



THE JOINT BENEFICE OF ST PETER'S, BROMYARD AND ST PETER AND ST PAUL, STOKE LACY • HEREFORDSHIRE

# **CURACY PROFILE**

*for the parishes of*

## **St Peter's, Bromyard and St Peter and St Paul, Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire**



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# Welcome to our Joint Benefice Profile

- A delightful, small country town in stunning countryside
- Very strong community spirit with eight annual festivals, busy theatre, sporting facilities, amazing Christmas lights and huge volunteer involvement
- Only half an hour to two county towns, the M5, and trains to London, Manchester and Cardiff
- One well-maintained, Grade 1 listed substantial town church and one equally well-maintained Victorian village church in Stoke Lacy
- A highly committed, but depleted, core of congregations from all the Anglican traditions
- Very active support from retired clergy and lay leaders
- A well-developed vision of how these parishes wish to expand and develop

## BUT

- Challenging recent history
- Consequently, very challenging finances with loss of giving and movement of some congregation to other churches
- Real need for much greater involvement within the town community, including working with young people and families
- Some challenging areas of rural deprivation.

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## PART 1

# Introduction

We are situated in the northeast corner of the very rural, yet beautiful county of Herefordshire. For 20 years, the parishes of St Peter's in the market town of Bromyard and St Peter and St Paul in a small village of Stoke Lacy about 4 miles away have been gently growing together as a joint benefice. Whilst traditionally farming hops, our communities still embrace this history and now welcome tourists to visit, many of whom enjoy great festivals, sample local ales and ciders and experience our characterful shops.

Our ancient churches are central to those we serve. In both town and village, new housing developments have brought people to help our communities quietly flourish despite the threats of the pandemic, the worries of local industry in response to Brexit and a relatively aging population. Bromyard is often described as 'quaint and old-fashioned' but it is this that makes our town and surrounding parishes rather special, and indeed, resilient to the pressures of change.

Our churches have long reflected our love of the Lord through prayer and praise, but our faith has been tested in recent years. Our ship has been tossed and turned during three tumultuous years, but with the appointment of a new Vicar in 2023, we felt the safety of a harbour beckon. The wider community across our parishes have, in the main, remained resolute to the power of God's healing but people have been very hurt. We have begun a period of reconciliation with each other, with those who have left our churches and with God.

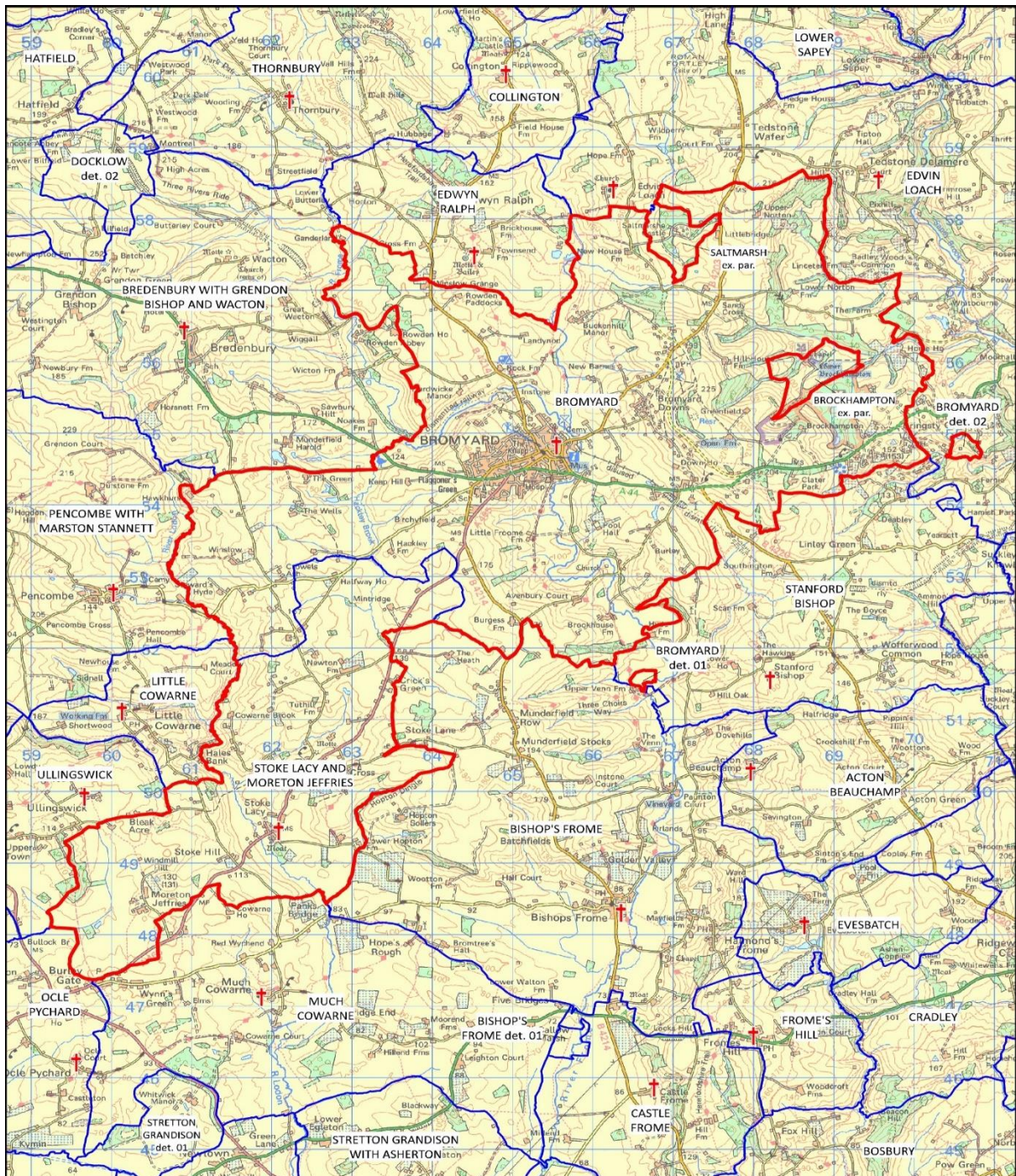
Despite this terrible time – or even because of it – there is a strong belief that God will guide our recovery in ways you will help us explore. You will share in helping us shape our future mission in our parishes, to reach out to everyone, from those whose families through generations have celebrated milestones in our churches to those who only know of our recent difficulties. You will not do this alone; there is a willingness from our small congregations, all of whom have gifts to offer on this journey. Please read on – and may God guide you and your prayers to our joint benefice.





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A GEOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE TWO PARISHES







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## PART 2

# 1: St Peter's, Bromyard

### WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE IN BROMYARD?

The small town of Bromyard is situated in some beautiful rural Herefordshire countryside, some 14 miles North-East of Hereford and 16 miles West of Worcester. It is also on the main A44 route to mid-Wales. Despite being rurally located, travel is in fact relatively easy; central Birmingham can be reached in an hour and a half, the M5 passes Worcester, and rail services from Worcester and Malvern give very regular services to London and Birmingham. The station at Leominster, 11 miles west, gives hourly services to Manchester and Cardiff. Bromyard is only half an hour from two county towns and national communications.

More locally, there are regular bus services to Hereford, and a lesser provision to Worcester; irregular services travel to Ledbury and, weekly, to Leominster.



*Bromyard Downs from New Road*

The town sits in the shadow of Bromyard Downs, from where the views to the Welsh Hills and the Severn Valley are outstanding. This has long been a beauty spot and tourist attraction from far afield (even



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including Edward Elgar in his youth!). Alongside is the National Trust property at Lower Brockhampton, which includes a visitor centre, the moated gatehouse and Lower Brockhampton itself, and extensive, beautiful parkland.

The town – like the church itself – has a very long history, with a settlement back in Saxon times. The local economy is still quite rural, although the development of three industrial estates has altered the economic base. Local businesses include automotive parts manufacturing, agricultural machinery, resin coatings, general engineering and others.



*Broad Street, with The Falcon Hotel on the right*







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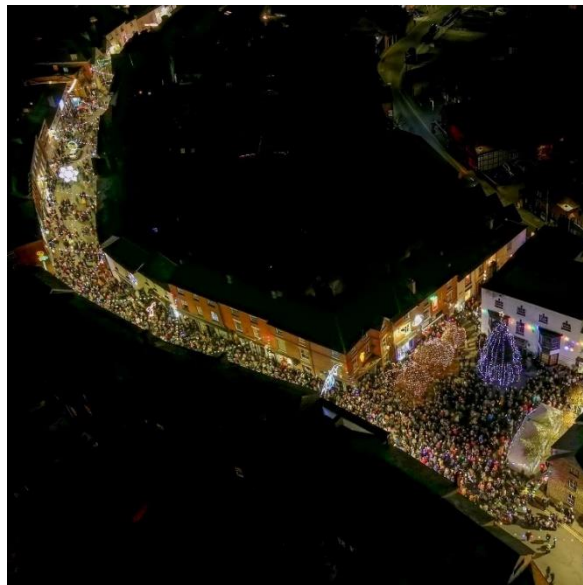
### *Bromyard's Largest Factory - Polytec*

The population of the town currently sits at around 5,500, although growth is expected; planning applications are in for over 800 new houses on various sites.

The town centre is a very traditional-looking market town, with a really excellent level of shop occupancy. Nearly all of these are independently owned and are relatively loyally-supported. There is a Co-op supermarket in Tenbury Road, but other convenience stores as well. Sitting along the High Street is Food For All, a Trustee-led and volunteer-run Christian and general bookshop. It also sells a range of maps, cards and other small gifts. As its name suggests, the shop provides a strong spiritual welcome to all.

Bromyard truly does have an amazing community spirit. Well known as the, "Town of Festivals", it has no less than eight annual festivals, including:

1. Bromyard Folk Festival (which includes a Folk Festival Service in church) showcasing folk talent from all over the country
2. Nozstock Festival – a small Rock and Pop event which now attracts national and international artists, including in 2022, Bill Bailey.
3. Bromyard Scarecrow Festival.
4. Bromyard Town Criers' Festival – nationally known on the circuit.
5. Bromyard Speed Festival – every other year, with the town crammed full of racing, rallying and classic cars.
6. The annual Fireworks Display.
7. Bromyard Christmas Lights – voluntarily run, probably the finest display in a very wide area, and a feast of coloured light and animated decorations.



*Switch-On time for Bromyard's Famous Lights – when the whole community comes together!*



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Bromyard town has two schools:

1. St Peters Primary School, located to the northern side of Winslow Road (see [www.st-peters.hereford.sch.uk](http://www.st-peters.hereford.sch.uk)), and
2. The Queen Elizabeth High School, located in Panniers Lane, to the West of the town (see [www.gehs.co](http://www.gehs.co)).

Also, within the wider area is the Brockhampton Primary School, located on Bromyard Downs, to the east of the town proper (see [www.brockhamptonprimaryschool.co.uk](http://www.brockhamptonprimaryschool.co.uk)). A little further away and just outside the parish is Rowden House School, run by the SENAD group. This school provides individualised care and education programmes for children and young people aged 11 to 19 years, with severe learning disabilities, autism and challenging behaviour. A small number living in half-way accommodation have occasionally been to services at St Peter's.

Sixth Form provision is at the nationally-renowned Hereford Sixth Form College, to which bus services are provided.

Tourism is a major matter in the Bromyard area. Apart from the Downs and National trust sites, there are extensive caravan parks at Saltmarshe Castle to the north, and Malvern View to the south-east, plus a popular Caravan and Motorhome Club touring site on the Downs. This has always been an attractive weekend destination from the more industrial West Midlands and even further afield.

We are not aware of any real current overwhelming issues or concerns. At the moment, the level of employment is high, despite a small reduction in local jobs. There is a considerable amount of commuting, especially to Hereford and Worcester, but also further afield and overwhelmingly by private transport.

Bromyard was recently voted one of the best places to live in a daily newspaper, and a visit will show why. Delightful rural surroundings, a vibrant community with strong community spirit, lots to do, and good communications makes this a very special place.

However, being in rural Herefordshire, there is another side to the story. The county is a relatively low wage area, and it suffers from a relatively high degree of rural deprivation. Indeed, Herefordshire compares relatively poorly compared with surrounding counties; population density is low; and, indeed, the central area of Bromyard is in the top 25% of deprived rural areas in the 2019 statistics. There are real challenges here of which the church needs to be fully aware, and active.





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## The Worshipping Community – Bromyard

The geographical boundaries to the two churches are given on the map on page 4. There are clearly instances of people crossing the boundaries from further afar to worship in our churches; likewise, it is recognised that a number travel outwards, especially to Baptist and Free churches, but also to other villages offering differing worship patterns.

St Peters is the only Anglican church in the parish. There are also two other churches in town: the Methodist Church in New Road, and the Roman Catholic church in Old Road. Both of those are in good heart, the latter in particular servicing the not-inconsiderable number of Catholic residents who have moved here from overseas. The Methodist Church is part of a network involving Hereford and towns in east Herefordshire; the RC church is serviced from Belmont, Hereford.

There are currently 62 on the electoral roll. This has been stable for the last couple of years, but we are very mindful of the fact that, twenty years ago, the number was well over 200. There is one Parish Administrator, working from the Church Room within the church complex, working Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Our current Associate Minister also uses this room as her base.

There is an active and practical core of volunteers, including wardens with their own skills, others with building skills and active groups of flower-arrangers and brass-cleaning gangs. There is one cleaner, working for three hours a week.



*A Folk Festival service inside St Peter's*



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## CHURCH BUILDINGS – ST PETER'S CHURCH, BROMYARD



The “catchment” of St Peters includes not only the boundaries of the physical town itself, but some of the surrounding countryside as well.

The church itself is a gem of a building, with a very long and proud history. It has also been well maintained. Once a Minster Church, this is a Grade 1 listed building of very considerable importance.

The first church was founded in Saxon times, and indeed the carved figure with keys over the main south door dates from that period. The first substantial stone-built church dates from Norman times, and the foundations form the central parts of the nave. The church grew in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, leading to the size and shape of the building now present. Thankfully, Victorian alterations were relatively minor, so the essence of the historic building is there to see. Some really significant features include:

- Three Norman doorways, including main north and south entrances (both moved outwards when the side aisles were constructed) and that to the north transept.
- The carved Norman font.
- An unspoiled main 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century stone structure.





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- A beautiful, and just restored, Georgian main ceiling.
- A memorial side chapel, the reredos being the town's War Memorial, carved by the Bromsgrove Guild.
- A substantial, but reasonably squat (as befits its age) tower, with a recently augmented and enthusiastically maintained ring of ten bells.
- A recently rebuilt organ (used for special events and 9.00 services) Walker organ of 1838 (much augmented over the years).
- A substantial Chancel which forms a chapel in its own right, able to seat sixty or so worshippers.
- A side extension, built by a craftsman builder – and member of the congregation – housing a Church Room (also used as Church Office), toilet and vestry facilities.



*Saxon carvings over one of the three Norman doorways*

The church has a very recently installed gas-fired heating system, and the church room has its own electrical, programmed system.



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*The chancel, temporary home during recent nave repairs*

During the recent renovation to the main ceiling, the chancel was used for all worship, very satisfactorily, as it brought the congregation closer together in what has been a very trying period.

The **Churchyard** was closed in 1915 and is maintained by the Bromyard and Winslow Town Council under a legal agreement; the parish therefore has negligible liabilities for its upkeep. It is a large, mainly cleared green space within the town.

The Quinquennial Report is to be carried out in 2022. We are not aware of any likely major issues (minor issues are already known, although not thought to be of great concern).





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CHURCH BUILDINGS – ALL SAINTS, BROCKHAMPTON



**Brockhampton Chapel**, within the Brockhampton Estate owned by the National Trust, and as noted on the map on page 4, is not, in fact, within the Parish. It is officially the responsibility of the Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance and is maintained by a dedicated local group. Ministers of St Peter's have traditionally been invited to take services there, and it is anticipated that this will continue. There is a monthly service on the Third Sunday at 3.00pm, plus special services as required.



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## Worship at St Peter's

### SERVICE PATTERNS

#### First and Third Sundays:

10.30 Holy Communion, following Common Worship with music from the Worship Group (piano, guitars, drums).

#### Second and Forth Sundays:

9.00 Holy Communion, Rite B (1928) with more traditional hymns and organ

10.30 Morning Worship, following Common Worship with additional liturgy such as that from Iona with music from the Worship Group.

#### Wednesdays:

9.45 Weekly prayers

There are additional services of various types on Feast Days and occasional civic events.

**Vestments** are worn on 9.00 services, but generally not for 10.30 services. The wearing of vestments for special services has been dependent upon expectations.

**Books used:** The 9.00 Sunday communion and also the 9.45 Wednesday communion use a special sheet compiled from Rite B (1928). No books are issued for 10.30 services, which are displayed on a screen. Two hymn books are available: Songs for Fellowship and Hymns Old and New. However, the 10.30 service has the flexibility of using other new songs not contained in the hymn books.

### WHO LEADS WORSHIP?

We are extremely fortunate in having a team of lay people who are trained to lead worship, along with two very well experienced retired vicars.

### REACHING OUT TO OTHERS LOCALLY

#### Home communions:

We aim to provide Home Communions when required. There are two quite substantial care homes within the parish, under common ownership, namely Highwell House and Whitegates, and we aim to service these with short services and provision of communion. Pastoral visits are also made to Bromyard Hospital (not A and E). A very small number of people make regular phone calls or visits to those people in their own homes.





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### CHARITY AND WORLD LINKS

There has previously been an active link between the parish and an area of north-east Tanzania; indeed, the Diocese still supports many connections with different areas of the country. Created in 1995, the church and town made strong friendships between parishes in Tanga with a particular focus around Buhuri, a farming college. The link had an environmental focus before widening to supporting greater social issues. Currently, needs in Tanzania are fewer, though no less important and our support-base is now older!

We support one student through the Seed educational charity, which is locally based and sends young people through primary, secondary and sometimes, tertiary education in Iringa in southern Tanzania.

We have contributed to the Foster Family through the Crosslink scheme.

### BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

	2021	2020	2019
<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Marriages</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Funerals</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>

### LIFE OF THE CHURCH

It is true to say that church attendances and giving reached, in real terms, an all-time low, and Covid had a further effect. Numbers have stabilised, and it is true to say that the congregation, although relatively small, is very committed and eager to participate in re-growth across all sectors as the following numbers will testify. Following sections on Vision will show the great thought that the parish, even in times of having no Vicar, has put into the future.

However, we need to be honest with some tricky history over the last twenty years or so. A new incumbent installed in 2000 made a substantial change of direction towards modern forms of worship which, on reflection was probably too sudden, and resulted with a loss of many from the traditional wing of the Anglican communion, both to the surrounding cities but also to surrounding parishes and denominations. The choir was also disbanded. There was also an approximately compensating growth in the more evangelical side of worship, but overall numbers remained relatively static. There has also been a more recent loss to Baptist, Methodist and Free churches. It is the wish of the church to have wide-open arms, and to provide complimentary forms of worship to draw across the broad panoply of the Anglican communion trying to avoid schisms within the church. The current congregation is remarkably united across the traditions, and this is a great blessing, and one upon which to build.

It is fair to say that the **life of the church** has stultified as a result of recent events. Where once was a thriving number of house groups, this has reduced considerably, partly as a result of a decline before Covid, then the severe effects of lockdowns, and also as a result of our recent troubles. Whilst they have



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existed in the past, there is no Sunday School; there are also no Youth or After-School Clubs. We are acutely mindful of the lack of school-age attendees.

As previously mentioned, the town has a very active calendar of events. The church has an involvement with the Christmas Tree Festival, held in church, and also, with Christians Together in Bromyard, the Annual Service as part of Bromyard Gala.

There are links for special services with local Guides and Brownies, and local schools do use the building for performance events.

### ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

The two parishes each have their own PCC, which are effectively independent. That for Bromyard has 7 members, with a lay co-chair. There are two churchwardens in post, but at the present time no deputies. A Standing Committee meets regularly at Bromyard on a fortnightly basis. There are also regular meetings of those leading worship.

#### Giving and Money:

A major problem at St Peters has been the reduction in giving over the suspension period, the departure of members of the congregation to other churches (some of whom were major givers), coupled with the high cost of repairs to the ceilings and walls, where coving was becoming detached and parts of the church were having to be closed off. Those works are now complete, and apart from repairs to a sunken floor in the side chapel – the majority of the funds for which are believed to be eligible for outside finding – it is not thought that there are any substantial claims likely for the immediate future.

At 31, December 2021, St. Peter's had free reserves of £55,441. Essential repairs carried out in 2022, and soon to be completed, will cost approximately £60,000, excluding VAT. With the decline in giving that we have experienced over the last two years, we expect to have very little money in the bank throughout 2022. We paid only a 50% Parish Share in 2021 and stopped paying Parish Share after the January 2022 instalment. In order to resume paying full Parish Share, we will need to see giving recover to the 2019 level. This is a very significant challenge, and we are examining ways to meet it.

### LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

**The Bromyard Grammar School Foundation** is a left-over from the old grammar school which has investments and also a field, used by the Folk Festival, the income from which is distributed annually to school leavers to assist with their further education. This is currently covered by the Methodist Minister.

**Bromyard Relief in Need** is an organisation providing for those severely affected by poverty. The constitution provides for the incumbent to sit on the committee. The previous incumbent has not fulfilled this role.

**Bromyard Food Bank and Money Advice Centre** where the incumbent is expected on a three-year rotation with Methodist and RC priests. Originally, this charity was started up through a worshipper at St Peter's.





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**Food for All.** This is a real star in Christian outreach within the town, and consists of a bookshop, not only Christian but general as well, with gifts and cards, right in the heart of town centre in High Street. There is meeting space here too. Set up by the late Pam Binyon (a very active lay reader and member of St Peter's), the property, two associated flats and business passed to an independent trust upon her death.



*Food For All*



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## Building Vision for St Peter's, Bromyard

For quite some time the parish has been considering a vision for the buildings, bearing in mind changes in styles of worship but also, more particularly, the need for much greater community involvement in the church, and indeed use of the church.

1. Lowering the ground levels to the south door to provide a level, disability-compliant entrance, with glass inner doors to provide a welcoming environment.
2. Removal of the pew bases, and replacement of those areas with new flooring, to provide for a flat floor throughout, with flexible seating.
3. Construction of a welcome area, Church Office, kitchen/servery and space for the Food Bank or similar, across the rear of the interior.

Such alterations would encourage community use of the nave, as well as seating for various community events and performances or worship. They are also essential pre-requisites for funding purposes and fit entirely with current visioning guidelines.

A new Working Group has started on the fundraising, along with focussing on the serious financial situation which has arisen following the suspension matters dealt with elsewhere.





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## 2: St Peter and St Paul, Stoke Lacy with Moreton Jeffries



### WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE HERE?

The church of St Peter and St Paul was rebuilt in the mid-1800s but the parish goes back some 1000 years. The church holds around 80 comfortably and is situated in Stoke Lacy conservation area. We are fortunate to have benefitted from a grant of £100,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which covered the cost of new roofs to the church and porch, re-shingling of the spire and other much needed works.

The un-dedicated old church at Moreton Jeffries was declared redundant some years ago but a Harvest Festival and Crib Service are held there every year. This small church, which would hold 40 comfortably, is situated in the grounds of what used to be Moreton Jeffries rectory, now a private dwelling, about a mile out of Stoke Lacy towards Hereford.

Stoke Lacy is a civil parish of some 350 houses, 4 miles from Bromyard and situated either side of and around the main A465 Hereford-Bromyard road. It consists of two parts – Stoke Cross, nearer to Bromyard, where most of the houses are situated, and Stoke Lacy, the conservation area around the church, at the bottom of the hill, where there is a farm and older housing, together with the Old Rectory, now privately owned. Stoke Cross has the village hall and a public house, The Plough, together with some



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light industry situated along the A465 and down Woodend Lane, otherwise mostly farming. There is also a new housing estate of 28 houses, Woodland View, and planning permission for a further 10 houses by the village hall. Permission for a further 18 houses has recently been sought, but this has currently been refused. There are not many children in the parish; most of these live on the new Woodlands housing estate in Stoke Cross.

Stoke Cross and Stoke Lacy are about half a mile apart down the steep and busy main road. There is no footpath from Stoke Cross to Stoke Lacy and currently no feasible way to make one.

Stoke Lacy Parish Council has recently submitted a Neighbourhood Development Plan to Herefordshire Council, seeking to limit housing in Stoke Cross but allowing limited building within certain areas.

The village hosts a Book Club, Garden Club, Friendship Club, monthly Coffee Morning in church, annual Plant Sale and annual Fete, and Much Cowarne WI holds its monthly meetings in the village hall. There is a move to revive the local community choir.

## WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORSHIP HERE?

### **Congregation:**

The regular congregation consists of mainly elderly people; our younger members are in their early 60s. We do get a full church for the Festivals, Easter, Christmas and Harvest, when we have a good mix of ages. In addition, two services a year, Harvest Festival and a Crib Service, are held annually at the little church at Moreton Jeffries, and are very well attended. We do not have anyone from Woodland View, although some of the residents attended the annual Fete which was held last year after it not being possible to hold one in 2021 due to Covid. Residents have been living in Woodland View for about 2 years but partly because of COVID we have not got to know each other very much. We really wish to encourage the residents to be part of the village and encourage them to come to church.

### **Services:**

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: PM Praise with afternoon tea

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Sanctuary – a time for quiet reflection, prayer and worship

We are very fortunate to have an excellent organist, Betty Arnett, who has lived here all her life and is a fount of knowledge on the area. She has been playing here for 75+ years.

### **Communication:**

There are two bi-monthly magazines. The Community Newsletter is hard copy and is delivered to residents of around 6 parishes, including Stoke Lacy. The Cider Press is produced in Stoke Lacy for Stoke Lacy residents and is now being sent digitally.





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### Accounts:

Appendix B gives details of the latest accounts.

### VIA BEATA – a way of blessing:

The PCC have committed to making Stoke Lacy a way-station along the 400 mile route of the Via Beata. Way-stations are being linked by existing footpaths and public rights-of-way so that pilgrims can walk or ride across the UK and be presented with the good news about Jesus at each station. In 2021, the Through Faith Missions 'Walk the Way' missionaries walked along the entire route and visited Stoke Lacy and Bromyard; this sowed the seed that our church could be involved in this missional outreach.

[www.viabeata.co.uk](http://www.viabeata.co.uk)

### The Morgan link:

Harry Morgan, son of George Morgan, rector of St Peter and St Paul for 50 years, founded the Morgan Motor Company in 1910. There are three beautiful stained-glass windows dedicated to the family, two in the church and one in the porch. The company were major sponsors of events to raise funds to restore the tower and roof.

<https://www.stokelacyheritage.co.uk/the-morgans>



*The Morgan window*





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*Lent Lunch*



*Nest Box Project*





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## PART 3

### The Curate's House



A spacious 5 bedroom detached house with garage, offering gas central heating and double glazing throughout. Set in the a peaceful cul-de-sac, Bromyard itself lies conveniently all but equidistant to the neighbouring cities of Hereford (14miles) and Worcester (15miles) and is 12miles from the fellow market town of Leominster.

#### GROUND FLOOR

- Front door access to hall leading to sitting room, stairway, kitchen and rear door with access to garage.
- Sitting Room: 10'9" x 17'11", with large window, radiators facing front aspect of the property. Door leading to dining room.
- Kitchen: 8'1" x 12'1", with fitted wall and base units, plumbing for a washing machine, space for a fridge freezer, electric free standing oven with hob, extractor hood. Radiator. Understairs storage cupboard and door leading to dining room.
- Window to rear of the property with a garden view.
- Dining room: 9'3" x 14'9", doors leading to lounge and inner hallway with cloakroom and door to rear. Radiator. Window to rear aspect.



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- Inner Hallway
- Door leading to rear garden.
- Cloakroom: with sink and WC.

### FIRST FLOOR

- Bedroom 1: 16'0" x 10'11", fitted wardrobes. Window to front aspect. Radiator.
- Bathroom: Bath with overhead electric shower and sink. Heated towel rail. Window to side aspect.
- WC: Separate WC with small window to side aspect
- Bedroom 2: 10'5" x 8'11", window to rear aspect. Radiator, Storage units and shelving
- Bedroom 3: 6'6" x 8'10", window facing rear aspect. Radiator.
- Bedroom 4: 11'1" x 6'10", window facing rear aspect. Radiator.
- Bedroom 5: 14'5" x 8'8", window facing front aspect. Radiator

### OUTSIDE GARDEN

FRONT GARDEN AREA is surrounded by a low brick wall.

REAR GARDEN is principally laid to lawn. Rear gate giving access to the garage and parking area

The gardens are of good size, mainly of lawn but with flower beds and kitchen garden. There is ample space for cars at the front.







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## PART 4: Our Vision

For at least a millennium, Christ has been proclaimed as Lord in Bromyard and Stoke Lacy. Over the centuries, our churches have grown, nearly collapsed, and sometimes flourished, yet always maintained their prime calling. We look to you to help us shape our mission, to engage with our communities and support us as we follow Christ's example to shine as lights that cannot be put out.

St Peter's has long been recognised as a centre of Christian faith in the town. Particularly those families who have lived here for generations feel this church to be their 'home' for the milestones of baptisms, weddings and funerals, and would like this to remain so. Being the only Anglican church in the town, we have sought to embrace a breadth of worship styles and provide a range of opportunities for all worshippers to come to know God. We understand how difficult it is to please everyone and are sensitive to change but accept that the 'status quo' cannot remain. In a similar way, St Peter and St Paul in Stoke Lacy is open to the opportunities new expressions of faith can bring. We must meet people where they are, including those of current congregations whilst reaching out to, primarily, younger generations who may welcome a 'reimagining' of what church can do.

**PRIORITY ONE: To grow as a worshipping community, proclaiming Jesus as Lord.**

Together in Christ, we welcome God the Holy Spirit, seeking His gifts, fruit and calling. We are to demonstrate God's eternal love and presence to various communities which make up our market town and its surrounding area. We are to help people to find and be released into their Godly callings and to seek, develop and exercise their gifts in Christian ministries.

### What will this look like?

- Worship which is inclusive, invitational and inspiring – embracing the rich breadth of liturgy, music, silence and spontaneity!
- An increased number of regular worshippers and which includes greater numbers of families and younger people – though we recognise that worship for some may be on a different day, place and time.
- Reconciliation with those who have moved away in recent years.
- A vibrant, corporate prayer life.
- Small 'cell' groups who are committed to a devotional life and support for each other outside the regular Sunday services.
- A growth in confidence that people who worship with us know they have gifts to offer and for these to come to fruition through combined efforts.



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- A worshipping community who is excited about exploring sound doctrine but open to valuing different interpretations and who can have a mature and knowledgeable discussion on matters which may be divisive.
- Through all this, a congregation who has the skills to (re)establish relationships with a community so that they can view our church as more than a historic building but an active response to proclaiming Jesus as Lord.

### PRIORITY TWO: To grow as a community of committed disciples.

C.S. Lewis once remarked that 'the perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of. Our attention would have been on God' – so it is our mission to be filled with the sheer omnipresence of God! We seek to enable all types of devotion but recognise that it is Jesus Himself who is at the very centre and purpose of our frail human methods. We are committed to Christ first, and through the unifying work of the Spirit, to one another and to the community we long to serve.

#### What will this look like?

- A community who are supported in fellowship and friendship, helped to grow in Godliness and fruitfulness.
- Partners in the Gospel who are bound together in God's love and purposes – and who seek not to keep this for themselves!
- Committed disciples who may often have to sacrifice their own needs for the work of Christ in the wider community.
- A church which is outward-looking, seeking to uphold, lead and embrace mission in action amongst the community.
- Disciples who are supported and encouraged to go out in ministry, including personal evangelism.
- A distinctive and corporate image of who we are and what our churches bring to the community.
- Churches which are recognised for upholding and celebrating Christian values, building bridges, not walls.
- Disciples who reflect God's peace: living within community, active in God's Word, creatively seeking reconciliation, proclaiming love, even to those who actively work against us.
- A community who looks for the work of the Spirit through our relationship with other churches, schools and the numerous groups/associations who do so much to provide a vibrant place to live.

### PRIORITY THREE: To grow as an accessible and relevant church.

Whilst there is much happening in and around the area – indeed Bromyard has styled itself as 'a town of festivals' – the St Peter's has not always taken the opportunity to put itself at the centre of what this town does rather well. In recent years, it has become increasingly isolated; certainly because of Covid, the





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previous vicar's suspension but also because of vandalism. The doors have literally been closed. Our association with the town and its people has stood still or even regressed; there are few links with local schools, young people and families.

We celebrate how St Peter and St Paul in Stoke Lacy has been sensitively refurbished and transformed in recent years, but it is now essential that St Peter's is used in new and exciting ways to embrace and welcome the community of north-east Herefordshire and beyond. Its historic building must not merely become a museum piece of what once was, but a vibrant and living part of Bromyard, ministering to people wherever they are in their faith journeys and everyday circumstances.

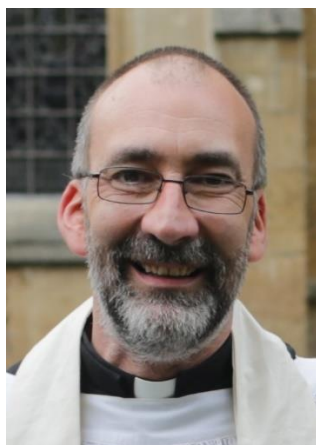
### What will this look like?

- An open church – physically and spiritually, ready to meet with people of all ages where they are.
- A building (and a community) which is ready for significant redevelopment so that it can host local groups and organisations as well as providing an income stream; the nave is a large, open area, ideal for concerts and large audiences.
- A building which is not just 'open on a Sunday' but is responsive to community needs – for example, home to the Bromyard Food Bank and Money Advice Centre.
- A dedicated church office area, kitchen and other meeting spaces will offer increased opportunities for wider use.
- A less challenging and more friendly entrance – we are not just steps and a solid oak door!
- A chance to celebrate our history and the church's place in the town with interpretation boards for visitors and locals alike.
- A church that looks forward, not only to its community but ready to embrace new and emerging technology and ways of connecting through social media.



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## PART 5: Your Training Incumbent



I'm Revd Philip Miller and I have the pleasure of being the recently installed Vicar for Bromyard and Stoke Lacy Churches.

My roots are in low evangelical Anglicanism, growing up in North London close to Oak Hill Theological College.

So it won't be a surprise that throughout my ministry the Bible has been central, with an emphasis on personal Bible study. When preparing for a sermon, and worship, I always read thought all the readings set in the lectionary. I try to encourage the congregation to have an open Bible so that they can follow the text, and , if necessary, challenge if I read into the text rather than out of it.

I was brought up with Bible Study groups being an important part of one's faith development, learning from and debating with others. That sense of learning and debating has carried on through my training, first as a Reader, and then for ordination. As Proverbs 27:17 says, 'As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.'

Over the years my spirituality has broadened from influences such as Iona, Celtic worship, and my training alongside Anglo-Catholics, Methodists, and those from differing churchmanships to mine.

I was ordained deacon in 2013 and priest in 2014. Initially I served as an SSM in the parish of Beccles before serving as Rector to the nine rural parishes of the Hundred River & Wainford Benefice. I came to Bromyard and Stoke Lacy in March 2023 and am beginning to find my feet here!

Before ordination I worked for Luis Palau Mission to London, Bible Society, Norwich Union Insurance,, an independent electrical retailer and contractor, and Clays book printers.

I am married to Natalie, and we share the Vicarage with my father-in-law, and our Hungarian Vizsla, Lily.





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### WHY THIS POST IS FOR YOU!

Our beautiful rural benefice is friendly and welcoming but after recent challenges is crying out for a leader who shares our vision to overcome our spiritual stagnation with renewed optimism for the work of the Lord within these parishes.

We will give you:

- **Congregations who value prayer, fellowship and mission beyond the church walls**
- **Two church buildings which are well-maintained and are keen to embrace wider community use and the benefits of tourism**
- **A part-time administrator to share in the organisation of the work in the benefice with the opportunity to further develop the role of modern communication methods**
- **A supportive and encouraging team (churchwardens, PCC members as well as retired priests and lay people) around you giving you the flexibility to manage roles and responsibilities**
- **Organists and group players happy to accommodate a range of worship music**
- **Two unique communities who are bound by their faith and energised by the work of the Holy Spirit**

Finally, we pray brothers and sisters,  
That, in and through our search for our new incumbent  
whatever is true, whatever is noble,  
whatever is right, whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable –  
indeed, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy –  
we think about such things.  
And the God of peace will be with us all,  
now and ever more. Amen.