

Come follow Christ



in the footsteps of St Chad



Curacy in the Diocese
of Lichfield



Title post
in the
Severn Loop Parishes



Seven churches
serving the hamlets
to the north and west
of Shrewsbury

Welcome to Lichfield Diocese

Cradled at the intersection of the Midlands and the North, and the interface between England and Wales, the Diocese of Lichfield is the ancient centre of Christianity in what was the Kingdom of Mercia.

We are rightfully grateful for the inheritance we have from St Chad that leads us to focus on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism as we live and serve among the communities of Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country.

Wherever in the Diocese you may be placed, you will benefit from being part of a wider family, mixing with people serving in a wide variety of contexts – from the grittiest inner-city neighbourhoods of Stoke and the Black Country, to the leafiest rural parishes of Staffordshire and Shropshire, to the sparsest upland communities of the Staffordshire

Moorlands and Welsh Borders.

And we embrace the widest spectrum of church traditions – evangelical and catholic, liberal and conservative, choral and charismatic, as we journey together – as a colleague recently put it, it is our goal to be a ‘spacious and gracious diocese’.

‘...a spacious and gracious diocese’

It is my determination and that of my episcopal colleagues that your calling to a title post will be a time of encouragement, ongoing formation, challenge and (while rarely unbridled) joy. Our colleagues among the diocesan staff keenly bring their various specialisms both spiritual and practical to serve our parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies.



+Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave
Bishop of Lichfield

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a Church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a Church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope.

(Diocesan Vision Statement)

A caring diocese

Lichfield Diocese is one of the largest in the country, covering an area of 1744 square miles and serving a population of more than 2 million.

The diocese consists of three episcopal areas with three Area Bishops (of Wolverhampton, Stafford and Shrewsbury) ministering alongside the Diocesan Bishop, each overseeing a different geographic area. This indicates the diocese’s commitment to its different contexts, and to the pastoral care of our clergy.

Homes and schools

We aim to provide high quality housing for our clergy with a continuous programme of improvements to houses and responsive, specialist contractors for emergencies.

As well as the 207 Church of England schools in the Diocese, there are many good schools and colleges that will welcome clergy’ children, and a

number of higher education centres can be found in Stoke, Keele, Stafford, Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Vocation and mission of all

Our vision for the diocese is that all people, lay and ordained alike, will grow ever more deeply into their vocation as disciples of Christ. We hope to become a Church where all our members are equipped to know they are called by God to worship and to be the eyes, hands, feet and mouth of Christ in their own contexts.

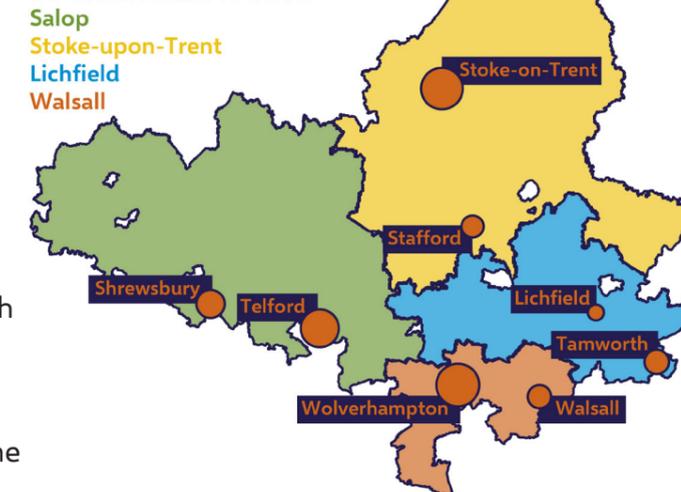
To further these aims, and to develop creative patterns of ministry, we ask all training parishes to offer ‘sixth-day’ opportunities for curates – which might be a chaplaincy attachment (school, hospital, prison or hospice), involvement with local gardening ventures, night-shelter involvement – to mention just a few possibilities.



“Our time as a family in my curacy in rural Shropshire has been one of the best of our lives. I’ve learned that the priestly role is vital in the community. I’m particularly enjoying working with seniors, and enabling the giftings of others which resulted in a successful Messy Church starting in one of the villages. I give thanks to God for this special time, and for everyone who’s been there for me and supported me throughout.”

Revd Jassica Castillo-Burley

The Four Archdeaconries of Lichfield Diocese



Everything but the sea



One of the distinctive surviving bottle kilns of the Potteries / David Rayner (Wikipedia) / CC BY-SA 2.0 BY-SA 4.0

Staffordshire prides itself on being ‘the Creative County’: Shropshire is the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and the Black Country is renowned for its industry and all have significant opportunities for spouses who wish to develop careers in any sphere.

For those days off when you need space away from the parish, the area has everything you could wish for – except the sea: wild landscapes, cultured museums and stately homes. Sports of many kinds (including Premiership football) and at least two theme parks

Shrewsbury Flax Mill – the prototype skyscraper / Tk420 (Wikipedia) / CC BY-SA 4.0



Opening of the Lighthouse Project at Kingsland CE Academy, Bucknall



Road and rail links



For those with family and friends in other parts of the country, the Diocese has great transport links: the M6/M6Toll bisects the centre of the Diocese north-south, and the M5 originates at our southern tip. Heading west, the A5/M54 give easy access to north and mid Wales, while the A50, A5 and M6Toll give swift access to the M1, M42 and A38 for the East Midlands and the south-east.

Rail links are also good with all major towns having direct services to London and Birmingham and four major airports surround our borders – Birmingham, East Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool.



Dovedale (location of one of the Diocese’s two residential retreat centres) / Shaun Dunmall (wikipedia) / CC BY-SA 2.0 4.0

Leisure and pleasure

Lichfield Diocese has everything but the sea. For walkers and climbers, there’s an extensive network of canals, Cannock Chase, The Roaches, and the Shropshire—Welsh borders (for example). If you’re into more organised fun, Alton Towers and Drayton Manor Theme Park

Wightwick Manor nr Wolverhampton / Tony Hisgett (Wikipedia) / CC BY-SA 4.0



can provide it. And then there’s many museums including Walsall’s New Art Gallery and the RAF museum at Cosford; not to mention excellent sporting options for both watching and participating – from Premiership football to the Tamworth Snowdome. Along with Wedgwood, theatres and cinemas, restaurants and superb tea shops just begging to be discovered...



Apedale Valley Light Railway near Stoke with the adjacent country park and Heritage Centre is one of many transport and leisure museums in the Diocese / Simon Jones

If shopping is your thing, there is a range of options - from the chic boutiques at Barton Marina, and Shrewsbury to large malls in or near the urban centres. We’re fortunate in being the home of many fine ales and beers brewed in Burton on Trent (the museum is well worth a visit), and Staffordshire oatcakes are a unique local delicacy to be discovered.



Wulfrun Centre in Wolverhampton is one of many shopping destinations in the region © Roger Kidd -/ geograph.org.uk/p/1171894/ CC BY 2.0

Alton Towers near Uttoxeter / Jeremy Thompson/Flickr / CC BY 2.0



The Severn Loop Parishes

The Severn Loop Parishes (or 'the Loop') serves the communities of Albrighton with Battlefield, Bicton, Bomere Heath, Fitz, Leaton, Montford and Shrawardine and is situated to the north and west of Shropshire's beautiful and thriving county town of Shrewsbury. It is a team ministry of two benefices comprising a total of five rural parishes with seven active churches. They form part of the Shrewsbury and Wrekin Deanery, in the Diocese of Lichfield. The core ministry team comprises a priest-in-charge, an assistant priest and a lay pastoral minister.

The context is a distinctly rural, fifteen mile stretch of countryside. There are many farms and a good proportion of residents work in related sectors. The largest population centre in the Severn Loop is Bomere Heath, where one of the benefice houses is situated. The population breakdown is as follows (approx. - building continues and this is almost certainly an under-estimation):

- **Albrighton with Battlefield** 232
- **Leaton** (including Bomere Heath village) 1,500
- **Bicton** 1,100
- **Fitz** 287
- **Montford** 390
- **Shrawardine** 140
- **Total** 3,649

The demographic is predominantly middle-class and quite prosperous, but rural poverty does exist (it's often hidden). There are younger mixed age groups in Bomere Heath and Bicton, but overall the population is generally older. Housing in the main consists of larger, detached properties, although there is social housing in Bomere Heath and around the Loop there are quite a few tied houses on estates.

Within the parishes there are two CofE primary schools, one nursing home, a number of small businesses and industrial estates and a few cafes and pubs. There are good, established and strong relationships with both schools and with the nursing home. We are developing links with local businesses, and in some cases have worked together in mission endeavours. In Bicton parish there is a significant area of housing development, which will have an impact on our ministry as time goes on.



Services in the churches:

Every church offers a mixture of Holy Communion and Services of the Word - the priests robe and (except for Fitz who have a tradition of the Book of Common Prayer) the liturgy is from Common Worship. Some of our churches have an organist; others use CDs. Our Sunday congregations are usually adults in the older age demographic and numbers range from 25 or more (at Leaton and Bicton) to six or less in our most rural churches. Any curate would need to be adaptable and at ease leading and preaching to very small numbers. We very much minister with the attitude that if two or three are gathered together, Christ is amongst us and we worship with joy and without anxiety.

Monthly Service Patterns

	Albrighton	Bicton	Bomere Heath	Fitz	Leaton	Montford	Shrawardine
1st	9.15am HC	11.00am HC		9.30am HC (BCP)	10.45am HC		9.30am MP (lay led)
2nd		11.00am MP	9.00am HC		10.45am MP	9.30am HC	11.00am HC
3rd	9.15am MP	11.00am HC		9.30am HC (BCP)	10.45am HC	9.30am MP (lay-led)	
4th		11am MP	9.00am HC		10.45am MP	11.00am HC	9.30am HC
5th	United service by rotation - 10.30am						

The Severn Loop Parishes

In 2020 we introduced a service of Evening Prayer on Zoom – Sunday @ Six. We also have a service of Morning Prayer every Wednesday at Battlefield Church. As well as seasonal services of celebration, there are a number of special services that are held around Severn Loop. These include the annual ‘Remembering with Love’ service, pet services, special Remembrance events, Christmas Tree Festivals... and more!

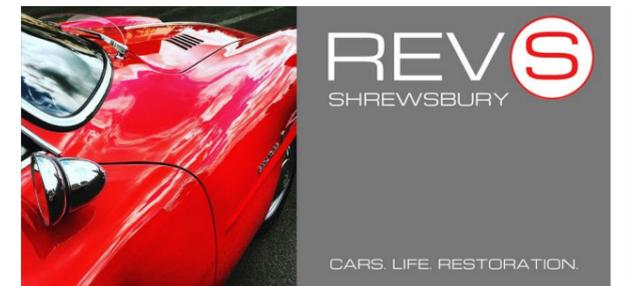
Occasional Offices are popular in the Loop. This calendar year (2023) we have six weddings and around ten baptisms booked. Funeral ministry is a significant part of our work, and in the first four months of 2023 we have done 14 funerals and four burials of ashes.

In Autumn 2019, Forest Church was introduced into the Loop. People of all ages enjoy engaging with our local environment and worshipping

The Congregations in numbers:

Figures from 2022	Albrighton	Bicton	Bomere Heath	Fitz	Leaton	Montford	Shrawardine
Electoral Roll	13	44	0	43	73	24	12
Average Sunday Attendance Adults	6	19	8	8	21	8	10
Average Sunday Attendance Children	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Baptisms	1	2	0	0	5	0	0
Marriages	1	5	0	0	2	1	1
Funerals	3	4	0	1	17	3	2

God in the wonder of nature. We are deeply grateful to local landowners who are generous with their resources, wisdom and time. After a break during the pandemic, Forest Church resumed in Autumn 2021. On average about 32 people attend, ranging in age from 8 months to 80+! Watch our [Forest Church video on YouTube](#).



REVS ([REVS Shrewsbury | Facebook](#)) meets within our parish, and we also have members of our congregations who enjoy going to our local Filling Stations ([The Filling Station](#)).

Buildings / Community

We are blessed in Severn Loop to have some beautiful historic church buildings, which can take some looking after! We get a lot of interest in our architecture, so much so that we are very mindful of using our buildings as a way of commending the Gospel. Within our parishes, we have seven open churches, two closed ones (maintained by the Churches Conservation Trust) and seven open churchyards, all of which are well-used and well-loved. Our greatest footfall is at Battlefield church, which is open every day. There, and at other churches, we are developing our welcome for passers-by, along with opportunities for prayer.

As is the case in rural communities, there is a great sense of belonging, and a felt sense of affinity with the inherited church. This means we have a large ‘fringe’ and our social events are well-supported. Being a presence at these events is a key part of being a rural minister, though it can be quite exhausting to eat so much cake! Ancestral memories still hold sway- so many of those coming to us for occasional offices have a historic link to the parish, and understand the church as their spiritual home.



The Severn Loop Parishes

Your Training Incumbent

Revd Hannah Lins

The Rectory, 15 Brookside, Bicton SY3 8EP

- **Trained:** St Mellitus College
- **Ordained:** 2017, Diocese of Lichfield
- **Curacy:** Severn Loop Parishes
- **Vicar since** 2021

As a training incumbent, I hope that I would bring fun, wisdom, a non-anxious presence and faithful friendship to any curate training with us. My own ministry experience was formed in the chaotic context of family life, so I hope I understand something of the challenges of multitasking and competing demands. Prior to ordination (and as an ordinand) I was fortunate to be part of a church (Trinity Churches, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury) that encouraged Every Member Ministry and the odd bit of risk-taking! When my second child was born, I and others began a Bible study group with creche. Along with the Christian playgroup my children attended, and the founding of a Toddler Church, these became formational experiences that continue to speak richly into my ministry today. I am passionate about recognising the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of people of all ages,

whether or not they would describe themselves as having faith. I also have particular interests in creative writing as a means of reflecting on the spiritual landscape of today's society; the role of the arts in mission and in our vocation as stewards of the environment. Many years ago I taught A-Level Psychology at the local VI Form College, prior to which I taught Secondary Mathematics.

Shropshire born and bred, and having spent most of my life in a lively, busy, suburban church, I've since discovered a deep love for ministry in the countryside. Often cut off by snow or high water, and having navigated the pandemic together, the stoic folk I serve have taught me so much about friendship and hospitality, as well as fragility and isolation. Their strength, resolve and gentle Christ-like kindness is always a real encouragement. My role as their priest is to enable that to flourish as fully as possible for the blessing of all, and to seek out those signs of the unfolding work of God in the life of our communities in order to think creatively and prayerfully (and realistically!) about how we can join in.



Context

The two benefices came together as the Severn Loop Parishes over 15 years ago. There is enthusiasm about the arrangement and a strong commitment to work together in a pastoral unit. We are committed to enabling our small, rural churches to flourish and grow in these separate but inter-connected villages. The congregations are committed to pastoral care and visiting and give huge amounts of time to the life of their local churches and villages. Church tradition is not an issue in Severn Loop. All the parishes are fairly open and central in tradition; some have a slightly lower church background. 'Generous orthodoxy' describes Severn Loop well.

For ministers in this place, it quickly becomes clear that the communities that make up the Loop have historic links and established networks across the parish boundaries- so people know each other well. One side-effect of this is a significant overlap in congregation make-up at occasional offices. The general mindset is very much community-focused, and so this means that any 'church' event must take into account the broader rhythm of the year for local people. In all but one case, the Anglican church is the only church building in each village. In Bomere Heath there is a Methodist Chapel and we enjoy a good ecumenical

relationship with them, working together in seasonal mission and having the occasional joint service.

Many of our parishioners are unlikely to talk about their faith; their discipleship and their worship is very much seen in action. People are generally private, and this calls for particular sensitivity with pastoral work. It also means that people will work hard to avoid confrontation- there is tremendous good-will and so it's mostly absent anyway, but sometimes we have to be alive to the possibility that there is an unspoken problem. There is also a level of eccentricity in our churches! This is a delight- a joy to embrace. The parishes all have Conservative local councillors, and our local MP is also Conservative.

We are hugely blessed with our local schools- where there is so much potential as well as existing ministry. There are plenty of young families in our villages, but those on the key (secular) committees around the Loop are mainly in the older demographic- which is also the case in our PCCs.

The ministry



The Severn Loop Parishes

There is plenty of scope for wide and varied experience in Severn Loop, particularly for rural ministry, which is characterised by a gentleness and fragility that will need to be appreciated. That's not to say that we don't take risks however!

In terms of services, there will be ample opportunity to lead worship in a traditional style, with both Common Worship and Book of Common Prayer liturgy. As capacity increases, we are considering the introduction of some more informal services, perhaps monthly- especially as we are beginning a round of confirmations that includes children from our local schools. The Mission Church in Bomere Heath is well-equipped to do this, and we would hope that a curate would like to get involved. There will also be plenty of experience of occasional offices.



"We're really grateful for all the support we got from the Diocese, starting with the DDO, who went out of her way to help in finding a good match, and to work out practical matters.

"My vicar has been very supportive, through planning carefully together and weekly supervisions, where we reflect on different areas of ministry. I have been given new challenges progressively, all done sensitively and fitted to the stage I was at. Our churches have been so welcoming to the whole family, and very supportive of my ministry, even when this involves less regular ideas, like planting a tree during a sermon (only in a pot, I regret to say!)."

Revd John Beswick Pallister

Our two home groups are lay-led, but we do also hold seasonal study groups- the most recent one being for Lent. A curate would certainly get experience of leading a Bible study and discussion. During the pandemic we began a weekly service of Evening Prayer on Zoom on a Sunday evening, and this has continued. It has done so much to build up relationships across our parishes, and has a strong, well-established congregation.

We've been developing outdoor worship, and outdoor spaces- a curate would be encouraged to take a full part in Forest Church, and to lead and organise it if they would like to. Our churchyards and porch welcome areas are being developed in different ways in different places- we have a prayer trail in one, are introducing an outdoor remembering loved-ones service in another, and a number are managing wildflower areas. We've also been invited to get involved in some research into the spirituality of churchyards and nature. There is potential to grow this ministry further, and perhaps to look at providing resources for reflective walks in our parishes, as well as prompts for prayer.

We have excellent relationships with our two CofE Primary Schools- we would encourage a curate to be a full part of the Open the Book team, and to be involved in some of our

spirituality and experience days. Currently the priest-in-charge is on the governing body of both schools. There is a lot more we could do to build relationships, but resources are stretched at present. This area could be taken on by a curate, or the presence of a curate may, in time, release more time for the priest-in-charge to spend in school. We are aware that there are also two special schools in our parish, an outdoor pursuits centre and a number of community hubs. We would love to make more links wherever we can, but such links must be sustainable.

A curate would also gain experience of ministry in Isle Court Care Home, along with the immense wisdom of our Lay Pastoral Minister, who does almost all of our home-visiting. It's a real benefit to have a team ministry, and there would definitely be the opportunity to take communion to people in their homes, and to get involved in ministry at the time of death.

In addition to our Lay Pastoral Minister, we have an assistant priest, and that completes the core team. A curate would therefore get training in all the associated paperwork for a parish, as there is no administrative support! We do have excellent wardens, some of whom function as de facto focal ministers. With four churches that have no possibility of ever having a water supply or toilet, our wardens are a brilliant resource for



spotting an opportunity and capitalising on it. For example, a wedding in Shrawardine last year meant a marquee and a set of posh portaloos were in residence for the weekend- immediately our warden booked Forest Church, and held a Pâté and Pimm's fundraiser. This kind of resourcefulness and flexibility is key in ministry in this context, and a curate will learn a lot about capitalising on what we DO have, rather than lamenting what we don't.

Our five PCCs are welcoming to all, and all align their priorities with the Mission Action Plan (see the website for a copy). They recognise their own strengths (though are very modest about them), and understand the need to be strategic

The Severn Loop Parishes

and prioritise our energy. For example, in Albrighton one of our priorities for the coming year is to get to know our wedding venues better- there is a hotel with which we'd like to develop closer links- we're aware that many creative opportunities have come from people staying there, noticing our church and getting in touch. Again, a curate would be most welcome to develop some of those links, should they wish to. All of our PCCs are solvent, but some have to dip into their reserves to balance income and expenditure.

We have two monthly social events- the Stepping Out Café in Bomere Heath, and a CAMEO Coffee Morning in Bicton. There are also community coffee mornings in Fitz, which it's proved wise to attend. Every week we hold a Coffee and Play session in Bomere Heath- this began as a warm space last winter. The social whirl can sometimes feel both exhausting and frustrating (!), but it is essential to the ministry of the parish.

We have good relationships with the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), and have worked collaboratively and positively at both Preston Gubbals and Battlefield. At Battlefield in particular, we are considering ways of developing creative ministry alongside the various re-enactment events that take place

there. Again, a curate would be most welcome to get involved.

All our churches and both of our schools are working towards becoming Dementia-friendly. The target-setting and associated work is the responsibility of our Pastoral Minister. We are particularly encouraged by the links we are building between churches, the nursing home and our schools as we all work together to be a place of welcome and acceptance for all.

The mission statement for the Diocese of Lichfield was inspired by its founding saint: Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad. We in the Loop have qualified this with our own strapline: Know the Story, Share the Story, Live the Story. In our life together as disciples in



these beautiful rural communities, we seek to deepen our faith, share the hope we have, and bear witness to Jesus as Lord in all that we do.

Housing and Accommodation

The Diocese of Lichfield either has a curate's house in the benefice or a 'strategic' house for curates in close proximity of the benefice. These are good houses, mainly with three to four bedrooms. If there is no curate's house in the benefice and where such a strategic property exists within easy reach of the proposed training parish this will be the preferred curate's house. If there is no strategic housing available nearby the diocese is committed to providing appropriate accommodation for all those entering ministry. We generally do not offer rented accommodation except as an emergency short term measure. Our curates can be confident that their home will be of a consistently high standard. If you wish to know further details about the house, the BDO will be able to provide you with more information.

Curacy in Lichfield Diocese

Supporting learning and formation

Curate learning, formation and development is strongly valued and affirmed in Lichfield Diocese. Curates receive ongoing supervision and reflection on ministry in the parish, complemented by our curate-training programme in which you share with your year-group of peers. The aim of the training programme is to enable each person to flourish in their ministry and inhabit more deeply their vocation as deacons and priests. This programme supports learning and formation through a partnership between the Diocese and The Queen's Foundation. And it takes place in the context of parish supervision and reflection on ministry.

The programme provides space and an environment beyond the parish context in which curates come together with skilled tutors to learn with and from each other's shared experience, so that they can better integrate their practice and reflection, develop their personal qualities, spiritual, ministerial and professional gifts and skills, and deepen their desire to learn.

The curacy experience is very much a collective one, often gathering at Lichfield Diocese's centrally-located Shallowford House for study, prayer, retreat and de-stressing with peers (pandemic permitting): as such, it's a much less scary venue during IME2 than as a base for a BAP!

Pattern of training

The programme focuses on grounded and situated learning and prioritises the Diocese's focus on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism:

- In Year 1 establishing you in your new ministerial context and practice, and supporting your preparation for ordination as priest.
- In Year 2, deepening your practice and understanding of mission and ministry with the theological tools and skills you need to contextualise this.
- In Year 3 helping you prepare for life-long ministry and to take up a post of responsibility to be entered into with skill and confidence.



IME2 to equip for ministry

At the heart of the programme are residential events which bring together a year-group of curates. They reflect the diversity of the Church, while the different ministry contexts reflect the diversity of the Diocese. This cohort is the primary context for the essential learning and formation to develop your ministries, focusing on ministerial formation, and on the development of relationships which enable mutual flourishing for all.

Opportunities for academic awards

Alongside the IME2 training you may wish to continue studying on an accredited pathway with Common Awards. Curates who already have a Diploma award from IME1 may register for a BA in Theology, Ministry and Mission. Others who already have a degree or higher award or are recognised as potential theological educators have opportunities to further their studies alongside their curate programme.



Care for curates and families

The wellbeing of clergy and their families is very important to us. In addition to the supervisory aspects to curacy, we have a free, confidential counselling service (the Listening Ear scheme) for all clergy, diocesan staff and their families.

More info

– contact the BDO (details on back cover) or visit lichfield.anglican.org/curacy

"We have had amazing support from the diocese over the 6 years through both of our curacies and that's not always been straightforward- particularly when 'life' sometimes gets in the way!

"But the support, through thick and thin has been fantastic, particularly discerning Adam's call to pioneering ministry and curacy under 'pioneer' supervision."

Revds Adam & Charlotte Gompertz



Curacy in Lichfield Diocese

For further information

In the first instance, please contact:

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[E] romita.shrisunder@lichfield.anglican.org

Find us on:

ChurchNearYou:

achurchnearyou.com/church

[/4160/ - Bicton](#)

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[/4161/ - Fitz](#)

[/4350/ - Leaton](#)

[/4163/ - Shrawardine](#)

[/4162/ - Montford](#)

Website:

severnloopparishes.org.uk/

Facebook:

facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064303407283

The Severn Loop Parishes

In Severn Loop we have qualified
the diocesan mission statement
with our own strapline:

Know the Story,
Share the Story,
Live the Story.

In our life together as disciples in
these beautiful rural communities,
we seek to deepen our faith, share
the hope we have, and bear witness
to Jesus as Lord in all that we do.

Our ministry is creative, flexible
and distinctly rural, drawing on
our vocation to care for each other
and for nature, in the heart of the
Shropshire countryside.