



# ST MARY'S CHURCH

A T H E R S T O N E

## PARISH PROFILE

*Rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness*

*Colossians 2:7.*



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# A WARM WELCOME

*"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me."*

— Matthew 10:40

Thank you for taking the time to read this profile. We hope it will help you to find out more about us, what we need and what we have to offer our new Vicar

Our intention is to share an honest reflection of our parish and the direction, we feel, God is calling us. We hope this helps you to discern whether this is the next role God is calling you to in service and ministry.

## **Who We Are - A Short Summary**

St Mary's is a welcoming and active Anglican church in the heart of Atherstone. Rooted in the love of Jesus, we are a church family committed to worship, community, and growing in faith together.

Our worship blends tradition and creativity, with services for all ages. We're deeply involved in the life of the town—hosting events, supporting local groups, and opening our doors to the community.

We value discipleship, care, and hospitality, offering groups like Children's Church, Messy Church, Tea & Chat, and Knit & Natter. Our historic building and modern Youth HQ serve as hubs of worship and community activity.

We recognise our challenges—like renewing pastoral care and maintaining our buildings—but we're excited for the future. We believe God is calling us to grow in love, service, and mission, and we're ready to walk that journey together.





# BISHOP SUMMARY

## WELCOME FROM THE BISHOP

As the new Bishop of Coventry, I am delighted that you are exploring the possibility that God may be calling you to serve at St Mary's, Atherstone. This is a challenging yet hopeful time to be a church leader in the Church of England. Here in Coventry, we are deeply committed to supporting clergy so that they may flourish in their vocation: to grow in confidence that they are loved and called by God, and to know that they are valued by their bishop, the senior team, and their lay and ordained colleagues alike.

We long for clergy who delight in the good news of Jesus Christ and who are eager to share that joy with others. Atherstone is a vibrant community with a rich history and a clear heart for reaching out with God's love. Like many churches, St Mary's is discerning new ways to grow across all generations, with a particular calling to nurture children, young people, and families. At the same time, the faithful ministry of older people continues to be a treasured gift, and you will find in Atherstone a committed and welcoming team ready to work alongside you.

Coventry carries a special calling to be a place and people of reconciliation. In a world that longs for peace, we believe God calls us to be peacemakers. If this resonates with your own sense of vocation, then Coventry Diocese may well be the place where your ministry can take root and flourish. We are excited for the years ahead and the ways God will continue to shape this calling among us all.

Please be assured of my prayers as you discern the next steps in your journey.

With every blessing,  
+Sophie

**Rt Revd Sophie Jelley**  
**Bishop of Coventry**



# DEANERY SUMMARY

## WELCOME FROM THE AREA DEAN

Atherstone is a thriving market town and the northernmost town in our Diocese. As a deanery leadership team, we are excited about this moment in the life of St Mary's. The church has welcomed new members who are eager to get involved, and there is a real sense of fresh energy and anticipation within the congregation. New missional opportunities are being explored, signs of growth are beginning to emerge, and additional resources are in place to support both the church and its next incumbent. We invite you to prayerfully consider whether God may be calling you to this role.

Within the Deanery Chapter we have a mixture of stipendiary, self-supporting, and retired clergy from a wide range of traditions. We meet monthly to pray, share in discussion, and enjoy fellowship over lunch, taking turns to host one another. Our deanery is home to a rich mix of rural and suburban churches, and we seek to encourage and support one another in ministry wherever possible.

The Diocese of Coventry has recently established six Mission Hub Churches to resource leaders and congregations in discipleship, leadership development, and the planting of new worshipping communities. All Saints Bedworth, the nearest Hub to Atherstone, is committed to offering support.

As a deanery, we are intentionally exploring new opportunities for growth. We believe this parish has significant potential, and we are excited about what God may do through the ministry of the next incumbent. Our prayer is that, as you read this profile, you will be inspired to discern whether you are being called to help St Mary's grow in faith, deepen its mission, and bring new life to the community.

With my prayers for you as you listen to God, reflect, and pray,

**Rev Dave Poultney**  
Area Dean



# PARISH VISION AND MISSION

## OUR VISION

St Mary's Church exists to serve Jesus today, and as followers of Jesus we want our mission to be His mission. We strive to follow Jesus' command to make disciples, baptize and teach His ways. We aspire to be a community of disciples and to be a people who take time each day to prayerfully ask how we can serve Him.

At St Mary's, as followers of Jesus:

- We are committed to supporting and encouraging people from all walks of life to foster deep and meaningful connections with God, each other and the wider community and to live out our faith in practical ways by sharing the good news of the gospel and making a positive impact in the world.
- Live a life that is grounded in love, compassion, and service.

## OUR CHURCH FAMILY SAY

As we move forward to a new chapter we consulted with the church family to gather their aspirations for the future. A number of themes arose as clear priorities that we believe have been led by God and could form a significant focus for our new vicar.

### Outreach/community

Many people feel we need to take church outside of the building and into the community. To focus on outreach will require us to inspire, nurture and grow more leaders and volunteers. We also need to engage more with the local community to find ways in which we can integrate and support more fully.

### Children, Families & Young People

Continue and develop the current programme by appointing a Children and Families worker to offer age-appropriate activities for all young people, re-establish links with schools and to resume Stay & Play sessions. Improving integration across our age groups is vital if we are to grow together, serve each other and deepen relationships in our church family.

### Closer Unity

Grow in our love for one another, paying particular attention to inclusivity, and provide more opportunities/activities/social events to bring the church family together.

### Prayer & Learning

Further opportunities to come together in prayer through Bible study, led parish away days and retreats.



# PARISH VISION AND MISSION

## OUR CHALLENGES

After consultation with the church family the following were identified that things St Mary's need support with:

- Pastoral care needs organising to address the challenges of the past few years
- Good communication with the congregation using a variety of means
- Being good stewards of our finances
- Encouraging people to use their God given gifts - too reliant on the same people
- Working together as a team
- Reordering the church building and improve kitchen and toilet facilities
- Take worship out into the community more
- Outreach to Men
- Listen to one another



*"St Mary's has given me the opportunity to use my gift of music to contribute to our church worship"*

*"Helped me to crystallise my faith by the opportunity to listen and share our lived experiences of faith with others"*

*"St Mary's welcomed me into their family"*

*"Introduced regular children's worship and activities to encourage the younger generation in their faith"*



# WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We hope and pray that our next vicar will lead, unite and nurture the whole church family to flourish and grow as Spirit-filled, disciplined individuals, and as a community.

We pray that they will:

- Provide inspiring Biblical-based teaching, ensuring we reach a deeper understanding of God's message and how it applies to our lives and how we can support others in that too
- Be a person of prayer who will nurture us to develop our prayer ministry
- Nurture in our church a fuller understanding of the Gifts of the Spirit that we have each been given, those realised and those yet to be discovered, enabling us all to serve God more effectively, when at church and when in the wider world
- Inspire and lead us in engaging with and taking the Gospel into our community
- A team leader who will support, encourage and grow the existing team
- Someone with experience to organise, motivate and lead a church seeking to grow
- Be able to connect with, and honour the existing varied worship styles at St Mary's and be comfortable exploring and developing new worship patterns
- Relatable and transferrable skills to support everyone who enters regardless of their age, gender, sexuality or disability
- Have an instinctive heart for those who are struggling and an ability to stand alongside people at difficult times of life, ensuring that an empathetic heart is central to our church family
- Inspire us all to participate in Pastoral Care
- Be a leader who will listen attentively, but who knows when to be directive in order to deliver the priorities
- Embrace the opportunities provided by technology and digital communication methods and be appreciative of their potential to support us in doing God's work in our church and our community
- Bring and foster enjoyment, laughter and a sense of fun



**ST MARY'S CHURCH**  
ATHERSTONE



# THE PARISH CONTEXT



The parish of Atherstone is set in the heart of North Warwickshire and encompasses the historic market town of Atherstone itself, along with parts of the surrounding area. It is a parish with a strong local identity, offering a blend of small-town charm, growing residential communities, and a sense of place that is both grounded and evolving.

The parish occupies a unique geographical peninsula shaped by diocesan boundaries. While we belong to the Diocese of Coventry, most of our nearest neighbours are parish churches from the Dioceses of Leicester, Lichfield, or Birmingham.



Atherstone lies on the ancient Roman road, Watling Street (now the A5), and is surrounded by rolling Warwickshire countryside. The town is roughly equidistant from Birmingham, Leicester, and Coventry, each about 30–40 minutes away by road. Its central location gives it strong transport links while preserving a sense of rural edge.



The town of Atherstone has a population of approximately 10,000 to 11,000 people, and this number is gradually increasing with the development of new housing. The parish reflects this upward trend and includes people from a range of ages and backgrounds.

The population is a mix of long-established families with deep local roots and newer residents moving in from surrounding cities or further afield for more affordable housing or rural living with good commuting options.

Atherstone is a predominantly White British community, though small but growing numbers of people from other ethnic backgrounds are settling in the area. The age profile skews slightly older than the national average, with a significant number of retired and semi-retired people. At the same time, there are young families and working-age adults—especially those connected to the logistics sector, retail, and local services.

Socially and economically, the parish includes a range of experiences—from stable, long-term homeowners to families experiencing the challenges of insecure employment or financial hardship. Some areas of the parish are within the top 30% of national deprivation indices, while others are more affluent. There is potential for relational evangelism and for the church to be seen more clearly as a place of hope, belonging, and spiritual depth.

# PARISH CONTEXT - STRENGTHS OF THE AREA

## **A Community with Heart**

Atherstone is known for its strong sense of community and belonging. People here care for their neighbours and take pride in local traditions, such as the historic Shrove Tuesday Ball Game—a unique event that draws the town together in celebration and good humour, the annual Dickens Festival at Christmas, which transforms the town with Victorian charm, and the Atherstone Big Weekender in June, a lively summer celebration that brings together residents and visitors alike. This deep local spirit offers fertile ground for pastoral ministry and community engagement.

## **Heritage and Character**

With its Roman origins and Tudor history, Atherstone has a distinct character shaped by centuries of change. Our High Street still reflects the charm of a traditional market town, and the past is woven into the town's story in ways that continue to inspire a sense of rootedness. Most families in the town have relations or links to the now long gone coal mining industry; however the "pit humour" and comradery of the old coal mines remains strong. Any families without links to coal mining may well have had links to the hatting industry,

## **Strategic Location**

Positioned near major transport routes, Atherstone offers both tranquillity and connectivity. While we enjoy the quieter pace of small-town life, we are well connected to the Midlands and beyond—Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Tamworth and Nuneaton are all within easy reach. The train station is just an 8 minute walk from the church with direct access to London in just over an hour. This makes the town a practical and pleasant place to live and serve.

## **A Diverse Local Economy**

While Atherstone's historic economy was built on the hatting industry, today it benefits from employment in the logistics sector and several local businesses. Aldi's national distribution centre and offices are based here, providing significant local employment.

## **An Active Church Presence**

The parish is known for its warm welcome, committed lay involvement, and desire to be a visible, caring presence in the community. There is a solid foundation for pastoral ministry and space for fresh vision and leadership.





# PARISH CONTEXT - CHALLENGES

## Shifting Economic Landscape

While logistics offers jobs, the nature of the work can be transient or limited in progression. Supporting people in finding purpose and spiritual grounding in the midst of economic pressures is an important opportunity for ministry.

## Strain on Local Services

Growth in population and housing developments have created pressure on schools, healthcare, and infrastructure. These challenges bring pastoral opportunities—to be a source of practical help and hope for those navigating stretched systems.

## Changes on the High Street

Like many towns, Atherstone has seen changes in shopping habits and the decline of some retail spaces. However, our town centre still maintains a core of independent shops and local businesses, and the church has an important role to play in fostering connection, resilience, and community cohesion.

## Transport and Accessibility

While roads are good, public transport is more limited, especially for those without a car. The parish will benefit from a clergy person who values presence, flexibility, and building relationships in a range of settings.

## Growth and Identity

As new housing developments emerge, there is a real need to build bridges between long-standing residents and newer arrivals. The church can be a vital space of welcome and belonging—a community of grace that brings people together across backgrounds.



# PARISH CONTEXT - PUBLIC SERVICES

## Education

St. Mary's does not have a dedicated faith school directly attached to it. This, however, fuels our ambition to build and maintain robust links with all the local schools within the parish.

The schools in the parish are:

Outwoods Primary School: 396 on roll with a resources SEND provision catering for 10 pupils. Ofsted Rating: Good (Latest report: 19 September 2023)

Racemeadow Primary Academy: 365 on roll. Ofsted Rating: Good: Latest report: 13 March 2023

St Benedict's Catholic Primary Academy: 182 on roll. Ofsted Rating: Good: Latest report: 13 June 2023

The Queen Elizabeth Academy (Secondary - no sixth form): 724 on roll. Ofsted Rating: Good (Latest report: 28 June 2022)

Post-16 students from Atherstone typically travel to nearby towns to continue their education, with the most common destinations being Polesworth, Nuneaton or Tamworth. There are good public transport links to all these towns, making it convenient for students from Atherstone and the surrounding areas to travel for their post-16 education.

## Other Public Services

Atherstone does not have a hospital within the town itself. The nearest hospital is George Eliot Hospital located in College Street, Nuneaton, about 8.8 miles away. There are, however, two doctors surgeries within the town.

Regarding police services, Atherstone Police Station on Sheepy Road was closed some years ago. The nearest active police station is in Nuneaton at 74 Vicarage Street, roughly 5 miles from Atherstone.

For fire services, Atherstone is served by the Atherstone Fire Station located on Kings Avenue. This station operates mainly on an on-call basis but is staffed during periods of high demand to ensure the community's safety.

Atherstone falls under the jurisdiction of several councils:

- Atherstone Town Council, manages community amenities and events within the town and is based at Council House on South Street.
- North Warwickshire Borough Council, with offices also on South Street in Atherstone, handles wider services including housing, waste collection, local planning and leisure services for the borough.
- Warwickshire County Council, headquartered at Shire Hall in Warwick, is responsible for education, highways, social services, and libraries across the county, including Atherstone.



# WORSHIP AND CHURCH LIFE

Our worship is rooted in the Anglican tradition, but open-hearted and adaptable, blending the familiar with the fresh. We value accessible liturgy, thoughtful preaching, and music that embraces both hymns and contemporary styles. Regular Sunday services are complemented by family-friendly gatherings such as Messy Church and Into the Light, which encourage participation from all ages in relaxed and joyful ways.

We're a community that cherishes reverence, warmth, and togetherness—and we're excited to grow. We welcome a new vicar who can help us deepen our spiritual life, develop creativity in our worship, and strengthen our engagement with all generations. There is room here for vision, encouragement, and the shaping of something vibrant together.

Our regular rhythm of worship reflects a blend of tradition, creativity, and pastoral care. Services are held weekly and offer something for everyone, while remaining open to the needs and rhythms of our local community.

## **1st Sunday – Into the Light Service and Evening Prayer**

Our "Into the Light" service is a family-friendly gathering designed especially with children and families in mind, though everyone is warmly welcome. It's a more informal and creative service, providing an accessible space for all to explore faith together. Later that evening we have an evening prayer service.

## **2nd & 4th Sundays – Holy Communion**

These services follow a more traditional structure, centred around Holy Communion and rooted in scripture and prayer.

## **3rd Sunday – Morning Prayer**

A quieter and reflective service of Morning Prayer offering space for contemplation and communal intercession.

## **Monthly – Fresh Bread**

Once a month, we gather for our Fresh Bread service on a Sunday evening—an informal, relaxed space for worship and reflection. With a focus on contemporary music and a more intimate setting, this service offers a chance to pause, pray, and explore faith in a quieter, more personal way.



## **Attendance and Events**

In 2024 the following were held at St. Mary's

- 2 Weddings
- 7 Baptisms
- 13 Funerals
- 1 Marriage blessing

The expected attendance was 40-50 for a Sunday Morning Service. The total number on the electoral roll for 2025 was 82 of whom 68 were residents and 14 were non-residents.

# WORSHIP AND CHURCH LIFE

Our **worship group** is a close-knit and committed team who lead music at every service, rain or shine. We blend traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs to create an inclusive and vibrant space for the congregation to encounter Jesus Christ through music.

The group includes two guitarists, a pianist, a drummer, a flautist, and five singers. While we come from a range of musical backgrounds and skill levels, we share a deep desire to use our gifts faithfully. What we may lack in technical precision, we make up for in heart, unity, and prayerful preparation.

We serve not only our Sunday gatherings but also regularly participate in special events such as Easter and Christmas services. Looking ahead, we're excited to explore more opportunities to bring worship beyond the church walls and into the wider community.

At the core of what we do is a simple purpose: to help people worship Jesus Christ. Whether we're leading a quiet moment of reflection or a joyful celebration, we aim to stir faith and draw hearts toward Him.



Our **Study Group started** during Covid, by meeting once a week on Zoom.

Afterwards, the participants requested that we meet on a fortnightly basis, and so we meet at 7pm on the first and third Thursdays.

It is led by John, Lay Reader, and Keith, Reader in training, on alternate topics.

Since we started, we have looked at:

- The Book of Isaiah
- The Book of Revelation
- Jesus in the Old Testament
- Judas Iscariot
- Ascension and Pentecost in the Book of Acts
- Jesus fulfils the Old Testament
- The Minor Prophets of the Old Testament
- Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus
- Satan in God's perfect plan
- The Second Coming
- Relatives of Jesus amongst others.

We did initially alternate our Thursday evenings with a Prayer Group, led by our Into the Light leader, Suzanne, this has currently been rested.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a key way we show our faith in Jesus, through service, fostering relationships and creating meaningful connections with community groups and events. Through our initiatives, we aim to bring people together, celebrate diversity, and provide a supportive environment for all. This is promoted on our town's Facebook Forum and St. Mary's Facebook page.

Our parish is actively involved in the community and participates in various committees that organise local events. This includes The Atherstone Partnership, which aims to promote local businesses, events, and activities in Atherstone, as well as the Dickens committee.

We support annual town events such as the Big Weekender in June, where streets are closed and stalls and entertainment take place all over the town, the Classic car show where again streets are closed and hundreds of classic style cars and motorbikes fill the town, and Dickens Day which marks the start of Christmas activities, with stalls and entertainment around town, ending in

fireworks. These all provide opportunities for community engagement, with the Church offering a place to talk, and hospitality with various refreshments along with other activities.

The church is available for hire for concerts organized by local councillors and other local groups to raise funds for charity. This year, events have included performances by The D Day Darlings and an Abba Tribute evening.

Atherstone Farmers and Artisan Markets are held monthly on the market square. The church is open during these times, providing children's activities and a café. Additionally, we have hosted the Teen Market, where young entrepreneurs can showcase their creative talents in a cost-free environment.

The A Town Sound Choir uses the church as their rehearsal venue and holds concerts there twice a year.

As part of our Parish community outreach our St. Mary's weekly "Tea and Chat" sessions, aimed at the lonely and vulnerable, bring the community into Church to enjoy hospitality, fun and friendship. In addition our weekly "Knit and

Natter" group brings together local crafters of varying kinds, who share their skills with others whilst enjoying fellowship and supporting various charities with their skills. The Knit and Natter group donate their funds to support St Mary's and various local charities



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Our Lay Reader and a group from our congregation hold a short service at Bracebridge Court and Bentley House care homes monthly.

We have engaged with the local primary schools by our previous vicar's wife going into their assemblies, Racemeadow primary have come into Church for some of their celebrations especially Harvest and Christmas while our Senior school TQEA come in for their Christmas service and other events.

The local scouts and schools come into Church to learn about it's history, and follow the children's heritage trail.

As we are a prime location on the Market Square we host various town events including the Mayor's Civic Service, the Atherstone Music Awards, and recently the launch of the CAB mobile unit by our MP.

Our Youth HQ building is rented out

to various organizations. Slimming World, the local art group, and a Pilates group hold their weekly sessions there, a new venture sponsored by Warwickshire County Council providing Day Care is also starting there shortly.

Warwickshire Vision Support meets fortnightly to offer advice, support, and information for those with sight loss. Alcoholics Anonymous also uses our venue twice a week.

Our GFS group holds 3 meetings a week in the Youth HQ for girls aged 5 to 18, around 50 girls attend weekly, this group is the biggest GFS in the country.

The local Priscilla Gent charity, whose majority of trustees are St. Mary's members, meets regularly to provide relief for those in need, hardship, or distress.





# CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

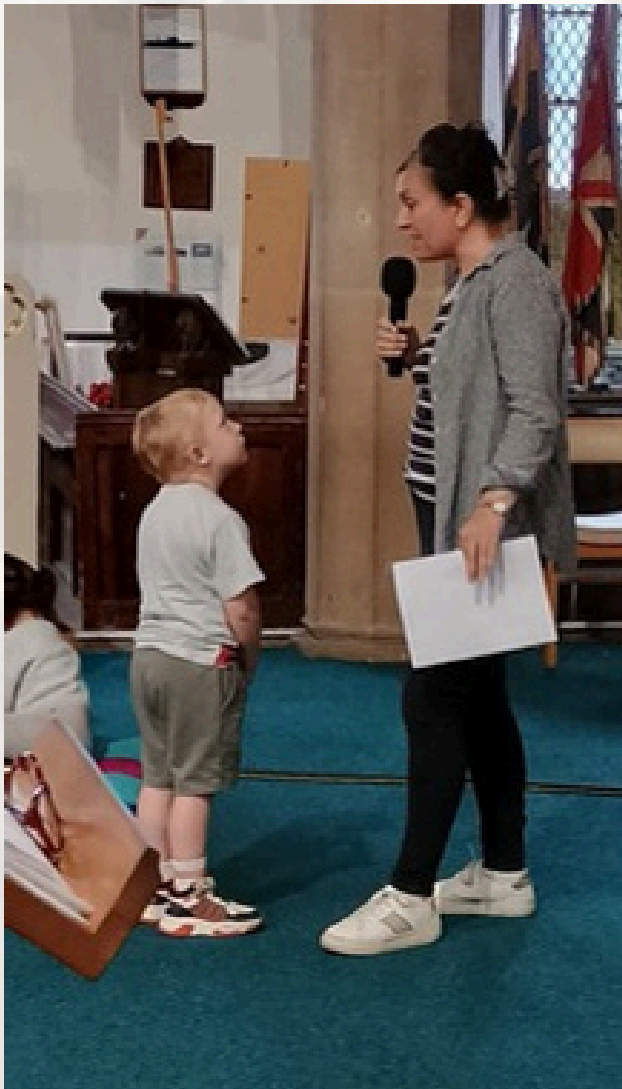
Building on the service pattern described previously, the “Into the Light” service—named by the children themselves—is an extension of the weekly programme of activities for children and takes place once a month. Designed to bring together all age groups within the church community, the service places children and young people at its heart.

Creative and contemporary in style, “Into the Light” offers a fresh approach to worship that is especially engaging for younger members. Prayer is expressed in imaginative ways, such as writing prayers on paper aeroplanes and launching them across the church, or contributing to a visual display of dove-shaped prayer notes. Music and songs often include actions to encourage participation, and Bible stories are shared through child-friendly videos in formats familiar to young people, making the message both accessible and meaningful.





# CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES



Children's Church at St Mary's runs weekly for children aged 5–11, taking place alongside the main service. Children leave for Children's Church when the readings begin and rejoin the congregation in time for Communion—when it is part of the service.

Each session typically includes a Bible reading and story, followed by themed activities such as crafts, games, and prayer. These sessions are designed to be fun, meaningful, and rooted in scripture, helping children grow in their faith in an age-appropriate and engaging way.

The group is led by two dedicated leaders and supported by a rota of four volunteers. Suzanne, our Children's Church Coordinator, began volunteering with the group over ten years ago and has been leading the ministry for the past eight years. She is supported by Libby as a co-leader, alongside a committed team of volunteers.





# CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Our leaders are passionate about children's ministry and feel strongly called by the Holy Spirit to this work. Their sense of purpose and vision has helped the group flourish with renewed energy and direction. The team shares a deep sense of mission for the growth of children and youth ministry at St Mary's, with a growing vision to expand provision for teenagers as well.

## **Messy Church**

Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, we had a popular and well attended monthly Messy Church group, which was run by an external provider. Since the re-opening of society following the pandemic, we took the leadership of Messy Church back into the church community's hands with a regular group of volunteers to lead the monthly sessions and provide fellowship and faith as an outreach to the local community.

At present, we are going through a transition in the leadership of this group and are looking for further support with the advertising, planning and momentum of this vital part of our ministry to the wider town.



# SAFEGUARDING

St Mary's is committed to the safeguarding, care and nurture of everyone within our church community. Protecting everyone involved in church activities is a shared responsibility. Our Parish Safeguarding Officer ensures that all relevant members are DBS checked and our policies are upheld.

We have recently expanded our Safeguarding Team to provide support for our lead officer to manage the Safeguarding Training.

Our dashboard is currently being updated in accordance with the Diocesan Audit.

Our focus is on ensuring our risk assessments and volunteer training is up to date to ensure all children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe in our care.

Promoting  
**a safer  
church**



# PARISH LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The PCC at St Mary's is currently one of the largest it has been in recent years, reflecting a vibrant culture of volunteering, service, and shared responsibility within our congregation. The council is made up of 11 elected members, along with our two churchwardens, lay reader, deanery synod representative, and PCC secretary.

The PCC meets monthly, with many members also taking an active role in leading smaller working groups focused on key areas of church life. The current focus groups are:

- Finance
- Building Care
- Events and Community
- Fundraising
- Social and Fellowship

Each group meets independently between PCC meetings to plan and carry out specific projects. These groups then report back to the full PCC, providing updates and inviting feedback. This structure enables more in-

depth discussion and informed decision-making, while also allowing progress to be made efficiently across a range of priorities.

St Mary's is fortunate to employ a dedicated Parish Administrator for three days a week, providing essential support to the clergy, PCC, and wider church community.

The administrator manages internal and external communications, oversees room bookings, and coordinates the practical aspects of church life and events. She also maintains key information displays—such as the volunteer display and the “What's On” board—as well as managing the church's social media presence and digital communications.

Her role brings valuable consistency and organisation to the church's operations, helping to keep the congregation informed and enabling others to focus more fully on ministry and mission.

## KEY LAY LEADERS AND STAFF

### **Sharon Holland**

Church Warden and Lay Chairperson

### **Richard Moore**

Church Warden and Safeguarding Officer

### **Keith Wise**

Treasurer, Verger and Music Group Leader

### **Tarryn Le Gresley**

Parish Administrator

### **John Stock**

Licensed Lay Reader

### **Pauline Wise**

Lead Safeguarding Officer

### **Joan Ball**

PCC Secretary

### **Suzanne Grimstead**

Children's Church Co-ordinator

# PARISH LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

St Mary's has long been blessed with a strong and deeply rooted culture of volunteering, clearly reflected in the active involvement of our PCC and wider congregation. From reading scripture, leading prayers, and serving refreshments at Sunday services, to stewarding major community events like Dickens Event and the Atherstone Car Show, our volunteers play a vital role in the life of the church.

They also generously give their time and energy to support fundraising events and help run initiatives across the church, demonstrating a shared commitment to service and hospitality.

Our core group of volunteers is, however, an aging one, and this presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the future. While their dedication, experience, and institutional knowledge are invaluable assets, we recognise the importance of ensuring continuity and sustainability in our work.

Over the next 5 to 10 years, renewal and the recruitment of younger volunteers will become a key strategic priority for us and we will need support, guidance and leadership to make this happen.



Church Wardens: Richard Moore and Sharon Holland



# OUR HERITAGE AND BUILDINGS



Our church building has a rich history, that many involved in the church are proud of. The building stands in a central and prominent position in the market square, serving as a visible and welcoming presence in the heart of the community.

St. Mary's is also a Grade II Listed Building due to the Kemp stained glass windows that themselves hold a remarkable history.

Some of the highlights of the building's history include the fact that many historians believe that the future King Henry VII received communion at St Mary's on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 with much of his army encamped in the fields surrounding Atherstone.

Another interesting period in the building's history are the visits of a young Florence Nightingale to her close friends, the Bracebridge family of Atherstone Hall, including attendance for services at St Mary's whilst she was their guest. She embroidered an apron for one of the maids of the Bracebridge family which was later

donated to St Mary's and is on display in a dedicated 'museum' area of the church that received lottery funding for its inception. This also includes an exhibit celebrating the remarkable sacrifices of the families of Atherstone during the first and second world war and the flag and ensigns of all three royal navy ships named 'HMS Atherstone'.

Atherstone's only secondary school, Queen Elizabeth Academy as it is now known, was founded by charter inside the church's very walls in 1573 as a grammar school with the chancel finding a new use following the dissolution of the monasteries. This arrangement continued until the school relocated in 1864 and the church was reunited as a single parish church building.

Further information on the history of the church can be found on our website and a wealth of literature is on display around the church to give more information to our regular visitors including a tour of the church and a children's trail.

# OUR HERITAGE AND BUILDINGS



As you consider this role, we want to be transparent that our historic buildings are in ongoing need of renovation. We envision this as a vital project for the commercial, social, and spiritual regeneration of our site.

As with all historic buildings, ongoing maintenance is essential. In recent years, the Nave roof has been replaced, while the Chancel roof is still awaiting renewal. The lighting has been upgraded to LEDs throughout the Nave and Chancel, and the heating system in both areas has also been modernised. Some repairs have been carried out on the stonework of three sides of the Bell Tower, though further work is still required. We also faced a significant water problem, which has now been successfully resolved.

The building has seen increasingly diverse and frequent use by the wider community for a number of years, for everything from worship to concerts, exhibitions, and a "HUB" supported by North Warwickshire Borough Council.

This growing usage means that building management issues are integral to the role, requiring a minister with good imagination and a collaborative spirit to work with the local community in delivering this valuable project. We believe in a partnership between the church and the town in caring for and managing this cherished landmark.

It is important to also note that there is no graveyard attached directly to the church. Atherstone Cemetery, on Sheepy Road, is managed by the Town Council, who also maintain the lawns and trees around our building.

Another item to note is that we have a set of 8 bells which are regularly rung by the local ringers and have ringing teams from further afield visit our church regularly.





# OUR HERITAGE AND BUILDINGS

## Youth HQ

Beyond the historic walls of our main church building, you will discover the Youth HQ, one of our two "modern" outbuildings. This facility is far more than just an auxiliary space; it's a vibrant and increasingly vital hub for youth work and wider community engagement, reflecting our commitment to serving all ages in Atherstone.

The Youth HQ is located adjacent to the main church, easily accessible and designed to be a flexible space. It has in recent years received a significant makeover, with funding from sources like North Warwickshire Borough Council and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. This refurbishment included replacement of windows, upgraded toilet facilities (including disabled access), and redecoration throughout. These improvements made it a much more welcoming, comfortable, and functional environment.

Currently, the Youth HQ is a hive of activity, hosting a diverse range of groups and initiatives. It is notably home to the largest Girls Friendly Society (GFS) group in the country, which runs multiple sessions for different age groups (School Years 1-3, 4-6, and 7+), offering games, crafts, cooking, and various other activities and trips. This makes it a significant centre for youth outreach for girls in the town.

However, its utility extends far beyond traditional youth groups. The Youth HQ is also regularly used by adult yoga classes, Slimming World sessions, Vision UK, AA, and various other local organisations and community functions, as indicated by the busy calendar of events.



# THE VICARAGE

The Vicarage is a modern, 5-bedroom detached house, ideally situated on a quiet street directly adjacent to St. Mary's Church, offering convenient access to your place of ministry and the vibrant town centre.

The property provides comfortable and practical living spaces, designed to accommodate both personal and professional needs. On the ground floor, you will find a versatile lounge/diner with a convenient dividing door, allowing for flexible use, whether for family life or informal parish gatherings. A dedicated study offers a quiet space for your work and reflection, complemented by a downstairs toilet for convenience. The kitchen is well-appointed for daily living.

Upstairs, the vicarage offers five comfortable bedrooms and a family bathroom, providing ample space for a family or guests.

Its proximity to the church means you will be truly at the heart of the community, able to easily engage with church activities and the life of Atherstone. We believe it offers a private and comfortable sanctuary for you and your family, while also being an accessible base for your ministry.





# FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

St. Mary's currently finds itself in a financial position to which it is not accustomed.

For many years, God has provided us with sufficient income to match our expenditure, and we have fully paid our Parish Share.

With the help of grants, we have been able to carry out extensive work to our building: our roof was repaired at a total cost of £300,000, a new heating system was installed (we had been without heating in the nave and chancel for around 20 years), mainly due to a generous grant from a member of the congregation, and our old lighting system was completely renewed. In addition to this, the Town Council have installed, as part of their system, CCTV cameras to cover vulnerable parts of the building.

We do still have issues with the building, especially the tower, an outdated kitchen, and two buildings being prefabricated. However, we would be looking for outside grants to assist us, although we are aware that match funding will be required.

Our Quinquennial Report is due towards the end of the year, sadly little has been actioned with regard to the last two reports, and extensive fabric repairs are outstanding.

The provision of heating has enabled us to use the chancel for concerts, some organized by ourselves, and others in cooperation with the local Town councillors.

However, since Covid, we have found that our income has diminished, but, even though we have been paying a reduced Parish Share for the past 6 years, our expenditure outstrips our income, and we have had to rely on what little reserves that we had. Our accounts can be found on the Charity Commission website.

That said, our financial situation changed around 2 years ago, when we were blessed with an inheritance from a member of the congregation of £1 million. We are now wondering how to spend this wisely and in accordance with God's will and purpose. This is currently invested with the CCLA, and we do not propose to touch it until our new priest comes amongst us, as we recognize that he or she will want to pray with us as to what purpose this is put to.

This, however, does not alleviate the day-to-day financial pressures on us, other than the interest from the investment being used to supplement our normal income in order to balance the books. The interest also helps us to afford a Parish Administrator, and in the future, we are looking to employ a Youth & Families Worker from this source.

We have a newly formed Financial team who are currently looking for ways to increase income and reduce expenditure so that we can live within our means in the future. It is fair to say that we have not had a Stewardship campaign for several years, although we have talked about finances within the context of giving to Christ within services. However, there has not been any follow up.

# FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

We have a policy that 10% of our giving from Church members is tithed to supporting mission partners which continued up to 2024 where we sent slightly above 10% to support with an fire incident in the community of Knapset, Kenya. It is our firm intention to continue this next year, after a break in 2025. We were supporting the aforementioned charity in Kenya with whom our previous vicar had close ties with, this has now ceased.

The PCC encourages a faith-filled approach to finances and is committed to strategic activities, trusting our Lord to provide what is needed to sustain and grow our core activities of prayer and worship. This includes our agreement with the Diocese to pay in full the Parish Share for 2026 and 2027. We will be looking for guidance from God and our priest so that our financial assets are used to God's glory and purpose.





# WHAT WE CAN OFFER

At St Mary's, Atherstone, we are committed to supporting our vicar both spiritually and practically. We understand that ministry is a shared journey, and we are eager to offer encouragement, partnership, and care in all aspects of parish life.

## **Supportive PCC:**

Our Parochial Church Council is proactive, collaborative, and prayerful. We value open communication and work to share responsibility for the mission and ministry of the church. We aim to be a source of encouragement and practical help, enabling the vicar to focus on leading, pastoring, and preaching.

## **Active Congregation:**

Our church family is welcoming, willing, and engaged. Many members contribute their time and talents to church activities, outreach, worship, and care for the building. We believe in shared ministry and are keen to work alongside our vicar in developing the church's mission in the community.

## **Administrative & Practical Help:**

We have capable volunteers who assist with administration, safeguarding, building maintenance, and pastoral care. We are also open to exploring how we might strengthen this support depending on the needs and preferences of our new vicar.

## **Prayer and Encouragement:**

We will pray regularly for our vicar and their family, and we are committed to creating a culture of appreciation, mutual respect, and pastoral care within the congregation.

## **Work-Life Balance:**

We recognise the importance of rest and boundaries in ministry. We will support and respect the vicar's time off and family life, and we are committed to ensuring the role is sustainable and life-giving.

## **LOCAL CLERGY NETWORKS & DEANERY SUPPORT.**

St Mary's is part of the Diocese of Coventry and the Deanery of Nuneaton, which provides a vital network of support for clergy and lay leaders across local parishes. The deanery clergy regularly meet for prayer, mutual encouragement, and practical collaboration on mission and ministry within the region. This close-knit network fosters shared learning and resource sharing, strengthening the work of individual churches like St Mary's.

The Diocese of Coventry supports parishes through training, pastoral care, safeguarding guidance, and strategic initiatives aimed at growing healthy, sustainable churches. Being part of this wider structure enables St Mary's to benefit from diocesan resources and to collaborate with neighbouring parishes to serve the local community effectively.

# THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read this, our parish profile. We hope we have set out both the nature of the challenge and the potential that can be tapped into.

As you reflect on what you have read, we invite you to consider how your gifts, vision, and faith might enrich our community. We are eager to welcome someone who shares our commitment and enthusiasm, and who can help us nurture the seeds of growth already sown here.

We will do whatever we can to support you in your new role. We believe that, together, we can build upon the foundations already laid, cherishing both tradition and the promise of renewal. In joining our parish, you will find a congregation ready to walk alongside you, offering both support and friendship as we grow in faith and service.

We look forward to meeting you and sharing in the next chapter of our parish's journey together. If you have any questions or would like further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch. May this period of discernment be filled with wisdom, hope, and a sense of God's presence guiding us all.

