

Swadlincote Minster: Parish Profile

Mixed Ecology Curacy

VISION - Working together for God's Kingdom by reaching out to communities across Swadlincote and seeing everyone flourish.



AIMS

To **transform lives** by helping everyone to grow and flourish and increasing the number of disciples.

To **grow church** by creating opportunities to plant Christian communities and to transform existing worship to promote God's Kingdom.

To **build community** by being active in transforming social issues across Swadlincote in partnership with other groups and agencies.

We have 4 Churches that operate across the ex-mining town of Swadlincote. Since 2018 we have been reshaping them and their ministries to form a '4 in 1' Minster that operates without boundaries across the wider area. We have yet to formalize this partnership and we are working towards how that could look.

Swadlincote has one of the lowest social mobility in England and has many social issues – several of which are hidden from view. Many of the institutions here (statutory, voluntary, and church) struggle to bring the fractured elements of local community together. There are disparate communities here from those who remember the 'mining days' to those who moved here more recently here but work and shop elsewhere. Swadlincote is also one the fastest growing towns in England. We love it here with all its challenges. It's never boring here!

Setting God's People Free



Many churches have excellent mission strategies – ours is reliant upon us being able to create new opportunities, but also to initiate several complex and costly changes in order to actually set God's people free from many decades of an overly clerical, congregational, and institutional model. We, as with much of the national church, are discovering that we have spectacularly failed to set God's people free.

We currently have several lay people (not Readers) who are frequently in charge on a Sunday morning - leading services and preaching, and who lead small groups, and who are learning how to plant new expressions of church. However, we continue to discover that most lay people are still culturally very reliant upon a clerical model that leads them and controls. As clergy we are discovering just how costly it can be (in terms of how much we need to change) in order to move from a high control/low accountability model to one of low control/high accountability.

A key part of your training here will be learning how:

To engage with that model of the Mixed Ecology Church and what it means for you as an ordained leader (do we exist to serve the laity or the laity for us?)

<https://freshexpressions.org.uk/the-mixed-ecology/>

To create opportunities for lay people to take the initiative (rather than volunteer for something pre-determined for them) and then support and equip them contextually on that journey.

To learn to bear the cost of this way of building church across the community in an ever changing, challenging, and demanding ministry, whilst learning how to hold onto an eschatological hope that is real for you, for others and lived daily.

2022 onwards...

Pre-covid we were planting, with varying degrees of success and failure, Missional Communities, Ecumenical Projects, Community based projects, and new Chaplaincy work-based placements. Across this ‘team’ we currently have restarted (as of Dec 21) our assembly team; a Chaplaincy Team operating in workplaces; several outreach projects; and plans to restart and plant anew different fresh expressions of church. Where we go from here is uncertain as we continue to see who physically returns to Sunday worship and what needs there are in a post-lockdown world. However, several of our lay people have already stepped up into new responsibilities as we, the clergy, have started to step back from operating as Vicars over a congregation and begun to operate as coach and enablers from the edge of the ‘pitch’ with an emphasis upon planting fresh expressions.

Training Incumbent

My name is Mike Firbank (Rev Dr) and I would be your training incumbent here. I was an inner-city teacher until the age of 30 and then, having been selected at a BAP, I trained at St John’s College, Nottingham.

I worked as curate and then incumbent in Cornwall for 9 years, setting up a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, starting several Street Pastor Teams across West Cornwall, and a Foodbank+ centre. Whilst there I began studying for my Doctorate at King’s College, London exploring the modern-day scapegoating narratives of vulnerable groups by institutions.

I believe in the need and potential to radically change the institution of the church from the ground up. In 2018, in agreement with Ministry Division, I was selected to return to a national selection panel (this time the Pioneer Panel). Following that I was redesignated as a Pioneer vicar back in my existing parish. A ‘pioneer training package’ was trialed with me (for vicar’s wanting to operate in that Mixed Ecology model) which is now being used nationally by others. See: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/growing-pioneer-ministry/mixed-ecology-learning-pathway>

If you want to talk any of this further and share your vision for your training and the shape of the church, then please email Mike

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