

 Diocese of Worcester

archdeacons' visitation news

Mission Accompaniers make a difference to churches

The Mission Accompanier scheme started in the spring of 2022. Funded by the Healthier Churches Fund, Mission Accompaniers come alongside parishes over an 18-month to two-year period, helping them to think about what health and sustainability looks like in their context/setting/tradition. To date, 24 Mission Accompaniers have supported 64 churches in 35 contexts (parishes/groups/teams).

Feedback on the scheme

Feedback from clergy has suggested that the Accompaniers offer the right mix of encouraging, supportive and challenging input, bringing appropriate levels of honesty, whilst facilitating positive, insightful change. "It was good to see a group of people challenged around our context and the challenges that we faced, and it was good to see the growth of different ideas. It was comforting and encouraging for me to have someone work with me."

"For me it's a growing in confidence. He came when I was going through a time of change and wasn't sure about things. For the church, it has opened up possibilities."

Outcomes so far

Many of the churches working with a Mission Accompanier have started or strengthened a new initiative as a result.

In one church, the Mission Accompanier helped them to open up for Heritage Days, which helped bring new people. The Incumbent said: "We have made really good links with the schools and also worked on Places of Welcome. Individuals from two care homes have started coming regularly on a Sunday along with their carers. We also have a young family who have started coming. We try to do a few things well, noticing where things are being really fruitful and being brave to stop things that aren't."

Another incumbent said: "My own ability to work as a leader has been transformed. But also, there has been growth in ownership and confidence of the PCC. We went for a children/family worker and that is bringing people into the church. We got a Kingdom People Fund grant and we now have half a dozen families. It's a model of how it could be."

Diocesan Leader of Transformation and Change, Archdeacon Nikki, said: "It is obvious from the feedback that Mission Accompaniers have been really appreciated by parishes and are making a difference in helping churches to grow. We are now looking at how we might be able to continue to support churches, helping them to understand who they are as a church and build on their individual strengths."

Thank you!



Thank you for all you do and are as Churchwardens, serving your parishes faithfully, diligently and sacrificially. Being new to this 'Archdeaconing' I am particularly thankful for all your good wishes and support over these first months in office. Nikki and I hope that you will be inspired and

encouraged by the updates on the progress of our diocesan priorities contained in this newsletter. Parishes, underpinned by grants from the Healthier Churches Fund, are already bearing fruit in increasing the number of children and young people worshipping in our churches, offering new and exciting ways for people to come to faith and worship God, the renewal of our churches, and through increased opportunities for training and development for mission.

Every church is different and we want to encourage and resource you all to thrive in your own context and in your own ways, as you worship God, make disciples, share hope, and transform your community.

May God bless you.

Mark Badger, Archdeacon of Worcester
Nikki Groarke, Archdeacon of Dudley

Supporting the growth of new worshipping communities



We are hoping to create 100 new worshipping communities (NWCs) by 2030, which will offer a more informal and relaxed form of worship, often in a different setting to the church building and help ensure we are offering a range of ways for people to come to faith and worship God.

There are already a number of new worshipping communities across the Diocese. Over the last two years, the ministry team in the parish of Bromsgrove have established three successful NWCs and they are just in the process of setting up a fourth.

Pizza Church

The longest-running new worshipping community in Bromsgrove parish is a café church, which has been renamed 'Pizza Church' by the children who attend. This takes place on Saturdays at 5pm in the church hall at St Godwald's Church in Finstall, on the edge of Bromsgrove. The format is similar to other café churches featuring food (or more accurately pizza), live music, songs, prayer and a sermon.

It is deliberately planned to be informal, fun and very inclusive in both style and theology. A core of 30 people attend regularly – mainly families with children who generally don't go to church anywhere else.

Twenty is Plenty

'Twenty is Plenty' takes place at Stoke Prior village church. It is a 20-minute time of worship and is specifically aimed at families with children. There is music and a brief talk as well as something creative to do to help familiarise the children with the church environment.

Soul and Senses

This takes place at All Saints in Bromsgrove town centre. It offers contemplative worship based around four or five prayer stations that follow a different theme each time. Those present gather for an initial time of worship, followed by time to move around the prayer stations while music plays in the background. It is tactile and about following the senses so no one talks. Everyone then gathers back together for the final worship.

Parish Café

Bromsgrove's newest offering is still in its early stages of development. St Luke's Church hasn't had a worshipping congregation for several decades but is in a part of the town that has no other worshipping community, so the team in Bromsgrove are using the NWC model as a way to try and breathe new life into it, a bit like a church plant.

To deliver all these NWCs and stay on track, those responsible for delivering each of these NWCs in Bromsgrove parish meet to reflect, plan, and pray together, as although each NWC is very different, they can learn from each other.

New Diocesan NWC Learning Pathway

To support those churches who are just starting a new worshipping community, leaders and their teams have formed a new learning pathway. It will meet every six months for two and a half years with mentoring and training provided in between the meetings. 32 people attended the first meeting, representing 11 different new worshipping communities, all of which are at different stages of development.

The Diocese has partnered with Myriad (part of the Gregory Centre for church multiplication) to deliver this new learning pathway. The parish teams will journey together, sharing their vision as well as encouraging and learning from each other.

After the first session, one of the participants commented: "Having sat through many similar events, I was a tad cautious, but found the whole day brilliantly put together, excellently delivered, beautifully and generously hosted and thoroughly enlivening, informative, visionary and fun! Our team is fired up!"

Support from the diocesan office

Funding has enabled a small team to be recruited to support all parishes as they look to develop new worshipping communities. This includes a part-time Administrator, Clare Ashworth, who played a key role in the smooth running of the first meeting of the learning pathway, and part-time NWC Enabler, Kim Brown.

Kim joined the Diocese in April from the Diocese of Gloucester where she was vicar of five rural churches. While there, her churches started two new youth clubs, a community meal and an outdoor eco-friendly family service. Before that, Kim helped to open a drop-in centre in Cirencester called The Upper Room, which grew into a new worshipping community. The team there journeyed with homeless young men, people who had been in care and others who had come out of prison, and young people with additional learning needs. They established a food bank, an intern scheme, a holiday playscheme, and saw many people come to faith and be baptised and confirmed.

She says, "I am very excited to be helping churches across the Diocese do new things to reach new people for Christ. Since I started, I have been so encouraged and excited at all the new and creative things that people are doing – alongside their work, childcare and family life. It is inspirational for me to see people seeking God for their community."

Parishes looking for support in establishing or developing a new worshipping community can find contact details for Clare and Kim on the diocesan website.



Enhance your church's fundraising efforts

Whether you're raising funds for new facilities, building repairs, youth worker recruitment, or daily running costs, the Ecclesiastical Fundraising Hub provides resources to aid your church's growth in fundraising. This practical hub is organised into user-friendly steps, each offering information, guidance and tools, regardless of your fundraising experience.

Explore a wealth of articles, blogs and supporting documents on various topics such as digital fundraising, capital projects, understanding the grants process and forming fundraising teams. Access a free searchable list of church funders providing grants, along with tailored fundraising support for small rural churches.

Also, to support time-constrained churches and volunteers, looking for quick information on the diverse fundraising landscape, the hub offers concise, insightful bitesize videos addressing key fundraising issues. Additionally, sign up for live, free webinars conducted in collaboration with Philanthropy Company across 2024. For additional help, call the fundraising helpline below.

📞 0345 601 9959

🌐 www.ecclesiastical.com/churchfundraising



An update from grant-making charity, Benefact Trust



BENEFACT TRUST

Every day, Benefact Trust, the charitable owner of Benefact Group, witnesses the crucial role churches and charities play in our communities. Since the Trust was established in 1972, it has awarded over £256m in funding to support these organisations to thrive and make a positive

impact in society. Benefact Trust's grants support a range of causes and there are many heart-warming stories to be found on the website.

🌐 www.benefacttrust.co.uk/news



Nominate your church for a chance to win



The Movement for Good Awards programme is back again with grants of £1,000 and more to give to churches and charities. Ecclesiastical is proudly part of the Benefact Group, who are giving away over £1 million to churches and charities in the 2024 Movement for Good Awards.

£1,000 draws are now open for nominations

- You can nominate your church or favourite charity for the £1,000 draw.
- You can nominate as many charities as you like; it's one nomination per charity per person.

There are six £1,000 draws this year giving away between £50,000 and £120,000 in each. Once you've nominated, share your nomination, and get your friends and family to support too.

Did you know?

The Movement for Good Awards has gifted over £5.75 million to more than 2,500 charities since the initiative started in 2019.

Last year, A Rocha UK was awarded £5,000 in the Environment and Climate special draw. A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and is committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment.

Also, in 2023, £11,000 was awarded to 10 church-related charities through the £1,000 Movement for Good Awards; Kilkenny Christian Centre in ROI actually won twice! So please get nominating; next time it could be your church! You can find out more at:

🌐 www.movementforgood.com/ecclesiastical

Contains promotional material

Would you like to sign up for e-news?

The monthly e-news is full of useful information to support you in areas such as fundraising, church security and environmental impact. Signing up is easy and you can unsubscribe whenever you choose. Many of Ecclesiastical's customers have chosen to receive this and we hope you would like to join them.

 www.ecclesiastical.com/signup



Financial support for your 2025 sabbatical

Established in 1987, the Ecclesiastical Ministry Bursary Awards (MBAs) have assisted over 1,400 clergy members in funding a variety of extended leave projects.


The experience of a sabbatical can be life-changing and have a positive and long-lasting impact on your church and community. One of the 2023 recipients, the Rev'd. Heston Groenewald, vicar of All Hallows Church in Leeds, received a bursary to support his local interfaith ministry.

He visited India and Pakistan to experience and learn more about the diverse cultures and customs that make up the fabric of the local community. On his trip, Heston experienced the Holi festival in India and celebrated Easter with Christians and Muslims in Lahore.

“ The MBA grant enabled an amazing adventure around India and Pakistan and so has been a valuable, wonderful investment in my wellbeing and in my local interfaith ministry. ” **Rev'd. Heston Groenewald**

The application window for the 2025 MBA programme is now open and closes in September 2024. In 2025, we are particularly keen to see more sabbaticals which aim to support the drive for net zero carbon.

If you would like to find out more about the Awards, including eligibility criteria and application details, please visit:

 www.ecclesiastical.com/mba



Invest in making a difference

Worries about social matters, our planet and the environment are factors most of us think about daily. To do more to help address these concerns, there is increasing interest from people looking to invest ethically in accordance with their principles.

What is ethical investing?

Richard Wood, Director of Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Services (pictured below), explains, "Put simply, ethical investments allow people to invest without sacrificing their environmental, social, moral or religious principles while at the same time aiming to make a profitable return."



Ethical investment funds can be screened using negative or positive criteria. For negatively screened funds, the fund manager will, for example, be screening investments to avoid a range of activities considered harmful – such as companies involved in manufacturing tobacco.

When using positive screening, fund managers actively identify companies that make a positive

social impact or who invest sustainably and/or responsibly. They will have, for example, good corporate governance and employment practices as well as being active in making a positive impact on the environment.

To find out more about ethical investing, contact Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Services today.



0800 107 0190



getadvice@ecclesiastical.com



www.ecclesiastical.com/financial-advice

Please note: The value of investments can go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount you invested. Your capital is at risk.

Looking for help to go green?

Give your parishioners a warm welcome!

We all want our church buildings to be welcoming spaces for both prayer and for wider community activities, but particularly in the chilly months, keeping buildings warm is a challenge and can be costly and harmful to the environment.

Wherever you are in your journey to reduce your church's carbon emissions, Ecclesiastical would like to help. For example, they would like to spread the word about some interesting innovations that they've come across recently.

Warming chandeliers

St Matthew's has been trialling innovative radiant heating chandeliers in their church in Bristol. These chandeliers use a very gentle wavelength of heat, like that of the winter sun, and they warm just the space needed, not the whole church. They have proved much cheaper to run than a central heating system and can help to lower your carbon footprint.



Through the Movement for Good awards, Ecclesiastical awarded a £35,000 grant to St Matthew's in 2023, which will allow them to make the trial installation permanent. If you would like to consider applying for a similar grant, further information can be found on page 3. Also, if you wish to install this type of heating, please let the Ecclesiastical Underwriters

know, so that they can advise on any potential insurance implications and ensure the system itself is covered.

Heated cushions

Another innovation, helping church communities take steps to reduce their carbon emissions by warming people not spaces, is a heated seat cushion! These are powered by lithium-ion batteries which are widely used as a power source in portable electrical products. However,



if you do choose this option, it is important to select seat cushions and fabrics that have an appropriate fire performance and to follow the guidance on charging the cushions. Cushions should comply with British Standards and have the CE mark. If you think that this is an option for you, you will find guidance about the cushions here:

www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-heated-cushions

Ecclesiastical has also developed a new Made Simple guide, which can support you on your journey to make your church buildings more environmentally friendly. It includes information about other alternative heating systems like heat pumps, information about LED lighting and much more.

www.ecclesiastical.com/madesimple

If you have any tips that have helped your church in its environmental journey, why not drop Ecclesiastical an email and they can share your ideas in their monthly digital newsletter.

weboffice@ecclesiastical.com



Insurance made simple!

As church insurance experts, Ecclesiastical is well placed to help you navigate many of the complicated insurance responsibilities of your church. They have created a series of 'Made Simple' guides which highlight potential risks and insurance implications of the day-to-day running of churches.



The guides also offer help with activities and projects that PCCs often become involved in, which include:

- Climate change and your church
- Administering insurance
- Building works
- Church events
- Church property
- Church valuation
- Community outreach
- Digital technology
- Legal expenses
- People on church premises
- Unoccupied buildings

You can find lots more information at:

www.ecclesiastical.com/madesimple

Herschel Infrared



Funeral planning

As you know, funerals can be costly, but Ecclesiastical can help you make provisions to reduce the financial worry for your family when the time comes and ensure your wishes are provided for.¹

¹ Terms and conditions apply – see website for details.

☎ **0800 055 6503**
✉ **info@epsfunerals.com**
🌐 **www.funeralplans.co.uk**

Car insurance

Ecclesiastical's Clergy Motor Insurance has been tailored specifically for the clergy and includes benefits such as business use, unlimited windscreen cover and up to £500 cover for church goods in the car.¹ To find out more about the benefits of this policy, get in touch with Ecclesiastical.

☎ **0345 450 9396**
🌐 **www.ecclesiastical.com/church/car-insurance**
¹ Subject to terms and conditions



Month by month support



So you can better look after your church and parishioners, Ecclesiastical has again produced their easy-to-view calendar to help you plan maintenance activities throughout the year.

🌐 **www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-calendar**

Insure your home with Ecclesiastical and they will donate £130 to a church of your choice

Trust130 is just one of the ways in which Ecclesiastical gives back to the community; for every new direct home insurance policy taken out, Ecclesiastical offers to donate £130 to an Anglican church or cathedral of the policyholder's choice.¹

Since 2017, Ecclesiastical has donated over £500,000 to more than 2,500 churches in the UK.

A £130 donation really helped **St Peter's Church in Parwich**. Church Treasurer **Stuart Chambers** told Ecclesiastical:

“ If you're short of numbers, it's a big job keeping everything ship-shape. I have a ride-on mower, but you can't get to the actual graves on that so inevitably they can look a bit unkempt, which is a real shame. ”

With the £130 donation, St Peter's was able to keep its graveyard looking neat and tidy by paying for a man with a strimmer.

Award-winning home insurance

As well as supporting your church, when you take out a home insurance policy with Ecclesiastical you are joining one of the most trusted home insurance providers with the happiest customers.²



Ecclesiastical continued to top the Fairer Finance league table in Spring 2024 for home insurance for a record 19th consecutive time, retaining the gold ribbon status. Their buildings and contents cover is also a Which? Best Buy and it was voted the best home insurance in the Times Money Mentor Awards in 2023.³



Get a home insurance quote

Ecclesiastical is a specialist insurer who understands the needs of those working in the church and for the church. Their policy helps to protect your home and takes into account the extra duties you carry out for the church.

☎ **0345 777 3322** and quote **CHOPS24**
🌐 **www.ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance**

¹ Terms and conditions apply. Visit www.ecclesiastical.com/trust130-terms ² www.fairerfinance.com/ratings/customer-experience-ratings/home-insurance ³ www.ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance

Children and families' workers across the Diocese

As we seek to double the number of children and young people worshipping in our churches by 2030 (from 2019 levels), a network of paid children and families' workers is growing across the Diocese.



Keri Robinson



Helen Laird

Norton and Wollaston, Stourbridge

Keri Robinson is the children and families worker at both St James' Church in Wollaston and St Michael's Church in Norton, on the edge of Stourbridge. She works part-time, with activities organised in each church and together.

Keri says, "We have a team of volunteers who have organised a series of outreach events for local families, getting to know people and building connections. The aim is to help local families on their own faith journeys with the hope that they will connect with church more regularly."

"There is a huge amount of potential in our local communities. It's great that families are willing to attend events at either church and we are continuing to develop links with St James' Primary School where I take assemblies and the church preschool at St Michael where I visit to do a song and prayer. We are also hoping to build closer links at the community school in St Michael's parish."

Working together in Worcester

Three churches in Worcester joined together to appoint a full-time children and young people's worker following a successful application to the Healthier Churches Fund. Helen Laird is working across the parishes of St John the Baptist in Claines and St Stephen's and St George's Barbourne in Worcester, building on their previous work with children and young people.

Helen says, "Each of the churches is very different in their style of worship and the activities that they offer, so there is a range of ways I can encourage them and different new worshipping communities to explore."

Helen has been reaching out to local schools and set up two 'Gather' after school services. She is a regular at the 'Little Stars' preschool group at St Stephen's Church and at the 'Little Friends' preschool group at Claines Church. She also helps to lead Sunday Stars, St Stephen's new worshipping community for families with small children, which acts as a follow-on to baptism.

Building a network

Both Keri and Helen connect with the developing diocesan network led by Simon Hill, the Programme Lead for Children and Young People in the Diocese. Keri said: "Simon is brilliant – I attend his meetings with other children and youth workers across the Diocese and we even had a retreat together. When you work on your own, it's good to know that there are others you can get support from. Our WhatsApp group is a particularly good way to ask for help or advice."

If your church would like to explore employing a children and families' worker or linking with other parishes to reach out to local children and young people, then do have a conversation with Simon Hill:

✉ shill@cofe-worcester.org.uk

Stewarding our churches' finances



**Stewardship and Resources Officer
Chris Boden writes:**

Many churches I visit describe themselves with words like family and community, and thinking about stewardship within family reveals some important messages. In the New Testament, the word *oikonomos* is used to describe

stewardship. This gives us the word 'economy' today and means the rules or customs of the house. So how can we think about stewardship in terms of our homes and family?

Mechanisms – families are full of people who are all different. Some visit occasionally and some are always there; some are tech wizards and have the latest gadgets, while others prefer pen and paper; some are financially comfortable, while others exist pay-day to pay-day. Our churches need to offer a variety of ways to give – not just cash on the plate, but regular giving with online banking or using a contactless card, to suit what works for the donor's situation and personality.

Impact and need – family members often help one another when they know there is a reason. This could be frequent (the bank of Mum and Dad), but sometimes it can be because life throws a curveball. Similarly, some people will always be willing to help our churches, and for them that is part of being in the family, while others will be happy to help but want to know the reason why. We need to explain why our churches need help and what impact these gifts will have for our communities.

Trust – trust needs to be built within families and we need to do the same within our churches. People want to know that their money will be going to the things they care about, that they are appreciated and that they feel part of your church's family. Think carefully about how you say thank you, this needs to be in a number of different ways so people hear it and feel it is genuine, a formal letter does not have the same impact as a card or a telephone call. Similarly, how you report the church's finances is important – celebrate good news and achievements, inviting all those who made them possible.

To become a Kingdom People, our churches' finances will always be challenging as we find new ways to engage our communities, but if we work together as a family to face these challenges then God's presence in our communities and homes will grow.

An update on our renewal churches



St Thomas' Church, Stourbridge

Our diocesan priority to ensure we have a church with a congregation of at least 150 in each major area of population in the Diocese has received significant support from the national Church. A number of our 'renewal churches' have now created detailed plans and are beginning to receive their funding.

St Thomas' Church, in Stourbridge town centre, is among six churches in Greater Dudley Deane that are developing proposals to receive a share of the national Church funding (along with St Stephen's Church in Redditch). This funding will help renew the life of the churches and enable them to support other local churches.

At St Thomas' Church, the national funding will enable it to ensure its building is fit for purpose and it can truly serve all those who use the town centre.

Vicar Andrew Sillis says, "Our church is already open every day and people often pop in. We have been watching how the church building is being used by the community so that we can understand how to provide the warmest welcome. We have also been developing new worshipping communities to reach out to different groups, and the renewal project aims to plug the gaps such that we create discipleship journeys from baptism right through to seniors, offering numerous opportunities for people to discover Jesus and join us."

Alongside expanding their current monthly service for toddlers and their café church service, St Thomas' has realised that there are often

secondary school children in town after school with little to do and students from the local sixth form college also already come into church to have their lunch and find a quiet space to study.

Andrew continues: "We will be able to employ a children and families worker so that we can offer after school provision for older children, and changes to our building will make it more accessible. We are also planning to recruit a pioneer town centre minister to work with the students and with the night-time economy. Stourbridge is as busy at night as it is during the day with the last club closing at 2am. We're preparing for a new worshipping community on Friday and Saturday evenings with worship from 8pm, but then to engage spiritually and pastorally with those in the town centre late at night."

Around a third of the funding St Thomas receives will be spent on making adaptations to the building to facilitate the needs of the different groups. They are hoping to remodel the nave of the church and install heating under a new floor. This will create a more flexible space for worship, but also enable other community use of the building including for concerts and exhibitions. The church also has aspirations to be net zero carbon once the work is completed.

"It's really exciting that we might be able to have a Grade I listed church which is net zero for carbon emissions," said Andrew. "However, our primary purpose with the changes is to make sure that our church provides a space that will serve the whole community."

The proposed changes to St Thomas are currently going through the faculty permission process and once funding is approved and permission is granted, work on the church will take about six months. The Churches Conservation Trust has also suggested that the church looks at its entrance to make it more appealing and St Thomas is now exploring how they might do this whilst improving the utility of the community garden at the front of the church.

"We'll need to get some extra funding, but it would be amazing to incorporate some tiered seating at the front of the church where people often hang out," said Andrew. "It would be a place to sit in summer but could also be used for outdoor worship and community music and theatre performances, hopefully becoming a great space for arts and culture which everyone can enjoy!"

Overall, the national Church's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board agreed in principle to an estimated investment of £6.8 million to support the renewal of seven churches in Dudley and Redditch. This forms phase 1 of our plan to ensure that each major area of population has at least one larger, healthy and sustainable church by 2030 – one with at least 150 people attending in an average week. Future phases of this plan will hopefully create similar congregations in Bromsgrove and Kidderminster.

For more information

Call: 0345 777 3322 **Email:** churches@ecclesiastical.com

Facebook: Ecclesiastical **X:** @churchmatters



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