

Bath Abbey

Parish Profile

People and Place Fully Alive
through worship, hospitality and justice



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.

www.bathabbey.org



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In response to God's immense love for us, we seek to be God's people living and telling the story of Jesus.

Our Diocesan priorities:

We have discerned three priorities for action that need to be at the centre of our diocesan life to help each and every one of us to 'live and tell the story of Jesus':

1. To place mission and evangelism at the heart of everything we do
2. To realign our ministry resources towards mission
3. To identify, develop and use the gifts of all our people.

Bath Deanery Vision:

- Everyone a disciple
- Everyone a disciple-maker
- Every church a discipleship community
- Everywhere a discipleship invitation

The Group Ministry:

Bath Abbey with St James is part of a group ministry with St Michael's Without. St Mike's Church is a city-centre parish church situated about 150 metres north of Bath Abbey.



VISION

Bath Abbey's vision is to be "a people and place fully alive" in Jesus Christ. Focusing on our Benedictine traditions of worship, hospitality and justice we try to live our faith

- rooted in our inheritance from the past,
- contemporary in our service to society, and
- visionary as we prepare ourselves and our church for the future.

This vision gives us strong guidance for everything we do.

We are a flourishing parish church in the heart of Bath and with this a significant part of the city's rich heritage which reaches back to Roman times.

While the geographical parish has only a small residential population, our congregation is a gathered community from all over the city and the surrounding area.

We also welcome hundreds of thousands of regional, national and international visitors and worshippers.

There's more about our building on page 8.

Please look at our website: www.bathabbey.org





OUR ABBEY COMMUNITY

We are a parish church in name, a cathedral in vocation: we aspire to be a visible Anglican presence in the heart of the city and to be a platform for the mission of our Bishop.

We are a large congregation. The older element predominates, though the younger generation too is represented. Many members come from professional backgrounds or the commercial or business sectors, reflecting the employment profile of the city; but our church family includes others from many different walks of life.

Christian worship and ministry is at the heart of what we offer, and we welcome everyone who comes to the Abbey for whatever reason.

Our normal Sunday services are:

- Holy Communion (B.C.P.) at 8.00am
- Parish Communion (C.W.), with a crèche and groups for children aged 5 – 11, at 9.30am
- Sung Eucharist (C.W.) at 11.15am
- Choral Evensong (B.C.P.) at 3.30pm
- An informal service at 6.30pm with seasonal variations, which uses reflection, contemporary worship music, scripture, teaching and prayers to end the day.





We currently worship together in a variety of styles:

- There are five services on Sundays; morning and evening prayer daily Monday to Friday (evening prayer is occasionally replaced by Choral Evensong), and weekday communion on Thursdays at 11.00 and Fridays at 8.30.
- Advent and Christmas are especially busy seasons and many will visit the Abbey in addition to our regular congregation. We host carol services for a large number of schools, and local organisations – the Bath Chronicle, Rotary etc. – as well as our own services.
- These include the formality of Nine Lessons and Carols and the informality of Carol Praise and Family Carols with Frosty the donkey.
- Owing to their popularity these last two services have to be repeated. Shoppers' Carols are held four times every Saturday afternoon during the Christmas market, and almost 1,000 people attend each time.
- In 2017 there were eight baptisms (plus four as part of confirmation), six weddings and six funerals in church (plus three at a crematorium).





OUR MISSION

Much has changed in Bath Abbey in the last dozen years.

- We have enlarged our vision of what it means to be at the heart of the city.
- We believe we are more accessible, open, inclusive and welcoming to visitors and newcomers, as well as caring for those who stay.
- We are committed to the highest standards of safeguarding.
- We have become less formal in some services, and more willing to embrace change.
- Our musical tradition has become more professional and is being diversified, and shared through our Schools Singing Programme. We have a nationally renowned organist as our Director of Music and our organ is one of the finest in Britain.
- We now have four choirs (girls, boys, men, and the young Melody Makers) who all contribute to our history of broadcasts on national radio and television, and a group of musicians who provide contemporary music for more informal acts of worship. An informal, voluntary adult choir is being formed to sing occasionally at the Parish Communion service.
- We are trying to be more outward-facing and outwardly engaged.
- We are more connected to the institutions and the people of Bath in that we are the focal point for big ceremonies. We host:
 - mayor-making
 - university graduations
 - significant funerals, and
 - other community events



- We are more mission-focused – from Shoppers’ Carol services in the context of Bath’s Christmas market to practical social engagement on behalf of the homeless and vulnerable of Bath.
- We are making better and more creative use of space in the Abbey – for exhibitions, for meals, for community events.
- We have extended our links with mission partners in Africa, India, Sri Lanka and Palestine and are working with them relationally, not merely financially. They challenge our thinking around the value and meaning of justice and pilgrimage.
- We have invested more in our welcome to tourist-visitors – more than 400,000 of them every year – investing resources into intentional generation of visitor engagement: chaplains, stewards, tour guides, conducted tower tours, and the shop.
- We have put on events and activity-days to inform and entertain young people especially – Easter Experience, Benedictine days, opportunities to paint glass and carve stone, etc.
- We hire our space to community organisations to put on concerts and exhibitions





FOOTPRINT

We are just starting the main build-phase of a development project to realise our vision and prepare the Abbey for many future generations of active worship and social engagement.

The practical works of the £20 million Footprint project will include

- essential repairs to the floor of the Abbey,
- the installation of a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath's unique hot springs as a source of energy and
- increased capacity to fulfil the Abbey's mission as a place for people to come together.

A programme to record and interpret the history of the Abbey and share this with millions of visitors is planned, to include an exciting calendar of events, family activity days, educational visits and resources for schools.

A substantial grant of £10 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and generous gifts and pledges from members of the congregation, the community, and well-wishers of all sorts has raised most of the money. There is, however, still a funding gap to be closed and there may be financial challenges ahead.



There is an experienced, professional team managing the delivery of the project. They are accountable to the Rector and PCC, who exercise oversight but not management of the contractors.

In all this we are determined to make the material serve the missional – the physical development is only a means to an end.



OPPORTUNITIES

The development of the Abbey community over the past decade has created a positive momentum and sense of direction which we are keen to maintain.

At the same time we are aware of the challenges that both the Abbey and the wider Church face, and we see these as opportunities.

- We wish to grow our church in discipleship, in numbers and in diversity.
- We long to engage more effectively with children and young people, taking into account their different needs in different stages of their development.
- We want to be a church that children and young people want to come to and join.
- We want to develop a ministry to students of whom there are 30,000 living in Bath in term-time
- We need to look again at our pastoral care provision for our congregations.
- We want to keep going out into the community, “living and telling the story of Jesus”, as our diocesan strategy would have us do, by serving the disadvantaged and raising our voices against injustice.
- We want to provide a place of quiet stillness and peace for contemplation and prayer.
- We want to be the heart of the city in every sense, not just at it. We want to be even more open to the community, so that they feel comfortable about the Abbey – their Abbey. We want to develop a culture of hospitality for the enhancement of our mission.
- We want to improve our digital outreach and presence in ways that catch the imagination.
- We want to reduce our carbon footprint and provide facilities fit for the 21st century.
- We want to communicate the centrality of our stewardship of creation.
- We want to play our part appropriately in co-operation with other churches, Anglican and ecumenical, and with those of other faiths.
- We are in the early stages of exploring, with others, what a ‘new monastic community’ might look like in Bath.
- We want to engage in debate with those who have questions about faith and life-issues.
- We want to be counter-cultural, going against the grain of a world where more than half of the population in our country has no faith.

"You should push open every window, to help your own people inside to look out and to help those outside to hear the singing"

- Bishop Peter Bath & Wells

OUR SUPPORT FOR THE RECTOR

- WHAT WE CAN OFFER

The Rector is the primary public face of the Abbey and its customary representative figure in relation to the civic community, other churches, the diocese, and the media. The Rector is also the senior figure in relation to the worshipping community and the employed staff. In other respects, the clergy divide responsibilities among themselves by mutual agreement.

The clergy team is composed of the Rector and two further full-time stipendiary priests with incumbent status. We are fortunate to have currently also one full-time self-supporting associate priest, and one part-time self-supporting curate, who is also Youth and Children's Chaplain.

The clergy, churchwardens and the executive director together make up the 'Chapter' whose role is to oversee and hold together appropriately the ecclesiastical and commercial sides of our life.

The role of executive director was created in 2017 to release the clergy to focus more on their priestly ministry.

One of the other full-time stipendiary posts is also currently vacant in addition to the Rector's. It is expected that this will be filled after the Rector is in post. The previous holder was known as the Abbey Vicar and had responsibility for the pastoral care of Abbey congregations. The Revd Stephen Girling, currently Acting-Rector, is the Abbey Missioner.

We await the appointment of an Interim Minister for the vacancy period when the clergy team is under strength. It is anticipated that the Rector will seek an appointment to the vacant full-time stipendiary post that will balance the character of the clergy team and maintain the breadth and diversity of churchmanship and spirituality that is important to the Abbey community.

There are three Readers, all with Permission to Officiate, and two Lay Pastoral Assistants who lead a team of ten to deliver pastoral care to members of the congregation. Many others serve as volunteers across a broad spectrum of roles.

The PCC consists of twenty six members. It provides oversight and support as a critical friend through its monthly meetings and its committees.

The Abbey hosts a branch of the Mothers' Union, two informal Men's Groups, a ladies group called 'Touch Base', and 'Anchor' – a youth group which grew out of Youth Alpha three years ago. The Rector is the President of The Friends of Bath Abbey with the right to nominate the chairman annually, and President of the Bath Abbey Music Society. Clergy develop, and volunteers maintain, a network of home and contact groups.



Our membership is stable. At the time of writing there were exactly 600 people on the Electoral Roll. There is a policy of encouraging enrolments, and the Roll is actively kept up to date. A separate membership list allows us to work with those who are part of our community but not on the electoral roll.

All those on our Electoral Roll are assigned to a Contact Group whose leader is tasked with keeping in touch with the members. These are different from the Home Groups which people elect to join.

The lay members of the Abbey community are keen to take more responsibility for leadership, ministry and service.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN OUR NEXT RECTOR

A prayerful, spirit-filled leader, hallmarked by their own discipleship and humility; one who attaches importance to their own on-going walk with God

Someone with a servant heart who

- is inspirational and visionary for the church of tomorrow
 - understands and enables others to share the gospel in a culturally acceptable and relevant way
 - will lead us in mission and facilitate our commitment to worship, hospitality and justice
 - is a good listener; a people-person with a pastoral heart and yet
 - is also a good preacher, teacher and communicator; a story-teller
 - will safeguard and build on our Benedictine roots and our Evangelical inheritance from Charles Simeon
 - has enthusiasm for ecumenical activities
 - will nurture good quality music in worship and support those who provide it
 - is sensitive to being informal and contemporary in some services but who also values traditional music-making and the need to sustain this
 - will champion the use of new technology to further our mission
 - has experience of working successfully through challenge and who understands organisational change and development
 - will understand and contribute to the business aspects of the Abbey
 - has shown evidence of team process skills, to work collegially and build an effective clergy and lay team
 - understands a variety of styles of leadership and will embrace and develop the skills of others
 - is aware of their own weaknesses, willing to delegate and allow others to compensate for this
- and is friendly, welcomes diversity and has a sense of humour and of fun

WHAT A PROSPECTIVE RECTOR WILL ALSO WANT TO KNOW

Bath Abbey is a Grade 1 listed building at the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage City. It is the last great medieval church built in England, begun in 1499.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries it suffered significantly but was restored in the 17th century. It underwent a major re-build in the 1860s, and an extension was added in 1923. Bomb damage to the Abbey from WWII was repaired in the 1950s.



Although the title of the benefice is “Bath Abbey with St James”, St James’ church was destroyed in the Second World War: there is only the one church in the one parish.

The geographical parish consists only of a small part of the city centre where historic and public buildings as well as commercial properties dominate.

There are strong ecumenical links with other city centre churches – St John’s RC, Walcot Methodist, Manvers Street Baptist.

An evening of ‘Prayer for the City’ is held in the Abbey twice yearly and is attended by these and others – Bath City Church, Elim Pentecostal, Widcombe Baptist, Vineyard and Father’s House, for example.

The Churches Together Cross Walks on Good Friday finish in front of the Abbey’s West Doors and a service is held there (with the Salvation Army Band).

We also have a special link with the Cathedral in Braunschweig in Germany, within the wider context of the twinning between Bath and Braunschweig; however, this link has been dormant for several years.

The employed staff number 24 (FTE). In addition, there are about 250 volunteers who provide worship support (sidesmen, lesson readers, intercessors, communion assistants, Sunday School leaders, home and contact group leaders). Others are involved in social action; others still serve our visitors as welcomers, guides, stewards, chaplains, etc.

Our finances are stable, and we pay our Parish Share of Common Fund in full every year. The greater part of our income is generated through visitor-related and commercial activities, less through direct giving. The latest available parish accounts are appended. We are business-like in financial matters and are keen to discover what a business in the Kingdom of God looks like.

There are no schools in the parish. Several secondary schools both maintained and independent

use the Abbey for services (carols, founder's day commemorations, etc.).

Both universities in Bath hold graduation ceremonies in the Abbey as does Norland College. Members of the Abbey choirs are drawn from schools in the Bath area, often those with whom the Abbey works more specifically on the singing programme.

The Rector of Bath Abbey is a joint patron of the benefice of Combe Down with Monkton Combe and South Stoke. A new incumbent of this benefice has been chosen and will be inducted in September 2018.

There is a Mission Support Group which manages and promotes this important aspect of the Abbey's mission.

The PCC gives away around 10% of visitors' donations each year, as well as what the congregation donates for this purpose, a total of about £100,000.

We try very hard to make and keep close relationships with the recipients of our giving, especially with the 'Big Five' –

- homelessness in Bath,
- 'Reaching the Unreached' in Tamil Nadu in India,
- Wycliffe Bible Translators' project to translate the New Testament into the vernacular of the Banen people in Cameroon and support a literacy programme,
- the indigenous church in Palestine and their work for justice and reconciliation,
- our parish link with the Cathedral Church of St Michael and All Angels in Kitwe in the context of the diocesan Companion Link with the five dioceses of the Anglican Church in Zambia.

Rectory:

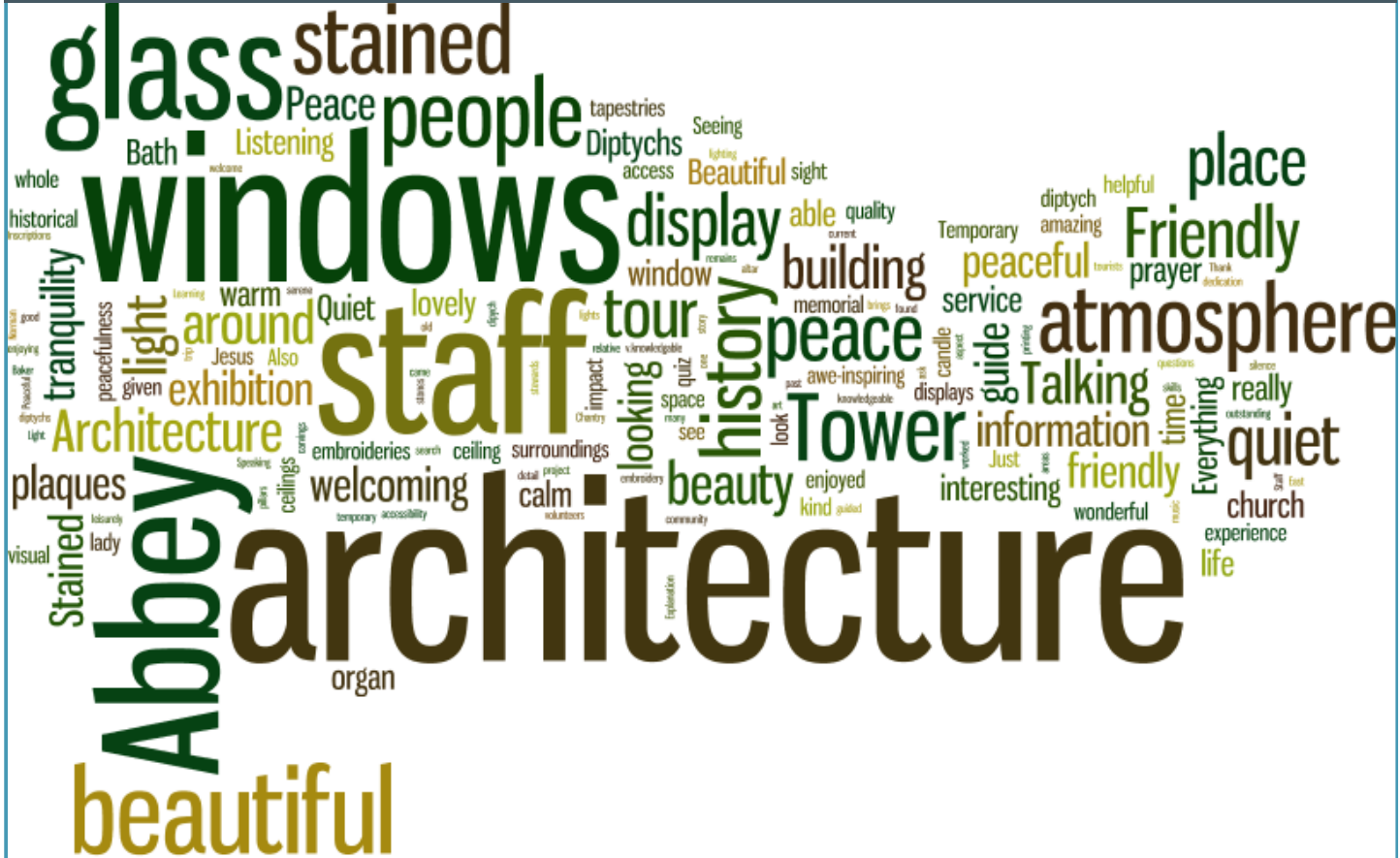
- There is a modern, detached, four-bedroom rectory in BA2 6JX, a mile to the east of the Abbey. (More details are available separately.)
- Appropriate office and meeting space is provided in the Abbey Office in the city adjacent to the Abbey.
- The nearest primary school to the rectory is Bathwick St Mary C of E Primary School and there is a variety of recommendable secondary schools in the city.

More information about Bath as a place to live can be found at <https://www.bathchronicle.co.uk/news/property/bath-better-city-bristol-raise-62162>



A close-up photograph of a person's hands lighting small, round candles arranged in rows on a metal tray. The candles are lit, and the person is using a match to light one of them.

WHAT OUR VISITORS SAY:



Source: On site survey 2015 (Base: 209)



BathAbbey

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