currently run across the Benefice usually including Bible study and prayer for one another. These are a mixture of lay and clergy led.
- [Christianity Explored](#) courses have been held as well as some 1:1 Bible studies and we would like to offer some new courses to renew this outreach.
- A women's monthly lunch group is held on a series of topics led by visiting speakers.
- The village pub in Cherington has been the venue for Men's and Women's Breakfasts, with visiting speakers. The aim is to present the Good News in an engaging way to people who do not normally attend church; they are always very well attended.
- There are occasional Special Evangelical Events held in a local village hall.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is integral to our SW7 church family. Villagers throughout the Benefice appreciate our attempts to reach out, support and connect in faith. The JPCC with the Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) has appointed volunteer pastoral coordinators for most parishes to facilitate communication with the MLT. Sometimes only clergy are able to provide the spiritual support needed but we are committed to a vision of pastoral ministry that involves every member of the church looking after each other. Home visits or phone calls are very much valued. Pastoral care also happens naturally through the many varied groups and clubs described above.

The Benefice also has many gatherings and activity groups (advertised in the monthly [Link](#) magazine) which cover a wide range of interests, especially relating to hospitality and good food! For example, Burmington's CAMEO Lunch Club. In Whichford there is a similar scheme whereby there is a supply of home cooked frozen meals for those needing it. Assistance and support by volunteers through help with shopping, lifts to medical appointments or a chat on the phone occur across the Benefice.

Youth and Children's work

Twenty years ago, a Family Focus Group was formed with the aim of drawing families into the church by building relationships and offering family activities including day trips and holiday clubs. This developed into the GAP service which is aimed at reaching out to and discipling families, although it is open to all. During the past the GAP service has supported both a kids' group and youth group. The youth group does not meet currently as previous members have grown up and moved away. There is now a clear need to refocus on younger families in the Benefice.

Acorns School

[Acorns Primary School](#) in Long Compton is the only school in the Benefice. It is part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) with Shipston and Brailes Primary Schools and although it is not a church school it has for many years had a good relationship with the church. The Rector and Associate Minister having long been welcomed to lead assemblies, and there are church members on the governing body. The school also usually holds Harvest, Easter and Christmas services in Long Compton church.

5. SAFEGUARDING

The churches of the South Warwickshire Seven group place the highest priority on the safeguarding of children, young people and adults who may be considered to be vulnerable, and endorse fully the six commitments set out in the House of Bishops' policy document "Promoting a Safer Church". Our Benefice considers that it complies with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, which requires the PCCs to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults (including both policy and practice guidance), and all parishes within our Benefice have adopted the standard, national Church of England's safeguarding policy "Promoting a Safer Church (2017)". Full details of our safeguarding policies are set out on our [website](#).

6. THE SEVEN VILLAGES

Barcheston with Willington

The hamlet of Barcheston, a mile south of the local market town Shipston-on-Stour now consists of [St Martin's Church](#) and just eight households. In 1508 the owner of the manor of Barcheston enclosed his lands and depopulated the village as a result of which the inhabitants moved a mile south to Willington, which now consists of some forty-five households and where most of the population of the parish live. There are six working farms in the parish.



St Martin, Barcheston with Willington, a children's concert

Barton-on-the-Heath

[Barton-on-the-Heath](#) is a small community of around forty houses and eighty residents with its 12th century church, St Lawrence. It has a manor house, an old rectory and two working farms, one in the village and one on the outskirts, although from the names of many of the houses, there were many more farms in times gone by. The village hall (which used to be the village school) overlooks the village green. Barton's 'claim to fame' is its annual village fete held on the green with brass band to entertain and numerous stalls for young and old to enjoy. The church

and the village hall benefit from the majority of the proceeds of the fete together with other local charities.



Barton-on-the-Heath's famous fete



St Lawrence, Barton-on-the-Heath

Burmington

Burmington is a small village of about fifty houses and a population of around 125. It has a church, two farms and a manor house, and a field held in trust for the village in which children can play, dogs be walked and village activities held. It is a very friendly and welcoming community with, in normal times, many village activities including the very popular monthly 'Come And Meet Each Other' (CAMEO) lunches in the [Village Hall](#) which Burmington shares with Willington and Tidmington. There are also village breakfasts, teas, talks, an annual fete and many other activities.



A Lebanese Supper in Burmington Village Hall after a talk in the church, October 2021.



St Barnabas and St Nicholas, Burmington

Cherington with Stourton

Cherington with Stourton villages are thought by all to be one community with a population of around 370. There are working farms at the heart of the villages which are also socially very active with a [pub](#) and modern [village hall](#). The church membership integrates well within village life. The [Cotswold Distillery](#) nearby has grown to be a significant local employer and tourism attraction. Just outside the parish, nearby [Feldon Valley Golf Club](#) attracts a large membership of locals and is a hub for the locality and some church outreach functions have been held there.

The Old Forge, now part of Stourton House, is much used and appreciated for home groups and church functions as it is a more intimate meeting place. The house set aside for the Associate Minister is in Stourton.



St John the Baptist, Cherington with Stourton

Long Compton

Long Compton is the largest of the seven villages in the Benefice with about 1,000 residents and several working farms. Nestling in a valley it hosts the main village shop of the area and the popular [‘Red Lion’ pub](#). The village has a well-used [village hall](#) hosting numerous local societies and there several businesses based in the village. [Acorns Primary School](#) which has a pre-school, Little Acorns is in the centre of the village and is used by families across the Benefice and other local villages. The Congregational Chapel has also recently reopened for occasional services.



St Peter and St Paul, Long Compton

Whichford and Ascott

Whichford and nearby hamlet of Ascott have a population of approximately 300 people. There is a thriving local pub called the [Norman Knight](#). [Whichford Pottery](#) is one of our local businesses with a nationwide reputation and is the biggest local employer. The church and community work together through many activities; craft club, providing transport for medical appointments, recycling schemes, home cooked meals (started during lockdown). There is an annual flower show which attracts over 1500 people. The village is surrounded by working farms and lovely woodland.



St Michael, Whichford

The Wolfords

The parish covers the two villages of Great Wolford and Little Wolford. Both villages have working farms. The adult population is 251, plus a small number of children who either attend Acorns primary school in Long Compton or are being educated at private schools. The [Village Hall](#) in Little Wolford is a venue for social functions, suppers, quizzes, film shows, WI meetings and the occasional church service. The pub in Great Wolford is currently closed. Meanwhile pop-up pub evenings are organised on the village green with great local support.



St Michael and All Angels, Wolford

7. THE LINK MAGAZINE

[The Link](#) is a monthly magazine which covers all seven villages, edited by a committee with no church affiliation but which provides space for a message from the Rector, contact details of clergy and Benefice officers, and details of all church services of the various denominations in the area. Each village has a section for local news and events and it is supported by local advertisers.

8. THE HOUSE

The property provided for the Associate Minister is in the village of Cherington and Stourton. The house has a large master bedroom and two additional double bedrooms. The living area includes an open plan kitchen-diner-summer room and a spacious lounge. There is a downstairs toilet, an upstairs family bathroom and an en-suite bathroom attached to the master bedroom. A study pod has been built in the garden for the use of the minister.

How to contact us:

Informal conversations are very welcome with Ben Dyson, Rector of South Warwickshire Seven Group, on 01608 628229 or vicarsw7@gmail.com

For further details and an application form please contact:

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An application form can be downloaded from the Diocesan Website:

<https://coventry.anglican.org/current-vacancies.php>

Enhanced DBS disclosure is required for this post.