



The Church of England
around Staffordshire, northern
Shropshire and the Black Country



Curacy in the Diocese of Lichfield



**Title post
in the parish of
Aldridge**



Small town | evangelical
a large church in a close-knit
community

Welcome to Lichfield Diocese



**Come follow Christ
in the footsteps of St Chad**

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

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

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

Shropshire, to the sparsest upland communities of the Staffordshire Moorlands and Welsh Borders.

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

**‘...a spacious and
gracious diocese.’**

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

+ Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave
Bishop of Lichfield

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

A caring diocese

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

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

Homes and schools

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

As well as the 208 Church of England schools in the Diocese, there are many good schools and colleges that will welcome clergy' children, and a number of

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

Vocation and mission of all

Our vision for the Diocese is that all people, lay and ordained alike, will grow ever more deeply into their vocation as disciples of Christ. We hope to become a Church where all our members are equipped to know they are called by God to

worship and to be the eyes, hands, feet and mouth of Christ in their own contexts.

To further these aims, and to develop creative patterns of ministry, we ask all training parishes to offer 'sixth-day' opportunities for curates – which might be a chaplaincy attachment (school, hospital, prison or

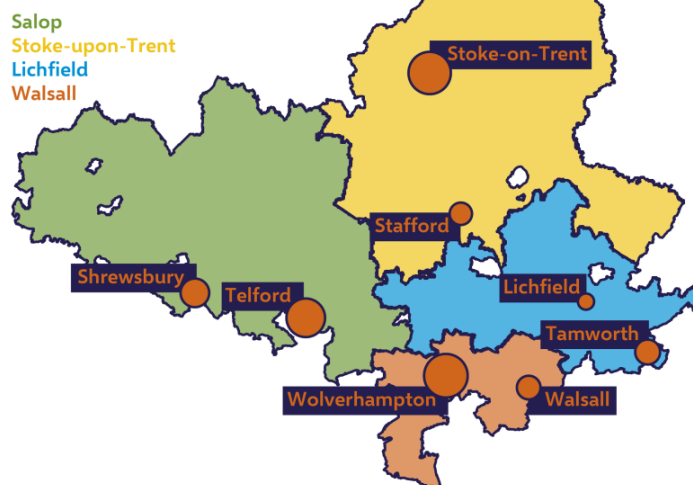
hospice), involvement with local gardening ventures, night-shelter involvement – to mention just a few possibilities.



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

Revd Jassica Castillo-Burley

The Archdeaconries of Lichfield Diocese



Everything but the sea



David Rayner (Wikipedia) / Stoke-on-Trent Bottle Kiln / [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

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

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

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



Opening of the Lighthouse Project at Kingsland CE Academy, Bucknall



Road and rail links



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

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



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

Leisure and pleasure

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

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



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



Apedale Valley Light Railway nr Stoke is one of many transport and leisure museums in the Diocese / Simon Jones

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



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

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



The Parish of Aldridge



Aldridge is a small town in the West Midlands, ten miles north of Birmingham and seven miles south-east of Lichfield. It retains something of its historic village feel, and long standing residents insist on calling it a village today. The parish population stands at around 16,500.



The town centre includes a large supermarket and a range of shops, restaurants, cafés and take-aways, a modern GP practice, a Youth Theatre, Community Centre and a wide range of other services such as dentists and legal practices. In the High Street stands the golden post-box, re-painted and marked in honour of one of the gold medals won by local swimmer Ellie Simmonds at the 2012 Paralympic Games.

Near the centre of the town are a cricket and hockey club and a golf club. Other sports and leisure facilities, including a new Sports Centre, with a swimming pool, are a short drive away.

No one type of employment predominates. There is a small industrial development within a defined area but many people commute to work in nearby Walsall and elsewhere.

Aldridge is well served by local schools. There are four primary schools within the parish (including Cooper Jordan CE School) and two secondary

schools. Aldridge is within travelling distance of a number of local grammar schools including the Queen Mary Schools in Walsall. The nearest Church of England secondary school is the Blue Coat CE Academy in Walsall.

Within the parish there are four Anglican churches: the Parish Church, formally designated as St Mary the Virgin, but known as "APC"; St Thomas; Tynings Lane Church; and the Hothouse. All are technically under the oversight of the rector of the parish, but St Thomas, Tynings and the Hothouse are overseen by two other stipendiary clergy: Revd Jen Middleton at Tynings and the Hothouse; Revd Mark Castleton at St Thomas. The focus of the curacy will be at the Parish Church, with the rector, Revd Steve Doel, as the training incumbent.

Each of the churches shares in a common mission. Each one aims to be a lively, Spirit-filled, evangelical church at the heart of its own neighbourhood. We want to share the love of God with local people through worship, clear Bible-based teaching and a strong prayer life, combined with friendship, pastoral care and practical outreach. Within this overall mission, the churches each have their own distinct identity.



Services in the Parish Church:

APC has been a Christian centre of worship for more than 750 years. We seek to be a warm, welcoming fellowship and it is our aim that our worship and clear Biblical teaching are appropriate and relevant for today. Our largest congregation is the Sunday morning congregation, which is made up of people from a wide range of ages, personalities and backgrounds and includes experienced, Biblically literate Christians, some of whom have exercised leadership in other churches.

The style of worship is informal but reverent. We do not robe for services. Sung worship is led by a band, and we are blessed to have a good number of experienced worship leaders. We use screens to project the words of songs, hymns, and prayers, and preachers make use of these facilities in their sermons.

There are only two Sunday services at present: a morning service at 10am and an evening service at 6.30pm. Part of our challenge is that our morning service is full. With around 200+ adults and 50-70 children in the building there is usually not enough space to fit everyone in comfortably. Because the number of regular members is double this (the

electoral roll figure is not representative), we are relieved that not everyone comes on the same Sunday! However this needs to be addressed, and one possibility for the future is that we could plant a second morning congregation in our newly built church-centre.

By contrast, evening services have been in decline. Ten years ago the numbers in the evening stood at around 150. In recent years this has dropped to 30-50. We are thinking and praying about how to take this service forward.

Sundays at Aldridge Parish Church

1 st	10.00am Holy Communion 6.30pm Evening Worship
2 nd	10.00 am Morning Worship 6.30pm Holy Communion
3 rd	10.00am Holy Communion 6.30pm Evening Worship
4 th	10.00am Morning Worship 6.30pm Holy Communion
5 th	10.00am Morning Worship 6.30pm Evening Worship



The Parish of Aldridge

Our Buildings



The two buildings designed for parish ministry which our new curate will get to know the best are the Parish Church and Aldridge Church Centre.

The Parish Church building dates back to the thirteenth century and the tower is one of the oldest parts. The building is oozing with history but remains very much a place for mission and ministry on Sundays and through the week.

Our Church Centre opened in 2015 as a resource which would allow the mission work of the church to flourish and to help our groups and projects to fulfil their potential. The Centre is now used by over 20 of our church groups, ranging from the 'Little Fishes' playgroup for the very youngest, the Youth Fellowship for our teenagers, to the 'OASIS' group for our more senior members. It has been a venue for outreach with our Alpha courses, and for some of our regular ministries including marriage preparation courses, all with lovely meals made possible by the fully fitted commercial sized kitchen.

Our staff offices are also in the Centre and the staff use it as a base throughout the week. With prayer we are constantly seeking new ways to develop its use as a central part of the mission work of our church.



Your Training Incumbent

Revd Steve Doel

- Trained: Wycliffe Hall
- Ordained: 2003, Southwark Diocese
- Curacy: St John's, Blackheath SE3
- Rector since: October 2018

Steve is 48, married to Jenny, with four children aged between 11 and 22. Steve worked for a software house serving investment banks in the City of London for a few years prior to ordination training.

He has trained three curates to date and enjoys sharing in ministry with others.

For fun, Steve fixes the circuit boards of iPhones, and visits Jerusalem as often as he can. He is fascinated by biblical geography and gets teased quite a lot for always putting up maps on the screen when he preaches.



The Context

Aldridge is a well resourced, well to-do small town and its residents are proud to live here. There is a good community feel and the church plays its part in supporting this. There are however some pockets of greater deprivation within the parish which a cursory inspection would be unlikely to reveal. With our four churches, the Anglicans somewhat dominate the church scene, but we have a great working relationship with Methodists (the only other protestant church in the parish) and we are on very friendly terms with the Roman Catholics. On Good Friday and Remembrance Sunday we join together in ministry and mission.

The Ministry

Aldridge Parish Church itself is a very busy and active church. It would not be possible for any curate to be regularly involved in everything which goes on day-to-day. Even so, there is scope for innovation and for the evolution of the ministries currently in place. This means that if you come to serve your Title Post with us we can tailor your curacy to be one which both plays to your gifts and experience as well as stretching you in areas of ministry and mission which may be unfamiliar.

There are no particular responsibilities that the training incumbent or the PCC will expect you to take on – there is a blank sheet in that regard – however you will be expected to take on leadership in some area as your curacy develops, and in a larger church this responsibility can often be significant.



The following pages offer a snapshot of some of the areas in which you may want to contribute, but these only represent a small proportion of the pastoral, nurturing, teaching, and evangelistic ministries which the people of the church are involved in.



The Parish of Aldridge



Aldridge Youth Fellowship

This is a vibrant work ministering to teenagers, and has been a long-standing part of church life in Aldridge. AYF is the follow-on group from Pathfinders and takes teenagers from 13 to 18. Currently we have 60+ teenagers supported by a group of volunteer leaders.



AYF meets on Friday nights from 8 - 10pm with a range of activities which are run in the main by the teenagers themselves. It's a safe place to which group members can bring their non-Christian friends to introduce them to the fun of AYF and, more importantly, to Jesus. It also meets after church on Sunday evening in the Church Centre for 'After Café' which gives the opportunity to go more deeply into the Bible for those who are ready. There



is a weekend away at a conference centre early each year and also a camp in the summer. These are special times together and form a great part of the AYF calendar. On Friday nights there is a range of activities from ice skating to quizzes to games nights. The last 30 minutes of their time together ends with an 'epilogue' which includes prayer, worship and a short talk often led by teenagers themselves. This is an opportunity for teenagers to pray, lead, speak and discover/develop their spiritual gifts. The group's motto is 'Through Friendship, through Fellowship, to Christ'.

Groups & Activities for Children

Normally up to about 60 children attend our Sunday morning service, and an enthusiastic team of volunteers provide a fun, friendly environment where children can explore faith and be nurtured as disciples of Christ. We have groups ranging from a crèche for under 3s up to a Pathfinders group for 11 to 14 year olds. We meet in the Church Centre which provides rooms equipped for the 6 different Sunday groups.

We have two midweek groups during term time called Cre8 (school years 5+6) and Dynamic (school years 7+8). These are an opportunity to meet together for fun, games, crafts and Bible study. Cre8

focuses more on learning about characters and stories from the Bible whereas Dynamic looks at topics relevant to the age group such as school life and Christian lifestyle.



Noah's Ark is a weekly stay and play session for toddlers and their carers, held in the Church Centre and run by volunteers. It gives adults a chance to meet and chat while their children enjoy the activities on offer, then share breakfast and a singing session to close. The group meets in church at Christmas and Easter for a 'Fun Service', providing many with their first visit to APC. The aim of Noah's Ark is to provide a bridge into the community by offering a warm, welcoming group where people can be befriended, supported and

introduced gently into church circles, in the hope that they may seek further involvement, which many do.

Little Fishes Playgroup is a Christian playgroup which is run by a staff team under the umbrella of the Parish church. There are four 2.5 hour sessions a week and the number on role is generally between 50 – 60. Pre-school children from Aldridge and beyond learn through play, based on the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines, and the group is Ofsted registered. Families of all faiths and none are welcome, on the understanding that ours is a Christian playgroup, with an ethos and teaching which reflects that. The group has been running for over 20 years and very strong community links have developed. Fishes families are invited to church events and services and many start to attend regularly. We are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers.

Throughout the year we hold special children's events and celebrations such as a Light Party and family outreach Easter event, a holiday club and open the church for local schools to have a day discovering the reality of a living faith.



The Parish of Aldridge



School Ministry

The clergy in the parish are active in three of the primary schools, taking assemblies and school services, and serving as governors. Aldridge Secondary school is very open to us being more involved with them than our current resources allow.

Small Groups

A Small Group at Aldridge Parish Church is a group of people who come together on a regular basis for the common purpose of worship, prayer and Bible study. It is hoped that Small Groups are where individuals can discover and exercise spiritual gifts: for ministry within the group, the church and beyond. Each group is led by identified leader(s) who seek to nurture group members as followers of Christ. Groups normally meet at least twice each month. Group members are encouraged to serve one another within the group by, for example, leading studies, making the drinks, or leading the prayers. Members are also encouraged to look for ways to witness and reach out to family, neighbours and the wider community and to take an interest in supporting APC mission links. Currently there are 17 Small Groups linked to APC.



Alpha

APC runs two Alpha courses a year which are well attended and appreciated and have helped many make or renew their commitment to Jesus Christ.



We have a great team behind the scenes who cook an evening meal for the guests and another team who 'wait at table'. The church, Sunday by Sunday, and some individuals, take on prayer support for these courses. We use the new Film Alpha series and cultivate a relaxed atmosphere where the Holy Spirit may gently lead people forward on their spiritual journey. When the Alpha course is completed, new and 'refreshed' Christians are invited into a locally generated Beta small group.

Our strategic aim is to continue to offer Alpha in the future and to train up a new generation of younger adult leaders and support teams.

We started in 2017 mentoring two enthusiastic, committed and relatively new Christians and plan to develop this further. Our experience is that God leads to these Alpha groups those in whose life the Holy Spirit is already at work and it is a joy to spend time with people who want to move on in their spiritual journey.

Beta

Beta courses in their current format were launched in September 2012. Since this time, participants on successive Alpha courses have been invited to consider joining a Beta course. Beta is explained as an opportunity to continue on the journey exploring the Christian faith, asking questions, going deeper into areas raised on Alpha as well as looking at what it means to live as a Christian.

After completing an Alpha course, most participants are unready to make the transition to being integrated into the church family and the vision of Beta is to bridge this gap and provide a continuing support network. We begin by looking at 'The Big Picture': some helpful images of the Christian life and how to grow to maturity in faith. We then teach and discuss key topics such as assurance of salvation, how to pray, how to get into the Bible, the importance of fellowship and what it means for Jesus to be our Lord as well as our Saviour. Later

sessions include sharing our faith, service and giving, and what the Bible has to say on practical issues such as family life and work-life balance. It also provides regular opportunities to 'bring your unanswered questions'. Usually the entire Alpha group begins Beta and a committed core of around half will complete the course. Following Beta, members are encouraged to join one of the established small groups which helps them become more integrated into the life of the church.

Oasis

Oasis started in September 2014 and grew out of a long-standing group that had been serving the older members of the parish. We started as a team of 4 ladies, now 5, and our vision was that this group would feel accepted, relaxed and also challenged about where they stand in relation to faith. We hope they will grow and develop in faith and that more will come to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Several who come are quite frail and do not come to Church on Sundays so we want to encourage them to see that they are still part of APC. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month.

The Congregation in numbers:

Figures from 2019	
Electoral Roll	244
SA	209 Adult 37 Children
Marriages	10
Funerals	35
Baptism	11

The Parish of Aldridge

The Staff Team

Historically APC has had a large staff team but this is much reduced at present due to a number of changes which took place in 2017. It was decided to wait until a new rector arrived before building the team up again. Since Steve arrived as rector in October 2018 we have been moving this forward under God.

At present the staff team at APC consists of Steve as rector, Maxine as pastoral assistant, Maureen and Jane as administrators, Chris as centre manager, Luke as part time IT support, and Lucy as our New Wine intern. We have staff team meeting on Friday mornings which we always begin by praying together.

In the autumn of 2019 we hope to appoint a part-time children's and families' worker, and a part-time schools-link worker. We are currently thinking and praying through the possibility of appointing a full time youth-worker, and this may come to fruition in 2020. All of us base ourselves at the Church Centre because we find this a much more creative and supportive way to work than the traditional model in which pastoral staff base themselves at home. We would make a space for a new curate at the Church Centre and would expect them to join us there as a day-to-day base.

In addition, once per month we have a parish-wide staff meeting, which includes all of the clergy, administrators, children's and community workers from the four churches in the parish. Sometimes this meeting is for breakfast at the local Wetherspoon's, sometimes it is for a working lunch. When we get together there are fifteen of us, and the number is rising.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming a curate to the team, if that is the way God leads, and we will do everything we can to support them and bless them in their new role.

Housing & Accommodation

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



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

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

Revd John Beswick Pallister

Curacy in Lichfield Diocese

Supporting learning and formation

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

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



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

Pattern of training

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

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



IME2 to equip for ministry

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

Opportunities for academic awards

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



Many second year curates have the opportunity to grow through visits to our link dioceses in Canada, Africa, or Germany– this group enjoying a day on safari.

Care for curates and families

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

More info

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

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

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

Revds Adam & Charlotte Gompertz



Curacy in Lichfield Diocese

For further information

In the first instance, please contact:

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Bishops' Director of Ordinands

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07949 033091 [M]

E-mail: romita.shrisunder@lichfield.anglican.org

Aldridge Parish Church

*Loving God
Loving Aldridge
Loving Life*

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