

OUR PARISH

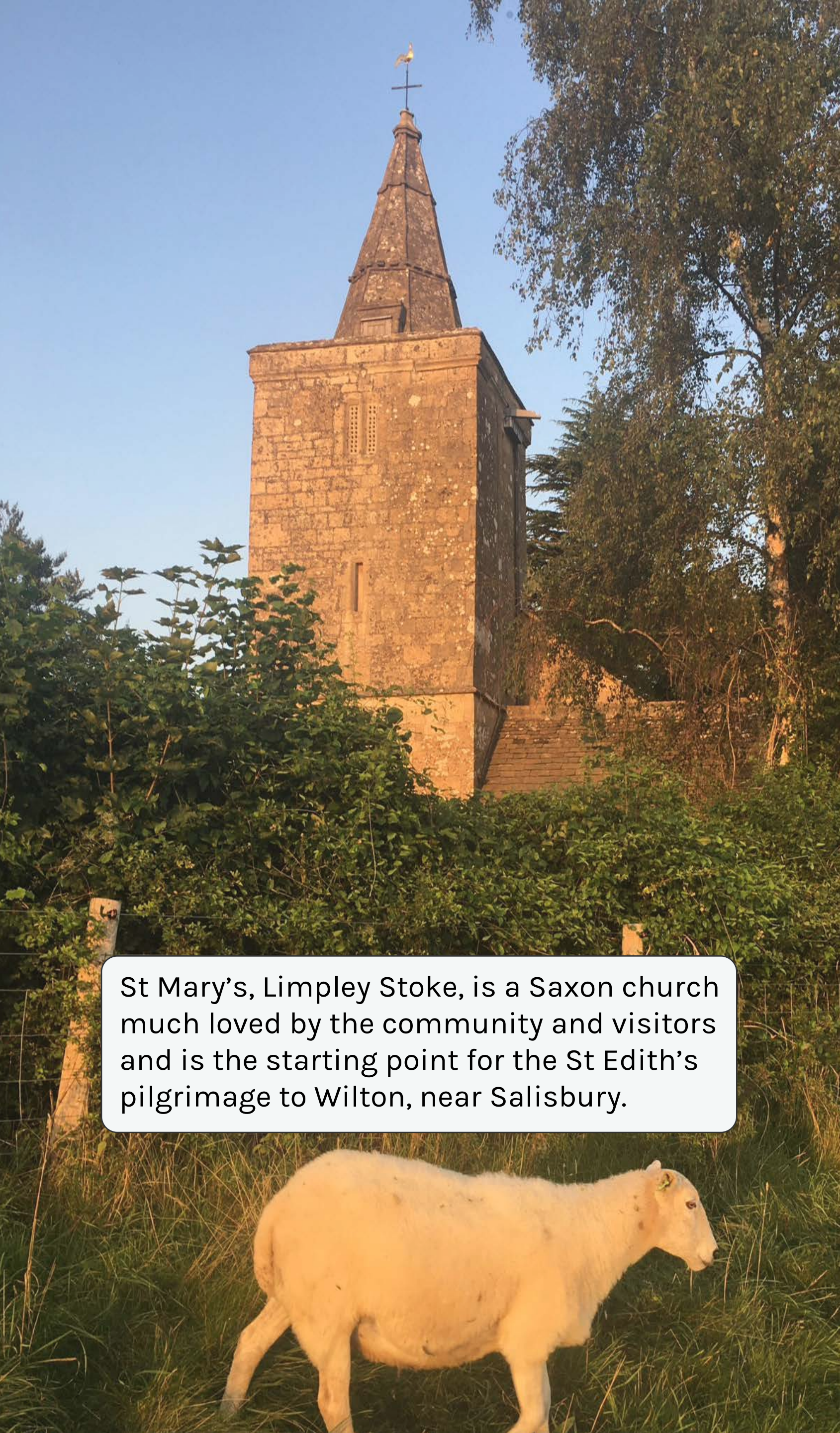
A landscape photograph capturing a sunset over a dark, flat field. The sun is a bright, glowing orb positioned centrally on the horizon, casting a warm, golden light across the sky. The sky is filled with soft, horizontal clouds, transitioning from a pale blue at the top to a deep orange near the horizon. In the foreground, the field is dark and mostly featureless. On the horizon line, several silhouettes are visible: a large tree on the left, a utility pole with wires, a house with a chimney, and several other trees and structures scattered across the distance. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path (Psalm 119)

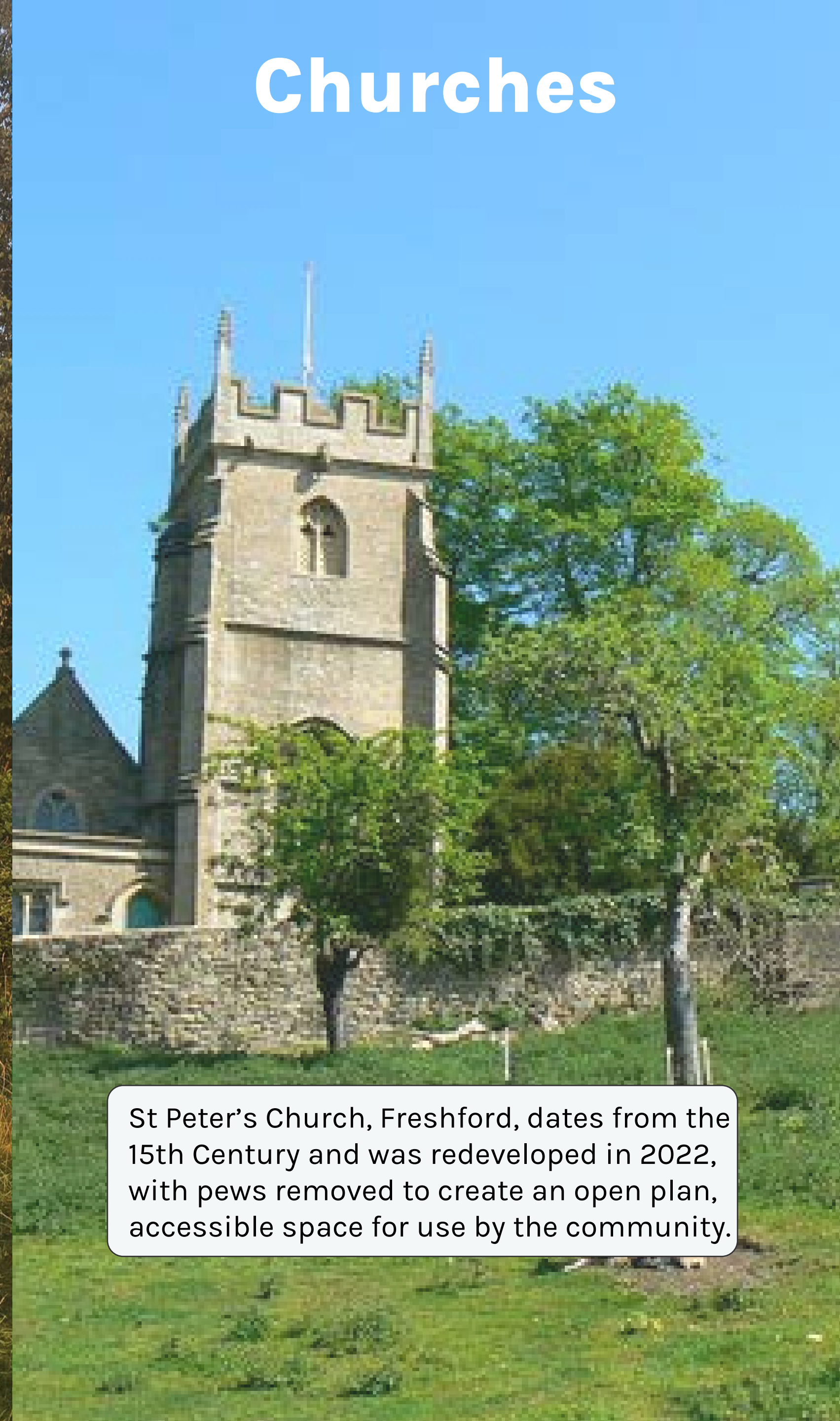
Freshford, Limpley Stoke and Hinton Charterhouse

We are a Benefice and single Parish of three villages, each with its own historic church, set on the southern edge of the Cotswold National Landscape - just 15 minutes from the centre of Bath with its leading university and excellent schools. The population of about 1500 is a mixed demographic of retired and working people, as more families with school age children move into the area. The Rectory is in Freshford, which has a railway station with trains to Bath, Salisbury and Bristol. Each village is on a bus route and the area is well connected via the A36 to the M4.

Churches



St Mary's, Limpley Stoke, is a Saxon church much loved by the community and visitors and is the starting point for the St Edith's pilgrimage to Wilton, near Salisbury.



St Peter's Church, Freshford, dates from the 15th Century and was redeveloped in 2022, with pews removed to create an open plan, accessible space for use by the community.



St John the Baptist in Hinton Charterhouse, the largest church, has beautiful grounds which make it popular for weddings, family-friendly services and events.

Vision

To develop our rural ministry, attracting new members, nurturing the congregation, and growing a Church that demonstrates the relevance of the Christian faith to today's society.

We want to reach out to our changing communities and are looking for someone who can help us develop a strong relationship with Freshford Church School, a highly regarded primary school which serves families from across the parish (rated as Good by OFSTED). We would also like to develop closer bonds with Freshford Preschool, (rated as Outstanding by OFSTED), Scout, Cub and Beaver groups, and two local toddler groups to connect with local families.

Our Mission

- * Reaching out to younger generations by i) strengthening our relationship with Freshford Church School and opening children's eyes to the Gospel and ii) providing child-friendly activities and all-age services, especially during key Christian festivals.
- * Finding innovative ways to engage people of all ages in wider church activities, or 'Church-Lite' services, creating openings for them to encounter God, in the hope of supporting their spiritual life and eventually growing our congregations and becoming more sustainable.
- * Being an inclusive and welcoming church, treating everyone equally, adapting and caring for the needs of our communities and our world in the face of social change, wars, climate change, biodiversity loss and future uncertainty.
- * Supporting our Church family in their need for spiritual nourishment by potentially increasing the variety and numbers of services available which might include reflective, traditional liturgy, all-age worship, prayer meetings and café church services, ensuring all members are spiritually fed, connected and involved.



Person Profile

- * A people person, good communicator and listener, who enjoys getting involved in village activities and spending time with young and old.
- * Comfortable in rural and village settings, building relationships with the school, preschool, and all sectors of the community.
- * An inspirational leader who will help us discern God's vision for the parish and build us up spiritually.
- * Willing to challenge and encourage us as we strive to make our church more visible in our community.
- * Adaptable, open-minded and able to lead a variety of services from simple liturgy services, to traditional liturgy, family-friendly, Fresh Expressions like café church and reflective services.
- * Having a pastoral heart and ability to support church sustainability and growth.
- * Organised, focussed and good at time management.
- * Spend time preparing and taking Sunday services, Baptisms, weddings and funerals.



We can offer

- * A loyal team willing to learn, grow and take on new responsibilities as we adapt to having a new leader with the time limitations of a House for Duty role.
- * The support of a group of churchwardens across three villages and an excellent paid parish administrator who eases the burden of parish management considerably. She manages the accounts and is supported by our PCC treasurer. We also have safeguarding and health and safety representatives.
- * A team of lay leaders who can assist in leading church services and work with you to investigate and try out new services to increase the number and variety available.
- * A growing Anna Chaplaincy ministry carrying out pastoral visits to the elderly offering support and connection to the church. The ministry is well connected to the Village Agent, an employee of West of England Rural Network, who offers support to elderly and isolated residents in our area.
- * Three foundation governors and a small team willing to support and carry out work in the school.
- * A simple one-page monthly newsletter with contributions from across the parish, issued by the administrator and shared with an email list of c.70 people.



Services

We hold weekly services at 10.30am each Sunday, which rotate around our three churches, with Communion at least twice a month. There is a desire to start some Sunday evening services, which have not been held since before lockdown.

Our services are very accessible whether using simple or traditional liturgy. Hymns are usually accompanied by the organ. There is an emphasis on community and fellowship. We hold Café Church services whenever there is a fifth Sunday in the month in the new open plan area at St Peter's Church.

The congregation wishes to increase the number and variety of services, and we're looking for someone who would be comfortable taking traditional liturgical and reflective services, simple all-age services, child-friendly services, as well as Fresh Expressions of Church. We want to appeal to different parts of our congregations and the wider community to help to grow the church. But we recognise there will be a challenge in terms of how to make services sustainable.

SERVICE PATTERN

1st Sunday 10.30am St John's, Hinton
2nd Sunday 10.30am St Peter's, Freshford
3rd Sunday 10.30am St Mary's, Limpley
Stoke
4th Sunday 10.30am St Peter's, Freshford
5th Sunday 10.30am Cafe Church, St
Peter's, Freshford

The Old Bakery

The Parish has its own community meeting rooms called the Old Bakery, on Freshford High Street, which is home to Freshford Toddler Group and has the parish administrative office upstairs.

It is used for church meetings, prayer meetings, and social events. We've previously held Cafe Church there (now in the reorganised St Peter's Church), women's and men's brunches, Maundy Thursday suppers and Celtic Evening Worship. It has also been used for Sunday morning services when St Peter's Church is not available, for example during building work.

The Old Bakery is rented out to local groups such as pilates classes and is available for private hire.



Challenges

- * We recognise the challenges our Parish will face as we adapt from having a full-time incumbent to a House for Duty Priest available only two days per week plus Sundays.
- * Our churches have an ageing congregation, with most worshippers over the age of 70, and declining numbers means we lack volunteers to action new ideas. We want to develop relationships with younger generations to start to build a supportive network to help make church activities more sustainable.
- * Although Freshford, Limpley Stoke and Hinton Charterhouse are largely affluent communities, there is a desire for our churches to engage more fully with people from all social backgrounds across all three villages to better reflect the needs of the wider community.
- * We face the ongoing challenge of making our churches more relevant to people across our communities.
- * Our Parish faces communication difficulties due to the geographical spread of our villages with the A36 dividing it in two. In previous years, each church had its own committee and there was a parish magazine for news. There is still some discussion about how best to replace these and communicate with our 1500 residents.
- * There is a desire for more opportunities for spiritual nourishment and support for home groups, prayer groups and explorer courses - but this conflicts with the reality that our churches have a declining membership to join in and support these activities.

Congregation

There is a regular worshipping community of about 30 to 40 people.

At Christmas, Easter and Harvest, our churches are filled with members of the local community, especially for our hugely popular carol services. In recent years we have also held Community Carols by Freshford Village Hall. There are special services for the school during the main Christian festivals and the preschool also comes to visit.

Weekly activities which support pastoral care and outreach include an Anna Chaplaincy, caring for the older and housebound members of our communities, as well as the monthly Wednesday Communion at St Peter's. We had two parish home groups but only one is meeting currently.

There is a weekly tea and cake afternoon held on Wednesdays in the Old Bakery which is open to all. Freshford Toddler Group meets in The Old Bakery on Thursday mornings. There is also a Ladies Walking Group which meets every month.

A small team including the school's Foundation Governors are working on building a closer relationship with Freshford Church School, attending collective worship, and encouraging Christian learning. We hope to build on this work as part of our mission to connect with families and young people in our parish.

There is a single PCC for the parish, with churchwardens to represent each church. Each village has its own Friends group which raises money for the maintenance of the church buildings, and we would like to revitalise these.

Church members and volunteers from our communities help to carry out repairs, clean-ups, and general upkeep of the buildings and grounds.



The Rectory



The Rectory is a four-bedroom coach house conversion of the late 1970's, set in the grounds of the Old Rectory in Freshford. It has a good-sized study, two reception rooms, and a reasonable sized kitchen. It is comfortable, in good order, with a double garage, parking and enclosed garden with magnificent views. It is planned to make several improvements to the property during the period of vacancy.

Benefice Context

We're three connected communities in a beautiful rural area on the edge of the Cotswolds, surrounded by countryside but only a short distance from the City of Bath, and the towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Frome, and Trowbridge.

Freshford has a thriving community shop and cafe, The Galleries, run mainly by volunteers, which has an ethos of sustainability, providing organic and Fairtrade products. Hinton Charterhouse has a vital village post office and shop, while Limpley Stoke residents have restored and developed a community-run pub, The Hop Pole, as a village resource.

There is a village hall in each of our communities: Freshford Village Memorial Hall, which is home to Freshford Preschool, Limpley Stoke Village Hall, which is owned by the church but run separately by a management committee, and Hinton Charterhouse Memorial Hall, which is home to its village toddler group.

There is a football club in Freshford with teams of various ages, as well as a tennis club, and a cricket club in Hinton Charterhouse, which was recently redeveloped and attracts players from across the area. The parish has three pubs, the Freshford Inn, the Rose & Crown and The Stag, both in Hinton Charterhouse, and two well-respected hotels, Homewood in Freshford, and The Limpley Stoke Hotel.

St Mary's Church is the starting point for the St Edith's Way pilgrimage walk on a 40-mile route once covered by Medieval pilgrims to Wilton, near Salisbury. The walk is enjoyed by walkers and tourists from all over the country and beyond.

There are popular community events, including summer fetes in Freshford and Hinton Charterhouse, which are supported by the church, a bonfire night display, regular talks, and environmental activities. Other groups include a Horticultural Society, History Society and Art Group.



Benefice Contacts



Our Benefice website
<https://flshc.co.uk/>

Freshford

<https://www.freshford.org.uk/>
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11086/>
<https://galleriesshop.co.uk/>
<https://www.freshfordschool.org.uk/>
<https://www.freshfordpreschool.co.uk/>

Limpley Stoke

<https://limpleystoke.com>
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11090/>
<https://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/stoke-church>

Hinton Charterhouse

<https://www.hintoncharterhouse.com/>
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11087/>
<http://www.hintoncharterhousepc.org.uk/>



Deanery Statement

The Parish of Freshford with Limpley Stoke and Hinton Charterhouse is part of the Bath Deanery. We are a friendly deanery where people generally get on well together and support one another.

Bath Deanery is one of the larger deaneries in the Bath and Wells Diocese. It is diverse in its nature, encompassing churches and chaplaincies in both the city and the surrounding villages, as well as from across the theological and worshipping spectrums. There's an energy and creativity to the deanery but also, as with the city itself, a family feel.

Clergy chapter meets every other month over lunch, fostering friendship, sharing ideas and resources where possible and encouraging mutual support. A clergy WhatsApp group also aids our support of one another and our communication. Clergy are also encouraged to meet informally at other times in smaller groups based on shared criteria such as geography, leading large churches, or leading rural churches.

We are praying that these next few years will be a fruitful and rewarding time to be in the Bath Deanery and we look forward to meeting and working with the newly appointed Incumbent of the parish. If you would like to find out more, or would value an informal chat about applying, please feel free to contact us on the details below:

Roger Driver Area Dean 07976 419981
Debbie Pow Assistant Area Dean 07739 515938
Pippa Page Lay Dean ppage198@gmail.com

Diocesan Statement



We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of House for Duty Priest of the Benefice of Freshford, Limpley Stoke and Hinton Charterhouse in the Diocese of Bath and Wells might be right for you. In order to help your prayerful discernment, we want to share a bit about our diocesan vision, within which we hope your own ministry.

Appointing a priest incumbent is amongst the most significant decisions that any benefice makes. When appointments work out well, they contribute significantly to parishes flourishing and growing in a host of different ways – in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities and in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church. Such flourishing is not, of course, all down to the person appointed as priest. It depends first and foremost upon God. It also depends upon everyone in a benefice being willing and able to contribute their unique gifts, skills, resources and abilities: working alongside their priest and sharing in the ministry of the benefice.

The flourishing and growth of churches always needs attention. It is especially important for us today, as we seek to recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic which accelerated the pattern of decline in church attendance that we have seen across our diocese. Thankfully there are signs that we are recovering from the impact of the pandemic. Not only does national church data show that our average adult weekly church attendance rose between 2021 and 2022 but, even more encouragingly, we have seen many churches around our diocese develop approaches that respond to the opportunities and challenges in their local context and enable growth to happen.

A vision for growth and transformation

In light of the challenges and opportunities we face, we feel our aim across all our parishes needs to be growing our churches, within and beyond our church buildings, in both numbers and depth of faith, so that we can better work for the transforming of our communities and the life of God's Kingdom amongst us.

Our shared priorities

To help us pursue this aim, and following consultation across the diocese in 2023, we are inviting all parishes to focus on four particular areas of our ministry together. It is important for clergy considering working in our diocese to know what these priorities are, even though what they look like in practice will vary in each place.

To value and cherish the people and resources we already have

We aim to ensure each person is well supported and equipped as a follower of Jesus Christ and for any ministries they may feel called to undertake, within the local church and wider community. We are committed to supporting the well-being of all our leaders and church officers, both lay and ordained. We have a fully funded clergy well-being service, the offer of peer support groups, and an excellent team of diocesan support staff fully focused on supporting our parishes, chaplaincies and schools.

To develop new Christian worshipping communities

Whether it be new forms of worship in a wide variety of settings and times, church revitalisations or church plants, we long to see the good news of Jesus connect with the people in our communities that our traditional offerings struggle to reach.

To share in ministry and leadership

We are committed to the New Testament vision of the church as a vibrant body of people all using their God-given gifts. We are committed to a model of shared local ministry: raising up and equipping lay and ordained leaders able to share together in leading the church and serving God's world.

Diocesan Statement

To deepen and grow faith

This is foundational to all we do. We long to see people of all ages and backgrounds, but perhaps especially children, young people and young adults, having more opportunities to discover, explore and grow in faith.

The outcome we are looking for

When he talks about his own ministry in 1 Corinthians, Paul captures the dynamic we are seeking to achieve. I planted, he says, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth (1 Cor 3: 6). We know that our churches will only flourish and grow as a result of God's action among us – it is God who gives the growth. But Paul is also clear that we have a part to play too – in watering and planting, in doing the things that enable the conditions for God's growth to be supported. So, covered by prayer, our confident hope is that if we are intentional in seeking God's guidance in planning and supporting growth, then God will honour that to see his people flourish and thrive - in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities, in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church and in transforming communities locally and beyond.

Local shaping and diocesan support

There can't be any 'one size fits' all approach to turning the priorities outlined above into action. They always need to be adapted to local circumstances, opportunities and needs. The task of our diocesan support services is to get behind all that local benefices are doing and apart from their general support, there is specific support for exploring how to grow new Christian communities, how to discern and equip a growing range of ministries in your context and how to work well with children and young people. All these areas of support are grounded in exploring what it means to live out our faith.

What implications does this have for the appointment of clergy?

It is important for us all to appoint clergy to benefices who are ready, willing and able to pray for and share in the vision we have for the flourishing and growth of churches and Christian life in our diocese. We want to create an environment that could be described as high challenge, high support.

This means appointing clergy who will not only value all that already exists but will be eager to work with others to build on and develop it. It means appointing clergy who are committed to learning, being creative, and to starting with the gifts God has given to them, their benefice and the wider community.

We are therefore looking to appoint candidates who will:

- * be committed to praying and intentionally seeking the growth and flourishing of the benefices in their care
- * relish and expect to work in an environment that is high challenge, high support
- * work joyfully and collaboratively with those who share with them locally in ministry and leadership, with their congregations and with others in their locality, to identify ways to grow and develop their churches with the grain of local priorities, resources, skills and passions.
- * enjoy working in partnership with deanery and diocesan colleagues.

We hope this might be you! We hope that you'd like to join us on the adventure and course we've set for our next ten years. We're praying that God will send us the right labourers for the harvest that God has set before us. Could this be you?



Bishop Michael