

# 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 our Group and our Parishes*

Spring 2024

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## **PRIEST-IN-CHARGE CHURCHES OF ARDEN**

At its heart, the role of this post is to lead our churches in fulfilling the Diocesan Mission Purpose of:

*Worshipping God*  
*Making New Disciples*  
*Transforming Communities*



## The Alcester Deanery

The Churches of Arden group forms part of 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 six full-time incumbents, and three 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 of clergy who enjoy working collegially. We are at a Kairos opportunity moment in the deanery, in that several incumbents have retired or moved on from parish ministry at the same time. So we are exploring radically new ways of sharing ministry across ecclesiastical boundaries to develop a truly Deanery-wide approach.

We are looking for the next Priest-in-Charge of the Churches of Arden to be a Rural Pioneer who enjoys working collegially with clergy colleagues, and who will be both the Priest-in-Charge well rooted in the Churches of Arden, 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 benefit the wider deanery.

We look forward to welcoming a creative colleague, who enjoys variety, to 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.

Reverend Kate Mier  
Area Dean



## Overview

***Thank you for your interest in coming to join us and the Alcester Deanery!  
We hope these pages will be of help to you in discerning whether God is  
calling you to us – but best of all, come and visit us and find out for yourself  
what life is like in our four Churches of Arden!***

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 a welcoming community, journeying together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to our villages at large. A variety of services are held across the group, from BCP and Common Worship, to Café Church and other more contemporary forms of worship and teaching. 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 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays; we share a part-time parish secretary and a Churches of Arden website.

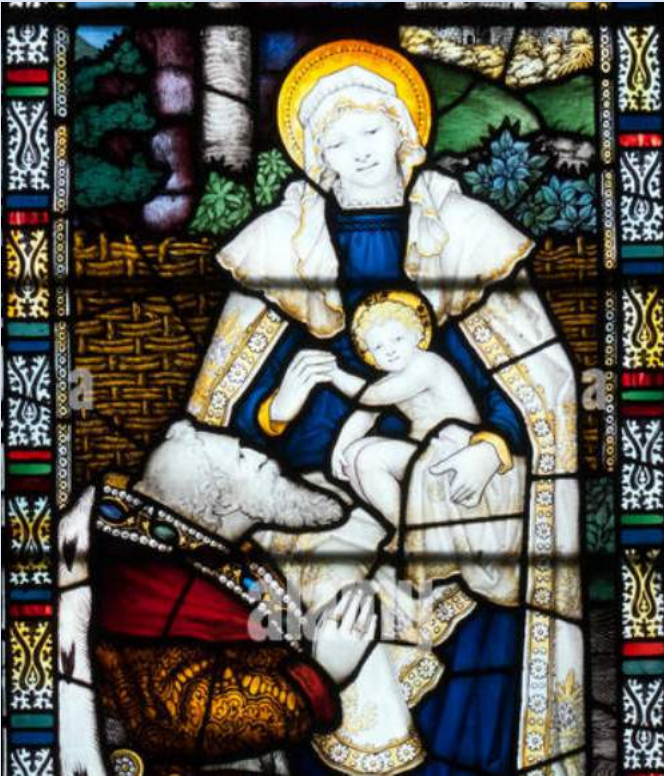
We currently have eight house groups meeting within our four parishes. These groups usually meet weekly or fortnightly, some in the daytime others in the evening. We have women's groups, men's groups and mixed groups, and all of them welcome new members.

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 the help of 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 planning to restart Open the Book in our schools.

Like most churches, our congregations have taken time to recover from the pandemic. Our mission is grow – by being open, welcoming and relevant to all the people in our parishes, encouraging them to come and see what our church and our faith have to offer.



## Overview



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 – for which we need the help of our new incumbent! – are:

- to have a period of settled leadership after many unsettled years, so we can grow spiritually
- to encourage the development of the natural links across our parishes, in our worship and our outreach – while respecting our different traditions
- to build on our youth and families ministry
- to continue re-building our congregations after the hiatus of recent years
- 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 currently planning a pilgrimage to Holy Island in 2025 for the whole Group.

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, our financial resources 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:

- through example, teaching and presence, and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will invigorate us spiritually as a church and as individuals
- prefers to achieve results through collaboration and team-working, and has a successful record of doing so
- believes in the power of encouragement to 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



## 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



## WOOTTON WAWEN

- Population c1400
- Social mix – farmers, commuters, artisans. High proportion of elderly and widowed
- CofE primary school
- Electoral roll 36
- Common Worship services and Café Church
- Grade 1\* listed church – the oldest in Warwickshire, with Saxon sanctuary
- Find us at B95 6BE



## 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



# 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, a pub 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 the last Quinquennial inspection - the next is due this year.

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 have recently organised a ‘West Gallery Band’ of about 10 instrumentalists, who play for occasional services and other events.

### ***Our 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.



*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 have been running an Alpha course in Claverdon again in 2024, with around 40 attendees.
- 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 recently recruited a part-time replacement with whom we are currently refreshing our plans.
- 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 people!
- For several years we 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 currently planning a return visit to Holy Island in 2025, in which there is already considerable interest from across our four parishes.
- Our Pastoral Group of a few 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, May 2023. (Church Centre on the left)*



*Christingle 2023*

*At the Harvest lunch, 2023*

## 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 2019 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 Wootton 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 continues to host musical and theatrical events and in the last year we hosted the Riding Lights Theatre Company and concerts by the Alcester Male Voice Choir and Alcester Silver Band.
- 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 (this year 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*



*World Day of Prayer 2024*

*Immanuel's Ground – one of many concerts at St Peter's*



# St Peter's, Wootton Wawen



*Refurbishing the turret clock*



*Harvest Supper, 2023*



*Café church, with coffee and pastries*



*Remembrance Day 2023*



# 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, and we are open to changing to other schedules.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday
Claverdon	11am Holy Communion (CW)	11am All-age service Lay-led	11am Bible café in Church Centre Lay-led	11am Holy Communion (CW)	Joint service rotating between churches
Preston Bagot	9.30am Morning Prayer (BCP)	9.30am Morning Prayer (BCP) Lay-led		9.30am Holy Communion (BCP)	
Wootton Wawen	11am Café Church Lay-led	11am Holy Communion (CW)	9.30am 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 2023. 14 weddings are currently planned in 2024 across the Group.

	Claverdon	Preston Bagot	Wootton Wawen	Aston Cantlow
Baptisms	4	0	1	1
Weddings	1	0	2	0
Funerals	8	2	7	2
Burial of ashes	4	1	4	2

## Administration and communication

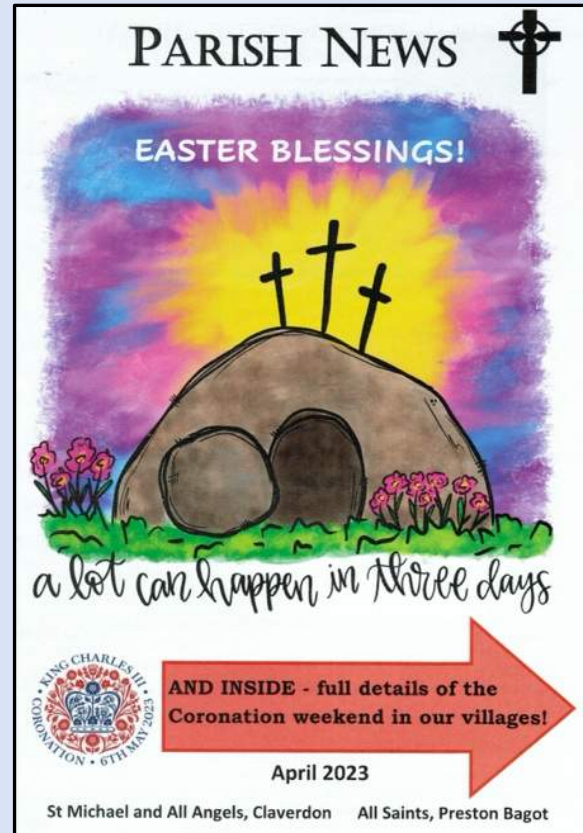
The parish office is in the Church Centre in Claverdon. This is the base for our part-time Parish Secretary, who also works from home.

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

The Churches of Arden has a dedicated website, maintained by our Parish Secretary – [www.churchesofarden.org.uk](http://www.churchesofarden.org.uk)

Other communication channels include a weekly newsletter, Facebook pages at [www.facebook.com/church.claverdon/](http://www.facebook.com/church.claverdon/); and YouTube videos at [www.youtube.com/user/claverdonchurch](http://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
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>106,485</b>	<b>22,805</b>	<b>56,228</b>	<b>16,458</b>	<b>201,976</b>
General expenditure	74,111	10,157	17,580	17,680	119,528
Parish Share	37,600	12,000	18,402	4,700	72,702
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>111,711</b>	<b>22,157</b>	<b>35,982</b>	<b>22,380</b>	<b>192,230</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(5,226)</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>*20,336</b>	<b>(5,833)</b>	<b>10,005</b>
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](mailto:barry.dugmore@coventry.anglican.org)

Tel: 07487578311

Area Dean – Reverend Kate Meir

Email: [rector@ardenmarches.co.uk](mailto:rector@ardenmarches.co.uk)

Tel: 01527 852830

For further details and an application form please contact:

HR Officer and Archdeacons' Administrator – Debbie Niblett,

Email: [Debbie.Niblett@Coventry.Anglican.org](mailto: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](http://churchesofarden.org.uk)