

Kington Parishes



*"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where comes my help? It comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."
Psalm 121:1,2*

Kington Group of Parishes Profile



Kington Parishes



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From the Bishop of Hereford

Welcome to the Diocese of Hereford!

We may be the smallest mainland diocese in the Church of England, but we think small is beautiful. It means you can know your colleagues and be known and we hope supported to exercise your best ministry.

We believe the local is the best place to discern God's call. Our parishes and benefices are the centre of the diocese not the Diocesan office. Our diocesan strategy seeks to unite us around a common purpose of 'Proclaiming Christ and Growing disciples' lived out in three values of Prayerfulness, Christlikeness and Engagement. We recognise our parishes and clergy are diverse and we encourage people to live out these things in line with their own giftings, individual and communal.

We are just starting a rolling programme to help embed the values in our churches. 2023 is a year of prayer, with events around the diocese, including communion services on the hills covering every deanery, exploring prayer workshops and more intense times of prayer for our common life. 2024 will be a year of hope, seeking to grow our discipleship, and 2025 a year of outward looking engagement with our communities. The senior staff seek to model these values and join with parishes in activities to deepen our spiritual life.

I hope you will feel led to join us in this beautiful corner of God's creation, in particular to consider the Benefice of Kington. It is a place of great potential, gifted people and excellent community relationships. May you know God's wisdom as you prayerfully consider this opportunity.

Every blessing

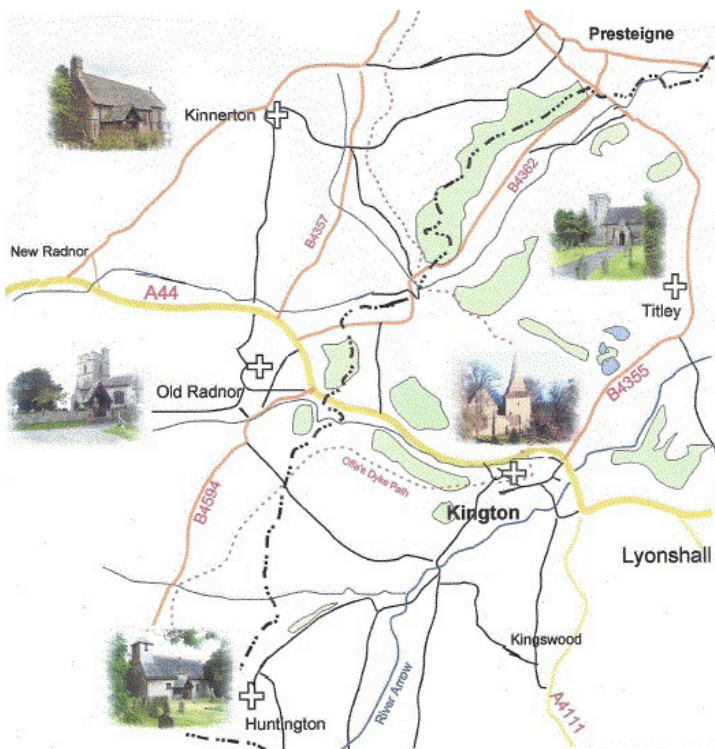
The Right Reverend Richard Jackson
Bishop of Hereford



Kington Parishes

Contents

Reaching Across Borders	4
Benefice Needs	7
Person Profile	9
St. Mary's, Kington	10
St. Peter's, Titley.....	13
St. Mary's, Kinnerton	15
St Stephens, Old Radnor.....	17
St. Thomas a Becket, Huntingdon.....	19
The Vicarage	21
Parish Detail	22





Kington Parishes

Reaching across borders

Some say Kington is a drovers' town; others say we are a quarrying town. Look up at the whale-back hills and you know you are almost in the uplands. Yet drive towards the Cathedral city of Hereford and you are amongst cider orchards and rich potato lands. We live between the woods and the water; the River Arrow with its green-meadowed fingers flows right through town, meandering its way to the Lugg and the Wye; but ancient oaks remind us of wilder forested pasts. Our Marches community is full of Welsh names with Old Radnor and Kinnerton parishes firmly in Radnorshire. Yet go to Titley and you find Saxon names and landscape memories. Up at Huntington, amongst its green wooded banks, you are back in Welsh Herefordshire.

Is this relevant? Yes! It's a metaphor for God's Church. We are conscious of living between times. Our Lord's coming to walk amongst us and share our hardships, the servant King. Yet we also anticipate his return when he shall come as triumphant King. We live as Christians in such borderlands. Our churches are cherished and beautiful where some of us meet on Sundays, but we long to spread God's grace where people live and work and often struggle.

In Kington we have enjoyed a variety of churchmanship over the years and we value regular celebration of the Eucharist and more traditional services with robed choir. However we recognise that to grow and bring new youthful life into the church we need to embrace more modern styles of worship too. We are active in our community but there is so much more to do. This is a beginning calling for innovation and energy to reach our town and rural communities.

We are quite well resourced. There is a comfortable modern vicarage with a beautiful garden beside the church; see page 20 for details. There is also a well-appointed Parish House close to the vicarage used for meetings, and it is well used





Kington Parishes

by several community groups, including the Scouts, Pilates, lunch club etc. Kington has been a training post for a curate. We also have a curate's house. Church Wardens of the Benefice meet together quarterly.

Our community brims with energy and creativity. Straddling the beautiful Offa's Dyke path, the town is full of walkers, and Spring and Autumn there is a Walking Festival with much feasting and exhausted relaxing. We recently featured on Ramblings with Clare Balding <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001n8pp>. We sometimes share the bread and the wine up on Hergest Ridge (see cover picture), and we once held a baptism in the River Arrow. There are cyclists and runners, a widely used Leisure Centre and a range of sports facilities appealing to all ages and capabilities, and the local football team. The Burton Hotel's Cloud Nine has a well-equipped gym, a brilliant pool, sauna etc.

We have a primary and secondary school, Medical Centre, Post Office and high street with galleries and traditional shops. The town boasts an enviable Horticultural Society, the Kington History Society, an excellent museum, the Tourist Office, an active Wildlife Trust with a local reserve at Birch's Farm, a thriving branch of the Young Farmers, and several choirs. Every September, the Kington Agricultural Society hosts one of the largest one-day Agricultural Shows in the country.

At the Kington Festival there is the famous wheelbarrow race. And we mustn't forget the world famous Hergest Croft Gardens ten minutes' walk from the church. If you take seriously, as the writer of Ecclesiastes has it, that God put eternity in the hearts of men, then all these enthusiasms, young and old, working and Sabbath-resting, are embers ready to be blown into life. Life in all its fullness, as our Lord promised.



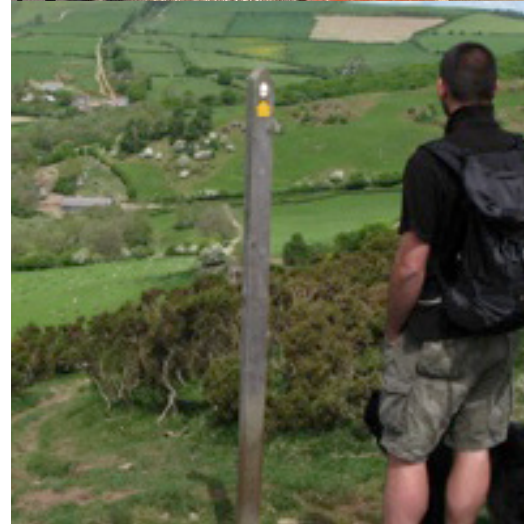


Kington Parishes

There is an active environmental group. KLEEN backs sane and sustainable life in all its variety, from litter picking to apple pressing, from allotmenting to community energy, from networking to promoting a functioning can-do Town Council. Several church members are in on all this <http://www.kingtonkleen.org.uk/>

There are four arts centres within 45 minutes of Kington with films, plays and streamed performances from distant metropolises, while within the town itself there are an amateur operatic company, a town pantomime, Choral Society and Community Choir. We have the annual Borderlines Film Festival and Herefordshire Art week. Made in the Marches and newly opened Ridge Bank Gallery are two excellent galleries. The best literary festival in the world is just down the road at Hay-on-Wye. There's plenty going on, so while road links and bus services can take one farther afield (our nearest rail service is at Leominster), there is a rich and varied cultural life right here.

Those of us committed to rural life and those who have known nothing else ask whether there is any greater and more rewarding challenge than leading God's work in a rural ministry. With a traditional rural economy and infrastructure, we have shepherds and farmers and quarry men. At the same time, with fast broadband there are people settling down in home offices dealing with the whole world; we have city lawyers and film makers and international aid workers. All of them need the Light of the World, and many of them are welcoming to those already travelling down the pilgrim way. Come and join the work!



Kington is on the western edge of Herefordshire





Kington Parishes

Benefice Needs 2023

Here is a gathered summary of our Benefice needs, embracing town and rural, which could fairly be called opportunity. Our churches recognize that with aging congregations we have to reach out to our communities more actively. We seek someone who will be at home with us, feel excited by the challenge and want to develop and grow our ministry.

There is still a church-going culture among the older generation; people fill the church for weddings, baptisms, major festivals and of course funerals. On all such occasions many of our neighbours and townspeople come to church and are quite ready to hear a message of life. There is room and need for a fuller programme of **outreach, encouragement, spiritual exploration and training**. We long to support and inspire both all-age worship and youth work. Churches Together (engaging St Mary's with the RC, Baptist chapel and United Reform Church) is an important witness to the town. We are also keen to **develop strong links with community projects** such as Open Arms Kington and the youth club.

With our two, successful schools, there is a whole community of life - children, parents and teachers - where the Church has an established relationship open to further development; the vicar has an invitation to take assemblies in both schools. We already have imaginative but aging lay teams running the monthly Morning Praise and Messy Church (in June there were 20 children and 11 parents); Lego club is developing. There is a Lay Reader who is a retired forester, a Director of Music with wide experience in education, a robed choir, and other gifted lay members and able churchwardens keen to develop their work and gifts.





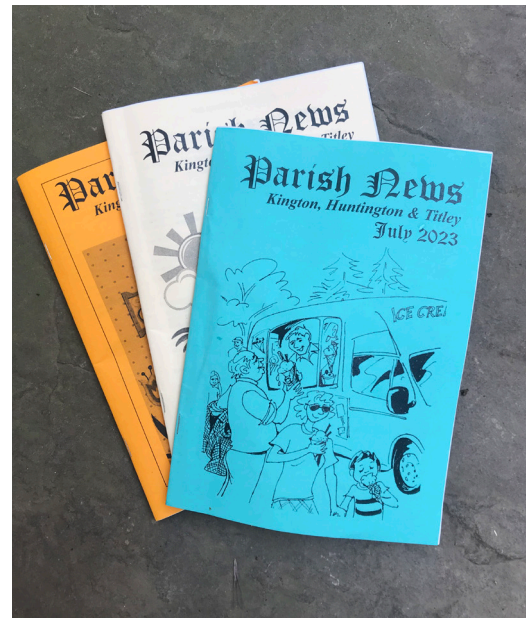
Kington Parishes

Our biggest challenges? Nothing new: reversing declining congregations, managing change, finding church officers, upgrading the sound/video system, usual fabric upkeep, reducing Carbon (especially from heating).

But we offer: Friendship, lay teams committed to collaborative leadership in ministry and outreach, ambition to grow and to develop our gifts, Benefice office and excellent Benefice administrator, strong links with schools and care homes, modern vicarage, local town and rural communities that are pro the vicar, commitment to becoming an Eco-church.

But like all small towns, Kington has its challenging side. There are difficult family situations and unemployment. The Food Bank has been helping meet growing demand. There is a drugs problem, thought by some to be growing, but very few resources being made available to tackle it. But with an hourly bus service to Hereford we are better off than many.

The Benefice needs also should to be recognized in terms of population. The villages together, along with farming, have several hundred mostly retired or elderly residents; at the same time Kington town with its immediate area has a mixed population of well over 3,000 covering all ages and all family situations. The Benefice needs could be summed up as both **huge opportunity for reaching out to a diverse community**, and **urgent pastoral action to love our neighbours** who are often struggling.





Kington Parishes

Kington Person Profile 2023

The following personal gifts, interests and aptitudes, along with a sense of humour and the ability to listen, are particularly important.

Passion for growth. We wish to attract an applicant who naturally makes spreading the Good News of the gospel a high priority, especially among families and in the schools. Experience turning this into practice would be desirable. We are very open to someone coming from a curacy, recognizing that they would expect and need strong support.

Building a team. It is essential to be a team maker and a team builder; they must be able and comfortable to delegate. Our present lay teams that lead monthly Morning Praise, Messy Church and Lego Club need building and empowering. Home groups, presently only a Lent group, need developing. Teams, not “helpers”!

Worship with variety. Whilst keeping a balance with much loved traditional services, develop and nurture variety and fresh approaches that would encourage a younger generation, families (including teenagers), and new comers where we can connect as a local community. (Point made by a mum.)

Love of community. An incumbent should be outward looking and happy to become an involved part of a small market town, with its challenges and demands, as well as ready to feel at home ministering in the rural and farming parishes. It would also be helpful to want to foster active working links with Diocesan officers and resources.





St Mary's Kington

The Church of St Mary stands high on the hill overlooking Kington, but it's worth the puff when you get there. The first thing that might be encouraging to say is that fabric and maintenance are all up to date; no need to be distracted from our main mission, which is Kington! We have new lighting, the roof repaired, and the North Aisle reordered where removal of pews allows wider and more flexible use. The Church is open for 365 days of the year, allowing visitors to enjoy the calm, peaceful atmosphere of a lovingly tended Church. The visitor's book is full of appreciative comments.

It is important early on to mention music. Philip Sell is our choir master, organist and Benefice secretary; thanks to his dedication we have a robed choir and are able to lay on both small musical services such as Tenebrae and Taizé services as well as larger choral celebrations. Presently we have an appeal to refurbish our organ (Walker 1883); this is making encouraging progress.

You will see in the detail on page 21 that we have both a traditional Eucharist and a monthly Morning Praise that is lay led and seeking to be attractive to new church members. There is also a popular Messy Church that is attracting an entirely new congregation of young families, and a growing Lego Club. Planning teams meet monthly. If we could draw young parents into family services this would lead to involvement in youth work, non-existent at present.

Annual festivals, such as Harvest Festival, are always well supported and reach out to a wider community. The Harvest Service is followed by a lunch in the Church, and the early Eucharist Service on Ascension Day is followed by breakfast. The annual Carol Service by Candlelight and the Family Crib Service on Christmas Eve are always very well attended. The Church bells are normally rung on Sundays and visiting teams are welcomed at other times. We seek the development of our less formal service alongside the popular traditional services.





Kington Parishes

Currently there are 116 on the Church electoral roll. We have a SSM minister and a Lay Reader. There is wide lay contribution to services.

We have an excellent and supportive Sacristan. On a fifth Sunday in the month the five churches in the benefice take it in turns to hold a joint Group Service; another opportunity to bring our rural parishes together! On Remembrance Sunday, St Mary's and the Baptist Church take it in turns to host a Remembrance Service, following the service at the War Memorial. Meanwhile, "Churches Together" further links us to our fellow worshippers in the Catholic, Baptist and other independent congregations in the area.

The Garth and Kington Court residential care homes welcome Communion services, home visits and a monthly lay led service with hymns.

There are Lent groups and a mission committee that lays on occasional events. Whilst there might be only 50 in church on a Sunday, we distribute 420 copies of our excellent monthly Parish Magazine, which also gently and sometimes obliquely shares the good news of the Gospel with our townspeople.

We are lucky to have an active and widely supported Friends of St Mary's group that raises money for the care of our church. This brings church and town together in a shared love for both building and spiritual life. We also raise funds through the Community Shop for a week annually.

The town has a strong tradition of charitable work and the incumbent is invited to take up membership of the Kington United Charities; our sense of mission is strong: the church in Kington makes regular donations to causes outside the parish and to the town's Food Bank.





Kington Parishes

There are many opportunities for developing our work. Lying on the Offa's Dyke long distance footpath means that walkers frequently come into the church for quiet and reflection. We would like to engage more with them. There is an exciting new community project in town called Open Arms Kington which is converting the Oxford Arms into a community centre and pub; they are enthusiastic about our involvement. In line with the strong environmental movement in town, a number of us are working to make St Mary's an Ecochurch.





Kington Parishes

St Peter's Titley

Titley lies three miles north-east of Kington on the road to nearby Presteigne in mid-Wales. The village is small with about 130 people, mostly older but with a few young families. There is no school or village shop but Titley is proud to be home to the famous village pub, The Stag, which won its first Michelin star in 2000 and retained it for many years. Now with a new chef, the pub remains a notable local haven of epicurean excellence, keeping Titley firmly on the culinary map. In spite of all the success and renown, however, The Stag retains its local charm and is very much a focal point for the village.

Titley also has a fantastic village hall just next to the pub, a great venue for weddings and large functions, and there are excellent kitchen facilities. It is in constant use, from Lent Luncheons and Harvest Suppers, to village meetings and the annual village fete, which is organised jointly by the church and the village hall.

St Peter's is at the far end of the village from the pub and the village hall. The Grade II listed building stands at the top of a gentle slope and has a very welcoming countenance. In 2010 the PCC raised money to mend major damage to the roof. This was a major undertaking and required a huge effort from everyone involved. We could not have achieved it without the generous support of the Village Hall Committee who helped us with joint fund-raising initiatives which continue to this day. We also continue to raise funds independently and have recently installed a fully-accessible WC and catering point to bring the church into the 21st Century. It is our hope and ambition that this might encourage playgroups and others to use the church - which is always open - as a meeting space, and to make it a centre of the community, as well as encouraging a wider range of services to encourage younger people back to our congregation. We have been particularly pleased to see walkers on Offa's Dyke and the Mortimer Trail using the church as a stopping point where they can refresh themselves and rest for a while in the peace of the church.





Kington Parishes

As you might expect, all of the graves in the churchyard at St Peter's are aligned east to west, as tradition dictates. All, that is, apart from one. The tomb of General Lazar Meszaros, the first Hungarian Minister of War, points towards his beloved Budapest. Exiled in 1851, General Meszaros was visiting Eyewood, just above Titley, when he died suddenly in 1858 at the age of 62. In his will, he requested that his remains not be returned to Hungary "until the last foreign soldier has left". He was reburied in Baja 133 years after his death, on 15 March 1991. The last Soviet soldiers - always seen by Hungarians as the successors of the Imperial Russian Army that crushed the Revolution 1848 - had left Hungary just months before.

Proud of its links with this brave statesman, in 2019, St Peter's hosted a service of dedication for the unveiling of a new plaque inside the church commemorating the General. The service was attended by representatives of the Hungarian government and a full military escort.

So there you have it: we are a small community but a busy one. Farming is the engine that drives most of the activity around here and we tend to be observant of its rhythms. (As you can appreciate, Harvest Festival is one of our most well-attended services by adults.) And though we are small, we are busy and we are committed to overcoming the problems which lie ahead - dwindling congregations and ageing populations being but two of them.

If we were to define our mission it would be this: to create a place of worship that is relevant to life in 21st Century England, even somewhere as quiet as Titley. While honouring the traditions of worship that have endured here for many decades, we also want to help the church to regain its position at the heart of village life. We currently have two services a month but we would love to increase that with the support of clergy and lay leaders willing to undertake the task.





Kington Parishes

St Mary's Kinnerton

St Mary's Kinnerton is a small church in the Radnor Valley just over the border into Wales. The village nestles at the foot of the Radnor Forest. When the bell is rung to call our handful of worshipers to Church during lambing, you can hear the ewes and lambs just over the churchyard wall. It is meaningful to be praying for the farming community when it can be heard going on all around. There are about 100 residents in the parish.

We are a warm and friendly church with a small ageing congregation, and as in the rest of the country very few younger people seem interested in joining us. However, St. Mary's is well endowed with a generous legacy, which means we do not have the pressure of having to raise funds for the upkeep of the building or the churchyard.

We hope the new incumbent for the Kington Parishes will be energetic, forward looking and inclusive. They would need to have an openness to young and old as well as rural and urban, and an ability to make the Church meaningful in this age of distractions.

We would hope to keep having 4 services a month, and perhaps one of them could be a family service, as there are some parents who would be interested. The church is always packed for the Crib service on Christmas Eve, also there are good attendances for Easter, Harvest Festival with harvest supper and sale of produce, Remembrance Sunday and the pet service, where all God's creatures including lambs, dogs, a donkey, doves and many more are all welcome.

The population is a mixture of local families mostly employed in agriculture, and retired couples who have come here to enjoy the peace and quiet of the beautiful rural setting.





Kington Parishes

There is a team of dedicated flower arrangers, who decorate the church. Also a wonderful team of cleaners who maintain the building and clean the brass. There is a monthly Parish magazine providing information about Church, village and local events, including children's activities and the Young Farmers Club.

There is a village hall where the WI hold their meetings. We also hold Quiz evenings, table top sales, Macmillan coffee mornings, whist drives, exercise classes, and occasional talks. There is a small group who do litter picking, and the Village Pond Committee which helps maintain the wildlife round the pond and has links to the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust.

We are looking forward to finding someone who will make the Church meaningful in this present age.





Kington Parishes

St Stephen's, Old Radnor

Yes, it's true, we are in Wales but belong to Hereford! We are a very small rural parish with St Stephen's Church sitting on its ancient hill surveying the Radnor Valley. Here there are extensive Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman remains just below the sheep cropped turf and arable fields. We have been a meeting place since ancient times, and our church carries a proud tradition. But it must be said that whilst a St Stephen's welcome is warm and heart-felt, the church was considered (not unlike many ancient buildings) colder than thought comfortable. A modern heating system has been installed which greatly helps! We would like to install a toilet and kitchen.

A small but dedicated congregation maintain the life of the church at Old Radnor. The Vice-Chairman of the PCC assists the clergy with Holy Communion twice a month. A busy band of us cleans and keeps the church in good order, and a rota of flower arrangers enhances the beauty of St. Stephen's. Due to the size and nature of the graveyard the local quarry has very kindly undertaken the maintenance of the main churchyard, and a team of outside volunteers care for the older part to enhance the wildlife habitat, and church members clean and maintain the paths.

Since the start of the year we have three services in the month. First Sunday is Junior Praise, suitable for all ages, and is led by Churchwarden Rosemary and her husband Philip. Second Sunday is Morning Eucharist. Third Sunday is Evening Prayer. On the fourth Sunday we are able to join Kinnerton with their Evening Prayer.





Kington Parishes

Annually, at the end of April, we hold our service to celebrate the end of lambing. Lambs are brought into church and blessed. Along with the congregation, we hold a festive tea which concludes the service, making it a joyful gathering (and popular with the children). We celebrate the Harvest, Christmas and Children's Activity Workshop, followed by the carol service the following evening. We host the Group Eucharist when it is our turn, on the fifth Sunday.

We have a busy village hall in nearby Walton, where the WI is active. We also have a busy Young Farmers Club. In many ways, as a community, we look west into the unfolding Radnorshire hills, just like our pub The Harp, which must have one of the most stunning views in the Marches.





Kington Parishes

St Thomas à Becket, Huntington

St Thomas à Becket Church is approached, unusually, through a farmyard. The building is Grade II* listed, late Norman. With its ancient oak pews and pleasing, more modern stained glass by the much-acclaimed Henry Payne of the Arts and Craft movement, it appeals strongly to worshippers, walkers, of whom many pass by and others, as witnessed by comments in the visitors' book.

The building is in good order and the organ has undergone a substantial upgrade. The church seats seventy and is open all day. There is a well-supplied table of cards, guides, local produce and Parish information. In the churchyard is a popular geocache. Maintenance follows a plan drawn up with Caring For God's Acre; and we boast a composting loo! The Electoral Roll numbers about a dozen and the PCC, a little less with treasurer, secretary and various other posts filled.

Huntington is very small and rural. The village is 3 miles west of Kington adjoining the Welsh Border. It comprises about 45 dwellings, supporting a lively community of 80 or so with farming as the mainstay. The Village Hall is used for a variety of functions including Harvest Supper, WI, dancing, table tennis, quiz nights, occasional reviews, films etc. The Swan is a gem of a local pub which holds the record in Herefordshire for length of the licence held in the same family. It has many regular customers and is a certain attraction to those holidaying locally. Annually, the Huntington Chase takes place from the village with competitors on horse, bike, running or just walking an 11k course taking in Hergest Ridge. Proceeds usually go to local causes. However, the highlight of the village's calendar is the Summer fête, established for over 60 years and a highly popular event, drawing crowds from far and wide. This is a real fête with tea on the lawn of the "big house" in the village and lots of fun and games!



Kington Parishes

Services at St Thomas à Becket are twice monthly, alternating between Holy Communion and Evening Prayer, each following the Book of Common Prayer. The congregation is mostly elderly and sometimes comprising just a few souls; a good attendance would be in double figures, more of course on Holy Days. Our organists cover most services which at Harvest Festival and Christmas are shared with the congregation of the United Reformed Church, also in the village. Bi-weekly is a half-hour kept for Silence and Prayer.

Many more people than those attending services have ties and good will towards this much loved church. Friends of St Thomas à Becket Huntington was formed 10 years ago and through talks and music provided a means for exploring creative ways to make the church a vibrant centre of village life, both cultural and spiritual. In this way it also contributed to the costs of caring for our church. Since Covid, the programme has lapsed and perhaps needs to be reborn with a fresh outlook.

Parish finances are reasonably robust; we are in the black on the current account, mainly underpinned by the Parish Giving scheme, fete, visitor donations and a sales table. We have been reliable contributors to the Parish Share. Reserves should be able to cope with any capital items, expected or not.

Our vision is to see more of our community embracing the spiritual life of the church.





Kington Parishes

The Vicarage, Kington

The Vicarage, built in 1968, with its spacious garden is adjacent to the Church and the Parish House whose drive it shares. There is ample parking space at the front of the Vicarage inside closed gates and completely independent of Parish House parking. A path and gate serves the Vicarage from the churchyard. The garden is well maintained comprising lawns, shrubs and trees, a fruit area and vegetable and herb garden near the house. French windows from the dining room open onto a patio. Inside, the lounge has doors leading into a dining room and both rooms look onto the garden. The kitchen leads to a utility room and thence to a single garage. There is a ground floor cloakroom. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, two with hand basins, a family bathroom and separate wc, an airing cupboard and a drop ladder leading to a floored loft. Also on the ground floor is an ample study with both an entrance from inside the house and a separate external entrance. The house has gas fired central heating with an open fire in the lounge and is served by mains drainage. Windows are double glazed. Outbuildings comprise a shed and small greenhouse. The curate's house stands in a residential area at the other end of Kington. It is also a modern property, presently let by the Diocese.

The Parish House is the converted stables and coach house of the former Vicarage. It is used for PCC meetings and fund-raising events and is available for hire by the community. Regular users include the Community Lunch Club for those living alone, the Operatic Society, Scout groups and parent and child groups organised by Home-Start. An office and storage space occupy the upper floor.





Kington Parishes

Parish Details

Profiles 2023	Population	Community	Choir	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals	Churchyard
St Mary, Kington	3240	Market town	Choir	3	2	23	Closed
St Peter, Titley	130	Pub	-	0	2	0	Open
St Mary, Kinnerton	100	-	-	1	0	1	Open
St Stephen, Old Radnor	300	Pub	-	1	1	2	Open
St Thomas à Becket Huntington	80	Pub	-	0	1	0	Open

The Crematorium is in Hereford

Services	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
St Mary, Kington	10:00 HC	10:00 HC	10:00 Morning Praise (lay)	10:00 HC	Group Service
St Peter, Titley	08:45 HC		10:00 HC		Group Service
St Mary, Kinnerton	11:30 HC	18:00 EP	08:45 HC	18:00 EP	Group Service
St Stephen, Old Radnor	18:00 EP	11:30 HC	18:00 HC/EP Junior Praise		Group Service
St Thomas à Becket, Huntington		08:45 HC		18:30 EP/BCP	Group Service