

PARISH PROFILE FOR
WORCESTER: ST STEPHEN (BARBOURNE)
September 2023



| SECTION | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 1. SUMMARY: WHO WE ARE | 2 |
| 2. "PRAISING GOD" - OUR WORSHIP AND CHURCH | 2 |
| 3. "SERVING THE COMMUNITY" - OUR OUTREACH | 5 |
| 4. OUR PEOPLE RESOURCES | 9 |
| 5. LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENT | 9 |
| 6. APPENDIX: DIOCESAN MINISTRY AND MISSION | 11 |

1. SUMMARY: WHO WE ARE

As Kingdom People¹, we are committed to our mission to be a compassionate Church who “Praise God and Serve the Community”. This two-fold expression reflects a strong tradition of accessible, high-quality, liturgical worship, and a broad engagement with our community aimed at enabling and encouraging everyone to enjoy Christ’s gift of “life in abundance”.

2. “PRAISING GOD” - OUR WORSHIP AND CHURCH

Our church is the focal point of our praise, and many in the congregation give significant time and effort to ensuring the building is - and appears - well cared-for, and to enhancing the worship by participation as servers, choir or in many other ways.

Many visitors remark on the beauty of the church and how conducive it is to worship.

Worship

We aim to make all our services accessible and with a high standard of preaching. Our worship is largely Eucharistic and rooted in the modern Catholic tradition. For most services the clergy, servers (and, if applicable, choir) vest. Incense is used on Maundy Thursday and on St Stephen’s Day.

There are currently two Sunday Services: an 8am Eucharist and a 10.00 am Parish Communion with choir that is accessible by Zoom. There is also a 9.00 am monthly family service, ‘Sunday Stars’ in the Bishop Allenby Hall, mainly suitable for very young children.

In terms of mid-week services, we share communion on Thursday mornings in the Church, followed by Open Church. We also alternate morning and evening prayer- on-line, via Zoom, on Monday to Thursday.

We hope to develop a series of “Something a Bit Different” services on Sunday evenings, that draw on different styles of worship. The PCC would like our priest to be proactive in exploring and developing these initiatives on Sundays and at other times to establish new worshipping communities.

The attractive church building and strong liturgical tradition make St Stephen’s a popular choice for the Occasional Offices. In the last twelve months there have been 12 baptisms across all age ranges, 6 weddings and a renewal of vows as well as 8 funerals and two interments at the church, and a number of funerals at the crematorium where a priest from St Stephens was asked to officiate.

“As a church in the 21st century, we recognise the need to be bold, offering a distinctive and counter-cultural message that remains faithful to the Bible.”²

Social media presence and technology.

The church has a well-established social media presence based on a website and Facebook page. The links can be found below:

St. Stephens Church Worcester: Home (st-stephens-church-worcester.org.uk)

¹ “Kingdom People” is an initiative of Worcester Diocese “to worship God, make disciples, share hope and transform communities” <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/growing-kingdom-people>

² All comments in blue italics have been made recently by members of the congregation.

<https://www.facebook.com/StStephensChurchWorcester/>

The church has purchased equipment, including cameras and a laptop to enable parishioners to access the main Sunday 10.00 am service via Zoom if they are unable to attend in person.

St Stephen's Church

St Stephen's parish was created in the mid-19th century by dividing off parts of the ancient (and now neighbouring) parish of Claines when the city was rapidly expanding to accommodate a growing urban population. The Preedy-designed church was built in 1862 of local red sandstone and stands in its own well-maintained grounds. It is one of the most distinctive landmarks in the area with frontages onto two roads - Droitwich Road and St Stephen's Street.



There is seating for about 280 people in mostly fixed pews. The church has some fine stained-glass, especially in the East and West windows and in the very attractive Lady Chapel (dedicated in 1916), which is used as a place for quiet prayer and reflection as well as for some services. Services are accompanied by an electronic organ, which has enhanced the music significantly, and enabled us to launch a series of music recitals. The majority of services use the Nave altar although the original high altar remains in place and is also used on key occasions.

The grounds are laid to grass. The churchyard is not now used for burials (and has been mostly cleared of memorials), but there is a Garden of Remembrance for the interment of ashes, which acts as an important link with the community.

A ring of 8 bells was installed in the tower in 2013. We have our own team of ringers, who are members of the Worcestershire and Districts Change Ringing Association. The bells are rung every Sunday morning as well as on special occasions, including weddings and funerals when requested.

"The Church is traditional yet strikes a modern balance; it celebrates birthdays and uses a mix of older and more modern hymns"

Bishop Allenby Hall

Immediately adjacent to, but separate from, the church is a relatively modern parish hall building - the Bishop Allenby Hall. This is a versatile building which is regularly used for parish and community events, a pre-school playgroup, Brownies, and a variety of social or interest groups. The hall has a stage, kitchen, toilets and storerooms and its greater use for more Church events should be explored.



Bishop Allenby Hall

Characteristics of the congregation

St Stephen's has an average weekly attendance across all inhouse services of about 120 adults, 15 on Zoom but very few under 16s. We have 151 members on the electoral roll. The greater proportion of the congregation is aged 50+. 52% of the congregation live outside the parish, reflecting the small size of the parish and the opportunity in Worcester to attend a range of different styles of worship across a relatively small area. The congregation is welcoming and well-motivated, with groups for worship, and activity groups for social and spiritual support for the wider community.

"[I love] to hear lots of laughter and music around the place as well as reverence, when needed."

Looking forward

Whilst valuing and wanting to maintain what is best in our tradition, we continue to explore modern approaches. This includes offering different types of services and at times to suit the working/family patterns of our community, as is indicated by our Sunday Stars initiative.

We are delighted to have recently appointed a Youth Worker for Children and Young People in collaboration with our neighbouring Churches of Claines and St. George's. Increasing the number of young people and their families who are involved in the life of St. Stephen's is important to us.

Thanks to a generous legacy, we have started to develop the children's area at the back of the Church. This is something that we aim to complete over the next few months.

Part of our vision is for the church to be a Sacred Space that all can enjoy offering opportunities to meet God in a quiet environment during the week. To facilitate this, we are constantly thinking about ways to improve and modernise the buildings to make them welcoming to all and to optimise the space and its use. As part of our Health and Sustainability Plan we have recently removed several pews from the north side of the church with a temporary faculty. This is already of great benefit to Open Church and to Good Companions.

Having already made a good start in becoming a Church that is more environmentally aware, we would like to explore working towards the achievement of a silver Eco-Church award.

3. “SERVING THE COMMUNITY” - OUR OUTREACH

Our mission is aimed at “enabling and encouraging everyone to have ‘life in abundance’, which is Jesus’ desire and gift.” This vocation is worked out across a broad range of activities and involvement in the community of which we are part.

In our work with the congregation and the wider community we are very conscious of our responsibilities to young people and vulnerable adults and we take the matter of Safeguarding very seriously. We want our priest to help uphold the good work done by our safeguarding lead to ensure the continuation of a safeguarding culture within the church.

Extending the welcome of the Church

Tea and coffee are served in Church after the main 10.00 am service on Sundays and we value these opportunities to get to know each other better. The Church is also open on Thursday after the 10.00am service and Saturday mornings for visitors to “Drop In” for refreshments and a chat.

“The coronation get together was a triumph and so many people were grateful for the opportunity to share a joyous occasion together.”

Other comments include

*“Lovely cake”. “Thank you very much for such a warm welcome. We will return”.
“It’s a great place to make friends”.*

Special services during the year - Harvest, Remembrance of the Faithful Departed, Carols, and Nativity for local schools and nurseries - are highly valued by the community and are very well-supported. The Church is usually full at the crib service on Christmas Eve. We would like to extend the opportunities for participation by youth groups, such as the Brownies within these events. Musical performances by a variety of choral groups and choirs are also held reasonably frequently.



Bring and share lunch in church.

Community Groups

The Bishop Allenby Hall is extensively used for regular and occasional community events, including “Sticky Fingers” (a pre-school playgroup meeting daily Monday to Friday), Brownies, and a variety of social or interest groups - from the Camera Club to the Women’s Institute.

A number of groups open to the community are also organised and run by members of the congregation, including Good Companions (for 55s+) and Barbourne Ramblers.

There are two Home Groups, which meet weekly for fellowship and the study of the Bible. Our new priest may wish to promote and facilitate further groups to encourage a deeper understanding of the Bible and to encourage personal faith to grow.

Other groups also meet within Church, such as a bereavement support group. This is a facility we hope to make more available to the wider community, especially as we develop the north aisle of the church and install more flexible seating arrangements.

Children and Young People

Children and young people are important members of our Church community and we are delighted at the role they play. One of our key priorities in the coming years is to engage creatively with the children and young families in our community. The appointment of our new worker for Children and Young people in collaboration with our neighbouring parishes, to act as a facilitator for our activities, is a key part of this process.

Each week, the Church welcomes its ‘Little Stars’ – a group of pre-school children and their parents and carers. This is great fun, and a wonderful introduction for many young parents to the life of the church. In recent months we have started to hold ‘Sunday Stars’ for very young children and their parents/carers on the first Sunday of every month, providing coffee and pastries for grown – ups and refreshments for the little ones. Initial attendance has been very good, and we would like to expand this further along with other children and young family activities.

We also have strong links with the local primary schools, which welcome our clergy regularly for assemblies and other activities, and with local uniformed groups, including Sea-Scouts. Our Brownies and one of the primary schools would like to explore how to develop these links further.

Our previous incumbent was the padre to the local Air Training Corps squadron and attended their meetings regularly. The cadets occasionally participate in activities at Church; for example they organised a community tea party on the occasion of the King’s coronation.

There will also be the opportunity for our new priest to join a chaplaincy team that supports students at Bishop Perowne College, a local 11-16 C of E secondary school.

“We very much want St. Stephen’s to be a family Church”.

Community Events

Our Autumn Fayre, in conjunction with Sticky Fingers, held inside and outside the church, is an important and high-profile event in the life of the community. We hold Christian Aid cake sales and other fund-raising activities such as table-top sales and musical recitals.



St Stephen's Autumn Fayre

"It was a lovely afternoon. Felt like a village fete. Loved the music and atmosphere and so nice to see young and old enjoying themselves."

Work with Sheltered Accommodation, Care Homes and other Institutions and individuals

Members of the congregation make regular visits to local sheltered housing and care home units, for Communion by Extension, Teas and Carols at Christmas.

St Stephen's also has links with Braley House, a self-catering approved premises in the parish run by the National Probation Service in partnership with Warwickshire & West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company.

Support Groups

There are valuable lay ministries of visiting those too ill to get to church, and of support for the lonely and recently bereaved, with a Pastoral Support Team all DBS checked and having completed Safeguarding training.

Zoom links are circulated so that parishioners who are unable to attend in person can take part in our main services.

Ecumenical Links

We are fortunate to be able to work alongside colleagues from our surrounding parishes and participate in the 'Working Together' initiative. We are also keen to work with those from other denominations.

There are opportunities for ecumenical services and outreach. Informally, we have cooperated on specific projects, such as the provision of an inter-denominational chaplaincy tent at the Worcester Show on the Pitchcroft Racecourse and a carol service in nearby Gheleuvelt Park. We also hold a joint Pancake party for young people and their families.



Gheluvelt Park

We want our priest to deepen these existing relationships, and to help forge new relationships, in order to foster the church's mission in the wider community, and to make known the relevance of the distinctive Christian message to modern society.

Collaboration with our Neighbouring Parishes

Geographically, St Stephen's lies between the parish of Saint George's (serving the Barbourne and Arboretum areas of Worcester, to the south of St Stephens) and Claines St John the Baptist (serving Claines and Fernhill Heath to the north). St George's and Claines are served by the same priest-in-charge. We have strong links with these parishes, both at a formal level (both parishes are within the Worcester Deanery) and at an informal level.

Some recent examples of the ways in which we are collaborating include:

- cooperation in Confirmation services;
- joint coordinated initiative to collect donations in response to the Refugee Crisis;
- youth club at Claines St John the Baptist which children from St Stephen's attend;
- each other's clergy invited to preach in our parishes;
- mutual publicising of events;
- Joint appointment of a worker for children and young people.

We are keen for our priest to explore fresh options for strategic collaboration, taking into account possible synergies, a 'common-sense' approach to caring for our respective communities, and sharing appropriate gifts and challenges across the three parishes. It is part of the deanery plan to see this collaboration further developed so it is envisaged that the new minister at St Stephen's will also be licensed as an Associate Priest at St George's and St John the Baptist.

4. OUR PEOPLE RESOURCES



Our Choir

We have a very capable team of lay people (including musicians) and clergy who actively support our mission to “Praise God and Serve the Community”. The team includes:

- one Verger
- two Authorised Lay Ministers
- one licensed Lay Minister
- two retired priests with Permission to Officiate
- two churchwardens
- A part-time paid administrator for the parish (there is no fixed Parish Office).
- The PCC has 13 members (and one co-opted member and two ex-officio), representing a broad range of backgrounds and skills, including buildings and finance work. The PCC meets approximately six times per year.

The PCC very much hopes that our new minister will help everyone identify and use their God-given gifts.

St Stephen's has acted as a Training Parish for many curates, and it is hoped that this will continue.

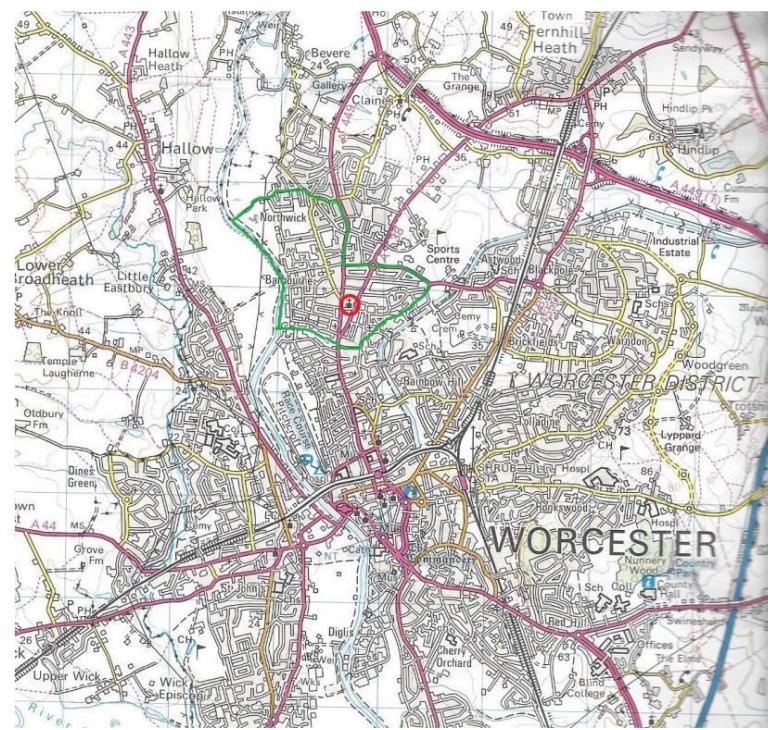
5. LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Where we are

St Stephen's is in the Barbourne area of Worcester, about a mile north of the city centre. Worcester is a

city of approximately 103,900 people sited on the River Severn, with a rapidly expanding university, a modern general hospital, a vibrant city centre with a range of large shops, restaurants, and a wide variety of social and leisure facilities. Worcester has a long history including significant involvement in the English Civil War. It is an attractive tourist centre in its own right, with easy access to the Malvern Hills, the Vale of Evesham and the Cotswolds.

The M5 runs adjacent to the city, with Birmingham $\frac{1}{2}$ hour away (25 miles) and Bristol 1 hour (65 miles). Regular train services run from three stations to Birmingham, Hereford, Oxford, and London.



— St Stephen's Parish Boundary ● St Stephen's Church

What St Stephen's Parish is like

St Stephen's is a relatively small parish geographically - about 1.5 km east-west and 1.5 km north-south, with a population of about 5,900.

It is primarily a residential area, much of which was developed in the late 19th century, but with significant areas of new development throughout the 20th and in the 21st centuries. Local shops support the community. There is one (local authority) primary school within the parish, with other primary and secondary schools (local authority and private schools) nearby. Just to the south of the parish (about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the church) is Bishop Perowne Church of England College. The southern parish boundary runs through Gheleuvelt Park (Grade II Listed Historic Parks and Gardens), and the western boundary is the River Severn.

The biggest employment sector in the city is public administration, education and health, followed by distribution, hotels and restaurants. There are some larger manufacturing employers nearby including Yamazaki Mazak UK (machine tools) and Worcester Bosch (central heating boilers).

Characteristics of the Parish's population

Information from the 2021 Census shows that 56% living in the St Stephen's ward declared themselves as Christian.

6.8% of the population are of minority ethnic background group with 91.1% identified the UK as their country of birth. 6% of households are in social rented housing.

The age distribution of the ward is as follows: 18.8% between 0-17 years old, 59.9% between 18-64 years old and 21.3% over 65 years old.

For those employed, 36.8% hold management, administrative and professional occupations.

"The new incumbent needs to be confident enough in their own abilities to refresh, renew and bring new ideas into our church."

6. APPENDIX: DIOCESAN MINISTRY AND MISSION

The Diocese of Worcester

The Diocese of Worcester covers an area of 671 square miles and includes parishes in Worcestershire, the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, and a few parishes in northern Gloucestershire, south-east Wolverhampton and Sandwell. It has around 170 parishes and 280 church buildings, together with 100 church schools. The diocese is divided into two archdeaconries, with six deaneries..



Our diocesan vision is to grow as kingdom people, sharing the good news of Jesus' love in Worcestershire and Dudley. As the body of Christ, we join together to worship God creatively, make disciples, share hope, and transform communities as we live out values of love, compassion, justice and freedom to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

Priorities 2023 – 2030

Over the next few years, we aim to:

- **Double** the number of children and young people worshipping in our churches.
- Create **100 new worshipping communities** offering a range of ways for people to come to faith and worship God. (eg Forest Church / Café Church / Walking Church).
- **Invest in the renewal** of around a dozen churches to ensure that each major area of population has at least one church with 150 people attending weekly, enabling them to support other local churches.

- Underpin these by investing in our clergy and lay leaders, providing **training and development** opportunities to enable them to grow and feel supported and equipped for mission.

[Download a pdf summary](#) of our priorities along with the different ways your parish can get involved.

[Download a pdf](#) of our full diocesan transformation strategy

One size doesn't fit all - we want to strengthen local churches and encourage and resource them to explore what it might mean to grow in health and sustainability in their context as they worship God, make disciples, share hope, and transform communities.

We share a vision for a church which enables its people to be:

- Deeply rooted in prayer and study of the scriptures
- Renewed and transformed by regular worship
- Equipped to witness to the gospel of love, compassion, justice and freedom
- Dedicated to helping children, young people and young adults to belong and be nurtured in faith
- Devoted to growing deeply in discipleship, offering our time and talents and money to God
- Resourced and released to minister to others
- Ready to engage with and serve our community
- Committed to making our buildings fit for purpose as a spiritual and community resource.



The Worcester Deanery comprises 31 parishes, a mix of rural and urban, that are located on both the east and west sides of the River Severn.

The Deanery, led by a Deanery Leadership Team plays a major part in encouraging and enabling the Diocesan Kingdom People Vision to be developed at the local level. Our main priorities are to be rooted in prayer, communicate effectively and work more collaboratively.

Deanery Synod meetings are the place where relationships are formed and together we explore what it means for our churches to grow in health and sustainability.

The Deanery Chapter includes around 20 licensed ministers plus some active ministers with permission to officiate. It meets monthly and offers a relaxed and supportive space where we share in fellowship and prayer.

St Stephen's parish lies between the parishes of St George's and St John the Baptist. In recent years the three parishes have been working more collaboratively, especially in the area of children and youth, and it is exciting that a Children, Youth and Family Worker has recently been appointed to help develop this work.

It is part of the deanery plan to see this collaboration between the three parishes further developed so it is envisaged that the new minister at St Stephen's will also be licensed as an Associate Priest at St George's and St John the Baptist.