



Rector of the United Benefice of Condover with Ryton, Acton Burnell, Frodesley and Pitchford and Rural Church Missioner of Condover Deanery

**A warm welcome awaits the person who God has identified as
the next Rector of Condover Benefice and our first Deanery
Rural Church Missioner!**



Can you take us from Winter to Spring?

Welcome from the Venerable Fiona Gibson - Archdeacon of Ludlow



The Diocese of Hereford is a place of contrasts. We're geographically large, but our population is small. We straddle six local authorities (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Monmouthshire, Telford and Wrekin, and Powys) and two countries (England and Wales), but we are one Diocese with one Bishop. We are predominantly rural, with scattered village communities, but we have a vibrant cathedral city, several historic market towns and post-industrial towns, and serve estate communities as well.

We are all committed, whatever our context, to our calling to make Christ known, to love God, one another and our neighbours, and to work for the common good. We do this not only through our churches but also through our church schools and academies which are an integral part of our Diocese.

We work collaboratively wherever possible, knowing that ministry brings unique demands as well as unique privileges. We are small enough (in terms of numbers) that clergy can get to know one another and the diocesan staff quite easily.

In the Diocese of Hereford, we want to appoint and work with clergy who are excited by the demanding and exciting common task of **"Proclaiming Christ and Growing Disciples."** Our Diocesan Values encourage all of our church members to become more **Prayerful**, more **Christ-like**, and more **Engaged** with God's mission in the wider community.

This means we are seeking church leaders who are committed to equipping and releasing the whole people of God, according to their giftings, inspired by the vision of the church in Ephesians 4. They will be people who inspire and enable others to be part of what God is doing in the local area. They will lead in mission and ministry by growing leaders and developing teams, providing support and oversight to other lay and ordained ministers rather than doing everything themselves.

Recognising that this way of working (sometimes called Oversight Ministry) can be challenging, we offer training and support for clergy and their teams through a range of Ministry Development opportunities and the Accompanying programme of mentoring for all clergy new in post whether this is their first post of responsibility or not. The Accompanying programme links clergy with an experienced priest who will not only act as a mentor for the new incumbent but work with them and their PCCs to help discern how God is leading them to work out the plans and hopes you'll read in this Profile.

Turning to the Conover Benefice themselves, the parishes are in vacancy following the retirement of their most recent Rector, who was also the Rural Dean. The post has been reduced from full-time to 0.5 and the parishes are working in the vacancy to prepare for the changes that will mean. There are two hardworking and capable Readers in the Benefice and other lay leaders too, all of whom will be ready to offer support and work with their new Rector, understanding that he or she will be part-time. The expectation is that the new Rector will work on Sundays in the Benefice, 17.5 hours as Rural Church Missioner and the rest of the time within the Benefice to include a rest period of 36 hours.

The role of Rural Church Missioner for the Deanery is a new role and is very much an opportunity to work together with the Archdeacon, Rural Dean and others to discern how best to support rural parishes. This role was identified as part of the Vision and Strategy for Church Growth 2024-2030

of the Diocese of Hereford. The essence of the role is to support parish incumbents to develop clear missional plans for the future of every church community and building in the Deanery. As this is a new role the intention would be that the post-holder would develop a blueprint for this work at a pace that is right for the post-holder and the Deanery. The planned revision of the Deanery Mission Action Plan very much connects with this work and so the post holder would play a key role in the Mission Action Plan development.

Where we are and who we are

The five churches have shared a Rector for several decades after a united benefice was formed in the 1980s. All five churches have been established since at least Victorian times and in most cases centuries longer. The churches, whilst formerly accommodating some diversity of opinions and tastes in the provision of church services, have moved over the past decade to increasingly uniform patterns of service. Holy Communion services throughout the Benefice are now all Common Worship Order 1 in contemporary language. There is a monthly All Age Worship service in Conover Church and a monthly Evensong at Acton Burnell Church. Frodesley Church has become a Festival Church. This pattern of services has been designed to enable the incumbent to visit each church in the Benefice throughout the month and several churches on any given Sunday. The Benefice is eager to work flexibly with the new incumbent to maximise the opportunities for worship. Although the five churches are combined in a single Benefice, each parish has its own character, though there are occasions during the year when parishes work together cooperatively. There are Lent courses at Conover which also has an active small choir and a bell ringing group, a Benefice magazine published monthly and there are free online newsheets for Acton Burnell and Frodesley.

We are disability friendly within the limitations of our church architecture and are Dementia Friendly too. The challenge remains of providing toilet facilities in all our buildings.

Monthly Service Pattern

Day	Condover	Ryton	Acton Burnell	Frodesley	Pitchford
1 st Sunday	8 am H C				10.30 am HC
2 nd Sunday	10 am HC		8.45 am HC		
3 rd Sunday	10 am Family Service		6.30pm Evensong	11.30am HC or 3pm Occasional Festival Service	
4 th Sunday	10 am HC	9 am HC			

On a 5th Sunday a Group Benefice Service rotates around the churches and may be a Holy Communion or a Songs of Praise.

The Rectory



The Rectory is a large detached 1970s house adjacent to the much older Old Vicarage and about 200 metres from Condover Parish Church. It has a small entrance hall with a good-sized study and cloakroom. A further door divides this area from the living accommodation. On the ground floor are a lounge, dining room, kitchen with pantry, and a utility room leading into a garage. On the first floor are four bedrooms, a shower room

and a bathroom. The property is double glazed. It has an oil-fired boiler for hot water and central heating. The kitchen has modern cupboard units and worktops. The garage is of a good size and there is plenty of parking space. The garden is mainly down to lawn with fruit trees along the boundary and is not over-large!

All the churches in the Benefice can be reached from the Rectory without having to use or cross a major road. However, farm machinery or animals can delay even short journeys significantly! Despite this the Benefice is in a location with easy access to the A49, A5, M54 and the motorway network beyond. The Rectory is also on a bus route to Shrewsbury which is about 4 miles away.



Our churches

Condover Parish: St Andrew and St Mary

The Domesday Book records a church and priest in Condover in 1086. It is a large church of uncoursed and dressed pink sandstone with ashlar dressings and machine-tiled roofs. Church tradition is middle of the road and vestments are worn for the main Sunday morning Eucharist. The church has a choir and an active team of bell ringers and there are weekly services. There is a variety of social activities in the village. These include WI, Pilates, Toddler Group, Brownie Pack, Thursday walking group, a monthly Wednesday coffee morning and a monthly film club. Clubs also run for Bridge, Football, Cricket and Golf. There is a Social Club situated next door to the Village Hall. The village also has a Post Office and a Deli shop.

The village (approximately 1000 population) has an ageing population, but Condover is also a commuter village for younger members of the community. There are no really big employers in Shrewsbury, but people find work in a variety of occupations there or in Telford or further afield. Condover industrial estate and two sand and gravel quarries provide local employment. Other local employers include Berriewood Riding School, Anchorage Care Services, JCA Adventure Centre based in Condover Hall and there is a local taxi firm.

Our large pink sandstone church is in good order though some work recommended in the last quinquennial inspection report (2018) is not completed. A quinquennial inspection report was completed in late 2023 and repairs to the roof and tracery on the south gable are now being instigated. Little remains of the original Norman church and much of the present church dates from the 17th century. It is cruciform with two small transepts; the southern one having been converted to a meeting room as a millennium project. The west tower houses the bells, “a fine ring of eight”. A project has been investigated to provide a toilet and kitchenette on the ground floor of the tower and to re-instate a first floor in the tower to accommodate the bell ringers. This remains under review.





Condover Parish: St Thomas Ryton

To the south of Condover village lie the smaller settlements of Great Ryton, Little Ryton and Wheathall. Ryton church was built of red brick as a mission room in 1896 and was dedicated to St Thomas on its centenary. It can seat 50. There is a celebration of Holy Communion monthly and to mark other festivals in the church year. The population (approx. 200) consists of commuters, farmers, retired people and young families.

In the past the 1662 service of Holy Communion was preferred by the regular members of the congregation. However, in the last 5 years the congregation has welcomed the adoption of Common Worship Order 1 as its preferred form of service.

There is a newly built Village Hall with an enthusiastic management committee. The local pub - the Fox - is currently closed and subject to an attempt to raise funds for a community owned and run pub.



Pitchford Parish: St Michael and All Angels

The beautiful ancient church of St Michael and All Angels lies away from the village and is adjacent to the manor house of Pitchford Hall. The latter is an extremely fine grade 1 listed timber framed building which has been owned by the same family since 1473. The Church is Grade 1 listed and the roof has had major repairs in the last 30 years with further work done in the last 18 months including essential cleaning of the roof, maintenance of the tower and repairs to guttering. Some internal repairs have been completed to the choir stalls and the maintenance of the churchyard is carried out by members of the PCC.

The church has an average worshipping congregation of 12 and more attending at festivals. Our congregation is boosted by visitors staying on the Estate and by visitors searching out an ancestral connection to the village. A sung traditional service is important to the congregation, some of whom travel regularly from other parts of the Benefice but we are open-minded and will participate actively in services. Our congregation is a mix of working and retired people. We have two Church Wardens and a small active PCC with a good mix of talents.

Pitchford is fortunate to also have a village hall, which also serves the villages of Acton Burnell and Frodesley. Recently it has had some major renovation work completed and is in a good state of repair.





Acton Burnell: parish of St Mary's



The Parish of Acton Burnell comprises the village of Acton Burnell where St Mary's church stands next to the castle, plus the hamlets of Ruckley, Langley, Acton Pigott and Evenwood. There is a redundant 17th century chapel, now in the care of English Heritage, in Langley.

Both the parish church and Langley chapel are listed in Simon Jenkins' "England's Thousand Best Churches". Both the castle, now a ruin, and the parish church were built in the late 13th century by Robert Burnell, then Chancellor of England and Bishop of Bath and Wells.

The former manor house at Acton Burnell is now Concord College, an independent school, most of whose 450 students are from overseas and studying for A levels and university entrance. The Hall had previously been a Roman Catholic convent school and there is a RC burial ground adjoining St Mary's churchyard.

The Church is generally in good repair. Over the years the roof has been well maintained, new lighting installed and improvements made to the drainage. The churchyard attracts many visitors in the Spring when the snowdrops and daffodils are a major feature which have been afforded RHS heritage status.



There are two services each month at St Mary's using Common Worship Order 1 for Holy Communion and the Book of Common Prayer for Evensong. Attendances average 6 people. In addition all the church festivals are celebrated and the parish works together with Frodesley and Pitchford for joint events such as the annual harvest supper. Whilst the chapel at Langley is the responsibility of English Heritage, there is one service each year on an autumn afternoon. This attracts a keen congregation from across the Benefice and further afield.

Acton Burnell has a small Post Office/shop, largely supported by the College and its students. Public transport is limited but a mobile library calls once a week.

Frodesley Parish: St Mark



The origins of St Mark's can be traced back to 1291 and the present church, probably the third on this site was built in 1809. Originally it comprised a chancel and nave of stone rubble, plastered inside and out. It has a slate roof and a small western bell tower. The chancel walls were panelled at the Rector's expense in 1847 and a vestry was added in 1900. This was later demolished and in 1959 the north aisle built in Gothic style was built. Currently the church is in reasonably good repair and works with Acton Burnell and Pitchford churches for some joint events.

The church is a Festival church holding a few afternoon services and some Holy Communion services.





The Community

The area is predominantly rural with farming, tourism, education, care and associated occupations playing a major part in the life of the parishes. Whilst there is the usual mixture of ages and families in the Benefice, a significant proportion of the population is actively retired, Overall there are good levels of health and wellbeing, but it is recognised that there is rural poverty. A number of people travel to nearby towns or further afield to work in the professions, light industry, business and service industries. Some people work from home and there are a number of small business enterprises as well as a number of self-employed local people. With only one Public House in the Benefice (currently closed and looking for a community buy-out) plus a Social Club in Condovery, people rely upon Village Hall events and church events as a major source of social interaction.

The population of the Benefice is just under 1800, but it should be noted that census wards and village boundaries do not coincide.

Village	Population	Worshippers
Acton Burnell	300	6
Condovery	1000	25
Frodesley	155	6
Pitchford	120	12
Ryton	200	6

Schools

There are two pre-school groups in Condovery with the only primary school in the benefice being in Condovery also. Primary school age children from the smaller villages mainly go to school in Church Preen or Longnor (both in the Deanery). Secondary school age children in Condovery go to Shrewsbury or Church Stretton (in the Deanery) whilst children from the smaller villages attend Church Stretton or Much Wenlock (also in the Deanery). Further Education is available in colleges either in Shrewsbury or Ludlow or there is sixth form provision in Much Wenlock. There are also several well-regarded independent schools in the area, notably Concord College in the parish of Acton Burnell which is an independent college with largely overseas students. Condovery Hall is the site of the JCA outdoor activities centre which specialises in residential outdoor courses for many age groups.

Condovery Primary School is part of the Diocese of Hereford Multi-Academy Trust and has a Local Academy Board. Currently the Benefice participates in school life through school assemblies and church services. The new incumbent would agree with the Headteacher how they would be involved in school life. There is also an opportunity to visit the pre-schools and playgroups whilst supporting activities in the various village halls.

A message from the Rural Dean



The Condover Deanery consists of six Benefices stretching from Craven Arms in the south, up along the A49 through the Strettons and Steeplewood Fold Benefice with Condover being the most northerly of the Benefices. The Wenlock team is to the east and the Apedale Benefice is between Much Wenlock and Church Stretton. There are ten licensed clergy (two are part-time and self-supporting), two curates and several lay readers and retired clergy with permission to officiate. There are regular Chapter meetings and at least one Greater Chapter in the year.

The Deanery is a Group Ministry meaning that all clergy (at the invitation of the relevant incumbent) minister across Benefice boundaries thus supporting one another.

Following the recent appointment of a new Rural Dean, Revd Prebendary Christobel Hargraves and a new lay co-chair, Mrs Andrea Graham, the Deanery is embarking on a refreshed Mission Action Plan which it hopes will invigorate the Deanery Synod in determining its role and purpose in Condover Deanery. The appointment of a Rural Missioner will very much be key to this work and Chapter members are excited at the potential it offers.

The appointment of a Pioneer Minister in late 2023 to establish a new worshipping community in Craven Arms is an exciting development in the Deanery. Other initiatives such as the “Butty Van” operating in the Apedale Benefice, “Filling Stations” in Craven Arms and in Leebotwood, a Food Bank in Church Stretton are just some of the ways the Deanery is seeking to become more engaged with local communities and to build His Kingdom.

What we are looking for in our Rector

We recognise as a Benefice that we are in the season of winter, but we are incredibly anxious to move into spring. We need someone to give us the warmth, love and attention required as we seek to discern the vision of spring that a new Rector will bring.

We have identified the following opportunities within the Benefice:

- **Worship.** To make services more accessible and attractive to those who do not attend and encourage congregations to accept change in order that we may grow and involve younger generations
- **Revival.** To help existing worshippers revitalise their faith
- **Lay Participation.** To encourage greater lay participation in both church services and mission in the community through pastoral visiting and other activities, thereby allowing the parishes and church members to develop their talents and use their gifts for the furtherance of the Kingdom
- **Finance and administration.** To help us flourish so that we might increase our fundraising and thus increase our Parish Offer to the Diocese. To encourage more people to give of their time and talents to serve as church officers and church wardens.

We would like our Rector to have the following qualities:

- To give clear leadership and walk alongside us as we go through change
- To be an enabler who is committed to communicating and supporting innovative thinking and initiative among church members
- To work collaboratively, flexibly and creatively with others
- To be friendly and approachable and able to fire us with enthusiasm
- To have the ability to release and develop others to share their heart for prayer, bible teaching, and pastoral ministry
- To have flexibility, tolerance and patience to understand and work with rural communities
- To delegate effectively whilst providing support where needed
- The ability to travel independently and quickly around a large geographic area on country roads is essential. Full, clean, driving licence and access to own car is desirable.

Rural Church Missioner

Job Purpose:

To support smaller rural churches to develop clear missional plans for the future of every church community and building in the Deanery.

To manage the Deanery Co-ordinator (this post has yet to be appointed to and the post-holder will be part of the recruitment process).

To work across Conover Deanery in Ludlow Archdeaconry.

Accountabilities:

Primary responsibilities:

The RCM will work under the direction of the Archdeacon, working closely with the Rural Deans of Conover, while being line managed by the Director of Mission and Ministry.

The initial phase of work will involve meeting with incumbents and PCCs to agree how to work together and identify the status of each church building / community as:

- a) a Healthy Growing Church;
- b) a potential Healthy Growing Church;
- c) a Traditional Parish Church (weekly or fortnightly services);
- d) a Festival Church (fewer services); and
- e) a church which the PCC believes may need to close.

Where there is agreement, the RCM will work closely with the incumbent and PCC to ensure that there is a plan for each church's future, with support from the Deanery Coordinator (DC), Archdeacon's team and central diocesan team as appropriate.

In the last four types of church, this may involve the following:

Potential Healthy Growing Churches

- Begin to assess areas of strength and opportunities for growth.
- Establish a plan to enable the church to move towards being a Healthy Growing Church.

Traditional Parish Churches

- Formulate a plan for continuing parish ministry, including missional worship led by lay and ordained volunteers as well as stipendiary clergy.
- Where needed, train and encourage local ministers in offering missional worship and events.

- Ensure that people who engage with the church are able to access further spiritual care and discipleship opportunities.
- Ensure a financial and buildings maintenance plan is in place.

Festival Churches

- Formulate a plan for missional Festival Services, led by volunteer lay and ordained ministers.
- Where needed, train and encourage local ministers in offering missional worship and events.
- Ensure that people who engage with the church are able to access further spiritual care and discipleship opportunities.
- Ensure a financial and buildings maintenance plan is in place.

Church buildings which may need to close

- Refer these to the Archdeacon who will lead on support for this legal process.
- Ensure a financial and buildings maintenance plan for the PCC until building is closed and consider any capacity issues relating to the PCC officers prior to closure.

Other responsibilities:

- Champion the needs and concerns of smaller rural churches.
- Keeping a record of relevant issues, the progress of Smaller Rural Churches and review plans as needed, co-operating fully with the diocesan evaluation and learning process.
- Build links with other agencies and organisations as appropriate such as Borderlands, Anna Chaplaincy, Rural Ministries and Rural Officers from the Church of England.
- Manage the Deanery Co-ordinator who will provide administrative support and co-ordination for the work of the RCM.
- Any other activities agreed with the line manager and Archdeacon and Rural Dean as suitable for this role

Key working relationships:

- The Archdeacon of Ludlow
- The Director of Mission and Ministry
- The Rural Dean of Condover
- Incumbents and PCCs
- Existing and potential lay and ordained ministers in the Deanery

- The central diocesan team (especially Mission & Ministry, Buildings and Finance teams)

Qualifications & Experience

Area	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge/Qualifications/Membership of Professional bodies (or equivalent)	This role is for those who are experienced Clergy <i>Knowledge:</i> Of rural multi-parish ministry.	Legal issues relating to multi-parish benefices. Of the Diocese of Hereford, its' policies and procedures and the resources and support available.
Type of Experience required	Of parish ministry, working collaboratively and missionally. Of training other ministers (lay and ordained). Of developing a team.	Of rural multi-parish ministry. Of supporting a church to become a Festival Church or through closure.

Competencies

Essential	Desirable
<p>Skills/Aptitudes:</p> <p>Ability to engage with incumbents and PCCs with sensitivity and care.</p> <p>Ability to formulate missional, financial and pastoral plans for churches.</p> <p>Ability to train others in missional worship and events and develop a team.</p> <p>Ability to line manage.</p> <p>Personal Attributes:</p> <p>Prayerful, Christ-like and Engaged</p> <p>An ability to work collaboratively and enable others</p>	<p>Training in mentoring, coaching or supervision.</p> <p>Participation in training course or programme looking at church growth.</p>