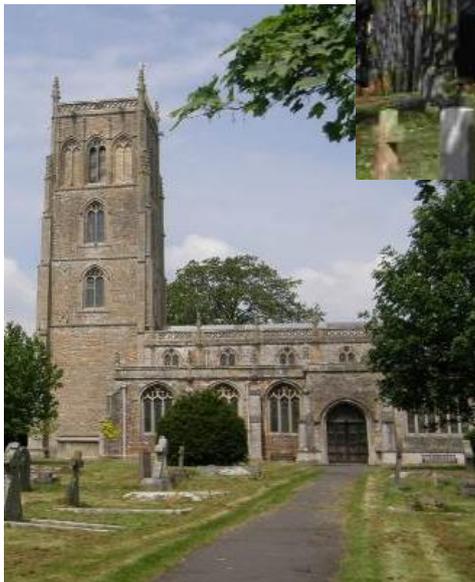


Diocese of Bath and Wells

Benefice Profile

The Benefice of Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke



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Welcome to the Benefice of Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke

We wish to extend a warm welcome to you and hope that this Profile conveys a flavour of the exciting opportunity of providing spiritual leadership for the Benefice of Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke.

Our Vision

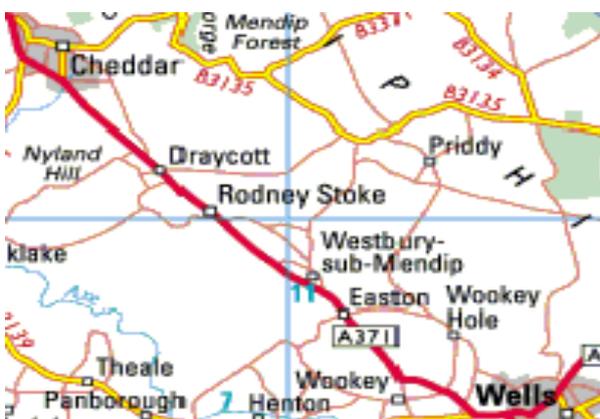
Our Benefice is founded on a love of God and we welcome everyone in Christ's name. We are three parishes of different sizes, histories and backgrounds, who are growing together through the Holy Spirit.

- We value the liturgy as an expression of our faith in God
- We aim to live the Gospel in our communities
- We are learning to work together in unity as a Benefice

Introduction

Each parish has its own parish church, Parochial Church Council and its own distinctive character. The Benefice was formed six years ago when both previous incumbents retired - formerly Cheddar had been a single parish whilst Draycott and Rodney Stoke had worked together for many years.

They had also experienced ministry very differently with Cheddar having had only two incumbents in the previous 50 years whilst Rodney Stoke and Draycott had shared several house for duty clergy and some long vacancies. Over the last six years we have come to know each other's strengths, and to value our differences as well as our similarities.



Cheddar is a large village, situated between Weston-super Mare and Wells on the southern edge of the Mendip Hills. Travelling from Cheddar along the A371 towards Wells you will find Draycott village which extends down the Mendip footslope to the edge of the Somerset levels, whilst a little further east is rural Rodney Stoke, nestling into the Mendip Hills.

Further information about the area can be found in the Parish Spotlights on the Diocesan website:

<http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/churchesandparishes/parish-spotlights/>

The Position

Our new incumbent will be appointed Rector of the Benefice of Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke, which is located in the Deanery of Axbridge in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.



A group from the Benefice Ministry team

Aims for the Future

- To support and build on our vision of an open and inclusive church community, welcoming people from different backgrounds and lifestyles
- To further develop our Benefice, whilst at the same time recognising the distinctive needs of each individual parish; to help us grow the Church within our communities
- To support and encourage our strong Benefice Ministry Team, and encourage learning and reflection for all
- To further develop the Mission of the church to children and young people through links with local schools, Messy Church and the Holiday Club
- To further develop our outreach by welcoming and opening our doors to the many visitors to the Cheddar Valley
- To continue to develop and sustain our church buildings through extended community use, making appropriate changes to facilitate comfort and flexibility of use



Qualities we are looking for

We are looking for a person:

- whose life is founded on the love of God, expressed through the Liturgy and shared with the people both in and beyond the Church
- who can inspire people to grow in their faith in God and encourage us to live the Gospel in our communities
- who is a strong and confident leader, inclusive and willing to collaborate
- who can help us increase the unity of our Benefice and who is spiritually sensitive to the needs of the differing parishes
- for whom “unity in diversity” is to be valued and not just tolerated
- who can co-ordinate our ministry teams and nurture our existing congregations, valuing their gifts and experience
- who can help us in our exploration of faith, intellectually and spiritually
- who relates easily to children, young people and families, and can help us draw them into the life of the church
- who can help us reach out to the wider community, including locals with rural traditions, those working in nearby urban areas and the tourists who visit the Cheddar Valley



What we offer

- a warm welcome
- an attractive location
- a developing Benefice
- an active, forward looking Ministry Team, with support from retired clergy, Readers and Lay Worship Assistants
- good relations with other churches in the Local Ministry Group and with other denominations in the area
- active links with local schools
- a thriving musical tradition, with excellent organists and choirs
- churches which welcome thoughtful engagement with social and theological questions; people willing to listen to differing opinions
- good transport links to the M5 and Bristol Airport nearby
- administrative support
- an office and meeting room, separate from the Vicarage
- great food, including our famous Cheddar cheese and locally grown strawberries!



The Vicarage



The Vicarage is a spacious four bedroom detached house, which is situated in Cheddar, very close to the Kings of Wessex Secondary School and local shops and amenities. It was built around 1890, originally as a pair of cottages, and comprises a large sitting room, dining room, study, kitchen/diner, utility room, downstairs toilet, four double bedrooms (two ensuites), a family bathroom and two very useful attic rooms.

Outside there is a small garden to the front and off-road parking, side access through to the garden and a garage. There is a rear garden which is mainly lawned with a patio area and an outside toilet.



The Parishes

Cheddar

Cheddar is the largest of the three parishes, with a population of 5,800, and is a key rural settlement. The village extends from the southern flank of the Mendip Hills to the edge of the Somerset Levels and is particularly famous for its Gorge, which is the largest in the United Kingdom and includes several show caves. These continue to attract a large number of visitors, not only to the caves as tourists, but also for the more adventurous activities of caving, climbing and hill-walking.



The village also gave its name to Cheddar cheese, which is still made today in the Gorge, and Cheddar was once a centre for strawberry growing, with the former railway line along the Cheddar Valley (now a cycle path) known as “The Strawberry Line”.

In addition to tourism the main employment is provided by light industry and commercial outlets on a business

park on the edge of the village, where the largest employer, The Kings of Wessex Academy, is also situated. There are also two large limestone quarries still in operation on the fringes of the village.

There have been several major new residential developments in recent years and today a large number of people commute to work in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton and Bridgwater. The village is served by one medium-sized supermarket as well as a number of smaller food stores, though there remain several empty shops in the centre of the village.

Unemployment is lower than the national average, though there has been a recognisable change in the demographic structure over the past few years, with increased social and affordable housing being built in the area and a number of people making use of the local food banks.

In the village there are also three banks, a post office, a library, a building society, a medical centre and a dental practice, several public houses, takeaways, cafes and restaurants and good sports facilities.



A major attraction is provided by the Kings Leisure Centre, next to the Academy, which contains a swimming pool, a modern gym, a sports hall and fitness studios. In addition the King's Theatre, located nearby on the same site, provides live drama and entertainment as well as regular film screenings.

Altogether there are three schools in the village, catering for the full age range, which are described in more detail on page 22 below.

Further information can found on the Cheddar village website at:

<http://www.cheddarvillage.org.uk/> .

Draycott

Draycott is a village of some 400 houses and a population of about 1,250 with a high proportion of retired people and the legacy of a market garden/farming economy. There is a happy and varied mix of 'old-village' families and 'in-comers'.

The majority of younger children from both Draycott and Rodney Stoke attend the C of E VA First School (www.draycottrodneystokeschool.uk.org) which has recently expanded to offer a Foundation Stage Unit (Nursery) integrated with the main school. Strong links with neighbouring schools have led to the formation of the Mendip Edge Federation, which comprises Draycott and Rodney Stoke C of E VA school, Shipham C of E VC First School, Cheddar First School and Fairlands Middle school. The first two of these schools now share a head teacher.

Activities available within the village include an active Women's Institute, an all-age Drama Group, the Cheddar Male Choir, a group of footpath walkers and a Neighbourhood Watch scheme among others. There is a well-stocked Village Shop and Post Office (www.draycottvillagestores.co.uk). The local pub, The Strawberry Special (www.strawberryspecial.com), hosts both village and Church events, such as the very popular village "Carols in the Bar" service in December, and fundraising Curry Nights and Jumble sales. With a skittle alley and keen home teams, it is a good supporter of the Church, which reciprocates by entering a team in the annual summer skittle league (The Holy Rollers) and taking part in the monthly pub quiz nights.

Also situated in Draycott is the new millennium War Memorial Hall (www.draycottmemorialhall.org.uk) on the recreation field, with excellent facilities - it is very well used for a wide variety of regular activities. The recreation ground has a children's play area and the field is regularly used by Draycott FC and is also the venue for the historic "Strawberry Fayre" in June.

Rodney Stoke

Rodney Stoke is a small, rural village on the A371, 5 miles north-west of Wells and 3 miles southeast of Cheddar. It has about 90 houses, with a population of approximately 270 (average age over 55). The village lies on the edge of the Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a very lively village, holding several well-supported social events each year.

The community is a mixture of long established local families and newcomers, ranging in age from the very young to pensioners. Farming, both agricultural and horticultural, still plays an economic role in the village, whilst several people commute to work both locally and further afield.

The village no longer has any shops but, at the Draycott end of the A371, there are two fruit and vegetable stalls, which sell a variety of groceries, including Cheddar Valley strawberries in season. At the Wells end lies Bucklegrove Caravan Park, which runs a small store, primarily for its campers. Its premises are also used for church fund-raising events such as St Leonard's Christmas Fayre and an Easter Cake Sale.

Non-church events in the village include an annual Horse and Dog Show in support of Save the Children and, in 2014, Scaddens Farm held a lambing show to raise funds for the farmers impacted by the severe floods. Situated on the main road in the middle of the village there is the well-known Rodney Stoke Inn with its restaurant and caravan site. Further along the same road is Rodney Stoke Garage, which services and repairs cars.

Benefice Ministry Team

During the vacancy the ministry team has included two retired clergy, the Venerable Judith Rose and Rev Hilary Thomas, who have been making a significant contribution, including preaching on Sundays and taking pastoral services. At present there is one Reader, together with five Lay Worship Assistants, who meet every other month to discuss rotas, plan sermon series and discuss festivals and other aspects of the Benefice worshipping life. We are hoping that the lay ministry continues to expand and develop in the future.

Lay involvement

In worship a wide range of church members are involved, including sidespeople/welcomers, lesson readers, intercessors, chalice assistants, servers, occasional acolytes, bell ringers, coffee makers and flower arrangers.

Pastorally, in Cheddar, we have set up a lay Neighbourhood Network (N2) of people who have a special responsibility for keeping an eye on a group of church members, especially those who are becoming more frail and unable to attend church regularly.

Small groups

The Benefice has a long history of ecumenical study groups for Lent, all lay led. This year the key text has been the Pilgrim course on The Commandments.

There are also occasional short courses, such as Pathways in Prayer, Emmaus, H+ which are also taken up well, but we have not managed to convert any of these into on-going House groups – which remain an ideal.

The midweek communion and the evening prayer times at Draycott and Rodney Stoke also usually include a significant amount of discussion about the readings. In addition they have an informal book group discussing a range of texts of challenging and radical theology.

Worship

Current List of Sunday Services within the Benefice

	Cheddar	Draycott	Rodney Stoke
Week 1	8am BCP Communion (7) 10am Morning Service (70)	9.30am Parish Communion (18)	11.15am Parish Communion (15)
Week 2	10am Parish Eucharist (70)	9.30am Common Worship Morning Prayer and Discussion(20)	EITHER 8am BCP (10) OR 4pm Family Worship (20)
Week 3	8am BCP Communion (7) 10am Parish Eucharist (70)	9.30am Parish Communion (18)	11.15am Parish Communion (15)
Week 4	8am BCP Communion (7) 10am Parish Eucharist (70)	9.30am Parish Communion (18)	11.15am Sung Matins (18)
Week 5	Benefice Communion rotating around the Benefice (80) 10.00am service		

(Approximate congregation numbers in brackets)

 Services led by Readers or Lay Worship Assistants

The pattern of daily prayer is at present variable, with Morning Prayer, Midweek Communion and Evening Prayer taking place at different venues during the week.

St Andrew's

St Andrew's Church seeks to be a welcoming community in Cheddar, inviting everyone to join us in discipleship and worship, built on a secure financial foundation.

The congregation sits within a central tradition, but includes people from a wide spectrum of churchmanship. We consider ourselves to be an open and inclusive church, welcoming people from the local community and visitors from further afield, including tourists to the Cheddar area.

A variety of vestments are worn at the weekly 10am Parish Eucharist, including cassock albs, stoles and chasubles. These services are well supported by a rota of servers, crucifers, chalice assistants, lesson readers and intercessors, and are generally attended by about 70 people, including about 5 or 6 children.

Our Lay Worship Assistants usually lead the first part of the service and there is a robed choir who lead the service, which is usually sung to one of two settings. In recent years Christmas, Easter and the Patronal Festivals have included the use of incense, though this has not met with universal approval.

Our Sunday Club, "Storytime", leaves at the gradual hymn, returning for the children to receive a blessing at the communion rail.



On the first Sunday of the month the Communion Service is replaced by a non-Eucharistic Morning Service, which is led by a Lay Worship Assistant, following "An Order for Morning Prayer on Sunday".

A Book of Common Prayer said Communion is celebrated at 8am with a small but faithful congregation of about 7. A similar number also come midweek when the liturgy rotates between BCP and Common Worship Healing Communion.

A united Benefice service is held in one of the three churches on a fifth Sunday, during which we often have a joint choir.

St Peter's

***St Peter's seeks to be a Church
that opens our doors to the whole community,
opens our activities beyond our walls,
and opens our minds in worship, prayer and study.***

There is a weekly Sunday service at 9.30am, which is normally Parish Communion, celebrated in cassock alb and stole. There is rota of lesson readers and intercessors and either the Reader, the Reader Emeritus or the Lay Worship Assistant assist with serving and distributing communion. The church is blessed with an excellent group of organists who contribute greatly to our worship, and the singing is adventurous, with frequent congregational practices. A new church choir was formed in April of this year.



Last year to enable more creativity we changed the second Sunday service to Morning Prayer led by the Reader and the Lay Worship Assistant. This has become a service of two halves, the first a Common Worship Morning Prayer, after which the sermon introduces a theme, which is taken up in guided discussion in part two, over coffee and delicious homemade cakes. We are already seeing a different group finding this service appealing.

The Christmas morning family worship led by the Lay Worship Assistant is very well attended by villagers of all ages from babes in arms to great grandparents and has a lovely family feel to it.

Average attendance on a Sunday, regardless of which type of service, is between 15 and 25, which we recognize as low for the size of the village community. By contrast, weddings and funerals often bring in a packed congregation, with standing room only. The churchyard itself is closed, but the parish cemetery is adjacent.

Traditionally the children from the First School and their families attended and took part in the Mothering Sunday service but a few years ago we recognised that numbers attending were dwindling and so we set up the additional "Mothering Friday" service for the school and parents in Church, led by the previous Rector and ministry team, with posies provided by the Church flower arranging team. We also celebrate the festivals of Easter, Harvest and Christmas with the School in the same way, and host the "Leavers' service" at the end of the summer term.

There are monthly services of Holy Communion at The Laurels retirement home and Sealey Close sheltered housing in the village and home communion is offered to any who request this.

St Leonard's

***St Leonard's is called to reveal God's love
by extending generous hospitality to all, including the school,
through regular worship, new services and music
to engage the whole community.
Redecorating the hall will help to provide
a more welcoming environment in which to hold events.***

Most services at Rodney Stoke start at 11:15am, with Holy Communion or Sung Matins. The number attending morning service usually ranges between 14 and 20 people. A recent innovation is that, on the second Sunday, services alternate between an 8am BCP communion and a 3pm family service, the latter often picking up traditional rural service themes such as Lammas and Rogation. The family service is proving very popular, where the children take an active role. It is organised by two members of the Benefice Team.



On average there are about two each of baptisms, weddings and funerals a year. The baptisms usually take place after the morning service. At Christmas, a congregation of over 150 come from far and wide to celebrate on Christmas Eve at the Carols by Candlelight service.



Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

The occasional offices are a significant aspect of our outreach and care, and the total numbers of each for 2014 are given below:

	Cheddar	Draycott	Rodney Stoke
Baptisms	21	2	2
Weddings	5	2	3
Funerals	28	3	3

Baptisms

We have an open baptism policy and use the CPAS DVD 'First Steps' for baptism preparation, during a visit by the clergy to the home of the family. The majority of baptisms take place at separate services. Our active Mother's Union always attend, often doing a reading and giving the family a 'Baptism Bear' on which the address is normally based.

Weddings

Our wedding preparation morning is delivered via the Local Ministry Group, with the three clergy leading input on different aspects of married life: understanding differences, communication and handling conflict. In our Benefice we also invite the couples to supper when we discuss the service itself with a particular focus on the vows they will make. We have benefitted from being part of the Weddings Project and have now created our own locally adapted cards to mark the seven moments.



Funerals

Funerals are held in our churches for people throughout the community, the majority of whom are not churchgoers. Just over half the services take place at one of our crematoria, often preceded or following a service in Church.

The People

	Cheddar	Draycott	Rodney Stoke
Electoral Roll	155	35	70
Declared Membership	107	18	16

St Andrew's

The congregation is predominantly adult, mainly aged over 60, with many married couples and those who have been widowed. There are a small number of children who come with their parents or grandparents, and attend Storytime, which takes place in the church hall during part of the service.

Up until this year a more child-friendly, non-communion family service was held on a third Sunday but this long term venture did not attract more families or children. However there has been an excellent response to running a monthly Messy Church in the Benefice, with up to 50 parents and young children taking part, using both the church and church hall facilities.



In addition a Holiday Club is held at St Andrew's each Summer, which attracts around 35 children and has been run by the previous Rector and a willing and faithful group of church members for the past twelve years.

St Peter's



The congregation of St Peter's comprises mainly retired people with approximately 25% of us still working in paid employment. We have no young families regularly attending our services, and therefore currently no Sunday club, but as mentioned elsewhere the Christmas morning Church service, "Carols in the bar" celebration and school services are very well supported by local families.

We advertise, encourage and support the Benefice Messy Church and Holiday Club initiatives at St Andrew's Church.

St Leonard's

The congregation of St Leonard's consists of mainly retired people and, given that the average age of the villagers is 55, this is hardly surprising. However, the recent innovation of the Sunday afternoon service has seen a greater number of young families attending the church. Numbers are far greater for the Easter, Harvest and Christmas festivals.



Organisations and Activities

The Friends of St Andrew's



This was formed as a charity in 1992 and since then many thousands of pounds have been raised, through events such as concerts from local orchestras, choirs and bands which have gone towards conserving and repairing the fabric of this ancient building.

Recently funds have been used to cover work on the nave roof and parapets, and repairs to the nave ceiling and windows. The Friends also organise an annual tour of other mediaeval churches of interest in Somerset (illustrated left), with a pub lunch en route.

Supporters of St Peter's

The Supporters of St Peter's (SoSP) is a small group of dedicated locals from Draycott village who got together eight years ago to raise funds for the restoration and refurbishment of our Village Church. We hold Jumble Sales, coffee mornings, craft fayres, soup lunches, organise concerts and talks with refreshments. The twice yearly curry nights at the Strawberry Special regularly feed and entertain around 80 people, and we continue to be involved in supporting most Church events especially those involving refreshments!

We work with the First School PTAF holding a joint Christmas Fayre spread between the School and Church buildings, thus engaging and involving the local community. The Supporters of St Peter's raise over two thousand pounds a year for the fabric fund.

On the first Saturday morning of each month the Supporters of St Peter's (SoSP) host a coffee-and-cake outreach event, which has an enthusiastic following of about fifty who enjoy joining in with board games, knitting, chatting or just companionable silence! The previous Rector held the Church Office here and this has proved a very popular way for prospective Wedding couples and Baptismal families to see the Church and meet the Church family.



Friends of St Leonard's



St Leonard's church lies at the spiritual heart of the village. Its activities, along with those of the Friends, form the focus of social life in the village. The Friends of St Leonard's (FoSL) work very hard to raise funds for the fabric of the church and many of their activities involve a large proportion of the village. Events include an annual Pet Service followed by a Pet Show, craft shows of local work, bonfire night, a wassail evening, pancake race, suppers, and bring and share social evenings.

Church House

St Andrew's church hall, currently named Church House, was built in 1894 and is situated across the road from the church, with its own car-park. It is the only hall of any size within the village and so is the venue for a good many organisations and activities. It is equipped with a stage, two separate adjoining rooms, a kitchen, toilets and a bar.

Although it continues to serve the community well, it is in need of modernisation. We are delighted to have received planning permission for an exciting programme of expansion and re-fitting, and we now need to find the grant funding to achieve the work, supplemented by an ongoing fundraising campaign led by enthusiastic team. It is managed as a Trust by the Vicar and Churchwardens.



St Leonard's Church Hall

This was originally the church schoolroom, becoming a church hall at the turn of the twentieth century when a joint Draycott and Rodney Stoke school was created in Draycott. The upper room of the hall is the venue for many village and church social events. Much has been done recently to improve its poor state of repair. Work carried out includes new double-glazing in nearly all the windows, a new toilet, a ramp and wider door to enable disabled access to the toilet for those using the church. A stair lift has been installed for ease of access to the upper floor.

Mothers' Union, Cheddar

The MU has a membership of about 30 active members who run a Toddlers' group and a child contact centre, support the baptism ministry, help with Messy Church and Holiday Club and provide catering at numerous church events. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month.

Choirs

There is a regular adult choir at St Andrew's Cheddar with weekly practices, led by the organist and musical director. A small children's choir has been started, building on their earlier involvement with STARR.



St Leonard's also has a choir, which sings every week. At Draycott a new church choir has been formed just this year and sings an anthem at the weekly service.

STARR

STARR is a Cheddar church based group, who produce pantomimes and other dramatic and musical items during the year. "The St Andrew's Roof Raisers" were founded originally to help raise funds for the church roof appeal in 1988 and then stayed as a church and local



community group to put on regular performances and also raise many thousands of pounds on behalf of St Andrew's and Church House.

Bell Ringers

Both Cheddar and Rodney Stoke have active bell ringing teams who call us to worship with a peal of eight bells every Sunday morning at Cheddar, four bells at Rodney Stoke. The bells can also be rung for weddings and funerals by arrangement. Practice at St Andrew's takes place at 8.00pm on Tuesdays, and at St Leonard's at 7.30pm on Thursdays.

Drama

At St Andrew's several religious dramas have been performed over the years, and also more light-hearted performances as fundraisers. These events involve mainly members of the congregation and also members of the local community.



Music Group



At Cheddar a music group has run for many years, playing in more informal services, and has provided the accompaniment to hymns and songs on piano, wind and stringed instruments.

Storytime

At St Andrew's younger children join Storytime in Church House after the start of the morning Sunday service and then return to church to receive a blessing and talk about what they have been finding out. This is usually represented by pictures or craft activities, based on the Gospel or other Bible readings, and the weekly session is run by two adult leaders with occasional support from parents or older children.

Parish Magazines

Cheddar produces a Parish Magazine on a monthly basis. It is funded by the advertising which raises about £1600 a year and actually makes a profit which goes into Church funds. It is mainly church activities, although village activities do also go in. The Editor for the past nine years hopes it will continue to thrive.

A single monthly parish magazine covers both Rodney Stoke and Draycott. For many years, the editors have been from Rodney Stoke and it has a circulation of about 200 copies. The magazine is an important source of information about church and village events. It aims to inform, inspire, intrigue and amuse the readership in roughly equal measure. The magazines can be accessed at www.rodneystokewithdraycott.org.uk

Schools

The Cheddar Valley operates a three tier system of schools: First, Middle and Secondary, which have all been popular and have consistently received favourable reports from OFSTED.

Three local First Schools (Cheddar First School, Draycott and Rodney Stoke CE VA First School and Shipham CE VC First School) have recently federated with Fairlands Middle School and the Rector is a Foundation Governor on the newly formed Mendip Edge Federation Governing body. These schools have all been judged as “good” in recent Ofsted inspections. Shipham and Draycott & Rodney Stoke are both Church First Schools; Shipham’s recent Church Inspection was judged as “outstanding” and Draycott and Rodney Stoke School’s deemed to be “good”, with their forthcoming inspection due very shortly. The previous Rector has regularly taken assemblies at this school, together with other members of our Benefice.

Cheddar First School



Though not a church school, Cheddar First School enjoys very good relations with St Andrew’s, holding a Carol Service each year and recently organising a Community Flower Festival in the church. Also the previous Rector has taken occasional assemblies in school and welcomed the children to St Andrew’s to learn about the church building and Christian worship as part of their RE curriculum.

<http://www.cheddarfirst.ik.org/>

Draycott and Rodney Stoke First School.

Most of the children in the two villages attend Draycott and Rodney Stoke First School, which now shares its head teacher with Shipham. The children attend a weekly service in St Peter’s, and St Leonard’s is looking at ways to involve the school in the church.

Recently they came to a Remembrance service, as Rodney Stoke is “A Thankful Village”, and also came as a school on Mothering Sunday.

www.draycottrodneystokeschool.ik.org



Fairlands Middle School

Children leave the First schools at 9 years old to go to Fairlands Middle School, in Cheddar, a school judged as “good” in the last Ofsted inspection, and they stay until the age of 13 years, before transferring to the Kings of Wessex Academy.

www.fairlands.somerset.sch.uk

Kings of Wessex Academy

This 1200 strong local comprehensive school, also situated in Cheddar, was judged to be “good” overall, following the latest Ofsted inspection in 2015. It has a large 6th form of over 300 students, judged as “outstanding” in the recent report, and its facilities on the campus include a leisure centre with an indoor swimming pool, and a theatre, which are well used by both pupils and all age groups within the village community and Cheddar Valley area.

The Rector is also a Foundation Governor at the Kings of Wessex Academy and the previous Rector took morning assembly on occasions. The school uses St Andrew’s church for Harvest, Christmas and Easter Services, and was judged to be “outstanding” once again in the recent SIAMS inspection. At a special Ascension Day service, those who are leaving climb the church tower to sing a hymn, accompanied by a school brass ensemble.



In the past few years, there has been a “Christian leader” based at the King’s Academy, funded ecumenically, who leads the Christian Union, sets up the four church services in the year and is generally a Christian presence in the school. The previous Rector has also gone into the school each week to lead a staff prayer group.

www.kowessex.co.uk/



Serving our community

Residential homes

We take communion monthly to five local care homes and fortnightly to another one. This ministry is greatly valued by residents and staff. Additionally there are regular and need-related home communions for the sick.



Elderly

The Neighbourhood Network (N2) has also been set up to enable us be more aware of the needs of our elderly members, though we believe we are only scratching the surface of the need for support, particularly spiritual support. Recent training days on the spiritual care of the elderly has given a renewed impetus to the potential for more work in this sphere.

Outreach at the Car Boot Sale

Every Sunday on a farm between Cheddar and Draycott a large Car Boot Sale takes place, attracting well over 1000 visitors each week, from near and far. Once a month a team from most of the Cheddar Churches (the majority being members of St Andrew's) provides a Christian presence and witness by running a stall, giving away Christian literature and as appropriate talking with and offering prayer to many who may seldom enter a church building.

Tourism

We are very conscious that there are a considerable number of people who visit the area and indeed our churches. We believe it should be possible to develop these visits and do more to help people to understand and appreciate the religious dimension of our buildings. This is another reason for ensuring that existing facilities are good, in order to welcome a wide range of visitors to the church, including day-trippers and tourists staying for longer in the locality.



Axbridge Deanery

The Deanery stretches from the West coast at Brean as far as Easton, situated three miles from Wells. In 2013 the Deanery Plan included space for creativity responding to current context. The plan suggested that as a Deanery we were good at working across boundaries and highlighted a number of ways in which parishes were working well with neighbouring parishes and in local ecumenical settings. Some of the working is informal and on a project basis, some is more formal under the heading of Local Ministry Groups and includes the cross licensing of clergy in one area.

On the whole this seemed to suggest that we are a Deanery that is open to working together in creative ways. This creativity has given rise to plans for a Deanery post to encourage and enable lay ministry, supporting parishes in their training for lay ministry across parish boundaries. Relationships between clergy are very good and we enjoy a supportive monthly chapter over lunch in a pub in the middle of the Deanery in the village of Weare. At the Deanery Synod, which meets four times a year, we encourage active participation through discussion in groups and in plenary.

Local Ministry Group (LMG)

Our Benefice Worship team works closely with the Anglican Benefice of Axbridge, Rowberrow and Shipham, Crook Peak parish (six churches – one PCC) and the recent addition of the Benefice of Wedmore, Allerton, Theale and Blackford.

The Group meets weekly for Morning Prayer and works together to provide events that would often be unsustainable individually. We deliver our annual marriage preparation together, provide our lay training in common, have occasional joint study sessions and annual worship days, and meet socially from time to time. For the last two years, we have set up a guided prayer week, which has really helped a number of our people to gain greater depth and awareness of the spiritual lives.

Cheddar Valley Churches



This is the informal ecumenical link which enables a few clergy to meet weekly for Bible study and prayer, with a larger group coming together monthly for lunch and planning. The relationships are cordial and much valued. In the Cheddar Valley, besides our three Benefice churches and the other LMG parishes, there is a Catholic Church, Methodist Church, a Baptist Church and a Community Church.

The main ecumenical event takes place on Fathers' Day in the grounds of the Kings of Wessex Academy, when we work together to offer a free, family fun day for the community, with around 800 people coming to join us this year. We enjoy worshipping together during Christian Unity Week, Holy Week, on Father's Day and for Bible Sunday.

Missionary and charity support

Christian Aid

A wide range of church members are involved each year in collecting for Christian Aid and last year a total of over £4 000 was raised.

Children's Society

The Benefice supports the Children's Society in different ways, with St Andrew's holding an annual Christingle service.



The Community of the Sisters of the Church

The congregation of St Peter's has for over 20 years supported The Loaves and Fishes project of the Community of The Sisters of the Church in Bristol (www.sistersofthechurch.org/our-houses/uk/bristol) by collecting food to be delivered monthly and giving our Harvest collection of both food and money from our Harvest Festival and Harvest supper.

Food bank

Collections of food are held at St Andrew's, and the previous Rector and members of the congregation have also served on the committee.

Zambia links

The Diocese of Bath and Wells is twinned with the Anglican Church in Zambia, and over the years links have been established with local communities in that country. Firstly we have supported the hospital in Katete, and in 2013 the previous Rector stayed in the town of Kafue. Church members have given gifts for Christmas to the children and also contributed towards the building of a new church within the locality.

Disaster funds

Congregations have regularly supported major disaster funds, eg helping victims of the earthquake in Haiti and the humanitarian crisis in Syria. They have also made an immediate response to the current Nepal Earthquake Appeal. At home all of the churches were active in supporting families who had suffered from the flooding on the Somerset Levels last winter.

Church Buildings

St Andrew's Church

St Andrew's is the Parish Church of Cheddar, a beautiful Grade 1 building with a superb 110ft



high tower. It is the fourth church to stand upon this site since Saxon times, the present building being erected between 1350 and 1450. It is well maintained and generally in good condition, with repairs to the nave roof and conservation work carried out on the parapets in recent years.

However following the latest Quinquennial Inspection in 2013 a survey of the tower reported significant areas of loose masonry and the need for extensive repointing, which will require grant funding to meet the large cost of repair.

The attractive interior of the church is in a good state of repair, with no urgent work required. A sub-committee of the PCC has been looking at ways in which the much loved medieval building can be adapted for the 21st century by improving the heating and lighting, both of which are inadequate by today's standards. Furthermore it is proposed to enhance the overall facilities within the church with a servery, toilet and the addition of welcoming and information areas. These aspirations have been shared with and supported by the PCC following a consultation with church members, though specific plans have yet to be drawn up and agreed.

Further information about St Andrew's can be found on our website:

<http://www.standrewscheddar.org.uk/>



St Peter's Church

St Peter's Church in Draycott was built in 1861. At the time the intention was to counter the increasing influence of the non-conformists in the area but we are now the only church in the village.

St Peter's Church is open plan, with comfortable upholstered chairs rather than pews, and is therefore ideally suited to varying forms of worship, concerts, seminars, special events and outside groups. The building has a number of points of interest, including the avenue of lime trees leading to the west door, the delicate wrought-iron chancel screen and the "four ages of man" stone font by William Burges. There is a toilet, a secure vestry, and facilities for the provision of tea and coffee.



In recent years a considerable sum has been raised for works to the church, which have included a new roof, complete re-wiring, better vestry provision, new chairs and carpeting and complete re-decorating. The PCC is aided in its work of keeping the fabric in good order by the Supporters of St Peter's (SoSP).

www.rodneystokewithdraycott.org.uk/Draycott/DraycottHome.htm

St Leonard's Church

St Leonard's Church is a very beautiful, Grade 12th century church, commanding a full-page entry in Pevsner's Buildings of England. It is well maintained, thanks to the excellent work of the fabric team, with the support of fund raising activities of the Friends of St Leonard's. Recent work has included repair to the tower steps, sound insulation in the bell chamber and repairs to the boundary wall. DAC approval has recently been granted for the installation of a hearing loop and full audio system.



The monuments in the Rodney Chapel are of special significance, relating as they do to the Rodney family after whom the village is named. There is a project underway for their conservation with full Faculty granted and fund raising in progress. The church is a very popular venue for weddings.

For more information about the church and its monuments, see www.stleonardsrodneystoke.org

Finance

St Andrew's

The Parish has always paid its share of the Common Fund by the end of the year, which was almost £47 000 in 2014. In recent years more people have moved to planned giving, while collections have declined somewhat in recent years.

It has been an ongoing challenge to ensure that sufficient funds are raised each year and this will only increase in future years, as we continue to pay the Parish Share (preferably on a monthly basis), and meet other ongoing costs. In addition we are committed to raising money for the redevelopment of the church hall and also proposed improvements to the church facilities, although repair and maintenance of the church building has been helped enormously over the years by donations from The Friends of St Andrew's.

As mentioned above, the repair of the church tower will need the support of grant funding, at an estimated cost of £150 000, and the first phase of the church hall redevelopment – the replacement of the roof – will cost around £75 000. So far nearly £40 000 has been raised through fundraising and grants.

St Peter's

In 2014, St Peter's paid its Parish Share in full: £12 656.

Financially, St Peter's Church has over the years just about broken even, income matching expenditure. In 2014 however the General Fund was in deficit of £2302. Three factors contributed to this deficit. (a) The parish share was very high, but for 2015 it will be reduced to £10 489. (b) The St Peter's Festival at the end of June was not held this year. (c) We bought the new lectern and a set of new hymnbooks.

Fund-raising for the Fabric Fund amounted to £2723. Together with covenants and other donations, this more than covered the total £4021 cost of the two projects carried out this year: repairs to the stonework of the bellcote and resurfacing the carpark.

Donations made to other charities in the name of St Peter's Church totalled £5251 in 2014. Our regular giving has for over 20 years also included supporting The Loaves and Fishes project of the Community of The Sisters of the Church in Bristol by collecting food to deliver monthly.

St Leonard's

St Leonard's paid its Parish Share of £7705 in full in January, thus attracting the discount.

Our major source of income comes through Planned Giving, with 20 people participating. Tax recovered is about £1800. Other income comes from fund-raising including The Christmas Fair, concerts and The Easter Cake Sale. The Friends of St. Leonard's give generous support for fabric repairs.

Major outgoings are the parish share, insurance of the hall and church, electricity, Parish expenses, clergy expenses, churchyard mowing and major fabric projects. Currently The Rodney Monuments is a £55 000 project of which we have already received promises of over £18 500 (February 2015).

We were £2596 in surplus for the year. This came about largely as a result of £1931 being recovered from the Inland Revenue on Gift Aid and Small Donations. Planned Giving totalled £6729. Fund Raising totalled £1705 and we did much good work on refurbishing the Hall with help from a Lottery Grant of £9783.

