

**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**

**Stretton-on-Fosse  
27 April at 10.00am**

# 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.

## Reports for 2025

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

The Electoral Roll number remained at 5 in total, all of whom are resident in the parish.

### (b) PCC report for 2025

The P.C.C. met twice as an independent entity in 2025 and was also fully represented at the joint meeting of all P.C.C.s in the group. There were no Reportable Incidents under Health & Safety legislation. Amongst items discussed were:

- Parish Share contributions and finances, ongoing implementation of the Parish Giving Scheme.
- Refreshment of noticeboards and updating of content to enhance the church environment.
- Care of the churchyard, including possible collapse of the retaining wall and associated tree surgery.
- Desirability of the cemetery extension being consecrated as soon as it is realistic to do so.
- Safeguarding, including new policies to be adopted and updates to the Parish Dashboard.
- Forthcoming Quinquennial Inspection and likely costs.
- Appointment of a church architect to replace Mark Evans who stepped down in 2021.

- Possibility of Stretton-on-Fosse becoming a Chapel of Ease with Ilmington as the parent church.
- The grass was mown; churchyard and cemetery were kept tidy; flowers were arranged; magazines were delivered; the church fabric was maintained and the interior cleaned - that these things took place without discussion or drama, is testimony to the quiet commitment and dedication of all those within the congregation and the wider church family who devote time and energy to keep this church running.
- There were 21 services in the church in 2025, including 18 Holy Communion, 3 special services, but no baptisms, weddings or funerals.
- 93 people attended Carols by Candlelight; 5 people came to church on Easter Sunday; 14 people attended Harvest Festival; 15 people attended the Service of Remembrance, whilst 27 were present at the Silent Memory at the war memorial.

### **Safeguarding**

Martin Whittaker remains as Parish Safeguarding Officer, working with Jane Downie who is PSO for the other parishes in the group. 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), Simon Bayliss (Secretary), Martin Whittaker (PSO).

Helen Patrick kindly continued as acting treasurer.

No church wardens or Deanery Synod representatives were elected.

Simon Bayliss

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

The church is in somewhat shabby but serviceable condition, with our very limited funds permitting only essential maintenance plus voluntary activity, which has included:

- Ongoing scheme to repair/replace the increasingly dilapidated external noticeboards at minimal cost.
- Repairs to guttering on the south side of the nave.
- Jetwashing of concrete path and access steps.
- Various emergency tree felling or extreme pruning.
- Investigation of the precarious state of the churchyard wall adjacent to the main street.

Routine maintenance has been carried out, including clearing gutters and downpipes. Various arboricultural and maintenance issues are in hand in preparation for the forthcoming Quinquennial Inspection in 2026.

Simon Bayliss

## (d) Financial Report

### I. Stretton

The decline in regular congregation numbers, which has led to a planned reduction of regular services to one a month in 2026, now shows dramatically in the reduction of income for 2025 compared to 2024, even when the 2024 figures are adjusted to take account of a £10,000 legacy received in that year. (See summary figures in Section 2 (ii) below.)

Income from standing orders and use of the Parish Giving Scheme increased, but there were no one-off donations, and fees from occasional offices (funerals and weddings) fell to only 20% of what they were in 2024. This latter figure also has a continuing effect, as the portion of fees paid to the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) is returned via the Deanery in the following year, so there will be a corresponding fall in the 'Fees Credit' (see section below) in 2026.

Overall expenditure was kept to a minimum and churchyard costs were reduced to only two-thirds of the 2024 figure. Two years' worth of Parish Share contributions were paid in 2024, so this figure was at a realistic level for 2025. The reserve funds are at a healthier level thanks to the legacy given in 2024, but the overall picture is not optimistic.

Positive discussions took place, as mentioned in the PCC report, about uniting the PCCs of Stretton and Ilmington. While this is not envisaged to affect the finances of either parish, which remain in separate accounts, it will enable wider oversight of Stretton's funds in the future, reducing the responsibility that falls on a very small number of PCC members.

(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	19089	18175
Other income	9643	9268	2655	658	19367 <sup>3</sup>		0 <sup>4</sup>		747	725	3586 <sup>5</sup>	2872
<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>22675</b>	<b>21047</b>
<b>Exp'ture</b>												
Parish Share	21181	23300	2000 <sup>6</sup>	1100	22181		0		4500	5000	6500	7200
Church & churchyard	9085	11449	6391	5418	19387		2513		3371	3701	35266 <sup>7</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>8</sup>		44735 <sup>9</sup>				3667 <sup>10</sup>	3832 <sup>11</sup>
Unrestricted reserves	43467	58792 <sup>12</sup>	16000	26346	708757		44791		50633	48457 <sup>13</sup>		

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

<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 £1000 for 2023

<sup>7</sup> Includes £27280 for Churchyard wall repair

<sup>8</sup> Restricted to St Gregory's Fabric upkeep

<sup>9</sup> Restricted to St George's Churchyard upkeep

<sup>10</sup> Restricted to St Mary's Fabric upkeep

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

<sup>12</sup> Includes £10,000 gift recorded in 'total giving'

<sup>13</sup> 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:

<b>PGS Income</b>	<b>Ilmington</b>	<b>Stretton</b>	<b>Tredington &amp; Darlingscott</b>	<b>Whitchurch</b>	<b>Preston</b>	<b>Total</b>
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

## (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).)