



PARISH PROFILE

ATWORTH WITH SHAW AND WHITLEY



We are looking for that someone
Who will lead us in God's name
Who will guide us on our journey
Who will nourish and sustain

We're a group of willing players
Our teamwork ethic's strong
We have skills and great potential
Our love for Christ, it drives us on

But we seek a brand new Captain
To guide our ship, propel us forth
Expand our crew, sail through new waters
Chart our way to renewed growth

We are looking for that someone
Whom God has planned to send our way
If that's you, we'd love to meet you
So please apply, without delay!



Letter from Bishop Andrew

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the post of Vicar of Atworth and Shaw, part of the See of Ramsbury in the Diocese of Salisbury. This is a rare opportunity for a smaller post offering full stipend within one of the most attractive parts of South-West England.

I am looking for devoted and visionary clergy, who can inspire and lead our churches in Making Jesus Known – our new diocesan vision. While this can appear a timeless landscape, our parishes are constantly changing and face all the challenges and opportunities of life in the 2020s. Because of this, the church must renew its mission and traditions for the contemporary situation.

In the Diocese of Salisbury, we place a high value on the encouragement and pastoral support of our parish clergy and, should God guide you to serve here, you will become part of a committed and collaborative team.

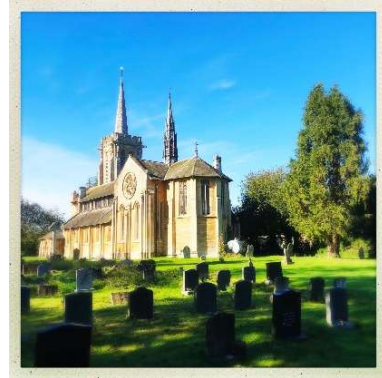
Please contact the Ramsbury office if you need any assistance with your enquiry and be assured of my prayers as you seek the Lord's will for your future.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Andrew Ramsbury".

Parish of Atworth, Shaw and Whitley - Our Community

Our beautiful Parish churches of **St Michael and All Angels in Atworth**, and **Christ Church in Shaw**, are located within **thriving village communities** and offer a warm welcome to all who live in, and visit, our villages.



We are fortunate to be **located in an enviable position** within Wiltshire: just 11 miles from the stunning Georgian city of Bath, and only 4 miles from Lacock and Corsham: both renowned filming locations for productions such as *Poldark*, *Downton Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Harry Potter*. The nearby market towns of Melksham, Chippenham, and Trowbridge, all within a 10-mile radius, offer a range of wider amenities including supermarkets (Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Aldi, Asda, Lidl), pharmacies, high street banks, and health services.



Our rural parish is home to approximately 3,200 residents, with Atworth, Shaw, and Whitley each contributing to a **strong sense of identity and local pride**. Demographically, the community has a broad age range with a notable proportion of families and retirees.

The community is bustling with life and activity. We are proud to host:

- **Two primary schools**, a private school, and four nurseries
- **Three pubs/restaurants** a coffee shop and a garden centre
- **A community-run village shop**, a country store, and a petrol station with convenience store and Post Office
- **Two parks and sports fields**, and a golf club
- **A youth club, a museum**, and numerous volunteer-run groups and clubs catering to all ages - from toddlers to seniors



Our churches are deeply embedded in the life of the parish and actively support local initiatives including village fetes, an annual music festival, and village hall fundraisers. We also host a number of our own community events throughout the year. Whether it's worship, social connection or outreach, **we are proud to be a community, within a community, for our community.**



Parish of Atworth, Shaw and Whitley – who we are looking for

We are prayerfully seeking a **full-time Priest-in-Charge** who will walk alongside us and **lead us forward with purpose and vision**. Our hope is to find someone who is not only called to ministry, but who feels called to **this community**, with all its richness, history, challenges, and promise.

Our Shared Priorities

We are a parish with a strong foundation and a desire to grow. Our priorities for the coming years are to:

- **Grow our church family** within our church walls and well beyond them
- **Restore financial stability**, rooted in renewed engagement and sustainable giving
- **Use our spaces and resources** to better serve and connect with our local community
- **Continue and expand our youth mission**, making Jesus known to the young people of our parish
- **Uphold and live out our commitment** to being an **Inclusive Church**

We are looking for someone who will:

- **Value and harness the talents and commitment** of our lay leaders, congregation and volunteers
- Be **engaging, charismatic, and ambitious**, drawing us deeper into discipleship
- **Encourage spiritual growth**, theological reflection, and new ways of encountering God
- **Gently challenge us to step outside our comfort zones** in pursuit of focused mission
- Be an **innovator and visionary**, open to change and flexible in approach
- Bring a strong sense of **collaborative leadership**, empowering others as part of the Body of Christ

We are not expecting perfection; we are seeking a **partner in faith** who brings their whole self, trusts in the Holy Spirit's leading, and shares our longing to see lives transformed by the Gospel.



What We Offer in Return

- A **full-time, stipendiary post** for the benefice. Due to potential pastoral reorganisation within the Deanery, this is currently designated as an **interim post** on a **three-year licence**, with the potential for a **three-year extension**. It is anticipated that, within this time, a pathway will emerge to establish the role as a **Common Tenure post**.
- A **beautiful vicarage**, ideally situated opposite **Christ Church in Shaw**. This large, detached house is set in its own secluded grounds and offers:
 - **Two spacious reception rooms**
 - **A good-sized office**
 - **Four bedrooms, two bathrooms**, and a **downstairs cloakroom**
 - A generous **kitchen and utility area**
 - **Double garage** and expansive driveway with turning space
 - A **fully enclosed, private lawned garden** with mature trees: an ideal setting for both quiet reflection and entertaining



More than this, we offer our **wholehearted support, prayers, and partnership**. You will be joining a faithful and generous community with a deep love for its churches, an open heart for its neighbours, and a shared desire to **Make Jesus Known** in everything we do.

Parish of Atworth, Shaw and Whitley - Our Churches

The Parish of Atworth with Shaw and Whitley is a semi-rural parish nestled amidst rolling fields and stunning vistas in the Diocese of Salisbury and the Deanery of Bradford. Our setting offers both natural beauty and a rich sense of heritage, while also presenting exciting opportunities for spiritual and missional growth within a close-knit community.

In August 2023, building on many years of collaboration as a joint benefice, we formally unified as a single parish. This transition brought together our two churches, **St Michael and All Angels** in Atworth and **Christ Church** in Shaw, under one Parochial Church Council (PCC), enabling a more cohesive and collaborative approach to governance, ministry, and mission.



Our Church Buildings

Our two churches, St Michael and All Angels in Atworth and Christ Church in Shaw, are both Grade II Listed and of sound structure. Each serves as a vibrant focal point for worship, fellowship, and community activity. Notably, the historic tower of St Michael's houses the **oldest bell in Wiltshire**, a treasured part of our heritage. While we are currently unable to hear its peal due to ongoing repair needs, we remain committed to restoring it and are actively fundraising and applying for grants to make this possible. In the meantime, the church remains open and in regular use.



Adaptable and Welcoming Spaces

We are fortunate to have a nearby church hall in Atworth that supports a range of community and parish events. At Christ Church, recent reordering has transformed the building into a more adaptable worship and community space. The removal of the pews has allowed for **flexible seating arrangements**, enabling us to host a wider variety of gatherings. This has already borne fruit in the form of our **monthly concert series, 'Live at Shaw'**, which features local singers and musicians and is beginning to draw people from across the parish and beyond.



Further improvements at Christ Church include:

- **Screens and audio-visual equipment** to enhance our services and make them more accessible.
- A dedicated **private prayer space** in the Lady Chapel.
- A **kitchen area** and **accessible toilet facilities**, making the space more user-friendly and inclusive.

We continue to explore how these modernised spaces can best serve the evolving needs of our communities, with a particular focus on **increasing accessibility and extending a warm welcome to all**.



Inclusive and Missional Vision

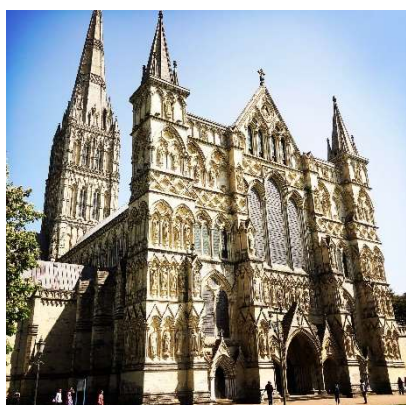
As a parish, we are proud to be a member of the **Inclusive Church network** (inclusive-church.org), affirming our commitment to inclusion regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, age or background. This is central to our mission to **"Make Jesus Known"** not only within our church buildings but out in the wider community.

We are intentional about our outreach beyond the church walls, seeking new and creative ways to engage with people of all ages and walks of life. Whether through worship, pastoral care, music, or partnerships with local groups, we aim to **reflect Christ's love in word and action** throughout Atworth, Shaw, and Whitley.



Our Cathedral Context

We also take pride in our connection to the wider diocesan family, especially our link to **Salisbury Cathedral** which is a place of remarkable spiritual and historical significance. There, one can gaze up at **Britain's tallest spire**, walk through the **largest Cathedral Close and Cloisters**, view the **world's oldest working mechanical clock**, and encounter the **best-preserved original 1215 Magna Carta**, a vivid reminder of our heritage of justice, truth, and hope.



Parish of Atworth, Shaw and Whitley - Our People

As a new incumbent, you'll be welcomed into a warm, committed, and deeply gifted parish community. We are incredibly fortunate to be supported by a dynamic team of lay leaders and volunteers who bring our shared vision to life.

Our Ministry Team

Our licensed and commissioned lay ministers play a vital and visible role in the worship and pastoral life of the parish:

- **2 Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs)**
- **5 Commissioned Lay Worship Leaders (LWLs)**
- **3 Lay Pastoral Assistants (LPAs)**

This dedicated team is active across our Sunday services, pastoral visits, school outreach, and wider parish life. They work collaboratively and enthusiastically to uphold a strong presence of worship and care, particularly during the vacancy period.



Our church family includes many other active volunteers:

- A regular rota of **readers and intercessors** for Sunday worship.
- **6 members licensed to serve Holy Communion.**
- **An enthusiastic congregation** who support tea rotas, flower rotas and many other roles, as and when required (and always with a smile).

Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Our PCC do a sterling job in governance, leadership and direction, and they work hard to ensure the parish remains spiritually vibrant, financially able, and missionally focused. They are looking forward to meeting and supporting you through this next chapter of your ministerial life.

Worship and Music

Musically, we are blessed beyond measure. Our worship is enriched by a **diverse and talented group of musicians**, including **pianists, organists, and a robed choir** whose offering is described by many as cathedral-worthy. Their contribution plays a vital role in both traditional and special services throughout the year.



Children and Schools Ministry

In 2024, we launched an exciting new initiative: **BLASCT (Bible Learning, Atworth and Shaw Children Together)**, which gathers on the **first Sunday of each month at Christ Church, Shaw**. It's led by a brilliant and passionate team whose focus is on **making Jesus known to our younger generations** through stories, song, craft, and prayer.



This complements our parish's longstanding involvement in the **'Open The Book'** programme, through which a team of volunteers regularly visits **both local village primary schools** to share Bible stories in a dynamic and engaging way.

Our previous incumbents were actively involved in leading Collective Worship in schools, and during the vacancy this ministry has been faithfully upheld by a member of our Lay Worship team. In Shaw School (next door to Christ Church), our parish also runs a weekly **Church Champions** after-school club in partnership with Whitley Methodist Church. This provides a fun and faith-filled space for children to explore Christian values.

Buildings and Grounds Volunteers

Our buildings and churchyards are lovingly cared for by a **dedicated crew of volunteers**, with **Fabric Committees at both churches** ensuring our sacred spaces are as physically strong as our mission. Whether it's mending, gardening, cleaning, or beautifying, there is always someone willing to roll up their sleeves.



Social Life and Community Engagement

Our **Social Committee** brings life and laughter to the calendar, running a wide array of events that not only **build community and raise funds** but also **open our doors** to the wider parish.

Highlights from 2024 include:

- A **Medieval Banquet** in full costume and spirit
- An **Open Gardens** afternoon welcoming neighbours and friends
- Ever-popular **Cream Teas, Coffee Mornings, and Bucks Fizz Breakfasts**
- A lively **Talent Show** and our annual **Garden Party**
- A much-loved **Christmas Tree Festival**
- **Choral Concerts** and more besides

These events create moments of fellowship, fun, and outreach that build meaningful bridges between church and community, and there is always something on the horizon.

Other valued traditions include our Lent Lunches, where parishioners offer a simple homemade meal, often in their homes or local halls, to raise funds for chosen charities and share time together during the Lenten season.



Parish of Atworth, Shaw and Whitley – How we Worship

Worship lies at the heart of our parish life, and we strive to offer a variety of services that nourish the faith of long-standing members while remaining accessible and welcoming to newcomers.

Current Worship Pattern

Before the vacancy, we held services every Sunday at both **St Michael & All Angels**, Atworth, and **Christ Church**, Shaw, as well as a midweek **Holy Communion service every Wednesday in Atworth**. Despite the challenges of the vacancy, we have worked hard to **maintain this rhythm of worship**, occasionally bringing the two congregations together for **joint services**, fostering a spirit of unity and shared fellowship.

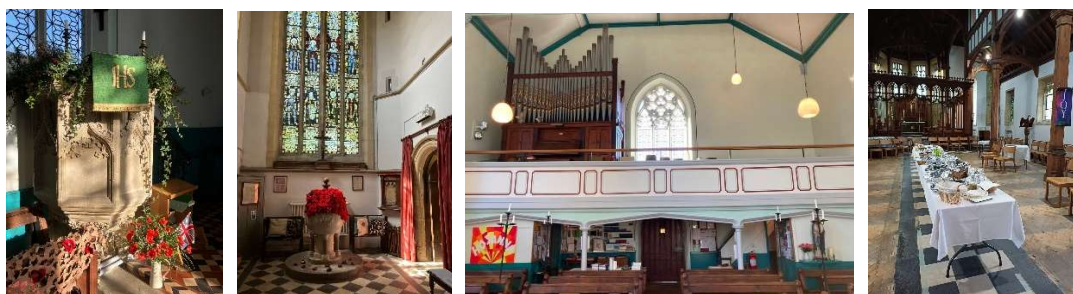
- **Christ Church, Shaw** hosts a pattern of **Eucharist Services** and **Services of the Word**, supported during the vacancy by **visiting clergy from the local area and the wider Diocese of Salisbury**.
- These services make full use of our **audio-visual resources**, including PowerPoint presentations displayed on **two screens** via a church-owned laptop, enhancing accessibility and engagement.
- **St Michael's, Atworth** offers **Morning Prayer** and **Evensong** services, with a traditional liturgical structure and a loyal, reflective congregation. The **Holy Communion service every Wednesday** has continued to thrive thanks to the support of a dedicated clergy member within the local Wiltshire family of churches.
- Both churches have recently upgraded their **sound systems**, which now feature **surround sound (loop systems)** and **Bluetooth capability**, making worship more inclusive for all attendees.



Style and Accessibility

While the majority of our services maintain a **traditional Anglican format**, we are gradually incorporating **more flexible styles of worship** and **modern music** to ensure a broader appeal and to reflect the diverse spiritual needs of our congregations.

We aim to offer **dignified, accessible, and prayerful worship**, with lay and congregational involvement across readings, intercessions, music, and technology. Our church family takes pride in **supporting one another in worship**, making it a shared and living expression of faith.



Worship Beyond Sundays

Worship and spiritual growth extend beyond our Sunday gatherings. We also offer:

- **Monthly Life Groups and Bible Study groups**, creating space for deeper fellowship and theological reflection.
- **Weekly 'Prayers for the Parish'** held in a local community centre, maintaining a prayerful presence in the heart of our wider neighbourhood.
- **Seasonal services and courses** in line with the Christian calendar (e.g. Advent, Lent, Holy Week), which are **consistently well attended**, often **reaching capacity** and drawing many who may not attend regularly on Sundays.
- **Pre-school and school services**, hosted regularly in our buildings and enthusiastically supported by our church, drawing in families, staff, and the wider school community.

Occasional Offices (Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals)

We continue to offer **Weddings, Baptisms, and Funerals**, with strong pastoral and practical support from our Lay Pastoral Teams and officiating clergy.

- Services are carefully planned with families, and a **pastoral follow-up system** is in place to ensure ongoing care after the event.
- A particularly valued part of this ministry is our **annual 'Light up a Life' service**, offering space to remember and give thanks for loved ones who have died, and providing comfort to those who grieve.

Our Changing Landscape

Like many churches post-COVID, we have seen a **decline in regular Sunday attendance**. However, this has been offset by a **significant broadening of our community presence and engagement** through:

- Our **parish website**
- **Monthly newsletters**
- **Social media presence**
- **Community events**
- **Pastoral outreach**

This enables us to continue to build strong and lasting connections in our **local schools, care homes, and community spaces**. These efforts have gathered real momentum in recent years and form an exciting foundation on which to build.



Each Tuesday evening people meet in Whitley Reading Rooms at 7.30pm to pray for our Parish and all the people in our villages. We offer prayers for those in need of healing and comfort and for our church community working to serve our neighbours while we have no vicar.

Everyone is welcome to join our short prayer meetings in the Reading Rooms but if you are unable to come you may wish to share in our prayer for this evening:

May the mind of God, ever wiser than our minds, search us deeply and open us to the truths that make for our healing.

May the ears of God ever open to our prayers, listen for us deeply and hear, beneath our words, our honest yearnings.

May the heart of God, ever filled with costly love, cherish us deeply, mending any brokenness and affirming our worth.

May God keep us company this night and bring us joy in the morning. Amen.



Parish of Atworth, Shaw and Whitley – Challenges Faced

Like many parishes across the Church of England, we are navigating a number of significant challenges: chief among them are **financial sustainability** and **post Covid recovery**. While patterns of attendance have shifted since the pandemic, we are steadily welcoming new individuals and families and remain committed to nurturing this encouraging growth.

Financial Pressures

We are blessed with a faithful culture of **generosity and stewardship**, yet our day-to-day operating costs are becoming increasingly difficult to meet. This is due to a combination of factors:

- A **reduction in regular Sunday attendance**
- A **fall in our electoral roll**
- The **impact of rising living costs**, affecting many of our congregation

Although we continue to have **great success with fundraising**, both for church fabric and for external charitable causes, there is a growing disparity between **funds raised** and **core income needed** to support ministry, mission, and maintenance.

Our **Parish Share contribution currently sits at around 75%**, and we are working closely with the diocese to address this with transparency and responsibility.



Changing Perceptions of the Church

One recurring theme raised during community consultations is a **widespread perception that the Church of England is a wealthy institution**, and therefore **not in need of financial support at a local level**. Many residents express a preference to contribute to **charitable efforts** (which we are proud to support) rather than to the church's operational costs.

We see this as an opportunity to **open up conversations about parish finances**, demystify where funds go, and highlight how local giving directly sustains local ministry.

Demographics and Discipleship for a New Generation

Like many parishes, we are aware of the **changing demographic landscape** and are committed to growing a church that reflects the full breadth of our community across ages, backgrounds, and experiences.

We are actively **exploring creative and meaningful ways to connect with all generations**, including through children's ministry, community events, music, and a growing digital presence. These initiatives are already bearing fruit, and we see them as part of a long-term, Spirit-led journey of discipleship and renewal.



Giving Initiatives

To help meet these challenges, we have introduced a range of giving tools:

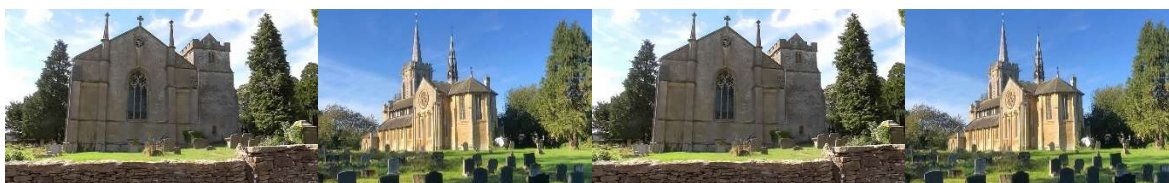
- The **Parish Giving Scheme** (online and by post), which has been positively received and continues to grow.
- In 2024, we introduced **CollectTins** at both churches, offering contactless giving options.

However, uptake of digital giving during services remains modest, largely due to **poor mobile and Wi-Fi signal** in both church buildings. We continue to explore ways to improve connectivity and promote alternative methods of giving.

Looking Ahead

We are not disheartened by these challenges, rather we see them as **part of the evolving story of our parish**. We remain hopeful that with creativity, strong leadership, and a deep-rooted faith, we can grow in sustainability, deepen discipleship, and **continue making Jesus known** across Atworth, Shaw and Whitley.





A Prayerful Invitation

We hope this profile has given you a glimpse into the life, heart, and hope of our parish community.

If something within these pages resonates with your calling and ministry, we hope you will consider joining us on this journey; to walk alongside us and lead us forward in faith.

As we look to our future together with prayerful expectation, we share with you the words that guide and inspire us in our journey of faith:

God of love and hope

Direct our way as we seek to serve you in Atworth, Shaw and Whitley.

Give us wisdom and courage to follow you,

even when the future seems uncertain.

We ask you to provide for our needs;

Help us to be generous servants with what you give us,

that all that we have may be used for your glory.

Fill us with your Spirit, and inspire us with your love.

Amen

Safeguarding

We are fully committed to the safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Our safeguarding policies follow national Church of England guidance, and all those in roles of responsibility are safely recruited and supported through appropriate training and supervision.

