

# CHRIST CHURCH ABINGDON

*ASSOCIATE VICAR PROFILE*

*APRIL 2024*



**CHRIST CHURCH**  
ABINGDON



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# FOREWORD FROM THE BISHOP OF DORCHESTER

Dear potential applicants,

I am delighted that you are reading this profile and encourage you to pray about whether this position might be the role to which God is now calling you.

Christ Church Abingdon, one of our prominent evangelical churches, are seeking an Associate Vicar to minister to the established Long Furlong congregation, and also to work as part of the team across the parish. They seek a friendly, warm and empathic minister who will also bring a confidence as they minister to many competent, gifted and spiritually mature members of the congregations. The Associate Vicar will be confident in ministering to families and all ages and will have a passion for mission. They will join a large team and so will be approachable and personable as they bring good teamwork skills. The new Associate Vicar will be confident in their faith and expectant of all that God will continue to do, and we hope and pray that they will be joyful as they work with us in seeking to grow God's Kingdom.



The Benefice recognises that they are under-represented in a number of key characteristics and would particularly welcome applications from those who would increase their diversity.

You will find an experienced and friendly Deanery with supportive colleagues. Our Episcopal Area and Diocese are in good heart, expectant for all that God will do and thankful for all that God is doing.

Please pray about whether you might be the right person to join us. If you decide to apply, I would be delighted to receive your application for this position and look forward to the possibility of welcoming you as a potential colleague to partner in the gospel with me.

With every blessing,

*+ Gavin Dorchester*

Rt. Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester



## MESSAGE FROM THE VICAR

Thank you for your interest in the role of Associate Vicar here at Christ Church Abingdon.

I love Psalm 16:6 which says, 'The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.' I think that's true of Abingdon - it's a delightful market town to live in, adjacent to the river Thames, with friendly people, diverse employment, and an active community life. And the verse is also true of Christ Church, with lively congregations full of people who love the Lord, love each other practically, and who have a missional heart. I really enjoy living and serving the Lord here.

I was previously the Associate Vicar here for five years from 2011, before becoming the Vicar. I know from first-hand experience that the joy of the Associate Vicar role is having the freedom to lead a thriving and mature church plant at Long Furlong, combined with gaining great experience in helping to lead a large church with many exciting ministries across the wider parish. The congregation at Long Furlong church is gifted, loving, and welcoming, and is a delight to serve alongside. As Associate Vicar you are free from some of the admin of an incumbent's role, which means you have more time to invest in ministry and mission.

With your time shared between Long Furlong and the wider parish, you'll need to work within that complexity and use your time carefully to maximise gospel impact. Given the active nature of the church and the many ministry opportunities, you'll need to prayerfully choose what you say 'yes' or 'no' to, so that you work and minister at a sustainable pace. The clergy role here is very much an Ephesians 4 model, equipping God's people for the work of ministry, whilst also leading by example.

If, as you read the profile, you feel the Lord stirring your heart, you are committed to growing disciples of Jesus, and are rooted in the ministry of the Word and the Spirit, we'd love you to apply. Please get in touch for an informal chat or visit with me and/ or the churchwardens as you consider how the Lord might be leading you.

With my prayers as we seek who the Lord is calling to this role.

Rev. Keith Dunnett  
Vicar, Christ Church Abingdon



# WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in our vacancy for an Associate Vicar.

We are a large, evangelical Anglican church, in the north of Abingdon, Oxfordshire. We meet on two sites (Northcourt Road and Long Furlong) and have a wide variety of services and ministries.

Our vision, discerned by the church in 2018/19, is to grow disciples of Jesus by being a church family that prioritises **being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and living for Jesus**. We want to equip people to be disciples of Jesus in their everyday lives as well as within our gathered worshipping congregations, so that our communities and workplaces are transformed.

From its beginning as a church plant over 60 years ago, based around a tithe barn in Northcourt Road, Christ Church Abingdon (CCA) has grown with a mission-mindedness, rooted in the evangelical faith with an emphasis on the ministry of the Word and the Spirit. Thirty years ago, we planted a congregation on a (then) new housing estate on the edge of town, Long Furlong. We as a church are grateful for our history because we have seen God's continued faithfulness as we have taken steps of faith. We feel the chapters written of our story so far are pointing us to further growth and so we actively look to our future. We're now prayerfully considering how we reach out with the gospel to more new estates currently being built in the parish.

Joining us as our new Associate Vicar, you will become part of this exciting ongoing story. You will work with the Vicar and Staff Team in collaborative leadership. You will have responsibility for the Long Furlong congregation and support the wider ministry of the parish. Our Long Furlong congregation meets in the hall of a primary school and has an informal style, a culture of participation (all-member ministry) and a strong sense of fellowship and community.

We have prayerfully considered the qualities we should seek in our new Associate Vicar and believe God is calling an Evangelical Anglican ordained priest who strives to be:

- a **gifted teacher and preacher**
- a **team builder and team player**
- a **missionary bridge builder**

In this document we tell you more about the role and describe our church, its mission, and our aspirations for the future. We hope this will give you a flavour of the ways God is working in North Abingdon and help you to discern whether God may be calling you to be our next Associate Vicar.



# ABOUT YOU

## Responsibilities of the Role

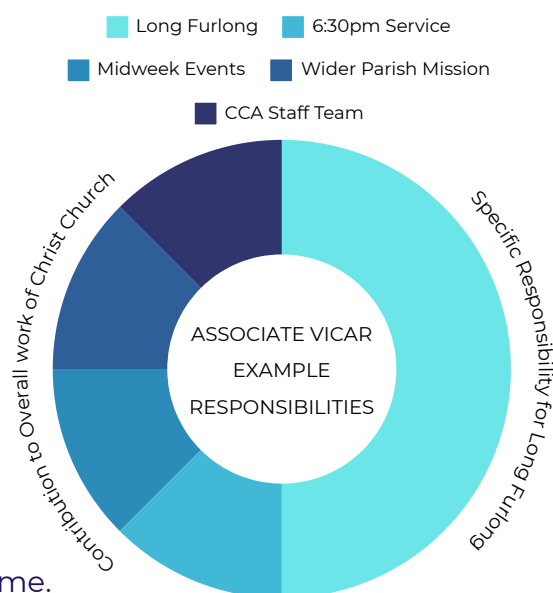
The main responsibilities of your role as Associate Vicar are described below.

You will be **part of the Christ Church Staff Team**. Within that team, you will bring gifts that complement those of the other members. Clearly your relationship with the Vicar will be pivotally important.

You will have **specific responsibility for Christ Church, Long Furlong**, working with the lay leadership at Long Furlong in developing strategy, planning teaching and worship and in providing direction to the ministries, discipleship, activities, and outreach that take place. These responsibilities will take approximately 50% of your time.

For the remaining 50%, you will **contribute to the overall work of Christ Church**, for example by being involved in the Sunday evening service and mid-week speaking events and contributing to the wider mission of the parish, according to your gifting.

We want to work with you to fine tune the detail of your role, to align with your specific gifts, once you are here with us in Abingdon. We will support you in selecting your responsibilities, deepening your faith and developing your gifts and skills, to ensure that you can thrive in this role.



## Gifts and Experience

To deliver the responsibilities of our Associate Vicar, we believe we are looking for a talented, ordained priest, passionate about God and continually growing in their relationship with Christ. We seek someone who has a deep commitment to the Bible and the importance of prayer, an ongoing experience of the renewing work of the Spirit, someone who strives to be:

**a gifted teacher and preacher** – someone who can communicate their passionate love of God through leading worship, expounding Scripture, and ministering in the Spirit - helping us grow in our relationship with God as well as in our ministry and service to our neighbours and each other.

**a team builder and team player** – someone with good inter-personal skills that develop and maintain effective working relationships. We seek a facilitator rather than a provider, someone who can recognise, draw out, nurture, and use the gifts of church members – a proven leader and delegator. We seek someone who will:

- equally value and affirm the ministries of all members, comfortable with working alongside both men and women, and able to interact right across the age range
- listen, recognise their own gifts and work effectively with others with complementary gifts
- contribute to the wider parish, and work with others of different backgrounds.

**a missionary bridge builder** – someone who can connect with people where they are and

- draw the non-believer to Christ,

- encourage people new to the Christian Faith,
- guide existing Church members in evangelism and discipleship
- recognise when a member of the flock is struggling in their faith, quietly draw alongside and help them to continue to walk with God.

We seek someone with a heart for the community, sensitive to the needs of the 'fringe' with whom we have connections (including the Long Furlong Primary School\* and the local community association) and able to deepen those relationships, someone able to develop the mid-week presence of our church, recognising the lifestyle of many families in the area – preferably someone sociable, outward looking and culturally aware.

In addition to these core skills and experience, as a member of a staff team in a large and busy church, you will need to be comfortable with using the management structures and IT-based systems that facilitate the smooth running of a large church. You will also need to have good time-management skills, and the ability, with the Long Furlong Leadership team, to manage your workload, choosing carefully what you take up and put down.

## Housing

You will be provided with a modern four-bedroom, two-bathroom house on the Long Furlong estate, a few hundred metres from the primary school where we meet to worship on a Sunday. The ground floor has been extended, so the accommodation now includes two studies and an additional sitting room. There is a double garage and driveway parking for four cars. It is also within easy walking distance of our Northcourt Road site, the vicarage, and the new housing development on the northern edge of the town.



\* Long Furlong Primary School is run by Oxfordshire County Council. It is not a church school.



# ABOUT US

## Christ Church

Christ Church began in the 1950s when a small group of scientists and others new to the area desired a Christian presence in the north of Abingdon. An ancient and dilapidated tithe barn, then used by a dairy, was purchased and restored for use as a church building; this is our worship centre today on our Northcourt Road site. The community in this part of the town continued to expand, resulting in a community today of around 6500 houses. A further development of around 1200 houses is now taking shape on the northern perimeter of the town.

In the early days, the church was overseen by a Curate from St. Helen's Church in the town centre. Over time, Christ Church grew to need its own vicar, and in 2011, to become a separate parish, the parish of North Abingdon. Most of the congregation have professional backgrounds and, continuing the focus from the earliest days, there is a high proportion of scientists, who work in the nearby research establishments, science parks or in the universities.

We hold four services on a Sunday (three at Northcourt Road and one at Long Furlong), with a variety of styles of worship from informal to contemporary to more traditional, reflecting the diversity of our Church community. We also have a wide range of midweek fellowship and outreach activities. We currently have an electoral roll of 440, and a typical total Sunday attendance of around 350 adults and 70 children. We place an important emphasis on people serving Christ on their Frontlines, whether that be at work, school, or university, in their families, neighbourhoods and social networks.

Our non-traditional church building means that Christ Church is not often sought out by those outside the congregation as a setting for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Weddings and funerals are therefore relatively infrequent for a church of this size. We have a policy of thanksgivings and baptisms. Occasionally, we hold services of adult baptism by immersion, using our own mobile pool.





Christ Church has a large and gifted staff team led by the Vicar (Keith Dunnett). The staff team acts as a core resource to enable growth and fruitfulness throughout the fellowship, enjoying a high degree of commitment and relationship to one another. The team meets together regularly during the week for worship, Bible study and prayer. There are also occasions when the team go away together, attend leadership conferences, have staff days, and take retreats. In addition to the staff team, there are several lay leaders who lead and preach at services, as well as heading up significant areas of ministry. Christ Church currently has five Licensed Lay Ministers, four of whom are based at Long Furlong.



The church has strong safeguarding policies, worked out over many years, and a committed volunteer team, wholeheartedly supported by the staff, which oversees all aspects of the safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults across both sites. We are thankful for the lessons learned, and the healing the Lord continues to bring, since our previous vicar was found guilty of spiritual abuse; and we seek to remain vigilant for any residual personal or cultural impact. Details of policies, guidelines and contacts are on the church websites.

Christ Church is an evangelical Anglican church, valuing scripture as authoritative and instructive, and affiliated to the Evangelical Alliance. We are committed in working together with other churches across the town, deanery and ecumenically – with an aim to be effective in mission and ministry - especially where we can share resources and utilise our complementary gifts.

## Equipping for Growth

Since we reconnected and re-established after the Covid pandemic, we have seen a change in the pattern of attendance. Some members of our church community have drifted away, and many others attend less frequently. We are finding it harder to recruit and retain volunteers, especially for the daytime ministries, and many of those who are involved report feeling weary and burdened. However, we also see many new opportunities around us, from welcoming refugees to supporting the frail, and helping with debt, and we want to do more. Also, whilst our numbers certainly put us in the 'large church' capacity, many of our structures and ways of working are still based on the methods which worked when we were much smaller.

We are therefore starting on a project to look at our structure and culture and establish the foundations for the next stage of growth. We want all our members, paid and voluntary, to thrive in their ministry and to make sure we focus on the things which God is calling us to do, instead of trying to take on everything we could do. The first stage of work, a review by an external consultant, is already underway.

We know that this type of change won't happen quickly, and so, whilst we hope to have made some progress by the time you join us, ideally in the autumn, we know there will still be a long way to go. We hope that our new Associate Vicar will be excited by joining us on this journey and will help us shape our future direction, drawing on their experience from previous churches or secular life.







# Christ Church, Long Furlong (LF)

Long Furlong is the name of a modern housing estate on the north side of Abingdon. The church plant on Long Furlong began with the visiting of new homes from 1987 and weekly services have been held on the estate since 1994. Since that time, the congregation has grown steadily, and a typical Sunday attendance is now about 120 people.

Christ Church, Long Furlong has a distinct identity within the Christ Church family, with its own strategy, teaching programme, fellowship, and outreach activities, consistent with the overall Christ Church vision and values. It has its own lay leadership team, chaired by the Associate Vicar. Initially made up almost entirely of families with young children, our church family now encompasses the whole age range from newborns to nineties. Although we are an evangelical Anglican church, our members are from a broad range of church backgrounds and from none. We seek to affirm and use this diversity in our church life. Whilst many of the original members moved from, and still have ties with Northcourt Road, the congregation has evolved to be more distinct with many today identifying with Long Furlong rather than Christ Church as their church. A significant fraction of our members lives on the estate or in nearby roads, within a short walk of the school where we meet, but we also attract people from the rest of Abingdon and even further afield, who choose to join for the welcoming family feel and informal style.

We are drawn to three actions from the Christ Church vision as priorities for us as a congregation:

**Worship** - God is honoured through our deep, passionate, whole-life worship

**Acceptance** - everyone is welcomed and finds a place to belong and be loved

**Community** - we meet local needs through loving service offered in Jesus' name.

Throughout its history, Long Furlong has been richly blessed with committed and capable members who value relationship with God, fellowship within the church, and active engagement in the wider community. Children and young people form about a fifth of our congregation and we value immensely their contribution to our church life. Long Furlong has a strong family feel over the whole age spectrum, with key members serving and leading in every age group. Everyone matters and is equally valued.

Long Furlong has a history of steady growth, and we want this to continue. A word of prophecy from our early days, drawn from Isaiah 60 : 21b-22, has guided us on our journey:

"They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendour. The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly."

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour."

Now approaching our thirtieth anniversary, we can probably no longer consider ourselves to be a 'shoot', and we have found ourselves drawn to a phrase in Isaiah 61 : 3b

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour."

For some time now, the school hall has been virtually at capacity. As a result, we feel that we have become somewhat 'too comfortable', our growth has slowed, and we sense that we need a new sense of direction. We hope that our new Associate Vicar will join us on this journey and lead the Long Furlong congregation to discern God's vision for the next phase of its life and ministry.

## Sunday Services



We meet every Sunday at 10 a.m. in the primary school hall. The environment is bright, warm, and modern. Most of the services are a very informal form of Morning Worship, and once a month we have a service of Holy Communion, based on Common Worship. Periodically, we hold 'Wellspring,' a quieter contemplative service, in parallel to our main service. Our venue of a school hall means that much of our church equipment lives in boxes during the week, and set-up/set-down are a significant part of our church life together.

There is strong lay involvement in speaking and leading services. We have several good singers and instrumentalists who can lead us in sung worship. Several of the musicians are drawn from our ranks of young people. We use modern music primarily, but also choose traditional hymns when appropriate. Songs and prayers are projected electronically onto a screen permanently located on the wall, and preachers also often use this facility in their talks.

Children and young people are an important part of our church family. During term time, we normally stay together for the first twenty minutes, and then the young people go to a range of groups led by members of the congregation. There are four groups covering the age range 0-18 and we use the adjacent community centre for some of the children's groups.

As our young people grow older, we encourage them to be actively involved in many aspects of church life. The two oldest groups have regular Sundays when they 'serve,' engaging with the younger groups, joining the music team, or helping with the main service.

## Midweek

Long Furlong's midweek activities are a blend of those which focus on our congregation, and those where we join with church members from Northcourt Road. Our worship venue of a primary school is not available to us during daytime during term and so we use the adjacent community centre when we need a space that is bigger than a family home.

## Life Groups

Life groups (our home groups) are an important part of our church fellowship. Currently seven groups meet regularly in homes (some daytime and some evening) and are places of love, acceptance, friendship, fun, learning, discipleship, and service, especially as the Long Furlong congregation continues to grow larger. These groups use a blend of Bible studies, topic studies, times of prayer and socials. These groups provide the main source of pastoral care and there is also a small central pastoral team.



## Pastoral Care

The Long Furlong Pastoral Team, which is part of the wider CCA Pastoral Team, offers prayer, comfort, and support to anyone who needs a listening ear and encouragement, whatever their situation or need. We also offer visiting and home communion.



# Prayer

Prayer is core to our church life, individually and collectively. Prayer ministry is often offered at the end of the service. Intercessory prayer for each other's needs and for wider issues forms an important part of life groups. Once a term, we have a dedicated prayer evening, usually held in the school, where we use a variety of styles of prayer to help us discern God's will for the months ahead.

# Fellowship

We enjoy spending time together. Coffee after the service provides an important opportunity to catch up with friends and get to know visitors and newcomers, and a time to play for our younger members. Nobody seems in a hurry to leave.

About once a term, we share lunch together, a 'bring-and-share,' a picnic, or one of our popular 'link-up lunches' when families are 'paired' with others whom they may know less well (at least at the start). We hold regular awaydays (usually not very far away) for fellowship and teaching and quiet days for prayer and reflection.



This friendship and care extend during the week. Meals are provided to help people out in busy times, such as the arrival of a new baby or a return home after a stay in hospital. We keep in contact with those who are unwell, and our networks provide pastoral support and practical help as needed.

# Outreach

We also have our own programme of outreach activities, focussed on drawing in those who live on the estate or close by.

**Singing Circle**, our group for pre-school children and their carers, meets in Long Furlong Community Centre every Thursday for singing followed by coffee and play. We have been delighted to see the attendance at Singing Circle grow almost fourfold since we resumed after Covid and are wondering how best to encourage the members to take the next step in their faith journey.

**Friendly Cuppa** offers a chance to meet with others from Long Furlong for a drink, chat, activities and make friends. It meets once a month on a Wednesday afternoon in the Community Centre. Most of its members are drawn from the older section of our community. We have just started to run short services aimed at this group, at the time of the major festivals, to draw these people into church.

**Coffee Break** meets for coffee and chat on Tuesday mornings and provides a chance to catch up with what's going on in our families, our church, and our community. It alternates between meeting at a coffee shop and in someone's home. All ages are welcome.

**Long Furlong Primary School** activities are provided by the wider CCA children's ministry team, particularly supported by the Long Furlong congregation. The team delivers six assemblies in the school each year, and a week-long prayer space which is loved by the pupils.







# Christ Church, Northcourt Road (NCR)

Northcourt Road draws its congregations from a mix of people of all ages and diverse backgrounds, mainly from the residential area in the northern half of Abingdon but also across Abingdon and beyond. It also caters more widely for people who feel at home with its evangelical outlook, both conservative and charismatic. This includes many from non-Anglican backgrounds. The services reflect this constituency.

## Sunday Services

Northcourt Road has three services each Sunday: 9:30 a.m. (with groups for children and youth), 11:20 a.m. (more traditional) and 6:30 p.m. (space for worship, teaching, and ministry). Holy Communion is offered in at least one service across the parish each Sunday. We welcome all ages at all services, but we have specific intergenerational services at times, mostly around Christmas, Easter and during school holidays.

Worship teams, led by a worship pastor, resource the services. Songs and hymns are taken from many sources, using the best of old and new and provide a variety of styles of worship.

We have interview slots most weeks when we hear about people's front lines and ministry updates. The evening services give space for the congregation to offer thanks and praise and for the gifts of the Spirit such as words, pictures, and prophecies. Our Newcomers team is active, seeking to help welcome and integrate newcomers into the church.

The children and younger youth groups meet during the 9:30 service. Sparks is for under 5's, Ignite for Reception to Year 6 children, and Pathfinders for youth in Years 7 to 9. Some of the youth serve in the Sparks, Ignite, Tech and Worship Band teams.

## Life Groups

Life groups are at the heart of church life - meeting both in homes and on the church site during the week. There are currently 21 groups at NCR, plus two missional communities and a Local Houses of Prayer group. We have a life group coordinator, and the group leaders meet with the vicar and the coordinator three times a year when we invest in the life group ministry. Life Groups at NCR follow a central teaching programme in the autumn term linked to the Sunday teaching material, and then each group chooses their material for the Spring and Summer terms. We have some groups focussed on specific people, including Alpha-follow-up, newcomers, a young parent's missional community, and Re-Imagining Faith, for Christians wrestling with significant questions.

## Pastoral Ministry

Northcourt Road has several pastoral teams that work closely together providing care and support. The Visiting Team visits people in their homes and offers friendship and support to those in need. The Prayer Ministry Team offers prayer ministry specifically at the end of services. The Pastoral Listening and Prayer Ministry Team offers longer term listening and prayer ministry during the week. An Intercessors group commits to regular – often confidential – prayer for key needs and a Home Communion team takes communion to the housebound.

# Buildings

Christ Church was formed in 1961 by the conversion of a 13th century tithe barn, a Grade II listed building. With its flexible seating arrangements, it can seat up to 200 people for church services and is also used for social occasions.

Since the tithe barn was converted, several other building projects have been undertaken. Our buildings now provide a base for a wide range of ministries, including a busy café and the northern hub of the Abingdon Foodbank, and for several community-led events.

As we are blessed with buildings of assorted sizes and good on-site parking, we often host broader Diocesan events ranging from Evangelical Fellowship meetings through to churchwarden training and Deanery events.





# Joint Activities

## Ministries

Christ Church has many activities happening parish-wide during the week. Many of these activities are based at Northcourt Road because of the availability of physical buildings but draw volunteers from both Long Furlong and Northcourt Road.

**The Barns Café** has been open for ten years, and offers drinks, cakes, light lunches, and snacks, in a loving Christian atmosphere. It is open Monday to Saturday. The café is a limited company, solely owned by the PCC as part of the church's ministry in Abingdon. It is run by a full-time manager, four part time staff and a large volunteer team.



We run the **Abingdon Foodbank** in partnership with Abingdon Vineyard Church, and as part of the Trussell Trust. We open on Tuesdays and Fridays at Northcourt Road, and on Wednesdays in South Abingdon. Demand continues to grow, and this is a major ministry which draws in church members, members of other churches, and volunteers from the community. The team includes a part time paid manager and part time paid coordinator.



**Link** for parents and carers of pre-school young children meets on Wednesday mornings. Some of the team from the Long Furlong Singing Circle and wider congregation are also part of Link.

Our children's ministry team run **assemblies** in four of the local primary schools up to six times a year, and a week-long **Prayer Space** in each of the four schools. We have a monthly after-school life group for Years 5 and 6, several intergenerational invitational events through the year, and a popular week-long **Holiday Club** in August.



Three **youth groups** meet midweek, drawing youth both from Long Furlong and Northcourt Road. Space Band trains and equips youth to lead sung worship. Youth Together for Years 7-13 includes worship, games, a gospel talk, small groups, and of course food! A youth Life Group offers those in Years 10-13 a chance to delve deeper into the scriptures. The annual Youth Weekend Away, and youth camping at New Wine are highlights of each year for our young people.

Secondary schools work across the town is coordinated through the Desire Network across churches, and Christ Church has links with the local college and one of the secondary schools.

**Roots** is our gathering for those in their 20s-30s, meeting several times a year, and is led by one of our curates.

Our **Eco Group** seeks to encourage members of the church to be aware of the environmental impacts of all our activities and helps us make practical choices, so we act as responsible stewards of creation as a church and as individuals.

Our **Justice & Inclusion** helps us express God's heart for all to thrive, regardless of race, gender, or ability.

We occasionally run **Parenting Courses** and **Marriage Courses** to invest in strengthening family life.

**Sixty Plus** is an umbrella ministry gathering a range of groups aimed at our older members. Activities include a monthly Coffee Cake and Chat, Friendly Cuppa on the Long Furlong estate, monthly services in two residential homes in the town, a fortnightly midweek older people's service called Thursday Fellowship, termly socials, an annual Christmas meal, and more recently a Retirement Seminar aimed at those approaching or recently in this change of life season.



We run a bereavement group called **Footprints**, which meets monthly drawing in people from across the community.

**Men@CCA** and **Women@CCA** offer several gatherings a year for men and women. Examples of recent events include Saturday Breakfast with a speaker, an annual quiz, BBQ, Middle Eastern food with a visiting speaker, and prayer triplets.

**Alpha** runs each year to introduce people to the Christian faith.

We run a **mentoring** scheme, with trained mentors offering to walk alongside church members on a 1:1 basis during particular seasons in their life.

We have a monthly **Cake and Create** group, a fortnightly **Board Games** group, a monthly **Church Walks** group, and a missional community called **Revival**, which organises prayer evenings and holds worship events in the market place.



The church organised a weekly welcome for Ukrainian refugees during the start of the war, and this has now evolved into an **International Café**, run in partnership with a local charity called Host Abingdon.

Many church members attend an annual **festival**, including around 100 attending New Wine. Others attend Keswick, Spring Harvest, the Big Church Festival, David's Tent, and Greenbelt.

Several of our members, alongside others in the Church in Abingdon group, are part of the **Street Pastors** initiative working alongside Thames Valley Police to promote a positive atmosphere for those enjoying a night out, providing help to those in need.



Whilst we have many good links with the local community, our longing and prayer and one of our greatest challenges is how we maintain those ministries and grow opportunities to share the gospel with people. One of our curates is hosting the **Greenhouse** initiative, helping ministries which serve the community to be open to the Lord growing new worshipping communities from them.



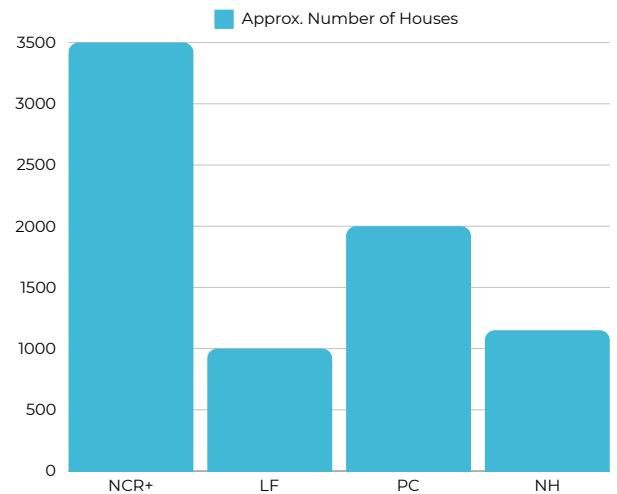
## New Housing

Christ Church has grown throughout its history by building relationships with those moving into new housing in the area. A team has met regularly to pray about the new estates since the outline plans were submitted, and visiting of the new homes began as the first dwellings were occupied. The Kings Gate estate at the western edge was the first to be occupied, and several of the homes were bought by members of the Northcourt Road congregations. We have organised several gatherings on the communal grassed area adjacent to the housing and had good turnouts, including some Christians who worship further afield.

Abbey Fields, the estate in the centre of the development and closest to our Long Furlong congregation, is now being occupied and, after several months which appeared fruitless, we have now identified a few homes with Christian occupants and are praying about where God will lead us next.

Building is in the initial stages at Radley Reach, on the eastern side of the Oxford Road. This area is closest to the Peachcroft Christian Centre, and they are preparing to lead the outreach to this estate.

We are open to where the Lord leads us going forwards– perhaps it will be missional communities, or a new gathered worshipping community / congregation. We hope that our new Associate Vicar will help us discern where God is leading us in this aspect of our mission.



Graph showing the approximate number of houses in North Abingdon Parish: NCR+ - Northcourt Rd & Surrounding Area, LF - Long Furlong Estate, PC - Peachcroft Estate, NH - New Housing Estates (Kings Gate, Abbey Fields & Radley Reach)

## Beyond Abingdon

We are committed to seeing God's Kingdom extended beyond Abingdon. Throughout the 63 years since Christ Church was founded there has been a steady stream of members of our congregations called to various forms of mission service. We have an active Mission Support Group. In 2024 the budget for support for our mission partners and gap-year mission volunteers is £89,000, around 15% of the total church budget.



## Living in Love & Faith (LLF)

In common with many evangelical Anglican churches, we are struggling to discern the right response to the issues of sexuality raised in LLF. The church ran a central gathering of the Living in Love and Faith course in spring 2022 (50 people attended), and three life groups have used the material. Although LLF has been a topic of discussion amongst clergy, there has been limited discussion within the Christ Church laity.

The PCC began a journey of considering the issue in July, when all PCC members were invited to prayerfully consider the direction of travel within the Church of England and note thoughts and questions. The November vote in General Synod came before the process of working together to answer them had even begun. We held an anonymous survey of the PCC members in late November, to gather initial views. The opinions recorded spanned the full range of attitudes to same sex blessings: of the 26 members who expressed an opinion, 14 were opposed to introducing same sex blessings, 10 supported their introduction, and 2 had not yet reached a decision.

The vicar holds and teaches the traditional view of human sexuality and marriage and would want the Associate Vicar to also hold the traditional view, whilst also respecting the diversity of views within the church.

As we continue to tackle this sensitive issue, we want to hold to our church value of being welcoming to all. We are aware there is potential for a significant split and remember our church value of seeking unity, across the generations and the sites. We need to be prepared to listen to one another, and listening implies an open heart and an open mind. We need to respect each other, recognising that we have differences and will allow them to be there.



## ABOUT ABINGDON

### The Town of Abingdon

Abingdon is a historic market town, claiming to be the oldest continuously settled town in England. It currently has a population of 33,000 inhabitants, which is slowly becoming more ethnically diverse. The town and the area around it benefit from a very strong knowledge-based economy. The workforce is highly skilled with a higher-than-average proportion of managers and professionals and scientists. The

levels of unemployment are also relatively low at less than half the national average.

The historic centre is attractive, with the river Thames and the meadows alongside it providing leisure facilities for the town in the summer. As with many towns, the centre has seen a transformation in recent years, with several closures of long-standing family businesses during the financial crisis, subsequent periods of austerity and Covid, but these have been replaced by significant increase in the number of cafes and other services.

There are several restaurants, as well as a small theatre and cinema. Standing at the heart of the town centre is the striking County Hall Museum, which is active in its exhibitions, and is also famous as the location for the town's 'bun-throwing' events, which take place at times of national celebration, such as the recent Platinum Jubilee and coronation.



The town has good sporting facilities. The Tennis and Leisure Centre on the south-east border and the Tilsley Park Sports Centre off Long Furlong offer plenty of sporting facilities all year round and there are many smaller gyms and privately-run exercise classes at various locations across the town. The town has football, rugby, rowing and running clubs among its sporting associations.

There is a wide choice of good state schools, and there are highly rated independent schools for both boys and girls. There is a strong relationship between the church and Long Furlong Primary School, in which it meets. Several of our previous Associate Vicars have served as governors at Long Furlong School.

Abingdon has good transport connections – by road via the A34 to Newbury, Oxford, M40 and M4; by train from Oxford, Radley, and Didcot Parkway – and is centrally placed in the south Midlands – only 60 miles to London, Southampton, Bristol, and Birmingham.

The university city of Oxford is only seven miles away and, in addition to the college buildings, famous for their education (and for Harry Potter!) it hosts an ice rink, several cinemas, theatres and live music venues, a comedy club and plenty of shops. About the same distance to the south, the town of Didcot has seen major expansion over recent years and provides good sporting and leisure facilities and a modern shopping centre with several national stores. Didcot Parkway station is close to the centre and offers a frequent train service to London Paddington with a journey time of around 40 minutes.



Both Christ Church sites are in the northern part of the town, which expanded rapidly in the post-war years. The Long Furlong Estate was built around thirty years ago, and until the current expansion, remained one of the town's more recent housing developments.

## North Abingdon



Approximate Guide of the North Abingdon Parish Boundary (2024)

The parish of North Abingdon (Christ Church) is largely residential, with small areas of local retail, and some small industrial units. It was developed almost entirely in the period following World War Two; initially to serve the science laboratories approximately 10 miles south of the town and further developments being added in the decades up to the 1990s.

The parish has a high density of educational institutes with three primary schools, two secondary schools, and a FE college close to the Christ Church sites.

Both Christ Church sites lie in the area of the parish on the west of the Oxford Road. On the eastern side of the parish, there is a Methodist church, founded in 1959, and an ecumenical congregation (Peachcroft), where the Church of England is one of the four sponsoring denominations (Anglican, Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist). Anglicans who worship at the Peachcroft Christian Centre are included in the electoral roll for Christ Church.

## Long Furlong

The Long Furlong estate comprises around 1,000 privately owned homes, from small flats to large, detached houses. Building began in the mid-1980s and was completed by 1993. At the centre are a primary school (where the Long Furlong congregation meets), a medical centre, and a community centre, which also serves as the local Girlguiding headquarters. The residents run this community centre. There are no shops or other local services – these can be found in the centre of the adjacent Peachcroft Estate, itself served by the ecumenical Peachcroft Christian Centre.

Many of the householders have professional careers; a substantial proportion commutes to work and feels few strong ties to the local community. The turnover of occupants is relatively low, many of the current residents have been in their current property for many years.

## New Housing

A development of approximately 1,200 homes is currently under construction on the northern perimeter of the town, and about 200 of these, at the western end of the development, were occupied by the end of 2023. The housing comprises a mix of privately owned dwellings, mainly houses of 3-5 bedrooms, and social housing; the latter being mainly situated at the northern boundary of the estate, closest to the A34.

Community facilities for the new housing are mainly planned for the final stage of the development. The approved outline plan for this phase has space allocated for up to 50 retirement homes, together with a local centre, a primary school, community hub, care home, children's nursery, public house/restaurant and retail and other services. It also includes public open space; recreation areas and sports pitches (including a sports pavilion and multi-use games area) play areas.

## The Church in Abingdon

Christ Church is one of four Anglican churches in Abingdon. Together these four churches span the spectrum of the Church of England. St Nicolas in the Market Square is broad church; St Helen's, traditionally the civic church in the town centre, is sacramental, and St Michael's, near Albert Park, is Anglo-Catholic.

There is wide cooperation among all the churches in Abingdon under the umbrella of the Church in Abingdon (CiA), an ecumenical partnership involving 14 churches. The CiA works closely with the civic authorities and coordinates many events during the year. The ministers of the CiA meet regularly once a month. There is also lay involvement from each church in the leadership of the CiA and in resourcing its varied activities – including a March of Witness on Good Friday, a Christmas outreach in the market place, Street Pastors, sometimes a joint Alpha launch, collaborating in secondary schools' outreach through the Desire network, and shared prayer events and an inter-church quiz during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.





# FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to explore Christ Church and Abingdon in more detail, the following resources may be helpful:

**Christ Church website:**

[www.cca.uk.net](http://www.cca.uk.net)

**Christ Church YouTube:**

[www.youtube.com/@ChristChurchAbingdon](http://www.youtube.com/@ChristChurchAbingdon)

**Christ Church Vision Summary document:**

[www.cca.uk.net/docs/Vision-Summary-2022.pdf](http://www.cca.uk.net/docs/Vision-Summary-2022.pdf)

**Christ Church Staff Team:**

[www.cca.uk.net/whos-who](http://www.cca.uk.net/whos-who)

**PCC members:**

[www.cca.uk.net/docs/PCC-Photo-Sheet.pdf](http://www.cca.uk.net/docs/PCC-Photo-Sheet.pdf)

**The Barns Café:**

[www.thebarnscafe.co.uk](http://www.thebarnscafe.co.uk)

**Abingdon Local Plan:**

[www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2031](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2031)

**Abingdon Town Council:**

[www.abingdon.gov.uk](http://www.abingdon.gov.uk)

**Long Furlong School:**

[www.longfurlongprimaryschool.org.uk](http://www.longfurlongprimaryschool.org.uk)

**New Estate Development:**

[www.sovereign.org.uk/developing-homes/north-abingdon-collection/our-unique-locations](http://www.sovereign.org.uk/developing-homes/north-abingdon-collection/our-unique-locations)





## WHY WE EXIST

“We believe that, in Jesus, God has revealed the most compelling way to be fully human and fully alive. God is calling us to be devoted to Him, flourishing as a community practising the way of Jesus, filled with his Spirit and rooted in the Bible. Our passion is to draw others to His gift of eternal life, and to see individuals, our town, neighbourhoods and networks transformed.”

*CCA Vision Statement 2019*









**CHRIST CHURCH**  
ABINGDON