

**The Diocese of Coventry**



**The Ilmington Downs and  
Stour Valley Churches**

*(the benefice of  
Ilmington & Stretton-on-Fosse  
with Preston-on-Stour & Whitchurch,  
and the benefice of  
Tredington & Darlingscott)*

**Agenda and Reports for the  
Annual Parish Meeting *and*  
Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
2026**

**St Mary's Preston-on-Stour  
30 April at 2.30pm**

# Agenda

The **Annual Parish Meeting** (APM) takes place first and is solely to elect churchwardens.

The **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** (APCM) follows immediately afterwards and has the following agenda:

1. Elections to the Deanery Synod and to the PCC
2. Reports on:
  - (a) changes to the Electoral Roll since the last annual parochial church meeting (from the Electoral Roll Officer);
  - (b) the proceedings of the parochial church council and the activities of the parish generally (from the PCC Secretary);
  - (c) the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church or churches of the parish (from the churchwardens);
  - (d) the financial statements of the council for the year ending on the 31st December preceding the meeting (from the treasurer);
  - (e) the proceedings of the deanery synod (from the DS reps); and
  - (f) other matters of parochial or general Church interest (from the incumbent).
    - i. Decision on PCC terms (1 year or 3 years)

# 1. Aim and Purpose

The Parochial Church Councils (the PCCs) of the benefice of St Mary's Ilmington, St Peter's Stretton-on-Fosse, St Mary's Preston-on-Stour and St Mary's Whitchurch, and the benefice of St Gregory's Tredington and St George's Darlingscott (known informally as the 'Ilmington Downs and Stour Valley Churches'), have the responsibility of cooperating with the Incumbent, the Reverend Canon Dr Richard Cooke, in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical in the ecclesiastical parishes.

The PCCs are also responsible for the upkeep of the six church buildings.

# 2. Objectives and Activities

The PCCs are committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches, and maintaining a Christian presence at the heart of our village communities. When planning our activities, the PCCs have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and in particular the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and Bible-reading, music and provision of the sacraments. We seek to enable people to live out their faith as part of our worshipping communities through:

- Worship and prayer: learning about the Gospel, and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus;
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish; and
- Mission and outreach work.

To facilitate this work, it is vital that we maintain the fabric of the church buildings.

## 3. Reports for 2025

### (a) Changes to the Electoral Roll since the last APCM

The Electoral Roll remains the same in number: 22, of whom 7 are non-resident.

### (b) PCC report for 2025

After several busy (and expensive!) years, it has been a relatively stable 12 months at St. Mary's. The church has continued to maintain a steady congregation throughout the year and at the major festivals we are seeing a slight, but nevertheless material, increase in attendance. The continued lack of an Associate Minister has remained an acute issue both within the Parish and the wider Benefices.

The PCC met in April, July and November. A joint meeting of all PCCs in the group was held in May but no representation from Preston was possible.

Items discussed during the year included:

- The appointment of Stephen Oliver as church architect in succession to Graeme Beamish. The next Quinquennial inspection is not due until 2028.
- Various matters regarding the Church building (covered in the Churchwarden's report below).
- Various matters regarding parish finances (covered in the Treasurer's report below).
- Approval for a plaque in memory of Ethel Davies, to be placed by the organ.
- Arrangements for regular services, including Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Preston continued to have regular services on the first (6.00pm Evensong), second (9.30am Communion) and third (11.00am Morning Worship) Sundays of each month, and usually on the fifth (9.30am Communion) Sunday when it occurs. All of these except the service on the third Sunday were from the Book of Common Prayer.
- The possibility of providing a small car park and toilet block on the site of an abandoned allotment near the west door of the Church. This would significantly enhance the attraction of St. Mary's for weddings and for those who have to drive to services, as car parking is currently very limited in the village - with toilet facilities being a significant distance from the church at the bottom of the hill in the village hall.

### **Safeguarding**

Jane Downie was appointed Parish Safeguarding Officer at the July meeting in succession to Jackie Grove, to whom we are grateful for her service in this role. A Safeguarding report was discussed at each meeting. There were no safeguarding incidents reported. Further progress was made with use of the Parish Dashboard for Safeguarding. The PCC complied with its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice guidance.

### **PCC Members 2025:**

Richard Cooke (incumbent), Andrew Holman-West (churchwarden, deanery synod rep. and secretary), Karen Kennedy (treasurer), Camilla West.

## (c) Churchwarden’s Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

**Buildings** - There is no evidence of leaks in the roof and the building is generally in good shape.

**Organ** - The organ continues to work well.

**Glass** - There are a number of cracked and broken clear lights in the nave windows and one of the hoppers.

**Graveyards** - Sheep occupied the old graveyard for part of the year. John Cawley continued to mow the new graveyards and trim the hedges. We are grateful to the Parish Council for making a £500.00 donation towards the cutting of the graveyards. There are no plans for any works to the trees.

**Insurance** - The insurance has been renewed with Ecclesiastical as part of a long-term arrangement.

## (d) Financial Report

### I. Preston-on-Stour

A simplified version of the full accounts is as follows:

Income	Preston-on-Stour		
	2024	2025	Notes
Total Giving	19809	18175	
Other income	3586	2872	Includes £640 for clergy expenses transferred from Stredder Fund in each year
<b>Total income</b>	<b>23395</b>	<b>21047</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Parish Share	6500	7200	
Church & churchyard	35266	9072	2024 figure includes £27820 for wall repairs, 2025 £900
Church & churchyard excluding wall repairs	7446	8172	
Other	1864	1512	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>43630</b>	<b>17784</b>	2024 figure includes £27820 for wall repairs, 2025 £900
<b>Total surplus/ deficit</b>	<b>-20235</b>	<b>3263</b>	
<b>Total expenditure adjusted for wall repairs</b>	<b>15810</b>	<b>16884</b>	
<b>Total surplus/ deficit adjusted for wall repairs</b>	<b>7585</b>	<b>4163</b>	
<b>Reserves at year end:</b>			
Restricted	3667	3832	Restricted to St Mary’s Fabric upkeep

The conclusion of repairs to the churchyard wall, which followed on from successive years of major repairs to the church roof and organ, means that 2025 is the first year without any major projects for some time, and enables us to identify more clearly the regular annual running costs for St Mary’s. The figures above include lines that try to provide a rough comparison in real terms between 2024 and 2025, though it is possible that some of the donations received in 2024 may have been a response to the repairs being undertaken. Equally, however, some of those donations may have been responses to a year where there were more weddings and funerals than in 2025.

Income dropped slightly in 2025, collections and donations together being only around 60% of the 2024 total (£4300 compared to almost £7000), though the reduction was offset by higher income

from the Parish Giving Scheme (an increase of around 18%, up from £10718 in 2024 to £12856 in 2025). A digital 'Donation Station' was trialled in 2025, enabling gifts to be made by card rather than cash. This is especially helpful in a church which regularly attracts visitors. Its annual cost is more than offset by the income from it.

The Parish Share contribution continued to rise. Ilmington and Tredington together pay the lion's share of this for the group as a whole, but this is a deliberate policy as they are the two largest churches, both have a weekly service, and on their continued thriving depends the future of the whole group of churches. Preston makes the third-largest contribution in the group, but has more regular services per month than any of the other smaller churches. The increase in adjusted costs shows a rise more or less in line with inflation, though the replacement of bell ropes cost almost £1000, and this expense will not recur for several years.

Thanks to Karen Kennedy for her continued sterling work handling the accounts with such efficiency, and John Horseman for his scrutiny of the accounts over so many years.

(Full financial statements are available separately.)

## **2. The Downs and Valley Group**

### **(i) Parish Share**

While each parish is responsible for its own finances, collectively the parishes are responsible for the overall Parish Share contribution, which is part of the Deanery Share. This money provides primarily for the stipends paid to clergy, and the cost of their housing, national insurance and pension contributions, as well as the cost of training future clergy before ordination.

The costs of the Parish Share per incumbent in 2025 were finally calculated as follows to be £68,508, two-thirds of which covered the costs of stipend and housing for the present incumbent and the remaining third a 'training share' which pays for the training of future incumbents and other clergy, including the cost of present curates.

In 2025 we offered to pay £61,000 as a group, meaning that we were being subsidised as a group by other churches in the diocese. However, we also receive back a credit for funeral and wedding fees which are paid to the diocese, which in 2025 amounted to £3690, meaning that the anticipated shortfall was ultimately £3009. We were able to honour the promise made for the Parish Share in 2025.

In the second half of 2025 the DBF budget for 2026 was announced. Due to some financial relief provided from central Church of England funds, plus use of some money from reserves, the DBF was able to keep the increase in requested Parish Share to a mere 0.3% - effectively no change. This was a remarkable achievement and very good news!

In our quest as a group to increase our Parish Share contributions so that we cover the costs of the present incumbent and training share (which pays for the training of future clergy) this meant we could revise the targets shared at the 2024 APCMs as follows:

Parish	2024 allocation	2025 Offer	2026 Projection (set 2024)	2026 budget (set 2025)	2027 projection	Increase 24-27
<b>Preston</b>	6500	<b>7200</b>	7920	7720	8000	1500
<b>Whitchurch</b>	4500	<b>5000</b>	5500	5300	6000	1500
<b>Ilmington</b>	21181	<b>23300</b>	25600	24900	26250	5069
<b>Stretton</b>	1000	<b>1100</b>	2000	1500	2500	1500
<b>Tredington &amp; D'scott</b>	22181	<b>24400</b>	26840	26040	28250	6069
<b>Total</b>	55362	<b>61000</b>	67860	65460	71000	15638
<b>Fees Credit</b>		<b>3690</b>	3500	3500	3750	
<b>Total</b>	55362	<b>64690</b>	71360	68960	74750	
<b>Incumbent cost</b>	64786	<b>67699</b>	71084	<b>68508</b>	74638	9852
<b>Surplus/ deficit</b>	-9424	-3009	276	452	112	

This recalculation means we have been able to reduce the increase in each parish's Share for 2025 while aiming to remain on course to pay our costs in full by the end of 2026.

Further good news was that, in 2025, Tredington & Darlingscott PCC, encouraged by an APCM resolution, agreed to set aside £60,000 from reserves over five years to cover the anticipated costs of the appointment of a house-for-duty associate minister which a lack of funds has prevented since 2022.

## (ii) The Parishes' Financial Performance in 2025

The table below shows the 2025 financial performance of all our parishes (Tredington & Darlingscott's accounts are not yet available).

Income	Ilmington		Stretton		Tredington		Darlingscott		Whitchurch		Preston	
	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024		2024		2024	2025	2024	2025
Total Giving	27020	40868 <sup>1</sup>	19223 <sup>2</sup>	6677	27640		2201		7374	8079	19809	18175
Other income	9643	9268	2655	658	19367 <sup>3</sup>		0 <sup>4</sup>		747	725	3586 <sup>5</sup>	2872 <sup>6</sup>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>36663</b>	<b>50136</b>	<b>21878</b>	<b>7335</b>	<b>47007</b>		<b>2201</b>		<b>8121</b>	<b>8804</b>	<b>23395</b>	<b>21047</b>
<b>Exp'ture</b>												
Parish Share	21181	23300	2000 <sup>7</sup>	1100	22181		0		4500	5000	6500	7200
Church & churchyard	9085	11449	6391	5418	19387		2513		3371	3701	35266 <sup>8</sup>	9072
Other	3368	1697	641	507	1927		172		168	232	1864	1512
<b>Total exp</b>	<b>33634</b>	<b>36446</b>	<b>9032</b>	<b>7025</b>	<b>43495</b>		<b>2685</b>		<b>8039</b>	<b>8933</b>	<b>43630</b>	<b>17784</b>
Surplus/deficit	3029	13690	12846	310	3512		-485		82	-129	-20235	3263
Restricted reserves					196873 <sup>9</sup>		44735 <sup>10</sup>				3667 <sup>11</sup>	3832 <sup>12</sup>
Unrestricted reserves	43467	58792 <sup>13</sup>	16000	26346	708757		44791		50633	48457 <sup>14</sup>		

These figures give good grounds for optimism about the financial viability of the parishes as a group. In particular the increase in income from the Parish Giving Scheme, some of which has replaced existing giving, but much of which is new, is very hopeful:

PGS Income	Ilmington	Stretton	Tredington & Darlingscott	Whitchurch	Preston	Total
2023	7023	1344	375	0	13	<b>8755</b>
2024	10333	1630	1621	4360	10718	<b>28662</b>
2025	13720	2149		5538	12586	<b>33993</b>

My thanks to all our treasurers, who work tirelessly at the basic but vital task of keeping our churches solvent.

Richard Cooke

<sup>1</sup> Includes £10,000 gift, transferred to reserves

<sup>2</sup> Includes £10,000 legacy, transferred to reserves

<sup>3</sup> Includes £10249 from PCC reserve funds

<sup>4</sup> Darlingscott paid its Parish Share contribution for 2024 in 2025

<sup>5</sup> Includes £640 from Stredder Fund, for clergy expenses for Preston and Whitchurch

<sup>6</sup> Includes £640 from Stredder Fund, for clergy expenses for Preston and Whitchurch

<sup>7</sup> Includes £1000 for 2023

<sup>8</sup> Includes £27280 for Churchyard wall repair

<sup>9</sup> Restricted to St Gregory's Fabric upkeep

<sup>10</sup> Restricted to St George's Churchyard upkeep

<sup>11</sup> Restricted to St Mary's Fabric upkeep

<sup>12</sup> Restricted to St Mary's Fabric upkeep

<sup>13</sup> Includes £10,000 gift recorded in 'total giving'

<sup>14</sup> Includes £500 loan from Stredder Fund

## (e) Deanery Synod Report

### Three meetings were held during 2025:

#### **25<sup>th</sup> February 2025. St. Edmond's Church, Shipston-on-Stour.**

The Guest speakers for the night were Rev. Naomi Nixon and Rev. Charlotte Gale from Coventry, who shared the story of the emergence and growth of St. Clare's at the Cathedral, an inclusive community which began seven and half years ago and attracts mostly 20- to 30-year-olds who live in and around Coventry. The community meets weekly for worship using liturgy from Common Worship, this takes place in a small building to be found nestling between the ruins and the cathedral itself. This is also a shop and a café which attracts people daily. The community seeks to be 'simple, generous and open.'

#### **20<sup>th</sup> May 2025. St. St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church, Butler's Marston.**

The focus of this meeting was an interesting talk given by members of this church about the configuration of their church building to make it more useful for the whole of the village community. It was a good example of a church and village community working together for the good of all.

#### **20<sup>th</sup> October 2025. St. Edmond's Church, Shipston-on-Stour.**

The speaker for the evening was Bishop Sophie, who had spent the day visiting various parts of our Deanery, having lunch with people with laity/clergy from across the different churches. After lunch there was an opportunity for everyone there to introduce themselves, their role in the church and ask any question they might have. At the Deanery Synod meeting, to which there had been an open invite, Bishop Sophie shared her journey to faith, ordination, and her ministry within the Church of England. Again, there was an opportunity for people to ask questions. It was a good opportunity to meet Bishop Sophie in a more informal setting and for us to get to know each other.

**Other information:** At this time of writing all four of the house for duty posts in the deanery are still vacant and with the addition of three incumbents planning to retire in the near future, there is a need to explore ways of supporting the clergy we do have, and one also another.

We thank our Area Dean, Rev. Sarah Edmonds for all that she does for us as a Deanery.

Ros Wakefield (Tredington) Paul Clark (Ilmington)

## (f) Other Business

The revision to the Church Representation Rules provides for PCC members' terms normally to be for 3 years, with one-third of the PCC elected each year.

If a parish wishes instead for all PCC members to be elected annually, it must decide that members elected at an APCM are to retire at the APCM following their election (i.e. for a one-year term; they are then eligible for re-election).

Such a decision must be reviewed by the APCM at least once every 6 years.

(See *Church Representation Rules* M16 (1), (2), (4).)