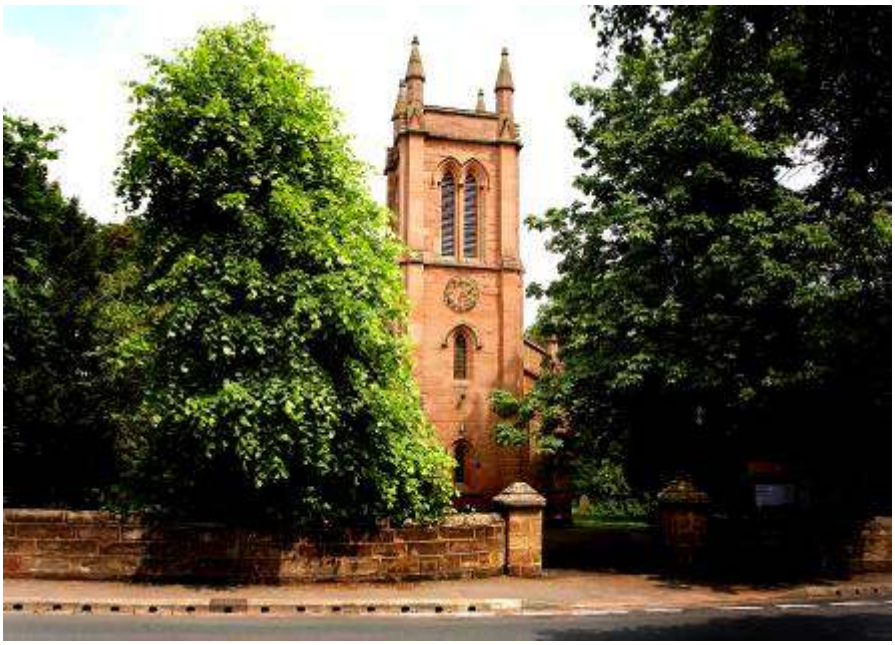
Welcome to

Christ Church, Catshill

with

St Luke's Church, Marlbrook



In the Diocese of Worcester

The Church

Christ Church is situated on the Stourbridge Road in the village of Catshill, 3 miles north of Bromsgrove. It is a grade II Listed Building in the Early English Style, built in 1838 and has strong connections with A. E. Housman. The poet was baptised in the church on Easter Day 1859 by his grandfather Thomas Housman who was the first vicar. Thomas Housman's grave, with a 14 ft cross, is in the S.E. corner of the churchyard.

Over the years the church has been enlarged by the addition of the chancel and transept in 1877 and the Lady Chapel in 1887. The Tracker organ was installed for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and has recently been refurbished following considerable damage due to water ingress. Seating capacity is approximately 180 in the nave and 25 in the Lady Chapel but the church was originally built with a capacity of around 300.

Photograph by kind permission of Michael Stuart

The west tower was restored some 12 years ago at a cost of approximately £80,000 and there is currently a restoration project in place to raise further funds to replace badly eroded stonework on the main body of the building. Approximately £300,000 is needed, of which approximately half has been raised so far.

The churchyard is now closed and is maintained by Bromsgrove District Council. The Cemetery on the opposite side of the road is nearly full and there are no plans for its extension. There is a new Garden of Remembrance on this site which has capacity for a number of years remaining.
Bromsgrove District Council has recently opened a new Cemetery in Catshill which it manages and maintains.

St Luke's Church Centre is situated in Marlbrook, approximately 1 mile from Christ Church. A modern building, it has dual use as a church and community centre. Though regular services are not held there at present, the building is still licensed. It is used by many community groups for their activities each week and as a church hall for Christ Church. Plans are currently being considered for the imminent refurbishment of the building.

Church Services

The present arrangements for Sunday and other services are set out below. They are the product of discussions in the previous Benefice that were agreed with the incumbent of the time, and do not necessarily represent the desires of the current PCC.

Lessons are read and intercessions led by members of the congregation in most services. In addition, organists are employed for church services and there are choirs for the major services and, when required, for weddings and funerals. Catshill has a cross-bearer/server for mid-morning and evening Holy Communion and there are 8 licensed eucharistic assistants.

After morning services, coffee and tea are served enabling the congregation, which prides itself on being a very friendly and welcoming one, to spend time together socially and to welcome newcomers. On special occasions, wine and cheese is provided and it has become a custom for mulled wine and mince pies to be served after the annual Carol Service, which is usually very well supported.

There is a history of Lay Ministry, both male and female, although the last licensed Reader has now retired. In the past, the laity has been involved in Marriage and Baptismal preparation courses as well as general pastoral support. There is a Lay led Family Service on the second and fourth Sundays which is planned and delivered by the Lay team.

The church is opened for Private Prayer on Tuesday mornings, between 10.00 a.m. and 12 noon, during holiday periods.

"Bromsgrove Anglican Group", of which the Benefice is a part, holds weekly services in Lent, on Ascension Day and on the occasion of the Group's anniversary. There is a policy of shared ministry within the group. It arranges talks, social events and outings to bring together members of the constituent parishes. The Group is currently reviewing its future with a view to being absorbed into "Churches Together in Bromsgrove". Catshill Methodists are sharing Lenten Groups between each church this year and the Baptist Church joins us for Christian Unity and Good Friday services held at Christ Church.

There are retired ministers living in the Bromsgrove area who are willing to take services when necessary.

Services at Catshill

Sunday Services	
1st Sunday	10.00 am H.C. C.W.
2nd Sunday	8.00 am H.C. B.C.P. 10.00 am Lay led Family service
3rd Sunday	8.00 am H.C. B.C.P. 10.00 am H.C. C.W.
4th Sunday	8.00 am H.C. B.C.P. 10.00 am Lay led Family service
5th Sunday	10.00 am H.C. C.W.
	Alternating with Dodford within the current Benefice
Midweek Services	
1st Wednesday	Home Communion
2nd Week	Nursing Home
Other Services	
	Patronal Festival
	Harvest Festival
	All Souls Day
	Carol Service
Christmas Eve	Midnight H.C.
Occasional Services (2008)	
Baptisms	13
Weddings	6
Funerals - Burial	5
- Cremation	13

The Congregation

There are 62 parishioners on the electoral roll with a wide age range. The congregation could be best described as being central in position with a strong emphasis on the Eucharist. Children are encouraged to attend the morning service and spend part of it being taught in the upstairs choir vestry. However, there are no children who regularly attend Communion Services at present so the Sunday School has been temporarily suspended. Two children take an active part in lay led services by reading the lessons and taking part in the intercessions with one of the leaders.

Average attendances:-

8.00 am Communion	12 - 14
Morning Services	40 - 50
Evening Services	15 – 20

Note: Due to the difficulties of arranging clergy for cover of services on a regular basis, the Evening Service has been temporarily cancelled.

Social Events

Throughout the year, Catshill Church organises activities either for fun or for fund-raising. There is a small committee who are responsible for these activities but a large number of helpers from within the congregation, and beyond, contribute to the success of these events.
There are two fetes during the course of the year which are well supported by the community. A variety of stalls (including Father Christmas at the Christmas Fayre) help the success of these occasions.
In addition to the fetes, the Church takes part in the annual 'Catshill Fun Day' on the village meadow, where a large number of local organisations have stalls, giving a carnival feel to the afternoon. This is always well supported and is a true 'village affair' bringing together all aspects of the local community.

A number of social events are organised through the year, which are well supported and welcomed. The most recent of these was a 'Forties Night' held in St Luke's.
We also hold an annual 'Saints and Sinners' meal around All Saints' day, where people from outside the regular congregation are invited to join us.

Catshill Church organises a 'Theme Weekend', usually once a year. These are normally held around a special occasion such as the Church birthday or Harvest. This year, a 'Wedding Weekend' is planned with a concert in the evening given by a local Brass Band.

Finance

Planned giving is achieved by a combination of standing order payments and weekly envelopes. Considerable use is made of the Gift Aid Scheme to recover tax where applicable. An annual 'First to the Lord' Service is held where the congregation is asked to review their giving.
Unfortunately, current levels of giving are barely sufficient to cover the Parish Share and annual outgoings. Over recent years it has been necessary to draw from reserves to pay our Parish Share contribution.

The parish helps a number of local and national charities. Recently these have included:-

Canon White in Baghdad
Acorns Hospice
Dodford Holiday Farm
Tear Fund
Water Aid (During Lent and at Christmas)
Produce from the Harvest Festival was given to the homeless in Bromsgrove in 2008
Christmas 'Toy Service' gifts were given to the Salvation Army
The Lions use St Luke's Church Centre for collecting, packing and distributing food parcels for the needy at Christmas.

In addition, the Parish has links with, and actively supports:-
St. James Hospital, Lesotho, Southern Africa
Al Kafaat Cedars Capability Centre, Beirut

During Christian Aid week, funds are raised through a plant sale and door to door collections on an ecumenical basis and a Quiz Evening has been enjoyed at Catshill Methodist Church in recent years.

Groups and Committees

The P.C.C.

This consists of approximately 14 members, including the two Churchwardens. Members are notionally elected on a three year, rotational, basis to ensure continuity and experience. The full Council meets once every two months.

The Finance and Standing Committee

This is made up of the Incumbent, Lay Chair, both Churchwardens, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. The Finance Committee meets a week or two before each full P.C.C. for preliminary discussions and to agree the agenda. This group also acts as the Standing Committee, and is convened at short notice if more urgent business becomes necessary.

The Social Committee

This consists of any interested parties who are not necessarily members of the P.C.C. It organises a variety of events throughout the year which may be for fund-raising or purely social purposes. It is considered an important function of the committee to provide events which are accessible to all and cater for those who would otherwise have little social life. Visitors from outside of the usual congregation are warmly welcomed to all our functions.

The Lay Service Committee

All leaders of the Family Service form this committee and meet to discuss and arrange the Family Services which are held on the second and fourth Sundays. When possible, this also includes a member of the Clergy, though during the interregnum, this has not always been easy to arrange.

The Sunday School Committee

This is made up of all the leaders involved with the Sunday School. At present, there are no children who regularly attend Sunday Services but it is hoped that the new links which are forming with the local middle school will bear fruit and will bring a change to this situation.

Clergy Housing

The Vicarage is a modern, four bedroom family house, on three levels, with gas fired central heating and full double glazing. It is situated on Stourbridge Road at Catshill, about five minute's walk from Christ Church.

Inside

On the ground floor is the office suite comprising an office, a printing room/store and a toilet.

On the first floor is a recently refurbished fully fitted kitchen/breakfast room with a door leading to the garden. The sitting room and dining room are connected by double doors, with patio doors leading from the dining room into the garden. Also on this floor are a toilet and laundry.

On the second floor is the main bedroom with a dressing room/private office and an en-suite bathroom. There is a Guest bedroom with a wash hand basin, two further bedrooms and a family bathroom.

Outside

The garden is on two levels and affords panoramic views from the upper level.

At street level there is a single garage and forecourt with ample parking for three cars.

Pastoral Information and Support

There is an incumbent's office suite located on the ground floor of the Vicarage, which contains a computer, photocopier, printer and a full range of office equipment which is owned by the current Benefice with Dodford Church. A secretary is employed for 2 hours each week day to assist with day to day administration.

A weekly pew leaflet giving information for the following week, and a printed copy of the readings for the current week, are also produced at the office.

Catshill Church publishes a monthly magazine which is circulated to all members on the electoral roll and to other interested parties. This gives details of church activities and also contains other useful information for parishioners. Whilst there is no formal charge for this, donations made each month more than cover production costs.

The Local Community

Catshill (a former nailers' village) with Marlbrook has a population of some 14,000 people with its own shops and schools, and three other active churches. (Methodist, Baptist and Strict Evangelical). Despite its size, Catshill still enjoys a 'village community' atmosphere being semi-rural/suburban.

Within the Bromsgrove area there is a wide selection of schools, from both the Independent and Local Authority sectors, catering for all age groups. The Catshill schools are part of the North Bromsgrove three tier pyramid. Local schools have all received satisfactory, or better, OFSTED reports.

Catshill First School	300 pupils
Catshill Middle School	500
Chadsgrove Special School	115

The previous incumbent was a Governor of two of the schools and was involved in developing the religious education in all three.

Christ Church holds its Spring and Autumn fetes at either Catshill Middle School or Catshill First School promoting additional links with the local community. Pupils from all the schools use the church for occasional services and curricular activities. In 2008, Catshill Midddle School held four, very successful, Carol Services at the church and have asked for this to be repeated again in 2009.

Further Education facilities exist within the town of Bromsgrove and nearby Redditch. Birmingham also provides extensive facilities which include a number of Universities and Worcester, with its new University is also within easy reach.