

# archdeacons' visitation news

## Dear Churchwardens

You play a crucial role in the life of every parish within our diocese, and we are incredibly grateful for all that you do. Without your service, leadership and commitment, our parishes simply couldn't exist, let alone flourish. On behalf of the Archdeacons I want to express our deep and heartfelt thanks for your ministry.

We would also like to express our thanks to Ecclesiastical for its commitment to providing a great service to the Church of England, which goes beyond the normal expectations of any commercial relationship. We would especially like to thank Helen Richards and Michael Angell for their ongoing help and guidance.

The coming year will bring a unique mix of joys and challenges for you as Churchwardens. It's also a year of aspiration, particularly in how we hope to develop our ministry with the emerging generations. Bishop Steven has asked us to prioritise our work with children, young people, families and schools. We know that parishes can't keep doing ever more, and so choices may need to be made in order to give sufficient attention to this ministry. We trust that you will offer words of prayerful wisdom to your incumbents and PCCs about ensuring the best use of the parish's resources within the limits of what is manageable.

Please pay attention to your own wellbeing. It's important to us that you flourish amongst the busyness and in a role that can be particularly demanding at times. The Archdeacons will be praying for you as we hope you will be praying for us. We are here to help you, so please contact us whenever you would value some advice or support, or even if you just want to talk something over. In the meantime, we pray for all wisdom and understanding as you serve in the places God has called you.

**The Ven Stephen Pullin**, Archdeacon of Berkshire



### Berkshire Archdeaconry

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### Buckingham Archdeaconry

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Photo: Ed Nix

## Working with the clergy



Mr Collins – perhaps Jane Austen's least attractive clergyman!  
Illustration by Hugh Thomson

My favourite novelist, Jane Austen, knew a lot about the church, being a clergyman's daughter and among the keenest observers of English society who ever put pen to paper. When considering how much has changed in the modern C of E, I often think of one of her fictional incumbents, Dr Grant in *Mansfield Park*, who leaves the parish to take up a canon's stall at Westminster, only to find that his new lifestyle 'brought on apoplexy and death, by three great institutional dinners in one week'. Fortunately, our own time sees very few clergy sent to meet their Lord by too much feasting.

Our parochial system is, in some ways, unchanged by many centuries. In others, it is completely transformed. The old model of a single vicar in a single village is long gone: a real Vicar of Dibley would have half a dozen villages, each the size of Dibley. While the clergy remain bound to preach the gospel, celebrate the sacraments and serve the community in the settings where they minister, they and those settings are very different from the rural idylls of the past.

Instead of being a uniform collection of white male gentry, our clergy bring a far greater breadth of background and life experience into the ministry when they are ordained. Most have had previous careers, and for many these continue; many or most are ordained in middle age; they may be married, divorced or widowed; they might well be adult converts to Christianity; they might only have joined the Church of England a few years before beginning their ministerial training.

Working with the clergy will always be a matter of collaboration and of discernment. Collaboration, because as a church we can only hope to be Christ-like if we give of ourselves to others and seek to build community as we work together. And discernment, because that working together will often be a matter of identifying the gifts that different people, lay and ordained, bring to the parishes and other communities in which we find ourselves.

Some clergy will come into ministry with a background in finance. Most won't. Some will have extensive experience of project management. Most won't. Some will have spent a great deal of time in schools and in children's work. Many will not. But in each of these cases, our parish communities will contain people who can contribute. For Churchwardens in particular, the ability to identify those people and to bring together the gifts with which God has blessed our parishes will be of enormous value.

Clergy will practise differing patterns of work. Priesthood is always 'full time', as one cannot cease to be a priest once ordained. But our ministerial work will differ. Clergy should be clear with colleagues and lay leaders what their work patterns are. Those leaders should do their best to make those patterns work for everybody, and this is absolutely a reciprocal endeavour: just as lay volunteers should support one another as well as the clergy, so the clergy must take care not to demand too much or to rely excessively on those who are giving their time and their limited energy freely.

At the same time, the importance of support for the clergy in simple and often little things cannot be underestimated. Do we spend time together, just for the sake of it – when did the clergy and wardens last enjoy a pub lunch together, for example? Do we look out for one another's care – are the clergy taking their days off, going on holiday, allowing time for retreats and quiet days? Do the deanery and the diocese support our clergy adequately? If not, complain to your Archdeacon!

In all of these responsibilities, we are called to use our gifts and to encourage others to do the same. Never give in to clericalism – sometimes things will be best done by someone ordained, and sometimes they won't. When working with the clergy, good practice will involve praying together, learning together, communicating well, clarifying roles, boundaries and responsibilities, and being willing to provide support when things go wrong. God entrusts us with the gifts of his love for the ministry of the gospel. As we love and trust one another, so we can work together for the good of our world.

### Peter Groves

(Below) Clergy in our diocese at the Chrism Mass. Photo: Rowan Lake





# 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto:getadvice@ecclesiastical.com)**

 **[www.ecclesiastical.com/financial-advice](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> To find out more about the benefits of this policy, get in touch with Ecclesiastical.

☎ **0345 450 9396**  
🌐 **www.ecclesiastical.com/church/car-insurance**  
<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>



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.<sup>3</sup>



### 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**

<sup>1</sup> Terms and conditions apply. Visit [www.ecclesiastical.com/trust130-terms](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/trust130-terms) <sup>2</sup> [www.fairerfinance.com/ratings/customer-experience-ratings/home-insurance](http://www.fairerfinance.com/ratings/customer-experience-ratings/home-insurance) <sup>3</sup> [www.ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance)



# Nurturing your spirit: a guide for Churchwardens



Morning view from the prayer cabin at Stanton House

Being a Churchwarden is a rewarding but often demanding role. As you dedicate your time and energy to serving your parish, it's easy for your own spiritual wellbeing to take a back seat. Remember, your ability to serve others effectively flows from the wellspring of your relationship with God.

Here are a few tips to help you nurture your spiritual life amidst the busyness:

- **Prioritise prayer and reflection:** Carve out regular moments for quiet prayer and contemplation. Whether it's a few minutes in the morning, midday prayer, or evening reflection, make intentional time to connect with God.
- **Seek support and community:** Build relationships with fellow Churchwardens, your incumbent, or a spiritual mentor. Share your experiences, challenges and joys with someone who understands your unique journey and the challenges of being a Churchwarden.
- **Step back and recharge:** It's OK to say "no" sometimes. Practise setting healthy boundaries and delegating tasks to avoid burnout. Taking time for rest and renewal will make you a more effective servant-leader.
- **Nurture outside interests:** Maintain hobbies and activities outside your role as Churchwarden. These nourish your soul, provide balance, and help you maintain perspective.
- **Give yourself grace:** Don't strive for perfection. You will make mistakes, and that's OK! Embrace your time in office as a journey of growth.

## Resources to consider:

- **Spiritual direction:** Consider meeting regularly with a spiritual director for guidance and deeper exploration of your faith.
- **Retreats:** We are blessed with several wonderful retreat houses in the diocese, so even if you can't get away for a few days' retreat, a quiet day somewhere like Stanton House or CSMV Wantage can be wonderfully refreshing.
- **Worship elsewhere (occasionally!):** If your church doesn't have a Sunday evening service, why not worship somewhere that does? Or go to a different church for a weekday service. It is vital to have times of worship when you can receive from God, aside from the pressures and responsibilities you carry as Churchwarden.

Remember, a vibrant spiritual life is not a luxury but a necessity for sustainable service as a Churchwarden. By caring for your own soul, you'll have deeper resources to draw from as you serve your church and community.



Blewbury churchyard

Photo: Alison Riggs

## Churchyards as havens for nature

The recent Synod motion on Land and Nature has brought the vital role of caring for creation to the forefront of the Church of England's mission. Churchyards, with their unique green spaces, can be havens for wildlife and biodiversity in an increasingly urbanized world. Churchwardens have a wonderful opportunity to embrace this responsibility.

The motion, championed by the Bishop of Norwich, recognises the perilous state of biodiversity in Britain. Our churchyards provide vital pockets of green space where wildflowers flourish, insects thrive and birds find refuge. Even small changes in churchyard management can make a big difference.

### Simple steps, big impact

Steps you can take to make your churchyard a haven for nature:

- **Reduce mowing:** Reducing the frequency of mowing allows wildflowers to bloom and provides habitat for insects and small creatures. Wildflower meadows are beautiful and require less maintenance.
- **Create borders:** Plant native shrubs and trees around the perimeter of the churchyard. These provide food and shelter for a variety of wildlife.
- **Let nature take its course:** Allow some areas of the churchyard to grow wild, creating a haven for insects, birds and small mammals.
- **Build bug hotels and bird boxes:** Provide nesting sites for birds and solitary bees.
- **Involve the community:** Hold 'Rake and Cake' days after strimming long grass in late summer or create mini wildlife ponds to engage others in caring for the churchyard.

### Many benefits

Studies have shown that connecting with nature can reduce stress, improve mental wellbeing and foster a sense of peace and tranquility. Churchyards can become sanctuaries for quiet reflection and spiritual renewal, complementing the church's ministry.

### Working together

Churchwardens play a key role in leading by example. By embracing these practices and informing the PCC, you can inspire others to join the effort. Remember, there are resources available to help you on this journey, particularly [caringforgodsacre.org.uk](http://caringforgodsacre.org.uk) and [bbowt.org.uk/team-wilder-churches](http://bbowt.org.uk/team-wilder-churches)

The Church of England has a long tradition of caring for God's creation. By fostering nature in our churchyards, we not only enhance the beauty of our church grounds but also contribute to a healthier, more biodiverse world. Let's embrace this responsibility and transform our churchyards into flourishing sanctuaries for nature and for people.

**Guy Elsmore**

# Meet Jane Haslam



**The Revd Prebendary Jane Haslam is Associate Archdeacon of Dorchester and Area Dean of Aston and Cuddesdon. We asked her:**

## What drew you to our diocese?

After 25 years in parish ministry, I believed that God was calling me to a different role. One possibility was that of an Archdeacon, and I was encouraged in this by the support of senior colleagues in Bath and Wells.

The role in Dorchester appealed, partly because of a sense of coming back to an area I knew, but mostly because of the vision of 'becoming a more Christ-like Church – more contemplative, compassionate and courageous for the sake of God's world'. This aspiration resonated deeply with me. It is something I try to live out in my own life, but also something I believed I would be privileged to encourage in the lives of others. I am a trained spiritual director with a long interest in spirituality. I believe compassion is at the heart of much of our ministry and service on the ground to others. I know that there are times when we need to be courageous in the working out of our contemplation and compassion. There is also a wonderful cyclical nature to these three Cs as the need to be courageous often encourages us to be more contemplative too.

## What inspires you in practice?

As an ordinand, I was asked to read *The Christian Priest Today* by Archbishop Michael Ramsey. One of the lines from this book has stayed with me over the years as an ordained minister: 'being with God with the people on your heart'. For me, this is the essence of my vocation and inspires me. To be with God and bring people to God.

This can happen in many different ways – through intercession for people, by spending time with people, by trying to communicate the Christian faith in different ways and to commend it to people. It is about being with people at all times in their lives and recognising what a privilege this is. It is about working to make life better here and now and responding to people's needs when I can. My own family inspire me, and I learn so much from them.

I am also inspired by the Rule of St Benedict and the vows of obedience (listening), stability and conversion of life. There is so much wisdom in Benedict's writings that can be applied to life today and I have found it helpful when so much of life can seem ordinary and everyday. Benedict's rule shows how to make the most of life and to find God in the routine. Recently, I have read Paula Gooder's book, *Everyday God*, which expands on this theme, and I recommend it to everyone. We have a God who loved the world so much that he came to earth in the person of Jesus to be with his people, to experience their life and to lead them on the Way. This is the greatest inspiration of all and a way I try to follow.

## What is your message to our wonderful Churchwardens?

You are heroes! Thank you for all you do.



### For more information

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

**Facebook:** Ecclesiastical **X:** @churchmatters



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