

BRIDGNORTH & MORVILLE

Parishes Team Ministry

***Bridgnorth Shropshire in the Archdeaconry of Ludlow in the
Diocese of Hereford***



TEAM PROFILE

&

STATEMENT OF NEEDS

June 2016

BRIDGNORTH & MORVILLE Parishes Team Ministry

Introduction

The Bridgnorth & Morville Parishes Team Ministry serves the attractive and historic market town parish of Bridgnorth and eight adjoining parishes of Acton Round, Astley Abbots, Aston Eyre, Monkhopton with Upton Cressett, Morville, Oldbury, Tasley and Quatford. The church communities are growing together with a focus in their next stage of ministry on intentional evangelism relevant to the wide range of people in the community as described below. The churches have a wide range of tradition, and each brings its own gifts and strengths to that ministry. Styles of worship vary from choral to charismatic and all are



valued. There is a regular healing ministry centred on communion at St. Mary's and there is a long history of shared ministry between ordained and lay church members. The church is at the heart of all the communities, and the congregations know this is key to the future mission of the church. They are looking for new staff who will help them to turn this engagement into growth.

The area

The area enjoys beautiful countryside and is located in the Severn Valley between the West Midlands conurbation and the Welsh borders. It is a popular centre for tourism, and Bridgnorth itself hosts an inland Cliff Railway and the northern terminus for the Severn Valley Railway. Bridgnorth was the first town in Shropshire to achieve Fair Trade status, and currently the population of the Team area is approximately 16,000.

The town is physically divided by the River Sever into two parts, known as High Town and Low Town, with the St Mary Magdalene Parish Church situated on the sandstone outcrop of High Town.

Throughout the area there is a fair social mix, with some council as well as a variety of privately owned properties. There has recently been a considerable expansion in housing provision, particularly in Tasley parish, and more is anticipated in the next five years. There have also been recent approvals of smaller scale developments in a number of the villages. Additionally there are five park home developments, which are expanding principally in Quatford.

Local employment opportunities are limited and a large proportion of the working population commute to larger centres including Wolverhampton (18 miles) and Telford (12 miles).

Public administration, health and education account for 21% of employment in the district, manufacturing 14%, wholesale and retail 15% and agriculture 5%, which is above the regional average. The unemployment rate is significantly below the regional average, as is the presence of ethnic minorities. The area is dependent on bus services for public transport, but this is limited.

There are five Primary Schools: County, Roman Catholic, C of E Aided and C of E Controlled and a Diocesan sponsored Academy. The two secondary schools of which one is a stand-alone Academy and one is County maintained. The town has a primary care hospital incorporating the medical practice and pharmacy. Across the Team area there are four residential/ nursing homes and a significant growth in accommodation for retired people now numbering four residential apartment blocks and a considerable amount of warden assisted housing around the town.

The Team Ministry

The Bridgnorth & Morville Parishes Team Ministry is a recent (2016) amalgamation of the Bridgnorth Team Ministry and the Morville Group which was first added to the benefice in 2008, having been under the pastoral care of Rev. Hugh Patterson since 1974, working as a SSM. As can be seen above Hugh retains a role in the Team which is appreciated. This was brought about by mutual consent of all the churches, and has allowed the establishment of a Team Council to co-ordinate ministry across the whole benefice.

The team consists of St. Mary Magdalene Bridgnorth, the civic church, and the two hall church communities in Bridgnorth as well as the eight village churches, each of which has its own distinctive character, community and congregation. All of the parish churches, with the exception of St. Mary's Bridgnorth which was built by Thomas Telford, are ancient, and excepting Oldbury and Tasley (which are Victorian reconstructions), Norman or medieval. Without exception their settings are beautiful. They are all in good condition, barring the floor of St. Mary's which needs replacing. Building works are contemplated in some churches, but this is principally associated with renewing the buildings for modern demands of ministry and outreach.

The Local Ministry Development Group

(Sometimes called the Local Ministry Team)

The Diocese of Hereford has a strategy for mission and ministry based on the development of local ministry shared between ordained clergy and laity. Bridgnorth formed its first Ministry Team eighteen years ago. There have been three reviews since then and currently the group consists of four lay and the two clergy members. A review is expected soon to bring in members of the former Morville Group churches and ensure ownership of the team by the whole benefice under the umbrella of the new Team Council.

The Local Ministry Development Group is practically involved in various ways, including: leading home communions and services in residential homes and pastoral care, school assemblies and church worship, and also seeking to develop the involvement of others in God's work in this place and engaging with the wider community. In addition to reading lessons, leading Intercessions and administering communion members of the congregations also take part in bereavement visiting, baptism support, marriage preparation, the ministry of healing, and leading groups and visiting. There is a deep commitment to work together and, using this diversity, to enrich the life of church and community.

Bridgnorth Youth and School Project (BYSP)

The BYSP was established five years ago with ecumenical support and is funded by the churches of the town, the Diocese and individuals. It is the largest provider of youth services in the town, having a budget five times the size of the County provision. It runs the Bridge Youth Centre, and has a widely respected outreach programme to primary and secondary

schools. It has a specifically Christian ethos. Its work is overseen by the Bridgnorth Community Trust, a body set up by local church leaders to oversee community projects set up by the churches of the town.

Its director is John Prockter who is a highly respected pioneering youth leader, and who was previously instrumental in setting up south West Youth Ministries (SWYM) in Exeter.

BYSP was instrumental in encouraging the Team to set up **St. James Youth** three years ago which caters for young people from years 5-8 in a weekly term time youth club at St. James Hall Church. This is run by a number of volunteers from within the churches and community and caters for around 15 young people each week.

Bridgnorth Community Trust

This is the umbrella body for local initiatives undertaken by churches in the community. These include BYSP (above), the **Bridgnorth Food Bank** and **Christmas Together**, an initiative to bring together up to a hundred isolated or vulnerable people for a meal on Christmas Day.

Ecumenical Relations

Within the town there are Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, United Reformed and Evangelical churches. Relationships are good and although there is no Churches Together group established there is a Ministers Fraternal. There are ecumenical lunches during the Week of Prayer and on Wednesdays in Lent, together with united services at various points in the year. In addition there is a team of people from churches across the town taking the Open the Book programme to schools in the town.

Occasional Offices & Pastoral Care

There are a lot of occasional offices in the benefice. During the last year they were as follows:

Baptisms 44

Weddings 15

Funerals 114

These are spread across all the churches. Ministry is co-ordinated through the **Bereavement Support Group** for funerals. Baptisms are supported through lay visitors and the **Pastoral Care Group** co-ordinates home communions and parish visiting to ensure as far as possible nobody slips by unattended.

In addition a weekly term time **Little Stars** group is held at St. Mary's Church for carers with pre school children. This is run by a mixture of lay people and clergy and involves crafts and chat.

There is a weekly visit to offer prayers and/or bedside communion to Bridgnorth Hospital and clergy do this on a rota basis. This is now going to be shared with a candidate ordinand and a reader in training in the parish.

Outreach

Parishes support agencies at home and abroad. These include: Bridgnorth Youth and Schools Project, The Bridgnorth Food Bank, Brothers of the Good Shepherd in Wolverhampton (working with the homeless) Children's Society, Christian Aid, Bridgnorth Africa Project, Leprosy Mission, and support for Mothers' Union projects and initiatives. Members also participate actively in Fairtrade Bridgnorth, Sustainable Bridgnorth,

the local environmental group, the Town events group and many local organisations and festivals surrounding music and arts. At least one of these, the English Haydn Festival is of international standard. Overseas links also exist through personal contacts with House Group members.

Present Team members of licensed ministers



Team Rector: Simon Cawdell

Simon was appointed in June 2010 having previously served 12 years as Vicar of Claverley and Tuck Hill in the same Deanery. He is a member of General Synod (& it's Business Committee), Chair of Clergy of the Diocese, and Convenor of the Diocesan Clergy Chairs nationally. He has had an active role in forwarding the new diocesan Mission Action Plan. He was appointed a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral in 2015. He is a serial trainer of curates, and has a passion for discerning vocation and nurturing it and believes that the best mechanism for learning is gaining experience. He has in the past held roles in the diocese and with New Wine leading healing ministry. He was a founder member of the evangelical group Fulcrum and remains part of its leadership team. Prior to ordination he worked in the City as a professional economist.

His great affection for the area stems from the fact he was born in Bridgnorth and he longs to see the Town and its surrounding parishes become alive for God.

Team Vicar:

Post vacant



Associate Vicar: Marjorie Brooks

Marjorie retired from teaching special needs children eight years ago, and has since trained for OLM ministry which she undertakes full time. She acts as the Co-ordinator for Pastoral Care in the Team leads the parish of Acton Round and takes a full part in the liturgical life of the benefice. She also fills an invaluable role as the Deanery Secretary and recently has been part of a diocesan review of local ministry.

Curate:

Post Vacant

Hon. Assistants:

The licensed staff are presently assisted by a number of clergy with permission to officiate, Rev. Hugh Patterson, who leads at Morville, Rev. John Ward, who leads at Aston Eyre and Monkhopton. Rev. John Webb leads the pastoral and liturgical ministry in the parishes of Tasley and Astley Abbots. (Rev Laura Hill, the previous curate had responsibility for the oversight of the PCC and parish life at Astley Abbots prior to her appointment to Dorrington.)

Ministers in training: We are delighted to have a reader in training, a candidate ordinand and others exploring licensed ministry at this moment. Vocations are warmly encouraged throughout the benefice, and we are frequently asked to receive placement students from

WEMTC, the local course training ordinands and readers.

Work pattern

Staff members meet daily for Morning Prayer except on days off, and weekly for a more formal staff time, which also includes Avril Bridges, the Team Administrator. We find the daily contact, worshipping and praying together invaluable for team cohesion. They are also part of the wider ministry team which meets twice monthly to co-ordinate ministry across the whole area.

Office facilities

A Team Office operates at St. Leonard's Hall and is open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 11.30am, and has a part time secretary in post.

Housing

The Curacy house is situated at 41 Innage Lane, (High Town) and is an extended 4 bedroom 1960's house. The ground floor comprises lounge, dining room, study, kitchen and toilet. It was extensively refurbished for the previous curate with new kitchen and bathroom and has a good manageable garden.

There is a primary school (St. Leonard's CE Controlled) immediately opposite, and it is a five minute walk from the centre of town.



Parish profiles

Profiles of each of the parishes can be found on the Team website:

<http://www.bridgnorthteamministry.org.uk> along with much other information

STATEMENT OF NEEDS: Curacy profile

Since 2010 when the present Team Rector was appointed, and with the outstanding input of the team of clergy and laity the team has worked to refocus its mission around the Five Marks of Mission and a benefice MAP with a focus to make and grow disciples. Two of its buildings have been significantly refurbished, St. James Hall Church benefitting from grants over £200k for a complete makeover, and St. Peter's Monkhopton £130k for significant structural repairs. Considerable work has also been done to bring the benefice together in a legal scheme cementing work that has gone on over the preceding forty years, and to ensure the ministry of the parishes is co-ordinated.

The challenge is being embraced warmly and outreach is being planned and implemented to follow on from the work done surrounding the occasional offices, of which there are many, regular prayer and healing ministry and the significant social programmes of the churches. These are churches with a genuine desire for growth, and a willingness to explore how that might come about.

"From the very first days of ordained ministry I've had ample opportunity to engage with all Occasional Offices and various aspects of Pastoral work within the team. I've officiated at 50 funerals during my curacy, 3 of those being for babies lost in pregnancy or at birth. As well as officiating at weddings and baptisms I've regularly been involved with planning and delivering marriage and baptism preparation, and also delivered the confirmation preparation for our junior candidates." Rev Laura Hill, Curate

There is a genuine recognition within the churches that they face a demographic time bomb. Mission is not an optional extra and without new members to replace the likely natural wastage a number of the churches face an existential crisis, even the possibility of closure. Many of the parishes have very good links with their communities, and this is a strength, however they have often struggled to leverage this in bringing about new faith. With this in mind it is likely the new team vicar appointment presently under consideration will have a pioneer focus and a specific task in mission and evangelism. This will add a further area of opportunity to the wide experience the benefice can offer a curate in training.

"For the last two years of my four-year curacy I have chaired the P.C.C. of one of the village churches, this has proved an invaluable preparation for first incumbency. Although at times it has felt rather daunting I have never felt left to manage alone or unsupported." Rev Laura Hill, Curate

Bridgnorth and its surrounding parishes have a very wide variety of social contexts, including landed wealthy, and those struggling with significant social problems stemming from poverty. There are two significant areas of social housing in the benefice and a further major housing development is proposed in Tasley parish which may increase the population of the benefice by a tenth over the next five to ten years. There are many openings for Mission. Our links with local primary schools are excellent, and there is scope to expand the use of the two church owned halls. Several of the churches hold regular family worship services. There are regular groups and courses running in the benefice to suit a wide range of Christian experience and good social links for pre-evangelism. We need to re-establish evangelism programmes for adults and young people following a couple of years in which concentration

has been on setting up the Youth Club and Little Stars programmes for carers and pre-school children and the spiritual development of the existing congregations.

“During curacy I’ve also had the opportunity to undertake outreach projects such as entering a float in to the local carnival. Working with one of our churchwardens I have re-established the Parent & Toddler group that operates out of St Mary’s Church, Little Stars. The group aims to provide a space to allow relationships to develop and flourish, between parents and the church, and we have seen some cross-over between Little Stars and baptism recently, with baptism families engaging with Little Stars and vice versa.” Rev Laura Hill, Curate

In the next phase of its life the benefice is looking to be overtly evangelistic, and in that context will be working with the diocesan focus on Market Towns to bring in new resources (including staff) through the Church Commissioners mission fund for new and innovative work. It will be a transitional period, particularly as some of our older honorary assistants retire more fully and the village parishes embrace a more holistic ministry of clergy and laity working together.

Our ideal curate will love people and variety. He or she will relish the challenge of dealing with a very wide cross section of society, will be at ease with those whose families have lived in the area for many generations, and will enjoy the company of newcomers. Similarly, whilst many of our services use the modern forms of liturgy, we would want someone who also open to the aesthetic and musical traditions of the Church.

“I’ve had a wide variety of experience of leading and preaching across a breadth of services, from large formal civic services to informal all-age celebrations. These have included occasions such as Remembrance Sunday, with uniformed organisations in attendance and civic dignitaries, Nine Lessons and Carols, Crib services, Christingle services, Pet Blessing Service, Open Air Service on a local farm, Pentecost celebration, Good Friday Vigils, New Fire on Easter morning as well as the week by week family services, Common Worship or BCP Eucharist.” Rev’d Laura Hill, Curate

We are looking for a colleague who will have a fundamental willingness to plunge into the many forms of ministry available within the team, and who will bring fresh ideas and vision which they will be willing to take forwards in a supportive context.

This is an opportunity to begin ministry in a benefice anticipating change, and looking to the future. In a wider variety of contexts from the traditional to the radically innovative the curate will be supported fully by a training incumbent who is an experienced risk taker and strategic thinker. The curate will be supported from ordination through to incumbency and will be encouraged to take initiatives forwards. They will be expected to learn resilience in preparation for sole ministry, and encouraged to seek resources for personal spiritual enrichment that will sustain a lifetime of ministry. The curate will be a full part of the team from their first day, and expected to contribute fully to it. They will have weekly supervisions in which all aspects of ministry will be explored and realistic workloads thought through.

“Regular supportive supervision sessions have enabled me to explore my sense of vocation and how that has ‘unfolded’ in ordained ministry. Supervision sessions have also helped me to work out how to balance the various demands of family life, work/life boundaries and the demands of parish life.” Rev Laura Hill, Curate

We are looking for a person to:

- Grow as an inspiring leader in faith and worship and as a practical expositor of scripture
- Develop as an excellent communicator, and good team player
- Be able to embrace, develop and guide the varied patterns of worship and pastoral care already developing within the Team, and to bring innovative, fresh and challenging ideas to the parishes in all aspects of the ministry, and encourage the work of its lay members.
- Learn competence in training and mentoring ordained and lay colleagues
- Give priority to leading congregations in their pursuit of mission, and especially the making and growing of disciples, and to develop confidence and expertise in achieving numerical and spiritual growth.
- Able to encourage and build on existing ecumenical links within the area
- Be willing to share the full life of the community throughout their ministry
- Engage fully in the diocesan IME 4-7 programme

And finally to approach this role with faith, humour and humanity

Process

All appointments are a matter of mutual discernment before God, and anyone exploring this post can expect as part of that to spend some time with the Team Rector, members of the Team Council, and also the Bishop of Ludlow who will make the appointment.

For an informal conversation in the first instance contact Preb Simon Cawdell by email s.h.cawdell@btinternet.com or telephone 01746 761573.

Appendix

Curacy with the Bridgnorth & Morville Parishes Team Ministry – A Curate's View by Rev. Laura Hill

Opportunities to meet the Learning Outcomes/Portfolio Requirements

Vocation & Self Care/Management

Regular supportive supervision sessions have enabled me to explore my sense of vocation and how that has 'unfolded' in ordained ministry. Supervision sessions have also helped me to work out how to balance the various demands of family life, work/life boundaries and the demands of parish life.

Worship & Preaching

I've had a wide variety of experience of leading and preaching across a breadth of services, from large formal civic services to informal all-age celebrations. These have included occasions such as Remembrance Sunday, with uniformed organisations in attendance and civic dignitaries, Nine Lessons and Carols, Crib services, Christingle services, Pet Blessing Service, Open Air Service on a local farm, Pentecost celebration, Good Friday Vigils, New Fire on Easter morning as well as the week by week family services, Common Worship or BCP Eucharist.

Occasional Offices & Pastoral Work

From the very first days of ordained ministry I've had ample opportunity to engage with all Occasional Offices and various aspects of Pastoral work within the team. I've officiated at 50 funerals during my curacy, 3 of those being for babies lost in pregnancy or at birth. As well as officiating at weddings and baptisms I've regularly been involved with planning and delivering marriage and baptism preparation, and also delivered the confirmation preparation for our junior candidates. There has been a great deal of flexibility within the team, enabling pastoral/community connections to be followed up through Occasional Offices where appropriate. The clergy meet regularly with the Bereavement Support Group and the Pastoral Care Group to liaise and oversee these aspects of parish ministry.

Biblical Reflection & Further Study

Throughout curacy I've been actively encouraged and supported to engage with the Diocesan CMD programme as well as other opportunities available to feed and nurture my own faith and growth. Reasonable time away from the parish for retreat and conferences has been negotiated appropriately.

Leadership

For the last two years of my four-year curacy I have chaired the P.C.C. of one of the village churches, this has proved an invaluable preparation for first incumbency. Although at times it has felt rather daunting I have never felt left to manage alone or unsupported. During curacy I've had the opportunity to work with colleagues to establish and co-ordinate a youth club, drawing on support from colleagues in the Bridgnorth Youth and School Project. The youth club runs from St James' Hall Church and aims to reach out to the young people resident on the Grove and Lodge Farm estates in particular.

Schools

During curacy I've worked closely with St Leonard's C. of E. Primary School, as a Foundation Governor and as a church link. Being a Governor has been a steep learning curve, and Governor-ship is time-consuming, however, as many incumbencies often include being a Governor in parish church schools it has been a valuable learning opportunity to be a Governor in a supported setting. I have found that both the school and the team have been great sources of guidance and support during the four years I've been Governor. During curacy I've also been part of a team delivering weekly assemblies across 4 schools, and had the opportunity to engage with work with the Bridgnorth Youth and Schools Project.

Community

There has been ample opportunity, and positive encouragement, to engage with wider community engagement, during my time in the team I've been a part of the Food Bank management committee, the Town Council events working group, the Bridgnorth Youth Partnership and the Grove & Lodge Farm Partnership (multi-agency community group) as well as serving as a Foundation Governor at St Leonard's C. of E. Primary School. During curacy I've also had the opportunity to undertake outreach projects such as entering a float in to the local carnival. Working with one of our churchwardens I have re-established the Parent & Toddler group that operates out of St Mary's Church, Little Stars. The group aims to provide a space to allow relationships to develop and flourish, between parents and the church, and we have seen some cross-over between Little Stars and baptism recently, with baptism families engaging with Little Stars and vice versa.

Placement

I greatly valued the opportunity to undertake a 'block' placement, being released from all parish responsibilities for a month, to enable me to join the chaplaincy team with our two local hospitals.