

**ST JOHN-IN-BEDWARDINE  
WORCESTER**



**AT THE HEART OF 'THE VILLAGE IN THE CITY'**

# **DIOCESE OF WORCESTER**

**JANUARY 2009**

(<http://www.stjohninbedwardine.co.uk/>)

## **A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF ST JOHN'S**

### **JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN FAITH**

First and foremost, we would like our new priest to be a person of God, serving our Lord in 'Godliness'. The quality of their spiritual leadership would be, therefore, central to their rôle and their leadership of us as a Christian community.

At present, we are in an unfortunate position. The diocese has engaged in a process of consultation with deaneries in order to reduce the overall number of stipendiary clergy. St John's (by virtue of the fact that it was the first to become vacant) was facing the possibility of becoming subject to pastoral reorganisation such that it would come under the care of one of the neighbouring priests. However, the Diocesan Pastoral Committee has made provision for this fixed term post of three years in order to build capacity at St John's so that it is better able to operate within a context in which there are fewer stipendiary clergy.

We are seeking to appoint a gifted and energetic person to this fixed-term post whom we should like to be an effective, intellectual teacher and theologically sound preacher, able to apply this practically whilst being able to encompass a range of styles and patterns of worship. We hope that s/he is able to be a good team leader in terms of our parish and congregation. We trust that s/he will be able to exploit our skills in terms of supporting the worship of the church, as well as providing an excellent example in terms of her/his talents in leading our services.

Our new priest should offer a dynamic approach to the affirmation and development of the ministry of baptized adults so that her/his work among the members of the church will increase participation, raise effectiveness, inspire enthusiastic discipleship and energise the mission

of the church. Ideally, at the end of this phrase of ministry, the church should be a place in which people's gifts and callings are given full expression, whilst maintaining our values (see *last page*), the laity is participating in leadership and strategic planning and the development of mission initiatives and opportunities are provided for people to continue to explore their faith and deepen their spirituality

The church of St John-in-Bedwardine has been standing in a dominant part of the area of Worcester, known as the Village in the City for more than 600 years. It is seen as a noteworthy church serving a strategically significant area of the city. St John's, although making up a large part of Worcester, is separated from the rest by the River Severn. It is quite self contained and proud of its identity and history. The priest from our church has always been an important and respected leader in the community at large.

In the past, we have been blessed by the calibre of our priests. There has been a long history of very able and gifted priests at St. John's and the congregation has grown used to (and somewhat dependant upon) a strong model of leadership. These priests have been Good Shepherds who have been traditional in their teaching and use of church liturgy but innovative in their spiritual leadership. Many curates have been trained in this parish, one of whom was amongst the first women to become a Cathedral Canon.

The majority of our regular congregation are retired or nearing retirement. Most live within the parish but some have moved out and continue to travel to worship at St John's. Many have been educated within the Church of England and have a spiritual depth and knowledgeable understanding. Although they strongly value the use of tradition liturgy and would not wish to lose it they also recognise the necessity of making the worship comprehensible and appealing to others.

We are very aware of the lack of inclusion and commitment from younger people and our need for help to build up our church membership. Ideally we would like a priest who has a good outreach to non-members, schools and other groups related to St John's. She/he should be a 'family person', which does not mean necessarily having

their own family, but possessing inter-personal skills to enable them to relate to all the different groups, including teenagers and older people. We are seeking someone who is enthusiastic, caring and innovative in terms of her/his work with the different age groups and aspects of worship and mission and who will be seen as the Church's authority and guide in the community of St John's.

### **Other clergy and ministries**

We have been fortunate, during the vacancy, to have been helped by retired clergy living in the area, our associate priest, and other clergy in the Worcester Diocese, so that we have managed to continue with our pattern of worship. We have also continued the liaison meetings between the local West Worcester Anglican, Free Church, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches called 'Churches Together'.

Whilst we have been supported well by our clergy friends, we are very conscious that at present we are only working hard to stand still and maintain the services and the running of the church on a day-to-day basis; during the vacancy we have not been able to engage in the kind of development of Christian worship and mission that we would dearly love to provide if we had our own priest.

### **Background Information**

The Parish Church of St John-in-Bedwardine was dedicated on Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 1371 to serve the needs of the people living on the west side of Worcester. The area became known as St John's and today is locally referred to as the *Village in the City* for a community of shops, dentists, doctors, pubs, nursing homes, a library and houses are clustered around the church's perimeter. The parish once had a huge market garden but now those acreages have been built on. It now includes a large secondary school, a primary school (of which the last incumbent was a governor), a golf course and sports' centre. The adjacent parish of St.

Clement contains the County Cricket Ground, Cripplegate Park and the University College of Worcester. Bus routes connect to surrounding areas and the hospital and it is a pleasant twenty minute walk along the River Severn from our church to the Cathedral, city centre and access to further state and independent educational establishments.

Bedwardine electoral Ward includes an estate of 98 modern houses at Meadowbank Drive, but is otherwise co-terminus with the Parish Boundary. The mid-2006 population estimates gave the following age profile for the Ward. By comparison with the rest of the County the table also shows a small bias towards older age groups – but not significantly so.

2006 population estimates	Bedwardine Ward		Worcestershire County
	Population	Percentage	Percentage
0-14	1,288	16.8	17.1
15-24	855	11.1	11.4
25-44	1,986	25.9	26.1
45-64	2,162	28.2	27.7
65+	1,379	18.0	17.7
Total	7,670	100.0	100.0

## **The Buildings**

The Parish Church still retains some medieval features although it was renovated in 1884 when the Chancel was extended over the area where it is believed that many soldiers from the Battle of Worcester in 1651 were buried. Very recently the font was moved and this, with the removal of the pews from the North Aisle, has given us more flexibility and the opportunity for social and community events to be held in the church, such as the Christmas lunch for the pupils at the referral-unit who were across the road, for the entertaining of our German friends from Magdeburg or for church fairs. At the same time the kitchen and WCs were rebuilt and the Blakefield Room, which is attached to the west end of the church, was refurbished. This room is in constant use and hired by the local community for yoga classes, children's music sessions, U3A groups, art classes, etc. as well as being used for Church meetings.

Attached to the Priest's vestry is the original vicarage that now houses the parish office, which is staffed by volunteers from 10am-11.30am Tuesday-Friday, the Vicar's office and a small meeting room. We receive rent from the flat above.

The present vicarage is a comfortable, detached, Edwardian house with five bedrooms and a large garden. It is situated on the leafy Malvern Road in the centre of the parish, opposite the Primary school and is only a ten minute walk from our church. We also own a 1960's house which is rented out at present, but intended for use by a curate.

The church is open every day between 9.30 am and 5 pm and people often call in or sit on the benches under the trees on the 'green' just outside the main door.



Some members of our congregation who were baptised at St John-in-Bedwardine

## The Usual Pattern of our Sunday Services

The pattern of most of our services could be described as traditional in style, but we are open to, and do have, other forms of worship that offer a rich, Christian, spiritual experience.

	8.00 am	Holy Communion:	BCP High Altar
	10.00 am	Parish Communion:	Rite A Nave Altar
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday Only	10.00 am	Family Communion	Nave Altar
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday Only	6.30 pm	Evensong	BCP: High Altar
	6.30 pm	Evening Prayer	(said) Lady Chapel

Evening Prayer is said on most days and has been laity led during the vacancy.