

PARISH OF GREATER WHITBOURNE

ACTION PLAN

FOR MISSION, FABRIC AND FUNDRAISING

1. BACKGROUND

1. The Parish of Greater Whitbourne was created by a pastoral scheme scheduled to an Order in Council dated 7 April 1982, which united the old parishes of Whitbourne, Tedstone Delamere, Edvin Loach, Tedstone Wafer, Upper Sapey and Wolferlow to form a new united parish named "The Parish of Edvin Loach with Tedstone Delamere, Tedstone Wafer, Upper Sapey, Wolferlow and Whitbourne". At an early meeting in 1982 the PCC adopted the name "The Parish of Greater Whitbourne" as a short name and it is by this name that the Parish is generally known. The Order in Council also created a united benefice with the same name as the Parish.

2. The benefice forms one of the four benefice groupings in the Bromyard Deanery in the Diocese of Hereford referred to in the Deanery Plan for Mission and Ministry (the Deanery Plan), which was adopted by the Deanery Synod on 17 January 2008 and which was brought into effect by a Pastoral Scheme on 1 January 2009. The Parish is situated in the north east sector of the Deanery and abuts the Diocese of Worcester along its eastern boundary. The Parish comprises 9,750 acres. At the time of the 2001 census the civil parishes included in the Parish had a total population of 1,485, of whom over half lived in Whitbourne.¹

3. The Rector, the Revd. David Howell, was instituted and inducted as incumbent of the benefice on 24 February 2002, having been Priest-in-Charge for the previous five years. As provided in the Order in Council, he resides in the Rectory in Whitbourne. He is assisted by the Revd. Doiran Williams, who does not receive a stipend, as Assistant Priest. Mr William North has officiated at Matins at Tedstone Delamere and Mr John Allan, who was a Licensed Lay Minister in the Diocese of Worcester, is able to officiate as and when needed.

4. The Parish is served by a single PCC, the Greater Whitbourne PCC. Whitbourne has a formally constituted DCC, whilst annual congregational meetings are held at Edvin Loach, Tedstone Delamere and Upper Sapey. Guidelines for relations between the PCC and DCCs / individual churches were originally adopted by the PCC in 1982 and revised in 2005. The PCC has overall responsibility for, inter alia, the financial affairs of the Parish and maintains a common purse account. The parish share assessed on the Parish by the Deanery in accordance with a formula determined by the Diocese is paid from this account. Whitbourne DCC and the individual churches maintain

¹The breakdown is Edvin Loach with Saltmarshe 43, Tedstone Delamere 142, Tedstone Wafre 67, Upper Sapey 345, Whitbourne 796 and Wolferlow 92. Further details about the Parish can be found on the Parish website www.whitbourne.org.uk

their own accounts and are responsible for raising the necessary funds to enable them to pay their proportion of the parish share, as determined by the PCC.

5. The Parish has four Parish churches at Edvin Loach, Tedstone Delamere, Upper Sapey and Whitbourne. A service of Holy Communion or Family Communion is held at Whitbourne every Sunday and the Holy Eucharist is offered every Wednesday. Services are held at the other three churches once a month. Tedstone Wafer church closed in 1972 and is now a private residence. Wolferlow church was declared redundant on 14 August 2006 and is temporarily vested in the Diocesan Board of Finance for care and maintenance whilst its future use is considered. Its graveyard was not included in the redundancy scheme and remains the responsibility of the PCC. Two churchwardens for each of the four churches are elected annually. There are three well appointed village halls in the Parish at Upper Sapey, Saltmarshe and Whitbourne.

2. INTRODUCTION

1. The Diocese has recently adopted five priorities, namely local ministry, mission and evangelism, stewardship, the environment and communication. The Deanery Plan has adopted four tasks “to effectively develop the Church’s mission and ministry in the Deanery area”:

- (i) to encourage the establishment of Local Ministry Development Groups across the Deanery,
- (ii) to encourage parishes to develop stewardship strategies appropriate to their need,
- (iii) to encourage the development of ministry to children, young people and the elderly in the places where they are, and
- (iv) to work towards improving communication at all levels of church life.

2. It is therefore right that the Parish should consider how it should respond to the priorities adopted by the Diocese and the Deanery and, so far as possible, how to put them into effect within the Parish. This Plan is an attempt to set out aims and objectives for the Parish for the next five years and to propose ways of implementing them. However it is not intended that it should be set in stone for that, or any, period; it should be kept under review on a rolling basis. It is to be hoped that adoption of the Deanery structure in the Deanery Plan will provide a period of stability in which to go forward.

3. MISSION

1. To witness to the Christian Faith in the Parish.

2. To promote greater unity within the Parish whilst maintaining the vibrancy of the individual church communities.

It is recognised that the Parish is not a natural geographical unit and there is no historical unity between the old parishes which were united in 1982. The Parish's main concentration of population is in Whitbourne; outside Whitbourne village communities are scattered, as is the common pattern in Herefordshire. Parishioners' allegiance remains with their local Parish church. However there are many social networks, such as the Womens' Institutes, the Upper Sapey Golf Club and Friday Market, and the Clifton-on-Teme Hunt, which cross the old parish boundaries and which bring people together from all over the Parish. Attempts should be made to work to promote unity using these networks.

3. To encourage the ministry of lay people.

The Parish should consider establishing a Local Ministry Development Group (LMDG). A LMDG would provide a structure for sharing leadership between the clergy and lay people. Members of the LMDG could:

- lead worship,
- become involved in the preparation for baptism, confirmation and marriage, and in subsequent follow-up,
- share in pastoral care, especially of the sick, elderly and bereaved,
- assist in the development of provision for children and families (see paragraph 6 below).

The needs of the Parish should be explored to establish the initial priorities for such a LMDG (see paragraph 9 below).

4. To increase participation in the life of the Church both within the congregations and the wider community.

The Parish is rich in human resources. More people should be encouraged to bring their particular talents to the service of the Church.

5. To encourage more people to come forward to serve the Church as churchwardens, Parish representatives on the Deanery Synod and lay members of the PCC.

Rotation of these offices should be encouraged and people should be helped to anticipate when they might be able to serve.

6. To review and enhance provision for children and families.

The model of the Good Friday family friendly service and Fun Morning at Whitbourne Church should be built on. It is no longer realistic to expect all churchgoers to attend a service every Sunday. A family friendly service could be held four times a year and made an event.

7. To promote our services as inclusive and accessible.

Village halls are developing as centres of community life. A service could be held in one or more of the village halls in Lent and Advent.

8. To promote awareness of the wider Church.

Our links with Tanzania should be developed, particularly by supporting our local charity, Tanga in Touch, which in turn supports our link parish, St Francis, Mapinduzi, and Misufini Leprosy Care Centre.

9. To improve all our means of communication.

Communication is two way – send and receive. Whilst the Magazine is an excellent medium for sending, communication from parishioners should be developed.

10. To develop Christian stewardship.

Stewardship means caring for what is to be handed on to the next generation: our faith and our churches as living places of worship. Fundraising to repair our churches and to pay our parish share in order to keep our Rector in the Parish and to maintain his ministry is an essential part of stewardship.

4. FABRIC

1. The Four Parish Churches²

St Mary the Virgin, Edvin Loach

The church was built in the 1860s to a design by Sir George Gilbert Scott to replace the old Saxon church, the ruins of which are now in the care of English Heritage. It is a Grade II listed building.

St James the Great, Tedstone Delamere

The church dates from the Norman period, but was heavily restored, and the chancel was rebuilt, between 1856 and 1857. It is a Grade II* listed building.

St Michael and All Angels, Upper Sapey

The nave and chancel date from the Norman period and much Norman work remains. The tower was added in 1859. It is a Grade II* listed building.

St John the Baptist, Whitbourne

The church dates from the Norman period, but was substantially rebuilt in the 13th century and restored in 1866 when the north aisle was added. The recently restored reredos made by Powell & Sons was set up in 1912. The stained glass in the window on the north side of the chancel is by Frederick Preedy. It is a Grade II* listed building.

2. These sacred buildings have been passed down to us from generation to generation over a thousand years. It is our responsibility, as those to whom

² For a fuller description of the churches, see D. M. Annett "The Churches of the Bromyard Rural Deanery – An Informal Guide" Revised edition 2003 published by The Bromyard & District Local History Society.

these buildings and their heritage are entrusted, to maintain, enhance and improve them, to keep them dedicated as places of worship that is acceptable to God, and to pass them on to those that follow us.

3. Quinquennial inspections of the four churches were carried out in 2007 and the reports contained recommendations for work to be carried out at once, within twelve months and within five years.³ The work which required immediate attention has largely been carried out by the churchwardens and volunteers and 2007 has seen the restoration of the organ at Upper Sapey and the re-laying of the footpath to the church at Tedstone Delamere. The work which the architects recommended should be carried out within twelve months was estimated by them to cost £6,515 at Edvin Loach, £2,000 at Tedstone Delamere and £1,800 at Upper Sapey. Whilst these sums are not in themselves enormous, they are large sums in the context of the reserve funds held by the churches and their congregations' capacity to raise money from their usual fundraising activities.

4. The estimates of the cost of the work recommended to be carried out within five years are formidable - £13,500 at Edvin Loach, £80,150 at Tedstone Delamere, and £21,600 at Upper Sapey. It is not realistic to contemplate expenditure of this order without grant aid. An application was made to English Heritage in 2008 for work at Tedstone Delamere, but it was rejected as the proposed work was not considered to be of a sufficiently high priority. The architects have recommended that the English Heritage architect be invited to advise on the possibility of applications for grant aid towards the recommended work at Edvin Loach and Upper Sapey.

5. What is essential is first to carry out work which, if left undone, will result in rapid deterioration of the fabric and cost estimates in future quinquennial reports which are then beyond our reach. This is the lesson to be learned from the loss of Wolferlow church. It should be our objective at least to carry out sufficient work to ensure that the estimates for work recommended in the next quinquennial reports in 2012, after allowing for inflation and the rising cost of materials, are less than the estimates in the 2007 reports. Second it is essential, as the architects recommend, to have a long term strategy for planning and carrying out the work.

6. Substantial work, for which grant aid was obtained, was carried out to Whitbourne church in 2006. However as this work progressed additional work was found to be necessary and some work in the original specification had to be left over. An application to English Heritage for further grant aid was made in 2008 and an offer of a grant of £76,000 towards proposed expenditure of £113,000 has been accepted. Efforts will now be made to meet the shortfall.

7. Our churches are more than places of occasional use for worship, albeit that this is their primary purpose. To quote Sir Roy Strong:

³ Copies of the reports are available from the respective churchwardens and the PCC secretary.

*“the [church building is an] historic microcosm over the centuries of a community. Their very fabric tells us of prosperity and depression, of war and peace; extensions in size reflect rise in population; the names of the headstones reveal the families who for generations moulded the life pattern of the land around. We need to develop for a wider public our approach to churches as expressions of past human beings, everyone’s ancestors over the centuries....”*⁴

Our churches are part of our heritage and are a symbol of the whole community and do not belong only to regular worshippers. It is therefore reasonable to look to the wider community for a contribution to the cost of maintaining them.

8. It is now becoming increasingly common for churches to be used for other community purposes. Indeed Whitbourne church has in recent years hosted several concerts, a flower festival, the exhibition “People of Old Whitbourne” and a polling station, and the Flower Show and the Fete is held in the churchyard. Scope for such usage at Tedstone Delamere and Upper Sapey is more limited as there are well appointed village halls at Saltmarshe and Upper Sapey, but Edvin Loach church is the only communal meeting place in the village. These activities may not themselves generate much income, but wider usage may encourage the wider community to contribute.

9. Our churches are always open and attract visits from tourists. As D.M.Annett says of the Deanery churches *“unassuming as they are, there is hardly one that is not worth the attention of a sympathetic visitor, whether for its situation, for some object of interest which it contains, or just for its appealing rustic simplicity.”*⁵ Tourism is being actively promoted by the Diocese and Whitbourne church is on the Preedy Trail. It is reasonable that visitors should be encouraged to contribute to their upkeep.

10. In 1977 the then Rector, the Revd. Frank Cherrington, encouraged the establishment of trusts for the maintenance of the fabric of his churches. Such trusts were set up for Tedstone Delamere, Upper Sapey and Wolferlow with the Diocesan Board of Finance as trustee and an initial capital of £1,000. Due to a conservative investment policy, and possibly an emphasis on income, the two former trusts are worth only app. £1,500. The Wolferlow Trust however is now worth app. £12,000 and the income is held in a separate restricted account and is available to the PCC to maintain the graveyard, which should thus be secure for the foreseeable future. Whilst these trusts cannot now make any meaningful contribution to the costs of repair and maintenance of the fabric of the respective churches, the concept of a trust or restricted fabric fund remains valid and has been adopted by many parishes throughout the country.

⁴ Sir Roy Strong “A Little History of the English Country Church” Jonathan Cape 2007 p 2

⁵ Introduction to “The Churches of the Bromyard Deanery”.

5. FUNDRAISING

1. A fundraising campaign will be mounted in early 2009 following the pattern of the successful campaign conducted in 2003. It will have the dual object of increasing regular giving with the target of covering the parish share and of establishing funds for the maintenance and repair of the Parish churches.

2. The campaign should comprise the following steps:

i) Setting up a Sub-Committee of the PCC to oversee the campaign consisting of the Rector, the Secretary, the Treasurer, one churchwarden or other PCC member from each church and one additional person from each church who is not a member of the PCC.

ii) Writing a letter to each household in the Parish (there should be a special version for regular donors) which should include:
an explanation of the situation,
a donor and GiftAid form for the respective Parish church, which will give donors the option of earmarking their gift for the maintenance and repair of that church
a question and answer page
an invitation to a Parish party in each of the three village halls
a reply card to the Rector

iii) Printing the letters and stuffing and delivering the envelopes.

iv) Follow up calls to ensure receipt and response.

v) Cheese and Wine Party and presentation.

vi) Services of Thanksgiving in each of the Parish churches.

vii) Publication of results.

3. On an ongoing basis donors should be written to annually and parishioners should be encouraged to leave legacies to the PCC or the churches in their wills and to support the Greater Whitbourne Investment Club, one of the objects of which is to raise funds for the Parish.

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