

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 Ilmington
26 April 2026 at 6.30pm**

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 reduced by 1, to 36 in total, of whom 5 are non-resident.

(b) PCC report for 2025

PCC meetings took place in April, May (joint meeting with other PCCs in the group about Safeguarding), July and October. Items discussed included:

- Service leaflets
- Altar Table faculty
- Grave Space faculty
- Church booklet
- Parish Share - which was paid in full
- Fund raising - Organ recitals and flower festival
- Joint PCC with Stretton proposal
- Bibles
- Tree surgery to the Scot's pine
- Communications ie website, The Downs and Valley Churches Magazine, Facebook and Email.

- Reports were received from the Churchwardens, a Governor of Ilmington C of E School, our Deanery Synod Representative and a representative of the Fabric Committee. Reports were also received from our SAafeguarding Officer and there had been no incidents reported.

Other events included:

- Ilmington School come into Church regularly, usually for 'Worship Wednesday' each month and an end of term service each term.
- The usual Cake Stall at the Ilmington August Bank Holiday Show raised around £200
- Ros Wakefield's Ordination Service took place on 7th December and we were very honoured for this to take place at Ilmington and to have The Right Reverend Sophie Jelley, the newly appointed Bishop of Coventry leading the service.
- A reading of 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' took place just before Christmas with many different readers/actors taking part, including several school children. The Church was full and over £1,000 was raised.
- Shipston Home Nursing successfully held their annual Carol Service in Church on 20th December raising over £8,000 for their charity.

Joan Murray-White (Secretary)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a standing item on all PCC meeting agendas and a Safeguarding Action Update (from the Parish Dashboards) is submitted to each PCC meeting showing progress towards the mandatory requirements of the Church of England.

The PCCs complied with their duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice guidance.

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church or all. From Promoting a Safer Church, House of Bishops, 2017.

The Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) for The Ilmington Downs and Stour Valley Churches are:

- **Jane Downie**, PSO for St Mary's Ilmington since April 2021, and since April 2025 also PSO for St Gregory's Tredington, St George's Darlingscott, St Mary's Preston-on-Stour, and St Mary's Whitchurch.
- **Martin Whittaker**, PSO for St Peter's Stretton-on-Fosse since 2015.

At present, none of the five parishes runs activities specifically for children, young people, or vulnerable adults in the name of their church. However, the Diocese still requires all PCC members to complete core safeguarding training:

- **Basic Awareness** – required for all church officers
- **Foundation** – required for all PCC members and must be refreshed every three years

Compliance with this training remains an area for improvement. *As at 15 April 2026, 10 of the 21 individuals across the five parishes required to complete training were up to date with this.*

The PSOs will continue to encourage PCC members to complete the online training modules and will notify PCCs when opportunities for face-to-face training become available.

PCC Members 2025:

Richard Cooke (incumbent), Jane Downie (Warden and Vice-Chair), Paul Clark (Warden and Deanery Synod Representative), Helen Patrick (Treasurer), Rene Sabin, Ros Wakefield, David Shell and Joan Murray-White (Secretary). The Revd Tim Seller (co-opted).

(c) Churchwardens' Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

Priorities for 2025 were:

- **Work towards completion of the tree surgery** – the arboreal survey was completed and the initial priorities agreed and approved through the PCC. Stratford DC approval was sort for those priorities and the Faculty permissions were also started with a view to completing those works within the early part of 2026
- **Progress broadband installation and present the cost vs benefit for review** – a number of options were worked through including the installation of a pilot SIM based system. This proved to provide a very low performance, and all other options were considered too costly vs the benefit gained. The installation of WiFi is proposed to remain on the longer term goals list and reviewed in light of any changing options
- **Arboreal survey – reobtain costs and complete** – completed
- **Hearing loop** – little progress made – this is proposed as a priority for 2025
- **Access hire and redecorate, repair, clean etc** – complete (many thanks to Oliver French for organising this)
- **Logbook – collate and update (RA's, Policies, Electrical certs etc)** – completed
- **Graveyard wall collapse – determine what can be achieved and how** – little progress made. We met with contractors and requested quotations but none were forthcoming. This remains on the to do list but not a priority
- **Add a light to the clock winding mechanism in the tower to aid the clock winding** – completed

Other works completed in this period include:

- Repairs to the vestry path to resolve issues with loose flagstones (many thanks to Mike Bell for completing these works)
- Replacement of the leaking downpipe (many thanks to Peter Adams for organising the completion of these works)
- The Monday Club volunteered and delivered a really effective church yard tidy up exercise – many thanks to all involved
- Inquiries began and continue with regards to heating replacement options focussing on a radiant heating option
- Periodic works with regards to boilers services and alarm services were completed and recorded in the logbook
- An oil delivery was taken in February 2025 of approx. 750 litres
- Quotations obtained for various building works including the boiler stair wall repairs and minor roof repairs

For 2026 proposed priorities are: replacement of boiler, hearing loop and sound system replacement.

Longer term goals include:

- The fabric committee agree that the installation of toilet and kitchen facilities should always be on the agenda going forward.
- Determine how best to take advantage of the recently installed underground water point such as a standpipe or similar.
- Maintain general tree maintenance periodically to ensure that the issue with the overgrown yew trees on the church yard border with neighbouring properties is not repeated

We are fortunate to have a very active Fabric Group, who meet regularly and provide expertise both in theory and practice! We're very grateful to all those on this Group for their help over the year.

Paul Clark

(d) Financial Report

I. Ilmington

A simplified version of the full accounts is as follows:

Income	Ilmington		
	2024	2025	Notes
Total Giving	27020	40868	(2025 Includes £10,000 gift, transferred to reserves below)
Other income	9643	9268	
Total income	36663	50136	
Exp'ture			
Parish Share	21181	23300	
Church & churchyard	9085	11449	
Other	3368	1697	
Total exp	33634	36446	
Surplus/ deficit	3029	13690	(2025 Includes £10,000 gift, transferred to reserves below)
Reserves at year end:			
Unrestricted	43467	58792	(2025 includes £10,000 gift recorded above in 'total giving')

These figures show a good year for St Mary's, with regular giving rising by around 8%, outpacing inflation, and one very large donation which was transferred to reserves. Reserves, which had been depleted drastically by the end of the Pandemic in 2022 are now in a healthy state, enabling plans in the Churchwardens' Fabric report to be considered for action. The Parish Giving Scheme once again proved very successful, and the rise in contributions entirely accounted for the increased in regular giving.

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.

Thanks to Helen Patrick for her continued sterling work handling the accounts with such cheerfulness and efficiency, and John Horsman for his scrutiny of the accounts over so many years.

(Full financial statements are available separately.)

2. The Downs and Valley Group as a whole

(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 Parish Share allocation	2025 Parish Share Offer	2026 Projection (set 2024)	2026 budget (set 2025)	2027 projection	Increase 24-27
Preston	6500	7200	7920	7720	8000	1500
Whitchurch	4500	5000	5500	5300	6000	1500
Ilmington	21181	23300	25600	24900	26250	5069
Stretton	1000	1100	2000	1500	2500	1500
Tredington & D'scott	22181	24400	26840	26040	28250	6069
Total	55362	61000	67860	65460	71000	15638
Fees Credit		3690	3500	3500	3750	
Total	55362	64690	71360	68960	74750	
Incumbent cost	64786	67699	71084	68508	74638	9852
Surplus/ deficit	-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 ministry 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 ¹	19223 ²	6677	27640		2201		7374	8079	19089	18175
Other income	9643	9268	2655	658	19367 ³		0 ⁴		747	725	3586 ⁵	2872
Total income	36663	50136	21878	7335	47007		2201		8121	8804	22675	21047
Exp'ture												
Parish Share	21181	23300	2000 ⁶	1100	22181		0		4500	5000	6500	7200
Church & churchyard	9085	11449	6391	5418	19387		2513		3371	3701	35266 ⁷	9072
Other	3368	1697	641	507	1927		172		168	232	1864	1512
Total exp	33634	36446	9032	7025	43495		2685		8039	8933	43630	17784
Surplus/deficit	3029	13690	12846	310	3512		-485		82	-129	-	3263
											20235	
Reserves at year end												
Restricted					196873 ⁸		44735 ⁹				3667 ¹⁰	3832 ¹¹
Unrestricted	43467	58792 ¹²	16000	26346	708757		44791		50633	48457 ¹³		

These figures give good grounds for optimism about the financial viability of the parishes as a group.

¹ Includes £10,000 gift, transferred to reserves

² Includes £10,000 legacy, transferred to reserves

³ Includes £10249 from PCC reserve funds

⁴ Darlingscott paid its Parish Share contribution for 2024 in 2025

⁵ Includes £640 from Stredder Fund, for clergy expenses for Preston and Whitchurch

⁶ Includes £1000 for 2023

⁷ Includes £27280 for Churchyard wall repair

⁸ Restricted to St Gregory's Fabric upkeep

⁹ Restricted to St George's Churchyard upkeep

¹⁰ Restricted to St Mary's Fabric upkeep

¹¹ Restricted to St Mary's Fabric upkeep

¹² Includes £10,000 gift recorded in 'total giving'

¹³ Includes £500 loan from Stredder Fund

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	8755
2024	10333	1630	1621	4360	10718	28662
2025	13720	2149		5538	12586	33993

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

Richard Cooke

(e) Deanery Synod Report

Three meetings were held during 2025:

25th February 2025, 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.'

20th May 2025, 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.

20th October 2025, Long Compton.

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).)