

Updated: April 2024

Pastoral Mission Opportunity

House for Duty based in Colton.



Sunday plus two days

Benefice of Abbots Bromley, Blithfield,
Colton, Colwich and Great Haywood

Pastoral Mission Opportunity

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**THE BISHOP
OF LICHFIELD**

A word of welcome to the Diocese of Lichfield

Cradled at the intersection of the Midlands and the North, and the interface between England and Wales, the Diocese of Lichfield is the ancient centre of Christianity in what was the Kingdom of Mercia.

We are rightfully grateful for the inheritance we have from our first bishop St Chad that leads us to focus on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism as we live and serve among the communities of Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country.

By answering God's call to minister in Lichfield Diocese you will benefit from being part of a wide family, mixing with people serving in a variety of contexts – from the grittiest inner-city neighbourhoods of Stoke and the Black Country, to the leafiest rural parishes of Staffordshire and Shropshire, to the sparsest upland communities of the Staffordshire Moorlands and Welsh Borders.

And we embrace the widest spectrum of church traditions – evangelical and catholic, liberal and conservative, choral and charismatic – as we journey together in mission. As a colleague recently put it, it is our goal to be a 'spacious and gracious diocese'.

It is my determination and that of my episcopal colleagues that your calling to minister with us in Lichfield Diocese will be a time of encouragement, fulfilment, challenge and joy. You will not be alone in your ministry; as part of the wider team our colleagues among the diocesan staff keenly bring their various specialisms both spiritual and practical to offer resource and support as you serve our parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies.

+ Michael Ipgrave

A caring diocese

Lichfield Diocese is one of the largest in the country, covering an area of 1744 square miles and serving a population of more than 2 million.

The diocese consists of three episcopal areas with three Area Bishops (of Wolverhampton, Stafford and Shrewsbury) ministering alongside the Diocesan Bishop, each overseeing a different geographic area. This indicates the diocese’s commitment to its different contexts, and to the pastoral care of our clergy.

Homes and schools

We aim to provide high quality housing for our clergy with a continuous programme of improvements to houses and responsive, specialist contractors for emergencies.

As well as the 208 Church of England schools in the diocese, there are many good schools and colleges that will welcome clergy’ children, and a number of higher education centres can be found in Stoke, Keele, Stafford, Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Vocation and mission of all

Our vision for the diocese is that all people, lay and ordained alike, will grow ever more deeply into their vocation as disciples of Christ. We hope to become a Church where all our members are equipped to know they are called by God to worship and to be the eyes, hands, feet and mouth of Christ in their own contexts.

To further these aims, and to develop creative patterns of ministry, we ask all training parishes to offer ‘sixth-day’ opportunities for curates – which might be a chaplaincy attachment (school, hospital, prison or hospice), involvement with local gardening ventures, night-shelter involvement – to mention just a few possibilities.

Staffordshire prides itself on being ‘the Creative County’: Shropshire is the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, and the Black Country is renowned for its industry and all have significant opportunities for spouses who wish to develop careers in any sphere.

For those days off when you need space away from the parish, the area has everything you could wish for – except the sea: wild landscapes, cultured museums and stately homes. Sports of many kinds (including Premiership football) and at least two theme parks



Road and rail links

For those with family and friends in other parts of the country, the diocese has great transport links: the M6/M6Toll bisects the centre of the Diocese north-south, and the M5 originates at our southern tip. Heading west, the A5/M54 give easy access to north and mid Wales, while the A50, A5 and M6Toll give swift access to the M1, M42 and A38 for the East Midlands and the south-east.



Rail links are also good with all major towns having direct services to London and Birmingham and four major airports surround our borders – Birmingham, East Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool.

Leisure and pleasure

Lichfield Diocese has everything but the sea. For walkers and climbers, there's an extensive network of canals, Cannock Chase, The Roaches, and the Shropshire—Welsh borders (for example). If you're into more organised fun, Alton Towers and Drayton Manor Theme Park can provide it. And then there's many museums including Walsall's New Art Gallery and the RAF museum at Cosford; not to mention excellent sporting options for both watching and participating – from premier ship football to the Tamworth Snowdome. Along with Wedgwood, theatres and cinemas, restaurants and superb tea shops just begging to be discovered...



Dovedale (location of one of the Diocese's two residential retreat centres) / Shaun Dunmall (wikipedia) / CC BY-SA 2.0 4.0

If shopping is your thing, there is a range of options, from the chic boutiques at Barton Marina, and Shrewsbury to large malls in or near the urban centres. We're fortunate in being the home of many fine ales and beers brewed in Burton on Trent (the museum is well worth a visit), and Staffordshire oatcakes are a unique local delicacy to be discovered.

Where are we?

The Benefice of Abbots Bromley, Blithfield, Colton, Colwich and Great Haywood is on the outskirts of Rugeley; 12 miles from Lichfield, 12 from Stafford and 8 miles from Uttoxeter.

The benefice is on the edge of Cannock Chase (which is designated AONB) and also within easy reach of the Peak District National Park. It has excellent train facilities with a railway station within the parish and an hourly connection to London and Birmingham. The regional airports fly to Europe, US and the Far East and are within an hour's drive. There is also a

lively Arts and Culture scene with local as well as regional activities. Birmingham Symphony Hall and Town Hall host excellent concerts etc and these and regional theatres are all within an hour's drive.

Staffordshire is an extremely interesting county - with its history of the industrial revolution and the wealth which was generated: there are areas of substantial deprivation but also large areas of wonderful countryside. There are many large stately homes both National Trust and private - Shugborough, which was the home of Lord Lichfield and the Anson family, is in the parish of Great Haywood. This is now National Trust. Blithfield Hall is also in the benefice and the Bagot family are active church members of Blithfield Church.

Who are we?

The Benefice has six villages, total pop about 6000, which range from very small (Blithfield) to quite large and expanding (Colwich and The Haywoods'). At this point, Dec. 2023 our regular benefice clergy team consists of the Rector, Simon Davis, two NSMs, Mark Davys and Lynda Farrington, a full-time curate, Neale Wright plus from All Saints to Easter PtO, Phil Searle. We have a faithful band of five prayerful Reader "Emeritus" and two local PCC appointed worship leaders. Each church has at least one service every Sunday.

All clergy are licensed across the benefice and minister to support the differing mission of all our churches to the local communities with an open Christian heart.

Colton has roughly 700 inhabitants and is an extremely friendly village with many organisations – Produce Guild, WI, Friendship Club and History Society to name a few. The Colton electoral roll has 50 names and is a mix of village and others from nearby parishes. Church membership includes some from outside the parish, and some who were formerly in other denominations. The village has an OFSTED rated "Outstanding" Church school (Sept 2023); which has close and positive links with the church. The church



building, its facilities and surrounds are attractive, well-maintained and of a high standard for a small village. It has been reordered to provide a flexible and welcoming space for worship and community events. While a traditional country church in outward appearance, it retains some medieval structures but the main body is Victorian, altered and expanded by GE Street in 1850s. The interior is very flexible, and we enjoy interactive and

informal approach to worship where appropriate.

What is our style?

St Marys is a “country church”; we enjoy a relaxed and open worship style, have a love for the Bible and relevant preaching, and offer a liberal open hearted non-judgemental welcome to all. We would be glad to welcome a priest who can minister within this ethos, while being open to sharing in the ministry styles of the wider benefice; which is more varied but with a single heart for sharing the good news of Jesus.



There can be an informality in some services which is engaging. The congregation are not afraid to answer questions and indeed have been known to answer rhetorical ones! We

have one main service on Sunday usually at 11am. On the first and third Sunday this is Holy Communion and on the second and fourth Morning Worship. The fifth Sunday is elastic!



During Lent there has been a weekly evening Compline and the Benefice churches takes it in turns to have the other weekday services such as Maundy Thursday or Ash Wednesday. Good Friday is historically marked by a procession through the village and a short service on the Croft - the raised grass area in front of the church.

Messy church has been a success but is struggling to become re-established after a break during the Covid pandemic. In the early days it occasionally numbered over 100 turning up but as other churches 'caught the bug' it has lessened. Re-examining and rejuvenating our work with families is one of our priorities. We have very strong links with the church primary school. The school also uses the church regularly for worship and welcomes the community, e.g. for Christingle. We have two organists who share the Sunday playing and the occasional services.

What can we offer?

We feel we are a very supportive congregation. Our churchwardens are ‘hands on’ and complement each other in their gifts. Our small PCC is focused and willing. We

cover safeguarding regularly. We do not have a ministry team. Our average Sunday attendance is about 20-25 so we know each other well and any newcomers or visitors can be easily noticed and welcomed.

What is the challenge?

- Help us explore our faith and grow disciples - we are willing to learn. Help the church to move forward from the messy church initiative.
- Ability to take the lead in engaging with youth within church and school communities.
- First call for occasional offices within a supportive benefice team.
- Oversee baptism and marriage preparation.
- Ex-officio PCC member and open to chairing of meetings as needs require.
- For someone unfamiliar with the diocese to learn to engage with "who is who" and what resources can be called upon.
- Share in the life of the benefice and the wider church, including World Mission and house group initiatives.
- Willing to be social and engage in local activities and make the opportunity to get to know the local people. (Dog owner welcome with popular walking circuit).
- Pastoral care for the parish.

What is the position description?

The position is a House for Duty priest (Sundays and two other days) to work as part of the wider benefice team. The post is based at Colton, which will be the focus of the minister's pastoral mission.

The Colton PCC would welcome an associate minister (priest) able to work alongside others, with the gifts of servant-leadership, ability to engage with the young and old, and encouraging all. He or she would be required to oversee lead and engage in pastoral work in the village; inspire and work alongside others with good services and sermons and help enlarge the spiritual aspects of the congregation. The services are led by a minister in the team and the congregation participate in various ways – lesson reading, leading intercessions and assisting with the chalice.

What is our mission?

Our Mission Statement is that we aim to see people drawn into a living faith in Jesus through the Holy Spirit by being a visible worshipping Christian community,

nourished by listening to God, ourselves and each other, accepting one another, and serving our wider community by the effective use of our gifts and talents.

Mission Action Plan is in the process of being updated but has items such as:

- Calling out a new generation of people who can lead worship.
- Develop more lively thinking in core areas.
- Supporting and expanding our Messy Church or its follow on (currently being discussed)
- Deepening the quality of worship to meet current spiritual needs.
- Ensure we are not entrenched in old ways but flexible and welcoming of new ideas.
- Grow our community life and provide opportunities for all age groups to “catch the gospel”.
- Ensure we are an accessible church, both physically and spiritually.

How does the Benefice work?

The wider benefice leadership of ministers and wardens are delighted to be able to seek a candidate who is flexible and open in style. We will pay all normal working expenses and “retired” fees for officiating at occasional offices. The churches are rooted in rural/commuter village communities which each have a distinct character. We desire someone who is relaxed but has spiritual depth. Our worship presentation varies from distinctly old school to the use of screens and streaming.

We are seeking someone who has a leaning towards supporting the worship across at least one other of our village schools, for example Anson school in Great Haywood, which is in the same MAT as Colton school or occasionally supporting the regular Wednesday Morning Prayer service at Colwich, to which a KS2 class attends on rotation. A colleague willing to share in occasionally presiding at the mid-week Eucharist at Abbots Bromley would also be welcome.

We are working towards revitalising our connections with families across the benefice, trying new things, such as an occasional Sunday afternoon “Cupcake church” at Abbots Bromley with a view to starting a similar young-family oriented ministry at Colwich.

St Stephen’s, Great Haywood became part of the “Inclusive Church” network in Autumn 2023 and is exploring its congregational ministry of welcome to all people, including the LGBTQ+ community.



In July 2023 we welcomed into full time stipendiary ministry our latest curate, Neale Wright, accompanied by his young family. Neale has attended Queen's Theological College in Birmingham and has settled well into the benefice. The diocese has invested in buying a new house in Little Haywood for this curacy, which will be the seventh curacy to be undertaken in the benefice over the last 20 years.

How do we keep in touch?

Almost all the church members are now on email - the rota is distributed by email. We use www.AChurchNearYou.com as our website. We have a very good sound system which could record sermons, but we have not yet progressed to doing this. There is an excellent Parish Magazine which is equally funded by the PCC, the Parish Council, and the Parish Lands Trust (an old charity which owns lands and property in the village and uses the income for the benefit of the parish).

There is also a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/stmaryschurchcolton>

What are our buildings?

St Mary the Virgin is an extremely well looked after building – no issues raised in the QI last year and the small job with the electrics (switches) was sorted in February this year. The fabric fund is very healthy owing to a large bequest. There is underfloor heating, as well as radiators and overhead heaters. Level access all-round the paths of the church and into the church and up to the chancel step. Cars can be taken right to the door.



There is also a small church room which has a kitchenette and well equipped for meals such as Alpha. It is also where the boilers reside. This is an extremely useful facility and other organisations use it as well. Not just the village but external diocesan meetings have been held there.

The New Rectory is on the west side of the church in its own grounds. It is a modernish (1980s) building with four bedrooms. The study is independent from the family side of the house being accessed from the porch and there is a 'jack and jill' toilet, accessible for visitors or family. Other upgrades were done before the last minister occupied the house and more recently the Diocese has just put in a new heating system and undertaken repairs and improvements (Autumn 2023). It has new composite front, back and French doors. It has a large garden and is a very pleasant quiet corner on the edge of the village between the brook and the church. There are excellent local walks from the house.

What are the church activities?

Pre-covid there was a lot going on with fund raising soup and cheese lunches, prayer group, fellowship group and “Messy Church” once a month. As with many congregations we are all a bit older since the covid years and are restarting our mission from scratch. We need a helping hand to partner us in our outreach and spiritual life.

Who do we need?

We would love someone who is a ‘people’s person’, who can interact with us, get alongside all of us and generally ‘grow the kingdom’ in Colton and the benefice.



What are our strengths?

Our main strength lays in the interaction with the school. This was nurtured by our last minister, and copied here in full is what the headmaster wrote when asked about his vision for a new minister.

Our school vision for a new minister is as follows.

We would like a minister that has the interests of the school at heart. They will passionately invest in our school vision and values and use these in their teachings and acts of worship. They will be kind, considerate of our children and their range of backgrounds and religious experiences. Ideally, they will have time to play an active part in school life with weekly acts of worship for the school that are planned alongside the school’s termly focus. Our worship team of children will build a strong relationship with the new Vicar whereby they can confidently offer ideas and be actively involved in acts of worship. Our children will be delighted to see the Vicar and feel they have a strong relationship. As a school we aim for our children to believe in themselves, their friends and above all God. The new Vicar would help us instil this message and allow our children to be the best they can be.

I think the SIAM’s inspection report section that talks about Anne (previous HfD) succinctly sums up her brilliance and what we would like in the future for our school.

‘The vicar serves the community with joy, imagination, and compassion. She plays a significant role in making collective worship a meaningful time when the school community renews its strength by being together. The vicar meets with the school’s pupil worship team to develop ideas for collective worship. Together they plan how a Bible story can be best presented to help everyone understand a Christian value such as peace, compassion, or justice. They write prayers together, choose songs of praise, a welcome and a blessing. A child-friendly, yet highly reverent, weekly act of worship in church is then led by the vicar and the worship team. It is a precious time which contributes richly to spiritual development.’

Mr J Wynn, Headteacher, **St Mary’s C.E Primary School**

The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust

What are our finances like?

We can say that the church finances are in a very good state. This last couple of years we have supported other parishes who are not in such a good place under the Diocesan scheme Generous Hope. In 2022 we supported two nearby parishes not in the benefice; this year (2023) we are supporting one of the benefice parishes.

What do we not have?

We do not have a churchyard! The area round the church is a levelled grass area and all closed by order in council. The old Burial ground is also closed and administered by the Parish Council. When it was full, the church gave the Parish Council a plot of land down by the road opposite the school which is now the parish burial ground and administered by the Parish Council. The church grounds, which include a large raised area between the church and the road are well kept and mowing is paid for by the PCC.

There is no public transport to the village and to be available for their ministry the priest will need to be a car driver/m'cycle rider or have a chauffeur willing to be out and about at any time of the day. The Diocese will support you in the self-funded fitting of an electric car charging point at the New Rectory.

Please apply to the Revd Preb Simon Davis:

revdsimon@gmail.com

The Vicarage, Market Place,
Abbots Bromley. STAFFS. WS15 3BP
01283 840242

We look forward to exploring and discerning your call to join our team. God guide and lead you as you seek your next posting. A warm welcome and good fellowship awaits.





Colton in the Spring



Rogation walk in Blithfield.



Abbots Bromley Horn Dance



We love Christingle!

Holy Week Reflections

