St George’s, Pontesbury is a Christian Community providing a loving and spiritual environment in which to embrace, explore and experience faith in order to serve our community.
Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read our parish profile. We hope that as you read it you are as excited by the opportunities for church growth and mission as our congregation are and will feel encouraged to apply.

Always time to chat!

Overview

The rural parish of St. George’s Pontesbury has the large village of Pontesbury itself at its centre, surrounded by countryside with farmsteads and hamlets. With a population of over 3,500, the village is on the edge of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty, which stretches for miles to the south. Although in a lovely rural area, Pontesbury is not isolated, being six miles from the county town of Shrewsbury.

Facilities

The village is served by several retailers, including a small supermarket, butcher, baker, greengrocer, Post-office, pharmacy, hardware and stationers, florist, car maintenance and repairer, and hairdressers. Pontesbury has its own medical centre and dentists – and there is a vet’s business in the neighbouring village of Minsterley. Other facilities include a public library, a well-used public hall, a care-home and a home-care business. For leisure, there are three pubs (two of which offer hot meals), two restaurants, two take-away outlets – and several more pubs and restaurants in the surrounding countryside.

Pontesbury supports a nursery school, a Church of England primary school and the Mary Webb secondary school – which has recently attained academy status. ’Pontesbury Project’ provides residential care for young adults with profound learning difficulties and visual impairment.

The county town of Shrewsbury is readily accessible from Pontesbury via the A488 and offers a wide range of facilities including retail parks, theatre, cinema, hotels and a large general hospital.
People and activities

Pontesbury is a community whose inhabitants include farming families active in the area for generations, young families, retirees who have moved into the village, and the elderly.

Local housing stock reflects this variety and significant new development and building is taking place.

The size of Pontesbury and the diversity of its people mean that there are numerous leisure activities and facilities for all ages.

Places of worship other than St. George’s church in Pontesbury include Congregational, Methodist and Baptist churches, all of which hold regular acts of worship.

Resourcefulness

In spite of its diversity, the population of Pontesbury has shown itself capable of pulling together to meet a challenge:

In 2008, a fund-raising campaign was launched by St. George’s church to meet the £200,000 cost of repairing the church tower. This was well-supported by the community and successfully met the target, allowing the necessary work to be completed in late 2009.

In 2014, a community-led campaign was launched to buy the lease of Pontesford Hill which overlooks the village, and this successfully raised the sum of £250,000 by April of the following year.

Currently, a campaign is underway to save the local public library from closure and to secure its long-term future. A series of fund-raising events has received – and continues to receive – strong support from the local community, not least the pupils of the local schools.

These examples reflect the positive community spirit of Pontesbury

Change and Opportunities

No community as active and diverse as Pontesbury can remain static. Looking ahead, we face some significant opportunities including continued expansion: the “Hall Bank” housing development close to the centre of the village is now underway and will deliver eighty new homes and perhaps 250 or more additional inhabitants within a few years. This will include a village hub to be run by the local Parish council. St. George’s is in a good position to use this for future community work. We are engaging with 40+ families giving us the opportunity to continue to develop our ongoing relationships with them.
The gifts and skills we seek

St. George’s Church is at the centre of the village and the parish, with Ministry and Lay teams working well together in order to provide a range of worship and social opportunities and to take Christian mission to the wider community.

The new housing development, will provide us with an opportunity for outreach to a new and establishing community whilst at the same time meeting and maintaining the needs of our existing worshipping community.

We have an enthusiastic and flexible congregation who have engaged in a positive way to new varieties of worship and outreach and we are excited by the possibilities brought with a new incumbent to lead us.

With this in mind, we seek a person to join us in our vision and who:

- Will work collaboratively with our retired clergy, Families Worker and lay leaders whilst showing leadership and the ability to lead by example
- Is keen to support and provide guidance to clergy, readers and lay leaders across the Deanery
- Is willing to work closely with and provide support to the person appointed to be Rector (Pioneer Priest) of the neighbouring Westbury Benefice
- Explores new ways to bring people into the life of the church
- Continues to build relationships both within the church and in the wider parish and community
- Has a commitment to further developing intergenerational worship and learning
- Has the ability to effectively share God’s word and its relevance to our daily lives
- Is a dedicated example and proponent of prayer
- Actively supports the pastoral care ministry within the parish
- Interacts with others with respect and compassion
- Encourages and enables others to participate fully in the life of the church
Our Strengths and our Challenges

Our Strengths

The welcoming and caring atmosphere in our church community is a great strength. Visitors often remark on the warm welcome they receive from members, also remarking on the evident care taken to make this a special place.

St. George’s has a strong musical tradition which is an important part of worship. The church choir provides a strong choral lead to services.

We are fortunate in having a prayerful, hardworking and loyal congregation; many being ready to assist in any way, in services and pastorally in order to support clergy. Several display strong leadership skills, using their own work and life experiences to support their willingness to assist.

We have a strong core leadership team which includes; Families Worker, Retired Clergy, Lay Leaders, Organist.

We have a good fundraising team who are ready and willing to spend time and effort in supporting fund-raising activities.

This support is very apparent in the way members of the congregation support the clergy and each other – recent events have highlighted the amazing care and compassion for each other. There is a willingness to learn in order to support the incumbent and to learn new ways.

The Challenges We Face

As a church, we see the challenges we face are also the opportunities to grow our church and mission.

To encourage new volunteers from our existing congregation and the wider community. We are already seeing sign of success in attracting new volunteers through our engagement with young families.

A second challenge is the “missing generation”: young and not-so-young parents who do not worship regularly. Often, their children are involved with the outreach and mission activities outlined earlier, and sometimes, these parents participate in these too.
A third challenge is to reach out, through new and existing mission, to the growing population within the parish.

A fourth challenge is to continue to meet the worshipping needs of our present congregation whilst always looking for new opportunities and ways of worshipping.
Worship and the worshipping community of St. George’s is about more than Sundays. There is a depth and diversity of worship which creates both weekly and monthly patterns, with the addition of seasonal opportunities during Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas.

It is important to note that all services are open to all. Whilst some services may have a specific focus, anyone is welcome to attend any act of worship held at St. George’s.

**Church Services**

**Morning Prayer:**
This is said in church on Tuesday – Friday at 0900 throughout the year, using a variety of resources which change seasonally. It is open to all and whilst not widely attended is supported by members of the congregations.

**Tea Service:**
This is a monthly said service of Holy Communion using liturgy from Common Worship which is changed seasonally, followed by an afternoon tea and opportunity for fellowship. It is predominantly aimed at, and attended by, those who are older, less mobile and/or reliant on others for transport. The service is well attended with the average congregation 20+ and is supported by a dedicated team of volunteers, who provide transport and all the essentials for the afternoon tea.

**Messy Church:**
This monthly service is led by the Families Worker and supported by a team of volunteers who assist with; prayers, crafts, activities, games and food. It is open to all, but aimed at young families and is held in St. George’s on Wednesday afternoons, straight after school. Average attendance is around 40.

**Courses and Bible Study:**
These run seasonally and periodically throughout the year. Lent and Advent are obvious times for a course or bible study and other opportunities are sought where appropriate. Course attendance varies, but there are always enough to make the running of a course viable and worthwhile.

“Lent Lunches” are an ecumenical activity involving a shared lunch and opportunity for reflection based on an agreed theme. These have proved to be very popular and are very well attended.
**Sunday Worship:**

Sunday: 08:00  
This is a weekly said service of Holy Communion using liturgy from Common Worship and once per month the BCP. It is usually well attended with a recent increase in numbers.

Sunday: 10:30  
This is probably to be considered the main service at St. George’s. Services are well attended and we have recently seen a rise in attendance.  
The service on first and third Sundays is a sung Holy Communion, with choir, using seasonal liturgy from Common Worship.  
On second Sundays there is a said service of Holy Communion, held in the chancel. This is a slightly more reflective service and is perhaps more akin to 08:00. It uses liturgy from Common Worship.  
Fourth Sundays are a new venture, Café Church. This is non-Eucharistic and can therefore be lay-led and is more informal in structure and nature. These have been well received and supported.  
Any fifth Sundays in the month would usually be a sung Holy Communion as first and third Sundays are.

**Healing and Wholeness:**  
This is a gentle, reflective and prayerful service, held monthly, on Sunday evenings, throughout the year. It is an opportunity for prayer and anointing. It is open to all and attracts people from across the deanery and beyond.

**Occasional Offices:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Statistic for:</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptisms</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3 booked to-date to March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weddings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 booked (2020 – 2 booked)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funerals</td>
<td>21 of which 12 were burials and 9 were cremations.</td>
<td>1 to date – to January 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview

Our church is not just for Sundays: between us, the Minister and Lay volunteers organise a range of activities as part of our mission and outreach. Our work in taking St. George’s to the community and of bringing the community to St. George’s falls into four broad groups: Families Ministry, Fund-raising, Pastoral support and Worship. Many of our volunteers are involved in several of the activities – as are many of the participants. Meanwhile, as the wider community of Pontesbury undergoes significant change, we face challenges that must be overcome if we are to best serve the community and to have the secure future that enables us to do so.

Families Ministry

We give a high priority to taking God’s word to the children and young people of our community. We use our funds to meet a large proportion of the cost of a full-time, professional Families Worker. (FW)

Families Ministry activities include:

Little Dragons:

This group meets on Tuesday mornings in term time in St. George’s and invites pre-school infants and their Carers to enjoy a fun time of play, crafts and stories. As well as helping the children to socialise, the group enables mothers and others to meet and share experience being a huge opportunity for Outreach, encouraging all involved to appreciate that St. George’s is a welcoming place.

Friday Club:

This group meets after school in term-time Fridays in St. George’s and aims to attract children of Primary School age. Here, the focus is on understanding the messages in the Bible, but with a strong element of sharing fun and creativity.
Who Let the Dad’s Out
Led by our FW, this group meets once a month in term-time and is aimed at Dads/Carers and their children. Meetings take place in St. George’s Church on Saturday mornings, when contact is made with young fathers. This is a group we are keen to attract into our church community.

Messy Church:
Also led by our FW, this is held once a month on Wednesday afternoons, is open to young families and aims to reinforce the work of the other Children’s Ministry activities. In particular, Messy Church seeks to attract participation by families for whom Sunday is in no way a day of rest but instead busy with secular activities.

Schools Ministry:
Children’s Ministry also takes the Minister, Lay volunteers and the Families Worker into our local schools. Working relations between St. George’s Church and the schools have improved greatly over the last few years so that there is a range of involvement, including:

School Governors:
St. George’s Church has representatives on the Governing Bodies of both Pontesbury Primary School and the Mary Webb Secondary School

One to One Mentoring:
The FW serves as mentor within the secondary school.

School Assemblies:
Between them, the Minister and FW take regular Collective Worship at the primary school – and pupils make organised visits to St. George’s Church to celebrate festivals and for their own services throughout the year.
Friday Lunch Club held in Mary Webb School on a weekly basis in partnership with Shrewsbury Youth for Christ

Pray-Bake-Read:
An initiative of our FW, this is now organised and run by a group of volunteers who listen to pupils at the primary school read aloud on a one-to-one basis. Each volunteer works with his or her class teacher to hear six or so children read to them, typically visiting the school regularly once a week for up to two hours. This helps the school and pupils as teachers alone lack the time to hear all pupils read aloud, while this process is vital to each child’s development. The “bake” aspect is where the volunteers give the school staff a cake to enjoy each half-term. We intentionally pray for the school.

Pastoral Support

This work mainly focuses on older members in the parish – but just like our mission to children and younger parents, this involves a team of volunteers as well as the Minister – and recognises that for many, ill-health, frailty and other circumstances make attendance at regular Sunday worship impossible.

Pastoral support includes:

Home Communion:
A much-valued part of our clergy ministry, this is now also carried out by authorised Lay volunteers.

Parish Visiting and Street Wardens:
We encourage members of St. George’s to “keep an eye” on the well-being of friends and neighbours, and of any new arrivals to our community. Feedback from this enables volunteers - and members of the Ministry Team – to pay visits to those who may benefit from spiritual support and guidance. As with communities everywhere, the inhabitants of Pontesbury encounter issues such as bereavement (sometimes sudden), terminal illness, family breakdown, financial hardship and criminal activity, where family support alone is insufficient to help those affected to cope. For those who have been bereaved, we offer trained volunteers who can provide appropriate support.

Bereavement Group:
A small group of people which supports those who are grieving. Contact is made either by letter, telephone or by means of the Footsteps Group.

Prayer Chain:
This provides regular prayer for the most needy and vulnerable within our parish and extends to friends and relatives further afield.

Mothers’ Union:
The St. George’s Church branch meets regularly to support Christian mission not only within our community but worldwide.
**Communications:**
The Communications Group advises the PCC on all means of dispersing information about St. George’s events both within the church community and the wider village community. The printing equipment and consumables is managed. Together with the help of the Administrator, printing of the monthly magazine, the weekly bulletin, service sheets, catalogues for Crib and Tree Festival and Art Exhibition and posters for events are printed together with advice as requested.

Details of events are displayed inside the church by means of a VDU system and also in the several notice boards both inside and outside. Broadband internet connection is available through a link to the Public Hall.

The successful, frequently-visited website, – [www.st-george.org.uk](http://www.st-george.org.uk) is kept up to date by our webmaster giving information concerning church details and activities.

**Fund-raising:**
This work is led by Lay volunteers and serves several aims. The most obvious is the raising of funds to help cover the costs of running our church, its many activities and its paid Ministry team. Monies raised, often being shared with worthy causes other than ourselves, encourage the community to come to us.

Examples are Annual Fete, Duck Race, Art Festival, Christmas Tree & Crib Festival, Big Brekkie, Friday Coffee, Beetle Drives & Quizzes.
The St George’s Pontesbury Benefice forms a key part of the Pontesbury Deanery which lays to the South-West of Shrewsbury, and is made up of the Benefices of

- Chirbury
- Ford
- Hanwood
- Pontesbury
- Stiperstones
- Westbury

During the interregnum in the neighbouring Westbury Benefice, the Clergy team at St George’s Pontesbury have helped with the leading of services and pastoral care. This pattern of closer working together has been a success and is something we would wish to build on in the future. To this end, The Priest appointed to this position will work closely with, and encourage and support, the new Rector (Pioneer Priest) of the Westbury Benefice to ensure that the latter will have the time and energy to devote to the deanery wide youth outreach aspect of that role, which we envisage as taking up 50% of that person's time.
The Deanery Chapter headed by the Rural Dean (Revd Giles Tulk, Rector of the Stiperstones Group) meets every month and the members are very supportive of each other. In addition, we now have an evening ‘Greater Deanery Chapter’ four times a year which is attended by our SSMs, PTOs, Readers and our Families Worker.

A new Deanery MAP, which is being developed collaboratively by the Deanery Clergy, has at its heart the idea that we will increasingly work more closely together across the Deanery in delivering worship, outreach, training and the taking of the Occasional Offices. Going forward, we would like to be in a position where each of the incumbents will have focus on a particular aspect of Deanery wide mission. This could include the following, with additional areas being identified, particularly if applicants bring specific skills and experience:

Children and young people (the new Westbury incumbent); The missing generation (ages 21 – 50); long-term Shropshire residents; people moving into the deanery; people who attend life services; training & formation.

Or aim is to more and more blur the edges between Benefice boundaries and to share the expertise and experience of clergy, readers and laity. We are already in a position where all lay training going forward is being delivered at a Deanery level, such as The Diocese School of Ministry Course which is being hosted at Westbury starting in March this year and is being led by one of our Readers.

If you want to be part of a flexible and forward-looking clergy group, enjoy working collaboratively, and would enjoy the challenge of helping to develop our mission, this could just be the role you are looking for!
Finances for 2018

Expenditure

£78,000 of which the Diocesan Quota was £60,500. We expect this situation to remain broadly unchanged.

Income

£30,000- Regular giving (including Gift Aid refund)

£10,000 Occasional Offices

in addition to

£8,000 - fund-raising activities, fees and one-off collections

Any shortfall is covered by drawing from the income generated by a trust fund

Looking Ahead

We take our approach to Christian stewardship seriously and in 2018 we introduced the 'Parish Giving Scheme’ and we are working to extend its reach to all supporters of St. George’s. We also plan to raise the profile of legacy giving

A full set of the latest Annual Accounts for St. George’s is available.

Paid Administrator

A non-contractual administrator is employed for approximately 3 hours per week, depending on requirements.
The Rectory

Known as The Deanery the Rectory, built in 1965, being modernised several years ago, lies adjacent to the church, situated in the heart of Pontesbury. It has gas central heating, double glazing and garage and comprises:

Ground floor: entrance hall, guest cloakroom, study, large sitting room with French doors to rear garden, kitchen/diner, utility room with additional storeroom.

First floor: four bedrooms, bathroom, shower room.

Outside: the garden surrounds the house on all sides. There is a greenhouse and a shed, and a good parking area.
In this world there is a need for some to lead the rest. A need for those who have the spark to light the way for others.

Are you someone who dares to take on the risk, to rise to the heights whilst leading those who are eager to share and to follow?

If this is indeed you, and you like what you have read; if you feel the challenge of the opportunity to lead, to support, to enhance our worship and to share with us the joy of our Christian journey and discipleship – then we are more than ready to return that support as we worship together.