

# Churn Valley Benefice

A multi-parish rural benefice in the beautiful Cotswolds

**Benefice Profile 2025**





# Welcome

We are delighted that you want to learn more about the Churn Valley Benefice here in God's beautiful Cotswolds!

We need a Rector, who will be based in Stratton, near the market town of Cirencester in Gloucestershire, to minister to the rural communities of 8 parishes. We want you to bring a vision and innovative approach that will enrich the faith of our Church community, so that together we will renew our mission with a vigour to bring God to those who do not yet know Him and reach out more creatively to share the Christian faith with our younger generations.

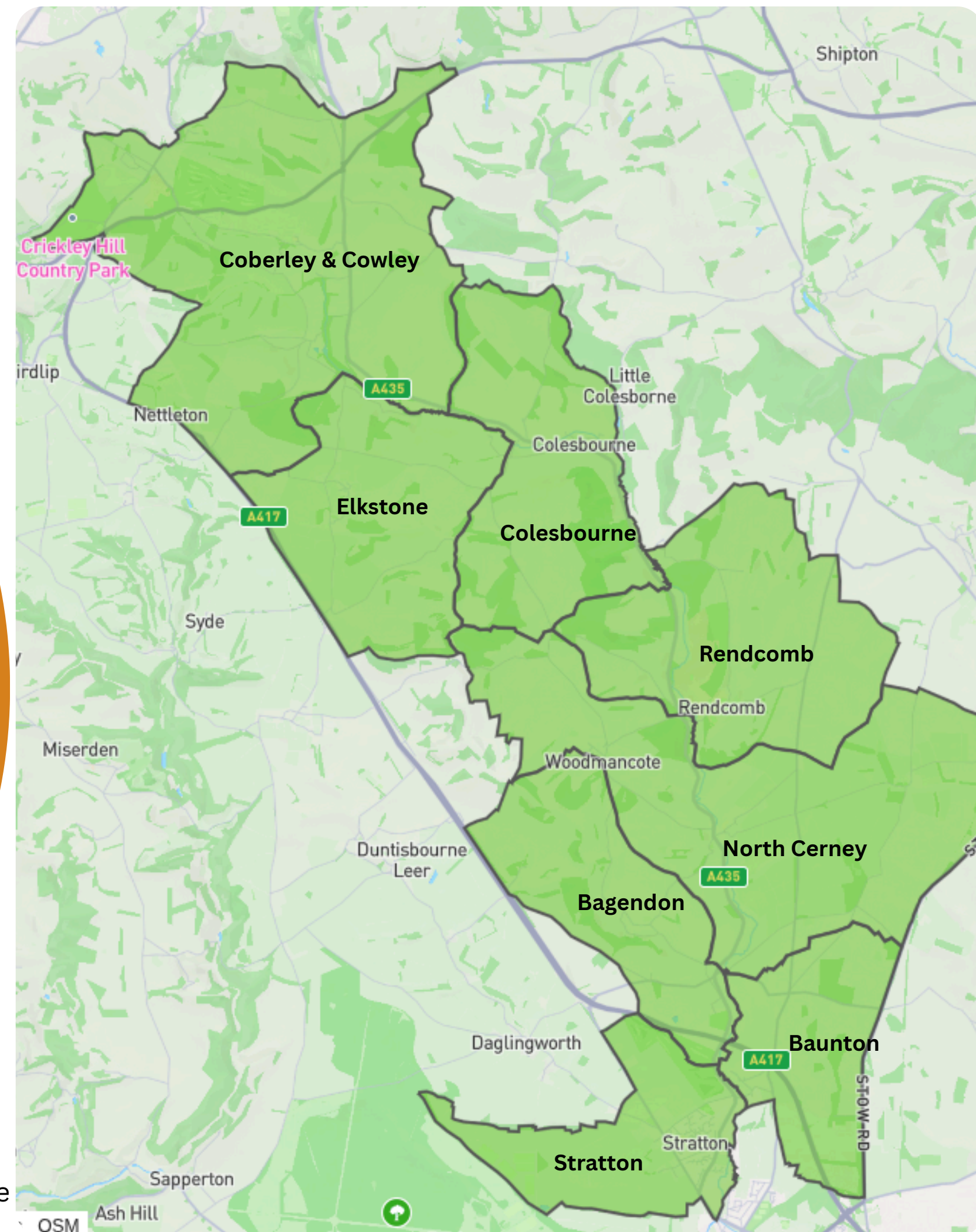


# Welcome

Our Benefice is geographically long and thin. It stretches along the upper reaches of the River Churn, from Coberley in the north, near Cheltenham, to Stratton in the south, next door to Cirencester.

- Bagendon. *pop. 250*
- Baunton *pop. 288*
- Coberley & Cowley *pop. 540*
- Colesbourne *pop. 120*
- Elkstone *pop. 216*
- North Cerney *pop. 785*
- Rendcomb *pop. 200*
- Stratton *pop. 2,500*

\*population statistics approximate





# Who we are now

We are a group of 8 Parishes with 9 Churches, 3 Church Schools and 2 Colleges under the umbrella of the Benefice, but largely operating independently as separate cells with strong and active villages, hamlets and communities. Full Benefice services are a monthly feature and also occur on 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays. The cross-flow attendance between Parishes is fairly small, but consistent.

Although congregations are generally small for regular services, there is wider enthusiasm for festival services. All our churches have a core of committed Christians living out the Gospel in terms of worship, prayer, supporting our "neighbour" when needed and being generous with both time and money. Pastoral care is evident in visiting, e.g. home communions and regular services at Stratton Court Care Home.





# Who we are now

A broader community supports our church buildings, both practically and through fund-raising. There is much charitable work carried out all year round and the Christian spirit is evident in the communities through the care and support of the elderly, the needy and the vulnerable.

As such, the foundations of a loving and caring community are in place, and we look forward to the opportunity of fresh team leadership and direction brought by a new Rector.

We are blessed to have a team of retired clergy and lay readers who assist with the provision of services across the benefice.

We have a supportive and efficient Benefice Administrator, who is much appreciated, but has a huge task. We also have the broader backing of the Cirencester Deanery which is developing operational and administrative support to all Parishes in areas such as finance and building works. We have too, the support of the skills and expertise of the Diocesan team.

We have increased the variety of types of worship to include Celtic worship and All-Age worship, whilst maintaining the traditional forms, and there are multiple activities throughout the Benefice which showcase a vibrant and collaborative spirit – Fetes, Together Sunday All Age Services, harvest suppers, barn dances, BBQs, film nights, choral events, carol singing, picnics, walks and bike rides, many of which raise funds for upkeep of our buildings.





# Schools Ministry

Our 3 Church of England Primary Schools in Coberley, North Cerney and Stratton all have close links with the Church. They demonstrate deep commitments to Christian values, evidenced by the children's behaviour and activities such as their spiritual gardens, prayer box and numerous wall graphics. They regularly hold their festival services, devised by the children themselves, in the church buildings and hold other celebratory worship events such as iSingPop concerts.

PCC members and members of the communities play an active role with the schools through governance, worship support, and weekly "Open the Book" assemblies.



**Open the Book**



**IsingPop**



**Festival Services**



**Values**



# WHO WE WOULD LIKE TO BE

With an awareness of our age profile, we need to engage more with the Young – Schools, Colleges, Youth Clubs, Scouts, Guides, Sports Clubs –

We must work more closely with the 3 C of E Primary Schools in our Benefice, with volunteer teams of clergy and lay people being led by our Rector to increase our presence in:

- Governance
- Open the Book
- School worship
- Spiritual activities

# WHO WE WOULD LIKE OUR NEW RECTOR TO BE

We need you to have an understanding of the culture of today's generation, - their expectations, their motivations.

We are looking for courageous, innovative approaches to ministry, a proactive, gregarious attitude of an outgoing person who will enjoy taking God's Word out into the community. We want you to take the initiative to develop relationships with our schools, ensure you are part of the governance, help to strengthen the Open the Book teams, the pastoral and spiritual development, to lead a mission to build relationships and evangelical links with our colleges, - The National Star College and Rendcomb College - as well as with the clubs and associations for younger people in our Benefice. You will identify opportunities to introduce pastoral care and Christian values and sow the seeds of God's Word



## WHO WE WOULD LIKE TO BE

We would like to encourage broader use of our church buildings by a wider section of the community to make them a greater part of community life and make the Word of God more visible. This will require many to make alterations to the building interiors and to add facilities. Some have already done this, but many have not.

Whilst seeking to reach out to bring God's Word to those who don't yet know Him, we must continue our ministry to His long-standing congregations, frequently of advancing years. We will continue to celebrate traditional forms of worship such as BCP Holy Communion.

And we want to reach out more to those who are infirm or cannot travel to church to ensure that they receive God's ministry

## WHO WE WOULD LIKE OUR NEW RECTOR TO BE

We want our Rector to be open to a change from the traditional use of churches. We want you to come with creative ideas for the development of our buildings and new activities

Our Rector must be comfortable delivering traditional worship to satisfy the more conservative tastes whilst still being forward-looking and creative to attract the new generation.

You will be eager to travel the length and breadth of this rural Benefice to take God's Word to people in their homes and have the ability to relate to the elderly, vulnerable, infirm and those with special needs.



## WHO WE WOULD LIKE TO BE

We seek a more united Benefice, - more co-operation between Parishes, more joint activities in both worship and events

We believe that there would be mutual benefit in working more closely with neighbouring benefices, to share resources to help each other with workload peaks and specific skills

We want to grow the pastoral care and worship in our Benefice.  
We must identify the opportunities and areas for growth.

## WHO WE WOULD LIKE OUR NEW RECTOR TO BE

You will need to be prepared to spread your time evenly across all Parishes. You will have the skill to bring people together and develop united and shared activities. In effect, you will be a team leader with an ability to break down traditional barriers.

We would like our Rector to have a collaborative approach and reach out to neighbouring clergy to explore how combining resources when appropriate across benefices could enrich the ministry to all parishioners.

You will discern God's plan for our Benefice and lead the lay team, with any additional available support, to pursue it



## WHO WE WOULD LIKE TO BE

Our aim is to ensure that our clergy spend optimum time on their evangelical and pastoral mission and less taken up on administration management. We have a highly efficient Benefice Administrator and must ensure that she has all necessary support through optimum systems and resources

We need to build our support team by

- More lay worship leaders
- Exploring the commissioning of lay pastoral assistants
- Building and retaining relationships with visiting and retired clergy and with Diocesan staff

## WHO WE WOULD LIKE OUR NEW RECTOR TO BE

We would like you to have some appreciation of business management systems, sufficient to be able to ensure that our Benefice Administrator has the technical resources she requires

We would like you to build close relationships with the Diocesan team, the county's clergy base and identify, encourage and support potential lay worship leaders

# Team

We have a strong team of licensed readers and a growing number of lay worship leaders. We have very welcome support from retired and visiting clergy (both from within the Benefice and without) and willing support from Diocesan clergy.

[For full team profiles click here](#)



Jan Moore – Retired Priest with PTO



Cliff Pooley – Retired Priest with PTO



Mark Venn – Lay Reader



Martin Green – Lay Reader



Christopher Hall – Lay Reader



Six Certified Lay Worship Leaders



Marie Hobbs – Rendcomb College Chaplain



Hannah Merrett – Administrator



# Where you fit



## Prayers of Love and Faith

There is a wide range of views on PLF / LLF across the benefice. We hope our new rector will be able to minister with those that agree or disagree with their own position on this sensitive pastoral issue. We seek to be a Church that is a welcoming space for all in our communities.



## Culture

Are you able to lead us in our desire to reach all in our community with the love of Jesus



## Creative

Can you help us explore innovative ways to reach our communities and to use our buildings for our communities?



## Worship

Will you value our traditions while sensitively encouraging us to explore new ways of worship?



## Collaboration

Will you work with lay and ordained colleagues in the benefice and across the deanery to share resources and bless each other?



## Vision

Can you help us fulfil our call to our parishes now and in the future?

# THE PARISHES



## Bagendon

Bagendon Parish includes the delightful village in the vicinity of the church, the hamlet of Perrotts Brook and the permanent static caravan site, Mayfield Park. Our Church is at the heart of our community. We are able to sustain holding a service every Sunday with the invaluable help of retired Clergy, experienced Readers and a committed team that includes two Lay Worship leaders. We give a warm welcome to all, whether to a Sunday service, "Occasional Offices" or a passing visit. Our church is always open. With an informal network, we aim to ensure that we are aware if anyone needs support and try to include and involve as many as possible in our annual Harvest Festival lunches, Remembrance Sunday, Carols by Candlelight, a "Celebration of Summer" free Cream Tea, and a picnic for all on GHCT Ride and Stride Day, taking every opportunity to provide a welcoming and generously hospitable ministry. Our Congregation supports many Benefice activities, such as the Lent and Advent courses, Good Friday Pilgrimage, Open the Book at the school in North Cerney, and of course the regular Benefice Services.

With an awareness of our age profile, we are seeking the right appointment, someone who will encourage and enable us to move forward as we strive to maintain God's presence in our community.



## Baunton

Baunton is one of the smaller parishes in the Benefice and the church of St. Mary Magdalene is an important community hub. The building has recently been reordered to make the space more flexible, and has a kitchen, composting toilet and WiFi. The PCC is pleased that it is used for monthly, popular coffee mornings, and is encouraging other activity, which is generally organised by the Social Events Committee. A successful Harvest lunch was held last year and all services are followed by refreshments, which helps to foster community.

The church is grade II\* listed and features a medieval wall painting of St. Christopher. Cleaning and flower-arranging in the church, and maintenance of the churchyard, are well supported by the village. A Holy Communion Service is held on the first Sunday of each month. The regular congregation averages around 10; Harvest, the Remembrance Service and especially Carols by Candlelight are supported by the whole community.

Baunton villagers are currently fundraising to take up the floorboards and replace rotting timbers beneath. They also need to replace the lighting.



# THE PARISHES



## Coberley & Cowley

In February 2019, the neighbouring ecclesiastical parishes of Coberley and Cowley combined to make more effective use of their financial and volunteer resources. With populations of approximately 400 and 140 respectively, they form the most northerly part of the Benefice and naturally look towards Cheltenham and Gloucester for everyday needs.

The united Parish contains two historic churches with Norman origins: St Giles in Coberley, one of the largest in the Benefice, and St Mary the Virgin in Cowley, nestled within the grounds of Cowley Manor. Services alternate between the two churches, offering a variety of worship styles, and occasional Benefice services.

Both communities strongly support the major Church festivals as well as fundraising to maintain the fabric of the buildings, through numerous events, in particular the two well-attended village fetes—Cowley's hosted at Cowley Manor and Coberley's at its local primary school.

Coberley Church of England Primary School, with over 70 pupils, has close links with St Giles, with its main festival services held there and is supported by active PCC involvement through governance and Open the Book worship.

The Parish is also home to the National Star College at Ullenwood, a nationally recognised centre for young adults with disabilities.



## Colesbourne

Colesbourne is a traditional estate village with around 35 houses let on tenancies, one third of which are at affordable rents, and another 35 owner occupied. There are three independently managed farms plus 900 acres of managed timber producing forestry with an arboretum of rare trees and one of the biggest snowdrop gardens in the country attracting 5,000–8,000 visitors in February each year. There are 10 small businesses in the village including a shop/filling station/Post Office, and an Inn with restaurant and 14 rooms.

The church dates back to 1050 but was much altered in 1850 and seats about 90. It is in good condition, it has a ring of five bells of 1719 which were rehung in 2001, an organ and services are held fortnightly but we will hope to return to weekly services with a new Rector and lay members. Most services are from BCP.

The oil fired boiler recently caught fire and agreeing and financing a way forward is a challenge for us at the moment.

# THE PARISHES



## Elkstone

St John the Evangelist Church is always open and we note it is used nearly every day by visitors who don't necessarily worship on a Sunday. It provides a safe, quiet place of reflection. We have two services a month, one Morning Worship and one Holy Communion. We have a local bell-ringing team ringing our 6 bells once a month, and an organist for one of the services. Our regular congregation welcomes villagers and visitors, and we always finish our services with refreshments and a valuable time of fellowship. There is a regular Bible/Prayer Group hosted by two members of the PCC who live in the village.

The church is a central part of the village community and we are able to host lunches and events in the village hall, and equally take part in the village's busy schedule. The churchyard is a much loved quiet area and also contains a footpath, a wildflower meadow and an EcoLoo. The village hosts an annual Open Gardens Day, raising money equally between the Village Hall and the Church. A much loved event organised by the village and church community.

The Churn Valley Community Choir takes part, as do the Bell ringers.



## North Cerney

North Cerney Parish has three villages within its borders, with Woodmancote and Calmsden being part of the parish of North Cerney giving a combined population of around eight hundred. The Church is a listed grade 1 building and is mentioned in most Church books. We currently have two Sunday services of Eucharist or matins, with a congregation of around eight to twenty.

Our Carol Service is held at the local pub and is popular. We also have an excellent flower rota of volunteers. The Church is open all day and every day and we have a number of visitors and organised groups coming to appreciate this beautiful and atmospheric building.



# THE PARISHES



## Rendcomb

St. Peter's lies in the heart of the village, surrounded by the beautiful grounds of Rendcomb College, a co-educational school for 3 -18 year olds. St. Peter's has a long-standing symbiotic relationship with the College. Not only does St. Peter's act as the College's chapel, but together we are a popular wedding venue. Rendcomb has circa 200 residents and includes the hamlet of Aycote and the Marsden Estate. It is a lively village with a doctors surgery, village store and a refurbished village hall that regularly hosts community groups, social events and fund raising activities.

A committed PCC works hard to encourage worshippers and raise funds. Our aspiration is continued growth to sustain our community by offering new ways for people, especially families, to engage with the church. Therefore, together with our new priest, we wish to contribute to a sense of common purpose across the benefice, with him or her bringing new ideas, energy and enthusiasm. Our vision is for St. Peter's to be at the heart of our village community and an integral part of a thriving benefice.

St Peter's replaced the roof in 2021 with terne-coated stainless steel after successfully securing numerous grants and donations. The latest quinquennial report in 2023 highlighted no major problems and we are continually aiming to improve and update our building including installing wi-fi very soon.

The finances are in a good position helped enormously with a generous legacy in 2024. We pay our Parish Share in full each year and we are enormously grateful to Rendcomb College for their help in maintaining the church and the churchyard.



## Stratton

Stratton with a population of 2,500 is located near Cirencester. It has rural boundaries on one side and on the other a vibrant market town 5 minutes drive away. The CVB Rectory is located in Stratton which also has a post office and village shop.

The regular congregation share practically in the upkeep of the beautiful church. Its worship is well supported by welcomers, readers, intercessors, lay leaders and retired ministers with PTO. The church, which is open every day, presents traditional and contemporary (Celtic) worship for Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and All Age Gatherings, which includes breakfast, creative craft activities and interactive worship in the round. A good sound system and an excellent organ and organist enhance this. Wifi is available. St Peters works with Churches Together across all denominations in Cirencester. Stratton Court Care Home has a regular service for residents and hosts a coffee 'Pop-in' for local people. Stratton has the A Rocha Silver Eco Award, with solar panels, trench arch, Eco loo and a wildflower area. An Open the Book team has long delivered 30 weekly assemblies at Stratton Primary School which regularly uses the church for festivals. Monthly community events - Tuesday Group, Horticultural Society and Film Night make use of the school premises. The local brownies attend the Remembrance Service at the Stratton War Memorial, led by the church and attended by Stratton people.



# Finances

Our Parishes are financially stable although some face more challenges than others in meeting commitments. However, all Parish Shares have been paid.

A review of the 2024 financial situation for all Parishes can be found on our web site:

[Parish Financial Statements](#)





# Summary

We have shared our Hopes, Visions and Challenges with you. Will you consider joining our community serving the Lord in the Churn Valley and help us to innovate, transform and inspire? We are eager to hear from you.



## Mission

To be a missional church reaching out to our parish communities



## Tradition

To explore appropriate new ways of worshipping while valuing and loving our broad traditions



## United Benefice

To be a more united benefice sharing resources while valuing the uniqueness of each individual parish



## Vision

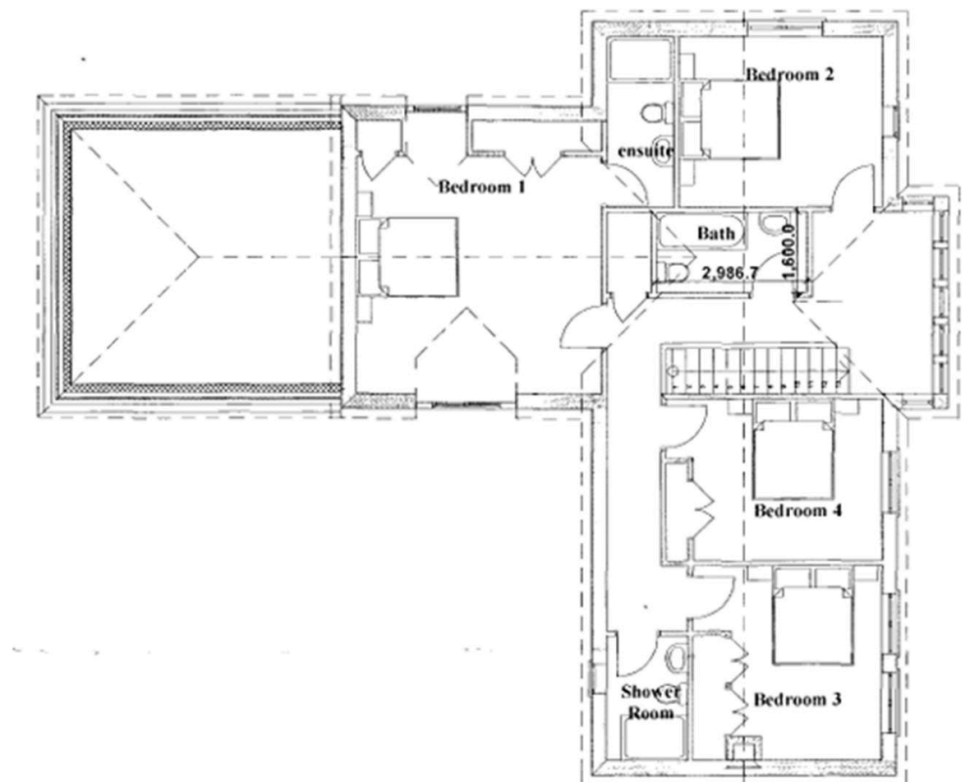
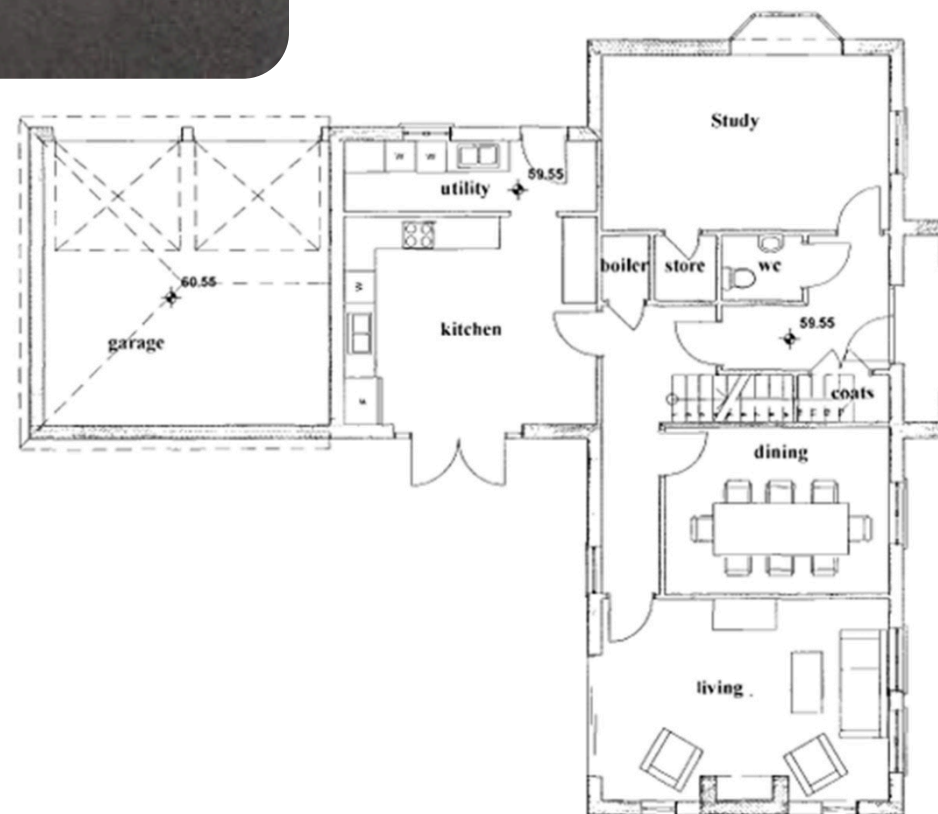
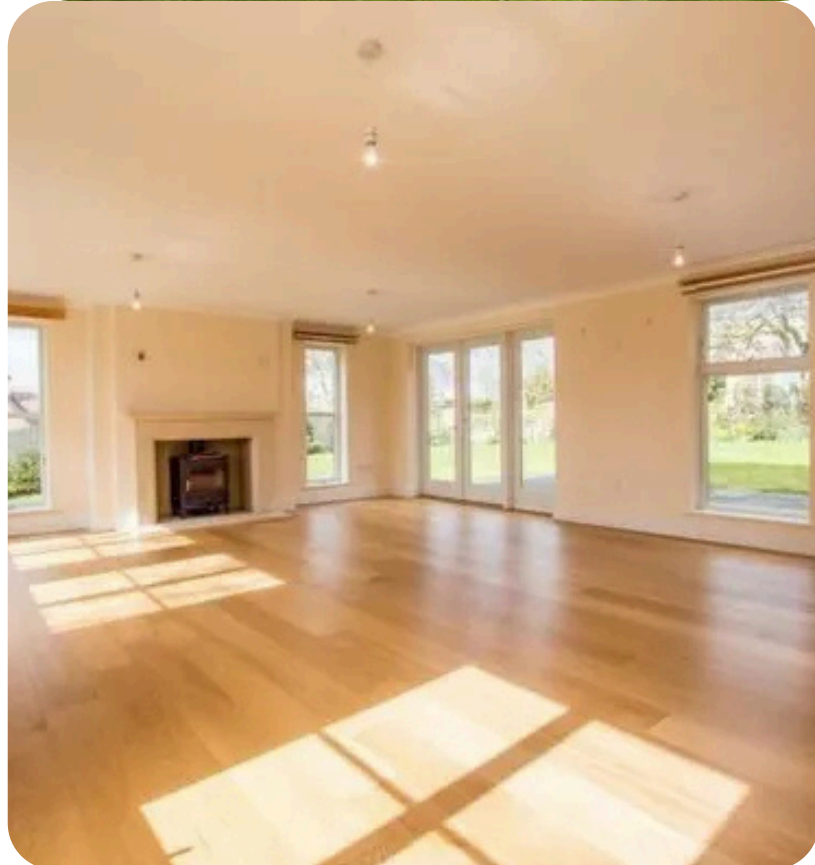
We seek someone who can guide and lead us into the future

# The Rectory

The Rectory is a large modern purpose built house in the grounds of the old rectory. It has a good sized study and double aspect lounge. The kitchen opens out onto the large garden. There are four bedrooms upstairs, a family bathroom and a shower room. The master bedroom has an ensuite shower and toilet. There is also a large garage behind the house.

The Rectory is a 3-minute walk from Stratton Church and about 1.5 miles from Cirencester town centre.

The Rectory, Pope's Court, Stratton, GL7 2LJ





# DIOCESE OF GLOUCESTER LIFE VISION

“I have come that they may have LIFE, and have it to the full.”  
(John 10:10)

*Life*

We remain committed to our LIFE vision

*Leadership*  
Committed to transformation

*imagination*  
Opening new paths to faith

*faith*  
Living as adventurous followers of Jesus Christ

*engagement*  
Living out Christ's love and hope

Nurturing  
everyday  
disciples

Investing in people  
and programmes  
which excite young  
people to explore  
and grow in faith

Encouraging new  
and courageous ways  
of worshipping in  
different places  
which connect with  
more people

Being advocates for  
flourishing through  
initiatives which combat  
injustice, environmental  
destruction, exclusion  
and isolation

Developing  
diverse lay  
and ordained  
leaders