

Nurturing our Growth as Ministers

Monday, 27th – Friday, 31st January 2025

Participants' Biographies



The Reverend David Ackerman

David was born in 1971 in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire and after a short time working for NatWest studied theology at Westminster College Oxford, and afterwards a PGCE. Living and studying in Rome for four years led to ordination in 2001. In the years since he has served in Gloucestershire with hospital, school and prison chaplaincies as part of curacies and was Incumbent of the Windrush Benefice. After a short spell in the RAF he moved to St John's Kensal Green 12 years' ago. Continuing study has included an LLM and study at Durham. This is his second course at St George's House.



The Reverend Oliver Blease

Oliver was born in Cheshire and after earning a Law degree, he moved to Melbourne, Australia working on anti-corruption and criminal defence cases. He discerned a call to ministry while worshipping in the Anglican Church in Australia and on his return to the UK studied for ministry at Ripon College Cuddesdon (Oxford), completing an MA at Durham on sacramental theology. Following a curacy in Royal Wootton Bassett, he became vicar of Christ Church & St. John's in Radlett and work as a parish priest.



The Reverend Dr Andrew Campbell

Andrew is the Rector of the Parish of Magherafelt (Diocese of Armagh). He was born in Newtownards and grew up in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. Ordained Deacon in 2012 and Priest in 2013 he commenced ministry as a Curate in the Cathedral Church of St Anne's, Belfast before moving to Bangor Abbey. In 2016 he became the Rector of the Parish of Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommlin.

His ministry has also allowed him to serve on various church bodies such as the general synod, the diocesan council (and related roles), the church of Ireland's Church and the Society Commission and the Church of Ireland Board of Education.

He has also fulfilled some academic roles, with adjunct lectureships at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (Trinity College Dublin) and Belfast School of Theology (Cumbria University) and recognised teacher at Union Theological College Belfast (St Mary's Twickenham). He has also had the privilege of writing articles for the European Journal of Theology and Church, and has a book (Wipf and Stock) coming out in May.

He married Allison in 2009 and they have two children, Henry (6) and Charlotte (4)





The Reverend Paula Challen

Paula is the Rector of a benefice of five churches four parishes in semi-rural Northamptonshire. She was ordained deacon in 2014 and priest in 2016 serving her curacy within the Tove Benefice where she was subsequently appointed Rector in September 2019.

She has a heart for chaplaincy and really loves being involved with ministry that is beyond the wall of the church and across the generations. She is particularly passionate about intergenerational worship and has developed very strong links with her four local primary and community secondary schools. She is an advocate of the Growing Faith Foundation and her benefice has participated in two Faith in the Nexus research projects.

She has been married for 30 years to Steve and they have three children (25, 22 and 10). They both have elderly parents so are sandwich generation. Their holiday time is really important to them, they go away about every six weeks. She enjoys singing, playing and listening to music of all sorts of genres.



The Reverend Tim Chambers

Tim entered ordained ministry in 2016, moving for curacy back to his roots, in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. He has now been five years in Aslockton, where he is Vicar of The Cranmer Group – six villages/parishes/churches; a semi-rural Benefice (popn. 3,700). As for his "area of expertise", he is very much a generalist - if anything, his principal experience would be ministry to primary-age children.

He is married to Clare, a primary teacher who, after the birth of Esther (6) and Benjy (3½), last year became their Children and Families Worker. His family's dog, Ella, also keeps him sane/vaguely fit.

His particular challenges are around workload/sustainability of ministry, juggling his love of married/family life, and his love of ministry. He inherited the Group with very few 'basic building blocks' in place of a healthy 'mixed ecology' church family. There's been lots to do! He is also especially conscious that he finds it difficult to be spiritually fed, when giving out so much.

By way of loose ends, before ordained ministry, He studied history of art and architecture, and worked in finance and business. He is 55; loves sport (less actively so, these days!), mountains, music and wine.



The Reverend Canon Diane Cooksey

Diane was ordained in the Church of England in 2011. Prior to this she worked as a primary school teacher in Birmingham for ten years. She is currently serving as a parish priest and pioneer minister in St Nicholas, Warndon, Worcester where she has been since October 2014. She has been a Rural Dean since 2018 and became Area Dean for Worcester Deanery in 2021. She also serves on the vocations team as a diocesan director of ordinands working alongside those exploring a call to ordination.





Archdeacon John Godfrey

John is the rector of the Aughrim Parish Union, in East Galway; the Archdeacon of Tuam and Killaloe; and a canon of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. He previously served as a Curate Assistant in Galway Parish and as a Deacon Intern in Greystones Parish. He graduated from Trinity College Dublin with an MTh in 2012. Prior to ordination he worked for ten years as a manager in RTÉ Television (Sales and Marketing). He has an MA in Film and Television Studies from Dublin City University and a BA in French and English from the University of Leeds. His current ministry priorities centre on the area of climate action and ecology.



The Reverend Stephen Griffiths

Stephen is the Team Rector of Oakham Team Ministry, based at All Saints Oakham which has a county/civic/diocesan role within Rutland, and Peterborough Diocese. 20 years of ordained ministry in Derby, Cumbria and Oxfordshire. Rural Dean ministry in Cumbria and Oxfordshire alongside vocational, educational, training incumbent and mentoring roles. Trustee of Launde Abbey, nurturing its vision for the local and national church. Recent sabbatical research on wisdom and discipleship and the Everyday Faith movement.

Married with three young children. Originally from Burton on Trent, the capital of brewing, Stephen has a heart for the often overlooked parts of rural and urban East Midlands.



The Reverend Canon Dr Sophia Marriage

Sophia has served as Rector of the seaside charge of St Marks, Portobello, Edinburgh since 2011. She is Convenor of the Diocesan Mission and Ministry Committee and sits on the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church. She has served on the Province's Liturgy Committee and is a chapter canon.

After a history degree in Cambridge, Sophia went to Edinburgh for PhD studies in inculturation and liberation theology. She worked for the Church of Scotland, before becoming Press Officer for the Scottish Refugee Council, and senior Press Officer at the University before training for the SEC.

She is married and mother to three daughters who have all recently started at university.





The Reverend Stephen Mason

Stephen is the Vicar St John's Hyde Park & Area Dean of Paddington, Diocese of London.

Ordained into the diocese of Lincoln in 1992 he began ministry in Grimsby, before serving a further five years in Southborough in Kent.

Appointed to St John's Hyde Park in 2002 it has been a privilege to lead this community on the Hyde Park Estate and in Paddington through significant change. An international congregation, both gathered and local their mission is to offer sacred space, worship and pastoral care for those who live and work in the area as well as visitors. They are actively involved in building up the community in this dynamic area of London.



The Reverend Sara Moore

Sara is currently vicar of Old Church, Smethwick, an outer estates parish on the edge of the diocese of Birmingham. She studied music at the University of Liverpool before coming to the Midlands to work in arts fundraising. She is passionate about nurturing the gifts of others and the Church's responsibility to actively welcome all: in our words and actions, liturgy, hymnody, creativity around buildings and space and much more.

Married to Andrew, she has two sons; Chris (15) and Greg (12). She is often found digging the gardening, enjoying musical theatre or on long muddy walks.



The Reverend Bradley Page

Brad holds a BA from Jacksonville State University (Alabama) and an M.Div from The University of the South (Tennessee). Ordained in 1994, Father Brad has served parishes in Alabama, Florida, and the UK. From 2000-2005 he was Chaplain to The Florida State University and Canon for College Ministries in the Diocese of Florida. Since 2006 he has worked full-time for The Walt Disney Company, where he is the Production Manager for Communication Strategy. In addition to his work at Disney, he is a priest in The Anglican Church in North America and serves as Rector of St. Nicholas Anglican Church in Kissimmee, Florida.



The Reverend Jonathan Parker

Jonathan is currently the chaplain to the Bishop of St Davids in the Church in Wales. Before this he was in parish ministry based in small rural parishes for about five years following his curacy. He trained for ministry after working as a secondary school teacher.

He has held training roles in the diocese and was responsible for the Initial Ministry Training of curates. He also serves in the vocation and discernment process within St Davids diocese.

By becoming more aware of his own ministry needs he hopes to be able to help others with theirs.





The Reverend Esther Peers

Esther is the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Leamington Spa, and the Dean of Women's Ministry for the Diocese of Coventry. She is passionate about church growth, community transformation, and leadership development. As a member of the Bishop's Core Staff Team, she oversees initiatives that support women flourishing in ministry and works to promote equality within the church, as well as supporting the work of the Bishop of Coventry.

At Holy Trinity, she has led a revitalisation project, growing the congregation and rebuilding trust within the community. She has also overseen a significant building repair project and is now shaping a new vision to guide the church into the next generation.

Alongside her church roles, Esther is involved in local volunteering and serves as a trustee for several community organisations.



The Reverend Prebendary Kelvin Price

Kelvin is married and have seven children aged between 10-25 years old. Prior to being ordained he was a Non-Commissioned Officer within the British Army in the Royal Green Jackets/The Rifles Regiment. Since 2010 he has been a priest within Hereford Diocese.

His current role (he has been in this post for eight years) is the Rector of Ludlow. This covers two parishes. The larger parish church of St Laurence's is within the top five largest churches in England, and has over 100k visitors per year. In many ways it runs similar to a medium sized cathedral (but without a chapter), while also operating as a large parish church within a busy market town. Therefore, his ministry has oversight of regular expectations placed upon clergy, but also requirements of larger financial, fabric, staff and civic responsibilities than most other rural/market town benefices. Next April he will be moving to become the Rector of Ross-on-Wye, which is located in the southern part of the diocese.



The Reverend Alex Randle-Bissell

Alex is currently the Rector of the Pastrow Family of Churches, a new single parish of eleven churches in the rural north of Winchester Diocese. He has a passion to see effective and healthy change management in order to promote growth. Also acting as a consultant to other rural parishes who are looking at organisational change, especially around governance. A background in senior leadership of organisations and an ex-Senior Leader of secondary schools before his ordination in 2012, and still involved in education through membership of an Academy Trust.





The Reverend Carole Reynolds

Carole is 63 years of age, married to Michael, they have three adult children and three grandchildren. Two of their children live in New Zealand and the youngest lives near Maidstone in Kent.

She was ordained into the Church of Ireland in 2019. She has liturgical and pastoral responsibility for Kilcummin parish, Oughterard, within the Galway Group of Churches.

As an Ordained Local Minister, she has a full-time job, Education Officer with National Parks and Wildlife Service in Ireland. She is based in Connemara National Park, Co. Galway.



The Reverend Canon Trevor Sargent

Trevor is a Priest in the Church of Ireland (Anglican). Rector of Bunclody Union of Parishes in the Diocese of Ferns, in the south-eastern part of Ireland in County Wexford.

He writes in both the Irish and English languages for various periodicals. He wrote a guide to food growing in an urban setting, called 'Trevor's Kitchen Garden'. He sings and plays the guitar.

He is married to Áine Neville, who is a keen horticulturalist. He trained as a Primary School teacher and was a Principal of a small school in Balbriggan, North County Dublin in the 1980's. He was elected in 1991 to Dublin County Council representing the Green Party, and to Dáil Éireann (the National Parliament) in 1992. He helped to establish a Prayer Breakfast during the time of the Peace Process. He was a Government Minister for Food and Horticulture from 2007 – 2010, having been Leader of the Green Party in Ireland for six years up to 2007.



The Reverend Katharine (Kaf) Smith

Kaf initially studied engineering at university before exploring a call to ministry and was ordained in 2014. She has been at her current role for 6 years where she is Associate Minister in two churches in Swindon. Pattern Church is a resource church planted by the Diocese of Bristol in 2018 to help younger generations and those currently not attending church to explore faith in Jesus. St Augustine's is a small traditional parish church in a diverse and historic area of town, and so personal growth in recent years has been within two very contrasting contexts, lots of spinning plates and dropping balls. Kaf is a member of Bishop's Council in Bristol Diocese and is a Vocations Chaplain.

Kaf is married with two primary aged children and works hard to balance all the different vocations she is called to in this season. She's part of a book group, loves playing piano and her theological hobbies are play, environmental sustainability and personality profiling.





The Reverend Katie Tupling

KT is an Anglican Priest, ordained 2003, Curacy Belper, 1st Incumbency Hope Valley Derbyshire, 2nd Incumbency Sheffield, Training Incumbent to two Curates, University College Chaplain. Currently Diocesan Disability Adviser for Oxford Diocese.

Co-founder of online community *Disability and Jesus* (on X/Twitter, Facebook and YouTube). Media work with BBC radio, UCB1 radio, Webinars and online seminars.

Grove booklets *Worship and Disability*, and *Being Disabled Being Human*. Co-author of *Pilgrims in the dark* (©Disability and Jesus). Contributor to *Canterbury Preachers Companion 2025*.

Musician (voice, clarinet), narrowboat owner, real ale drinker. Wife to Chris, mum to Samuel, ignored by the dog...!



The Reverend Karsten Wedgwood

Karsten was born in 1977 in West Germany, Bad Gandersheim. He read theology at Goettingen University, and to improve his English, he came to the UK in 2004 for one academic year as a German assistant teacher. The Anglican Church in the little town made quite an impression on him, and he found a sense of community that he had never encountered before in the Lutheran Church. After he graduated, he decided to move to the UK for good. The start wasn't easy, and it took him a couple of months to find a job, but he then worked for Guide Dogs for a few years in Manchester. Again, the local church was instrumental in his growth, and Manchester Diocese became his sending diocese. He enjoyed the context-based training at Bristol Trinity, served his curacy in a multi-parish benefice in Manchester, and has been now in his first incumbency for nine years in rural Cornwall.



The Reverend Kirsty Wells

Kirsty came to faith as a child, attending a CofE VA Primary School. The local Vicar came in for assembly every week and whole school Eucharist once a month. She was confirmed aged 11, alongside her Dad who had previously been in a Non-Conformist Church. (Mum had been raised in the CofE and RC churches)

She was encouraged to lead worship as a teenager and felt a strong call to Ministry aged 16.

After university she taught in Primary Schools (mainly KS1) until 2003.

She has worked for the church in many capacities since 2003, as: administrator, Incumbents PA, Children and Families worker. She has worked within all traditions of the Church of England, including Middle of the Road, Conservative Evangelical, High Church and Charismatic. She has always enjoyed exploring Fresh Expressions of Church.



Kirsty was ordained Deacon in 2016, having trained at Sarum College. Served her title on the Dorset/Wiltshire Border in Salisbury Diocese. She then spent 18 months as chaplain at Musgrove Park Hospital, which coincided with the Covid-19 Pandemic. She has been Rector of five rural parishes since January 2021 and they became a Benefice in September 2021.

She has a passion for nurturing faith in children — both in school and the community and has recently discovered the thrill of nurturing new ministries.



The Reverend Canon Dr Eleanor Williams

For nearly 14 years Eleanor has been the Vicar of Burwell with Reach, two Fen Edge villages 10 miles north-east of Cambridge. She is an Honorary Canon of Ely Cathedral, has been a rural dean for three years and is a trained spiritual director.

Prior to ordination, she was a General Practitioner in Cambridge, and Associate Specialist in Clinical Communication Skills at the University of Cambridge.

Her current areas of special interest are creative community engagement with all ages, intergenerational spirituality and promoting holistic health and wellbeing.



The Reverend Michelle Woodcock

Michelle is currently Priest in Charge of the Beacon Team of churches in South Lakeland, Cumbria. This comprises six churches mostly based around rural and scattered farming communities with the exception of the two larger churches near Kendal.

She is a qualified primary school teacher and worked in education as a Music and RE specialist for 27 years. She was ordained in 2010 and has mainly worked as a Self-Supporting Minister since then with a focus on Children and Youth ministry. She began her current role, which is her first full time incumbency in April 2024. She is a newly elected member of the DBE.



Speaker & Facilitator Biographies

Chris Blakeley

Chris is the founding Director of Waverley Learning, and runs their highly respected leadership development practice. He has run retreats and development programmes for the Anglican Bishops, The Salvation Army, PwC, NHS, Saga, McLaren Racing, Pret A Manger, Syngenta and many more. The continual theme of his work over twenty years has been combining ancient retreat practices and contemporary psychology/sociology to help leaders appreciate and handle the human aspects of change and growth – in themselves and others. He helps people access and action their deeper insight and energy so that they are leading the system rather than it leading them. Chris also established the Crossroads Retreats Charity to provide space for people at difficult Crossroads in Life and runs the Waverley Learning Community, which provides monastic retreats for people in professional life. He is a Benedictine Oblate, a trained counsellor and Spiritual Director.

Karen Stefanyzyn

Karen is a certified Integral Coach who has held senior global roles in Organisation Development, Leadership Development, and Talent within a FTSE top 50 company. She began her career in youth work and was a member of the YMCA National Executive. For the past 8 years, she has been building a unique coaching practice enabling senior and emerging leaders to achieve sustained levels of functioning they had not thought possible in today's pressurised world of work. Karen's work is aimed at achieving long-term excellence, inviting people to sense the world as it really is today and to work creatively with complexity and ambiguity, preparing to deal with situations they cannot even anticipate yet. She is a Director of Waverley Learning, a Trustee of 'Crossroads Retreats', a Lay member of the Methodist Ministries Committee and a Non Exec Director at Methodist Central Hall Westminster.

The Reverend Canon Dr Hueston Finlay Warden, St George's House

The Reverend Dr Hueston Finlay read Engineering and Theology at Trinity College, Dublin and pursued his doctoral studies at the University of London. Following ordination, he worked in the cathedral parish of St Canice in the County of Kilkenny, where he acted as Bishop's Vicar, Diocesan Librarian and Diocesan Registrar. While there he taught theology in the country's largest boarding school and lectured on ethics and doctrine for the diocesan adult education programme. He then moved to Cambridge when he was appointed as Curate to the University Church and Chaplain to Girton College. Later he served as Dean of Chapel, Director of Studies in Theology, and Tutor at Magdalene College Cambridge. He also held an Affiliated Lectureship at the University of Cambridge, where he taught doctrine. He was appointed a Canon of St George's Chapel in 2004 and Warden of St George's House in 2008. He is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen where he studies the connections between Schleiermacher and Barth. He also has an association with the University of Jerusalem and is a member of the Irish Theological Association.



The Reverend Canon Martin Poll
Canon Chaplain & Canon Precentor, College of St George

Martin was installed as a Canon of St Georges Chapel, in October 2012, having previously been Archdeacon for the Royal Navy. As Canon Chaplain he has responsibility for the Royal Chapel in the Great Park and pastoral care of the community there and in the Castle. In June 2014, The Queen appointed him as a Domestic Chaplain in Windsor. At Easter 2016 he was additionally appointed Canon Precentor. Martin was born and educated in Enfield, Middlesex, prior to reading English at the University of Kent at Canterbury (Christ Church College). After training for the Priesthood at Oxford (Ripon College, Cuddesdon), he served his title at John Keble Church, Mill Hill.

