Benefice Profile
St Martin's
Low Marple



and
St Paul's
Compstall



A message from the Bishop of Chester



Thank you for looking at this post in Chester Diocese. Whatever the Lord has for you, I want to assure you of my own prayers and a deep gratitude that we might get to partner together in this part of the Lord's work.

I have spent ages trying to capture the enormity of the privilege I feel in getting to serve the people of this diocese, and my words cannot bear the weight of that calling. This community of communities ranging from the very richest to the very poorest and the deepest rural to the most industrialised and urban is amazing. The diocese holds together in a shared sense of call to be 'Together in Christ Sharing Hope'. We have a deeply held vocation to serve the 1.5 million inhabitants who have no meaningful connection with a community of faith, and share the feast which has been shared with us in Jesus.

In Chester Diocese this is always going to be worked out locally first and foremost: no-one met Jesus through a Diocese! Lives are changed in parishes, chaplaincies, and new expressions of Christian community, when people are invited in kindness and grace into transformative encounter with the love of the God who made them. Together we focus on our broad strategic aims so that those who know they are the people of God can serve all the people God calls in their everyday living.

We are utterly committed to safeguarding, because every person matters to our God and Saviour more than we know how to express. This is also why we welcome applications from every background for posts in this diocese. We are learning how to do all of this as guest rather than always as host, as we partner to serve the world to which we are sent.

If God is calling you to serve with us, I rejoice! Come, roll up your sleeves, and get stuck in! If the call is elsewhere then be assured of our gratitude and earnest prayer that the Lord will lead and provide in all things.

Please do pray for us, too – the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

+Mark, Bishop of Chester, Mark Tanner

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What we want from a Vicar

This is a newly formed benefice. We have worked alongside each other sharing a vicar for the last few years but as a new benefice there is lots of potential for us to work together in further collaboration whilst maintaining the individual tradition of each church. This is an interim position to help us grow both individually and together. We are looking for someone who:

- Is an engaging and visible presence who will maintain and nurture the different traditions of each church
- Will help all ages grow in spirituality and discipleship and help us both develop our work with children, young people and families
- Is skilled in helping others explore and live out faith in everyday life
- Can help the two parishes to deepen their identity and working together as a new benefice
- Will seek new opportunities to engage with the local communities in mission
- Is prayerful and pastoral
- Is a leader who can see potential in people, buildings, and resources and enable growth in each of these areas
- Will live out their commitment to fostering a strong and effective safeguarding culture within the parishes, where all feel safe, valued, and welcome

For further details please see the profile of each church below.

ST MARTIN'S LOW MARPLE



Qualities and skills we would like to see in a new incumbent

The man or woman we at St. Martin's are looking for is someone who will lead its congregation in prayer and worship, and nurture and encourage its growth and spiritual development. Specifically, we would like to see:

- A priest rooted in the Anglo- Catholic tradition, but with a willingness to lead both churches in their different styles of worship. A commitment to maintaining and protecting the Anglo-Catholic tradition of worship including the choir and the fine musical tradition at St Martin's and a passion to grow our congregation.

- We want to develop and strengthen our ministry to all ages but especially to young adults and families as well as to develop good relationships with schools and need help to achieve this.

- We wish to attune ourselves to the will of the Holy Spirit, with more disciplined focus on bible study, prayer, and by putting this into practice by leading proactive lives putting values into everyday life and helping others grow in faith.

- We would like to receive help in achieving a wider vision on mission on our journey of faith and how we can grow; sharing and emphasising how our Anglo-Catholic tradition, grounded in our sacramental worship, can be a vibrant, welcoming, transformative home for those seeking a deeper connection with God.

- We offer a distinct community and approach to faith within Marple, and we are dedicated to opening up this unique path of discipleship to everyone.

- A commitment to developing the ministry of the church and its lay leadership.

- A commitment to furthering our good progress made on safeguarding.

- A willingness to be actively involved in Churches Together in Marple and the Rural Deanery.

Low Marple, Marple and Marple Bridge

The parish of St. Martin's, Low Marple (population approximately 3,820) lies towards the NE boundary of Marple and Marple Bridge (combined population approximately 17,900), 4 miles from Stockport and 9 miles from Manchester. It is beautifully situated on the edge of the Peak District and yet within very easy reach of the city: Edale is 20 minutes in one direction from Marple station (next to St. Martin's church) and Manchester Piccadilly 25 minutes in the other. Manchester airport is 40 minutes away by car (A555) and London is 2 hours by train from Stockport.

Marple is a very pretty and pleasant place to live and work. It has a wide range of cafés, bars, independent shops, restaurants, a cinema, a theatre and plenty of places to walk and exercise. The Memorial Park, with stunning views across the hills, is home to the Senior Citizens' Hall, Children's Play Areas, Bowling Green, Skate-Park and French Boules Court. The new Marple Community Hub sited less than half a mile away in the Memorial Park which is due to open in the autumn 2026 contains the new library and health clinic as well as a cafe, a 5 lane swimming pool, and a 60 station fitness centre.

The 180-acre Etherow Park – one of England's first country parks and now attracting 250,000 visitors a year – has a sailing club, a café and a small garden centre. Brabyn's Park – Marple's largest – is bordered by the river Goyt and the Peak Forest canal and hosts a popular 5km. Park Run every Saturday morning. One of Marple's most unusual features is the flight of 16 locks – one of the steepest in Britain – that carries the Peak Forest canal from the Marina in Marple, past St. Martin's, to the dramatic aqueduct over the River Goyt. The view from Marple Ridge over the Goyt valley and the canal is spectacular.

Between them, Marple and Marple Bridge have three state primary schools, a Catholic primary school, a state secondary school, and a Sixth Form College. Stepping Hill hospital is 4 miles away in Stockport.

St. Martin's Church – ministry

There are currently 78 people on the Electoral Roll. The worship at St. Martin's is in the Anglo-Catholic tradition: clergy wear vestments, there is a robed choir and an altar party consisting of thurifer and two acolytes. Incense is used at all sung Eucharists and major festivals.

A high proportion of the congregation (>55%) come from outside the parish due to the less common Anglo-Catholic tradition of worship at St. Martin's which was established by our benefactress 156 years ago.



The ministry team at St. Martin's includes Rev Dr Lynda Pugh (SSM) who can cover holidays in addition to presiding or deaconing at regular Sunday services. We have one Lay Reader Debbie Moores who also runs the Junior Church and is helped by a couple of the parents. Home Communion for the sick is currently carried out by Rev Lynda and Debbie Moores.

The Sunday intercessions are led by a rota from a few from the congregation and a retired Lay Reader Tony Doust.

There is a very strong musical tradition at St. Martin's. The church has a Professional Organist/Director of Music who is responsible for the selection and preparation of music appropriate to the liturgy and the seasons of the church year.



We are now in a United Benefice with St. Paul's, Compstall. Twice a year the churches meet for services at Ash Wednesday (St Martin's) and Harvest Festival (St Paul's). Both Churches are looking to become more financially sustainable and are working towards increasing our parish share to sustain a full-time parish priest. We hope that the person who joins us will help us to grow our giving and generosity to make this viable for the future.

St Martin's Church – as a worshipping people

Normal Sunday Services are:

8.00am	Holy Communion: Common Worship – said (last Sunday)
10.25 am	Choral Matins (2nd Sunday) – led by the choir
11.15am	Parish Mass: Common Worship – sung
11.15am	(3rd Sunday) Family Mass
6.30pm	(1st Sunday) Choral Evensong
6.30pm	(3rd Sunday) Prayer Hour Service
5.30pm	(Other Sundays) Zoom Evening Prayer

There is a regular SATB choir of eleven adults which can be augmented for Choral Evensong and other services. Practices take place on Friday evenings, and again before services.

For Sunday 11.15 Mass, the choir sings a Responsorial Psalm, two Motets or Anthems during Communion, and uses a variety of congregational Choral Mass settings. Choral Evensong consists of an Introit, an Anthem, settings for the Preces and Responses, Canticles and Psalms to the Anglican Chant. Special services with substantial musical input include the Advent Service of Light, Nine Lessons and Carols, services for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and special midweek services such as Candlemas and Corpus Christi.



The choir has a large and varied repertoire, ranging from Plainsong and the Tudor music of Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, through to music by modern composers such as Ola Gjielo and John Tavener. It has introduced the most recent edition of the Ancient and Modern Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship (2013) – and is looking to develop other musical opportunities.



Junior Church takes place on the first two Sundays of the month. We currently use “Roots on the Web”, as it follows the Lectionary. This usually means that the children are learning about the same aspect of the Bible as the adults in church. We return to church in time for the Peace and the children are encouraged then to follow the Eucharistic Prayer.

St. Martin’s holds regular Lent and Advent groups, using a variety of resources. We have looked at books of Christian art and a variety of other subjects. Our most recent Lent course was based on the book “The Journey” by John Pritchard. We also held one of our occasional courses on “Faith Re-examined” which looked at various aspects of worship.

Study groups have also looked at Art in the Bible which led to visits to Manchester Art Gallery and also to Sheffield and Chester Cathedrals.

Imaginative and inspiring Prayer Stations have been set up especially in preparation for Holy Week and for other major festivals. Some of these can be seen on the church's Facebook page.

St Martin's take a lead in the annual Remembrance Sunday parade which takes place in the local Memorial park which is within our parish.

An important part of St. Martins' community involvement is the annual Christmas Tree Festival timed to coincide with the Marple Bridge 'Winter Wonderland' weekend when the Church Hall is open for lunch and hosts a small craft fair. Up to 20 local schools, groups and organisations decorate trees in the Lady Chapel along with our nativity scene which remains until after Christmas. This is perhaps the busiest weekend of the church year.

Crafternoons are St. Martin's version of Messy Church which are mainly aimed at children but adults are also encouraged to attend. Currently we hold five crafternoons a year, alternating between St. Martin's and St. Paul's. They have a theme based on the church year. There are always a variety of crafts, mostly things for the children to take home, but also, at most sessions they produce a themed 'Stained Glass' to decorate the hall. This has two benefits – the children see their work being used in a positive way, and users of the church hall clearly see that the hall is very much linked to the church.



St. Martin's Church – and the community it serves

St. Martin's Heritage Trust was granted charitable status in 2014 to help preserve and publicise this precious piece of artistic heritage. It has a large and growing membership. As well as regular Saturday 'Open Days', it runs an ambitious and successful programme of events. Past lectures have covered the Arts and Crafts Movement in the North-West, and a series of introductory talks on Morris as poet, artist, designer and businessman, events which have helped raise money for a number of restoration projects as well as raising the profile of the church both locally and nationally.

Examples of recent work funded by the Heritage Trust with grant aid have been the Annunciation window, a new altar frontal and the cleaning of the St Christopher Sculpture.





Across the churchyard is the Parish Hall. This was originally the Verger's house and school and is another attractive Grade II listed building. Today it is used by a number of groups including an Arts Society, Craft groups, Yoga classes, Dance groups, a toddler's play group as well as church groups such as the Mothers' Union Fellowship Group and for events such as Board game coffee mornings or Bring-and-Share lunches after services. There is a Fairtrade stall once a month. The income these activities generate covers running costs, regular maintenance and repairs.

St. Martin's Church – buildings and resources

St. Martin's, Low Marple – Marple's 'Hidden Gem' - is a Grade II* listed building. It was commissioned by Ann and Maria Hudson, the owners of Brabyns Hall, who were enthusiastic followers of the Oxford Movement and wanted a church that would reflect the theological and architectural traditions of Anglo-Catholic ritual. The work was entrusted to a leading architect of the time, Edmund Sedding. He died young in 1868 from tuberculosis and the project was taken over by his younger brother, John Dando Sedding, whose other churches include Holy Trinity, Sloane Square, London. The church was finished in 1870. The Lady Chapel was added in 1896 and the Christopher Chapel in 1909 (both designed by Henry Wilson).

The relatively modest exterior – walls of Pennine sandstone laid in random courses and topped by a plain roof of clay tiles – gives little hint of the impressive interior with its stained glass windows by leaders of the Arts and Craft movement including William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, the Lady chapel painting by Christopher Whall , stunning Art Nouveau font cover, and the 'Father Willis' organ. Recitals have been performed on this instrument by world renowned organists such as John Scott and Dr Gordon Stewart whose latest performance is still available on CD.



The interior is plastered throughout and the timber roof structure is exposed below the plastered in-fill ceiling. The main body of the church can accommodate 140 in traditional pews provided with bench cushions and there is room for another 25 in the Lady Chapel on chairs. Level access for wheelchair users is provided via the St Christopher Chapel door. The church has a new amplification system and an induction loop for those with hearing aids.



The church is generally in good order with no major work required. We have a reserve fund for unexpected future repairs and maintenance. The churchyard is closed to new burials but has plots for the interment of ashes. The local council is responsible for keeping the grass cut and the trees maintained but we hold a monthly working party of volunteers to supplement this in clearing leaves and keeping weeds and shrubs under control.

Financially we are secure due largely to a legacy from a former lay reader whose interest in the environment and teaching we are trying to follow having updated the lighting and sound systems but more is to be done. Our regular giving is not enough to pay in full our increasing Parish share but currently we manage to pay about 90% of our assessed share.

St. Martin's makes regular donations to the local Food Bank while the Mothers' Union Fellowship Group donates household items and the church gives toiletries and children's toys to a refuge for victims of domestic abuse. Members of the congregation are also involved in fund-raising activities for *The Wellspring*, a nearby homeless charity.

The church has one lay reader: Debbie Moores. There are two Church Wardens – Alan Ashurst and Teresa Thornecroft. The PCC has 10 members and meets 6 times a year. The Secretary is Kath Powell and the Treasurer is Alan Ashurst.

St Martin's Vicarage



The Vicarage, built in 1982, is situated next to the east end of the church. It is a detached house with, downstairs, a living room, small dining room, a large kitchen, a utility room, a study and a toilet and, upstairs, four bedrooms and two bathrooms. There is an attached garage and a large garden at the back bordered by mature trees. It is well decorated throughout and the diocese has committed to replacing the doors and windows throughout in hardwood and has applied to Stockport council for permission due to the location within a conservation area .

Conclusion

St. Martin's is a warm, welcoming, exceptionally caring and friendly church committed to it's local community and glorifying God in the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

The church website can be viewed https://www.stmartins-lowmarple.co.uk/

and the Facebook page at: https://www.facebook.com/StMartinLowMarple

St Martin's Heritage Trust: https:// www.stmartinsheritagetrust.org.u k

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH COMPSTALL

SK6 5HU



We are a broad–based community of Christian worshippers drawn from the Village of Compstall, near Stockport, and the surrounding area.

Our Mission

Walking in Faith within the Community

Our Vision

Working as Christ's presence in the world.

Websites

St Paul's Church Comstall

(Compstall) St Paul - A Church Near You

Churches Together Marple Area

Who we are looking for:

- We are a small, friendly church with a desire to grow in following Jesus and sharing our faith with our community.
- We are praying for a kind, caring and sympathetic individual who will lead us with the Holy Spirit in our journey of faith in God.
- We are looking for someone with a sense of humour and an understanding nature who can celebrate the joys with us and also be there with us in times of difficulties.
- We are looking for someone who will help to develop our prayer life.
- We would welcome a new Incumbent who would work alongside our existing congregation in moving our church forward. This could include patterns of worship that are multi-generational and would enable participation from those who feel able to take on a more active role.
- We would like a good listener with strong Pastoral skills.
- Focusing in the first instance on youth and family work within the Parish and exploring with us what these families would like in their Parish Church. We want to grow our connection with our community.
- We hope for someone who will helps us further our work on safeguarding.

We recognise that this position involves us sharing our vicar, but we will offer wholehearted support in helping the new incumbent to achieve our common goals.

Who we are and Our Community

We are a small semi-rural parish with a population of 1200, adjacent to a popular Country Park, on the outskirts of Stockport, with links to the larger local communities of Marple, Marple Bridge and Romiley. There is easy access to Manchester and Sheffield and the beautiful Peak District National Park.



We are at the heart of a small village with a strong sense of community.





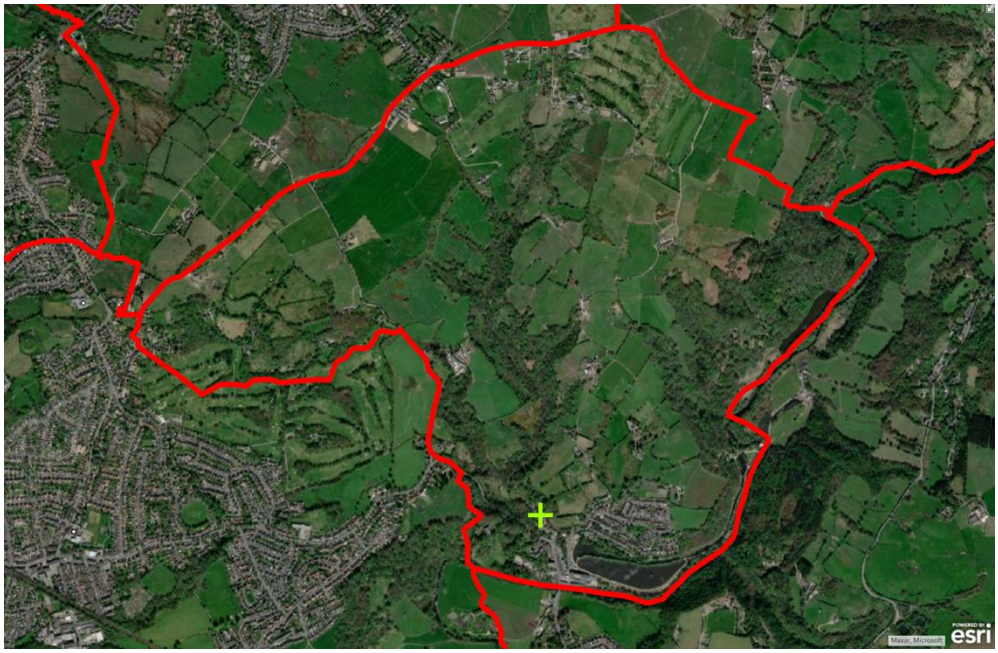
Compstall Village has a thriving pub, Post Office/General Store and a florist. Also, a community café and sailing club in Etherow Country Park. There is still an active farming community within the Parish.

As well as the village base, many of our congregation come from communities beyond the Parish.

There is a small new housing development in the Parish and a larger development in the planning phase which are creating a more dynamic community and could provide further opportunities for outreach and potential to increase our church community.

The Church connection to the Village occurs within various contexts:

- Engagement with Compstall Community Council, a voluntary body to take care of local issues.
- Our verger is part of Mellor, Mill Brow, Marple Bridge and Compstall Neighbourhood planning committee. (MMMC)[8]
- We have a longstanding relationship with the village pub, The Andrew Arms. Currently they are running a monthly quiz in support of church funds.



The Parish of St Paul's Compstall (green cross, North at the top), bordering with the parishes of St Thomas's Mellor (lower right), St Chad's Romiley (lower left), Holy Trinity Gee Cross (upper centre) and St Michael Mottram-in-Longdendale (upper right). The Parish of St Martin's Low Marple is just below that of St Chad's Romiley.

With a current electoral role of 62, the congregation mainly comprises people of retired age from all walks of life, bringing a wealth of job and life experiences to the Church. We also have some working age members of the congregation and occasional families attending. We would like to expand our congregation to include more generations.

Our Church community is involved with Outreach, with volunteers involved with a local Foodbank and many local activities centred on our Parish Hall, including a very well attended monthly community lunch.

Roles taken by Church members currently include:

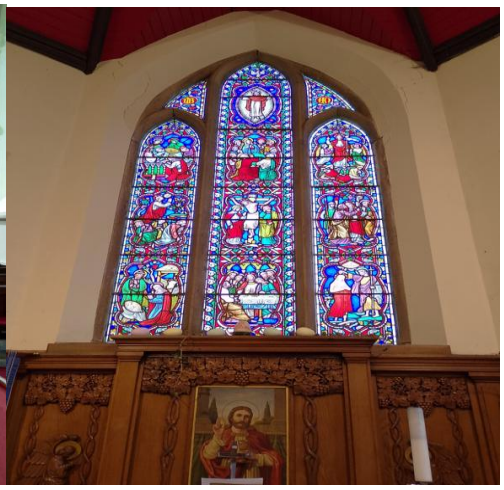
- Church Wardens (2)
- Verger
- Retired Priest with PTO
- Assistant Church Warden
- Intercessors
- Treasurer
- Sides people
- Refreshment Co-Ordinator
- Baptism Co-Ordinator
- PCC Secretary and members
- Safeguarding Officer
- Events Committee
- Flower Secretary
- Music Group Members
- Organist

We are praying for spiritual help and guidance whilst we continue to expand our Ministry.

The Church Building

The Church was built in 1841 by the local Mill Owner, George Andrew, and many of the Memorial tablets are dedicated to members of the Andrew family. It is set in beautiful natural surroundings within a mature, now closed, graveyard.







The Church building acts as a venue for a range of concerts (Including local bands, choirs and organ recitals) in addition to our regular worship. In 2025-2026 we hosted a number of concerts and events.

A Heritage Lottery Fund grant in 2018 enabled us to complete major renovation within the church, including underpinning of the Chancel, reordering the Nave and creating a large Narthex with kitchen and storage facilities, creating a space for meetings and classes. An internal staircase was added for access to the large gallery and clock tower. There is a toilet with disabled access and baby changing facilities in the Porch. An Audio-visual system is installed.

The quinquennial inspection was recently completed. This highlighted a few ongoing maintenance issues which will need addressing in the future but the church remains structurally sound and available for worship.

Worship

We have a Central church tradition with vestments.

Our weekly Sunday morning service at 9.30am uses Common Worship and is accompanied by music and Hymn singing.

Once a month our 9.30am service is a family communion service at which our music group plays to accompany the singing.



We welcome families of all ages and are happy to engage young children in our worship.

- Special Services include: -

- The Annual Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial in the Church grounds
- A gathering of over 100 Motorcycles commences a ‘Ride for Remembrance’ from our car park on a Sunday in November
- Ash Wednesday – has been held as a joint service with St Martin's church.
- Palm Sunday and Holy Week Services
- Maundy Thursday foot washing and stripping of the Altar
- Good Friday Meditations and Stations of the Cross.
- Easter Day service
- A joint Harvest service with St Martin's.
- Christmas Carol Service.

- A Bethlehem service on Christmas eve and a Christmas Day service.

Prayer underpins everything we do in the Parish. This includes a small rota of readers and intercessors from the congregation in our Sunday Services.





Church Parish Hall



We are fortunate to have a large parish hall with several rooms, a large floor area, a stage and a modern, fitted kitchen. Most areas have disabled access. Apart from the church building itself it is the only large venue available in the village. As well as hosting a variety of local regular paying groups which include choirs, exercise groups, Taekwondo, Brownies and a monthly U3A Meeting, it is also popular for holding children's parties and provides a venue for the local village meetings.

These groups can provide access to individuals who don't presently attend Church.

Church Led activities include a popular monthly Lunch Club, run by volunteers.

In addition, we hold special fund-raising events at different times of the year.



Church Activities

There is a broad range of activities and ministries originating in, or connected with Church, and carried out by volunteers.

- A Parish Magazine, enthusiastically edited by one of our young members. This is published ten times each year.
- Readings and prayers are sent out to the housebound on a weekly basis.
- Home Communion is taken to the housebound by our retired Priest with PTO by request.
- Support for families before and after funerals.
- Baptism Co-ordinators engage with families both before and after the Baptisms. The families are invited to a special Sunday Service when the names of the baptised are added to the Baptism Board in church.
- Birthday cards are sent out to members of the Congregation where appropriate.
- Weekly Lent Discussions are held during the Lenten period.
- Engagement with other Parishes – via Churches Together in Marple (e.g. a Good Friday walk to the Cross at Mellor) and the Chadkirk Deanery Synod.
- Food is generously donated on a weekly basis for Bredbury Foodbank. Volunteers help with distribution.
- Joint activities with St Martin's include:
- Craft afternoons for children and families
- Lent and faith groups

Conclusion

Our loyal congregation are hoping for a priest who will be called to work and walk alongside us as part of our newly formed Benefice.

Our new Benefice is built upon our recent history of St Martin’s and St Paul;s working together on a number of pastoral projects. Including: joint Harvest service and crafternoons.

The churches have two distinct ways of worship and we are looking for someone who will continue to bring us together as a community whilst celebrating our unique traditions.

Both Churches are looking to become more financially sustainable and are working towards increasing our parish share to sustain a full-time parish priest. We hope that the person who joins us will help us to grow our giving and generosity to make this viable for the future.

We welcome anyone who feels God is calling them to serve in our Parish and look forward to our future together.